

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin

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The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 271

Chapter 271: The Enemy of the Demon King (5)

“It’s not too late even now. How about you return and wait for the Demon King?”

“I don’t want to cause harm to those around me anymore. And I no longer wish to endure the painful waiting.”

Besty’s mind was made up.

Rogers repeated the thought in his head that perhaps talking was unwarranted.

Although he mentioned everything to regard her opinion, Besty had made her decision all too swiftly.

Amidst their jumbled thoughts and moving forward, they eventually arrived at their destination.

“It’s been a few years since we came here. This place too...”

The Lake of Oblivion.

The largest lake in the demon world, it shimmered faintly with a hazy blue glow as if about to reveal its interior.

The expanse was so wide that its horizon was indiscernible.

But one could only lose themselves in the majestic yet lonely sight for so long before —

“You have had a long journey.”

Ascalon and his entourage appeared through the misty lake fog.

“Just the two of you?”

“Can’t you see for yourself?” Besty replied coldly.

To that, Rogers added,

“Let me say this beforehand. If I sense even the slightest danger or harm towards Lady Besty, I will immediately escort her back to the castle.”

“I can’t promise there won’t be any dangers.”

“This is your answer?!”

“Calm yourself, Rogers!”

Besty, holding back the agitated Rogers, took a step toward Ascalon, her hand clasping a pendant tightly.

“What would you have me do?”

“...”

Ascalon gazed at Besty with a look of affectionate nostalgia before leaning in to whisper in her ear.

“Had you not been my daughter, I wouldn’t have done this.”

“...!”

It felt like a deep wound to her pride.

Besty clenched her fist so hard that she trembled, while Ascalon, as if nothing had happened, turned his head toward the other demons with a detached expression.

“Prepare.”

Following his command, other demons brought over pillars as large as their bodies, then began stacking them in predetermined spots, sprinkling an unknown white powder around them.

“What are you doing now?”

“Preparing for the ritual.”

“A ritual?”

Besty, with a clueless look on her face, received a matter-of-fact response from Ascalon.

“I will use magic to destroy that pendant which beguiles you.”

Rogers jumped up, objecting.

“That’s absurd! That pendant cannot be affected by magic, nor any power! If you try to force it open, it may harm Lady Besty...!”

“Who said anything about forcing it open?”

“...?”

“I will destroy it.”

The eyes of the two demons violently clashed.

“Power is honest. Weak power is always suppressed by stronger power. No power is exempt. I will destroy that pendant with my magic.”

Power supersedes power.

The idea was to completely obliterate it with an overwhelmingly powerful magic force to ensure it no longer exerts its influence.

Theoretically, it sounded reasonable, but it was as much a gamble as anything.

“This is too risky! What if touching the pendant’s power backfires on you?”

“That’s why I couldn’t assure you of no dangers...”

This was something Rogers could not accept.

No matter how renowned Ascalon was in the demon world for his abilities, risking her life on an uncertain outcome was not an option.

Without a second glance, Rogers turned away.

“There’s no need to think it over! This is a dangerous gamble! Even if the pendant is destroyed, if Lady Besty is harmed even the slightest, the Demon King will not stand by idly!”

“You might be right.”

Besty seemed to concur with Rogers’ opinion.

“But, Rogers.”

“Yes?”

“If we always think of the negative outcomes and give up, won't we end up achieving nothing?”

“Lady Besty!”

Rogers shouted out, realizing her intent.

“I understand your urgency! But the more so, you need to think rationally now! Isn't this always the advice you give to the Demon King?”

“I am thinking more rationally now than anyone else, Rogers. If we cannot remove this pendant as it is, it could lead to even worse situations for us.”

Unable to continue his words, Rogers just looked on.

As if to calm him, Besty gently pattered Rogers' shoulders.

“Don't worry, Rogers. I will overcome this. For the peace of the demon world, for Belkarion...”

With her last determination, Besty turned toward the site of the ritual.

Rogers, unable to hold her back, finally closed his eyes tightly.

“Please, be safe...”

Devoutly, Besty reached the center of the ritual site, with Ascalon following behind her.

The demons encircled them, forming a guard ring, and as Besty looked around and sighed, she closed her eyes.

“It will be over soon.”

Ascalon immediately commanded the ritual to begin.

-Vwoooooom!

A crimson magic circle formed beneath their feet, and the magic power manifesting through the circle was transmitted to the erected pillars.

Then the magic power arising from the pillars surged toward Besty at the center.

“Kugh!”

Feeling the turbulent flow of magic power, Besty grimaced.

Her breath quickened, and her legs started trembling, nearly buckling at any moment.

Despite the danger, Besty desperately held on.

As she endured, the pendant, caught in the grip of the magic power, began to flutter and jerk about.

'I must hold on!'

Besty repeated this thought continuously in her heart.

Even if her body crumbled and she vomited blood, she had to endure.

For the sake of Belkarion, who was still roaming the demon world for her.

But then,

"Stop this at once!"

Rogers, who had been watching the ritual from about ten paces away, suddenly shouted.

"Stop the ritual right now!"

Not just shouting, he dashed aggressively towards her.

The other demons blocked him, completely preventing his approach to the ritual site.

Realizing that something had gone wrong, Besty tried to turn around urgently with wide eyes,

"...!"

She abruptly met the gaze of Ascalon, who had moved in front of her.

His eyes were bloodshot, a deep crimson.

In only a few seconds, Ascalon's face had contorted into something grotesque and uncanny.

Stunned by the transformation, Besty's body stiffened, and she found herself locked eye-to-eye with him.

"Father? What is happening to you?"

“Everything is for the sake of light...”

Muttering incomprehensible words, Ascalon suddenly clutched the pendant.

-Crackle!

A spark burst from the pendant along with a flash of light.

“Let go of it!”

Besty managed to slap his hand away and dashed desperately out of the ritual space.

-Thud!

But she did not get far before colliding with an invisible barrier and bouncing back.

A magic barrier had been erected around the ritual site using the pillars.

Trapped with no escape, Besty crumpled to the ground, holding the pendant tightly in her hands.

-Thud...

Ascalon approached her again.

“Why are you doing this father? Come to your senses!”

“Everything is for the sake of light!”

Despite her heartfelt plea, Ascalon kept repeating the same unintelligible phrase.

Overcome with fear, Besty clenched her eyes shut.

Just as Ascalon’s relentless hand reached for the pendant again,

“Everything shall revert to Void (無) ...”

Suddenly, a jet-black sphere appeared above their heads.

“...?”

Both Besty and Ascalon, along with his followers and even Rogers, focused their attention on the sphere.

“That... That’s?”

“The Sphere of Void (無)?”

It seemed to register too late what the sphere was,

-Vwoosh!

The Sphere of Void began to absorb all the magic around it.

Irresistible with its overwhelming force, the area’s magic was annihilated in no time, leaving everyone confused by the unexpected spectacle.

The Sphere of Void was a dark attribute magic that used the caster’s magic power to nullify all powers and magic of the opponent.

It was a simple spell that even a 1-star rank holder could perform, providing the attribute matched.

However, the caster’s magic power had to be significantly higher than the power they intended to absorb for the spell to be effective.

Ascalon was a demon of high repute, wielding the might equivalent to an 8-star human mage in the demon world.

Yet, his magic power was completely absorbed by the Sphere of Void without any resistance.

This implied that there was a sorcerer among them who summoned the sphere, someone with magic power surpassing Ascalon’s.

Naturally drawn to a familiar aura, Besty turned her eyes.

“Power supersedes power. It’s as simple and honest a principle as that. I considered destroying the pendant myself too.”

And then, out of the mist, a voice so languid revealed its owner.

“But like Rogers said, the risks were just too great, so I quickly abandoned thought.”

The demons reacted with shock at the sight of the woman.

“This human?”

But this was no ordinary human.

A magical prodigy that one might see once in hundreds of years in the human world.

She had transcended the limits of magic and now wielded divine spells, the sole human to have achieved such a feat.

She was the owner of Maseo Lemiharam, Lunav Reine River.

“Lu, Lunav?”

Ignoring Besty’s call, she approached Ascalon.

“I was curious if the magic of a demon would be different, so I thought I’d watch with interest, but it seems you never intended to destroy the pendant from the start?”

Ascalon, his eyes still bloodshot, glared at Lunav ferociously.

He swiftly raised his hand to manifest his mana, yet

-Swish

As if expecting that very moment, Lunav opened the Maseo and unleashed an even greater surge of mana.

Responding to her mana, the Sphere of Void unleashed a powerful vortex that enveloped Ascalon, absorbing his magic power completely.

“Scream!”

In torment, Ascalon cried tears of blood and soon collapsed face-forward onto the ground.

“Father!”

Besty was startled but,

“Do not come near, Besty!”

Ascalon raised a hand to fend her off.

Instead, Lunav leaned down to examine his face.

“So, it was that after all?”

“Lunav! What is happening?”

“She was under the influence of a beguiling power.”

“...!”

Covering her mouth, Besty trembled uncontrollably.

“Lady Besty!”

Rogers, having fought through the demons, rushed to her side.

“Are you alright?”

“I can stand, just about.”

Once she was confirmed safe, he let out a deep sigh of relief.

“Let’s get out of here for now.”

“But Ascalon! My father...”

“We don’t know when he’ll explode again! Let’s move to safety first, and we can come back once the situation is clear!”

“Alright. Rogers...”

Reluctantly conceding, Besty quickly left the place with Rogers.

While guiding her, Rogers took a moment to glance back at where Lunav was.

‘For her magic to absorb Ascalon’s so easily...’

Rogers was a demon adept in magic, not inferior to Ascalon himself.

But the magic power displayed by Lunav far transcended his own—it was on a completely different level.

‘That Sian who fought the Demon King to a stalemate, how far can human potential reach?’

Whether such heights would be tolerated by the beings who created them, he felt a mixture of awe and a rising sense of anxiety.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 272: The True Nature of the Demon King (Part 1)

“Gragh.”

Ascalon groaned as he regained consciousness and opened his eyes.

Realizing his body was bound by something, he lifted his head to inspect his surroundings.

“It seems you’ve come to.”

That’s when he met the gaze of a strange human woman, her identity unknown.

If his memory served him correctly, she was the very person who had launched an orb of nothingness at him before he lost consciousness.

Ascalon quickly assessed his condition.

“Binds of Salvation?”

Chains of light sparkled atop a transparent magic circle, snaring his entire body.

Looking around, he saw that his followers were similarly restrained.

“Did you do this to me?”

Lunav merely nodded indifferently.

Earlier she revealed a dark attribute magic orb, and now light magic?

Was this human disregarding the very concept of attribute values?

Confusion clouded his vision, and soon, Besti and Rogers came into view.

They stood five paces from Lunav, giving Ascalon a look mixed with apprehension.

“So, you’re that human who frequents the demon king’s castle.”

“Seems I’ve become somewhat famous without my knowledge.”

Lunav did not deny it.

Rogers approached, glaring down at him and said,

“You owe us a proper explanation, Ascalon.”

With a heavy sigh, Ascalon hung his head low.

“Before I begin explaining, may I ask one thing? Did I just try to destroy Besti’s pendant?”

“It would be more accurate to say you aimed to destroy its wearer rather than the pendant itself.”

Lunav responded with an indifferent face.

Ascalon began to explain, his face heavy with regret.

“I had no idea about the pendant until recently. I only knew that an unidentified human frequented the demon king’s castle.”

Rogers frowned, not quite convinced.

“Do you know that a faction opposing the demon king had recently been in contact with humans?”

“What are you talking about?”

Rogers challenged, jumping at the accusation.

“It appears you were unaware. Recently, the ‘Demos Faction’ stopped all communication with other factions and rumors spread that they were seen with a human. I encountered said human while discerning the truth of these rumors.”

“What human are you referring to?”

“I don’t know his name. He wore a robe that concealed his body, but I saw blond hair and a strange sword at his waist. Not only did he find our base somehow, but he also spoke out of nowhere about Besti.”

Upon hearing this, Besti flinched.

While the clues were only golden hair and a peculiar sword, Lunav instinctively guessed the identity of this person.

“He bluntly stated that if his daughter was in danger, shouldn’t he save her? He then informed about the pendant. That was when things started feeling off. Each time our eyes met, I’d get a headache and feel dazed.”

“It’s similar to when I first got bewitched by the pendant.”

Besti added her own experience to the explanation.

“Clearly, I wasn’t myself at the time. If I were, I would have investigated the facts before acting. Yet, I led my group directly to the demon king’s castle. Perhaps my desire to save my daughter was too compelling.”

Ascalon’s gaze briefly met Besti’s before he quickly averted it.

“I intended to destroy the pendant. But when my magic was unleashed, my mind clouded again. The pendant was all I could see, and my hand reached for it without thought.”

He clenched his eyes shut, recalling the harrowing incident.

“Had it not been stopped, I may have forcibly tried to remove it. I’d rather not contemplate what could have happened.”

He looked towards Besti once more.

“I truly am sorry, Besti...”

Overcome with emotion, Besti’s eyes wavered as she accepted his apology.

“You too were charmed, Father. No one can be blamed.”

Besti forgave him, yet could not bring herself to face him, turning away instead.

“I need some time alone.”

She walked towards the lakefront by herself.

“Lord Rogers!”

That’s when the reinforcements requested from the demon king’s castle arrived.

As Rogers and the soldiers dealt with the aftermath, Lunav approached Besti, who stood silently gazing beyond the horizon.

“How did you know?”

“I overheard your conversation with Rogers in the other room. I apologize for listening without permission.”

Lunav apologized for eavesdropping, but Besti appeared more shocked than upset.

“You penetrated Rogers’s barrier to overhear our conversation?”

“Yes.”

Lunav answered nonchalantly, her abilities were evident in absorbing Ascalon's magic and now Besti was in awe.

"You're truly exceptional. If not for Lunav, I wouldn't be alive now. Thank you."

She bowed deeply in gratitude.

"You call Ascalon your father...?"

"...!"

"So, you chose to walk a path opposite to his?"

Despite the sensitive topic, Lunav's inquisitive nature didn't allow her to overlook the question.

"It wasn't always opposition. My father was the most delighted demon when I changed Velcaryon. He celebrated the transformation."

After a brief hesitation, Besti shared her deeper thoughts.

"I don't know about the human realm, but the demon realm is extremely cruel. Survival is solely based on power, and the powerless are inexorably eliminated. I thought, wouldn't it be good if the demon king, the supreme being, used his power for the realm? That even powerless demons could live in peace? Velcaryon did change and with it, the demon realm became a better place to live."

Besti firmly believed the demon realm was currently in its most peaceful era.

"However, at some point, Father opposed this transformed demon king and incessantly demanded my return from the demon king's castle. I couldn't understand why. The demon realm had never been this peaceful; why was Father against it? I still don't know."

"I'm in the same boat. I've been at odds with my grandfather for the same reason."

Lunav sympathized with Besti's predicament.

After sharing her struggles, Besti asked,

"How did you become so strong, Lunav?"

"My strength? It's simply from chasing what I earnestly desire."

The answer seemed too simple, but Besti could tell it held more meaning.

To keep chasing one's heartfelt desires – wasn't that something she had been doing tirelessly?

"I don't know how you see me, but to me, Besti seems stronger and more incredible."

"Why would you say that?"

"At least the man Besti longs for recognizes her. I'm still far from reaching mine."

Lunav expressed her longing, glancing at the distant horizon.

After the lakeside conversation, the two women, alongside the demon king's entourage, made their way back to the castle.

"I won't report today's events to the demon king. There mustn't be any talk of it; not from us, nor from that faction."

"Do you intend to keep this from the demon king?"

"It's in no one's interest to tell him."

Rogers, who volunteered for cleanup, demanded nothing more than discretion from Ascalon, rather than a large reward or an apology.

"Let me ask you, Rogers. Do you truly think that this changed demon king is better for our realm?"

"I have no intention of responding to a question not worth answering."

As Rogers turned to leave, he paused and glanced back,

"The peace we have isn't made by the demon king. It was Besti. You know this, don't you, Ascalon?"

"Things may seem fine now, but will this peace last?"

Ascalon, his eyes fierce, voiced the feelings he had kept within.

"We demons have survived the cruel lands of the demon realm for thousands of years through 'survival of the fittest.' That's the source of our strength. The very nature of a demon king emerges from these principles; you know this as well as I do!"

Rogers remained silent.

“A peaceful demon realm? Our realm has no need for peace. For our kind to continue surviving, we need a truly ruthless and merciless demon king.”

Rogers didn't respond; he kept his mouth shut. One thing, however, was certain. The peaceful era of the demon realm could very well be ending, ushering in the most perilous times.

Meanwhile, in front of the demon king's castle,

“Where have you been, Besti?”

“Vel... Velcaryon?”

Velcaryon greeted Besti with a warm smile as she and the others returned from the lake, an unexpected early return confusing everyone.

“You're back early?”

“It turned out that way. But why all together, where did you go? Rogers isn't here either?”

“That's because... well...”

Struggling to answer, the demon escorts shared awkward glances.

“Why can't you speak? Is it too hard to say? Should I ask someone else?”

Velcaryon's gaze shifted to Lunav.

“Then tell me. Where did you and Besti go?”

“Where is your senior?”

Rather than answering, Lunav responded with her own question.

“Why did you return alone? Where did you leave your senior?”

“I'm asking first. Where were you?”

Without Lunav's response, Velcaryon's eyes sharpened, a hint of anger igniting within.

“It seems you are all misunderstanding something...”

“Wait, Velcaryon! I'll explain!”

Besti hastened to intervene, sensing the tense atmosphere,

“Don’t argue and answer. Unless you wish to die!”

Already, Velcaryon’s eyes burned red, consumed by rage and desire to kill.

(To be continued)

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Chapter 273: The True Nature of the Demon King (2)

In front of the Demon King’s castle, where dry sandstorms swirled like tempests, the atmosphere between the unwavering man and woman had escalated to a point of near explosion.

The other demons couldn’t bring themselves to intervene, simply staring wide-eyed from a distance.

“So, you have no intention of opening your mouth, is that it?”

“.....”

Despite the Demon King’s final warning, Lunav remained silent, her priority being Sian’s whereabouts.

Having endured as much as he could, Velkaryon finally lifted his hand.

Crack

A chilling sound of bones echoed ominously as he clenched his fist lightly.

In response, without a change in her expression, Lunav defiantly opened her grimoire.

Their eyes locked onto each other, as if ready to devour one another at any moment.

“I went to Lake Myeong!” Besti interrupted, stepping between them.

“Lake Myeong?”

Velkaryon’s gaze instantly shifted to her.

“Yes, I just wanted to get some fresh air. I was feeling a bit... stifled.”

It was a lie.

An incident significant enough to endanger her life had occurred, but Besti couldn't share this with Velkaryon.

She knew all too well that no one could handle the repercussions that would follow if she told the truth.

"Is that so? Well, if you're feeling stifled, it makes sense to want some fresh air. You did good."

Velkaryon then reassured Besti with a generous smile, as if indignant behavior never happened.

"Let's go back inside. The air in the Demon Realm feels especially foul today."

It seemed like the incident would pass without escalating further, yet...

"I have yet to receive an answer," Lunav stopped Velkaryon as he tried to return to the castle.

She hadn't yet received an answer about Sian.

"Where is Senior Sian?"

"I'm not sure? We were together in Arem, but then he disappeared on his own accord. It's been tiring looking for him, so I came back alone. It's not my responsibility to find him, right?"

Velkaryon replied indifferently, with only a half-hearted glance.

Lunav stared at Velkaryon with a look of distrust for three seconds before she turned to leave.

"Wait! Where do you think you're going, Lunav?"

Besti quickly grasped Lunav's arm, startled.

"I'm going to look for my senior. If you say you don't know where he is, then I should go find him myself. Can you just tell me which way Arem is?"

Without a second thought, Lunav was determined to search for Sian.

"Calm down for now. It seems like something unpleasant has happened to Velkaryon. I'll persuade him to let us know where Sian is. So, for now..."

“There’s no need for that.”

“.....!”

“You’re not wrong. We’re just strangers in this place, and if mine are missing, it’s only right that I should search for them.”

Lunav seemed to accept the Demon King’s words that she had no obligation to search.

With her firm stance, Besti was left speechless and unable to continue.

“Don’t worry too much. I’ll be back as soon as I find my senior. I still need to share life energy too...”

With those words, Lunav turned her back completely and walked away.

Besti sent a longing gaze after the distant figure she couldn’t stop.

“.....”

Velkaryon watched Besti with an expression of displeasure.

* * *

Clang!

We hadn’t kept track from the beginning, but it felt like we had exchanged at least fifty strikes.

We had competed purely in swordsmanship, without using magic or any other additional powers.

As expected, my father’s sword was very honest—heavy, fast, and fundamentally sound—embodying the sword of a true knight.

It was a testament to the decades of life he had walked, and it was clear that he deserved the respect from every knight in existence.

But that was it.

To me, it wasn’t so remarkable.

In the end, hadn’t he become a foolish puppet who lost his own agency, oblivious to the reason behind his movements?

It was impossible for me to revere someone who had come to such a state.

Thud!

With emotion driving my strike, my father couldn't withstand the blow and was ultimately pushed back.

Click!

He nearly lost his balance and seemed about to kneel, but he managed to maintain his stance by pressing his sword into the ground.

"Remarkable, Sian. You're much more than I had anticipated."

Although it was meant as praise, I felt no joy.

"Now I understand why Eshel could not defeat you."

By mentioning him, my father seemed more composed.

I held my sword's blade downward and slowly approached my father.

"What do you gain from fighting me?"

"Why are you asking now?"

"Just curious. For me, there's an inevitable reason I have to kill you, but what do you get from fighting like this? You could take my head right now if you wanted to."

An inevitable reason to kill me?

While I was curious about this grand reason, I chose not to ask.

"Are you seeking acknowledgment from me?"

"Didn't you first demand that I prove the worth of my swordsmanship? I'm merely abiding by your words."

Wondering if he had forgotten what he said just a moment ago, I quickly retorted.

"Do not underestimate a parent's eye. Right now, I can see your desires in your eyes."

"Which desires are those?"

"Desires... To seek recognition of your worth from me. It's not like you are clashing swords with me just to follow my orders. Despite being an irrational father, did you want to prove something? That the path you've chosen was the right one?"

I offered no response.

“Alright, I acknowledge it, Sian. I cannot deny any part of the path you have taken. You have fervently walked a path that you deemed right.”

Unknowingly, I scoffed.

Wow.

Words I had longed to hear in my past life, and yet they were delivered to me so easily now?

Instead of feeling joy and vindication, it felt utterly empty.

Even with this belated recognition, nothing would change for me now.

My father surely knew this too.

“But, Sian...”

As expected, my father didn’t stop there.

“What significance does it have now?”

Crackling!

At that moment, a white light surged beneath my feet.

The light extended into a magical formation, within which a strong flow of mana began to swirl.

As I swiftly looked around, I saw knights who had been observing our duel, now channeling their mana below my feet.

A sealing formation?

No, it was something much more powerful—the highest defense system, a bulwark of chivalry prepared for situations when behemoths like Devil Dragons appeared.

“Sealing of death?”

The extreme area that leads one to an inevitable path of death without refusal—the sealing of death.

Using such a dangerous secret technique against me showed that they were serious about killing me.

“I’m sorry, Sian.”

As if offering a final farewell, my father spontaneously apologized.

“May you not be born as the child of such a failure in your next life.”

This was so ridiculous that it didn’t even bring a smile to my face.

Planting the seed, nurturing it into a flesh and blood – when had that happened, and now saying this?

Even if he wasn’t in his right mind, I was also finding it difficult to endure.

“It seems my brother might have misinformed you.”

“.....?”

“Do you really think this sealing of death would be enough to kill me?”

I smoothly turned my which had been aimed downward, outward once again.

Ssshhh

From my entire body arose a black mist, engulfing the confining barrier in its entirety.

Smash!

“Argh!”

The barrier shattered in an instant like a pane of glass, and the knights, unable to withstand the shockwave, were sent flying.

“It’s truly pathetic, almost laughable. Even after such an ordeal, you still fail to comprehend the extent of my capabilities? Well, considering that pitiful demon, it’s quite probable!”

Having destroyed the formation with a show of force, I once again stepped toward my father.

“.....”

Father did not advance or retreat; he silently accepted my approach.

His expression remained composed, but his eyes wavered ever so slightly.

[What are you going to do?]

Keram, who had remained silent until now, finally spoke up.

What am I going to do?

There's plenty I can do.

Having received recognition, I could persuade my father to show me where that person is,

or I could use the personality of the shadow to implant a new persona into my father, like I did with Kellin, who had been a faithful servant to that person.

For me, that would be easier.

Too severe for a father who shares my blood?

Didn't that father tell me before?

What significance does it have now?

Indeed.

Whether this man before me is my father or not,

Using him for my purposes and according to my will is all that matters.

There's no law stating I can't manipulate my father, right?

With that unwavering decision set firmly in me, as I manifested mana in one hand—

Whoosh!

A tremendous shadow flew across the reddened sky, causing a strong wind to blow.

Caught off guard by the unexpected event, not only I but also my father and the knights turned our gazes to the passing shadow.

Surrounded by reeds and trees that stretched upwards to more than thrice the height of an adult man, it was unclear what had passed by, but the energy radiated an unmistakable presence.

-Thud!

Momentarily thereafter, giant footfalls began emanating from beyond the marsh.

The sound grew louder and closer with each step, sending vibrations through the earth.

I kept my eyes trained in the direction of the noise.

This was the Demon Realm.

A realm teeming with grotesque creatures that I hadn't even glimpsed in the Lemea Canyon.

In other words, aside from the living areas of the demons, this land was so volatile that a demonic creature could emerge anywhere, anytime.

Yet, if it had been a mere low-rank demon, I wouldn't be on such high alert.

A massive shadow then crept across the shallow marshy waters.

First visible were the horns protruding from its head and large wings.

And presumably, a long shadow that appeared to be a tail.

Horns and wings might suggest a common demon, but the tail was different.

Including the Demon King, none of the demons I had previously encountered had tails.

Horns, wings, a tail.

There was only one creature that possessed all these features across both the Human and Demon Realms.

Shuffle, shuffle

The thundering, earth-shaking footfalls abruptly hushed, reminiscent of the dignified steps of nobility.

The owner of the steps soon emerged above the swamp, locking eyes with me.

"Are you the human that has come to this Demon Realm?"

The polite tone was reminiscent of a human nobleman's.

But the first thought that struck me upon facing him was singular.

"Polymorph?"

The figure before me was strikingly similar to that of a creature I knew transformed into a human form.

One distinction, however:

There was a palpable aura of a complete dragon, not a half-measure.

(to be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 274

Episode 274: The Devil Dragon (1)

“Nice to meet you. My name is Nagel Ansyon de Couture Zenis Arodik Yunis. If it’s too long, please just call me Nagel.”

A name that was almost too lengthy to grasp at once. There was only one race across the two continents that used such unnecessarily verbose names. Dragons. And not just any dragon; with its dark purple, luminescent wings and sharply pointed horns resembling embedded spear blades, the man’s identity was obvious: he was most certainly a Devil Dragon. Interestingly enough, part of his tail was severed.

“Your name is... Cyan Berth, correct?”

I never imagined my name would be called by such a strange being from a strange land. Never mind my name being called, what’s with this dragon?

The aura he exuded was vastly different from the common Devil Dragons I knew. The divine power oozing out from within him, if seen only for a moment, seemed to rival even the fearsome blood-qi of the Demon King.

“Do you have business with me?”

Whether it was a chance encounter or he came seeking me knowing I would be here, the fact that he knew my name meant he had a definite purpose in mind.

“Before we begin our conversation, we should take care of the surroundings first.”

The dragon named Nagel turned his gaze toward the knights around us.

“I shall deal with this promptly. Please wait a moment.”

Aware that they were the target, the knights immediately took up a defensive stance.

“Who gave you permission?”

His gaze returned to me.

“Do dragons not follow any codes of honor? Trying to butt in on something here, are we?”

“Ah, were you hunting these men? My apologies, I have intruded. Please continue with your business. I shall wait here.”

With an apology and by stepping back, he showed his intent not to involve himself in the situation.

Hesitantly watching him with one eye, I turned back to my father.

“Leave.”

My father immediately frowned and retorted.

“Are you telling me to go?”

“I have no further reasons to cross swords with my father. And you have no reasons to stay here any longer, do you? You cannot kill me.”

It was an irrefutable truth, a fact that even my father acknowledged with a faint smile.

“We shall see whether this choice benefits or harms you.”

“That’s not for you to decide.”

It was something for me to determine. I had considered using my father for my own ends, but now I chose to let it go. Even my father, with his vast combat experience, and his knights would not match me, even with the power of the holy sword on their side. Not even that sly demon would think it possible.

Maybe he had hoped that I would kill my father myself.

I had let my emotions get the better of me momentarily, but I had no intention of playing into his agenda.

My father and his knights faded away into the swamp without a word.

Only after their presence had disappeared into the distance did I turn back.

“Weren’t you hunting your prey?”

“You know that’s not my business. So, why were you looking for me?”

Even in response to my brusque reply, he remained expressionless and continued.

“There is someone who wishes to meet with you.”

“Someone wants to meet me?”

“Yes. They are close by, so you must come along with me.”

It was not a request or an invitation but a unilateral compulsion to follow.

“If you want to take me, at least tell me who this audacious person is that wants to meet me.”

“...”

For the first time, a change of expression appeared on the stoic face. Looking at me with a heavy gaze, he then lifted his chin and spoke.

“It’s not difficult to tell you about the person, but before that, may I add one thing?”

“Go ahead.”

“This is not your land.”

The divine power that had been subtly flowing from his body burst forth in a sudden surge.

“If you are a foreigner, then act as one. And do not forget that I am extending you the utmost courtesy as we speak.”

Was he cautioning me not to overreach, given that I was a foreigner? Although he didn’t mean to harm me now, the underlying message to stay in my place was clear.

I responded by lifting my chin in kind.

“The person who wishes to meet you is Kellian Akus Dio Namerian Azis Cruz Delio...”

What a name, it held no significance to me. Even hearing it ten times over, I’d never remember. Such an elaborate name held no benefit to learn.

My curiosity was not about the Dragon Kellian-whatever, but rather why this dragon wanted to meet me and for what reason.

Picking up on my thoughts, Nagel added to the name.

“He is our leader.”

...!

Involuntarily, my eyelids shot up.

* * *

Leaving the marshlands, a steep mountain range that was not seen in Arem appeared.

“Screech.”

The cries of an unidentified creature were just a bonus. The incline was so steep it seemed nearly impossible for humans to stand, let alone climb.

...

I followed Nagel while feeling occasional wary or mocking glances from others along the way. Not surprisingly, they were not friendly.

I continued on without displaying any reaction until we reached about halfway up the mountain. Nagel stopped and spoke without looking back.

“Before you meet with him, there are a few things I need to tell you.”

“Don’t speak unless you are asked a question first, answer immediately within one second without hesitation when asked, and do not retort. Never meet his eyes while conversing. If you follow these instructions, your safety is guaranteed.”

“And if I don’t?”

“I will not take responsibility for what follows.”

He’s being unnecessarily difficult. Despite their pretense of being high and mighty, in the eyes of these Devil Dragons, I’m nothing but a lowly human, is that it?

Regardless, his ilk was hard to like.

“Well then. I hope this meeting proves meaningful for you...”

With those words, Nagel stepped aside, and I found myself facing a tear in the very fabric of space – shattering like glass, revealing pitch-black darkness on the other side.

Strange and yet somehow familiar, though I had never been here before, I could guess what this place was.

“Is this a pocket dimension?”

“Precisely, this is the Dragon’s pocket dimension,” corrected Kellian.

I resolutely advanced along the path laid before me. After roughly a hundred steps, a mighty throne appeared before me with an unfamiliar figure seated upon it.

Unhesitatingly, I approached.

“Welcome, human from the mortal realm!”

Unlike Nagel who had escorted me here or the other dragons that had looked upon me unfavorably, this one greeted me with apparent friendliness. Ignoring the warning not to meet his eyes, I did exactly that.

“Was it you who wanted to see me?”

This was the leader of the Devil Dragons. An entity with no particular reason to either friend or foe me. At least, for now. His intentions would determine the direction our relationship would take.

“It’s been hundreds of years since I last met a human. But you’re a bit peculiar, aren’t you? Why do I smell my own kind on you?”

My kind. He meant the Devil Dragons and their kin.

“Have you perhaps consumed the flesh and blood of dragons?”

“What if I have? What’s it to you?”

I countered again, ignoring Nagel’s warning, pressing my gaze down into him.

Kellian looked into my eyes for an extended moment, and then suddenly erupted into laughter.

“Ha! You were warned, yet still you speak so boldly. Did you leave your life behind in the mortal realm?”

His words seemed like a mix of a warning and a threat, yet strangely they didn’t feel menacing.

What’s going on? Is this really the Devil Dragon’s leader?

Whether he’s hiding his true self or not, I don’t know, but my honed instincts—forged over lifetimes of living and fighting—told me this being was not a threat. Actually, the dragon Nagel who brought me here felt more dangerous.

“Nevertheless, since you have amused me, I will forgive your earlier insolence. Be sure to be more cautious in the future.”

As if he was granting some grand mercy. I continued to meet his eyes without flinching.

“I heard about you fighting a hard battle with the Demon King in the demon castle, unable to determine a victor. Humble human as you are, battling equally with the most powerful being in the demon realm, such a thing is unbelievable to me. Humans I knew were weak, far less powerful than even the lowest demon.”

“So, you’ve called me here to see if the rumors are true? Are you planning to test me yourself?”

“You are greatly mistaken if you think so. I am the leader of the Devil Dragons, a direct successor with the blood of gods, not a mere creation like yourself. Did you seriously believe that I, of all beings, would stoop to competing with you? Your intellect is far lower than I anticipated!”

The disparaging comments kept coming—what’s the meaning of this?

This goes beyond my expectations, plumbing the depths of inadequacy.

This ridiculous creature is their leader? And that dragon Nagel who instructed me in all these tiresome rules—he seems all the funnier now.

What were these fools thinking in bringing me here...?

In the midst of my incredulous thoughts, I sensed a different aura and swiftly turned around.

Behind me, on the path I had traveled, felt a silent gaze watching me.

“So you turn your back in my presence? You really have no wish to leave here alive, do you?”

I barely paid any heed to the insolent creature blabbering behind me. I closed my eyes and focused, sensing the true nature of the unfamiliar energy that filled this dark space.

When I opened my eyes, I finally realized the truth of this place.

“Perhaps this would’ve been amusing, calling you here just to see what would happen, but alas, humans will always be humans. Your presence only diminishes my stature. I shall send you back now, so if you value your life, vanish from my sight immediately.”

“Hey.”

He seemed to think he misheard, for he was silent for about three seconds.

“What did you just say?”

“Quit your pathetic act and call out your real leader. I can no longer stomach this charade.”

“You! You’ve completely lost your mind! How dare you utter such blasphemy to the illustrious Kellian!...”

“Do I need to cut off your head to make him appear?”

I immediately gripped Kelliam tightly and rose into the air.

Panicked, he waved his hands frantically, fear painted across his face.

“Wait! I was only...”

“Stop there.”

In the moment I felt the true owner of this space, I halted mid-action and descended back to the ground.

“It seems the rumors of you matching up to the Demon King weren’t exaggerated after all.”

Upon slowly turning my head, a familiar voice reached me as if echoing through the void.

“Let us properly introduce ourselves, human.”

Then, not too long after, he emerged before me, radiating a majestic divine power.

“I am the real leader of the Devil Dragons. Nagel is my name.”

(To be continued in the next episode)

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Chapter 275: Devil Dragon (2)

“So, you came here empty-handed?”

“Didn’t you already know? Even with me and my knights, we’re outmatched to kill Xian...”

Eshel did not deny it.

“Xian didn’t want to kill me either. Perhaps he even realized that it was you who desired it.”

The duke’s words provoked a very unpleasant reaction from Eshel, who jutted her chin up in anger.

“What a hardship. It seems I overestimated my father’s ability. I was foolish to think I could at least cause a minor wound.”

Despite his child’s scornful mockery, Duke Bertrand maintained an indifferent expression.

“However, I was able to confirm the son’s feelings towards his father, and in that, I believe there was some meaning. Next time we meet, I’ll stir up those feelings further...”

“Don’t you think it’s time to stop, Eshel?”

Suddenly, Eshel’s face stiffened like stone.

“I realized it for sure when our swords clashed. You can’t beat Xian. No matter how much strategy and cunning you devise, it won’t work against him.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Because I don’t want you to continue with something meaningless.”

The duke spoke calmly yet assertively.

“My heart is still wholly dedicated to you. If you tell me to go kill Xian again, I can do it without a second thought. However, that wouldn’t change anything.”

“...”

“Awaken to reality, Eshel.”

The duke advised her to recognize reality now and to put an end to everything.

But,

“Kihahahaha!”

Eshel suddenly burst into laughter, looking up at the sky.

“You tell me to awaken to reality?”

To him, it was an absurd statement.

“I’ve never asked you to make me realize the reality. Your role as my father is to change reality for me! If you say I cannot beat Xian, then do whatever it takes to make me able to beat him! That’s what you must do! Do you understand?”

The order of this world should move only in accordance with him.

As Eshel still firmly held onto that conviction, he wouldn’t give up his desire to surpass Xian.

“I’m Eshel, the eldest son of the Bertrand duke’s family, and the man who has the duty to carry on the will of Willius Bertrand, the guardian of the continent, to protect this world! In order to fulfill that duty well, you, Father, must assist me, even if it means sacrificing your soul!”

“ ... ”

“Do you now understand what you must do?”

“You... I will do as you wish.”

Only then did Eshel show a satisfied and vile smile.

Taking the duke’s hands gently, he pleaded as if beseeching him.

“Never forget. Only I can correct the disordered world caused by my youngest sibling. I am the sole savior of this world!”

His laughter, filled with delusional ecstasy, echoed across the red sky and spread in all directions.

* * *

The charade of a fake leader wrapped up, and the throne’s true owner took his seat. The atmosphere began to emit its rightful aura.

He rested his chin on his hand and crossed his long legs, looking down at me with narrowing eyes.

The dragon sat on the chair, looking oddly natural in his posture.

Could it be he prefers to spend his time in human form?

“When did you partake of dragon’s blood?”

His first question concerned the scent emanating from my body.

“Hard to say? It’s been over 7 years, so I don’t remember clearly.”

I responded evasively.

“At least I’ve never consumed a Devil Dragon.”

“I know. If you had, you would’ve been in my belly by now.”

It was immediately clear he was serious, not joking.

“So, why bring me into your space with such a poor charade?”

“I find your term ‘poor charade’ a bit irritating. It was my way of verifying the rumors that you stood on equal grounds with the Demon King. But it appears the rumors weren’t baseless.”

He then uncrossed his legs and leaned forward towards me.

“I’ll be direct. What’s the reason you’ve come to the Demon World?”

“You brought me all the way here just to ask that?”

“I’m quite familiar with the levels of humanity. Although I doubt the Demon King has given it his all, still, the mere fact that you’ve matched the pinnacle of the Demon World allows us to estimate your standing in the Human World. Undoubtedly, you must be at the apex among humans.”

Since it wasn’t a false statement, I didn’t deny it.

“A supreme figure of the Human World facing the Demon King directly is no small matter. It inevitably signifies that a significant event will occur, or perhaps it has already...”

“That sounds like a story from experience. Am I wrong?”

He did not make an effort to deny it.

“I came after a foolish human who caused a stir in the Human World and fled to the Demon World. As soon as I capture the human, I will return to my world, never to set foot in this land again.”

“So, you’ve come chasing after your prey that’s taken flight.”

He glanced away from me, his gaze wandering to something or someone else.

“Fine. Then, I will help you in finding this quarry of yours.”

“Did I mishear something just now?”

“Quit jabbering.”

As if he wouldn't repeat himself, Nagel expelled a heavy tone.

“The humans you saw in the swamp earlier, they must be the group associated with the prey you're seeking. I've memorized their scent already. They're located not too far from here.”

While I couldn't yet trust what he said, intuitively, I didn't think he was lying.

“Why would you help me?”

“Don't ask. While it's not out of kindness, it certainly isn't borne of ill will either.”

A vague answer like that only stoked my suspicions.

“Have you already forgotten what I said earlier? You're not in a position to refuse right now. As an outsider, resolve your matters and quickly disappear back to your own lands.”

Was that it? His only aim seemed to be to get rid of me from the Demon World as soon as possible.

Though I felt a bad smell about this deal, since it was nonetheless beneficial for me, I decided to go along for now.

“Let's consider it accepted and proceed.”

It seems my opinion wasn't of concern to him anymore.

He casually lifted a finger and gestured behind me.

-Woong

A round gate leading outside was created.

“I've informed one of my kin outside about the location of your prey. He will guide you; just follow him.”

Direct guidance was out of the equation, it seemed?

It wasn't particularly to my liking, for various reasons, but as there was no harm to me, I opted to follow and see where it leads.

"Hope we haven't any reason to see each other again."

"We'll see about that."

Leaving each other with some mutual discomfort, I stepped outside.

"....."

Pausing for a moment, I gazed down upon the extraordinary sight beneath the steep rock mountain.

Dozens of Devil Dragons lined up on each side as though waiting for my exit, stretched out long as if in a guard of honor.

Without approaching or speaking to me, he didn't make the situation any more pleasant for me.

Intent on ignoring and passing by them, one of the dragons, about midway, blocked my path.

I could tell right away that this was the dragon meant to guide me.

Judging by its size, it didn't seem to be a full adult yet, perhaps just past its growth stage.

Like the others, it stared at me with discontent before polymorphing into a human form.

"Follow me."

It commanded without further ado, expecting me to follow.

[Oh?]

From within, Kayram voiced its amused laughter.

I chose not to respond as I had no intention of inquiring further...

But this Devil Dragon.

For some reason, it felt strikingly familiar to me.

Keeping my thoughts to myself, I quietly followed.

* * *

As Xian left with the guide across the rock mountain,

Nagel, sitting in his throne wrapped in contemplation, is approached by Kelian, who had pretended to be the leader for a while.

“That human has just left with the guide to the location you mentioned. We’ve also sent a few watchers after them as you instructed.”

“.....”

Nagel didn’t even open his eyes to respond.

“Nagel, if it’s not too much, may I ask why you’re showing kindness to that human?”

The space quivered like rippling water as magic energy spread into the surroundings.

“My apologies, Lord Nagel!”

Kelian hastily bowed, asking for forgiveness.

“Have I not already said it? I’m not helping him out of kindness.”

It was not out of goodwill, but rather for some benefit.

“After seeing him, I realized. The power that human wields far exceeds my expectations. I cannot allow him to confront the Demon King again.”

“That... it’s that serious?”

Kelian was taken aback by this unexpected assessment.

“Moreover, there was a strange smell coming from him.”

“What kind of smell are you talking about?”

“I’m not sure. An odd scent that’s hard to put into words, it’s almost recognizable yet elusive.”

It wasn’t simply because the human had partaken of dragon’s blood.

“It’s a smell with the half-cocked energy of something smeared all over...”

Nagel was struck by how familiar that scent felt, almost as if it was emanating from his own body.

* * *

A table fully laid so that the legs may snap from the weight. Despite the array of delectable dishes, Nana couldn't bring herself to eat.

"Why aren't you eating, Nana?"

"I'm... not hungry."

Arin instantly knew that was a lie.

Nana clutched her hands together as if never letting go, restraining her appetite, but the distress showed clearly on her face.

"It's okay, you can eat. I won't ask about Emilia."

"Really?"

After a brief hesitation, Nana finally gave in and began to inhale the food in front of her.

Arin smiled nonchalantly while watching her genuine behavior.

"I heard from Brian. You took everyone to Belias by transforming into a dragon, Nana."

".....!"

Nana's fork came to a sudden halt mid-air.

"It's fine! Everyone knows you're a dragon!"

Seeing Nana unexpectedly distressed, Arin beckoned with her hand in reassurance.

"Tell me about it sometime, okay? I'm really curious to see you in dragon form. It must be quite a sight, right?"

"Arin, have you ever seen a dragon?"

"Just once. It's been more than 10 years ago now. When I saw one, I was so startled. Xian was clinging to a dragon above Lemea Gorge. I was so worried something had gone wrong..."

"....."

"That was a Devil Dragon, wasn't it?"

"Would you do anything for Papa?"

“Huh?”

The light in Nana’s innocent eyes dimmed suddenly.

“Answer me. Are you like Emilia, someone who would do anything for Papa?”

Arin found herself flitting through a multitude of thoughts. Technically, she had prepared this food to get Nana speaking.

According to Brian, Emilia had told both Nana and Hastia everything before she vanished.

Yet for some reason, Hastia was silently tight-lipped and would not respond to psychic communication, and Nana refused to speak about Emilia.

But the recent question helped Arin intuitively realize that based on her answer, there might be something she could do.

Arin was a princess.

With the heavy responsibility of a nation upon her shoulders, the question of whether she could do anything for someone was a dangerously loaded one.

Yet,

“Yes. I would do anything for Xian.”

Without hesitation, Arin expressed a dangerous response unworthy of a princess.

It was an honest answer, filled with sincerity.

In response, Nana returned to her genuine smile.

“Arin, will you come with me to find Papa?”

(To be continued in the next chapter)

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Chapter 276: Devil Dragon (3)

“Do you have nothing to say to me, Rogers?”

Belkaryon smiled gaily while Rogers had a stern face.

“Lord Demon King. Please calm down for now.”

“Hey. Anyone would think I’m the one getting excited. Or am I about to commit some misdeed right away?”

“Can you assure that you are not?”

“That will be for me to decide after I hear what you have to say.”

The Demon King spoke as gently as ever, no different from usual.

However, Rogers was not ignorant of the truth that his heart was not as calm.

After a moment of contemplation, Rogers finally spilled everything about what had happened at Lake Myeong.

“Hmm, so that happened? It’s truly fortunate, isn’t it? If it hadn’t been for that Lunabran person, things could’ve taken a really bad turn.”

Rogers cautiously observed the Demon King’s reactions, which were changing by the second, with a nervous heart.

“So, you just let Ascalon go without any responsibility?”

“We secured a promise of cooperation. In addition to pursuing that Asher fellow, they’ve agreed to share any and all information they obtain with us.”

“What cooperation? We’d be lucky if they don’t get in the way!”

Belkaryon seemed less than enthused.

“Hey. Rogers.”

“Yes, Lord Demon King.”

“How long must I be patient?”

Rogers swallowed his dry spit as if the expected had come.

“You and Besti would want me to lead with reason even in this situation, but honestly, isn’t it really difficult given the current circumstances? What’s going to be resolved by me controlling my nature?”

Annoying situations were repeating themselves, and what would be resolved by just patiently suppressing my anger like a fool?

The Demon King truly wondered.

“They want this. They even tempted Ascalon, thinking to provoke your temper. I know it’s hard to endure, but you can’t act according to their will, right.....”

Rogers spoke firmly, but suddenly stopped.

In his wide-open eyes, a vivid red current ebbed.

As if waiting for the moment to emerge from the Demon King’s body, it exuded a deadly presence.

“Yes, I know. That’s why I’ll be patient to a point. The problem is that the limit is almost upon us.”

“.....!”

“I’ll go meet Besti for a bit.”

Left behind, Rogers could only stare helplessly at the receding figure of Belkaryon.

“This is bad.....”

He realized that a much bigger issue had arrived than the Demon King failing to control his reason.

The tremor that started from his fist soon spread throughout his body.

“The Sword of Death is opening its eyes!”

* * *

The busy streets bustled and clamored with people, no, demons.

Understandably, there was no sign of Sian.

“I do want to praise you for making it this far without wandering off... But now, how do you plan to find that friend?”

“I’ll think about that now.”

Remiharam internally let out a wry laugh.

While motivated by the thought of finding Sian, he had come to Arem without much planning, and the likelihood of Sian still being here was indeed very slim.

Whether Lunab knew his thoughts or not, she gazed down the streets of Arem for a moment with an indifferent look.

“Is this really the demon world?”

“That’s so, isn’t it?”

“I feel like I’m in the human realm. What could be the reason?”

“Our lady must not be able to feel. The difference between humans and demons.....”

Realizing what she had to do, Lunab shook her head.

She sniffed the air as if hunting a scent, perhaps left behind by someone, but...

“It’s not there.”

She couldn’t detect Sian’s scent.

“What is that woman doing? Why is her skin so pale?”

“I can’t see horns, is it my imagination? She looks just like a human?”

“I heard rumors that humans are wandering the demon world nowadays, could it be true?”

Instead of Sian’s scent, whispers about her could be heard from all around.

Despite being cloaked in a hood and robe, every demon passing by took a glance at her.

“I’ve come up with a plan.”

As if an idea struck her, Lunab headed towards the center of the crowd.

Then, she abruptly sat down on the ground.

“Excuse me, lady, what are you trying to do...”

“Keep quiet, please.”

Remiharam promptly silenced himself.

Lunab then quietly closed her eyes, perking up her ears like a rabbit, and murmured softly.

“Amplification...”

The magic converted her mana into hearing to amplify the surrounding sounds, the same spell she used when eavesdropping on the conversation between Besti and Lunab in the Demon King’s Castle.

As her hearing was maximized, voices from the entire street began to funnel into her ears.

Mostly, due to the sheer volume and overlap, nothing was heard clearly.

However, just for a moment,

(Are you asking me to believe that speech? Our members were taken down by a mere human?)

Lunab swiftly opened her eyes wide and perked her ears.

(As unbelievable as it sounds, it’s true! All of our members were taken down by one human with a strange sword! I thought I was going to die too!)

It’s uncommon for conversations among demons living in the demon realm to revolve around humans.

In other words, the chatter about a human happening here was very rare.

But nevertheless, discussions around that human were indeed occurring...

“We might have found him.”

Lunab rose swiftly from her seat and ran towards the source of the voice.

“Really, you never fail to surprise.”

Remiharam marveled at her extraordinary magical prowess.

Their destination was a secluded alley amidst the shadows.

Two demons were engaged in a secretive conversation.

“.....!”

Upon noticing Lunab, they stiffened in surprise.

“What’s that, she’s not getting away...?”

At a glance, it was clear she differed significantly from the demons.

The demons attempted to turn her away but stumbled in their speech.

“Is, is she human?”

She was viewed with the same shock as one might look at a mythical beast.

Caught off guard by their unexpected reaction, Lunab tilted her head.

“I overheard you discussing humans...”

The two demons jerked nervously at the mention.

“Will you share with me?”

One demon vehemently waved his hand, denying it.

“We, we have nothing to do with you anymore! I’ve said all I’m willing to say!”

“What were you talking about? I haven’t heard anything from you?”

“Are you with that filthy human man?”

That inquiry made Lunab’s eyes widen.

“The filthy human man?”

“Yeah! Not only did he kill all our members, but he also caused me to reveal everything, even the most trivial details!”

“Were the human man using a dagger perhaps?”

“Yes, that’s right!”

Realizing she had found the correct person, Lunab flashed a mysterious smile.

“What’s been broken once can be broken again, no difference, right?”

“What?”

“Would you mind telling me? Everything you said to your superior, just as it is.....”

* * *

Not too far or too close, exactly ten steps away.

Maintaining that perfect distance, Devil Dragon led me deeper into the demon realm.

-Swish

A sharply discarded leaf grazed my face.

Though it didn't bleed, it stung more than a knife wound.

Leaves like these were relatively harmless.

In between, some were spotty or entirely dyed red, indicating potency with poison.

Regardless of what this place was for,

"The aura of the Holy Sword?"

[Completely unnoticeable. And you?]

Predictably, no trace of human presence, aside from myself, could be found.

Instead,

"Screech!"

Something attacked from a clump of bushes.

-Scratch

Without even making eye contact, I instantly severed its throat.

I gave the bisected creature a serious glance.

A demon beast I hadn't seen in Lemea canyon.

Roughly speaking, by comparing to the creatures of the human realm, it resembled a snake, much larger than average—thick as a grown woman.

-Trickle

From the severed neck, blood mixed with green fluid seeped out.

Crimson was blood, green was poison.

They flowed separately, like water separated from oil.

“Your taste in food remains unchanged, I see.”

I looked up immediately after the remark.

“Don’t eat that monster. The poison is lethal enough to leave you hungry for days if consumed.”

That instant deciphered the mystery for me.

“It seems as though you’ve seen me eat a demon beast before.”

“.....”

“Have you actually seen me before?”

“Shut up and follow! I don’t want to mingle with a human!”

The creature evaded answering and continued on its path.

During our journey, there were a few more attacks by nameless demon beasts, which strangely only targeted me, never casting an eye at the picky dragon.

Creatures instinctively recognize their apex predators; no foolish demon beast would dare attack a dragon.

But something felt eerily unsettling.

As if the dragon wasn’t avoiding me but rather commanding the beasts to attack.

While dealing annoyingly with these encounters, we arrived at a destination.

“We’ve arrived.”

Amidst a forest void of any human or even the numerous demons we had encountered, not a single life-force could be detected.

“What kind of place is this supposed to be?”

“How would I know? I’m simply following Master Nagel’s orders to bring you here. Asking me won’t offer any information.”

The creature’s response was curt, implying I should figure out the rest myself.

“Isn’t that nose and those eyes just for decoration?”

“What?”

“Are you really suggesting that the human I’m looking for is in such a heart of darkness? Did your leader truly pass on that information? Or did you misunderstand?”

“Would you dare to insult Master Nagel?”

“You are the one I’m insulting.”

Enraged by the unexpected affront, the creature reared up fiercely.

Its momentum hinted it could return to its true form and devour me at any moment, but,

“My role here is done. The rest is up to you!”

It haughtily retreated.

Transforming back to its original form with haste, it spread its wings wide.

“You’ve seen me before, right?”

I repeated my earlier question.

“Again with that? Why would I answer...!”

“Ten years ago, atop the Blood River cliff of Lemea canyon.”

The creature’s expression twisted instantly.

“The Devil Dragon I met across the river stream back then. It’s you, isn’t it?”

“Dr, dragon mistake! I’ll be on my way now! I’m going back!”

-Woosh

A whirlwind kicked up as it shrieked frantically.

Flapping its vast wings, it soared into the sky and hurriedly flew away from me.

A dragon fleeing in the presence of a human.

But then, it had already fled once, so what’s stopping it from fleeing a second time?

At that time, too many eyes were around; I had no choice but to let it go,

But not this time.

That dragon still has more to do for me.

“Dark Art Third Form: Mist Gliding.”

-Whoosh!

With the incantation, I wrapped myself in the emanating mist and followed the creature into the heights of sky.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 277

Chapter 277: Devil Dragon (4)

A sacred race that directly inherited the blood of the gods.

Guardians overseeing the chaotic order of the demon world.

Even the unintelligent, base demonic beasts instinctively realize they cannot approach this being—the Devil Dragon.

For that Devil Dragon to flee in fear of a mere human?

If one were to exaggerate, it could be said this act defies the flow of the world itself.

It was an event that seemed impossible.

It was merely something fascinating, just a little out of the ordinary.

Would you believe that a tiny human child, newly exposed to the world perhaps just for a decade, single-handedly subdued a demonic beast?

What if it was said they ate at the scene and even neatly cleaned up afterward?

Such a tale couldn't even be considered a joke.

Yet, I saw it clearly with my own two eyes.

This individual was human, yet not human-like at all.

Certainly, even in the human realm, a mutant treated with contempt, I got the feeling they would be capable of great deeds.

At the thought that this being might even taste quite delightful to consume, I was interrupted by a sudden realization.

“.....?”

The human caught sight of me and our gazes locked.

I will likely never forget the feeling of that moment, even after an eternity passes.

The human's eyes glimmered like a top predator who had discovered the ultimate prey, filled with rapture.

They dared to gaze upon me—a Devil Dragon, the supreme lifeform and predator—as mere prey.

It was my first time receiving such treatment since my birth as a dragon.

I wondered if their intelligence level was even lower than that of demonic beasts, but that wasn't the case.

The human was sincere.

They genuinely identified me as prey, a dragon, and charged.

I thought it was an unexpected stroke of misfortune, but after all, a human is still a human.

With just a snort, I could make them vanish without a trace.

However, I couldn't.

The strength of this human far surpassed the power of me, a Devil Dragon.

Could this be the true nature of humans?

No, that couldn't be right.

This human was clearly a miscreation!

With a strong sense of denial, for the first time within me sprung a powerful desire for survival.

In the end, I turned my back on that human and fled, too embarrassed to speak of it to anyone, including my kin, even after 10 years.

The meeting with that human was like a nightmare I never wanted to experience again, but now, 10 years later, he appeared in the demon world.

Although he grew in appearance, his eyes remained the same.

Why would he show up in such a deep, unlikely place within the demon world?

I didn't know the reason, but I tried my best to avoid him.

I just wanted to finish my business and leave quickly, but what do you know?

The leader of my kind had designated me as a guide and instructed me to escort that human to a specific location.

The word of our leader is absolute, and I, still not fully mature, could not dare to refuse.

Despite the unpleasant feelings I held back, I managed to bring him to the appointed place.

But why is this damned human always making my life difficult?

"Seems you've grown a bit, huh?"

Sian floated in the air with ease, lacking wings.

He approached the Devil Dragon quickly and blocked the way, then flashed a smile.

"Come down. Don't we have more to do?"

"What else is there to do? I've fully executed Lord Nagel's command! My work ends here!"

"Did your leader really direct you to guide me to this place? Are you sure?"

"Are you insinuating that I, a dragon who received orders directly from our leader, would deceive a mere human? For what reason!"

Regardless of how lowly humans were, there was no reason for a dragon, who had received orders from the leader of their kind, to lie to a human.

Accordingly, he led Sian to the exact location specified by Nagel without deviation.

"Your leader said this, didn't they? They hope we never have to meet again. If I find nothing here, I'll go back to your leader. Will that be alright with you?"

"There's a limit to shamelessness! Why involve Lord Nagel if you can't find anything?"

“I’m not saying I’ll blame your leader. I mean that I would blame you.”

“.....”

“If I come back because you guided me wrong. If that’s fine with you, well, I’ll go.”

The Devil Dragon exhaled heavily, clearly bothered.

In his gaze at Sian, anger mixed with a sense of injustice.

“Why are you doing this to me, exactly?”

“Out of all the mature dragons, there must be a reason why you were the one sent.”

“What?”

“Stop wasting time, and come down. Unlike you guys, I don’t have wings, so I can’t stay up long.”

Sian was the first to retract his power and descended to the ground.

“Ah, seriously, how did I end up in such a situation!”

The Devil Dragon sighed heavily as he looked up at the sky, then folded his wings and followed Sian down.

Then, he transformed back into human form through polymorph.

“You seem pretty comfortable walking around as a human, huh? Your leader does, too.”

“Don’t be sarcastic. And stop with the ‘you, you’; I have a name! Mishuka Andersen Azui.....”

“Just say the first part.”

Though he wanted to shout the full name into his ears to heavily imprint it in his mind,

“...Mishuka.”

He reluctantly provided just the first name.

“Why do you unnecessarily go for such long names when your leader simply calls me ‘Nagel’?”

“It’s none of your business. I don’t understand you humans who stick to short names.”

There was no point in trying to understand each other over mere names, so Sian shifted the conversation back to the original topic.

“So, why do you think your leader guided me here?”

“Why are you asking me that.....?”

Provoked by the deadly gaze that stirred past memories, Mishuka stumbled over his words a moment.

“Before asking me, maybe try sensing what’s around first.”

I have already sensed the surrounding energy multiple times.

The dry air parching my throat, the dull vegetation scent numbing my head, the occasional smell of demonic beast blood from those I’ve dealt with.

And the divine energy (神氣) unique to dragons.

Most of it seemed to emanate from Mishuka, who was beside me, but whether it was him or not, it subtly spread through the air, invisible like mist.

“You might not sense it, but within this pervasive divine energy, another type of energy is lying in wait.”

“Energy lying in wait?”

“Yeah. Concealing energy to this fine degree is impossible unless you’re someone like Lord Nagel. I’d like to see the face of the culprit.”

With those words, Sian closed his eyes and cast a spell.

“Stealth Technique Four: Detecting Intent to Kill.”

As if searching for something that didn’t exist, I excluded all immediately perceptible energies and focused on detecting hidden ones.

‘Found it.’

Just like something hidden within a small gap in a thick wall, I detected a familiar energy.

It was an aura I had encountered numerous times in the human world,

‘The aura of a holy sword.’

It was the aura of the holy sword Durandal.

“A pocket dimension.”

Using the power of a god’s artifact to create a separate space within the boundaries of dimensions, separate from reality.

The owner of the holy sword wasn’t in the human world, but rather hiding within a pocket dimension in the demon world.

Somewhere in the vicinity.

“From your expression, you’ve finally realized, but it doesn’t matter. Just knowing about the existence of a pocket dimension doesn’t mean you can...”

-Wooong!

“What, what’s that?”

Mishuka was in disbelief.

He was about to explain how complex and difficult it would be to locate the entrance to a pocket dimension now that its existence was known when, directly in front of him, Sian openly created one.

“Can you also create pocket dimensions?”

That a mere human, not a dragon, could create pocket dimensions was unthinkable.

Just what was the identity of this being?

“What are you waiting for?”

“.....?”

“Come in.”

Sian entered first and gestured for Mishuka to quickly follow, tilting his head.

* * *

There’s nothing to find in the middle of nowhere.

Just as roads are found on roads, and people are sought among people, pocket dimensions must also be sought within pocket dimensions.

But honestly, this is not my area of expertise.

That talented junior of mine would be ideal in this field, but it's currently impossible to bring him along.

Instead,

"This. What ever am I doing....."

If we were to utilize this Devil Dragon, who is much more adept than us, the story would be different.

Humans need a god's artifact to even create a pocket dimension, whereas these dragons are inherently divine and, once they reach a certain level of maturity, creating personal pocket dimensions is no big deal, as I've heard.

In other words, dragons handle pocket dimensions far better than humans.

"As I've said before, even using my powers doesn't guarantee that I will find it, right?"

"Then I guess I will have to ask your leader to search for it."

"I really don't know what to say to you!"

As if finally losing his temper, Mishuka grabbed my collar and lifted me.

I thought he might throw a punch, but instead,

"Ha..."

He sighed deeply and turned back to resume searching for the pocket dimension.

He might be quick to anger, but he seems to be a good listener.

I crossed my arms and watched his disgruntled back for a moment.

"Hey."

"Isn't it Mishuka, you learned my name."

"Why did you come to the human world?"

He stopped tracing the energy and turned to gaze at me.

"Do I have to tell you?"

“If you don’t want to, don’t.”

“Then why ask?”

I raised an eyebrow as if to say there was no particular reason.

Mishuka’s face scrunched up as if debating whether to speak.

“I was just a little curious. Humans are said to be lowly creatures, and I wanted to see for myself just how barbaric they really are. So, I thought I’d just take a quick look...”

“Did you go to the Lemea Valley?”

“Yes! After encountering you there, I was so infuriated I couldn’t sleep for a long time!”

Would he react if I said I also regretted not being able to eat him and scowled occasionally?

I was curious but did not express it.

“Lord Nagel has always viewed humans very negatively. But at some point, Lord Nagel’s perspective seemed to moderate. They considered us not so different after all...”

Not so different.

For a species as arrogant as dragons to regard humans like that was hard for me to believe.

“Did your leader also visit the human world?”

“Yes, about nine years ago? I’m not sure of the reason, but they did visit once. They seemed quite distressed afterwards, though...”

-Crack

Suddenly, sparks arose from Mishuka’s hands as he manipulated divine energy.

“I found it!”

With a shout, Mishuka stood up quickly.

Waving his hand through the air, creating a large circle, light sprang from the circle and a gate formed.

After a brief moment of staring blankly into it,

-Fizzz

The light of the gate dimmed, unstable.

“The owner of that space doesn’t want you there. Desperately trying to close it, see?”

It looked like it would vanish any moment.

If I don’t enter it now, finding it again would likely be even tougher.

-Hwaak!

With no hint of hesitation, I threw myself into the gate.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 278

Episode 278: A Sign of Calamity (1)

“Princess?”

Lesimus stood in front of the wide-open door, a look of desolation on his face.

What immediately caught his eye were the empty plates strewn about the table, and the windows flung wide open.

Neither Arin, who had been conversing in this room, nor Nana were anywhere to be seen.

The knights who had witnessed the scene were all plunged into panic as well.

“The princess has disappeared!”

“Quick, report this elsewhere too!”

As a knight moved swiftly to report,

“Wait.”

Lesimus stopped him.

With a face set in determination, she calmly walked towards the table.

Among the impeccably cleared dishes lay a single piece of letter, its author unknown.

Lesimus promptly unfolded the letter to check its contents.

“.....”

Then, not long after, she put the letter down and, looking out the open window, sighed deeply.

“Le-Lesimus, sir! Is that the letter left by the princess?”

“Yes. It seems so.”

“What does it say...?”

The knights waited anxiously for Lesimus to read the letter aloud.

However, rather than reading it immediately, Lesimus shut her eyes tightly.

She wrestled internally over how to react to the situation, but soon, having steeled her resolve, faced the knights.

“The princess has gone to do what must be done.”

The knights blinked, thinking they had misheard.

“To do what, exactly?”

“Yes.”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know.”

It might sound like an irresponsible answer, but it was the best Lesimus could give.

The letter Arin left contained only this one line, with no further information.

<I will go and do what Arin Severus must do.>

* * *

-Whooosh!

A once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Or, considering the course of human history, how many people had experienced the same?

Arin thought that even counting on both hands wouldn't suffice.

A human riding a dragon through the sky.

More than marvelous or strange, she questioned whether this was truly reality, it seemed so much like fear.

"Arin unni, is the speed okay? Aren't you scared?"

"Eh, yeah, I'm fine. Probably..."

The words following 'I'm fine' were lost to Nana.

"If you're scared, let me know anytime. I'll slow down."

"Th-thanks, Nana."

She just hoped that Nana wouldn't fly any higher.

"When could you first transform?"

"What did you say? I can't hear you, unni!"

The howling winds at high altitude made it hard to hear.

Arin clenched her eyes and shouted.

"When were you first able to transform?!"

"Three years ago! I started feeling a strange energy in my body and then I could transform!"

Nana flapped her wings more powerfully, increasing their speed of flight.

"It feels really great! I've always wanted to take Arin unni for a ride! Next time, I want to go out with just papa, you, and me!"

"With... with Sian?"

"Yeah! But papa seems to dislike flying. He always refuses to ride on Nana's back."

Arin felt like she understood the reason.

“Have papa and Arin unni become close again? Let’s go out together next time!”

“Yeah. I wish that could really happen...”

A wishful thought that seemed nice if it could come true.

Though it seemed unlikely, Arin tenderly harbored that small hope.

“.....!”

The gleeful shine in Nana’s eyes suddenly sharpened.

“What’s wrong, Nana?”

“Hold on tight, Arin unni!”

Sensing danger, Nana swiftly reduced their altitude.

Caught off guard, Arin nearly had a heart-stopping moment.

They were over a vast canyon range with cliffs so deep, their bases were out of sight.

Without hesitation, Nana plunged into the midst of it.

Only when they reached the base of the cliffs did they stop flying, Nana returned to her original form.

“Nana, why are we here...?”

Bewildered, Arin asked as she got off, and then shivered with a sudden jolt.

She could feel a series of energies slowly tightening around them from the darkness.

Nana, who had sensed the energy before Arin, sharpened her tail like a blade, staring ahead.

-Thud!

In a cliff corner where no light penetrated.

The sound of heavy, yet not loud footsteps began approaching from all directions.

As the footsteps drew closer, sweat covered Arin’s palms.

“Light of Guidance!”

Remaining calm, she cast magic that lit the dark surroundings.

Despite the illumination, nothing seemed to appear at first.

-Thud!

But the mystery steps continued.

Soon, a giant shadow with the shape of wings loomed in front, and Arin quickly drew her sword.

“.....”

After a moment, five bizarre figures emerged from the shadows.

All had black hair, horns on both sides of their heads, and wings on their backs.

“Demons?”

Arin believed without a doubt that they must be demons.

“This doesn’t make sense...”

However, they were not demons.

Putting aside the human Arin, a sense of puzzlement and confusion filled the eyes of those observing Nana.

“Why would such a being exist in this world?”

“Would Lord Nagel approve of this?”

“It’s not just Lord Nagel, no one should find out.”

Their astonishment soon turned into murderous intent towards Arin and Nana.

Sensing this, the murderous aura began to simmer in Nana’s eyes as well.

Amidst a situation tense enough to explode at any moment,

“.....!”

Managing to control her trembling heart, Arin looked down at her feet.

“Magic circle?”

A magic circle overflowing with multicolored mana.

Arin, as well as the others watching, were baffled by the unfamiliar magic circle that had seemingly popped up without notice.

“Could it be?”

Arin sensed a familiar mana pulse.

With a hint of hope, she looked around and soon spotted a familiar figure poised beneath the sphere of Guiding Light atop a cliff.

“Capture her, it’s a teleportation circle!”

Though too late in identifying the magic circle, they rushed forward,

-Whoosh!

Arin and Nana were enveloped in light from the circle and vanished.

-Thump!

In an unknown location where they had been teleported,

Arin swiftly raised her head and found herself face to face with the one who had rescued them from danger.

“Are you hurt?”

“Lunab!?”

It was Lunab who had left for the Demon Realm with Sian.

“How did you get here?”

“It was quite bold of you. Coming to the Demon Realm and deciding to face a Devil Dragon?”

“A Devil Dragon? Weren’t they just demons?”

That the threatening figures were Devil Dragons, akin to elite monsters, meant they were in an extremely dangerous situation.

Overwhelmed, Arin couldn’t hide her shock.

“Dragons, okay! They smelt just like Nana!”

Nana, now with a cheerful smile unlike before, showed her original form.

“But where is this?”

Belatedly surveying the landscape, Arin blinked and inquired.

“Where else? In the Demon Realm.”

“That I get, but the atmosphere is a bit...”

Where they were was markedly different from their original location.

If not for the red sky, it would be hard to believe it was the Demon Realm because it felt quite peculiar, yet oddly familiar.

“While transferring the senior and this child through the portal, I shifted space as well. Fleeing nearby would only lead to us being quickly tracked, so I thought it best to escape to a place with many eyes.”

Lunab explained that this was one of the Demon Realm’s residential areas called Alem.

“But why are you alone? Where is Sian?”

“Ah, that’s a bit complicated to explain...”

Lunab stroked her chin, pondering where to start.

“Now that I think of it, senior, why did you come here? Without any guards?”

“That, well, it’s also a bit complex to explain if I might...”

“Screaaam!”

At that moment, a chilling scream echoed from the distance.

* * *

My automatic response entering the space was to squint.

As if rejecting my presence, the overwhelming brightness engulfed my vision, making it hard to keep my eyes open.

The gate disappeared the moment I entered, and Mishuka, who had opened it for me, couldn’t follow through.

Probably, right now she must be clutching her head in frustration in my spatial dimension.

[Ah. Already starting to feel nauseous?]

I concur.

The repulsive energy rolled in like tides, gradually constraining me more and more.

Despite the discomfort, with nowhere else to go, I moved forward resolutely.

A few steps in, the silhouette of someone familiar came into view.

It wasn't Eshel.

Her hair was much longer than his, but the energy emanating from her felt nearly indistinguishable from that of the demon.

At this point, deeming them identical wouldn't be far off.

"Here we meet again, Xian Vert."

She turned her head slowly to greet me, her welcome neither particularly welcoming nor unwelcoming.

Anael Pasinity, the demon mother and the very woman I sought in the Demon Realm.

I responded without a word, merely glancing around to take in my surroundings.

"Alone?"

"Yes. Since a bit earlier. The moment you entered this space, I dispatched everyone that was with me, including your father. ..."

As she said, there were no signs of life apart from us two, and Kielam was the only other presence.

"It must be disappointing for you who wished for my son, but why don't we take this opportunity to have a deeper conversation?"

"Why should I?"

"I'll ask the question. Why don't you follow Eshel?"

Despite my apparent reluctance, she insisted on questioning me.

“From the moment I bore Eshel, I granted him the power to make all beings in this land his followers, except for the gods.”

“You sure talk of power easily.”

“To you it might not seem much, but to me, and to our kind, this power has been the only means to perpetuate our existence.”

“I’m not here to listen to your side of the story?”

The more I heard, the more I tired.

I gripped Kielam tightly and quickly advanced toward her.

“Are you intending to kill me?”

No, I planned to drag her out by her hair.

“You might not realize yet, but you can’t leave here.”

Kielam’s blade paused just a fingernail’s distance from her neck.

“If I can’t leave, that means no one will come to save you either.”

“That’s right. No one can leave this space now, nor can anyone enter. Only you, me, and that demon sword will remain. This won’t change even if you kill me.”

It took me precisely three seconds to recognize her words were true.

[Hey boss. This situation doesn’t seem like we can afford to take it easy.]

Kielam too felt something wrong, emitting an uneasy laugh.

Something about this spatial dimension was strange.

As time passed, the boundaries between the spaces felt increasingly fortified.

Was she seriously planning to sacrifice herself just to keep me trapped here?

“Don’t worry too much. I’m not going to keep you here forever.”

Anael looked triumphantly into my face as she continued.

“Just stand by helplessly in this space, Xian! By the time you manage to leave this space, both the Demon Realm and the Human Realm will have been plunged into chaos and disarray!”

Only then did I realize the true nature of this spatial dimension.

This wasn't a hideout for prey fleeing into the Human Realm.

It was a trap,

A cage to confine the predator that came hunting.

"The calamity has already begun!"

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 279

Episode 279. The Harbinger of Disaster (2)

"Aaaah!"

A chilling scream echoed from the streets.

The three ladies intuitively knew that the scream was accompanied by pain.

They immediately rushed toward the direction of the noise.

"What on earth is this?"

The unbelievable scene that unfolded before their eyes made all three of them widen their eyes.

"If I had to define it, it would be a massacre."

That was indeed the case.

The situation before the ladies was a literal massacre.

Mysterious robed figures were indiscriminately slashing their swords at the demon folk.

The victims of the slaughter were the powerless demons.

"Why is this happening all of a sudden...!"

Confused and unable to comprehend the situation, Arin focused her gaze on the swords wielded by the strange attackers.

“That sword?”

It was a sword she recognized all too well.

“It’s the sword used by the soldiers at the front!”

The pure white longswords used by the high-ranking knights who served under the command of Duke Vert to guard the front.

The fact that these swords were being used here meant,

“It means that the knights from the frontline are committing a massacre in the Demon World.”

This was an utterly unacceptable worst-case scenario.

“We must stop them!”

Without hesitation, Arin ran towards the knights.

Lunab and Nana also followed her lead.

“Move! Get out of the way!”

“Run for your life!”

Caught off guard by the sudden turn of events, the demons could not react and desperately ran screaming.

They were unable to deal with these top-tier knights renowned in the Human World.

In a critical situation, their instinct to prioritize their own lives was no different from that of humans.

“Please help me!!”

An innocent demon child who couldn’t escape in time was pitifully begging for help in the middle of the street.

However, behind the child loomed a blade ready to usher in death.

The child clenched their eyes, unable to even scream.

-Clang!

“.....?”

Realizing that she wasn't dead, the child cautiously opened her eyes.

“Are you okay?”

Instead of answering, the child just nodded.

Having confirmed the child's safety, Arin refocused her attention on the knight without a moment's relief.

-Squeak!

But Arin could not withstand the superior might of the high-ranking knight.

The balance was quickly lost, and she desperately struggled to prevent herself from falling.

“Blow! Cold gales of water!”

The fusion magic 'Aqua Blast' that combines water and wind.

Lunab's supportive attack added to the critical situation.

-Thump!

Caught off guard, the knight was sent flying backward by the magic.

“Now, run!”

“Thank you!”

The child was able to safely escape, guided by Lunab, who had followed.

The knights then immediately surrounded Arin.

“Even though you hide your faces, I know your identity. Don't even try to hide it!”

Arin defiantly shouted, refusing to be cowed.

“Why are you committing such an intolerable massacre?”

The knights did not answer.

There was no sign of volition on their hidden faces.

They seemed like puppets.

“It doesn’t look like they intend to respond.”

“Do you have any guesses, Lunab?”

“Unfortunately, no. This is my first time encountering these knights in the Demon World, too.”

As the women’s questions deepened,

-Swish

Suddenly, the standoffish knights began to step back one by one.

After a brief moment, a familiar figure revealed themselves in the created space.

“.....!”

Recognizing his identity, Arin bit her lip hard and gripped her sword’s hilt tightly.

“So you have pursued me here, Princess Arin.”

“Duke Vert!”

* * *

Power.

This was the absolute element required to maintain the chaotic order of the Demon World.

Only the being known as the Demon King must control everything.

Reason? Peace?

Such trivial, fragile things were not needed.

This was the Demon World, not the Human World,

where everything must be controlled by the absolute element called power.

“Belcarion?”

“.....”

“Belcarion!”

“Huh? Did you call me, Besti?”

Only after being called a couple of times did Belcarion respond by lifting his head.

“Are you listening to me?”

“What were you saying?”

“I said I would explain everything that happened with my father, or rather, Ascalon...”

“Well, I already heard everything from Rogers. I told you, there’s no need to talk about it anymore. It’s okay, you don’t have to say it again.”

Belcarion dismissed it as a matter of the past and told her not to worry, but Besti’s heart became even more uneasy.

“Is everything... okay?”

“Why? Do I not seem okay to you?”

Despite her heart’s turmoil, Besti couldn’t bring herself to nod.

Belcarion was smiling as if nothing was wrong.

“Don’t worry about me, just take good care of yourself. You know I can’t do without you.”

Suddenly, Besti felt chills running down her spine.

In any other situation, those words would’ve been touching, but for some reason, they sounded exceptionally unsettling today.

“Belcarion, I was thinking about it and I think...”

-Thud

Besti, who had been about to continue her words while holding his hand, suddenly collapsed into the Demon King’s arms.

“Besti?”

For a second, Belcarion was stunned and did not understand the situation.

“What’s this? Why all of a sudden...?”

But then he quickly realized something was wrong and hurriedly moved her away.

“Besti, wake up! Besti!”

He shook her, trying to rouse her, but Besti had already lost consciousness and did not open her eyes.

Even while unconscious, she still clutched the pendant tightly in her hand.

“Somebody help! Besti has collapsed!”

Soon, the castle’s healers rushed to transport her.

Fortunately, she was still alive, but her condition had become much more critical than when she first collapsed.

“It seems all of her life force has been exhausted.”

Rogers explained the reason for her collapse after assessing Besti’s condition.

Until now, Lunab had been continuously replenishing her life force, allowing her to stay conscious.

However, since Lunab had left the castle to find Sean, there was no means to restore Besti’s vitality.

The pendant she wore was emitting a light much stronger than before.

“The enhanced power of the pendant is draining Miss Besti’s life force even more rapidly.”

“So what exactly are you saying I should do?”

“It would be best to bring back Miss Lunab who left the castle, at least as an emergency measure.”

But that was merely a stopgap measure.

It was not a direct solution to save Besti.

“My, my Demon King!”

Amidst this, another demon rushed in urgently from outside the door.

“There’s a serious incident happening in Arem!”

“A serious incident?”

“Yes! Unidentified monstrous people are massacring the residents...!”

-Crack!

Before the demon could finish speaking, the Demon King suddenly grabbed him by the collar.

“Massacre? What nonsense are you spouting?”

The demon could not continue and only let out agonizing groans.

“Calm down, my Demon King!”

Rogers quickly intervened.

Gasping for air, the demon finally managed to speak.

“Unidentified humans appeared in Arem and started swinging swords at the residents!”

“.....!”

Shocked and unable to speak, Belcarion let Rogers ask instead.

“Humans? You’re saying humans attacked our demon folk?”

“Yes, that seems to be the case! From what I’ve heard, fortunately, other humans showed up and saved the demons...!”

-Clang!

Before the demon could finish, Belcarion spread his wings and flew out through the window.

“My Demon King!”

Rogers’ desperate cry was completely ignored.

With a fierce expression, Belcarion flew towards Arem, but suddenly he turned his body and changed direction.

It was towards Lemea Gorge.

-Thunk

At the exact same spot as before,

Belcarion landed on the ground with his wings folded and with sharp eyes, followed the stream of the Blood River.

Soon, the owner of the golden Holy Sword appeared.

"It's nice to see you again, oh Demon King."

Facing the one he had been seeking, magic energy exploded from Belcarion's body.

"It sounds like you knew I would come?"

"I thought you would be very anxious around this time. I've been waiting for you. It seems you have been desperately looking for me."

Echel's smile was even more peculiar, irritating Belcarion.

Belcarion's face turned murderous.

"You've already crossed the line. Your future is decided. Even if this Demon World falls to ruin under your hands, I will tear you to shreds myself!"

Even if Echel would save Besti now, it didn't matter.

Belcarion proclaimed in front of him that he would certainly kill Echel with his own hands.

"You will kill me, but shouldn't you save those who need to be saved?"

However, as if expecting this, Echel maintained his smile and continued.

"Do you intend to let Miss Besti die?"

-Whoosh!

Unable to contain himself, the Demon King lunged at Echel with his fist leading,

-Sha-sha-sha

but several pure white blades suddenly fell from above his head.

Belcarion disdainfully received the blades with his whole body.

Despite being pierced by dozens of blades, he was unscathed.

“If you kill me, you can’t save Miss Besti.”

“That’s for me to decide after I’ve seen it!”

Belcarion reached out again to grasp his body, but as soon as his hand touched him, Echel’s body rippled like water and then vanished in an instant.

It had been just an illusion.

“You need to do one thing.”

Though his body disappeared, his voice lingered, continuing to echo in Belcarion’s ears.

“Please kill Sean.”

“.....!”

“Then you can save Miss Besti. After that, whether you come after me in the Human World or leave me alone is entirely up to you.”

With those words, Echel’s voice vanished completely.

Left alone, Belcarion looked up at the sky, suddenly chuckled, and finally roared loudly.

“Fine! I’ll do what you want! Afterwards, I’ll destroy everything! I will lead you, your existence, and the world you live in, to ruin!”

The Demon King, having declared his intent, stretched out one hand to focus his magic energy.

-Whoosh

A black flame arose from his hand, and as it reached down, it gradually morphed into the shape of a red sword.

The Demon King’s ruthless nature had finally awakened.

Laughter that belonged to an unknown spirit ominously spread throughout the gorge.

(To be continued in the next episode)

**The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter
280**

Chapter 280: Premonition of Catastrophe (3)

The number of human knights that had appeared at Arem was ten.

Including Duke Berth, who was commanding them, there was a total of eleven, and they were all top-tier knights who had made a name for themselves in the human realm.

“Reinforce: Power Enhancement.”

With Arin’s arrival, the knights simultaneously cast enhancement spells.

Soon after, their physical abilities reached their peak, and a golden aura began to radiate brightly from their swords.

“The power of the holy sword!”

Recognizing the aura, Arin furrowed her brows intensely.

Just like at the royal palace, the knights who had inherited the power of the holy sword now exhibited a much more formidable strength than before.

“Why are you doing this, Duke Berth?”

“Do you still ask for a reason?”

To Arin’s question, the duke replied with a tone that suggested her question was pitiful.

His expression also conveyed that she should already know why he was doing such things by now.

Beings with no will of their own, just puppets following given orders.

To such beings, questions or persuasion were meaningless.

It was enough to block or stop them.

However, the situation was far from favorable for Arin.

It had been around two hours since she arrived in the demon world.

Her body was still not adapted to the environment of the demon world, making even breathing extremely uncomfortable.

Lunab and Nana seemed relatively fine, but they could just end up being a burden rather than help.

“The grace of holy light shall protect us!”

Along with the incantation, a pure white curtain unfolded in front of Arin.

It was the light-attribute defense magic ‘Wall of Resistance.’

Arin immediately turned her head toward the one who cast it.

“We have bought some time at least.”

Lunab, looking calm, held the grimoire Lemiharam, which blocked the knights’ approach by emanating an immense magical power.

“We won’t be able to hold on for long. We need to decide how to deal with these deluded knights by then.”

Lunab was forcing Arin to make a choice.

“What do you think we should do, Lunab?”

“The first thing that comes to mind is desperately gathering our strength to hold off these knights...”

Lunab raised her other hand, which was not holding the grimoire, and extended a finger.

“The second is to hold on desperately until Cian-senpai arrives.”

“Cian, where is he now?”

“I don’t know. But I have a feeling he’ll be here soon.”

It was purely an intuition, without any solid basis.

Arin touched her forehead, slightly overwhelmed by the situation.

“And what’s the third option?”

“Running away without looking back. As far as we can.”

It was an unexpectedly drastic measure by Lunab’s standards.

“I believe that choosing this third option would be the best if we want to survive.”

“Why? Why would that be?”

“Because this isn’t our land.”

It took Arin a moment to understand what she meant.

“A man who does not wish for chaos in this demon world is coming to resolve this situation... flying here rapidly.”

While Lunab was speaking, a sudden and uneasy presence covered the sky, along with a tremendous killing intent that caused bodies to flinch automatically.

“It’s too late now.”

Realizing the situation had worsened, Lunab conjured more magical power.

“Fall back, Sister Arin!”

Nana, sensing the threat, sharpened her eyes and stepped forward, and the opposing knights pointed their swords in the same direction.

-Thud!

A moment later, something fell from the sky with incredible speed, raising a massive roar and a whirlwind of dust in all directions.

As the dust cleared, the first thing everyone saw was a red sword emitting a feeling as if it had gathered all the evils of the world—grotesque and impure.

Following the hand that wielded the sword, everyone at the scene was struck with horror.

“...!”

Demon King Belkarion.

Gone was his logical demeanor, now only his true instincts remained, revealing his form as the strongest being in the demon world.

* * *

Approximately 2km from Arem, in a plateau area.

Five Devil Dragons, polymorphed into humans, were observing the situation at Arem using their innate ability ‘Thousand-Mile Eyes,’ with Nagel at the forefront.

“The Demon King has finally drawn the Death Sword.”

Nagel’s expression was grim as he focused on the red sword in Belkarion’s hand.

“Lord Nagel! What should we do?”

“With things having escalated to this point, our intervention would only complicate matters further. It’s best to remain as onlookers.”

“Even you cannot handle the power of that Death Sword, my Lord?”

“It’s not just me. That weapon is a divine artifact that not even gods can be sure to overcome.”

The Death Sword, an absolute artifact allowed only to the beings titled ‘Demon King.’

Having watched over the history of the demon world for ages, Nagel was well aware of the sword’s power.

“The Death Sword has been passed down from Demon King to Demon King since the dawn of time. When a Demon King perishes, the sword is handed down to the next one, inheriting all its previous owner’s powers...”

In other words, the sword contained not only the power of the current Demon King Belkarion but also the power of all the Demon Kings who had reigned over the demon world.

“If the Holy Sword and the Demon Sword vary greatly in power depending on the potential of their bearers, the Death Sword gains strength as it is passed down, accumulating the obsessions of the greatest Demon Kings. The spirit of the sword, born from these obsessions, has probably been provoking the Demon Kings all along. The awakening of the sword means that...”

Nagel paused, leaving the sentence hanging.

“It means the winds of turmoil are yet again stirring in this demon world. Not only here, but the human world will not be safe now either.

Even from a distance, the fearful presence the Devil Dragons felt made them hold their breath and watch silently.

“Why would such a sword be given to the Demon King?”

“It’s a resistance, meant to protect the demon world from those called the highest beings. It’s a sign that it’s not just you who can destroy the world...”

Nagel surveyed all corners of Arem, but the one he sought was not in sight.

“Have you heard any news from Mishuka?”

“Communication ended once she reached the designated location. Given that there is no telepathic signal, she might have entered a spatial void with that human.”

Meaning she had entered but had not yet returned.

Nagel turned his gaze away from Arem to the direction Cian and Mishuka had gone.

One dragon then cautiously asked Nagel.

“Lord Nagel. Do you possibly think that human can stop the Demon King?”

The other dragons, too, were silently waiting for Nagel’s response.

Nagel answered without hesitation.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?”

“I say I don’t know because I truly don’t know.”

All the Devil Dragons who had been following Nagel for hundreds of years knew one thing for sure.

Their leader never gives an uncertain answer.

If it’s true, it’s true.

If not, it’s not.

For the first time, Nagel, who always gave sure answers, said he did not know.

“He was an inscrutable human even I could not predict. So that’s all I can say...”

At least one thing was certain: in this demon and human world combined, he was the most likely being able to stop the Demon King.

And one more thing caught Nagel’s eye.

‘That child?’

He was referring to the unfamiliar pink-haired woman who stood boldly in front of Arin and Lunab, shielding them from the Demon King.

A dual being that was neither human nor dragon.

She was an exceedingly irksome existence for some unknown reason.

However, not wishing to show this annoyance to the other dragons, Nagel again shifted his gaze toward the Demon King.

* * *

In a space surrounded by pure white clouds and towering pillars, a man was sitting with his legs crossed.

“ ... ”

As if lost in deep thought, he spent a long time absorbed in contemplation.

“You’re showing an unbecoming face, Lumen Del?”

A woman’s relaxed voice broke the silence, and he tilted his head slightly.

She was an unwelcome visitor it seemed, as his expression was clearly uncomfortable.

“The Demon King seems to have manifested the power of the Death Sword. Is this also your plan?”

“Why are you asking me that?”

“I was just thinking that maybe you’ve let go of the reins improperly. As you know, the power of the Death Sword is not something to be underestimated, as it rivals our own power. If the Demon King cannot control it and becomes berserk, who can stop it? Or is it your intention now to descend upon the demon world following the human world?”

“Go back if you aim to mock me, Aquanis.”

Lumen Del fluttered his hand, showing no interest in continuing the conversation.

“Don’t take it the wrong way. I was just worried and wanted to share my thoughts.”

Regardless, she moved behind the throne where he sat.

“Do you have a plan in mind?”

“There’s no need for a plan. Excessive power always leads to one’s downfall. The Demon King is no different. It might cause some damage to the human world, but ultimately he will lead himself to ruin.”

“So it means what remains after the calamity is important, right?”

Lumen Del looked deeply into her eyes instead of answering.

“By the way, your recent actions have been intriguing.”

“Why is that?”

“You’ve been going down to the human world often to exchange something with a dragon? Her name was Marian?”

A slight disturbance appeared between Aquanis’ eyebrows.

“It’s not nice for a man to pry into a woman’s affairs.”

“If you dislike that, then don’t go around doing foolish things, Aquanis. If you don’t want to end up like those who were expelled...”

With a smile, not quite a smile, Lumen Del raised the corners of his mouth, delivering a sincere warning to her.

Aquanis’ face, full of smiles, seemed to falter momentarily, but soon she regained her usual composure.

“Conversations with you indeed lack any fun, as always.”

She slowly turned around to leave, but then suddenly stopped.

“Oh, I had an interesting thought recently.”

She turned her head back toward Lumen Del.

“What if the successor of the black mist stopped the Death Sword-wielding Demon King?”

“What are you getting at?”

Lumen Del’s face contorted instantly.

“The tide is turning that way, isn’t it? You probably wanted your successor to be the order in the human world, but now the world is moving in the opposite direction. Maybe the successor of the mist defeating the Demon King is also part of this world’s flow.”

“ ... ”

“Who knows? Maybe the human who appears before you soon will show us more than the creation we’ve envisioned.”

A deep, genuine smile curled on her lips, as if she wished for that future.

The Goddess of Blue Waters left the space.

(To be continued in the next episode)