

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

## **Chapter 21 - 25**

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 21: The Strongest in the Demon Realm (2)

In the royal mansion situated within Belias, Princess Arin had succeeded in rendezvousing with the reinforcements. Escorted by imperial knights, she crossed over the boundary gate and arrived at this place. From early evening till dawn, it had been a long day that wholly consumed her. She was tremendously tired both in body and spirit, but her weary eyes refused to close.

-Knock knock.

“Come in.....”

As she replied with a somewhat feeble voice, a woman with an extremely tense expression cautiously opened the door and entered.

“Ex, excuse me. Your Highness!”

It was Sian’s maid, Emily.

“Thanks for coming. I know you must have been resting, and I apologize for calling you so abruptly.”

“No, no, it’s not ridiculous at all, Your Highness! I am truly grateful to have been summoned.....!”

Emily’s rigid shoulders and shrunk neck revealed how nervous she was.

Just a few hours ago, they had rushed over with her in their arms. The awkwardness now felt incongruous with that memory, making Princess Arin increasingly uneasy.

“Why express gratitude? I’m not someone worthy of...”

“Come on! Meeting with Your Highness is of course an honor! I probably won’t forget today for the rest of my life!”

“Is that so?”

Despite her appearances, the maid seemed rather simple.

Arin had called her without much thought, but was now perplexed as to where to begin or what to say first.

The words she wanted to say struggled to find their way out, leaving her to idly bite her innocent lip.

“First of all, I should apologize. I’m truly sorry for dragging you into this mess because of my foolishness…….”

Unable to meet Emily’s eyes, Arin turned her head as she spoke with difficulty.

Unlike the troubled princess, Emily hands waved energetically in denial.

“Why are you apologizing, Your Highness? It’s not your fault! It’s those vile demons who should be sorry! Why did they have to appear in droves precisely on the day of your arrival……!”

“It’s not that!”

The princess inadvertently shut her eyes tight and raised her voice.

Emily continued to look around, wondering what she had done wrong.

“Because of me… your master is in trouble…. Because of my foolishness in coming to your side…. Your master trying to protect me……”

She had regretted it during that brief time, again and again.

If she hadn’t been there at that time, at that place, none of this would have happened.

Someone’s child and someone’s master had suffered a mishap because of the bravado of an incapable princess.

Feeling a paralyzing helplessness that made it seem impossible to face anyone, tears welled up in the princess’s eyes.

However, Emily, as if oblivious to the situation, continued to blink innocently.

“If you are speaking of our young master, I am under the impression that he has not perished?”

The chances of survival were slim for that young body, devoid of any strength to cut through the currents.

Frankly speaking, it seemed like an inevitable death scenario to everyone.

“Do you mean to say that you believe your master is still alive?”

“Of course! My young master hasn’t passed away!”

Princess Arin doubted her own ears.

“How could he be alive? Even if he fell into the water, the fall was an impossible height! The rainfall must have increased the current’s speed, it’s more strange for him to be alive, isn’t it?”

“Ah, you have no idea how tenacious my young master is! He wouldn’t die so easily! Maybe he swam or grabbed onto a branch, whatever he did, he’ll definitely come back!”

Princess Arin considered one thing for sure.

Setting everything aside, she could clearly discern this much.

This maid was speaking from the heart without any pretense.

Perhaps she was the only one in the world who believed he was still alive.

“I’ve heard it over and over again on my way here. Everyone lamented saying there’s no chance for the young master to have survived, but strangely I never felt that way! I always had this feeling that he would return soon as if nothing happened!”

This feeling was strangely persuasive.

While she might have spent a longer time with him than the princess had, it was not easy to think this emphatically.

But, conversely, it showed how much trust the maid had in her master.

“You believe in him. In your master...”

The princess's anxious heart seemed to slightly ease.

It was somewhat comforting knowing that there was someone who still held hope for his survival.

“What kind of person was your master?”

The conversation naturally shifted towards Sian.

Emily thought for a moment, then stuck out her lips, unable to figure out how to express herself.

“Well..., originally he was considered completely useless, to the point where he couldn't do anything in the family. Almost every servant in the mansion didn't even know if he existed, his presence was that negligible.”

The young master was neglected even by the servants, an unnoticed figure among prominent offspring.

That was Sian Vert's original image.

“But about two months ago, I think? The young master changed bizarrely after a duel with the fourth young master. It felt as if he suddenly started displaying abilities he had kept hidden until that moment...”

“Hidden abilities?”

“Yes! Ever since then, he's truly become a different person! Suddenly declaring he wanted to join the frontlines, he then received recognition from the Duke himself. I just followed him, surprised...”

Her beaming smile seemed genuine, devoid of any deception.

It somehow made sense why this nonchalant man brought this maid along with him.

“Don't worry too much, Your Highness! You'll see our young master's stern face again before long!”

“I hope so... that would be really great...”

However, reality was much harsher than desires, preventing her from fully letting go of her worries.

Princess Arin could only hope that she would see his face once more.

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“Phewah!”

The moment he savored the sweet taste of fresh air, all the pent-up strength drained from him.

“Ptooeey! Ptooeey!”

He spat out all the impurities in his mouth and struggled onto dry land with great effort.

While the ground was unbearably hard and uneven, it felt like the most comfortable bed in the world to him at that moment.

“Ah... what a dreadful struggle.”

It was all fine and dandy leaping into the Blood River, but what followed was considerably more tiresome.

Despite holding his breath, the stench that seeped into his nose and the horrid sensation of corpses touching him made him feel revolted.

The grotesque aquatic demons feeding on those corpses added to the chaos, turning it into a total mess of a party.

If that damned dragon had been obedient from the start, none of this would have happened.

If I ever encounter it again, I'll grind its wings so it can't escape, then chew off everything from the horns on its head to the claws on its toes!

As he snapped out of these futile thoughts, a long sigh escaped him.

I should have kept doing what I was doing from the start. Showing off has only left my body feeling wrecked.

It wasn't just me who came close to wreckussian. In my stretched-out right hand was Ceyram, having transformed somewhat.

The pale violet blade was nowhere to be found, replaced by a murky state smeared in dark red fluids, looking nothing like a demon sword.

“Did you die, Ceyram?”

Expecting an answer despite the silence, I cautiously asked.

[...Don't make me talk.]

The heavy, reluctant words caused my relaxed muscles to tense up again.

A voice filled with all the annoyance in the world.

I better not push any further, or that sword's liable to stab me without a second thought.

Quietly standing up, I created a sphere of water the size of a fist with my hand.

-Swish swish

The pure water, free of impurities, gently cleaned off the grime clinging to Ceyram.

After some washing up, the mist cleared and Ceyram's true form re-emerged.

[Urgh, I hate this sticky feeling!]

“Once we get back, I'll give you a proper wash, so hold on for now.”

Ceyram's rigid gaze still held a heavy amount of irritation.

[Ha? Do you even think of returning? Do you have any clue where you've ended up?]

“Well, it's definitely not the frontlines...”

The sky was a deeper red than the one above the frontlines.

The air was thick with heat, unnaturally uncomfortable, and a chilling cold grazed at my skin.

At first glance, it was an awkward space that seemed vastly inconvenient for any human life.

The name of this place was known as the Demon Realm.

In the end, I had come full circle and landed back on this dreadful soil.

Wow, how long has it been since I've been here?

It was so nostalgic I felt like jumping for joy.

[Is this really the time to be lost in recollection? Snap out of it!]

Always so temperamental...

I know it's not a time to be lost in nostalgia.

Since I'm here in the Demon Realm, I'll eventually have to go back. The knights are probably scouring every nook of the gorge looking for me by now.

I need to rush back and be "found" in an unconscious state as soon as I can; otherwise, I might miss the right moment to return entirely.

Turning my head, I checked the state of the Blood River.

The calm rippling of the water's surface suggested an improvement from before.

If I followed the river upstream, I could likely return without a hitch...

It seems I've really gotten myself a long way off.

The distance to Remia Gorge looked incredibly vast.

I had better hurry if I wanted to be found at an appropriate time.

"Grrrr..."

An unexpected sound of a dog's growling.

Turning in the direction of the noise, a pack of Hellhounds had appeared.

This was rather timely, as I needed to replenish my vitality.

Having partied hard in the Blood River, I was fairly famished.

“Growl!”

Though the Hellhounds charged with great bravery, their heads fell as I casually swung my blade through the air.

As always, I picked a head of a decent size and bit down into it.

[Hey...]

The taste was now as familiar as water itself.

The initial bitter flavor that I experienced the first time was now almost fragrant.

[Hey, Master...]

I wondered if I'd eventually start searching for blood rather than water.

If I ever got addicted to this, it'd be quite the trouble...

[Look behind you, you fool!!!]

A bellow loud enough to burst an eardrum caused me to drop the head I was holding.

Startled, I turned to Ceyram, who was looking somewhere with a serious gaze.

“Ah, why would you scream all of a sudden while I'm eating...?”

“Look at that! Didn't I tell you that something amusing would happen~?”

“...!”

Humans have a limit to their memory; they can't recall all their past experiences.

However, there are some memories that are so absolute that they cannot be forgotten no matter what.



Even in a life lived twice, that memory, that existence, that voice was unavoidable!

I hadn't verified it yet, but I knew who this cocky voice belonged to.

Slowly turning my head, I followed Ceyram's gaze.

There, crouched on a low cliff, was a man looking down at me.

At the sight of his face, my 99% speculation became 100% certainty.

"You're human, right?"

The man was grinning with a carefree smile.

Even though I found myself in the Demon Realm, the first demon I encountered had to be this guy?

Why on earth was this demon, no, this man here?

Demon King Belkarion.

The strongest in the Demon Realm, who had fought the most terrible blood battle with me in my previous life, was now right before my eyes.

(To be continued)

footnote-1

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 22**

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 22

Chapter 22: The Strongest in the Demon Realm (3)

Demon King Belkarion.

Those who had witnessed him during the war with the demon legions all agreed:

“It’s as if all evil in the world has been gathered into one place.”

He was a being who thoroughly negated the inner workings of sentiment, which according to legend the Creator had endowed all life with during the creation of the world.

An existence of such a level that it could not be fully expressed by any negative words, a being that gave a sense of incomprehensibility and rejection that could not be understood.

Even I, who had made a contract with a god, felt fear for the first time in the presence of this being.

Perhaps even the gods would fear this man.

The wild throbbing of my heart spoke for the current instability of my emotions.

“Are you human or not? Why aren’t you answering?”

Belkarion pressed for an answer at my lack of response.

“Are you mute? Or do you not understand what I’m saying?”

It was not that I did not understand; I heard every single word.

Belkarion, who had jumped off a cliff, landed casually on the ground where I stood.

“Judging by your appearance, you look like a young child, maybe 10 years old at most, but you’re quite daring. To kill a hellhound in one blow and even dare to drink its blood?”

With each step he took towards me, suppressed memories from the past surfaced.

The thrill of facing the strongest being.

The chilling cold penetrating to the bone and the rising bloodlust.

An overwhelming emotion was consuming my inner self – the belief that I had to pour everything into this, without thought for what came after.

I silently extended both hands forward.

“.....?”

Crossed wrists and the pointed end of a sword aimed forward, two eyes set over the curved space.

I had adopted the optimal defensive stance considering all possible scenarios.

Watching this, Belkarion burst out laughing.

“Ha-ha! Isn’t this amusing? Hey, relax! Who told you to kill...!”

Belkarion’s mocking demeanor froze in an instant.

Only about ten steps separated the Demon King from me.

Although we were close enough to fall on each other, no more was permitted.

Even if not visible, a red circular boundary was already established around me.

If he took even one step further, he would enter into the domain of my killing sword (살검), which I had designed.

A smile returned to Belkarion’s face, which had been stiff just a moment before.

“The potential for growth of your race is indeed infinite, isn’t it?”

Responding to my murderous intent, an indescribable, formidable aura of killing intent rose from the body of the demon king.

“Do you want to fight me, little one?”

In his extended right hand, not mana, but another kind of energy was gathering.

A power that humans could not wield, unique to the demon race.

Both sides were prepared, and what remained was to see whose foot would step forward first.

[By the way, who is that?]

Ceyram, who had been silently watching, finally spoke up.

“The Demon King.”

Contrary to expectation, she did not seem surprised.

It seemed she had already guessed his identity from the first time they met.

[Then is he the one who I destroyed even his soul in my past life?]

“Well, fundamentally speaking...”

To be precise, what Ceyram had annihilated was not the Demon King himself, but the Death Sword (사검) that the Demon King possessed.

However, the Demon King did not hold the Death Sword in his hands now.

Upon scanning his entire body, there was nothing that seemed to resemble a sword.

Since it wasn't a small blade like Ceyram carried, it would certainly have been obvious if he had it.

Is he without it now?

[So, do you honestly think you can win with your body in such a mess?]

Honestly, the chances were not necessarily high even if I had said I didn't have a chance.

As Ceyram indicated, my body was not in a normal state at the moment.

Due to being caught up in various events throughout the night and using my power consistently, my energy was nearly exhausted.

My hand holding Ceyram unknowingly trembled slightly.

This was an all-too-slim chance to gamble on...

Could I really win a fight against this Demon King now?

– Snap!

“.....?”

Suddenly, the power that had been condensing in the Demon King’s hand dissipated in a flash.

Lifting my head in confusion, I saw him gesturing at me to stop with his hand.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. What would I gain from fighting a child as small as an acorn... Don’t be on your guard so much, kid.”

The killing intention that was once full to the brim in his eyes had disappeared.

I was hesitant, but I couldn’t let my guard down.

When I raised my sword even higher for alertness, the Demon King dropped to the ground in exasperation.

“I’m really not going to do anything! As much of a troublemaker as I am, I don’t bother kids! If it doesn’t work, shall we lay down and talk like this? Like this? Are you reassured now?”

The Demon King’s pathetic state was truly unlike what I expected.

Moved by his pleading, I unknowingly lowered my sword and relaxed my guard.

“You’re a suspicious little guy, aren’t you? But judging by this, you’re not the type to get backstabbed later on.”

“.....!”

I flinched at the mention of a backstab, but did not show it and continued to gaze at him restrainedly.

“Now, let’s get back to the previous question, are you a human, kid?”

I nodded silently in reply.

“How did you end up here?”

“...I was swept away by the current.”

“Swept away by the current? So you came here involuntarily?”

After a moment's hesitation, I nodded once more.

I had responded to his question, but he seemed to be asking purely out of curiosity, without any malice.

"Then what's your real identity? You carry an unusual presence for someone who looks so young, ripe with killing intent."

"An average human..."

I spoke, finding no suitable description.

"Heh! You don't really expect me to believe that, do you? Why would an average human drink the blood of a hellhound? That's not even part of your diet. Or were you so hungry that you couldn't see anything else?"

"Why should you care what someone else eats?"

I gave a brash reply that could provoke his emotions, but the Demon King retained his unchanging smile.

"The kid has quite a temper. True to what you say, it's none of my business what you eat, but let's say my warning was just a friendly advice. You've obviously had more than one or two, and who knows, the scent of that might attract some terrible beasts looking for you?"

I wasn't surprised by the information; I was already aware of it.

Seeing my rather calm face, Belkarion looked puzzled for a moment and then tilted his head.

"Hey, kid. Despite my looks, I have quite a prestigious position in this land you're standing on, you know? There isn't a demon in this realm that doesn't know me....."

That would be expected, living in the Demon Realm and not knowing the Demon King would be nonsensical.

"But you're a human and not a demon, and it's your first time here in the Demon Realm, right?"

I nodded one more time.

“So surely we have never met before, but your face now is quite peculiar? Even the way you were on guard earlier, it’s as if you know who I am……”

He was sharper than I thought.

To calm myself down, I swallowed the dry saliva in my mouth.

As I did, a streak of sweat that had trickled down from my head followed the path of my neck downwards.

“You… have you seen me before……?”

“No, we’ve never met.”

Of course, within this lifetime.

My response was quicker than his question, and while it could seem suspicious, he seemed to accept it.

“Anyway, children these days are exceptionally perceptive, aren’t they? Maybe humans have that kind of indifference?”

Frankly, I found it quite curious that I was having such a lighthearted conversation with Belkarion, the Demon King.

Under different circumstances, instead of conversing, he would have shattered my legs to block any escape, tortured me to extract what he wanted, and then callously discarded me…

Was this demon really the cruel Demon King that I knew?

“……Why were you here?”

For the first time since starting this conversation, I threw a question his way.

“Me? I was just patrolling nearby with a particularly nagging demon. In the meantime, I felt a strange aura from this gorge and decided to check it out. I never expected to find a human here, of all things.”

“Patrolling?”

“Yeah, patrolling! It’s routine for a Demon King like me to inspect the lands over which I rule. Though in reality, it’s tedious and often skipped, but this time I couldn’t avoid it because of that nag...”

His face suddenly contorted mid-sentence, as if he’d said something he shouldn’t have and was caught.

“Ki-kid. What, what did I just say?”

“That it’s routine to inspect the lands over which you rule as a Demon King?”

“Right, right...”

Belkarion seemed embarrassed and scratched his head.

“Aren’t you surprised?”

“About what?”

“I just admitted that I’m the Demon King, and you’re not surprised?”

“.....”

“What? Do you really recognize me? Otherwise, even the most naive child would be startled to hear the term ‘Demon King.’ Have you lived all your life without hearing adults say that the Demon King will take you away if you don’t listen to your mother?”

What was this all about?

Certainly, the Demon King I was dealing with now was not the merciless sovereign I knew. Perhaps, even the Demon King had not been inherently evil from the start.

If I don’t significantly change the course of history, the invasion by the demon legion is yet to come.

If this casual, down-to-earth attitude was truly the Demon King’s original nature, what could have caused such a metamorphosis?

In the end, will I not be forced to fight the Demon King once changed again?



“Really, the more I look at you, the more peculiar you seem? Anyway, you need to return to where you came from, don’t you? If you go up against the stream, will that take you back?”

“That’s the plan.”

“Right, staying too long in a place that doesn’t suit you is just uncomfortable. Although our time was short, I’m pleased to have met you, kid. I’m not worried about you dealing with hellhounds, but be careful anyway.”

A gracious farewell wish. Was this really the end?

Could I safely make my way back?

This felt too anticlimactic compared to the urgency I had felt just moments ago.

As I turned away with my remaining sense of vigilance, my footsteps were hesitant.

It felt as if there was something very important I needed to ask.

“You.....”

“Hm?”

“If you’re truly the Demon King.....”

The dry saliva in my mouth was swallowed, and a clamorous thumping continued from my heart.

Turning my head once more to meet his gaze, I forced out the words that had risen to my throat.

“What do you want to do as the Demon King?”

A question that held much weight, and potentially a spark that could intertwine my future with this being known as the Demon King.

Belkarion looked at me with eyes wide with disbelief.

“This kid, I see now you’re not just daring but straightforward.”

He who had been holding his position, finally moved his foot and approached me.

The distance of ten steps was swiftly narrowed to just a finger's breadth.

"You want to know what I want to do as the Demon King?"

The towering figure, easily twice my height, looked down at me with an elevated gaze.

"Isn't it simple? I just want the beings under me to live well and be well. That's the role I must fulfill as their king..... But!"

The spirited eyes of the youthful Demon King suddenly glittered, and the suppressed murderous aura within became vividly apparent.

The corners of his mouth curled upward, forming a sinister smile.

"If there are those who would obstruct that! Those who would cause harm beyond obstruction! Those who dare invade my land and bring suffering to my people! I will utterly annihilate them to atone for their sins! That is my duty as the sovereign and Demon King of this land!"

For a fleeting moment, I distinctly felt the malevolent true nature of Demon King Belkarion...

Even though various restraints held him now, those restraints could be released at any time, and that day would bring chaos to the world.

I wasn't sure if I could prevent this predestined future.

One thought, however, remained clear in my mind.

"Demon King, won't you make a deal with me?"

"A deal?"

Belkarion scratched his head at my sudden proposal.

"Whatever happens, there will be a massive change that could overturn your current mindset and bring about a drastic transformation. A change so profound it could turn the world upside down..."

“What sudden nonsense is this? Why would I intentionally...?”

“I don’t know what will happen. But I can assure you that you’ll change completely from who you are now because of it. And your transformation will also greatly impact our human world...”

Belkarion, appearing to realize that my words were no bluff, peered at me with a grave expression.

“Are you suggesting that I will invade your lands?”

“Let’s make a deal. No matter what happens, please don’t cross over to our lands.”

Belkarion snorted.

“Ha! You think you’re a prophet or something, kid? Suddenly making a deal is funny enough, but you want me not to cross over to your land? Fine, if I don’t cross over, what are you going to do for me, kid?”

“I’ll help you.”

He looked puzzled, as if he didn’t understand what I was offering.

“Help with what?”

“Everything. Whenever you face any crisis or difficulty, I’ll help you solve it. I’m sure I can be of great help.”

Belkarion kept his eyes fixed on me in silence for a while.

I, too, quietly waited for him to speak.

“Kid, what’s your name?”

“Sian Vert.”

“Sian Vert...”

He declared with a nod, “Good. As the master of the Demon Realm, I promise not to invade your lands, no matter what.”

Belkarion agreed easily to my proposal.

“However, you must follow through on your promise to assist me with anything. I detest those who break promises, whether they are children or adults.”

I simply nodded without saying a word.

Whether or not this deal would last into the near future, I wasn't sure. But if we were to meet again, at least then, I should not have to clash swords with the Demon King.

Best of all, perhaps it would be that we never met again...

With this hope, I made my way back to the front lines.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 23"Chapter 23: Return (1)

“I found him! It's over here!”

In the dim light of the dawning daybreak, those who heard the call gathered in one place, unable to close their mouths agape in astonishment.

Surrounded by knights, in the midst of the dew-laden shrubbery, lay an unfamiliar figure collapsed, seemingly unconscious.

Exactly 24 hours after disappearing by falling into the Blood River, Sian Vert, the youngest of the Duke Vert family, was discovered.

Considering his drenched attire from head to toe and his close proximity to the Blood River, it was presumed that after escaping the river, he had dragged himself here before becoming utterly exhausted and passing out.

Now, the only thing left to do was to confirm whether he was alive or dead.

-Swish

A high-ranking knight bent down to cradle the body, pressing an ear against the chest in search of a heartbeat.

In the surrounding silence, the knight concentrated all his senses on his hearing, searching for any faint hint of life's breath.

-Thud.

“.....!”

The distinct throb of a beating heart.

Breathing was evident, subtle but unmistakably present through the nose.

“He's, he's alive!”

To everyone around, it seemed nothing short of a miracle.

“From now on, we will transport Lord Sian to the rear. Be prepared for any unexpected attacks from demonic beasts!”

Having completed the search, ensuring safe passage was the next step.

No demonic beasts were encountered during the transport, and as a result, Sian's body was safely returned to the rear without incident.

\* \* \*

-Clump, clump

The urgent footsteps of [Duke Vert](#) echoed down the corridor.

He nodded in response to every bow from those he passed, though he had no time to focus on such formalities.

He stopped in front of a door, pushed past the saluting guards, and hurried into the room.

“Lord Sian of the Vert family, at your service, Father.”

As if expecting his arrival, the young man greeted him calmly.

It was the Duke's son, Sian.

While Sian was indeed sitting up in bed, the mixture of emotions crossing the Duke's face was complex.

The Duke calmed his excitement, approached Sian with steady steps, and asked:

“Are you alright?”

“I am focusing on my recovery. Considering how important matters at the front are, I apologize for causing you such great concern.”

The place where Sian was recuperating was a monastery in Belias, outside the border guardianship.

This location also served as a military hospital for knights wounded on the front lines. The Duke had already been informed through a messenger that Sian was in good condition.

“.....”

The Duke had many questions, but no words came out.

Sian’s composure was chilling for a child who had just danced with death.

Instead of a ten-year-old boy, he seemed more like a veteran who had witnessed the horrors of war countless times.

“Do you remember what happened that day?”

“Father. I successfully evacuated the princess and eluded the trolls that pursued us, but, unfortunately, I encountered a formidable demonic beast, a Devil Dragon, near the Blood River. It seemed to recognize me as prey and captured me instantly, and I was powerless to resist.”

Sian’s response flowed as if he had rehearsed it.

The Duke continued his questioning.

“Weren’t you scared?”

“You’ve said even if caught by a dragon, if one keeps wits about, survival is possible. I clung to the desperate desire to live, attacking the dragon’s foot relentlessly in hopes of inflicting even a minor injury.”

Now, the Duke understood why the dragon had circled the area continuously.

Not only had Sian saved the princess but he had also stood unflinching against a Devil Dragon.

While a commendable feat, the Duke felt little joy.

“Since it has come to this, I won’t make excuses. Rather than save you, I prioritized defeating that Devil Dragon. Ultimately, the dragon fled, and you plummeted into the river and nearly met death, but I do not, not even once, regret my actions. I hope you understand why.”

“Actually, I see it as a natural decision. The primary goal here is to subjugate the demonic beasts, after all. Isn’t it that one must take care of their own life on the front lines?”

Sian remained unfazed until the end.

Could this really be the mindset of a mere ten-year-old child?

Despite being his flesh and blood, the Duke felt an inexplicable distance.

‘Wouldn’t it be alright for you to show just a little bit of childishness ... ?’

It seemed like all of this had somehow stemmed from him.

The immense responsibility of the family creeds burdened not just him but his children as well.

Could the Duke’s own lack of paternal care have crafted such a prematurely mature child?

The Duke was unsettled.

“Regardless, I must recognize your heroism in safely protecting the princess. I am inclined to grant you a reward.”

“A reward?”

“Yes. If there is anything you desire, speak freely.”

Prompted by the offer of a reward, Sian pondered carefully.

What could someone who had narrowly escaped death possibly request in his current situation? The Duke couldn’t help but wonder.

“If so, may I make a request?”

“What is it? Speak.”

“Please do not send me back to the front because of this incident.”

Silence enveloped the room for nearly ten seconds.

While gazing silently at Sian, a myriad of thoughts fluttered through the Duke’s mind.

He realized, irrespective of his age, the boy was fully primed to uphold the family’s legacy.

Any traces of his youthful innocence, glimpsed briefly during fencing practice, were now entirely erased.

All that remained was to watch how much more he would grow.

The Duke spoke with a serene tone.

“I will grant your request. But understand that nothing changes. As always, you must protect yourself till the end.”

“I shall heed your words.”

Having finished his business, the Duke turned to leave. As he took a few steps, he glanced back at Sian once more.

A faint smile lingered on his face.

“I look forward to witnessing your endless growth.”

With that, the Duke left the room.

\* \* \*

[You still haven’t come to your senses?]

“Why, what now?”

[After causing such a commotion, you plan to go back there?]



“What commotion? At most, I was merely swept away by the river and happened to venture to the demon world once.”

[Oh really? You were so confident that it would be thrilling even if a Demon King appeared, yet you trembled in fear upon meeting one—have you lost that memory due to the shock?]

“Did I? Perhaps I felt a thrill without realizing.”

[Enough! It’s already remarkable that a child like you returned alive.]

Ceyram’s teasing was deftly shrugged off, and she sighed as if exhausted.

Sian had walked back from the demon world for half a day to reach the front.

Upon sensing the search party, he positioned himself to be naturally discovered.

If Sian had not been found by then, he heard that the Duke had given preemptive orders to declare him dead—understandable given the slim chance of survival with his diminutive stature.

Extending the dangerous search when dealing with unnecessary circumstances would not have been prudent, so elevating the leader’s decision as the best course of action seemed fitting.

Truthfully, even Sian was bewildered as to how he managed to return.

[Is that guy really a Demon King? The Demon King you fought, was he truly that trivial?]

That remained an unresolved question.

Sian knew the Belkarion he was familiar with—a deeply cruel and ruthless incarnation of evil without an ounce of compassion. However, the demon he encountered that day seemed no less foolish and senseless than Emily had been.

Regardless of whether it was a demon or not, people didn’t change in an instant.

Sian had a hunch that something significant had transpired in the demon world which he had overlooked in his past life.

Possessing knowledge of the future as if it were a separate world was not something he could ignore.

For now, he had established a “life insurance” of sorts through a deal—though immediate action wasn’t possible, it was something to consider over time.

[Hm?]

Suddenly, Ceyram glanced towards the door.

Simultaneously, hasty yet restrained footsteps approached from the other side.

[Ho~?]

“What? What’s with that laugh?”

An unsettling sensation surged within him at the unexpected mischievous smile.

[It’s good that you have many people who worry about you~]

“What?”

[So please, try not to be too grumpy with them. Getting on the wrong side of a woman can be like sinking into a bottomless swamp. I’m off to sleep~]

Leaving behind baffling words, Ceyram vanished into the sword like a wisp of mist.

-Knock, knock

A moment later, there was a knock at the door.

“Come in.”

Carefully, the door opened a crack, revealing the happy face of Emily.

“Wow, milord! You really are alive?”

Not a ‘glad you’re alive,’ but ‘you’re alive?’ What sort of reaction was that?

“I knew it would be like this! While others were clicking their tongues, certain you were dead, I believed without a doubt that you’d return in perfect health! See, I was right?”

She rushed over and hugged him tightly, but somehow, the gesture lacked heartfelt emotion.

While grateful that she was the only one who believed in him, he couldn’t help but feel the situation was awkward.

Emily wasn’t the only visitor.

Hovering uncertainly at the open door was another guest, Princess Arin.

When their eyes met, she flinched in surprise, then mustered her courage to approach.

“I’m, I’m glad you’re alive.”

“I am relieved to see that you, as well, have evacuated safely.”

Her demeanor was as hesitant as ever.

Not only for life’s reassurance, it seemed she had something else she wanted to say.

Emily’s glance shifted surreptitiously, and with an unfathomable gesture of encouragement, she swiftly exited the scene, leaving just the two of them behind.

“Your maid is quite extraordinary. No one else thought you were alive... It was clear how much she believes in you.”

Would anyone actually say that after living together?

For the time being, he remained silent.

“Are you feeling okay?”

“Oddly enough, I am quite unscathed, perhaps by a stroke of good fortune.”

“Th-that’s good to hear.....”

Expectedly, silence followed again.

“If you are thinking of apologizing, you needn’t.”

“Eh? Wh-why?”

“Because it is not something you need to apologize for. The emergence of demonic beasts isn’t your fault, is it?”

“That may be so, but if I hadn’t come to you that day, you wouldn’t have...”

“Then you shouldn’t have come to the front lines in the first place. The root of the problem is demonic beasts, not your actions. Please don’t speak of this any further.”

She reluctantly nodded her head.

Having dismissed the trivial chatter, it was time to broach the main subject.

“That day, you told me to become the empress... What did you mean by that?”

Her voice dropped suddenly.

Sian lowered his tone as well, whispering softly.

“I meant exactly what I said. If you genuinely wish to contribute to the empire as a member of the imperial family, I suggest becoming the empress and truly making a difference.”

“Do you think it’s possible for me?”

“That is for you, Princess, to decide. I merely provide direction. I am not a kingmaker with the power to make you an empress.”

Disappointed by the unexpected answer, the princess once again silently gazed into Sian’s face.

“...Can’t you help me?”

She apparently didn’t understand.

“What power do you think I possess? I am but a scion of a duke’s house.”

“That’s not true! You have exceptional insight and talent, don’t you? If you were by my side, I believe I could make far greater progress than now!”

Determination shone in the princess’s eyes.

Then, she finally revealed her true reason for visiting.

“Would you become my person?”

(To be continued)

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 24**

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 24

Chapter 24: Return (2)

“No.”

Refusal came in one resolute word simultaneous with the proposal.

It was so swift it made my somewhat meaningful comment seem embarrassing.

Perhaps angered by my immediate response, the princess’s face flushed red.

“Why, why not!?”

“Do you not know the reason better than anyone, Your Highness?”

Without needing any grand reasoning, this one line silenced the princess.

“That makes sense. I have no power of my own...”

To become someone’s person is like grasping an unstable rope.

If the rope is strong and durable, one can climb to the skies; but if it's old and frayed, it will snap before long, plummeting one down.

Though a member of the imperial family, the orphan princess had no power or backing – a freshly twisted, fragile rope.

Besides, I had vowed to live this life for myself—I had no intention of becoming someone's person, not even as much as the dirt under my nails.

She didn't say any more, only bowed her head in silence.

If she truly wanted me, she should have come up with a fitting proposal instead of hastily begging for it.

Though I had jokingly told her to become the emperor, the reality of a powerless princess ascending to the throne was as likely as her four siblings dying all at once.

This is why I preferred to remain uninvolved...

Her clenched fists revealed her frustration.

However, this did not mean I had completely cast her from my mind.

Now that I knew she was under the scrutiny of that devil...

"Then, may I ask for some time?"

"Time?"

"You currently have nothing, Your Highness. No power to protect yourself, no backing, nothing. That is the biggest reason I cannot be 'your person.' Becoming bound to a princess in this powerless state is far too great a risk, isn't it?"

"That's true... You're right."

The princess nodded as if conceding the point.

"Yet, one of the things that should never be underestimated in this world is human potential. Who's to say how much you might have changed in a year, three years, or ten years? Since I am not currently thinking of serving anyone, I can certainly afford to watch Your Highness grow."

“Watching me?”

“Yes. Though the time is indefinite, if the day comes when I wish to truly serve you as my sovereign, then I will reach out my hand to you. If that is acceptable, may I ask for your patience?”

On the surface, it seemed like I was asking for time, but in reality, I was giving her time.

In other words, ‘if you want me, prove your worth by growing stronger.’

It didn’t take long for her to understand what I meant.

“So I have to grow strong enough to earn your recognition?”

I responded in silence.

“I see. I’m not sure if I can meet your expectations, but I will try. And when the day comes that I am fit to be an empress, I will speak to you again! I will ask you to become my person!”

It all depended on her, as I’ve said time and again.

Even if she someday became capable of being an empress, whether I would stand by her side was uncertain.

But for now, the orphan princess’s face held a clearer resolve than ever before.

Having finished her business, she rose to leave.

“We’ll see each other in a year at the Royal Academy, won’t we? I hope you stay well until then. You’re tenacious, as your maid described, so you’re unlikely to die easily!”

“.....I’ll take it as a compliment.”

Her earlier cowed appearance was gone; now, she regained her composure.

As the princess moved towards the door, she looked back one more time.

“May I ask you one thing?”

“Speak your mind.”

After a brief pause, she asked with a soft smile.

“What do you want to live for?”

I didn’t reply immediately to the unexpected question.

“Ever since I first saw you, I felt that like me, you have a clear goal. If it’s not too much trouble, can you share it?”

It wasn’t a problem to tell her.

After all, my current life wasn’t for anyone else.

Ever since my first death and my second chance at life, I have only pursued one thing.

“I will live for myself.”

\* \* \*

Ten months had passed since the emperor’s circuit tour.

The dry season gave way to a bitter winter with swirling snowflakes.

While the snowy veil over the stark gorge was indeed beautiful, looks can be deceiving.

After all, beneath that white blanket lay a horrific curtain of blood...

“Heave-ho!”

Somewhere on the outskirts of the rear camp.

A man wrapped in a white cloak hurried toward an unknown destination.

He soon arrived in the middle of a deserted forest.

After ensuring he was alone, he sat on the ground and took out an item.

It was a small transparent cube with the appearance slightly larger than a palm.



– Ping!

He directed a small concentration of mana at the cube, and with a short flash, a tiny dimensional gate opened.

“Not much time left...”

Pleased with what he saw inside, the man reached into the cube for its contents.

Just then,

“Freeze.”

A chilling voice cut through the air, halting all his senses.

“This... What is this?”

-Crunch, crunch.

The sound of footsteps crushing thick snow approached.

Exactly five steps behind the man, the presence of an unfamiliar entity could be felt, carrying a strange aura.

Although he wanted to see what it was, his stiff neck refused to turn.

“Dimensional box, eh... It’s been a while since I’ve seen one of these artifacts. Or is it not yet mass-produced at this time?”

“.....!”

“A high-grade artifact that uses a space within dimensions created by magical power to store potentially infinite items. Wasn’t it a masterpiece made by the Garam Kingdom’s Magic Society?”

The footsteps drew nearer while the owner of the voice continued to speak.

“During the past year, I kept an eye on how they stored and transported these items out of the front lines. The supply cart that comes every quarter, could someone inside be an informant?”

The unfamiliar figure finally picked up the artifact from the man’s hand.

“If valuable items were hidden not in plain sight but in a special dimensional space known only by a few, and one such person was present in this front-line region?”

A chilling mist obscured the man’s vision.

Though he couldn’t see clearly through the mist, he could sense overwhelming malice.

After the haze lifted, a figure appeared unscathed—Sian Vert.

Holding a crimson dagger, with blood dripping from below.

“A bumptious fellow like you really doesn’t burn well. I might have to deal with the insiders who helped you if things get worse.”

Alone with Sian, the man felt why he had appeared here didn’t matter anymore.

This child may be extraordinary, but after all, he is inexperienced in real combat.

The man calculated he just needed to move quickly and leave this place.

-Swish

As his frozen fingers began to move, Sian rummaged through the scattered corpses, apparently distracted by the grim spectacle.

The man secretly gathered mana under his fingertips and chanted.

“Hell’s flames shall engulf everything!”

-Whoosh

With the incantation, a surge of fiery blaze shot up.

It was ‘Inferno Flame,’ a seventh-tier fire-spell that engulfed Sian in a monstrous fiery maw.

The scorching flames made the snowy terrain irrelevant.

It seemed impossible for any human, let alone a higher demon's corpse, to withstand such heat.

Convinced of his success, the man relaxed.

-Skrrk

That's when the peculiar sound caught him off guard.

His eyes trembled as they shifted to his left hand.

Through the blurry heat haze, the expected sight was gone.

Instead, trails of red seeped downwards, and a strange pain registered.

Seeing his left wrist pouring blood without its hand attached, he screamed.

Wreathed in the consuming blaze, instead of smoke, a black mist rose from within.

-Whisk

The small mist expanded enough to swallow the infernal flames.

"Black mist?"

The man desperately hoped that what he saw was not the dark element he anticipated.

This was not a natural phenomenon nor a human-made magical creation.

It was the vile power worshiped by the followers of a god-like being.

In disbelief, the man watched the flames die down, revealing Sian, unharmed and gripping a blood-stained dagger.

"You shouldn't have underestimated us. Now, it all depends on your actions. If you want to suffer less, forsake your pride and confess everything."

The figure before the man exuded the presence of a ruthless assassin, no longer just a boy.

The man, realizing death was upon him, opened his mouth intending to bite his tongue.

“Ugh!”

But his attempt was swiftly resisted by an unfathomably strong grip.

“This is why people like you are called dogmatic, protecting worthless gods at the expense of your own life...”

Sian’s tone grew grave with displeasure.

The man, overpowered by the young hand, felt his options and time running out.

His despairing mind understood that his final moment had come.

Resolved, he mouthed to endure the agony, to bite down on his tongue anyway.

(To be continued)

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 25**

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 25

Chapter 25. Return (3)

Numerous carriages were stationed at the rear camp.

Inside the carriages were supplies such as food, weapons, and artifacts, necessary for combat, all packed to the brim.

These were the supplies from the capital that came every quarter.

The supply workers who descended from the carriages started unloading goods according to their assigned groups.

While everyone was preoccupied with the task, including the knights, two of the suppliers tasked with food exchanged an indecipherable signal.

They wore expressions of intense nervousness as if searching for something hidden.

Suddenly, assuming they were moving goods, they rushed towards the food storage.

True to the nature of a frontline storage, the food supplies were neatly organized in their designated places.

The destination for these suppliers was a pile of salt bags.

As usual, one kept a lookout while the other began rifling through the salt bags.

“Found it!”

The supplier’s face lit up as he found what he was looking for.

He lifted two wooden boxes from among the salt bags.

“What’s this? Two this time?”

“It seems we have more demonic beast blood collected! Can we take more this time?”

Their mood lightened as they eagerly opened the first box.

Inside the box was a glass bottle filled with a ruddy liquid.

“Ho? There’s much more than before, isn’t there?”

“Honestly, the last time the amount was too little to even skim off, but this time it seems Sir Renard has really put in some effort! Hehe!”

The suppliers grinned at the prospect of skimming off a portion, but there was still the second box left to check.

“Oh, this box is rather heavy?”

The second box was twice as heavy as the first.

When they lightly shook it, it didn't sound like bottles clinking but rather emitted a dull thud.

“What's this? Did they include an unprocessed demonic beast corpse?”

The unusual sensation prompted them to put the box on the ground.

Anxiety gripping their hearts, they carefully opened the box and then—

“Eeeek!”

“What, what is this?!”

The two of them scrambled away from the box without hesitation.

The contents were far from what they had expected.

“What did we just see?”

“Was that... was that Sir Renard...?”

They crept back to the box to reconfirm its contents.

It was a box the size of a human head, and within it lay the severed head of Renard Crimson, Seven-Star Mage Knight, eyes wide with fear and horror.

“How... How did this happen? Why is Sir Renard here?”

His head, which was the supplier of the demonic beast blood they received, had inexplicably turned up.

The supply workers were genuinely horrified.

“Wait! Then what's in that bottle? It is actually demonic beast blood, right!?”

A surge of unease struck them as they turned their gaze back to the glass bottle from the first box.

The blood, unusually vivid red today, which is supposed to be darker due to the mix of demonic beast blood, confirming that it belonged to some other life form.

“Could it be... Renard's...?”

“Who did this? Who’s behind this?!”

Shock and fear consumed the supply workers as they lost any semblance of composure.

Dust swirled around them as they frantically looked around, wondering if the perpetrator was nearby, but they saw nothing.

The rigid gaze from Renard’s eyes seemed to convey a silent warning to flee the scene.

\* \* \*

After completing the supply transport, the members were boarding the carriages again.

Among them, two particularly shaken suppliers stood out.

It was abundantly clear even without shouting “I’m incredibly nervous right now” that these two were complicit with Renard Crimson in skimming off the demonic beast blood.

– Whisk! Swipe!

They kept vigil, turning their heads in all directions.

Clearly, they had found the “gift” I left and were now stricken with fear.

Having confirmed the conspirators, I turned away without a second thought.

[Are you just going to let them go?]

“I can’t kill them when they still have duties to perform. They have a very important mission to carry out—sending my warning all the way to Garam Kingdom.”

The trafficking of blood collected from the demonic beasts at the frontline was orchestrated by Renard Crimson, a mage knight from Garam Kingdom.

Before burning the corpses of the slain beasts, they preserved small parts of the bodies in a small-dimensional box, later extracting the blood and transporting it via supply workers who were in on the scheme during quarterly supplies.

The final destination was Garam Kingdom's Magic Society.

As one might imagine, it was an act of excessive curiosity and research enthusiasm.

Garam's Magic Society, recognized across the continent, was a gathering of those obsessed with magic.

While Ushif Empire's Magic Society recruits talent based on established magic and nurtures masters adept in handling such, Garam's society did the opposite—researching the origin and foundation of magic to constantly create new spells and pursue new limits for humanity.

In short, it was a gathering of those who are mad about magic.

And the blood of demonic beasts was a resource for their ongoing research.

I never expected them to have started this kind of activity so soon.

Had those foolish supply workers not succumbed to their greedy desires to skim off the top, this supply chain could have continued undisrupted for several more years.

Considering the insane acts they perpetrated in my past life, it's too dangerous to ignore—it would be problematic later on.

For now, a warning of this magnitude should suffice.

Having betrayed the existence of someone who knows of their conspiracy within the frontline, they won't dare stir for the time being.

[It seems trouble follows wherever you go, despite your attempts to act for your own benefit. Ever thought of changing your career to that of a problem-solver?]

It's a dreadful thought, but I can't entirely deny it.

As she has pointed out, since my regression, I've unwillingly tangled myself in a series of bothersome events.

With unease in my heart, I headed back to the tent where Emily awaited.

“What's this? Where've you been at such a time, Young Master!”



Emily greeted me with a discontented face as I lifted the curtain.

“Out for a walk.”

“Which ‘walk’ takes place at all hours without warning! I’ve had to pack everything alone because of you!”

As she mentioned packing, I noticed that her possessions far outnumbered my own.

A servant with more baggage than the master; it seemed we had a mix-up in our servant-master relationship.

“Wow! At least we’re finally ending this dreadful life at the frontline!”

Emily, perched upon her heap of luggage, wiggled her legs excitedly.

February 15th, year 986 of the Genesis Era.

Today is the day we leave the frontline to return to the estate.

“For me, it’s the beginning of a new hell...”

My sentiments starkly contrasted Emily’s excitement.

As a student, I’m bound to attend school.

Now eleven years old, I’m expected to enroll in the Royal Academy which starts in March.

Being a part of the Vert family, which prioritizes ideals and the growth of children, attending the academy was an undeniable formula, and of course, I was no exception.

“I’m so excited! The grand architecture, the antique atmosphere, the superior facilities full of knowledge, and the cuisine I’ve never tasted before—like heaven on a plate! Surely a far cry from this dull and gloomy place.”

I didn’t want to shatter her fantasy, but the Royal Academy was far from the utopian wonder she imagined.

It would be better to break the truth to her later; I doubted my ability to manage her hysteria right now.

\* \* \*

The Vert family's estate's front yard looked just as it was when we left.

Descending from the carriage, I saw servants busily unloading luggage—a clear sign that it was Kranz's carriage.

At eleven years old, he was set to join me at the academy.

After our duel a year ago, we hadn't seen each other and frankly, I nearly forgot about him.

Judging by his early packing, he likely intended to leave before my return—a plan I wouldn't oppose.

Just as I considered this, Kranz emerged from the central door and we instantly locked eyes.

“Ah!”

He froze on the spot, then hurriedly sidestepped away.

I had intended to greet him, but he dashed off before I could.

With a hint of embarrassment, my hand awkwardly returned to my side.

[What's with that lousy kid?]

Ceyram commented with disdain as he watched Kranz.

“That's Kranz, my half-brother. Don't bother yourself with him.”

[More than a brother, he looked like he saw a demonic beast. How badly must you have beaten him for him to react like that?]

Considering our history, I should have been the more aggrieved party.

[Even your father doesn't seem to trust you that much. Why does it seem like you have a contentious relationship with all of your kin?]

It wasn't completely true.

Kranz didn't matter to me anymore, and I had a good rapport with my sister Ellis, occasionally exchanging messages during my time at the front. She was practically the only family member to whom I poured my barren affection.

The botheration was another family member entirely—one I might not even leave physically intact.

– Creak

I pushed open the door to my house for the first time in almost a year.

But the scene inside was far from expected—the servants bowed in unison, a gesture that they'd usually reserve for the arrival of a duke, now performed for me.

I should have been the least of their concerns even just a year ago, but it seemed my status had changed drastically.

The peculiar environment mixed with various thoughts as I made my way to my room.

With Emily busy with her luggage, I could afford a brief respite.

As my hand reached for the doorknob, an unusual sensation sent shivers down my spine.

This was supposedly my room, untouched by anyone for a year.

But now, I could feel a presence—a presence that wasn't welcome and obviously not there to celebrate my return.

My hand began to tremble at the door; the idea of tearing apart whatever lay beyond was overwhelming.

Why? Why this reaction?

There could only be one reason for such intense feelings—could he really be there?

That despicable being I wouldn't mind ripping to shreds?

– Creak

The door swung open—operated by someone inside.

As I slowly lifted my eyes from my lingering hand, a familiar yet loathsome face greeted me with a faint smile.

“It’s been a long time, Sian.”

The bright sunny blonde hair and alabaster skin contrasted with a smile filled with malice.

Memories spanning decades flashed before me—a man I thought was my everything, to whom I dedicated everything, who led me to death.

Aschel Vert stood before me—a sight far from pleasant.

(To be continued)