

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 221

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Chapter 221: Each Their Own Plan (2)

Thirty minutes before Lunev and Schultz's arrival.

Brian was awestruck by the scenery of the pocket dimension, which was a first for him, while Hastia, having seemingly grown accustomed to such spaces, did not pay it much mind. However, her gaze remained fixed on one thing she couldn't ignore:

"Where exactly has Lord Sian reached?"

The White Elves, historically aloof from humans, had close ties with other transcendent beings. Hastia had occasionally seen the power of these beings, including the protective dragon of Fruina and the lesser gods of the divine realm, but:

"To think I'd see such power coming from a human."

It wasn't through the use of a cursed sword or another's borrowed might; this was Sian's own, innate power. The mere fact that he could create a pocket dimension was enough for Hastia to feel with her entire being that Sian had reached the realm of gods or even beyond.

But while the two were still struggling to find the right words:

"....."

Sian's expression was anything but pleased. He was staring intensely into the void.

"Why do you look so troubled, Lord Sian?"

"You've blocked it quite effectively, haven't you."

Instead of answering her question, Sian muttered something cryptic to himself.

"Pardon?"

"Never mind. You two won't need to move anytime soon. Just wait here until I get back."

"Where are you going, my lord?"

“If the main gate is closed, I must take a side path.”

Brian’s questions only yielded enigmatic responses from Sian. Left without a clear idea of what to do next, Hastia and Brian could only wait silently, as commanded, until Lunev and Schultz appeared.

“So this is not Mist’s dimension, but yours, senior?”

Lunev began to scrutinize their surroundings with keen interest, intent on observing every detail, even the smallest particle floating in the mist.

While Lunev was fully absorbed in her observations, Schultz explained how they had come to be here.

“The princess Arin has been kidnapped?!”

Hearing news from the palace for the first time, both were naturally shocked.

“You didn’t know about this?”

“We were transferred here not from the palace but from elsewhere. The lord told us nowhere would be safe once things started, so he asked us to stay put here...”

After completing her inspection, Lunev approached the two.

“Senior Sian didn’t know about senior Arin’s kidnapping?”

“He must have known. Up until yesterday, he had been at the palace. I assume he’s aware, although...”

Brian hesitated, a thought occurring to him. Yesterday evening, Sian had mentioned going to the palace, the same evening the news spread of Princess Arin’s kidnapping. It was impossible to miss the connection between the two events.

“What was he doing here?”

“He was... standing there with a displeased expression, staring at nothing. Then he mentioned something about the main gate being blocked and having to take a side path, and that was it.”

“That confirms it.”

Lunev’s eyes glittered with certainty.

“What do you mean?”

“Senior Arin is not here but trapped in another dimension. Specifically, the Black Mist God’s dimension.”

Everyone’s expressions stiffened at this revelation, Brian exhaling a sigh of relief. He had been worried that Sian might have been the kidnapper, but that didn’t seem to be the case.

“A god’s dimension has the special characteristic of connecting two similar dimensions together.”

It was by utilising this nature of pocket dimensions that Lunev and Schultz had arrived here.

“Senior Sian must have known that senior Arin was trapped in a dimension and had intended to connect two dimensions to find her.”

“Just a moment! Does that mean you managed to create a dimension to come here too, Miss Lunev?”

“What’s the issue with that?”

Faced with a response as indifferent as if discussing a massive city wall, Hastia could only flicker her eyes in bewilderment.

“But it seems he gave up for some reason. He must have encountered an unexpected difficulty.”

Lunev seemed to effortlessly piece together Sian’s situation.

“However, I don’t intend to give up. I’ll try to connect the two dimensions in his stead.”

She then sat down in the spot Sian had been occupying.

“Is that possible?”

“I’ll make it possible. If it’s something he gave up on, it must be exceptionally challenging, but...”

Undeterred, she began to draw upon her mana.

“I’ll help you.”

Hastia approached to assist her.

“If we just need to find a dimension with a similar energy to Lord Sian’s, I’m confident I can do it!”

“Why?”

There seemed to be a hint of displeasure in Lunev’s voice.

“Because I always carry Lord Sian’s energy with me!”

Hastia proudly showed off her soul stone. At this, Lunev’s expression turned cold.

* * *

Do you know what’s a favorite saying among assassins?

The darkest place is under the candlestick.

With the palace in chaos due to the kidnapping, the knights were scouring every corner for even the smallest lead.

But they were bound to overlook a few places. Where I am is one such place.

Surrounded by dozens of bookcases and tens of thousands of books within a vast, open five-story space. It didn’t suit me, being surrounded by unfamiliar books.

This was the royal library, located very near the palace. Despite the turmoil, the library remained eerily silent.

-Click clack, click clack-

The familiar sound of footsteps reached my ears and halted precisely on the opposite side of the bookshelf.

Then, a minute passed in silence.

“You have the nerve to show your face.”

From the only gap in the densely-packed shelves, a familiar voice echoed.

“You should be holed up in a pocket dimension, consumed by shame.”

“I am recovering faster than anticipated. Initially, it wasn’t different from what you mentioned.”

My response was nonchalant.

“It reminded me of the first time I met you, Lord, here in this library. You found me crouching in the academy library corner and bothered to greet me.”

“Likely after hiding Mist’s directive.”

I feel it multiple times after living twice: hindsight always proves you right. Never once have I gained an advantage for ignoring your words.

“Good realization.”

“One question, if I may?”

I paused briefly.

“If I were to leave Mist to serve another, what would you do?”

There was silence for a few seconds before answering.

“If that’s what you desire, I won’t cheer for you, but I would let you go.”

“Why?”

“If it leads to a simpler path than the one laid before you by Mist, does that answer suffice?”

It was a predictable response, even laughable.

“Without the constraints you’ve refused, will you pave your path? Nothing pleases a mentor more than seeing such a determined, independent apprentice.”

Really?

Is she truly sincere? Can she let go without a fight, watching someone who has given their all break away one day?

Is that possible?

“In a previous life, you let me go without hesitation when I chose to follow my brother over the organization.”

The leader did not confirm or deny with words.

“Aer was the same. That god was likely annoyed, but you, I really don’t understand.”

“...”

“Why would you let me go?”

“As with why you didn’t kill Arin, I would hazard.”

I frowned, not quite following.

“Don’t overthink it. Because I care for you, too.”

She spoke as if it were nothing.

“Why not? Am I not human? Before I’m the leader of Mist, before I’m an assassin, I’m a human with joy, sorrow, and love. It’s because I’m human that I care for you.”

“ ... ”

“A wish for less hardship for you, to see you live well, to live happily.”

“ ... ”

“These selfish desires of a person who wholeheartedly cares for you, simply wanting to ease your way—that’s all.”

“Is that the end of it?”

“There’s nothing more to explain, it seems.”

My throat tightened, words trapped. For a previous incarnation, such reasons would be incomprehensible, even infuriating. That a woman, the leader of an assassination group, would let me go just for ‘caring.’

But now I understand, profoundly.

“Silence from you? Do you think I lied?”

“No. You never once lied to me. Not before, and not now.”

“Appreciate your acknowledgment. So, now what will you do? Will you finally follow my instruction?”

“You know I won’t.”

Her faint laughter echoes clearly.

“I want all of us, the members of Mist, Emily, Brian, Nana, and me, to live openly and proudly in this world. Any burdens or shackles can be thrown off and overcome. That’s why, in this life, I sought you out with my own legs.”

She erupted in genuine laughter at my declaration.

“Impressive. But the world you wish for won’t materialize just because you want it and have the strength.”

“Is there really more to it?”

“Motivation is necessary.”

She stressed her point on ‘motivation.’

“You need the drive to pursue a single path, leaving all else behind. Without it, the world you hope for will remain out of reach.”

“If you’re thinking of Arin as that motivation, you’re mistaken.”

“We’ll see. Just so you know, she is still alive. I plan to kill her precisely six days from now.”

It was no joke—an evident murder warning.

“Consider this the end of my good graces for you. From today, neither are we mentor and student nor leader and subordinate.”

“Two assassins, walking different paths... Is that what you were going to say?”

She continued her silence instead.

“Interrupting a woman’s speech isn’t gentlemanly, Sian.”

Her concerned scolding brought out an involuntary chuckle.

In exactly six days, it’s likely that it will be more than just blades that clash between us.

Fully prepared for this, neither of us could smile as we turned our backs and walked away.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 222: The Day of Reorganization (1)

After several years, the lights in the Emperor's office were lit again. Aschel and Violet stood before the office, seeking entry. Aschel's face bore a trace of displeasure.

"Do you really have to do this?"

"People become complacent when they grow too accustomed to their surroundings, forgetting their place."

Violet responded with a shrug, as if to question what the issue was.

"Why do you think someone like you, not even a royal family member, could wander around the imperial palace as if it was your home? Because you're the son of Duke Vert with a close relationship with Abamama? Because you are the owner of the glorious Holy Sword? Utter nonsense. It was all possible because of me!"

Violet leaned in so close that their lips nearly touched.

"Being human, you cannot be perfect. So, let me remind you of who I am to you."

Aschel stared at Violet's triumphant gaze for a moment.

"You will regret this," he said, leaving the remark hanging in the air as he knocked on the office door.

-Knock knock

"Come in," came the Emperor's dignified voice. Without hesitation, the two entered.

"His Imperial Majesty, I greet you as Violet Severus, the second imperial princess of the Ushif Empire."

Violet greeted the Emperor with a refined gesture.

On the other hand,

Aschel stared at Emperor Dione without offering any greeting.

"What is this rudeness, Aschel? Hurry and pay homage to Abamama..."

"Welcome, Lord Aschel."

Violet doubted her ears for a moment.

"You have suffered much because of my wayward daughter who has yet to mature."

"Abamama? What are you talking about...?"

Violet was briefly startled by the Emperor's unexpected behavior, then she noticed something in his gaze and froze on the spot: His eyes were not the deep black she knew, but a pale violet. An eye color that no normal person could possess.

Violet realized something was critically amiss with the Emperor.

"Sometimes, it's better to live in comfort not knowing the truth than to fall into confusion upon learning it."

Her gaze inevitably shifted to Aschel.

"You may have thought the rapid weakening of the Emperor over the past few years was due to a chronic illness... but no."

This time, Aschel leaned in close enough for their lips to touch.

"Aschel? What in the world did you do to Abamama?!"

"Try to guess. What do you think I did?"

Aschel asked smugly, turning the question back on her.

"It was surely some bizarre magic you learned from that man Boris! How dare you do this to Abamama without my permission!"

"It's not magic."

A single statement was enough to shut her up.

"This is my own power. The highest entity who can turn all those who meet my gaze into my people has blessed me with this special power."

"Power?"

"Yes. But I did not use this power on you, Lady Violet. Not even on Lady Arin. Can you guess why?"

Violet was unable to answer.

"It's simple. Because I am lonely."

Aschel explained it clearly with a smile.

"What's the use of ruling over people who do not understand me? It's just the same as owning puppets. Wouldn't life be tastier when someone like yourself, who truly shares emotions with me, is by my side?"

Violet's expression was awkward, unable to laugh or cry.

"So please remember this once more. I am someone who aspires to reach the highest position accessible to humans. Whatever scheme my brother laid upon you doesn't concern me. All you need to do is watch closely with your own eyes until I reach the position I desire."

Violet, her legs finally giving out, collapsed to the floor.

With her expression a mix of hollowness and futility, it was short-lived.

"Haha..."

She burst into hollow laughter, whether out of madness or understanding of his true nature, she didn't look sane.

"In five days, during the conferral ceremony, please take my place, Lady Violet. The script will be delivered to you through someone else soon. Please prepare well."

Leaving the princess behind indifferently, Aschel left the office.

"Vi, Violet?"

The Emperor, returned to his senses, spotted the collapsed Violet and his eyes flashed.

Violet, unable to reply to his call, simply continued laughing.

As Aschel left them behind and stepped outside, he called out wistfully,

"Sian..."

His smile twisted with ecstasy and anticipation.

"How much I look forward to seeing you again, fully confident that you understand my true nature!"

* * *

By the fifth day, Brian and Schultz were speechless in disbelief.

Lunev Rainriver.

Was she really human?

It was no lie that for those five days she hadn't frowned once.

It was hard to believe something not made of magic had that level of focus.

“Ha...”

After five days, she finally showed a reaction. Hastia, who had been assisting, sighed as well.

“It seems that even if exiled, a god is still a god, huh? The barriers are intricately layered.”

Lunev’s face showed discomfort – not from fatigue, but what appeared to be a blow to her pride.

‘It’s already been five days! While we’re doing this, who knows what may be happening to Princess Arin...’

Hastia was filled with concern for Arin amidst her fatigue.

If only Sian had returned, they might have gained a clue. However, even after five days, Sian had not come back.

Lunev turned her body for a moment.

“How’s the atmosphere at the imperial capital?”

“It’s quite busy due to the upcoming royal audience. But...”

Brian hesitated slightly.

“Something is very off. People seem quite displeased with holding an audience without Princess Arin.”

Schultz added his observations.

“Checkpoints were cleared in just two days, and they’re now preparing for a sudden audience before commoners, creating considerable resistance. I’ve heard the nobles are also reacting quite negatively...”

Though Arin previously received only token acknowledgment from the royals, she was now in a pivotal position where she could play a significant role.

In a situation where searching for her across the empire would be strenuous enough, focusing on preparing for the audience instead seemed absurd even to a child.

“So either the royal family has decided that Arin is already dead and is continuing with the planned event, or...”

Everyone held their breath to hear Lunev's hypothesis.

"...they believe she will appear at the audience. That's what I'm thinking."

Lunev seemed more certain of the latter.

'Is there a reason for your assumption?'

"There's nothing more convincing. Based on how Sian is acting, he probably knows that Arin is still alive too."

Having finished, Lunev took out an object from her chest – a small, fist-sized white glass orb.

She immediately handed the orb to Schultz.

"Lunev, what is this?"

"It's a magical artifact, a 'Messenger Orb' resized for portability. With it, you can communicate with me even beyond the spatial void."

Everyone except her marveled at the Messenger Orb.

"Carry that with you to the audience tomorrow. Report every event that occurs to me from there."

"I will attend as well!"

Brian volunteered to accompany them.

"Good. Based on that report, Hastia and I will keep an eye on the spatial energies."

Hastia nodded energetically in agreement.

Having confirmed their plan, Lunev crossed her arms and closed her eyes briefly.

If their assumptions were correct, then tomorrow, Princess Arin would appear at the audience, along with Mist.

They must seize that moment.

If they used the gap when they opened the gate to let Arin out, Lunev was certain she would be able to reach it.

Into the spatial void of the Black Mist God.

* * *

In the heart of the imperial capital, preparations for the royal audience were underway atop a tall platform.

The watching crowd shared sentiments of discontent.

“Has the royal family lost its mind? Holding an audience when we don’t even know what’s happened to Princess Arin?”

“What’s become of the Princess?”

“What are they planning to announce that they need to do this now?”

Reflecting the people’s emotions, even the sky seemed oppressively murky.

As the appointed time approached in the midst of a restless atmosphere, Princess Violet ascended the platform, revealing herself to the crowd.

After looking around, she cast a magic spell to amplify her voice and began to speak slowly.

“Under normal circumstances, we should have held a ceremonial audience and declared a new order today for the Knights of Salvation, the Redeem. But as you all know, the mood isn’t appropriate for that.”

Murmurs began to rise from the audience.

“Arin is a precious sister to me, more than just a member of the royal family. Despite her turbulent circumstances, she did not despair and diligently improved herself to fulfill her role as a noble princess. But what became of her? Abducted by vile minds that I dare not even mention.”

Her voice grew increasingly intense as if overwhelmed with emotion.

“Those miscreants’ intentions are clear. They wish to deny the value of Princess Arin. Every day, she prayed to Lumen Del for peace and well-being, sharing her heart with everyone. They must have been terribly annoyed by her!”

The murmurs in the crowd started to shift with growing agreement with the Princess.

“Come out and show yourself, Mist! If you dare, appear here and state your purpose for kidnapping my sister!”

Violet shouted towards where she suspected Mist to be watching, but no reply came. Instead, the voices of angry people filled the air.

“Those undeserving devils!”

“Show yourself, Mist!”

“Return the Princess to us!”

As such voices of defiance resonated, the silent observing Jereon clicked his tongue.

“With things like this, it seems impossible to save even the beings of the mist.”

The tension was high enough to reform the Purification Army then and there to subdue them.

Just as their voices against Mist seemed endless,

-ssssss

A mysterious black mist began to envelop the platform.

“Take cover, Princess!”

Sensing the ominous presence, the knights quickly evacuated Violet, while the crowd watched the scene on the platform with bated breath.

From within the mist, an unfamiliar group appeared.

Those who saw them were horrified.

Not because of the dark-clad figures exuding a gloomy aura of murder, but because of someone who was sitting among them, bleeding.

Some screamed in shock.

“A, Princess Arin?!”

(To be continued)

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Chapter 223: The Day of Restructuring (2)

Although she still clung to life, the precariousness of her condition was such that it would not be surprising if she stopped breathing at any moment. The state of Princess Arin was that dire.

And in that moment, there were unidentified assailants holding swords to the throat of such a princess. While their identities had not yet been made clear, most had already assumed who they might be – the followers of the Black Mist God, the foremost assassination organization across the continent.

“It’s Mist!” was the exclamation in the midst of the bewildering chaos.

Schultz, who had been momentarily stunned by the scene unfolding before him, quickly produced a communication orb to relay the situation to Lunev.

“L-lord Lunev! People presumed to be Mist have appeared on the platform with Princess Arin!”

Shortly after, Lunev’s voice came through the communication orb. “What’s the condition of senior Arin?”

“It’s extremely serious! She’s completely covered in blood! She needs urgent treatment, or she might actually die!”

“And what about senior Sian? Is he there too?”

“That’s just it...,” Schultz hurriedly scanned the assailants on the stage.

“He’s not there! I can’t see the young master anywhere!”

It was Brian who answered in his place.

“Not only the young master but also Silica and even the senior members are nowhere to be seen!”

At such a crucial moment when Mist had revealed themselves before the crowd along with the kidnapped princess, the organization’s key figures were conspicuously absent. On hearing the situation, Lunev hastily sorted out her thoughts. It was abnormal that not even the high-ranking members of the organization were present when even the organization’s leader had sufficient reason to demand what they wanted.

As she quickly sifted through the theories swirling around, a single conclusion emerged, “The Arin there might not be real!”

“No other clues have surfaced. Please examine the surroundings more carefully. Are there others around...?”

“Lady Lunev, please look at this!” Hastia urgently called to her through the orb just as Lunev was about to give further instructions.

Turning to look, Lunev’s eyes sparkled with realization. “The Soul Stone is reacting! It seems to have detected the same energy as Sian!”

The Soul Stone was congregating with an even denser and more intense mist than usual. Lunev pushed Hastia aside and channeled mana into her hand. Then, focusing all her mana into the tips of her fingers, she traced an unknown gesture into the air, as if inscribing letters.

With a sharp sound, a diminutive gate materialized amidst the mist. “The gate has opened!” Without hesitation, the two women entered the gate.

The space beyond was little different from before, a dark void enshrouded in an unknown black mist. Although it might be mistaken for the same space, “It doesn’t seem to be mismatched,” Lunev was certain they had come to the right place.

“Lady Lunev, look there!” Hastia, with her nervous rabbit eyes surveying around, soon pointed to one side. At the location she indicated, an old chair was left standing alone. Touching the part of the chair that someone would sit on, a lingering warmth could still be felt.

“...!”

Beneath that was the rope presumed to have been used to tie someone to the chair, now sprawled on the ground.

“At least, five minutes...”

It was certain that someone had been there just moments before. Yet, there were no immediate traces to be found now. To reach a definitive conclusion, more concrete evidence was needed.

Lunev attempted to channel mana for another spell, but the moment she did, it dissipated as if snuffed out.

“Is it because this is a divine subspace that we cannot use magic carelessly?”

While it was not impossible to use other powers, Lunev opted for a different approach due to the associated risks.

She bit down hard on her finger.

“Lady Lunev! What are you doing?” Hastia quickly tried to intervene, but Lunev, undeterred, let the blood from her bite drop onto the surrounding area.

The blood began to tint the black, mist-covered ground red.

“If senior Arin was really here, at the very least, there should be bloodstains...”

Schultz had described Arin as being covered in blood. “Not a drop of blood? Everything is too clean.”

(We might be too late.)

At the sudden, unfamiliar voice from behind, both women turned around.

“...!”

A dubious entity had appeared out of nowhere, shrouded in black mist, obscuring its form. However, it was clear that it was humanoid. A faint smile visible through the mist seemed to take interest in the women.

(The boy who just left has gone to another place.)

“Who took him away?”

(I cannot tell you that. To say would be to break a promise I made to him.)

Unlike Lunev, who persistently asked questions, Hastia faced the entity with a mix of panic and excitement on her face.

“Ahh...”

It seemed she had an inkling of who the person might be.

(My successor, the more I learn of you, the more amazed I am. Every woman you meet is incredible...)

The mysterious figure, hardly deterred, lauded them with admiration.

(The Empire’s princess and an elf blessed by the gods and...)

“Are you Aer the God of Black Mist?”

Ignoring his trailing words, Lunev boldly carried on with her question.

(Such grandiose titles were stripped from me long ago. Now, I am simply the master of this wretched space.)

Aer revealed his identity with neither a confirmation nor a denial.

Lunev remained unflinching even in the presence of such a high being.

“First, let me apologize for showing up uninvited. It was a bit urgent for us.”

(There’s no need to apologize. While I might not always welcome men, the visit of such lovely ladies is always a pleasure.)

“How long ago did senior Arin leave this place?”

(She left exactly 1 minute before you arrived. It was a very close call.)

Lunev bit her lip in frustration.

Realizing there was no reason to stay any longer, she turned to leave.

‘Are you leaving?’

“Yes. There’s no reason to stay. We didn’t come to chit-chat with someone kicked out of the heavenly realm.”

Despite the seemingly disrespectful remark, Aer didn’t seem to care.

As they prepared to open the gate to leave,

“...?”

Lunev hesitated while channeling her power.

‘What’s wrong, Lady Lunev?’

“What is this energy?”

Her eyes widened in astonishment at the unfamiliar sensation.

In the divine subspace, where the presence of mist was overwhelming, she felt a completely different new energy emanating from beyond.

(Surely the master of one artifact recognizes the energy of another.)

Aer spoke, observing her reaction.

“What do you mean?”

(Nothing complicated. Besides you and I, there is another subspace nearby, is there not?)

Lunev's pupils briefly shivered.

(A space so repulsive to you.)

A different subspace not belonging to her, Sian, or any god, but to someone else.

While it could have been irrelevant to her current matters, Lunev felt that it wasn't.

With renewed vigor, she activated her mana and a new gate materialized amidst the white light.

'Where is this?'

Hastia wondered upon the sensation of unfamiliar energy from beyond.

"Lady Lunev, where are we?"

"Definitely not a good place for Sian and me."

However, opening the door was as good as declaring their intent to enter.

"But on the contrary, it means it's a place that needs to be eradicated..."

The dark space was brightly illuminated by pure light.

To Lunev, it was more revolting than disgusting.

"How can I not enter?"

Ending her words there, Lunev threw herself into the gate.

* * *

Thinking back, it had been roughly a week.

She had been in a semi-conscious state for about five days.

Completely restrained and blindfolded, occasionally someone would force water and food into her, keeping her alive yet heightening her anxiety.

Why did they kidnap her? Instructor Silica, now known as Assassin Silica, intended to use her as a sacrifice for the start of some plan related to Sian, but Arin, ignorant of the true circumstances, found her mind muddled with confusion.

Just when her anxiety and fear were becoming unbearable, something unexpected occurred.

– Pop!

Suddenly, all her restraints were released, and someone lifted her up.

Briefly disoriented by the abrupt action,

Arin soon realized her body was engulfed in unknown energy, transporting her somewhere else.

The place she arrived at felt vaguely familiar, accompanied by a familiar voice.

“Are you coming to your senses?”

The owner of the voice relinquished the blindfold, questioning as he did so.

After nearly a week of obscured vision, Arin’s eyes snapped open.

“Si, Sian?”

She rubbed her eyes in disbelief and looked again.

There was no doubt.

The man before her was definitely Sian, the only one in this world who could look upon another with such detached disdain.

“How is this possible? I was sure that I was...”

As Arin attempted to rise, she lost her balance and staggered.

– Thud

Sian caught her as she was about to fall.

“It’s strenuous to move immediately after being confined for a long while. Acclimate as quickly as possible. I won’t catch you a second time.”

Sian spoke to her in an unchanging, indifferent tone.

Arin raised her head once more to survey her surroundings.

The library, filled with countless books and bookshelves, was a place all too familiar to her – the imperial library.

“Did you rescue me?”

“Yes.”

“Why? You’re definitely with Instructor Silica...”

Arin halted mid-sentence without knowing why.

“Do you not desire to see the true nature?”

“...!”

“Follow me. From now on, you, Princess, will see the true face of light and mist alongside me.”

Arin was utterly dumbfounded.

She was already disoriented by his sudden return, and now he spoke of true natures?

Sian gazed at her more earnestly than ever.

“After seeing that true nature, please make your judgment.”

“Regarding what?”

“Which order the Princess ought to follow...”

She had no time to ponder this sudden proposition.

Amidst her profound disorientation, Arin quickly nodded her agreement.

“I understand.”

As soon as she confirmed, Sian turned on his heel.

At the moment the two were about to depart,

“...”

Sian grasped the doorknob but hesitated in opening it.

“Why, Sian?”

“Step back three paces.”

Arin did as he instructed, retreating three steps from the door.

About a minute passed.

Sian did nothing but hold onto the doorknob, showing no reaction.

Yet, Arin couldn't bring herself to ask what was happening. Sian's eyes, fixed on the door, were filled with intense murderous intent and vigilance.

– Clank!

Finally deciding to act, he threw open the door wide, and a threatening clash of metal resounded throughout the library.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 224: The Day of Reorganization (3)

Assassins more often use side paths than the main gate.

From the moment I was capable of creating my own subspace,

I have freely traveled back and forth to Aer's subspace whenever and wherever I desired.

Therefore, this time too, I intended to use that pathway, but what do you know?

The head of the family had blocked the connection to Mist's subspace, preventing my entrance.

Being someone who doesn't particularly enjoy using my brain, I immediately gave up at the blatantly complicated mess they had set up.

I had no choice but to take a detour.

There's something you should know—since the head and I left the academy, there was no longer a need to maintain an agit (safehouse) in Rowen for Mist.

Instead, gates that lead into the subspace were established in various parts of the empire.

One of these gates is right here in the Imperial Library.

Haven't they said the darkest place is right under the candlestick?

If you go to the secret archive room on the second floor over there, there's a gate that leads to Aer's subspace.

So did I use that path to rescue Princess Arin?

That is strictly speaking the main gate.

It makes no sense to block the side paths and not to block the main gate.

The side path I'm talking about isn't here,

It's another route that leads to Aer's subspace.

"Did you really visit, as I suspected?"

As soon as I opened the door and swung my sword, the head of the family looked at me and asked.

"Apparently, you didn't have enough time to block it?"

"There wasn't a need to block it. I didn't think you'd go through the trouble of returning to Rowen just to rescue that girl."

"If you're to be resentful, hold it against the dimwit god, not me."

Yes,

The place I visited was the route in Rowen, where the Royal Academy is located.

It took a full five days to rush there and rescue Princess Arin.

Why is it still there, you may ask?

Why, indeed?

Because the owner of the space, the dimwit god, didn't bother to close the gate out of inconvenience.

-Clang!

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, I sheathed my sword and widened the distance between us.

The head smashed her way through one of the main gates and entered.

None of the other Mist members seemed to be around.

“You came alone?”

“Because of your incapacitating the officers who went to persuade you, we’ve had a few setbacks. They’re all at the scene right now.”

“The, the scene?”

The head’s gaze shifted to Princess Arin, who wore a complicated expression.

“In this situation, I assume you’re not just looking to have a pleasant date with her, then where do you plan to take her?”

“I haven’t decided on any particular place just yet. Just want her to witness everything that will unfold before me.”

“That’s interesting. Are you planning to turn that child into a puppet called the Emperor?”

“I don’t see anything wrong with that.”

“.....?!”

Ignoring the distressed look coming from behind me, I continued,

“I’d rather use her than watch her be swayed here and there by others.”

“Really selfish, aren’t you?”

Presently, I’m willing to take that as a compliment.

“Is it fun for the two of you to talk without the party involved?”

Princess Arin, whom I thought would remain silent, opened her mouth with an annoyed tone.

“I may not know the significance of my existence that you make such a fuss over, but I find it a little unpleasant. I’m not a doll that just stands idly by without any thoughts.”

Her defiant and assertive response was hard to come by in such a tense atmosphere.

Then again, considering the current her, it wasn’t particularly surprising or alarming.

However,

“Your Highness, you may be glad that Sian appeared for you, but...”

Sometimes it's better to stay silent in certain situations.

"No. If you had, Your Highness might have been able to live a much better life than before. Not as a princess but as an ordinary woman."

"Who said they wanted that kind of life?"

The princess threw back her bold question without any intimidation.

"[To be continued]"

(Disclaimer: This translation is a work of fiction, any names, techniques, and places are part of creative liberty taken by the author, and do not reflect any real-world counterparts.)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 225

Chapter 225: The Day of Revision (4)

Swords clanged in harmony within the library, a place where silence should have prevailed.

-Clang!

The cross of blades in a fierce contest of strength.

A precarious balance, ready to collapse at any moment, lingered for a few seconds.

"It's a relief to see that there's no hesitation or doubt in you, but something still feels empty."

The clan leader commented, looking meaningfully at Ceyram's sword instead of mine.

"Where has Lord Ceyram gone?"

"I'm not sure what offended him, but for the moment, we're temporarily separated."

I pushed forward with added strength against the opposing blade, slightly disrupting the clan leader's balance.

Quick to exploit the opening, I launched a rapid series of strikes, but she had already created distance between us.

“Unexpected. Even someone as volatile as you would not usually resort to separation without just cause. How much did you have to push for this to happen?”

“Why does it sound like it’s my fault?” I asked.

“Don’t worry too much. If I push you to the brink of death right here, perhaps he will show up to save you, won’t he?”

“You seem to know little about my love for the sword. Let’s just hope you don’t end up consuming me.”

I adjusted my stance and drew upon the power of the fog within me.

The clan leader responded by simultaneously drawing forth magic along with the fog.

Just as a serious clash was about to begin,

-Creak

The sudden sound diverted our gazes precisely towards the door.

A woman had entered, flinging wide the remaining door that was still closed.

It was a face I recognized, not a stranger to me.

“Continue with what you were doing. I’ll sit here and wait.”

With an indifferent glance, she nonchalantly made her way to a corner of the room and sat down.

Was there already a rumor about an amusing spectacle at the Imperial Library?

Obviously, she was not a guest I had invited.

Even if I thought she wasn’t summoned by the clan leader,

“.....!”

For some reason, the clan leader’s expression turned grave.

“Do you know her?”

“Do you?” she parried my question.

“When the clan leader attended a meeting the other day, I saw that woman in the imperial palace’s basement. A woman bearing a name I couldn’t ignore.”

The corner of the clan leader's mouth twitched subtly, but I remained expressionless.

"What was her name?"

"Mia Hapencus."

My body involuntarily flinched.

At the mention of her name, the clan leader's facade shattered, and she was visibly consumed by rage.

With barely restrained fury, she addressed me once more.

"Did you, by any chance, use the demonic sword in the presence of that girl?"

Even those slow on the uptake would have realized what she was implying.

I surely must have committed an action that was strictly forbidden.

But then,

Hadn't I just decapitated Kellin moments before encountering her, using the demonic sword in the process?

"Yes."

I tersely confirmed without elaboration.

The clan leader's face twisted even more, and she muttered to herself.

"Since it seems like you're done here, it's time for my matter to be attended to."

Suddenly standing, the woman turned to me.

"Sian Vert. I received orders to kill you from Aschel and Boris."

What?

"I bear no personal grudge towards you, but I have something to reclaim. If you surrender it willingly, I'll make your death less painful."

Was I really hearing this right?

People freeze in moments of sheer disbelief.

For a brief time, I simply met her gaze and then spoke.

“Did you not pass on my message?”

“I did. And the response was to relay to you this message: How else am I to defeat you if not for this craziness.....”

Well, it's admirable to know they're aware they can't successfully subdue me, but is this really their prepared response?

Hmm... what can I say?

While it's said never to judge a book by its cover,

This is beyond disappointing; it's appalling.

“If you have nothing to say, then I'll take it as a denial and kill you in the original way.”

Whether I responded or not, she drew a sword from within her cloak and pointed it at me.

Wait,

What is that?

For a moment, I furrowed my brows in disbelief and blinked repeatedly.

As I was about to blink for the third time,

“.....!”

She had already closed the distance, wielding her sword against mine.

-Clang!

Her agility was surprising, certainly not something one would expect from a fragile-looking girl, rivalling even the assassins of the Mist.

But that was not the true issue at hand.

-Creeeak

My heart raced, not due to her speed or the strength she displayed, something that could match my own physical power, but rather,

I was stunned by her sword.

A blade emitting a murderous amethyst glow, and a dark gem exuding sinister energy.

A demonic sword.

A demonic sword identical to Ceyram which I possessed.

How could Mia be brandishing a demonic sword identical to mine before me?

-Sssss

Between our clashing blades, a black fog emerged.

Ordinarily, one would assume it emanated from my sword, but not in this case.

In this world, there should exist only one such sword, not two.

“Where did you get that?”

I looked up from the sword and queried, but she remained silent. Instead, she offered a self-introduction.

“My name is Mia Hapencus.”

For half a second, or perhaps just an instant, I was dumbfounded.

Dio Hapencus? The original owner of the demonic sword? His descendant? All this was not surprising news, but her next statement was.

“I’m here to reclaim the demonic sword you possess.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Listen, girl, this thing is a perilous item. Do you really think you can handle it?”

“I have no intention of using it. I’m going to destroy it.”

Her words left me baffled.

“A demonic sword called Ceyram is an enemy that laid ruin to our bloodline.....”

Her indifferent eyes suddenly flared red.

“It must be eradicated from this world.”

A denser black fog enveloped our engaged swords.

It wasn’t just superficially similar to Ceyram. The energy billowing from her sword was unmistakably the power of the fog.

Not mine, but hers.

-Sssss

As if drawn by that energy, my own sword reciprocated with a similar fog.

[How dare this wretched woman presumptuously wield me!]

A familiar and welcome voice accompanied by...

* * *

Bright light permeated the ethereal space of luminous nothingness.

At its center, Boris stood alone, his smile brimming with ecstasy.

In hand, he held a pure white scripture.

“Killing the innocent Princess Arin to incite the wrath of the people, fueling their negative emotions... such a characteristic plan of yours.”

Although Boris’s eyes were closed, he was keenly aware of the critical events unfolding in the Imperial Palace, unfolding dream-like within his veiled sight.

“But alas, this scripture contains everything you plan to do. To accept and to steer the given future, that is the scripture’s path. Everyone believes they are doing their best in their respective roles, but all of this is merely part of a process towards the future illuminated by the scripture.”

Opening his eyes, Boris broadened the scripture widely.

Within its pages, a prophecy said that Sian would cross swords with the clan leader, Silica, of the Mist.

“I was devastated when I first glimpsed a changed future in the aetherspace. No matter what we did, we couldn’t defeat you, Sian. Where did such a being come from? Using all of the powers of light that we possessed, we could not subjugate you.”

The next passage predicted that a descendant from the past who replicated the power of the demonic sword would arise to confront him.

“However, that didn’t mean there was no solution. If we couldn’t topple you with our power, we only had to create an entity with a power similar to yours. The scripture pointed us towards such a path.”

Closing the scripture, Boris retrieved another book from within his robes.

The book bore no title, only the name Dio Hapencus inscribed beneath the cover.

“My friend, you said it best. One must question everything in this world. But humanity, by nature, prefers compliance over change. Only when unified by a singular belief can the world truly progress...”

Boris’s head tilted back in laughter, his joy resonating throughout the space, just as,

“This is an interesting space, isn’t it?”

Another unfamiliar voice rang out.

Boris quickly turned his head.

A blue-haired woman exuding immense power stood before him.

As if she saw something she shouldn’t, Boris’s eyes widened immeasurably.

“Light’s aetherspace? Interesting, but I’m getting a bad vibe from it. I feel nauseous already.”

The woman covered her mouth with one hand, sharing her distaste as she entered the space.

Following her was an anxious, white-haired elf surveying his surroundings.

“Are you the owner of this space?”

“How... How did you get here?” Boris knew who she was.

A former child prodigy magician from the Garam Magic Society who now stood as a key figure leading the institution.

It was Lunev Rainriver.

“Accepting and following the path as scripture describes it? I have to ask, did the future your scripture foretells even include me?”

As Boris hastily attempted to verify her words with the scripture, he hesitated.

He had explored its contents hundreds of times, so another once-over wouldn’t reveal anything new.

She was a woman undoubtedly missing from the scripture-dictated future.

“How did you arrive here?”

“Shall I say it was by chance? I didn’t intend to come here. I didn’t even know such a space existed. I just followed the energy.”

“Energy, you say?”

“Yes. A bad energy for both me and senior Sian, an unfavorable space, hence, a space I have to eradicate.”

As she continued, she produced a book from within her cloak.

“.....!”

Upon spotting the book, Boris’s face drained of color.

“Why... Why do you possess that?”

Contrary to the scripture that enlightens the predetermined future, the other sacred text that denies and reverses it,

A tome that can only be wielded by those who comprehend truth amidst unending darkness – one of God’s books.

“You have the demonic book?!”

In Lunev’s grasp was the demonic book Remiharam.

Next to her, the manifested essence of the book itself appeared.

“.....”

Remiharam greeted Boris and the scripture Hiscrea behind him with a friendly wave.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 226

Chapter 226: The Day of Reformation (5)

Two years ago, in the heart of the mountains in the southeastern region of the Garam Kingdom, an ancient relic lay hidden underground. Lunev brought her steps to a halt before an old book resting alone on a dust-covered shelf. Despite bearing the grand title of ‘Scriptures of the Deity’, its condition was far from decent.

Gently lifting the book, she dusted it off and opened its covers, which released a brilliant array of polychromatic light that burst towards the ceiling, as if greeting her in welcome.

“Have you grown quite a bit, little lady? Should I now simply call you ‘lady’?” teased a playful voice that tickled her ears. Lunev glanced indifferently toward the source.

Sitting atop the bookshelf, chin on hand and smirking with amusement, was a man. It was the spirit of the sorcerer Remiharam. This was their second encounter since their first meeting at the Nodeli ruins five years ago, with an ambiance unchanged as if time had stood still.

“You haven’t forgotten our promise, have you?” Lunev inquired.

“Huh? What promise?”

“You said to seek out Remiharam. That you’d grant my wish if I found you.”

“What’s the rush? Skipping pleasantries and going straight to the point?”

With an expression suggesting the question was pointless, Lunev simply looked at him.

“Same as ever, our lady.”

At the unchanged visage, Remiharam’s shoulders slumped as if deflated.

“How did you find me? It couldn’t have been easy.”

“That’s right. It wasn’t easy. Life doesn’t pan out as expected.”

Lunev, haughtily crossing her arms, recounted the process.

“I’ve compiled every book and record from all across the continent, from the nations of Garam, Ushif, and Spania, to identify places where you might be. Most had less than a 1% chance of being correct, but...”

“How many were there?”

“All combined, 742 places.”

Momentarily stunned, Remiharam cocked his head.

“You, you visited them all?”

“I intended to. But as it happened, it was the 100th location where I found you. Perhaps luck was on my side.”

Speechless, Remiharam simply closed his mouth.

“There’s more than just you here, isn’t there? I sense the magic of light in the other room...”

“Ah, yes. Light and darkness coexist. That place was inhabited by someone different from me, who still roams free in the world.”

With that, Remiharam leaped from the bookshelf.

Approaching Lunev, he leaned in intently.

“Handling the Scriptures of Divine Magic is no simple task. A regular human brain might not be able to contain the knowledge I possess.”

“Is that so? Then how do I appear to you, Remiharam?”

Pausing mid-sentence, he scratched his head.

“Wow. What have you been up to these past five years?”

Lunev blinked blandly, unfazed.

“As the soul of a sorcerer and the would-be owner of a sorcerer’s tool, I must ask you one thing,” Remiharam said, voice shifting to solemnity.

“You who seek the truth! Do you have a future that you wish to change through me?”

“My future has already changed.”

Without hesitation, Lunev answered firmly.

“I only wish to eradicate those who stand in the way of that altered future.”

She glanced subtly at the open pages of the sorcerer’s tome—a blank sheet.

However, as if proving her ownership, words began to etch themselves on the empty paper.

A future that had shifted—and now, it was one she was determined to protect.

<'Together with Sian.'>

“Even if that means going against a deity...”

* * *

"I've had my eye on you since the Academy. The granddaughter of the great sage Regens Rainriver, and a magic prodigy said to come once every few centuries. Still, I never imagined you would possess the same Scriptures of Divine Magic as I do," Boris confessed with a peculiar smile, laying bare his feelings.

"I felt the same way. Apart from Sian, you were the only person whose magic I couldn't detect. While Sian sparked my curiosity, you... you invoked an inexplicable repulsion."

Lunev, too, revealed her inner thoughts.

"It seems you have a significant misunderstanding about me. I am pursuing a peaceful future as revealed in the holy scriptures, one that I desire to enact. I definitely do not wish for chaos in this world."

"Do you really? The future you desire doesn't seem particularly favorable to Sian or myself. I'm not interested in such a future."

The sorcerer's tome in Lunev's grip then began to shine.

"What do you intend to do?"

"You are also a sorcerer, just like me. I know all too well what sorcerers detest."

Boris's face twisted for a moment.

"The dismantling of long-crafted theories and plans in an instant, leaving no contingency in place—a total collapse. For people like you, that's the moment of greatest defeat..."

With the tome's power responding, a crack appeared in a section of the void.

"I will now eradicate the false space you've created, leaving no trace behind."

"I don't understand. What would you have left by doing so?"

"It may leave me with nothing, but Sian will have something."

Boris, wordless and incredulous, laughed out loud.

"Truly a frightening obsession. They say there's nothing more terrifying than the obsession of a genius."

With that, he too turned a page in his scriptures, unleashing its power.

"However, that obsession can sometimes harm you. Inexperienced with failure, you fall into the delusion that anything is possible. I've seen many others like you."

The previously formed cracks were mended with light, gradually returning the space to its original state.

“Divine scriptures cannot bear change. Not even with the power of a sorcerer’s tome...”

Two scriptures, each projecting their power to erase the other’s dominion.

Both sorcerers stood determined to topple each other, without a moment’s hesitation or retreat.

* * *

[How could you be so ungrateful? Even if I ground my bones to dust and mixed it with my blood for you, it wouldn’t be enough...!]

Ceyram, her outcry filling the air with rage, seemed ready to tear Mia apart with sharp hands and eyes.

“It’s been a while, huh?”

I offered a casual greeting, but received no response.

Look at that obvious face.

She’s pretending not to hear me.

“Without asking, you disappeared and now you ignore the words of your master, oh grand sorcerer’s sword?”

[Oh my! Who might this be? The assassin who spared the princess out of sentimentality and let her escape? Who are you showing that shameful face to?]

Caught off guard by her sudden attack, I couldn’t help but laugh.

So she was playing dumb while watching all along?

Such a cunning and foul...

I barely restrained myself from uttering harsh words.

[What do you even see me as?]

“What?”

[What were you doing while that abominable copy of me was roaming free?]

She really is becoming bold.

Does she not realize who should be angry?

“You, Ceyram, what are you thinking?”

The clan leader, who had been watching with a twisted face, stepped forward.

“I told you before, did I not? I won’t reveal Ceyram’s secrets, but if they pose a threat to the successor, that’s a different story!”

[Will you shut up? Taking advantage of me being asleep, you really flew off the handle, didn’t you? Seething with fighting spirit and unable to contain yourself, shall I relieve you of it?]

The two women should never be in conflict.

The stress accompanying their confrontation was all mine to bear.

“Stop this pointless fight and explain, if you will.”

Their gazes turned back to me.

“What’s with her?”

These two knew something about Mia Hapencus that I did not.

Now that I’d caught on, they surely wouldn’t deny it.

The clan leader spoke first.

“Hapencus was a lineage that followed the old deity Aer. Dio Hapencus, the author of the scriptures you showed me, was their leader and the former owner of the sorcerer’s sword. I heard it directly from the deity, and no one can deny it,”

With the truth-telling deity confirming it, it must be accurate.

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“At the time, Ceyram glared at me so negatively. It was necessary for my survival.”

She looked at Ceyram with a rare bit of smugness.

“Furthermore, she was once a child we considered as a possible successor.”

This was an intriguing turn.

“Given she’s the last of the Hapencus bloodline on this continent, we thought she’d be able to wield the power of the Black Mist and the sorcerer’s sword better than anyone. Of course, that all changed because of you, but I never expected to meet her again like this.”

“What about that sword?”

I gestured with my eyes to the other sorcerer’s sword in Mia’s hand.

“A replica of the power, perhaps. I asked if you had ever used the sorcerer’s sword in front of the girl. Likely, the sword is a magical creation based on the traces of the sorcerer’s sword you used.”

If it was a power of that magnitude,

“From the power of the scriptures?”

“What else could it be?”

It wasn’t surprising.

If the power of the holy sword was generously shared, why not a replica?

In the end, she was a puppet created by them, intent on erasing my existence.

A typical act of those foes.

My gaze naturally shifted to Ceyram.

[What?]

Ceyram retorted with lit eyes, but I didn’t break my stare, sending a clear message for her to explain.

Rolling her eyes in irritation, she looked at me and said,

[Yes, it’s true! Dio, that wretch, was my previous owner!]

She couldn’t have hidden just to avoid saying that.

[He was not only my previous owner but also the one I devoured! I consumed that pathetic soul and controlled it at my whim! Are you happy now?]

After spewing out her bottled frustration, she waited for my response, simmering down.

So that’s why she kept it from me?

“Hm.

What can I say about that?”

As I voiced my internal thoughts, Ceyram’s eyes flickered.

“It’s not a big deal. That’s your nature. Haven’t I tried to consume you several times too?”

Ceyram struggled to respond, only blinking back at me.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 227

Chapter 227: The Day of Revision (6)

Since when did it begin? I couldn’t quite recall.

The same dream visited me every night.

A burning village, with piercing screams spreading in all directions,

at the village center a man, name unknown, was indiscriminately swinging a dagger at people.

Behind the man, a woman with black, flowing hair and blood red eyes wore a cruel smile – as if she was controlling him.

Whether this place was reality or hell, it was hard to tell, but to Mia Hapencus, this scene was all too familiar.

After all, everything is shocking only the first time.

Even the most horrific and tragic scenes become familiar with repetition.

For her, these nightmares had transformed from fear to curiosity.

Who were these people that tormented her in her dreams every night?

As this question deepened, a man appeared.

He introduced himself as Boris and claimed he would reveal the truth behind her recurring dreams.

He said they were the cries of the Hapencus bloodline, hoping she would resolve their unfulfilled grudges.

Mia asked what she needed to do to resolve these grudges.

Smiling, Boris answered she had to kill the owner of the cursed sword and the sword itself.

To accomplish this, she needed to acquire the power of a similar cursed sword.

Extending his hand, Boris made an offer,

and Mia took it.

Years passed.

Now, in front of her stood the current owner of the cursed sword and the spirit of the sword itself.

'Is that the spirit of the cursed sword Ceyram?'

Encountering the entity of Ceyram for the first time, Mia felt a strange sensation.

The sword in her hand also trembled.

Was it reacting to the aura of its original form?

It felt like she would be drawn to it any moment if she failed to control herself.

Nevertheless, she didn't care.

The ones before her eyes needed to be killed to resolve the deep-seated wishes of her bloodline – nothing more, nothing less.

Hadn't she been rushing towards this moment for years?

Gripping her sword firmly, Mia lunged at Sian again.

– Clang!

Sian deflected her strike without difficulty.

Unperturbed, Mia swung her sword continuously in all directions.

“.....!”

Sian countered them effortlessly.

“You, where did you learn to use a sword?”

“I never learned,” Mia retorted sharply, continuing her assault without pause.

Her answer was the truth.

Mia had never been formally trained in swordsmanship, not before being taken in by Boris, nor afterwards.

Occasionally, after receiving rituals from Boris, she began to experience unfamiliar sensations regarding the sword.

Boris explained that these sensations were ancestral, belonging to Dio Hapencus, the sword's previous owner.

Despite wondering how it was possible to inherit the senses of the deceased, she never asked.

All she desired was to be freed from the nightmares, wishing for the crying souls to escape their pit of grudges and rest peacefully.

Yet, despite inheriting her ancestor's senses, Sian easily parried her attacks, as if he could foresee her movements.

Realizing she could not kill him with sword clashes alone, Mia created distance and called upon the sword's power.

“Cursed Sword Manifestation...”

* * *

It's fascinating to see all the things one encounters in life.

How did those who witnessed me manifesting the cursed sword feel?

If it had been a mere imitation, I would have laughed it off.

But it wasn't.

The power she manifested was nearly identical to mine when I wielded the cursed sword.

A black mist rose visibly from the sword's tip, flaunting its power.

[Ha?!]

To my surprise – and perhaps even more so for Ceyram – she merely sniffed in disbelief at the sight.

Something felt off, so I scrutinized. Behind her, as she manifested the mist, a strange shadow flickered.

The face was difficult to discern – simply a man with long black hair.

A figure I knew nothing about.

“Do you recognize them?”

[.....]

I asked Ceyram, thinking perhaps she might know. Instead of responding, she bit her lip, showing her displeasure.

From her reaction, I gathered the gist without further explanation.

“Is it the soul of your former owner?”

[Absolutely not! I devoured his soul so there wouldn't be a trace left. There can't be any spirit left!]

She vehemently denied the possibility.

Then it must be an apparition resembling the exterior, controlling the power of the replicated cursed sword.

I'm not one for overthinking or worrying, so I responded in kind, holding out my blade and whispering.

“Phantom Technique 9: Cursed Sword Manifestation...”

Simultaneously as the mist released from the blade, Ceyram, in the midst of materializing, joined with my inner self.

With preparations complete, I launched forward without hesitation.

She too, wrapped in mist, braced herself without stepping back.

– Clang!

The feeling of experiencing another cursed sword's power was truly astounding.

It was familiar yet foreign – an intriguing sensation.

– Creak

The blades met, and hers pushed mine back slightly.

Though a minor difference, she had pushed back the power I had honed countless times.

The strength of the mist from her blade wasn't ordinary.

Not just a simple copy.

This was a force that could truly kill me, a reminder of death's shadow I hadn't felt in a long time.

“.....”

Nevertheless, my gaze kept returning to the apparition standing behind her.

The apparition, sensing my gaze, looked back with hollow eyes devoid of pupils.

Dio Hapencus.

Follower of the ancient Aer and former owner of Ceyram, he had lost both body and soul to the overpowering cursed sword – a fate tragic for any cursed sword's owner.

I felt neither pity nor unease.

That apparition represented a potential future anyone wielded by the cursed sword might face.

I, too, could end up that way.

“Why did you eat him?”

“.....?”

Mia, caught off guard by the sudden question, furrowed her brows.

But my question wasn't for her; it was aimed at Ceyram within me.

[Is this really the time for such questions?]

I wanted to know why.

Even if consuming the owner's soul to obtain their power was the nature of the cursed sword, Ceyram wasn't the kind to consume her owner even at the brink of death.

Why do I think so?

Nothing significant – it's just my intuition from sharing emotions and sensations over the past years.

Haven't I mentioned it before? We humans are creatures modeled after the gods.

Even She, a relic of the god, must possess emotions like us.

So not just me, but she must have felt fondness for her former owner, Dio.

She wouldn't have consumed him so hastily on mere instinct.

Ceyram sighed with discomfort, then reluctantly began to speak.

[He asked me to. He wanted me to devour his soul and go on a rampage. Pleading desperately for me to do so.]

"So you granted his request?"

[Why would I refuse? I'm not kind enough to follow an owner who's lost not only their sanity but even their will. So I did as he wished. No matter how harsh and merciless I might be...]

Ceyram trailed off.

[At least, I'm not devoid of all compassion to ignore a final request.]

Perhaps it was best to leave that unsaid.

I turned my attention back to Mia – not Dio.

"So, this sword is the enemy that destroyed your ancestors?"

".....?!"

"Have you ever considered the reasons this sword had no choice but to destroy them?"

"What are you implying?"

"There must have been a reason."

With self-answered questions, I pushed back her sword.

She regained her balance quickly from the forced retreat, but my hand was already ready for the next strike.

A slashing strike that seemed to cut through space itself.

But it wasn't Mia I had struck; it was the apparition of Dio Hapencus behind her.

"Mist Sword: Slashing the Apparition."

What is an apparition?

Anything that doesn't exist yet appears to.

Like the form I see now, sometimes people witness apparitions that don't exist in reality.

Sometimes, we are so captivated by these apparitions that they impact us more than reality.

But chasing after such non-existent apparitions can never bring anything good.

The one thing to dispel them is the reality of what truly exists.

Only one honest and correct strike is needed to remove all apparitions.

Just as now.

– Swish!

Unlike the previous Mist Sword techniques, no power of the mist was embedded in this strike.

In essence, it was just a plain horizontal slash.

– Swoosh

The apparition of Dio Hapencus reacted violently to the single strike, thrashing about.

"....."

Then I saw it – right before it vanished, turning to dust:

A faint smile on the lips of the disintegrating apparition.

With that smile, the apparition disappeared completely before my eyes.

– Thud

With the loss of the apparition that was the source of power, Mia collapsed to her knees.

The mist still rose from her sword, but she seemed to have lost the will to fight.

Still, I cautiously approached to make sure, lifting her head to meet her eyes – a face filled with resigned loss.

I considered interrogating her about the matter, but the futility of it made me let go and stand up.

“Did you say I should consider the reasons why my ancestors had to be destroyed?”

She suddenly spoke.

“I had no time to think of such things. They would come to me every night and cry out, without any reason or explanation...”

Without an answer to give, I remained silent.

“You’d better hurry...”

“Hurry where?”

“On my way here, I encountered Princess Arin.”

I involuntarily tensed my brows.

“I passed by since I was here for you. But it seems that Aschel was not so indifferent. If you are meant to protect that princess, you should hurry.”

My tense brows deepened into a frown.

“Otherwise, you might never see that princess you knew again.”

Exactly 3 seconds later.

“.....”

I walked past her and out of the library at a steady pace.

Mia, the family head, neither restrained me nor tried to hold me back.

To put it plainly, my immediate emotion wasn’t the urgency to rescue Princess Arin,

but rather the overwhelming anticipation of soon seeing the twisted face of some nefarious demon.

* * *

So Sian left the library,

but with nowhere else to go, Mia just sat there, staring blankly at the ground.

“Perhaps, it’s our fault for neglecting you.”

Silica approached the sitting Mia.

“You are an embodiment of the ideologies and traditions of those who once followed the ancient Aer. Your justice holds great value for us, the Mist and its heirs.”

Silica gently offered a hand to seated Mia.

Mia silently stared at the hand for a while.

“Teacher Boris never spoke of a future like this.”

“.....”

“He even said there’ll be no scenario where I send the owner of the cursed sword to Lord Aschel. But somehow, the future he spoke of has completely changed.”

A future with Silica, extending a hand, did not exist in Boris’s prophecies.

“What am I supposed to do in this changed future?”

“Nothing much.”

Silica locked eyes with Mia and whispered secretly.

“Just stay by Sian’s side in my stead.”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 228

Chapter #228: The Day of Revision (7)

****Translation Start****

The assembly hall was thrown into chaos with the appearance of Mist.

People shouted toward the stage, each with their own demands.

“Release the princess!”

“What is the royal army doing? Save the princess!”

“If they won’t, then I will go!”

The situation was a pandemonium, blending together pleas to save the princess and curses calling for the death of the assassins.

For Violet, it was infuriating to witness.

She yearned to slice through the black-masked fiends and rescue Arin in an instant.

However, the assassins acted as if to thoroughly prevent any such endeavor, refusing to remove their swords from Arin’s neck.

The knights could only fumble helplessly, unable to take action.

“What in the world are the two of you doing amidst all this?”

To make matters worse, neither Aschel nor Boris were anywhere to be seen.

Ultimately, the burden of resolving the current predicament fell squarely upon her shoulders.

Violet issued her command to the knights.

“Kill them.”

“Your Highness?”

The knights, thinking they had misheard, responded in unison.

“Kill them all! They’re the root of evil that dares to insult the empire and the imperial family! Arin wouldn’t want herself to be used as a hostage! She signaled me with her eyes just now! She’d rather die than be subjected to such disgrace!”

Violet’s eyes were bloodshot, showing she was beyond the point of rational judgment.

“But, even so...!”

“Come out!”

Unable to stand it anymore, Violet pushed past the knights and stepped forward.

A huge amount of mana erupted from her hands, and soon a white magic circle cast over the platform, overshadowing it with dark clouds.

“Princess, please calm yourself! That magic is dangerous!”

“I’ll take the responsibility!”

Despite the knights rushing to dissuade her, Violet paid them no heed.

As they were unable to lay hands on the imperial princess so easily, at that moment of disarray,

“Please steady yourself, Your Highness.”

An elder appeared on the platform, taking hold of her arm.

Violet, taken aback, looked round-eyed at the insolent man who dared touch her.

“Rash judgments often lead to disaster. Especially in these situations, one must remain calm.”

“Captain Jereon?”

It was Jereon, the captain of the Knight of Light Order.

In contrast to the thoroughly flustered Violet, the knights wore expressions of relief as if salvation had come.

“I’m in charge here! No one can oppose my will!”

“I understand your distress. However, did you not ask me to be your savior, Your Highness? Now you advance toward self-destruction; how can I simply stand by?”

At a loss for words, Violet’s lips quivered silently in response.

Jereon cautiously let go of her hand and began to approach the assassins.

Sensing his unusual aura, the assassins became even more guarded.

“I’m not sure what your true intentions are, but to my eyes, it looks like you’re just buying time.”

Some of the assassins showed signs of perturbation at his remark.

“Is the princess there the real Princess Arin?”

“We don’t take questions. Step back three paces from where you are.”

As if there wouldn’t be a second warning, the speaking assassin closed the distance between the sword and Arin even more.

“You seem to be under some misconception, but I already know that the princess here isn’t the real one.”

“...!”

“Yet, I do not say it because the opportunity may arise where I could possibly collaborate with you folks, depending on the situation.”

It was a murmur he kept low enough for just them to hear.

The assassins’ gazes flickered with unease before dissipating.

“Let’s cut to the chase. Simply state your true purpose here. Then perhaps I can be persuaded to cooperate with this time-wasting of yours...”

“Let the supreme power of the gods smite this evil!”

-ZAP!

Just as a strange negotiation seemed to take place, a chant for an advanced spell echoed behind Jereon.

Startled, he quickly looked up.

But Violet, having lost all reason, had already completed the casting of her magic, and lightning soon poured down upon them from above.

“Gods’ Strike!”

* * *

“Hyap!”

From a promising future prospect to a trustworthy knight of the royal family, it had taken but a single year.

Despite her youthful age, newly an adult, no one within the palace doubted her skill.

Some would even call her the Sword of the Princess.

A steadfast knight and sword to protect Princess Arin.

The knights unanimously agreed that without defeating her, none could ever touch the princess.

“...!”

After clashing swords for nearly five minutes...

... To be continued.

Translation End

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 229

Chapter 229: A Day of Reorganization (8)

To be honest, my heart had been quite gloomy lately due to various events, but the sullen mood lifted in an instant.

What? The only truth of this world?

To think that they still have not grasped their standing and are spouting such nonsense.

People say that no matter how much you polish the exterior, the inner self doesn't change, and indeed, what the ancients said is not wrong.

With my excited heart calmed a bit, I turned my attention to the situation unfolding before me.

Aschel and Princess Arin were manifesting the power of the holy sword Durandal, facing each other in a stand-off.

Judging by the way they were wielding their swords, it seemed this foolish princess had once again tried to outdo the sword's master by being the first to awaken its power.

While it's true that the power I saw in Aquizzel has become much more refined, it's still essentially insufficient to surpass the original source, Durandal.

Yet, it didn't seem entirely impossible.

The very fact they were competing like this just highlighted how little the sword's master had progressed in seven years.

Unable to stand it any longer, I lightly leaped forward and swung my sword Ceyram, separating the two.

"Si-Sian! When did you get here?"

"I just arrived. I apologize for being a bit late."

Leaving her bewildered behind, I moved forward.

"It's been a while, Sian."

Aschel greeted me with a nonchalant face, but the insincere smile he wore was exceedingly revolting, yet I did not let it show.

"Have you been well, brother?"

"A cruel question. You know better than anyone that I was not."

Though there was laughter in his voice, it was laced with a sharpness like a hidden blade.

Despite appearing to converse casually, one could sense the tremble in his eyes and voice, indicating he was engulfed in anxiety and rage.

"What happened to the woman you went to meet?"

He meant Mia.

"If she hasn't left on her own, she's likely still in the imperial library. You seemed to have put a lot of effort into it, so I left her alive for now... though, to be honest, I am disappointed."

"Disappointed?"

Aschel let out a derisive laugh in response to my question.

"So, the doll is all that your seven years of preparation to subdue me amounted to? Not even the previous owner of the demonic sword, but their descendant? And I had clearly told you to do everything in your power?"

"I know. I didn't think the child would defeat you, but I also didn't expect her to crumble so easily. Surely my plans didn't involve this... and yet, your actions continue to ruin my plans, Sian."

Well? You say so, but I haven't really shown anything of substance yet.

Being accused so squarely without having done anything noteworthy, I can't help but be taken aback.

-Koogung!

Just as I was about to ask what was bothering him, a tremendous roar blasted from exactly 11 o'clock in front of me, accompanied by a flash of lightning.

A lightning bolt out of clear skies.

Although the weather today has been gloomy, that lightning was definitely not a natural occurrence.

An artificial lightning created with magic power, in other words, magic.

And the place where it fell is just as important.

If my eyes are not failing me, it's where the royal ceremony is currently taking place.

".....!"

Both Aschel and Princess Arin couldn't hide their astonishment.

It meant that none here anticipated this situation.

The instigator of the lightning strike seemed obvious.

"The Gods Strike, a high-ranking spell of the light attribute. Right now, there's likely only one person at that location who's capable of such magic?"

The emperor's daughter, acclaimed to have inherited his magical talents the most – the bearer of the light attribute power, Violet Severus.

Except for her, no one else could have done it.

"Didn't you tell the princess I had visited?"

"What have you done to Princess Violet?"

What have I done?

I simply instilled a tiny portion of mana into her body.

That's all there is to it.

Although there may be a mild rejection reaction from her body, it's not a threat to her life.

Let alone use magic or any kind of mischievous tricks.

"I just planted doubt, that's all."

Humans are creatures inherently prone to duplicity, always hoping for events that benefit them, and even expecting the one they favor to look only at them.

Princess Violet.

From the moment we reunited in her chamber, I could sense her profound madness, her obsession, her desire for Aschel to pay attention only to her.

An ordinary person would have let it all out long ago, but she was holding back as much as possible in an attempt to maintain her dignity as a princess.

Suppression could eventually turn into an ailment, wouldn't it?

I helped her desires find release by implanting that very little emotion within her.

I imagine Violet's current sentiment in launching that lightning would be along the lines of 'Without Aschel, she must resolve everything. Only then will he turn his gaze back to her.'

Such deeply poignant affection is beyond words.

Someone from a past life who did something similar comes to mind, and I can hardly laugh at the thought.

"Why?"

He asked again, sighing deeply.

"I endeavored not to cause you any harm, Sian. You weren't in my envisioned future. You were supposed to be the useless youngest son of the Vert family, ignored and destined for obsolescence! Yet why do you emerge before me, incessantly foiling my plans?"

Look at this earnest, hapless sight.

A human at the edge of desperation, hysterically denying reality.

Yes, your words are not unfounded.

Originally, I, or rather, my existence, had no value even within my own family.

Before all this, you never showed any interest in someone as powerless and talentless as me.

But...

"Haven't I mentioned it before?"

".....!"

"I am a person who knows your true nature all too well. Knowing that the future you dream of could never be good for me, how could I possibly not obstruct your path?"

Moved by my response, he said nothing.

After a pause filled with silence,

"Haha....."

Laughter, unexpectedly, spilled from his lips.

"You and I are alike, Sian."

Has he finally lost his sanity?

"That's a dreadful thing to say."

"There's no need to resist. You are like me. You do not trust others; you're always wary of your surroundings. You prefer to reveal malicious intent rather than unwarranted friendliness, taking a highly skeptical view of humans. And thus, you have no qualms about using and killing people without conscience."

Since the statement wasn't entirely wrong, I decided to listen.

"Conscience, virtue, the so-called necessities humans must uphold – I never understood why. They said it was the order of the world, so I tried to adhere to it to an extent. However, I never grasped how hollow that effort was until you made me realize."

The once-fading light of the holy sword began to radiate once more.

Aschel slowly raised the glowing sword upwards.

"If my plans were ruined because of you, it would make sense to eliminate you and restart from scratch. But that's not what I'll do."

“What is it that you intend to do, then?”

“I aim to ascend to the pinnacle of human achievement. How could I claim the right to reach that height if I cannot subjugate someone like you?”

A beam of light emitted from the tip of the sword raised to the sky.

The light scattered in all directions, and for a moment, the golden aura of the holy sword wavered before my eyes before disappearing instantly.

“I admit it, Sian. Even now, after seven years, I cannot defeat you. What good is a power I alone hold that cannot rivet you? Thus, I have shared it, so others too can turn their swords towards you!”

-Woong!

Suddenly, a sword flew at me from behind.

While I managed to avoid it by marginally shifting my body, I couldn't hide my surprise.

The wielder of the sword was Princess Arin herself.

“Wa-wait a moment, Sian! This isn't my will!”

She looked distraught as if something was causing her body to move against her will.

“Something, it keeps moving my body!”

Princess Arin was shaking wildly, unable to control herself, as if an invisible force was yanking her body around.

-Step, step.

Before her words were finished, the sound of heavy footsteps echoed, and my gaze naturally shifted in response.

At that moment,

“.....!”

I was struck by a glint of recognition.

Brilliant armor glinting with the rays of the sun.

The majestic presence it exuded.

And the distinct imperial crest emblazoned upon the chest.

Within this imperial capital, nay, in the entire empire, there was only one person who could wear such armor.

“Em-Emperor father?”

The Emperor of the Empire, Dione Severus.

His sword was manifesting a golden magical aura akin to the holy sword.

* * *

“Protect us from the peril that has befallen us!”

As the chant ended, a gigantic white shield materialized above.

-Fizz!

The strike of lightning, which did not hit the ground but the shield, released sparks in all directions, and only after a blinding burst of light began to subside did people regain their senses.

Jereon breathed a sigh of relief, narrowly escaping disaster.

The sudden spectacle left the crowd utterly bewildered.

“Did Jereon just save the assassins?”

“No! It was Princess Arin and us! If it weren’t for that shield, we would have been harmed for sure!”

“Did Princess Violet really intend...?”

The assassins were equally perplexed.

With the magic happening so suddenly, there was no chance to either dodge or block.

Thanks to Jereon’s swift action, they were spared injury.

“.....”

The assassins exchanged glances for a moment, and then,

-Thud.

Rather unceremoniously, they threw Princess Arin onto the stage and vanished in a swirl of black mist.

The knights, not knowing what to do, alternated their gaze between Jereon and Violet.

However, Violet's face was already so distorted with seriousness that it seemed she could no longer make sound judgments.

"Please escort Princess Violet."

Jereon, remaining composed, issued his instructions calmly.

"What are you doing, Jereon! Those assassins escaped because of you! Why are you meddling with my affairs!"

It seemed best to remove her from the public's view before things worsened.

Jereon paid no heed and approached the flung aside Princess Arin. As expected, a decoy.

It was nothing more than an artificial corpse, elaborately crafted with magic.

The knights that had run over couldn't hold back their shock.

"Has enough time been bought, then?"

Understanding their actual purpose was still out of reach, leaving Jereon feeling quite empty.

"What should we do now, Lord Jereon?"

What use was it to seek directions from one who held no command authority?

However, understanding the necessity of the situation, he issued orders based on his experiences as squad leader.

"Firstly, calm the people. Let them know that Princess Arin is safe and there's no need to worry. We'll conclude the royal court here."

The knights bowed and quickly dispersed.

Just as Jereon was about to stand,

-Zing!

A sudden, bizarre sound carried from the west, and a golden radiance erupted forth.

That direction was where the imperial library was located.

The sudden, strange turn of events confused everyone, but then,

“.....!”

A few knights abruptly stopped in their tracks and began to contort their bodies strangely.

“What’s going on?”

“My body is moving on its own!”

They all shared a commonality: each knight’s sword was emanating a golden hue.

It wasn’t just the imperial army and the Order knights.

Turning his gaze down from the dais to the crowd watching the court, several others were similarly afflicted.

Most of them were personal knights of nobles who had come from various territories for the meeting.

Their bizarre situation did not last long, however,

“.....”

Those affected by the phenomenon suddenly stiffened like stone.

Their eyes soon turned toward the library, the source of the golden glow, as if deaf to everyone’s words or commands.

“For salvation...”

Muttering unintelligible phrases, they all began to run toward that location.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 230

Chapter 230: The Day of Reform (9)

A thought struck me in an instant: could this be a marionette imitating the Emperor? But I dismissed that thought within three seconds. The presence of a person can't be imitated so frivolously—their physique, gait, expression, among other additional elements. The man approaching me was undoubtedly the Emperor of this nation, Dione Severus. Despite hearing he had been bedridden with chronic illness over the past few years, unable to handle state affairs, let alone his daily routines, he now looked fit enough to head out and deal with demonic beasts at a moment's notice.

It wasn't just the Emperor.

The Imperial Army and Knights of Salvation, alongside plenty of others who looked like they've swung a sword before, all followed the Emperor towards us. They had one thing in common: each held a sword emitting a light similar to that of a holy sword.

"Ah, why is His Majesty here?"

The most shocked was Princess Arin. Her father, who she believed to be bedridden all day, had suddenly appeared before her, fully armed—it would have been strange if she wasn't surprised. However, it would be problematic if in her shock, she struck me from behind, so—

-Click-

It seemed necessary to calm her down for a moment. I gently placed my hand on her forehead.

"Let everything... be nothing."

As with Aquizzel, I neutralized the surging power emanating from her. The light from her sword and wings gradually vanished, and as her strength faded, she collapsed into Resmus's arms.

"Father..."

Even as she fell, her eyes were still fixed on the Emperor.

As time passed, more knights assembled, and it seemed as though news of an entertaining spectacle had spread, for crowds of onlookers began to gather. Finally, the Emperor, passing by Aschel, stepped forward with dignity and raised his sword in command.

"I command thee, as Emperor of the Ushif Empire and bearers of the Swords of Salvation!"

His cry was met with thunderous responses from the knights.

“Every knight, raise your swords and eradicate the foggy presence that has insulted the royal family and profaned the light! Do not sheathe your swords until this being kneels and collapses!”

“We shall obey the Emperor’s command!”

The whole scene was nothing short of a ludicrous puppet show. So, this was why they handed out holy swords as if they were treats—to prepare for this moment. It was such a distinctly imperial notion. Not taking the lead himself but instead, bestowing strength on those around him to handle matters, formed a sort of holy sword legion. It’s all too familiar.

Countless swords, aimed at me with the intent of eradicating evil, transformed me into a being of absolute malevolence in their eyes. I fought and resisted to survive until eventually, I died—

Alone and utterly wretched.

Truth be told, my current situation is even direr than before.

“Look, there’s Princess Arin! That assassin has kidnapped Princess Arin!”

“Release the Princess!”

“Kill the assassin!”

Without a single word or action, to the collective gaze of the crowd, I might as well be the kidnapper of Princess Arin and the protagonist of the continent’s chaos. The irony of the situation couldn’t be more exasperating.

“Do you see, Sian?”

Suddenly, Aschel, with arrogance radiating from her face, put the question to me.

“This is the gaze of the masses toward you. It’s the world’s gaze upon you. Your existence only brings disorder and sin to people. No one desires your existence.”

Did she think I wouldn’t know?

I wasn’t particularly bothered since I was already aware of the fact.

“You have no one to help you, nor anyone to save you. Caught up in such loneliness and solitude, you will soon despair. And then you will finally see the only existence that can save you from the abyss of despair is none other than myself...”

She kept spouting nonsense as if she was the only one who could save me from this worst moment. I continued with my impassive response, without any retort or reply.

“Don’t you feel wronged?”

Princess Arin asked me as she observed my silence.

“Is this really the situation you and Mist wanted? Being despised by people and denied by the world—is that really what you desire?”

She implored with a pressing tone, but I didn’t respond. Who, born human, would desire rejection?

But,

“I am just accustomed to it.”

“What?”

“It’s merely familiar to me. That’s why it doesn’t bother me.”

“How can that possibly be?”

Princess Arin shook her head as if she couldn’t comprehend. She wouldn’t understand. Still, I had no desire to enlighten her. To someone like me, the notion of being ‘saved’ was purely theoretical.

All by myself, in solitude, without anyone’s assistance—I would overcome this situation.

As I was about to raise my sword with a peaceful mind, a familiar voice reached my ears.

“Lordan!!!”

Amidst the tumult, a gust of wind suddenly rose, and two men wielding swords forced their way through the crowd towards me. Without discussing the circumstances, they positioned themselves squarely before me, facing the knights instead of me.

“Brian?”

It was my companion Brian.

“I am relieved you are safe!”

Hadn't I told him to stand by in the subspace? What was he doing here? The man with black hair glanced at me briefly before refocusing his attention on the knights. Wait, he looked familiar. I recall seeing him before in Lorand with Lunev Blanc...

The confusion persisted unabated.

An inscrutable fog enveloped me protectively, and within it, a familiar voice sounded.

"This situation is terribly inconvenient."

It was a voice tinged with annoyance. The fog vanished as quickly as it had appeared with those short words.

"Argh!"

Sudden alien screams emerged from the crowd. The screams multiplied, and the people shouted in response.

"It's Mist!"

Assassins emerged, bypassing the knights' defenses and gradually revealing themselves. One by one, they gathered before me and prepared a defensive formation as if naturally bound to protect me. There were no words or explanations. As if it was the most natural thing in the world to fight for me.

During all this, there was no sign of the clan leader with whom I had performed mental resonance.

"What shall we do, Young Master?"

Puzzled by my silence, Brian spoke in my stead.

"Shall we fight to buy you time to leave this place? Or..."

Brian couldn't bring himself to finish. If not fleeing, the only other option was to kill them all. Still, his eyes reflected a steadfast willingness to follow whatever choice I made.

"It's fortunate, though."

Princess Arin, having regained some strength, got to her feet and spoke.

"You may have thought you were always alone, but you're not. Even if the whole world dismisses you as unnecessary, there are definitely people for whom your existence has changed their lives, like me and Resmus."

The Princess prepared herself and directed her sword not at me, but at the knights. Resmus followed suit.

“Didn’t I tell you in Aquizzel? I wanted to save you. Alone, I might not suffice. But together with the multitude who desire you, who have had their lives transformed by you, I believe it’s not impossible. Not just here, but elsewhere too, people are moving for you.”

“I never asked for that.”

“It doesn’t matter if you didn’t. I want this.”

I couldn’t help but let out a wry laugh.

“Truly persistent to the last.”

“Now, telling me that won’t hurt me.”

Now she was immune to criticism regarding herself.

“Show me, Sian. Show the true face of your light and mist...”

I casually looked up towards the sky. Dark clouds that blanketed the threatening sky seemed to mirror the impending trials in my future. And yet, it somewhat set my mind at ease.

I was determined to put aside all unnecessary thoughts from now on. I should focus on what needs to be done from this point forward.

To utterly disfigure that demon’s face, who was laughing so vilely once again.

* * *

In a light-filled subspace shimmering with stunning brilliance, a silver throne sat at its center with a woman resting with her eyes closed.

-Tap, tap, tap-

Soon, the conspicuous footfalls of someone approached. Accompanying the sound, faint black mist began to flow from the front. Noticing the guest, the woman slowly opened her eyes.

[You look much better than you did seven years ago.]

“ ... ”

[Fortunately, it seems you've recovered without any issues. Did your master feed you well?]

Even before Ceyram's sneering comments, the woman didn't twitch an eye.

[Humans are becoming craftier by the day, aren't they? They never give up. Witnessing them accomplish the unthinkable time after time...]

"I'll give you a chance, Ceyram."

Durandal, who had been silent up to this point, finally spoke up.

"Devour your master's soul here and take over their body."

[What nonsense are you spouting now?]

"Shouldn't be too hard, right? Just awaken your suppressed nature. Once you possess the successor's body, I'll take care of the rest."

Durandal expressed a decisive intention.

[Are you seeing things that badly? Do you think the situation has turned in your favor?]

"Don't you know what will happen when my master and your master confront each other? We might have to overturn this world once again."

[...]

"Think carefully, Ceyram. What would be more beneficial for you?"

Ceyram fell silent at the serious proposition. She turned her gaze away slightly as if for a moment considering it, but then firmly,

[No.]

She resolutely rejected Durandal's offer.

"Why?"

[Because I hate it.]

Her answer was simple and straightforward, leaving Durandal at a loss for words.

[Turn the world upside down again? Who would reject such an exciting future? I've told you before. Let's do what we always do.]

Ceyram stepped away and drew closer to Durandal.

[Resist more! Struggle more! The more you and your master flounder...]

“...”

[The more joy my master and I will feel!]

“As always, your kind never changes.”

Durandal shook her head as if she anticipated this.

“In the end, you and I cannot coexist on this land. Not you, not your successor, not even that outcast who is your origin! You should not consider existing on this land any longer.”

The two women shared the same thought.

‘My master will win.’

With a conviction that their respective masters would triumph in this conflict and subdue the opposition, a fierce determination blazed within the hearts of both women.

(To be continued)