

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 2

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Episode 2: The Incompetent Son of a Duke (1)

Creation Year 985, March 1st.

Currently, I am 10 years old.

I have returned exactly 27 years to the past, from the moment I was betrayed and faced the blade meant for me.

I've assumed that I've returned to the past, but everything still feels incredibly confusing.

To think that I traveled back in time...

I've never heard of such magic in my life, nor did I think it was possible.

In typical novels, they call this 'regression'...

But to be frank, there's a chance I'm just a lunatic, lost in delusion, right?

Still, to better understand my current situation, there are a few things that need to be confirmed.

Absentmindedly chewing on meat, I reached for the vase on the table.

...It's heavy.

Even with both hands, it's a struggle to keep it steady—a sure sign of the frail ten-year-old body I once inhabited.

Next, I plucked a single flower from the vase.

Aiming the knife, previously used for slicing meat, at the petals, I struck it in mid-air.

-Tock tock tock

Six petals fall without any deviation—an indication that my abilities of focus and reflex seem to have remained intact, much like when I caught the sculpture before.

These skills certainly didn't belong to my 10-year-old self.

“.....Emily?”

“What is it, young master?”

Emily, who had been brewing tea for dessert, replied with an indifferent expression.

“What do you think about me in this house?”

“What kind of question is that? You’re the incompetent one who can’t do anything.”

Her blunt response came without a second’s hesitation.

But that was the confirmation I needed—almost 99% sure now.

I’ve returned to the past with all the memories and senses from my previous life.

You might wonder how the words ‘an incompetent who can’t do anything’ could provide such certainty, but it’s an entirely fitting description of my situation.

I was the powerless, inept son of the Duke, ridiculed even by my personal maid and never once capable of angering her.

Siân Vert in his tenth year—that was exactly who I used to be.

A time when nobody turned their eyes to me, when expectations were non-existent—the most miserable era of my life.

How is this even possible?

Even transcendent mages couldn’t defy the natural course of time with regression—so this was certainly inexplicable.

Is it some kind of prank by the god of time?

“You finished your meal faster than expected, young master.”

Emily commented, noticing my empty plate.

“What’s wrong with finishing my food?”

“Well, it’s just that today you are supposed to attend the fencing duel, right? Yesterday you were lamenting how you wished the day wouldn’t come.....”

Memories from thirty years ago flashed through my mind.

The first day of every month, a fencing duel is conducted in the domain.

Today was March 1st, exactly one year before my enrollment at the Royal Academy—a crucial event observed by Duke Vert himself.

Fencing and the Duke...

At the time, those were the two things I dreaded the most.

* * *

Under the blue sky, a white dueling ground unfolded.

The ground was already packed with soldiers from the domain.

In terms of size, it was equivalent to a company of troops or more.

It was not just soldiers in attendance; servants from the house and related personnel of the Duke were also present.

There was only one reason they were all there—to witness the fencing duel between the Duke's heirs.

Well, what can I say? It's a strange feeling.

The nostalgic sensation you get when you return home, perhaps?

Although back then, I would have rather died than come here, now it just looks like indifferent stone paving.

“Aren't you nervous? You seem rather calm?”

Surprised by my usual impassivity, Emily asked with a hint of curiosity.

“Well, there doesn't seem to be any reason to be nervous.....”

From the way she cocked her head, it was clear she found my behavior unfamiliar.

That's not unreasonable.

As she'd said before, in the past, I was the incompetent fool of this household.

Even if I stood in the dueling ground, instead of swinging a sword, I'd just tremble ridiculously until I was beaten.

Because of this, nobody ever had any expectations or interest in me...

Only the strong and capable are valued—a meritocracy at its core.

And that was the ethos of Duke Vert's household, charged with the duty to defend the continent.

"The Duke has arrived!"

Following the robust call of a knight, those bustling about began to settle into their places.

Moments later, Duke Vert unveiled himself at the entrance of the dueling ground, and the senior knights executed their salutes with swords.

"....."

With a serene smile, the Duke swept past them gracefully.

Following him were the Duchess and the Duke's fourth son, Kranz Vert.

-Swish

The Duke, with a refined motion, discarded his cloak and took his seat with no hint of his age nearing fifty, his sturdy physique and comeliness still evident.

"Let's begin without delay."

There was no need for wasteful ceremonies before the meal.

Upon the Duke's command, a blond-haired boy who was following him stepped towards the center of the dueling ground.

The fourth son of the Duke, Kranz Vert, a boy of the same age as myself, although a half-brother from a different mother.

As Kranz made his move, I too rose from my seat.

"Your sword, young master."

Emily handed me a sword as I stood to proceed to the duel.

It was a slender rapier, embedded with a blue gem.

All the heirs of the Vert family receive swords from the Duke upon reaching the age of seven.

Presented with the meaning to cultivate the power to protect themselves and the world, it was a rite of passage.

However, I had never utilized this sword appropriately thus far.

"Why not just surrender and come down?"

Rather than encouragement, she greeted me with a sarcastic remark; what an invaluable maid indeed.

“Surrender? All I have to do is win and come back.”

“Just come back uninjured, please.....”

She gave me a concerned look, to which I responded with a quiet smile.

With preparations complete, I stepped into the center of the dueling ground to face Kranz.

When we reached a distance of three steps from each other, the dueling officer instructed us to bow to one another.

While I bowed without issue, an irritating voice caught my attention.

“You actually showed up instead of running away?”

I looked up to meet Kranz’s face directly.

His sneer bore contempt, dripping with malice that implied I was nothing more than a stepping stone to elevate him.

As I beheld that smile, my mind flooded with thoughts.

The legitimate son of the Duke versus the bastard whose mother’s identity was unknown.

The comparison essentially ended there.

From birth, Kranz had enjoyed tremendous support from his maternal side, indulging in food of a quality that was worlds apart from mine.

I never envied him for that; I simply accepted it as the natural order.

Only later did I realize how foolish that was...

Although it’s nothing more than two ten-year-old boys clashing swords, the fencing duel holds tremendous significance within the Vert household.

Boys of 10, soon leaving the family to head for the Royal Academy.

At that pivotal moment, this fencing duel is a trial set by the family head.

Meaning, failure to impress today equates to slipping completely from the Duke’s regard.

No heir of the Verts would be unaware of what that entails.

In a past life, I was defeated in this vital duel.

And to be more precise, I was horribly beaten.

It's hard to even describe it as a duel, considering how miserably I was bested.

But that didn't change anything.

No one ever expected me to win in the first place.

Sian Vert, the useless child of the family, wasn't expected to subdue Kranz, an adept who'd completed professional training—truthfully, not even I entertained that thought.

Wasn't it obvious?

For an incompetent who never puts in the effort to defeat a talented person was impossible from the start.

Since my defeat was the routinely expected outcome, no one was surprised.

However, after the duel, father summoned me and said these words,

“Don't do anything.”

What did that imply?

He meant since I had fallen out of his favor, I should cease all effort.

How could a parent make such a heartless statement about their child?

Yet, this is Vert, the Duke's residence.

Here, the concept of noble dignity and parental warmth is nothing but superficial etiquette.

Only strong children who can carry on the Vert mission survive.

Casually, I lifted my head and surveyed the entire dueling ground.

Easily more than a hundred spectators were looking at Kranz and me.

None of them were expecting my victory.

“.....”

Suddenly, as I was shifting my gaze, I locked eyes with the Duke for a brief moment.

I quickly looked away, but even in that short instant, I caught it clearly.

Expectation.

In contrast to everyone's assumptions of my defeat, the Duke harbored some anticipation that I would show something remarkable.

In a previous life, I utterly shattered that expectation.

But what about today?

An undefinable smile spread across my lips.

-Boom boom boom!

With the pounding of drums signaling the start of the duel, Kranz unsheathed his sword and pointed it at me.

I too drew my sword calmly.

The blade reflected the sunlight and emitted a bewitching blue light.

Unlike the heaviness I felt in the past, my sword now felt almost weightless.

-Thud

Without giving me time to gauge, Kranz immediately charged.

In his view, I wasn't even worth considering—was that it?

I watched him silently as he closed the gap with rapid strides.

His confidence at my seemingly defenseless stance must have amused him.

Yet despite his smile, he was prepared to deflect my sword.

I could clearly trace the trajectory of his sword.

Using the momentum of his charge, he went to strike with full force.

At that moment, I thought,

Is he moving or is this just a snail?

There was no need to block. I merely stepped aside and avoided his blow.

“...!”

Our eyes met as a surprised Kranz stumbled, losing his balance from a missed strike—and I didn't waste the opportunity.

I raised my sword and slashed down at his.

-Clang!

Kranz's sword went tumbling to the ground.

Stunned, he watched as his sword fell, making no attempt to retrieve it as he clutched at his ankle, wincing in pain.

For all intents and purposes, the duel was already over.

Had I pointed my sword at Kranz's throat, victory would have been mine.

“.....”

But somehow, that didn't feel satisfying.

A feeling of emptiness lingered at the back of my mind.

Insufficiency.

Ending it like this felt sorely lacking.

There was a desire to further crush him, to stand assertively above him—and that desire surged from within.

The will quickly transformed into action.

-Thump

My foot shot forward and struck Kranz's head.

Compensating the lack of strength with precision, my blow landed perfectly on his temple.

The impact was more than Kranz could bear, and down he fell, lifeless.

-Thunk

The fallen heir of the Verts, now a pitiful sight dribbling all manner of saliva.

Standing over him was I, Sian Vert, the one scorned as the useless member of the family.

Without concern, I aimed my sword at his throat.

“.....”

Silence ensued.

Caught off guard by the unexpected, were they all momentarily paralyzed?

Not long after, amidst the rugged drumbeats, the duel officer announced with a booming voice,

“The duel is concluded! The victor is Sian Vert!”

(To be continued)