

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin

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The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 281

Chapter 281: The Flow for Him (1)

Do you know when a person suffers the most?

Is it when their body is stabbed by a sword and blood spurts out?

When deadly poison travels down the throat, twisting the guts?

Well, it probably differs drastically from person to person.

But if you ask me what the most excruciating pain is, according to my standards, I'd like to answer like this:

The agony of idleness.

The pain that surges when realizing that I am in a powerless state where I can do nothing.

This is, very much so, the pain I am currently feeling perfectly.

It's as if the blood is flowing backward so violently that my internal organs seem ready to spurt out of my mouth.

"You seem to be in quite a bit of pain," Haniel jeered at me with a sneer, taking pleasure in my torment.

For your information, since entering this place, she has done nothing to me.

Nor have I done anything to her.

Even if I offered her a pain worse than death, nothing would change.

Right now, I am helplessly trapped in this holy sword's subspace.

-Bang!

In a fit of enraged emotion, I slammed my fist into a white pillar that rose in the corner of the space.

The nausea was so overbearing I felt like I was going mental.

“Seems the Demon King will soon arrive in Arem. Or perhaps he has already arrived.”

I turned my head sluggishly and locked eyes with her once more.

Despite my intense gaze, laden with murderous intent, the devil mother did not stop speaking.

“The lord of the demon realm will surely judge all the humans who dared to commit a massacre in the netherworld. However, his anger won’t be appeased by that alone. The unresolved rage will naturally be directed towards the human world.”

“By any chance, does that include the Duke of Vert, no, my father among those humans in Arem?”

“It’s an obvious question. Even if they are enchanted knights, someone must command them, right?”

Well, what a surprise. As if.

What does a husband who mingled with me matter anyway?

To him, they’re nothing more than disposable pawns for the sake of his oh-so-great child.

Human beings with power slaughtering powerless demons.

The Demon King’s anger towards humans who have crossed that line.

Haniel explained that a Demon King, unable to contain his instinctual nature, would unleash that fury upon the human realm.

I don’t feel like explaining what happens next.

It would be akin to a calamity, just as she said.

And here I am, locked in this revolting space, feeling the full force of idle agony.

It couldn’t be more the epitome of the worst moment.

“Was the pendant just a decoy in the end?”

“To be honest, I didn’t expect you to be able to delay the power of that pendant. Regardless, the complete release was never achieved, so inciting the Demon King’s rampage was only a matter of time. But hastening it doesn’t hurt.”

Even if I were to save that woman named Besti now, it’s already too late.

From the moment we, as humans, swung our swords against the demons, the Demon King’s anger was ignited, and it won’t be easily extinguished.

“Do you think it possible for your son to stop the rampaging Demon King?”

“Of course.”

“On what basis?”

A laughable question, and so I asked again with a hollow laugh.

“Because I made it so.”

Like mother, like son, their answers are strikingly similar.

“As a child of the House of Vert, you must have had your suspicions countless times. So did your brothers. Why did your father pour so much enthusiasm into only the eldest son.....”

“Do you need to ask now? It’s obvious he was played by your cheap enchantments.”

“Do you think that was wrong?”

“Should I think it was right?”

“You must think it was inevitable. After all, it’s no different from the desperate struggle of humans for survival.”

To me, it was nothing more than a weak justification.

“Witch? Enchantment? You claim that you control people at will using strange powers? You know nothing! Not about me! Nor us! The suffering of those shunned by the world!”

She seemed to vent her frustrations that had accumulated over time.

“We simply followed the desperate instincts of humans! The instinct to survive! To realize the value of life! For that purpose, I chose Willyus Vert as my man, bore his son, conceived a completely perfect child from the beginning!”

The only thing I could empathize with was that statement.

She was right.

A completely perfect child from the start.

Because he took everything, I was left with nothing.

There was a time I thought that was how it should be.

Like a fool.

“Eshel Vert. That child is my everything. And I cannot stand to see him crumble because of an existence like you, Sian. Even if it means offering my soul to the demons! I will stop you!”

Offering her soul to demons.

How ironic, from where I stand, you all just look like demons to me.

The sad sorrows of those abandoned by the world?

I have no idea what you’ve been through to say all that, but I can say this for sure.

I, too, have been abandoned once.

By someone who was once my everything, my world, none other than your son.

That’s why I’m resolute in my denial.

Even if all the beings in the world turn their blades against me.....

“An order made for your son, Eshel, was it?”

I’ve heard enough. My ears ache.

“Perhaps it was so in a past life, but not anymore.”

“Past life? What are you talking about?”

“The flow of this world is set to my rhythm.”

Ignoring her question, I continued.

“I’ll break out of this space and rush to where the Demon King is to stop him. That’s my role, and it shall be done.”

“You still don’t understand, do you? This world aligns with Eshel, not.....”

“We’ll see about that. Watch closely from the center of the crumbling space. Between the flow you designed and mine, we’ll see which one prevails.”

-Crack!

I poured every ounce of the fog’s strength I could muster into the Claram and slammed it to the ground.

[I thought I’d die of boredom. It’s unlike you to listen to such a long story, isn’t it?]

Exactly my sentiment.

Whether it works or not, it’s more my style to collide with action. I can’t believe I hesitated oddly for a moment.

-Dududu

The power of the fog transferred to the Claram began to disseminate across the subspace, initiating a tremor.

* * *

Whether it was days or hours apart,

The Demon King Belcarion made his appearance in Arem in an entirely different form than before.

“The, the Demon King?”

The atmosphere felt in the front lines was incomparable to this situation.

Aerin’s limbs quivered helplessly as she failed to move her body.

“Hello, humans?”

Belcarion greeted everyone with a laugh that was certainly not borne of a positive mindset.

“Ah, there are familiar faces and some new ones? Who will tell me what fun you’ve been having in a land that isn’t even yours?”

Of course, both sides knew the laugh wasn’t from a good place.

Veteran knights who'd experienced countless battles trembled at the mere presence of the Demon King's killing intent.

"Why so silent? You don't want to speak? Or do you find it difficult to speak to me?"

Belcarion's eyes then passed over the humans and settled on the scattered bodies of fallen demons.

His gaze, initially on the dead, naturally shifted to the blood-stained swords of the knights.

"Did you do this?"

Instead of replying, the Duke of Vert reached out towards Belcarion.

"Gods Strike!"

With the incantation, a magic circle formed above Belcarion's head and, without hesitation, lightning struck down.

-Crackle!

"What are you doing!"

Startled, Aerin went to cast a protective spell,

-Thud!

but Lunab grabbed her hand and shook her head.

"That won't do anything."

As Belcarion turned distracted by the knights, Aerin noticed Lunab silently emanated mana to escape.

"What are you doing, Lunab?"

"There's nothing good in staying here. We'll just be caught in that whirlwind of rage. Better to leave quietly."

As the Demon King was preoccupied, Lunab was about to recite the last spell, when-

-Crack!

Suddenly, a crack appeared in the magic circle,

-Crash!

and it shattered into pieces like broken glass.

“Going somewhere?”

Without a moment to react, the eyes of the three women turned to the source of the sound.

“When did you...?”

“Trying to flee with something fishy, are you?”

Aerin wanted to explain they had no part in the slaughter and were in fact trying to prevent it, but she was overwhelmed by the bloodlust and couldn't speak.

“Thinking about it, how would Sian react if I killed you here? Would his excitement and agony exceed what I'm feeling now? Surely he'll feel something similar, right?”

Belcarion faced the women.

“He'd truly try to kill me. That wouldn't be so bad! I'm sure it would be very entertaining!”

His purpose was clear as day.

The killing intent that had been directed at the knights was now fully focused on them.

“I wonder what kind of expression he'll make?”

* * *

“Phew...”

Rogers, despair on his face, sat beside fallen Besti, glancing out the window.

As time passed, Besti's lifeforce weakened rapidly, suggesting she'd unlikely survive the night.

In such a crisis, what could the Demon King be doing outside? Since it couldn't be good, Rogers grew more worried about when he would return to the castle.

“Did the servants also feel like this under the former Demon King?”

Although he wished for an answer as he spoke aloud, no response came back – only the faint breathing of unconscious Besti.

“Wishing for a peaceful Demon Realm, was it always this difficult...?”

The only thing birthed from his despair was a plea of sorrow.

-Knock knock

A knock sounded at the door but Rogers didn't even look.

Most likely, it was a demon from inside the castle with unpleasant news.

“Excuse me.”

However, the voice that followed the knock immediately made Rogers turn his head.

As the steward of the Demon King's castle, he recognized the voices of all who dwelled within. Yet he never heard this unfamiliar voice – a clear female voice.

-Creak

The owner of the voice soon entered the room.

“This is the Demon King's castle, right?”

The audacious woman who casually walked in asking if it was indeed the Demon King's castle.

Though hooded and robed, Rogers understood immediately.

She was human, not a demon.

“Who are you?”

The woman hesitated slightly before responding.

“Ah, the name – for now, just call me Emily...”

(To be continued)

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Chapter 282: The Current for His Sake (2)

In the midair amidst the flames, a crimson aura fluttered like a mirage around the four-sided blade. Belkarion, gripping the blade in his right hand, slowly approached; both Arin and Lunab could only watch him helplessly. With each advancing step, despite the decreasing distance, neither of the two women could muster a response.

They wanted to take action, but their bodies refused to comply. Their legs had solidified as if rooted to the ground, and not a trace of mana surged from their fingertips. Having come face to face with the true visage of the Demon King, their once fully functional bodies had ceased responding, as if their capabilities were nothing but lies.

“Haa, haa...”

Only coarse breaths escaped ceaselessly from their lips.

While the women remained powerless, Belkarion had already reached them. His gaze on the fear-stricken duo was indifferent.

-Swish!

In the midst of this, someone boldly blocked the Demon King's path, attempting to halt his advance.

“...”

It was none other than Nana.

She faced Belkarion, her expression neither smiling nor blank but something ambiguously in between.

“I don't recognize your face. Who are you?”

Belkarion tilted his head as he regarded her, but then, with a hint of a smile, he continued.

“You're not human, are you?” The playful laughter followed. “You don't seem to be from the demon tribe either. By your looks, you might be mistaken for a Devil Dragon who has polymorphed... but even that vibe is a bit off. What are you?”

Despite being pressed with questions that carried the weight of an inquisition, Nana remained silent, her eyelids half-closed as she silently faced him.

“Nana, be careful! It's dangerous!” Arin couldn't stand by and watch; she barely managed to open her mouth to whisper-shout at Nana.

Yet, despite Arin's warning, Nana made no response.

Instead,

“Hehe...”

She responded with an unusually bright smile, her lips stretching towards her ears.

“Mister. Do you give off a nice scent?”

Belkarion’s face instantly stiffened.

“It’s not a scent from your body? Strange. It is certainly a scent coming from you, isn’t it?”

Nana tilted her head from side to side questioningly, then suddenly, her bright eyes turned in one direction.

“Ah, is that where the scent is coming from?”

Naturally, Belkarion’s eyes followed hers. Unless Nana was looking at something invisible to others, her gaze was clearly directed at the four-sided blade that the Demon King held in his hand.

“Are you talking about this?”

Belkarion pushed the blade forward, as if to confirm.

“Yes! It’s really interesting! It’s my first time smelling something that isn’t alive...among all the scents I’ve experienced in my life, this is by far the most delicious smell...”

Nana even stuck out her tongue slightly, her lips pouting as if savoring a taste.

“Can I... can I eat this?”

A daring, almost reckless question.

No word in the world could adequately describe the sheer horror of such an inquiry.

With an enigmatic smile still on his face, Belkarion glanced sharply at Nana before suddenly swinging his blade.

“Nana, watch out!”

At that moment, Arin, who had regained control of her body, dashed without hesitation and embraced Nana. Even with the target moved, the blade did not halt. Arin closed her eyes as the shadow of death loomed over her, but then,

-Thump!

A resounding echo accompanied by a ripple effect shattered the impending doom.

Realizing she was alive, Arin cautiously opened her eyes to find a transparent shield glowing like sunlight above her head.

A light attribute defensive spell—Guardian's Shield.

Of course, Arin hadn't cast the spell, nor had Lunab. The one who conjured the magic was none other than Duke Bert.

"Former knight! Protect the princess from the Demon King!"

Following the Duke's command, the knights swiftly formed up and counterattacked against the Demon King.

Caught off guard by the unforeseen circumstances, confusion painted Arin's face.

"..."

Belkarion, however, received the knights' counterattack with a strangely amused smile.

"Are you okay, Arin?"

Nana caressed Arin's face with concern.

"You could've been in big trouble, Nana! What were you even thinking...?"

"I was fine though?"

Nana blinked, seemingly clueless about what she had done wrong.

"Princess!"

Just then, Duke Bert grabbed Arin's wrist, hurriedly pulling her away from the Demon King.

"What are you doing, Duke Bert?"

"I'm trying to protect the princess."

His answer was absurd to the point of disbelief.

"Now, of all times?"

“The princess should not have been in this place from the very beginning.”

Nonetheless, Duke Bert’s eyes showed a seriousness that could only be described as steadfast and resolute.

“I’m aware that my actions are not normal and that the princess may not understand them. But my heart’s intention to protect your safety is sincere!”

Both Arin and Lunab, who had quickly joined her side, were dismayed by his words.

“We’ll buy time. In the meantime, escape from here.”

“I cannot understand. All of a sudden, why...?”

“I’ve already crossed the point of no return, and I must pay the price here and now. But the princess is different. On behalf of me, on behalf of the emperor, you must protect the Usyph Empire! And secure the destiny of humanity!”

A guardian of the continent for many years, his eyes showed nothing but integrity and determination. Perhaps Arin was finally, truly, facing Duke Bert.

“Can I truly see you as the Duke Willyerus Bert that I once admired?”

“A guardian who has protected the empire and the continent for decades cannot have their convictions so easily broken.”

Duke Bert answered firmly.

With her head swirling with doubts, and the situation still full of questions, time wasn’t on Arin’s side. She made her decision.

“As the princess of the Usyph Empire, I command you. Do not die, Duke Bert! You must thoroughly repent and reflect on the sins you have committed!”

For a moment, Duke Bert had no response.

“Answer me, Duke Bert!”

“I will... abide by the princess’s orders.”

That was all.

No more words were needed.

Arin fought to suppress the surge of emotions within her as she turned to leave.

Then, with Nana and Lunab, she began her escape in the opposite direction.

After they had vanished from sight, Duke Bert turned back to face the Demon King.

He knew it within himself.

That he wasn't functioning normally. He had been deluded by an unknown force and was following his eldest son Eshel's words without question.

But,

'As a friend rather than as an emperor, I must ask you for a favor.'

Duke Bert had spent decades fighting for the empire and the peace of the continent, backed by the grace of the emperor; it was a conviction that not even the divine could sway.

And in this situation, he had to prove that conviction one last time.

"Duke, if I die before you... remove that child quietly. Please let her live as a commoner, with no ties to the royal family..."

Emperor Dione had made this request in the event of his death before Duke Bert, pleading for the princess Arin to be saved from the upcoming storm of bloodshed.

Neither the emperor nor the duke, nor anyone else, could have predicted at the time that princess Arin would become the only one capable of shouldering the future of the Usyph Empire and the fate of humanity.

"I will protect her with my life, Your Majesty!"

With a cry of allegiance to the emperor, Duke Bert channeled his magical energy into his sword.

"And my insufficient role as a father... I entrust to you. May you create the world you desire... Sian!"

With his last testament for his most reliable child, Duke Bert charged forward.

* * *

Following Duke Bert's instructions, they had escaped, but the situation remained dire.

"I don't mean to count the seconds, but the knights might buy us only two minutes; it's hardly enough time for us to flee from Arem."

Lunab had seen the Demon King's power firsthand, and warned that they could quickly find themselves in the same predicament.

"We need to find Sian! Can you find him, Lunab?"

"With the clues at hand, it's daunting. I only know that he passed through here, but beyond that..."

Hastily moving to not waste time,

".....!"

The three women felt a threat at the fork in the road and stopped in their tracks. They sensed someone lurking just around the left-hand corner, obscured by buildings.

Wary, Nana's eyes sharpened as she glared menacingly in that direction.

-Thud, thud...

The foreboding stillness was pierced by the sound of clear footsteps. The source of the footsteps soon revealed itself before the women.

Needless to say, it was not a person.

Nor was it from the demon tribe.

The energy emanating from the mysterious figure differed significantly from ordinary demonfolk, and Arin's eyes naturally turned to Nana's direction.

The reason was one.

The unidentified being before them exuded an eerily similar aura to Nana.

"Devil Dragon?"

It suggested an encounter with a Devil Dragon, like the one Arin had first confronted upon her arrival in the demon world.

"..."

The mysterious being simply raised a hand in silence, and beneath them a black magic circle began to form.

Recognizing it as a teleportation circle, Lunab attempted to cast a counter-magic, but before she could act,

-Whoosh

The bodies of the three women were already enveloped in the light of the magic circle, transporting them to an unknown location.

* * *

“Ugh, this is driving me crazy!”

Lost and trapped in this unfamiliar space between spaces, unable to do anything, Mishuka felt this was an experience unique to herself across the entire continent.

What on earth was this all about?

While she grudgingly tolerated partnering with the human who tried to devour her before to fulfill the orders of their unchallengeable leader, what was intolerable was that the same human (who probably couldn't really devour her)—after having connected these interspatial realms—had left her alone to disappear abruptly.

Left by herself, Mishuka couldn't figure out what to do, having paced back and forth inside Sian's pocket dimension for what felt like hours.

“Is this happening to me because I'm cursed to be entangled with that human? Now I'm in such a situation that I can't even tell whether I'm alive or dead!”

She had tried multiple times to reopen the pocket dimension where Sian had entered, but once closed, it remained stubbornly inaccessible.

“No, come to think of it, what do I care about his life or death? Haven't I done everything that I was supposed to, as Nagel commanded? That's right, yes! I just need to leave this place, and that's it!”

After much internal strife, Mishuka finally settled on a direction and cracked a tentative smile.

Then, she created a gate to exit.

“It's not my concern what happens to you! Better if you never manage to leave... I'd welcome it!”

-Whoosh!

Just as she was about to leave through the gate, Mishuka was stopped in her tracks by a familiar sound from behind.

Another gate had opened, separate from the one she created.

Quickly turning to look, Mishuka couldn't hide her shock.

"What, what are you doing here?"

The person who had emerged from the gate was none other than Sian.

However, he bore a different aura than when he had entered. He wasn't physically harmed or in rick of life, yet he seemed mentally ravaged.

Looking up slowly, Sian caught Mishuka's eye.

"Hey."

At his weighty utterance, Mishuka flinched.

"What? Why? You disappear out of the blue and then show up hours later suddenly acting all serious?"

Trying to maintain her pride as a dragon, she would not be cowed.

"Why don't you go with me to Arem?"

Mishuka found herself unable to refute the words that followed.

(To be continued in the next installment)

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Chapter 283: The Flow for Him (3)

"Wh-where is this?"

A dark space where no light entered.

The three ladies who had been teleported by an unfamiliar presence arrived in a void dimension devoid of everything around them.

However, their figures were clearly visible to each other.

"An extradimensional space?"

Lunab, who had realized the nature of the space, furrowed her brows.

It was different from the extradimensional space she created through the Divine Relic, but undoubtedly, this place was someone's extradimensional space.

The brief wandering ceased when Arin and Lunab suddenly felt a presence and swiftly turned their eyes towards it.

Nana, who had been with them, had already been gazing in that direction for a while.

“.....!”

A man sitting on a throne-like chair with crossed legs.

It was Nagel, the leader of the Devil Dragons, the very entity who had appeared before the ladies and had cast a spell.

Nagel appeared lost in thought, with his eyes closed, not bothering to speak to the ladies.

“Did you bring us here?”

Despite Lunab's question, Nagel remained silent.

“If you won't speak, we will leave this place.”

“.....”

When the silence persisted, Lunab boldly took out a tome and unfurled it.

As someone capable of creating and manipulating extradimensional spaces, it was an easy task for her to create a gate to leave.

“Don't waste your time with futile actions.”

Finally, Nagel responded for the first time.

“Even if you leave, there is nowhere for you to go.”

Leaving through a gate would mean still being within the Demon Realm.

Being targeted by the Demon King meant that their only option was to flee.

“So you're saying you brought us here to protect us? Is that how we should interpret this?”

The silence that did not deny her words was another form of affirmation.

Was this an act of kindness, or a calculated move?

For now, nothing was known for certain.

While the couple were engulfed in questions,

“.....”

Nana, unlike when she first saw Nagel, was staring at him with sharp eyes full of vigilance.

Nagel seemed to be aware of her gaze and met her eyes, but he did nothing more than offer a derisive snort.

-Hoooung

At that moment, a gate opened behind Nana.

It was Keliyan, one of Nagel's loyal servants.

He too glanced at Nana before swiftly approaching Nagel and quietly giving his report.

“I have received a response from Mishuca.”

“What did she say?”

“She's currently heading to Arem with Sian.”

“How is she?”

“She seems unharmed. But whatever happened in that extradimensional space, the mood seemed very changed, she reported.”

“So, they're inevitably fated to clash, after all.”

A profound heaviness could be felt on Nagel's usually emotionless face.

Amidst the tense conversation,

“Let us go, please.”

Nana, who had been glaring at Nagel, finally spoke up.

“I need to go to Papa. Let us go, please.”

Unlike the flustered Keliyan, Nagel's expression remained stoic.

“Papa, you say? Is that how you call that man?”

“Yes.”

Without a second's hesitation, Nana responded promptly.

“Do you really think he is your biological father after reaching this level of growth?”

“Papa is just my Papa. There is no other meaning.”

“He won't be able to help. In fact, you'll only get in the way.”

“Papa said so. If you have the ability to do something but do nothing, there's nothing more foolish than that.”

“Impudent! Do you realize who you are speaking to!”

Outraged by her audacious attitude, Keliyan yelled, but Nagel held up a hand to calm him.

“You said you have the ability?”

“Yes.”

“And you think you actually possess such ability?”

“Yes.”

Nana's answers remained resolute and confident.

Observing the exchange, Arin quietly approached and took Nana's hand.

“From the moment Sian was born, Nana has been lovingly caring for Sian's child. Naturally, her desire to be by Sian's side is to be expected.”

“.....”

“We appreciate your assistance thus far. However, knowing something might happen to Sian and just standing aside is equally incorrect.”

“.....”

“Please let us go. Even if it's just a small help, we must go to Sian!”

With clasped hands, Arin earnestly appealed to Nagel.

Could there be any being more foolish than they?

Having been rescued from the chasm of death, they now asked to be returned to it.

Such foolhardy and stubborn beings.

“Silence! If you continue to insult the favor granted by Lord Nagel, I will...!”

“Keliyan.”

“Yes, Lord Nagel!”

“Inform all in the territory. As soon as that man reaches the extradimensional space, create a bounding barrier that no one can cross.”

Keliyan, taken aback, widened his eyes.

“Your will shall be done!”

He quickly opened a gate and hurried out.

Arin looked at Nagel with bewilderment.

“Still undecided, but you’re staking possibilities twice today.”

Nagel once again summoned his magic and lifted a hand.

A black transference magic circle formed under the ladies, just like before.

“Let’s see how it goes. Whether your existence will influence that man or not.”

With those words, the three ladies were engulfed in the light of the magic circle and vanished once more to an unknown place.

* * *

This is the worst.

My head feels like it could collapse and plummet right to the bottom.

It’s that sensation, as if venom has been injected into all the tiny cuts opened by a blade.

How long has it been since I’ve felt like this?

“We’re almost at Arem... Are you sure you’re all right? Why does your breathing feel more labored?”

I want to tell her to focus on flying and ignore me, but I can’t muster the strength to speak.

I’m seriously falling apart even as we head to Arem.

To stop the Demon King.

[It’s not too late to change course, even now.]

“Why?”

[Don’t tell me you’re asking because you don’t know. What do you expect to achieve fighting in that condition?]

“Concern for the master? That’s a big change for you, Kairam.”

[If only I couldn’t speak!]

Kairam, unable to bear it any longer, appeared in front of me.

“What, what?”

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Chapter 284: For His Sake (4)

A sword that devours the soul of its owner to hijack that power.

Among the divine weapons inherited from godly strength, it is both the most destructive and the most dreadful sword.

A blade more familiar with blood than any other.

All of these were words used to describe the demonic sword Kairam.

For hundreds of years, indiscriminate slaughter had been carried out by her, regardless of race — humans, demonic beasts, the demon race, and even beings like dragons that had received divine power directly.

She exuded fear and horror to all who heard of her, never feeling any pangs of conscience or fear during her massacres.

A weapon that, legendary as it was, could even dispatch beings in the gods' realm.

However, even she was now feeling a wave of nervousness so great that her heart fluttered uncontrollably.

A red space reminiscent of the insides of furious flames.

Before Kairam, in that space, stood an enigmatic spirit wavering like smoke.

"To think the horrific demonic sword Kairam would come here. This is indeed an honor."

Despite having a single form, within it resonated the overlapping voices of dozens.

Kairam silently crossed her arms, giving the spirit a look that said, "What kind of thing is this?"

She had once heard from Sian.

In her past life, she had fought a decisive battle with the Death Sword, the weapon of the Demon King, to weaken his strength.

Although she had succeeded in halving the power of the Death Sword, her personality had been erased as a consequence.

Until then, she had thought it to be mere puffery.

In this world, the only being she considered a match for her strength was holy sword Dyrandark at most.

She had believed there was no weapon to rival herself, the inheritor of divine strength, and she had lived accordingly.

Now, however, she was beginning to believe Sian's words.

No, she had to believe them.

For even the Demonic Sword could not deny the monstrous power emanating from the spirit.

"You should not have come to meet us."

"When did you say it was an honor, and now what nonsense do you speak?"

“You, bestowed with ultimate power from the beginning, may not know. You and your master lived receiving grace as creations of the gods, but we did not. We had to emerge from an endless abyss of lifeless earth, climbing with the sole intention of survival. The pains and strength we had to accrue simply to live, to survive — such misery of our demon race is unknown to you.”

“Why? Didn’t you kneel and pray too? Begging for them to take interest in your land?”

“The opposite. We have grown this power throughout the ages to oppose you and those who created you.”

Kairam’s face, which had held a mocking smile, contorted instantly.

“We have seen all that has been done in the human world under the pretext of maintaining order. They have enforced control and demanded adherence to their laws upon humans. As a result, humans evolved into devout followers and mere creations of the gods.”

Kairam did not deny that with bitterness in her heart.

“We did not want that. But you crossed a line in the end. You will pay for it now, and no one can stop it!”

A chilling laughter echoed from within the spirit.

“Your long history of slaughter ends today. Starting with you and your master, we will absorb the souls of the mortal world to enhance our power. Those filthy and loathsome supreme beings can never encroach upon our territory again!”

“.....”

“Make a splendid beginning to this. Demonic Sword!”

* * *

“What in the world is happening inside?”

“That demon from the sky, was that the Demon King?”

“Who is the Demon King fighting inside?”

The demon realm’s inhabitants had evacuated outside Arem to escape the human slaughter.

Ignorant of what was occurring inside, they worriedly wrung their hands together.

“Can someone go and check?”

The demons hoped for someone brave to verify the situation inside.

However, around Arem, a limiting barrier had been created, which made entry practically impossible.

The dragons, following Nagel's orders to form the barrier, concentrated fully from unseen positions to ensure it was not destroyed.

They too were curious about the situation inside.

Sweat poured down their backs as the relentless collision of powers continued unabated.

-Clang!

With each clash of the sword, bursts of red magic energy and black mists exploded without end.

-Clang! Clang! Clang!

As Velcaryon continued his barrage of strikes, he abruptly stopped and stared intently at Sian.

Sian seemed to struggle, breathing heavily in defense.

Velcaryon then unleashed a torrent of magic energy to deliver a mighty blow.

-Boom!

Unable to withstand the impact, Sian was sent flying and crashed to the ground; the building crumbled instantaneously.

However, soon the rubble stirred, and Sian re-emerged from within the dust, attempting to regain his footing when suddenly—

“.....!”

Velcaryon's devastating punch flew right toward Sian's face.

-Thump!

Caught off guard, Sian crossed his arms to block the punch just in time.

Yet the Demon King's fist kept coming relentlessly, and Sian found himself unable to mount any effective counterattack.

Once again, his body was sent flying and smashed into the ground.

"What are you doing?"

For the first time since the fierce battle began, Velcaryon spoke, his expression one of bitter disappointment.

"It's different from before. I thought your eyes looked haggard, and now I see you're not even in your right mind. Did you come to fight me like this?"

Without a word, Sian stood up and assumed his stance once more, though he seemed to have no strength left to respond.

"So disappointing..."

The dejected Demon King cupped his face with one hand and lifted his head.

He had thought this was the only being capable of quenching his thirst for battle, but judging from the current state, Sian seemed no better than prey for a hellhound.

Velcaryon put down his Death Sword and began to walk towards Sian.

In desperation, Sian swung his sword, but—

-Swish!

It was but a meaningless cut through the air.

Unable to bear it any longer, Velcaryon kicked Sian fiercely in the gut.

"Try and muster some strength. Rouse even the strength from your baby days. Is it okay for me to kill off all the humans around you? Shouldn't you be trying to stop me?"

"....."

"Enough. Just die."

Realizing further resistance was pointless,

Velcaryon grasped Sian's neck, pulling him up and slamming him against the wall.

Sian could offer no struggle and simply gasped for breath powerlessly.

“Don’t bother feeling sorry for yourself. I’ll send all humans your way, both the ones you loved and loathed, by killing them all.”

“.....”

Velcaryon slowly raised the Death Sword.

At the tip, red magic energy gathered, and a vivid light gleamed, seemingly hungering for Sian’s soul.

Just as the Death Sword’s energy was about to overwhelm Sian, he suddenly spoke.

“Now....”

“.....?”

“Now is the time.”

Sian’s voice was faint, but he unmistakably said, “now.”

The meaning was yet unclear.

Baffled, Velcaryon hesitated for a moment instead of attacking.

“Consume.”

Then came the next word.

“Consume it...”

After saying “now,” Sian inexplicably repeated the words, urging something or someone to devour.

“Devour it. Kairam!!!”

His shout shook the surrounding debris.

Velcaryon’s gaze swiftly moved to Sian’s right hand, which gripped the demonic sword.

“.....!”

But it was too late to stop anything — from the blade’s tip, an immense mist spewed forth, utterly obscuring the view.

“Kehehehehe!”

An odd laughter followed.

With the bizarre laugh came a foreign voice that had never been heard before.

“You said I needn’t be sacrificed, yet you wield me like this? As always, from the beginning to the end, our master never considers anyone else’s opinion.”

Velcaryon couldn’t believe his ears.

In this very place, at this proximity, such a clear and distinct voice could not possibly come from anyone other than Sian.

Gradually, as the mist cleared, Sian’s formerly obscured face reappeared.

A chilling grin spread across Sian’s lips, causing a shiver to run down one’s spine.

“Bored now? I can understand. Our master is dreadfully stubborn. So inflexible. Always so righteous...”

It was impossible not to realize.

The Sian facing the Demon King now was definitely not Sian—another personality had taken his place.

“Convoluting struggles between demons, warnings to the gods... why make life so complicated? Living each day is hard enough just satisfying my desires... don’t you agree?”

Velcaryon offered no response.

“Shall we get back to a proper fight? But I have to warn you, I’m in quite a foul mood right now.”

Sian lifted the demonic sword he held, displaying it conspicuously.

“Round two begins~!”

The figure of Sian wielding the demonic sword was the embodiment of unity with the blade.

* * *

In the heart of a verdant forest with leaves dense enough to block out the sky,

Haniel leaned against a tree, wrapping her arms around herself.

Being further inside the collapsing spatial dimension of the holy sword would have meant erasure without a trace, so she too had stepped outside and was staring at the sky with hollow eyes.

“Willius Bert. Where on earth did that man find such a being...”

She seemed quite shaken by the incredible power Sian had demonstrated.

“Yet even if you break free from space, nothing changes. How could you stand against the Demon King in such disarray? If you’re lucky, you might slightly weaken the Demon King’s power.”

Haniel laughed to herself, despite not realizing it.

“But in the end, it’s akin to assisting your son, so I can’t entirely resent it. I am sincerely grateful that you offer your life for Echel, Sian...”

Everything ultimately returned to Echel in the end.

Pleased with how things were progressing, Haniel continued to chuckle.

-Rustle rustle

Amidst this, unfamiliar footsteps approached from somewhere unseen.

The footsteps made Haniel abruptly stop laughing.

They weren’t heavy or light enough to be a demonic beast.

It felt like the footfalls of a human, and that intuition proved correct.

“.....!”

Upon seeing the source of the footsteps, Haniel’s eyes widened in surprise.

“What? Why are you here?”

“Is there a reason why I shouldn’t be here?”

Struggling to her feet, Haniel quickly approached and grabbed the woman by the scruff.

“What’s your scheme? Why are you here too?”

-Thud

Something fell to the ground, causing her to instantly divert her gaze.

Haniel, taken aback, picked up the object that had fallen — a pendant.

It was the very pendant she had used to lure Echel into the trap destined for the Demon King.

“Why is this pendant here?”

“.....”

“Tell me! Did you release it? Disable the power of delusion?”

“Do I really need to answer that for you to know?”

Haniel finally shouted in frustration.

“Why? Why? Why would you, of all people, mess this up? Why did you do it?”

“I was never Echel’s person.”

“What?”

“I always was, and still am, Sian’s person.”

Haniel’s face, once marked by shock, twisted into utter despair.

Looking down indifferently at Haniel was none other than Emily, who had silently stood by Sian’s side for a long time.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 285

Chapter 285: The Flow for Him (5)

“.....”

I woke up with a strange sensation, as if something had pricked my cheek.

Describing my current feeling is like falling alone into a deep sea abyss where the bottom cannot be seen—a feeling of emptiness and powerlessness.

I should open my eyes to see what's around me, but I didn't particularly feel like doing so.

What difference would it make if I looked?

Fighting the Devil King in a state where my mind was severely damaged from shattering the holy sword's subspace would be reckless to anyone's eyes.

Of course, Keyram's scolding was natural.

But I had to go.

If I didn't, in the end, the Devil King would kill other humans, and I was the only one who could end that massacre.

I didn't go mindlessly.

Despite the worst situation, had I not planned it all out?

In the desperate situation when the Devil King aimed to take my life, I entrusted my soul to Keyram and passed on my body.

The regret of not seeing my father one last time did linger, but what would be the point in worrying now?

It wasn't my body anymore.

I certainly kept my promise with Keyram.

The very promise that I would never sacrifice her.

I had given up my entire body, so I assumed she would fight on her own from now on.

With a body tempered with demonic blood, the senses of an assassin, and the power of the Black Mist God, if she controlled all these, not even the Devil King with the death sword would be undefeatable.

“.....”

But the more I thought about it, the stranger it seemed.

I clearly told her to devour my soul, so why am I still conscious?

It's not that I can't move my body if I set my mind to it. Look.

My arms and legs moved freely, didn't they?

And beyond the eyelids that were closed, I even felt a short burst of light.

As if being drawn to that light...

I naturally opened my eyes.

“.....”

So, this place is...

It definitely isn't the demon world.

The air itself felt starkly different in this unmistakably human realm.

It wasn't an unfamiliar place, yet it was also not so strange.

-Whoosh

Within the forlornly blowing wind, the smell of dry blood wafted over.

Following the familiar scent, I naturally moved forward but stopped not many steps ahead.

Ah, I remembered.

This place, one could say, was the most disastrous site across my past lives.

The outskirts of Sebelinus, the capital of the Uship Empire.

In the midst of a nameless forest covered in verdant leaves.

Somehow, I saw a familiar corpse.

A man lying in solitude, with both wrists severed and blood seeping from his body.

It was me.

All around, there was nothing else—only my body lay desolate.

What could this be?

Am I dreaming a nightmare?

It felt too real for that.

Regardless of what its true nature was, I understood it to be an abnormal situation.

The numerous knights, assassins, and sorcerers who had attacked me.

Even Boris, who commanded them,

And the holy sword and its master, who directly ended my breath.

There was no sign of them anywhere.

Did they not bother to dispose of me after my death?

They undoubtedly didn't leave me be with good intentions.

Either they left me for the beasts to handle, or they might've fabricated a false incident about an empire knight assassinated by ruffians, to use it for handling another person.

It's something that devil would do indeed.

So now, the question was why this gruesome memory was laid out before me.

They say a person's life memories rush by before death, so is this what's unfolding now?

What should I make of this...

-Swish

Suddenly, from the opposite side where my body lay, I sensed someone's presence.

Instinctively, I hid behind a tree.

Shortly after, someone cloaked head to toe in a mantle appeared beside my body.

Their face was hidden under a hood, preventing me from discerning their identity.

But judging by their walk and overall physique, they seemed to be an average-built woman.

Who is she?

A sorceress sent to deal with my body belatedly?

If so, she wouldn't have come alone?

Looking around for other guardian knights or companions, I saw none.

Instead of cremating or moving my body elsewhere, the woman just stared blankly at my corpse for about a minute.

Then, all of a sudden, as if collapsing...

“.....!”

She began to wail, clutching my body.

This was perplexing.

Who is this woman, and why is she sobbing so sorrowfully over someone else's corpse?

Not to brag, but back then, there were virtually no one who would shed tears for me.

Not a wife, much less a lover.

So who would weep for me, when I had even been betrayed by the brother I devoted my life to?

Whether this really is the aftermath of my previous death or a nightmare-like illusion, a strong desire welled up within me to see this woman's face.

Without hesitation, I approached her.

Striding boldly, making my presence known, but she didn't glance at me even once.

It seemed she wasn't even aware of my existence.

Then, as I leaned over to see the face buried in my corpse,

“Young master.....”

Caught off guard by the unexpected words, my body froze.

What?

What did this woman just say?

“I'm truly sorry. Young master.....”

Young master. She called me young master.

After Bert left the mansion in my previous life, there was no one who would call me young master.

Yet this enigmatic woman had clearly called me that while embracing my corpse.

No, at this point, saying her identity was unknown made no sense.

This familiar voice, the resonant sobbing, the familiar atmosphere.

This woman was unmistakably...

“Emily?”

Despite my astonished call, she did not look at me.

She simply continued to weep bitterly, looking at my cold, discolored corpse.

* * *

-Whoosh

“Where is this?”

“It seems we’ve returned.”

The three ladies who had returned to Arem through teleportation magic.

Right at the spot they had faced Nagel before teleportation.

-Boom!

A strong explosion sounded from the center of the residential area before they could take a moment to gather their thoughts.

While unclear what had happened exactly, the ladies instinctively surmised it had to do with Sian or the Devil King.

“Papa must have arrived!”

Nana, who first sensed Sian’s presence, opened her eyes wide.

Lunab also sharpened her eyes, catching onto Sian’s scent.

“Let’s hurry, sister!”

“Wait, just a moment Nana!”

Before Arin could stop her, Nana dashed towards where Sian was.

-Thump

However, not far along, she bumped into something invisible and fell over backward.

“Are you okay?”

Rubbing her forehead, Nana nodded.

Following behind, Lunab noticed a transparent wall fluttering in the air and frowned.

“It’s a restriction barrier.”

Given the situation, it appeared to be the same barrier Nagel had instructed the Devil Dragons to create.

“To prevent the spread of damage, he must have erected a double layer, and coincidentally, it’s blocking right in front of us.”

“Is there no way to release it?”

“It’s not impossible, but it takes time. If it’s a dragon’s barrier, it might take us several hours...”

-Zap!

At that moment, a brief light sparked from the barrier.

Rippling like waves, a small gap emerged, just enough for one person to pass through.

“Can we enter now?”

Arin and Lunab looked at Nana in surprise.

“How did you do that, Nana?”

“I don’t know? I just touched it thinking maybe, and it opened?”

With a bright smile, Nana replied.

“Quickly, let’s go! Papa is waiting!”

“Wait a moment.”

Lunab caught Nana’s arm as she rushed ahead.

"It's pointless to rush in recklessly. If senior really is fighting the Devil King inside, we need to have a clear plan on what we can do before going. Especially if we don't want to get in the way..."

"Are you saying we should decide beforehand how we can help?"

"Depending on how we approach the situation, the way we can assist senior will differ."

"Approach?"

"Whether we choose to save the senior so we can all escape together, or if we help the senior kill the Devil King... We have to decide on that first."

At the mention of killing the Devil King, Arin shuddered.

"If we have to choose, the second option seems more feasible. Given the Devil King is alive, returning to the human world intact seems impossible."

Even that seemed nearly impossible, truth be told.

Hadn't they already felt it when they faced him directly?

The overwhelming presence of the Devil King, which caused fear beyond death, just by standing before him.

"Is there no way to resolve this peacefully? So that no one gets hurt?"

"Given the current situation, I'd say that's nearly impossible..."

"Ho, is that Lunab there?"

A familiar voice calling for her made Lunab immediately turn around.

".....!"

Recognizing someone she didn't expect to see, Lunab's eyes narrowed in doubt.

Arin and Nana also turned their heads, and unlike Lunab, they appeared puzzled.

Exactly twenty steps away from where the three ladies stood.

There were Rogers, the administrator of the Devil King Castle, and...

"Bestie?"

Bestie, the companion of Belcarion, was there.

* * *

-Bang! Bang! Bang!

Faster than before, with stronger power, and an intimidating aura as well.

The awakened Sian was truly a different being.

Thunderous clashes resonated each time their swords met.

Nevertheless, both men wore smiles soaked in thrill.

“Mist Sword: Dance of the Blood-stained Sword!”

The Dancer of the Mist, having recovered his body, painted enchanting curves in the air with his sword, which then transformed into dozens of sword energies assailing Belcarion.

The Devil King parried each onslaught with his death sword.

-Uwoooong

Belcarion did not stop at defense; he counterattacked immediately.

He poured an immense amount of magic into the sword from his body, the weapon blazing like the sun, and swiped ferociously at Keyram.

Keyram didn't dodge but met the strike head-on.

-Bang!

The forceful collision caused fierce ripples to spread around.

“Are there many like you scattered in the human realm?”

“How could there be? It's full of morons barely managing their own lives and trembling in fear. But he is special.”

“You don't seem like Sian at all to me right now. Who's in that body of yours?”

“Why don't you ask that fine sword you're holding?”

With a menacing smile, Keyram retorted.

“I mentioned it earlier, didn't I? I am not in a good mood. The fact that I have to do this because of a worthless person like you is too annoying!”

A slight tremble emanated from the unsettled Sian's hand.

"Let's end this quickly. I have more than just you to finish off."

Reeling back, Keyram let black mist emanate once again from the body she'd taken over.

In response, Belcarion drew out even more potent magic energy.

Both started preparing for the final blow, deciding the outcome of their face-off.

Resolve to not give in shone in each other's eyes.

As they were about to unleash the decisive blow,

"Sian!!"

"Belcarion!!"

At the desperate plea calling for them, their movements halted, as if by magic.

(To be continued in the next chapter)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 286

Chapter 286: For Him – Flow (6)

The standoff between the two men, swirling with the ferocity of a wild storm, came to an abrupt stop in an instant. Both men turned, faces flush with shock.

"Be, Besti?"

Belkarion was the first to break the silence.

Upon seeing his reaction, Besti immediately raced out.

"It's dangerous, Lady Besti!"

As Rogers hastily followed to dissuade her, she proudly thrust her chest forward, exclaiming loudly.

"I'm okay. I'm completely free from the pendant now, Demon King!"

The pendant of allure was no longer hanging from her neck.

The unexpected sight caused Belkarion's eyes to shake violently.

His hand, clutching his sword, seemed to twitch for a moment, but—

-Whoosh—

Belkarion soon swung his demon blade back towards Sian.

-Clang!—

Sian, with a composed expression, re-engaged in their deadly duel.

"Why, why is this happening?"

"The Demon King is currently ensnared by the very nature of the demon blade he wields!"

"What's a 'demon blade'?"

Lunav, stepping close to the grave scene, posed the question.

"It's the sword comprised of the malice of every Demon King who's sought to protect the demon realm! It symbolizes the very essence of the Demon King! His mind is likely ensnared by that blade as we speak!"

"I'll try to reason with him again!"

"It's futile! Even you, Lady Besti, won't be able to reach him now!"

The realization that she, the only one capable of calming him, could do nothing, twisted Besti's face into an expression of despair.

"Then is there truly no way?"

"If we can suppress the power of the demon blade even slightly, there might be a chance!"

Rogers suggested that the key lay in restoring the demon king's reason, which had been engulfed by the blade's influence.

However, contrary to hope, the intensity of the demon blade grew only stronger with each clash against the cursed blade.

Suppressing its power in such circumstances seemed near impossible.

“What should we do.....”

Besti collapsed to her knees, overtaken by despair and grief.

-Swoosh-

Gently, Lunav reached her hand to rest on the disheartened Besti's shoulder.

“Can you do it?”

“Hm?”

“If I can weaken the demon blade's power even slightly, will you be able to calm the Demon King?”

For a moment, Besti looked blankly at Lunav.

“We don't have time. Answer quickly.”

“I'll try!”

“Trying won't do. I need a definite answer.”

“I can do it! If there's even a sliver of reason left in Belkarion, I can reach him!”

Besti stood up with a jolt and shouted confidently at Lunav.

“Understood.”

Having ascertained her resolve, Lunav nodded affirmatively.

“What are you planning to do, Lunav?”

“Everyone, step back.”

With her stern instruction, they all silently retreated.

Lunav closed her eyes, drawing a magic tome from her bosom and opening it.

-Whoosh!—

Then, a vast amount of magic power contained within surged forth explosively.

“Can you hear me, Remihaam?”

“Of course, My Lady.”

Remihaam responded with a heavier voice than usual.

“Use my magic power to weaken that demon blade’s force. Spare not a single drop...”

“.....”

“Why don’t you answer?”

“Is this for Sian, the master of the cursed blade?”

“Do you really need an answer?”

As ever, Lunav’s heart always beat with steadfast resolve.

“Prepare yourself, My Lady.....”

With those words, Remihaam entered Lunav’s body.

“.....!”

The instant her soul merged with the tome, Lunav staggered violently.

Quickly regaining her balance, her hands trembled like aspens, and her breath was punctuated by a host of exhalations.

With faltering control, she pointed her trembling hands toward the demon blade.

“Weaken...”

The basic, attribute-less, first-circle magic intended to weaken the power of a target. Simple as it was, its effect depended on the caster’s magic power – and right now, this spell was desperately needed.

Her intensifying desire fueled the magic, and the light from her hands finally reached the demon blade.

“.....!”

The sword, which had glowed with a red hue, flickered with a small spark of dark radiance.

Yet apparently still far from enough, Belkarion showed no reaction.

‘How pitiful.’

As if the attempt itself was laughable, a mysterious voice echoed through her mind.

Undeterred, Lunav poured forth all her strength without hesitation.

The light, once a mere flicker, grew steadily with the reinforcement of magic power.

‘You cannot hinder our will with your power. Desist...’

Even as the voice persisted, urging surrender, Lunav paid no heed.

Her lips soon released rivulets of blood, speaking faintly in response.

“Not trying to stop you. Just pause, for a moment, a brief moment.”

Eventually, her light outshone the dark aura of the demon blade.

“.....?”

Alerted to the abnormality, Belkarion finally diverted his gaze to his blade.

“Mist Blade: Scatter of the Eight Petals!”

Seizing the moment, Keram’s blade relentlessly pressed the attack.

Belkarion fought desperately to parry the barrage, but—

-Clang!

Failing to block the final attack, his balance crumbled.

“Now!”

Lunav shouted loudly, signaling Besti.

Upon the signal, Besti rushed towards Belkarion with all her might.

While it was the perfect opportunity for Keram to deliver a decisive blow,

“What a commotion.”

Watching the movements of Lunav and Besti, Keram swiftly altered his attack path, striking fiercely at the demon blade.

-Clang!

The demon blade flew from Belkarion’s grasp, arcing through the air.

As the blade landed on the ground,

“Stop, it’s enough. Belkarion.....”

“.....”

“For the peace of the demon realm, please stop.....”

Besti pulled the fallen Belkarion into a tight embrace.

-Thud-

And at once, Lunav, too, collapsed from exertion.

“Lunav!!”

Arin hurriedly came to her aid.

Fortunately, Lunav had not lost consciousness, merely exhaling in exhaustion.

“Did we succeed?”

Confounded, Rogers wavered unsure whether to approach the Demon King or maintain his distance while everyone beheld Belkarion and Besti in their embrace.

All but one,

“.....”

Except Nana.

Her body had without notice moved closer to Sian.

Normally, she would have embraced him immediately, but for some reason, she refrained, instead eyeing him distrustfully.

As if the Sian before her did not seem like the true Sian.

“Where’s Papa?”

* * *

“Answer me, Emily.”

“.....”

“Answer! Can’t you hear me?”

I shouted loudly, close enough to be nose-to-nose, but Emily did not respond to my call.

Unable to hold back, I reached out to her.

“.....!”

Yet my hand passed right through her, failing to make contact.

What is this?

Am I being treated like a ghost?

Should I just shut up and watch from the sidelines?

It was more absurd than infuriating, prompting a hollow laugh from me.

-Plod, plod—

Then, from the direction she had walked, another presence approached, accompanied by footsteps.

What’s this now?

Though hooded like Emily, the newcomer’s face was visible from the front.

While she appeared slightly different, there was no mistaking her.

Haniel Passinity.

The frustrating woman who had detained me in that cursed sacred blade’s subspace, that demon’s very mother.

She, too, seemed not to perceive me, her gaze fixed intently on Emily embracing my corpse.

Her eyes told of supreme contempt.

“What are you doing?”

“You ask as though I’m involved in some strange affair, Mother.”

Emily answered dispassionately, not turning to face her.

“Are you grieving his death?”

“You’ve told me many times, Mother. We are human. We know joy and sorrow, we can cherish... we are humans...”

Emily embraced my body tighter as she continued.

“Yes. There’s nothing unreasonable in showing compassion to a man who lived foolishly, unaware of the truth his whole life. You’ve seen enough. It’s unsightly, so stand up now.”

Haniel ordered her to rise to her feet, but Emily remained immobile.

“Is that fine by you?”

“What are you implying?”

“Things have turned out as you wished. Lord Eshel has achieved everything. Now, there seems to be no one in this land who could oppose him.”

“You sound less than thrilled, unlike me?”

“I can’t deny it. Perhaps because I don’t share blood with Lord Eshel like you do, Mother?”

Emily continued to utter words mocking Eshel, unbothered.

Haniel’s frown deepened progressively.

“I wonder whether Lord Eshel even remembers me. Does he even know I share the same blood of witches with you, Mother?”

What?

What did I just hear?

Despite hearing every word clearly, I involuntarily denied the information as if I had heard nothing.

A witch? You’re a witch, Emily?

“Conceding that you, unlike me, could possibly develop affections for Sian Vert, I cannot tolerate you belittling my son.”

“What if I speak more frankly, then? I assure you, this ordered world of Lord Eshel’s creation will not last.”

“.....!”

With a slap, Emily's face whipped to the side.

Haniel couldn't contain her rage and struck Emily's cheek.

"Repeat yourself. You said something about Eshel's world of order?"

"I spoke carelessly. Let me clarify so as to leave no doubts. Lord Eshel's world of order will....."

With her face proudly raised, Emily stated:

"Collapse. It won't be long now."

A look of firm conviction, though not a familiar sight, somehow didn't feel alien at all.

Because her gaze was nearly indistinguishable from the one she often gave me.

"You've crossed the line, Emily!"

Haniel's face distorted grotesquely as mana manifested in her hand.

"There's no need to keep you alive if you won't act in my son's interest! I'll send you myself to join your precious lord!"

A golden magic circle formed above Emily's head.

But she seemed to have no intention to dodge. Instead, she held my body even tighter.

"Lord. If by some chance, though unlikely....."

She whispered softly into my ear.

"It won't happen, but if life were given to me once more, then I won't live for Lord Eshel."

Powerless being nothing but a corpse, I could only silently receive her words.

"I want to live and die for you, my lord, as I always have... from the beginning."

"....."

"Live your life for yourself, my lord."

The moment her scalding tears touched my face,

-Crack!—

Lightning struck my vision.

Whether Emily was struck dead, I could not tell.

Because as the blinding brilliance slowly faded, another sight unfolded before me.

Surrounded by darkness, the scene resembled my void space, though the atmosphere felt entirely different.

If all the cursed sights I'd seen were dreams or illusions, then it was all wrong.

Who could it be?

Whose memory is this, and why is it being shown to me now?

As if in answer to my question, I sensed an unfamiliar presence behind me.

I turned to face it.

Though in the shape of a person, the face was obscured by brilliant light.

From the ambiance alone, this being seemed closer to a god than human or demon.

But it was no deity I had ever seen or known.

Two things were certain:

This entity had shown me these memories, and additionally.....

"It is you."

"....."

"The one who granted me this second life....."

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 287

Chapter 287. Last Chance (1)

While living the second life no one else had ever experienced,

No, in fact, I had thought several times whether this really was a second life.

It was that much of an absurdity.

However, if we assume that I, who have returned with memories of my past life, have undergone what's called 'regression,' then I had to entertain another question.

Who exactly,

For what reason,

Granted me this absurd second life?

I pondered countlessly, and even thought that I might never know in my lifetime.

But an entity that could unravel that longstanding enigma, akin to my deepest yearning,

Eventually appeared before my eyes.

"How does it feel?"

Without self-introduction or any explanation of the situation, he abruptly asked me how I felt.

"Are you asking for my thoughts on these obscure memories of the past?"

If he truly wanted an answer to that, the only response I could give was one.

'It feels like I'm going out of my mind.'

That was the only phrase I had.

"What I'm asking is how it feels to be dead."

However, caught off guard by his unexpected meaning, I was momentarily speechless.

"As the spirit of the demonic sword consumed your body, your soul was split from it, and normally, you would have dissipated without a trace. I momentarily halted that process."

To have died.

Well, it wasn't something shocking enough to turn the world upside down.

It would be strange to even regard this situation as being alive.

"What do you want to hear from me?"

“Exactly what I asked just then.”

Despite my direct question, he remained consistent with his answer.

“You had a choice. Although your consciousness was nearly shattered while collapsing the spacetime of the holy sword, it wasn’t necessary to confront the Demon King in such a state. Instead, you needed sufficient time to recover in your own spacetime. Had you approached the blood battle with the Demon King in a normal state, you wouldn’t have needed to sacrifice your body to the demonic sword to defeat him.”

That’s right.

Even I cannot deny that fact.

Had I taken sufficient time to recover and fought the Demon King in proper condition, the current situation wouldn’t have unfolded.

Knowing this, I still proceeded with the blood battle directly against the Demon King.

Why?

Probably this enigmatic being also knew the reason.

“But in the end, you chose not just your own people and your world. You couldn’t bear the thought of your loved ones being ravaged by the Demon King during your absence. Without even completing your own revenge, you gave up your life for them. I want to know how that decision makes you feel.”

The moment he finished speaking, the scenery around me changed.

It was the exact place from a moment ago.

Where Emily and I had been, there was now no one left, just scorched marks on the ground.

“Humans are foolish. It is only upon the brink of death that they harbor late regrets.”

This too was a fact I knew all too well from experience.

“That woman felt the same. She regretted not choosing you and repented too late, only to meet a tragic end. With the same resolution as yours that she would not live the same way in her next life.....”

Though I could not remember, being already dead, Emily had spent her last moments with me.

And when I returned, she was the very first person I faced.

Should I consider this merely a coincidence?

“But regardless of that resolution, you once again lived not for yourself. Instead, you lived a life entirely for others. Can you even fathom how many have been saved by you and gone on to forge new lives? Sian Bert. You have once again lived a failed life.”

So, that’s what you wanted to say?

That I had once again led a failed life for the sake of others, following my past life.

You might be hoping to see me contorted in despair because of it, but—

“Are you done talking?”

I have no such intentions.

“Is it now my turn to speak?”

“You’ve been free to speak all along.”

He responded as if he had been waiting for it.

“Then let’s get straight to the point. When are you going to resurrect me?”

A brief silence followed my words.

“What are you talking about?”

“I recognized it the moment you asked if I regretted the end of my second life. Even setting aside my own feelings, you are very much regretting my death, aren’t you? Right?”

As I raised my eyebrow and questioned him, he remained silent, simply gazing at me steadily.

“In this world, there is no such thing as an act of kindness without purpose. You gave me a second life with a certain goal in mind, but I ended that life without fulfilling your objective. That must be frustrating for you, to have taken pains to prevent me from dissipating to the point of throwing these pointless questions at me. Unless there’s a rule that says you shouldn’t do something twice after doing it once...”

With a faint smile, I continued my words.

“Hurry up and resurrect me. Whether you gather and piece together my scattered soul, or this time, you turn back time right back to before I was born—do whatever you can.”

“Do you think I have any reason to again extend my goodwill to you, who have already failed twice?”

“According to whom? Isn’t that just what you think?”

His lips sealed shut once again.

“I do not regard this life as a failure.”

This was but my unadulterated and truthful conviction.

“The battle with the Demon King will be continued by her who has consumed my body, so I’m not overly concerned. Eshel Bert has already played all his cards, and all he has left is ruin. As for the remaining world, the survivors will carry it forward. I believe I have lived my life reasonably for myself. At least better than in my past life...”

Regrets?

It would be a lie to say there are none.

However, I do not regret the choices I have made even now.

But that being may think differently.

“I don’t know what your goal is, but if you still wish for me to fulfill it... send me back to the world.”

Unless I achieve what he desires,

He would not wish for my demise to be permanent.

“You’re quite audacious.”

A certain familiarity struck me with that remark.

“Audacious, yet utterly cunning. Very much like us.”

As to who that ‘us’ referred to, I had no clue yet.

He approached me slowly.

“This is your last chance.”

When he was just a step away, he raised his hand to strike,

-Thump

And suddenly thrust it fiercely towards the area where my heart was.

A sensation, unlike anything I'd ever felt before, made me involuntarily hold my breath while my body tensed up rigidly.

Pain then followed, as if all the blood in my body was converging to one destination, unbearable.

"You must be curious about my purpose, right? The answer lies in what your maid once said."

Maid? Was he referring to Emily?

"Expand your world based on your order. I will observe how your world flows in comparison to the world where light becomes order."

As if echoing in my ears, that declaration marked the beginning of another change in my surroundings.

* * *

As the magical energy, once erupting like a volcano, began to dim like a fading candle, Besti in the embrace showed no sign of detaching herself.

Amidst this, Belcarion gazed wearily at the red sky of the demon realm.

Rogers cautiously approached his side.

"Hey Rogers."

"Speak your command, my Lord."

"This rationality is truly an enigmatic creature. It acts like it'll never return, yet at some moment, it reappears out of nowhere. Really hard to control."

Besti simply tightened her embrace on Belcarion in response to his words.

"But now, even when thinking rationally, I'm not sure what to do. Because of those humans, the demons living on my land have died. I need to exact revenge for them. In this situation, what should I do?"

"..."

“Truly, I am asking because I do not know. What decision should a rational Demon King make now?”

“Take your time, think it through.”

Unable to find an easy answer, Besti spoke instead of Rogers.

“Rational decisions aren’t made alone; they’re made for everyone. If you truly care for the demon realm and its people, you will undoubtedly make a good decision. Whatever decision you make, if it stems from a rational mind, I will respect it, Belcarion.”

“My head hurts...”

Trapped in a dilemma, Belcarion let out a deep sigh.

“It seems worse over there.”

Nevertheless, he naturally turned to look where Sian and Nana were.

“ ... ”

A face twisted with imminent tears, full of anxiety.

Sian just silently looked at such Nana.

“Tell me. Where did Papa go?”

Even with Sian right in front of her, Nana kept on repeating the unknown question.

While Arin watched, she slightly tilted her head with curiosity.

“Why is Nana doing that? Why is she asking where Sian is when he is right...”

-Thump

Just then, a sound emerged as something hit the ground, and a strong shudder passed through Arin’s body.

Having dropped her tome, Lunab shivered, staring at Sian in disbelief.

“Is this what you meant by being prepared?”

“Why, what’s wrong Lunab? Is Sian in bad shape?”

Outwardly, Sian appeared to be completely fine.

“His energy... I can't feel his energy...”

Yet, Lunab saw something else.

“What?”

“Right now, the being inhabiting Sian's body isn't his spirit. Something completely different has taken over.”

“What do you mean? If it's not Sian, then who...?”

Unable to comprehend, Arin turned her head, and their eyes met.

“!”

And she finally realized what made those eyes she had faced so often,

Those that had reflected herself back at her,

Were no longer present in Sian.

According to Lunab, it felt as if someone else had invaded his body.

“Really. Going his own way until the very end...”

Lunab collapsed as if drained of the strength to stand, and Arin followed suit, sitting down beside her.

“Then who's in Sian's body now?”

“It must be the spirit of the demonic sword.”

In response to Arin's question, Lunab lowered her head and let out a disheartened laugh.

“It's because Sian judged that he couldn't suppress the Demon King with his current self, and thus gave his body entirely to the demonic sword.”

“I can't understand! Why? For what reason?”

“Why do you think? Surely he did that to protect us.”

Immediately, Arin looked towards Lunab.

“If only it were the opposite...”

After saying this, tears streamed down Lunab's cheeks, dripping onto the floor.

The tears served as proof that Sian no longer existed in this world.

Yet, unwilling to accept this fact, Nana persisted,

"Tell me, Kairam! Where is Papa?"

She cried out to Kairam, who seized Sian's body, in appeal.

But Kairam remained silent.

There was no use in speaking,

For there was no need to utter a word.

"..."

Kairam, silent, just turned away and left.

Unable to follow, Nana fell to the ground.

The feeling of losing someone she thought was her everything in an instant...

A profound emptiness for not knowing what to do next.

The only sound she heard was the distancing steps of Kairam.

Other than listening to that heartless sound, Nana could do nothing.

-Clunk

"..."

-Clunk, clunk

"!"

But, as the sound of footsteps began to fade, they grew loud once more, drawing closer towards her.

Promptly, Nana sprang up from her seat.

Just a few steps away, Sian approached her again and, without a word, placed his hand atop her head.

Then, with a familiar touch, he softly caressed her.

“When did you come back?”

Only then did a smile bloom across Nana’s face.

“Papa!!”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 288

Chapter 288. Last Chance (2)

Xian sat opposite Bellkarion, with the lethal magic sword generating a deadly aura between them. Bellkarion scrutinized Xian’s face with suspicious eyes.

“Is it really you?”

Xian didn’t feel the question was worthy of an answer and merely chuckled.

“Well, judging by those familiar yet sinister eyes of yours, I guess it’s you. Do you have any idea how surprised I was? Out of nowhere, in the midst of the fight, some strange woman appears, claiming she’s your sister or something...”

“There won’t be a next time, so you can relax.”

“It’s not about being relaxed. Regardless, what’s done is done. We’re yet to finish what we started. The fact that your people trespassed my land and committed a massacre won’t just vanish because you and I stopped our bloodshed.”

Xian had no intention of denying that.

“But rationally speaking, those humans weren’t related to your kind, were they? Plus, there’s evidence of those girls trying to evacuate the demons and prevent the slaughter. There’s no reason for me to use my power on your behalf.”

If that were the only issue, there wouldn’t be a problem, but Xian knew it would never be so simple.

“So, just hand over Eshel Vert to me.”

“ ... ”

“No need for further cooperation. I’ll deal with the rats hiding here myself. Your troops can stop prancing around on my territory and get lost.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Don’t reject the best decision I’ve come up with. I won’t yield any further here either.”

Bellkarion’s eyes now contained a fierce and venomous intent, indicating his unwavering resolve to judge Eshel Vert personally.

Sian, without showing any reaction, crossed his arms and spoke calmly.

“There are two reasons why I can’t hand him over.”

“Speak then. I’ll at least listen.”

“First, I have no idea where he is. I can’t hand over someone when I don’t even know their whereabouts. Second...”

Xian leaned in slightly, narrowing the distance between himself and Bellkarion.

“Eshel Vert is akin to the purpose of my life.”

Bellkarion frowned, not understanding his words.

“I was born to kill that man, to inflict upon him a pain so vile it doesn’t exist in this world. He’s my life’s mission. If you think I’d simply hand him over to you...”

Xian’s gaze then shifted to the magic sword embedded in the ground.

“...you might as well pull out this sword and kill me now. Until then, you won’t have him.”

Even if it were the Demon King or a deity demanding it, it would be futile.

As long as he lived and breathed, Xian had made several vows to put an end to Eshel Vert personally.

“Did you say to pull out this sword?”

As if accepting his challenge, Bellkarion gripped the hilt of the magic sword.

“It’s been crying out since earlier, telling me not to entertain any more nonsense and to just slaughter everything in sight. Honestly, it’d be easier that way, not having to think at all.”

Bellkarion demonstrated that executing such a deed was well within his power.

“But doing that would be playing right into Eshel’s hands, wouldn’t it? There’s no reason for me to make things better for him.”

With that, he flashed a smirk as if none of it mattered.

“Since you also don’t know where he is, let’s make it simple: first one to find him gets to kill him. Everyone else in your party can go back except you.”

“I accept.”

Xian nodded, accepting the proposal.

The hunt was on, and whoever found the prey first would claim the right to deal with it.

Should they both encounter their target simultaneously, the recent confrontation could easily resume.

“Well then, I suppose I should take my leave first. But remember, I’ve also given up on that man. Be sure...”

– Swoosh –

Bellkarion stood up, retrieving the magic sword in one swift motion.

“Let’s hope there won’t be a need for me to draw this sword on you again.”

Xian watched Bellkarion, silent and indifferent, as the negotiations concluded.

As Bellkarion turned to leave,

“What happened to the humans who fought you before I arrived?”

Xian reopened the conversation.

“They were here before you came? Why? Did they involve someone you knew?”

Xian didn’t respond.

“Do you even need to hear the answer? You probably already suspect it, don’t you?”

“They’re all dead. Understood.”

Ending the conversation, Xian stood up and turned to leave.

Bellkarion watched Xian walk away, his gaze tinged with complexity.

“My name is Willerius Vert! As the guardian who protects the continent, I swear my honor to confront you, Demon King!”

“Willerius Vert. And now Xian Vert...”

Bellkarion often couldn't remember what had occurred previously when his true nature took over.

However, this time, the name proudly declared against him lingered in his mind, incessantly echoing.

“Just how rationally do you live your life?”

While contemplating, Bellkarion couldn't help but look upon Xian with a hint of profound amazement.

* * *

[Are you going to say something now?]

“What?”

[Can't you hear this? My insides are boiling like lava! All eager to devour when it suited you, and now how did you come back?]

“It must be because you didn't manage my soul correctly.”

[How dare you! Do you think this is the first time I've done this? Even if it weren't you, back in the past...]

Keram cut off his words and ground his teeth angrily.

[I made no mistakes! I thoroughly shredded your soul until nothing was left and then I fully possessed your body! You have no idea the panic I felt when those shattered pieces of your soul reformed. If you had some kind of last resort, you should've warned me beforehand...!]

“It wasn't my doing.”

[What?]

“I said it wasn't my doing. My last resort was to surrender everything to you.”

Keram looked at me, clearly incredulous.

[Then who brought you back? A god?]

“God... I suppose. That’s something I’ll have to figure out now.”

Perhaps the situation was even more significant than I realized.

At this moment, I didn’t need to rack my brain over complications. If I just carried on with what I was meant to do, everything should naturally come to light.

For now, I began walking back to the ones who were awaiting my return.

“...”

Halfway there, I encountered Princess Arin standing alone.

Since I didn’t see the others around, it appeared she had been waiting for me by herself.

“Why are you here alone?”

“Lunab is resting, and Nana has fallen asleep. She must’ve been really exhausted from the journey from Velias to the demon world on my behalf.”

As she replied, she reached out and handed me something familiar.

“I thought I should return this to you.”

It was the one true Guardian’s Sword in this world, my father’s sword.

“I couldn’t find anything else. I’m sorry.”

The traces of hastily wiped-away blood and dirt were evident on it.

I didn’t take it, instead fixing my gaze on her as I asked,

“Why are you returning a sword that belonged to a traitor of the Empire to me?”

“You might not believe it, but when the Demon King threatened us while you were gone, Duke Vert bought time for us to escape.”

“What does that mean?”

My eyes flashed involuntarily.

“Although he was under some spell, his determination to stay loyal to the Empire and protect the continent seemed unchanged. That day, I saw Duke Vert, or rather your

father, with the same eyes of the Guardian I once admired. As a princess, I commanded him to survive and atone for all his sins instead of dying but...”

Princess Arin hesitated to continue, but I already knew.

Duke Vert, my father, could not fulfill her order.

Now, the sword she offered was likely the last remnant of my father’s presence in this world.

After a moment of thought, I reached out and grasped my father’s sword.

“...!”

Suddenly, my mind went blank as if I’d been struck,

‘May I entrust the tasks I couldn’t complete to you, my dear son.’

A voice that sounded unmistakably like my father’s resonated clearly in my head.

‘May you create the world you desire, Xian...!’

What was this? Hallucination?

My body and mind were frozen as if bewitched by petrification magic, unable to move.

“What’s wrong, Xian?”

“Nothing of concern.”

Only after hearing Princess Arin’s voice did I snap out of it as if the illusion shattered. Maybe I wasn’t in my right state of mind yet, hearing all sorts of things.

“Doesn’t it sadden you?”

“What do you mean?”

“He was still your father, wasn’t he? To have your father suffer such a misfortune, even someone like you would...”

“Why is that unfortunate?”

She hesitated, confused.

“Ah?”

"If what you say is true, then my father met a death befitting the honorable title of a Guardian. He would have had no regrets, even at the moment of his demise. I see no reason to mourn a father who chose death without remorse."

"Are you being sincere?"

"I have no reason to lie to you, Your Highness."

I knew all too well how foolishly honorable our father was.

But now, I felt I could somewhat understand that foolishness.

Once you decide to protect someone, regardless of your own fate, you're compelled to protect at all costs. Wasn't I, too, experiencing that same chilling determination?

Blood ties are inescapable, it seems.

"Please return to your empire with Nana and Lunab once she wakes up. I will deal with the remaining matters by myself."

"What? But!"

"What if Nana insisted on coming along alone, Your Highness? I never requested support, did I?"

"I know that even without your telling me. But we did manage to help, didn't we? Nana and I did everything we could to help you. In the end, Lunab provided the most aid, but..."

Nobody asked for their help.

They came unbidden and proclaimed they were there to assist me, as if I should be overwhelmed with gratitude.

I didn't want to point it out; it would only be tiring for me.

It was time to send them all back where they came from.

"If you truly wish to assist me, please return immediately. I've made myself clear."

I turned and walked away.

"Wait! There's one last thing I need to tell you!"

I hesitated but reluctantly looked back.

“What is it this time?”

“You might already know, but there was another reason I could come here with Nana.”

Now that she mentioned it, I'd almost forgotten. Nana should have been in the Empire—how did she come to Velias and meet the princess? Someone must've brought her...

A particular thought suddenly flashed through my mind.

“How much do you know about Emilie?”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 289

Episode 289: Retribution (1)

“It appears that the situation has concluded, Nagel-nim. The Devil King's magic has significantly diminished.”

“Tell our kindred to deactivate the barrier and withdraw from Arem immediately.”

“Yes!”

Following Nagel's orders, the restrictive barrier that spread throughout Arem was lifted, and the devilkind who had evacuated to the outskirts began to return one by one.

“It's unbelievable. An entity, no less than a human, has stopped the Devil King's rampage...”

“Human potential for growth is said to be unfathomable. Perhaps this is not the end.”

Nagel, who had been observing the situation, suddenly sensed a series of energies and bristled his tail.

“What is it, Nagel-nim?”

“I'll leave the cleanup to you, Kellian!”

Without further ado, after entrusting the remaining dragons with the aftermath, he hurried into his own subspace.

Upon entering the subspace, Nagel immediately encountered a familiar figure waiting in front of his throne.

“I heard you vanished from Pruyna recently, but what brings you to the devil realm without notice?”

“One doesn’t need to announce their visit here, right? I’ve come to ask for a favor.”

“A favor?”

Nagel frowned and asked back.

“Just find one human who slipped into this devil realm. The name is Eshel Bert. I trust no further explanation is necessary?”

“Why are you searching for that human?”

“Don’t ask for a reason. Just find them before those two you just saw do.”

She asked him to find the person before Sian and Velkaryon could.

Nagel, intently observing her, soon smiled enigmatically.

“It’s not fitting for you to smell so human. Marian?”

“Are you the only one with that right, Nagel?”

Pruyna’s Guardian Dragon Marian faced him with a complex smile.

—

A very long time ago.

That is, in a past life when I was still a child.

I remember having a discussion with Emily while she was doing the laundry in the manor’s yard.

“Emily, where is your hometown?”

“My hometown? Why do you ask all of a sudden, young master?”

“Just curious. Since you said you’re not from Belias like the other maids.”

“Well, if I must say, I don’t really have a hometown. I’ve always been a wanderer since I was born, and only settled down in Belias for the first time.”

Emily told me she had been at this manor since she was young, long before my birth.

To my understanding, she became my dedicated maid only after I was born as a child of a concubine and left at the manor.

Truth be told, calling her a dedicated maid seemed vague, as she was the only maid tending to me and accessing my room; in essence, Emily was my sole maid.

“I was taken in by the family’s former matriarch. That’s Eshel’s mother.”

“My brother’s mother? How did that happen?”

“I guess she just took pity on me, wandering around on the streets without food. Perhaps she thought to use me as a servant or slave when I got older. Without understanding anything, I just entered this duke’s household.”

Back then, naive as I was, I simply accepted her story, but now that I think about it, she had glossed over many details in telling me this.

“After she passed away, Lady Margaret came and changed all the servants, but I didn’t leave. That’s why I’m here with you now.”

“Why did you stay with me? Didn’t the one who took you in have a son? Shouldn’t you be at my brother’s side?”

“There wasn’t much of a reason. Since Eshel is the elder son, many would serve him, but you didn’t have anyone. No one wanted to be your maid, so I just volunteered.”

“Thank you, Emily...”

“Thanks are not necessary. If you truly are grateful, then please don’t slump around like this. Do some exercise. That way, you could eventually be of little help to Eshel.”

Nothing much of a reason.

She definitely said so, and I didn’t doubt it.

But only after recalling that memory did I realize.

She hadn’t stayed with me for no reason.

She was there for some secretive purpose.

For someone else, not me.

“ ... ”

“You aren’t shocked? Did you know that Emily was involved with witches?”

Princess Arin shared the entire story about Emily in Belias with me and asked curiously at my calm reaction.

“Yes.”

If I hadn’t seen that memory just earlier, I probably would’ve been entirely unaware.

“Was Emily really a witch?”

“To be honest, I’m not sure either. I’ve only recently learned about Emily’s connection with witches.”

“I see.”

She nodded, accepting my response.

“I wish she could have told us honestly, but Emily didn’t say anything and just disappeared from our side. It seemed that Nanan and Hestiawan somewhat knew, but they didn’t open their mouths for some reason...”

Emily had cleaned my room one last time before she disappeared.

“I may be presuming, but she was definitely one of your people. I don’t know where she is now, but I bet Emily won’t go to Sian...”

“That maid Emily, she’s in the devil realm.”

Our gazes shifted simultaneously.

Lunabre, who had somehow regained enough strength, was approaching us with the support of Nanan.

“Rogers said so. An unfamiliar human suddenly arrived at the Devil King’s castle and removed the Pendant of Enchantment.”

I knew what that meant.

“Didn’t I tell you before? The only one who can undo the Pendant of Enchantment is someone unaffected by it, in other words, only another witch...”

“...”

“Sir, who have you been keeping as your maid?”

Lunabre's sincere question left me with no response, as I myself did not even know who she truly was.

Where exactly is Emily now,

and what is she doing?

—

In the dark forest where no light penetrated, Haniel sat dejectedly on the floor in front of her with a broken Pendant of Enchantment.

And in front of her, with a face deeply twisted in anger, was the owner of the holy sword.

"I'm sorry, Eshel..."

"Please, tell me what I long to hear. Mother."

In response to her mother's heartfelt apology, there was nothing but a cold and harsh reply.

"I'm not here to hear an apology from you, Mother! Didn't you say you would detain Sian? Fine, I can understand if you managed to break out of the subspace! But Sian is not fighting the Devil King right now! Despite my provocations, the two are not trying to kill each other!!"

Overcome with anger, Eshel could not calm his wrath.

"Speak up if you have a tongue! This is entirely your plan, isn't it?"

Finally, grabbing Haniel's head, he demanded an explanation.

Nothing about family mattered to him any longer at that point.

"That wench has betrayed us! Because of her, everything has gone astray!"

"Which wench are you referring to?"

"The stray cat I left behind at the Bert Duke's House before I left. She has forsaken you and chosen him!"

"Speak clearly, who has forsaken me...?"

— Swoosh

A strange presence suddenly diverted the tense atmosphere.

Eshel's eyes quickly turned to where the presence was felt.

"It's been a while, Eshel-nim."

A fairly unfamiliar woman greeted him formally.

Eshel, not immediately recognizing her, looked puzzled.

"Who are you...?"

"I served as Sian-nim's maid at the Bert Duke's House. My name is Emily."

"That's right, Emily. I remember you. But why are you here?"

It was a question born purely out of puzzlement.

Eshel could not comprehend why she, barely a memory to him, was present in this place.

"That woman is also a witch. Like you, she carries my blood within her..."

As Haniel explained, Eshel let out an incredulous laugh.

"You tell me it carries your blood? That she's my family?"

"Not exactly. Unlike you, Eshel-nim, I had Haniel-nim's blood forcefully infused into me through magic."

Eshel's gaze returned to Emily.

"I was like a stray cat in the duke's house, watching over everything in place of Haniel-nim. By Sian-nim's side, I witnessed all his actions. For the future Eshel-nim..."

"I thought it strange before. You were the one maid at the duke's house who was not charmed by me. And you even refused my offer to become my maid after Sian."

Eshel had not had significant suspicions about her at that time.

With Bert Duke and Kellin, along with many guardians, under the spell of his enchantment, he had simply thought his own power wasn't enough yet.

Moreover, since she only told redundant stories when asked about Sian, he didn't feel the need to question her further.

"And now you're telling me that you were a witch with mother's blood? Why didn't you serve me?"

“The reason is what I’ve told you before.”

“What?”

“I am the one and only maid of Sian-nim in this world.”

“Sian! Sian! That damned Sian!!!!”

Unable to contain himself any longer, Eshel exploded in rage, screaming wildly.

“The world is supposed to conform to me! It’s supposed to be structured around me! How can he, they, everyone! How can they forsake me for that Sian!”

“While I can sympathize with how you feel, it seems you don’t have time to be so agitated.”

“What?”

“By now, not only Sian-nim but also the master of this devil realm must be frantically searching for you, Eshel-nim. Shouldn’t you be running away quickly? It would be excruciating regardless of which of them catches you, wouldn’t it?”

“I, the savior of this world, am I supposed to run just because those abominations are coming?”

Eshel defiantly drew his holy sword that radiated light.

“Before that, I should deal with you first! Corroded by filthy dark mist, I will purify you with this light!”

Gripping the golden light-emitting holy sword tightly, Eshel slowly approached Emily.

– Tick

Suddenly, a single raindrop fell from the clear sky,

soon followed by a heavy downpour.

Distracted, Eshel watched the falling raindrops with a vacant expression.

“Unexpected. I didn’t think she would be the first to arrive...”

Emily, also gazing at the rain, opened her mouth meaningfully.

“Is it a relief? At least, the most merciful one seems to have found you first.”

“What?”

Eshel’s gaze quickly shifted as another presence was detected.

– Splish-splash

Wet footsteps sounded, approaching Eshel ever closer.

As the noise neared, Eshel felt an inexplicable chill.

“That’s a face I’ve never seen before on brother.”

“...!”

“Very unfamiliar. It even seems pitiable.”

“Why are you here?”

Eshel’s face turned ghastly pale as if he had seen a ghost.

“It rained back then, too. I felt so utterly hopeless and despairing, like a wanderer with nowhere to return.”

Amidst the pouring rain, she shone with pure beauty.

The elder daughter of the Bert Duke’s House, Eshel’s sister,

“What do you think of that feeling now, brother?”

It was Elris Bert.

(To be continued)

—

End of translation.

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 290

Chapter 290: Poetic Justice (2)

After leaving the Order of Light and disappearing for a full seven years, Elise finally reappeared to Eshel. Despite the long years that had passed, her pure and elegant beauty remained unchanged, as if it were an eternally flowing stream. However, her aura had greatly changed.

“Elise, why are you here?” Eshel asked.

“I came to see you, brother,” she answered without hesitation, leaving Eshel momentarily speechless. Then, shifting to an awkward smile and soon bursting into cheerful laughter, he said, “Haha! Of course, that’s it! You’ve come to help me! As a part of the Bert family, you’re here to support our future, my future, right Elise?”

Elise just looked at him with no response, her gaze indifferent.

Eshel approached her slowly. “Help me, Elise. We need to escape this demon realm. We need to formulate a new plan to oppose him.”

Finally, standing face to face, Eshel took her hand and looked earnestly into her eyes. Elise did not reject his gaze. Suddenly, a violet enticing power manifested in Eshel’s eyes.

“Will you help me, Elise?” he whispered. Elise gently released his hand while tenderly cupping his face, her own eyes beginning to soften.

“Brother...”

“Yes, Elise!” His face filled with hope once again.

But her previously softened gaze sharpened once more. With a sudden move, she tightened her grasp on Eshel’s face and threw him to the ground. Eshel, thrown down, quickly massaged his face and glared at Elise.

“Surprised that your power of enticement has no effect?” she said.

Eshel’s eyes, filled with anger a moment ago, now swam with confusion. A dazzling blue aura shone from Elise’s figure.

“Elise, have you... contracted with a god?” he gasped.

The power of enticement worked only on similar beings, not on humans who received power from higher beings.

Instead of answering, Elise produced a strange object. “Do you remember this, brother?” It was a worn scroll that looked like it would crumble at any moment.

“You said when I activated this summoning scroll, everyone would turn their eyes to me, didn’t you? And indeed, they would have if I became prey for the demonic beasts.”

Realization dawning, Eshel’s expression turned sour. “It seems there’s been a misunderstanding. I only meant...”

“Since then, I’ve realized that you don’t wish for me to carry on the family’s legacy, you just want to see me die miserably,” Elise cut him off. “That way, the attention of the family and our father would turn more towards you.”

Overwhelmed, Elise crushed the scroll in her hand. “What were you so afraid of, brother?”

“Afraid of what?”

“What frightened you so much that you had to kill anyone who could rival you? How many must die for your order? Because of you, our father, who devoted his life to protection, died senselessly!”

Elise strained to hold back tears.

“You’re an existence that shouldn’t be in this world,” she confessed, her words reflecting a long-suppressed sentiment.

Eshel, startled, rose to his feet. “So, you too deny me, Elise.”

Drawing his holy sword, Durandal, he pointed it at her. “It doesn’t matter if you’ve made a contract with the gods. I am the sole savior selected by the almighty God Luminel! No matter how exceptional you are, you cannot stop me, Elise!”

“Savior? You are no savior,” Elise rebutted fiercely, standing her ground. “A savior doesn’t live for himself alone. Don’t dare apply such a noble title to someone like you!”

Suddenly, the surrounding landscape changed radically.

Amidst the abyss of deep ocean darkness, where not a single ray of light penetrated, Eshel was left struggling, gasping for air, while Elise remained calm. No matter how desperately Eshel swung his holy sword, the situation did not change, and he kept sinking deeper into the abyss of despair.

“Luminel, have you truly abandoned me?” Eshel prayed for salvation to the heavenly being who had once favored him.

But then, a ray of light appeared in the all-consuming darkness, emanating from the holy sword Durandal. The spirit of Durandal materialized before him, and Eshel’s face brightened with hope.

“Holy Sword! Lead me back to the path of salvation...”

“How pitiful,” the spirit responded coldly. “How can a self-proclaimed savior beg for salvation? You’ve sullied the name of the holy sword and the light.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You’ve squandered the final chance granted by Him. He no longer harbors any expectations for you.”

Eshel’s face contorted with ultimate despair as he was told, “Sink into the abyss.”

The light faded, and with it, Eshel’s anguished cries echoed into the void, unheard. The false savior, who believed himself the sole arbiter of the world’s order, fell endlessly into the chasm of despair.

* * *

“ESH...