

## Chapter 2 Part 2

### 2

The day after visiting Flegel's house, I called my dear friends to the outskirts of the Kingdom's territory, which is a short distance away from Filnots.

With the war brewing between the Kingdom and the Empire, and considering the escalating damages caused by the conflict, I decided to take them to the Empire.

I am not going to go through the pain of losing my dear friends in a war again. This time, I will not let anyone die. Hence, this will be the groundwork for that.

That's why I requested Princess Valtrune to arrange for their transportation so that they could safely reach the Empire. But the result is...

"...A dragon mount, huh?"

In front of a dragon mount with its wings spread wide and roaring, I was taken aback.

I don't have fond memories of dragon mounts. In my previous life, I had struggled multiple times against these formidable foes. They moved swiftly and unpredictably in the air, making it difficult to deal with them.

Even dozens of regular soldiers together would find it hard to stop a dragon mount's movements. Moreover, they had a ferocity that could wreak havoc even without a rider. It reminded me of what incredible creatures they were.

"Aldia, what's the matter?"

"Well, it's just that the thought of riding one of these makes my stomach ache a bit..."

"...I see. It's understandable that you'd have such a reaction."

Princess Valtrune smiled, seemingly understanding my feelings.

Having fought against these dragon mounts and nearly died multiple times, as a result... I had developed an aversion to them.

"By the way, how were you able to call the dragon mounts...?"

Upon hearing my question, Princess Valtrune answered with a smile.

"For a princess like me, it's quite an easy thing to do."

She seemed proud of herself.

"Besides, I'd also love to see Aldia riding a dragon mount."

Her mischievous smile looked adorable, but... I was far from finding it funny.

The dragon mounts, arranged as a means of transportation to the Vulcan Empire, were accompanied by a few soldiers. These dragon mounts were much larger than humans, and they were actively used for military purposes in the Empire.

Looking at the dragon mounts before me, I turned pale. However, the others had different reactions.

"Wow, it's a dragon mount... I've never seen one before..."

Steano's eyes were sparkling as he reached out towards the dragon mounts.

It is dangerous to get too close, as they could bite. That was why I, for one, would not casually approach them. His actions are a little worrying, but I understand the feeling of curiosity.

During the war, dragon mounts were spotted all over the place. However, for someone born in the Kingdom and experiencing the current peaceful environment, there are hardly any opportunities to catch sight of dragon mounts.

"These dragon mounts have the most exceptional lineage in the Empire. While we have many dragon mounts raised within the Empire, this particular breed stands out for its incredible speed, intelligence, and aggressiveness."

Princess Valtrune proudly explained.

Observing this, Petra muttered.

"But it's strange, isn't it? Why is Aldia... getting so close to Princess Valtrune...?"

Ah, I'm getting chills.

Standing right next to Princess Valtrune, Petra's face took on a stern expression, and she sent a sharp gaze.

"Petra, you see... I can explain."

"Humph!"

It seems that there is no room for excuses. Even if I were to explain that we had a connection from my previous life... it is unlikely that anyone would believe me. Without actually experiencing time regression, it is hard to understand.

"Aldia and I happened to meet on the day of the graduation ceremony."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, Her Imperial Highness is absolutely right."

"Heehh..."

Although Princess Valtrune briefly explained why we were working together, Petra kept giving us her skeptical looks.

"I'll explain in detail once we arrive at the Empire. Is that okay?"

"Haa... Fine, I'll accept that for now."

Having obtained Petra's approval, I let out a deep breath.

"By the way, it's really a gathering, isn't it?"

All of my friends are gathered here.

Addy and Tredia, who are still attending the military academy, are not here, but the six of us—Steano, Petra, Ambros, Mia, Flegel, and me, have gathered here. In addition, Princess Valtrune and a few dragon mount soldiers she brought along are also present.

"Well, that was the plan, after all!"

"Yeah~!"

Steano and Mia, both in high spirits, talked cheerfully.

"Still... there are quite a lot of us."

Seeing the size of our group, I am glad that we did not gather in a busy area, which would have attracted unwanted attention from passersby.

"Imperial Princess! Who are they?"

One of the younger-looking dragon mount soldiers raised his voice. He must be curious about us.

"They are my important guests. I plan to invite them to the Empire. Is there a problem?"

With a stern expression and a snobbish attitude, the dragon mount soldier took a step back. He must be a nobleman's son. While asking Princess Valtrune about our identities, he sharply directed his gaze towards Flegel. He must have sensed Flegel's high status from his attire.

Flegel is the fourth son of the Viscount Margneuer family, a noble family from the Kingdom.

From the perspective of the nobles in the Empire, it seems they are displeased with the friendliness between Princess Valtrune and the nobility from other countries.

"It seems like you've misunderstood, but the Imperial Princess and I are not in any close relationship."

"I didn't ask you. Nobles from the Kingdom shouldn't meddle."

The rumors about Princess Valtrune breaking off her engagement must be circulating within the Empire. That is why the dragon mount soldier was directing harsh words toward Flegel.

"...Imperial Princess, with all due respect, I am opposed to them setting foot in Imperial territory."

"Oh, really? And why is that?"

"I believe the Imperial Princess understands how the future of the friendship with the Kingdom will unfold. Despite that, do you really think that the Emperor would allow you to invite nobles of the Kingdom as guests!?"

Indeed, there are those who dislike the idea of us entering the Empire. And it's not limited to the Empire; similar sentiments might also exist within the Kingdom. However, Princess Valtrune remains undaunted.

"I have no intention of seeking my father's permission. What's wrong with inviting my friends to the country?"

"Let's say the Emperor permits inviting that noble over there to the Empire. But the others are commoners, right? Inviting them as guests might tarnish the Imperial Princess's dignity."

The Empire is a country where nobility reigns supreme. This was particularly evident during the war, where the majority of generals were sons and daughters of the Empire's nobles. The rise of non-noble generals came during the final stages of the war when the Empire was desperate.

The discriminatory attitude of the dragon mount soldier toward the commoners is not uncommon. This mindset is shared by every noble in the Empire and was considered the norm.

"Are you suggesting that I'm blind or something?"

"N-No! That's not my intention..."

"Then let me ask you, isn't it my own decision whom I befriend and invite as guests to my country?"

"W-Well, that might be true, but..."

Hearing the Princess's words, the man clenched his teeth and looked down.

"Sir Linos, they are my important guests. I ask you to treat them with respect."

"—! I'm sorry, but... I can't accept them!"

The dragon mount soldier, named Sir Linos, mounted his dragon and took off into the sky. The other soldiers looked on with appalled expressions.

The only one who raised his voice at his actions was a brawny man among the dragon mount soldiers,

"Hey, Linos! Are you abandoning the mission!?"

"I can't accept this situation! Never!"

"I won't tolerate anyone disrupting the order, no matter who they are!"

"I don't care...!"

Ignoring the reprimand, he flew off into the distance.

"Hey...! Haa, he's gone too far now, we can't call him back."

The distance was so vast that he appeared like a speck in the distance.

The brawny man was looking at him with an exasperated expression but soon turned his gaze back to Princess Valtrune.

"...I apologize, Imperial Princess. I didn't discipline the soldiers enough."

The man who had been shouting just moments ago now humbly apologized. He must hold a certain position within the Empire.

In response, Princess Valtrune smiled gently at the brawny man.

"Please raise your head, Sir Dorthos. It's not your fault."

With that, she gently placed her hand on his shoulder.

"But... haa, abandoning the mission is an unacceptable act for a proud dragon mount soldier."

"It seems he has a negative impression of commoners."

"Yes. However... deep down, he's a serious and considerate person, but unfortunately, his pride gets in the way..."

It seems ingrained ideologies are hard to change. Perhaps that was why the Empire lost the war against the Kingdom.

"That seems to be the case."

"Yes, I'm ashamed..."

Respecting established traditions and turning a blind eye to new ideologies. The consequence of that was the mass deaths of Imperial generals.

Incompetent nobles led the troops, resulting in unnecessary loss of military strength, and in the end, even their own lives.

The Kingdom was different. Even commoners were actively given the right to command troops if they were competent. I was one of those, and I believe it is a rational approach. Unless this exclusionary mindset is addressed, the Empire will undoubtedly be defeated in a war against the Kingdom.

This time, with the decision to serve Princess Valtrune, I must create a future in which the Empire will not be defeated.

"This is not just a problem limited to Sir Linos. It's a problem for the entirety of Imperial nobility."

"That's right... The Imperial nobility doesn't like to socialize with commoners."

"Yes, but Sir Dorthos doesn't seem to be bound by such customs, which is reassuring."

Seeing Princess Valtrune smile, he scratched his head and turned away, looking embarrassed.

"That's not it, I simply admire strong individuals. I believe that the ideology of meritocracy is more prominent than the aristocratic supremacy system. In fact, our Fourth Dragon Mount Soldier Squad consists of handpicked elites, with over half of them being former commoners."

Hearing Dorthos's words, the dragon mount soldiers nodded happily.

"Our captain is our pride! We've been oppressed for being commoners, but the captain is different. He gives us a fair evaluation."

"Yes, that's right. I'm really happy to be part of this Fourth Dragon Mount Soldier Squad!"

"Captain Dorthos is known to be one of the few nobles in the Empire with good character!"

Amid the excitement around Dorthos, Petra, who had approached me unnoticed, murmured softly,

"They seem so passionate over there..."

"Don't say that."

"But it's true. I'm not lying."

"Even if it's true, you should keep quiet at times like this..."

Trying to caution her in a low voice, she pouted her lips and said, "*But still...*". Well, it is true that from our perspective as outsiders, it just looked like a mere farce. However, as someone who is going through his second life, I understand that it was only natural for Dorthos to be admired and respected by his squad.

"Petra, you may not know this, but it's quite impressive for an Imperial noble to treat commoners without discrimination."

"Heehh, is that so? But I'm not really interested in noble affairs or anything like that."

"Why are you so stubborn and negative about it...?"

She maintained a consistently indifferent attitude. Despite that, Ambros spoke to her.

"Petra, the aura emanating from that person... it's like the epitome of purity, just like that of a saint."

"Huh? Aura? Ambros... um, I have no idea what you're talking about."

"A healthy body houses a healthy mind. That's what I mean!"

"Haa... Is that so?"

Petra tilted her head, not entirely understanding his explanation.

He probably wants to convey that Dorthos is a trustworthy person. However, with such a roundabout way of speaking, Petra will not understand. He should have used a more straightforward approach.

When I looked at Ambros, he just smiled in response... completely unaware of my intention.

"Hmm, well... let's leave it at that. Imperial Princess, you're sending the guests to the Empire on the dragon mounts, right?"

This praise-filled scene ended abruptly with a single remark from Dorthos that seemed to disrupt the flow. It must have been quite embarrassing for him. His face flushed red as he glanced sideways at the soldiers' excitement.

Princess Valtrune was thoroughly pleased as she observed the scene.

"Sir Dorthos, then I entrust the Fourth Dragon Mount Squad to transport us."



"Please leave it to us. We will safely escort the Imperial Princess and her guests to the Empire."

And so, despite a small dispute, we were able to enjoy our aerial journey without any further issues.