

## **The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 4**

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Episode 4: The Incompetent Son of the Duke (3)

Duke Willius Vert.

The Grand Duke who governs the Western territories of the Empire, Belias.

Beyond his status as a mere Duke, the world calls him the 'Guardian of the Continent'.

A hero who repelled the demon race's invasions for a long time with his exceptional magical prowess and strategy.

People unanimously say that without him, the continent would have already been occupied by demons.

But do you know?

The most arduous life in the world is that of a hero.

By definition, a hero carries the burdensome fate of protecting all people in the world.

To protect the entire world with a human body that can barely protect itself?

In the end, it is a life without any gain for oneself.

And that man, who had chosen such a life, was my father.

\*Sigh...\*

As I arrived at the office under Yulken's escort, I couldn't help but let out a sigh.

It had been almost 15 years since I last saw him – after he died fighting during the demon army’s invasion.

\*Knock knock\*

As I composed myself and knocked on the door, a resounding baritone voice answered from inside.

“Come in.”

Yulken seemed to be waiting outside.

Without hesitation, I opened the door.

\*Creak\*

The Duke observed me enter with a scrutinizing gaze.

Ignoring this, I bowed and paid my respects.

“Sian, the youngest of the Vert family, greets father.”

“No need for such a formal greeting. Take a seat.”

The Duke gestured for me to sit in a prepared chair.

“.....”

It might seem disrespectful, but I really want to describe my father this way:

‘A foolish man.’

A man who took on the unasked duty of a hero, foolishly hoping his children would carry on that mandate.

A man who possessed enormous power not even the Emperor could touch, yet lacked the smallest desire for power.

His only wish was for the peace of the continent – which really, if you think about it, is nothing more than volunteering for the good of others.

Even the desire for strong and capable offspring was merely to cultivate a successor who could continue this peace.

In my past life, I was far removed from such a successor...

“Have you learned swordsmanship?”

His first question was unsurprisingly about sparring.

“Rather than learning, I just practiced alone at night.”

“Who taught you?”

“No one.”

“So you did it all by yourself?”

“Yes...”

Of course, that was a lie.

My talent for swordsmanship in my previous life was clearly due to external assistance.

“The you I knew had neither talent nor interest in swordsmanship, yet possessing such skill, why hide it?”

If I had the interest and talent, I could have shown it off as much as I wanted.

Even receiving all sorts of support from the Duke.

What the Duke really wants to know is why I lived like a incompetent son all this time.

But there’s no need to tell him what I’m actually hiding.

With a sly look on my face, I replied.

“I just didn’t want to stand out. Considering my position in the family and various other reasons, I thought it best not to be too conspicuous...”

“Are you conscious of other people’s views?”

“Yes...”

The Duke looked at me with pity as I nervously hesitated.

It seemed my act of innocence had somewhat worked.

“Well, if that’s the case, it’s my fault. It won’t happen again. If you wish to refine your sword skills, practice freely. I’ll even provide a training hall if you want. No one will object.”

“Thank you, Father!”

An unexpected kindness was offered.

Although I didn’t really need it, there was no reason to refuse.

“Before we start today’s sparring, I had expectations of you.”

“Expectations?”

“You looked me in the eye before we started, right?”

I swallowed hard.

I didn’t expect the fleeting glance was so clearly noticed.

“Do you know what I saw in your eyes?”

“What, what did you see?”

“Confidence.”

The Duke smiled as he continued.

“I saw the confidence that you would surely win against Kranz. And you have proven that confidence admirably.”

To catch that in just a fleeting moment, should I be calling him father?

But it doesn’t matter.

If I can reestablish my reputation with him, all the better.

“However…”

The atmosphere changed in an instant.

The Duke's tone suddenly became grave.

"Wasn't your subsequent behavior unnecessary?"

He was referring to the merciless beating I gave Kranz.

"There was no need to resort to such extremes when the pressure was relieved and the contest was already decided, was there? Why display such a thing?"

The Duke asked softly, his face full of seriousness.

He wanted confirmation.

What was contained within the vessel named 'me'.

The response to this question, would determine how I was perceived by the Duke.

It wasn't difficult.

All I had to do was give the best possible answer in this situation.

"I thought it was insufficient."

"Insufficient?"

"If I had ended it by pointing my sword at Kranz after he kneeled, he would never have accepted the defeat."

The Duke's brows furrowed slightly.

Unperturbed, I continued my explanation.

"The purpose of a swordsmanship duel is to contest one's ability and prove superiority. If one side does not acknowledge this, it is meaningless. That's why I took such action. I thought that kneeling wouldn't be enough for Kranz..."

For a moment, silence lingered.

The Duke's hand stroking his beard betrayed his deep contemplation.

Kranz, having been pampered with high expectations from birth, was someone whose pride soared to the heavens.

Such people generally do not accept defeat after just one setback.

Had I ended it with him simply kneeling, Kranz would have doubtlessly continued to challenge me repeatedly.

I wanted to break that spirit, to make him submit, hence the kick to his head.

If Kranz wakes up now, he likely won't even be able to meet my eyes due to his trauma.

“Did you want to make Kranz submit?”

The Duke was quick to grasp my intention.

I replied with a measured voice.

“Yes. Even if he is my kin, I wanted to make him submit.”

I am aware.

The words and actions I have taken today do not match an innocent ten-year-old child.

Anyone looking at them would think they are anything but normal for a child.

But who is the person in front of me?

Duke Vert.

He's not someone who cares about trivial matters like character development.

Look.

See the hint of a smile behind his veiled hands...

“Excellent! That's right, the essence of a duel is to demonstrate superiority over your opponent. No need to get entangled in trivial feelings like family affection!”

The Duke was genuinely content.

He was probably very pleased to find a child who could uphold the ideals of the family.

From the start, he never regarded his children as anything more than that.

“Your cold rationality is commendable despite your youth! You shall become a sturdy support to help Aschel in the future.”

“.....!”

I was stricken as if by a hammer blow.

What?

Become a support for whom?

Does he understand for whom I died when he talks like that?

Tension crept into my fists as a dirty feeling surged in a corner of my heart.

Another reason I called the Duke foolish.

His terrifying obsession with the eldest son, Aschel.

Aschel was not the child of the current Duchess, Margaret.

He was born from the first wife, who had supposedly died long before my birth. Whatever love he had for that first wife, the Duke's love for Aschel was to an excessive degree.

As if he were under some spell...

Well, it's not like I'm one to talk.

After all, I was the one who most often looked after that guy...

But now it's over.

At the moment Aschel's sword pierced my heart, a seal was etched within me.

A life solely for myself.

Every action that unfolds now will be the cornerstone of the future.

“As for a reward, it seems strange to call it that, but I still want to give you something for the duel. If there’s anything you want, just say it.”

Desires.

An opportunity bigger than expected had come.

In a short time, I had to think about what choice could serve me the greatest benefit.

Currently, all I have are the memories and senses from my past life.

I still need time to grow to regain my original power.

And beyond even what my past self could imagine, I need to develop an even stronger force.

That’s right, no need to think too hard.

Since I always felt the need for power, I won’t concern myself with possible dangers.

I just need to pursue the most assured and effective method given the current situation.

“I want to go to the frontlines, Father!”

\* \* \*

A space underground where light does not penetrate.

A faint mist, almost tangible, fills the surroundings.

Despite the absence of any light source, the terrain is surprisingly visible – a very peculiar place.

-Step step

A woman emerged from the mist.

Her face hidden by a black hood, she walked along the corridor shrouded in fog.



Her steps seemed determined, as if seeking something.

Eventually, a faintly glowing desk at the end of the corridor came into view.

Atop it laid a mysterious black box.

As she always had, the woman naturally opened the box.

“.....!”

The box was empty, devoid of even a speck of dust.

The item that was supposed to be there had vanished without a trace.

The woman, inspecting the box this way and that, soon broke into a cheerful smile.

“The time has come!”

She quickly packed the box and returned the way she came.

Back at the end of the corridor unfolded into a vast underground space.

The woman looked at figures also adorned in identical hoods – the so-called ‘members’.

They were engaged in various entertainments such as drinking, gambling, and sleeping, and paid her no mind.

Without any reaction, she continued to the center and casually flung the box before the members.

-Clang

The noisy sound of the box clattered as it rolled.

All at once, the members’ attention turned to the box.

“The mist stone has vanished.”

The woman announced the disappearance of the box’s contents.

None among the members were unaware of what it signified.

“ .....

The previously raucous atmosphere became silent in an instant.

Amid the silence, a member asked a question.

“Has the successor returned?”

The woman answered with a smile.

“We shall find out soon enough.”

She reached for the thrown box, summoning a black mist from her fingertips as magic swelled.

-Whoosh

An unfamiliar white smoke emerged from the empty box.

The smoke reached upward, morphing into an indiscernible shape.

-Zap!

The smoke shifted to black with a curious sound.

A moment later, the smoky figure took the shape of a young child before vanishing without a trace.

Having confirmed her objective, the woman raised her hands high and declared.

“The day of revelation has arrived! From this moment, we resume the activities of The Mist!”

With her command, all the members disappeared as if they never were.

All that remained in the expansive underground space were the woman and the box.

“ .....

The woman gazed at the box, a meaningful smile on her face.

(To be continued)