

The background of the cover is a dark, stylized illustration of a city at night. A massive, translucent blue and pink mechanical monster with glowing red eyes looms in the sky. In the foreground, two characters are silhouetted against the city lights. The character on the left is a young man with spiky hair, wearing a dark coat. The character on the right is a young woman with long dark hair, also in a dark coat, holding a long, glowing pink sword. The title 'Masy Skelter 2' is prominently displayed in the center-left. The word 'Masy' is in a light blue, jagged, blocky font. 'Skelter' is in a similar but darker blue font. The number '2' is large, pink, and has a faceted, gem-like texture. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located just below the '2'.

Masy Skelter 2™

DIGITAL NOVEL



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*This short novel contains spoilers. We recommend reading the digital novel after clearing the game.

Long ago, several leagues below the surface of the sea, there existed a mighty kingdom of mermaids that stood upon the ocean floor.

Among its many inhabitants were the six princesses, all of whom were daughters to the ruler of the kingdom, the King of the Mermaids.

When each princess turned fifteen, she was granted permission to depart from the kingdom and visit the world of Man.

Most of the princesses enjoyed regaling the youngest sister with whimsical tales of the land above the water, fueling her anticipation for the day she could see that magical world for herself.

One day, however, one of the older sisters took the young princess aside to warn her.

“Little Mermaid, you must listen to me. The human soul, although sacred enough to be claimed by the gods on the day they cross over to the other side, resides within a fragile, human body. We are not like them. Our bodies return to the ocean as seafoam in the end, but the body of a mermaid can outlive a human’s and live to see three hundred years pass before our time comes.”

The elder mermaid tried her best to discourage her sister from leaving her home, but it was of no use. The young princess was fiercely determined to visit the world of Man.

Once Little Mermaid had finally entered her fifteenth year, she immediately traveled to see what secrets lie above the surface of the sea.

As soon as her head rose above the water, her eyes became fixed to the looming shadow of a massive, wooden ship.

“Wow! What a magnificent ship! Wait... who is that?”

Standing port-side was an adolescent human boy. He was a prince, and he was celebrating the eve of his sixteenth birthday with a lively party aboard his ship.

“My, he’s so handsome.”

For her, it was love at first sight.

In what seemed like moments, a powerful storm arose and began to rage above the mermaid and the ship, toppling the prince over the side of the ship and plunging him into the freezing waters.

“Oh no!”

Little Mermaid reacted quickly, swimming towards the prince. Grabbing ahold of his body in the pouring rain, she swam them towards safety onto the shore.

“Your Highness, are you okay?!” shouted Little Mermaid as she desperately tried to wake the prince.

Just then, she noticed a young girl in the distance walking towards her and the prince.

Little Mermaid, afraid she would be seen, dove into the water to hide.



As the human girl approached the unconscious prince, she called out to him. He began to wake. The weakened prince, in a low voice, began to speak.

“You saved me. Thank you... thank you so much...”

The prince, unaware of his true savior, continued to express a deep gratitude to the girl. Little Mermaid ached. Disappointed and hurt, she sank underwater and swam home. Forgetting about the prince, however, proved to be very difficult.

“I know! If I can become a human, I can see him again.”

Excited about the prospect of this new plan, Little Mermaid sought the help of a mysterious witch whose powers could facilitate the transformation she desired.

Upon hearing Little Mermaid’s request, the sly witch responded, “Of course, Princess. Your beautiful mermaid tail shall be split in two, granting you the feet of a mortal human. But beware... for every step taken will be agonizing, as if you were walking on a bed of knives.”

“However, should you fail to wed the prince... you will never return to the sea as a mermaid, but as seafoam instead. Are you certain this is what you desire?”

“I don’t care. I just want to see the prince again.”

“Very well... on one condition. For such a transformation, you will give me your beautiful, sweet voice... the voice which possesses the most beautiful singing in all the kingdom.”

Little Mermaid forfeited her voice in exchange for the potion that would change her mermaid form into that of a human.

Hastily, Little Mermaid swam to the surface, unable to contain her excitement. She took a seat on the sandy shore and downed the potion at once. Just as the witch had warned, however, her feet began to hurt each time she tried to walk upon the sand.

To her surprise, the prince was happening to walk along the beach where she was lying. He approached her at once.

“What’s the matter? Can you not walk? Hop on my back.”

The prince carried Little Mermaid back to his castle, tending for her as though she were his sister. For a time, this arrangement suited Little Mermaid, who believed she was living happily in the prince’s company. That is, until she learned of the prince’s intention to marry the girl he mistook as his savior.

“No! I was the one who saved you that night! Not her!”

She wished she could reveal the truth to the prince, but alas, Little Mermaid was mute.

As preparations for the prince’s wedding went underway, it seemed to Little Mermaid that the threat of her becoming seafoam would soon materialize.

Later that night, Little Mermaid’s sisters snuck into her quarters to bring her a knife and instructions.

“Kill the prince with this. Then, rub his blood upon your legs. Only with this can you become a mermaid once more.”

“If I kill the prince, I won’t have to become seafoam,” contemplated Little Mermaid. She took the knife, and quietly entered the prince’s chambers as he slept.

As Little Mermaid stood over the sleeping prince, she raised the knife, her hand trembling while her eyes were fixed on her victim’s heart.

“Farewell, my prince.”

However, she found herself incapable of killing him.

Little Mermaid cast the knife away and prepared to flee. Her last gesture before leaving the prince’s side was a tender kiss upon his forehead.

Following her escape, she dove headfirst into the sea. Her body began to dissolve into bubbles upon making contact with the water and before disappearing altogether.

However, this was not quite the end. Soon after, Little Mermaid heard a mystical voice.

“Little Mermaid... you refrained from murdering the prince...
If you become the fairy of air, and watch over lovers with kindness, then I shall return your soul to the prince.”

“Really? I can see the prince again some day?”



Jail.

It appeared from out of nowhere. A seed sprouted from a nightmare.

They say it came flying from the sky, crashing down to Earth to dig its corrupted roots. Buildings which surrounded its crash site warped, and any flora or fauna in its vicinity were either swallowed or vanished.

This corruption gave birth to monstrosities known as Marchens, a scourge to mankind.

The Dawn, a task force assembled to defeat the Marchens, was organized inside of Jail. At the same time, a group of girls, later identified as Blood Maidens, planned to escape the towering prison by scaling its never-ending staircase.

It was their only hope to restore the sun...

Or so they thought.



I was beginning to suspect I was in an aquarium.
Ever since I awoke, I've lived here alone. I noticed strange beings lurking around me. They looked so bizarre, and their language was unknown to me. I feared them.
Soon, though, I subconsciously began to understand how they communicated, but I had no one with whom to practice their language.
I fell into a deep loneliness.
My only treasure was a broken microphone I had found inside of the aquarium.
Every chance I got, I used it to sing.
I love to sing. It was the only way I could alleviate my loneliness. The strange beings watched me from time to time. Although they couldn't understand my song, sometimes they would sit and listen anyway. Maybe if I could sing better, I could make a friend.
One day, I mustered up the courage, and attempted to sing directly at the flock of creatures serving as my audience.
I took a great leap of faith, but...
It seemed my song sat unfavorably with the audience.
“GGGGGGGGGGGGGIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”
The strange beings reacted by attacking me.
“Huh?! Why?!”
I rushed to get away, but I became tangled in their claws and tripped.
The monsters pounced on me, slashing and punching at me.
“Ow! That hurts! Please stop!”
I cried out in agony, but they wouldn't relent. They tore my skin, and I felt the blood seeping out of my wounds.
I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared.
Apart from the pain, I was assaulted by a barrage of thoughts.
Why? Why must I endure this? Was my singing so terrible?
I just wanted to make friends. Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?
For a moment, I felt my world begin to warp.
There was a darkness waiting to explode inside of me.

“HEY!”

I heard a voice.
The monsters halted their assault, hoping to spot the source of the voice.



I looked in the same direction.
There stood a small figure.
He didn't resemble those strange beasts. It looked like me. Human. A child, similar in age to me.
“Get away from her! Stop bullying her!”
His voice was gallant in spite of his age. His warning must have worked—the monsters soon fled at his behest.
“Are you okay?” he asked.
As his question lingered, I noticed a part of his hair that was vivid; it was dyed a bright red and shining white.
Is it a boy...? If so, his feet quivered.
I sensed fear in him, but it was he who had saved me. Where did this child come from? I had never seen anyone else who looked like me in the aquarium.
But... that wasn't important. I needed to thank him for saving me.
“Um—”
“H-Hey!”
Before I could thank him, the boy loudly interjected.
“Yes!”
I was so hasty to respond, that I forgot to thank him.
What did he want to say? Hello? Was he introducing himself? Would he warn me about other monsters? It could have been any number of things, but what he screamed nearly blew my mind.

“Please let me be your bride!”
It made no sense.
A bride? Like, my bride? He wanted to marry me? But I'm a girl, aren't I? Wait, isn't he a boy?
Or is it a “she”? Besides, we just met. Does he expect me to say yes?
His proposal baffled me in all sorts of ways, but there was a nagging thought...

Marriage. The word was lodged in my brain.
Then, it seemed my mouth responded before I could think of a response.
“Can you...”
“Huh?”
“Instead of being my bride, why don't you be my prince? I would be okay with that.”
His eyes widened.
Without another word, he smiled and nodded.
“Okay. I understand, Princess.”

And so...



Through unordinary circumstances, we were married.
Then, we were two: a princess and her prince.



Another story of the Jail, the princess who should have become seafoam, and the prince who changed the future.
This is no dream or illusion.
It is all true. The story of the Miracle of Theophilus.

What is a marriage anyways?

Even when Little Mermaid and Otsuu really thought about it, they didn't have a clue.

Marriage means becoming a bride. Marriage means devoting your life to the person you love. It's an eternal vow—at least, that's how it seemed in their minds. They felt like there was something bigger to it, but they couldn't put a finger on it.

Maybe one day...

"Princess, your hand. Please watch your step."

"Okay, Otsuu."

Otsuu offered her hand to the girl, who was about the same age, and she took it with glee.

"Thank you, my prince."

"Of course. It's a pleasure to be there for my princess."

After making their vows, Little Mermaid treated Otsuu like her prince, making her a happy groom.

When Otsuu's offer to become Little Mermaid's bride became a proposal to be her prince, she was truly surprised. Girls don't make princes. Any doubts, however, were soon washed away.

"If it's what Little Mermaid wants, then I... I shall become a prince," thought Otsuu.

It was inexplicable. Otsuu had only just met Little Mermaid. Besides, even Little Mermaid had no idea why she was here. But from the beginning, Otsuu felt obligated to do whatever her princess had asked.

"Hey, Otsuu? Will you sleep with me again today?"

"Er, sure. Good grief. You're quite clingy, Princess."

Otsuu felt an irresistible charm from Little Mermaid, tickling her heart each time the mermaid displayed her affection. But the charm was so much that Otsuu couldn't bring herself to touch Little Mermaid, despite longing to do so.



One day, Otsuu and Little Mermaid were standing in a corner of the Aquarium Ruins, taking a break after driving away a pack of monsters.

Just then, they were startled by a commotion echoing from down the hall.

"Hey, Otsuu? Do you hear something?"

"Yes... Princess, stay here. I'll check it out."

"I'll come with you."

"It's fine. It might be dangerous."

"I'm going. Married couples always stick together."

The line made Otsuu's heart swell. With a lopsided smile, she took Little Mermaid's hand and led them in the direction of the commotion.

"Eight, nine... ten! Haha! This is amazing."

They heard a voice.

It was the first time they had heard another human voice in this place.

They poked their heads around, sneaking a peek from the shadowy end of the hallway.

It came from a little girl, dressed in a red-hooded cloak. She was in the midst of cutting down a swath of monsters, swinging at them with a pair of scissors nearly twice her size.

"Who... is that?"

It was Otsuu's first time encountering another human aside from Little Mermaid, yet she was reluctant. It couldn't be assumed that she would be an ally. She could just as easily point her scissors at Otsuu and Little Mermaid next.

"Hey, Otsuu! She's human."

"Please keep quiet, Princess. Let's sneak out of here before she sees us."

"What? But—"

Otsuu grabbed Little Mermaid's hand, hoping to hurry away.

"HEYYYY!" screamed the girl in the red hood, halting the two in their tracks.

"Humans! Haru! There are humans here!"

"Huh? Hey, you're right. They are human."

It seemed Otsuu and Little Mermaid were spotted, and that the girl wasn't alone. She summoned a small group of adults who came running towards them, one of whom wore an eye-patch.

Otsuu motioned for Little Mermaid to stand behind her, hoping to block her from the oncoming strangers. If they planned to do harm, then Otsuu would serve as the princess' shield.



“Have you two been here this whole time? It’s okay, come with us,” said the girl in the red hood. She beamed, offering her hand as a token of friendship.

“Come with you...?”

“We’re part of an organization called the Dawn. There are other humans there, too, who all live together. There are even other children around your age,” spoke the man with an eyepatch. His words sounded curt, but there was a hint of kindness in his eyes. Perhaps he could be trusted.

“Have you two been living here all alone? Looks like you put up a good fight.”

The girl in the red hood spoke after, “You never know when the Marchens will attack. If you join the Dawn, then the adults will protect you. Let’s stick together, okay?”

Otsuu and Little Mermaid listened to their proposition, turning to look at one another.

“What should we do, Otsuu?”

“We don’t have to go. They could be lying.”

“But staying here could be dangerous too. Maybe we should go.”

“In that case, I’ll protect you, Princess.”

“True, but I don’t want to put you in danger either, Otsuu. And, if there are other humans, I’d like to meet them...”

“Well...”

Otsuu fell silent, unsure of how to answer.

Suddenly, a small monster jumped out from behind them.

“Watch out!” screamed the red-hooded girl, who grabbed her scissors a second too late.

The monster clawed Little Mermaid’s pale skin, producing an ugly gash.

“Ahh! Don’t touch Princess!”

Before Otsuu could react, the monster was felled by the blade of the red-hooded girl’s scissors.

The blood of the fallen beast splashed onto Otsuu’s skin.

“Agh!”

Both the red-hooded girl and the man with the eyepatch let out a gasp.

“Haru, she’s—!”

“Yeah. That’s surprising. We’ve got no choice but to take these two with us.”

“Huh...?”

With pink-stained eyes, Otsuu stared in confusion back at the two strangers as they discussed.



“A... Blood Maiden?”

The two were convinced to follow the girl—who introduced herself as Red Riding Hood—and the others, joining them at the headquarters of the Dawn.

“That’s right. If your skin gets in contact with Marchen blood, your physical abilities enhance drastically. That’s what you two are. Just like Red Riding Hood,” responded Miko, a bespectacled woman dressed in a white lab coat. “You are Blood Maidens.”

“When the Marchen blood splashed on you, your eyes turned pink, didn’t they? That proves it.”



“Yes, but this is a lot to take in.”

“Of course. I understand how confusing this must be for you. Why don’t you stay with us here for a while? Enough to get acquainted with things. With us, and yourselves.”

Miko patted Otsuu and Little Mermaid’s heads kindly. A comforting gesture in strange circumstances.

“Princess, what do you want to do?”

“I’m okay with that. Everyone is so kind. Besides, being here means being safe from danger.”

“Good point. As long as you’re safe, Princess. That’s all that matters.”

“Otsuu...”

“Princess...”

The two looked at one another, starting to form their own world. Their moment of silence was interrupted by a dry cough.

It came from an older man with a head of white hair, whom Miku and Haru referred to as the Professor. Red Riding Hood, on the other hand, called him “Dad”.

“Now, would you mind if I ask you some questions? Let’s start with both of your names.”

He flashed an easy-going smile, which allowed Otsuu to answer comfortably.

“I’m Otsuu.”

“I’m Little Mermaid.”

“I see. Little Mermaid and Otsuu. Hmm, Otsuu... I see.”

For some reason, the mention of Otsuu’s name caused the Professor to perk up.

“Otsuu, do you know why you’re named so?”

“Huh...? What do you mean...?”

Otsuu paused. She hadn’t the faintest clue. When Little Mermaid had asked for her name, she answered “Otsuu” without hesitation. She never paid it a second thought. But it never occurred for her to ask why it was so.

“Oh, my apologies. If you do not know, that’s fine. Do not worry. It’s normal procedure for the Blood Maidens.”

“Yeah, totally. I don’t know why I’m called Red Riding Hood,” laughed the hooded girl.

“Hey, Dad. Is that all?”

“Hm? Oh, sure. I think we are finished for today.”

“Yay! Then Otsuu, Little Mermaid, come on! Lemme show you around the Dawn!”

Red Riding Hood yanked their hands and they rushed to follow.

And that is how the two of them came to join the Dawn.

The Dawn Liberation Force, or “Dawn” for short. An organization committed to eradicating the Marchens, the beings responsible for transforming this town into the living prison known as Jail. Its headquarters was located on the town’s outskirts.

Its divisions worked in tireless harmony. The research unit was in charge of investigating the origins of the Marchens, the Jail, and the Blood Maidens; the defense unit assembled an arsenal out of whatever arms they could find to protect people from the Marchens; the maintenance unit not only repaired weapons, but saw to the upkeep of the town’s building, sewage, and electrical infrastructure; the public works unit prepared food rations and disposed of waste; and finally, the rescue unit cared for the injured and ailing.

They all worked together within a protected region known as the Liberated District.

It was there, where the Dawn’s headquarters was located. In one of its non-descript research rooms sat the Professor, the head of the research unit, reading a book.

There was a scar over his right eye. He parsed through his book, his back hunched over in his white lab coat, as he noticed a shadow approaching from behind him.

“What’s that you’re reading?”

“Hm? Oh. It’s you, Haru.”

It was the man with an eyepatch, sporting a tuft of messy hair and a cigarette in his mouth.

Haru served as chief of the maintenance unit. Being especially close to the Professor meant he was one of the few people, apart from the Blood Maidens, to whom he could speak casually.

The Professor glanced over his shoulder and held up the book he was reading.

“You remember the trove of documents we uncovered in our last expedition? It seems I’ve found a story that explains Otsuu’s origin.”

“Oh. Is it a fairy tale?”

“So it seems. It’s from a book called Yuzuru. One of its central characters bears Otsuu’s namesake. It is as I hypothesized. Otsuu is just like Red Riding Hood and Cinderella.”

Blood Maidens, the designation reserved for girls with mystical powers who resided within Jail.

When they come in contact with Marchen blood, their eyes turn pink and their physical aptitude is dramatically enhanced. When the Dawn had discovered the Maidens’ potential to ward off Marchens, they pored themselves into researching their origins.

One common characteristic observed by the researchers was the Blood Maidens’ tendency to remember nothing about where they came from or how they came to be, except for their own names. Each girl’s name corresponded with the protagonist of a children’s fairy tale.

Red Riding Hood was the first Blood Maiden they discovered. The second was Cinderella, followed by Little Mermaid and Otsuu.





The first three were fairy tales with which the Professor was acquainted, but the origins of “Otsuu” were mysterious to him.

“From what I’ve gathered, Otsuu was a crane who was caught in a trap. After she is discovered and freed by a man, she transforms into a human and asks him to take her as his bride.”

“I see. Is that why she proposed to Little Mermaid when they first met? It sounds like Otsuu saved Little Mermaid, though.”

“You make a good point. I suppose the circumstances don’t quite match the lore, but there’s still much we’ve yet to learn about the Blood Maidens. However, I never expected us to encounter two at once. That makes four, thus increasing our research opportunities.”

Excitement gleamed from the Professor’s eyes, but Haru furrowed his brow.

“They’re just kids. Don’t overdo it.”

“Of course not. They’re our biggest hope,” said the Professor calmly.

He smiled, knowing the Blood Maidens were like his daughters. It was his goal to make researching them as painless as possible.

“Even so, it is time for us to take the next step. We were unsure at first how Blood Maidens would interact, but now we know there is no issue.”

“You mean...?”

“Yes. Let’s introduce Red Riding Hood to Cinderella.”



“Now, go on. Introduce yourself.”

A blue-haired girl fidgeted behind the Professor, timidly poking her head out. Red Riding Hood waited with sparkling eyes as Otsuu and Little Mermaid stood watching them, their hands held in embrace.

“My... My name is Cinderella.”

“Dad! Is she...?”

“That’s right, Red Riding Hood. She’s just like you. A Blood Maiden.”

“I knew it! Nice to meet you, Cinderella. I’m Red Riding Hood!”

“Eek!”

Red Riding Hood jumped onto Cinderella and hugged her tightly. The gesture puzzled Cinderella, drawing a wry smile out of Otsuu and Little Mermaid.

“W-What in the heavens are you doing?! I’m choking! Please unhand me!”

“You’re so cute! I love how you talk, Cinderella! Dad, why’d you keep such a cutie secret from us?!”

“Forgive me. There’s so much we’re still learning about the Blood Maidens. I was worried about the possibility for something to go awry if you met, but after seeing Otsuu and Little Mermaid, I now know there to be no risk.”

“Bout time! Look how adorable she is! There’s no way she’d do anything bad!”

At first Cinderella merely tolerated Red Riding Hood’s playful behavior, but after a few moments, her patience started to wear thin.

“Hey, enough of this... It’s hot! My cheeks are burning!”

“Now, now, Red Riding Hood. You’re upsetting Cinderella. Let her go now.”

Blush filled Cinderella’s cheeks as she gasped for air, so Otsuu kindly pulled Red Riding Hood off of her. Despite being far younger than Red Riding Hood, Otsuu had a noble air about her.

Cinderella’s reaction was somewhat dejecting to Red Riding Hood, but at last she relented and let the Blood Maiden go, allowing Otsuu and Little Mermaid to introduce themselves as well.

“Nice to meet you, Cinderella. I’m Otsuu.”

“And I’m Little Mermaid. It’s a pleasure.”

“H-Hello. I am Cinderella.”

Their gentle approach restored Cinderella’s composure.

“So are all of you like me? Are you Blood Maidens?”

“Yes, so they say. We don’t know much about it yet.”

“Yeah, we’re all Blood Maidens! Since you three are like my little sisters, you can call me Sis!”

exclaimed Red Riding Hood, which gave Cinderella a glum feeling.

It was unclear to Cinderella why the feeling overcame her, but it seemed the Professor took notice and understood immediately.

In the fairy tale matching Cinderella’s namesake, the titular character was bullied by her older step-sisters. The Professor drew this conclusion to himself quietly.

“Big... sister...”

The Blood Maidens and their fairy tale origins. What is the relationshi—

“Gee, this isn’t a business meeting! It’s called being friendly! Cinderella, you’re so cute!”

“Argh, not again!”

This time, when Red Riding Hood hugged Cinderella, the latter didn’t hold back her discomfort.

“Unhand me! LEEET MEEE GOOO! *pant, pant*... Goodness gracious. Calm down this instant, or I will refuse to call you Sis!”

“Aww! Hey, Otsuu and Mermie, you guys’ll call me Sis, right?”

“Hm. I think I’m fine with ‘Red Riding Hood.’”

“Not you too, Otsuu...”

“I-I’ll call you that! S-Sis!”

“Mermie! You’re so cute!”

It was almost Little Mermaid’s turn to accept Red Riding Hood’s unbridled friendship, until Otsuu instinctively stepped between the two to protect Little Mermaid.

“Stop! I’m the only one who can hug Princess!”

“Otsuu, you’re making me blush.”

Little Mermaid’s bashful reaction got a grin out of Red Riding Hood, who had seemingly picked up on the subtext.

“I know, I know. I won’t take Mermie from you, Otsuu. You’re married after all.”

Cinderella cocked her head.

“Married? You two are married?”

“That’s right. I’m her prince.”

“That’s right, and I am Otsuu’s princess...”

“Princess...”

“Otsuu...”

As the two gazed longingly at one another, Cinderella interjected.

“Otsuu, aren’t you a girl?”

“I am, but who says a girl can’t be a prince?” smiled the young Otsuu. An eloquent retort befitting her princely designation.

“Actually, Otsuu asked me at first if she could be my bride, and I responded by telling her I would marry her if she would become my prince.”



“So that’s how you became a prince?”

“Yup. That’s how we got m-ma...”

“Married, right Otsuu?” asked Little Mermaid, smiling with blushed cheeks.

Otsuu turned even redder, sweating nervously.

Initially, the idea of the girls being married perplexed Cinderella, but soon she became envious of their arrangement.

“How wonderful. I hope to find a wonderful prince of my own some day.”

“No! Boys are wolves! Beasts! You have me, Cinderella!”

“Argh! All right, all right. I understand. Kindly leave my cheeks alone!”



Otsuu and Little Mermaid. Red Riding Hood and Cinderella. Watching the Blood Maidens play in peace brought a happy tear to the old Professor's eye.



Situated in a building on the corner of the Liberated District...

There was a large, yet-unnamed orphanage.

Ten years had passed since the town sunk. The Marchen attacks led to several children becoming orphans, who were then taken in by any surviving adults.

The orphanage itself was established before the formation of Dawn, long before anyone knew how to combat the Marchens. A symbol of what humanity remained against the rising tide of evil.

People gathered and collaborated to survive the underground Hell. The commune empowered the survivors to find meaning in the role-based work. It was a place of hope, a home away from Dawn.

Five children who were especially loved and cared for lived here.

"Snow White, Sleepy, this way this way!"

"Wait, Sister Thumbelina!"

"..."

The eldest was bright and energetic, followed by a shy middle child, and the quiet third-born.

Three sisters, discovered two years ago.

Their names were Thumbelina, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty.

These three, along with a pair of siblings, Michiru and Chiaki, were frequent playmates, a sight which made the chaperones chuckle with glee.

However, the chaperones had no idea of the great and heavy destiny which awaited them.

Nearly a year had passed since Otsuu and Little Mermaid arrived at the Dawn, and there was now a total of seven Blood Maidens.

It was impossible to determine each Blood Maiden's age, so the Dawn assigned them provisional ages. Red Riding Hood was determined to be the oldest, followed by Cinderella, then Otsuu and Little Mermaid, and finally the youngest being Thumbelina, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty. The latter were a set of triplets who had recently joined the Dawn.

When it was discovered in the orphanage that some of the children had pink eyes, the members of the Dawn were immediately notified and moved swiftly to meet the children.

Discovering the triplets was an unexpected stroke of luck for the Dawn. If the Blood Maidens were key to defeating the Marchens, then they would need to recruit every one they found.

The Professor speculated they would need a minimum of seven in order to succeed.

His reasoning? There were seven isolated prison areas situated around the central Jail Tower. Each prison contained a Core, from which the Marchens spawned. It was up to the Blood Maidens to destroy the Cores in order to redirect nutrients to the Jail Tower, thereby causing it to continue growing until it burst through the sky.

Upon investigation, the Dawn discovered something far scarier than Marchens hiding in the depths of each prison—invincible beasts called Nightmares. How to overcome these beasts was still a mystery, yet the Professor surmised that the Blood Maidens may be the key to challenging them.

Therefore, they would need one Blood Maiden per prison. Which required seven... to use as sacrifice.

Even so...

"Our Blood Team. We found seven faster than we anticipated," spoke Miko coldly.

Her statement rung through the quiet research room. As head of the rescue unit, she observed the Blood Maidens' health, giving her access to information only a few others in the Dawn possessed. It seemed Miko was none too thrilled about the prospect of having the required amount of Blood Maidens. Her message was dryly delivered, in a manner someone may perceive as critical of the Professor.

The Professor took no offense, responding, "No need to be so curt, Miko. I know. They're young. I do not intend to force them into anything. We all wish to avoid sacrifices, of course, but we must push our research forward. After all, there's still so much we've yet to learn about the Blood Maidens."

He faced his desk, analyzing the blood samples he had extracted from the Blood Maidens.

"Eventually, the true battle will begin. Until then, raise those girls as you would your own daughters. I am counting on you, Miko. I'm certain they would benefit from a feminine touch."



"Understood," nodded Miko.

Everyone in the Dawn was aware that mankind's great burden was resting on the shoulders of such young girls.

"By the way, Professor, about the orphanage."

"Hm? What about it?"

"It seems they're developing into a full-fledged religious cult. A number of people are referring to Michiru, the girl with heterochromia, as 'Lady Oohime,' and have begun turning her into an oracle."

“Hmm...”

“Her little brother, the boy named Chiaki, is calling himself ‘Hitsuka’ now, serving closely next to Lady Oohime. They’re both still children, so I’m unsure if they’re behind this movement. It’s possible someone is using them to achieve some ulterior motive.”

“Have there been any issues of note?”

“No, not yet. The orphanage is functionally still the same. It’s just that Michiru has been seen speaking at large from time to time.”

“I see. Well then, why don’t we keep a close eye on them? The orphanage has contributed massively to our cause. They do as much for the people as the Dawn does.”

“Right. Well, I suppose it’ll be fine, but one thing still bothers me.”

“What is it?”

“The triplets. Because of their close relationship with Michiru and Chiaki, they often visit the orphanage, which now refers to itself as the Order of the Sun.”

“Well, that isn’t a problem, is it?”

“Well, it seems that children of a similar age visit the orphanage often as well. I worry that Michiru’s deification could be a seed of a larger problem in the future.”

“Hm,” speculated the Professor as he put his hand to his chin.

“When you refer to children close in age, you mean...”

“Otsuu and Little Mermaid.”



Until the arrival of the triplets, Otsuu and Little Mermaid were considered the youngest Blood Maidens. Although no exact ages could be determined, it was assumed that the triplets were one year younger. Otsuu and Little Mermaid were happy to have new little sisters, and began playing with the triplets more often than Red Riding Hood or Cinderella. In turn, the triplets would take the two to visit the orphanage to meet their friends, Michiru and Chiaki.

When Otsuu first met Michiru, something took her by surprise.

“Whoa, your eye color!”

“Wow. You have the same eyes as me.”

Otsuu’s eyes were red on the right and blue on the left, something she only discovered when Little Mermaid had complimented her eyes.

The praise impacted Otsuu—she finally had something she liked about herself, and now, she found someone with whom she could identify.

Otsuu was not alone in her surprise; the other Blood Maidens, along with Chiaki, were awed by the coincidence.

“I never thought I’d meet someone with the same eyes as Sister,” muttered Chiaki.

“Hehe. What a surprise! I’m Michiru. This is my little brother, Chiaki. What are your names?”

“Oh, I’m Otsuu. And this is...”

“Little Mermaid. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Otsuu and Little Mermaid... I see, so you are the same,” responded Michiru dreamily.

Neither Otsuu nor Little Mermaid had ever met anyone like her.

“Huh, but you’re...”

Michiru interrupted Otsuu with a sudden hug.



“Huh?!”

“What the—?!”

The gesture put Otsuu and Little Mermaid at a loss for words. This didn’t bother Michiru, however, who responded by sniffing Otsuu’s hair.

“*sniff, sniff*...”

“Hey, wait. Let go—”

Otsuu tried at first to fend off Michiru, but she stopped.

(Huh...?)

She was taken by an odd feeling.

(What’s going on...? This person...)

The two shared a quiet embrace. Eventually, Michiru lifted her head and looked Otsuu in the eye.

“You are—”

“N-No!” screamed Little Mermaid, who tore them apart from one another.

“P-Princess?!”

“Otsuu is my prince!”

Michiru and Chiaki both gasped at Little Mermaid’s frantic cry. The triplets, on the other hand, rushed to reassure Little Mermaid knowing of her closeness with Otsuu.

“Calm down, Little Mermaid! Michiru won’t take Otsuu from you!”

“That’s right! Michiru is very kind!”

“Yup...yup...!”

Realizing what she had done, Little Mermaid turned red out of embarrassment. She offered Michiru an apology, but the latter played it off.

“Hehe. Hahaha. I see. Otsuu’s your prince, is she? The Little Mermaid’s married a prince.

Wonderful.”

She curled her lips into what seemed to be a heartfelt smile, an act which mesmerized both Otsuu and Little Mermaid.

“Well, why don’t we all play? What do you say, Chii?”

“Yup, let’s do it. With this big of a group, we can play all sorts of games. Any suggestions?”

Chiaki picked up a branch off the ground and began writing something. All of them observed as the little brother took the lead.

After deciding what to play, the group was split up into teams. Chiaki approached Otsuu casually, tapping her shoulder as he whispered, “Otsuu, let’s be friends. I know we’ve both got our hands full, but if you need anything, you can confide in me.”

“Huh? Oh, okay. Thank you.”

The act perplexed Otsuu, but she nonetheless nodded, grateful for the kindness.

It wasn’t until later that Otsuu realized Chiaki mistook her for a boy. She was unsure if it meant she suited the princely title well, or if she was ill-fit to be a Blood Maiden.



“Once you’re ready, head inside the cage.”

“Okay.”

One day, inside of the research facility..

Otsuu was ordered to sit inside of a cage, wearing garments that she had been given for the experiment.

None of the Blood Maidens enjoyed any of the experiments, but they did as they were asked.

Otsuu in particular felt like a scared animal, staring out of the cage while awaiting further instructions from the Professor.

Inside of the cage was a metal cabinet storing vials of pink liquid. One could ascertain the contents to be Marchen blood.

“Let’s get started. First, please lick the blood in the first vial.”

Although Otsuu had once detested the act of drinking Marchen blood, she had grown accustomed to the procedure. Luckily for her, Marchen blood was sweet to the taste. Because they rarely had the chance to enjoy desserts of any kind, she relished the opportunity.

She did as she was told and tasted the blood, immediately feeling its effects. There was a rush of adrenaline, and her eyes, she assumed, had turned pink.

Normally the Professor gave her instructions that followed the blood consumption, but on this day, he did no such thing.

“All right. Now, sample the second vial.”

Without thinking, she obeyed the command and grabbed the second tube.

(Huh...?)

This time, when the blood hit her tongue, another sensation took hold of her.

(What’s this? It smells different? This one feels like...)

She pondered the difference in feeling to herself while continuing to lick the blood.

Like the previous vial, it induced euphoria, but...

(I’ve felt this... somewhere else...)

It was a familiar feeling.

She searched inside herself for an answer.

“Oh...”

Then, it hit her.

“It’s unlike you to ask to meet me alone.”

Three days later, Otsuu had visited Chiaki behind the orphanage.

Otsuu sensed great kindness from Chiaki, which remained even after Chiaki learned she was not a boy. Chiaki served as something of a big brother to Otsuu.

Hence why Otsuu sought out Chiaki’s counsel.

The other day, when Otsuu was asked to taste the mysterious vial of blood...

She was taken by the same feeling as when Michiru had hugged her.



“Hey! What’s that supposed to mean, Chii?!” resounded the angry Thumbelina.

Her voice echoed behind the orphanage, which was now going by a different name:

The Order of the Sun.

Chiaki responded with a cold gaze, “I mean exactly what I said. I don’t want you to visit her anymore.

And from now on, I’m not ‘Chii.’ Call me ‘Hitsuka.’”

“Hitsuka...? What the heck? That makes no sense!”

“It doesn’t have to. Make sure to call my sister ‘Lady Oohime’ from now on too.”

“Michiru is Michiru! Chii, you’ve been acting weird lately!”

“Sister Thumbelina, please calm down.”

“Yup. No... fighting.”

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty tried meagerly to placate their sister, but deep down, they agreed with her sentiment.

The orphanage the triplets had once called home was now barely recognizable. They watched as their home reformed itself as the Order of the Sun. Chiaki, a kind, brotherly figure whom they respected, began wearing blue and white robes and going by the name of Sir Hitsuka. Watching adults deify this young boy confused Thumbelina and her sisters.

However, they found Michiru’s transformation even more puzzling.

People now referred to her as “Lady Oohime,” and had worshipped her even more than they did Chiaki. Her enigmatic manner of speaking had become regarded as the gift of prophecy, leading to her becoming head of the Order of the Sun.

Much had changed in the year leading up to the formation of the Order. Michiru and Chiaki were once frequent playmates with other children in the orphanage. They were, in other words, normal children.

As time progressed, however, something changed in Chiaki. He started to regard his sister as a holy entity, doing everything in his power to protect her from the influence of the triplets and others.

One day in particular clued the triplets into the wide divide between themselves and Chiaki.

“Don’t visit anymore. Don’t get close to Michiru. Don’t call us by our names.”

Annoyed that Miko and other members of the Dawn were expressing doubts about the Order of the Sun, the triplets were further enraged by Chiaki’s rejection.

“Forget this. Call Michiru! I’m gonna tell on you!”

“It’s Lady Oohime. Don’t make me repeat myself.”

“...!”

Thumbelina gasped, taken aback by Chiaki’s threatening tone. She cowered in intimidation.

Nonetheless, she glared back at Chiaki with tear-filled eyes.

“Why? Chii, do you hate us?”

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty followed suit. With watery eyes, they stared up at Chiaki, hoping he would take his words back.

For a moment, Chiaki bit his lip.

“Of course not.”

“Then why!—”

When Chiaki seemed to show signs of remorse, Thumbelina pounced.

But Otsuu and Little Mermaid interrupted.

“Thumbelina, please stop. We don’t need to trouble him further.”

“But, but...!”

“It’ll be okay. He said he doesn’t hate us, didn’t he? Besides, I’m sure Chiaki’s got his own reasons for doing things, right?”

“Of course.”

“Then, please explain yourself. Or you’ll upset them.”

Chiaki let out a big sigh. “Thumbelina, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty. My sister has been tasked with a duty to pray on behalf of the people. It’s our only hope of bringing back the sun. It’s just like with you Blood Maidens.”

“Just like us?”

“That’s right. We can’t fight like any of you can. So, we make do with what we have. Or what my sister has, at least. I’m helping her, too. Because of all the work the Dawn puts in to help everyone, we want to do our part to protect everyone’s hearts as well. That’s why we won’t be able to see each other as much. That’s all.”

“Protect everyone’s hearts...”

“Everyone’s given us so much support. Now, it’s our turn.”

A kind, familiar expression returned to Chiaki’s face, from which Thumbelina drew some comfort.

“When will you have time to play with us again?”

“I don’t know about playing, but if you ever find yourself in business with us, you can visit anytime. It might be hard to see my Sis, but I’m sure we can work something out.”

When it seemed the triplets had finally calmed down, Little Mermaid and Otsuu moved forward to comfort them.

“All right. Let’s call it a day. See you later, Chiaki.”

“Yeah. And remember... it’s Hitsuka.”

“Right, right. Almost forgot, Sir Hitsuka,” joked Otsuu.

She turned around and nodded at Chiaki, to which he returned the favor.

A year ago, Otsuu had revealed to Chiaki that during the research experiment where she licked blood, she had been overcome with a feeling not dissimilar from when Michiru had hugged her.



Ever since, Chiaki began a fervent investigation into Michiru and the Dawn in secret. The mysteries were numerous, even after Chiaki became regarded as Hitsuka. It was unclear how or why the orphanage served as the location of a religious organization. It was Michiru herself who proposed it.

Chiaki put his hand to his chin in contemplation. There's no way Michiru could have devised this plan on her own.

The amount of suspicious activity in the town was piling up.

However, Chiaki was aware of his limitations as a child to perform a full-fledged investigation.

He would need to climb the social hierarchy, a tough ask even if he was Hitsuka of the Order of the Sun. It was his goal to uncover the truth.

Even if the consequences were dangerous.

Chiaki would stop at nothing to keep his precious little sisters out of harm's way.



One day, in a changing room inside of the Dawn headquarters...

The Blood Maidens were in their underwear, undergoing a physical performed by Miko.

"Okay, girls. Line up. Cinderella, no need to look so embarrassed."

"B-But... I'm a mere soot stain outside of normal attire."

"That's not true at all. You're cute."

"Oogh. Why do we even need a physical in the first place?"

"I think it's about time all of you had uniforms," responded Miko.

As soon as the words escaped her mouth, the girls became giddy with excitement. The idea of new, fashionable uniforms was tantalizing.

"Like what Red Riding Hood wears, right? I always thought hers was so cool!"

"Me too! Otsuu, I'm sure you'd look great in it!"

"No, no. I think you would look much better, Princess."

"You'd be so much cooler!"

"You would be much cuter, Princess!"

As Otsuu and Little Mermaid one-upped each other in compliments, the rest of the girls rolled their eyes.

Despite the light-hearted mood, Thumbelina stared at the ground. Miko, taking notice, asked,

"Thumbelina, what's the matter? Don't you want a uniform?"

"Oh, no... It's not that."

Thumbelina stood quietly still, gathering the courage to speak her mind.

"Is it possible to ask for a blue and white uniform?"

"Blue and white? You mean..."

Miko realized the connection immediately. It was the same color scheme as Michiru and Chiaki's robes.



The reason for Thumbelina's request was unsurprising, as Miko surmised that she had wanted some common ground with Michiru and Chiaki since the triplets were asked not to visit the orphanage. This, nonetheless, prompted a raised eyebrow from Miko.

"You see, a uniform is something we all wear that matches. Red Riding Hood's is black and red, right? We can't have you wearing a different color."

In truth, Miko had her doubts. She hesitated for the Blood Maidens to bear any resemblance to a suspicious organization.

Both Snow White and Sleeping Beauty seemed crestfallen by her reaction.

Otsuu spoke out, "Well, I think blue and white works too!"

"Otsuu?"

Unlike Thumbelina, Otsuu's motivations were slightly more complicated. She was partially motivated by Chiaki's change in character after she sought his counsel, but she too liked the color white.

"Well, white's pretty. Like snow."

"Oh... I think blue is beautiful too, like the ocean," agreed Little Mermaid.

Hope gleamed from the triplets' eyes.

"Well, if they all want it... then I want it, too."

"Yeah. I'm the oldest after all. If my little sisters want it, then I support them!"

All of a sudden, the decision to make the uniforms blue and white was unanimous among the Blood Maidens. Miko had little room to protest.

"Well, maybe we can source some new fabric. Very well. I suppose the uniforms can be revamped."

"YAYYYY!"

Watching the triplets hug one another in glee made Miko smile. A reprieve from a tough emotional time for them.



Three years passed without much incident.

The Blood Maidens laughed, cried, and even argued sometimes, but their bond was always strong.

At the same time, the Dawn had expanded the scope of their research and experiments, putting each of the Blood Maidens' attributes into focus.

Among the biggest revelations was the discovery of the Blood Maidens' awakened state—Massacre Mode.

The term pertained to the enhanced physical state Blood Maidens underwent when coming into contact with Marchen blood. They turned rabid, showing no mercy against any Marchens.

While in Massacre Mode, the hair of the Blood Maidens turned stark white, their eyes a glowing pink.

The maidens, however, still retained some sense of self and could be reasoned with.

The researchers deduced that the temporary nature of the Massacre Mode state made it an asset in battle.

And so, the research continued.

However, there was one person of concern: Cinderella.

Her pessimistic personality caused the failure of several experiments.

Watching Otsuu, Little Mermaid, and the triplets exceed her in the trials stressed Cinderella to the point of locking herself in her room, alone.

One day...

Cinderella went missing.



Roughly five years had passed since Otsuu and Little Mermaid had joined the Dawn, during which the Blood Maidens welcomed their eighth member.

Her name was Kaguya. She came from a small village, where she carved out a life attacking Marchens. Her abilities, however, were perceived as being not too different from the Marchens. Even Kaguya's adopted family feared her power. Fear soon turned to resentment. As soon as her family became privy to the Dawn's existence, they made contact.

Thus, Kaguya was brought to the Dawn, where she received high marks on all of her exams except for the physical. However, she was so distraught that she had begun holing up in her room.

Try as the maidens might to beg her to come out, the damage was done. Kaguya's emotional scars were deep. The Professor and Miko advised for the other girls to give Kaguya space, and keep visitations to a minimum.

One day...

Chiaki, now a fully-grown adult, was serving as Hitsuka of the Order of the Sun. He had summoned the audience of the Blood Maidens for the first time in a long while.

With a team and a wealth of resources at his disposal, he had finally conducted the investigation of the Dawn he sought since childhood.

He hid his investigation and its findings from anyone else. In order to confirm the findings, however, he would need to discuss them with the Blood Maidens directly.

The questions were simple: what their oldest memory was, when they came to learn their names, and which experiments the Dawn had been engaging in. They were harmless questions that they could answer without trouble.

Cinderella was the last to be called in. Not that there was a particular order; it was happenstance. This did not escape Cinderella, however, who began to ponder why she had been chosen last. She fell into a negative spiral.

Chiaki's questions clearly intimidated Cinderella. He put his hand to his chin in thought, muttering in front of Cinderella with a big sigh.

"Why do they need seven Blood Maidens?"

The words made Cinderella's heart jump.

They needed seven Blood Maidens. It was as the Professor had always said. Hence why he was ecstatic upon discovering the triplets.

Of course, there were eight now.

After bidding Chiaki farewell, Cinderella returned to her room. She wrapped her arms around her legs, shivering nervously.

(They needed seven Blood Maidens... but now that we have Kaguya, there's eight of us. Does that mean... they don't need one of us? Who would they kick out? Kaguya got high scores on her test, which makes the most useless one... me. No, you never know... I have to be useful.)

Cinderella's eyes turned pink without so much as a taste of Marchen blood.



One night, the Professor and Miko stood in the laboratory, engaged in discussion.

“I’m thinking of choosing one Blood Maiden whom we can put under physical and emotional duress to measure the level of ‘corruption.’”

“But that’s...”

The research team began quantifying the damage and stress endured by Blood Maidens as corruption. Whenever corruption hit a certain threshold, the experiment would halt. However, the Professor became increasingly invested in testing the threshold.

“The experiment will have to be done eventually. We know that corruption incites Massacre Mode, but what lies beyond? I cannot help but feel like we’ve only tapped the surface. The Blood Maidens are no strangers to darkness, despite being mankind’s last hope.”

“Even Red Riding Hood is still only a teen. Such harsh conditions could break them.”

“True. That is the risk. But remember? We only need seven Blood Maidens. In other words...”

“I cannot condone what you suggest!”

“Please keep quiet,” urged the Professor.

Miko drew in a deep breath, opting to change the subject.

“Beyond that, I am worried about the Order of the Sun’s activity.”

“You mean Hitsuka?”

“Yes. Hitsuka seems to be ordering his members to move. He’s been questioning our girls as well.

There are rumors he’s forming a combat division within the organization. Don’t you think we should keep an eye on him?”

“Hm. It seems that our decision to leave them unattended has cost us. He’s gaining power. That could pose a problem.”

The Professor stroked his chin.

Just then, the door slightly creaked.

Miko walked hurriedly to open the door, but no one was there.

“Who is it?”

“There’s no one here.”

“Hm?”

The Professor stroked his chin once more.

The next day, Cinderella had disappeared from the Dawn.



A month had passed since Cinderella’s disappearance.

Members of the Dawn searched far and wide, but she was nowhere to be found.

The Professor suggested a worst-case scenario: Cinderella might have wandered to the prison area and gotten killed by a Marchen. At first, it was unbelievable. But as weeks turned into a month, the Blood Maidens despaired their predicament.

“Do you really think Cinderella would go to the prison area on her own...?” asked Otsuu, clearly disturbed.

Little Mermaid looked up rebutting, “The defense unit members checked there already, didn’t they?”

“Only the entrance, where it’s not dangerous. I’m sure they didn’t go much further.”

Red Riding Hood held a stern expression. Cinderella was like a little sister to her, their ages separated by only a year.

“If that were the case, why would she go there alone? We were told not to.”

Thumbelina sensed the Dawn’s suspicions about the Order of the Sun, so she distanced herself from everyone except for her sisters. However, her heart was not too cold to ignore Cinderella’s absence.

“Cinderella... was always stressed about not scoring high during the experiments.”

“Yup, yup...”

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty’s brows furrowed with worry.

The Professor ordered the girls to stay put while he went off to join the search party, but the girls could sit still no longer.

“We should look for her too—”

Just as Otsuu proposed they leave, she heard a commotion from outside the room. The girls could not make out what was being said, but it was obvious the conversation wasn’t peaceful.

“I wonder what’s going on.”

“Let’s check!”

Red Riding Hood broke into a stride, and the other girls followed.

As the Blood Maidens left the building, they saw what appeared to be members of the Order of the Sun gallivanting and hollering in the streets.

It confused members of the Dawn, but when the Order of the Sun members noticed the Blood Maidens, their cries became louder.

“It’s them! They’re the ones that killed Sir Hitsuka!”

Thumbelina froze.

“That’s right! I saw it too! It was a brat dressed the same way, with blue hair! She killed Sir Hitsuka in front of us!”

The ire of the adults confused the Blood Maidens, but they could not bring themselves to object.

Thumbelina, however, approached one of the believers and asked, “Hitsuka... Wait, are you talking

about Chii? Was Chii murdered? What do you mean?”

The Order of the Sun believers seemingly recognized Thumbelina, and put their arms on her insistently.

“Thumbelina! You guys should come back this instant! The Dawn can’t be trusted!”

“I’m asking you what happened!” yelled Thumbelina.

The members lowered their voices and began to explain.

“Sir Hitsuka organized an investigation team to scout the prison. I was part of it. Yesterday, while we explored... we found a girl dressed like you guys. She ambushed us, killed Sir Hitsuka, and disappeared further inside.”

The Blood Maidens fell speechless.

A heavy cloud hovered over their conversation, until Thumbelina repeated one detail.

“Blue-haired?”

“That’s right. She had long blue hair. Down to her hips.”

A blue-haired girl with hair down to her hips dressed in a Blood Maiden uniform.

Only one person could fit that description.

“Snow White, Sleepy. Let’s go home.”

All of a sudden, Thumbelina grabbed hold of her sisters’ hands and marched swiftly back from whence they came.

“Huh...? Sister Thumbelina...?”

“Ah, wait...”

Their attempts to resist were futile. In the end, they let their sister pull them away.

“No, I can’t let them go,” thought Otsuu. She ran up to Thumbelina to tug at her back.

“Wait, Thumbelina!”

“Shut up! Don’t follow us!”

Hearing the pained cry, Otsuu stopped.

Thumbelina also halted in her tracks, peeking over her shoulder for the last word.

“I’m going to find out if it’s true. So, for now...”

It wasn’t until she completed her sentence that she looked Otsuu and Little Mermaid in the eye.

“Don’t follow us!” she shouted tearfully.

Thus, the sisters had departed from the Dawn.





There had to be some kind of mistake. One that would soon clear up, and the triplets, Cinderella, and Chiaki would all return home. This silent prayer lingered in the back of everyone's minds.

But no one ever returned.

Without the truth, or any sign of Cinderella, coming to light, Chiaki's corpse was recovered.

The Order of the Sun held a solemn ceremony, one that the Dawn was forbidden from attending.

A few months later, it was revealed that the triplets were promoted as the new Hitsukas of the Order of the Sun. Scouting teams reported that the girls no longer wore their Blood Maiden uniforms, but instead wore garbs of the Order of the Sun.

Then, there were only four Blood Maidens, leading to more conservative experiments on behalf of the Dawn.

Without explanation, Kaguya came out of her room one day, open and eager to participate in experiments. In different circumstances, her behavior could have been encouraging, but the manner in which she seemed stressed drew concern from much of the Dawn.

Red Riding Hood, however, insisted upon Cinderella's innocence. There had to be some mistake.

The Professor never denied the possibility, so Red Riding Hood plead with him to entertain the idea of the triplets' return.

How could things have fallen apart like this...?

Otsuu contemplated the notion to herself quietly.



Eventually, research on the Tower had stagnated. Time had passed.

It would be another five years until they found a new Blood Maiden.

However...

No one knew it would be the curtain call of despair.

