

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin

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The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 291

Chapter 291. Karma (3)

A single phrase clung to by the barely conscious mind.

Emily's eyes flared open as she faced the one who had grasped her body.

"Yo-Young Master?"

Even though her vision was a bit blurred, there was no mistake.

He was the one and only young master and master of her world.

It was Sian.

-Whoosh

Mana and mist swirled together in his free hand, gathering into a sphere.

With a bold move, Sian pushed the orb into Emily's body.

It was sucked in smoothly.

"Suction!"

A 5-star darkness attribute unique magic 'Absorption'.

A spell that sucked in poison or impurities from the target's body and transferred it into the caster's, healing and purifying the target at the expense of the caster.

"No, Young Master! If you do this, the poison will enter your body...!"

"It doesn't matter."

Emily tried to stop him, but Sian continued to draw the poison into himself relentlessly.

Finally having absorbed all the poison, Sian staggered slightly as his head spun.

However, he didn't fall.

Instead, he spit onto the ground, and among his saliva was some of the poison he had drawn in.

"Are you alright, Young Master?"

"This isn't enough to bother me."

Sian's body, hardened by the blood of the beasts, was already beyond human limits; so such an impact was insignificant.

Sian gently released Emily's body, and she immediately collapsed to the ground.

Then she looked up at Sian with a vacant gaze.

"How did you get here?"

"Isn't that the least of your worries?"

"You must have really not wanted to lose me, running here in such a hurry?"

"Who else would take care of my back if not you?"

"That's true."

Emily burst into laughter without realizing and bowed her head.

– Drip

For some reason, a single droplet of water fell to the floor.

Confused, when she touched her face, she realized tears were streaming down her cheeks.

Sian wordlessly draped a cloak over Emily.

"My, my! Look at the state of this cloak! How much have you been wandering around for it to be this tattered? We'll have to mend it immediately when we return!"

"Do whatever."

Sian gestured for her to do as she pleased, and soon walked past Emily, trudging forward.

As he walked away, Emily whispered to herself.

“Other than me, who else would mend the Young Master’s cloak?”

With a resolute decision to not hand it over to anyone else, Emily tightly clutched Sian’s cloak.

“Do you think you’ve won?”

Haniel sneered at the approaching Sian.

“Your actions will eventually destroy the order of this world! You’re only adding more to what my son has to do!”

A desperate outcry that humans always use when cornered.

Sian was all too familiar with such situations.

“Soon, your people will regret! They will regret their ignorance for following a savior who is not righteous!”

Haniel continued to reproach Sian, almost as if she were possessed by evil.

Sian looked down at her without a response, remaining calm and collected.

“That damned order. Why are you so obsessed with it?”

Those words, he had heard so often they almost became annoying.

Haniel laughed mockingly in response.

“There’s no particular reason! I just lived faithfully as a human, following my instincts!”

Sian’s brows furrowed slightly.

“Like humans live to fill their stomachs, sleep, and satisfy their desires, I too lived a long life realizing the value of my existence while carrying this filthy blood!”

Haniel showed off the blood flowing down her elbow to Sian.

“Don’t think this is the end! As long as my son, my savior, lives! This world will never accept Sian Bert!”

“And where is this savior of yours now?”

That single question silenced Haniel.

"If he is the undeniable savior you believe in, shouldn't he be here to save you in such a situation?"

But, her savior was nowhere to be seen.

Unable to even suggest he would soon arrive, Haniel remained silent.

"It seems you already know. That your savior will not come to save you..."

In a situation that allowed neither denial nor affirmation, Haniel's face twisted into despair.

Sian pulled out his Keram and aimed it at her.

However, without any particular judgment or execution, he simply watched her in silence.

Then, just when it seemed he would finally sheath the sword, he turned towards Emily.

"...?"

Haniel wore an expression of disbelief that she wasn't to be executed.

Similarly, Emily looked puzzled as she watched Sian make his pointless return.

"Are you... just going to leave?"

"Yeah."

"But, because of that woman, many knights including your father had to endure tragedy. Including you, Young Master. Are you really going to let her walk free?"

"What do you think is the most painful revenge I could inflict on that woman?"

Unexpectedly asked this question, Emily hesitated.

"It's probably to show her... to watch something she believed and hoped for crumble miserably..."

"Correct. But right now, I don't have that something."

Understanding dawned on Emily, and she nodded.

"Then, acting now wouldn't satisfy me. It's better not to touch her."

After leaving those words, Sian supported Emily and left the scene.

Left alone, Haniel stared forlornly at their retreating figures before once again erupting into manic laughter towards the sky.

“Kyahaha! Truly foolish! Did you think I’d self-destruct like this? I’m far from finished!”

While looking at her own blood flowing warmly, she reassured herself that her ability to bewitch still existed.

“First, I’ll reclaim my son! Then, I’ll show you the true power of a witch! No one will be able to stop me this time...!”

“Witch?”

A cold voice suddenly quenched the rising heat.

Haniel tensed up on the spot, unable to move.

“You’re the witch? The one who gave that pendant to Eshe, who you thought would provoke me into attacking Inge?”

The owner of the voice picked up the pendant lying on the ground and displayed it to her.

Haniel managed to turn her head to face him.

The Demon King Belkarion.

Following Sian, now the strongest of the demon world appeared before her.

“I never understood when people said mental pain is more difficult than physical pain. How hard can that be? I thought it was just something you could endure.”

-Crunch

The pendant in his hand crumbled into a formless dust.

“But because of you people, I fully experienced it. And seriously, I never want to experience it again. So, I need to repay you for this precious experience, don’t I?”

The area around him began to be slowly consumed by a dark red demonic energy.

Haniel could neither resist nor run; she could only tremble helplessly.

“Yes! I’ll give you the worst pain imaginable, the kind you’ll never forget in your next life! The pain that me, Besti, and the residents of the demon world felt, I’ll return it all to you!”

“...!”

“Esheeeeel!!”

Amid the roar of anguish echoing through the deserted woods,

There was no savior for her.

* * *

Ignoring the desperate scream heard from the direction I came from, it wouldn't change anything if I went back now.

“How did you find me here?”

In a silence uncharacteristic of the moment, Emily cautiously asked me.

“I didn't specifically go to find you. I just happened to come across you by chance.”

“And here I thought you had rushed here just to find me.”

With those words, silence fell again.

Emily kept waiting for me to say something, but I had no intention of speaking first.

“Aren't you going to ask me anything?”

“About what?”

“Just various things. Such as what kind of relationship I had with that woman, how I ended up here, why I tricked the Young Master all this time...”

“If you want to talk, just talk.”

I gave her the freedom to speak her mind without pressure.

After pondering for a while, Emily finally took a deep breath.

“I just did it for the Young Master's sake.”

“That's enough then.”

“Do you believe me?”

“There's no reason not to.”

“You’re very nonchalant about it. I was so nervous thinking I’d get a huge lecture!”

“Why would you get lectured when you didn’t do anything wrong?”

Her sigh slipped out again at my consistent response.

“Haniel said I was like a stray cat taken in by her. In the Bert Dukedom, I watched over everything that happened and monitored the brothers, including the Young Master. Haniel told me to figure out who could be of help or threaten Eshe, the Young Master.”

“What was I then?”

“At first, you were neither here nor there, Young Master. To be of help or a threat, you needed power, but until ten years old, you were just treated as incompetent.”

Yeah, that was true.

Unconsciously, I scratched my cheek.

“But you suddenly changed, beating Kranz until he was almost dead, and then declaring to the duke that you wanted to go to the front lines. I really thought you became a completely different person!”

I still vividly remembered Emily’s face when I returned after beating Kranz in a sword practice.

“I think my feelings changed around that time. I was deeply impressed by the Young Master’s constant effort to grow and not succumb to negative reality. After that, I decided that the only Young Master I would serve in this world was Sian. It felt like I had to live that way...”

I simply nodded in agreement, not reacting further.

There was no need for words; I already knew her feelings.

“Why did you clean my room before you left?”

“Oh, that was because... it felt like I wouldn’t be able to do it ever again.”

“Very like you.”

As Emily grinned and asked what that meant, I returned a silent answer, and during our light banter, I could see our group waiting for me in the distance.

“Emily sister!”

Nana was the first to rush over and embrace Emily.

“You didn’t die; you’re alive! I’m so relieved!”

“Is that what you should be saying? Do you have any idea what I’ve been through?”

“I kept the promise I made with sister Emily! I didn’t tell anyone about who she is!”

“Ignoring the fact that you didn’t talk, why would you bring the princess here? Ah, really! That stupid man Brian, what the hell...”

While familiar bickering played out, Princess Arin approached me.

“Did you find Eshe?”

“He wasn’t found. However, I’m sure he is not in the demon world.”

I had a vague idea of where he might be from the aura I sensed earlier, but there was no need to let her know.

“Then, there’s no reason for us to stay here?”

“Correct. You should return, Princess. I will follow shortly.”

The princess seemed about to say more but nodded briefly in agreement.

“Just wait a moment, please.”

I called the princess back as she turned and returned my father’s sword to her.

“Why?”

“That sword is the only proof that my father, no, Duke Bert, is no longer in this world. Please take that sword and let the world know. Of the noble death of the guardian of the continent...”

“I will do so.”

The princess smiled slightly and readily agreed.

“Don’t be late. Unless you want to see me come back to the demon world again...”

With a farewell that didn’t quite sound like a warning, she and the others were carried away by Nana, soaring high into the sky.

After they disappeared beyond the horizon, I finally spoke softly.

“They’re gone. You can come out now.”

“Ugh. You’re too quick with your observations.”

With that, Mishuka, who had been hiding behind us, revealed herself.

“Nagel wants to see you.”

(To be continued in the next chapter)

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Chapter 292: Retribution (4)

Rogers silently advanced through the scene surrounded by the pungent smell of blood. It wasn’t just the odour of blood that filled his nostrils; he could also sense a different kind of aroma—perhaps the smell of screams and despair? It was the scent that naturally emanated when a creature near death cried out in unbearable pain and frenzied madness. Rogers was especially familiar with this smell; at the end of this scent at every crime scene, a certain being could always be found.

At the end of the path, Rogers halted his steps when he caught sight of a familiar figure. His lord and the absolute ruler of the demon world, Demon King Belcarion.

“Hm? When did you arrive, Rogers?”

“Just now, my lord.”

Belcarion greeted Rogers with a blood-soaked smile. Before him laid an unidentifiable grotesque mass, drenched in blood. Rogers summoned mana to his hand and approached the Demon King with long strides, ready to deal with the aftermath as he usually did.

“No, stop. Don’t bother.”

Belcarion, however, halted him.

“Will you leave it as it is?” Rogers questioned.

“I’ve no particular desire to erase the traces. Besides, there are no demon residences around here, right?”

“Anyone would recognize it as the Demon King’s doing.”

“All the better if they do.”

Belcarion seemed to prefer it that way.

“It can serve as a warning and a testament to my power, don’t you think?”

“What are you trying to prove?”

“That my nature as a Demon King is still very much intact. That at any time, anywhere, and to anyone, I can do this without any effort if I so wish.”

Belcarion gazed at the corpse, an evil grin in his eyes, which caused Rogers to frown slightly.

“It’s not that Ash fellow, is it?”

“Right. Instead, this was the witch who made the pendant that tormented Besti. She claimed that Ash fellow would no longer be in the demon world.”

“Then where?”

“She didn’t know. Told me to look in the mortal realm if I was curious.”

Upon mentioning the mortal realm again, Rogers couldn’t help but swallow.

“Do you intend to go?”

The question was loaded with meanings, and Rogers’ expression tensed up. Belcarion simply flashed a sly smile.

“Who knows?”

Behind him, the vengeful spirits of the cursed swords were still yearning for blood and wailing madness.

* * *

“What are you thinking, Marian?”

“Weren’t we supposed to not ask each other questions anymore?”

“If it were an explicable action, there’d be no room for questions. Why did you intercept the prey those two were hunting?”

“It wasn’t exactly intercepting. I was just temporarily tying it down. It wasn’t something I wanted to do.”

“I wonder if the supreme beings will see it the same way. Doubts linger.”

Marian shrugged as if it didn’t really concern her, while Nagel watched her with a wary look.

“Do you plan to collaborate with the God of the Black Mist?”

“Why do you ask? You know as well as I do that as arbitrators, we don’t get involved in worldly affairs. It would be improper to think otherwise over a trivial matter like this.”

“I asked the wrong question then. Does the Goddess of the Blue Waters plan to cooperate with the God of the Black Mist?”

At the mention of the goddess, Marian’s eyebrows moved slightly.

“Didn’t know you were such a curious man. What? You want in too?”

“The thought alone is appalling. Leave my pocket dimension if you’re done here.”

“I was just about to.”

Opening a gate, Marian soon turned back to Nagel.

“You’ve become quite human, haven’t you?”

“What does that mean?”

“Nothing in particular.”

With a satisfied smile, Marian left the pocket dimension. After she left, familiar footsteps sounded from beyond the space. Nagel was confronted by Xian, who he had instructed Mishuka to bring.

“Your eyes watching me are peculiar. As if I’m hiding something?”

“Do you say that because it pricks your conscience?”

Xian retorted with a calm response.

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Chapter 293. Unwanted Help (1)

Passing through the red sky of the demonic realm, the boundary gate of the frontlines finally revealed itself. Recognizing her safe return, Arin let out a long sigh, relief mixed with a slight concern.

“Why do you look troubled, Princess? You seem unwell.”

Emily, beside her, asked with a worried expression.

“Oh, it’s nothing! I just feel a bit sorry for those who were probably worried because of me. After all, I left without a word, only a letter...”

“But in the end, all is well. What’s done is done, right? As long as one can manage the aftermath properly after acting impulsively.”

To Lunab, who had much experience with such situations, this didn’t qualify as a worry at all.

Arin smiled awkwardly at the somewhat vague comfort.

The person she felt the most sorry for was undoubtedly Resimus.

With a resolve to bow first without excuses upon her return, Arin tightly gripped the sword of Duke Verth given by Sian.

“Princess!!”

Upon their final return to Belias, the troops stationed at the boundary gate hurried to welcome them.

Arin immediately bowed her head towards the knights.

“As a member of the royal family, I made a personal decision based on emotion instead of sound judgement! I sincerely apologize to all who were concerned!”

The sudden apology left the knights visibly flustered.

“The matter has been resolved for now. We didn’t find the instigator, Eshel Verth, but the situation with the Demon King has been peacefully...”

Arin began to raise her head and stopped mid-sentence as she saw the expressions of the knights looking at her. There was an inexplicable urgency plastered on their faces.

She noticed that Resimus was nowhere to be seen.

The one person she thought would be anxiously waiting for her...

"We will escort the Princess!"

"Has something happened in my absence?"

Arin intuitively sensed that another incident had occurred with her diplomatic party.

"We'll explain on the way! We have no time, we must move now!"

With that, Arin quickly moved inside Belias, and upon hearing the full story later, she slammed her hand on the table in a fit of rage.

"What do you mean, a rebellion?"

"Would you take a look at this?"

Arin quickly reviewed the document presented by the knight.

<The Ushif Empire has revered the glorious light since its foundation. We absolutely cannot accept the proposal by the fifth princess of the royal family, Arin Sevellus, to pardon the followers of the black mist. If you agree with this sentiment, rise up now to reclaim the glory of the Empire...>

"Who is the instigator?"

"It's suspected to be the first prince, Luinel Sevellus. It seems he planned the rebellion while the Princess was away."

-Crunch

As if she had seen enough, Arin crumpled the document on the spot. Anger was swelling in her shaking pupils.

"You mean to say the nobles are siding with this rubbish edict?"

Without saying a word, the knight offered her another document.

Similar to the previous one, but something familiar yet shocking was stamped at the bottom.

"The, the seal of House Verth?"

Arin's eyes shook violently with shock.

“According to known information, this edict was first spread by House Baron’s Setting Sun.”

“Who could have spread such an edict?”

As Arin was calming herself from the shock, a thought flickered through her mind.

“Yulken Darius...”

Verth’s adjutant and the knight known to have left Belias for another mission. A knight from Belias who was confirmed to be immune to the power of enthrallment.

“Could it be him? Why? It was said he was free from the power of enthrallment?”

“That could have been a lie.”

In the confusion, Lunab entered the room.

The knight tried to stop her, but Arin signaled for him to allow it.

“What do you mean, Lunab?”

“The power of enthrallment isn’t something you can overcome with just belief or willpower. I can assure you of that as someone who has directly analyzed it.”

“But Duke Verth overcame it! You saw it too, right? The scene where he faced the Demon King to defend us!”

“Well, what if Duke Verth hadn’t received an order not to protect the Princess? I’m sure nobody thought the Princess herself would be at the scene.”

“If what you say is true, then why would Duke Verth have this edict spread?”

“Well, it’s obvious, isn’t it? Naturally, it’s meant to sow chaos in the Empire and the continent.”

“...!”

“We’ve been battling till now to prevent this.”

With Lunab’s answer, Arin bowed her head and sank into thought.

“Was this the intent from the very beginning?”

Was this the will of Duke Verth, or was it Eshel’s?

In the returned confusion, Arin knew all too well that only she could resolve this crisis.

“Where is Resimus?”

“The Princess had left Belias just a few hours before your return. He left in your name to gather loyal royal forces. Maybe he headed to the Duchy of Kundel first.”

“I will begin sorting the forces that will join the rebellion and those who remain loyal to the current royal family. When the list is ready, I will send edicts from the royal family with varying content to both sides!”

“As per the Princess’s command!”

The knights immediately took action upon receiving the orders.

Arin, compared to the bustling knights, turned to Lunab, who stood idly by, and said with a small smile.

“Could you gather the others, Lunab?”

* * *

“What in the world is going on? Rebellion? What kind of mess do we face immediately upon return?”

Emily, in agony, was pulling her hair out.

Nana, taking a deep sleep in the corner to relieve the fatigue accumulated from the arduous journey, and Brian, looking anxiously back and forth between the two.

Aware of their glances, Emily strode towards Brian.

“Hey, if you have a mouth, why don’t you say something? How long are you going to just sit there idly?”

“Bu-but, without the young master’s return, there isn’t much we can do...”

“Who’s asking to do anything now? Just think for once!”

A scolding maid and a scolded knight. An ordinary daily situation, but Brian, unlike his usual panicked self, was looking at Emily with intense eyes.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

“What am I supposed to say?”

“Huh?”

“Didn’t you also not say anything to me, Miss Emily?”

Emily stood speechless for a full 10 seconds, flustered.

“Look at this man. Are you upset because I disappeared without saying anything? Look, Brian! I’m always here for the young master...!”

“Am I not living for the young master as well?”

Emily’s mouth stopped again.

“The feelings you have for the young master, I understand them well. But Miss Emily, you’re not the only one living for him, right?”

Brian, as he spoke, boldly took Emily’s hand.

Startled, Emily’s face flushed red.

“Next time, please speak to me as well. I may not be someone to lean on, but I’d like to be of assistance.”

“Why are you suddenly setting the mood like this?!”

Emily jerked her hand away briskly and turned around quickly.

After calming her startled heart, she hesitantly spoke.

“I’ll tell you everything later. Just the two of us, in private...”

Unable to meet his gaze, she averted her eyes to the window.

“Don’t make me wait too long.”

Brian sent her a gentle smile despite the helplessness.

-Creak

Just as an awkward atmosphere was about to linger, the door opened, and the others called by Arin appeared. Lunab and Set, now special attendants to the Princess.

Upon entering, Set flopped down on a chair.

“Goodness, how can issues crop up in succession? The Princess must be having a tough time too.”

“I’d rather deal with it all at once. It’s easier to handle that way.”

Although present as the Princess’s honorary attendants, both were clearly foreigners. Ideally, they should return safely to their homeland without entanglement in this affair, but their attitude suggested they were ready to join the fray.

Emily and Brian quietly sat down, quietly gauging.

Lunab glanced around and tilted her head curiously.

“Where is Hastia?”

She was one of those Arin had asked to be summoned, but for some reason, she was absent.

“That, well. She said she needed to pray alone for a moment and wanted some solitude.”

“Prayer?”

“Yes. Something about a white elf tribal ritual. We didn’t dare bring her while respecting her wishes...”

“I see.”

Lunab seemed not to think it a major issue, but felt a nagging discomfort.

As Lunab pondered going to check on her, the door opened again, and Arin reappeared.

“Sorry I’m late. Thank you all for gathering despite the abrupt request.”

Arin bowed deeply, gratitude sincere.

“Now’s not the time for ‘thank you’s’, right? So, what do you need from us, Princess Arin? Should we call in troops from the Kingdom of Spania? The justification is clear!”

Set was ready to call in reinforcements in his name, and...

“I’ve told Shultz to send a message to the Karam Academy. If the Academy’s mages come, they can help not just with troops but with supplies as well.”

Lunab was ready to utilize the power of the Karam Academy for support without hesitation.

Their offers to help in a foreign matter without hesitation touched Arin deeply.

"I truly appreciate it. All of you."

Arin bowed to them once more.

"But I'll just take your intentions with gratitude. I didn't ask you here for help."

"...?"

But Arin refused all their offers. The unexpected response left everyone but her wide-eyed.

"Please leave the Ushif Empire as soon as you leave this room. I'll ensure your safety."

"Princess, are you serious?"

"Yes. I am serious."

"But Arin, this matter is..."

"This matter belongs to the Empire, and none of you have a reason to get involved. It occurred solely due to my negligence and the Empire's internal affairs."

Arin's demeanor was absolute. Seeing the resolve, Set and Lunab couldn't continue.

"And one more thing. I have a request."

Arin's firm gaze shifted to Emily and Brian.

"When Sian returns, please, do not mention this incident."

"Really?"

Emily's instinctive reply echoed.

"Yes. Even if Sian learns of it..."

Arin clenched her fist as she continued.

"Please tell him I do not want any help."

(To be continued)

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Episode 294: Unwanted Assistance (2)

The red hue of twilight seeped through the window, bathing the room in its glow. Hastia offered her prayers beneath the light, eyes tightly shut, as the indistinct shapes of numerous spirits looked down upon her.

(Have you forgotten your awareness as a White Elf, Hastia?)

‘Of course not.’

(Then why do you not return to Fruian and remain within the lands of humans?)

‘I cannot return until I’ve ensured the safety of the one who showed me favor. Without that person, speaking with you like this would be impossible.’

Hastia demonstrated an unwavering and assertive attitude throughout.

(We understand your heart, but the time has come to give up. Have you not considered the worry you are causing to your clan members in Fruian?)

However, the mention of her clan made Hastia’s lips quiver.

‘But, I...’

(Stop there. Do not continue to speak.)

Interrupted by the spirit, Hastia had no choice but to sever the connection.

(We will not tolerate further deviation. Return and fulfill your duties to your clan, Hastia.)

‘What should I do?’

(Return to Fruian immediately.)

Hastia, seemingly expecting this, didn’t react with surprise.

(However, you must take someone with you.)

Her eyes widened in response to the mention of a companion.

‘Who are you speaking of?’

(Sian Bert.)

Her widened eyes then churned with shock and confusion.

‘Why Sian in Fruian?’

(The gods wish it.)

Immediately, Hastia grasped the soul stone tighter, her hands trembling.

* * *

Night fell suddenly after the expected hour-long conclusion of the battle against the Demon King, which had taken longer than thought. It was a relief to have avoided a messy aftermath.

Thus settled, what’s going on here?

Near the boundary gate, about 20 meters away, the lack of soldiers was discernible.

Lower than a squad’s worth?

Still, cautious observation confirmed the minimal military presence.

Had there been a sudden relocation of troops?

It was a curious situation, yet serendipitous for me, allowing for stealthy exit from the boundary gate and passage into the interior of Bellias.

[A savior who brought peace to the interstice, yet the welcome is underwhelming.]

A savior my foot.

I might as well be lucky not to be shackled on arrival.

Ignoring Keram’s jeers, my immediate destination was the imperial villa in Bellias.

Approaching the main entrance for assessment...

Something felt off.

Beyond the gates of the villa where the princess resided, the military presence was unusually sparse.

This disparity raised questions. Could the princess truly be inside?

And with that small spark of curiosity, unease began to take hold.

Only personal confirmation would suffice now.

-Shh

“Hm?”

“What’s happening?”

“Ah, it’s nothing. Thought I sensed something pass by...”

Easily evading the guards’ eyes, I infiltrated the villa.

“Haap!”

The moment I went to enter, a familiar, spirited yet hollow shout caused my gaze to instinctively turn.

There could only be one other man with such a shout known to me.

“Huff! Huff!”

The sharp swordplay cutting through the cold night air unmistakably belonged to Brian, who was in the midst of training.

Upon confirming no one else was around, I approached him directly.

“Wh-who...?”

Felt by Brian, he immediately spun around.

“Young Master?!”

Recognizing my face, he dropped to the floor hastily.

“Welcome back! I’m relieved to see you’ve returned safely!”

Really, this kind of thing is too much for me.

“Enough, stand and cease your babbling.”

At my word, Brian sprang up, his eyes becoming tinged with rising emotion.

To avoid any sentimental entanglement, I shifted the topic.

“Why are you alone here?”

"The princess had graciously assigned this imperial villa for us to stay in your absence. Staying at the Bert residence would have been inconvenient..."

That makes sense.

The likes of the dimwit Krantz and Duchess Margaret would not welcome my people.

"And the princess?"

"She has safely returned and is now at ease in the villa with Nana and Emily!"

So she has safely returned?

"But why are the guards so scarce? Isn't the princess here too?"

"Ah, well, that is..."

He hesitated, suddenly trailing off.

"She returned to the royal palace soon after reaching Bellias."

"Immediately? For what reason?"

"The Emperor... his health deteriorated rapidly. I assume it was her decision to return quickly considering her extended absence. She expressed regrets and gratitude, asking to convey them to you. You're welcome to rest at the villa if you wish..."

Is the emperor's illness recurring?

While I understand the reason,

"What about others? Did they return with the princess?"

"Not really. Lady Lunab and Sir Seth are still here in Bellias."

There's no reason for me to meet and bother them now.

It's better to leave without seeing them.

"What about Hastia? Is she here too?"

"Hastia? Oh yes, she's with Emily in her room."

"Then quietly bring her here. No need to mention my presence."

"But why, if I may ask?"

-Sssh

I need not answer, as another presence intrudes.

“Seems that won’t be necessary.”

For the one I was seeking, the elf, had found her way here on her own.

‘Welcome back, Lord Sian.’

Clutching the soul stones in her hands, Hastia greeted me warmly.

Her mood seemed subtly changed, or was it just my imagination?

I promptly moved with her to a secluded place for a private conversation.

“Let’s go to Fruian together.”

‘...!’

She looked surprised, which I expected, but her reaction more intense than anticipated.

‘Why are you heading to Fruian?’

No point in hiding the truth, so I relayed the entire ordeal with the Devil Dragon’s leader to her.

‘So, Lord Sian, you seek a way to survive from the highest beings in Fruian?’

I nodded to affirm, expecting that the situation would not be pleasing to Hastia.

She, a being protected by a deity, had no good reason to assist someone like me, an eyesore to those deities.

That said, I didn’t really want her help.

It was simply convenient to take her along to Fruian; what came after, I’d handle myself...

‘Yes, I’ll help you with everything I can!’

“...?”

‘Willingly!’

She accepted my request readily, beaming with enthusiasm.

Even after I asked her several more times if she was truly fine with it, Hastia remained resolute.

I decided to meet her at dawn and sent her away, then returned to where Brian was.

“Where are you going now?”

“You know the drill, why ask?”

“Still... it’s.”

“Sorry for causing you concern. I didn’t mean to bring you all the way to Bellias.”

“Not at all, Young Master!”

Brian emphatically denied with a wave of his hand.

Smirking, I turned away from him.

“Where to now?”

“Home. I have someone I need to see.”

“Who might that be?”

Obviously, it wasn’t to see Krantz or the Duchess.

If I had to put it simply...

I was off to see the person who offered unwanted aid.

* * *

Under the shroud of a melancholy night, Elis was left alone in the empty room, leaning against the window and gazing at the room’s landscape, her eyes filled with intense sadness.

-Creak

The door suddenly opened, and a brief shock at the unexpected visitor was replaced with...

“Welcome, Sian.”

Elis greeted him calmly with a smile, though Sian’s eyes bore a hint of sharpness unlike usual.

“You look rather stern. It’s as if I’m the guilty one here.”

“ ... ”

“How did you know I’m here?”

“Just had a feeling you’d be here. This was the first room I visited.”

The siblings found themselves in the room of William Bert, the head of the Bert family, located on the top floor.

“Heh, family’s intuition is something else. To be in synch like thi—”

“Why did you do it?”

Sian’s cutting question was followed by silence.

“What do you mean?”

“To do our respective duties, that was your own decree. Was this your idea of duty?”

Elis simply looked back into Sian’s eyes, seemingly untroubled by his severe inquiry.

“I won’t mince words. Where have you put Eshel—my brother?”

“And once I tell you, what will you do?”

Should another have asked that question, Sian would have promptly answered without hesitation.

I would kill him.

But before Elis, those words remained unsaid.

“Will you kill him?”

He dreaded the inevitable follow-up he knew would come if he answered.

“Why?”

“He’s a criminal who insulted the empire and the royal family. He also brought dishonor to our family and father...”

“That’s all in the past.”

Sian fell silent again.

“You’ve wanted to kill Brother Eshel for a long time, haven’t you?”

“ ... ”

“Ever since you saved me at the front seven years ago, no, even before that, you’ve been intent on his death.”

“ ... ”

“Even Brother Eshel admits he doesn’t understand why you hate him so much...”

Sian’s lips refused to move, and Elis pressed on with her words.

“I don’t want to force you to explain. But I can no longer wait. It’s time for you to choose, Sian.”

“What are you suggesting?”

“Tell me all your secrets, right here, right now. It’s about time you did, isn’t it?”

“Give me another option.”

Sian immediately made clear he couldn’t share his secret with her yet.

“If not that...”

Elis, however, seemed prepared for his refusal, remaining impassive.

“Let it all go, Sian.”

“ ... ! ”

“Let’s end this here.”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 295

Chapter 295: Unwanted Help (3)

“What did you just say?”

Sian's eyes were as sharp as a well-honed blade.

To think the youngest sibling, who had shown endlessly gentle eyes only to him, was now looking at him with such sharp and edgy eyes.

For Ellis, the tension only heightened.

"I said let's stop here. You don't need to strain yourself anymore. You can live proudly with the people you cherish. No one will blame you. I'll make sure of that."

However, she did not yield and declared her intention firmly.

Ellis genuinely hoped Sian would stop there.

She wished that he would stop staining his hands with blood and live a human life from now on.

But,

"What do you think I'm going to do after all this?"

Sian had already shown, through his gaze, that he had no intention of doing so.

"Whatever it is, it will probably involve sacrificing you under the pretext of protecting everyone. Knowing that, how could I let you go?"

Struck to the core, Sian fell silent.

His eyes evaded to the window.

Ellis did not continue speaking, waiting for Sian to open his mouth.

"I'm not saying I haven't thought about quitting. I've thought about it being pointless several times."

Sian revealed his sincere feelings that he had experienced thus far.

"But you couldn't put it into practice, could you? I understand. There was no one to replace you. But it's different now. By your side, now there's me...."

"I hate the idea of my sister sacrificing herself for me anyway. I've told you repeatedly. I want you to live your life, not caring about the family or anything else. That's why I gave you a second chance at life."

Whether it's this person or that person,

why is everyone so eager to sacrifice themselves for having saved his life just once?

Sian truly couldn't understand.

Humans are selfish, self-centered creatures, after all,

Sian desperately hoped that the people around him would finally realize their instinct and live their lives for themselves.

"I leave my brother in your care for now, sister. When I return to fetch him, I ask that you hand him over willingly. If you truly care for me, you must do so."

This was a declaration under the guise of a request.

No matter who came to stop him, Sian could not possibly give up on the devil named Eshael.

With those words, Sian turned around and slowly headed toward the door.

"For how long do you intend to sacrifice yourself?"

With a poignant look, Ellis appealed to Sian.

"I never thought of it as a sacrifice."

Sian, holding the doorknob, looked back at her one last time.

"All of this is just a part of the process of moving forward to live."

With these words, Sian left the room, and Ellis helplessly gazed at the door through which he had gone.

'Really, such a stubborn younger brother.'

After a moment of silence, the voice of Marian echoed in her head.

"It feels bitter. Not that it was unexpected, but..."

Ellis wiped her tears and calmed her heart.

'So. What are you going to do now? You know, I have to return to Pruina. I can't stay with you any longer.'

"Yes, I understand. I can no longer rely on you, Marian. Thank you for all the help so far."

‘ ... ’

“ ... ”

‘If you have a request, don’t hesitate, let’s hear it quickly.’

“Di-Did you notice?”

Ellis scratched her head with an awkward smile.

‘I’m doing this not for you but for myself, so I can leave in peace after solving this one last thing.’

After a moment of hesitation, Ellis spoke with a resolved and firm expression.

“Then, please allow me to meet Lord Aquanis.”

‘ ... ’

At that, Marian stopped for a moment as if struck.

Ellis herself seemed to realize the magnitude of her statement, with a single drop of sweat trickling down her cheek.

“To face a deity?”

Marian’s voice sharpened as she asked.

* * *

The blue light of dawn.

Hastia had arrived at the meeting place before the designated time, gazing at the beautiful curtain of dawn.

Sian appeared right on the dot.

‘Have you come?’

Hastia greeted him with a bright smile.

However, noticing Sian’s unhealthy pallor, she quickly becameConcerned.

‘Is something wrong? You look unwell.’

Instead of an answer, Sian scrutinized Hastia from head to toe.

Then, suddenly, he took off the cloak he was wearing and draped it over her.

‘Sian, what’s this for?’

“If you go out like that, you’ll get cold.”

It was a considerate gesture, concerned that Hastia’s scant clothing would leave her cold.

Hastia, who showed a moment of dazed surprise, soon burst into laughter.

‘Did you forget that I’m a White Elf? There is one thing I’m confident about more than you, Sian—it’s bearing the cold! You don’t have to worry about me!’

“Really? Then give it back.”

As Sian tried to take it back, Hastia quickly clutched it.

‘No! Once given, who takes it back?’

She then joyfully rubbed her face against the cloak, laughing pleasantly.

Sian watched her with a look of disbelief.

Soon, their journey to Pruina began.

Before departing, Sian glanced back at the Bert Ducal Residence, seen in the distance.

From the beginning to the end, he never wanted help.

He didn’t want someone stopping him under the pretext of offering help.

As always, moving forward and bearing the burden alone was what he wanted, which Sian never doubted.

* * *

“What are you saying? The young master visited only to leave right after?”

Brian could only nod in place of an answer.

Without hesitation, Emily grabbed his collar.

“Have you gone mad, Brian? Even if that’s the case, how could you not tell him about what’s happening in the empire now?”

"It's an order from Princess Arin, isn't it? Besides, the master also asked us not to say anything until he left."

Grasping someone's collar in vain wouldn't change anything.

With a helpless expression, Emily reluctantly asked.

"Then, did he at least say where he's going....?"

Brian responded by shaking his head, not with words.

Hasn't it always been this way?

Sian had never properly informed anyone when he was leaving or returning.

"He must have gone to Pruina."

In the midst of the ongoing heavy atmosphere, Lunab, who was in the room with them, spoke up.

"If he has taken Hastia with him, there's only one place he could have gone. Her homeland and realm of the White Elves—Pruina."

"For what reason?"

"That's something we can't know since the party concerned has not spoken. However, the fact that he left without speaking means he doesn't want our help at all."

"It seems everyone's in a rush to handle things on their own,"

Set stretched his back, sitting up with a cynical laugh, seemingly fed up with Arin and Sian's obstinate actions.

-Swish

While everyone was lost in thought, holding their chins, Lunab rose from her seat abruptly.

"Where are you going, junior?"

"To the Kingdom of Garam."

"Are you... going back to your homeland?"

"No. I'm heading out to request assistance myself."

Everyone blinked twice in unison.

“If everyone takes the initiative on their own, why shouldn’t I?”

Lunab shrugged as if to say, “What’s the problem?”

“Stop worrying and do what you feel like doing.”

“But....”

“Anything is better than just wrapping your head with your concerns and doing nothing.”

With those words, Lunab left the room.

“Our junior really is on another level, isn’t she?”

Set also left the room with a meaningful smile.

Left behind in confusion, Emily and Brian didn’t know what to do initially,

“.....”

But it seemed they realized what they needed to do, as their dark eyes slowly began to brighten.

* * *

-Wooong

Along with a clear sound, a radiant aura began to take form above the clouds.

The aura soon transformed into the splendid shape of a holy sword, showcasing its noble presence, with the presence of its creator, the God of Light, Lumenidel, watching over it.

Acknowledging its creator’s presence, the sword glowed anew.

Soon, the spirit of Durandalark materialized and knelt before him.

“I am unworthy, Lord Lumenidel....”

The deity gently stroked the head of her who was seeking forgiveness.

“You are quite wet.”

She appeared as though she'd fallen into water, with droplets falling from all over her body.

"Thank you for summoning me once again. That false savior who twice spurned the chance you granted has been banished by me to the abyss."

"What wrong did he do? He simply crumbled under a power too great for him to bear."

Yet Lumenidel did not utter a word about saving him.

"I've been thinking. Why have such things come to pass? This world should have been properly ordered under my followers, but somewhere along the line, it began to deviate."

Mutants who could not adapt to the flow were bound to arise anywhere.

But now, the power these mutants revealed was increasingly slipping beyond what Lumenidel had contemplated.

"I haven't found the reason yet. But I do know the solution. Do you know what it is?"

"Please tell me. What is it?"

"It's simple. Just rewind everything back to the beginning."

"Rewind, you mean?"

"It wouldn't be bad for you either, Durandalark. I will return you to the arms of the master who used you best."

"Lord Lumenidel! You mean...!"

Durandalark's face was immediately filled with joy and gratitude, realizing Lumenidel's intent.

"But currently, isn't he sealed beneath Pruina's eternal snow? Even for you, Lord Lumenidel, unsealing him directly..."

"Who said I would unseal him?"

"Then?"

"I shall let the key, who has been under my protection until now, unlock that seal."

A smile slipped on Lumenidel's face as he spoke.

“The reason humans are frail is that they possess emotions. When emotions crumble, the vessel holding their power cracks, and in the end, it shatters. I will completely destroy that mutant’s emotions. Since he is determined to be human, this will be a despair he cannot overcome no matter what.”

No matter how strong a human’s spirit is, it’s futile.

This is poison that is inevitably fatal to any human,

And on the complacent faces of those preparing that poisonous blade, blossoms of joy were blooming.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 296

Chapter 296: Pruiena (1)

It’s already been a week since I left Velias. I had taken back roads as much as possible to avoid prying eyes, which took a bit longer, but nonetheless, I managed to reach the vicinity of Pruiena without any incidents. Hastia initially struggled a bit considering we did not use any mode of transportation such as horses or carriages, but as we neared Pruiena, she seemed to gain strength and was now keeping pace with me without any difficulty.

Sigh

With every breath, now a mist automatically forms. It’s definitely colder since we came up north. Contrary to me, take a look at that elf who is not even breathing mist, no signs of being cold whatsoever. If I could, I’d ask for my cloak back, but look at her, holding onto it tightly with both hands as if she might lose it to me. There’s no chance of getting it back before we arrive.

“We should reach Pruiena by tomorrow morning.”

As she said, within a couple of hours of walking, we should arrive in Pruiena. Most likely, this will be the last night we camp out together.

“Is this your first time visiting Pruiena, Mr. Xian?”

“Yes.”

That's only for this life. In my past life, I visited Pruiena just once.

"Normally outsiders aren't allowed, but since it's Mr. Xian, our people will gladly welcome you. Not only did you help us, but you're also the owner of the magic sword...."

As soon as I heard 'owner of the magic sword,' my eyes naturally drifted to where Keyram was. Without any indication of a response, he seemed to be sleeping.

When Hastia and I first met, she said that Keyram had saved the white elf tribe a long time ago. That was something I couldn't even consider as a joke. However, immediately after hearing her words, Keyram clamped her mouth shut as if there was something I shouldn't hear.

Although I didn't show it, I really was curious.

"Didn't you say that the eternal snow of Pruiena is melting?"

Hastia nodded slightly.

"What caused the Dark Elves that are trapped in that eternal snow to end up there?"

"As far as I know, it was Mr. Keyram and his former master who used Pruiena's magic power to seal them. They had such incredible vitality and infinite regenerative capabilities that even the divine weapons struggled to confront them."

Well, that explains the circumstances of the sealing, but...

Even the divine weapons had difficulty facing them?

Is such an existence really possible on this land?

"How did those Dark Elves appear initially?"

"I'm not sure. There are no precise records of when, where, and how they appeared. All we know is that when they suddenly emerged, our white elf kin suffered greatly, with no means to cope until..."

"The magic sword and its owner appeared, you mean?"

"Yes, right. That person came to our salvation...."

[What interesting story are you two sharing?]

Keyram's voice spread through the air as he awoke, and Hastia's mouth stopped in mid-air.

[Why don't you get a bit closer to each other when talking? It makes for better rapport, doesn't it?]

Keyram, in his physical form, draped his arm over my shoulder and whispered.

Based on his tone, it didn't seem like he had been listening to our conversation. But, if I was curious about that time, the best thing to do would be to ask Keyram himself.

"Let's rest."

Now wasn't the time.

As I turned away, Hastia followed suit.

[What a bore.]

Keyram turned back into mist and retreated into the sword.

Revival of the Dark Elves.

Perhaps the path I am seeking, as mentioned by the leader of the Devil Dragons, could lie there.

With that thought, I took a short rest.

At dawn break, we began our journey again.

Swoosh

Walking through the frost-covered shrubs, a long mountain range and its peak covered in eternal snow stretched out beyond them.

"This is Pruiena, Mr. Xian!"

The sense of peace and contentment was evident on Hastia's face as she finally returned home after a long journey in foreign lands.

She then firmly grabbed my hand.

"Let's go, Mr. Xian! I want to introduce Pruiena to you quickly!"

Her hand felt warm unlike my cold, ice-like hand. As if it were a hand warmer, I couldn't bring myself to let go, given my unfamiliarity with the cold.

That moment,

“...!”

I quickly pulled Hastia’s hand, drawing her into my arms.

Whoosh!

Exactly 0.5 seconds later, an object I assumed to be an arrow swiftly flew past where Hastia was standing.

In our current location, an open field, moving forward would only make us easier targets.

“Bend down!”

I immediately covered her face with my cloak and, head down, retreated back the way we came.

During the retreat, a few more arrows flew towards us, but we managed to disappear into a thicket without much difficulty.

“It seems like Pruiena’s guards! Let me convince them, Mr. Xian!”

Hastia said she would handle the situation and urged me to let her go. After a quick scan of our surroundings, I let her proceed.

‘.....’

As Hastia moved forward, she immediately closed her eyes and began to communicate through empathy. Her voice spread in all directions, and the malicious intent aimed at us weakened, soon followed by the sounds of footsteps approaching.

Then, elves with white hair, hooded heads, and elves from all around appeared.

“Hastia, are you alright?”

They rushed over to check on her condition.

Hastia nodded at them and then approached me, introducing me.

“This person here has helped me and brought me this far. He’s Mr. Xian, not some strange outsider, so you can rest assured!”

“Mr. Xian, is it? Then this human is the one who took Hastia...”

They must have heard about me through the elves that returned to Pruiena before us. None of them had good eyes for me, only malice and distrust filled their gaze.

“Fortunately, you’ve safely returned. We will escort you, so please come with us.”

With these words, Hastia immediately grabbed my hand.

“Let’s go, Mr. Xian! The talks went well, so you have nothing to worry about!”

Is that really what she thinks, or is she just saying that to reassure me, a little anxious on the inside?

They weren’t exactly welcoming me, as I had expected, but what really mattered,

Was that arrow from before.

It was clearly aimed at Hastia, not me.

‘Why are you doing this, Mr. Xian?’

A strong premonition swirled within me that I’d get entangled in yet another complicated matter.

* * *

“Hastia is back! Hastia has returned!”

What seemed like the entire white elf congregation had gathered in the plaza, buzzing with commotion.

‘I’m really sorry for causing everyone so much worry!’

Hastia bowed her head in apology to her kin, one by one, for causing them concern.

From a distance, I watched this scene, making sure not to interrupt.

While doing so, I also scanned the area.

Something doesn’t feel right.

Neither Garnian – the clan’s most formidable warrior, Roiel – known for her magic prowess, nor Alphonse – who had once aggressively inquired about my identity, were anywhere to be seen.

“Mr. Xian, was it?”

Suddenly, two unfamiliar elves appeared behind me.

They seemed to be part of the same patrol that had escorted Hastia and me here.

“Please follow us. There’s a place you need to go.”

Instead of a reply, I glanced towards Hastia.

“No need to worry about Hastia. We will take her to the same place separately.”

Since causing a fuss in such a place would be beneficial for me, I pretended to comply with their request for the time being and followed them.

They led me to what looked like a naturally formed ice cave. Inside, the cave was incredibly beautiful, radiating a translucent blue light, although it emanated a rather unpleasant smell.

“Step inside.”

Still playing along, I moved as instructed.

[Hey, Master.]

Just then, Keyram suddenly called out to me.

“What is it?”

But silence was all that came back after my response.

Keyram, who seemed like he was about to say something urgent, abruptly fell silent.

[Never mind.]

What a tease.

Though I was intrigued by his unusual reaction, I stepped into the cave.

“What is this place?”

No response.

And despite there being no significant differences between human and elf languages, they acted as if they hadn’t heard me at all, not even giving me a glance.

“Surely those big ears aren’t just for show?”

As if your world had a jail.

My expression soured, and I drew Keyram out.

Clink!

* * *

With the clan members, Hastia excitedly exchanged greetings.

‘Where is Garnian? Including Roiel and the others, I don’t see them.’

Nevertheless, the companions that had traveled with her to the land of humans were nowhere in sight.

‘Mr. Xian is gone too!’

Now Xian had disappeared as well. Hastia, now anxious, scanned her surroundings when the same guards who had escorted her earlier approached.

“Hastia, we will take you this way.”

‘Have you seen Mr. Xian, who came with me?’

“If you mean that person, some other guards are taking care of him. You’ve said your hellos, so now follow us if you may.”

Hastia, without much suspicion, followed them.

‘Um, I haven’t seen Roiel and the other clan members, where did they go?’

“If you mean Roiel and company, they’ve briefly visited Marian’s nest. They will return shortly as we’ve informed them of your arrival.”

Relieved at the news of their safe return, Hastia nodded.

“Then, where is Garnian?”

When she asked about Garnian, the guards fell silent for a moment, engulfed in silence.

“Garnian hasn’t returned.”

‘What?’

Hastia’s step halted.

‘What do you mean Garnian hasn’t returned?’

“Exactly as I said. Roiel and the others are the only ones who returned. We have no knowledge of Garnian’s whereabouts.”

She could not comprehend it.

Garnian hadn't returned.

Hadn't he solemnly vowed before her to repent for his actions in Gaul and pay for his sins upon returning to Pruena?

"Garnian betrayed the clan and put you at risk, so we've heard. Perhaps he fled to avoid paying for his crimes."

How could that make any sense?

Every clan member knew Garnian to be of the utmost integrity.

Hastia did not believe for a second that he had fled or lied.

Rather, it was these guards before her who were lying.

Without budging, Hastia looked them in the eye.

'Where are we heading?'

No response.

'This doesn't lead to the council chambers. Weren't you taking me to the elders?'

"The elders are not in the council chamber but elsewhere. Please, just follow us for now."

Despite their firm demeanor, Hastia pretended to follow their lead and then—

Whoosh!

She quickly broke away and escaped in the other direction.

"Capture Hastia!"

Other guards who had kept a distance began to chase her.

Hastia tried to hide among the bushes in the forest, but it seemed futile.

"There!"

The guards closing in made escaping their gaze a lost cause.

She wouldn't last long at this rate.

As she mulled over her next move,

Swoosh

Someone sneaked up behind her and clamped their hand over her mouth.

(To be continued in the next episode.)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 297

Chapter 297: Pruyina (2)

“Cough!” With a single groan, the elf dropped his sword and collapsed right before me. That makes ten. There’s nothing beneficial in killing them for me, so I’ve only struck vital points to knock them out for now. I did consider waking one of them up to ask why they’re attacking me, but I decided against it. The honor of the elves is as stringent and upright as any human knight. They wouldn’t open their mouths unless subjected to severe torture. It’s better for me to check myself.

I turned my head toward the deeper part of the cave enveloped in darkness. They did say it was a prison, right? Whether it’s a space to lock someone up or one to imprison me, I’ll find out soon enough. Maybe after walking about 200 steps? The basic structure of a cave usually narrows as you go deeper, but this cave seemed to widen the further I went. It felt like I was about to encounter something big.

At that thought, as soon as I turned the corner, a strong wind blew, signaling that I was entering a broader space. The surroundings brightened, and the landscape of the cave revealed itself. Hmm, what is this? Comparable to the size of an army parade ground, there’s just one thing placed atop it. A gigantic ice block? Ice meteorite? Ice crystal? In any case, an enormous glacial mass lay before me, large enough to make anyone’s jaw drop.

What caught my eye was another enigma within the ice. Covered in dirt-like black skin with two horns protruding from its head and pointed ears like those characteristic of an elf. In the domain of my knowledge, there was only one term to call such a creature. [A dark elf?]

Before I knew it, Keiram had materialized beside me, peering into the ice with an intrigued look. [Why is this one here?] “Shouldn’t you know better?” [Do you think I’m some kind of history book, knowing everything if you just look back in time?] “Well, you did mention that you’ve encountered these dark elves before with a master that wasn’t me, right?” [Hmm, that’s so long ago I barely remember. But I should note, I wasn’t with

any other master at the time.] “What?” [I was alone back then. It was when I had completely taken over his body.]

Keiram let out a meaningful smile. -Trudge, trudge- Suddenly, footsteps sounded from behind. The distinct sound of one person, not many. That meant it wasn’t one of the elven guards coming to catch me. No, it wasn’t an elf at all. “They said you were an assassin, and indeed, the aura of your killing intent is distinct from others.” A relaxed voice grew closer to where I was. I couldn’t see her face yet, but the voice alone was enough for me to physically identify who she was.

The guardian who protected this harsh realm of the elves, known also as the Dragon, the servant of the Blue Water Goddess. “Finally, face to face with you. The heir of the God of Black Mist...” Marian. Her name is longer, but that’s all I can remember. “You seem to recognize me, but have we met before?” “I’ve seen enough dragons until quite recently.”

She gave a peculiar smile at my ambiguous response. Separate from my knowledge of her, she appeared to be aware that I am the heir, suggesting she knew a fair bit about me. “Did you create the situation earlier?” “I’d hope you wouldn’t misunderstand. I recently returned to Pruyina myself.” -Tap, tap, tap- No sooner had we exchanged words, footsteps echoed again from the path I’d come. More than one this time. The urgency suggested they were indeed elven guards here to capture me.

“It’s difficult to show myself without knowing what’s going on...” And then, Marian’s body began to emit light, “I’ll have to borrow your body for a moment?” Soon after, she transformed into a small spirit alongside a radiance and without permission, slipped into my cloak’s hood. “What are you doing?” “No need for alarm. Since your sister had me run around for her, I thought I’d ask a favor in return.” What is she talking about? Sister? Could she mean my sister, Elise?

“Come, let’s get out of here for now.” Without any room for explanation, dozens of elven guards appeared before me, swords and spears drawn, blocking my path. * * * “Hastiya has disappeared!” “That human must have kidnapped Hastiya! We need to chase after him!” “Why did the humans enter Pruyina?” My premonition of unease had, annoyingly, yet to be wrong. I expected the elves would not welcome me, but things had gotten much more complicated than anticipated. “Caught up in pursuit as soon as I arrived, huh?” “If you simply spoke up, wouldn’t all of this be sorted out?” “With the nature of the events still unclear, it’s not wise to just expose myself. Isn’t that what you assassins adhere to as well?”

Anyone would think I belonged to some assassin’s guild or something. However, she was not wrong. Why the elves attacked me, why the dark elf is imprisoned, how this dragon wound up beside me—I lack clarity on all these fronts. What I should do now is find Hastiya. Whether I’ve been slandered as a kidnapper is secondary; her being missing suggests she might have sensed danger and fled. “Whatever the situation, should we not start by rescuing Hastiya?” “If you know where she might be, could you

inform me?" "I was intending to. Go north of the village and ascend, you'll find my nest. Let's head there first."

"Nest?" "My place of rest. There are no eggs, so don't get any funny ideas." Who said anything about that? "Is there a guarantee Hastiya will be there?" "If you were to ask for the safest place in Pruyina, my nest is without comparison. Whenever there was danger, I told her to take refuge there, so there's a good chance she fled in that direction." Reluctantly, but with no other option, I agreed to follow her suggestion. Bypassing the elven eyes, I headed north of the village. Escaping was simple enough, but as soon as I left the village, a biting wind lashed against my face. Ah, bitterly cold.

-Woosh- Suddenly, the cloak glowed red, and warmth began to flood through my body. What's this? Magic? "To think you enchanted the cloak with warming magic, it seems you're weaker to the cold than you appear." If you're concerned, it wasn't me. It must have been her doing throughout the journey that she snuggled inside my cloak. Unsolicited, yet she went through quite some trouble. Continuing north for about 20 minutes, a towering ice cliff surfaced, carved sharply across centuries of freezing and thawing. An icy chill emanated from the cliff.

Following Marian's instructions to head a hundred steps to the left, a massive ice cave entrance appeared. It was certainly big enough for a dragon. "You found your way here despite the cold. Not bad." "For the 'safest place in Pruyina,' it doesn't look all that special." "Not everything is as it appears. Watch your head." After a warning to be careful, a fierce snowstorm suddenly erupted from above. Sensing the threat in the blizzard, I quickly repositioned myself. -Boom! A massive figure crashed into the exact spot I was just at, blinding me with upturned snow.

-Woosh- Through the obscured view, a heavy fist flew toward my face. -Thump! I brought up my hands in time to block it, but the impact still sent me flying several steps backward. The foe didn't relent, charging forward, so I grabbed Keiram and counterattacked. -Swoosh The beast narrowly evaded. I didn't stop the offensive and wrapped my other hand around its neck. ".....!"

The creature struggled momentarily, losing balance under my grip. Seizing the moment, I went for a punch. -Whoosh! Just a paper-thin distance away. I halted my fist right before striking the creature's face because the snow cleared, revealing its face. "You, who are you?" "The name was... Garnian, wasn't it?" "How did you find this place?" Garnian, the white elf who had previously fallen into the seduction of Saint Nephrodite and temporarily imperiled Hastiya and the clan. He also seemed quite surprised to find me here. 'Lord Sian!' As a familiar voice echoed in my mind, I naturally withdrew my fist and looked up to see a familiar woman hurling herself into my embrace. It was Hastiya. 'I'm relieved you're unharmed!' She cried in my arms, tearful and relieved.

Honestly, who's the one that should be worried here? Soon after, more elves with familiar faces emerged from the depths of the cave. * * * Garnian ended up being the one to shelter Hastiya from the pursuing guards. Upon hearing Hastiya had returned to

Pruyina, he had sneaked into the village to observe the situation and, upon spotting her escape, guided her to this place. "It seems you've had quite the ordeal upon arriving in Pruyina. Allow me to apologize on their behalf."

Roel, speaking for the group, expressed regret to Sian. "Let's not dwell on that. Why don't you explain why your kin ended up in this situation?" Roel sighed deeply before answering. "You had a clash with our guards before, right?" "I did." "Our clan's guards only work as a self-defense force to fend off potential invaders. They don't maintain order within the village itself. But when we returned, things had changed. Armed guards patrolling the village, ruling over our people's lives..." "And the reason for this?" "Obviously, we questioned them right away. But all we got in response were threats and restraints. Accusing us of neglecting Hastiya to the humans, they demanded our cooperation or else told us to leave."

That's when they had no choice but to seek refuge here, in Marian's nest, Roel explained. "Do they know you're here?" "They probably do. But they won't dare do anything." Roel glanced at Garnian as he said this. Sian also looked at Garnian and asked, "You're with the clan's greatest warrior; what's stopping you from overpowering them?" "I committed a grievous sin by putting the clan and Hastiya into danger. I may use my strength to protect the clan, but I cannot take arms against it." His answer displayed a somewhat old-fashioned loyalty to his kin. Hastiya then spoke up with a sincere expression. 'It's my fault. My absence must have brought them uncertainty and chaos. I'll return and try to persuade them. If I appeal to them sincerely, surely...' "Such naïveté," Sian interrupted her. "Don't turn a blind eye. Even you must realize what those guard elves did to you." Hastiya's eyes trembled at the implication. "What are you saying? What did the guards do to Hastiya?" Hastiya couldn't find the words; she just shook with clasped hands.

In that moment of confusion, "There's no need to pester her," suddenly, a bright light burst forth above Sian's hood. (To be continued in the next episode)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 298

Chapter 298: Pruina (3)

"What happened here?"

"Am I alive?"

Ten guardian elves were summoned to deal with an outsider accompanying Hastia.

However, they failed their mission and ended up spending an uncomfortable hour sleeping on the cold, icy ground.

Most of them first rubbed the back of their heads as they woke up.

“We were overpowered so suddenly that we had no idea what happened.”

“It’s a miracle we’re not dead.”

With this, they expressed their fear of the outsider who had knocked them unconscious.

“Tell us more about this outsider.”

An elderly elf with a long beard approached them with this question.

“Yes, he had deep black hair and used a strange sword, but no magic.”

“A strange sword?”

“Yes. The sword was enveloped in an inexplicable dark aura that looked like mist.”

“Stay still for a moment.”

The elf closed his eyes and manifested mana from his hands.

The residual energies present at the scene then began to rise, slowly gathering towards the mana he radiated.

“Elpurius, what are you doing?”

His fellow elves asked him, but he remained unresponsive.

After a moment,

The elf opened his eyes, stood up, and murmured to himself quietly,

“The master of the demonic sword has come.”

* * *

-Whoosh

As a familiar divine power emerged within Sean’s hood, accompanied by a gleaming light, Roel and the other White Elves dropped to their knees in unison.

“Welcome back, Lady Marian!”

They recognized the return of Pruina's guardian.

The radiance soon took human form in front of Sean.

"I'm sorry I returned late."

"It's nothing. We're just grateful that you're back safely."

This was the moment when the uneasy hearts of the elves settled down considerably.

"Let's start with the matters we need to discuss, Hastia."

'Yes, Lady Marian...'

"Explain firsthand what happened with your kin before coming to Pruina."

Hastia hesitated, her head hanging low.

But knowing that she couldn't hide the truth forever, she finally opened her mouth after contemplating.

"When we first set foot in the entrance of Pruina, we were attacked by arrows. They were aimed right at me."

"The clan tried to kill you, Hastia?"

The elves knew better.

Anyone else might lie, but they knew Hastia would never fabricate the truth.

What Hastia had recounted was a clear fact she had experienced herself.

"Why would the guardians...?"

The elves grasped their heads, agitated by the confusing thoughts.

"Speaking of which, where did the guardians take you?"

Amidst the turmoil, Garnian asked Sean.

"Hard to say exactly where, but they called it something akin to prison."

"I"

All of the elves turned their attention to Sean.

“Don’t tell me in there, you...?”

“I saw the dark elf, who was tightly asleep within the ice.”

With nothing to hide, Sean truthfully relayed what he had seen.

“They took you there? Why?”

“Let’s ask and find out ourselves.”

Calming everyone down, Marian started walking towards her sanctuary.

She then sat there with the dignity of a dragon, closing her eyes in concentration.

Soon, her body emitted an abundant divine power, spreading throughout the entire nest.

‘To all living beings currently in Pruina.’

Marian’s voice echoed in the minds of every creature in Pruina.

‘Hastia is with me. Before taking her back to the village, we must hear the full story of the recent incident. Anyone who can explain is urged to come to my nest as soon as possible.’

The voice reached Sean as well.

‘You have one hour.’

Marian clearly set a time limit and concluded her empathic communication.

“Now we can just relax and wait comfortably.”

However, contrary to Marian’s words, the elves’ faces still showed traces of worry.

After the uneasy hour passed,

-Footsteps

Sounds of unfamiliar footsteps approached the entrance of the nest.

All eyes turned towards the source,

And as the figure who braved Pruina’s harsh, cold winds revealed itself,

“!”

Everyone except for Sean and Marian couldn't hide their astonishment.

"Thank goodness you returned safely, Lady Marian."

"Yes. You've come to explain the current situation, haven't you, Elpurius?"

"That's right."

With a composed expression, Elpurius knelt on one knee before Marian.

"Can someone explain who this elf is?"

At Sean's request for an explanation, Garnian spoke up.

"This is Elder Elpurius, of our White Elf clan."

"Elder?"

Basically, a person in a leadership position among the clan.

"Surely you don't mean Elder Elpurius would...?"

Even he, usually as steady as a rock, was visibly shaking.

"Now, shall we begin the explanation, Elpurius?"

"Before that, may I ask one thing?"

Elpurius's gaze drifted to Sean, who stood in the corner.

"Has Hastia been with this human since coming to Pruina?"

Hastia answered for him.

'Yes, I came with Mr. Sean.'

"And she was with the same human when the other clan members returned earlier?"

'Yes, that's correct.'

"So the two of you have been together ever since?"

"So what's the problem with that?"

Sean, unable to bear it longer, interjected.

The implication that his company somehow made her a criminal was extremely bothersome.

But,

“It looks like we won’t need any further explanation.”

“...?”

“Hastia no longer meets the requirements to be the key’s guardian.”

Elpurius’s look was more resolute than anyone’s.

“The key’s guardian? On what grounds do you say that?”

“As you know, Lady Marian, the supreme beings tasked us 300 years ago with the heavy responsibility of sealing the ancient records. They made it clear back then. As we seal these records to erase human follies, those who seek this seal will likely be humans. That’s why they warned us: never let the key fall into human hands.”

Marian did not object.

“However, Hastia has broken that taboo. Ignoring the gods’ warning to beware humans, she spent time with one, exposing herself to danger.”

‘Sean protected me! He never coveted the key’s power within me!’

Hastia earnestly protested that Sean was innocent.

“It’s not your fault, Hastia.”

Elpurius spoke to her kindly.

“If fate led you, there’s nothing you could do and you’re not to blame. But the time has come to relinquish your duty.”

The meaning of those words was clear to everyone present in the nest.

“It’s time to pass the power of the key to another member of the clan.”

‘...!’

Except for Elpurius, everyone was distraught.

Transferring the power of the key to someone else.

Sean, who had already witnessed such a procedure in Gaul, knew too well what it implied.

“You’re going to... kill Hastia?”

“It’s our clan’s matter, none of a human’s concern.”

Despite Sean’s agitated question, Elpurius responded indifferently.

“I’ve said what I needed to. I trust you will understand, Lady Marian.”

“For now, return to the village and await further instructions. It seems these folks need time to think as well.”

Without another word, Elpurius left the nest.

The remaining elves, unsure of what to do, merely glanced around in silence.

‘Elpurius is right.’

Hastia broke the silence with her empathic message.

‘If I’m no longer qualified to be the key, then it’s correct for someone else to take over. Someone who can do a much better job than me.’

She appeared resolved, with no sign of faltering.

Unable to argue, the elves were in silence.

Sean felt the same.

His heart heavy, he stepped outside the nest for a moment.

* * *

Humans are selfish.

They prioritize their own perspective and interpretation when listening to anything.

I wasn’t particularly concerned about what that Elpurius guy said or how the elves reacted.

But one thought overwhelmed my mind after witnessing the whole situation:

Is it because of me?

Am I the reason Hastia found herself in this predicament?

If only I had sent her back with the other elves in Aquizel, could this have been avoided?

The more I thought about my selfish desires causing her this trouble, the more twisted up inside I felt.

So, what now?

The answer is simple. Fix it.

Regardless of the situation's true nature, if I believe it unfolded because of me, then it's my responsibility to solve it.

That's right.

Just solve it, but...

How?

Run away from Pruina with her?

I'm certain that's not what Hastia wants.

She is a White Elf and should live as one on elven land.

Taking her away by force to live elsewhere would be meaningless.

Ah, this is frustrating.

Nothing but these thoughts whirled around inside my head.

['Did you chew on a demon's droppings? Why such a gloomy face again?']

As I wrestled with my concern, Kairam appeared, figuratively poking at my face.

['Are you blaming yourself? Do you feel responsible for this mess?']

"Frankly, I can't deny it."

I admitted openly.

"It was a mistake to keep her with me. I should've sent her back then. My foolish choice led to this situation."

[‘Then take responsibility. What are you doing? It’s unlike you to be like this.’]

“What do you think I’m not aware of? It’s because I can’t think of any better solution that I’m acting like I’ve eaten demon’s droppings and wallowing in worry...”

[‘Want me to show you a way?’]

I paused for a second.

[‘Expose the divine secret yourself.’]

“...?”

[‘That way, you can save that elf girl.’]

“What do you mean?”

[‘Exactly what I said. Break the power of the key within that elf, reveal the secret hidden in her memories, and you’ll no longer need to worry about keys and such. Doesn’t that render everything else insignificant?’]

“That’s insane...”

As I spoke, the idea seemed ludicrous.

Break Hastia’s key power and steal its hidden secrets?

Is that even possible...

‘Go to Pruina. There, you will find the path you seek.’

In an instant, I remembered the words of the Devil Dragon leader.

My path in Pruina.

The way to survive an encounter with the gods, my way.

And there’s only one place where such a path could be...

“There’s nothing else but the ancient records.”

-Swish

Then, from behind, I heard delicate footsteps and a familiar presence approaching.

‘Sean.’

It was Hastia.

Judging by her expression, she came to console me.

'You don't need to feel sorrowful. This happened because I'm not worthy of being the key's guardian.'

"..."

'I consider myself lucky, really. So please, don't blame yourself, and...'

-Click

Determined not to listen further, I grabbed her shoulders.

'S- Sean?'

Hastia was startled, her face flushing red.

"From now on, think of it like this: You just got caught up with me."

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 299

Chapter 299: Into the Secrets (1)

Hastiya had gone out of the nest to soothe Xian for a while, but when time passed and she did not return, an anxious Alphonse went out to check.

"It's taking quite long, isn't it?"

The blizzard had stopped and the visibility had significantly improved, but Hastiya was nowhere to be seen.

"Lady Hastiya?"

For some reason, there was no sign of Hastiya or Xian, whom she had gone out to find.

"Lady Hastiya has disappeared! That human must have taken her!"

The elves, jumping to their feet one after another, followed Alphonse outside immediately to look for the missing Hastiya.

However, two elves, Gernian and Roel, did not go out and stayed by Marianne's side instead.

"Why aren't you both joining the search?"

"We believe there's only one reason why that person would have taken Lady Hastiya."

To save her.

They wished just as much as anyone else for her not to die.

"I wish for Lady Hastiya's safety. Although there's nothing I can do, that human might be different."

Gernian had no doubt that Xian would do whatever it took to protect Hastiya.

"Then why doesn't Lady Marianne move?"

Roel inquired curiously.

"I, too, share the same wish as you."

Marianne's answer was no different from theirs.

"There's no reason for that child to die due to a deity's selfishness."

* * *

Somewhere about a thousand paces from Marianne's nest, Hastiya began chanting an unknown spell upon a land blanketed in thick snow.

Soon after the incantation ended, a white magical circle formed beneath her feet.

-Whooom-

Engulfed in the light emitted by the magical circle, the two were instantly transported elsewhere.

Upon reopening their eyes, the sight unfolding before the man and woman was,

"Trees?"

A tremendously large tree stood before them, so vast that it would take six grown men with arms outstretched to encircle it.

It was not just any tree; from its trunk to its leaves, it was entirely covered with pure white snow.

‘This tree is Arbor, offered to the gods. It was commanded by the deities to protect the ancient records, all sealed within this tree. And the key to unlocking that seal is within me.’

The forgotten records of the ancient times, nowhere else to be found on the continent, were stored in this tree.

‘So then, Xian, you’re planning to use the power of the key within me to uncover the secrets of the gods? To render my life wholly insignificant?’

“If you’re unwilling, say so now. I will not force you.”

Hastiya, with her big eyes blinking like those of a rabbit, suddenly burst into laughter.

“Why are you laughing?”

‘You commanded me without any regard for my will, and now you ask for it?’

Xian did not respond and averted his gaze.

‘Then please answer one question honestly.’

“What is it?”

‘Is this for my sake? Or for yours?’

Xian answered without a moment’s hesitation.

“It’s for both of us.”

Hastiya’s expression changed subtly.

It was a difficult read, seemingly both satisfied and not, indecipherable to the core.

‘If you had said it was for my sake alone, I would have refused immediately. I can’t betray my tribe just for my own survival.’

Indeed.

Hastiya was not selfish, even if it meant being naïve.

‘But if it’s for you, Xian... then do as you must. I’ll do anything if it helps you.’

Even though the response was not unexpected, Xian couldn’t help but find it a bit absurd.

“Even if it means for your sake you’ll abandon your entire tribe? You’re okay with that?”

Hastiya did not respond immediately.

‘If I said I was okay, it would be a lie...’

Xian waited patiently for her to continue.

‘I want to be selfish just this once. What’s good is good.’

For the first time, the earnest Hastiya made a selfish decision.

‘But despite my feelings, there’s nothing I can do. You must bring forth the power of the key.’

However, Xian did not know the way.

How could he unleash the power hidden within her and, even if he did, how was he to use the key?

As he grappled with this frustration,

[You’ve done well to come this far.]

Keram materialized, caressed Xian’s head, and appeared.

[From this point on, whatever happens is yours to bear. Can you handle it?]

“If you have nothing useful to say, at least tell me what I need to do.”

[You’re so stubborn. Try unleashing the power of the mist.]

Doing as told, Xian manifested the black power of the mist in his hand.

Then, Keram grabbed Xian’s hand and without warning,

“.....?”

Suddenly pressed his hand against Hastiya’s chest.

Startled, Hastiya’s face flushed red in an instant.

“Hey! What are you...!”

-Crackling-

Before there could be further questioning, a strong spark erupted from Xian’s hand.

A burning pain, like skin being ripped apart, surged up through his fingertips.

[The divine protection intended to repel you has been activated. Don’t mind it and endure.]

It’s easy to say, isn’t it?

Xian gritted his teeth and bore the pain, undeterred, but Hastiya seemed to share the same agony from her expression. As much as he was concerned whether she could withstand it,

‘I’m, I’m fine, Xian...!’

Hastiya seemed to sense Xian’s thoughts and reassured him that she was okay.

But soon, without a moment to relax, the pain intensified, and the sparks that had erupted once again suddenly exploded.

-Boom!-

With the explosion’s light spreading, something small and unrecognizable engulfed Xian.

It looked somewhat like a key.

-Thud-

As the light faded, Hastiya and Xian collapsed together.

Watching over the fallen pair, Keram said,

[Let whatever happen, happen.]

With those final words, he vanished into the mist, returning into Xian.

* * *

My head is throbbing.

Even being knocked out with a hammer wouldn’t feel this bad.

It's as if someone vigorously kneaded my brain.

Just how infuriatingly unpleasant.

Right, Hastiya.

She must have fallen with me, but is she alright...?

Barely managing to hold on to my wavering consciousness, I opened my eyes only to question my own sight.

What is this place?

The grand white Arbor we were at is gone, and in front of me is a lush green tree.

The icy snow-covered surroundings have now long been replaced with dirt and leaves.

Even a fool would realize—this isn't Fruina.

Did I somehow get transported elsewhere?

Right as the thought crossed my mind whether that perverse magic sword tricked me,

-A scream!

A human's agonized cry rang out.

I headed straight toward the source of the sound.

"Once a man begins, he must see it through. Why are you all hesitant just because one of you was struck? Eh?"

Hiding behind a tree as soon as I heard the voice, I wondered about this voice; it sounded like two distinct voices fused into one.

One was understandable, yet one voice was oddly familiar to my ears.

The sight before me revealed several bandit-like figures, and a stranger with red hair saying,

"What's wrong? Won't you attack?"

Although they tried to overwhelm him with sheer numbers,

"What rubbish."

The man was unmatched, as his merciless swordplay cut them down without pity.

Wait a moment, could it be...?

As I witnessed the scene, I was astounded yet again.

A violet sword blade, chilling just to look at, and a black gem in the hilt – such a sword is unique on this continent.

The magic sword Keram.

The sword wielded with such unrestrained freedom by the man was undoubtedly Keram.

Frantically searching myself,

It's not there.

Keram, which I have always carried at the same spot, was nowhere to be found.

"If you're hiding, come out now, while I'm being nice."

Searching for my sword, and as my head snapped back to attention,

He called out to me.

Once spotted, there's no point in hiding.

I stepped forward as the man wished, revealing myself.

".....!"

They say the eyes are the windows to the soul.

Look into someone's eyes, and you see their soul.

The man before me, I have no idea who he is.

But those eyes, I cannot ignore.

Haven't I recognized the voice?

The man, no, the soul inhabiting this man's body must be,

Keram.

“Who are you?”

But she asked me who I was.

If she truly is the Keram I know, there’s no way she wouldn’t recognize me.

So, does that mean she is not the Keram I’m familiar with?

“Why are you emanating the power of the mist?”

She seemed to have sensed the power of the mist inside me.

If she doesn’t recognize me, there are two possibilities:

She has forgotten me, or

I’m facing a version of her from the past I am not aware of.

From the current situation, it seems likely to be the latter.

“I’m asking you, kid. What’s your identity? Got a tongue? Can’t you understand words?”

Even if I answered her question, there’d be no meaningful reply in this context.

What should I say...

“Could it be that you’re a minion sent by that brainless god?”

Brainless god?

Could she mean Aer?

To avoid raising more suspicion,

I immediately assumed a formal posture and bowed to her.

“That’s correct. I was ordered by Lord Aer to serve and support you, Master of the Magic Sword.”

Keram scrutinized me with eyes full of suspicion and alertness.

I awaited her response with a nervousness I hadn’t felt in a while.

“Such a waste. If you’re going to send someone, at least send someone decent. Why send such a gloomy fellow?”

It seemed she bought it.

She believes I was sent by Aer, so I suppose I must reluctantly follow her lead and show respect.

Without a chance to breathe a sigh of relief, she strode up to me.

“You look young; what’s your name?”

After a second of thought, I answered.

“Sian. Sian Vert.”

“Sian Vert? Doesn’t sound like any noble’s son I’ve heard of. That’s too hard to remember; I’ll just call you ‘kid’.”

“Do as it pleases you, Milady.”

With a smirk, the lady then began to roam.

“Now then, Kid. I seem to have lost my way...”

Although it irked me to be referred to as ‘lady’ in a man’s body, I let it slide for the moment.

“Could you show me the way to Fruina?”

“Are you heading to Fruina, Milady?”

“What, didn’t that imbecile of a god tell you anything? What an useless baggage.”

“If you continue forward, you should find your way.”

“What’s your basis?”

“The cold wind has been constantly blowing from ahead, hasn’t it? That’s an indication that we’re nearing the poles.”

“So it seems I wasn’t wandering aimlessly. Don’t fall behind if you don’t want to be left behind.”

With that, she advanced on the path ahead.

As I was about to follow, I paused and fixated on her receding figure.

“How should I address you?”

“Hmm?”

“Do I call you Keram?”

My query about how to address her elicited a peculiar smile from her.

“No, I am not Keram.”

“Then, what should I...”

“Dio.”

“...!”

“Dio Hapencus. That’s the correct name for now.”

That peculiar smile carried a trace of bitterness with it.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 300

Episode 300: Into the Secret (2)

Stars twinkled like tiny stitches across the dark night sky. Beneath them, she listlessly watched the roaring campfire before suddenly asking me a question.

“Have you ever been to Pruina?”

“Yes, I have.”

“And how was it?”

“Cold.”

“Anything else?”

“The wind blows very harshly.”

“So, it’s an annoying place.”

Just as her eyebrows creased in frustration, she fixed her gaze intently on my face.

“How did you know that I’m a Magic Sword?”

“I knew by your eyes.”

“My eyes?”

“Yes. Who would look into those eyes and think they belong to a human?”

“Do people often tell you that you’re brazen?”

“I hear it quite frequently.”

Indifferently I poked at the campfire.

“Ugh, talking to you is no fun. When I go to sleep, make sure not to put out the fire and to manage it well.”

Yawning as if her jaw would fall off, she soon turned over to sleep. Although I ended up accompanying her without drawing suspicion, I still knew very little.

No need to stir up any suspicion by talking carelessly now.

What exactly does this old record want to show me?

For now, I was simply curious about why she was heading to Pruina.

Hm?

While keeping an eye on her half-closed, something odd caught my attention.

The thing she’s using as a pillow looks suspiciously like a book.

“What? Do you have something to say?”

Perhaps sensing my probing stare, she asked without turning around.

“That... Are you using a book as a pillow?”

“A book? Oh, this? It’s useless to me, so I’ve been using it as a pillow. Read it if you’re bored.”

She casually tossed it at me.

Upon seeing the book, my eyes went wide.

Could this be?

"It's a scripture or something, a book for the followers of the black mist. It was written by the previous owner of this body."

My hunch was right; it really was a scripture.

The very scripture of the mist that was spread across the continent when Boris controlled the empire.

Here I was, unexpectedly coming across an original copy.

"What's the point of endlessly writing and spreading those? To reform humankind to use for what? In the end, he perished before enduring to the end."

The author of the book, Dio Halfencurse, was the leader of a clan that followed Aaer in the old era, as the head of the Silica clan had told me before.

Kayram said that she devoured her previous owner.

Purely because it was his request.

"So, the previous owner of that body is no more?"

"Yeah. He said he couldn't take it anymore and begged me to eat him, so I did. Now, I got this body I never wanted..."

She seemed to particularly resent having a human body.

"Great. In this time when I'm supposed to be fighting to the last stand, they tell me to go check out some worthless elf land. What was that idiotic god thinking? Does he even think at all?"

"Why did Lord Aaer send you, Magic Sword, to Pruina?"

"How would I know? Rummendel always has a scheme, doesn't he? Just said there's something I need to do there."

So she too didn't know why she had to go there.

"You probably already assume, but in this war, that idiotic god will likely lose. He'll have his godhood stripped and be banished from heaven."

"What will become of you then, Magic Sword?"

"Me? It doesn't matter who wins, I'll be stuck in some unknown place buried with that obnoxious Holy Sword. The god's artifact is always sealed away in some dark underground corner after the war."

And that unknown place would indeed be underneath our home.

I would be curious about the basis of that selection, but asking now wouldn't yield any answers.

"I'm really going to sleep now, so shut up. And don't put out the fire."

With those final words, Kayram returned to slumber.

With a burning fire beside me, I spent the unfamiliar night sorting through various thoughts.

The next morning dawned, and

-Ssswwwwh!

The chilly wind had now transformed into a blade-like gale. Kayram and I finally entered the edge of Pruina.

"It's damn cold!"

Kayram scowled as she kept blowing air into her hands.

I wasn't much resistant to the cold either, so I wrapped my cloak tighter around me and stepped forward.

"Hey! Give me that cloak!"

"The cloak?"

"Yes! How selfish of you to keep warm all by yourself! Hand it over now!"

She was practically robbing me in broad daylight.

Even my last means of warmth was taken away.

Damn, it's cold.

As I sulkily continued on,

"Halt!"

Ten White Elves wearing hooded cloaks appeared and blocked our way.

"This is the territory of the White Elves, Pruina. Entry of outsiders is strictly prohibited, so please leave the way you came."

Considering that they used to welcome with arrows in the face, this wasn't too bad of a reception.

Of course, that's what I thought, not necessarily the Magic Sword here.

"I'm here to help you guys. Stop messing around and let us through!"

"To help us!?"

Puzzled and unable to hide their surprise, the elves were at a loss.

"We don't know what your motive is, but there's absolutely no reason for us, the White Elf clan, to accept the help of humans like you! Don't delay and be off with your nonsensical talk!"

"Something did happen, didn't it? You can't hide those expressions."

"...!"

As she pointed out, something was off about the elves' expressions.

They seemed unnatural, like they were hiding something.

Seeing that elves are not asking for help doesn't mean they don't want it. No use dilly-dallying; it's better to just spit it out and get on with it.

"If we assist," I inferred, "it's not because we find you particularly adorable. If something happened, tell us without dawdling. We plan on leaving as soon as it's resolved."

"You, the dialogue isn't working! If you keep this up..."

"Excuse me for a moment."

Unable to watch the debacle, I stepped forward to mediate.

"Hey! Who told you to block my way...!"

She reacted impulsively to my intervention, but I raised my hand to stop her and looked directly at the elf who appeared to be the leader.

"Could you please tell us what's happening in Pruina?"

"Th-that's none of your concern!"

Clearly, there was something going on.

"It's unfortunate, but we also can't simply turn back. We've come with no malice, purely to offer our help. Please trust us."

"How can we trust humans based on just your word?"

Another elf couldn't stand idly by and exploded, speaking their mind.

To convince them, we would need to demonstrate our capability to help.

I turned to Kayram again.

"Please, show them who Dio truly is."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Show them who Dio is, what kind of person he was."

She grimaced distastefully but knew she had no choice but to step forward. Reaching into her bosom, she drew the true form of the Magic Sword.

"...!"

Confronted with the force of the Magic Sword, every elf present gasped in shock.

"Are you then the owner of the Magic Sword?"

Looking at each other in confusion, suddenly the leader elf spoke resolutely.

"Would you mind giving us a moment?"

They wanted to discuss with the other elves in the village through their empathetic communication, and I consented.

After standing for about ten minutes,

"Please come with us."

The elves finally opened the way and offered to lead us into the village.

Just as we were about to follow,

"Hey!"

She callously summoned me once again.

I turned and she gestured for me to come closer.

Approaching without hesitation,

“If you ever block my way again...”

Her breath close to my ear,

“I’ll kill you.”

With that chilling warning, she marched past me, and I followed silently towards the village.

* * *

“Welcome, humans who’ve set foot in Pruina.”

Upon entering the village, an elderly elf with a full beard greeted us.

“I am Tatarius, the elder of the White Elf clan.”

Of course, he was a completely different elf from the elder Elphuris I knew in reality.

“We heard the owner of the Magic Sword is here. Did the god of the black mist send you to us?”

“Something like that.”

“Hmm. I’m not sure what he knows, but let me explain as we move along. Come this way, please.”

Following the elder’s lead, we moved deeper into the village.

“Recently, strange beings started to emerge in our village.”

“Strange beings?”

“Yes. At a glance, they look undeniably like our clan, but their skin is burnt black as if scorched by fire, and they’re incredibly violent with an aggression comparable to demonic beasts.”

“What? Such entities exist in this world?”

“You’ll understand better when you see for yourself.”

We finally arrived in a secluded, shaded area, a bit away from the living quarters.

Many elves stood guarding the area with an iron-clad vigilance.

Ahead, a large canopy was set up, seemingly to obscure something from view.

The elder did not hesitate to remove the canopy.

-Bang!

“...!”

Everyone but Kayram and I instinctively stepped back, maintaining our composure.

Having heard the description, I had an idea, but seeing it in person was another story.

A black-skinned elf with sharp teeth baring, tightly gripping the bars made of ice, ready to shatter them and lunge at us.

“So, what do we call... this?”

“For now, we’ve been referring to them as Dark Elves.”

Dark Elves, the same race that once brought the White Elf clan to the brink of crisis.

Calling this the first encounter felt awkward given its state, but nevertheless, seeing it alive gave a clear impression.

It was a true hybrid of a demonic beast and an elf.

At first glance, they resembled elves, but...

Horns growing just like those of an elf.

Claws and teeth sharpened like blades.

Eyes bloodshot and crimson as if drenched in blood.

These were not parts of an elf’s physique.

They were more befitting of demons or monstrous beings.

“When we first discovered them, they fled, keeping their distance, but soon they began attacking our clansmen on patrol and even appearing near the village, consistently threatening us.”

Glancing around, I noticed bandages on some of the patrolling elves.

“You had means of defense, no? Why not kill them with magic?”

“The problem arises after they are killed.”

An elf approached at the elder’s command, unraveling the bandage around his arm to reveal the flesh beneath.

Kayram and I both grimaced.

“What the heck is this?”

“It’s a wound inflicted by a Dark Elf. Merely a scratch, it began to rot as if poisoned over time, and now it’s come to this.”

Around the wound, the elf’s naturally white skin was speckled with an unsightly spread of black spots.

The magic seemed to have stopped its progression for now.

“Their secretions and blood appear to contain some lethal toxin. Left alone, their corpses emit foul odors and rot the surrounding area rapidly.”

Which meant these creatures were real trouble to dispose of carelessly. Where on earth had they come from?

Of course, they couldn’t have come about naturally.

Someone must have artificially created them unless...

“Tatarius, elder!”

An elf came running toward us, urgently calling out to the elder.

“The Dark Elves have appeared near the village!”

(To be continued)