

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 31

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 31: To The Academy (5)

As dawn lifted and the round sun rose in the morning, the usually tranquil sky contrasted sharply with the noisy corridor of the inn.

– Bang, bang, bang!

Several knights clad in armor were banging loudly on the door.

Brian hurriedly opened the door and stepped out of the room in response.

“What is going on?”

Brian looked perplexed by the sudden intrusion.

“An emergency decree has been issued throughout all of Saphern! We are to conduct a collective investigation on outsiders, so everyone in the rooms must come out now!”

The knight showed Brian an official document emblazoned with the Saphern crest, demanding cooperation.

Brian’s face broke into a sweat upon seeing the order.

“Could we, perhaps, be granted some leniency to prepare? If you give us the location, we will come to you, but could you allow us some time right now?”

“Leniency? Do you think we are playing around here? Come out immediately unless you want to be dragged out forcibly!”

“Well, it’s just that our young master is still asleep. He strictly instructed to not be awakened until it’s time for him to rise on his own...”

“Young master?”

The notion of a young master staying in a common inn was met with derision from the knight. It was laughable to think that nobility, who valued their dignity more than life itself, would be staying in such a place.

“If you don’t come out by the time I count to three, I will consider it non-compliance and begin forced removal!”

The knight counted with his fingers.

“One!”

“Please wait, sirs! It really would be a huge mistake!”

The knight paid no heed.

“Two!”

“This could very well lead all of you to the realms of death...!”

“Three!”

With the count of three, the knight kicked the door open, pushing past Brian.

Upon entering, the knight found Sian sitting on the bed, his torso bare.

He seemed to have just woken up, evident by his dazed expression.

“...?”

After the knight’s brazen entrance, a heavy silence ensued.

Sian’s long, smooth physique was marked by a multitude of scars that seemed out of place on his youthful face—a hint to his experience on countless battlefields.

The situation felt like stumbling upon a tiger’s lair when expecting a rabbit’s hole; everyone who entered the room was at a loss for words.

“Have you awakened, young master...?”

Brian was the first to regain his composure and cautiously asked.

“I woke up because it was noisy.”

Sian glared with eyes filled with killing intent.

Brian’s body froze under that intense gaze.

“What did I tell you last night?”

Sian’s voice was filled with irritation.

“That you should not be awakened until you wake up on your own...”

“And what is this? I clearly didn’t wake up on my own, did I?”

“I tried my best not to wake you, but there was an unavoidable situation...!”

Brian trembled as he looked towards the Saphern knight, wanting someone to assume responsibility.

The knight, previously dazed, quickly shook his head.

“According to the emergency measures of Saphern, all outsiders must undergo an urgent investigation! We are here to request your cooperation, but...”

The knight’s voice faded to a whisper.

“Are you, by any chance, the son of a distinguished family?”

Realizing that something was terribly wrong, his tone switched to that of a higher register.

Sian simply stared intently without responding, the oppressive aura silencing the knight.

The silence was broken by Brian.

“Our young master is Cian Vert, the [son of Duke Vert](#) of Belias! We were on our way to Rowen for the Royal Academy!”

Brian quickly showed the Vert family crest to the knight.

Upon seeing the insignia, the knight’s eyes widened before he promptly sheathed his weapon and bowed deeply at a 90-degree angle.

“I apologize for not recognizing you, the noble son of the Vert ducal family!”

The remaining knights also hastily bowed.

“.....”

A prolonged silence followed.

Sian, his gaze still stern, began to slowly dress.

Watching him, Brian thought:

He had just saved many lives this day...

* * *

“Emergency measures for outsiders?”

“Yes, that’s correct!”

“Why all of a sudden? Has someone stolen the tax evasion money hidden in the storeroom?”

The knight’s face turned pale with fright.

“Spe, speaking of such grave matters! No, it’s not that; our lord, Lord Farquad of Saphern, has gone missing since last night...”

Farquad?

Where have I heard that name before?

He’s certainly one of the prominent members of an imperial noble family.

“Are you referring to Farquad Nephris of the Count Nephris family?”

“Yes, exactly! After the sudden death of the previous lord a year ago, Lord Farquad took over the rule of this region!”

Unbeknownst to me, one of those bald guys was managing this place.

The Nephris family is one of the three major wealthy families of the empire, backing the current Empress Cassandra Nephris.

Right now, it must be Count Randolph Nephris at the head of the family.

And this Farquad lord must be his brother.

But how can a lord just go missing? How incompetently must his guards have acted for that to happen?

“What does a lord going missing have to do with outsiders like me?”

“Ah, well, that is, it’s a bit difficult to explain, but...”

The knight hesitated, as if trying to hide something.

“You were going to interrogate us all anyway, right? You must have intended to talk about it. Don’t beat around the bush, just tell me.”

It seemed as if the roles had reversed, with me questioning them instead of the other way around.

After some back and forth, the knight reluctantly closed his eyes and disclosed.

“Actually, we suspect our lord may have been kidnapped, not simply missing...”

“Kidnapped?”

I pressed on with my questions.

“Who are the suspected kidnappers?”

“We’re not certain yet, but you know of the organization that has been mentioned recently? The one that worships the Black Mist, those Mist followers...”

They’re losing their minds.

I confirmed last night that they’re not here.

Now, every time something happens, do they just blame the Mist by default?

And they say kidnapping, but if it was really the Mist, wouldn’t they have simply killed the victim instead of abducting them?

It’s more plausible that someone pretending to be the Mist kidnapped a lord...

Wait a second.

When I think about fakes, I suddenly remember last night's events.

This couldn't possibly be...

"Is that Farquard lord bald?"

"Yes..."

The knight replied promptly, without hesitation.

A masked kidnapper and a bald noble.

It seemed more and more likely that the person I saw last night was actually Farquard.

Just great, unintentionally getting entangled in unnecessary matters again.

"Honestly, we don't think it's a very likely situation! Our lord is not of the sort to have attracted the contempt of such dark fellows!"

Such nonsense.

Do they think I'm unaware of the real sordidness of that bald family?

If they knew they'd all be executed for treason later, they'd likely pass out in shock.

"But because strange black smoke was seen in the room from which our lord disappeared, we included those potential imposters among our suspects. We were conducting investigations on outsiders as a precaution when we came here."

"So you were conducting urgent investigations under suspicion that the perpetrators might be in disguise among outsiders?"

"Yes, exactly! You have a keen insight!"

He kept babbling more than necessary.

What an exemplary knight he seemed to be.

Despite claiming to be a noble's offspring, I doubted he could amount to much.

I stood up.

“Alright. I understand, so let’s end this. Leave now.”

“Excuse me?”

The knight looked dumbfounded.

“I said the investigation is over. You’re no longer needed, so leave.”

Of course, when I said the investigation was over, I meant my own and the fact that they were no longer needed meant the knights.

They must be bewildered, having come here to conduct an investigation only to be interrogated themselves. But what can be done?

At least it’s clear that I’m not the perpetrator.

After almost chasing out the dim-witted knights, I immediately started preparing to leave.

“Where are you going, young master?”

Brian, who had been observing the situation, asked, bewildered.

“For a stroll.”

“In the morning?”

“It won’t take long. Have everything ready for when I return, so we can set out immediately.”

“Yes, I understand!”

The journey to the Academy might be long, but there’s a saying for times like this: “More haste, less speed.”

I’m not trying to solve any meaningless kidnapping case, just casually observing my surroundings with a leisurely mind... what a load of nonsense.

I’m simply too bothered to leave things as they are.

Now that the culprit has seen my face, if I were to just leave, who knows what kind of trouble might spark?

I turned my steps back to the alley where I had spread the fog last night.

Despite the rising sun in the morning, the alley was just as deserted as the night before.

Once I made sure no one was around, I closed my eyes again.

“Black Mist 4th Form: Sensing Killing Intent!”

A little fog escaped my collar and seeped into my eyes through my throat.

The fog-covered vision turned everything black, changing the world to a monochrome palette.

However, this monochrome world was nothing more than a useless background.

– Fwoosh!

Gradually, a red glow began to shine through my focused pupils.

Over the elongated walls and densely built buildings, it emitted a strong light.

It’s the same.

The same killing intent as the one I sensed last night.

I crossed the alley quickly towards the source of the red light.

The place I arrived at was in front of a dilapidated house.

It didn’t seem deserted, but it was so old that nobody would question it if it were called an abandoned house.

Or rather, it was a suitable place to dump a body or to confine someone.

I naturally knocked on the door.

– Bang, bang, bang!

I waited a minute after knocking.

Despite a couple more knocks during that time, there was no response from within.

Is he pretending not to be there despite sensing someone around?

I was about to forcibly break the door when I took a step back to position myself.

This rotten old wooden door could easily be broken with a punch, no need to draw Ceyram...

– Creeaak.

As I had barely clenched my fist, the door opened with a creaking noise.

“Who’s there?”

“...?”

I was caught off guard.

The person who opened the door was not the middle-aged man I expected, but a girl who looked about my age.

Moreover, she was leaning on a crutch under one leg...

“I’m sorry, my leg is not in great condition, so it took me a while to answer.”

I glanced down at her leg subtly.

This was more than just a bad condition.

The girl’s left leg was completely twisted below the knee and wrapped tightly in white bandages.

As I lifted my eyes to meet hers, I saw nothing but innocence untouched by the hardships of the world in them.

Did I make a mistake? Am I at the wrong place?

While I was still doubting whether it was actually the house behind that I had mistaken, another person appeared from inside the house.

“What’s the matter, Sal... Gasp!”

He was a middle-aged man with streaks of grey in his hair.

The moment he saw my face, he went pale as if he had seen a demon.

I could tell by the way his eyes trembled like aspens.

I had found the right address.

(To Be Continued)

FOOTNOTES:

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 32

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 32

Chapter 32. To the Academy (6)

Even if I couldn’t recall his face, I distinctly remembered his clumsily innocent gaze.

The familiar energy that we sensed from one another.

He seemed to have realized that he had been discovered, and he didn’t try to deny the situation.

“Shall we move to another spot?”

It appeared as though he was taking cues from a girl who seemed to be his daughter.

Without a word, I nodded, and the man looked down at the girl and spoke.

“Sally. Daddy needs to chat with this person right here, so can you wait inside for a bit?”

“Okay, got it!”

The girl answered with a bright smile and went inside.

After sending his daughter away, the man with a stiff expression led me to a place behind the house, a clearing littered with discarded timber, its purpose unclear.

Though he wasn't looking at me, I could sense the lingering hostility in his worried gaze from behind.

“Are you from the Lord's manor...?” The man asked, turning around with an anxious look.

“If I were, I would have captured you and thrown you in jail last night.”

I replied nonchalantly.

“The girl just now, she your daughter? Or granddaughter?”

“My daughter...”

“She seemed a bit handicapped. Has it always been like that?”

“...”

Instead of answering, the man emitted a threatening aura.

“Can't you just pass by like yesterday, pretending not to have seen anything?”

I couldn't help but snicker at his pathetic attempt.

“Don't be mistaken. I'm the one in control right now. I can hand you over alive, or, if it bothers me, I can just take your head.”

His eyes were filled with suspicion.

“You don't believe me? Go ahead, try something. Did you stick that club in your belt to wipe your ass?”

“...!”

He might have concealed his weapon, but I had been aware of it since I first saw him.

The man’s face turned pale, and he soon pulled out a hidden stick and threw it to the ground.

He realized he had no choice.

“What do you want?”

“First, take me to where he is.”

The man’s gaze led in one direction.

At the end of his line of sight was a small, newly built shack in the corner of the clearing.

I walked towards it without hesitation.

-Creak-

It was only the size of a storage closet, but the floor was covered with an oddly neat carpet.

Upon moving the carpet aside, a staircase leading down was revealed.

Anyone would think it’s some kind of secret base.

As I descended the narrow staircase, I was greeted by a pitch-black space. I gathered mana on my hand and cast an ignition spell.

-Whoosh!

The space lit up in an instant.

It was a confined underground room, not much different from the one I had entered.

“...!”

I almost burned the heavy-set figure that suddenly materialized in front of me.

“Wh-who are you!”

The person behind the hefty body was also startled, letting out a scream.

His hoarse voice inevitably made me frown.

Scanning him from head to toe, I recognized his bald head—it was the missing Lord Fakron.

“This scoundrel! Do you even know who I am to dare put me in this miserable situation? I am the Lord of Saphern, Fakron Nephris, from the Nephris family, a distinguished line of the Empire! Once I get out of here, I’ll skin you alive, grind your bones, and feed them to the beasts in……!”

His hands and feet were chained.

An eye cover made him sightless, presumably used in some kind of torture.

He was spewing serious curses that one wouldn’t want to hear, even if he were begging for his life.

Worried about getting spit on, I took a step back.

-Thump-

I bumped into a small table in the corner.

Atop the table was a familiar black mask.

“Was this it? A wooden mask carved quite convincingly, huh?”

The man kept silent.

Next to the mask, a fist-sized, reddish-brown stone rested.

A faint aura of mana flickered around it.

“An ignition stone? I was curious about how you managed to produce black smoke. Sounds like the knights were duped by such a crude trick.”

The small artifact called an ignition stone could produce fire without magic—a kind of mana flintstone often used by long-distance traders because they could easily obtain it.

I hadn't expected such a cheap item to mimic the mist.

"I just got lucky, I guess..."

The man turned away as he answered.

"Right, it was just luck. You wouldn't even dream of this in Belias or another city near the Imperial Capital. It's because this backwater town was a mess."

After some more investigation, it was clear that any city guarded by such foolish knights wouldn't function properly.

"Such pests that shouldn't exist in the world! Do you think I'd be scared of the followers of the Black Mist? It's nothing for me, Lord of Saphern, to exterminate all of you!"

Even with such a pitiful lord, what was there to expect?

He seemed to lack not only hair but also reasoning skills.

"Seems like you couldn't train him properly after all this trouble. What have you been doing?"

"Excuse me?"

"It's not like you abducted the lord just to take pleasure in seeing him tied up, right? You planned to torture him, didn't you?"

"Torture?!"

At the mention of torture, Fakron shrieked even louder.

I continued the conversation, ignoring him.

"Correct! But I haven't been mentally prepared yet, and there are knights roaming around outside too..."

His feeble hesitation wasn't even amusing anymore.

I voiced the assumption that had been in my mind.

"Your daughter's leg... it has something to do with this man, doesn't it?"

The man did not deny it.

“How did you know?”

“It just seemed like it.”

I continued, maintaining my composure.

“Which parent wouldn’t go mad if their precious child suffered because of a brainless pig? You managed to abduct the lord with a bitter determination to repay the exact pain your daughter experienced, but when it came to moving to the next step, you hesitated, didn’t you?”

The man shouted as if he had been wronged.

“Even so, it wouldn’t bring my daughter’s leg back, right? In fact, this act is meaningless...”

The man began to tell his buried story with tears in his eyes.

“I used to be a servant attending the former lord of this place, Saphern. I assisted directly by his side, managing administrative tasks related to the operation of the city.”

It was unexpected that he had served the previous lord who had passed away a year ago.

“The former lord was incredibly selfless. He had no personal greed and only thought of the prosperity of the city, to the extent that it was all he cared about. Sadly, he passed away early due to a chronic illness.”

“So?”

“He had no children or siblings, nor did he appoint another successor. Consequently, a new successor was sent from the Imperial Capital, and it was this Lord Fakron.”

At a glance, it was evident that the Nephris household’s influence, associated with the current Empress’s faction, was at play.

“But this man was the complete opposite of my former master. Instead of caring for the well-being of the city, he was only concerned with filling his

belly, imposing massive taxes on the citizens in the name of sending funds to his family and even embezzling a portion of that.”

It was clear evidence of a corrupt lord.

In truth, even a real Mist would find ample reason to act in such a case.

“I felt a disconnect with his greedy nature and immediately quit. There was no way I could change such corruption, and I thought it was easier not to see it.”

“Why? Didn’t you think about changing things yourself?”

“I’m just a powerless commoner. Moreover, behind the corrupted lord was the enormous power of the Nephris household. Taking them on would have been rushing to my death.”

For him, that was the most appropriate action he could manage.

“Unfortunately, calamity struck from an unexpected place. Even the gods are cruel! What crime did such a young child commit? A pure child, not yet fully grown, what wrong had she done to deserve this? Just for blocking his path...”

A tear streaked down the man’s face.

“He claimed that his carriage was blocked during his tour! My child was just caught up in the unfortunate event while playing in the street, but for such a trivial reason, this man broke one of her legs! Telling her to effectively stay off the streets for the rest of her life!”

It is said that the anguish of a child is more piercing than a stabbed heart.

I had never had children, so I couldn’t fully empathize, but I could understand why he had kidnapped the lord.

“That’s why I abducted him! Though I know nothing else, I wanted to return the pain my daughter experienced! But if I did... wouldn’t I become no different from this inhuman scum?!”

Do you think he’s pitiable?

From my perspective, he’s painfully weak.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—that's the way of the world. Yet, by hesitating to exact revenge in the name of preserving human dignity, you gain nothing.

After all, humans are not so noble as to harp on about dignity.

Having heard his entire story, I spoke softly to him.

“You're no different.”

“Excuse me?”

“It's just difficult to cross the starting line. It won't make you less human.”

I, too, existed boldly as a human in the world.

“After all, this man wasn't considered human to begin with, was he?”

A lord diverting taxes, breaking a child's leg out of depravity...

It would not be surprising if the real Mist acted on such a case.

Ignoring the bewildered man, I picked up a heavy wooden stick from the corner.

Soon, a terrible scream echoed throughout the underground space.

-Thwack-

“Ahhhh!”

Alarmed, the man cried out in haste.

“What, what are you doing?”

“I'm just finishing what you couldn't do.”

With each strike of the club, the small chamber reverberated loudly.

I focused particularly on the left ankle of the man who had been spewing nothing but curses.

“Now he was screaming in pure agony.”

“Pl-please, save me! I’ll do anything you ask, just please save me...!”

He was already begging pathetically for his life after a few blows.

That’s the hideous nature of humans.

Only after experiencing pain do they understand their place.

If I intended to stop now, I wouldn’t have started in the first place!

-Thwack-

“Ahhh!”

After about ten more minutes of flogging, it finally ceased.

Lord Fakron of Saphern, having received his punishment, seemed to have fainted, his eyes no longer visible.

“Why... why would you do this...?”

I tossed the club at the feet of the man who sat slumped on the ground.

“Do you think it’s cruel? Compared to the agony your daughter went through, isn’t this nothing?”

“But...”

“If you were going to end this half-heartedly, you shouldn’t have started at all. Being sentimental only hurts you in the end.”

The man was speechless.

Leaving him sitting there, I climbed the stairs.

People say that crossing the line is like crossing a bridge with no return.

But I would ask, is there a need to return?

It’s merely difficult to begin, but once you cross the starting line, a limitless plain stretches endlessly ahead.

I know my path is not acceptable or understandable.

Would understanding it change anything?

I simply live for what I believe is right.

After finishing my business, as I was about to ascend to the surface, the man hurried after me, gripping my arm and asking once more.

“Just who are you...?”

After pondering for about three seconds, I replied.

“Just someone with a bit of experience...”

An understatement, given my current appearance.

And with that, I left Saphern and continued my journey back to Rowen.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 33

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 33

Chapter 33: Royal Academy (1)

It's been ten days since I left Saphern. According to the sporadic news, the lord of Saphern was found in the marketplace the day after I departed from the city.

Of course, he was not found in one piece.

His bones were broken in dozens of places, and one of his legs was so mutilated that it was beyond recovery.

No matter how much they questioned him, he only kept begging for his life like a madman, eventually fleeing Saphern in a panic, claiming that a devil was after him...

It seems he got to savor the agony just shy of death, more cruel than death itself.

Yet, it appears that I refrained from foolishly releasing him.

Well, what happens next is up to that father and daughter to figure out.

I let out a bored yawn as I looked out the window.

Peaceful.

This might just be the most peaceful moment out of the past ten days.

In every city I visited, there were runts clinging around, asking if I needed bodyguards, bandits jumping out whenever I passed a slightly secluded spot, and beasts rushing at the scent whenever I thought about setting camp.

I really don't understand how they have such a knack for disrupting my journey.

Most of them seemed to dislike living in this world, so I kindly sent them on to the next.

"Sir, I see Rowen!"

Beyond the flurrying leaves, at the end of the connecting path, the white city revealed itself.

My final destination, Rowen, the city of splendid harmony.

Normally, a boundary area adjacent to different nations would be a dangerous region prone to conflicts at any time, but this place was different.

It borders the Ushif Empire, Garam Kingdom, and Spania Kingdom—three countries touching this point.

Until the Royal Academy was established, it was nothing but a barren wasteland, not even a blade of grass to be seen.

No one would have imagined that an academy would have been built on such a wasteland.

The Royal Academy is a national institution established under the ideology of pursuing infinite advancement in magic and humanity.

As the word “national” indicates, it wasn’t something just anyone could establish.

It was the Great Sage Teramile Ishpa, the man who was heralded as the greatest magician in human history, who founded this academy.

Starting with his successors who sought to follow his ideology, it grew and developed, which eventually created the multinational city of Rowen that is today.

The pure white walls encircling the area.

Rowen was a city entirely surrounded by walls, and only those who went through the necessary process and had permission were allowed to enter.

As I approached the main gate, like in any other city, the guards blocked the way.

As always, I stepped out of the carriage and showed them the crest of the Vert family.

“Greetings to the young master of House Vert! Welcome to Rowen, the city of harmony!”

The guards saluted with a robust lead.

Brian, who had been driving the carriage, asked as if it was now expected.

“Where do we go now?”

“Keep going, soon you’ll see a road adorned in gold. Just follow that path.”

“Understood.”

Following the order, Brian slowly moved along the road.

Me too, through the window, observed the many carriages parading along with the noble families claimed by continents roaming the streets.

This brings back memories, unintentionally...

Even if they're not all pleasant memories, every time I return to the space of my past like this, it feels like traveling back in time to those memories.

Back then, I even had trouble just watching people from the window.

Thinking about it, this academy brought many changes to me.

If I hadn't come here, I would never have caught that devil's eye.

Let me reiterate, there's nothing left for me to learn here, and there's nothing that will change because of it.

I especially have no intention of engaging in friendship among nobles, and the academy is just a fence providing protection for my current status as a student.

Well, who knows if my mind changes.

Perhaps this time it will be me who changes this stagnant and decaying place...

With various crossing thoughts, the carriage drew ever closer to the Royal Academy.

* * *

Upon arriving at the main administration office, it was crowded with students who, like me, came for registration procedures, along with instructors and administrators.

They were too busy chatting amongst themselves to pay attention to me.

I approached the registration desk and submitted my application.

The female official reading my application pushed up her glasses and spoke.

"Can you please show me something that verifies your identity?"

I took the family crest from my pocket and placed it on the desk.

Seeing the crest, the registration clerk slightly shook.

"May I ask your name?"

“Sian Vert.”

“...!”

My name caused everyone’s attention to turn my way.

“Sian Vert... the incompetent from House Vert...?”

“The same young master who reportedly roamed the frontlines with high-ranking knights for an entire year?”

“Ah, I heard that was just a bluff and he was merely cowering in the rear. Probably just a title given by Duke Vert.”

“He looks nothing like Prince Kranz.”

Sometimes, having acute hearing can be a problem.

Although I typically ignore such petty chatter, passing it through one ear and out the other—as they say—I’m not some saintly figure,

so let’s hope I don’t hear anything like that when I’m in a bad mood.

Otherwise, I might just tear those babbling mouths apart...

Well, I can’t do that on the first day.

Today, I shall pass over things with a light heart.

“All procedures are completed. Please wait in your assigned dormitory, and attend the opening ceremony that will be held in two days.”

The official gave me the entry document along with a key to my quarters.

“...?”

Gunmetal keychains were shiny, with a gold loop featuring a crown engraved on them.

Realizing that there was a problem, I immediately asked the clerk.

“Are you sure this is the right one?”

“Yes. Sir Sian has been assigned to the Royal House. It was selected through official procedure, so you don’t need to worry.”

The word “Royal House” once again stirred buzzing around me.

No, it’s nonsensical—if the official procedures were followed—are they not?

In my past life, I was assigned to Noble House, a dormitory for the children of nobility.

It was the standard accommodation for nobles from families of baron rank and above.

There were lower-ranked dormitories, but nobles were usually placed in the Noble House regardless of status.

However, the Royal House that I’ve now been assigned to is not some common dormitory.

Royal. A word that literally refers to royalty.

Only the descendants of kings and emperors from the various nations, a very select few, can use this highest-class dorm.

Certainly, not just the direct descendants but occasionally influential families closely associated with the imperial family like the queen’s side are assigned to the Royal House, but that wasn’t my case.

Someone must have interfered.

Could it be my father’s doing?

While it’s possible, considering the location and if he personally requested the emperor, but frankly, there’s no reason he would go that far.

Neither my sister Ellis nor that bastard got assigned to the Royal House.

Needless to say, Kranz doesn’t either.

Here I am, attracting intense attention from day one when I’d be better off keeping a low profile.

Probably by tomorrow, the talk of the town will be about how a noble's offspring ended up in the Royal House...

I just hope it won't reach my ears.

For now, I decide to unpack. I lead the carriage to the assigned dorm.

In my past life of six years at the academy, I'd never set foot in this place.

I just thought it would be a bit more luxurious than Noble House...

"This, what on earth is this..."

Upon viewing the dormitory, Brian couldn't close his gaping mouth.

It wasn't just luxurious, it was as if they had built an entire castle within the academy.

In front of the building, there was even a neatly kept pond and garden.

To an unknowing outsider, it could be mistaken for a separate palace built by the nation.

After slapping the dazed Brian to bring him back to reality, I entered the main gate.

My room was at the end of a hallway on the second floor, to the left.

Surprisingly, for such a luxurious building, the door of the room was rather plain.

With a feeling of intrigue, I unlocked the door and entered...

-Thunk!

No big deal.

It was just the sound of Brian dropping my luggage, which he was carrying.

He must've been shocked for he didn't immediately pick them up, just stood there gawking at the spectacle before him.

I should have guessed from the spacing of the doors in the hallway.

The room was spacious, at least triple the size of my room in Noble House.

“My apologies, young master! I will move the rest of your belongings right away!”

Brian hurried out to return to the carriage.

In the meantime, I leisurely inspected the interior of the room.

After putting everything away, Brian approached me, bowed, and spoke.

“I have organized all the belongings you brought, Sir!”

He was dripping sweat as if he were in the rain.

“Good job. You can go now.”

“Yes, I unders— Pardon?”

Brian seemed perplexed, not understanding what I meant.

“I said you can go now. You’ve accompanied me to the academy and unpacked, so your work here is done.”

I pulled out a small pouch from my pocket and tossed it to him.

Since there’s no use for money within the academy, I had filled the pouch with all the gold coins I had.

The expression on his face as he opened the pouch was quite something.

“Why would you give me something like this...?”

“You earn your pay when you work. Whatever you decide to do, wherever you go, this should be plenty for a fresh start. Though I’d recommend avoiding Belias. Well, I’m not going to stop you if you decide to go...”

Brian just stared blankly at the pouch of gold coins.

Some might think it’s too much for such a service, but I’m not the scoundrel who betrays his own.

He provided me with safe travel and comfort, so it's right that I reward him for it.

What he does now and how he lives are up to him.

– Thump!

“...?”

Just when I thought he'd made up his mind, he unexpectedly kneeled before me.

“I, Brian Kendrick, a formal knight of Belias, beseech you, I wish to serve the noble Sian Vert!”

Has he lost his mind at the sight of a few gold coins?

“My father has always said, if I ever meet a lord I can trust and follow for life, not to hesitate and devote everything to him! Today, I choose not the coins, but the young master Sian Vert as the beginning of my life! Please accept me!”

His father, whoever that may be, sure taught him how to speak with flair.

I thought with a few coins, he would say thank you and leave, but he turned out to be a man of greater resolve.

A servant then?

He has a different vibe than a maidservant like Emily.

“You mentioned you wish to follow and trust a lord for life?”

“That is correct! I desire to serve you as my lord, Master Sian!”

“That's an exceedingly foolish act.”

“Pardon?”

Brian lifted his head, previously bowing deeply.

“You might have limitless trust in me now, but I have neither belief nor affection for you. That means I could equally well discard you at any moment without surprise.”

“I don’t mind! Even if I’m abandoned, as long as I was of some small help to you, I would be satisfied!”

He was stubborn as a fort.

“Do you realize how foolish that is! What will you do if you end up on the wrong side of my blade?”

“I will still be fine even if that happ... What?”

A long silence filled the room.

It seemed my exasperation got the best of me, leading to some absurd comments.

I wonder if that bastard felt this way when looking at me.

“A servant willing to do anything for me...”

When I think about it, despite doing everything for that bastard in my previous life, I never had someone under me.

Now, the first person offering to serve me was a coachman – quite humorous, really.

But what’s the harm?

If he’s willing to give his life for me, then I, in turn, will ensure his well-being.

After all, I’m not the same as that guy.

I smiled wryly and said,

“Just don’t stab me in the back later...”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin

chapter 34

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 34

Chapter 34: The Royal Academy (2)

About 300 freshmen must have gathered in the auditorium.

There would be nobles who already knew each other and those who didn't recognize faces but had heard some of the names.

From the very first day of the entrance ceremony, they would likely be exchanging stories with those sitting next to and around them, eager to build camaraderie.

Gradually, the atmosphere would become noisier, and the hall more chaotic.

That's when the dean would take the stage.

After amplifying his voice with mana, he'd start with these words:

"Each of you is born with duties to fulfill. You have moral obligations that correspond to your high social status."

The students might respond with indifference, wondering what nonsense he was spouting.

Then, the dean would continue.

"The title of 'noble' is not to be taken lightly. The power you possess is akin to the abilities bestowed by the gods. Therefore, you must uphold the responsibilities that come with it and set an example befitting your societal status."

Perhaps a few naive students would be moved by his words and accept the responsibilities and duties befitting a noble or elite.

What noble sentiments, right?

So grand they almost seem nonsensical.

Instead of wasting time listening to such pompous talk, I find it more valuable to confine myself to my room and exercise.

As I was doing pull-ups on the horizontal bar, Brian, who had been promoted from coachman to servant, approached me.

“Master, are you certain you won’t attend the entrance ceremony?”

I countered with a question.

“Why do you think I should go?”

“It could serve as an important foundation for starting your new life, sir. You would have the opportunity to bond with other students and perhaps hear wise words from the dean and professors...”

I couldn’t help but snicker at the mention of ‘wise words.’

“Wise words? Indeed. They must be so profound that I still remember them.”

“Pardon?”

“Do you know what the norms of the Royal Academy are?”

“I’m not certain, but...”

“Setting an example. The idea is to take what you learn and refine it to eventually serve the nation and its people.”

“Isn’t that a good principle?”

He tilted his head, not understanding what the issue could be.

“How many nobles do you think actually live by that in this land?”

“...”

“Just so you know, the Duchess who first took you in is also an alumnus of this academy.”

“Ah...”

With a nod of understanding and a sigh, Brian acknowledged what I meant.

Imagine how harmonious this land would be if the nobles lived without greed or arrogance, truly embodying the principle of setting an example for the nation and its people.

At the very least, there would be no place for Mist to run rampant.

Granted, it's not as though there are no exemplary nobles at all, but let's face it: nobles, by nature, are not pursuers of pedestrian livelihoods; they are born to power and wealth, chosen from birth with no concern about their next day's bread.

The idea of sharing and giving from such endlessly avaricious folks...

That's mere lip service in the stagnant world of nobility.

Moreover, there's even less reason to attend an entrance ceremony that's just going to spout such stories.

Especially since not going doesn't mean getting kicked out or anything.

"Phew!"

After completing my set goal, I immediately transitioned to the next exercise without rest.

My room was equipped not only with a horizontal bar but also with various exercise machines reminiscent of a training ground, and potions that could enhance muscle development.

To someone like me, who had fed on the blood of magical beasts, such potions would hardly be effective.

But they were still better than nothing, and I was getting used to the convenience and comfort that royal spaces provided.

-Knock knock knock

A knock on the door during the time of the entrance ceremony...

It must be someone unaware that I'm in here.

For now, I sent Brian to see who it was.

He soon returned and handed me a piece of paper.

“What’s this?”

“It’s a notice from the administration office. They say there will be an attribute test at the magical training ground at 16:00 today and are asking that students gather without using any mana beforehand...”

Annoying, I thought.

Well, while the other students were at the auditorium, the attendants masquerading as guardian knights were likely in their dormitories, so they must have distributed these in advance.

“Such a hassle...”

“Pardon?”

Brian’s eyes widened.

“Well, attribute tests are important, aren’t they? They help determine the direction in which you need to hone your magical abilities...”

“Right. Extremely important.”

Except, I already know what my magical attribute is.

Having regressed, my attribute wouldn’t have changed, and since the test would be meaningless, I wondered if I could just scribble something on the paper and send it in.

Of course, that wouldn’t be allowed.

I scold myself for harboring such thoughts due to my annoyance.

* * *

A large magical circle of five colors was situated in the center of the space.

A student, nervous-faced, stepped onto the circle after preparations.

-Whirr...

A small circle emerged underneath, starting at the student's toes, slowly ascending, scanning the entire body.

Once the test concluded, red writing etched itself onto a blue parchment in front of the magic circle:

『Magic Rank: 1-star

Physical Rank: C

Attribute: Fire 31%』

The tested student left with the parchment, and the next one entered. The process was the same, and their attributes marked on parchment as before.

『Magic Rank: 2-star

Physical Rank: D

Attribute: Water 37%』

Some students cheered while others showed disappointment upon seeing their assessments.

Meanwhile, some were perplexed by unexpected attribute percentages.

“This year's freshmen seem to have high scores overall, don't they?”

Rodin, the instructor overseeing the tests, remarked.

“It's a shame that the attributes seem so mundane. They're mostly limited to fire, water, wind, and the like.”

Silica, an instructor standing beside him, appeared somewhat disappointed.

“It can't be helped. Extraordinary attributes don't show up just because we wish for them. It seems we may not have a student this year with the God's gift.”

Everyone is born with an inherent supply of mana and a magical attribute.

If mana is the energy needed for spellcasting, an attribute is the intrinsic quality granted that dictates which types of magic an individual can naturally utilize.

Fire 31%, Water 37%, Wind 42%.

The magical circle in this training ground identifies the highest attribute percentage of the individual and inscribes it onto a parchment infused with magical power, revealing the results.

Of course, the revealed figures represent only the highest among the individual's attributes; it does not mean they are incapable of other types of magic.

If an individual's highest is Fire 31%, the remaining 69% is a mix of various other attributes like water, electricity, wind, earth, light, dark, and so on, which implies the potential to wield other spells.

In principle, the higher the percentage of an attribute, the greater the potential to enhance spells related to that element.

Therefore, typically, students focus on strengthening the attributes confirmed by the test.

"Next student, please come forward."

As Silica called, a slight girl with silver hair entered.

The instructors immediately recognized who she was.

"Princess Arin?"

"Yes. Let's proceed with the test."

Silica approached the timid Arin to explain the precautions.

"Step onto the circle after removing your shoes. Do not step off until the testing is complete. Just stand still, and the circle will take care of the rest!"

"Okay..."

Arin did as instructed, and the test started.

-Whirr....

Her test took about a minute longer than the others.

Soon, white writing, somewhat unique, appeared on the parchment.

『Magic Rank: 2-star

Physical Rank: B

Attribute: Light 52%』

“Light attribute?”

Arin covered her mouth in shock at the unexpected result.

The instructors too were astonished.

“Goodness, who would’ve thought... Princess Arin has a light attribute...”

“Moreover, over 50% scoring. This could qualify her as chosen by the divine, right?”

The divine’s choice.

Occasionally during these tests, students appear whose attribute percentages exceed 50%.

As mentioned, higher attribute scores broaden the potential for magic rank advancement, and surpassing 50% places one in an entirely different category, capable of mastering transcendent magic akin to divine powers.

Therefore, there are those who say the divine itself has descended its power, dubbing this phenomenon the divine’s choice.

“Emperor Dione had the light attribute as well, right?”

“Yes. It appears the father’s attribute has been inherited by the daughter. And her physical grade is quite impressive too.”

The instructors meticulously recorded her information, just as they had for the other students.

Princess Arin, now looking rather joyful, bowed to the instructors and exited.

The testing continued.

“Next student, please!”

A broad man with sun-kissed skin pulled back the curtain and appeared.

His burly figure, unbecoming of his age, caused the instructors to flinch a bit.

“Just, just remove your shoes and wait atop the circle. Don’t come down until the test is finished.”

The magical circle conducted the test, just like it did for previous students.

『Magic Rank: 3-star

Physical Rank: A

Attribute: Sand 71%』

“Sand 71%?!”

Upon seeing the results, both instructors exclaimed in unison.

Their astonishment wasn’t limited to the numbers.

“This... this can’t be an error, can it? A magic rank of 3-star, and physical rank A? He truly is a freshman who just enrolled this year?”

Silica, now bold, approached the new student directly.

However, the student named Seth, holding his inscribed parchment, left the room without a word.

“Such terrible character grade, F.”

She sneered softly as she watched him leave.

“Such students are not uncommon... Wait, that was Seth Shahar Khan, wasn’t it?”

“Do you mean the First Prince of Spania, known as the Sand Prince?”

“Yes, with an exceptionally high physical rank and the relatively rare sand attribute. He might well be the highest-scoring student amongst the freshmen.”

The instructors diligently recorded his data, just like they had for Arin.

“Next student, please!”

Eventually, the last student entered.

The black-haired boy walked in, took off his shoes, and ascended the magical circle without hesitation.

Before Silica could even relay the instructions, she found herself at a loss for words because of his natural demeanor.

“Oh, well, let’s get started!”

She quickly hurried behind the curtain, and the test began.

“The last student is the youngest son from the Duke Vert family.”

“Oh! That’s the young lord who lived on the frontline for a year! It’s no wonder his eyes seemed so sharp, almost like he had seen demons!” “He was once known as the incompetent of his family, but I’m curious what attribute will appear for him.”

-Whirr...

Unlike before, the magical circle was not so quick to complete the test.

Both instructors waited anxiously, longing for the blank parchment to reveal its inscription.

Finally, as the test concluded, words began to engrave upon the parchment.

『Magic Rank: 1-star

Physical Rank: S

Attribute: Darkness 92%』

“???”

Unable to utter a word, both instructors stared at the parchment in disbelief.

(To be continued in the next chapter)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 35: Royal Academy (3)

92%.

It was an inconceivable number he had never seen or heard of in his life.

At this rate, it wasn't so much a divine selection, but as if a deity from the divine realm had directly descended into a human body.

I dare say that since the attribute examination began, no human has ever possessed such high numbers as this student.

"Is this magic circle broken?"

"Impossible, it worked just fine until recently..."

The two instructors double and triple-checked the numbers written on the parchment.

It remained unbelievable, even after checking it a thousand times.

"Are we done?"

Sian calmly stepped down from the magic circle and checked his parchment.

His gaze was indifferent, not even a flicker in his brow at the 92% figure, and he left the room without a reaction.

The two instructors could only stare in bewildered silence.

"A 92% attribute score and an S-rank physique... At least he's got some conscience with a 1-star magic rank."

But even that seemed meaningless.

Magic rank was something that was expected to improve over time.

“Certainly it’s a historic number without precedent...”

Rodin, one of the instructors, was nonetheless feeling a bit regretful.

“Why did it have to be the darkness attribute... It’s a shame when you think of it the other way around.”

Darkness attribute.

Though a rare attribute, in this land, it was not well-received.

Its scarcity was one thing, but fundamentally, the Ushif Empire revered light.

In a nation that favored light, the opposite attribute of darkness wasn’t welcomed.

Not only in neighboring countries but in other regions as well, this had led to a near complete lack of research in darkness-based magic.

In other words, it was an attribute with good looks but no substance.

“Exactly. With a maximum of 92%, that leaves only 8% for other attributes. Magic development doesn’t seem promising for him.”

“You never know. With that level of compatibility, if he has any genius, he could create new magic.”

“Big spells of darkness, huh... I honestly can’t imagine. At best, maybe spells for hiding or illusions... How can an attribute so scorned be developed?”

Silica shook her head in disbelief.

Rodin, on the other hand, appeared deep in thought, his face imbued with significance.

“Rodin, do you have any ideas?”

“Not really. It’s just... there’s an organization I think might welcome a student like Sian.”

“Which one?”

Rodin hesitated for a moment before scratching his head and speaking.

“The Mist...”

“ ... ”

“If you say his magic might be limited to stealth and illusions... well, such specialties might not be unwelcome among assassins.”

Her gaze at Rodin held what appeared to be genuine contempt.

* * *

92%?

In his previous life, it seemed like it was in the 80% range; the number must have increased since then.

Well, considering how much mana he’s used hunting demonic beasts, it would be strange if it didn’t increase.

Naturally, the attribute scores identified now didn’t stay the same for life.

Like any strength, it would grow with use and dull with neglect,

and attributes were the same—they could increase or decrease depending on how mana was used and applied.

People varied, but a typical change was around 10%.

Of course, there were cases of greater changes.

In his past life, he had received considerable attention because of this outrageously high number.

Although he was mostly taunted with claims of being as incapable as his attribute...

Ah, he didn’t feel like thinking about the past anymore.

Back then, he just let it go, but this time, it didn’t seem like it would pass so easily.

Perhaps they’d make an example out of someone, plunging them into the abyss of darkness, to show them despair and pain...

Well, that would undoubtedly spell the end of his quiet and peaceful academy life.

As he drank the muscle enhancement potion he had brought from the dormitory, he tried to shake the unsettling feelings.

Hmm, this is actually quite good?

Sweet and slightly bitter, it almost reminded him of troll's blood.

Not that the effectiveness could compare, but as far as reminding him of the past...

"...!"

Turning a corner, he came face-to-face with a familiar figure.

"Si, Si..."

Eyes and mouth trembling as if struck with an acute disease.

Looking as though he had seen a ghost, it was Kranz.

You little... perfect timing.

"Know this guy, Kranz?"

Beside him stood a chubby blond kid, so fat it looked as if his head was placed directly atop his chest.

Oh, I remember you too.

The son of the Penéron Marquess of Garam Kingdom, Popper Penéron.

Along with Kranz, he was one of the ones who made his early academy life a complete mess.

"Uh, well, you see..."

Despite the pig-like boy's question, Kranz continued to stammer away. Oh, can't speak all of a sudden, can you?

Have you forgotten your dear brother's name already?

Surely, our Kranz, who complained to our mother wishing I'd vanish from this earth, couldn't have forgotten his brother!

"Tha, That's my brother! Sian Vert, he came to the academy with me this year! You made it safely, didn't you, Sian?!"

Look at this shameless guy.

Still trying to play it cool in front of his friend?

Let's just watch silently and see how long he can hold out.

"Ah, you're the brother he used like a slave while living at the mansion?"

"...!"

Whatever spirit Kranz had managed to recover with his act abruptly drained from his face.

Unable to look at me, his eyes wandered in panic.

Well, yeah, it's true.

He had treated me like a slave up until the swordsmanship duel.

Since I'm a merciful person, I could easily overlook such minor slips of the tongue.

"Moreover, he said you're a bastard child whose mother is unknown, right? Wow! Just like he said, you do look quite ill-bred!"

– Thud

A heavy sound echoed as if something solid had dropped.

Presumably, that would be the sound of Kranz's heart sinking.

"Ah, ah no, what I meant was...!"

I didn't wait to hear his excuse and immediately grabbed the back of his head.

His hair was so damp with sweat, but that didn't mean I was going to let go.

After all, it seemed a beast like him only learns after a beating, so a re-education seemed in order.

After momentarily lowering my head, I raised it again with a bright smile.

“Shall we talk for a moment, Kranz?”

* * *

“Attribute score 92%?”

As the white-haired old man read the report and stroked his chin, he muttered.

“Yes. However, unfortunately, the primary attribute in question is darkness...”

“No real value to it then.”

The old man continued to scrutinize the report of Sian Vert with refined gaze.

“It’s true that it’s an unprecedented figure. Even that ‘Child of God’, Ellis Vert, was at 81%, if I recall correctly?”

“Yes. At the time of graduation, it had risen to 88% in the water attribute.”

“Interesting. The figure that we praised as an extraordinary talent was surpassed by a newcomer, something Ellis herself could not achieve.”

The dean’s face bore a smile of amusement that was rare for him to show.

Noting the unusual situation, Silica felt out of place.

She was in the dean’s office on the highest floor of the academy’s main building, there to report on the day’s attribute tests.

It made sense that the old man engrossed in the report was indeed the person in charge of this room.

Condor Quizzel, the dean of the Royal Academy, the head of the illustrious Quizzel family of the Ushif Empire, father to the emperor’s first empress, Diana Quizzel—in other words, the emperor’s former father-in-law.

Furthermore, he was the only one amongst the current members of the academy to have reached the 9-star level.

“Do you know, that this lad Sian has been assigned to the Royal Dormitory?”

“Yes, I’ve heard from other instructors.”

“What do you think allowed someone who is not a part of the imperial family to get assigned there?”

Silica broke out into a cold sweat as the quiz took an unexpected turn.

The answer seemed obvious.

A common noble, not of the imperial bloodline, getting assigned to the Royal Dormitory?

Without overthinking, it indicated someone had used their influence—and whoever approved it must hold power at least equal to the dean.

That person could only be Dean Condor.

In other words, Dean Condor must have been persuaded by someone, and hence Sian Vert was assigned to the Royal Dormitory.

“...Perhaps the Duke Vert had something to do with this?”

“Ha, that’s not it. How upstanding is the Duke of Vert? He is not one to seek personal favors for his child.”

“Then who could it be...?”

“The Emperor, His Majesty Dionne...”

Silica thought she must be misunderstanding her own ears.

“The emperor Dionne, His Majesty?”

Without a word, Condor simply lifted an eyebrow in confirmation.

“Why would the emperor take interest in that child?”

“What is your current magic rank, my dear?”

Suddenly, Condor inquired about her magic rank.

“7-star...”

A mundane rank among the academy’s instructors.

“A 7-star can wipe out an entire village with a single lethal spell. So what would you do if a dragon appeared before you now?”

“A dr, dragon?”

What would one do if faced with an heir of divine blood lineage?

Though she didn’t see why he was asking this, Silica decided to answer honestly.

“I would fight it with all my might... Well, I would try to escape, but I believe I’d soon be begging the gods for mercy.”

“Quite honest of you. If a 7-star like you says that, then what about the others? Most will likely accept their death and give up on life. But...”

Condor’s eyes sharpened for a moment.

“That boy came back alive. From a dragon, no less...”

“...?”

It wasn’t just her ears in doubt anymore, but her reality as to whether she was dreaming.

“Unbelievable, isn’t it? His Majesty told me so himself. The boy was kidnapped by a Devil Dragon and then fell into a river, missing for two days before being found unharmed...”

“I heard he lived on the front lines, but to think something like that happened...”

Condor continued to speak.

“It seems His Majesty was deeply impressed by the boy’s act of safely evacuating Princess Arin from the beasts during their tour. And then seeing him return alive from the dragon... there’s not much more to say. Who knows, maybe we’ll hear wedding bells in a few years.”

His joke didn't sound so far-fetched, considering the emperor's involvement, it could be a real possibility.

Having understood the situation, Silica asked with mixed feelings.

"...Was he really chosen by the gods?"

Without much concern, Condor replied.

"No need to overthink it. All we have to do is watch. Even with a seemingly useless attribute, who can say? He might reach a unique pinnacle that no one else can..."

With a satisfied smile, Condor looked at Sian's report as if watching a flower bloom.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES: