

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 211

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Chapter 211. What Do You Desire? (1)

Arin awoke in the Ducal Condor residence a day after the unexpected reunion with Sian. Gazing out the window, she instinctively rubbed her neck, still feeling the vivid trace of his tightening grip from the day before. In the midst of her unsettled emotions, Arin could only let out a mournful sigh.

“Your Highness. It’s Resmus.”

Startled by a voice beyond the door, Arin hurried toward it.

“I apologize for leaving my post.”

“Are you out of your mind? Resmus!”

Despite the princess’s scolding, Resmus maintained a steadfast response.

Although his life wasn’t in danger, he had been instructed to rest and recuperate for a few days, but he had returned in less than one, as if he needed no such thing.

“My basic recovery is already complete thanks to the healers of our territory. Captain Condor also said that this should suffice...”

“Did I say that?”

Condor himself entered following Resmus, the master of the mansion.

“What you may not realize is that in the long term, this behavior whittles away at your body. Serving your lord is all well and good, but first and foremost is your own health. Only then can you protect your liege.”

“There are many knights who can protect Her Highness in my stead. However, there is only one master I serve, which is Her Highness. From the moment I decided to become her sword, I stopped concerning myself with my own well-being.”

“A bit too idealistic, but it’s a commendable mindset for a knight.”

To Arin, however, the situation wasn’t entirely amusing.

Would she and Resmus have continued this connection had Sian never existed? The sudden negative thought made her shake her head.

“I’ve ensured strict secrecy regarding your stay in Aquizzel. The affairs that transpired there won’t spread to the capital. Though, by rights, you should be returning as quickly as possible?”

“Yes. You’re correct.”

“I’ll assist you. I can get you to the outskirts of the capital by nightfall.”

“I will not forget this kindness. ”

Arin bowed in gratitude to Condor.

“Aren’t you curious about him?”

At that, both women’s gazes wavered.

“Have you found him?”

“Everyone is scouring for him, but I advise not to get your hopes up. I may have raised the subject, but it’s best not to expect too much.”

Arin bit her lip, trying not to show her feelings.

“It might not be a consolation, but he didn’t come to kill you from the start.”

Condor observed as Arin tried to mask her disbelief.

“At least, while he was talking to me, he seemed to harbor no such intentions. Even when you knocked on the door, he appeared quite anxious. It’s possible that initially, he only intended to watch over you.”

Arin appeared lost as if unable to comprehend the idea.

“Had I not interfered out of whim, this would not have transpired. My complete oversight. If you wish, accuse me of this crime when you return to the capital.”

“You say this knowing I wouldn’t do that, right?”

Condor smiled slyly, and finally, Arin allowed a faint smile to grace her lips.

She soon turned her gaze to Sian’s cloak neatly placed on the bed.

“Is that his?”

“Yes.”

“He covered your face so others wouldn’t see you at the end, didn’t he?”

“That seems to be the case...”

“First he charges at you as if to kill, then flips to consideration. He’s indeed inscrutable.”

Concurring, Arin spoke softly.

“What does Sian live for, I wonder?”

A question lingering since their first meeting. Why pursue paths shrouded in the black mist that denies the light?

Currently, Arin had no answers.

* * *

Nine years in the past.

I, the once disgraced, undertook the regressive return to my past—a rebirth of sorts.

The single aim of my life since my regression was vengeance.

Aschel Vert.

He tossed me aside after a lifetime spent in servitude—not for my own sake, but for his.

I intended to ruin everything he sought to achieve, to crush all his plans with my own hands.

That’s why I didn’t kill him.

I wanted him to realize he couldn’t defeat me and to despair in that realization.

Then I would tell him:

I’m but an ordinary human that knows your truth and holds unbridled hate for it.

Yes, a human.

A creature that knows joy, anger, sadness—possessing very real emotions.

Hesitation for an assassin spells death, but I’ve come to embrace even such feelings, becoming a true human.

The chieftain said I needed to understand my egoism.

Preoccupied with my own strength, I cared not for those around me—foolishly jeopardizing greater causes for a single ounce of warmth.

Ironic, isn't it?

Not even slightly.

It's all unfamiliar, necessitating some acclimation, not pointless brooding over days and nights.

At the end of the lingering fog, I faced a familiar altar and face.

A face that appeared surprised to see me arrive.

(Why is it that the child who always growled at my sight is nowhere to be seen today?)

He was talking of Ceyram.

(Have the two of you had a falling out?)

"If that were the case, I'd be relieved."

I was still unsure of how to mend things with a woman's heart.

(While I'd like to offer advice on such matters, given your expression, it seems the mood isn't right for it.)

"Since when did you care about such things?"

I said, lifting my chin in disbelief.

"Do you remember the first time we met?"

(Are you talking about this life?)

"Isn't it obvious?"

Aer began to kick his foot and continued.

(Of course, I remember every detail. Which part should I recall?)

"The part where you promised to help me with my endeavor."

The corner of his mouth hinted at a subtle movement.

(Yes, but didn't you say that you didn't know my desire?)

"I know. In fact..."

Aer leaned forward, lips curling with intrigue.

(Was this divulged to you by my former self?)

"No. Neither then nor now did you ever utter a word. At least not to me..."

(.....)

"If I thought about the reason why Mist was formed, it should've been apparent."

(Entertaining. Then speak. What is it that I desire?)

I crossed my arms, answering coolly.

"A retired knight once posed a question to me: Can we truly believe that the black mist we hear about is genuine? If I had to answer then, I would say..."

(And your response?)

"I don't know."

(.....)

"And he probably would've continued. Before labeling the mist as evil, can we confidently say that the light represents all that is good?"

The look in his eyes changed subtly.

"You want to shift the paradigm, don't you?"

In this world made by the victors—the light—the defeated mist has been scorned and dismissed as negative.

From the vantage point of those overshadowed, there's only one thing they could feel.

"To establish a new order, one centered not on light but on mist..."

Aer wrinkled his brow, tilting his head.

(But aren't those just superficial reasons?)

Certainly.

These are basic precepts that every initiate learns upon joining Mist, hardly the true will of the deity.

What this insane god really wants isn't a world transformed but something beyond it.

"You're hoping for another war between gods and demons, aren't you?"

(Why would you think that?)

"If the world was centered on mist, the other gods wouldn't stand for it."

That would provoke divine intervention, and such interventions aren't merely armchair theories.

They'll execute another purification, striving to erase the mist from existence.

Through this, the god aims to ascend above the rest.

Simple, really.

For the humans among us, consider it like the tale of an exiled prince from a civil war, biding time and thriving in the shadows, only to then revolt and seize the throne—a cliché story.

Haven't I always said?

Humans are the creatures that most resemble the nature of the gods.

Our actions are no different from their own.

(Ahaha!)

Aer responded exuberantly.

(So you knew this all along and still chose to follow me? It couldn't have been pleasant for you. Why then, do you agree to help me?)

"There's nothing to it. You took me in."

Without you, there would be no me by now.

I cannot live as a human in a world centered around light.

So I'll create a world centered around mist.

Even if that defies divine law, it's irrelevant.

In that world,

I will live proudly.

For no one else but me.

“That’s why I, as your successor, will state this clearly to you.”

(What is it?)

“Just watch.”

(.....)

“Do not interfere—remain the bystander you are. Eventually, what you desire will come to pass.”

(Of course, standing aside is what I do best.)

Aer confirmed the matter as naturally within his capabilities.

(Are you going to stop the chieftain—your master?)

“I was never good at following orders anyway.”

(I suspect he won’t be pleased.)

“That’s why I’m saying this. Stay out of it.”

I pondered.

Was the chieftain’s exclusion of me from this mission merely because I couldn’t kill Princess Arin?

The answer: No.

She seeks not only Arin’s death but also to prepare turning winds that will shift the mist’s fate.

And that wind will, without doubt, have an immense impact on me.

I am not content just to observe.

With those words, I turned away.

Aer neither reached out nor spoke as I walked further.

Unable to see behind my head, I didn't witness his expression, but I'd wager he was smiling.

After a few more steps, I emerged not in the void but into sunlight-drenched surroundings.

There, greeting me with a bright smile was Hastia.

'Have you concluded your conversation well?'

"More or less."

'Such uncertainty isn't good! Still, looking at your face, Sian, it doesn't seem there was much trouble!'

I responded with a slight upward twitch of my mouth.

'So, where shall we head from here?'

Hastia looked at me with bright, expectant eyes.

As always, I spoke plainly.

"To the capital."

(To be continued)

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Chapter 212. What do you Seek? (2)

After the declaration of the dissolution of the Order of Light following the death of the Saintess, the first Knight Order assembly took place. The eyes of the knights, now devoid of the belief called the light, were clouded with anxiety, distrust, and suspicion. Hundreds of knights gathered in the central hall. When the news first broke, some of the knights who were shocked by the developments made premature exits before the formal disbandment, but not enough to significantly weaken the original form of the Order.

However, if things were to continue without any action or plan, it was inevitable that more knights would leave the Order. Someone had to step forward to coordinate the situation. Amidst the confused knights, an old man ascended the platform that rose

within the hall. Some knights, recognizing the old man's face, could not hide their surprise. Former Commander of the Order of Light and the knights' actual leader, Jereon Alkin, emerged within the Knight Order for the first time in decades.

His message to the gathered knights was simple. The Order of Light was not disbanding but being reorganized. Although the original form was to be retained, the Order's role would change as the era changed. The only thing that would not be used further was the name 'Order of Light.' It would transform, adopting a new name in following with the new order. Named Redeem, it was to become the Knights of Salvation.

Proclaiming that their current duty was to provide salvation in the name of salvation for all people in this desperate land, Jereon spoke confidently. Thus, the Order of Light was reborn under a new name: the Knights of Salvation. People would later call this day the beginning of a new order.

"That was a fantastic speech. The aftertaste of it still lingers," someone said, approaching Jereon as he descended from the platform. It was Aschel, coming close. "It seems the knights were deeply moved by your speech too, sir. Their anxiety seems to have lessened a great deal as well."

"I think you misunderstand, so let me clarify once more; I said I would help you, not that I would join you," Jereon replied, drawing a clear line. "I understand. You just wanted to know what kind of order we were trying to establish. However, dare I say, sir, that you too will soon follow us, not the light but the new order..."

Jereon's gaze grew complex at the words 'new order.' "The new order you speak of ultimately encompasses even those who once denied the light, does it not?"

"Of course. We will guide them not with destruction or judgment, but with salvation."

"I have some ties with your father, so let me give you one piece of advice." Aschel responded with a smile, his hands neatly placed together in a welcoming gesture. "Changing the order isn't as easy as you think. Not only changing the minds of those who followed the old order, but also overcoming the resistance of those who didn't even adhere to the old order will take a considerable amount of time."

"I understand your concerns. However, if we don't do this, we can't defeat them. You know the dangers posed by the beings of the mist..." Jereon did not reply. "We must use everything at our disposal. Even if that means pursuing things beyond this world." Aschel spoke, gripping the pure white longsword at his waist.

]The Order of Light has reorganized, not disbanded.];

]The Knights of Salvation for the new order. Redeem.];

The morning was bustling due to the official documents spread across cities and domains.

While it seemed like a trivial play on words, it was still upsetting on many levels. A new order. The Knights of Salvation. Discarding longstanding conventional concepts of this land and re-establishing new ones. While it was uncertain how entangled the royal family and others were in this matter, it was undeniable that they were involved.

Soon, they would reveal their real goal, which has been in development for years, and it would undoubtedly be directed towards me. It would not be wrong to say that he is aiming for something even greater. Do you know what the best way to disrupt an opponent's plan is? Simple. Learn all about the opponent's plans in advance. For me, my second life is perhaps my greatest weapon in this world.

But maybe I've been too confident in that weapon until now. I thought I could handle whatever they planned. However, the story changes if they acquire unknown information that I'm not aware of. The key to that unknown information lies with the speechless elf in front of me, diligently chewing on a hard piece of bread.

"The bread's so soft! I've never had such a soft bread in Fruina!" Whether it was a lie or sincere, that bread looked hard enough to break teeth.

I came here to avoid crowded places, but boy, did I end up in just any place. Never thought I'd end up at a place where they can't even properly serve bread. The fact that the elf finds it tasty is even more amusing. Records of the old era. Truly unknown information to any human living in this land. Saintess Nephrodite tried to obtain it from Hastia, meaning that information was also desired by others who shared her purpose. Even the foolish princess resorted to approaching it with just a knight, which says a lot.

'Sian, sir?' I wonder, why did Princess Arin come alone to Aquizzel? Did she intend to secretly obtain the records of the old era? 'Sian, sir?' Come to think of it, there were a lot of things I should've asked her back then; I wasn't quite myself... 'Sian, sir!' The annoyed blue eyes staring at me pulled me out of my thoughts. Rather than reacting to my mental call, she forcefully took my face in her hands, demanding my attention, so I had no choice but to respond.

'What are you thinking so deeply about that you can't even respond when I call you?' "Do you have something to say?" 'Just... this soup's delicious...' She proudly presented her steamy soup to me, a clear broth without any substantial ingredients. If she thinks that's tasty, it's saddening to imagine what sort of food they have to endure in impoverished Fruina.

I sent her off once with a cool farewell, only to have her beside me again for a simple reason – I assessed it was safer to keep her at my side. After all, letting her pursue the records of the old era? At least, having her by my side could ward off anyone else trying to exploit her. Not that I place any faith in divine protection. To put it differently, it implies

those high-handed gods are hiding something that necessitates protection, their so-called weakness. Even if I detest it, I cannot turn a blind eye just to fulfill that lunatic benefactor's wish.

'But where's the demonic sword, sir?' "...". 'Is it sleeping?' "Think of it that way." I casually deflected the question, knowing that mulling over it more would bring no good. When Hastia realized my distraction, a man entered. "Has someone arrived?"

It seems like the right time now. Not too late, though enough to make a good entrance. "Ah, there you are, young master!"

"Took you a while?"

"Eh, must have been bad luck. I had to scour the entire vicinity and only discovered this place last..."

"Good work. Sit down."

"Yes, young mas..." As the man went to take a seat, he suddenly noticed Hastia across from him and was taken aback. "Young master, who might this person be?"

"Just a White Elf that's accompanying me for a matter."

"A White Elf?!"

Reacting as if he'd seen something significant, he turned his attention back to me. 'Sian, sir, who is this person?' "His name is Brian, and he's my man."

"I am Brian Kendrick, who serves the young master!" Brian introduced himself and bowed his head. His naive nature seemed to have remained unchanged over the years. 'You call him the young master?' "Don't mind. It's just an old term of address."

Hastia looked puzzled, not quite getting the explanation. "You made sure everything was fine with the house shield, right?"

"Yes! I checked it one last time before leaving, and as long as Nana doesn't go out of her way, there shouldn't be any major issues..." Haltingly ending his sentence implied another problem was afoot. "Lately, there seems to be more of the family guard coming and going near the house."

"The guards have been around?"

"Yes. They appear more often than usual, loitering. I didn't give it much thought, but it seems like they were checking if you were there..."

Was the family head really hoping I would just take Nana for a walk? From their viewpoint, I suppose they wished I'd stay quiet in some out-of-the-way place, but unfortunately, that's not my intention. By now, the events in Aquizzel should have reached their ears, so they're probably searching everywhere for me. Looks like I need to cover up my tracks a bit more. "I'll step out for a moment." Leaving them behind, I exited the restaurant.

* * *

Sian left without a word about where he was going, creating an awkward silence between the remaining Hastia and Brian. -Sssk Hastia carefully pushed her food towards Brian. "Oh, no, it's okay! You don't have to worry about me..." 'You said you searched the whole area, right? Aren't you hungry?' "???" 'Oh, you don't understand mental communication?'

As it happens, Brian wasn't skilled enough in mental magics to understand mental communication. Since most of the people Hastia had met could communicate mentally, she naturally responded the same way. However, Brian just stared blankly. "Uh, may I ask if you're mute?" Hastia nodded cautiously. "Well, are you able to communicate like this?" Without hesitation, Brian began expressing something in the air with his hands—a language of hand gestures, sign language. '...!' Recognizing Brian's sign language, Hastia responded in kind.

"Oh, you can hear. Got it." Having found a common medium, Hastia quickly became closer to Brian. She shared the story of her journey here, with Sian's help, from the Kingdom of Garam to Brian. "I see. Our young master may seem gruff, but he's very warm-hearted. I think calling me here means he wants me to look after you, Miss Hastia." While sharing stories about Sian, -Creak- the door to the restaurant opened, and a man and woman entered.

"Why come to such a place when there are so many other restaurants?"

"I don't much care for crowds, and this old place has a familiar smell that I find comforting."

At the sound of the woman's voice, Brian's face suddenly turned stone-stiff. It was surprisingly familiar. Scratching his memory revealed that this was the voice of a woman who had often visited Sian's room at the academy and, more importantly, had helped them during their escape from Brenu, from the Garam Magic Society... 'Lunev...?' (To be continued)

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Chapter 213. What Do You Desire? (3)

Closest to the capital of the Ushif Empire, Severus, was the city of Lorand.

Though a bit too large to be considered just a town, and a bit too small to be truly called a city, thanks to its proximity to the Imperial City, it saw a tremendous amount of traffic.

Accordingly, shops, restaurants, and inns were lined up right from the entrance—in abundance.

However, the place Lunev and Schultz sought out was the most dilapidated restaurant in the furthest corner.

They preferred to avoid the more populous areas.

A significant visit after seven years.

For Lunev, this was her second visit since her time as an academy student, her first venture into the city.

Unlike the absence of sensation back then, now she felt much more freedom and thrill.

As they waited for their order, Lunev began to peruse the royal proclamations that were spread on the street like flyers.

“The Order of the Knights of Light is changing its name to the Order of the Knights of Salvation. Personally, I find the new name less warm.”

“Could there be a particular reason for the name change?”

“Changing a name is actually a very meaningful act. It signifies an intention to alter the traditions and notions that had been preserved with that name. While outwardly it claims to inherit the original form of the Knights of Light, I doubt it will be a complete succession.”

Lunev frowned slightly, showing her displeasure.

“Probably, this new direction will begin with those who wanted the name change.”

She had no doubt that this new direction wouldn’t steer towards anything good.

– Swoosh –

Suddenly, a group at the table in front of them, who had been eating before they arrived, discreetly got up.

And with a quick payment, they left the restaurant as if fleeing.

Lunev thought nothing of it and turned her attention back to the proclamation when—

“...!”

Her gaze swiftly shifted back to the door through which they had left.

A hooded woman and a robust man with brown hair.

While the woman’s face was hidden hence unidentifiable, something about the man felt uncomfortably familiar.

Seven years ago, he was first seen in an upscale restaurant in the Imperial City,
a noble heir’s guardian knight who lived in the Royal Academy’s Royal Residence.

Lunev’s rapid conjecture soon turned into certainty.

“Mr. Schultz.”

“Yes?”

“The people who just left. Do you remember their faces?”

“Yes, I do remember them, but...”

“We need to catch them immediately.”

Exactly one second after those words escaped her lips,

Schultz bolted out of the restaurant like a summoned beast obeying its master’s command.

Just seconds, or perhaps a few dozen seconds, had passed.

Yet when Schultz emerged, there was no sign of them.

Without giving up, Schultz keenly watched the people passing by.

It was that time of day when the sun was high in the sky and the streets were at their busiest.

Amid the busy crowd,

“...!”

He caught sight of familiar figures entering an alley in the distance.

“Over there, Lady Lunev!”

Without hesitation, Lunev followed where Schultz pointed and ran.

They were aware of being pursued and quickened their pace to lose their tail.

Lunev and Schultz diligently followed, but eventually lost them in the quiet of the woods.

Right as she prepared to cast a detection spell, thinking they couldn't have gone far—

-Rustle-

A noise from the left bush revealed the hooded woman.

‘Lunev ma’am?’

A face very familiar to them both.

It was Hastia.

Lunev asked, her eyebrows narrowing.

“Why are you here?”

‘I was returning to Fruina with my clan!’

“That wasn’t the route we gave you, was it?”

‘Yes, you’re correct! However, we had an urgent matter and inevitably came this way.’

“Did you know that we were at the restaurant?”

‘Yes. But I thought greeting you might cause a misunderstanding, so I quietly left. Now, I think it would have been better to say hello.’

Lunev thought to herself.

Certainly, Hastia wasn’t sharing the whole truth in her emotional resonance.

There were lies covering something up.

“Where is the man who was with you?”

‘If you mean Sir Brian...’

Hastia hesitated at her inadvertent naming.

“Brian?”

But that name had already entered Lunev’s mind.

She frantically recalled that name from her memory when,

– Zoom –

Schultz suddenly dashed from his place to a specific spot.

Swiftly drawing his sword, he slashed wildly into the dense bushes.

– Cling!

A clear clashing sound stimulated their eardrums.

A dagger met Schultz’s longsword within the bushes.

Following a brief struggle of strength, when Schultz created some distance, the owner of the dagger also appeared from behind the foliage.

The man, seemingly unwilling to show his face, was wearing a black mask.

The cautious Schultz instinctively touched his wrist after feeling an immense force behind the dagger, akin to being hammered despite its small size.

It clearly wasn’t an ordinary strength.

“Since when does a member of your clan need the protection of a human man, Hastia?”

‘Do I need to explain...?’

“If you don’t want me to inquire more directly.”

Hastia hesitated a moment longer before stiffening her face and speaking out boldly.

‘This is personal. I indeed owe a great debt to you, Lady Lunev, but I cannot tell you about this.’

“Sussk! Heavily horrendous of a private secret for someone bound by secrecy. How curious.”

Lunev’s eyes pierced through Hastia as she spoke sarcastically.

“Fine, I won’t bother you further about this personal affair...”

Lunev’s sharp gaze turned towards the man in the black mask.

“However, I would like to see that man’s face.”

‘Why, why would you want to see him?’

“You have no right to prevent it, Hastia, not when this man is not one of your clan members.”

Hastia failed to deliver any further emotional response.

Ignoring Hastia, who had fallen silent, Lunev approached the man.

“Shall I take it off for you? Or would you prefer to do it yourself?”

“...”

“Speechless? Do you also need to communicate through emotional resonance like that woman?”

The man continued his silence.

“Seems like you didn’t understand me: when I said I’d take it off, I didn’t mean gently with both hands.”

Lunev’s mana began to manifest within her hand, her mood slightly soured.

“Depending on the circumstances, I might blow away everything below your face. Is that what you want?”

The man kept silent still.

However, traces of a tough decision could be seen beyond the concealed mask, and soon his unoccupied left hand reached towards it.

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Chapter 214: What Do You Desire? (4)

“There’s no point in this! Heir!”

I'm not sure who'd find no point in this, but I'm not doing this for my own satisfaction.

In the center of a dark alley cloaked in shadow,

the stench of discarded trash was being overpowered by the fresh reek of blood that had just been spilled, wafting through the air.

The only member left standing, blade met with mine, was one.

The rest were all busy dealing with their wounds, trying to stem the bleeding that was flowing out like a waterfall.

"Aren't you the one who knows the most about our lord? The lord isn't ignoring this to harm you, Heir! All of this is for you!" they said.

For me, that phrase is dangerously ambiguous.

Perhaps in time, I might think, 'Ah, so the lord did all this for me back then', but as for me right now? Even a hundred years from now, I doubt that sentiment will come to me.

When I extended my arm to disrupt the delicate balance of the swordfight,

".....!"

The opposing member's arm started to falter under pressure.

In the moment when our faces came within a finger's breadth of each other,

"Tell the head of the family this," I whispered to him.

"I don't want his indifference."

Is it now my turn to show indifference?

When have I ever been so formal as to take turns with such matters?

The head of the family is correct.

I'm an incredibly selfish person.

And because I am selfish, I will go through to the end doing exactly what I wish.

Purely for myself.

– Swoosh –

“.....!”

I slid my blade diagonally, and the opposing member, having lost balance, staggered for a moment.

I didn't miss the opportunity and mercilessly slashed at the right calf of my falling adversary.

“Cough!”

With a scream, he collapsed, and I left the alleyway without a second glance at the fallen members.

“What on earth do you want?” cried one of the members, but I chose to ignore it.

They won't understand me as I don't understand them.

I re-emerged onto the street and headed towards the restaurant where Hastia and Brian were waiting.

I had used up more time than expected.

Arriving near the restaurant, hoping that they might've eased their awkwardness in my absence,

“.....!”

I stopped three steps from the restaurant's entrance.

Something felt different from when I left.

I sensed the presence of Hastia and Brian, as well as others.

It might just be ordinary customers, but it wasn't.

There was a high-grade mana flow leaking out of the restaurant entrance as clearly as water, the blue aura visible even from the gap in the door.

Like it was inviting me to sense it.

-Creak-

A woman appeared as the restaurant door opened, locking eyes with me.

As if she knew I was coming, she showed no signs of surprise.

“Are you coming in?” she said.

Lunev Rainriver.

Her indifferent gaze met mine, unchanged even after seven years.

* * *

Nothing can be as disconcerting as an unintended reunion.

While I expected to cross paths with members of Mist, I never showed surprise,
but this woman was different.

Why was she here in the empire when she had been in the Kingdom of Garam even just recently?

There are five inside, including myself and the black-haired man who looks familiar, but I can't quite place him.

Brian looked at me with a pleading face that said, 'this was the best we could do'.

“If you were gone any longer, our meeting place would have transferred to the middle of a forest covered with restrictive barriers.”

Neither Hastia nor Brian denied the situation.

After all, she's not one for lies, not where I'm concerned.

“Say something, would you?”

“What am I supposed to say?”

“Oh, as ever, after seven years, you haven't changed. Left Gaun Kingdom without even a greeting...”

I had passed by her in silence before for a simple reason.

There had been nothing good in acknowledging her.

Not for her sake, nor for mine.

“You think I would stick around to find out what you would do to me? Makes sense to run away.”

“Anyone would think I'm going to eat you alive.”

I respond with silence.

Lunev turned her gaze to Hastia, seated obediently by her side.

"It looks like you really can't live without a woman, can you? She insists there's nothing between us, right?"

Hastia waved her hands in panic.

'I'm really not! I'm only accompanying him for a little while because of some circumstances...'

"And what circumstance would that be?"

"That's none of your business."

"Secrets as always? Still full of them."

Lunev sighed and shook her head, probably bored with our tedious conversation.

Turning to Brian, I said, "Take Hastia and step out for a minute."

"Yes, sir!"

Hastia looked slightly confused but obediently got up and followed Brian.

"Lunev, please wait outside as well."

She, too, excused her knight, and soon it was only Lunev and I inside.

She waited quietly for me to speak.

"Why are you here in the empire?"

"Personal reasons."

"Even if I glare, she shrugs. She's not here on any public business, and no one from the academy or in her company knows she's here, except for the knight outside."

It's so like her that I wasn't particularly surprised.

What she does here is purely her own affair, and there's no reason why I needed to know.

Yet I needed to convey something clear and unequivocal.

“Just one thing, no more, no less.”

“What is it?”

“Don’t go to the imperial palace.”

“Is that a warning that something big is about to happen?”

With avid curiosity in her eyes, she continued,

“Is it for your sake or mine?”

“It’s for me.”

“Alright, I’ll agree.”

Her swift concession surprised me, actually.

“Don’t look so surprised, you know I’m sincere when it comes to you.”

Some things are scary because they change, others because they don’t.

She belongs unequivocally to the latter.

“Just one promise then.”

She conditioned her agreement on a promise from me.

“What is it?”

“Once you’re done with what you’re doing, meet with me for real.”

“.....What do you mean?”

The question slipped out almost involuntarily.

“It’s simple. Just properly meet up next time and talk about whatever’s been going on. Do you think I’m expecting something grand from you?”

I could not respond.

Lunev smiled, content, as she looked at me.

“Let’s pretend today’s meeting never happened. As if we never met.”

“Why?”

“For a reunion after seven years...the meaning seems to...to be...”

“.....?”

“Neither particularly significant for you nor me.”

I felt dazed, not from shock, but from an odd sense of disconnect.

“Then, until next time.”

She left the restaurant, leaving me alone.

Unable to grasp the full meaning of her words, one thing seemed certain to me.

Before I begin the impending major event,

she’s advising not to get emotionally consumed because of her.

Proceed as if we never met before and then meet up again afterward.

Her unusual offer does compel some awe.

Naturally, it’s piqued my curiosity too.

“What exactly do you live for?”

An unspoken truth from within me accidentally slipped out.

* * *

“Is it over?”

“It’s over.”

Their conversation ended far too quickly, considering how much Lunev had looked forward to it.

No remnants of regret or longing showed on her face.

“Wasn’t that the meeting you’ve been anticipating? To end it this fast...”

“It’s an unplanned encounter after all. I’m fine with it. It’d be a lie to say there’s no regret, but it seems it’s not something the current you will appreciate.”

Schultz didn’t quite get what she meant.

“He seemed peacefully stoic, but I could sense a bit of anxiety. I felt like I was seeing myself when I first grappled with the emotion called love.”

Lunev used to struggle to comprehend new feelings.

She sensed the same bewilderment in Sian earlier.

“I wouldn’t want to add to his confusion.”

She ardently hoped for a future where they could meet again with ease.

Despite its simplicity, such a day would be hard to come by, and she yearned for it.

* * *

]We seek Count Nigrity’s counsel in the revision of the Order of Salvation and to discuss the future direction of the Ushif Empire. Please attend.>];

]Violet Severus];

There was no courtesy or conversation.

The document almost seemed more of a summons than a formal letter.

Although it bore the Count Nigrity name, similar messages were likely sent to other noble families as well.

Silica let out a scoff then murmured,

“Setting the date so blatantly for the ‘Day of Execution’?”

It felt like a challenge.

“Silica!”

In the midst of it all, a servant burst in without knocking.

She hurried to Silica’s side and whispered.

“We’ve located the heir in Lorand!”

“.....”

Silica did not show a ripple of emotion.

“Four of our high-ranking members and one superior member engaged him, trying to subdue...”

“And the members’ condition?”

Silica asked about their state without concern for the outcome.

“They’re not in mortal peril, but all have suffered serious injuries to one side of their bodies. Recovery won’t be quick.”

Silica’s face remained impassive, but her hand, once holding the summons, had clenched into a trembling fist.

“And they conveyed this message for you.”

“.....”

“He doesn’t want any of your oversight...”

“Understood. You may leave.”

The servant left without further words or queries.

Silica closed her eyes, breathing calmly before lifting her head to the ceiling.

“You too will eventually realize.”

Then she began to speak from her heart.

“What path it is you must follow...”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 215

Chapter 215: For a New Order (1)

An official royal document was dispatched to each noble family in the name of the Second Princess, Violet Severus.

The faces of the nobles who checked the document were filled with worry.

Although it seemed like a simple request to attend a meeting to discuss the reorganization of the knighthood and the direction of the empire, the true intent behind it was anything but simple.

The Knights of Light.

A group composed of holy knights who undertake evil in the name of the gods.

Anyone can join regardless of status if they have talent in martial arts and magic, and sometimes they are regarded with even higher honor than noble titles,

the value of the name 'Light' was truly significant.

A reform of the knighthood?

Why would the Knights of Light, which even children of high noble families dream of joining, undergo such a reorganization?

It's because of the glory of being the messengers of the gods, under the grace of the saint, performing the missions bestowed by Lumen Del, the god of light.

However, the Knights of Light currently have no saint.

With the symbolic and spiritual leader equivalent to their figurehead gone,

the imperial family's plan to reorganize the Knight Order held deep implications.

There was not a single noble who didn't understand what this meant.

With the new name 'Knights of Salvation,' the royal family essentially declared their intention to include all senior knights within the royal influence.

The nobles thought:

They did not want to go.

But they had no choice but to go.

With the downfall of the once-prominent First Prince Luinel and the frailty of Emperor Dione, who could no longer get involved in state affairs,

it was Second Princess Violet who had whipped up this storm in the midst of a brewing tempest.

To not attend the meeting would be to publicly admit that they would not follow the rapidly changing order of the empire.

The royal family, all too aware of the nobles' predicament, could only smile wryly.

In the Great Chamber of the Royal Palace, at the center of which was the Second Princess's office.

Seated around a circular table were four men and women facing each other.

Violet, Aschel, Boris, and Arin.

Boris stood with the document in hand and said to them:

"Out of the 20 families we've sent the decree to, a total of 18 have sent their affirmative replies. Two have yet to respond."

"Which are they?"

"The Duchy of Condor, and the Duchy of Vert."

Violet and Aschel simultaneously let out a wry smile.

It was no coincidence that the involved families had connections with them.

"My esteemed grandfather seems to be influencing our family's affairs. It's been over a decade since he passed his title, yet he can't seem to sever ties with family matters."

Violet sighed and then shook her head.

She was convinced that this was the influence of her maternal grandfather, the former head of the Condor family, Condor Quizzel.

Because her uncle and the current head of the family, Pyrlo Quizzel, didn't have the backbone to do it.

"Don't worry too much about it. It's likely that he just wants to see the other families' reactions before making a decision. He will probably send a positive reply before long."

Violet's gaze then turned to Aschel.

"What about you, Lord Aschel? From what I gather, Duke Vert doesn't seem too pleased with the situation?"

"He must be too busy to have checked yet. With things as they are, I'll go ahead and approve on behalf of the Duchy of Vert. I'll speak to my father about it later."

"?"

Arin thought she had heard wrong.

After all, wasn't the front line at Belias, which included the kingdom itself, where most of the Knights of Light were stationed?

Duke Vert commanded and directed so many knights and had the power to lead them by his own decree,

yet he planned to proceed first and discuss it afterwards?

Even as the heir of House Vert, Arin found this incomprehensible.

Unlike her, however, both Violet and Boris seemed to agree with Aschel's decision.

Arin thus chose to remain silent for the time being.

The meeting ended, and Aschel and Violet left the room promptly.

As she continued to organize the documents without minding the situation, Boris approached Arin.

"Princess Arin?"

"Yes?"

"Could we talk for a moment?"

"Do you have another matter to report?"

"No, it's that... I've noticed you've been using the power of the sacred sword recently."

Arin flinched inwardly but maintained her composure, continuing the conversation.

"Was it noticeable?"

"The remnants of the sword's light magic linger around you. I wanted to act as if I hadn't noticed, but I couldn't contain my curiosity. How did you come to use the sacred sword's power?"

"Ah, I was just feeling quite restless that day. I wanted to test my abilities, so I tried to wield it for practice. The result was, well, embarrassingly insufficient."

"Haha, I see. Don't be too discouraged. As a saint, you'll surely soon be able to properly harness the power of the sacred sword."

"Thank you for always being so encouraging."

It felt like she had managed to deflect the conversation well.

No more questions seemed forthcoming, so perhaps it was best to let the matter rest.

Yet, Arin didn't stop there.

She herself had a question she wanted to ask that day.

"Do you believe we can defeat the being known as the mist, Lord Boris?"

"The master of the cursed sword, do you mean?"

Boris immediately referred to Sian.

"If I am to be honest, it seems difficult at present. We don't yet know the true extent of his power."

Contrary to Arin's expectations, he acknowledged the grim reality of their situation.

"That's why we need the help of a young princess like you. The power of light comes from faith and unity. Only then, defeating the being of mist may not be entirely impossible."

Faith and unity.

Those were the most important factors that could amplify the power of light.

But Arin's heart was filled not with firm belief towards the bright light,

but with questions towards the dark mist.

"Lord Boris, the scripture you gave me..."

"..."

"How did you acquire it? You said it wasn't handwritten by you, right?"

Instead of continuing, Boris gave her a knowing smile.

"Should I say it's a legacy left by a dear friend of mine?"

"A dear friend?"

"Yes. Someone who held mutual interest and tried to outdo one another, an inseparable friend with a long-standing bond. Additionally..."

“Yes?”

“Never mind.”

“For now, that’s all I can share. If there is a chance, I will tell you everything.”

“Ah, I see. Thank you for your response.”

Despite many uncertainties, Arin left the room without pressing further.

With Arin gone, Boris stood alone in the middle of the room, chuckling with an unmistakable smile, and quietly muttered to himself.

“... and also a former master of the cursed sword.”

* * *

At the western border of the Empire, in the rear camp by the Belias Front.

Having read the royal document, Duke Vert lifted his head to address Yulken who delivered the message.

“What is the spirit among the knights like?”

“They are not greatly unsettled, but it is impossible to say that they are indifferent.”

Even though protecting the continent is of paramount importance,

it’s unreasonable to assume the knights will simply accept the notion that the order to which they belong has fundamentally changed without their knowing.

“And what about you?”

“What do you mean, my lord?”

“Do you understand what the knighthood reformation entails? It doesn’t concern me directly; I am only a leader to oversee you all. Yet, with this reformation, the direction your paths as knights must follow may change—will you continue to follow me?”

“Sir Yulken Darius pledges loyalty to you, Duke! Even if you lead us to the very edges of the underworld, I shall follow you to the end!”

Yulken’s conviction was unwavering.

“Though we bear the blessing of light, performing the missions given by the gods, all the knights at the front have served you for decades already. It will remain so into the future, and no one but you can command us!”

“It appears I haven’t lived my life all that poorly then,” the Duke said with a wistful yet content smile.

“It seems that the other nobles have already agreed to attend the meeting. What are your intentions, my Lord?”

“I follow orders only from His Majesty the Emperor. Let alone complying with a decree sent by some princess.”

“However, at the main palace, the first Prince is...”

As Yulken began mentioning Aschel, he caught the Duke’s expression and hastily stopped himself.

However, the Duke replied with an indifferent look in his eye.

“Let’s observe the situation for a bit longer. It’s not like the meeting won’t proceed without me. For now, focus on ensuring that the knights do not get disconcerted.”

“As per Your Excellency’s command.”

After receiving his orders, Yulken left the tent.

Duke Vert too stepped outside, gazing at the unnaturally reddened sky over the front that particular evening.

‘Let us go.’

If he desires the peace of the continent for his children to achieve, then he must let them go.

Those words, spoken seven years ago by his lost youngest, still resonated faintly in his mind.

There was no need to trust.

In such circumstances, all one could do was observe the current flow from a bystander’s perspective.

“What are you planning to do, Sian?”

The Duke’s heart was not filled with trust but laden with doubts.

* * *

A week after the imperial decree was sent out to the noble families of the empire.

One after another, the nobles who had replied to the summons began to appear at the main palace.

None of them had indulged in the frivolous finery typically seen among their kind.

Each was accompanied by an escort of at least battalion strength, and their arrival filled the palace with an air of solemnity and tension.

In the imperial conference hall where the high-level meeting was to occur, the participating nobles, with tense expressions, checked each other's temperaments.

Among those present who could exert significant influence, two figures stood out:

Condor Quizzel, Violet's grandfather and the actual power behind the Duchy of Condor, and Duke Vert of Willius, the guardian of the continent.

Yet there was no sign of either.

In Condor's place sat Pyrlo Quizzel, the current head, and the seat for House Vert remained conspicuously empty.

As the meeting time approached,

amidst a hushed atmosphere, the back door of the conference hall suddenly opened, and in walked a golden-haired man of striking beauty.

It was Aschel Vert, the eldest son of House Vert.

His easy comportment as he nonchalantly took his seat signaled something unsaid to the rest of the nobility.

For Duke Vert, responsible for defending the front line, to attend in person was nearly an unfathomable prospect.

In his stead, the heir had responded to the imperial call.

That Duke Vert would acquiesce to a summons from the royal family and not directly from the emperor was a substantial shock to the others.

— Thud!

Finally, the front doors to the hall swung open, and the cortege from the royal family who had organized the meeting entered.

At the lead was Second Princess Violet, with Fifth Princess Arin in trail.

There was no sign of the third or fourth princes.

Who could have predicted such a turn of events?

Amidst an atmosphere tinged with unease and anxiety, Princess Violet opened the meeting with a gratified expression.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 216

****Chapter 216: For a New Order (2)****

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has come here for the future of the empire, despite being busy with the affairs of your own territories," Violet said, slightly lifting her skirt in a dignified curtsy.

"Before we start the meeting, I would like to ask one thing," she added.

At that moment, Duke Gillian Barrens, who was sitting at the center of the meeting table, raised his hand to ask a question.

"Is the host of this conference the royal family, or His Majesty the Emperor himself?"

"I do not see the intent behind your question. Our royal family acts on the will of His Majesty the Emperor, and His Majesty is an evident member of the royal family. Therefore, naturally, would not this meeting also contain His Majesty's will?" Violet responded with a nonchalant tone, as if questioning what the issue was.

"However, His Majesty has long since withdrawn from state affairs. Some even rumor that His Majesty is utterly unaware of the current state of affairs in the empire. We are vassals to His Majesty the Emperor, not vassals to the princess."

It was a bold statement that highlighted the speaker's loyalty to the Emperor.

However, Violet nodded as if understanding their sentiments.

"I am well aware of your uncertainties. You must be wondering whether the royal family intends to consume the Order of the Light through a reorganization of the knights, or whether, taking advantage of the Emperor's illness, I am aiming to establish a new order within the empire. However, to answer your concerns upfront: that is not the case."

Caught off guard by her hasty acknowledgment, some nobles' eyes gleamed.

"The Order of Salvation is not there to maintain the influence of the royal family. Its mission is to maintain peace across the continent, identical to what the previous Order of the Light stood by. Only now, the order they are based on is not that of light."

Upon hearing this, another noble from the front seats raised his hand.

It was Count Dayden of Averico, the head of the Averico county.

"I have heard that a scripture glorifying the black mist has been distributed throughout various territories and cities by the imperial court. I believe there is no one here who is unaware of this fact."

Most nobles nodded in agreement.

"Why would the royal family, that seeks a new order, cause confusion among the people with such baseless scriptures? What purpose did you have in promoting such an event? You must explain it to us at this venue."

Count Averico presented the scripture in question as if to prove his point.

Just as some nobles seemed ready to support his claim,

Swish!

Suddenly, one of the knights guarding the conference proceeded with an unexpected act, climbing onto the conference table.

The startled nobles were confused for a moment until, ultimately, the knight unsheathed his sword and planted it into the table's surface, manifesting his mana.

"Get down from the table!" a noble cried out, sensing a threat, but by that time, a circular black curtain had already enveloped the area around the noble's table.

"What's happening here?"

"Is there no one outside?"

"I knew something like this would happen!"

While some were at a loss for what to do, others were trying to call the knights that were on standby outside, and some were glaring at where the princess was seated, as if they had expected this situation all along.

Their reactions to the sudden turn of events were diverse.

Keeeng

At that moment, a beam of light penetrated the black curtain before the nobles, revealing a woman wielding a sword who stepped forward.

“Haap!”

Clang!

With a shout, the woman swung her sword diagonally.

The knight who failed to block the strike was immediately thrown out of the curtain.

The black curtain he had created also vanished simultaneously.

“?”

The nobles were perplexed upon seeing the woman.

With her sparkling silver hair gallantly fluttering, the woman stood confidently atop the table.

Her sword seemed to exude a holy aura reminiscent of the divine armaments of a high god.

“Princess Arin?”

The owner of the sword was none other than the Fifth Princess, Arin Severus.

As if nothing had happened, she stepped down from the table and helped the fallen knight to his feet.

The nobles could only blink in confusion at this inexplicable scenario.

“I prepared a small spectacle to ease everyone’s tension. Was it to your liking?”

Upon saying this, Princess Violet looked around at them with a tranquility as if the world were at peace.

“Even so, haven’t you crossed the line?”

Overwhelmed by the situation, the nobles were at a loss for words.

Suddenly

Ever since the start of the meeting, Aschel, who had been sitting quietly, stood up and moved forward without a word. Without any greeting or explanation, he suddenly produced a golden sphere of mana.

The sphere soon transformed into the shape of a long sword, revealing the hidden divine armament in all its nobility.

The gathered nobles realized at once: This was no ordinary sword.

This was a divine armament gifted to humanity by the high god of light, Lumen Del.

It must be the holy sword Durandal.

“Those of you who know will understand,” Aschel said, gripping the summoned sword gently with both hands.

“Seven years ago, I crossed swords with my younger brother, the owner of the cursed sword. The shock that my beloved sibling was actually a follower of the mist was huge, but what pained me more was the fact that even with the power of this noble holy sword, I could not save him.”

Who wouldn't know of such an event?

It had not only shocked the world but also sowed doubts about the mist among the people.

“Due to that, I lived every day trembling in anxiety. The fear that they could reappear at any time and that I alone could never defeat them weakened me further. But soon, I realized, to overcome them, we need the powerful faith...”

Srueng

Suddenly, knights guarding the meeting room simultaneously drew their swords.

Dozens of swords aimed at the ceiling shone with a gold light similar to Aschel and Arin's swords, as if it was the power of replicated holy swords.

“The spreading of the scripture of mist was indeed done by our royal family. If you ask me the purpose, I would say it was to give strength to the real followers of the mist.”

Violet stepped forward once again after a brief retreat.

“What do you mean by that?”

“The scripture spread by the royal family has undoubtedly intensified people’s suspicion and doubt toward the mist. Thus, those who have inadvertently gained influence will soon reveal their true nature. They might carry out assassinations like before, or engage in even more heinous acts,” Violet explained.

Hearing the word ‘heinous acts,’ several nobles shivered.

“In that case, what should we do? Should we oppress and suppress them like in the past?”

No one could readily answer such a question.

The nobles could only wait for the princess to provide the answer to her own question.

“No, we must save them.”

Aschel proposed salvation as the answer.

“We use the power of light to save them and establish a new order. This is the direction we must take to maintain the current peace.”

“Does that mean, Lord Aschel, you intend to save even the real followers of the mist? Are you talking about that assassination group, the Mist?”

As soon as the word ‘Mist’ was mentioned, the nobles held their breath in unison.

How he answered this crucial question would give them a clue about the direction of the new order they were aiming to establish.

“There are various ways to save a person.”

“...?”

One couldn’t grasp the meaning of that answer all at once.

Aschel continued without paying any heed.

“I will share the power of this holy sword with all of you. If you don’t wish to receive it, you may pass it on to your guardian knights.”

“Is that truly possible?”

“Don’t you see it with your own eyes? The power shown by the princess and the knights just now is undoubtedly that of the holy sword.”

Before further questions could be raised, one more needed to be asked.

“Why do you wish to give it to us as well?”

Why?

Why would they share that power with them, who had nothing to do with the holy sword?

“The strength of the holy sword is magnified when people’s faith is united. Since I alone cannot harness people’s power, I need your help. With the power of this holy sword, you are to return to your territories and perform just one small act.”

“And what exactly is this small act?”

Aschel didn’t immediately follow with an answer but instead gave a brief pause.

“Please purify the influence of the mist that has formed in each territory through the scriptures.”

“...!”

At that moment, the nobles’ pupils shook violently as if they had heard wrong.

To ‘purify the influence of the mist’?

That couldn’t have been a mere linguistic use of purification as in cleansing away impurity.

Clearly implied in the sense of purification he spoke of was,

“Are you suggesting that we should kill the believers?”

“Kill” was indeed the meaning behind his words.

“As I said, the holy sword grows stronger when people’s faith is added to it. If people realize that the black mist they were wary of is indeed wrong, they will once again direct a stronger faith towards the light.”

“But that could accidentally harm innocent people...”

“There’s no need to worry. It was the same 60 years ago,” Aschel assured, as every noble seemed petrified by the suggestion except for one.

All except for Silica, who had been sitting calmly at the back of the meeting room the entire time. She was present not as the head of Mist but as the representative of the Nigrity county.

“We will thus forge another new order.”

Aschel lifted the holy sword he was holding with a dignified gesture. His sword shone with a unique light among the dozens of swords in the meeting room.

* * *

Exactly 100 steps from the main gate of the meeting room.

Dozens of knights stood piercingly in the middle of the hallway, brought personally by the nobles from their territories.

Focused on the meeting, they took no notice of anything else as they stood ready for any contingency.

Bang clang

Just as expected, a noise resounded from beyond the meeting room, like something gigantic rolling over.

Upon hearing it, the knights rushed toward the meeting room.

“Calm yourselves!”

As if on cue, the Imperial Knights blocked their way.

“How can we remain calm when we hear such commotion? Move aside at once!”

“No need for alarm. The situation is as planned. Everyone inside is safe, and should any issues arise, we, the Imperial Knights, will take responsibility!”

“Let us check, then!”

Those who sought to proceed and those who intended to block them. A standoff ensued between the knights, unwilling to yield.

Amidst the rising tension, I slipped quietly to one side.

Dodging the gazes, I appeared to turn around the left corner but then stopped in place, tapping the wall.

thump thump

The hollow sound hinted at an empty space, exactly what I was hoping for.

I immediately cast my secret technique.

“Shadow Dance 2nd Form: Spatial Transposition.”

Swish swish

As I murmured the spell, the mist stretched from my hand to the wall, enveloping me as if diving into wavy water and transporting me inside the wall itself.

After the Imperial Banquet, this is my second exploration of the secret passage.

Last time, I headed to the Crown Prince’s chambers to overhear their plans.

However, today my destination was not the chambers of the Crown Prince or the Second Princess, but beneath—underground.

In my past life, around this time, Aschel had convened with the Crown Prince to transform one of the palace shelters into a covert space utilized for their vile deeds.

To be precise, a workspace to plan those unpleasant acts.

Based on that knowledge, I proceeded, thinking this time would be no different.

And sure enough, there it was.

A familiar room juxtaposed right next to the shelter.

At first glance, the overpowering aura of magic gave it away, along with the unfamiliar scent of someone’s blood wafting through.

I immediately opened the door and entered.

“Ughhh...”

I was met with a foul stench of blood that seemed to have been festering for days, if not months, accompanied by faint groans of pain.

Soon enough, eyes laid upon a familiar face, marked from head to toe with wounds and a beard grown so long it could touch the floor—it seemed as if years, not months, had rotted away.

Well, not the encounter I had predicted, but I wasn’t particularly startled by it either.

Though familiar, it was hardly a welcome face.

Kellin Diego.

The loyal subject of Aschel whom I had once imbued with a new persona through magic.

“Si, Sir Sian?”

He too spotted me and called out with a voice full of desperation.

(To be continued.)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 217

Chapter 217: For a New Order (3)

“I’m sorry…….”

Following the call of my name, Kellin immediately conveyed words of apology to me.

Sorry, sorry.

Honestly, I never expected to hear those words first from his mouth.

I thought I’d be met with a complaint, or an accusation as to why I’d only now arrived.

Well, it was evidence that the personality I had implanted in the shadow had survived well.

“Due to my inadequacy, Sir Sian’s true identity was exposed.”

It’d happened quite some time ago, laughing about questioning it now,

Yet surviving without exposure up to seven years later, that wasn’t something to overlook.

They still had something to gain from Kellin, it seemed.

“Since when have you been like this?”

“I regretfully cannot remember clearly. Perhaps it’s not been many years…….”

I gently laid my hand on his sweat-and-blood-mixed head.

Then, closing my eyes tightly, I transferred mana.

It was almost as if I had massaged his brain.

Perhaps there were traces of mental torture left to find any remnants of me in him.

A normal person's personality would have long since collapsed and become useless.

Only because it was a high-grade magical personality, had it managed to hold on this long.

Sympathy? Not at all.

This puppet was made simply to be manipulated to my liking from the beginning.

There was no room for feelings like affection for such a being.

Had I not instilled personality in him, it's safe to say he would have sided with those who created this space to screw me over.

Sympathy for that kind of guy,

I haven't become so mellowed out yet.

"Be careful, Sir. They believe they cannot handle you with their power alone. That's why they are preparing a completely new existence to oppose you."

"What is that?"

"Sorry. I do not know too much beyond....."

"Anything else you'd like to say?"

Silenced by my stern questioning, he struggled to continue.

"I'm really grateful that you appeared now."

-Swish

As if it were his last will, I beheaded Kellin right then and there.

Was it to ease his pain?

Leaving him be would only result in his being manipulated to their liking.

Perhaps he would have thought so.

Honestly, it was more out of sheer bother to manage any longer. I just killed him.

It wasn't anything particularly pleasant, so there was no need to keep it alive.

-Thud, thud

I heard unfamiliar footsteps coming from the direction of the entrance.

Not many, just one person.

The steps weren't heavy nor light.

Approaching toward me, the footsteps halted exactly at the doorway.

Seeing me between the open door gap, the person stopped.

I thought there would be hesitation, but then they stepped in again.

Since I had no intention to hide, I turned my head to face them.

"....."

Black hair, a short haircut, vague eyes, a delicate figure.

About my age, or maybe a year or two younger.

At first glance, one might mistake her for a boy, but she's female.

Her face was fraught with yin energy.

Anyone who wasn't a fool could notice at a single second glance what had transpired in this room, but without panic, she seemed unfazed.

"Did you kill Kellin?"

Without answering, I looked at the tray she held.

A slice of bread and a cup of water.

Clearly she'd come to provide sustenance, or, to prolong his life.

"Are you an assassin?"

Even after her continuous probing, I remained silent.

Curious about her reaction, I quietly waited.

“.....”

After setting down the tray and just staring blankly for a few minutes.

“What are you doing?”

Unable to see more, I asked.

“Standing still?”

“Why?”

“I thought you were going to kill me. It didn’t seem likely to run away.”

Doesn’t look like a servant of the palace, nor a knight, definitely not a noble either.

Moving freely in the palace’s clandestine spaces, even bringing food?

There was a suspicious smell, keenly irritating my senses.

“Kellin’s face. It looks at ease now.”

She suddenly mentioned Kellin’s severed head.

“He always looked in pain. And yet, he didn’t utter any complaints. I found it pitiful and you’ve liberated him.”

She pointed out one of my least favorite notions.

“If you’re not an assassin, then are you perhaps a knight of liberation?”

What a pointless joke. Enough observation.

I had no intention of wasting time with questions such as her name or purpose for being here.

As I was about to grab her hair and drag her out,

“.....!”

My hand shook abruptly.

To be precise, my right hand.

Even more precisely, from the firmly grasped Ceyram, there came a strong vibration.

Checking if Ceyram was trying to manifest physically,

[.....]

Not even a voice came from Ceyram, let alone mist.

Regardless of Ceyram's consciousness, the demonic sword itself felt something and reacted against it.

"Is that a demonic sword?"

My gaze returned to her.

"The demonic sword Ceyram, said to inherit the power of the god of black mist, Aer."

Her expression remained flat as she spoke.

"Seeing that you hold it, you must be that Sian Vert."

To say she hit the nail on the head would be to assume too little evidence.

This was someone deducing based on information received about me.

Kellin's last words before his death flicked through my mind.

They were preparing a completely new entity to stand against me, weren't they?

I expected mere puppets, but it seems they were crafting a more special doll this time.

"Your name, what is it?"

I asked her, maintaining a stern expression.

Without any indication of being perturbed, she opened her mouth calmly.

"Mia."

"Mia Hapencus."

Should I feel relieved or more worried?

As Condor Principal said,

Right before his retirement, a student with the name Hapencus transferred to the academy.

And now that girl,

“Do you know me?”

Here she was, right in front of me.

* * *

After the unilateral declaration named a meeting concluded, Violet, Aschel, Boris, and Arin gathered again in the Second Princess’s room.

“Great work out there, Sir Aschel.”

“It’s not me who’s worked hard but the princesses. I am particularly grateful to Princess Arin. You truly were impressive.”

“It was merely my duty.”

Arin downplayed her significant role.

“The power of the Holy Sword influences the entire empire, how reassuring. Who would dare refuse the power of the Holy Sword?” Violet commented with a sense of self-satisfaction.

“Regrettably, there was one place.”

Boris interjected, changing the room’s mood.

“What do you mean?”

“Among the twenty families that attended the meeting, it was only the Nigrity Count’s house that did not wish to receive the power.”

“Are you referring to Silica?”

Arin showed her surprise, flashing her eyes.

“Why did they refuse?”

Ignoring Arin’s question, Violet’s eyes narrowed inquisitively.

“They claimed they lacked a capable talent to inherit the power.”

Violet instantly realized it was an excuse to escape the situation.

“There’s always someone who doubts a perfect gem. No need to worry too much about it.”

Boris tried to dampen the somewhat intense atmosphere, making it seem a minor issue.

“Well, let me excuse myself for a moment. There’s something I need to do.”

He soon left the room alone.

Violet turned to Aschel, slightly annoyed.

“I’ve wanted to ask before, wasn’t Boris originally with your brother? Since when has he been following you, Sir Aschel?”

With the unseen prowess of an 8-star, the ability to effortlessly tackle any task, and enigmatic strategy—to behold him was as if he was a divine talent.

When did the man chosen by Prince Luinel begin to follow Aschel?

Arin too always wondered this.

Aschel responded with a modest smile.

“They say destiny is orchestrated by the gods. I guess we both recognized right at our first meeting what we could do for each other.”

“So, was it like a twist of fate?”

“It’s akin to the situation when I chose you as a princess from Belias.”

“Not too convincing, but I’ll leave it at that.”

Although Violet held her doubts, she didn’t press further.

As the remaining three began discussing their next steps, Boris had exited the room and descended into the palace’s underground corridors, illuminated by gloomy torchlight.

Boris paused in front of a particular room.

“

He was about to grab the doorknob when he hesitated, feeling an unusual energy from beyond the door.

He then quickly flung the door open.

A putrid smell of blood wrinkled his brows.

On the floor lay Kellin's head, and standing idly by was Mia, who noticed Boris's entrance but remained silent, just gazing at Kellin's severed head.

Watching her, Boris asked cautiously.

"What happened here, Mia?"

"He came here."

"Who might that be?"

"Sir Boris, you've always told us about the owner of the demonic sword, Sian Vert."

Boris wore an ambiguous expression, neither smiling nor showing confusion.

"Did he kill Kellin?"

"Yes. I was going to give him his meal and torture him as usual, but since he died like this, I didn't know what to do so I simply stood by."

A hint of disappointment lingered in her indifferent gaze.

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know. I thought he was going to kill me, but he just asked my name and then vanished."

Upon her words, Boris scanned for any nearby presences.

Luckily or not, no immediate signs of murderous or bloodthirsty energy were detected.

"Before he went, he told me to pass a message to the next person he meets."

"What did he... say?"

Mia turned her attention from Kellin's head to Boris.

"Quit, throwing a fit....."

(To be continued)

**The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter
218**

Chapter 218: For a New Order (4)

The power of the holy sword, emanating a golden sacred aura.

Condor silently observed the knight's blade imbued with that power.

Initially skeptical, now that he witnessed it with his very eyes, belief was his only recourse.

It was undoubtedly the power of the gods.

Even he, who had dedicated his life to magic, had to shake his head in disbelief.

Condor looked at the knight's face and asked,

"What about you?"

"What do you mean?"

"How do you feel about receiving the high power of the gods?"

The knight hesitated for a moment, then carefully began to speak.

"I'm not sure if this is the right way to describe it, but it feels like I've been weakened."

"Weakened?"

"Yes. I've dedicated my life to training, honing both my swordsmanship and magic, but before this power, I feel shamefully inadequate. Even if I were to live twice, no, three times longer, it seems I could not reach the realm of this power. I feel incredibly powerless."

The knight expressed his candid feelings.

He was a high-ranking knight within House Quizzel, respected by many and possessing abilities that surpassed frontline knights.

"I suppose the other knights who've received this power likely share the same sentiments. We are far from reaching the divine realm..."

Condor nodded in complete understanding.

It made him think anew—perhaps that's why they're gods.

As mere creations, humans lacked far too much to reach the divine realm of their creator.

“In a week’s time, the royal family will officially declare the start of a new order to the empire.”

The Duke of Quizzel added as though explaining.

“It’ll be done by Princess Violet, not His Majesty the Emperor, though.”

“No. It will be Princess Arin...”

Condor furrowed his brows and turned his gaze to Pyrlo.

“Princess Arin is to make the declaration?”

“Yes. It seems that after all her travels and charity work across the empire, she’s been chosen to minimize the public’s confusion. It’s actually Princess Violet who’s been more actively promoting this...”

Condor’s expression suddenly became severe.

Princess Arin as the figurehead for an event signaling the empire’s new beginning?

Princess Violet surely understood the significance.

Condor didn’t have confirmation yet, but he suspected there was another reason for choosing Arin as the representative.

* * *

As a tumultuous day came to an end, the night deepened within the imperial palace.

Accompanied by the moon high in the dark sky, she reviewed her remaining duties when Resmus approached with a letter.

“What’s this?”

The sender’s name wasn’t written on the letter.

“I received this from Lord Boris on my way here. He requested that I deliver it to you as soon as possible.”

It was odd, receiving a letter within the palace walls.

Curiously, Arin immediately tore open the letter to read it.

“...?”

Confused by the content, Arin tilted her head.

“Why do you look puzzled, Princess?”

“What does this mean...?”

-knock knock-

Simultaneously with the knock, a servant entered the room.

“Your Highness, you have a visitor.”

“A visitor?”

“Silica Nigrity, the eldest daughter of the Nigrity family.”

It was an unexpected visit given the late hour.

Yet before Arin could show any surprise, she looked over Boris’s letter once more.

“Let them in.”

Silica was then permitted entry.

“Thank you for granting me this audience despite the late hour.”

“Welcome, teacher.”

Arin welcomed her former instructor with a slightly bewildered reaction.

“Last time, I didn’t handle things well, did I? Not only was your visit abrupt, but I also left without saying goodbye. I’m truly sorry.”

“That’s alright. It only showed how actively you’re working for the empire. Your conduct today was also exemplary.”

“Truly... do you think so?”

“Yes. Whether the mission was by design or not, the way you handled it, with composure, was quite impressive to me. I meant that sincerely.”

Despite receiving praise from her former mentor, Arin couldn’t bring herself to smile.

“Could you give us a moment, Resmus?”

Sensing that a private conversation was necessary, Arin sent Resmus out.

"I heard that the Nigrity house didn't receive the power of the holy sword. May I ask why?"

"It's as I told you before. We don't have anyone in our family who can receive the power."

"I know that's not the only reason. I'm asking because I want to know the other reasons."

Instead of answering, Silica offered a smile that held no clear meaning.

"May I ask you something, then?"

"Of course."

Arin nodded, indicating it was okay to proceed.

"How much of your thoughts are reflected in this plan the royal family is now pursuing?"

"Most of them, I'd say. Sister Violet has supported me, and both teacher Boris and Duke Aschel have helped guide my direction."

Arin continued, looking resolute and unashamed.

"I'm not sure what you think, teacher, but I can proudly say that it all started with me. After all, I was the one who first raised doubts about the black mist."

"Was there a particular reason for that?"

"Would it help if I mentioned an incident from seven years ago?"

Instead of explaining, Arin alluded to an event from the past.

Realizing the connection, Silica nodded.

"You once said to me, Princess, that you doubted whether light could truly lead our order, right?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Questioning is the driving force behind human potential. A small curiosity can grow into something that moves the world."

"What do you mean?"

Arin couldn't quite grasp the meaning.

"May I share my own story?"

Caught off-guard by Silica's request, Arin nodded.

"Our Nigrity family is, as you know, an ancient lineage of scholars. From a young age, I had access to countless books and manuscripts, learning various knowledge. Around the same age as you, I suspect, we began to question: why must we revere light and shun mist? That small question soon led to deeper curiosity... and interest."

Arin's eyes sparkled with an unexpected revelation.

"That's... really?"

"Yes. So I decided to delve deeper. What is the origin of the black mist, and why must we reject it? What began as a tiny doubt became a flourishing interest, and I shared my findings with my siblings and those around me."

Despite her curiosity about why Silica was sharing all this, Arin couldn't ask.

She felt overwhelmed by the imposing aura the other woman radiated, leaving her unable to speak.

Silica continued without pause.

"But my parents, especially my father, couldn't understand me. He went so far as to burn the research on mist I had compiled, right in front of me, showing an extreme aversion. He told me that light was our guiding principle, that the mist was a forbidden existence, one of negativity."

Her voice rang cold and sharp, a stark contrast to the warm, kind instructor Arin remembered from the Royal Academy.

"There was no explanation, no reasoning. That day, my father seemed less a devotee of light and more a mad zealot. Why such blind faith in light and revulsion for mist? My questioning of the mist soon turned into an aversion to the light, which morphed into greater doubt."

As Silica spoke, Arin felt like she was sinking deeper into a quagmire.

Her body, not just her mouth, wouldn't respond.

"However, my doubts were resolved after I joined the Royal Academy. Meeting him, I came to understand the truth I needed to follow."

Silica took out a book and presented it before Arin.

It was the script on the mist dispersed by the royal family throughout the empire's monasteries.

"Did you think that harnessing its power would reveal the true nature of the mist? But you were mistaken. The black mist doesn't grow stronger from convictions or unity like light does."

With an eerie smirk, Silica leaned closer to Arin.

"Do you think absolute belief is good? No, that's a shortcut to obsolescence. Only by constantly doubting, questioning, and rejecting can we progress."

"...!"

Arin's eyes reeled as if witnessing the inconceivable.

From the palm of Silica's gently raised hand,

an unknown black mist softly began to rise.

"The source of the mist grows stronger when accompanied by negative emotions like anger, envy, and hatred."

Silica intently watched the ascending mist.

"Princess Arin, you've been traveling the empire, engaging in charity work. Your reputation is stellar, and some even hope to see you as Empress. However..."

Her steadfast gaze returned to Arin.

"You met Sian in Aquizzel, didn't you?"

"...!"

"Sian tried to kill you but couldn't. Do you know why?"

Arin's lips trembled, unable to answer.

"Because he had grown fond of you. He couldn't kill you because he had developed feelings that weren't there before."

Silica gently stroked Arin's trembling shoulders.

"If you, who've inspired such affection, were to die brutally at our hands..."

“...!”

“Our successor would fully awaken amidst all this negativity. That’s when the new order we seek will rise.”

-sss-

From her body erupted the hitherto concealed black mist.

Enveloped by it, Princess Arin was,

“...!”

Unable to resist, she was consumed and disappeared into thin air.

“Princess?”

Sensing something was amiss, Resmus knocked from outside, but no one remained inside to answer.

-Flung open!

Resmus, having hurriedly opened the door, saw only,

“...!”

The dwindling mist that previously surrounded Arin and Silica, now fading into oblivion.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 219

Chapter 219: For a New Order (5)

Late into the night, Princess Arin vanished without a trace after conversing with Silica in her room.

Naturally, the royal palace was thrown into chaos.

However, since many of the nobles were still staying at the imperial palace and its surroundings,

the royals, who had another major event ahead, were not keen on the spread of such an unfortunate incident.

“So you’re saying that when you sensed the strange atmosphere and opened the door, both of them were gone, and you saw an unidentified black smoke rising and then disappearing? Is that correct?”

“Yes! It’s definitely the work of Mist, a group that follows the black fog! They have taken Princess Arin.....!”

“Isn’t that funny? Just because you saw some smoke, how does it link to the work of Mist?”

Prince Resmus became dumbstruck when faced with Princess Violet’s incisive question.

Princess Violet wasn’t aware of what Arin had suffered at the hands of Sian in Aquizzel, was she?

And here Resmus had carelessly suggested that it might have been Mist’s doing.

The color drained from Resmus’s face as he realized his mistake.

“Please calm down, Your Highness.”

Aschel diffused what could have been a charged atmosphere.

“Shouldn’t we focus on finding the missing Princess Arin first?”

“Yes, you’re right! She couldn’t have gone far, we must organize a search party to find the princess immediately!”

While Aschel emphasized that finding Arin was the top priority, Resmus agreed, and Violet’s face began to show a trace of displeasure.

“Fine, but you, leave for now.”

“Pardon?”

Resmus asked again, thinking he must have misheard.

“Disappear from my sight right now! Shouldn’t we be devising a plan? Are you planning to broadcast throughout Severus that the princess has been abducted from the royal palace?!”

Violet's suppressed anger finally erupted as she sharply scolded Resmus with eyes like knives.

Aschel stepped in to appease her in place of the flustered Resmus.

"Would you please wait outside for now? There are things the princess and I need to discuss privately."

Discuss during such an urgent situation?

But powerless Resmus had no choice but to suppress his emotions and retreat.

After Resmus had left the room,

Violet, now alone with Aschel, raised her head to ask.

"Did you know that this woman Silica is related to Mist, Aschel?"

"It's not yet confirmed, is it?"

"We have been together for already seven years. Do you think I saw you with blind eyes? No way! I definitely saw your face change when that knight mentioned Mist. That's when I realized you knew it from the very beginning!"

Aschel did not deny it and only maintained silence.

"Why have you been hiding the truth from me all this time?"

"If I said that I missed the right moment, would that suffice as an answer?"

"Missed the right moment? Are you calling that an excuse?"

Violet snorted with disbelief.

"Listen, Aschel. After I accepted your offer seven years ago in Belias, I went along with every word you and Boris said."

"....."

"I agreed when you said to modify the shelter into a secret workspace and to secretly raise a girl named Mia who appeared out of nowhere. Even when that detestable Arin rambled on about needing to question the mists, I turned a blind eye! Even the idea of using her face to declare a new order – I actively promoted it! Why? Because you said to do so!"

Violet unleashed all the pent-up frustrations she had been holding.

Nevertheless, she struggled to quell her boiling rage and kept gnawing her lip.

“You yourself said it. The power of light is strengthened by trust and unity. Where am I supposed to find trust in a relationship where everything is hidden?”

Despite Violet’s continuous interrogation, Aschel remained silent.

“I wonder where Boris has gone at a time like this?”

She brought up Boris, who was not present at the moment.

“Why are you not speaking? Or is it another matter that only you and he knows about? Should I go check the shelter myself?”

Aschel then slowly looked down at the desk and picked up a letter that had been left there, frowning as he read it.

“I’ll ask you just one thing now.”

“Do as you please.”

“Why did you try to kill Princess Arin?”

Violet, who had stood there with an air of arrogance, suddenly went pale.

“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t pretend you don’t know. Weren’t you planning to kill her on the day of Revelation that’s coming up in a week?”

“Where did you hear such nonsense?”

Violet jumped and denied it out of panic.

Aschel waved the letter in front of her as evidence.

“It seems Boris was already aware. Princess Violet, that you were planning to kill Princess Arin on the day of Revelation. That appears to be why Princess Arin sent an urgent message.”

Violet quickly snatched the letter and read its contents with her own eyes. Faced with the undeniable truth, she couldn’t hide her shock.

“It’s something I already knew, though not sure if you’ll believe me, that you were planning this.”

“.....!”

“I tacitly consented to it. I fully understood the princess’s heart. However, since it wasn’t the right time, I intended to dissuade you before you acted.”

“Do you think I’ll believe that?”

Violet showed a half-convinced reaction.

“Whether or not Your Highness believes me, the fact that I am telling the truth does not change.”

“So what? In the end, we are both hiding facts from each other, aren’t we? With Arin’s role already over, shouldn’t the useless junk be swiftly disposed of? What’s the problem with that?”

Feeling cornered, Violet began to defend herself as if she had done nothing wrong.

“Don’t be mistaken, Aschel. I agreed to be your person because you really saw me and understood me.”

With a smirk, Violet moved closer to Aschel and gently touched his smooth cheek.

“Neither Boris nor Arin can take you away from me! It’s unacceptable to me if those people know things I don’t! I should be the one who stands closest to you! Do you understand?”

“.....”

Aschel, without response, just looked down at her with a calm gaze.

“It’s not good for such facts to spread and only cause unnecessary confusion, so let’s wait until the day of Revelation. Make sure all nobles are kept quiet until then.”

“That will be done.”

It wasn’t the answer she wanted.

Violet turned and left the room.

Although her receding footsteps echoed in his ears, Aschel paid no attention, as if he didn’t care.

Instead,

“There must be a reason they took her alive instead of killing her.”

He was more preoccupied with Mist, who had kidnapped Arin.

* * *

Back in her room, Violet was still breathing heavily, her emotions brimming, she grabbed the edge of the desk.

“Someone bring me a glass of water!”

As soon as she shouted, a door opened and an armored knight walked in, handing her a glass of water.

“.....?”

Violet’s expression stiffened instantly.

Though she had said “anyone,” normally a menial task like bringing water was handled by a servant, not a knight.

It wasn’t a problem that a knight had done so.

But this was indisputably the room of a princess.

No man, even a knight, was allowed without permission.

However, the knight standing in front of her was,

“What is this?”

Clearly, he was a man.

And breathtakingly familiar.

-Crash!

Violet, in shock, dropped the glass and stepped back without thinking.

It was a feeling she hadn’t experienced in a very long time.

A man who had instilled fear and trepidation in her, a woman who had nothing else to fear.

The most disruptive existence to the new order she was initiating, the man who should not have been there.

“It’s good to see you remember me.”

The knight took off his helmet and revealed his face, smiling as if he enjoyed the reunion.

It was Sian, Aschel's younger brother and the youngest member of Duke Vert's family.

"Why, why are you here?"

"Didn't you predict that such a day would come, Your Highness? Considering you are my brother's person and someone who seeks to eliminate our existence in the mist and push for a new order, it is quite natural for me to appear before you."

Desperate to deny this reality, Violet shook her head.

But denial didn't change anything.

She tried to call for the other knights outside in haste but,

".....!"

Sian stood there wearing a very relaxed smile, as if saying to go ahead and try calling.

The feeling was that it wouldn't make any difference.

Feverishly, Violet reached under her skirt, drew a dagger from her thigh, and swung it at Sian's throat.

-Swish!

It wasn't a clumsy motion, but one which seemed practiced hundreds, if not thousands of times.

-Click!

However, to Sian, who had swung his own weapon millions of times, it was utterly no threat.

Sian looked amused, but his gaze shifted when he saw the golden light emitted by her blade.

"The power of the holy sword is said to be strengthened when supported by the belief of the people, right?"

Aschel had made such a statement to the nobles in the conference hall.

At the time, it was an eloquent statement that captured everyone's attention, but,

“To me, it seems like a pathetic attempt of an incompetent fool struggling in vain to overpower me.”

He knew the reality behind those words – nothing but an empty boast.

“What do you plan to do with me?”

Violet managed to ask, barely controlling her trembling voice.

“Even if you kill me here, there will be no benefit to you! It’ll be a meaningless act!”

“Rest assured. I did not come here to kill you, Your Highness.”

Sian leaned closer to the fear-stricken princess.

“Just earlier, I disposed of a doll I had forgotten for a while. Reflecting on it, it was quite a useful doll after all, so I felt a twinge of regret.”

In his hand, a black mana orb had already formed.

“I thought that finding a new doll would be a good idea, so I decided to visit you, Your Highness.”

“What rubbish are you talking about? A doll? Why would I be your……!”

As Violet protested and leapt up, Sian ruthlessly pushed the mana orb into her mouth.

“It’s rather fortunate for you, I think.”

“……!”

“As opposed to creating a new personality like Kellin, it only reveals a more honest side of your existing character.”

As the mana spread through her entire body, Violet could no longer hear Sian’s voice.

She could only feel the dark mana seeping into her body, closing her eyes smoothly.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 220

Chapter 220. Each Individual's Plan (1)

In a secret space next to the shelter beneath the imperial palace.

"Have you arrived?"

As the door opened without any hesitation, Boris, who had already arrived, greeted him.

"I've heard the news. Princess Arin has been kidnapped, right?"

"It sounds as if you expected this to happen?"

Aschel asked him with a strange smile, as if to probe his thoughts.

Boris deftly deflected with a crafty smile.

"Did you manage to soothe Princess Violet?"

"If it hadn't been for the letter you sent to Princess Arin, I would have been tied up without a chance to move."

Aschel shook his head, expressing the sentiment he felt at that moment.

"There's good news and bad news. Which would you like to hear first?"

"Let's hear the bad news first. It's better to deal with the unpleasantness upfront."

"Kellin has been assassinated."

Without any hesitation, Boris immediately communicated the news.

"It seems your lovely brother came to find this place."

Aschel's face instantly froze over.

"Are you saying Sian came to the imperial palace?"

"It's not something we didn't anticipate, is it? It was something that could have happened at any time. I don't know how he found this place, but it seems he came and went while the meeting was in progress."

Aschel silently twitched his lips without saying a word.

"There's no need to worry too much. At least for now, I don't feel his presence around here."

“What’s the good news?”

As if he had been waiting, Boris beckoned forth some mysterious energy with one hand.

“...!”

As Aschel recognized the nature of the energy, a smile spread across his face again.

“Have you obtained the aura of the demonic sword?”

“It was harvested from the severed corpse of Kellin. It was the most needed yet the hardest to obtain, but since it has come into our possession so easily, I can hardly call it a loss for us.”

“Is there any chance that Sian could have noticed something?”

“He may have sensed something odd, but I doubt he ascertained the true nature of it. In fact, there are only three people in this imperial palace who know of it, including you and me.”

Boris showed no concern.

“Can you make use of it?”

“Of course. It’s not my first time, after all.”

Aschel clapped his hands in admiration.

“You continue to amaze me with your capabilities, Boris.”

Just when their secretive and sweet laughter was about to spread far and wide, the door to the space burst open, and a woman entered.

“The princess?”

It was Violet.

She appeared to have run hastily, her breath heavy and sweat dripping from her.

“I’m here...”

Without any preamble, she blurted out that she had just arrived.

“Who are you talking about?”

“Sian Vert!”

As a man’s name was spoken with a scream, the atmosphere in the room suddenly became heavy.

“Your brother came to my room!”

Violet’s face was a mixture of desperate cries and vehement denial.

* * *

“I sense a suspicious flow of dark attribute mana for sure...”

At Violet’s request, the detection spell scanned her body, but

“That’s all. There are no noteworthy traces of magic.”

Boris dismissed it, saying that she seemed to be in perfect condition.

“That can’t be right! That man created a strange energy and forced it into my mouth! It was excruciating!”

“Perhaps it was just a clash with the light attribute mana flowing through you, princess. When opposing attributes collide, a natural rejection occurs, which then manifests as pain.”

“It’s not just mana that came in! There was something else...!”

“Did Sian really visit your room?”

Violet, who had been jumping up and down in alarm, suddenly turned a cold gaze toward Aschel.

“What do you mean by that question? Are you suggesting I am lying?”

“That’s not what I meant. I am just...”

-Creak

Just as the atmosphere was getting seriously charged,

the door abruptly opened, and a woman with short black hair stepped in.

“Should I come back later?”

“Please come in now. Mia.”

Boris personally welcomed her and led her inside.

Violet let out a hollow laugh, incredulous that Boris seemed to care more about the new arrival than her.

“Are you paying more attention to that woman who just rolled in here than to me?”

Boris who wanted to say a few words simply glanced at Aschel before turning his head away.

Aschel quietly approached Violet, held her shoulders gently, and whispered softly.

“We’re a little busy right now, princess. I will come to your room later, so would you excuse us for now?”

“Aschel! How could you...!”

“There’s no need for you to worry. Just stay still, princess. Everything will be resolved while you just wait.”

With those words, Aschel escorted Violet out of the room.

Rejected, Violet gritted her teeth in humiliation at the door.

“Just stay still? I can’t do that. I’m your person, not a doll!”

Turning around, Violet strode down the corridor.

Eventually, she reached the emperor’s chambers above ground.

Before long,

news that Princess Arin had been kidnapped by the Mist spread throughout the imperial palace.

* * *

Severus’s streets were filled with knights from the early dawn.

The knights conducted searches on everyone, be it commoner or noble, without discrimination by the emperor’s direct command, which no one could refuse.

With potential consequences unknown for showing the slightest suspicion, everyone was visibly tense and anxious.

“Lord Lunev! Shouldn’t we leave the imperial city now?”

“There’s no need to act surprised. I still find myself unprepared, despite the warning from Senior Sian.”

Lunev responded indifferently, dispelling Schultz’s worries.

Their current location was in an alley somewhat removed from the center of Severus.

While the streets were packed with seriousness at its peak, Lunev seemed to be observing the scene with great interest.

“To be honest, I still don’t understand. Was it necessary for us to come here, ignoring his warning?”

“How could we not come? He had such a look of intent to act openly.”

Despite Sian’s warning not to come to the imperial city, Lunev could not heed such advice.

“As long as we’re not caught, it doesn’t matter. If no one sees us, we are as good as nonexistent.”

The response was clear and astonishingly brazen.

Schultz clasped his forehead, frustrated, beginning to regret that he may have followed Lunev in error.

“If the ones who kidnapped Princess Arin last night are truly Mist, we should consider why they would bother with a cumbersome move like kidnapping rather than assassination.”

“What do you mean?”

“The targets Mist has assassinated so far do not align with Princess Arin’s profile.”

Schultz agreed.

Princess Arin’s reputation was well-known not only throughout the empire but even among wandering mercenaries and other kingdoms.

And her reputation was mostly positive.

Her periodic imperial advocacy trips and frequent visits to slums to listen to people made her so well-liked that some even wished she would become the empress.

Given that Mist specialized in assassinating corrupt nobles engaged in wrongdoing, Princess Arin didn’t match their typical targets.

“We have to assume there’s an ulterior motive for using her.”

“Was it Sian who did this?”

“No. Senior Sian wouldn’t have done it. In fact, he might not even be involved at all.”

“On what basis do you think that?”

“Just a hunch.”

The response was once again abrupt and infuriatingly plausible.

Brooding, Lunev suddenly closed her eyes and entered a meditative state.

“... ”

And then she started to mutter incomprehensibly to herself.

As Schultz stepped back, feeling a hint of strangeness,

“It won’t be easy, but it’s not impossible.”

Lunev, accompanied by a cryptic statement, suddenly sat down on the ground.

It was not a one-sided soliloquy; it felt like she was conversing with someone unseen.

Mana began to emanate from her palms as she seemed to write something on the ground.

Schultz had hoped she might be casting a spatial transference spell to escape the imperial city.

But it wasn’t that.

Calling it similar might be a stretch, but she seemed to be creating a space – not a tangible space on the ground, but a surreal space, resembling the interior of a gigantic mana sphere.

Stunned by the bizarre scene, Schultz was speechless.

“Lunev, what are you doing?”

“I thought about it. If the princess was abducted last night, they should have left the imperial city by now. But it doesn’t seem they have, which means they must have hidden her somewhere here. Given the current situation where the city’s being searched thoroughly, they won’t be able to keep her hidden for long...”

Having finished preparing, Lunev calmly stood up.

“So, she could be hidden in a completely different space that isn’t this realm – like a divine pocket dimension, for example.”

In front of her was a mysterious space with a blend of black and white light.

The space seemed to beckon her in with a twinkling aura.

“If we can find that space, we can find out where Princess Arin is.”

As Schultz watched the interior of the space in awe,

Lunev quietly slipped something she had been holding into her pocket.

Then she boldly stepped into the space.

“Wait, please, Lord Lunev!”

Caught off guard, Schultz followed her in.

Inside was filled with books and shelves vast enough to make any library jealous.

Lunev sat in the center as if she were a librarian there.

“This is going to take some time. It could take a few hours or even days. If you’re bored, pull out a book to read. Although, you may find it difficult to comprehend the content.”

“What are you going to do, Lord Lunev?”

“I will be searching for the pocket dimension of the Mist from now on. I have to explore and interpret all the energy nearby, creating a path, so it’s best not to disturb me.”

With that, Lunev closed her eyes and resumed her deep meditation.

Still bewildered, Schultz only managed to blink without much understanding.

Thinking it best just to wait silently, he was about to sit down when,

“...!”

Lunev abruptly opened her eyes again, having not been closed for long, and she jumped up.

Before a word could be asked, she manifested mana in her hands again and drew a circle in the air.

-Zzzing

A moment later, a space similar to the one they had entered appeared, and without hesitation, Lunev plunged in.

Schultz hastily followed.

They arrived at another space.

It was an eerie place, unfamiliarly cloaked with black mist.

Coincidentally, there were already others present.

“...?”

Both parties couldn't hide their surprise at seeing each other, unaware why they were there, yet not appearing hostile.

“Why are you here?”

“That's what we would like to ask you...”

Hastia and Brian.

Sian's companions encountered in Lorand were sitting right there before their eyes.

(To be continued)