

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 241

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Chapter 241: The Order of Mist (1)

Another subspace filled with the energy of black mist.

The owner of the space sat on the altar as usual, waiting for someone to seek him out.

-Tap tap tap

A moment later, the sound of urgent footsteps came from down the corridor.

Sensing the presence, Aer thought to himself.

Exactly 1 second later,

He would be grabbed by the collar.

-Crunch!

Indeed, as expected.

Precisely a second later, as his collar was grasped, a figure appeared before him.

The insolent human who dared to grab the collar of Aer—even though he was an exile, he still had the power of a god—was none other than,

Aer's successor, Sian.

It was clear at a glance that Sian was in an extremely agitated state, unable to contain his emotions.

(You seem to have a lot to say, yet you seem unable to say any of it.)

Aer spoke smoothly, unbothered.

Just as he had anticipated, Sian could do nothing but hold onto his collar without uttering a word.

(I sense Silica's remnants in you. She left after passing on everything to the very end.)

Sian's body radiated an even more substantial mist energy than before.

(Won't you say anything? Surely you had plenty you wanted to say before coming to me?)

Despite Aer's prodding, Sian remained silent, unable to open his lips.

(Do you want to ask about the location of Lumen Del?)

"....."

(Or do you wish to demand that I transfer all my power to you?)

"....."

(If not that, did you come merely to vent your anger? Or to resent me for not intervening directly in the situation with Lumen Del?)

Sian asked nothing, gave no answer.

He simply held the collar with trembling hands, his gaze firmly meeting Aer's.

(I have done the same thing for all of you.)

As the mist surrounding his body dissipated, Aer's face became visible.

An indifferent expression, neither smiling nor frowning.

Aer continued, his voice even.

(Seven years ago, I honored your request to forbid anyone from approaching Brenu. This time, I honored that child's request. She asked me not to intervene, no matter what happened, even if it meant her death.)

"....."

(Is that a problem?)

Sian suddenly cried out in frustration.

(I had advised against it, saying it was unnecessary. But she denied it, saying you needed motivation. She said you needed something to strengthen your feeble heart. And she fulfilled that role before leaving.)

"Why? Why did she?! What about me? So selfish and impudent, why for someone like me! Why did she have to die for me!!!"

(Because she desired it.)

It was a simple, indifferent answer.

(Do you know what she said to me when we first met?)

“.....?”

(She said she didn't want to live.)

“What?”

Sian asked incredulously.

(Born as the eldest daughter of a noble family, living a life with nothing to envy, she told me she didn't want to live. She didn't want to live as a human among this world filled with unquestioning, ignorant trust. Yet, she wanted to instill doubt into everyone.)

Unconditional belief is the fast track to extinction.

To advance, humans must constantly doubt, question, and deny. Having realized this early on, Silica had followed Aer to pursue this truth and had led the Mist.

(But she said she couldn't do it alone, and if someone capable appeared to help her, she would support them with everything she had.)

-Click

(Do you understand now? This was a long-held wish of Silica's...)

For the first time, Aer grabbed Sian's collar in return and asked.

(You shouldn't be sad or angry!)

His gaze, initially calm, began to sharpen, and his voice intensified.

(You promised before me. You vowed to help me change the order of this world! Didn't you anticipate this could happen at the moment you made that vow?)

Sian was unable to respond.

(I have watched the deaths of hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands who followed me! For merely following me, they had to die! And I watched it all unfold before my eyes!)

Humans are creations meant to emulate the nature of the gods.

Aer had felt and encountered these negative emotions far longer and much more deeply than Sian.

(You may have been precious to Silica, but not to me! To me, you are just like any of the countless children before me who may disappear at any moment!)

Suppressing the brief surge of emotions,

Aer closed his eyes gently and exhaled softly.

(So make your choice. Will you lead the remaining children and change the world, or will you live alone, drowning in your weakness, refusing to lose anyone else? Either way, it won't be easy.)

“Ha...”

Sian also sighed in response.

Then he slowly released Aer's collar and removed the hand that grasped his own.

“This is the,”

(.....)

“Last time.”

A sentence with multiple meanings.

With those words, Sian turned to leave.

Aer did not try to stop him or speak further.

He simply watched silently.

That was all he could do now.

Following the corridor, Sian arrived at the plaza of the subspace.

There, the former members of Mist awaited him, their expressions and postures full of resolve.

Without a word, Sian walked among them.

He stopped where Silica's body lay in eternal slumber.

Her face bore a faint smile, as if she had released everything.

For a moment, Sian blankly watched that smile,
And then gently placed his hand on her face.

-Ssssss

Black mist erupted from where their flesh touched.

The mist wound around her body, embracing it tenderly, watched quietly by Sian.

Soon, her body began to transform into mist,

And the moment she was completely converted,

The mist dispersed into the surroundings and disappeared.

After performing this final rite for her, Sian stood up and turned to the members.

Then he spoke, expressionless and dispassionately.

“I declare to all former members of Mist.”

The members instantly adjusted their posture.

“From this moment onward, I am the head of Mist.”

An announcement that was both unilateral and autocratic.

Yet no one in the plaza objected.

It was as if it was natural for him to become the head.

“We have lived in the shadows, rejected by the world, hiding our true nature.”

Darkly intense, yet staunchly calm.

“But we need to hide no longer,”

With a firm resolve yet unemotional face,

Sian shared his will with the members.

“From now on, we will live openly in this land. There is no need to hide or deny that we are Mist. We are the order, and we are the masters of this land, and we will live proudly as such.”

“A salute to the new head of Mist!”

The members bowed a knee to Sian in homage.

No longer existing in the shadows but living as essential members of the land.

This was the world the new head wanted, the order they would create.

Even if gods opposed it,

They would not stop.

* * *

“Heretics just vanish as they please, and now you speak such astonishing words. Lunev!”

“It’s not the first time, you know. Isn’t it time for you to come to terms with it?”

“I don’t need to hear more! At once, I will send an envoy in the name of the academy! From the empire, for this incident, we will demand a clear consequence...!”

“Hence my message. So stop this pointless act and ensure that no strange atmosphere pervades from your end. Grandfather.”

“Wait! Don’t hang up, Lunev!”

Despite Regens’s urgent exclamation, Lunev severed the communication with the messenger sphere without hesitation.

“Isn’t that just careless to cut off like that? The principal seems quite furious, don’t you think?”

Schultz looked on with a concerned tone.

“Oh, what can we do? It’s already done. Grandfather always stays in such high spirits. He should be conserving his energy at his age...”

Lunev dismissed the concerns indifferently.

They then made their way out from the alley into a busy street filled with people.

Just a week earlier,

The scene of chaos was now surprisingly tranquil, as if unreality had resumed its normal course.

Lunev observed the scene and remarked,

“Isn’t it fascinating? Just a week since the tumult, but life continues as if nothing ever happened.”

“Isn’t it because the imperial family handled it well?”

“Perhaps that’s part of it. But there’s also a willful ignorance.”

“Willful ignorance?”

Schultz quickly asked back, puzzled.

“People want their daily lives to continue despite their doubts. To live tomorrow, they forget yesterday.”

Schultz clenched his fist, struggling to voice his question.

“Is your heart still troubled?”

Perceiving his turmoil, Lunev turned and asked.

“Do you feel pitiful for fighting so fiercely without understanding why you did it? For not knowing for whom or what you should live for from now on?”

“I’ve never had the notion of living for something in my life. I’ve just lived meaninglessly, hoping someone would value my life. That’s why I’m confused. I wonder what I should live for after going through such significant events...”

Schultz spoke candidly, exposing his inner thoughts.

“That’s a good mindset.”

Lunev responded unexpectedly positive.

“No one can give you the answer, Mr. Schultz. So keep contemplating your doubts. Eventually, you will understand what you should live for...”

Schultz looked still perplexed.

“That’s my experience.”

“I will keep your words in mind, Ms. Lunev!”

Assured by her, Schultz nodded.

With satisfaction, Lunev turned back toward the alley.

“Now, let’s go do what we need to do.”

She gestured in the air as if writing, and a black gate appeared before them.

Without hesitation, they stepped through.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 242. The Order in the Mist (2)

Back in the imperial palace, Arin’s office offered no time for rest for the recently returned lady.

“The investigation into the Holy Knights of the Empire, the Knights of Salvation, and the knights from each territory who have been granted power revealed no cases of the sacred sword’s power manifesting again.”

“How is Father’s condition?”

“It seems to be largely the same as yesterday.”

Arin sighed slightly, her feelings a complex web.

“The movements of the Nephris Duke’s family, including the Empress Mother, are not normal. They seem to be looking for an opportunity to rebound through this crisis.”

“They dare to blame us for taking the ailing Father to the battlefield. They can’t miss this opportunity.”

Arin, as if she had foreseen this turn of events, did not react strongly.

“Any news about the Duke of Aschel?”

“While there have been a few reports of people seeing someone resembling him near the imperial city, it seems there is still no confirmed information. Also…”

Resmus hesitated slightly before continuing.

“There is still no news about Mist.”

At that, Arin closed her eyes tightly.

A week had already passed since the chaotic events of that day.

Sian and Mist had departed after tending to Silica’s body, and Arin had not stopped them.

It had been a day of inconceivable events, and even now, the scenes still vividly played through her mind.

But the most shocking amongst them was,

“That being who killed Silica that day was,”

“...?”

“It wasn’t a human, was it?”

“What exactly did you see?”

Resmus, who had not been at the scene, was unable to understand.

“I don’t know. There are suspicions, but I dare not mention them out loud.”

Arin clutched her forehead, her expression pained.

“Sian will be okay, right?”

With that, she was haunted by the image of Sian wailing in despair.

-Knock knock-

“Princess Violet has arrived!”

Following the knock, the news of Violet’s visit is heard.

Soon the office door opened, and Violet stepped in with confident steps.

“Welcome, sister.”

“Let’s talk for a moment, Arin.”

The two sisters sat down as if their meeting was pre-arranged, without any indication of emotions.

As Resmus was about to leave quietly,

“Stay there.”

Violet stopped her.

“There’s no need for you to leave.”

Violet’s directive contained the implicit understanding to stay for the duration of the conversation.

“You’ve heard the news, right? The Empress’s family is trying to blame us for this crisis. If we can’t handle this properly, we’ll be completely vulnerable.”

Us?

The word ‘us’ that she used felt unusually foreign to Arin.

“Why? Does it seem very awkward coming from my mouth now?”

Reading Arin’s feelings as if she had pierced through her, Violet asked with raised eyebrows.

“I understand. Even after years of working together, there was no trust between you and me. I’ll confess now. I’ve tried to kill you, Arin.”

“...!”

“Didn’t expect that, did you? I thought you’d be somewhat prepared.”

“I didn’t realize I was so valuable to you, sister.”

On hearing value, Violet sniggered.

“Funny thing to say. I don’t particularly want to ask for your forgiveness. It’s my fault due to my ignorance, so I should take full responsibility for it. In that vein, let’s divide what we have to do between us.”

“What do you mean?”

“From this moment on, all the aftermath of this incident is my responsibility. You, Arin, just followed what we told you to do and have no direct involvement in this incident. You understand my words, right?”

Surprised, Arin’s eyes sparkled as she asked,

“That means, sister, you’ll take all the responsibility?”

“Yes. I’ll bear all of it. I’ve already sought advice from my maternal grandfather.”

“There’s no need to go so far...!”

“Because I am a princess.”

With that one sentence, Arin fell silent.

“As a princess responsible for the administration of this country, I will take responsibility. It’s only natural.”

Determination shone in Violet’s eyes.

“So Arin, please work for the future of the imperial family and the empire, not dwell on the past.”

With those words, Violet rose to leave.

“It might be hard to see me for a while. So don’t worry about me, just focus on what you need to do. So there won’t be a next time...”

“To me!”

Arin quickly stood up and shouted at the retreating figure.

“Are you really okay with entrusting me with the entirety of the imperial family?”

Instead of responding immediately, Violet held onto the doorknob and lingered.

After a short pause,

“We don’t have much time left for Father. That means we don’t have much time to prepare either.”

No matter how much one is a child, one cannot deny that.

The life of Emperor Dione was indeed not much longer.

“So, you especially, must continue the preparations for the future of the imperial family and the empire.”

Violet did not continue her speech and opened the office door.

“I’m not worthy...”

Arin did not hear that last remark.

Feeling troubled, Arin clutched at her fluttering heart and stared out the door Violet had left through.

“Resmus.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Do you think I’ve earned recognition?”

Resmus delayed her response for a moment, but then confidently replied,

“From what I saw, it seemed so.”

“So this is what it feels like. To be acknowledged.”

Unknowingly, Arin smiled faintly.

After a brief moment of emotion, she was ready to resume her work when...

-Knock knock-

Again the door to the office knocked.

“May I come in?”

A familiar voice followed the knock.

Arin and Resmus looked at each other in disbelief.

“I’ll go and see!”

Resmus quickly offered to check the visitor.

“No, Resmus!”

Arin raised her hand to stop her and allowed entry with a calm voice under control,

“Come in.”

-Creak-

As the door opened, the atmosphere within the room seemed to become heavier.

The stranger entering with confident steps wore a noble's attire, dark and stately—a black-haired man, none other than Sian who had a rare air of nobility about him.

"How did you get here?"

"As you see, through the front gate."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

Sian continued his indifferent responses as if there were no problem.

"I've come to talk with the princess. May I?"

"Of course."

Arin guided Sian to a seat.

Without hesitation, Sian started the conversation.

"I heard you stopped the pursuit of Mist."

"That's only the official investigation. I've been keeping up with the news about you personally."

"Why?"

"There's nothing significant. I just had to focus on other matters."

You know? Not just the imperial city, but the entire empire is in disorder. The day I wanted to proclaim a new order such scandalous incidents transpired, so now all my attention is poured into calming that disorder."

"You've come a long way."

Caught off guard by the unexpected praise, Arin's cheeks reddened slightly.

"There's something I've wanted to ask you for a while now. May I?"

"Please do."

"Why do you hate your brother so much?"

For Sian, it might be a very sensitive question.

However,

“I don’t hate him.”

“...?!”

“I loathe him because I know his true nature.”

Without hesitation, Sian continued his response.

“He is not the savior who will rescue the world, nor the pioneer who will lead a new order. He is just a man who uses everything around him for his purposes until they’re no longer needed, and then discards them without mercy... Dirty and vile.”

No excitement or unrest showed as Sian spoke with cool eyes,

Elucidating his feelings towards Aschel.

“Yet the world has made him out to be the sole truth and hope of this world. Because I cannot accept that, I aimed to completely ruin all his plans. It was the same that day.”

Sian meant to reveal the real face of Aschel, who is hailed as the savior of the light.

“But it didn’t go as I intended. Soon, he will reappear wielding light as his reason and try to deny our existence. He might try to use you, princess, once again.”

“You don’t want that to happen, do you?”

Without hesitation, Arin asked.

“...”

“That’s why you’ve come to me, right?”

“I won’t particularly deny it.”

Sian averted his gaze ambivalently and answered.

“I’m not here to demand anything of the princess. However, from now on, we will make our presence known openly, not hiding in the shadows. So please, princess, make a choice.”

“Choice?”

“Whether you will accept and welcome our existence, or if you will continue the same order as it is now.”

“Why ask me to choose?”

Confused by his reasoning, Sian furrowed his brows slightly as he replied.

“Don’t you now possess the power to do so, Your Highness?”

Taken aback, Arin flinched.

Holding power?

Did that mean Sian acknowledged her?

It wasn’t said directly, but Arin couldn’t contain her excitement, and her face flushed red.

“Not something to be pleased about. There’s always a price to pay for power, and princess, you’ll have to bear more responsibility in the future.”

Yet Sian’s reaction was enough to instantly extinguish her excitement.

Thanks to that, Arin was able to quickly settle her emotions.

“Anyway, the choice is yours, princess. We are prepared for whatever you decide. If you have no intention of welcoming us... “

Sian stood, turning to leave.

“At least, don’t interfere.”

It was a weighty statement, heavier than any other time.

As Sian was about to leave the room, he paused, seeing something familiar draped over a chair.

“Why do you still have that?”

“It’s not my belonging, so I can’t just discard it. You want it back?”

“No need.”

Sian exited the room.

Arin watched the door where Sian left for a while.

“What will you do, princess?”

Resmus, who had been silently watching, asked.

Without a word, Arin approached the window.

“Silica once told me something before the end.”

She gently drew back the curtain, and the foggy view of the imperial city came into view.

“She told me to keep chasing after Sian. Not just blindly follow him, but chase with questions. Only then would I understand the world Sian desires...”

Her teacher’s final moments, striving to convey her will while spitting up blood and enduring agony.

“If I come to believe that world is right,”

Arin remembered the scene vividly.

“She told me to help Sian create that world. Sian still needs many people by his side.”

She turned towards Resmus and asked,

“We could help too, couldn’t we, Resmus?”

“If it’s you, Your Highness, you’ll surely be of great help.”

Resmus silently promised to uphold her duty behind the princess.

“Let’s see Father. I need to tell him all of my thoughts.”

Deciding in her heart, Arin made to leave the office but hesitated for a moment, casting her gaze at something there and smiling mysteriously before departing.

Where her gaze had lingered, Sian’s black cloak was neatly folded over a chair.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 243. Order in the Mist (3)

The day following her meeting with Sian, Arin issued an imperial edict in response to the choice Sian had spoken of, reaching across the entire Empire.

“Duke Aschel Vert, the eldest son of the Vert Dukedom and the owner of the Holy Sword, has committed major treason by deceiving the Royal Family and insulting the Emperor. Consequently, the Royal Family hereby strips him of his title and declares him wanted as a criminal for his grave offenses.”

The edict was a declaration that she would not adhere to the current order.

What was more crucial was the content beneath.

“Simultaneously, the Royal Family revokes all warrants for Mist and proclaims a full pardon for the crimes related to Sian Vert. Furthermore, he shall be once again granted the title of nobility.”

The warrant for Aschel and the pardon for Sian.

Some people, upon seeing this, commented that the Empire had now decided what was good and who was evil.

They predicted that this decision would be met with considerable resistance, and soon many opposing forces would rise up to block her.

Most believed that Princess Arin would be unable to prevent this from happening.

However, Arin thought differently.

This was but the first step towards a new future for the Empire.

It wasn't an act meant to define good and evil.

“I never expected to meet the princess in such a way.”

“Nor did I anticipate encountering you under these circumstances, Boris.”

From the moment Aschel was declared a criminal, those close to him couldn't escape the arrows of crime.

Boris, bound and surrounded by knights, was no longer the magic consultant to the royal family but now a distinct criminal in front of Arin.

“This is foolishness! This will never serve the Royal Family nor the Empire! Rescind the edict immediately and reissue the order for Mist's capture!”

Despite Boris's repeated pleas, Arin showed no reaction.

“Do you think you've ascended to that position on your own?”

After asking that question with a change in tone and raising his veins in anger, Boris continued.

“No, it’s not. The position you stand in now was created by Aschel and me! It is not a place you can frivolously take just because we’ve momentarily lost power!”

Hearing these words, Arin thought to herself that it was utterly disgusting.

“No one but His Majesty, my father, the Emperor, can create the position of a princess. To claim that it was made by you... It is so irreverent it’s revolting.”

Boris, barely swallowing the words bubbling up within, continued calmly.

“I apologize for my earlier remark. But please trust me, Your Highness! What you must have now is not doubts but trust! Trust towards the light!”

Arin wondered how a man who once seemed so great could have fallen so far.

Bending slightly to meet his gaze at equal level, she said:

“I can’t deny that I’ve learned much from you, Boris. But do you know what I realized while receiving your teachings?”

“What is it?” Boris asked uneasily.

“There was never any sincerity in your words towards me.”

With Boris speechless, his lips twitching, Arin asked rhetorically if it was really possible to ask for trust from someone who never showed any sincerity towards her.

“Oh, you misunderstand! I have always...”

Without listening further, Arin sternly turned away.

“I shall postpone your punishment for now. It won’t take long.”

As she distanced herself, Boris watched with bitter eyes.

Then suddenly, he burst into maniacal laughter, as if going insane.

“Ignorant creatures, indeed! The fact that they keep making the same mistakes is truly lamentable!”

Arin turned back, tempted by his words.

“No one can punish me! Even if the Emperor himself came!”

Observing the pitiful scene of a fallen man desperately denying reality and distorting before her eyes, one couldn't help but let out a sigh.

Yet there was something Arin didn't say.

"Your punishment will not come from us."

Boris, puzzled by her words, watched his face contort in confusion again.

"For your information, there are no guards stationed in this prison. In other words, should someone come for Boris, there will be no soldiers to stop them."

With Boris now perplexed by her words, Arin left the prison with the knights.

Left alone, Boris resumed his insane laughter.

He knew the end was already decided and wondered why she still had doubts...

Soon, a white light glowed from Boris's body, unlocking the chains and locks binding him. Free from his shackles, he rose leisurely from the ground.

"Eventually, everything returns to its rightful place, does it not? We must prepare for this. Hiscrea..."

His face, previously beaming with a smile as he called upon Hiscrea, suddenly turned to stone.

No response from the call,

No reaction from the magic,

Realizing something was amiss, Boris stared helplessly at his hands.

"Hiscrea? Why aren't you responding to me?"

Unlike the Holy Sword or Dark Sword, which could be sensed even from afar through a psychic resonance, the Holy Book Hiscrea showed no response to Boris.

There were only two possible reasons for this:

Either it was being deliberately silenced,

Or it was in a situation where it could not send a signal.

Currently, Boris had no way of ascertaining the truth.

At that moment, unfamiliar footsteps echoed down the corridor.

Sensing someone's presence, Boris froze and focused on the source of the sound.

"What is this?"

The presence was familiar to Boris, but distinctly not a good sign.

Surely an entity capable of bringing immense harm and despair to him!

Soon, a voice followed the black mist seeping through the bars.

"Didn't you say it yourself before?"

"...!"

"When our relationship was at its ripest, it would be better to resolve it then? You said it would be more satisfying."

As if his instincts were correct, a black-haired man exuding murderous intent violently struck the bars—Sian.

"Isn't that right?"

Sian had come to deliver Boris's punishment.

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Chapter 244. Helpers (1)

"What on earth are you thinking, Remiharam?"

"I'm not thinking much. What's there to think about when both you and I have to obey our master?"

"Don't you feel it too? Lord Lumen Del came down to the human world that day! You know better than anyone what that means."

"And knowing doesn't mean I can stop it, does it? Our lady doesn't seem to want that either, plus, we were never the type to see the same future and be on such terms, were we?"

With sharp eyes set on Hiscrea, who was trying to persuade Remiharam, the latter remained relaxed, unaffected by Hiscrea's intensity.

"It's not too late! Convince your master to reject the owner of the demonic sword! That way, at least your existence won't disappear!"

"Ah, well, I'd like to, but I can't. You may not know, but our lady is no ordinary person. Even a god wouldn't be able to break her stubbornness, let alone me."

Remiharam shook his head, indicating it was an absolute impossibility.

Click clack

"Oh, it seems they're already here."

Footsteps approached from behind, and Remiharam quickly started to tidy the surroundings. Soon, Lunev and Schultz appeared, walking past shelves filled with various books.

"Were you in the middle of a conversation?"

"No! It wasn't anything important!"

Remiharam immediately made room for them.

"I didn't think it would be comfortable here, but it seems you find it livable, right?"

Hiscrea, instead of responding, only narrowed her eyes.

Lunev, paying it no mind, placed his hand on his true body, the scripture, and manifested mana.

Whirring

The scripture responded to the power with a black glow, and Hiscrea's expression twisted in pain before she slumped to the floor, drained of strength.

"Scripture master, might you give me a chance too?"

"What kind of chance are you speaking of?"

"You smell of a seeker. A seeker who yearns for learning, who thirsts for the truths of this world. Surely, you too wish for the truth you believe in to manifest in this world? Therefore, I'll help you!"

Lunev tilted his head in confusion.

“What about Hiscrea’s original master?”

“That one has failed. There’s no more reason to follow a flop who couldn’t lead towards the destined future!”

“That’s rather cold.”

With that short comment, Lunev turned to leave.

“What do you think brought me here to lead you to this place?”

“...?”

“Your very existence might harm my senior, and I definitely can’t take the risk of handling someone as dangerous as you. It would be foolish.”

Hiscrea scoffed as if stunned by the foolishness.

“Don’t you realize what’s foolish? The master of that demonic sword already has countless enemies! Do you really think just the two of you can handle it?”

“I wouldn’t know. I haven’t tried yet.”

Lunev always remained calm, unfazed by the situation.

“In the end, you’re just an enemy to my senior and me. So stop causing trouble and continue to rest in my space.”

With that, Lunev left the area with Schultz.

Hiscrea, left behind, wailed in anger and lament.

“I told you. It’s a stubbornness that won’t be easily broken.”

Remiharam followed Lunev, echoing the sentiment.

Shortly after, Lunev and Schultz left the subspace and stepped back into the human world.

“Should we just leave that scripture as it is?”

“It’s best I manage it so no one else can touch it. For now, that’s the best we can do.”

Lunev sighed slightly at the inevitable reality.

“Still, that scripture’s words do have some sense. To prepare for the many enemies that have arisen against the senior, I’ll have to create allies too.”

Muttering to himself, he seemed to reach a conclusion.

“I don’t fancy it, but I’ll have to send a message to that man.”

“Whom are you referring to?”

“There’s this senior of mine who falls apart with even a cold...”

* * *

“Prince! Prince!”

Despite the fervent calls, there was no response.

With his throat about to burst, a servant turned his head in search of the prince.

“Ah! Why is he in such a place at times like this?”

Finally spotting him, the servant sighed heavily.

The prince was beyond hearing range, so the servant approached him weakly.

“Prince! Training is good, but please do it somewhere less... extraordinary! It’s difficult for me to find you here!”

The prince chuckled, dismissing the plea.

“If I train in ordinary places, I’ll only have ordinary results! To gain worth, one must train in special places!”

Yet, the “special” training was no more than mere push-ups. The issue was that these exercises were being performed atop a 100-meter-tall square-shaped relic, where a single slip could send one rolling down thousands of times due to the steep incline.

“So why did you come?”

“Ah! There’s been something huge in the Ushif Empire recently!”

“The empire? What, a civil war?”

“Something like that. The 5th Imperial Princess, Arin Severus, was kidnapped by the Mist... Whoa!”

The servant almost fell backward out of shock as the prince had suddenly appeared right before his face.

“Who was kidnapped by whom?”

“That, that is...”

Calming his mind, the servant patiently explained the empire’s recent developments to the prince.

Hearing the story, the prince let out an exasperated sigh.

“Exemplary! Coming back after 7 years and causing such a magnificent mess! Why wasn’t I included in such fun?”

“Prince—what blasphemy!”

The servant was visibly disgusted, waving his hands in dismay.

“What’s that in your other hand?”

The prince pointed to another letter in the servant’s possession.

“Oh! This letter is for you, Prince!”

“A letter? Who would send me a personal letter?”

The prince received the letter with doubt but proceeded to read it.

“Ha!”

He chuckled within seconds of opening it.

“This junior never changes.”

Storing the letter in his pocket, the prince wore a pleased smile.

“I suppose it’s time for me to go out! Let the capital know!”

And without a moment’s hesitation, he leaped off the peak.

“Prince! Where are you going!?”

“To the Ushif Empire~!”

“Go ahead, but at least let me down first, Prince Seth!”

The servant's desperate pleas echoed faintly, but Prince Seth did not look back.

* * *

The colorless black-and-white sky.

She realized immediately she was not in reality but a dream. She'd often had similar dreams before.

A black and white landscape devoid of life and a lone man with dark hair in the center.

Mysterious black mist swirled around the man's body. Among the numerous dead bodies around him, it seemed all had been slain by him.

The brilliant light that seemed bright enough to dispel all darkness of the world poured down on him.

Yet this light was not cast upon the man to save or praise him, but it was brimming with hostile intent, as if condemning him amid a massacre.

It felt as if the whole world saw him as an enemy.

The woman thought she must rush to him and take his hand.

Just as she resolved to do so and dashed forward to grasp his empty hand, she woke up from the dream.

“*Gasp!*”

Realizing she was underwater, she quickly stirred her hands and moved her body.

Gasp!

Once out of the water, she clutched her chest, stabilizing her breath.

“Congratulations. You’ve broken your record.”

An indifferent voice welcomed her from outside; a spirit of radiant colors.

“Did you have a nice dream?”

“I don’t know. Every time I’m about to take his hand, it ends, and I can’t tell what it means.”

Frustrated, she massaged her forehead and sighed.

“While you were submerged in the divine water, something interesting seems to have happened far away.”

“Something interesting?”

“Yes. It’s about your brother...”

At the mention of her brother, the woman’s eyes widened, and she rushed to the spirit.

As if expecting this reaction, the spirit pointed to a rock nearby, where a document bearing the seal of the Ushif Empire’s imperial family lay.

Reading the document, the woman turned, her face swirling with complex emotions, to look back at the spirit.

“There’s no need to look at me like that. Haven’t I always said? Whenever you’re satisfied, you’re free to leave.”

“...”

“Looking at you now, you’re not yet satisfied, is that it?”

Gripping the crumpled document, the woman felt a deep sense of guilt for not being there for her brother.

“I can’t keep doing this. I wasn’t there for him seven years ago, nor now, during such crucial moments.”

“That child didn’t exactly want you around either, did they?”

The spirit sought to reassure her as though her worry was needless.

“It’s not about what I want!”

The woman was overwhelmed with guilt for failing to protect her brother.

“I must go to my brother. I want to return to the empire! Lady Marian!”

“There’s no need for such grand declarations. I’ll send you on your way if that’s what you desire. But first, I must tell you this.”

Shining

With a flicker of brilliantly colored light, the spirit took on a larger glow, filling the area with a mighty radiance. As the light faded, a magnificent white dragon exuding divine aura appeared.

The dragon approached the resolute woman and asked in a thunderous voice.

“Helping that child means making enemies of many supreme beings, including the god of light. Are you prepared for that?”

“Yes, I don’t care!”

She responded immediately as if the question was irrelevant.

“I owe my life to that child! I must use it for him! Even if the entire world turns against him, I will protect him to the end!”

“You’re unwaveringly determined. You haven’t changed at all from the beginning.”

It was as if she was pure water, unchanged by thousands of years.

Realizing further questions were pointless, the dragon spread its wings.

“Come then.”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 245

Chapter 245: Allies (2)

“What? What is all this about?”

On a cloudless, sunny morning,

Despite the clear blue sky, Emily’s face was shrouded in darkness.

It was because Nana, who had slipped out for a morning walk unnoticed, had carelessly placed a public announcement on the table.

Upon reading its contents, Emily couldn’t help but panic.

“A pardon for our young master’s crimes?”

Previous sections of the document mentioned a hunt for Aschel, but to Emily, none of that seemed to matter anymore.

Her eyes, wide with surprise, quickly turned to Nana.

“Hey, kid! Where did you get this?!”

“It was being distributed all over the village just now? It looked like an interesting read, so I took one!”

Nana replied cheerfully, sitting at the dining table eating her meal.

“Our Papa’s been pardoned! Does that mean we can freely roam around with Papa now? Is that right?”

Hope swelled in Nana’s eyes as they sparkled with anticipation.

“It’s not that simple! Ugh, my head hurts! What exactly has the young master been up to with Brian?”

Emily clutched her forehead, a wave of headache washing over her, and her face contorted.

-Knock knock-

Just then, someone knocked on the house door.

“I’ll go take a look!”

Startled, Emily was promptly replaced by Nana, who scurried to the door.

“Wait! Do you even know who it is? What if it’s someone bad?”

“Don’t worry! I don’t sense any malice.”

Trying to ease Emily’s concern, Nana reassured her.

She then proceeded to release the barrier on the house and flung the door open.

“Greetings to Miss Emily and Lady Nana.”

Four neatly-dressed men and women bowed to Nana.

“Who, who are you?”

Emily cautiously followed and asked.

“We are here by the clan leader’s orders to escort you both.”

“The clan leader?”

“Yes. Lord Sian has requested that you be brought to where he is.”

Both Nana and Emily’s eyes sparkled in unison.

Sian as a clan leader? This was a startling revelation.

While Emily couldn’t comprehend the situation,

“Then... what about Lady Silica?”

Nana’s face suddenly hardened at the cheerful suggestion.

* * *

In a gloomy atmosphere permeated by coldness and creepiness.

For Brian, it was a familiar feeling, but today the darkness seemed even denser than usual.

Sian stood alone in the midst of this bleakness, and by his side approached Brian.

“Young master, a message just arrived. Emily and Nana are safely on their way here.”

“.....”

Sian didn’t reply.

He had already heard about what had happened to Sian.

In this situation, all Brian could do was to stand silently by his side.

Offering any trite consolation was unthinkable.

“Brian.”

After a long silence, Sian finally called him.

“Yes, young master.”

“Do you find the current situation incomprehensible?”

Faced with a perplexing question, Brian hesitated for a moment.

“Wh-What do you mean?”

“You must have been curious while following me. How a person as young as I could possess such incredible strength, how I happened to join a group known as Mist, and furthermore...”

Brian involuntarily swallowed hard.

“Why I so loathe the man called Aschel, whom I consider my brother and the heir to our house.”

It would be a lie to say he was not curious.

However, Brian had never once asked Sian these questions.

The reason was straightforward.

“I am a servant and knight following the young master. Thus, holding doubts about the young master has never been right in my heart, and I have always trusted...”

“Didn’t I tell you before? There is nothing more dangerous than blind trust.”

Brian remained speechless, his mouth hanging open.

“I’ve never shared the truth with anyone before, and now there is no one left in the world who can resolve any doubts about me.”

Sian’s face was serious despite the darkness.

“Listen closely. This story is one I will never repeat again, so pay attention.”

The story Sian divulged over the next five minutes was far more shocking and devastating to Brian than any prophecy of the apocalypse could have been.

No one in the world could have experienced what he did.

To know the tragedy that befell his master...

“How could such a thing happen?”

The story was hard to believe, but if it were true, it explained why Sian had always seemed so abnormal.

So that was it.

That was the reason.

Knowing the truth, Brian's face was filled with all kinds of negative emotions, and Sian looked at him with the same indifferent eyes.

"Are your questions answered?"

"Yes, very well..."

"Then remember well. If a time comes when I disappear from this world, you'll need to resolve the remaining doubts others have about me."

"I will engrave the young master's words in my very soul!"

Brian knelt on the spot, vowing to follow Sian for life.

"You're going overboard again..."

Sian commented with a slightly bitter expression.

-Footsteps-

Sian turned his head slightly to the sound of approaching footsteps.

It was Mia.

Following that day, Mia, honoring Silica's dying wish, expressed her desire to join Mist, and Sian had approved without any complication.

Mia was now approaching as a member of Mist to meet Sian.

"Was I interrupting a conversation?"

"No, it's fine. Do you have news?"

"I believe I've located that person."

Sian's eyes flashed with intensity.

There was only one person Sian could be searching for in the current situation.

"Where?"

As always with a nonchalant expression, Mia responded.

"Belias."

* * *

"It's been a while, Yulken."

To the west of the Empire, in Belias on the outskirts of the combat border line.

A man who was too closely associated with the region's leader to be an outsider, yet who had become the Empire's criminal, smiled at his knights.

"Why do you all look so grim? It's almost as though I shouldn't be here."

"Surely you're not actually asking that question, Lord Aschel?"

Unable to listen any longer, Yulken furrowed his brow and inquired.

"Unfortunately, I really don't know. I've heard on my way to Belias that I've become some sort of criminal of the Empire, and that's why you're on guard against me?"

"No more words are needed. I shall arrest you here and now, Aschel Vert."

Yulken displayed his resolution to apprehend him according to the law.

"Then allow me, at least, one last audience with my father."

"I refuse."

"As his son, I've come to confess my sins for the last time. I implore you just this once, Yulken."

"You are to confess not to the Duke but to His Majesty the Emperor. I will hear no more of this. To the Imperial Palace, at once..."

"Stay your hand."

The majestic voice silenced the knights, who froze in unison.

Aschel promptly knelt and addressed the voice's owner.

"Aschel Vert, the eldest son of the Duke Vert House. I come before you with a remorseful heart, Father."

"Come with me."

Duke Vert casually brushed aside his son's greeting and led him inside the border gate.

Reaching the rear camp and the Duke's tent,

The Duke glared at his son with a high and mighty gaze, devoid of any emotion, while Aschel met him with an air of composure.

Then the Duke tossed a thick bundle of papers onto the table in front of Aschel.

“Do you realize what this is?”

“I’m not certain?”

“It lists all the corruption you’ve committed with the Imperial family’s influence behind you. Princess Violet sent these to me a few days ago.”

Without bothering to check the documents, Aschel didn’t even attempt to look through the papers.

“Along with the letter, she confessed to me without omission that she once sought to kill Ellis and that you were involved in all of it. Do you have anything to say?”

“Nothing.”

Aschel did not try to deny the facts that were now coming to light.

“I believed you could be everything to me, without a shadow of a doubt. I even thought that you would follow in my footsteps, upholding our family’s traditions and contributing to the continent’s peace.”

“.....”

“But now, I question why I felt this way. Was it because you’re my eldest son? Because of your talents? I truly don’t understand why I was so fixated on you.”

Aschel listened quietly as the Duke spoke, offering no reply.

“Once, the youngest told me not to trust him. He just wanted to do what he desired.”

At the mention of the youngest, Aschel’s gaze sharpened.

“You might have come seeking help, but I have nothing more to give you. So, head to the Imperial Palace quietly, Aschel. If you have any honor left as a member of the Vert House.”

Revealing no further thoughts, the Duke leaned back and raised his chin high.

Stunned, perhaps, by his father’s resolute response,

Aschel’s head hung low in silence.

“You are truly foolish.”

The Duke questioned his own ears for a moment.

“What did you say?”

“Family, empire, peace. Are you still clinging to these delusions?”

With a twisted laugh, his slumped head slowly lifted.

“Why did you fixate on me? It’s inevitable. I made it so! I made sure to outshine every other offspring, that only I would catch your eye! It was I who seduced you, Father!”

-Whoosh-

The Duke drew his sword in a flash, aiming at Aschel.

“You must provide a satisfactory explanation for your statement this instant.”

“There’s nothing else to explain! This is evidence that the world was designed for me from the beginning! This is my undeniable power!”

-Zing!-

A crimson gleam flashed in Aschel’s eyes.

Caught in its glow, the Duke’s gaze turned vacant as he stared dumbfounded at Aschel, then –

-Sheath-

He resheathed his drawn sword.

The Duke’s demeanor changed completely, and he now inquired with a different tone,

“What is it that you want, Aschel?”

Wearing a smug expression, as if everything had gone according to plan,

Aschel approached the Duke and whispered in his ear.

“Command all the knights at the front.”

What he truly desired.

“Prepare for war with the demon realm at once!”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 246

Chapter 246: Allies (3)

A mountain of documents piled atop the desk like a tower.

Feeling fatigue rush over her already, Arin sighed heavily.

The documents were proposals from various nobles and lords of the empire, and even from noble families of other nations.

Most of them were essentially objections disguised as suggestions.

“Should I take them away?”

Resmus, who had been watching Arin’s reactions carefully, asked tentatively.

“No. It’s the path I’ve chosen. Whether the words are good or bad, I need to listen and reflect on all of them.”

With renewed determination and a deep breath, Arin sat down at her desk and started her administrative work.

The nobles had shown a certain degree of acceptance of the imperial warrant for the deceitful Aschel.

However, they would not accept the pardons for Sian and Mist.

In the end, it didn’t change the fact that they too had insulted the imperial family and the empire,

and accepting the followers of Mist would mean disregarding centuries of imperial order and values.

Surprisingly, there were not a small number of nobles who supported Arin’s direction.

The most notable among them was the Quizzel Ducal Family.

Once the ducal family, previously the Emperor’s in-laws, voiced its support, other more cooperative noble families began to show signs of accordance, one after another.

Of course, the opposition was still overwhelmingly greater at the moment.

Yet Arin methodically read through the proposals with the intent to change things slowly but meaningfully.

Some were written with utmost politeness throughout, while others blatantly disregarded the princess's decisions.

Complaints about Sian were particularly numerous.

After evaluating each proposal, Arin turned to Resmus and asked,

"Has anything come from the Vert Ducal Family yet?"

"It's unfortunate, but no."

Time had passed, but there was still no response from the Vert Ducal Family.

Given that the two key men involved were coincidentally from the same family, it would not be easy for the Duke Vert to make a statement.

Whose side would the Duke Vert take between his two sons?

His choice could either facilitate the direction Arin had chosen or lead to a series of hardships.

What would Sian be thinking about all this?

Since they hadn't met since that day, Arin found herself wanting to ask for his thoughts.

"Is there any news about Sian, by any chance?"

At the mention of Sian, Resmus' body tensed slightly.

"In fact, I've just received some information through the knights but..."

For some reason, he seemed reluctant to continue.

"What is it? Tell me."

Arin narrowed her eyes and pressed him, noticing his unusual demeanor.

"At a restaurant on the outskirts of Severus right now..."

Leaning forward and covering his mouth with one hand, Resmus whispered cautiously to Arin.

Moments later, after hearing the news about Sian, Arin exclaimed,

“What?!”

In shock, she slammed her hands down on the desk and bolted upright, scattering papers everywhere like a blown-apart tower.

* * *

On the outskirts of the imperial capital, Severus, in a small restaurant tucked away in an alley:

The place was so modest that it could barely hold ten customers, and given its appearance, one might wonder if it would draw any proper clientele at all. However, today, unless we counted ourselves, the restaurant wasn't likely to seat even a single table.

Why, you might ask?

I rented out the entire place.

So that no one else could enter but us.

‘Really delicious, Lord Sian!’

A simple noodle dish that could be found anywhere in the empire.

Yet Hastia was devouring it with such a blissful expression.

Her messy eating might stimulate the appetite of an onlooker, but I couldn't bring myself to eat anything.

I was preoccupied with a single, disturbing thought.

Aschel, who had vanished nearly a fortnight ago, had been located.

Now, having taken my place as the empire's most notorious criminal, he had finally revealed himself in none other than Belias.

His destination was obvious.

He sought help from his father, the lord of that place, possessing a military might comparable to the royal family itself.

Since the news first came through Mist's information network, the imperial family was still unaware.

But it would only be a matter of time.

For me, it might have been more straightforward to single-handedly confront Aschel with Ceyram in hand,

but for now, I decided to wait and watch.

Not out of idleness, but because there was something I wanted to confirm.

Something fundamental about him.

“...?”

Suddenly, a pile of noodles twisted around a fork appeared before me.

Holding the fork was Hastia, her blue eyes blinking as she stared intently at me.

“What are you doing?”

‘You haven’t taken a single bite yet, Lord Sian! If we leave you be, you won’t eat at all, so I thought I’d feed you myself!’

Without any hesitation, Hastia thrust forward her arm, still stretched out as if urging me to open up and eat.

I couldn’t quite fathom what she was trying to do.

Regardless, such behavior wasn’t fit for taking in food.

Instead, I took the fork from Hastia, ate a bite as she wanted, and then handed it back to her.

Pleased with just that, Hastia beamed a bright smile.

[You seem to be having a good time.]

Ceyram, who was not too pleased with the spectacle, sneered from the side.

[Can you even swallow food when you’ve been cast out by the gods?]

‘...!’

The moment Ceyram mentioned the gods, Hastia, who was twirling her fork, froze.

I was aware, but without showing it outwardly, I looked away.

‘Lord Sian?’

Promptly, she addressed me without a stutter.

“Yes?”

‘Do you intend to stand against those supreme beings, Lord Sian?’

Her question may have been put delicately, but it was essentially direct. I calmly replied.

“If it seems impossible, just say so.”

‘...?’

Hastia looked confused, failing to understand my words.

“There is no one left among humans who would aim for you. You won’t face any more danger. If you want to return, you can tell me now. I’ll take you back to Fruina.”

‘What are you talking about, Lord Sian?’

“You felt that energy that day, didn’t you? Then you’d know there’s no advantage in staying with me. So you’re free to leave.”

Hastia suddenly claimed that she had felt Lumen Del’s energy that day too.

As an elf protected by the gods, it wasn’t surprising that she could sense their presence.

But to her, it meant that staying by my side, openly defiant towards Lumen Del, may not be the best move.

With her safety in mind, I suggested that parting ways might be better for her.

‘Why would you say such a thing!?’

To my surprise, Hastia lashed out at me.

‘Weren’t you the one who needed me and took me away from my kin?’

That was true.

Ultimately, it was to protect her from harm.

If no one else needs to see the records of the ancient times, then there’s really no reason for me to bring them out either.

'You may have taken me away on your own volition, but I won't have it when it comes to parting! I came with you because I needed you too!'

"Why do you need me?"

'...!?'

"Other than your clan's problems, is there something else?"

I was genuinely curious.

Even if I were that very person, why would she need me?

She had been so assertive a moment ago, but Hastia turned red and awkwardly resumed eating her noodles as I pressed for an answer.

[What can she expect from an obtuse master like ours?]

Ceyram shook his head in disbelief as if pitying Hastia.

[Anyway, let that be. Why is she still clinging around here?]

Suddenly, Ceyram's gaze, sharp as a blade, shifted to someone beside Hastia.

"Her, you mean?"

The woman with short hair, keeping her calm gaze steady, was none other than Mia.

[So it's her, huh? Just like her imbecile ancestor; can't tell where she belongs, meddling with a fake like me? Suddenly she shows up with all the impudence in the world?]

"I'm only following the wishes of Lady Silica, who asked me to stay by Lord Sian's side in her stead."

[Ha! Since when did you obey that woman? You couldn't even understand where you should be before and played along as a puppet to some saintly bastard, and now this?]

"Well, that was when I couldn't discern where I was needed. But now I'm certain. I feel much more at ease by Lord Sian's side than I did with Professor Boris."

Ceyram could only respond with exasperated laughter.

Though I felt somewhat burdened by the situation, she was also a talent that would be a shame to lose.

Plus, if her master had said as much, I supposed I should listen.

"I may not know much else, but I am confident in my ability to protect Lord Sian. Whether I'm leisurely dining like this..."

-Swish!

Suddenly, she grabbed a knife from the table and hurled it behind her.

"...I am able to protect Lord Sian from any threat."

-Thud!

The knife flew in a straight line and embedded itself into the wall right next to the restaurant's front door.

"...!"

The familiar elderly man with white hair and what seemed to be his middle-aged manservant jerked back in shock.

"If you were a year older, you might not have managed to dodge that one..."

The old man chuckled awkwardly, looking like he had aged a decade in that moment.

"An intruder not scheduled for entry. Should I kill him?"

"Let it be. Leave him."

I quickly calmed Mia down, who was at the ready like a bear smelling blood.

"In our absence, the ladies have multiplied, I see. Your skills seem not to be limited to assassination; isn't that so?"

The elder joined our table with ease, pulling up a chair as if it was completely natural for him to intrude.

"You didn't see the sign outside? I rented this place exclusively for today."

"Ah, one might take that as disheartening. Does that mean you've forgotten how my men and I stood beside you and fought that day?"

I had been meaning to ask him about it myself.

Jereon Alkin.

Once the Grandmaster of the Order of Light, still revered and adored by knights across the continent, had abruptly chosen to fight alongside me against much younger knights. This must've been baffling not just to the spectators but also to me.

"In all your years, what possessed you to do such a thing?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure myself. At that moment, it seemed far more proper to join your side rather than aligning with the suspicious Sword Saint! Well, if you look at the outcome, it seems it wasn't the wrong choice, right?"

One couldn't help but be amused by the Grandmaster's optimistic nature, wondering if it was his true disposition or if it had changed with age.

"But as for you, I'm curious. Despite receiving a pardon under the royal name, you have the audacity to rent an entire restaurant. What's on your mind?"

It wasn't like I rented a fancy restaurant in the heart of the royal district, so what's the issue?

Anyway, I hadn't rented this place to have the cheeky old man come find me.

"It might be presumptuous of an old man, but now doesn't seem like the right time to be lounging around like this, does it? Shouldn't you be off looking for that runaway Sword Saint?"

Instead of replying, I only raised my chin in response.

"That glare... Well, I was just saying it because there are still many eyes on you with doubt. After that day, the golden knight fell from the sky, and in this land, the distrust towards the Mist persists, right? Shouldn't you hurry to catch the Sword Saint to prove you are right?"

"Why are you so curious about other people's business?"

"How can you call it someone else's business? The imperial family and even foreign lands are paying attention. You've captured everyone's eyes. Not just me, but others are curious too. They're wondering what you will do next."

The old man giggled, obviously looking forward to our next move. However, I wasn't really pleased with that thought.

But he wasn't wrong.

Everyone's attention.

In a previous life, I never once basked in such attention. Not from everyone, nor even a single person...

"What on earth is going on here?"

The moment I heard that familiar voice, I helplessly closed my eyes, feeling my energy drain.

Another uninvited guest had arrived.

Well, it's not exactly surprising.

They'll probably say they just happened to pass by and came looking for me by following my scent...

"Do I really need to rely on my sense of smell to find you, senior?"

It was Lunev.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 247

Chapter 247: Allies (4)

"What in the world is happening?"

Princess Arin, peeking through the worn windows at the restaurant.

Inside, an unbelievable sight was unfolding.

"I get why Lunev is there, but why is Mia? Who is that woman with white hair? And who is that clinging to Sian's side?!"

Even one woman would be surprising enough, yet here were four rushing around Sian.

Arin was at a loss, her feet tapping impatiently.

Resmus, pitying her, reluctantly asked,

"Why not just go in?"

“Go in? Wouldn’t it look weird if I just walked in? What reason could I even give?”

Arin was visibly flustered, reminiscent of her Academy days seven years ago.

“Why do you need an excuse? You heard he was here and came, isn’t that enough?”

“I can’t give such an irresponsible reason! I’ve even postponed my duties to be here! Sian will surely think I’m pathetic!”

She seemed to understand.

Despite wanting to drag her into the restaurant, that wasn’t an option.

Frustrated, Resmus sighed deeply.

“What should I do? Should I ask what’s going on?”

As Arin’s pointless pondering dragged on,

“Princess Arin?”

A familiar voice carried on the wind, triggering memories.

“.....!”

Arin quickly turned towards the sound.

They were twenty steps away from where the girls were.

Three familiar faces looked back at Arin and Resmus with surprise.

Arin’s mind briefly went blank.

“Princess?”

Brian and Emily, too, were taken aback by this unexpected meeting.

Among them stood another woman, her eyes sparkling.

She looked about Arin’s age or slightly younger, with familiar pink hair and unchanged, innocent eyes that reminded Arin of someone.

A cherished individual who interlinked with Sian, caring for her as much or more so than Sian did,

“Nana?”

It was Nana.

* * *

“Didn’t you see the sign outside?”

“I did. Very clearly...”

Lunev, with a piercing look in her eyes, said coldly,

“I came thinking this was a special place you prepared for some alone time with me... I never imagined such a ridiculous situation would unfold.”

What’s she talking about?

Lunev examined the table where I was seated.

The eyes that settled on us were intense, making not just Jereon and his knight, but also Schultz, who came with Lunev, break out in cold sweat.

“Why don’t you try explaining, senior?”

“What am I supposed to explain?”

“It’d be best if you explained. Otherwise...”

She brandished a mana sphere brimming with formidable magical power, looming it over me.

“I might just blow up this restaurant right now.”

Her gaze was filled with an intensity I had not seen before.

It became clear to me.

She was serious.

But why? What’s causing her to act like this?

“Do you want me to kill her? Her murderous intent rivals that of an assassin.”

Mia seemed ready to kill Lunev with the knife in her hand.

I snatched the knife away, imploring her to stay put.

[You should've known better, right? Having endeared yourself to so many without thinking of the consequences, of course you're now facing this situation.]

Ceyram seemed to find Sian's predicament amusing, sneering at him.

I feel like I'm losing my mind.

My head was already a mess, but it now throbbed with a headache.

– Tap, tap, tap!

In that moment, the sound of approaching footsteps.

Perhaps the individuals who ought to be here, finally arrived.

“Papa!”

Without a moment for pleasantries, a cute, blushing voice resonated in my ears.

Without hesitation, the pink-haired young lady dived into my embrace.

It was none other than Nana.

“I missed you! Papa!”

“I'm sorry. I've been so busy I couldn't come get you.”

“That's okay. I'm just so happy to see you again, Papa!”

Nana always beamed with sincere smiles.

Watching her, I felt warmth in my heart, and my clouded mind began to clear.

“What's this? Young master's face has grown even handsomer? What have you been up to in my absence?”

My only, feisty maidservant had examined my face, full of inquiries.

“Just many things.”

“Is that really your answer? Do you know how shocked I was when I suddenly heard the news of your acquittal? My heart was on edge the whole way here, worrying something might happen!”

Her bold spirit remained unchanged.

Both appeared unaffected, which was a relief to me.

However,

“Papa?”

The three women’s gazes once again shifted to me.

‘Sian, were you married before?’

“It seems you have more explaining to do, senior.”

“Should this one be exempt from death as well?”

It was a complete mess.

I gave up explaining, resigned to the notion that whatever happens, happens.

“Oh right! I just saw Princess Arin out front!”

Nana pointed clearly towards the door, where Arin and Resmus stood hesitantly, considering whether to enter.

I had been aware that they were watching us outside the restaurant.

Wasn’t she supposed to be exceedingly busy with her own duties?

What was she doing here?

“What are you all doing here, gathered like this?”

It seemed like an interrogation.

“Do you not see? It’s a perfectly ordinary dinner gathering.”

“Dinner?”

“Yes. I’ve arranged this in light of inviting Nana and Emily to the royal palace. Is there an issue?”

My words were no lie, but the pure truth.

It was not in a busy, fancy restaurant, but I had leased this place for us to have a peaceful meal.

Where did it all go wrong to bring about this situation?

No matter how hard I pondered, the answer alluded me.

With more people arriving, the restaurant owner continuously brought out food.

The table was soon filled with sumptuous dishes, and Nana expressed her delight with an exclamation of joy.

“Wow! What are you waiting for? Let’s sit down and eat!”

She then settled into her seat and began to dine.

Her pure actions caught everyone’s attention, including mine, and after a moment of lost composure,

“L, let’s all take a seat, everyone!”

With Emily and Brian’s guidance, everyone started to find places at the table.

The hesitant Princess Arin was soon seated with some prodding from Resmus.

It was an unexpected gathering—everybody who had passed through my life, now at one table in an odd atmosphere.

How did I feel?

I can’t say precisely since it’s a situation I’ve never encountered before but, if there’s one thing that’s certain,

seeing this gathering of vibrant human interactions didn’t seem so bad.

Maybe it wouldn’t hurt for it to continue just as it is.

* * *

[Was it awkward?]

“Very.”

[Why not be a bit honest? Deep down, you enjoyed it, didn’t you?]

I remained silent, not responding.

The moon had risen on a quiet night.

In the middle of an empty plain on the outskirts of the palace,

the solitary luminescence of the moon filled the sky, illuminating my lone figure.

If there's anything I've seen more of than corpses in all my past life, it's that moon.

There's no great reason behind it, just that when I am alone in seclusion like this, gazing at the moon adrift in the sky,

it feels as if the solitude that clenches my heart loosens slightly.

But now, I've begun to think.

A man like me ought to be alone.

On that day, the God of Light, Lumen Del, had gifted me with a small despair—the death of a clan leader.

For him, it may have been a minor despair, but for me, it was an unbearable, worst despair.

Meaning he could always bestow upon me small despair, or perhaps even more extreme ones.

It wasn't just the clan leader,

but anyone else whom he may take away from me.

For me, who desires none of that,

it'd be better to remain in solitude.

Staying by my side out of affection only endangers them, offering no help.

Truthfully, though, it may already be too late.

So, I have to take responsibility.

Otherwise,

I might end up exactly like Ceyram's former owner.

"Hey, Ceyram."

[What?]

"Do you still think about devouring me?"

Ceyram did not immediately reply.

There was a silence, though not a prolonged one.

[I have one philosophy I've maintained since I first came into this rotten world,]

she began, and just the mention of philosophy coming from her was oddly jarring.

[If I can't have it, nobody else can. I may be ignorant of other matters, but this one principle, I've rigorously upheld.]

I understood immediately what she meant.

[Lumen Del, or whoever else thinks they can cause despair in my owner, I can't watch such vile acts. I'd rather...]

Ceyram stopped there, not finishing her thought.

Nor did I continue to probe.

But one thing was clear.

Even if a despair-filled future awaited me,
in my last moments, she would be there with me.

That was enough for me.

[Quit sulking and look behind you.]

"What?"

[She's been waiting for a while now.]

Before I could further question, I perceived a presence and quickly turned around.

".....!"

For a moment, my thoughts halted and my limbs shivered.

Am I seeing things due to exhaustion?

No, that couldn't be.

That radiant figure in the dark plain, shining brighter than the moon, couldn't be a figment.

I could never mistake her.

-Step

Seeing me motionless, she stepped forward, one slow step after another, closer to me.

With every step she took, my heart raced more furiously.

Finally, when she was close enough to touch me,

she asked with a faint smile,

“Have you been well, Sian?”

I responded with a slight nod in lieu of words.

“You’ve outgrown me so much? You’ve truly become a man now.”

She then gently raised her hand to my rough skin, stroking it tenderly.

“I’m proud. Even without your sister’s care, you’ve grown up so well.”

The same face, voice, and touch that comforted my weary heart for seven years were now vividly before me.

“Has it been tough?”

As she spoke, I wrapped my arms around her in an embrace.

Ellis Vert.

Another person in my life I desperately wanted to protect.

She quietly comforted me, patting me as if she knew and understood all my hardships.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 248

The Duke’s Regressed Son is an Assassin Chapter 248: Allies (5)

The last time I had seen my sister’s face was seven years ago in the Limia Gorge.

That day, I was betrayed by a knight whom I had trusted and relied upon like family, and I saved her as she was left in a state of utter despair.

In doing so, I gave her a second chance at life.

I desired that her new life be for herself alone, free from the constraints of being my family.

I had no particular desire to be further involved.

I believed she, being far more intelligent and wise, would manage on her own.

Therefore, we did not even exchange news, let alone see each other's faces, for some time.

Didn't I miss her, you ask?

How could I not?

She was the family that had offered me sanctuary from that hellish house during my childhood,

The very first person I had determined I must protect.

If I said I did not miss her, that would be a lie.

And now,

She stood before me,

With a warm smile that hadn't faded with time.

After all this time, she came to me when I needed her most.

"Your face has changed, Sian?"

It has been a whole seven years; of course, it has.

"Back when you saved me, it felt so distanced as if you were not my younger brother, but now you've returned to the familiar Sian I knew."

"What do you mean?"

"That look of being alone and in agony, craving for someone's touch like a little lost lamb, an image that compels my incessant care. That is the Sian I see before me now."

My sister gently stroked my head with a fresh glint of amusement in her eyes.

“Still treating me like a child, huh?”

“Would it kill you to be a little more gracious? You’re still the same when dealing with women.”

I could only offer a slight laugh before I felt an odd sensation from the hand she held.

It was like feeling the flow of water without a single impurity, a sense evident throughout my body.

But within that feeling lay a power that no human could possess, a mysterious and profound strength.

It was a force very similar to my own, inherited from the god of the black mist.

“Your hand is cold?”

Was it the same kind of energy that my sister felt?

She stared intently at our hands, much like myself.

“So, you felt it too?”

“What have you been doing all this time?”

In a quick shift of expression, I asked assertively.

My sister, undisturbed, gently soothed my hands scarred with wounds and calluses.

“So many thoughts ran through my mind when I first saw your wanted poster seven years ago. I wanted desperately to run to you immediately, to ask what had happened, how did you end up there, was this what you’ve been hiding all along...”

Why did I hide the truth from my sister?

It was because I did not want to cause her confusion.

And that was another reason I had stayed away.

“But soon enough, I realized it was pointless. I had no right to confront you with the truth in such a manner; it would only bring sorrow to both of us. Besides, I couldn’t even protect those around me.”

She seemed to recall her time on the front lines, a trace of bitterness flickering across her face.

“That’s why I thought I must become stronger, too. If you were taking a wrong path, I would guide you back, and if you were on the right one, I would fully support you. Though this time my power fell short...”

A shiver ran through her hand as we held each other.

In that tremble, I felt her regret for not being able to aid me.

“Do you believe that the path you’re treading is the right one?”

Without hesitation, I affirmed my belief.

“Then, that’s settled. I’m ready to help.”

Overwhelmed by emotions, I gripped her hand tighter, as if to protest.

“You don’t need to do that! Sister, you should live a life for yourself, not just for me! I didn’t save you simply so you could...”

“But who said it was for you?”

“...?”

“It’s not for you. This is entirely for myself.”

Her calm yet resolute response left me speechless.

“I am your family, your sister. You are my precious brother. If a family wants to lend their strength to each other, who could possibly say it’s wrong?”

I had so much to say, but I could not utter a word.

No matter what I said, I could not overcome her logic that it was all because we were family.

“You seemed to be having fun at the restaurant earlier, didn’t you?”

“You saw?”

“Of course! Your cute, lost face and all. It reassured me to see that there are so many people who care for you, aside from myself.”

My sister embraced me again, her face showing genuine relief.

“You don’t have to be alone. There are so many people willing to help you. So, you can afford to open your heart a little more. You deserve to be happy.”

Happiness.

Throughout my two lives, I had been unaware of what happiness was.

Naturally, I had never experienced it.

Yet, my sister confidently proclaimed that I could be a person capable of happiness.

‘I will support it, too, as a teacher wishing for the happiness of her pupil.’

Suddenly, I remembered the last words spoken to me by our head of family before his death.

If this moment, being embraced by my sister, can be called happiness,

I felt that I would do anything to protect this happiness.

Even if it meant protecting everyone,

And dying alone.

* * *

‘...!’

In the deep silence of the night, while everyone else was asleep,

Hastia felt a particular energy and suddenly opened her eyes and rose.

‘Could it be?’

Quietly, so as not to wake the others, she stealthily exited to the outside.

As she stepped outside the inn and was about to head towards where she sensed the energy,

“There’s no need to look so desperately.”

Upon hearing the familiar voice, she turned around.

A small spirit, the size of a human face, radiated colorful light in the dark.

The spirit soon transformed into a human figure, glowing brilliantly and lighting up the surroundings.

“Never thought I’d see you here, Hastia.”

Hastia, taken aback, could hardly move for shock.

‘Marian-nim?’

Marian, guardian dragon of Fruina, who, several years ago, had left without proper explanation, now stood unexpectedly in human lands, in a rare human form.

‘What brings you here?’

“That’s my line. Where are the others, and why are you alone here?”

‘That, there are circumstances...’

“Do the others know?”

‘Yes...’

“Good enough. Considering I also left your side without a word, I don’t want to hear any complicated excuses. You must have had your share of troubles, too.”

Instead of insisting on an answer, Marian studied Hastia intently.

“But this is odd. Why do I sense the aura of black mist coming from you?”

Hastia, startled, failed to control her expression, and her face went pale.

‘What do you mean?’

“Show me your soul stone.”

With a sinking heart, Hastia, trembling, closed her eyes in resignation.

She pulled out the soul stone from her pocket and presented it to Marian.

Marian examined the stone and questioned Hastia.

“Were you with the successor of the black mist?”

‘Yes...’

“You’ve lost your mind.”

Marian's reproach heavily fell into the air.

"Did you truly not realize what kind of catastrophe could ensue from a protected elf of the gods being in the company of a black mist entity?"

'I have my reasons, Marian-nim! Sir Sian saved our tribe!'

"He's a man who could lead your tribe to ruin."

Unable to formulate a response, Hastia was at an utter loss for words.

An elf graced with divine protection following a man denied by the gods.

Realizing the selfishness of her actions thus far, Hastia couldn't raise her head for shame.

Marian sighed lightly while looking at her.

"After all, what right do I have to scold you? I have done the same."

'What?'

"No matter. Soon enough, you'll know. I don't want to speak with my own lips. Instead..."

Marian's gaze shifted from Hastia and landed behind her.

"To think that I would encounter such a dangerously unknown entity here."

Unable to grasp her meaning, Hastia turned around at the unfamiliar energy.

'...!'

"That child, is it also one brought by the black mist's successor?"

'Yes, that's right. We found the child by chance and have been raising it since...'

"Raising? That child? Doesn't make sense. How have you managed to control it without causing a rampage?"

Marian expressed disbelief, furrowing her brow, which also shocked Hastia.

Undoubtedly, the child in the restaurant earlier seemed ordinary, but the energy felt now was starkly different.

As if witnessing an inappropriate fusion of human and dragon aura, an unsettling feeling was present.

“ ... ”

Nana, the child who affectionately calls Sian ‘Papa’ and whom Sian regards dearly like family, stared blankly at Hastia and Marian, her face pale and devoid of color.

“It smells...”

‘ ... ? ’

“It’s not a pleasant bad smell, yet it doesn’t feel like something I should just ignore. What could be the reason?”

-Giggle

Concurrently with the question, Nana’s body began to change.

Horns sharpened by a sensed threat,

Wings unfurled, radiating mystical power,

And a tail playfully flicking while omitting an ominous presence.

It was clear from a glance that this was not a normal state.

“Could you please explain why you are here?”

* * *

As dawn approached, breaking the twilight, Arin, her face haggard from a night of relentless work, couldn’t afford to rest just yet.

The long-awaited message had finally arrived.

It was a communication from the Belias lord, Duke Willius Vert.

All this time, Arin had speculated about numerous possible outcomes.

Would the Duke agree with the direction proposed by the royal family? Or would he object?

Would he side with his eldest son or his youngest?

No matter his choice, Arin had continuously pondered the next plan and direction, preparing for all eventualities.

Yet,

“What on earth is this?”

Duke Vert's message contained neither of the expected responses.

No comment was made about the direction the royal family was taking, nor about which son the Duke might support.

Instead, it held something completely different.

]To the Royal Court, on behalf of Willius Vert, Lord of Belias, I put forth a request.];

The Duke had sent not a response, but a plea.

As the chief of the frontlines, commanding military might comparable to the imperial forces, the Duke implored the Royal Court for one thing:

]Please send reinforcement troops for the Demon Realm expedition.];

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 249

Chapter 249: The Demon King Belkarion (1)

Amidst the air tinted with a strange reddish hue,

The foul stench of decaying corpses,

And the unnerving sounds of wailing that could make one's skin crawl.

At first glance, it was the kind of dangerous place one instinctively knew not to enter.

-Crunch-

Under a massive vine-covered tree, a Devil Boar was greedily devouring its freshly caught prey.

Surrounding it, Big Mantises that considered anything in sight as food, whether it be their own kind or not,

And below them, Death Worms slithered incessantly, as if patrolling their territory.

Within this treacherous demonic marsh, teeming with fearsome beasts,

A man with piercing red eyes boldly revealed himself.

Sensing his presence, the monsters all turned their gaze toward him.

Normally they would charge at prey that came willingly, a typical hunting instinct, but...

“Screech...”

Although they made alarming cries, they didn’t dare approach, sensing the overwhelming fighting energy emanating from the man.

“Not coming?”

The man provocatively jostled his head towards the monsters.

Provoked, they all lunged at him, baring fangs and claws, but...

-Whoosh-

Exactly a minute later,

The monsters that had charged were all lying dismembered, scattered around him, and five minutes afterwards,

“Ah! Now I’m finally warming up.”

The marsh’s monsters were completely annihilated.

The man seemed completely unphased, stretching leisurely after the exertion.

“You’ve been here.”

Suddenly, another figure appeared—a middle-aged man with a neatly trimmed beard.

“Have I not said it time and again? It’s fine to go out, but at least leave a message.”

“Then what? You’d go on about being careful, this and that—just nagging. Listening to you nags kills any fighting spirit I may have.”

"It is but my loyal advice to you, for the well-being of our Demon King. To become a true ruler, it is essential to adopt the proper attitude to learning."

The man covered his ears, evidently not wanting to listen anymore.

The strongest entity in the demon realm; the absolute ruler, Demon King Belkarion.

Despite possessing overwhelming martial power that could eradicate even ferocious high-level beasts in the blink of an eye, he was rendered entirely powerless against the nagging of his attendant and the chief steward of the Demon King's Castle, Rogers.

"Hey, Rogers. I get it, I do. After doing a good deed, the last thing I want is a nagging. Can't you just offer some praise today and let it be?"

"As much as I'd like to do that, looking over this place now, I don't think I can do that. Even considering this swamp is a suitable place for monsters to thrive, I did not expect one so close to the human villages to form."

Rogers surveyed the surroundings with a worried expression.

"That's why I need to roam around more often than not, for the peace of our demon realm citizens!"

Belkarion had a simple reason for decimating the swamp monsters.

It was for the safe living of the nearby villagers.

This was hardly a rare occurrence for him; it had become part of his daily routine, traversing the demon realm and continuously maintaining order.

"Anyway, let's return quickly. Lady Betty is waiting for you."

"Just a moment! Won't we manage the corpses first?"

"I will handle it."

With that, Rogers stepped forward confidently, leaving the Demon King behind.

He extended his hands, gathering mana towards them.

-Flare-

A red magic circle accompanied by high-temperature flames erupted into a pillar, immediately engulfing the torn corpses.

It didn't take long for the remains to be reduced to mere ashes, leaving no trace behind.

Having finished cleanup, the two headed straight for the Demon King's Castle.

"Hey, Rogers. Do you know what I've been thinking about lately?"

Belkarion, hands behind his back, arrogantly asked with a smug grin.

"The human child you met ten years ago, right?"

"How did you know?"

"You've mentioned it no less than one hundred and forty-two times. Don't you always bring it up when it seems you've forgotten?"

"Is that so?"

Belkarion, seeming a bit embarrassed, turned his attention to the sky and smacked his lips.

"If you consider their age, they should be an adult by now."

"Yes, by human standards they would be the same age as you, Lord Demon King."

"I'm still not able to forget that brash statement he made to me."

The Demon King closed his eyes tight, reminiscing about that moment.

"He proposed a deal with you, right?"

"Exactly. He insisted that no matter what happens, they shouldn't come across to their lands. And said he'd help me out. Wasn't he a strange one?"

"Indeed, it didn't feel like he was just saying anything to survive."

Rogers nodded, expressing agreement with Belkarion's sentiment.

"Recently, I've been thinking something else..."

Belkarion suddenly turned his head in another direction.

It was towards the Limia Valley, where he had met that boy.

"Say, just hypothetically. If there comes a time when I should carry out that deal, what should I ask from him?"

"Do you have something particular in mind?"

Belkarion didn't answer immediately, instead letting the silence linger.

"Shall I ask for him to provide me with the ultimate combat to quench my boiling fighting spirit? Would that be impossible?"

"That's most certainly impossible. A mere human man cannot possibly handle such a demanding request."

Rogers denied the feasible nature of the Demon King's idea.

"But you said it, didn't you? Humans possess remarkable potential for development! After enough growth, it might become possible, wouldn't it? And moreover, that kid had..."

"...?"

"His eyes... they were unusually threatening."

Though it might have been just his intuition, Belkarion felt that the boy could fulfill his request.

"Since we are on the topic of humans, I must tell you that the atmosphere in Limia Valley has been quite unusual lately."

Here, Rogers changed the subject.

"Limia Valley? Isn't it normal for monsters to stir up trouble?"

"It usually is, yes, but this time it seems to be a different issue. Recently, the monsters have been crossing the valley and Blood River, coming into the heart of the demon realm."

Belkarion stopped walking suddenly, his face showing surprise.

"Are the monsters being pushed out of their territories or something?"

"It's a possibility. A new high-level beast might have appeared in the valley or perhaps..."

"Or what?"

"The humans beyond the valley might have begun a large-scale hunt of the beasts."

Rogers suggested various other possibilities.

"Humans, huh."

The Demon King rubbed his chin, lost in thought.

As it happened, they were not too far from Limia Valley.

With a decided heart, Belkarion spread his wings.

“Return ahead of me, Rogers. I’m off to check out Limia Valley now.”

“What shall I tell Lady Betty?”

“Hmm... Say I went out to buy a gift!”

With those words, Belkarion soared high into the sky.

Rogers continued to watch him disappear over the horizon, sighing softly before returning to the castle.

Flying for about half an hour,

Belkarion reached the vicinity of Limia Valley and descended to the ground gracefully.

-Boom!

As if on cue, a Death Worm burst from the earth with its massive jaws open.

But Belkarion, unshaken, seized the sides of the worm’s maw and with terrifying strength,

-Snap!

tore the beast’s mouth apart right then and there.

“So Rogers was speaking the truth.”

Belkarion calmly stated as he looked at the torn carcass.

It was indeed odd for a Death Worm that lived deep within the valley to emerge outside.

Convinced that something amiss was happening, he promptly moved towards the heart of the valley.

“ ... ”

It was silent.

Normally, there would have been at least a half-dozen monster attacks by now, yet the valley was devoid of even an insect.

Puzzled, he continued on until the sound of flowing water reached his ears, and before him appeared the Blood River.

Suddenly, Belkarion stopped.

Right at this spot, ten years ago, he first encountered the boy.

But now, ten years later, instead of the black-haired boy he had seen,

There stood a different human—a blonde man that was somehow repelling, just on sight.

“Greetings, sovereign of the demon realm...”

Naturally, he had never seen this stranger before in his life.

Yet the man addressed Belkarion with certainty, as if he had always known who he was.

“Do you know me?”

“By the aura emerging from your body, and the subtle yet powerful vibe radiating from you, you can only be the sole ruler of this demon realm. If I am mistaken, please accept my apology.”

The man’s complacency was irksome, but despite that, Belkarion learned something from his words:

Regardless of whether he was the demon realm’s ruler, the man had been craving his appearance.

Otherwise, he wouldn’t adopt such an expectant expression.

For now, Belkarion decided to respond in kind.

“So did you clear out all the monsters around here?”

“It would’ve been impossible on my own. I drove them away with the knights under my command. It was akin to breaking through a dead end, so to speak.”

The man knelt on one knee before Belkarion, despite not having asked a question that warranted such a reaction.

“Master of the demon realm, no, Demon King! Please, hear our plea.”

“A plea?”

“Yes! In our human world, a malevolent being in defiance of divine order has appeared, causing chaos. Our meager strength proved insufficient against them. Thus, we crossed over to the demon realm seeking aid.”

“You want me to eliminate this malevolent being you’re talking about?”

“We couldn’t dare make such a presumptuous plea due to our urgency. All we ask is for you to cross into the human world and cause some minor disturbance.”

Belkarion’s eyes narrowed slightly.

“A minor disturbance in the human world?”

“Yes. Simply cross over and cause a small amount of damage. That’s the only thing I will ask of you, Demon King.”

“And what do you gain from that?”

The man didn’t respond immediately but instead slightly upturned the corners of his mouth.

When he finally spoke,

“We will make the people of our human realm recognize that such an evil presence must not exist in our world.”

“...!”

“You will aid us, won’t you?”

Belkarion couldn’t help but laugh—it was such a preposterous proposition.

To use him, the greatest of the demon realm, as a puppet in their schemes,

To demonstrate the dangers of this malevolent being to the human world...

It wasn’t offensive, just utterly nonsensical.

“Listen here, human friend.”

Clearly irked, Belkarion spoke with a sarcastic smile.

“What’s your name?”

“Aschel. Aschel Vert.”

Hearing the name, Belkarion’s lips twitched slightly.

“Vert?”

While not particularly possessing good memory, there was one name that had been embedded in Belkarion’s mind for the past ten years.

Aschel Vert.

Whether it was a coincidence or not, the man’s name was curiously similar to that memory.

“Could it be... just hypothetically...”

Belkarion inquired, looking at him once more.

“That malevolent being you keep mentioning. What’s his name?”

Upon being asked about the malevolent being’s name, the man hesitated for a moment.

But as if deciding there was no harm in sharing, he calmly gave the answer.

“Sian.”

“...!”

“Sian Vert.”

As the name was revealed, a tense silence ensued, and soon after,

“Sian Vert, you say?”

A sincere smile of joy spread across Belkarion’s face.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 250

Chapter 250: The Demon King Belkarion (2)

“Rogers. You know, you’ve gotten more shameless these days, right?”

“What can I do about it? I am just, after all, conveying the words that the Demon King has asked me to deliver...”

Rogers turned away his gaze deliberately, ignoring her.

“That man. Does he know what day it is today?”

“Why wouldn’t he? That must be why he told me he was going to buy a present.”

Although he responded that way, Rogers thought to himself:

The chance is half of half.

He may or may not know.

At this point, there was no choice but to trust that fool’s memory.

“Never mind. It’s understandable if he is busy. He travels all over the Demon Realm daily, so it’s possible that he might forget a day like today.”

You can’t be disappointed if you don’t have expectations.

Betty seemed to be giving up early, as she sighed with a bitter expression.

“Betty, I’m back!”

Right on cue, the man in question returned to the castle.

He entered with a grin like a carefree child but, upon seeing Betty’s stiff face, he quickly asked,

“What’s wrong with your face, Betty? Was there something bad?”

Seemingly unaware of what he might have done wrong, Rogers hoped Belkarion would quickly figure out the situation by giving him as many hints as he could with subtle gestures.

“Where have you been?”

“I went to the swamp near the Limia Ravine to subdue the demons there! And after that...”

His lively explanation was interrupted by a sudden shift in his expression.

Belkarion belatedly remembered what he had told Rogers to tell her.

Quickly thinking of what to do, he frantically searched through his pockets.

“I, I bought you a present! Look at this!”

Betty didn’t expect anything.

She assumed he would show her another strange part of a demon and call it a present.

However, the item he pulled out this time was beyond Betty’s expectations.

“This, did you get this yourself, Belkarion?”

Both Betty and the nearby Rogers doubted their eyes.

“Do you like it?”

Taken aback by her unexpected reaction, Belkarion asked cautiously.

But Betty, completely lost in the gift, failed to respond.

A pendant that shone with a light that was neither too flashy nor too dull.

In the center was a white jewel, the likes of which were rarely seen in the Demon Realm.

It was an impressive gift, hard to believe it was chosen by the Demon King.

“I didn’t know you had such taste...”

“Stay still for a moment! I’ll put it on for you.”

Belkarion gently placed the pendant around her neck as she sat demurely.

The pendant met the owner it was looking for and emitted even more splendid light as it mixed with her fair skin.

Betty was so enchanted that she couldn’t take her eyes off the pendant.

“Do you remember what day it is today?”

“Of course, I do!”

Belkarion answered while quickly looking to Rogers for confirmation.

Rogers gave him a quick hand signal.

"It's the birthday of you, the one I cherish the most in this Demon Realm! Even someone with a poor head like me always remembers it!"

"Thank you, Belkarion. It seems, after all, that I'm just a woman who can't help it. Despite knowing how busy you are with the affairs of the Demon Realm, I still hoped that you would take care of me on days like this..."

Betty softly wrapped her fingers around the pendant's jewel.

Belkarion, watching her, felt pleased but also a slight bitterness.

After safely handling what could have been a crisis(?),

Belkarion left the room with Rogers and immediately questioned him in an accusatory tone.

"Hey Rogers! Why didn't you tell me it was Betty's birthday today?"

"Didn't Your Majesty say last year on Miss Betty's birthday? That you would surely remember the next one, and that whatever happens, I shouldn't say anything."

Even that statement Belkarion only remembered belatedly, and he immediately closed his mouth.

"Still, since you said you were going to buy a present, I thought that this time you would remember..."

Belkarion dodged the question.

To him, it wasn't because it was her birthday, but because he had seen her face looking quite gloomy recently that he prepared the gift as a way of cheering her up.

"Still, it was quite an unusual and nice gift from you, the Demon King."

"Ah, that... Did it look good to you too?"

"Who did you receive it from?"

Rogers asked seriously, changing his tone abruptly.

"Who, received it from? I carefully selected and chose it..."

"I am well aware of Your Majesty's taste. That pendant is not something that someone like the Demon King would personally choose. Stop beating around the bush and speak frankly."

"Damn!"

Belkarion scowled and averted his eyes.

"Hey Rogers. If, just hypothetically, I were to cross over to the human world, what would happen?"

"Before wondering what would happen, why would you cross over there?"

"Some humans say there's a terribly bad human who is tormenting them. Just to see who that person is and, while at it, maybe?"

"Something must have happened at the ravine."

Rogers, sensing the Demon King's intention, immediately mentioned the Limia Ravine.

Knowing it was futile to hide it, Belkarion then recounted the events that had happened just before.

"It already sounds full of suspicions."

"Right. From head to toe, it was covered with suspicion and doubt. Especially..."

What stood out most from that blond human was the sword he had on his waist. It was a high-quality white longsword, and it gave off a disturbing feeling that was difficult to put into words.

"If I may speak out of turn, Your Majesty, you are the ruler of the Demon Realm, not of the human realm. Even if some of them come to ask for help, there is no reason for Your Majesty to intervene personally."

Who does not know that?

Interfering in other people's fights never ends well.

Whatever happens in the human world, it has nothing to do with the Demon Realm.

As the Demon King, he simply had to care about the Demon Realm and that was it.

However,

“Nonetheless, if the affairs of the human realm have an influence on the Demon Realm, the story would be different. They’ve already cleared out the demons to open up the ravine’s path in order to make contact with Your Majesty. They will likely approach several more times, trying to involve Your Majesty in their affairs. If that happens...”

“If that happens?”

“I dare say, it will not end in anything good.”

Rogers hinted at a warning while sharpening his friendly demeanor.

” So, what you’re saying is to nip it in the bud before they keep pestering me. That’s what you want to say?”

“It’s not necessarily about cutting it off definitely. But it would be necessary to make Your Majesty’s intentions clear. To show that the Demon King does not wish to involve himself in the matters of the human world.”

In other words, draw a clear line.

Rogers’ suggestion was certainly the most appropriate response without room for debate.

“But, the existence of injustice that the human mentioned i-...”

However, Belkarion couldn’t easily come to a decision.

If there was a reason, it was...

“Never mind. I will do as you say, Rogers.”

Belkarion was about to say something but then he suddenly changed his mind and swallowed his words.

Rogers, in turn, didn’t bother to ask more.

“Just a moment. Your Majesty! Then, the pendant that Miss Betty is wearing right now, is it from that human?”

“Huh? Yeah, that’s right! They offered a bundle of annoyingly burdensome jewels, saying it was their small gesture of courtesy. I didn’t want to carry them, so I just took the first pendant I saw.”

“Are you out of your mind!!!”

Rogers suddenly yelled in reproach at Belkarion.

“How could you just accept a gift from such a suspicious person! Besides, just accepting the gift is giving them an opportunity to meet again, isn’t it?”

“Ah, why make such a fuss over just one pendant? Do you think I would’ve carelessly accepted it? I almost went deaf from the shouting.”

“There’s no need to discuss this further. Since Your Majesty brought it, Your Majesty should solve it.”

“How should I solve it?”

“Either return it or dispose of it yourself.”

Belkarion, thinking he must have heard wrong, cocked his head.

“I, I’ve already given it to Betty?”

“Then you should just get it back. Miss Betty will understand.”

Belkarion could not bring himself to say that he would do so, and just stared at Rogers’ sharp eyes.

* * *

Fifteen years ago, no, even ten years ago, the demons could not have even imagined the peaceful state of the Demon Realm they were in now.

Half the continent was barren land, barely habitable for life.

Half of the remaining livable territory was home to dreaded monsters,

and as the survival of the fittest, the law of natural selection had been ever-present, the weaker demons continued to be culled from the land as unfit for survival.

The Demon King, who could be considered the strongest in the Demon Realm, simply couldn’t contain his overflowing power and was constantly looking for fights,

It was everyday life for him to blow away a land the size of a village based on that day’s whims.

At the mere mention of the name Belkarion, all demons, young and old, would shiver in terror. To the demons, the Demon King was an absolute fear that could not be defied.

It was this Betty who transformed him from that beast-like man into this goofy figure.

A mere woman, powerless with not even a small amount of mana to her name,

the demons unanimously said that without her, neither the Demon Realm nor the Demon King of today would exist.

“Betty, can I come in?”

After knocking on the door, Belkarion entered the room.

“Welcome back, Belkarion.”

Betty greeted him with a bright smile.

“Did something happen with Rogers? Earlier, I could hear his shouting from here?”

“Huh? Ah, it was nothing!”

Belkarion quickly brushed off her question and changed the subject.

“You’re still wearing the pendant?”

“Of course. How often would I receive such a thing from you? A wonderful gift like this...”

“Ah. Now that I look at it again, it’s not that pretty. Something else would suit you better.”

“Not at all. I really like it! There’s no pendant more beautiful than this one!”

Betty asserted, cutting to the chase.

The determination in her eyes was clear that she would not part with the pendant from her neck.

“Are you going to keep it?”

“Absolutely. I will never lose it. I treasure it even more than you!”

Betty’s eyes were firm.

After staring intently at her resolved gaze, Belkarion reluctantly shook his head.

“Whatever. I’ll just get some flak from Rogers later.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind. I need to go somewhere for a bit.”

Eager to leave the room, Belkarion turned around, approached Betty, and leaned in.

“...!”

He gently pressed his lips to her forehead.

“What, suddenly?!”

“Happy Birthday, Betty!”

Belkarion smiled wryly at her rapidly blushing face, then quickly left the room.

Leaving the Demon King’s castle, he spread his wings and flew into the air.

His direction pointed towards Limia Ravine—the very place he had been to a few hours earlier.

Waiting there as if he’d knew he would return, the blond human was still in the same place.

“You’ve returned sooner than I thought.”

“Save the chit-chat. Let’s finish this meeting with you.”

Belkarion moved straight to the main point without delay.

“I have no intention of meddling in your affairs. So give up the thought of achieving anything through me from this moment on. Handle your own affairs.”

A gentle expression of refusal.

However, unexpectedly, Aschel didn’t even blink an eye, seemingly completely unaffected.

“If not already, there’s still a small possibility, I hoped. But it seems to be as expected. What can I do? If a request doesn’t work, I guess I’ll have to give a warning next...”

An angry rage swelled in Belkarion’s eyes at Aschel’s comment.

“What?”

“Let me repeat myself. Demon King Belkarion. Please meet our demands. Otherwise...”

Despite Belkarion’s questioning, Aschel remained calm and continued to speak his piece.

“The peace of the Demon Realm that you are sustaining... will shatter.”

A warning masquerading as a request and the subsequent silence.

Belkarion, eyes wide open, glared at Aschel and finally opened his mouth.

“Do you want to die?”

(To be continued)