

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 41

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 41-50

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 41

Chapter 41: The Greatest Sword of the Continent (2)

Princess Arin thought the current situation was quite unfair.

A boy being bullied by several students, and people passing by without doing anything to help.

None had extended a hand to the boy in need.

She could guess why the boy was being tormented.

He was probably a commoner who entered the academy with an honorary noble status.

A portion of the students who didn't look kindly upon it were now insulting him.

She had anticipated the Royal Academy wouldn't be all peace, but she never expected it to be this bad.

It was more than just physical assault; they were trying to force a mana sphere into his mouth.

Was this not equivalent to trying to kill someone?

She had heard one should build good relations with the nobility, but this was not acceptable.

If no one else would stand up, she had to.

"I am Beruth Luimill, the eldest son of the Duke Luimill of the Garam Kingdom. May I know who you are?"

The blond student demanded to know her name after introducing himself without hesitation.

“I am Princess Arin Severus of the Ushif Empire.”

He twitched momentarily at the mention of ‘princess’, but upon hearing her name, Arin, he offered a distasteful smile.

“Ah, I see. You’re the Princess of the Ushif Empire? It’s an honor to meet you.”

“As much as I regret saying this, I’m not in the mood to exchange pleasantries with you right now. You need to explain what this situation is.”

He shrugged as if he did not understand what he had done wrong.

“It seems there’s a misunderstanding. We were merely enjoying a bit of fun. It’s not bullying.”

“Shameless. I saw with my own eyes your cruel maltreatment. Are you telling me that wasn’t bullying?”

“Shall we ask him directly then?”

Beruth grabbed the hair of the boy who was sitting down and asked with a brazen voice,

“Tell us yourself. Are we bullying you?”

The boy hesitated.

“It’s okay! Speak freely! The Princess here is curious, so hurry up and answer!”

Seemingly coerced, the boy slowly opened his mouth.

“I-I wasn’t being bullied...”

“?! What did you say?”

“I said I wasn’t being bullied! Please don’t worry about me and just go...”

However, Arin quickly understood.

The boy’s words were meant to protect her, his frail eyes conveying the message to stay out of trouble and leave quickly.

“You don’t have to hide anything! It’s clear that you were being bullied. If these people are threatening you...”

“Kekeke...”

Arin tensed up at the sound of vile laughter.

“Threats? You do go too far with your words. Now this is starting to make me uncomfortable.”

Beruth sneered, and Arin bit her lip in anger.

“To go so far as to accuse an innocent student of being a bully and a threat, isn’t that a bit much? I think I deserve an apology, or I’m going to feel quite downhearted.”

He clutched at his chest, feigning being wounded. To Arin, it seemed only more evil.

—Swish

At Beruth’s signal, multiple men emerged from behind the trees, armed with swords and dressed in plain clothes. They were probably his guards.

In response, Arin’s knights also appeared, confronting them.

The tension simmered.

No one wanted to draw swords in the middle of the park, but ultimately, the situation would have to be resolved by Beruth and Arin, not the knights.

Collecting herself, Arin spoke again.

“Alright. Then, I will take this boy with me. I’m not sure how these wounds appeared if it wasn’t bullying, but I will ensure his healing.”

As Arin reached to help the boy up,

—Click

Beruth grabbed her arm.

“...!”

“You don’t seem to understand what I’m saying...”

He looked at her with a face that indicated his annoyance had risen.

The knights were about to draw their swords when

Arin raised her hand to stop them.

“It seems it is you who do not understand, Baron Beruth. Shall I officially report this situation to the academy?”

She glared back at him with defiant eyes.

“You are quite old-fashioned, Princess. By showing concern for such an insignificant commoner, who do you think will appreciate it?”

“I cannot find a shred of noble pride in you. If those who have the moral duty to lead don’t care about such matters, then who will?”

Beruth grinned disdainfully.

Arin was infuriated but held back showing her feelings.

“Kekeke! Very well, let’s ask the friend here then. Tell us, Resmus! Do you want to be healed with the Princess here?”

Again, Beruth passed the decision to the boy.

Arin reached out to the boy and said,

“You don’t need to be subjected to any more of this injustice. As a Princess of the Ushif Empire, I promise to rescue you. So come with me.”

The boy trembled, unable to believe that a Princess was pledging her name to help him—a situation he could never have imagined.

Amid his conflicting feelings and shaking hands,

—Thud, thud

Footsteps approached from the front.

Two legs entered the boy's field of vision as someone plopped down in front of the boy, catching his eye.

"Si, Sir...!?"

Princess Arin stood up in surprise, covering her mouth in shock at the sight.

Beruth was also startled, having apparently not noticed the arrival of this mysterious man.

"..."

A man of similar age silently stared at the boy's face.

* * *

I thought the situation was getting interesting:

Three nobles bullying a pitiable schoolmate, the princess stepping in unable to tolerate it, and the commoner friend saying he wasn't being bullied and to pay him no mind.

The atmosphere was charged, and even the knights intervened, though realistically, they couldn't do much.

What was unexpected was the firm stance of Princess Arin.

She appeared much more resolute than the hesitant and naive princess a year ago.

That blond brat, too, I remembered him as soon as I heard his name.

Beruth Luimill was already infamous in my former life for his problematic personality.

This round was quite exciting to follow.

But then, looking at that commoner friend, his face is somehow familiar.

I'm not one to remember faces well, but I do pick up on scents, as I mentioned before.

Let's say, this friend has not an evil but an exhausted scent.

Did I have any connection with this guy in my past life?

Something tells me that he might give me quite the trouble in the future—

“Tell us, Resmus! Do you want to be healed with the Princess here?”

The name from the blond brat caught me off guard.

Resmus?

The Resmus I know?

The last guardian of the Garam Kingdom and the greatest swordsman of the continent, Resmus?

The commoner sitting here woefully, he's that Resmus?

Haha, impossible.

It must just be someone with the same name.

It's not like there's only one person named Resmus in the world; it could be a mere coincidence.

—Bing

Yet against my will, my body moved first.

Drawn as if by something, I started to approach them.

“...?”

Half doubtful, half curious, I faced the boy's face.

Ah, now that I think about it, he's not even a boy.

The Resmus I spoke of, the greatest swordsman, is a woman.

Considering the short hair and masculine features, most people here must think of her as a man.

But with the yin energy emanating from her face...

It's a woman.

A woman pretending to be a man.

And despite the wounds, look at those firm and steadfast eyes.

Before long, she will dominate as a true champion, a martial artist's spirit lying dormant.

Hearing just the name, I was unsure, but seeing the face, I was certain.

This boy, no, this girl... she is the Resmus I know.

She blinked in confusion, not understanding what was happening.

"Si, Sian... how did you...?"

"Ah, it's been a while, Your Highness."

Arin stuttered, startled by this sudden encounter.

"Sian?"

The name makes the blond brat's eyebrows twitch.

"That's the youngest of the Vert family, Sian Vert?!"

Apparently, he knew of me by the reaction.

Ah, I remember now. He's someone with ties to me.

The greatest swordsman of the continent, Resmus, and the madman of the Garam Kingdom, Beruth Luimill.

I killed them both.

Beruth, especially, was dispatched brutally.

The heir to one of Garam's influential noble families, the Luimill family, who wielded real power in the kingdom.

Spoiled as a late-born child and pampered throughout his life, he developed into an unparalleled psychopath.

Beating servants was just the start. He would lure beggars with the promise of food, only to give them animal waste, and he'd burn animals alive under the pretense of practicing magic.

He was someone whose actions were unfathomable to other humans, doing unspeakable things casually.

His cruelty continued at the academy, culminating in killing a fellow student during a magic duel. And even that was swept under the rug by his family's influence as an accident.

Those who knew Beruth had no doubt that he intended to kill from the start.

And so I put him down.

Under the pretense of purification work for the Mist.

He was returning home after being suspended when I ambushed him, making him experience everything he had inflicted on others, one by one.

At first, he grinded his teeth, barking that such methods would never break him, but after the torture, he pleaded—not for life, but for death.

"I've heard a lot about you. You survived that terrifying front line, didn't you?"

I simply nodded without a word.

"Do you also intend to get involved in this situation? Despite what you may think, we were not bullying this student."

"I heard the gist. Some sort of amusing game, right?"

Unsettled by my informal tone, Beruth's face turned sour.

"Amusing indeed—to put one's mana sphere into another's mouth. That's a game I haven't heard of. Is it really so fun?"

"Haha, yes, something like that..."

"Then let's try with you."

With a flick of my wrist, a mana sphere, dark and condensed, formed.

Upon seeing it, his face paled.

“What’s wrong? Aren’t you brave?”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 42

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 42

Chapter 42: The Greatest Sword of the Continent (3)

“Your external wounds have mostly healed, but you need to rest for your internal injuries to recover. It’s best not to move today and just rest here.”

“Thank you, really. I don’t know how I can repay this kindness...”

Despite expressing gratitude, there was something insincere about their expression.

This place was a healing center located at the heart of Rowen.

Arin, the imperial princess, had brought Resmus here to be treated after being assaulted by Beruth’s group.

That blond madman had pulled out a mana sphere as if to play along, only to run away like lightning when told to do it later.

I had thought about forcibly making him ingest it, but it seemed Resmus’ healing was more important, so I accompanied her to the healing center.

Including fractures, internal bleeding, and even a slight concussion, her condition was not going to get better with a day or two of treatment.

It was quite remarkable that she was managing to stay conscious.

Perhaps, that’s the spirit of the greatest sword of the continent?

“If it’s alright, could you tell me how long they’ve been harassing you?”

Resmus hesitated for a moment at the princess's question.

"Ever since I first arrived. It felt like they were deliberately targeting me."

She had admitted to being the target of their bullying.

"The situation almost got out of hand. I never expected them to be so brazen as to try forcibly putting their mana sphere in someone's mouth..."

It really was a close call.

Had Arin, the imperial princess, not arrived to intervene, Resmus would be in critical care rather than resting in a standard room.

But left as is, the harassment would likely continue.

Resmus seemed aware of this, as her expression remained troubled.

"Um, I've been wondering since earlier..."

Resmus's eyes suddenly turned towards me.

"Do you know me?"

"Hmm?"

"You've been staring at me for a while now..."

Yes, I know.

Resmus Klein, the greatest sword of the continent.

A knight who was revered as divine with a sword after slaying hundreds with a single strike.

The last defender of the Garam Kingdom, protecting it to the very end during the continental unification war that erupted after the demon king's subjugation.

However, as I said before, I killed her.

She was originally from the Ushif Empire.

After changing her surname upon joining the Count Klein's martial family in Garam Kingdom post-academy graduation, she even changed her nationality.

At the time, the empire had conquered all castles of Garam Kingdom except for Klein's territory.

Although negotiations were held for her to surrender peacefully for complete continental unification, Resmus refused to forsake the kingdom that recognized her value despite her unremarkable self.

The empire, concluding that her will was unwavering, ordered me to assassinate her.

While the empire commanded assassination, being a swordsman myself before an assassin, I wanted more than a hollow death for the greatest sword of the continent.

Truth be told, she wouldn't have been easy to assassinate, anyway.

She was a formidable opponent who let me experience, once more, the sensation of defeat, something I thought was a thing of the past after the bloody battle with the demon king.

It's worth mentioning she was also known as a swordsman who didn't use magic.

While most knights proficient with swords also utilized mana and magic to enhance their swordplay, she relied purely on her own swordsmanship to reach the pinnacle.

Thinking back, it wasn't that she didn't use magic, she couldn't.

That deranged blond must have shattered her mana flow from an early age.

And yet, she ascended to be the greatest sword of the continent.

One could only wonder how much more she would have grown had she integrated magic into her swordsmanship.

Maybe Aer meant this when she suggested looking around.

I decided to be vague in my reply.

“You just resembled someone I knew. But I guess you’re not them.”

“Ah, I see...”

As the conversation petered out, an awkward silence followed.

Arin, the imperial princess, tried to change the subject to lighten the mood.

“So, Resmus, how did you end up at the Royal Academy? I heard they selectively recruit especially talented commoners, did they recruit you that way?”

“Yes, that’s right. Instructor Jade from the main academy recruited me as a special swordsmanship talent. He promised to sponsor me thereafter, but... he was suddenly expelled from the academy the day before I enrolled...”

The sudden expulsion of an instructor promising support was quite suspicious, perhaps not merely a coincidence.

“So, where are you staying now?”

The answer was obvious.

The only accommodation available to commoners like her, who wasn’t royalty or nobility, was one place.

“The Communal Hall...”

The academy’s dormitory for about 5% of its students, exclusively for commoners.

Despite its use by commoners, the facility was not dilapidated in comparison to other dorms, but there was an undeniable difference.

The academy itself didn’t plan to neglect it.

But as mentioned earlier, due to our distinguished noble lords protesting how lowly commoners could receive the same treatment as them, it ended up being so out of necessity.

Not even guard knights, let alone janitors, were likely to clean the place more than once a month.

“It’s a tough situation. Having to go back there, you might be targeted by those people again...”

As things stood, even the instructor willing to offer support had been expelled, making it unsurprising if those blond madmen returned to commit more violence at any time.

The princess appeared contemplative, rubbing her lips as if searching for a good idea.

Then, I made a suggestion to her.

“Why doesn’t Your Highness take her in?”

“Hmm?”

She tilted her head as if she had misheard.

“Why not personally bring her to live with you as your servant? After all, there is no rule at the academy against living with another person’s residence.”

It’s not done because everyone refuses to share a room with a lowly commoner.

“What, what are you saying? Even so, it would be preposterous to share a room with a boy I’ve met today...”

“That fellow is a girl.”

“...?”

Arin, the imperial princess, looked at Resmus in disbelief.

“It’s not that I meant to deceive Your Highness...”

Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment, hands neatly clasped.

A demure visage resembling an eleven-year-old girl.

This too caused the princess’s face to redden.

“I’m, I’m sorry! Your short hair made me think of you as a boy without realizing it!”

“There’s, there’s no need to apologize! It’s my own fault...”

Truthfully, there was no fault.

A commoner attending the academy without a guardian, especially as a girl and not a boy?

It would be unsurprising to find her one day as a naked corpse, murdered.

Cross-dressing was merely a means to protect her well-being.

Indeed, in the empire, there were women who disguised their gender to join knight orders, so it wasn’t so peculiar.

Arin looked at her with even more pity.

“You must have had a hard time...”

Did she see herself reflected in the other’s circumstances? Emotion and empathy were evident in the princess’s gaze.

“If she was recruited on account of her swordsmanship, surely she has skills worth learning. If Your Highness were to take her in, she could teach you the way of the sword, and maybe later, even be appointed as a personal guardian. It seems like a fair arrangement.”

It didn’t seem like the princess would need to ponder for long.

“May I ask where you’re from?”

“The southern cities of Ushif Empire, ‘Brenu’...”

Furthermore, her nationality was still that of the empire.

With her being a fellow nation’s citizen, taking her in as a servant had ample justification.

“What do you think about it? I find Sian’s suggestion agreeable. Becoming my person, you won’t be harassed by bad people anymore and can live comfortably. Learn what you want, do what you want...”

Resmus looked perplexed, probably not understanding what was happening.

Suddenly the imperial princess was saving her, and now asking her to stay together.

It all felt like a dream, one she wanted to pinch her cheeks to confirm its reality.

“Why, why would you go to such lengths for me...”

“I am an imperial princess of the empire. It’s natural for a member of the imperial family to save her subjects. I’m not asking you to come without any expectations in return. If you have swordsmanship skills, I would like to learn a lot from you.”

Tears began to well up in her eyes.

“Honestly, I am just lonely on my own. It’s been dreary living alone in a spacious dormitory with no friends to talk to, so wouldn’t it be fun if we stayed together?”

At this moment, Resmus might have thought a goddess had descended to save her.

Salvation appeared on what seemed like a bleak future.

Soon, Resmus let out a tearful cry and embraced the princess.

“...”

It was a touching scene to behold, not easily watched without tears.

It seemed my role here was done.

I quietly rose from my seat and left the sickroom.

Why do I keep doing this when my hands are full with my own troubles?

Has my heart changed?

Not at all.

It was a simple judgment that having her by the princess’s side was better than taking her in myself.

For now, she's just a sapling.

But if that sapling grows into a tree, and more trees form a forest.

That becomes one's domain, their power.

I had merely pointed the way for the future greatest sword of the continent to join our ranks, while the princess was the one to nurture the sapling.

What came next was her responsibility.

However, there is one thing to remember.

Gaining one ally is like making several enemies.

Just as my enemies become the ally's enemies, inevitably, the ally's enemies become mine too.

Who knows?

Perhaps at this very moment, a new enemy, unbeknownst to the princess, is sharpening their blade for her.

* * *

– Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Aaaah!”

Overwhelmed with a humiliation he had never felt before, Beruth let out a scream.

Having always been the one to trample over others, the frustration of being overpowered was indescribable.

“Arin Severus... to think a mere fifth princess, a shell of a title, dares to lecture me?”

It was an utterly laughable claim, devoid of any noble pride.

“Who are you to dictate terms to me?! You should've just moved along quietly like the rest!”

Before he could suppress his anger at her, another person crossed his mind.

“Sian Vert...”

Not once had anyone ever looked at him with such disdain, as if deeming him inconsequential.

The shame he felt was unbearable; his body seemed to twist under the pressure.

“Uaaaa!” In a rage, Beruth started destroying everything around with his sword.

“This isn’t enough...! This won’t do...!”

Unsatisfied with the shattered remains, he proceeded to break them down further.

Once they were reduced to dust, beyond any further division, a satisfied grin crept across his face.

“I’ll do the same to all of you! I’ll inflict such excruciating pain that you’ll beg for death! You’ll pay dearly for angering me, Beruth Luimill!”

The powdered remnants were like a promise of their fate to come.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 43

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 43

Chapter 43: Purification Work (1)

As the new semester began at the Royal Academy, the first-year curriculum was foundational, setting the stage for the educational journey of the next six years. It focused predominantly on theoretical knowledge such as:

– The Basics of Mana Utilization,

- Introductory Magic Theories,
- Swordsmanship Textbook Style 1, etc.

These were followed by continental history, mathematics, geography, literature, and an array of tediously conventional classes.

Sigh, the mere thought of it brings a yawn.

Indeed, theory is crucial when starting anything new.

Does that mean I'm well-versed in these elementary theories?

Hardly possible, right?

It's been over 30 years since I last delved into theoretical studies.

Would I remember all those meticulous details if I were a scholar instead of an assassin?

Theory is significant, true, but ultimately it's about how to apply those learned theories to one's self that matters most.

For someone like me, who has mastered the application, learning theories again would be utterly meaningless.

In my current situation, it's not the tiny-print theoretical books that matter, but this single piece of paper.

Rare to see, the black paper is densely filled with red script.

This is an order of command.

A missive from the head, Silica, distributed to other members within the academy.

Passing it around means the organization's next target for purification has been determined.

Normally, the rank of the purification operation divides which members are selected to execute it, but this time they have decided to involve me in a high-ranking operation from the start?

It's so overwhelming; I hardly know what to do with myself.

The target is the empire's beneficiary, and one of the three richest magnates on the continent, "Zickerman Albas."

A baron by position, he's a bigwig who currently holds sway over all commercial rights within the Ushif Empire.

To my knowledge, he's known to be a benevolent merchant who cares little for his rank and donates most of his earnings to the poor...

Turns out it's quite the opposite.

The decree lists all the unrighteous sins committed by Zickerman Albas.

Most notably, he's been operating a slave market.

In the empire, where human trading is strictly forbidden under the teachings of the Light God Lumen Del...

He's quite the audacious one.

It seems impossible that other figures within the empire are unaware of this; there must be a protective force shielding him from scrutiny.

-Clomp! Clomp!

While I was examining the order, heavy footsteps echoed from the stairs below.

Of course, I wasn't in a classroom.

Worldwide, skipping classes on the rooftop may be a common retreat, but here at the academy, since the rooftop is occupied by the magic dueling arena, it would be a bit of a stretch.

So, where am I?

On the terrace atop Royal Hall.

A neatly arranged garden with a refreshing breeze made it an ideal place to spend time alone.

-Thud! Thud!

The footsteps that began as methodical clomps were intensifying.

Even ironclad knights wouldn't make such a din. What were these – the footsteps of trolls or monstrous behemoths?

I hid the order and remained silent to see who was ascending the stairs.

-Bang!

The terrace door burst open from a kick.

Instinctively, my body twitched.

“...”

The intruder, seemingly startled to find someone there, was staring straight at me.

“You are...?”

The tall man approaching had a dusky complexion and shoulders sculpted like a statue's.

I'd wager no one would mistake him for a student.

I assumed naturally he was a Royal Guard.

“Sian Vert?”

He knew my name?

Lately, it feels like too many people know who I am.

Unless they have a death wish, a Royal Guard wouldn't dare address a noble's child so casually, which means he must be either an academy instructor or a fellow student...

No, wait.

With that physique, if he's a student, there must be something seriously amiss...

“...!”

The crest on his chest caught my eye.

A golden emblem resembling the scorching sun.

I'm acquainted with that symbol.

“Spanian royal family...?”

A nation in the eastern deserts of the continent, an oasis amid endless sands, under the blessing of the Sand God, Sabulon. Here, the Shahar Khan clan, who alone wield the magical attribute of 'Sand', govern the country.

Only one person at this Royal Academy would carry that emblem.

The Sand Prince, Seth Shahar Khan.

He was the firstborn prince of the Spania Kingdom and a leading heir to the throne.

From what I recall, even in my previous life, he hardly attended classes. Did he actually skip classes too?

Seeing him eyeing me intently hinted he wasn't about to leave without a word...

“Do you know me?”

He readily began speaking as though waiting for permission.

“Of course. Sian Vert, the youngest son of the Vert family, the Guardians of the Continent. I've heard much about your exploits from the outside. Rumor has it you've been slaying demons on the front lines?”

What? Who said that?

True, I did... but except for the trials my father set, there should be no official record of me fighting monsters.

The rumor seems to have grown a bit out of hand.

Shaking my head, I clarified.

“I merely observed knights in battle from a distance. I’ve never faced a demon directly.”

His skeptical eyes implied he found my denial unconvincing.

Ah, this is quite uncomfortable...

“Then what brings you here?”

“Why? Perhaps for the same reason you are?”

Set smirked at the idea we were there for the same purpose.

“The same reason, huh... Interesting. So you share my sentiment?”

Without hesitation, he rolled up his sleeves and started warming up.

“I was honestly surprised. I must admit, I thought there could be no one at this Royal Academy who could surpass my physical prowess...”

That seems quite plausible, given your beast of a frame.

Now that I’m up close, you appear even more formidable than from afar.

If you applied to the Knights of Light right now, I bet they’d welcome you without question.

“Physical rating S... Even I haven’t attained such a rating, but you, Sian Vert, you did?”

Um...

Yes, I guess I’ve eaten well over the past year, earning a good rating.

While people usually emphasized magical grades or attribute levels, this fellow seemed particularly focused on my physical rating, likely very proud of his own physique.

“At this Royal Academy, most only care about a student’s magic and attribute levels. Foolish, really. True human strength arises from a strong body, honed through conditioning.”

With that, he promptly began performing push-ups on the ground, surpassing thirty reps in under ten seconds.

The more I saw, the more alien he seemed.

“You probably think the same way, don’t you? Instead of enduring boring lectures on theory and magic, you’d rather invest time strengthening your body! Unconventionally manly for sure, Sian Vert!”

No, I mean, it’s true I don’t want to attend classes, hence I’m here, but I didn’t come for intense exercise like you.

Body conditioning? Without question, it’s important.

However, if you knew how you died in your past life, you might want to hide in shame.

There was the Great Sword of the Garan Kingdom, and the Sand Prince in the Spanian Kingdom.

The Shahar Khan clan, blessed with the power of Sand attributed directly from the Sand God Sabulon, could wield the vast desert at their will.

Seth Shahar Khan perfectly inherited such power, to the point where some conjectured he was the direct chosen of the Sand God.

Especially for Spania, a country not just geographically but climatically opposed to the Empire, their unity was already strong – and with the Sand Prince, conquering the kingdom was a great challenge for the Empire.

But there’s a saying, isn’t there?

“The genius lives short lives.”

The formidable Sand Prince died in a ridiculously foolish manner.

Death by illness, due to a cold.

Obsessing over physical strength, he neglected his interior health.

His death was a loss to the kingdom’s backbone.

Shocked citizens believed the gods had forsaken Spania, and ultimately, its once unbreakable unity crumbled, leading to its demise at the hands of the Empire.

In fairness, dying from a cold does seem rather absurd.

But unaware of this, the enthusiastic prince energetically challenged me.

“Alright! I, Seth Shahar Khan, eldest prince of the mighty Spanian Kingdom, hereby challenge you, Sian Vert, to an official duel!”

A fierce wind whipped around as if his challenge were something grand.

Maintaining a calm façade, I replied.

“When?”

“Right now!”

“Then no.”

“Why not?!”

He yelled in confusion.

“Not permitted duels without the academy’s consent. If you want a duel, go to the main building’s administrative office and apply formally.”

His incredulous expression suggested he was unaware of such protocols.

“Then if I apply, whatever that is, we can duel?”

“That would seem likely.”

Assuming the academy gives permission, anyway.

“Great! Then where do I go to apply?”

“I told you. The administration office. It’s on the third floor of the main building.”

“Understood!”

Like a bear tracking prey, he dashed off towards the office.

With each hefty step, the terrace floor echoed, leaving me worried about the construction quality of this rooftop.

A duel with the Sand Prince...

It seemed like another pesky situation was unfolding.

* * *

In Brenu, a city in the southern part of the Ushif Empire, amidst the large tents lay a bizarre space filled with grimy cages.

Having finished sorting, a man urgently headed to the merchant's quarters.

"Master Zickerman! The merchandise is ready!"

Zickerman didn't even glance at the man.

Something wrapped in colorful cloth within a golden chest, which he fondled as if it contained the world's most precious jewel.

"Coordinate the time and place with the clients and send the message. Especially ensure tight security this time! And do not inform those higher up in the empire!"

"Yes, understood!"

With the report concluded, the man scurried out.

Left alone, Zickerman carefully inspected the item from the chest.

"This is the finest item of my forty-year career! Surely it deserves the best, wouldn't you say?"

Receiving no reply was expected; after all, inanimate objects can't talk. Regardless, Zickerman laughed heartily, holding the item.

"Proper preparation is needed for the greatest show. Rest easy within the chest for now."

He returned the item to the chest and sealed it cautiously to prevent any harm.

-Squirm

For a moment, there was a rustling movement inside the chest.

Following the initial stir, there were a few more movements, but Zickerman was too preoccupied with laughter to notice.

-Swish

Simultaneously, an invisible colorless energy began to rise from the chest like smoke.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 44

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin 44. Purification Work (2)

As the sun set and the sky darkened, it was time for all creatures to return to their nests. However, this place was an exception. As time passed, more and more people kept flocking in, many of whom seemed to be wealthy, their pockets likely filled with money. As if by some arrangement, they gathered in droves, entering the building in front of them.

“Despite it being the first purification operation, you don’t seem nervous at all?” The leader asked with a smile, noticing my utterly nonchalant demeanor.

“How could I be otherwise? Who else would start their first mission with a task meant for higher-ups?” I retorted.

“Who knows? I think it’s the perfect stage to test your abilities. After all, I am the leader of the Mist, not foolish enough to send my men into a mission I believe is doomed from the start.” The leader confidently gave a thumbs up as if there were no issues at all.

This place was Brenu, a southern city of the Ushif Empire notorious for operating a slave market. Our mission was to assassinate Zickerman Albas, a vile merchant of the empire. Including the leader Silica and myself, a total of five members were dispatched for what seemed too small a team for a high-ranking task. Naturally, assassination should be conducted quietly, in the most secluded places, leaving no trace behind, quick and majestic. But what was this? Assassinating someone who drew so much attention in such a bustling place was not something the Mist typically engaged in, almost uncharacteristically so.

Reading my thoughts, the leader smiled, "Today's purification operation involves not just the assassination of Zickerman Albas, but also something else we need to check."

"And what would that be?"

"According to the lead members' information, there's an auction being held by Zickerman today. Given his history of running a slave market, it's likely related to humans."

I nodded, unsurprised.

"This auction, however, seems to be offering something special this time, something that even the empire's officials haven't been informed about to prevent leaks. Could it be something as extraordinary as a hero from another world?"

"Is securing that 'item' our objective?"

"Not exactly. But it's worth checking out what the item is, especially since Aer Knight himself has mentioned something special is going to be present. It must be worth investigating."

Ah, so even that dimwitted deity mentioned it; definitely something out of the ordinary then.

[...]

Silent more than usual, Ceyram seemed very focused on something inside the building.

"Feeling something?"

[Hmm... It's a complex aura. It's as if two familiar auras have merged, creating an entirely new and foreign one. Whatever it is, it's certainly unusual.]

From her furrowed brows, it was apparent she was disturbed. Was it odd that I felt nothing? Nonetheless, I quickly infiltrated the building under the leader's orders.

* * *

The party hall was reminiscent of a noble's gala, ostensibly a social event by the Empire's Merchants Guild but that was merely a facade. Not all those people would participate in the auction; information had been selectively shared, likely only with top-tier clients considering that even the empire's officials were kept in the dark. Disguised among the party-goers, four members, including leader Silica, had already infiltrated the crowd. With my small stature, disguising as an adult was out of the question, so I stayed hidden, observing from the sidelines. For now, Zickerman Albas was nowhere in sight. I expected him to reveal himself once the auction or whatever it was began, but so far, nothing had caught my attention.

Suddenly, I caught the leader's eye from across the hall. Through a brief but clear movement of her eyes, she signaled me to head downstairs, sensing something beneath. Indeed, assassinating Zickerman himself wasn't the real challenge. It wasn't as if we had announced our intention to kill, so there was no reason to assume they'd taken any special precautions. However, all of that would be meaningless if we couldn't secure the target's location. I had no choice but to comb through the entire building to find Ziker Albas. Upon receiving the order, I promptly left the banquet hall. Contrary to its external appearance, the building was smaller than I had anticipated, with hardly any space beyond the crowded banquet hall. Anyone would think it shoddy that a slave auction was to be held in such an insignificant space. That left two possibilities: either the auction was held elsewhere, or there was a hidden space unseen to us. If it was the latter, there was a good chance this hidden space was situated right beneath our feet. Since no stairs leading downward were in sight, I decided to employ a bit of magic.

“Black Mist 2nd Form: Spatial Transference.”

With the incantation, the mist that rose enveloped my entire body. Merged with the mist, my body naturally sank through the floor, descending downwards. After dropping about 2 meters, I entered a new space filled with stale air that irritated my throat.

-Click-

The moment I landed, the mist dissipated instantly. In the pitch darkness where not a single ray of light penetrated, I manifested mana at my fingertips and applied it to my eyes.

“Darkness Adaptation.”

Gently closing and reopening my eyes, my vision, previously swallowed by darkness, cleared up instantly. I got to my feet and began surveying my surroundings. The underground area was eerily silent. Rust-covered steel frames interspersed with large canvas covers resembled cages for beasts. Curiosity led me to peer inside one of the tents.

“.....”

Manacles lay carelessly within the empty cages, still retaining a hint of warmth. This indicated that people had been here just hours before. Out of caution, I inspected another.

“Ugh!”

The moment I lifted the tent, I was assaulted by the foul stench of decay; bodies that had long since started to rot hit me with a wave of revulsion, and I averted my gaze immediately. There was nothing more to see. This was a prison for slaves, likely all moved elsewhere in preparation for the auction. The bodies, deemed to have lost their value, were left to rot. Was it because it had been so long since I last undertook such work? I thought I had grown numb to these feelings, yet an unspeakable disgust surged within me.

[You seem to have mixed feelings?]

Ceyram seemed to pick up on my mood and asked with a sly smile.

“I still have a long way to go.”

I resolved to focus on the task at hand.

-Clank!

Just as I was about to move, the sound of a cage door opening abruptly made me hide.

-Creak-

From the darkness, a frail woman with long hair struggled to crawl out of the cage, a heavy shackle impeding her movement on one leg. Somehow, she had managed to open the jail cell.

“Ah, ah.....”

Even from a glance, I could see she was in dire condition, barely able to mutter groans of pain. Given her state, she wouldn't last long before being captured.

“My child... my child...”

It was more of a whimper than a whisper, but I heard it distinctly. A desperate call from a mother longing to reach out to her child.

In a bizarre space, the anguished cry of a ghost whispered and echoed like an echo.

-Thud!

At that moment, with a loud sound, a ray of light leaked from one side of the space.

Struggling to her feet, the woman, as if she had found a path to salvation, moved toward that place.

Of course, it was obvious that those who would appear from within that beam of light were not going to be her saviors.

“What, what is this?”

“Catch that woman!”

Sure enough, a group of men who had appeared from within the light crazily rushed out to capture her.

“Ah!”

Men mercilessly beat the woman's arm, which hardly had any strength left.

Tears of pain streamed down from her eyes.

“How on earth did she escape?”

“Is that really important right now? Zickerman himself will be coming soon!”

“Anyway, she’s not going to be sold as a product, is she? Just dispose of her now!”

They put the woman back into the prison, and without a second thought, they drew out their clubs from their belts.

Dispose...

One might think they were talking about taking out the trash. But then again, it’s not exactly an inaccurate description for people.

Maybe what I’m doing now is disposing of filth like them.

-Swish

With a resolved mind, I unsheathed Ceyram instantly.

With one step, the distance was halved,

With two steps, I had reached the front of the cage,

And with three steps, I was close enough to hear their heartbeats.

Three steps taken in the span of one second.

Feeling something was amiss, they naturally turned around, and at that moment,

-Slice

The neck of the man in the lead was cleanly cut.

“Eek...!”

She did not give them a chance to scream.

In the cell, whooshing through the air, five severed heads tumbled to the ground.

“Who, who...?”

The moment I gently raised her head and their eyes met, an involuntary smirk appeared on my face.

What a sight...

Swollen eyes, a crushed nose, teeth shattered into pieces.

One could wonder if she could even see with such a horribly disfigured face.

But to me, it was a familiar sight.

After all, I had turned all the garbage I dealt with into something like this.

“My child... my child...”

Even in the midst of this, her call for her child continued.

Granted, I had prolonged her life for now, but it didn't seem like it would last much longer.

If the exterior looked like that, the interior would be worse.

She was probably suffering from multiple incurable diseases already.

It wouldn't be surprising if she were to breathe her last at any moment.

-Clump, clump

In the midst of this, the sound of footsteps came from beyond the beam of light again.

This time, it was just one person.

Judging by the simplicity of the steps, he didn't seem like much of a threat.

“Ah...”

At the sound of another presence, the woman attempted to stand up again.

[Did she leave a gold mine with her child or something?]

Such was the great obsession that even the kerambit would be taken aback.

However, before she could even make her way out of the cage, the owner of the footsteps had already reached it.

“What is this?”

Shocked by the gruesome scene before him, the man immediately collapsed.

-Clunk

“...!”

At the same time, a golden box he was holding clattered loudly as it hit the floor.

“Aaaah!”

At that moment, the woman, who had been lying like a corpse, let out an inexplicable scream.

With a madness-filled gaze never seen before, she ran out as if possessed.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 45

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 45

Chapter 45: Purification Work (3)

“Get off! Get off me!” echoed the violent beating noise throughout the dungeon.

Zickerman ruthlessly trampled over the woman clinging to the box.

“You filthy thing! How dare you get in my way...!”

“Ah... Ahh!”

Despite the bone-crushing and gut-wrenching pain, she remained unwavering.

He had tried kicking her, even striking her with chains, but she showed no signs of letting go of the box.

Panting heavily as if drained, Zickerman eventually pulled a small dagger from his bosom.

“This is why scum like you can amount to nothing! You should’ve known your place instead of involving yourself in matters beyond your reach!”

-Slur

Realizing he couldn’t remove her with beatings alone, Zickerman aimed the dagger at the woman’s nape.

“Aren’t you lucky? Rather than growing up disgracefully under the likes of you, I am graciously helping you leave for a better place. You’ll be thanking me even in the afterlife!”

Zickerman, with a laugh tinged with madness, mercilessly brought the sword down.

-Swish

-Clink

However, what the dagger’s point met was not the woman but the dull metal floor of the box.

Feeling something was amiss, Zickerman, with trembling eyes, slowly looked at his right hand.

“Hyiiiiieek...!”

Blood gushed from his severed wrist. Before he could even scream, something blunt struck his vocal cords.

“Gurgh!”

Losing balance, his body tumbled forward.

“Zickerman Albas, one of the continental magnates and a significant power in the Ushif Empire...”

A young boy’s voice came from somewhere, an unfamiliar voice that surely didn’t exist in his memory.

“Through murder and threats, monopolizing the empire’s commerce, conducting bribes to silence the officials, and illegally operating slave markets prohibited by the empire...”

Those were the evils Zickerman had committed.

He wanted to speak, but only guttural moans emerged.

“Is that reason enough for death?”

Zickerman desperately shook his head summoning all his remaining strength.

However, the enigmatic voice continued without care.

“I’ll give you one minute...”

“...?”

“Just one minute. Spend it repenting for your misdeeds and wrongdoings. After one minute, the pain you feel now will completely vanish...”

Zickerman well understood the meaning of those words.

Once the minute passed, his life would be extinguished without mercy.

“But in that minute, no matter what happens, you shall not die. Of course, pains far worse than what you’re feeling now might be inflicted...”

The situation was beyond comprehension.

Despite his weakness, Zickerman managed to lift his head slightly.

“...?”

The enigmatic boy gazed down impassively.

But Zickerman immediately knew he was no ordinary boy.

'Mist...?'

In a moment of utter hopelessness, all that was left for him was the worst minute of his life that would feel the longest.

* * *

Was it luck?

Never did I imagine he would come to me willingly.

With the target right before my eyes, there was no need to waste time.

After allowing him his last moments of repentance, I immediately severed his heart and ended his life.

I stood up, turning my attention toward the woman.

"Huuuh..."

She was gravely injured but not yet dead.

Clinging to the box with yearning eyes, she caressed it incessantly. Perhaps the child she so desperately called for was inside the box?

I approached her.

"I'm sorry... truly sorry..."

Her frail voice and the tears streaming down her face revealed her intense emotions.

She was acutely aware her end was near.

Do I pity her?

Well?

To be honest, I've grown numb to it long ago.

When I first started this work, rage was all I knew as the world revealed its heinous side beyond the protection of the Duke's house.

Accustomed and desensitized to the world's cruel reality, before I knew it, my gaze and lips drew a straight, indifferent line.

Because too many like her have met with miserable ends.

This woman before me – she happened to catch my eye, nothing more, just another life passing through my hands.

“Please... my child...”

I was taken aback as she pushed the box towards me, a keepsake she seemingly would never let go of.

In an instant, when I hesitated, confused, looking into her eyes,

-Thud

Her face lifelessly hit the ground – drawing her last breath.

Her body would be left unattended, unnoticed by anyone.

I gently laid my hand over her head.

-Swish

Mist emanating from my hand wrapped around her body, enveloping it warmly. Soon enough, it turned to smoke and dissipated.

[Why not pray for her peaceful afterlife?]

“That might be too much...”

I couldn't guarantee that the other side was any better than this world.

My cleansing task complete, all that was left was to report back to my master.

[Are you leaving this behind?]

A trophy, though somewhat peculiar.

[Since outside, I've sensed a distinctive energy emanating from this box. That idiot mentioned a special item, could this be it?]

Zickerman, the target, held it, and the woman fought so desperately to protect it.

Ceyram felt a distinct energy too, so perhaps it contained the special item mentioned at the auction...

I reached out to uncover what lay within when suddenly –

-Writh

“...?!”

The box stirred unexpectedly.

“What’s going on?”

Clearly feeling something alive inside, I hesitated, wary of carelessly touching something mysterious.

[Is this... could it be...?]

Ceyram seemed just as surprised by the movement detected.

[Well, aren’t you opening it already?]

Regardless of how I felt, Ceyram urged me to open the box.

Alright, I’ll look, but could a real child be living in a box without air holes? What could it possibly contain?

-Thud

Upon lifting the golden lid, something wrapped in a vibrant cloth lay inside—slightly larger than a human head.

I cautiously unveiled the cloth, wondering if perhaps the relic was a Death Knight’s head or worse...

“...?”

[....?]

Both Ceyram and I were astonished.

The contents of the box were unlike any speculated item.

“An egg?”

An egg, it was. But this was no ordinary egg.

It shone with a brilliant luster – a white egg radiating an ethereal glow.

If it emitted such divinity, surely it must be...

[A Dragon’s egg?]

* * *

In my past life, I only once glimpsed a dragon’s egg.

I didn’t experience any particular fascination at the time;

merely a thought that it was a large and mystical egg.

Even such huge and mighty dragons start as embryos no different from a human’s, I had mused without much emotion.

And what about my sentiments upon this second sighting?

All other thoughts aside, just this one kept coming back to me:

Why is this here?

“It seems we underestimated this man Zickerman. Who would have imagined he planned to auction off a dragon’s egg?”

The master also appeared surprised, absentmindedly stroking her chin.

“Was there anything else?”

“There was nothing else of note.”

Nothing could stand out next to this egg.

“Hmm...”

Her gaze shifted sharply toward me.

“You seem quite composed, considering.”

“About the egg, you mean?”

“No, about killing Zickerman. That must be the first human you’ve killed with your own hands since joining the Mist, yet you appear so naturally unfazed.”

The master wore a strange smile, twisted between curiosity and approval.

I had nothing to say in return.

“Well then, our target Zickerman is dead, all the slaves at the other locations have been released, and we’ve accidentally secured the special item mentioned by Lord Aaer. You’ve done well, Siyan.”

A Mist’s mission only goes that far. Once the target is assassinated, the cleansing task ends, and it’s not our responsibility to care for the lives of the freed slaves. We are assassins, not saviors.

“What about the egg?”

“Why ask me?”

“Excuse me?”

“It’s your prize, so you should take responsibility. We have no authority over it!”

“ ... ”

I felt duped. It was only meant to be confirmed, not looted.

[Why not try raising it since it came to this?]

Now, this perverted magic sword was throwing out madness. Could the egg even be hatched?

For dragons born with immense lifespans, even the gestation periods match, much longer than any human’s life.

At the least, 50 to 100 years.

Moreover, I had no idea when this egg came into existence. If luck was poor, I might die without seeing even a single crack form. No matter how holy and noble a dragon's egg might be, for now, it's just a weighty stone.

"What do you know? Might it hatch sooner than expected, and one day it just "suddenly" hatches?"

[Yeah, maybe look forward to it when you're around a hundred? Kah kah kah!]

"..."

At this point, might as well just eat it. Containing the dragon's essence and blood, wouldn't consuming this egg be akin to feasting on a dragon's flesh? I immediately dismissed the ludicrous thought.

-Twinkle

As if the egg sensed my gaze, the immaculate shell gleamed with a light that was otherworldly.

* * *

"Master, what is this?"

"A dragon's egg."

"Excuse me?" Brian scratched his head as if hearing incorrectly.

"Leave it anywhere it's convenient. It's unlikely to break."

I handed Brian the egg that I had been holding.

"Ugh!"

Caught off guard by its weight, he staggered.

"Where did you get this...?"

"Just found it while out for a drink."

I might never see this egg hatch in my lifetime. Best to forget about it and focus on other matters.

Fresh from a shower and feeling revitalized, I was toweling off my hair when suddenly,

“Ma, Master...!”

Brian called out urgently, his voice fraught with panic. He hastily ran to me without waiting for me to approach.

“What’s wrong?!”

“It’s hatching!”

For a moment I doubted my ears.

“What?!”

“The egg is cracking! Just when I thought I saw a fissure. It’s shaking and breaking apart...!”

“The egg is hatching?”

Wasn’t there a long time until hatching?

I rushed to the living room with Brian to see for myself.

-Crack crackle!

It was true!

The egg wasn’t merely cracked, it was shaking violently as if struggling to emerge.

[What’s this? Is it really hatching?]

Even Ceyram, in a hurry, materialized beside me in her physical form.

She had not expected the hatching to happen so soon. “...!”

We all held our breaths, watching the egg. No one dared touch it, instead, only sweat poured down our faces.

-Crack... pop!

[A chick has come out!]

Finally breaking free of its shell, a sacred new life appeared.

With the cracking of the shell, a bright light shone forth, which gradually receded as time passed.

It seems regression truly brings the most unexpected experiences.

To witness the birth of a dragon...

“...?”

Abruptly, everyone tilted their heads, momentarily confused.

“Master... Is this truly a dragon?”

Two horns protruded above the forehead.

A set of wings spread from its back.

With a long tail dangling below, it was undoubtedly a dragon's body...

[What kind of dragon is this? It looks more human to me!]

Ceyram voiced the very thoughts I had been having.

The skin was devoid of scales, pure white.

Tiny, curled hands and feet.

A face that didn't seem out of place on a human.

It wasn't a dragon at all, but instead...

“A Draconian?”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 46

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 46

Chapter 46: The Half-Blood

There are myths in the continent about creatures that are half-human, half-beast.

A monster, half human and half beast, born from the union of a human and a non-human creature.

In other words, a unique existence born with the characteristics of both sides.

But conversely, it can be said to be an existence that is rejected for not fitting into either side.

Let me explain more logically why they are inevitably shunned.

You are human.

You are human but have a special power to transform into a dog.

Even though you can transform into a dog, would you mate with one?

No matter how much someone loves and cherishes dogs, it is only as a human loving a pet, not as an object of sexual desire.

The same goes for not just dogs but also cats, cows, chickens, etc.

Unless one is mentally disturbed, no one would commit such madness.

When even humans think this way, what about our almighty race, the dragons?

They disdain humans to the point of considering them less significant than the dirt beneath their claws.

For such a race to share an intimate moment with a human and conceive a child.

(By the way, dragons can transform into humans.)

Even a passing dog would bark in disbelief at such an absurd notion.

But that absurd event was now unfolding... right in front of me.

The child shook her head in refusal and brushed off the fragments from her hair.

Silence filled the unfamiliar space while her bright, wandering eyes looked around.

From head to toe, I scrutinized the child.

Horns, wings, and a tail that a human couldn't possess.

And, long pink hair that reached down to her hips.

Moreover, her gender... she was a girl.

Her wandering eyes finally settled on us.

We were all startled, without saying a word, and simply accepted her clear gaze.

For some reason, I felt she was especially looking at me.

Then, as if she had drilled into me with her gaze, she suddenly started crawling towards me.

What, is a newborn already crawling around?

I didn't know if this child was special or if it was the fast growth due to dragon's blood, but she was crawling directly towards me with a straightforward gaze.

Seeing this, Brian and Ceyram moved discreetly to the side.

At an arm's reach, the child looked at my flustered face with puzzlement and then smiled.

"Papa!"

For a moment, I was so stunned that I blinked in disbelief.

My mind went blank, and I couldn't think of anything.

Ceyram's laughter broke the silence.

[Ha ha ha! Papa! Really, our master who is only eleven years old has become a father! Kyahahaha!]

Brian, too, couldn't hide his laughter and chuckled softly.

For a moment, I considered silencing those mouths with magic or a cursed sword...

But looking into her pure and shining eyes, I couldn't bring myself to exert any force.

The child tilted her head as if wondering what the problem was.

* * *

In my previous life, I never married.

Not having married, I also never had the chance to have children.

So when I heard a newborn calling me 'Papa' for the first time, I had no idea how to respond.

"Truly, you live and you learn. To think I would ever see the hybrid offspring of a dragon and a human..."

Silica commented with interest as she observed the child.

"Putting everything aside, why does she call me 'Papa'?"

"It must be the effect of imprinting," Brian hesitantly offered.

"Imprinting?"

"All creatures, upon being born, naturally recognize the first living being they see as a figure to rely on. Since the young lady here saw you first after hatching, she may have naturally recognized you as family, but..."

"You seem quite knowledgeable?"

“Well, when I was with Belias, I had some experience raising livestock...”

An experience in raising, I see.

“That does seem plausible. The child doesn’t even know what existence she is right now. She just hatched and saw Sir Sian first, so we can conclude that’s it.”

It was so clear that I was left speechless.

Oblivious to my inner turmoil, the daring young half-dragon had already nestled into my lap, taking sweet slumber.

She woke from her sleep and sat up, rubbing her eyes.

“Papa, I’m hungry.”

I was no longer surprised.

So, a child that has barely been born for two hours starts crawling and even begins to speak clearly?

And now before you know it, she’ll just start walking...

Before I could even finish that thought, the child stood up and walked steadily towards the kitchen.

[The dragon’s blood really seems to speed up her growth, doesn’t it?]

She naturally sat down at the dining table and began eating the prepared food.

“Her appetite seems quite good...”

The dishes for at least two adult men were quickly emptied in the blink of an eye.

She belched in satisfaction, showing off her belly with joy, and then became sleepy, soon falling asleep.

“She’s just like a newborn, eating and sleeping,” I muttered.

My head was a whirl of confusion.

I thought she would just remain a rock until death.

Suddenly born out of nowhere, calling me 'Papa' to boot.

What am I supposed to do with this little one?

Looking back, I now understood why that woman at the slave market was obsessed with the egg.

She must have been this child's mother.

Meaning that woman was the one who had shared a passionate moment with a nameless dragon...

In the end, she entrusted her child to me, offering the egg as a pretext.

What does she expect me to be? A foster parent for a half-dragon?

"What does Sir Sian want to do with this child?"

The head of the household asked me, apparently noticing my complex feelings.

"Honestly, I'm not sure."

"I'm not trying to rush a decision, but for now, the child cannot leave the dormitory. If her existence becomes known, the Academy will be turned upside down. She'll be captured immediately, and Sir Sian's safety will also be endangered."

Not just for me, but it could also harm Brian and the head of household.

"For a while, she might be able to stay here, being a newborn. But once she grows into a toddler, she might begin to showcase a true dragon's talents. Depending on how potent that is, at the very least, the headmaster-level figures are bound to notice. That there's a dragon within the Academy..."

Perhaps, using my dark attribute magic, I might manage to cope until she reaches the vicinity of the Royal Hall.

The problem is, if people beyond a certain level of magic proficiency come by, they will immediately notice.

The most dangerous one would indeed be the headmaster.

“Also, as you know, dragons basically belittle humans. This half-dragon existence might be a deeply humiliating presence for them. They may want to eliminate her from this world... so much so...”

I know.

If her existence became known to the dragons as well, they would stop at nothing to eliminate her.

They’d likely even seek to kill anyone associated with her.

“But there’s also potential merit. Having the traits of both humans and dragons, the possibilities for her development are boundless. The organization could raise her, or Sir Sian could guide her growth in any desired direction. Whatever happens, she’s bound to exhibit extraordinary growth.”

The desired direction of growth...

As I’ve said before, I’ve neither raised a child nor trained a disciple.

I can’t guarantee whether it would end up good or bad, no matter the direction I take.

[Why? I think she’s worth raising. Right now, she may just be a hatchling, but if she grows, turning into a full dragon is also possible, right? Then she could fly, which would be great!]

I’m not sure what that would mean.

First of all, I have no idea how long it will take for this child to reach adulthood.

Moreover, I do not really desire conspicuous acts like dragon riding.

To be honest, from what I’ve seen so far, there seems to be no reason to adopt this child.

Above all, I’m not prepared to pursue an uncertain future by shouldering such great risks.

“Um... Young master? If you are worried about raising her...”

Brian, who had been quietly listening, suddenly raised his hand and spoke up.

“I believe I could take on the responsibility of raising her as long as we’re within these walls.”

In other words, he offered to be a nanny.

“Raising pets is a different feeling, wouldn’t you say?”

“It’s fine. After all, that child is still a human, isn’t she? I had a lot of younger siblings at home, and I’ve raised babies from newborns. I can’t promise to raise her perfectly, but at least I can ensure the young master’s daily life isn’t disturbed.”

A human...

Yes, that child is also a human after all.

Born from a human mother, unquestionably human.

Admittedly, this harsh world will not see her for either side...

“I’ve said before, we have no authority over the child. It will be entirely up to Sir Sian’s decision.”

As when with the egg, the head of the household stated they would not get involved.

I approached the child, who was sleeping peacefully as if being guided by some mysterious force.

Her innocent sleeping face.

Although not a drop of blood between us was shared, she recognized me as family the moment she was born.

What would happen to her if I abandoned her?

She’d be entirely rejected by the world without any affection.

I can assure that she wouldn’t integrate into any group, either humans or dragons.

In that case, maybe it would be better to spare her from any pain right here and now?

Yeah, that might be better.

Rather than suffering in this indifferent world, it might be better to shorten this life quickly and let her live a full next life for her own sake.

As I decided, I felt a murderous intent in my eyes.

Those around me seemed to have noticed what I was about to do.

However, no one took action.

They knew that, at the end of the day, the act was my responsibility.

Carefully, I reached for her neck to ensure she wouldn't wake.

Not rough and coarse but soft and delicate to the touch.

With this, it wouldn't take much power to simply snap her neck.

I felt no remorse.

I've said over and over, this is all for the child's sake.

To ease her pain in this cruel world ahead of time was a gesture of care...

Just as I was about to exert force, she awoke from her sleep.

She looked earnestly into my eyes, blinking.

At that moment, no more strength would flow into my hand.

In fact, it was trembling.

What is this?

Am I hesitating?

I, an assassin?

While I hesitated for 10 seconds, the child looked at me once more and smiled brightly.

“Papa!”

And she naturally embraced me.

The child in my arms fell asleep again shortly after.

I could feel it.

The beat of her heart against my own skin...

“Yo-Young master?”

For the first time, combining my past and present lives, a new emotion took over my mind.

How should I express it? I became indifferent to the potential consequences of what may follow.

A vague idea blossomed – whatever happens, I would just handle it.

Lifting the child with ease, I looked at them and calmly declared.

“Let’s raise her.”

(To be continued)

Editor’s musings:

How to raise a draconian daughter???

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 47

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 47

Chapter 47: Duel (1)

In the eastern district of Belias, the mansion of the Duke Vert's family.

Margaret Erzes, the mistress of the mansion, walked the corridors with an exceptionally anxious expression.

“.....”

Hands and feet trembling like aspen leaves.

Lips quivering as if covered in frost.

She seemed like a sinner hiding a grievous wrongdoing.

“Mother?”

“Huh!”

The unexpected touch of a stranger made her body ripple like a wave.

It was the firstborn son of the house, Aschel.

“Are you alright? You look very pale.”

Margaret, reassured by Aschel's presence, calmed her startled heart.

“Ah, ah... no. I, I'm fine, really fine.....”

Aschel, with a gentle smile, reassured her by taking her hand.

“Please tell me if there's anything troubling you, Mother. As your son, I will do everything within my power to assist you.”

“Tha-thank you, Aschel.....”

Although he was not her biological son, he was by far the most charming child in the house.

As if enchanted by his gaze, Margaret cautiously caressed Aschel's cheek.

After she departed, Aschel, now alone, was approached by the head retainer, Kellin.

“Bodies were discovered in the mountains near Belias. All of them belonged to knights of our fiefdom.”

“How many were there?”

“Six bodies were found in total. However, the Duchess had dispatched seven men, so one is presumed missing. Furthermore...”

Kellin hesitated for a moment.

“Continue, don’t stop now.”

“Well, amongst the party led by the youngest master to Rowen, we confirmed there was a knight from our fiefdom.....”

Aschel turned his head towards Kellin without a word.

“It is assumed that the missing knight might have been him.....”

The Duchess’s failed assassination plot against Sian Vert.

However, the plan ended in failure, and Sian safely enrolled in the academy.

Upon discovering this truth, the Duchess desperately covered it up, but Aschel, who had detected her unease, came to know of these facts.

Despite the gravity of the report, Aschel laughed heartily.

“How amusing. So you’re telling me, one of the knights who went to assassinate my brother might have ended up enrolling in the academy with him?”

“Yes.....”

Aschel’s maniacal laughter continued.

Kellin waited silently for his laughter to subside.

When it came to a sudden halt, Aschel asked with a composure in his tone.

“What happened to the agents we dispatched?”

“That, well.....”

It was the question Kellin least wanted to answer.

“The last contact indicated they had been given residence in the Royal House after academy entry, but since then there’s been no further communication.....”

“No communication?”

“Yes! So I dispatched additional informants, but there’s been no news from them either to this day.....”

In fact, Kellin had sent a total of three additional informants after the initial spy had infiltrated the academy, but after notifying they had arrived, they vanished without a trace.

It was enough to drive him to madness.

He couldn’t help but wonder if they were cutting their ties or if something more sinister was at play.

“.....”

Aschel turned away, silent.

Perhaps Kellin felt he had let down his master?

Disheartened, Kellin clenched his fists tightly.

“I shall go myself.”

“.....”

“It won’t take long. I’ll just ascertain what’s happening around the youngest master and promptly return. I assure you, I will not lose contact!”

Kellin spoke with confidence, then bowed his head towards Aschel.

“Look at me, Kellin.”

Aschel, with a bright smile, said.

“Your misguided concern leaves you no need to struggle so. Let us put aside matters regarding my brother for now. You’ve worked hard thus far.”

Though it seemed like a gesture of gratitude, Kellin did not take it that way. He knew his master well.

Once Aschel set his mind to something, he would see it through to the end. For him to suddenly give up on a task?

Aschel's message was clear.

He no longer wanted Kellin to handle matters concerning Sian.

To Kellin, such disgrace was unbearable.

"I pledged to serve you for life, Master Aschel! This matter is not a burden for me. Please, allow me to go to Rowen!"

With the resolve akin to facing death, Kellin conveyed his sincerity to his master.

The response he received was Aschel's warm laughter.

"Haha. As expected, I cannot prevail against you, honored Kellin. Very well, your wishes shall be respected. But make haste. I have need of you as well."

"I will follow Master Aschel's command!"

Kellin's face spread with a smile, feeling validated.

"....."

In contrast, Aschel's expression, as he turned away, was utterly emotionless.

* * *

"Papa, open this for me!"

She handed over a glass jar filled with candies, each as big as an eyeball.

It seemed she was too young to have the strength to open the lid.

"Do you even have teeth for sweets?"

“Yep! Look, my teeth are all grown!”

She widely opened her mouth, proudly showing off her newly sprouted white teeth.

With incisors and molars fully grown, there were even sharp canines characteristic of a dragon.

I easily opened the lid and handed the jar back to her.

“Make sure to brush after eating. Otherwise, your teeth will rot.”

“Yep, got it!”

She cheerfully stuffed a handful of candies into her mouth.

[Father of the year, are we?]

Ceyram remarked, half teasingly.

“Kids are always like that.”

[To an observer, they’d think you’re an old man who’s lived 40 years or more.]

I didn’t deny it given that it wasn’t inaccurate.

The little draconian had been with me for a week already.

In that brief period, she displayed a terrifying rate of growth.

From birth, she climbed, walked, and spoke immediately,

and her stature had grown more than twice in size.

What’s more, she adapted remarkably quickly to the sprawling dorms, already confidently navigating them as if it was her own home.

[Draconian growth is known to be rapid, but she might even outpace you at this rate.]

“Growing quickly is a good thing.”

[Is that so? You’re aware of what that implies, right?]

I was fully aware.

It meant that her time with me was growing ever shorter.

But conversely, it also meant she'd reach a day when she could stand on her own sooner.

In the end, she would live hundreds of years longer than me.

The sooner she adapted to this world, the more capable she'd become to live on her own.

Well, for now, she's happily sucking on candy with innocent joy.

"I'm back, sir."

Brian returned from shopping for groceries, with the head of the dormitory at his side.

"What brings you here on a day without classes?"

She wore an unusually frustrated expression.

"Well done. You've caused quite a stir, student Sian."

"What kind of trouble do you mean?"

Suddenly accused of causing trouble, I was perplexed.

She silently handed me a piece of paper.

'Approval for Duel' was written boldly at the center of it.

The moment I saw the words, I immediately understood the situation.

That muscle-brained prince actually got approval for a duel.

"How could you even think of this? Instead of remaining unobtrusive, you arranged a duel with the Sand Prince? The rumors are already flying around the academy!"

"He initiated the request..."

“That’s not the point! This duel is the first face-off between freshmen and it’s attracted a lot of attention! The key academy officials will all be present, even the chancellor is rumored to be attending!”

[What are they all lacking in things to do? What’s so interesting about eleven-year-old freshmen swinging at each other?]

Ceyram shook his head, unable to fathom.

Indeed, her point wasn’t invalid.

Duels to measure student abilities were common in the academy, and it could happen daily as long as both parties agreed.

Though it might be odd to say out of my own mouth, I had become quite a celebrity at this academy.

Noble origins as a duke,

Glamorous past on the battlefield,

Unprecedented attribute scores and physical grades at the academy.

Now, the moment had come for me to show my abilities for the first time.

It was inevitable I would garner attention.

And against the Prince of Sand? The case spoke for itself.

I shifted my gaze and asked frankly.

“So when is this duel set to happen?”

“In two hours.”

“.....?”

That’s unexpectedly soon.

– Bang, bang, bang.

A loud knocking erupted from the door.

There wasn't a need to check; It was fairly obvious who it could be.

"Sian Vert! I have secured approval for our duel as you requested! Why wait? Come forth and show your power!"

A headache began to surge.

* * *

The rooftop of the academy's main building, transformed into a magical dueling arena.

Large enough to accommodate a thousand students.

Students, from all grades and genders, huddled together.

It was unusually crowded; not a single seat was empty compared to the norm.

"Princess, this way."

Resmus, having secured a spot, guided Arin to her seat.

"Thanks, Resmus!"

Once seated, Arin slowly scanned the surroundings.

Freshmen, upperclassmen, a diverse group of students had gathered.

Instructors responsible for lectures and high-ranking researchers were present.

Even Kundle, the head chancellor of the academy, was there.

The upcoming duel between the two students had evidently piqued significant interest.

"Princess, have you ever seen Sir Sian fight?"

Resmus inquired to the somewhat distracted girl.

"Huh? No, I've never had the chance. Now that I think about it, there was never an opportunity to see him in action. We met in a frontline wartime zone, after all."

Arin suddenly recalled the time when Sian volunteered as a decoy when they fled the military camp to save her.

His audacity in the face of dire beasts, showing no sign of fear or cowardice.

Thinking back, he had never exhibited fear or dread from the very beginning.

“That’s why I don’t know much! We’ll see today. We’ll find out just how powerful he is!”

“Indeed.”

Resmus seemed somewhat disappointed with his reply.

“What do you think?” Arin prodded.

“Pardon?”

“It’s okay. It’s just between us. Who do you think will win today’s duel, Resmus?”

He hesitated briefly before cautiously answering.

“While I’ve never directly observed Sethra, I can’t make claims without knowledge... but as far as freshmen go, I believe there is no one who could best Sian.”

His response was bold.

Taken aback, Arin asked again.

“Why, why do you think that?”

“From the moment I first saw him in the park, I felt it. It’s hard to describe, but... not like a swordsman or a warrior, but more like a ruthless predator. As if I was facing an assassin who could easily take my life right here, right now...”

“That, that serious?”

“Yes, but this is solely my opinion! Please, take it lightly!”

Resmus quickly waved his hands, urging her to dismiss the thought.

Shortly after, instructors appeared at the center of the dueling arena to create a massive magic circle.

-Woosh

A four-star magic barrier suitable for the students' abilities was erected.

Soon after, the two contenders rose from their seats on either side of the arena and confidently walked towards the center.

A strange tension filled the air.

(To be continued in the next part)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 48

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 48

Chapter 48: Sparring (2)

As I mentioned before, this sparring match is quite interesting.

It's a duel between two students whose attendance rates are almost zero since the semester began.

In other words, it is a spar between those who haven't been influenced by the academy in the slightest—purely unlearned students.

How dare these no-show students organize their own sparring matches?

Honestly, even the instructors and staff can't complain, even if they found it disagreeable.

But look at the people gathered around.

Students and instructors alike, the audience fills the sparring grounds.

Even in the VIP seats, the headmaster of the academy, Condor Quizzel, is present.

That's how much the academy is anticipating this duel.

Considering that, I can't help but let out a slight chuckle.

Am I supposed to meet their expectations?

"I've been waiting for this moment, Sian Vert! You must feel the same, right?"

Seth, facing me, spoke with a joyous expression.

I simply nodded noncommittally.

"I initially wanted to request a hand-to-hand combat spar, but, unfortunately, I was told that here only swordsmanship and magic duels are allowed. Do you plan to use magic?"

"If you're not using it, then there's no need for me to do so, either."

Even with my indifferent reply, he laughed heartily.

"Hahaha! That's what I like to hear, Sian Vert! Okay then, we'll just fight with our swords, no magic involved!"

-Slring

He drew the curved sword at his waist.

Its blade arced like a crescent moon.

Though it resembled the scimitar used by the Mist members, it was longer and its tip less pointed.

In response, I also drew my sword.

Since I couldn't use my magic sword in front of everyone, I had to use a regular long sword this time.

As I've explained before, the purpose of a sword-duel is to measure each other's skills and establish superiority.

The criterion for superiority is to target the opponent's neck with a sword.

For me, it was the first duel in a year.

-Dang Dang Dang

With the sound of the bell indicating the start of the duel, Seth kicked off the ground and rushed forward.

-Thump Thump

Faster than expected.

If his physicality is combined with strength and speed, his sword strikes would be inescapable even if blocked.

“Haat!”

Intent on splitting me in half, he swung his sword without hesitation.

Taking it head-on would likely cost me my weapon and potentially break my bones.

But that was never my plan.

-Slring

I took Seth’s full force head-on.

His curved sword began to slide away from my blade, and soon the edges of our swords crossed and slid apart.

“.....!”

An assassin doesn’t need brute strength but precision and refinement.

Such a simple physical difference was a lightweight element for me, something that didn’t require magic or secret techniques to overcome.

“Whoa!”

Seth lost his balance as his weight shifted forward when his attack missed its mark.

Not missing the opportunity, I swung my sword at his exposed back.

-Chang!

It seems the nickname “Prince of Sand” wasn’t for nothing.

Most would have lost their weapon and opened their neck by now.

However, in the brink of disaster, Seth twisted his waist with the flexibility of folding paper, barely parrying my sword.

-Whoosh!

Then, he quickly regained his posture and swung his sword at me once more.

A slight dodge, and Seth hurriedly created distance between us.

It was a situation that could have ended in a single move, and his expression was clearly flustered.

“Ha!”

He gave off a short laugh and started to loosen his body.

-Crack Crack

The sound of his bones echoed ominously throughout the sparring grounds.

Taking a different grip on his sword, he rushed at me again.

-Swat!

This time, though, he didn’t come recklessly.

Using the reach of his curved sword, he maintained a distance, unleashing a series of strikes from a range that didn’t allow for counterattack.

-Chang Chang Chang

The sound of clashing swords was all that could be heard in the hall.

Seth continued a relentless offense, but sadly, none of his strikes were effective.

He seemed to realize this too, as his once confident face began to twist.

-Slring

The slash aimed at me diagonally once again slid off my blade.

“A second time won’t work!”

As if he anticipated it, Seth changed the trajectory of his blade with a quick step.

Initially swinging from bottom to top, the sword suddenly shifted into a thrust toward my neck.

-Swish

I stepped aside with a concise movement, avoiding the blade and then...

-Clang!

I aimed my sword at the perplexed Seth’s neck.

His curved sword had already slipped from his hand and was rolling on the ground.

“Ha ha.....”

Seth let out a sound that was somewhere between a laugh and a sigh.

The duel was over.

What remained was for him to fully accept his defeat.

Those with high self-esteem typically also have strong pride, and they can hardly accept the fact that they lost.

This muscular friend here probably assumed winning was as natural as eating.

Whatever was on his mind, he simply twitched his large frame without a word.

I withdrew my sword and stepped back a bit.

“Indeed, you’re remarkable, Sian Vert. I acknowledge my defeat.”

Contrary to my expectations, he accepted the loss with sportsmanship.

“It’s clear that in terms of swordsmanship, you’re on a higher plane than me. For now, it seems I can’t beat you.”

In truth, apart from meeting the wrong opponent, his sword skills were far from ordinary.

Having the insight to effectively use his natural strength, rather than simply overwhelming his opponent with it, was not a simple feat for an eleven-year-old boy.

Was he more open-minded than I thought?

With a stern expression, Seth picked up his blade and said,

“I don’t like to be clingy, but I don’t feel like ending it here. Would you allow me another challenge if it’s alright?”

Is that it? He doesn’t think it’s over with just one attempt?

Well, it’s certainly better than him whining over failure to accept his defeat.

I nodded in agreement, indicating my acceptance.

-Ching clang!

“.....?”

Why is he throwing his sword away?

I thought it meant he wanted another challenge with the sword, but apparently not.

Mana surged from his body, and along with it, a storm of sand began to rise.

“What is this about?”

“This much is certain, I must beat you by any means, Sian Vert! I’ll pour all of my power into this, so I expect you to do the same!”

For a moment, I considered myself foolish for thinking he could remain cool.

It turns out he’s an incredibly sore loser.

* * *

The headmaster, Condor Quizzel, who was watching the duel from the VIP seats, thought the two students below were quite audacious.

The academy's duels aim to assess the students' skills, mainly through the use of magic.

The physical grades of Sian and Seth were S and A, respectively—undeniably the top amongst the new students.

However, the academy primarily pursues the advancement of magic.

Physical grade? It matters, of course.

But frankly, physical grade essentially supports one in wielding higher-order magic.

If you were to ask which is more important, the physical grade or magic grade, the answer would undoubtedly favor magic, a hundred out of a hundred times.

Seth Shahar Khan's magic grade was three stars, definitely among the best of the new students.

In contrast, Sian Vert's magic grade was one star.

Reality dictates that if they were to fight with magic, there wouldn't be much of a match to begin with.

But look at their demeanor.

There's no hint they're going to use magic, just pure swordplay.

'Have they made some sort of compromise?'

It's true that Seth, who had applied for the duel, initially wanted a hand-to-hand combat duel, so it seemed they both wanted to base the match on their physical grades from the start.

-Chang Chang Chang

The sweeping sound echoed through the hall like a majestic harmony.

Seth was efficiently applying his strength to the long reach of his curved sword—overwhelming, forceful strikes.

Any ordinary student would likely lose their grip on their weapon at the first strike.

But watch how Sian moves.

He isn't exerting the strength befitting his S-grade class.

Just the force you'd expect from an eleven-year-old boy.

With that level of strength, he's been deflecting all of Seth's heavy blows.

With movements precise and sharp enough to rival those of a senior knight.

The headmaster aside, the expressions of the swordsmanship instructors watching the duel were particularly noteworthy.

-Clang!

It was over.

Deflecting even the most critical move, Sian knocked Seth's sword away and aimed his own at the opponent's neck.

Although the outcome was somewhat anticlimactic, the process was not.

Meanwhile, Cirika, who arrived at the dueling grounds somewhat late, quickly took her seat in the stands.

"It's unusual for you to be late for a duel."

"I apologize! I had some matters to attend to and was delayed. How did the duel go?"

"It's over. Although it was a swordfight, that student named Sian practically dominated."

"I see."

The headmaster glanced at her face.

Her stoic demeanor showed no sign of agitation or disturbance.

-Whoooooosh!

Just then, a strong wind filled the dueling ground as a surge of mana spread out.

“That student! What is he doing...?”

The swirling wind was laden with thick sand grains.

“Sand Hurricane!”

Accompanying the incantation, Seth generated a powerful whirlwind starting from beneath his feet.

The mixing of sand made for a chilling sight, and the whirlwind grew in size.

But the trouble was not the sandstorm itself, but the mana detected within it.

“That Seth student had a three-star magic grade, correct?”

“Yes, that’s right. But this energy I’m feeling now...”

-Thud!

Suddenly, there was a loud noise from the magical barrier.

The magic barrier enveloping the dueling ground was four stars in strength.

It was installed considering the magic grades of the students, but the current state of the barrier was critically unstable.

In other words, Seth was now deploying magical energy exceeding the barrier’s grade.

“Huh, he’s surpassed his own magic grade... While it’s certainly extraordinary to pour all his efforts in, this is indeed a rare caliber.”

With interest, the headmaster stroked his chin and smiled.

“This is not the time to smile, isn’t it? If things go wrong, the barrier might...”

-Crack

Sure enough, the magic barrier soon began to fracture.

Yet Seth, unconcerned, enveloped himself in the sandstorm and charged towards Sian at full speed.

“Reinforce the barrier!”

Startled instructors quickly rushed out to the dueling ground to reconstruct the barrier, but in that instant,

-WHOOOSH!

A mysterious black sphere appeared in Sian’s direction.

“.....!”

The black sphere manifested and began to absorb Seth’s sandstorm.

The storm, threatening to engulf everything, gradually lost its strength and dissipated, along with the mana energy.

“The Sphere of Nothingness?”

Condor’s eyes flashed briefly.

He knew exactly what that power was.

Dark attribute magic fundamentally lacks lethality.

It cannot burn like fire, sweep away like water, or shatter like lightning.

This was also the primary reason why dark attribute magic was not well received in the continent.

But lack of lethality doesn’t mean it’s not threatening.

After all, darkness is synonymously referred to as ‘nothingness’ (無)—an attribute with the power to nullify all things that exist.

The Sphere of Nothingness.

A unique spell of dark attribute magic.

There's no need for a complex explanation; it simply nullifies all magic present before it.

If one's attribute aligns, even a one-star mage can perform such a simple spell.

However, to be effective, one always needs to be higher in magical prowess than their opponent.

What's happening in front of us now?

Sian, who's merely a one-star mage, has just nullified Seth's magic, which momentarily soared to a four-star level.

“.....”

In the dueling ground where the storm raged, only a silent stillness remained.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 49: An Interview (1)

To be honest, I was a bit surprised. The magic rank of Seth, known for his elemental swordsmanship, was three stars. Among this year's freshman class, his rank was unquestionably the highest. Considering his abilities, the instructors had installed a magic barrier of four-star strength, one grade higher. But look at the state of the barrier now. It is so fragile that it seems it could break with a mere touch. For a moment, he displayed a realm of transcendence that exceeded his own magic rank. If my Sphere of Nothingness had been any slower, there might have been damage to the arena as well.

“.....”

Seth's face was unexpectedly devoid of thought. Drained of every ounce of strength, it would have been a feat for him to even stand, let alone have any mana left.

He called out my name, barely able to catch his breath.

“A complete defeat on my part.”

His admission was impressively cool. Surely he wouldn't persist in such a state.

“Swordsmanship, magic... I lost in both of the areas where I thought myself most confident. And so utterly powerlessly...”

“Take this as consolation or not, but you were amazing too. For a moment, you transcended your own magical rank, right?”

“That's not even close to consoling! You, on the other hand, are perfectly fine unlike me!”

Hm, that's true. Perhaps I should have pretended to be a bit more out of breath.

“This defeat is a first for me. But thanks to it, I've realized how much I have yet to learn! My desire to train is surging uncontrollably!”

He seemed ready to retreat to a mountain cave for solitary training. Given his state, he didn't seem likely to show up for class for a while.

“I don't know when, but I will challenge you again! You'll accept again then, won't you, Sian Vert?”

“Well, if the opportunity arises...”

Seth laughed heartily, satisfied.

“Excellent! But it won't take long! I'll train with fierce dedication and I will definitely...”

-Thump!

It was nothing. The guy who had been incessantly talking to himself finally collapsed from exhaustion. The waiting instructors hastily rushed over and took him to the infirmary.

“Sparring is over! The winner is Sian Vert!”

Despite the announcement of the victor, only a solemn silence filled the sparring ground. Not even a smattering of applause, just a pathetic murmur here and there.

“What’s that about? Wasn’t his magic rank supposed to be just one star? And his attribute, a useless darkness?”

“The Sand Prince turned out to be nothing special. All that and defeated by a mere one-star...”

“Maybe he learned some tricks from those frontline knights?”

“Look at that nonchalant face of his! Really irksome...”

Of course, nobles filled with envy and jealousy wouldn’t think of me fondly. But why would I care for the opinion of swine?

Not that there were only swine present. Among the onlookers—upperclassmen, instructors, researchers, and even the head of the house sitting in the special seats—doubt filled every gaze.

“A one-star? He seems to be at least a four-star.”

“Is this what being a scion of the house of Vert entails? Not a single ordinary one in that family...”

“To master the Sphere of Nothingness at his age... despite being a darkness attribute, his potential is intriguing.”

Among them, the gaze of our head, no, Instructor Silica, was the most noteworthy. It almost seemed to say out loud, “Was it really necessary to show off like that, Sian Vert?”

And then there was another...

Condor Quizzel, the chief administrator of the Royal Academy, watched me with a steely gaze unlike any other, hard to decipher.

Staying here any longer wouldn’t do any good.

Ignoring the many stares, I left the arena.

* * *

“My lord, this is...”

“What’s this?”

While I was resting on the sofa, Brian handed me something.

It was a thin envelope with a red background and the academy’s emblem on it.

“I’m not quite sure. Lady Silica said she couldn’t give it directly to you and handed it to me to ensure it reaches you...”

I immediately opened the envelope to see its contents.

“...A warning?”

Not exactly a welcome item to receive.

“This is quite a disappointing prize for a sparring victory.”

Did I expect too much hoping for a surprise party invitation?

“Papa! What’s a warning?”

Our little one asked with pure eyes, her cheeks puffed with candy like a hamster.

“Well... simply put, if we don’t do as they say, they’ll kick us out of here.”

“So what will we do? Will we end up on the streets?”

“...Where did you learn such a thing?”

Has she been exploring the city in my absence?

But honestly, the current situation wasn’t much different from what I explained to our little one. The warning informed me that continuous absence from classes would lead to further warnings and sanctions, and if I continued to show a lack of compliance, I could be expelled from the Royal residence, and in the worst case, expelled from the academy.

Sooner or later, this moment was expected. What concerned me was not that the warning came from the academy's administrative department, but from someone higher up.

-Chancellor Condor Quizzel-

There it was, the name written clearly under the warning letter. The top authority of the academy had now personally sent a warning to a mere freshman.

The head had told me that I was being watched, but it seems that the sparring from two days ago heightened their attention.

"Then shall we move to a different place?"

"No, not yet. We need to be here until our little one grows up."

I gently stroked her head as I spoke.

Still, it's not like I'd just obediently start attending classes. In essence, this warning was like a love call from the chancellor, an invitation to come and see him if I had any complaints.

It seems I'll need to make a deal with the head of the academy if I want to continue wandering its premises freely.

"Sir, shouldn't you also think of a name for her?" Brian suddenly spoke up.

"Huh?"

"Well, it might be good for her emotions. And we can't keep calling her 'little one'..."

It seems that not having an actual name was somewhat troubling for Brian. I hadn't avoided choosing a name on purpose—it was just that I couldn't think of a good one.

Dragons, obsessed with their outer appearance, also insisted on grand names. I remembered meeting a dragon in my past life whose name was 'Marian Del Ancart Luscal Dia Postarn', and even that was considered short by dragon standards.

I don't understand why they need such needlessly long names. Their tradition had been going on for thousands of years; who was I to question it?

But then again, this child wasn't obliged to follow their customs. Being half human, she could choose her own name.

"What you want is the most important," I had told her.

I bent down to look her in the eyes and asked, "Little one, do you have a name you'd like?"

"Name?"

"Yes, a name. How would you like us to call you?"

After gulping down her candy and pondering for a bit, she smiled brightly and said, "Nana!"

"Nana?"

It was easy enough to say and fairly cute.

"Yes! I want to be called 'Nana Vert', with Papa's last name! Is that okay?"

"Um... sure, why not..."

I feel like she pulled a fast one on me there.

When did she learn my last name?

Nonetheless, Nana continued munching on her candy with an innocent smile, carefree of any concerns.

* * *

Condor Quizzel, Chancellor of the Royal Academy. Mentor to [Emperor Dionne Severus](#) and subsequently ascending to become the emperor's father-in-law. After the death of Empress Diana Quizzel, he set aside his family responsibilities to dedicate himself solely to the role of academy chancellor.

Quizzel was also one of the few on the continent to have reached the grade of nine-star magic rank—a grand mage capable of wiping out a territory in the

blink of an eye if so desired. It was an unwise choice to mess with such an elderly man.

However, there was no particular connection between Quizzel and my past life. Perhaps my only personal experience with him was when he scolded me a bit.

Despite not exactly being boast-worthy, in my past life, I graduated from the academy ranked fifth overall. It was a deliberate choice, as I only achieved the scores I deemed necessary at the time.

(Had I wished, I could have been the valedictorian.)

Nevertheless, the chancellor invited me, an outstanding graduate, to his office. I was half-expecting him to scout me for some academy-related job.

But instead,

“You have been hiding your power within the academy,” he said.

I didn’t show it outwardly, but my heart sank at those words.

“You’re joining the Order of Light Knights? To follow in your exceptional brother’s footsteps? Doesn’t seem like the right path for you.”

When I asked if that was because I was a holder of the dark attribute, the chancellor laughed heartily and replied,

“Hahaha! So even you realize it doesn’t suit you? Let me give you some advice. If you go there, you will definitely not end up well. While you may consider it a trial, in the end, it will be a fruitless life for you.”

At the time, I ignored even divine advice, so such words were mere spiteful comments. Yet, looking back, he really hit the mark.

Indeed, his prediction came true, and I met the most miserable end imaginable in my previous life.

The irony is that while one can see the future of others so clearly, one’s own future remains unseen. Chancellor Quizzel was exactly like that, a seer who, despite witnessing a great deal, remained blind to his own destiny. Perhaps in many ways, he was similar to me.

Remembering those days only leaves me with a bitter smile.

The chancellery was located on the top floor of the main building. Given the late hour, the chancellor would likely be in his office. I saw no guards on patrol—perhaps they had ducked out for a snack—a thought interrupted.

In an instant, I was on the top floor of the main building, thirty paces from the chancellor's office. I could continue walking and reach it without issue.

However, I couldn't just proceed. An unfamiliar, menacing presence filled the entire floor. Not murderous intent, but rather an aversion to even approach a profoundly negative aura. No scent of blood or signs of life, just sporadic artificial mana energies scraping against the flesh.

A restricted barrier. With a vast amount of mana, a limited area was created where penetration was impossible. A magic barricade meant to induce an unbearable feeling of rejection the moment an intruder stepped inside, to prevent any approach.

If the mana presence had been normal, I might assume it was for security measures, but this was beyond that. At least eight- or nine-star grade, requiring the reach of a grand mage to manifest such overwhelming magical power.

There is only one person at the academy capable of such a feat...

Of course, Chancellor Quizzel.

I knew immediately that at this moment, he was testing me.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES:

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 50

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin Chapter 50

Chapter 50: Interview (2)

-Crash!

With a crisp sound, it rolled on the floor a couple of times.

If asked why I entered with such a commotion, it's because I came in through the window, not the front door.

Quickly raising my head, I caught sight of the chancellor sitting at the desk.

I stood up without much emotion and said calmly,

“[Sian Vert](#), a freshman at the Royal Academy. I've come to lodge a complaint with the chancellor.”

“.....!”

The chancellor wore a rather inscrutable expression.

I suppose it could be interpreted in two ways.

Either he never expected me to actually come, or

He knew I would come, but not in such a manner.

After setting up such a high-level 'restriction barrier', did he really expect me to enter through the front door?

Unless I used the power of Aeryl, it would have been impossible to breach that barrier with my bare body.

But an assassin doesn't usually take the main entrance, does it?

I had climbed up another stairwell to the rooftop.

And then I jumped.

Using a sphere of mana as a springboard, I charged straight through the window of the chancellor's office.

Though somewhat violent, it was, after all, the most inconspicuous method I could choose.

The chancellor then looked at me with a chilly tone and asked,

“Have you come to lodge a complaint?”

“Yes. The warning notice was issued under the chancellor’s name, so I came directly to see you.”

The chancellor let out a disbelieving chuckle.

“Audacious. At this sacred educational institute, a student skips classes and I take action, and you want to lodge a complaint against that? Do you take the Royal Academy for granted?”

Every word was imbued with strong resolve.

He’s taking a hard stance.

Of course, I know the current situation is not in my favor.

If he wished, he could charge me with unauthorized entry and property damage, imposing additional sanctions.

However, if that had been his goal, he wouldn’t have sent me a warning notice in the first place.

I replied with a restrained tone.

“In truth, coming to lodge a complaint was merely a formal procedure to see you, Chancellor. As for the warning you issued, I have no intention of denying it. In fact, I think it was a natural decision.”

“Ha, so that means you have another purpose for coming here?”

With that, the chancellor scoffed and continued,

“Indeed, I sent the same warning to you and Seth. They were identical in form and format, but one thing was different — the sender. Seth’s warning probably said it was from the administrative department, but yours did not. As you put it yourself, if you had an objection to the warning, coming to me directly was the right move.”

The chancellor’s tone was unflinching and cold.

“Why do you think I sent you my warning and not both of you?”

“That would be because you wanted to test me, no? Discovering and nurturing talent is something you excel at, is it not?”

An educator’s true role is to accelerate the growth of students, contributing to the advancement of the nation and society.

And it would be unthinkable for someone who manages the continent’s top educational institution to simply overlook a talent such as mine.

Even if I criticize the Academy as a den of intrigue and deception, at its core, it is a place of learning.

Historically, numerous talented individuals have passed through here, which is why it has maintained its reputation as the leading educational institute on the continent.

“Fine. You’ve attracted my attention with your bold entrance and the duel the other day. If you’ve not come to lodge a complaint, let’s hear it then. State your original purpose...”

I had pondered this moment several times on the way here.

Whether to reveal some of my cards for a clear and decisive path,

Or choose a safer route that might be circuitous but allowed me to keep everything hidden.

Truthfully, the latter was not to my taste.

In my life where failure meant the end, the word ‘safety’ didn’t quite fit.

I don’t particularly like the phrase ‘life is a gamble’, but since I had decided to deal with the chancellor, half-hearted sentiments had to be set aside.

I firmly looked the chancellor in the eyes and said,

“I have one question for you, Chancellor.”

“Hmm?”

“Do you wish for the empire’s prosperity? Or do you seek the glory of your house?”

For a moment, the chancellor's eyes sharpened and moved.

"Before being the head of the Royal Academy, you are also the leader of the Quizzel Ducal house. Furthermore, you were the Emperor's father-in-law. I understand you've maintained a good relationship with His Majesty even after the empress passed away."

"And what of it?"

"Please answer my question first. Depending on your response, what I have to say next will change."

The chancellor's gaze was as heavy as that of a predator at the top of the food chain.

As if to say, 'Why should I answer to someone like you?'

I too did not back down, fully accepting his scrutinizing gaze.

"Prosperity and honor?"

The chancellor finally spoke after maintaining his silence.

"Neither are my concern."

That was an unexpected answer.

"The continent has been at unprecedented peace since the founding of the Royal Academy. It has already been a hundred years since nations have crossed swords. Right now, this is arguably the most prosperous period in the history of the empire."

It has been a hundred years since the great sage Teramile Ishpa established the Royal Academy.

Indeed, since then, there have been no wars between states on the continent.

The Academy's central role in this cannot be denied.

As the chancellor said, this is indeed an era of unprecedented prosperity for the empire.

“Moreover, I’ve long since lost interest in my house’s glory. The house runs well without me, and I stepped down from the position of duke some time ago. For me now, this academy is all that matters.”

The chancellor’s words carried an unequivocal resolve.

I nodded and replied,

“I understand. Then since you do not care about the empire’s prosperity or your family’s honor, I assume it wouldn’t matter to you if either the 1st Prince or the 2nd Princess did not ascend the throne?”

“.....!”

The air in the room grew heavy in an instant.

“You’re not audacious... you’re impudent.”

The chancellor spoke in a heavy tone, a light smile on my face.

“I’ve dedicated 30 years of my life to this academy. During that time, I’ve seen many students, many talents. That included your sister, hailed as the child of the gods, and your brother, deemed to become the continent’s second guardian. I too thought of you as a talent in the same league as them.”

A bittersweet compliment, being compared with him, but I chose not to show my thoughts.

“Yet it seems I misjudged you. You are nothing but a dunce, complacent with the power you’ve been given. No matter the Duke of Vert’s offspring, have you not considered the repercussions of your words? Or has the Emperor’s favor corrupted you with vanity? I regret ever seeing you in a good light, even if briefly. Let’s consider your last statement as unheard. I’ll lower the barrier for a moment, now leave.”

That was blunt.

The chancellor was plainly instructing me to leave.

Ignoring his command, I continued,

“Chancellor, as you said, we are in an unprecedented golden age of the empire—at least during the Emperor’s lifetime. But do you think this peaceful era will continue after His Majesty passes?”

“.....!”

The chancellor’s eyes flashed for a moment.

“You may have withdrawn from your house, but you surely aren’t ignorant of the current state of the empire. We are tightrope at present. The factions of the late empress, the 1st Prince and the 2nd Princess, and the current empress, the 3rd and 4th Princes... After the Emperor’s death, the impending civil strife between them is almost a given.”

I’ll leave out one more person for now.

“What’s your basis for such claims?”

“Randolph Nephris, Count of Nephris, is not one to be disinterested in the world like you, Chancellor. He places his house’s honor above all and would kill a demon from hell to preserve it. Surely, he must desire his bloodline to ascend the throne.”

A flicker of disturbance crossed the chancellor’s eyes.

He knew more about Nephris than I did.

I pressed on,

“Based on legitimacy, it would be right for the 1st Prince to take the throne. But the Nephris house wouldn’t stand idly by. It will inevitably lead to civil strife. And if peace within the empire shatters, and the worst happens with the 1st Prince’s faction defeated, even the Quizzel family cannot guarantee its security.”

“Do you think our Quizzel house is so weak?”

“It’s just a possibility, isn’t it? No one knows for sure.”

The chancellor is likely thinking now,

‘How can an eleven-year-old boy predict the deep politics of the empire?’

It would seem too confident for overheard information.

After all, only a direct vassal could speak of such things.

“The empire’s prosperity and the family’s honor... You say they don’t concern you much, but what if both shatter in the near future? Even then, will you really be untroubled, Chancellor?”

The chancellor looked at me in silence, a look filled with many thoughts, but one thing was clear.

No longer would he see me as just another freshman...

“No one of my house has said such things to me... I never imagined it would come from you.”

His tone was slightly softer now.

“So, you’re saying all this to guide me towards the right path amid the prospective turmoil?”

I smiled and replied,

“I acknowledge that you are a great man, Chancellor. If a civil war really breaks out, you would lead the fray and ensure a Quizzel ascends the throne.”

Indeed, Chancellor Condor had made groundbreaking contributions in leading the Quizzel house to victory in a succession conflict, making Prince ‘Luinel Severus’ the new emperor.

But it didn’t end with the strife.

After the civil war concluded, the chancellor wanted the new emperor Luinel to embrace his other siblings peacefully.

Without their support, a conflict could erupt again—they should not be killed but kept in a friendly relationship.

However, Emperor Luinel thought differently.

Raised in a world of power struggles, brotherly love was alien to him.

They were merely insurgents threatening his position.

Even the far-seeing Chancellor Condor couldn't predict his own future.

The civil war gave birth to another, and ultimately, Emperor Luinel ordered the assassination of the opposing Chancellor Condor while executing his remaining brothers for treason.

Princess Arin was simply banished.

"Ha! Then what was your real purpose in telling me all this?"

Unless something changed, the empire's future would remain the same.

Honestly, I no longer care a speck about the empire's prosperity or the family's honor.

But the old chancellor wouldn't feel the same.

Above all, he would hope that the current peace lasts for the rest of his life.

I would use that hope of the chancellor to my advantage.

"Chancellor, you said the academy matters to you most, so it's irrelevant who becomes the emperor, right? Plus, if the family's honor continues as it is, all the better. You would want to see the empire and academy flourish in this peaceful time, wouldn't you?"

"And you will help me with that?"

He sees right through it.

I silently responded with a smile.

"Yes, I acknowledge. As long as the academy's welfare is assured, it doesn't matter to me who sits on the throne. So, what do you want from me? What power do you have?"

I had said all that could be said in words.

Now, what remained was to prove myself.

Can I showcase the power to turn the tide in the tumultuous state of the empire?

-Swish

I formed a small mana sphere in my palm.

A mundane mana sphere, do you think?

Correct.

This is a very ordinary mana sphere that even a 1-star student could create.

But this ordinary thing feels different depending on who creates it.

“.....!”

The chancellor’s gaze wavered intensely.

He sensed it.

The tremendous power emanating from the black mana sphere.

And he would also know,

The power I am displaying now is nowhere near my full extent...

“Who are you exactly...?”

“You needn’t think so hard about it. Think of me as a genius, prodigy, or perhaps a divine being who has descended among humans. As long as you don’t see me as just an ordinary student, that will suffice.”

The chancellor looked perplexed.

But that moment didn’t last long.

As if coming to a decision, he asked again.

“What is it that you want from me?”

Our chancellor understands the concept of give and take very well indeed.

Without hesitation, I immediately replied,

“Nothing much. Aside from retracting the warning, allow me to continue life at the academy as it is. I might not attend classes often, but I’ll go every now and then. I’ll regularly take exams as well.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, that’s all. Nothing more.”

The chancellor seemed surprised.

“What do you gain from this?”

“Peace. I too want to attend the academy without issues.”

With my smile suggesting ‘what’s the problem?’, the chancellor wore a complex expression.

(To be continued)