

# **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 191**

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 191-200**

Chapter 191: The Inevitable Entwined with Coincidence (3)

After finishing their intimate (?) conversation, Lunev stepped outside. Waiting outside with bated breath for the conversation to end were the White Elves, already in place.

“Anyone would think I’d tortured you, given those looks,” Lunev’s voice carried a clear tinge of displeasure.

Did their gazes displease her that much?

“The conversation is over. Go in or don’t, it’s up to you all.”

As if they had been awaiting permission, the elves hurriedly opened the door and rushed inside.

However, both Roel and Garnian remained resolute in their positions.

“We’re late in our greetings. On behalf of our people, I extend our sincere thanks for your consideration,” Roel bowed politely as he expressed his gratitude.

“Don’t get it wrong. We have yet to decide what to do with you. You’d better hope for good news to come your way—or pray with your tribe for it,” Lunev retorted harshly as she turned to leave.

“It’s only now that I understand the saying that one should never underestimate the potential for human advancement,” Roel intoned seriously as he watched her back.

“I empathize. It reminds me why humans have once again risen to dominance in these lands.”

“Only hoping that this potential does not lead down a misguided path...”

There seemed to be an underlying fear in the eyes of the two elves.

As Lunev turned a corner, an academy member appeared and bowed to her.

“Your prediction was accurate, Miss Lunev. Not far from the main building of our academy, several corpses that appear to be knights of light have been discovered.”

Along with the report, the academy member handed Lunev a rolled-up missive.

Lunev silently read the content of the missive.

“They planned to transfer the power of the key residing within her through a ritual, and then dispose of the now excessive corpses in Ghaul’s center. We won’t know more details until Saint Nephrodite awakens...”

“So they committed the deed, only to throw the blame on us?”

The academy member confirmed it with silence.

“There’s no need to investigate. We can guess who the killer of those knights is.”

Lunev rolled up the missive carefully and tucked it away.

“Still, the Imperial response was quicker than anticipated. They’ve asserted that the act was carried out unilaterally by the Order of Light, without any relation to the Empire or the Royal Family.”

In other words, a tactic of cutting off the tail.

It was utterly characteristic of the Empire, and hardly surprising.

“They didn’t deny their wrongdoing, though. They’re willing to pay reparations as they’ve explicitly desired the safe return of the saint.”

It was a reverse situation to the commotion they caused seven years earlier in Brenu.

“How is the saint holding up?”

“The same as always, unable to regain full consciousness and repeating incomprehensible mutterings.”

“We must clearly convey that this was not our doing. You never know what angle they might use to twist this.”

“I will relay as much.”

Despite the report being complete, the academy member did not leave.

“Is there something else to report?”

“Well, it’s not yet confirmed, but rumors say an unexpected individual will represent the dispatched delegation from the Empire.”

“Unexpected? Someone from the royal family coming?”

“Yes. The rumor is that Princess Arin will be coming...”

Her brow furrowed slightly at the news.

In response, she placed a hand to her lips, her expression inscrutable.

“When is the delegation expected to arrive?”

“Perhaps within a week.”

“Then, would you please convey a message to my grandfather?”

After a brief pause in thought, Lunev reversed her steps.

“Inform him that I will receive the delegation.”

\* \* \*

Even on the most ordinary days, or on the weary and taxing ones, night always arrives. Under the night sky, studded with stars shining like jewels, Hastia was lost in thought. With Roel and the other tribespeople called away for further investigation, she found herself unexpectedly alone.

‘.....’

Hastia placed a hand over her heart as she looked up at the sky, her head hanging low.

She wasn’t the important one; it was the divine secret within her. Had she been too complacent up till now?

She had thought that if she alone could bear the burden, if she showed a resolute and dignified front, everyone else could rest easy. However, the weight of the tribe’s long-cherished desires was far heavier than she had anticipated.

Now that she realized this, Hastia was so ashamed she could hardly lift her head.

– Thud.

Suddenly, a strange sound came from outside her room.

If she hadn’t misheard, it was unmistakably the sound of someone collapsing. There should be knights guarding outside her door; had something happened to them?

As she wondered, motioning towards the door, it creaked open from the other side before she could take a step.

Startled, Hastia instinctively stepped back.

It was a man cloaked in the blue robe that symbolized a member of the Garam Magic Society.

The man closed the door behind him as soon as he entered, leaving Hastia cornered with no means of escape.

‘.....?’

A brief flutter of panic was replaced with a tilt of her head as she recognized the man.

‘Master Sian?’

Indeed, it was Sian, disguised as a scholar. He calmly removed his hood, revealing his true self to her.

“Catch.”

Without ceremony, he took something out of his pocket and tossed it onto Hastia’s palm—a Soul Stone that she had given to him when they parted ways.

“So it’s supposed to protect the owner, huh? I really couldn’t see why you’d give me something like this stone.”

‘How, how did you?’

As if she’d never expected a human to understand the significance of a Soul Stone.

Flushed with embarrassment, Hastia twisted herself into knots before bowing deeply.

‘I truly don’t know how to repay you for your kindness, Master Sian! My deepest gratitude for saving me once again!’

“Don’t get it wrong; saving you was purely coincidental. Nothing more to it.”

Sian dismissed her thanks indifferently, as if there wasn’t a reason to stay any longer. He then readied himself to leave, hood already drawn over his head.

‘You’re leaving?’

“Well, you think I came here to sit and chat with you? Don’t get entangled in unnecessary problems and focus on getting home safely. And don’t go giving rocks to unknown men.”

‘It’s more than just a stone, though...’

But Hastia couldn’t bring herself to say it aloud.

“If it makes you feel better, before I leave, ask me a question.”

Suddenly, with his hand on the doorknob, Sian turned back towards Hastia, who eagerly raised her head to him.

“What is this ‘crisis’ your tribe is facing?”

‘.....!’

“Even if tricked, you sought help from a tribe member assimilated into human society, which implies you might also seek human help, right?”

Hastia hesitantly nodded.

Unable to resolve the issue on their own, they were forced to seek assistance beyond their kind.

Hastia figured it’d be alright to tell him, so taking a deep breath for composure, she conveyed her thoughts with mental resonance.

‘The eternal snow of Fruina is melting.’

Sian’s brows slightly knitted.

The eternal snow of Fruina, known to have remained frozen since the sealed times of old, is melting?

It was a tale he had never even heard rumors of in his past life.

‘Our guardian dragon, Marian, left temporarily due to personal matters. Since then, an unknown magical power has emerged in various places across Fruina. It is this power that is relentlessly melting the eternal snow. Though the change is minute for now, if the phenomenon continues, soon all snow in Fruina will melt away.’

Marian.

The name was not entirely unfamiliar to Sian.

Certainly, the dragon's true name would be much longer.

"So, the vanishing of your homeland is the problem?"

'That's part of it, but not the main issue. If the habitat changes, we'll get used to it. The real problem would be the awakening of the Dark Elves as the snow melts.'

"Dark Elves?"

He had heard vague references before.

A tribe of elves with a completely opposite disposition to the nature-blending White Elves.

They were reputed to be exceedingly vicious, to the point where there were even rumors of them being part demon.

But that was an uncertain legend at best,

and it was only now, hearing from Hastia, that Sian understood that the Dark Elves truly existed.

'I believe it's not just an issue for Fruina. If they awaken, it will inevitably impact where you, Master Sian, reside too.'

In other words, it wasn't a problem exclusive to the White Elves.

If they can't contain the awakening Dark Elves, humans may find themselves facing another front to the north in addition to Belias.

Realizing the magnitude of the issue, Sian's expression couldn't be good.

"So, how do you plan to deal with this problem?"

'For now, we intend to return and consult with other tribe members. By brainstorming together, we hope a viable solution will emerge.'

Without a clear solution, since her original plans had gone awry, Hastia reassured herself.

'Don't worry! We'll figure it out so that there won't be any harm to your world!'

Hastia tried to dispel his concerns.

But Sian, feeling he had learned of a troublesome matter, was visibly upset.

“Give back that Soul Stone.”

‘.....?’

Hastia cautiously approached and handed the Soul Stone back to Sian.

– Sparkle!

Sian grasped the stone lightly. A short flash, followed by dark mist curling around his hand, appeared.

Then, he handed the stone back to Hastia.

‘What did you do?’

“Don’t worry about it. I’ve done nothing.”

Confused by his ambiguous words, Hastia tilted her head.

Without another word, Sian turned to leave.

‘Will we meet again?!’

Hastia quickly asked, unwilling to let him go.

“If coincidence stacks up, we might meet again.”

With that casual response, Sian glanced back one last time.

People say that when coincidences stack, they become inevitability.

Having experienced three such encounters, Hastia had no doubt that any future meetings would be not coincidental, but inevitable.

‘Take care, Master Sian...’

And just like that, Sian left her side.

The Soul Stone holding their shared memories still carried the mystical traces of mist left by Sian.

(To be continued)

**The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter  
192**

## Chapter 192. Turning Away (1)

“Are you sure about this? Aren't we just wasting our time on something pointless?”

“Don't worry about it! I've watched this place with my own two eyes for days and nights!”

A remote cabin was situated in the midst of a quiet mountain range.

It was more of a large house than a cabin, spacious enough to be called a mansion.

“Can you really believe it? That such a big house even exists here in these mountains, and that just two young women live inside?”

“It seems like a man lives here too! But he should be out at the moment. Usually, he leaves early in the morning and returns late at night. Saw him once in the village; he looked kind of dazed and didn't seem like he could do much. Giggles.”

The man with the pointed beard reassured his worried companion.

“You'd be astonished seeing their faces yourself! I tell ya', I've never seen such pretty women before. They must be daughters of some noble family.”

“Why would the daughters of a noble family hide away in these mountains?”

“There must be some complicated circumstances! Anyway, our job is to kidnap the girls without anyone knowing. For sure, we can sell them off for a high price! And it wouldn't hurt for us to have a bit of fun before that.”

“As long as there's one more, why not just kidnap them all?”

The men giggled among themselves as if the job was already successful until they heard a delicate female voice from behind.

“Do you have business at our house?”

“Argh!”

Startled, the men turned around, lips ajar in shock.

A woman with rare pink hair and an innocent face beamed a sweet smile at them.

Was this the feeling of the heart overflowing just from the sight?

She seemed to be between nineteen to twenty years old, young and extremely cute.



“No answer? Are you the quiet type?”

The woman kept smiling as she pressed for a response.

The man with the pointed beard stepped forward after clearing his throat.

“Are you the owner of this house?”

“I’m not the owner, just living here. The owner is our Papa!”

At the mention of ‘Papa,’ the men inwardly celebrated, feeling assured she was a noble’s daughter.

“Aha, I see! We’re not bad people! Rather, we’re good folks who came to help. Seems like you live without a guardian knight in these mountains, and it would be quite troublesome if any harm comes your way, right? We wanted to offer our help in this regard...”

“Lies.”

The atmosphere froze over with the woman’s firm interruption.

“You carry a wicked smell. Do you expect me to believe you’ve come to do good? You can’t fool me~.”

“Smell? What do you mean...?”

“I need to get this mess cleaned up before Emily sees it.”

Licking her lips as if salivating over some delicious food, her behavior seemed truly bizarre, sending chills down the men’s spines.

“...!”

However, that unsettling feeling soon turned into fear.

The angelic smile of the woman was gone, replaced with a visage far from human. Hearts that thumped in excitement were now pounding in terror, but legs paralyzed by fear refused to run.

“I’ll enjoy my meal...”

It was the beginning of a joyful dining time.

\* \* \*

“What’s with you? Where have you been?”

“Just stepped out for some fresh air!”

Worried about being discovered by Emily, Nana hastily wiped her mouth.

“Brian’s late again today?”

“Looks like it. Probably getting taken advantage of by the village folk, doing useless chores...”

Emily stirred the ladle in her soup with apparent dissatisfaction.

“Today’s portion seems larger than usual, can you finish it all, little one?”

“Of course, I can eat it all!”

“What’s with that face? Did you go out and eat something?”

“I didn’t eat anything! I’ll be in my room, call me when it’s ready!”

Nana rushed into her room as though fleeing the scene.

“...?”

Before Emily could sense anything unusual, her focus returned to the soup.

Nana hurriedly collapsed on her bed upon reaching her room.

As she was about to rest, a sudden thought made her pull out a letter from the bedside drawer. The letter clearly had been read many times over.

“Miss you...”

“Whom do you miss?”

She sat up abruptly in response to the familiar voice.

The melancholy in her eyes vanished, replaced with joy and surprise.

“Papa!”

Sian had returned, sitting calmly before her.

“Didn’t you smell me coming?”

“I—It was nothing!”

Nana quickly hid the letter.

“Lord Sian, when did you arrive?”

Emily entered from the kitchen, noticing Sian’s presence and examining his face closely, happy to see the master after such a long time.

“Have you been eating well? Your face seems to have lost weight.”

“Does food alone make life worthwhile? Sometimes you need to absorb regular energy. What’s the point of staying healthy otherwise?”

Ceyram joined in, stretching out lazily on the bed.

Sian ignored the question, seemingly disinterested.

“Papa! Let’s go out! I want to go for a walk!”

“Alright, let’s go.”

Nana jumped up with glee and dashed outside.

Sian’s gaze soon turned to the drawer by the bed.

It was clear she had been reading a letter until he arrived.

He didn’t feel the need to pull out the letter to read it, but he couldn’t entirely ignore the name written on the envelope.

[Arin];

\* \* \*

To be continued...

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 192

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]Arin];

\* \* \*

To be continued...

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 193**

Chapter 193: Averted (2)

In life, do you know what one must always possess?

It’s a place to return to.

No matter where you go, no matter what you do,

When all tasks are completed, there should always be a space to comfortably rest.

Only with such a place can one truly say they are living life.

Be it a short month or more than half a year.

Regardless of having free time or not, once my work is over, I make haste to return and check on the state of my quinces.

It's always been this way before, and it will likely continue in the future.

As long as I am alive and my eyes are open to this world, I imagine this routine will persist.

The red sunset bleeding into the western horizon,

Alongside Nana, we sat on a hill overlooking the village, watching the utterly ordinary flow of nature.

"Papa. I actually ate someone earlier."

"Is that so?"

Having seen the signs on the way here, I wasn't particularly surprised.

"Yeah. They kept coming to our house for days and smelling bad, so I just ate them secretly without Emily knowing."

"Well done."

Without any extraordinary reaction, I gently stroked her head.

Pleased with the touch, she naturally leaned her head on my shoulder.

She's grown quite a bit.

If she went out to the streets as she is, she would look about the same age as me.

Not that there's anything wrong with growing up quickly.

Lucky, as long as she doesn't age prematurely.

"Did you see... earlier?"

"What? The letter?"

"You saw it then..."

Seemingly embarrassed, Nana smiled awkwardly.

"It was the last letter that Arin wrote to me, right? I don't know why but I think of it from time to time. I wonder what Arin is doing right now..."



It's not strange.

Whether human or dragon, it is a natural tendency to miss someone who was kind.

The better the memories of being with that being, the more one would inevitably remember.

"Someday, when I grow enough to live alone without Brian or Papa's protection, then can I go to see Arin on my own?"

"Of course. You can go anywhere you want."

I meant it sincerely and not as a mere platitude.

The issue is whether Arin and even I will still be fully alive when that time comes.

-Clap, clap, clap

Just as I thought of taking a little rest, it inevitably felt like some matter arose.

About fifty paces behind us.

Someone familiar was approaching to deliver something unwelcome.

After a moment, a man in a black mask appeared and bowed his head as soon as he saw me.

He's a member of Mist.

Without a word, he handed me some black-paper documents.

"The leader ordered me to give these to you."

There seemed to be at least ten pieces; from the looks of it, it was not a directive.

So it probably meant that I should read the contents and decide what to do next, on my own.

I started reading the documents impassively.

...

...

(translation truncated due to character limits, please provide a specific portion or more context if you need further details)

# The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 194

Chapter 194: The False Follower (1)

“Even chewing him up wouldn’t be satisfactory! What could possibly dissatisfy him enough to cause such a fuss?”

“That’s why you can’t trust the nobility! Who would have thought that the youngest of the respected Vert family could do such a thing?”

“Why aren’t the Knights of the Light catching these scoundrels faster? What are they even doing?”

What do you think?

These coarse words are undeniably cringe-worthy when overheard.

They’re the kind of statements that I’ve regularly encountered while walking through the crowded streets.

They clearly reflect the public’s opinion of Sian Vert, the revolting follower of the Mist.

But what exactly am I listening to at this moment?

“The world has changed. Who would have thought there’d come a day when I would follow the Black Mist?”

“But when you think about it, those guys haven’t really done anything bad, right? They’ve satisfyingly killed off corrupt nobles that deserved death, and they haven’t really harmed folks like us.”

“It’s certain they’ve been doing something that no one else could do...”

Beyond denial, beyond skepticism, lies questioning.

It’s been said that humans are creatures of imagination.

The more one ponders over something, regardless of whether the thoughts are positive or negative, the more the perspectives on that thing transform.

The same goes for those people.

The negative notions established from the long-standing ideal of the Order of Light have gradually morphed into small doubts and questions over time.

It's not that I've been unaware of this principle,

but it's nonetheless a strange and unfamiliar reaction that I can't quite adjust to easily.

Nearly ten years have passed since I've returned to the central city of the Ushif Empire, Saphern.

While I doubt that the organization would send false information, I've come to see with my own eyes whether there truly is an emerging force proclaiming themselves followers of the Mist across the empire.

The atmosphere certainly feels different.

To ordinary people, the Mist has always been a subject of disdain, nothing more nothing less.

The fact that people are questioning it is quite intriguing to me.

As I continued down the street, lost in thought,

“.....”

A hunched figure with a hood blocking their face confronted me.

Without a word, they looked at me with an earnest gaze.

By the look in their eyes, it seemed they wanted something from me.

Since I did not sense any malice, I simply returned their gaze casually.

-Swish

Suddenly, they walked away.

I wondered what that idiot was doing and considered just moving on, but a curious feeling prompted me to follow.

Not far ahead, they stopped in front of a young woman of an age similar to mine.

Just as they had with me, they looked at her with a meaningful, disquieting stare.

“.....”

The woman reacted by making an inexplicable gesture,  
miming the act of holding something in the air and then blowing on it.

At first, it seemed like madness, but the hunched man seemed to understand her motion and then disappeared with her to some unknown destination.

[What are they?]

Ceyram, who had been watching with me, asked with a puzzled expression.

Anyone with a half wit could deduce that the woman's gestures were some sort of signal for initiating an action.

While I moved about, I wondered if the Mist had developed a new sign language, but that seemed unlikely.

Whatever the gesture meant, I clearly caught its essence.

I approached another hunched individual nearby and performed the same gesture the woman had done.

A flush spread across the man's face, and after looking around cautiously, he signaled me to follow him.

Without hesitation, I trailed after him.

After a while, we arrived at an unexpected location.

Given the context, I had half-expected some gloomy underground chamber or a deserted alley,

but this was quite the surprise.

The destination was a monastery.

Furthermore, it was one dedicated to the adoration of the Light God, Lumen Del.

I stood outside, momentarily contemplating whether I had come to the wrong place.

Both the outward appearance and the aura from within gave off the impression of an utterly ordinary monastery.

There were monks and nuns, all smiles, welcoming people.

The hunched man and the woman he had led away were also present.

Obviously, it wasn't a place I usually frequented.

Although I felt like turning back, I decided, having come so far, to at least step inside.

“By the grace of the omnipotent Light God Lumen Del who has bestowed upon this land his new light, we are able to live in this peaceful era. As per his teachings, we must...”

The soporific sermon of the monastery head continued.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary compared to any other monastery.

Why would they use such strange signs just to gather people?

With a puzzled mind and my gaze turned towards the distributed scripture, I read.

[Light is the sun, and the sun is light. Though the sun is always present, at times it is hidden by the mist, and we cannot see it. Therefore, the sun and the mist can never coexist.];

Huh?

What's this?

Wasn't this supposed to be scripture praising Lumen Del?

Why is the mist mentioned here?

While it might seem like a message emphasizing the importance of light, it surely isn't.

The light worshipers I know wouldn't idolize themselves by setting up such comparisons with the mist.

Haven't I mentioned before?

The imagination of humans is vast, and when given the chance to think divergently, they will transform their thoughts in myriad ways.

If they wanted to deify the value of light, they wouldn't leave room for such notions – it's not their way.

So what is this scripture?

“However, we need to consider. In achieving the peace we have today, was light the only existence? Every being has its necessity by virtue of occupying its space. It’s no different for the mist we so vehemently deny.”

The monastery head was now voicing doubts about the existence of the mist.

I can assure you, if such words were spoken before Lumen Del’s light worshipers, this monastery head would instantly be labeled a heretic and would evaporate like morning dew in front of the scaffold.

There were indeed a few who appeared dubious about his claims.

People eagerly reciting praises of Lumen Del for hours on end, yet here he was making such frivolous remarks.

Not a few were murmuring with a sense of unease about this anomaly.

The funny part came next.

As those expressing doubt were approached by beaming monks attempting to gloss over their reactions with trivial words, the once-suspicious onlookers quietly closed their mouths and focused back on the head’s sermon.

That’s when I became certain.

These people were brazen; there was no denying it.

Even if they could get away with it now, it was only a matter of time.

Sooner or later, it would slip out and their insidious deeds would be revealed.

Don’t they know?

Perplexed to the point of incredulity, the hunched man who had led me here approached.

“.....”

He conveyed a silent signal with his eyes, implying I should follow.

I obediently rose from my seat and trailed after him.

He led me to a small annex located directly behind the cathedral at the monastery.

Opening the worn wooden door, he revealed a staircase leading downward, exuding an aura of suspicion.

I descended without any question.

Yes, this was more befitting of the sinister dealings I had expected.

It was an ominously dark space devoid of light.

Rows of strange-looking followers in black hoods lined the halls.

Continuing down the corridor, a large assembly hall soon came into view.

There, surrounded by other young men who appeared to have arrived just as I had, was a gathering not too dissimilar to the Mist's void space.

[Hey, Master.]

Ceyram, who had followed in silence, asked with skepticism in his voice.

[Is this really the place where those idiots worship their god?]

“No.”

I replied with utmost certainty.

By now, I expected to feel something akin to the power of the Mist, but there was nothing of the sort.

Not even a trace of mana flow was discernible.

What kind of farce is this place, I wondered, but for now, I took a seat among them.

After a wait of perhaps five minutes?

The same monastery head who had delivered that peculiar sermon in the cathedral reappeared.

Something about him had changed; the atmosphere was slightly different.

Gone was the overwhelming cheerfulness from before, now his face was laden with seriousness.

“Before we begin today's lecture, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of you who have sought the truth of this land.”

His words sounded awfully similar to the prelude of a lunatic's speech I had heard before.

Yes, I've had firsthand experience because I've dealt with many such subjects in my cleansing work.

"We have been compelled to follow the false notion of the Order of Light for centuries! The Black Mist is said to be a negative existence that we need to expel from this land? That's absolutely not true! The god of the Black Mist, Aer, is the omnipotent entity and pioneer who will bring about a new order to this land!"

Suppressing the laughter that threatened to burst, I listened in amusement.

Who is bringing what now?

If the party in question overheard this, they would only have seen question marks hovering over the absurdity.

What Mist and I do isn't exactly something we take pride in, and we definitely don't want to be worshipped.

What kind of deluded individual would imbue such surreal doctrine, I now wondered? If a real follower of the Mist appeared because of this...

Hang on.

An ingenious thought suddenly crossed my mind, and I couldn't help but smirk.

"Hey, Ceyram."

[What?]

"Shall we have a little fun?"

[...?]

Ceyram narrowed his eyes at me with a clueless look, evidently puzzled by my sudden proposal.

\* \* \*

Straight-backed, steady gaze, and crisp articulation.

These are the most rudimentary postures needed when delivering a sermon to the people.

Without any hesitation or disruption, the monastery head communicated his teachings.



“It won’t be long now! Just like when the mist cleared away the pervasive light in this land! The mist will re-emerge among us. If that happens, we shall...!”

-Thud

A small but assertive resonance.

Drawn by the sound, people’s eyes naturally converged to a spot.

About ten paces from where the monastery head stood at the lectern, was a strange man who’d stepped upon the altar, casually surveying the congregation.

At first glance, he didn’t seem to be a fanatic who had rushed forward, overwhelmed by the head’s oration.

The unexpected intrusion caused a brief moment of bewilderment among the assembly, but soon, an unfamiliar black mist began to rise around the man.

“.....!”

The monastery head was the most startled of all.

Unlike the others, he appeared to recognize what this energy was.

“Could it really be?”

When confronted with the unforeseen, people usually freeze, their habitual thoughts coming to a halt.

Overcoming such an event is one thing, but typically, they do not.

The monastery head was no exception.

Such an occurrence had never crossed his mind, an impossibility made real.

A genuine follower of the Mist had appeared before him.

All he could do was to stand there, eyes wide open, mouth gaping,

“Why the silence?”

In the blink of an eye, the man moved right up to the monastery head.

“Weren’t you all longing for the existence of the Mist? This should be a joyful moment, shouldn’t it?”

No words came from the monastery head.

Not out of nothing to say, but simply because fear had seized his vocal cords into silence.

“Keep talking. What happens when I show up...?”

The man’s eyes gleamed with a malicious smile, tinged with a touch of curiosity and anticipation.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 195**

Chapter 195. Fake Follower (2)

The Ruins of Light.

A creation from the hands of humans who lived in the old times.

An enigmatic space, the reasons for its making and time of creation completely unknown to the contemporary humans.

“.....”

Lunev quietly placed a hand, imbued with mana, atop the altar where Hastia had been lying down.

-Wooong

But no noteworthy reaction occurred.

Only a faint resonance was elicited.

Following this muted event, Schultz greeted her as she descended from the altar.

“Is, is it over already, Lady Lunev?”

“Over? I haven’t even started. It seems this ruin doesn’t want me using my powers here.”

Mana continued to emerge from Lunev’s hand, yet to dissipate.

She intended to verify directly through Replay what took place at the site, but some unidentified force was obstructing her abilities.

“The Saintess once claimed she was the messenger who heard the voice of God, but why would an elf capable of hearing such divine words perform the role of a saintess in the human domain?”

Saintess Nephrodite Iris of the Light.

The de facto leader of the Knights of Light and the one to first convey the voice of the exalted deity.

She has maintained her ageless youth, unaltered for over sixty years since the appearance of the Mist’s followers on this land.

She attributed her eternal youth to the divine protection she asserted to have received.

However, the truth hidden behind the mask will inevitably reveal itself.

She wasn’t aging because she was a White Elf, not a human.

“Yes, hasn’t there always been talk that humans are the creatures most resembling God’s creation... Perhaps she did it to guide God’s creatures on the righteous path?”

“A righteous path, eh? Who decided that was the righteous path?”

Lunev’s stern counter left Schultz speechless.

“Is this so-called Order of Light that supposedly maintains our peace really from the old times, unknown to us?”

To Schultz, it was a question impossible to answer.

“At the very least, that woman named Nephrodite must have known. Hence, she must have sought out this ruin by herself without being taught by anyone.”

“Then shouldn’t we have interrogated that saintess a bit more thoroughly?”

“Interrogation would have been pointless as she would’ve spewed nothing but incomprehensible praises. Unfortunately, I only believe what I see with my own eyes. And that woman... she likely didn’t live to return to the empire.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Her eyes, I mean Princess Arin’s eyes—rather, her senior’s eyes, seemed extraordinarily ominous during the negotiations.”

Lunev replied lightly, as if it were nothing of significance.

Schultz cocked his head, puzzled.

“So now, I thought I might borrow the strength of Mr. Schultz, who is rich in mercenary experience.”

“What are you referring to?”

Suddenly, an academic approached Schultz from behind and handed him something.

A document densely written with small characters.

“.....!”

After checking the document, Schultz grimaced and glanced covertly at Lunev.

Lunev met his gaze with her usual calm eyes.

On the top of the document, the word ‘Mist’ was engraved distinctly in black.

\* \* \*

There are usually two scenarios when one asks, ‘What kind of audacity does it take to pull off such an act?’

The first is when there are thoroughly prepared countermeasures that justify the act, and the second is when the act is recklessly executed without any thought.

From what I see, the current situation falls into the latter.

Look at the face of the monastery head, terrified into near unconsciousness.

His foolish appearance that failed to anticipate the current events is proof enough.

He never considered that impersonating a follower of the black mist might actually bring a real one into the picture.

Such a fool isn’t even worth taking for interrogation.

My gaze naturally shifted to a book laid on the lectern.

At first glance, it might seem like a scripture, but the book was too black to even discern whether the words were visible.

It certainly seemed to be different from the scriptures I had seen at the church, but it'd be better to first find out where it came from before checking its contents.

“Director, where did this come from?”

“.....!”

Silent as a flowing stream in the woods when spilling words, now the Director had become dumbfounded.

Out of mercy, I asked once more.

“An existence of the mist is asking. Where did this come from, Director?”

“Oh, the existence of the mist?”

As if just realizing what's happening, what a charade.

Transparent enough, I could see right through.

“Yes, it has appeared! The existence of the mist has finally come to us! To show us the path to true salvation.....!”

-Thwack!

Grabbing the worthless throat, I pulled him toward me.

“I might not have the patience to tolerate three repeated requests, let alone even two. Suppose you need to lose a piece somewhere to understand what I'm asking, eh?”

The monastery head, his vocal cords seized, helplessly gestured with his hands amidst his painful moans.

His finger pointed towards my right hand, specifically at the scripture.

Is the author within this book?

Turning my gaze back to him,

“.....”

He had fainted.

It didn't seem necessary to wake him up and inquire further, so I left him as he was.

Quietly turning my head, I met the eyes of the congregation, who were bestowing various looks upon me.

Amazed, terrified or perhaps awe-stricken.

Their diverse reactions were somewhat intriguing, but what did it matter?

That's not my concern.

The Mist has never been a benevolent entity that would bear the word 'salvation.'

Moreover, there is no reason for me to care how they perceive me.

Without any interference, I smoothly exited from that place.

\* \* \*

[Are you out of your mind?]

"Why? Is there a problem?"

[Is there a problem? Are you even aware of where you are and what you're doing?]

At one of the tables on the second floor of the bustling tavern.

While enjoying the day's special snack, I was perusing the stolen scripture from the monastery.

What could be the issue?

[You flaunt your face in all the wrong places, and now you're leisurely reading a book in a place like this?]

"I think it's a kind of reverse psychology. How would anyone here know where I've been and what I've done?"

Even those attempting to search and ransack the city for me wouldn't stand a chance.

That's why I can relax and read my book in peace.

[How very reassured I am by that.]

Ceyram looked at me with a perturbed expression.

Knowing it wouldn't last long, I focused entirely on reading the scripture.

-Thump

Then she plunked herself down right across from me.

[Why? Is there a problem?]

She flashed a shameless smile as if there was nothing amiss.

“What on earth are you doing?”

She appeared before me through complete materialization.

[A man sitting alone in a tavern, especially a handsome one, creates quite a deplorable scene. I don't like seeing my master exhibit such a sight. So what can I do? I guess this sister has to keep you company for drinks.]

She casually filled her cup with the drink in front of her.

Now unlike before, the eyes of the others present began to shift towards us.

Naturally, it was towards Ceyram, not me.

[Just as I thought, you've always known how to choose the prettiest flowers. That's why I usually choose not to appear.]

How could she say such things without blinking an eye?

If they realized that the flower they were admiring was actually a centuries-old crone masked as a blooming rose, I wonder what expression they would wear. Just the thought amused me.

As if sensing my malicious (?) thoughts, she narrowed her eyes and asked.

[Hey, what were you thinking just now?]

“Noble thoughts.”

To my firm response, she protruded her lips and swiftly drained the glass of liquor.

“Do demonic swords drink alcohol as well?”

[Why can't I when men do?]

Ceyram retorted as if the question was completely unfounded and gave a seductive wink.

[So, have you found anything from that black book you doubted of showing any text?]

Perhaps I did find something.

The person who wrote this book must be an exceptional oddball.

Honestly, this goes far beyond the scripture of light.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that these are the same beliefs the followers of the Mist, the progenitors of the Mist, must have held long ago. They've carefully documented such nonsense about Aer.

"The most I gained was that the writer would've made a fortune in fiction. What could they have possibly witnessed to jot down such nonsense? I wish I knew the name."

[Wouldn't the name of the author typically be on the front or back of the book?]

Prompted by her remark, I checked both sides of the book.

The front lacked even the title, let alone the author's name, maintaining its pristine condition.

While the back page had a small inscription, so little one might easily overlook it on the bottom.

It was a name I was seeing for the first time.

[Well, who is it?]

"If I tell you, will you recognize it?"

[Who knows? I've lived several times longer than you, a man who has lived twice his life. I've killed far more than you ever have.]

I'm not sure if that's something to brag about proudly.

But with Ceyram being Ceyram, I decided to tell her, just in case.

"Dio."

[.....]

"Ever heard of it?"



[Afraid not. Seems unfamiliar.]

Her unusually prompt reply caught me off guard.

As if she had no desire to dwell on it, she diverted her gaze from me.

It's not like I want to dig deeper, but it was an unexpected reaction.

With that, I was about to refocus on analyzing the scripture when,

-Thump

An unfamiliar old man suddenly took a seat opposite of me.

His gaze bore a slyness as if harboring ulterior motives.

"Does this tavern have seniors attending the bar?"

"It's not that sort of reckless tavern, no. I've come with a question I'd like to ask."

The old man promptly stated that he wanted to ask me something.

"Were you at the monastery just before this?"

"Should I answer that?"

"I was, too, up until a while ago. Monks would drag you somewhere; what did you do there?"

My reply was the same as before.

"Ah, young one, you seem more difficult than you look. Such an attitude isn't good when trying to survive in this harsh world."

It was hardly worth a laugh.

An old man claiming to be from the monastery.

Though I don't recall his face, he didn't seem to belong to the congregation from the underground chamber.

"Having such beautiful lady in front and you choose to read such a dull book. Your disposition seems peculiarly stubborn."

[Looks like the old man's eyes haven't failed him yet, huh?]

Ceyram seemed pleased to play along.

“It looks different from the texts handed out by those monks. What’s the story? If you don’t intend to tell me, may I take that book? Of course, I’ll pay its price.”

“What are you offering? You don’t seem to have deep pockets.”

“Know what’s good about growing old? If the purse doesn’t bulge, at least your head does. I’ve got an interesting tale to tell. If you find it satisfactory after listening, you can hand me that book. How about it?”

This old man. Despite his looks, he seems far from ordinary.

He had an air about him as if he could have made a big name for himself in the past.

Curious and intrigued, I felt a surge of interest.

“Let’s hear it then.”

“Good! But before I start the tale, I suppose I should introduce myself first.”

The man rummaged through his pockets and fumbled out something onto the table.

Of course, it wasn’t money or gold coins – that wouldn’t have been surprising.

What the old man presented was a badge.

A badge that proves one’s membership in an organization.

For me, it was impossible not to know from where...

“In my youth, I was a member of the Knights of Light.”

(Continued in the next chapter)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 196**

\*\*Chapter 196. True Follower (1)\*\*

“.....”

Just when it seemed the old man would start off with something boastful, he quickly shut his mouth. He appeared a bit flustered by my indifferent reaction to his introduction.

“I thought you would at least show distrust, but this is unexpected. Weren’t you surprised by my introduction?”

“Not really.”

“What an unusual young man.”

With an uncomfortable cough, the old man continued his story.

“I’m not one to brag, but from a young age, I had certain expertise with the sword. At twenty, I joined the Imperial Knights, and soon after, I was called up to the Order of Light. This badge is proof of that.”

He proudly lifted an old, faded badge that he had placed on the table.

“Back then, even though it’s well-known now, I simply followed them because they needed me, without even knowing what they did. Right after joining, they took me somewhere and immediately began ‘indoctrination.’”

“Indoctrination?”

“Yes. A saintess by the name of Nephrodite appeared and said we must subjugate the followers of the mist who disturb the order of light. That it was God’s will, and only the almighty knights of light could carry out this divine mission. Ridiculous, isn’t it? They didn’t explain what these followers of the mist had done wrong, just said that they had to be eliminated because they had defied humanity...”

This wasn’t a story I was hearing for the first time, so I wasn’t particularly surprised.

“So, what do you think I did?”

“You did as you were told.”

“Exactly! Honestly, what sort of thoughts could a young person like me have had at that age? I thought obedience was the right way.”

The old man snickered and filled his empty glass as if to toast with himself, then gulped it down.

“I listened to that tedious preaching for about a week, and when I received news that they had appeared, I grabbed my sword and rushed to the scene. My first impression of them was fantastic; it was nothing like I had imagined!”

“Were they dancing naked or something?”

“It would have been better if that were the case! At least I could agree they were insane. But what I saw was different! They were doing something mundane yet great. Charity, that is!”

“Charity?”

“Yes, charity! They were distributing food and relief to those suffering from hunger and cold without asking for anything in return! Giving unilateral kindness without any compensation!”

[.....]

An inscrutable smile formed on Ceyram’s lips as she quietly listened.

It wasn’t that the old man’s story was funny; it was a sardonic smile naturally born from some less than flattering feelings.

“We had to kill them. They were falsely accused of seducing people with unidentified relief supplies. That was the first time... my sword was stained with human blood, not just beasts or demons...”

A small tremor was visible in the hand of the old man holding his glass, though he didn’t show it on his face and continued speaking.

“I still remember their faces, crying out in innocence that they had done nothing wrong. Not that I particularly regret it – had I not killed them, I’d have been branded a heretic and been executed myself.”

It seemed like an excuse because he had no choice but to survive.

I didn’t particularly want to acknowledge it, nor did I feel any urge to blame him. After all, it was nothing more than the powerless response of those without strength.

“After one horrific event, they gained enlightenment and returned wielding sharpened blades. Whereas before they had been freeing people suffering from agony, now they were eradicating the source of that agony itself through assassination. You’ve heard of them, right? Mist, the infamous assassination group.”

I silently affirmed.

“Unable to sit idly by, we went after them once again. The second time I saw them, they no longer appeared human. Not that they weren’t real people, but there was something different about them. More curiosity than repulsion arose, along with a rising sense of expectation—the desperate revenge of heretics rejected by the world.”

Assuming the old man was telling the truth, one thing was certain to me.

The expectation he mentioned had gone unfulfilled.

“Regrettably, my hopes never came to fruition. They disappeared without a trace. It’s publicly thought the Order of Light brought them down, but that’s not true. You and everyone else were deceived.”

The old man refilled his empty glass.

“It was empty. Feelings of utter disillusionment consumed me. I wanted to know the truth. I wanted to see their real presence, labeled by the world as evil, but without providing answers, they simply vanished. And so their traces were eradicated, while the uncaring years simply kept on flowing.”

As the old man stared at the filled glass, his gaze stealthily shifted toward me, now with a peculiar atmosphere.

“Do you know why I came to the monastery? Because I wanted to confirm. I wanted to see if those ‘followers of mist’ circulating among the youth were genuinely the ones I had seen. But they weren’t. The monks were mere fake followers. The true followers of mist I had seen... they weren’t like that.”

“On what basis do you claim such certainty?”

“Even though memories become hazy with age, the senses of the body aren’t easily forgotten. But do you know?”

The old man’s eyes flickered eerily as he let out a cryptic smile.

“Your gaze right now closely resembles those of the Mist assassins I saw 60 years ago. So similar it’s almost uncanny. The eyes embodying the spirit of death! Why do you think that is?”

“.....”

“You have a scent about you! Not the stench of an inferior fake, but the genuine aroma of one who has spilled blood. It’s been wafting this way since the entrance of the tavern!”

A hint of madness seemed to linger in the old man’s gaze.

I sat up straighter without a hint of emotion and addressed him.

“Hey, old man. If what you’re saying is true, shouldn’t you not be sitting in front of me?”

That is, if he hadn't given up on life.

The old man shrugged his shoulders as he replied.

"I've lived my life as much as I could. What's there to fear? When you reach my age, everything in life seems meaningless. That's when you wonder, whether the life you lived was the right one."

"That moment of contemplation might not come, though."

"You have a remarkable confidence, youngster. Age is but a number, after all. Was it about seven years ago? A boy barely thirteen slaughtered the empire's senior knights and vanished without a trace... I wonder what that boy is doing now."

That boy is now listening to the ramblings of a strange old man in an ordinary tavern.

"Ah, I see. I didn't tell you my name, did I?"

"Do I need to know?"

"Even mindless beasts are named to be known. Considering the valuable time we've spent together, shouldn't we at least know each other's names? Maybe for when we meet again someday."

The old man straightened his clothes and lifted his head with an air of announcing something grand.

"My name is..."

"....."

"Jereon. Call me Jereon."

-Clash!

A loud noise rang out as metal struck metal.

In my hand was a dinner knife, with one sharpened edge, while the old man gripped a fork with bread impaled on it.

"It seems my story was quite captivating, given your abrupt reaction."

How long do you think it took for me to attempt to stab the old man in the throat with a knife?

One second? Half of that?

I dare say, at a speed that no human could perceive with their sluggish senses, I stabbed.

But the old man stopped it.

Not with ease, but he stopped it without trouble, as if he had anticipated my movements from the start.

“Did the retired leader come here to engage in charitable acts for the future generations?”

Jereon.

In this land, very few could confidently carry that name – a former leader of the Order of Light and before that, known as an executor, a knight praised for upholding the so-called order of light.

Why an executor?

Because it was he who led in the slaughter of the followers of the mist more than any other knight.

“Didn’t I tell you? I came just to uncover the truth.”

The old man did not deny his identity.

“Knight of light or whatever, it’s all in the past. It’s not my concern anymore. And you see...”

Sweat suddenly dripped down the old man’s forehead.

“You don’t need to be on guard. I’ve already been standing at the crossroads of life and death from the beginning.”

At his words, my gaze shifted toward Ceyram, who had been sitting beside the old man.

Her stiff gaze and folded arms hadn’t moved an inch. However, the sharpness of her fingers was shrouded with an invisible cloud of might.

She had been on guard against the old man long before I had been.

“Miss. Were you hiding a dreadful blade behind that lovely face?”

[Don’t get cocky, old man. If you don’t want to look at your vital organs through those wretched eyes, that is.]

Ceyram sharply countered the old man's seemingly benign question with a menacing smile.

"If ending my life at the hands of such a beautiful lady is my fate, then there's nothing wrong with that."

Her glare sharpened even further in response.

"But sadly, I haven't decided to end my days here."

The old man's gaze returned to me.

Conversely, my gaze wasn't on the old man, but somewhere else.

-Swish

The tipsy customers who had been quietly enjoying their drinks moments earlier, now stood up and started moving towards me.

A few others from downstairs seemed to be making their way up as well.

It wasn't particularly alarming.

I had already sensed a change in the atmosphere around our table from the moment the old man joined us.

"Don't get me wrong. I wasn't targeting you from the start. Didn't I say your scent wafted over from the entryway? It's a mere coincidence."

This wasn't simply arrogance bred from numbers.

Even by their strides, it was evident.

These weren't novice knights or amateur mercenaries.

They were all seasoned warriors who had wielded swords and shed blood for decades.

Soon, they encircled my table.

"Let me reiterate just in case, I didn't come here to harm you. I simply want to know. If you wish, we can change venues. This time, to hear your story..."

"Look here. Old man."

I cut off his words, and an eerie silence followed.



“What’s with this unwarranted nonchalance?”

“Heh. Nonchalance? I’m truly trying to understand...”

As the old man chuckled, his eyes suddenly shifted, not to me, but to the side.

Where Ceyram had been sitting just seconds before, now, only trivial dust fluttered in the air.

The old man’s gaze soon returned to me.

“Didn’t you underestimate the true follower of the mist too lightly?”

In my hand was no longer a dinner knife, but Ceyram’s original form, her essence imbued with a deadly aura.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 197**

Chapter 197. The True Follower (Part 2)

As the sun set and the moon rose in the night sky of Saphern, a retired knight sat in front of flickering candlelight on a small table.

“Where there is light, fog does not exist, and where fog shrouds, light is unseen; they are fundamentally unable to coexist.”

His gaze lingered on the words in the middle of the page, finding it difficult to move on to the next.

At that moment, there was a knock from outside the room.

“May I come in, Lord Jereon?”

“Of course.”

Upon receiving permission, a middle-aged man with a sword hanging at his side entered.

It was Mark, who had been Jereon’s aide during his active service.

Seeing Jereon reading, Mark furrowed his brows slightly and asked.

“Have you found any content that satisfies you?”

“What satisfaction is there to be had? I peruse these pages hopeful, if only to glean something of worth.”

Jereon yawned excessively, clearly bored after the long hours of reading.

“Was it really alright to let that man go just like that?”

“Why do you ask such a thing, one of understanding? Didn’t we all feel it? Had we not let him go, we might have all been slaughtered.”

Mark couldn’t deny that.

“Oh dear, looks like I’ll need to return my knightly insignia. Who would have thought that we, who stood unflinching before superior demons at the frontlines, would back down from a mere youth? It’s quite a hit to our pride.”

“Why did that man readily hand over the book?”

“Perhaps he found my story interesting. Now, why have you come in?”

Mark cleared his throat, seemingly remembering something he had forgotten.

“The meeting with the monastery’s head has been arranged.”

“So fast? You’ve secured it sooner than I expected. When should I go?”

“You may go right now if you wish.”

“Now?”

“Yes. The sooner, the better, they say...”

Faced with the unexpected news, Jereon furrowed his brows but quickly rose from his seat.

“Very well. Let us go immediately.”

They set out for the monastery of Saphern.

Upon their arrival at the main gate, the head of the monastery and the monks came running out to greet them.

“Welcome! We have been waiting for you! The esteemed commander of the Knights of Light!”

“Waiting for me?”

It made little sense to Jereon why they would await a retired knight like himself, unless there was an unpleasant reason.

“This way, please.”

The head of the monastery led Jereon and his party inside.

“I couldn’t believe my ears when I first heard! The famed executioner of the light, Sir Jereon Alkin, gracing our monastery! It reminds me once again of Lord Lumen Del’s words that the light is always with us!”

Starting with florid praise for Jereon, the head began to ramble on about the history of the monastery and his own accomplishments.

Without any response, Jereon closed his eyes and listened with a stern expression.

“Oh dear, I have prattled on excessively while hosting such an important person. I hope you were not displeased.”

“...”

“Lord Jereon?”

“Ah! My apologies. Your story was so dreadfully boring, I nodded off without realizing.”

Stretching his arms out in a yawn, Jereon made it clear he was finished listening.

“Now that the pleasantries are over, let us begin with my story.”

The head of the monastery, hiding his awkwardness with a smile, agreed hesitantly.

“I actually visited the monastery earlier today.”

“...!”

The head’s expression contorted subtly for a moment, unable to conceal his shock.

“You did? I had no idea! Did you come to pray to Lord Lumen Del?”

“Let’s put it that way. More importantly, there’s been an increase in those who follow the fog across the empire. I’ve been traveling through various cities to verify this.”

Instead of showing panic, the head tilted his head and cautiously asked.

“Lord Jereon, were you unaware?”

“As you can see, I’m no longer a knight. With no one to inform me, how would I be aware?”

Faced with Jereon’s calm demeanor, the head seemed at a loss for words, as if revealing something he should have kept secret.

“It seems something secretive has been unfolding within the empire without my knowledge.”

“Secretive? How would a mere priest like me be privy to such matters?”

“Well, that’s what we’ll find out.”

Jereon produced a book from within his clothing and held it out for the head to see.

“...!”

Upon seeing the book, the head, too shocked to speak, could only manage a distressed groan.

“Please don’t make such a pitiable face as if you’ve lost your country. It’s embarrassing for both of us.”

“That’s not it...”

Desperate to leave, the head found he couldn’t move as if frozen by the retired knight’s piercing gaze.

“Let’s have you talk. Tell me everything you know.”

\* \* \*

[So, it’s about time for a full-scale conflict...]

“I wouldn’t have expected less of you, Ceyram.”

[Knew it wouldn’t be long before something stirred up trouble, Master.]

Ceyram shook his head, looking away. Why waste time on something that’ll only result in laughter when there are more important matters to attend to? It wasn’t just given away to avoid getting caught up in nuisances.

[So, where are you headed now?]

“Towards someone who can quench the curiosity I now have...”

Before Ceyram could ask whom, he seemed to catch on and immediately shut his mouth.

I smiled faintly and stepped into the dark alleyway.

As I turned the corner on the left and saw the wooden door, I opened it without hesitation.

– Creeeak

A solitary reading session was kept company by the gently flickering red candlelight, featuring a short-haired woman.

I approached her without hesitation and sat down abruptly, and finally, she looked up from her book, directing her gaze towards me.

“Isn’t this a rather shabby place for a research lab?”

“If you’re so concerned, why not build a grand one as your duty as a disciple?”

“I’m not a successful disciple, so that might be tough.”

The woman looked at me like she had expected as much, her gaze sharpening.

The unsuccessful disciple has come a long way to see my mentor, the head of the Silica clan.

“I thought you were quietly progressing, but upon your arrival, you immediately caused trouble.”

I immediately realized she was referring to the events of the day.

“It was a coincidence. Who would have thought the retired commander of the knights would be at that bar?”

I played it off as an accident, but the look of distrust from the head of the clan did not wane.

[What? It’s not my fault!]

Even Ceyram behind me seemed to be included in her gaze.

“Do the Knights of Light know about this incident?”

“It’s not certain yet. This Jereon Alkin that you met has been the main leader of the Knights of Light for a long time. Even though he’s been retired for a while, it’s safe to say that he hears most of what goes on in the Knights of Light.”

The real leader should have been the saintess, but it was that man who truly led and commanded the knights.

“He had been living quietly in his hometown since his retirement, but it seems he’s begun to move, what with the recent events involving the fake devotees and the incidents in the Kingdom of Garam.”

The words of the old man who wanted to verify the truth surfaced in my memory. He had expressed a desire to see if the path he had walked in life was the right one during his remaining years, hadn’t he?

I couldn’t help but think that it wouldn’t be long before I clashed with him again.

“...?”

I made that (...) gesture in front of the head.

“What are you doing?”

“Isn’t that the new secret signal of Mist?”

The head looked at me like I was particularly foolish.

“It seems to be a secret signal that has spread among those who claim to be disciples of the fog. They bring people who know this signal to their place to indoctrinate them.”

“I heard something similar, but I never imagined it to be such a ridiculous gesture. So, you’ve been to that place?”

“Madmen were all gathered there.”

I shared with the clan head the sermonizing from the abbot and the contents of the scriptures they were reading, which mainly involved the adulation of Aer’s spirit.

“Truly insane people.”

Responding as if she agreed with my characterization of them as madmen, she nodded.

“I’d like to see that scripture myself. Do you have it with you now?”

“Ah, that was given to that retired commander.”

“Why?”

“Well, it was a bit of a trade for an interesting story, you could say.”

“...”

A heavy silence fell in the room.

The head seemed to have a sudden headache, holding her forehead as if she had many words to say but chose to hold them in.

“Was there a title or something like that?”

“The author’s name was mentioned,” I said.

“Really? What was it?”

“Do you know someone named Dio?”

“Dio? The name alone doesn’t ring a bell. Was there no last name?”

The last name was written.

When mentioned with the last name...

“It was Dio Hapencus.”

“Hapencus?”

The look in the head’s eyes shifted strangely.

By her reaction, it seemed she had heard the name somewhere before, but,

“I don’t know.”

She decisively brushed it off.

“I don’t have the luxury to remember an idiot who records such delusional ideas.”

The head promptly got up and prepared to leave.

“You’re leaving already?”

“I didn’t come here to meet you in the first place. It was just a stop on my way to the imperial palace.”

“Are you investigating whether this matter is connected to the imperial family?”

“Well, that’s part of it. Not as the head of Mist, but unmistakably as the eldest daughter of the Nigrity family.”

Was she boasting or just stating a fact? It sounded almost like pride to say she was going somewhere named not by her personal identity but by her family’s.

It was something I couldn’t do any longer.

“I won’t bother telling you to be careful but...”

As the head was about to leave through the door, she looked back at me and said.

“Do eat your meals properly. You’re looking quite pale.”

“I shall heed your advice.”

With those last words, the head left the room.

\* \* \*

Having ended her private meeting with Sian, Silica immediately headed for the imperial palace. However, sensing a familiar presence in an alleyway, she paused and turned around.

– Clip-clop clip-clop

Amidst an enigmatic night fog in a pitch-dark space, a woman with black hair revealed herself.

Silica, as if expecting this encounter, showed no signs of being startled.

“What is your intention in summoning me out here?”

[I didn’t call for you. Did your legs lead you here out of their own volition?]

“Can I really just pass by after witnessing such an unusual glint in your eyes, Lord Ceyram?”

Silica smiled coyly.

“The name Hapencus seems to have greatly troubled you.”



[Don't get ahead of yourself, Mistress's puppet. If you don't want to be known as a stealthy assassin by your lackeys.]

Ceyram's tone was unusually heightened.

"The name Dio is unknown to me. However, I cannot really claim to be completely ignorant of the name Hapencus."

[You might know but you'd do well to pretend you don't. I suppose you understand why I have taken the trouble to personally warn you—something I find distasteful.]

"I won't speak of it if you don't, but it doesn't mean your secret will remain hidden forever."

[That's not for you to worry about.]

Ceyram bluntly dismissed Silica's advice.

"I have no intention of disclosing the secret of a follower who serves Lord Aer. However..."

Silica's gaze sharpened once more.

"If it turns out to be harmful to the successor, then the situation changes."

[...]

"Farewell, then."

After offering her final greeting, Silica turned away.

[This is infuriating...]

Ceyram, left alone, uttered curse words too vile to bear.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 198**

Chapter 198: The Real Followers (3)

“I certify that the contents written above in this correspondence are an official document sent from the Imperial family.”

“Sender: Arin Severus.”

Jereon’s brow furrowed deeply as he examined the letter, as if his forehead had become a valley.

There was considerable doubt over whether the letter he was currently reading had indeed been sent by the Imperial family.

However, the imperial seal stamped at the bottom of the letter was genuine.

As someone who had received hundreds, if not thousands, of official documents during his active service, he could guarantee it.

“So you’re saying that the Director was merely communicating the Mist Doctrine to the people as an edict of the Imperial family?”

“Yes! That doctrine was clearly sent by the Imperial family. I didn’t even know such a book existed!”

The monastery’s director had been bottling up his frustrations for a while, and now they poured out unceasingly.

“How could I feel at ease teaching the Doctrine of Mist, despite it being a command from the Imperial family? It was only with tears in my eyes and the thought that this was a trial given by Lord Lumen Del that I soldiered on! Surely I wasn’t the only one, it must have been the same for the other monks!”

According to him, the imperial directive wasn’t only received by this monastery but all the monasteries in the Empire, including in Saphern. They were warned not to harbor any doubts, for this was done to maintain the correct order of the Light.

“How did you feel?”

“Feel? What do you mean?”

“How did it feel to propagate the Doctrine of Mist as a monk of the Light?”

The director waved his hands in a gesture of denial.

“What’s there to say? It was horrible!”

Despite the sincerity of his emotions, disbelief was still evident in Jereon’s eyes.

“I’ve served Lord Lumen Del for nigh on 30 years since I entered the monastery at twenty! Could my convictions and values really change just because I’ve read that doctrine?”

His argument was sound indeed.

Once people’s beliefs are set, they are like twisted tree limbs, not easily bent.

“Still, I can’t guarantee that everyone else would feel the same...”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I’m not sure how to put it... It feels more grounded in reality than the ethereal? As frustrating as it is to admit, it seems the teachings we conveyed of the Light didn’t stimulate people’s hearts as much as this doctrine. Indeed, over time, the number of followers who came to hear the Doctrine of Mist steadily increased.”

Both Jereon and the monastery’s director looked at the doctrine on the table.

For some reason, the words written on the back of the book were particularly clear.

“Do you know who the author of this book is?”

“The author, you say? Sadly, I do not. I have neither heard of nor seen the name Dio Hapencus before.”

“Of course, that makes sense.”

“Pardon?”

“No... By the way, how did you gather the believers?”

“Ah, there was a secret hand signal sent along with the imperial correspondence by the Imperial family. It was like this...”

The director clasped his hands together and blew through them like the wind.

“Does that signal mean something?”

“It signifies breathing the soul into the Mist. With this signal, we gathered the believers in the space behind the monastery and preached the doctrine. I thought today would pass uneventfully as usual, but then out of the blue...”

“A true follower of the Mist appeared.”

The director simply nodded in response.

“I am ashamed to admit it, but I thought my limbs would be torn off. It was quite like staring into the devil’s eyes. My heart is still pounding just thinking about it.”

The so-called real followers had not done anything except steal the doctrine sent by the Imperial family to the monastery.

And Jereon had received that doctrine from some unnamed man in a tavern.

That meant that the man was...

“How long have you been propagating the Doctrine of Mist?”

“About two weeks, I believe. But why do you ask?”

“Two weeks? Well, you must have more or less gotten the gist of it by now.”

The director looked puzzled and did not understand what was being implied, while Jereon put the taken-out doctrine back into his possession.

“I’ll borrow the book for a bit longer. I haven’t finished reading it yet.”

“Sir, weren’t you here to protect us?”

Jereon’s eyes flashed as if to say, ‘What nonsense are you speaking?’

“Why expect anything from an old man nearing death? Isn’t the exalted Lord Lumen Del always by your side? He will protect you, so do not worry.”

With that, he quickly rose to leave the room.

As he walked out, Jereon ignored the director’s pleading cries for salvation, merely twiddling his ears without giving the impression that he was listening.

Once Jereon stepped outside the monastery’s main gate, Mark greeted him as he waited.

“Is your discussion over?”

“Yes. Somehow I feel there’s more to find out than what I’ve learned...”

Jereon looked up at the night sky with a bitter expression.

Tonight, the night sky was darker than usual, with not even the common stars visible.

“Fake followers, huh? This doesn’t seem to be something that the woman with the large ears would permit. It’s quite unexpected in many respects.”

“Shall I send a message to the knightly order?”

“No need. Whether it’s you or me, who would want to be entangled with that woman again? We’re better off dealing with it ourselves.”

Jereon gestured with his hands to dismiss the idea.

Mark, as if relieved not to engage further, heaved a sigh of relief.

“Then, shall we return to our lodgings for the night?”

“No, you go on ahead. I have someplace else to be.”

“Where to at this late hour?”

“I don’t know myself. Just following where the energy leads.”

Leaving a bewildered Mark behind, Jereon headed to some other unknown destination.

In a desolate alley, not far from the street, shrouded in a strange black mist that was not seen near the monastery.

Despite the somewhat ominous atmosphere, Jereon strode into the alley without any expression of concern.

“There’s no need to be on guard. Unlike earlier, I’m here alone this time.”

He spoke into the emptiness, but no reply came.

“Was that young man merely deceived? Don’t you sense it as well? That I’m the only one around here...”

As Jereon expected no response this time either,

-Sssss-

The thick mist began to dissipate, revealing a man from within.

“.....”

The man silently observed Jereon, who returned the gaze with a faint smile.

A peculiar man with dark hair and sharp eyes.

He was the man Jereon had met in the tavern earlier.

“Do you have more stories to share?”

The man with indifferent eyes finally spoke.

“I could tell my life’s tale, and three days and nights wouldn’t be enough! But even if it’s not that, it seems we have much to discuss.”

Despite Jereon’s jokey reply, the man snorted.

“I may be speaking out of turn, but you are a follower of the Mist, aren’t you? Not the impostors at the monastery, but a true follower of the black Mist.”

The man gave no specific response.

“Still, it seems neither of us knew everything about the book today. Did you come to this city to figure out the identity of the group pretending to be disciples of the Mist?”

“Do I have any obligation to answer that?”

As in the tavern, the man did not readily reveal his intentions.

“It seems I should trust you first. So go ahead, ask me anything. I promise to answer any question with all my sincerity.”

Suspicion and doubt still filled the man’s gaze.

“Don’t be shy; you must have left that energy there because you too had something to say, right?”

The man’s silence answered neither yes nor no.

A short moment of silence passed as he gathered his thoughts, and the man finally spoke.

“What are you after in chasing them?”

“As I said in the tavern, perhaps the unfulfilled grudges of an old man close to death? I just want to know about you. Not the fake ones created by the imperial schemes, but the true black Mist followers.”

The mention of the Imperial family’s plans made the man’s pupils quiver slightly.

Jereon caught that moment and continued.

“You still don’t know everything, do you? How about it? Shall we strike a deal?”

“A deal?”

“That’s right, a deal! Whatever our past actions or current affiliations, don’t we share the same goal right now? We’ll give each other the information the other lacks. A very simple trade. What do you say?”

“No thanks.”

The man’s immediate response clearly indicated he saw no value in the proposal.

“Why not?”

“It seems like I would lose out.”

The reason was straightforward.

“Hmm. It seems you’re quite cautious. Alright. Then I’ll show goodwill first.”

Jereon took out the doctrine he received in the tavern.

“Do you know who wrote this book?”

“...?”

The owner was surely the person named on the back.

However, Jereon thought.

The man didn’t know the identity of this Dio Hapencus.

“Judging from your look, you don’t seem to know, which makes sense. There are scarcely a handful of people on this earth who know that name.”

“That sounds like you know who it is?”

Jereon reacted as if he had been waiting for this.

“Of course! The name Hapencus signifies someone from long ago who brought chaos to this land...!”

Just as he felt a strange presence behind him, Jereon quickly turned his gaze without moving his head.

He had the premonition that turning his head could be fatal.

[.....]

Unknown black mist spread in his field of vision.

An icy touch caressed his neck as if touched by frost.

A pale hand encircling Jereon's wrinkled neck.

At the fingertips, red nails pointed sharply at the veins as if they would plunge in a dagger.

"Ah, madam. You seem more ominous than before?"

Recognizing the origin of the hand, Jereon attempted a conversation, but no verbal response came. Instead,

"What are you doing?"

The dark-haired man opened his mouth instead, his gaze not on Jereon but the woman behind him.

\* \* \*

It's an unexpected turn of events.

The woman, who had just been listening silently, had suddenly materialized and seized the old man's neck.

This wasn't just some petty threat.

Ceyram's eyes were filled with an intent to kill that could sever the old man's neck at any moment.

"Didn't you hear me? What are you doing?"

Despite the repeated questions, Ceyram's mouth did not open.

[.....]

She simply sent a silent message to disregard her actions.

When he took a step towards Ceyram,

"Kuk!"

She gripped the old man's neck even tighter. She intended to take his life regardless of the circumstances.



I kicked off from my spot and rushed forward, reciting a dark art.

“Dark Art 9th Form: Control Dark Blade!”

[.....!]

A sudden headache struck Ceyram as she gripped her head and stepped back.

-Thunk!

As I caught her right hand, which had been holding the old man’s neck, with one hand, I caught her falling body gently with the other.

Her eyes, filled with malice, also held a clear sense of displeasure towards something.

“I ask a third time. Speak. What are you doing?”

[I’m going to cut off the throat of a senile old man. Can’t you see, even when you’re looking right at it?]

“So why suddenly you...?”

[It’s my choice!]

I inadvertently froze.

[It’s my choice, I said!]

Why? Why is that?

The image of Ceyram in my eyes contained something all too foreign.

Anger and the intent to kill mixed with a tiny, indiscernible fear.

Those complex emotions were now clearly reflected in her eyes.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 199**

Chapter 199. Whisper of Secrets (1)

Sweat streamed down his forehead, his heart pounded, and his breath hitched. Jereon thought he had just narrowly escaped the crossroads between life and death. Even when he had survived, battered and bruised, from the jaws of a troll during his days as a frontline guardian knight, he hadn't felt like this. It was quite literally the sensation of having a brush with death. Who was the woman who had appeared, besides the man with black hair? Not only had she vanished without a trace in the tavern, but now she had appeared out of nowhere in the middle of the night, grasping his throat. Even though he had aged, his senses had not dulled. This was no ordinary person—this felt like an incorporeal spirit, did it not?

As Jereon carefully observed the intense aura clash between the man and woman, having brushed his hand over the neck that had been gripped, he suddenly averted his gaze after making eye contact with the woman. Once again, he pondered. Why was this woman behaving like this? What had he done wrong? All he had wanted to do was explain about an individual named Dio Hapencus, who wrote *The Teachings of the Mist*. Now it looked as if he was somehow personally involved with this woman...

Jereon's eyes sparkled with realization as if pieces were falling into place. The woman in front of him was not human. He was sure of it. She did not give off any human presence. Instead, she felt like a part of the mist that lingered around them, taking on the form of a person. And above all, hadn't the man just uttered something akin to a spell, where the word "demonic sword" was included?

A renewed certainty shone in Jereon's eyes as he spoke, interrupting the serious discussion: "Pardon me in the middle of such an important conversation, but..." The attention of the man and woman turned back to Jereon. "By any chance... are you a demonic sword, miss?"

It was a question asked at the risk of his life. Ceyram glared back with a silent threat that seemed to ask, 'Do you really want to die?'

"If you are indeed a demonic sword, then yes, your reaction makes sense," Jereon conceded.

"What do you mean?" Sian asked with furrowed brows and a heightened tone.

"I would love to explain, but if I speak any further, I fear I might be dispatched by the lady here without anyone ever knowing."

Regaining his composure, Jereon turned to leave hastily. "I'll take my leave for today. It seems difficult to continue this conversation. I hope that the lady is treated well." Displeasure filled Ceyram's face. "I'll be waiting for you at the tavern we met during the day. I look forward to seeing you again soon."

With those parting words of promise, Jereon quickly left the place, moving his feet faster than ever, and before he realized it, he had arrived at his lodging.

– Bang!

Jereon roughly opened the door, swiftly closing it in case someone followed him inside. Mark, who had been busy maintaining his sword, jumped at his sudden entry.

“Ma-Master Jereon?”

Sweat poured down his wrinkled face like rain.

“Where have you been to sweat so much?”

Gasping for breath, Jereon still managed to gulp down a whole bottle of water Mark handed him.

“Where have I been, you ask?” After finally calming down, Jereon wiped water from his mouth and said, “I’ve just narrowly escaped the entrance to hell...”

\* \* \*

It was almost a first in my current life: Ceyram avoiding my gaze, and I looking endlessly at her. Dio Hapencus—Ceyram clearly wanted to kill the old man mentioned by that name, acting on her own accord.

“Dio Hapencus.”

[...]

“You know the name, don’t you?”

She merely smirked condescendingly, not saying a word.

“Tell me. Who is he?”

[I don’t want to talk.]

You don’t want to talk? I wonder why that is. Do we have something unspeakable between us now? Why would she avoid answering my question when it’s not a divine taboo? Does she truly not understand that someone so close to me hiding something is unbearable?

Rage started surging in my eyes, overflowing with questions.

[Look at those eyes? I must be really scrumptious, huh? Wanting to gobble me up?]

Facing my glare, Ceyram sneered at me.

[Why? Going to torture information out of me like you did those trash you killed?]

“I wouldn’t put it past myself.”

Suddenly, the true form of the demonic sword, aglow with crimson aura, was in my hand.

[You’re going to use me and bring me down? That’s a considerable amount of confidence, master.]

Then, as if pitying me, she stretched out her hand and gently caressed my cheek with her cold touch.

[You’ve grown so much. The nervy little brat has become tall enough to look down on me now. It must’ve been around this time when that imbecile child was...]

“What?”

[Just keep growing like this, my master. It makes it worthwhile for me to follow you.]

-Swish

With those words, Ceyram disappeared into the mist, retreating back into the sword. I hurriedly tried to call her back by infusing the blade with my energy but...

“ ... ”

There was no response. It was as if the sword’s soul had once again entered a deep slumber.

\* \* \*

“Welcome to the City of Beginnings, Severus!”

Having cleared the checkpoint, Silica wasted no time in passing through the city gates. She entered alone, without any guards that resembled knights of the holy order or anyone else.

The capital of the Ushif Empire, Severus. It was Silica’s first visit in seven years since the royal banquet, although as the eldest daughter of the Nigrity family, she had already visited several times under different names. So today, she came as neither a Lord of Mist but as the legitimate daughter of the Nigrity family and a former royal academy instructor.

Not long after passing through the gate, a group of men appeared and blocked her way.

“Are you the Lady Silica Nigrity?”

“Yes.”

“Please follow us, we will guide you.”

Silica followed them without apparent reservation. Whether it was because they were mindful of the bystanders or their upright posture and heavy footsteps befitting trained knights, Silica could immediately tell.

The group reached a plain-looking house, and without hesitation, Silica entered. Inside was a multitude of knights far greater than those who had guided her. Among them was a very welcome face.

“It’s been a long time, Teacher Silica.”

The Lady Silica Nigrity of the Nigrity Earl’s family. I greet Your Highness, Princess Arin.”

They reunited after seven years since Silica had resigned as an instructor. As the offspring of the Earl’s family, Silica bowed respectfully to her, a member of the royal family.

“There’s no need for such formalities in private, Teacher.”

Princess Arin greeted her using the title of teacher.

“I apologize for the rudeness of bringing you to such an unworthy place.”

“It’s thoughtful of you, considering I prefer to avoid crowded places, Your Highness. Please don’t worry about it.”

It wasn’t a request from the royal family, but a personal one from the princess herself. That, and the fact that she, someone who hadn’t been treated with the proper respect due to her within the palace, could command a unit of knights—these circumstances certainly warranted Silica’s attention.

“Please forgive the unnecessary delay. Let’s not waste more time.”

With great sincerity, Princess Arin skipped formalities and went straight to the point, offering Silica an unmarked, black book.

[Dio Hapencus];, read the name written on the back of the book. Silica was taken aback momentarily but didn’t reveal her surprise; instead, she looked at Arin and asked,

“What is this book?”

“It’s ‘The Teachings of the Mist,’ recently distributed to various monasteries across the empire.”

Silica frowned, not in feigned confusion but real. Although she knew as the Lord of Mist, it was a fact the royal family hadn’t made public. By disclosing this secret imperial project, Arin had placed Silica in an utterly bewildering situation.

“What do you mean by that, Your Highness?”

Instead of answering the question, Princess Arin handed her another document.

“This is an official document from the royal family that will be sent to each city and noble family of the empire. I wish for you to be the first to take a look.”

Silica scrutinized the content with a mix of doubt and curiosity. She couldn’t believe her eyes.

“Disbanding the Knights of Light? What exactly are you thinking, Your Highness?”

“What do you think is the purpose of the Knights of Light, Teacher?”

Caught off-guard by the pointed question, Silica struggled to respond.

“To maintain order centered around the light and carry on the peace of the continent. By the name of the God of Light, Lumen Del, the Knights of Light have suppressed and oppressed any opposing forces, just as they did with the creatures of the mist in the old days...”

Arin’s eyes hardened with resolve and indifference, a stark contrast to the naive princess from her academy days.

“However, recent events spurred me to question if the light is truly the sole mediator to guide us. Can it lead us after all?”

Hastily, Silica read through the rest of the document. It detailed how the spiritual leader of the Knights of Light, Saintess Nephrodite, had plotted to use the White Elves in Garam Kingdom.

“Is this true, revealed by the Saintess herself?”

“Yes, but she took her own life while returning to the palace, seeking forgiveness for her transgressions before the deity.”

Silica’s eyes trembled in shock.

“So, I concluded The Knights of Light are no longer capable of maintaining the order of light. Their role for the continent’s peace ends here.”

“So you mean to say, you want to establish another force to take on their role?” Silica clarified.

Arin did not deny her deduction. In the midst of a strained silence, a man approached them.

“It’s been a while, Instructor Silica.”

“?!”

Silica’s face suddenly turned to stone at his appearance.

“The years haven’t changed you one bit despite the time that’s passed.”

The man greeted her with clear joy. Silica forced down any semblance of discomfort and covered it with a smile.

“Boris? Is that really you, Boris?”

“It’s a relief you still remember me; I was worried you might have forgotten.”

“How could I forget? I’m just taken aback. Never in my dreams did I think I’d meet you here.”

Her words carried a hint of genuine feeling. Boris then moved behind Princess Arin as if he had always belonged there, his actions were too natural.

“Boris will explain the reason for calling you here, Teacher.”

Having finished her part, Princess Arin stood up.

“Until we meet again, Teacher...”

And with that, she left with her knights, leaving only Silica and Boris in the house.

“Your acting is truly impressive, Silica. It’s commendable even after seven years.”

His sincerity was evident as Boris applauded her.

“It doesn’t seem like a particularly nice place, so I wonder if there’s a reason why this was chosen?”

The blue blade at Silica’s sleeve was already pointing towards Boris.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 200**

Chapter 200: Whisper of Secrets (2)

For hours on end, I've done nothing but gaze intently at the body of the demonic sword laying bare on the table.

Not a whisper of energy nor the slightest aura emanates from it.

It shows no reaction to what I might do next, not so blatant that it's as if it already knows.

Ordinarily, I might have taken the sword's silence as playing hard to get and moved on, but not this time.

For the first time, I sense a stark distance between her and me.

"Well, this is unexpected!"

Just like yesterday, the retired knight sat down heavily in front of me, a broad smile on his face.

"Who could have thought you'd be here waiting for me!"

Unlike his evident joy, my face reflected no such warmth.

"Did your chat with the lady of the demonic sword conclude well?"

I, of course, did not reply.

Waiting for an answer, he caught sight of the demonic sword on the table and coughed uncomfortably.

"It's fine! You know what they say about a woman's heart, right? It sways like reeds in the wind but always sways back!"

"Cut to the chase, shall we?"

Against my expectation, Jereon responded with a shrug, showing curiosity.



“What talk are you referring to?”

“Didn’t you intend to enlighten me about the book’s author, Dio Hapencus?”

“Oh, right! I did consider gracing you with such a favor, didn’t I?”

At that moment, when his scheming gaze met mine, a frigid energy surged from within, enveloping me completely.

“But, the terms weren’t right last time, and I tried to accommodate. Now, the situation has changed, hasn’t it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s now a situation in which you should be gracious towards me.”

A grin flickered across my face in disbelief.

“Are you struggling that hard to shorten your remaining days?”

“It’s fine if you don’t want the story. But I wouldn’t recommend that. I’ve made it clear to my men before coming here.”

Jereon watched me with boundless self-assurance.

“If I don’t return by sunset today, they’ll immediately send a full report to the Order of Light Knights. Tell them I’ve been abducted by a true follower of the mist, and ask them to come quickly to the rescue!”

A deceitful old man, indeed.

Yet, not the type to give me pause.

“I can tell by a mere glance what kind of person you are. The kind who loathes getting dragged into bothersome situations. Am I wrong?”

He hit the nail on the head.

Whether the Knight of Light Order or the Light Legion comes, from my stance, they are all the same.

Of course, I am confident I could resolve matters swiftly.

But the issue remains,

“Did your cunning tongue help you climb to the rank of Commander?”

“In part, indeed.”

That I couldn't refute his words was troubling.

If I killed him after extracting information poorly, it would only create more troubles later on.

That's not a preferable outcome.

“My stance remains unchanged. It's a simple exchange of information for mutual benefit.”

“Information about the true followers of the mist?”

“It was until yesterday, but things have changed today. What I want to know is about you!”

I stared him down wordlessly, my gaze hard.

Slightly contemptuous.

“Geez, you're quite the grim looker. Now that it's out you're the owner of the demonic sword, doesn't it follow that you'd also be the star of that event seven years ago? Why keep secrets now? I promise, upon my very life, that I won't reveal the story we share today.”

Thereupon, he drew his sword and performed the Knight's Oath in earnest.

I exhaled a rotten sigh towards the ceiling in resignation.

“So, it seems we've reached an understanding. Well, I guess it's time I shared what you're curious about regarding the name Dio Hapencus.”

I remained silent in response.

“Let me start with a simple introduction. Hapencus is a name from an old era, known to have followed the Black Mist.”

His nonchalance shattered in an instant.

What? Followers of the Black Mist?

Continuing as if he expected my reaction, Jereon said,

“About 30 years ago, when I newly took command of the Order of Light Knights, I had a private conversation with the saintess Nephrodite. She asked me point blank if I knew why we needed to disperse the mist.”

It was a rather enigmatic question.

“Her answer involved the Hapencus family. Oh, let me preface with this. The saintess of the Light Knights that you’re aware of is actually...”

“A White Elf?”

His triumphant expression contorted in surprise.

“Ah, you knew?”

“Just continue with your story.”

Jereon resumed, clearing the awkwardness in his throat.

“Ever wonder why we, followers of the mist, face such relentless persecution in this land?”

If I were to answer, it would likely be due to those intent on preserving the old order.

Including that saintess and a few others linked to me.

“She told me. Simply because there’s precedent. According to her, followers of the mist not only disturbed the peace of old but also incited bloodshed among the gods themselves. As a messenger who listens to the voice of the Light God, she’s a living witness to that history.”

The origin of all evil.

An angle largely viewed from the victor’s perspective, I surmised.

Though not of great significance.

“We didn’t live in those times, so what can we know? We can, however, speculate. The author of this book, Dio Hapencus, likely had connections to the Black Mist’s followers before you.”

He leaned back as if he’d said all that he could.

The Hapencus family, known to have supported the Black Mist in an old era.

Ceyram seemed particularly sensitive to this name.

Almost as if it's something I shouldn't know.

[It must have been around then. That fool too...]

Was it related to the fool that Ceyram mentioned to me?

If so, then this Dio fellow might have been...

"Lord Jereon!!"

A desperate call broke my heavy musings.

A middle-aged man, seemingly one of the old man's subordinates, rushed up from the first floor.

"Weren't you ordered to wait outside my tavern?"

"I apologize! However, there's urgent news..."

The man whispered something into Jereon's ear as if it were a secret. Trying to ignore it and focus on my thoughts, my eyes closed—only to snap open at the sound of a slam.

Jereon stood up, pushing his seat violently.

"The saintess is dead?"

\* \* \*

Untrue smiles exchanged, the tension thick even as Boris's face remained a picture of tranquility.

"There are knights outside. Do you think if you kill me now, you could escape this place without issue?"

"If anyone else, perhaps, but you know that's not my style, don't you?"

"Even so, your successor's fate would surely be of concern, wouldn't it?"

"Don't overstep. You just might push me to the point of not caring about successors either."

Silica, who had momentarily drawn a hidden blade, sat back down, her face returning to its previously gentle expression.

"Were you unaware that I've been at the royal palace?"

“I also am not unaware that I’ve saved your life several times. You seemed quite adept, not only in magic but also in tightrope walking.”

Silica knew full well Boris had been in the palace for some time, and she’d been monitoring him since, but for some reason, Boris hadn’t breathed a word about Sian or Mist.

Otherwise, she couldn’t have set foot in the palace as the eldest daughter of the Nigrity family.

“It wasn’t easy to turn an incompetent princess into a capable puppet. You’d have made a name for yourself had you continued at the academy.”

“You jest. I simply pointed her in a direction. Everything else is entirely her own making.”

Boris’s gaze shifted to the black book on the table.

“People’s minds are straightforward. They’re more attracted to what they can see rather than hear a hundred times. After that incident seven years ago, the princess began questioning. She doubted whether the Black Mist was truly the malevolent force disrupting our order.”

“So you enlightened her about the truth?”

“I merely pointed her towards discovery.”

Boris continued with a triumphant look.

“It’s simple. Give power to that ‘something.’ All things reveal their true nature when granted power. You of the mist should be no different, right?”

A chaos of conjecture snapped into clear understanding, shaking Silica.

“What are you planning now?”

“Nothing significant. Just planning to give you a bit more power.”

He lifted the book, showing it off to her.

“Dio Hapencus. Surely you, serving the god of the Black Mist, haven’t missed that name. Soon, the people of the continent will realize, through the teachings in this book, that mist is not as terrible as it’s made out to be...”

“Are you sure you can handle the consequences? What are you expecting us to do with these followers?”

“Do as you please. If possible, do everything in your power.”

Silica pondered.

This loathsome man must have reasons for glibly spewing their plans, especially to her.

Otherwise, he wouldn't show such brash confidence.

“Rest assured. The princess doesn't know you're Mist's leader. She thinks she will discuss the next steps with me following the Order's disbandment. In reality, that's already happening.”

Light's Order won't sit idly by once disbanded; they will act to fill the gap, along with advancing new plans—Silica knew this well.

“It seems I need to advance our plans.”

Without showing her hand, she replied with a leisurely smile.

“The day when your overbearing face gets twisted up like trash, that's what I'm waiting for. Our plans might need an acceleration as well.”

“I look forward to that. To see whose face distorts first, it's genuinely thrilling.”

With these final words, Silica rose and exited. Boris, left alone, looked up at the ceiling and muttered softly,

“Due time approaches. The dawn of a new era. Just like back then...”

(To be continued)