



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride present:

## Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 2

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Blue Duke”*

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## **Chapter 6. The fairy from his memories**

After Mythrill Reed Pod escaped from the castle, Ann came to Dale with a request.

"I would like an audience with His Grace."

"For what purpose? As he is now, the Duke would be displeased to be bothered unnecessarily."

Dale's attitude towards Ann, the last remaining craftsman, was harsh. His tone of voice was clearly different from when she was one craftsman out of many. She sensed he was determined to have her make a sugar sculpture that satisfied Alban at all costs.

"It's an essential matter. I request an audience with him between just the two of us, if possible."

Ann's earnestness seemed to have convinced him, as Dale prepared the arrangements for the meeting.

The sun had completely set, and the temperature was dropping further. Outside the window, snow mixed with the raging winds.

Ann was led into Alban's heated chamber.

Alban was sitting in the same place he was that morning, in the same pose. He had probably remained this way the entire time, and most likely spent his days the same way.

That lethargic, empty state—Why was he so obsessed with a sugar sculpture as

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he was?

No, what Alban was obsessed with wasn't a sugar sculpture. It was the fairy in the painting.

Ann wanted to know the reason behind that obsession. Then, she'd try to give shape to the object of his desire.

That was Ann's job as a craftsman.

"Thank you very much for granting me this meeting."

She kneeled. Alban didn't even glance her way.

"What is the purpose of this meeting?"

"There is something I wish to inquire about. It's for the sake of making the sugar sculpture. Would that be alright?"

"If it's for making it, you may ask."

"Then..."

She quickly regained her breath, then asked, "Could you please tell me the name of the person in the painting?"

Perhaps it was a rather unexpected question, as Alban turned to look at her. It seemed that, for the first time, Ann had entered his sight.

"Why is her name necessary?"

"It's for the sake of giving her shape. I feel I must know. The painting doesn't fully depict her."

"With that, will you be able to make it?"

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"I don't know."

Alban suddenly grabbed the sword he had propped up beside him. He smoothly drew it out of its sheath and stood up with the naked blade in hand.

Ann resisted her body's subconscious need to run away. Her knees slightly trembled from forcefully subduing her fear.

With the sword in hand, Alban stood before her.

"That question just now is a question that invades my memories. Are you prepared for what you're asking? If you can't make it after prying into and disturbing a person's memories, I'll have you compensate with your life. Are you prepared for that?"

"I cannot be prepared to die. I won't die. I've made a promise to a friend, and there's someone I wish to see. Therefore, I won't die. As I have this resolution, I will definitely make it. So please tell me—Her name."

They stared at each other. Alban placed the blade of his drawn sword on Ann's shoulder. She winced at the cold and heavy feeling of the iron.

"...Christina," Alban said quietly.

"Is that her name?"

"Yes."

"But fairies have an original name. Are you aware of that?"

"Realis Seal Erill."

By hearing the name promptly leave Alban's mouth, Ann was convinced.

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*—As I thought, she's special.*

Fairy owners wouldn't care about something like a fairy's original name. The only humans who would care are those who see the fairy as an equal, and those who regard them as special.

Ann understood that well. She too, knew that same feeling.

"Why don't you call her by her original name?"

"That's what she wished for. She wanted a human name, so she asked that I give her one."

Alban withdrew the sword he'd placed on Ann's shoulder and sat down in a nearby chair. Suddenly fatigued, he seemed as if he could not stand any longer.

"Where did you meet? You and Lady Christina." Ann purposely called the fairy by her human name. She felt she should, having learned of her wish.

"By the sea. On a beach below the castle's cliff."

"What was Lady Christina doing there?"

"She had just been born. She was sitting absentmindedly, gazing at the wave crests she was born from."

"If she remained there that way, she would have been found by fairy hunters, wouldn't she?"

"That's why I took her back to the castle."

"Why is that?"

"I pitied that she might be captured by humans and get hurt."

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"Did you spend a long time together?"

"Three years."

"And what of Lady Christina now?"

"A year and a half ago... She disappeared. That was her lifespan," Alban murmured, staring at a single point on the floor.

*—He loved her.*

She saw her own feelings overlap with Alban's figure. Somewhere in her heart, Ann was still calling the name of a single fairy. Alban too, must have been calling a fairy's name the same way.

"She had always said that water fairies themselves didn't know their own lifespan. That while some may live for centuries, others will disappear in a few years."

*—That's why he had so many pictures painted?*

All the paintings decorating the hall and the tower—it was as though he had been trying to hold onto her, not knowing when she'd be gone. He must have had many, many pictures painted because he was afraid of her disappearing.

The fairy smiling in the painting somehow seemed deep in thought. Perhaps she'd been worrying over what would become of her lover once she disappeared.

At last, Ann could see the outline of their feelings.

Why hadn't she tried to hear those feelings from the beginning?

She felt she'd taken quite the roundabout. And she became aware of her own

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inexperience. If it were Hugh, no doubt he'd have asked Alban why he desired a sugar sculpture in the first place.

Ann thought only of making a beautiful sculpture that could satisfy herself.

She hadn't understood what the client truly wanted.

What Alban wanted wasn't an extraordinary sculpture. He wanted a portrait that reproduced Christina's remnant as it was, as a memento for reviving his memories.

When making a sugar sculpture, no matter how realistic, one needed to adjust the colors, the shapes, and the balance of its form in order for it to look good. However, Ann shouldn't have done that.

Without those adjustments, a sculpture might be completely raw and unrefined.

But that was what Alban wanted.

The desire to make it overflowed within her. She wanted to shape and show Alban the portrait of the fairy in his heart, whom he had been seeking the same way she herself sought Shall.

"Would you mind if I brought the sugar sculpture here?"

At Ann's question, Alban slowly raised his head.

"What?"

"I'll bring the sugar sculpture here. I'll carry out my work in your presence, and while listening to you, I'll give her shape. Lady Christina's hair color, skin color, eye color... Her expressions and gestures... I'll make them all while listening to you."

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"This is bad."

Upon entering his room in the inn after having returned from Philax Castle, Hugh tossed his coat over the table and plumped down on a chair. Shall was standing with his back leaning against the wall, and his face turned in the direction of the window.

Outside, the sky was already pitch black, and snow danced violently in the strong wind.

"Rumor has it he's been acting strange, but to that extent... And it bothers me Lady Christina wasn't with him."

"His lover?"

At Shall's question, Hugh brushed up his forelock while exhaling a sigh and looked up at the ceiling.

"That's right. Well, she's a fairy, though."

Caught by the word 'fairy,' Shall knit his eyebrows.

"A blue-haired fairy?"

"Yeah, have you seen her in the castle?"

"I saw a painting. That guy ordered craftsmen to make a sugar sculpture using that painting as a model."

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"Not her in person, but a painting as a model? Why?"

Hugh then turned to Shall, looking startled. "Shall, do you know what an ocean-born fairy's approximate lifespan is?"

"Ocean-born fairies are water fairies. Their lifespan varies. Some live for centuries, while others only a few years."

Water fairies themselves didn't know their own lifespan. From the moment they were born, they lived in anxiety.

Mythrill was a water fairy as well. He, too, must have been aware of the fact that his life was unstable. The way he always acted arrogant was most likely an effort to try and blow off that apprehension. He hadn't told Ann about his life, and even if he did, he'd probably act tough by baselessly saying, *'I will definitely outlive Shall Fen Shall!'*

"What about sugar sculptures? If they kept eating them, a fairy could prolong their lifespan, right?"

"Sugar sculptures with the power to prolong a fairy's lifespan are rare. Your sugar sculptures might do it, but that too, would probably only add between a few weeks to a few months. There'd be no point unless they kept eating them."

"I see... Then, she disappeared. That's why the Duke is..."

Shall sneered at those words. "You're saying that man is in such a state because his fairy lover disappeared? As if humans would be bothered by a single pet fairy disappearing. They'd be satisfied just by buying another one as a replacement."

"She isn't a pet fairy. No one could replace her." Hugh clenched his fists over

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the table. "The House of Alban never rebelled against the House of Millsland. Not only that, but during the Chamber Civil War, they fought for his majesty, Edmond II. Yet, how about that? As he is now, does he look like a man in a noble position who carries Grand King Cedric's blood? Moreover, does that look like the heroic family that fought to build the current King's reign?"

All trade-related taxes are siphoned off by the royal family—of which they receive a stipend—and they're obligated to make a courtesy visit once a month. That's the treatment they receive after the Chamber Civil War that should have earned them praise for their service. The Duke would have been twelve or thirteen years old at the time. How angry had that boy approaching adolescence been at the treatment they received? It must have been a great shock for a mere child. However, he and his father obeyed. Holding back their anger, prioritizing the stability of the country, they resigned themselves to accept those obligations. But no one could heal those distorted feelings and that anger. No one but her."

As to rebound Hugh's sharp gaze, Shall smiled with just the corner of his mouth. "A companion for easing his pent up anger? That fairy must have been happy."

"Yeah. I think she was." Hugh glared at Shall so as to challenge his sarcastic words. "Before becoming the Silver Sugar Viscount, I made the Duke many sugar sculptures. I hear he gave them all to her, and in fact, she told me herself that she wanted to prolong her life by even a little. For him."

*—Prolong her life? for him?*

The fairy in the painting that always wore a smile tinged with sorrow. What was that sorrow for?

"She was probably worried this would happen," said Hugh, before falling silent.

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The strong winds shook the windows.

Just then, Salim came into the room and declared hurriedly, "Viscount, a report came from the watchman stationed at the highway. It appears Earl Downing has entered Philax with a cavalry of over three hundred men. They'll soon arrive at Philax Castle."

Hugh stood up, clicking his tongue. "That old man. I wish he'd act more like an old man and take it easy," he said, then glanced at Shall.

"We're going to Philax Castle again. That old man has little patience. If the Duke doesn't surrender obediently, he'll launch an attack. There should be two or three hundred of Alban House's guardsmen residing in the castle. If it becomes a rough-and-tumble battle, Ann will be in danger too."

Was it alright to go and help Ann? Considering he had been rejected, he wavered. However, unable to sit still, Shall headed towards Philax Castle along with Hugh.

The sea raged with the strong winds, and the sound of the breaking waves resounded loudly. The snow falling on his cheek was like fine pebbles bursting against his skin.

Philax Castle's shadow flickered in the raging night storm. Standing at the cape were three hundred men holding up torches, and fanned by the wind, their flames swayed the castle's shadow left and right.

"Earl Downing!"

Tents stretched from the highway to the sloping road that lead to the cape. They

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flapped in the strong wind, bending considerably, but without flying away.

Earl Downing looked surprised to see Hugh's figure rushing towards those tents.

"Mercury?"

"Has Philax Castle surrendered?" Hugh asked while catching his breath.

Earl Downing's lips curved into a sarcastic smile. "The gate is barricaded shut. I requested their surrender, but a messenger came asking that we wait a while. The time limit of this 'while' is unclear. Mercury, it seems your persuasion attempt has failed."

"You knew?" Hugh smiled wryly, looking embarrassed.

"It's because I know full well that you have a relationship with the Alban House that you were made the Silver Sugar Viscount. I thought I'd at least let you go persuade him."

Earl Downing then gave Hugh a severe look. "However, I will tolerate nothing further. Don't you get in the way. The last flashpoint of the kingdom must perish."

"I won't get in the way. But Ann Halford is in the castle."

"Halford?"

"She's the girl that competed for the royal medal in the previous sugar sculpture fair."

"Ahh... Her..."

For a moment, Earl Downing's eyes widened, but he immediately shook his

head lightly. "How unfortunate. We can only pray she hides well during the fight."

Even Earl Downing wouldn't want to allow an innocent girl to die on his watch. But he had a mission. In order to fulfill that mission, he determined that forsaking the life of a single girl was unavoidable. He was an old retainer that had experienced the civil war and worked for the sake of securing the country's stability. He wouldn't even weigh the life of a single girl against his mission.

"But—"

Still trying to confront Earl Downing, Hugh bent over the table the Earl was sitting at.

With a sigh, Shall turned his back to Hugh and left the tent. However much Hugh insisted, he knew it was futile. That old retainer wouldn't yield no matter what was said to him.

The wind raged on. Beyond a curtain of snow, one could see the castle's vague shadow.

Gazing at it, Shall clenched both his fists. "That girl..."

He had to go to the castle and get her out immediately.

But Shall might be the only one she'd refuse to be helped by. He shouldn't be the one to go. He should bow his head to Salim and beseech him to penetrate the castle before the battle starts and get her out.

Just as he thought that, Salim came walking from the direction of a herd of Earl

Downing's soldiers. In his hands hung a small handled can.

Having located Shall outside the tent, Salim headed straight towards him.

"It seems one of the soldiers caught this, this evening," Salim said suddenly, without so much as a greeting, and held out the can to Shall. It was a can for carrying food rations such as bean stew that soldiers hung at their waist.

Unable to grasp the meaning of it, Shall knit his eyebrows, to which Salim then urged him by adding, "I remember seeing this. It might be an acquaintance of yours. Open it."

Shall didn't get it, but he took the can and removed the lid as urged.

Fitted completely inside it was a small fairy. Shall couldn't believe his eyes.

"Mythrill Reed Pod?"

"Shall Fen Shall?"

The two momentarily stared at each other at the highly surprising reunion.

"It seems that fellow ate all the soup that was in there. The soldier that found him apparently closed him in as revenge and was going to sell him to someone. As I was passing by, he approached me asking if I wanted to buy him," Salim explained indifferently.

"What are you doing? You left the castle and ate the soldiers' food?"

Hearing Shall's amazed words, Mythrill shabbily crawled out of the can to protest.

"No, that's not it! That is it, but that's not it! I was properly fulfilling my role!"

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But I got hungry, so I thought I'd get something to eat for the moment. Though I don't know why, there were lots of soldiers, so I thought no one would notice if I ate a little."

"You left the castle alone to snatch the soldiers' soup? What about that girl?"

"That's right! Ann!" Mythrill flapped his lone wing and nimbly jumped onto Shall's shoulder.

"Ann stayed in the castle. The Duke plans on keeping her there until she makes a sugar sculpture he likes, so she told me to wait outside."

"So you left on your own as told?"

"Well, it's because I felt I had to go find you." Tears gradually welled in Mythrill's eyes. "Because Ann is calling you. Because she wants you to come back."

Those audacious words upset him.

"Are you an idiot? What are you saying? She told me to leave, she couldn't be calling me."

"*You're* the idiot!

"Being called an idiot by you pisses me off."

"Then I'll say it over and over!! Idiot!! Idiot!! idiot!!"

Mythrill violently pulled at a lock of Shall's hair.

"You think Ann would seriously tell you to leave!?! *That* Ann!?! That bastard Jonas snatched my wing and threatened her into saying that. After separating

you from Ann, he offered her to Duke Philax and ran away!"

"...What?"

Shall's mind went blank with disbelief.

—*She was threatened by Jonas?*

"I'm telling you, Ann only drove you out because Jonas threatened her into it!"

—*It was after she started crying, so...*

He was uncharacteristically dumbfounded.

Though it had stirred his feelings so much, in truth, she had only been threatened into it.

"Then, now... What is she doing?"

"I told you, didn't I!? She's making a sugar sculpture. She said herself that she won't leave the castle until she makes a sugar sculpture Duke Philax acknowledges. She's intent on making it at all costs."

Shall's dumbfounded state was momentary. Mythrill's words made him seethe with impatience.

—*That idiot! Even now she's still making sugar sculptures instead of running away!?*

Shall grabbed hold of Mythrill, who was annoyingly clamoring and pulling his hair on his shoulder.

"W-what?! Hey, Shall Fen Shall! Let go!"

He shoved the screaming Mythrill into the can and forcibly handed it to Salim.

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"Hold on to that! I'll be back for it later!"

And then he took off.

Salim shrugged, looking down at the canned Mythrill in disinterest.

"Why do I have to hold on to this thing?"

"What do you mean 'this thing'? I am the great Mythrill Reed Pod! Rather, first of all get me out of here—!" Mythrill screamed from inside the can.

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One barrel of silver sugar, kneaded into balls, then piled up to form a rough human shape. It turned out slightly taller than Ann.

Seeing that, Alban murmured, "Craftsman, what are you trying to do?"

Ann turned to him with an earnest expression.

"What was Lady Christina's approximate height?"

"Height?"

After thinking for a while, Alban got up. He stood in front of the pile of silver sugar that was becoming vaguely human shaped, and pointed at the area of his chin.

"Around this height."

"Then, that's what I'll do."

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Straightening her back, Ann once again set her hands into the silver sugar. It could be said to be an odd size for a sugar sculpture, but she was certain that size was necessary.

"I'm asking you what you are trying to do, craftsman."

"I'm making it the same. Everything. Her stature, her face, her expression. I'll make them all exactly the same. When picturing Lady Christina, what is the strongest impression that comes to mind? If I were to imagine a certain someone... It would likely be him looking down at me in a seemingly bad mood, though."

Thinking for a moment, Alban gently cast down his eyes and smiled. "Calmly standing against the wall. Looking at me, smiling."

"Understood."

That was not a pose she should use if she wanted to make a good-looking sculpture. But it was about giving form to the Christina Alban sought. It didn't matter whether or not it could attract people's eyes as a sculpture.

Having decided the fairy's pose, Ann got down to the details.

Five barrels of silver sugar were carried into Alban's private chamber.

Other than that, there were also a single barrel filled with cold water and a worktable. Additionally, more than a hundred bottles of colored powder that had been brought over from Ann's room were lined on the floor.

Ann kneaded up the sugar sculpture over a stone slab placed on the floor. That probably wasn't something one should do in a nobleman's room, but Alban allowed it.

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She had a solid grasp of the colors and atmosphere.

When she had showed Alban her first sculpture, he had said to “leave the atmosphere as is.” The atmosphere she read from Christina in the portrait wasn't wrong—she sculpted while keeping that in mind. She'd made a sculpture with the exact facial features before, as well. All she had to do was make sure not to make it conspicuous nor influenced by her own style.

Taking in her hand a wooden spatula with a brush-like finely cut end, she stood on her tiptoes to sculpt the hair flow. With just the strength level of combing hair, she quickly carved down from the top of the head to the waist in one stroke. Finely, finely, she repeatedly carved hundreds and thousands of times.

She carved persistently, so that when looking at it, one could almost feel its silky touch.

Alban attentively observed Ann, who continued sculpting, and the fairy that was being created by her fingers.

She couldn't tell how long it had been, but it was certainly already deep into the night.

Still, Ann continued sculpting. Alban didn't sleep either.

It was when the wind became awfully loud that she suddenly stopped working.

"Duke." The door opened to reveal a nervous-looking Dale.

"A cavalry of over three hundred men has besieged the castle. They're Earl Downing's men."

Ann was surprised to hear that.

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—*Why is Earl Downing...?*

Without any particularly strong feeling, Alban urged him on, "And?"

"They sent a demand for surrender. And for taking you into custody."

"I figured they'd come eventually, but they were later than I expected."

"What would you like to do?"

"Have them wait. I want to watch this," said Alban while directing his gaze at the fairy sculpture in making. He observed it intently, as though someone was inside its still vague outline.

"Understood." Replying as though bracing himself, Dale took his leave.

"Why has Earl Downing come to take you into custody?" Ann asked unintentionally, unable to resist her curiosity.

Alban smiled as if there was something funny.

"For a year and a half, I haven't gone to Lewiston. Failing to show allegiance is the perfect pretext for attacking me, isn't it?"

"You haven't gone to Lewiston? Why? Even though by doing so, you're placing yourself in danger..."

Alban frowned in annoyance, and sitting in the chair, he threateningly pointed the tip of his sword at Ann.

"Silence, craftsman. Just make that."

"But, why—"

"I said silence!!"

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Ann cowered at that angry roar.

"You wouldn't understand! Something like the feelings of someone who's had all their dignity stripped from them and is forced to behave like a servant... The one who could understand is...!!" Alban, who'd been shouting in rage, suddenly shut his mouth, as if noticing that he let his feelings get the better of him.

Ann gingerly bowed her head, then looked at Alban. Facing down, he let the sword to the floor and heaved a deep sigh. It looked as though even he was tired of his own fixation.

The room was neatly arranged, but possessed only modest stone walls, a woolen carpet, and the melancholic sound of the ocean outside the window. One wouldn't believe that this was the castle of a descendant of Grand King Cedric. The Silver Westhall castle Hugh lived in was much more extravagant.

An oppressed, proud household. Still, in order to protect the order of the kingdom, they had most likely been desperately enduring. Perhaps it had been only that fairy who could sooth those raging feelings.

But that fairy had disappeared.

For a year and a half later, Alban still had not gone to Lewiston. It was not possible that he had not understood the meaning and outcome of that action. Yet he did not go.

He had chosen slow self-destruction instead.

That was how much Alban despaired after losing Christina. He had become unable to endure his suppression after losing her.

Ann too, knew the pain of losing a loved one. When her mother passed, she felt

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it deeply in her heart, and believing that she was all alone, she couldn't take a single step.

*—This man believes he's all alone, as well.*

The peace he had finally obtained for the raging feelings he couldn't bear—after that disappeared, his loneliness gave birth to obsession. But that obsession he had created himself was gnawing at him.

If the sole desire of such a man was a sugar sculpture, she would make it.

Reproducing that man's feelings as they were.

Ann once again set down to work. With no time to rest, she mixed the colored powder and kneaded.

Only the sound of the wind and the firewood popping in the hearth was heard.

Inside, the room was kept at a moderate temperature. But Ann, who earnestly continued sculpting, was dripping with sweat. She wiped the sweat on her forehead with the back of her hand. Kneeling on the floor over the stone slate, she redid the gloss of the fairy's wing; it needed to be more and more lustrous, and thinly stretched like silk.

A gust of cold air suddenly brushed against her flushed cheeks.

There was no knock, but she could tell someone had entered the room. Thinking that it must have been Dale, she didn't raise her head. Alban seemed to have thought the same, as he continued gazing at Ann's hands.

Suddenly, a voice sounded over her head.

"I'm going to have you return her."

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At the familiar voice, Ann looked up in shock. "...Shall?"

She couldn't believe it. Having been so preoccupied with the sculpture, her mind was slightly dazed. She felt like she was seeing an illusion or something of the sort. Shall Fen Shall was standing right beside her with his sword in hand, pointing its tip at Alban. The blade shone with the flames of the fireplace.

Alban raised his head as well, frowning. "You're... the fairy that came with this craftsmen, aren't you. Though I've also heard you're Mercury's warrior fairy. What have you come for?"

"I've come to have you return this girl."

"I won't return this craftsman. I'll be keeping her here until she makes what I want."

"Then I'll kill you here and now. I bet Earl Downing would rejoice if I deliver your head to him."

Still flabbergasted, Ann whispered, "Shall... For real?"

Shall glanced at Ann, then spoke bluntly, "I'm amazed at your idiocy."

That foul mouth certainly seemed like the real thing. But hearing that unreserved comment turned the inner corners of her eyes hot.

"Shall? Why... Did you come here? Shall..." she whispered with both hands over her mouth. Her tears were about to escape.

"I heard about Jonas from Mythrill Reed Pod."

"Mythrill. He really told you... Shall, I'm sorry. That time, I—" Regret and joy swelled up inside her chest.

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"Apologies aren't necessary. Stand. It's dangerous here. Once they get themselves in gear, Earl Downing's soldiers are going to break through the gate and storm in. We need to leave the castle before that."

"Eh... But, I... The sugar sculpture—"

Instantly, she felt that she couldn't leave.

Alban slowly stood up, holding the drawn sword in his hand. "I won't allow that craftsman to leave. Keep working."

"I'm taking her with me. If you want to fight, come."

Shall held up his sword as well. The sharpness of a polished obsidian set into his eyes.

"Wait!"

Ann jumped at Shall's back.

"Wait, Shall! Your Grace, too, please wait. I will continue working, so please withdraw your swords!"

This time, Shall turned to Ann in shock. "Are you mad?"

"I'm serious."

She looked up at Shall to appeal. "I... Want to give shape to this work. I want to make this fairy's sugar sculpture."

"What are you—"

"I undertook it. I started it saying that I could make it! I want to make it. I feel like I can do it. So let me. Please."

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At those words, even Alban looked surprised.

She wanted to continue working. She even felt that she could complete it soon. She couldn't possibly leave it that way and run away. That was her job.

"Please, let me continue working!"

"This castle is surrounded by soldiers. When they break through, it'll become a battleground."

"I know."

"It's dangerous."

"I know that, too. But I can't abandon this job midway. Please. It's the only thing I can do, and it's my pride."

"...Unbelievable..."

Suddenly, the killing intent faded from Shall's body, and he withdrew from his stance. The sword in his hand turned into light, dispersing.

He heaved a deep sigh. "Make it. But I'm staying here too."

Ann timidly asked Alban, "Might it be alright if he stayed here as well? If you could allow that, he will also be pleased, and I'll be able to continue working."

"...Very well."

Having granted his permission, Alban once again sat down in a chair with his sword in hand.

Shall moved to stand against the wall, watching Ann's work attentively.

Even while progressing with her work, Ann couldn't believe Shall was there.

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*—He came back. The misunderstanding was resolved. He came back for me.  
He forgave me.*

Joy overflowed inside her chest.

At pivotal points, Ann confirmed aspects of Christina with Alban.

Her hand gestures and the fineness of her fingers, the way she smiled, the way she tilted her head—she paid attention to everything, especially to the coloration. In order to faithfully replicate her light blue color, she subtly adjusted the colored powder over and over.

As the fairy's shape became clearer, Alban's expression changed. In his previously apathetic green eyes appeared the passion of a seeker.

"It's very similar," said Alban as he noticed the facial features. "It's similar. But... the eyes are wrong. They didn't have such a cloudy white color."

"What color did they have?"

"Silver. It was a translucent silver, like it repelled light."

"Silver, is it?" Ann pondered sullenly.

*—A silver color can't be made by normal means. Moreover, it needs to be translucent. What should I do?*

Shall coldly watched Alban's eager state.

"With those eyes... It's Christina."

At that murmur, Shall let out a chuckle. Sneering.

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Catching the sound of that sneer, Alban glared at him. "What's so funny?"

"That's a sugar sculpture."

"It's Christina."

"It's a sugar sculpture, made by this girl's hands. What's going to come out of having something like this made?"

Alban then showed a somehow self-deprecating smile. "Fairies are born from the condensation of an object's energy through the gaze of a living creature."

"So?"

"So I wanted this shape."

"...Eh?"

At those surprising words, Ann inclined her head. "Whatever do you mean?"

"It's Christina's 'shape.' Moreover, it's a sculpture made of silver sugar that can prolong a fairy's life. Fairies are born from objects, so if I gaze at this, might something be born from it? Don't you think there's a possibility, craftsman?"

*—He's asking if something will be born from the shape of Lady Christina made of silver sugar?*

She tilted her head, unable to grasp Alban's intention. But then immediately, she realized. "You can't possibly mean... That Christina will be born again from this!?"

It was impossible.

Christina was born from wave energy. Even if something were to be born from

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the sugar sculpture, the probability of it actually being her was infinitely low.

Low to none.

"Have you ever witnessed the moment a fairy disappears? They become particles of light, and disperse into midair. The matter that made up her shape disappeared, so I need to once again give shape to that dissolved matter. A fairy's lifespan is prolonged by a sugar sculpture of beautiful 'shape.' That shape has some sort of energy. A fairy's life is connected to that. It's the 'shape.' The 'shape' is what's necessary."

What Alban spoke of was unfounded hope that revealed his obsession.

However, Ann couldn't deny it. Though it was unfounded, thrusting reality at a person who clung to it was too cruel.

But Shall was different.

"Impossible," he said mercilessly, spurning that hope. "What's been lost can't be revived. No matter how much you cry and seek it, it won't come back. Even if you stared at something like that, it'll result in an unknown distorted fairy being born."

"I won't allow you to say another word!"

The enraged Alban stood up, holding his sword. Shall remained against the wall without moving, and scornfully said to Alban straight out, "Whether I say it or not, it's fact."

"Stop, Shall!" Ann pulled at Shall's arm. "Don't say that!"

She couldn't watch quietly as Shall cornered Alban with the cruel truth.

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It was at that moment that the castle trembled.

The three gasped in shock, and at the same time, Dale came jumping in through the door.

"They set explosives at the gate. The gate's been breached. The soldiers are coming."

"...So I didn't make it," Alban murmured. "I thought it didn't matter when, but... I can't believe that, when just a little longer and what I'd given up on would be complete..."

*—I want to give this man the fairy he longs for.*

For the first time, she heard Alban's humanlike weak voice. With that, her desire to make it welled in her even more strongly. It was only a little longer until what he desired was complete.

In that instant, something occurred to her.

"Ah..."

Ann rapidly let go of Shall's arm and held up a stone bowl she'd poured silver sugar into. What she thought of on the spur of the moment was a method for creating a silver color.

"Duke! The eyes, right? If I can do the eyes, it'll be complete, right? I can do it, so, please watch," she affirmed while searching for a nearby pot.

Shall grabbed her arm in a fluster. "You're still going to make it at a time like this!?"

"It's almost complete though, I can't stop. Until the soldiers come into this room,

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I'll keep making it."

"You don't need to go along with this man's delusion!"

"I'm not going along with it! This is my job! I undertook it, so I want to do it to the end. I'm not pretty, or smart, or rich. But I want to believe that, only in this, I won't lose to anyone. Because it's my job. So I can't stop midway."

At those words, Shall gazed at Ann in surprise. After a momentary silence, he asked, "That's what you want?"

"Yes."

"You're an idiot."

"I believe so. But, I want to see this through."

"If that's what you want... Then, as you wish."

Shall gently touched his hand to Ann's cheek. "I'll hold off the soldiers as much as I can. Make it until you're satisfied."

Leaving only those words behind, Shall turned on his heel and left the room.

**Translator Notes:**

General note: When speaking to Alban and Earl Downing, Ann and Hugh use Keigo (Japanese honorific speech, and specifically in this case, Sonkeigo) to show respect. I did my best to give it some distinction, but it's very difficult to translate.

<sup>1</sup>Ann drops the Keigo from here.