

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 81

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 81-90

81. Lunev Rainriver (4)

A total of six people.

There's no sign they fled separately or hid themselves anywhere.

Given that verification comes before disposal, I swiftly approached the carriage.

["I thought at least one would be left alive. If they were all to be killed, what was the mask for?"]

Did I wear it because I wanted to?

Though under a sleeping spell, I thought they'd be awake by now, hence the hurried choice of wearing it.

But,

"...?"

I didn't expect them to still be sleeping.

Just in case, I placed my hand over her face.

"..."

Completely asleep, to the point where someone could carry her off without her noticing.

Could this be considered as making up for several sleepless nights before?

It felt like she was finally catching up on the rest she had missed.

Even after untying her hands and feet and removing the gag, she didn't stir at all.

“Sigh...”

Letting go of the mask, I exhaled a breath I had been holding.

But there’s no time to leisurely observe her sleeping face.

I had to quickly finish my task and leave.

I gently laid Lunev’s body down in a proper position.

Then, I unbuttoned the top two buttons of her shirt to reveal her chest area.

Placing my finger on her chest, I closed my eyes.

-Woong

I cast a 6th-level general spell called ‘Searching’.

It’s a spell that injects mana into the subject’s body to check its physical state, an upgraded version of the ability she used to check my physical grade.

For me, it’s been quite some time since I last used this spell.

“...”

I could feel it.

The flow of mana through her body, along with her blood.

However, it wasn’t flowing actively.

As mentioned earlier, something unsettling was disturbing the natural flow.

As if chains were tightly wound around her blood vessels.

“So, this was it.”

No wonder she couldn’t live properly with something like this inside her body.

Identifying the nature of this energy, I opened my eyes.

[“Why? What did you find?”]

“Heart Curb...”

[“Heart what?”]

Ceyram tilted his head, clearly not understanding.

She couldn’t possibly know.

This is one of the proud research outcomes of those obsessed with magic.

“Simply put, it’s a device that inhibits human growth.”

An artifact that injects a mass of magic power, the size of the subject’s heart, to suppress the growth of mana.

Like vines entwined, dark black tendrils were chaotically wrapped around her beating heart.

[“To inhibit growth?”]

She would think this doesn’t make sense.

Surely, the head of the society, Regens, had a firm goal of elevating his granddaughter to the pinnacle of magic.

For this purpose, he treated her like an experimental subject, involving her in various experiments to spur the growth of her magical abilities.

To have such a restrictive device in her, out of the blue.

It would be reasonable to curse them for such nonsense.

The ironic part is that the likely culprits behind placing this artifact would be the Garam Magic Society.

[“Who planted this?”]

“Obviously, the society.”

[“For what reason?”]

They probably intended to use it not as a restriction but for storage.

If a placid river keeps flowing, there's no problem.

But what if its flow is suddenly stopped and held back?

Nature won't allow the cessation of the flow; the water that cannot flow will gradually accumulate and swell.

And when it gets released all of a sudden?

It would burst forth explosively.

Due to the aftermath of that moment, chaos would ensue around. The Garam Magic Society must have wanted this. By using an artifact called Heart Curves, they suppressed the flow and growth of her mana. They continued to infuse magic into her unstable body. When that reached its peak, they would release the suppression device, causing the potential they had amassed to explode. Was it possible? I don't know; I've never tried. But I'm quite clear about what they would have done to make this a reality. They would have gone through dozens, if not hundreds, of human experiments to apply the most suitable route to her. Probably, Lunev in her previous life couldn't survive this and died. This was not about growing a vessel but rather breaking it. Ceyram seemed to have difficulty understanding, wearing an awkward expression.

[So if we leave it like this, she's going to die, right?]

"That's right."

[Then what are you going to do about it?]

I haven't decided yet. In fact, the content of the mental empathy that Ceyram told me about was unrelated to this. It was merely about a faction opposing the Garam Magic Society hearing of her unauthorized exit and planning to kidnap her by disguising themselves as members of the society. They intended to take her to their hideout somewhere in the Garam Kingdom and experiment on her to their liking.

By now, the real members of the society would have realized the truth and would be hurriedly coming after her. So why did I help Lunev? It's nothing much. It would have been quite bothersome to face the backlash if I stayed idle knowing all this. Since she was kidnapped right after meeting me, it was natural that the blame would come to me. If I just handled the situation lightly

and left her safe, nothing would change. Yes, my work here is done, and it's time for me to leave...

"Sigh..."

I let out a sigh without realizing. If that was the case, I wouldn't have come here in the first place. I manifested mana in my hand once more.

-Keeing

Right under the left chest, between the sternum and the spine. Like dipping a hand into the water, my hand, filled with mana, was sucked into her heart.

-Tudduk It was tougher than I thought. Like ripping out vines tangled on a tree, I roughly pulled out the black tendrils entwining her heart.

-Hwaruk I immediately burnt and disposed of the pulled-out remnants. Once I completely detached and destroyed the core of the artifact sticking to the end, her heart began to beat vigorously as if it had regained vitality.

[Where did the person who said they weren't a savior go?]

Ceyram mocked me with rather cheerful eyes.

I responded nonchalantly, "I just cleared the path, that's all."

With the Heart Curves gone, her lifespan was significantly extended. She might not realize it right away, but she would gradually feel it, the change in her body. Then, naturally, her mindset would also change. What can she do with the prolonged lifespan and possibilities? Would she continue to whittle herself within the confines of the society or break free and tread a different path? What happens next is entirely up to her. Who knows? If she explores her own potential, she might indeed fulfill the head of the society's dream of reaching the pinnacle of magic. After all, no one knows whether a sprouting seed will turn into a flower or a tree.

* * *

"...!" Waking up, Lunev gasped for air as if she had a nightmare. Unintentionally, her hand reached for her heart. But there was no discomfort. Instead, compared to before she slept, the feeling was significantly more refreshing. After a brief moment of daze, Lunev finally looked around. Her

belongings were scattered, and a cold breeze blew in from one side. Just as she was about to leave the carriage,

“Hmm?” Part of the space outside seemed to ripple, as if a droplet of water had fallen.

“A barrier?”

It was a restricted barrier created by magic.

Lunev, as if drawn by curiosity, lightly tapped the barrier.

– Ding!

The barrier rippled like a wave and then immediately disappeared.

Lunev cautiously stepped outside.

“I found you!”

At the same time, she heard the urgent cries and footsteps directed towards her.

Squinting, she saw the familiar faces of the society members.

“Are you alright, Ms. Lunev?”

They immediately checked on her well-being.

Lunev responded with a slightly bewildered expression.

“For now, yes.”

“Do you remember what happened to you?”

Her last memory was of unknown watchers casting a sleep spell on her and putting her to sleep.

There were no memories in between, literally waking up in an unfamiliar carriage.

“I’m just glad you’re safe! We’ll explain as we go, would you please come with us? The head of the society is waiting for you!”

“...Alright.”

Although the situation was similar to before her sleep, she harbored no suspicions.

While being escorted by the society members to the carriage, Lunev kept checking her condition.

Feeling as if something constricting her had completely vanished.

An unusual sense of refreshment she had never felt before.

Along with this, a foreign presence seemed to have settled within her.

It didn't feel repressive or consuming but rather like a protective mechanism.

“Is grandfather very angry?”

The society member hesitated to respond to Lunev's question.

“We-Well, if you explain the reason for your outing properly, I think everything will be alright! Being safe is what matters the most....”

She knew well that it wouldn't be the case.

She was likely to be severely reprimanded upon her return, but she wasn't afraid.

It seemed as if something new was protecting her...

This was not a sense of liberation, but rather a feeling of reassurance.

* * *

The scene was neatly arranged, and through welcoming magic, my alibi was clearly established.

I had also set up a restricted barrier around the carriage to prepare for any eventuality, ensuring that unless a sandstorm passed through, there would be no issue.

In other words, there was no one who could prove I was there.

However, the one person who couldn't be deceived, burst into my room immediately upon my return, interrogating me.

"You seemed to have gotten quite restless in my absence?"

"I have no idea what you mean...."

Silica, the head of the organization, looked at me with a face full of suspicion.

"You know about Lunev's matter, don't you?"

"Of course, I went to the restroom and when I returned she was gone. I never would have guessed she had been kidnapped."

I feigned ignorance with a serious face.

The news of the kidnapping was already widespread within the society.

"Nela Aronis, a magic instructor at the society, has gone missing. A woman from the Garam Kingdom, newly appointed not long before. According to recent information, she was an executive of a faction opposing the Garam Magic Society."

It likely referred to the woman in grey I had disposed of first.

"Then she must have spread Lunev's information to her faction. Seems like going to the restroom was a divine move."

I maintained a consistent attitude throughout.

"Can you really assure me you have nothing to do with this?"

Without hesitation, I replied.

"I can assure you."

Though I'm unsure what's at stake.

[.....]

Ceyram watched Silica and me with a rather displeased expression. He seemed eager to pick a fight but found himself without words, likely because he was an accomplice as well.

“Even though the banquet incident must have been tiring, you seem quite restless. From looking at your face, it seems your body is very agitated.”

Not at all.

“Since there’s some time until the next term starts, I’ll assign you a solo task.”

I couldn’t believe my ears.

“A solo task, you say?”

Silently, she pulled out a black envelope from her belongings and handed it to me.

“Ha....”

All I could do was let out a hollow laugh as I opened the envelope.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 82

Chapter 82: The Lambert Cage (1)

The afternoon sun filtered through the windows of the Royal Hall, its warm rays a stark contrast to the listlessness within. A bored maid yawned, her tasks for the day seemingly nonexistent, while a sleepy draconian dozed off after a hearty lunch.

Meanwhile, with no master to guard, a naively devoted knight dedicated himself to vigorous training. Curiously, the room’s rightful occupant was nowhere in sight.

“Seriously, how tough can you be? Who does exactly six hours of training every single day without fail? Is it normal for knights to be this dedicated?”

“Ah, well, his lordship advised that any second of breath not spent training is a second wasted, and I’ve been doing my best to live up to that guidance.”

Emily waved her hand as if to say 'stop joking around.'

"Pfft! You're funnier than you look, sir knight. Did you really think I would fall for that?"

"Pardon?"

"Our lord' is what I know best. He's not the sort to offer fine advice, certainly not anything akin to a wise saying! It's utterly nonsensical!"

For Brian, who had simply stated facts, the situation was baffling.

"Aha, while we're at it, let's hear about it. How was the young master's life at the academy?"

And so, the conversation began, focusing on the absence of the young master.

"His schedule involved barely attending classes, mostly doing exercises like I do during the day, and then venturing out at night, only to return at dawn. Sometimes he'd be absent for a day or up to a week."

With evident resignation, she clucked her tongue.

"He hasn't changed a bit. He used to do the same when he was in the front lines; always out and about. To think that habit has stayed the same!"

At one point, she stretched out on the sofa and let out a deep sigh.

"I was so looking forward to the academy, and yet it's one boring thing after another. Honestly, where has the young master gone, leaving this bizarre half-pint here?"

Her gaze shifted to Nana, who was sound asleep in the room.

Grown she might be, but the distracting clutches of sleep were all too familiar.

"Ha-ha! Don't worry, he hasn't been alone. Lord Ceyram has always been by his side, after all."

Brian chimed in, perhaps offering some comfort.

"Lord Ceyram? And who might that be?"

“Pardon?”

Silence filled the room at the mention of this unknown figure.

“You don’t know... Lord Ceyram?”

“It’s the first I’m hearing this name. Was this person really by the young master’s side?”

Brian, taken aback, struggled to articulate a response. Even though Emily had been by Sian’s side for a long time, it was now clear that she had no knowledge of Ceyram’s existence. As an innocent woman, she found the situation profoundly ambiguous.

“Who is Ceyram? Given the mood, I gather it’s a woman? Who in the world is she that you would know someone I don’t!”

Frustrated, Emily grabbed Brian by the collar and gave him a good shake.

“Well, you see... Although not often seen, they say this person has always been by the young master’s side...”

But this figure was difficult to describe; not so easy to just bring up in conversation. To Brian, the person had naturally become part of the young master’s life, to the point where an explanation now seemed impossible.

“What’s this? In addition to the princess and that noble lady, who else is by the young master’s side now?”

“Em, Emily, please let go...”

Brian’s collar continued to sway helplessly.

* * *

Southwest of the Ushif Empire was the neutral city of Lambert, a place vastly different from Rowen, which was dedicated to the advancement of the academy. Lambert was a city formed through silent consent for the fulfillment of human greed—a grimy city of crime driven more by money and might than law and order.

“Ugh, how dreary! What kind of city is this?”

Even Ceyram, who had freely wandered in good spirits across the monster-infested front lines, could not hide her disgust here.

It's not unreasonable. Profanity and brawls were rampant; the streets reeked of unidentifiable waste and the stench of blood; and the mean-looking brutes roaming around hardly instilled confidence.

Yet, there was one reason I found myself in this place: I was here to execute a mission given to me by my master, a 'welcome-back' gift, if you may.

The thoughtfulness of the master was so overwhelming that I hardly knew how to express my gratitude.

"Isn't she quite mad? I mean, what is she thinking sending someone like you here alone? I just can't find anything likable about her!"

"Really? That doesn't seem like your place to comment," I countered.

Her complaint seemed to stem not from the mission itself, but from the mere fact that the master had given me a task.

Suddenly, a fleshy figure burst out from an alley corner and collided with my shoulder without causing me to move. I stopped in my strides and turned to face the offender.

"Tsk, tsk, one must watch where they're going. Bumping into people isn't polite, is it?"

They were practically asking for it, clearly waiting on the side to jump out.

"What's this? Did your guardians let you out alone? Why is a child parading the streets at this hour?"

Would they prefer children to be roaming around at night instead?

It was a typical scheme: provoke the townsfolk and extort them.

These goons must've assumed I was with an adult who would rashly react.

"Hey, hey, where do you think you're going? Can't you see my aching stomach from your child shoulders? Isn't it only proper to apologize and provide compensation after striking someone?"

Well said. If only you drop to your knees and apologize, I might just walk away.

“Ho? Upon closer look, you’re quite the pretty boy, aren’t you? Got no place to go? How about coming with me? There are plenty who’d find someone like you... intriguing! I’m offering you a job!”

Rather than an apology, the audacious exceeded all boundaries.

I simply caught his outstretched finger and gently twisted it.

—Snap!

“Ugh...!”

Before he could even shriek, I kicked his shin, throwing him off balance.

—Thud!

The heavy-set figure fell to the ground with a thud; the same belly that had hit my shoulder was now upturned. I stomped noticeably on it with one foot—that’ll teach him never to carelessly use that clumsy gut.

“Urgh!”

As he groaned, filth spewed from his mouth. I then stuffed the broken finger into his mouth and ground it down with my foot to prevent him from removing it. His writhing resembled a pig dragged to slaughter.

“Look here, big guy, that thing on top of your shoulders isn’t just some ornament to carry around.”

No verbal response came; only pitiable groans.

“You’re right, what business does a young kid like me have running around a dirty place like this in broad daylight? Ever think that perhaps there’s a reason a ‘child’ would be here? If you’re not smart, at least have some sense.”

If they had any sense, they’d be doing anything aside from resorting to thuggery. They approached without a second thought.

—Swoosh!

Seems there was more than just this one brute, as four more miscreants crept up behind the one who writhed from agony.

“Listen and listen well, because I’ll only say this once.”

—!

They halted, stopped by the gravity in my voice.

“Spread the word to your kind and anyone who’d listen. From this moment on, if anyone spots a lone boy wandering the streets of Lambert, do not touch him. And if anyone ignores this and dares to approach the boy...”

—Crash!

With more force, I stamped my foot.

“You might end up crippled, just like you—”

The sound of teeth scattering followed.

I let this be a warning. For the first offense, a finger and a few teeth were enough. But should anyone ignore my warning and approach me again, the consequences would be far more grave.

“Understood?”

Mercifully, I lifted my foot, and the thug nodded, clearly having learned his lesson.

Reaching for composure, the bruised man quickly scurried away with his cronies, surprisingly swift for their size.

[You seem intent on making enemies, huh? Keep that up, and you might not live very long.]

“Quit the nonsense. You’re practically smiling inside, right?” I remarked.

I could tell they relished the thought of more fights.

[Oh, caught me? Look at you, discerning a lady’s heart. You’ve grown so much!]

As ever, my Sword remained true to its nature.

I ignored it and surveyed the city streets. There was no sign of vitality to be seen. Beggars lay collapsed from hunger in every corner.

At first glance, Lambert might seem abandoned, but surprisingly, it rivaled the imperial capital for capital inflow.

Of course, had those funds been used for the betterment of the city, it wouldn't look so dismal. But as I mentioned before, this is a neutral city with no real ruler. Essentially, it thrives solely through its market and trade, upheld by the actions within its boundaries.

Upon closer inspection among the riff-raff, I could see people who looked like they wielded some real power.

Without much concern, I made my way to a luxurious-looking building.

—Creak.

The cleanliness inside was a stark contrast to the grimy exterior, though the faces of the people inside hardly matched the setting.

A brown-haired woman, probably a worker, glared at me with dissatisfaction. It wasn't surprising, considering my attire wasn't befitting nobility but rather that of a humble wanderer.

"How can I help you?"

She seemed to speak out of obligation.

"I'd like to book a room."

I noticed a flicker of change in her eyes—probably expecting a patron other than myself.

"How many will be staying?"

"Just me."

Her eyes snapped back in disdain.

“Hey, kid. I think you’re lost. This is no place for a child. With your green age, why bother an establishment for grown-ups...”

—Thud!

She jumped back, startled, as I plopped a sack of gold coins onto the table.

“I’ll take your best room.”

“...Excuse me?”

Only when she finally registered the purse did her demeanor change once more.

“Welcome to the Lambert Cage! Allow me to escort you immediately to our top-floor VIP room!”

In that moment, all eyes in the lobby fell on me.

(To be continued on the next page)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 83

Chapter 83: The Lambert Cage (2)

The Lambert Cage.

Putting aside what it does, what comes to mind when you hear that name?

Most likely, nine out of ten wouldn’t think of it as a pleasant place.

One might imagine it as a birdcage where human slaves are kept en masse.

However, surprisingly, this place is a luxurious accommodation facility used by numerous people every day.

A VIP room that costs a hefty 50 gold coins to enter.

The facility itself was ostentatiously luxurious enough to rival the Royal Suite.

A stark contrast to the dreary exterior.

It offered some insight into the tendencies of the main clientele who frequented this establishment.

Of course, I wasn't here to enjoy a comfortable hotel vacation.

As I quickly glanced out of the window, I could see lowlifes who had roamed the streets earlier, as well as richly dressed tycoons, all streaming towards this place.

However, they weren't entering through the front; it looked like they were heading somewhere else.

Accordingly, I also turned my head and stepped out of the room.

-Creak

“.....”

As I opened the door, I immediately captured the attention of several pairs of eyes.

Above the hallways, luxurious and well-ironed red carpets were laid out, and along the sides were a total of six rooms, three on each side.

Guards were positioned in front of each of the rooms, excluding my own, and all of them glanced at me with unwelcoming looks.

Judging by their appearance and the vibe they gave off, they didn't seem to belong to this building.

They were most likely bodyguards brought by the owners of each room.

I ignored them and strolled leisurely down the corridor.

-Swish

The scent of perfume and familiar cosmetics stung my nose.

It was so strong it could make one's head spin.

It was an all too familiar smell to me.

Many of the nobles I had killed with my own hands in my previous life had reeked of this scent.

Entranced by the smell, I descended the stairs and soon found myself on the first floor.

There were a total of five floors.

The further down you went, the wider the space became like a pyramid. This meant that the first floor, where I stood, had to be the most spacious area, but that wasn't entirely the case.

Beneath the shiny wooden flooring of the first floor's corridor, there lay a gigantic underground space, easily more than twice the size.

I headed towards the lobby, which was closest to the building entrance.

Next to the lobby, there was an area where one could eat food and drink just like a typical inn.

Unlike when I first entered and saw a moderate number of people, the place now looked as deserted as a closed shop, with not a single mouse in sight.

The only person visible to me was the brown-haired waitress who had given me a hard time earlier.

"I am Lisa, the employee of The Lambert Cage! How may I assist you?"

Her insincerely pleasant smile almost made me chuckle.

I wasn't sure if I should admire her professional spirit or her sheer brazenness.

For now, I decided not to mind it and spoke up.

"I'd like to use the cage."

"The cage, you say?"

The corners of her mouth twitched slightly.

“I’m truly sorry, but the cage is currently reserved for our existing customers, and it would be difficult for a new customer like yourself to make use of it.”

I thought to myself.

She’s peddling nonsense.

Would they really segregate the usage of the cage when they’re even willing to rent out VIP rooms to 13-year-olds for money?

“If that were the case, shouldn’t you have declined to provide me with a room from the beginning?”

A bead of sweat trickled down her cheek.

“That’s because our accommodations and cage usage are separate services... What can I do? I’m just doing as I’m told from above...”

Does she think I came here without any prior information?

In this city, where fist takes precedence over law, and money before fists, it’s unlikely they’ve established such restrictive rules.

This woman is lying to me without reason.

This means she’s hiding something.

-Slide

My hand naturally headed towards my inner pocket.

“.....?”

The meaning of my action was simple.

I was just planning to take out a few coins to hand over to her.

But then, I saw it.

At the moment my hand reached into my pocket,

I noticed her hands flinch with a twitch...

It is not unusual behavior.

After all, humans are sensitive creatures who instinctively guard against possible threats.

But the problem was something else.

She didn't just twitch in fear; she had assumed a stance ready to engage in some follow-up action.

Indeed, her fingers were repeatedly glancing under the desk, as if hiding something there.

For about five seconds, I did nothing, leaving my hand in my pocket as if time had stopped.

From my first impression of her, she seemed to be just another Emily-type, a troublesome employee, but now she appeared to be entirely different.

Isn't it strange too?

She's the only one looking after this wide lobby.

Ordinarily, multiple guards should be scattered around as a norm,

especially in a city-like this one, where troublemakers could burst in at any moment and wreak havoc.

However, right now, apart from her and me, there was no sign of any guards or any human presence.

It could be due to one of two reasons.

Either there's an ongoing situation causing the guards to gather elsewhere,

or maybe this waitress alone is sufficient, making additional guards unnecessary.

I could verify this now.

-Squeeze

Though I had no original intention, I subtly grasped the hilt of my sword, Ceyram, in my pocket.

Not simply grasping it.

The murderous intent that usually accompanies drawing a sword was not suppressed; I let it freely emanate.

“.....!”

She must have sensed my killing intent, as her pupils trembled visibly this time.

After about ten seconds passed,

as my right hand finally emerged from the pocket—

-Ting

A deafening rip broke the silence, assailing the ears.

“.....!?”

The waitress, caught off-guard, was holding a sharp dagger in her hand.

In contrast, my hand was empty.

Not because I had come out empty-handed.

Nor had I drawn Ceyram.

What I pulled from my pocket was a shiny yellow gold coin.

Different from the waitress’s panic, I was utterly nonchalant.

As I tossed the coin, it struck her dagger and ricocheted, spinning on the desk like a top.

After a clattering sound and the spinning ceased, she let out an incredulous chuckle, seemingly in disbelief.

“Wh-What are you doing right now...?”

“I just tried to take out some money.”

It wasn't a lie.

As I said before, I intended to take out money from the start.

She quickly sheathed her dagger and waved her hands frantically.

“Don't misunderstand! This is purely for self-defense! Given the rough people rampant in this city, it's just something I need for protection...”

“.....”

I glared at her with suspicion evident in my eyes.

“Can I file an official complaint? The lobby attendant just pulled a knife on a customer. That's pretty offensive, right?”

Of course, I wasn't genuinely offended.

But she was already struggling to find a way out of her predicament, her face a picture of helplessness.

“Perhaps, what you'd like is...”

“Admission to the cage.”

I was clear about my purpose.

She exhaled as if admitting defeat.

“You're the hot topic of the gossip, right? Some unknown young boy showed up in Lambert Street, stepped on common thugs, and warned not to mess with him. Never thought you'd come our way, though.”

As she muttered to herself, she wrote something down and then handed me a sealed pass.

It looked like a ticket for admission.

“As a nosy piece of advice, if you're not planning to stay long, I recommend you keep to yourself and leave quietly. That is, unless you have multiple lives.”

The hospitality of the attendant, who worried for the customer's well-being, was unmatched.

She rose and opened a small door behind the lobby, behind which lay a deep staircase leading underground.

Illuminated intermittently by lights, it wasn't too dim.

"Looks like staff-only access?"

"It doesn't matter anyway; the destination is the same. It would be bothersome to go all the way back, wouldn't it?"

A fair point.

There was no reason to refuse the offered kindness.

I didn't hesitate and stepped through the door she had shown.

Many things about the employee were dubious, but I decided to disregard them for now.

The staircase was longer than I thought.

It seemed to go down the depth of three floors, and I could feel the oppressive air typical of basements.

[I wonder why these steps feel so familiar? Have you been here before?]

Ceyram, who had been silent until now, popped up midway down the stairs and asked.

"I've been here before. Though it wasn't during such a lively period."

I had last visited in a previous life when the place was almost like a haunted house.

As I descended, the indistinguishable cries of a crowd echoed from below.

Likely dozens, or perhaps hundreds of people.

As I continued down the stairs, focused on the sounds, I soon arrived in front of an old door.

Without hesitating, I opened the door and stepped through.

“What the hell is today’s lineup? Did I come here to watch this boring trash fight?”

The first thing that hit my ears upon opening the door was a stream of curses.

“If you don’t wanna watch, piss off! There’s a crowd waiting to see the fights besides you!”

Rough-looking rabble that wouldn’t be outshone in any fight made up a rowdy, overbearing atmosphere.

[I’ll ask, though I might already know, what is this place for?]

“Nothing much. Just an arena where they bet and fight.”

Since ancient times, fight spectacles have been considered the most entertaining, and betting on them has made them even more thrilling.

This place was the perfect venue to satisfy such primal human desires.

People who fancied themselves fighters would gather, beat each other to a pulp, and the spectating crowd, thrilled by the brutality, cheered on.

And those who became addicted to the excitement would bet on new matches, fueling the infamous The Lambert Cage, a renowned feature of this city.

At first glance, the main customers might seem like unruly ruffians who enjoyed strifes.

But they were only a dispoably small fraction of the total clientele.

Elsewhere across the continent, there were many such fighting arenas, and the key customer base managing these facilities were all nobility without exception.

It’s no surprise that it was considered one of the most successful businesses on the continent.

The VIP room I had secured was, in reality, nothing more than an ancillary facility for such nobles.

For now, I headed straight for the betting area, which was plainly in sight.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 84

Chapter 84: Lambert Cage (3)

As befits a neutral city, Lambert had no lord presiding over it. However, the absence of a lord did not mean the city lacked an owner. In places like Lambert, where disputes were frequent, the territory's master often changed, and many forces and factions vying for control were present throughout the city, making it akin to a small battlefield.

A man with hair redder than blood sat on the stone steps, smoking a cigarette. His name was Gunther Rictus. He was one of the rulers of the city, in charge of managing the western district's waste site. Before him stood an underling reporting on a series of events that had just occurred in the eastern district.

"A young boy?" Gunther asked.

"Yes, sir. He appeared at the entrance of the city, in the entertainment alley, and trampled the area's members while leaving a warning," the subordinate reported.

"What did he say?"

The man conveyed the boy's warning exactly as it had been given, which elicited a loud snort from Gunther.

"Ha! Really? That he would cripple a part of anyone who dared to mess with him? Is he out of his mind?"

It was not so much ridicule as it was disbelief that someone could be so brazen. The audacity of the boy's warning didn't seem to particularly upset Gunther.

“So what’s happening in that area? It’s unlikely Delkia would just sit back, right?”

“Of course not. Right after hearing about it, they started looking for the boy’s whereabouts. Surprisingly, they found him easily.”

“Really? Where is he?”

“He’s at Lambert Cage.”

Gunther’s brow furrowed slightly.

“Lambert Cage?”

“Yes. And he’s taken the most expensive room, the VIP room. Though, he’s there alone.”

Gunther’s expression subtly changed.

“Could he be nobility?”

“I’m not sure. However, when he booked the room, he didn’t register his name.”

“You’ve seen his face, haven’t you? Was there anything distinctive?”

“Well, there’s something strange about that...”

The man hesitated as if not entirely sure of what he was going to say.

“Everyone present at that time can’t seem to remember the boy’s face.”

“They can’t remember?”

Gunther immediately questioned him.

“Yes. Although they vividly recall his hair style, clothes, voice, and gait, they can’t seem to remember his face, except that he had dark hair and sharp eyes.”

“That makes sense? Even if they’re not suffering from face-blindness, why can’t they remember him after being attacked?”

It was impossible to answer since none of the parties involved were present.

Gunther's expression hardened briefly but quickly relaxed.

"So, that boy is currently at Lambert Cage? He wouldn't go there just to watch after stomping street thugs and leaving a warning, right?"

"Th-that would seem likely, yes."

A strange smile appeared on Gunther's lips. He then tossed away his cigarette and rose from his seat.

Creak

Even though he simply stood up, a menacing sound of bones cracking filled the air.

"It's been a long time since I've felt genuinely intrigued by someone. This is beyond interesting—it's exciting."

With a face filled with delight, he headed straight for Lambert Cage.

* * *

People tend to draw attention when they're in a place they don't naturally fit into, and I was no exception. While I wasn't consciously aware of it, it was clear that I was the recipient of everyone's gaze.

"This joint has really gone downhill, huh? Letting in any runt like this one?"

"Is he some lordless servant who's lost his way? What else would he be doing here?"

"Why don't we go and trip him up?"

If they did, they'd risk breaking their own legs, but I hoped they wouldn't try to put it to the test.

[Are you planning to kill everyone here after your job is done?]

Surprised by the sudden morbid suggestion, I asked, "What are you talking about?"

[Well, you're being awful bold. Even if you're not close by, isn't it risky to show your face so openly?]

“ ... ”

I stared back into her eyes for a moment.

[What's with that look?]

“It's just not like you to care enough to worry...”

[Do you have a death wish, you tiny thing?!]

It seemed she couldn't shake her suspicions no matter what I did.

Well, her concern wasn't unfounded. When an assassin reveals their face, it usually means they are ready to kill.

Though I'd left the academy far behind, given the recent scuffles with the rabble, word of me must have already spread throughout the city.

So, revealing my identity, including my face, would be just a matter of time.

But if I intended to make such a rookie mistake, why would I have bothered revealing my face at all?

I have a contingency plan for a reason.

“It'll be fine. After all, the people in this city won't remember my face anyway.”

She seemed about to question me when she suddenly stared directly at my face.

[You've done some trick on your face, haven't you?]

I hadn't changed my face but merely made sure others wouldn't remember it. To those looking at me, my face was not visible but covered by a thin veil of black mist. This was an adaptation of one of Mist's secret techniques, “Black Mist 1st Technique: Camouflage,” which induced memory interference in others, making them unable to recall my face. In other words, anyone who saw my face would be unable to recognize it as if afflicted with face blindness.

So, no matter what commotion I caused here, my true identity would remain undiscovered.

[As always, who else but a god could teach such a devious little technique?]

“...”

[What now?]

“Nothing.”

I wanted to retort that she too had inherited powers from that god, but I decided to hold my tongue.

I approached the betting counter with a calm expression. However, the middle-aged man who seemed to be the attendant looked at me with a puzzled look.

“Um, so, would you like to place a bet...?”

Before answering him, I examined today’s matchups laid out on the table. Although I doubted I’d find the name I was looking for, I checked anyway.

“Is it okay if I just watch without betting?”

“Sure, that’s fine. But may I see your identifica—”

The only thing close to an identification I had was the item that the servant had given me moments earlier.

“VIP?!”

The attendant couldn’t believe it when I showed him his ID.

“I’m sorry for not recognizing you sooner! Let me show you to the VIP seats immediately! What are you all waiting for?”

He shouted, and the guards rushed over. I hadn’t expected it, but apparently, I had stumbled upon a rather convenient ticket. It didn’t seem like the servant had tampered with it, either.

“What’s going on now? Even these young chicks are given VIP tickets?”

Just as things were settling down, a rough voice emanated from behind me.

“Wh-what are you doing?”

The owner of the voice suddenly snatched my ticket from the attendant. I didn't care to describe his appearance. A large thug with poor judgment – nothing more, nothing less.

“So this little chick managed to buy a VIP room with money? So are you some kind of aristocrat?”

I simply stared into his eyes without a word.

“Wow! Those are some savage eyes you've got there! Are you the hot topic? The boy who warned that touching him would lead to injury? Does that mean I'm in big trouble now?”

He asked mockingly, with an eerie laugh, even arrogantly placing his hand on my shoulder.

Fine.

He touched me even though he knew about my warning?

I smoothly grabbed his beard,

“...?”

and slammed his face down before he had time to realize what was happening.

Bang!

Although the room thundered, I paid no attention.

There were to be three more booms.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After the third echo, silence fell around us.

“Ga-gasp...”

He was lucky to be just dazed and not unconscious.

I tossed his bloodied face aside mercilessly.

“Where do I go?”

“The guards will show you,” the attendant said nervously.

From there, everything happened swiftly.

* * *

“The match is over! The victor is Albert!”

“Wowowow!”

Throughout the five bouts, I had only one feeling: boredom. I had settled into what was supposedly the best seat, the VIP section, but the fights were so lackluster they almost put me to sleep.

[Why would anyone pay to watch this?]

Ceyram felt the same way. The thrill of watching a fight only exists when it involves contenders stronger than oneself. The moment you think, ‘I could do better’, the excitement falls flat.

I had intended to pick up on some details from watching the match, but there seemed to be no significant takeaway.

I pulled out the directive given to me by my liege.

It was short enough to question its clarity, but that was all. A single sentence demanding the facility’s owner be killed without a proper name or detailed crime listed. For the receiver, it was a headache inducing order.

However, I had one advantage—I knew who the peculiar owner of this establishment was.

Lindsay Nihalov.

The owner of Lambert Cage and one of the actual rulers of the city.

Beyond a name, though, that's where my knowledge ended. What did he or she look like? Gender? Age? What was their purpose in life? Important details about Lindsay's identity remained hidden, and not even in my past life was this data available.

The only assumption was that, given they ran an arena, Lindsay must be wealthy. Even in my past life, Lindsay was rumored to have been approached for meetings.

Among those was Prince Luinel from the empire, who later became the emperor. Seeking war funds for his continental conquest, he had contacted them, only to be repeatedly rebuffed.

Eventually, after achieving continental unification, the emperor sent an army to absorb the neutral city, but Lambert had become a ghost town by then, with Lindsay nowhere to be found.

I was one of the knights sent to conquer Lambert during that very period.

I returned only with the smell of dust to show for it.

In the end, before any confirmation of Lindsay Nihalov could be made, it seemed necessary to make them come to me rather than the other way around.

I stood and headed back to the betting area.

"What can I do for you?" questioned the attendant nervously, a noticeable stiffness in his demeanor compared to earlier.

"I'd like to sign up as a contender."

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 85

Chapter 85: Lambert Cage (4)

Structures of rusted steel beams intertwine to evoke the image of a massive birdcage.

At first glance, the word 'cage' seemed apt for its appearance.

Currently, this place was unusually noisy due to the bustling clamor.

Though all the scheduled matches for the day had ended, there was uproar because the organizers had announced a new match.

It was called the debut match.

However, the response was generally negative, with skepticism and curses rather than positivity.

“Really? Now they’ve gone and put a kid in as a contender?”

“Has the Lambert Cage lost its shine? Or are they that short on fighters?”

From the VIPs seated in luxury to the regular spectators, everyone showed their lackluster reactions quite openly.

Whether he knew about it or not,

The boy inside the cage just stood still with his arms crossed, seemingly unperturbed.

“Isn’t he the brat who caused a commotion in the betting parlor earlier?”

“Seems like it, doesn’t it? Isn’t he the same scamp who beat that thug to a pulp? Could he be the lead character of that rumor?”

“The brazen kid who claimed he’d cripple anyone who crossed him? Gosh. The Delkia gang has been in a frenzy looking for him. Of all people, to have messed with a Delkia employee...”

“Right. If he didn’t want to die, he should have already left this place. Otherwise, if they catch him, every hole in his body will be stuffed, kekeke.”

With high-ranking ridicule and mockery floating around, the boy showed not a hint of wavering.

He simply waited quietly for the match to begin.

Soon, a hulking man appeared in front of the boy.

“What’s this? It’s not a debut match but an exhibition match?”

“Ho. Looks like we’re in for a high-level scene after a while!”

The reaction of the audience, which had been less than enthusiastic, took a 180-degree turn with the arrival of this fighter.

His name was Zelbird.

An overwhelming powerhouse and a brutal figure, he was like a veteran presence here.

“Wow, the organizers really are cruel. At this rate, I almost feel sorry for the kid?”

“Who wouldn’t agree? Out of all opponents, they put him up against Zelbird. That kid is not going to make it out alive today.”

Some even showed sympathy for the boy.

Betting odds were overwhelmingly in favor of Zelbird, and the spectators were eagerly anticipating just how badly the boy would be beaten, regardless of the outcome.

-Buuwoo

The blaring sound of the horn signaled the start of the match.

Zelbird, wearing a malicious smile, charged at the boy right away.

“Crush him, Zelbird!”

“Trample that brat into the ground!”

-Thump!

A dull thud suddenly silenced the crowd.

The audience had expected a series of satisfying blows, but after the first thud, nothing else was heard.

-Thud!

Instead, the sound of something massive falling resonated.

The eyes of the spectators widened, mouths agape.

It was a fall.

Not the boy, but Zelbird.

And he went down in a single blow.

* * *

“What on earth?”

In just a second, the unbelievable unfolded.

Gunther, who had been watching the match, doubted his eyes.

The boy evaded the punch with minimal movement, stepping and turning in one fluid motion.

In the brief moment his unbalanced opponent faltered, the boy didn't miss his chance and swung his right foot, taking down Zelbird, who couldn't even squeak before he hit the ground.

It was a concise, yet perfect motion.

To someone as confident in his fists as Gunther, this was enough to make his blood boil.

This movement wasn't something you could see from someone who had learned a bit of fighting.

It was the movement of mastery, achievable only by years of training and rigorous practice.

“Is this how it was?”

Gunther realized.

Perfect as the movement was, it didn't even show the full extent of the boy's skills.

He wondered how the boy would fight with fists, what swordplay he would show with a blade in hand, and what sort of magic he could wield.

His mind was wholly consumed with what abilities the boy possessed.

Then, all of a sudden, he stood up and rushed somewhere—it was the betting parlor.

“G-Gunther?!”

The employee who saw his face was shocked.

Beyond mere recognition, there seemed to be a profound dread in his gaze.

For him, the events of the day had been nothing short of tumultuous.

“What's the boy's name?”

“Excuse me?!”

“Just tell me the name of the boy in the cage now!”

The flustered employee frantically searched through documents on the desk to find the paper detailing the boy's information.

“Si-, Sion! His name is Sion!”

* * *

The night fell upon the Cage after all the scheduled matches had ended.

It was typically a quiet time, as the spectators would have left for other places by now.

However, that was not the case today.

A crowd gathered in front of the usually serene building, and they forcefully opened the main gate.

“Welco—...”

Lisa, the employee stationed in the lobby, was met with an unwelcome sight.

It was as if she had confronted someone she wished not to see.

A lavishly adorned woman, decked in bulky jewelry, marched up to her in a haughty manner.

Men of somewhat androgynous appearance followed behind the woman.

“What brings you here?”

Lisa asked in a stiff tone.

“I don’t want to linger, so I’ll get straight to the point. I heard there’s a little chick among your guests. Bring him out to me! Right now, this instant!”

Despite the threatening shout, Lisa was unfazed.

Instead, she seemed amused and even let out a snort.

“Ha! You come unannounced and demand to see our guest without any reason? Have you eaten away your integrity?”

“Integrity? Are you lecturing me on integrity in my presence? Enough! If you don’t want a mess here, bring him out now!”

The unexpected standoff escalated quickly.

Lambert Cage guards flocked to the scene, but their presence only intensified the already tense atmosphere.

“Are you doing this because of what happened earlier today? If that’s the case, I must say you have no shame. Making such a fuss over a lowly employee... Aren’t you embarrassed?”

“One more word from you—just one—and I’ll rip that mouth of yours first.”

Neither woman showed any sign of backing down.

“This is your last warning! If that brat isn’t in front of me by the count of three, you’ll all wish you’d gone to bed for the night!”

“Ha! Try me! Why would I stop you if you want to self-destruct? Go ahead!”

Unbothered, the woman started to count with her fingers.

Lisa glared back with fierce defiance.

“One...!”

“Looking for me?”

“...?”

Before she could even count to three, their attention shifted abruptly.

A boy with a calm demeanor was standing amid the tense gathering.

No one knew when he had arrived, but there he was, leisurely sitting and sipping tea.

‘What? When did he...?’

None of those in the lobby had noticed the boy’s presence.

* * *

Just when things were getting interesting, it seemed I was the cause of it all.

Since they were looking for me, I decided to show up, but everyone was suddenly speechless as if they had honey in their mouths.

With nothing to say myself, I waited for someone to break the silence.

“So, guest? How did you slip in unnoticed?”

“Probably from the moment you started to issue your last warnings,” I replied dryly, glancing at the woman by the door.

The person beside her whispered something in her ear.

Looks like they mentioned my name.

“Mr... Sion, is that correct?”

I simply nodded in response, without uttering a word.

[Seriously, what kind of a naming sense...]

It was just a disposable alias meant to be used for registering as a contestant.

“Looking for me?” I inquired in an unvarying tone.

“Ah! Yes, that’s right! Our lowest-ranking employee was trampled by a base youth, and we’ve been searching for him. When I heard you were at this facility, I had to come.”

“I don’t know if he was your man, but en route here, I did step on someone. I hope there’s no misunderstanding. He was the one who started the trouble.”

“I’m fully aware! I admit it was entirely our fault.”

Then why did she come looking for me?

Hardly to apologize—based on the tension just moments ago, her intent was presumably retaliation, but now such purpose seemed to have disappeared.

“Do visit us sometime when you’re free. We have many things that can pique your interest, Sion. If there’s anything you’re curious about, feel free to ask!”

She handed me a business card with an enticing smile.

Looking at the business card, I thought to myself: Is she insane?

Though my insides were those of an experienced adult, on the outside I was just a youngster barely grown—a kid being offered a business card to an establishment?

It seemed I wasn’t the only one who thought her offer was crazy.

“Delkia! Are you out of your mind? What are you giving the guest? You’ve targeted the wrong kind of client!”

“It’s not business. I’m formally inviting him,” she retorted, grinding her teeth at the staff member but offering me a broad smile.

“If you decide to come, you only need to bring yourself! No money required.”

The implication of ‘just bring yourself’ sent a chill down my spine.

“Well then, I look forward to seeing you soon. Have a good night, Mr. Sion~!”

I managed an awkward smile in response.

After her entourage left, the puzzled staff member approached me, still holding the business card.

“I’m so sorry, guest! You must be very uncomfortable?”

Uncomfortable wasn’t quite the word—more bewildered.

“And just so you know, stay clear of the red-light district! It could spell big trouble for you!”

Of course, I had no intention of going now, but it was evident that, aside from being a red-light district, the staff member was particularly wary of that woman.

“Why should I stay away?”

“It’s just that—well, you may not realize because you’re still young... Anyway, there’s a reason! That woman’s tastes are quite peculiar...”

“Why not just tell me straight?”

Finally, she burst out with the truth.

“...?!”

What did I just hear?

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 86

Chapter 86: The Lambert Cage (5)

In a night street occupied by bright red lanterns, the boisterous laughter of women intertwined with scents of alcohol wafting around every corner.

Beneath a tree adorned with one such lantern, two men smoked their cigarettes and discussed the recent events at The Lambert Cage.

“I really think I saw it for the first time – that delighted smile on Delkia’s face. It sent shivers down my spine.”

“Who wouldn’t? She was absolutely livid before, vowing to make a mockery of his manhood. But then, she seemed like a completely different person!”

Indeed, it was quite disconcerting for people to witness someone behave contrary to their usual self. Today, Delkia’s extraordinary demeanor was the center of that discomfort.

“I’ve heard laughter and screams coming intermittently from Delkia’s room, and she shows no sign of stopping.”

“Heh, seems young Zebird caught her fancy alright. Before long, there might be a new portrait hanging in Delkia’s room.”

With a hint of foreboding, the two men shook their heads together in agreement.

“But is it really okay? From what I heard, that boy Sion sent Zebird packing in one round at the cage. His cold gaze didn’t look like a mere child’s either.”

“Don’t you know? Once Delkia sets her sights on someone, reason goes out the window. She’s bound to try and bring him by any means necessary.”

“Indeed, we’re going to have a seriously tough time ahead...”

Their shoulders drooped at the thought.

“By the way, do you remember what the boy looks like?”

“Hmm? Definitely had black hair and sharp eyes... Huh? Can’t seem to remember now?”

It was only two hours since they’d left the cage. Although it should’ve been a fresh memory, the face of the boy named Sion just wouldn’t take shape in their minds.

It was not just them. Even Delkia, who paid considerable attention to Sion’s face, was experiencing the same issue.

“I can’t recall it! Not at all!”

Heaps of crumpled papers littered the floor of her room, each with chaotic scribbles of a person’s form.

“He was the best of all those I’ve seen! A unique man unlike any other! Why can’t I remember his face?”

No matter how hard she tried, Delkia couldn’t conjure up Sion’s face in her mind; it seemed to fade away the more she attempted to recall.

“I must! By any means necessary, I must bring him here! It’s simply inconceivable that such a youthful, lovely face could age or change!”

Screams of desperation echoed as portraits in the room shook violently.

-Thud

Several frames fell to the floor, but Delkia paid them no mind. Her deranged gaze was fixated on repeatedly uttering the boy’s name.

* * *

“So, Delkia caused a ruckus at the cage?”

In a shadowy space opposite to the light, a woman’s androgynous voice echoed with a chuckle as she received the report.

“And the boy, Sion?”

“He said he needed some fresh air and went out. We’ve already warned him about Delkia’s peculiar tastes, so he likely won’t visit her. He seemed to dislike the idea as well.”

“Oh? Lisa, you personally advised him? That’s rather unexpected.”

Lisa’s pupils wavered slightly.

“Th-that was just part of managing a VIP guest. There were no personal feelings involved. Nonetheless, he’s an important newcomer...”

-Bam!

As they were talking, the back door burst open with a loud thud. The man striding in with a smug grin was Gunther Rictus, owner of the western junkyard.

“Ha, still using this old place? Isn’t it time for a change?”

“Gunther! How dare you barge in here!”

Startled, Lisa tried to intervene, but the shadowy woman raised a hand to stop her, her interest piqued.

“You really have grown, Gunther. I remember when you were but a scrappy boy cleaning up trash at the cage... Though I suppose you couldn’t forget the taste of it, which is why you remain in such places...”

“Don’t carelessly shoot your mouth off. It could get ripped off for real. I’ve been having trouble controlling my emotions lately.”

Despite his menacing warning, she remained unconcerned.

“Anyway, get to the point. Why do you want to register as a fighter in your arena?”

Lisa couldn’t contain her surprise.

“Have you lost your mind? You were banned from the arena long ago, and now you suddenly want to fight in it again...”

“I want to take on that Sion kid!”

Gunther confidently proclaimed his intention.

“Sounds like a win-win situation, doesn’t it? Think about it! Me, of all people, returning to the arena to fight? Just imagine the crowds that would draw if I took on that kid? Who stands to profit then? You do!”

The woman smirked at his proposal.

“Ha, that’s classic Gunther. So, you really want a match with our VIP guest, then?”

“Just give me a straight answer. Are you going to arrange it, or not?”

In response to his brash inquiry, the woman casually assented.

“Fine. You’ll get your fight with this Sion character. But I can’t book it immediately. He’s just had his debut, you know? We need to build him up a bit more first.”

Though his debut was flashy, it would be foolish to rush him into a big fight. The proper strategy was to have him rack up wins and raise his profile first, baiting the audience for more money; that’s the rule of the arena.

“As always, you’re quick on the draw when it comes to money. Just don’t keep me waiting too long! You know I’m not one for patience.”

Having concluded his business, Gunther left without looking back.

“Are you sure about this, Lady Lindsay? Sion isn’t one of our employees, and if he’s unwilling, we can’t hold a match.”

Sion was, after all, a guest. If he chose to leave now, the cage would have no grounds to keep him.

“He came here seeking something. Let’s see what he wants. Lisa, find out his intentions. If he has terms, you can negotiate within reason.”

“Me, Ma’am?”

“Can’t do it?”

“No, no ma’am! I’ll make sure the match between him and Gunther happens!”

After completing her report, Lisa quickly left the room.

The woman remained alone, a strange smile playing on her lips before she disappeared into the shadows.

* * *

My only reason for participating in the cage fights was simple: to find Lindsay Nihalov, the owner of the facility and my assassination target.

What I had to do was straightforward.

Dominate every fighter in the cage.

Given the nature of the arena, if one fighter racked up an overwhelming number of victories, bets would naturally gravitate towards them.

Then, they'd have no choice but to seek me out.

I didn't plan to let this drag on for long.

This city... it didn't suit me.

-Whoosh

The night streets remained desolate, as always.

Just to be safe, I avoided the west side known for its nightlife, not even giving it a glance.

That woman, Delkia,

I knew she was off her rocker, but never guessed her tastes were so sordid.

Unless my target is there, I doubt I'll be visiting.

-Thud

Something stumbled into me around a corner.

"I'm so, so sorry!"

This time, unlike what occurred during the day, an apology swiftly followed.

But accepting it seemed almost graceless to me.

Helping the fallen one up, I asked, "Are you hurt?"

It was a young boy, perhaps eight years old.

"No, th-thank you."

He clutched a basket as big as he was.

His hesitant gaze suggested he had something he wanted to say.

"Do you, um, need these? Would you like to buy them?"

As he unfolded the cloth from the basket, the contents were revealed.

Cigarettes. Filling the basket completely, not just a couple.

An involuntary chuckle escaped me.

“Sorry, I’m a non-smoker.”

Never touched them in my past life, either.

“Ah, I’m really sorry!”

The boy hastily tried to leave, almost as if he had done something wrong.

“Where did you get these cigarettes?”

“Part of it’s from the Grey Merchant Association!”

“Grey Merchant Association?”

You have me at a disadvantage here; this is the first time I’m hearing of them.

For now, disregard the details. An organization using kids for such work—well, that would be typical of this city.

“Do you have to sell them all to go back?”

“Yes! If I sell everything by dawn... If not...”

His words trailed off, the fear apparent in his tremulous hands.

“I have an idea of what might happen. Do you have somewhere to sell them? That’s such a large quantity.”

“That’s why I was headed to the western pleasure quarter. Roaming around till sunrise—at least then, I might be able to sell them all and go back.”

Might go back if he’s lucky.

I doubted the place he would return to was pleasant.

In all likelihood, he wasn’t the only child forced to wander around like this.

This city... it was more rotten than I thought.

“Sigh.”

I exhaled deeply and pulled out a gold coin.

“Take this.”

“Huh?”

The boy looked utterly bewildered.

“I-I can’t make change for a gold coin...”

“No need. Take it, and give me all your cigarettes. I’ll buy them all.”

A sucker for sales if ever there was one.

“Another thing.”

I continued, pulling out another gold coin and slipping it into his pocket.

“This is for...”

“You won’t miss it. Spend this however you want.”

Tears started to form in the eyes of the boy.

“Th-thank you! Really, thank you!”

He was saying “thank you,” but his hands came together almost as if he was begging not to be struck.

[I knew it. Why not become a philanthropist instead?]

I almost can’t deny the suggestion.

Lunev as well, something feels like I’m losing my edge.

An ill-fit for good deeds and yet they don’t feel all that wrong.

I remained there for a while even after the boy left.

[Why have you turned to stone again?]

“Just doesn’t sit right leaving it like this.”

I have a hunch.

It’s as if not leaving this place will strangle me in some affair...

“Screaaaaam!”

The faint scream of a child disrupted the night.

At that moment, I realized my premonition was spot on.

I quickly changed course and walked toward the source of the cry.

“Hey! Didn’t I tell you I’d kill you if you sold cigarettes in this area again? Am I not speaking clearly enough?”

“That... that was all I had to sell, I was just about to go...”

The boy held out his empty basket in trembling hands.

“What? You really sold everything? Where did you hide the rest?”

A scene of glaring violence orchestrated by three grown men against a young boy I had just met.

“What’s this? There’s gold in the kid’s pocket?”

“No, don’t! That was given to me... by someone else!”

As his feeble protests fell on deaf ears, his frail body shuddered under their blows.

“You little thief! Where did you steal this from? A brat like you isn’t supposed to have things like this. What’s more, you’ve got two of them.”

They rummaged through his pockets, turning up the second coin.

“That... that coin is from someone, a kind person...”

His explanation was cut off by another heartless kick.

“Liars! You must’ve stolen them!”

“This is our lucky day. We can have a grand time in the pleasure quarter tonight!”

“I’m telling you, it’s a great day! Ki-ha-ha!”

Without saying a word, I approached them.

“Huh? What’s with this k—Aaargh!”

Seizing the hand holding the coin, I twisted it in a full circle.

-Crunch!

The snapping and screaming formed an exquisite melody.

I’d wager this fellow will have to adjust to eating with his other hand from tomorrow on.

“What the hell—who is this guy?”

As an ill-aimed punch came swinging from behind, I grabbed the man’s wrist and flung him forward.

The same man who had kicked the boy without restraint moments ago.

Now, I gripped one of his ankles and curled it violently.

“Aaaargh!”

This fellow will likely find walking quite challenging starting tomorrow.

Seeing a child lose his money and suffer injustice with no one to aid him was distressing.

I picked up the fallen coins and returned them to the boy.

“Uhh…”

Again, the boy was at a loss for words.

-Clap clap clap

An inexplicably irritating sound of clapping emerged from behind.

I turned slightly to see an unfamiliar, bear-like figure clapping at me.

“What’s all this? Such luck to run into each other in a place like this. What a coincidence.”

The tone in his voice suggested he knew me.

But I had no memory of him.

Still, he didn’t quite give off the air of a petty thug.

“It’s you, isn’t it? The new kid in town, that Sion guy.”

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 87

Chapter 87: Lambert Cage (6)

In a surreal subspace created by divine power, the head of Mist, Silica, sat alone in an expansive square, continuing her mental training. The controlled emotions, unresponsive to any external stimulus, were visible through her serenely closed eyes. As she sat there, a handful of black mist slowly approached her.

(You’ve assigned Sian an interesting task, haven’t you?)

Her closed eyes snapped open at the comment.

“What do you mean?” she inquired.

(I’m talking about the person mentioned in the directive. He’s not part of the purification work you planned, is he?)

Silica couldn’t immediately respond.

“... I won’t deny it.”

(No blame from me. I was just surprised you sent the boy on a personal errand, that's all.)

She stood up and responded with composure.

“From the moment Sian first met me, he was a child who had everything perfectly in place, so much so that it made one wonder why such a child exists in this world. You must know the reason, Lord Aer.”

(...)

Aer smiled imperceptibly.

“I have no intention of pressing you on that matter now or in the future. However, Sian needs to realize something.”

(What might that be?)

“What he can and cannot do with the power he possesses. There are indeed personal feelings involved in this mission. Through it, Sian must come to a realization. Only then will he be able to use his power in the future without regret.”

A faint smile bloomed across her lips like a budding sprout.

* * *

As I mentioned before, I've used Mist's secret technique to conceal my face so others can't recognize me. Now, I've encountered someone who has recognized me for the first time. This was definitely not something to just shrug off.

I pretended not to care outwardly and asked him casually.

“Do you know me?”

“Of course, I do! At first, I thought your face looked a bit long, but seeing your punches, I recognized you instantly! They were just like the quick movements you showed earlier!”

The nuance suggested he had seen my match during the day. He recognized me just by my movements?

His brain might not be full, but his senses deserve credit.

“Gunther, sir?” Upon seeing him, the gangsters sprawled out on the ground were startled.

I hadn’t heard the name Gunther before.

“Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gunther Rictus. I manage the waste depot in the west and am one of the rulers of this city.”

One of the city’s rulers?

So he’s a high-up.

Putting Gunther aside, the gangsters’ faces were a sight to behold.

Despite their broken limbs, they were engulfed in tremendous fear of Gunther rather than me.

“I am a fan of yours, for starters. Your flamboyant technique impressed me! It’s like seeing my younger self!”

“You’re out of your mind.”

His words were laughably absurd.

“Don’t get me wrong! I mean it in a good way! So I rushed to the head of the Cage right after the match ended, asking to be matched up with you!”

My brow furrowed at his words.

“The head?”

It was a term I couldn’t just ignore.

“Oh, you don’t know? Such an odd woman steeped in mystique. Pay it no mind. You don’t need to know...”

Without another word, I walked calmly towards him.

Something seems to be easily resolved.

“Wow? The atmosphere’s changing, huh? My words seem to have hit a nerve!”

Two steps away, within arm’s reach or a kick in less than a second.

Within that range, I asked with unperturbed composure.

“Do you know the owner of Lambert Cage?”

He grinned and replied.

“Of course, I know! I’m one of the few in this city who know her face, right? The lady Lindsay Nihalov...”

-Whoosh-

The moment he mentioned the name I had been seeking, my body was in motion.

-Thunk-

My right foot, swung in a semicircle, was aimed at his head.

Despite a dull thud, he didn’t budge, blocking it with his arm.

“Ha! What are you trying to do?”

The search was over, and my task was clear.

To make him talk in this place now.

About that Lindsay Nihalov.

Responding to my fighting spirit, he clenched his fist on the opposite side and slammed it down with force.

-Bang!-

I dodged effortlessly by spinning, avoiding the impact.

Such a mighty strike that it could split the ground; the earth trembled momentarily.

“You’re unexpectedly spirited for your appearance. You wanted to fight with me?”

I did not bother to respond.

“Alright, no need to wait for the day of the match! If you want, and I want, there’s no problem battling it out right here and now! Kahaha!”

I felt a need to first shut that blathering mouth of his.

Correcting my posture, I mustered strength in my fists and rushed him again at that moment.

“Stop, Gunther!”

An unexpected, familiar voice caused me to automatically turn.

-Swish-

A short dagger’s blade split the air between us.

Fluttering brown hair and a neatly dressed uniform.

It was Cage’s enigmatic employee.

Behind her, brawny guards stood at the ready.

“Are you alright, guest?”

“Huh?”

I was momentarily flustered by the unexpected inquiry.

“Gunther, what is this nonsense! How dare you mess with our guest outside? Do you want your ugly mug buried in a manure pit to decompose?”

I couldn’t help but chuckle at her quite forward statements.

Clearly, this employee was also not quite right in the head.

“What kind of trash talk is that? He attacked me first!”

“I’m not listening to you! What are you doing? Protect our guest already!”

Her words prompted the guards into swift action.

A protective ring formed around me without delay.

What's with this overprotection?

"Who would think I'm not a VIP with all this royal treatment. Can somebody relax the security? Do I look like a thug who doesn't know when to stop?"

While I was puzzled, it seemed clear from the look on the employee's face that she indeed considered me such.

"Gunther, explain yourself! For what reason did you attack our guest at this ungodly hour?"

"I'm going crazy. It wasn't me, he attacked me first! And by the way, this is clearly my jurisdiction, isn't it? What's it to you guys if I want to make a scene in my own territory?"

Territory.

Now that I think about it, Gunther had mentioned he was one of the city's rulers when he introduced himself. Are they playing some sort of territorial game?

Considering this, how did this employee find me?

Unintentionally, I found myself caught in an awkward tension between the two of them.

The two, like predators encountering another predator, maintained fierce gazes.

"It's done! What use is there fighting with you?"

Surprisingly, it was the rogue who backed off first.

"If you really don't want to see a mess, then arrange that match with your friend. You know what I'm saying?"

With a cigarette in hand, he turned to me and said,

"Then I'll look forward to our match, Sion!"

After his booming farewell, Gunther disappeared into the alleyway.

-Thump-

“Are you unharmed, guest?”

I found myself at a loss for words for a moment.

“Why did you come here?”

“Well, that is... I was on the tail of that rogue, I mean Gunther, and coincidentally ran into you... Anyway, it's a relief! I'm glad I could protect the guest from his menace.”

“I was the first to attack, though.”

“What?”

A palpable silence enveloped those around us.

“Oh! That's right, it was... Gunther started making trouble for the guest first...”

“Not at all. I simply attacked first.”

She seemed speechless at my blunt response.

“What... then why did you?!”

“Well... because of this little friend, shall I say?”

I pointed to the boy sitting on the floor, who flinched and tried to hide inside an empty basket, looking quite adorable.

Of course, there's a real reason, but there's no need to spell it out.

“Ahem...”

Perhaps thinking she was embroiled in a troublesome situation, she held her head tightly.

“By the way, I heard something strange from that man Gunther?”

“What do you mean?”

“He said he went to the head of this facility because he wanted to fight with me.”

“Ah... he ended up telling you after all.”

With a look of enlightenment, she bowed her head.

“I won’t deny it. It’s true. Gunther showed up out of the blue earlier, demanding a match with the guest.”

“Why?”

“He must want to fight you. He was originally from here, from Cage. He used to be a popular fighter, but a few years ago he was permanently expelled for killing someone in the middle of a match. Now he wants to set up a match with you, and I’ve got quite the headache.”

So Gunther was from here too?

But considering how things had been earlier and the atmosphere, it seemed he had some kind of connection with this employee.

It’s none of my business, but there’s one thing I must clarify.

“So, regardless of my wishes, you’ve arranged a match? I’m not affiliated with you guys, am I?”

As if she’d been waiting for that, she swallowed hard and said,

“Well, it’s not confirmed yet, but Gunther and our manager both want that match. So we wanted to ask the guest about his willingness.”

“The manager?”

I couldn’t help but react to the word.

“Why, why do you ask?”

“When you mention manager, you mean the owner of Lambert Cage?”

“Yes, right. Our owner, Lindsay Nihalov, but...”

I already knew that Lindsay Nihalov was the owner of Cage; not particularly important information. The issue is this woman.

Her words and demeanor suggested she had received instructions direct from her owner.

I concealed my thoughts and spoke plainly.

“Arrange the match. Tomorrow, even today if possible. The sooner, the better.”

“Are... are you serious?”

She was taken aback by my sudden agreement.

“But there’s a condition.”

“Say it, please! I’ll do my best to accommodate!”

My gaze turned to the little boy selling cigarettes, who looked lost as to what to do in this situation.

“Let him work at your facility.”

* * *

Just a week since the rumor of a rising star at Cage had spread, the place was swarming with a record-breaking crowd.

“I was doubtful, but it’s true! Gunther from the waste depot is back. What wind blew him here?”

“I heard Gunther himself asked for a match. He seems pretty keen to fight the audacious kid.”

“Giggle, I guess Cage is a long-term spectacle. Who would’ve thought that such an inconsequential child would one day reign supreme here?”

A week.

The time it took for a boy named Sion to conquer Cage.

Considering only the match time, it barely reached five minutes, and he had never fought more than two combinations.

While his feat was jaw-dropping, it wasn't all good news for the spectators seeking sensational entertainment.

But now, a contender has appeared in Cage who could satisfy the crowd's taste for thrill.

"Ladies and gentlemen, lovers of Lambert Cage, sorry to make you wait! Today's much-anticipated match starts now!"

The announcer, wearing sunglasses, declared the beginning from the center of the stage.

In response, the crowd was stirred in an instant.

Without delay, the fighters appeared from both sides.

Gunther and Sion.

In contrast to Gunther's gleeful demeanor, Sion maintained his usual stoicism.

"Folks, we can't just enjoy a fiery match like today's idly! A special rule is being added to this match right now!"

The murmurs began among the crowd.

"A special rule? They're not giving the boy a handicap, are they?"

"Could be. Even a kid with a punch can't match Gunther. Maybe there's a clause about not killing each other? Teehee!"

"I just hope they don't impose some strange restriction..."

Most of the audience expected Gunther to win.

Although Sion had performed well, memories of Gunther's ruthless antics were more vivid in the minds of the viewers.

Anticipating the crowd's psychology, the announcer grinned and announced,

"No-rule match! Today's game will proceed as a no-rule match!"

A moment of silence descended among the spectators.

“Exactly as it sounds, a match without rules! Not only fists but also weapons, magic, even trickery are allowed! Any means to overpower the opponent is acceptable!”

Silence turned into cheers in an instant.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 88

Chapter 88: Lambert Cage (7)

“No-rules match?”

This was the first time I was hearing about this.

To be more precise, it seemed like I was the only one who had not been informed.

While I was somewhat perplexed, Gunther already looked as if he had been anticipating this, donning his prepared iron knuckles.

“Your expression is odd. Didn’t you hear that our match is a no-rules one?”

“I didn’t hear about it.”

“Hmm, maybe the message didn’t get to you? If you have any need for a weapon, now’s the time to get it. I’ll let that slide.”

There’s no need for such courtesies.

Although I hadn’t drawn it out because there was no use for it until now,

I have my own unique arms with me, unparalleled in this world.

I took Ceyram out from my possession and assumed my stance.

[Does it seem like you're drawing me out reluctantly?]

"You catch on quick."

Honestly, whether rules existed or not, I didn't really want to use Ceyram against this guy.

The feeling of cutting him didn't seem like it would be too pleasant.

"Don't you know, Sion? I'm going to kill you in this match!"

His words, which didn't sound like a joke at all, were so shocking that I couldn't even muster a laugh.

But looking at his face suggested that he wasn't kidding.

"I thought death matches weren't literally to the death?"

"Of course not! But I'm serious. You're the first in a long while to stir my fighting spirit. This isn't just a thirst that can be quenched by punching fists!"

He seemed ready to burst with something brewing inside him.

"I was raised in this Cage and have fought countless opponents. Not one or two have had their jaws dislocated or limbs crippled by my fists. You could end up the same!"

What was he trying to say?

"You know why I left the Cage?"

"Because you killed someone?"

"Right! As time passed, I couldn't hold back my growing bloodlust and ended up killing my opponent during a match. But that's not the only reason..."

As if to show me, he thrust forward the knuckles he was wearing.

I noticed they were tinged with a fiery brown hue.

"I believe that useless trash should be eliminated from this world. That's why I manage the waste dump! Trash that has lost its usefulness should be disposed of, and that includes people!"

I couldn't pinpoint why, but my brow furrowed in disapproval.

Or maybe, deep down, I knew all along.

"Enough talk! I'm going to fight you with everything I have, so you better do the same! Understand, Sion?"

Anyone would think this was an intensely fiery contest between two men.

But 'best effort'...

If we're discussing the dictionary definition, it implies putting one's full sincerity and strength into the endeavor.

Right now, this guy was demanding of me to give my best, like some sort of coercion, wasn't he?

Let's think about it.

Do I need to show my 'best' to this guy right now?

No.

Definitely not.

What I should be showing in this situation is not my best effort with all my sincerity, but mercy that would make him realize his worthless status.

It's about time I threw in a word of my own.

"Choose."

"Hmm?"

"Left or right?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm asking which arm you'd prefer to keep."

His shoulders twitched markedly.

“I don’t follow. I told you to give your best, not to put on some petty bravado. Are you mocking me?”

“If you can’t choose, then I’ll make the decision for you.”

His previously flimsy mood suddenly shifted.

“You... do you really want to die?”

Had he not been telling me all along that he would kill me?

I couldn’t figure out what he was sour about, but serious killing intent began to show in his eyes.

“I was trying to hold back, but I can’t any longer. Just looking at your disrespectful gaze makes my blood boil. Consider this a warning—get rid of that look right now!”

Of course, I wasn’t the kind to just comply.

I maintained the same expression without any reaction.

“Let’s correct that. I’m going to make your death as painful as possible. Make sure you beg me for death, so that there’ll be no regrets left in your life!”

This time, a laugh escaped me.

It resembled a phrase I often used in the past.

Here I was, hearing it from such a man, and I couldn’t help but laugh.

-Buuuu!

At that moment, the sound of a horn signaled the start of the match.

-Tat

He immediately dashed at me, his body shooting forward.

Simultaneously, mana with a brown tint emanated from his hands.

“Petrification!”

-Ssshkk

Accompanied by the sound of something cracking, his hands began to harden like stone.

It was as if he had donned sturdy gauntlets, radiating an intimidating presence.

Earth magic Petrification, a spell that reinforces parts of the body by self-applying it.

Depending on the magical power, it could create a defense that no blade or weapon could easily cut through.

Of course, it could be used offensively as well.

-Whoosh

At a distance of five steps.

Thinking he was in range, he swung his fist wide.

His trajectory aimed precisely at my face.

I had few options.

I just had to wait patiently for him to throw his punch.

Four steps, three steps, two steps.

Between zero seconds and one second.

At the very moment his fist was about to reach my face.

-Swish

I dodged back one step,

-Slash

And lifted Ceyram vertically to slash.

-Slash

Naturally, as my gaze lifted, I saw something gray soaring into the air.

Red liquid spurted out like a fountain, and without anyone to catch it, it fell carelessly.

“Aaaagh!”

A piercing scream reverberated through the arena.

* * *

The atmosphere in the combat arena turned solemn as if doused with cold water.

The spectators were stunned, their reactions turning from shock to bewildered.

On one side, Gunther, with one arm severed, screamed in agony, while the boy looked on with a serenely calm face.

Was this a spectacle fit for human eyes?

Overwhelmed with unfamiliar fear, the spectators began to suffer unexplainable symptoms such as shortness of breath and trembling limbs.

It felt similar to facing a grotesque demon, even though they hadn't experienced it directly.

Some even fled the Cage in panic.

“What? What's happening?”

However, among them, one person couldn't take his eyes off the boy.

A burly mustached man in the VIP seats, Morris Gerick.

One of the city's rulers and head of the Grey Traders' Guild in the northern part of Lambert.

Through his fancy golden binoculars, he didn't focus on the boy's face, but on the amethyst blade he held.

“I can’t believe it! But that’s unmistakably...”

Morris knew.

The weapon the boy held was no ordinary dagger.

Decades of business acumen made him certain.

The sinister aura emanating from the sharp blade,
the mysterious smoke cocooning it among the droplets of blood,
and the gemstone filled with madness, as if taken from a demon’s eye.

When putting all this together, there was only one conclusion to reach.

The sword the boy held was undoubtedly a...

“Demonic blade!”

* * *

I watched the man writhing in pain for quite a while.

I had no intention of delivering speedy blows.

I just hoped this would end as is.

Eventually, the hesitant referee approached and asked me if I would end the match, to which I agreed.

As a result, the duel concluded anticlimactically.

It was an outcome I had entirely anticipated.

“Good work, Sir Sion!”

As I entered the waiting room, the kid who had been peddling cigarettes until yesterday handed me a drink.

“Started working here?”

“Yes! Manager Lisa assigned me to help with the Cage facilities!”

Facility assistant, huh?

It didn't seem like a bad job.

In reality, whatever he did would certainly be better than selling cigarettes on the street.

But manager?

So she was actually someone directly under the owner's command, and yet, why would such a woman be working as a mere employee in the lobby...

"S-Siiiiir!!"

My train of thought was interrupted by the ringing shout of a familiar voice.

Disheveled and panting heavily, as if she had something crucial to say, she ran towards me.

"There's been a mistake! Some form of oversight! There must have been an error in the report... I can't believe something like this would happen without my knowledge..."

"It would be nice if you could explain more clearly."

"The no-rules aspect of this match! Did you know about it?"

I shook my head.

"As expected, that's right? I'm so sorry! It's a blatant mistake on our part! To not even inform you of such an important detail beforehand, I'm really truly sorry!"

She kept bowing and apologizing repeatedly.

I snorted dismissively.

"I don't get it."

"It's my fault! There's nothing I can say about that! It's only natural for you to think that..."

“I’m not talking about you. Even if you were unaware, there was no need to rush over to me, don’t you think? Shouldn’t you be hurrying over to that man with the severed arm instead?”

After all, I’m completely unharmed.

If she really wanted to do some damage control, it would have seemed more appropriate to rush to the owner of the waste dump,

“That’s ridiculous!”

Her response made it clear that I was wrong.

“Mr. Sion, you are a valued guest here! I am a manager who prioritizes the convenience of such guests! If a guest suffers an unexpected disadvantage, it is only right for me as a manager to rush over and apologize!”

Hmm.

I temporarily lost words.

In a place where discipline and duty were often thrown aside, here stood someone with a staunch professional ethic.

Suddenly, my satisfaction with the service inside the facility surged tremendously.

“Pardon my interruption, but...”

Suddenly, a middle-aged man’s voice interjected.

“Do you mind if I have a moment of your time?”

The look on his face seemed like that of a merchant who was good at wheeling and dealing.

Unlike me, meeting him for the first time, the manager’s expression showed a mix of disbelief and shock.

“Morris?”

“...!”

The kid, who had been silent until now, also quickly hid behind my leg.

“I’m sorry for showing up unannounced. But no matter what, I had to meet the person in front of me.”

There were a lot of people here who couldn’t seem to contain their eagerness to find me.

I answered with an indifferent look.

“Are you talking about me?”

“Yes! My name is Morris Gerick. I serve as the head of a small merchant group called the Grey Traders’ Guild.”

The moment I heard the term Grey Traders’ Guild, my gaze instinctively turned to the kid.

The trembling in his hands told me that he was frightened of the man before us.

“Indeed, you have more nobility about you than the mere sight of you in the spectators’ stand suggested. You have the look of an aristocrat’s son.”

It seems the merchant’s tag wasn’t for show after all.

I maintained a dispassionate expression.

“Could you please excuse us for a moment, Manager Lisa?”

“What? But...!”

“I would like to make a business proposition to Sir Sion. I am here alone, without any guards, so you can rest assured.”

There was indeed no hint of anyone else around aside from him.

After a moment of hesitation, she bit her lip and said,

“I’ll give you ten minutes...”

“Thank you.”

With a look of reluctance, she left the waiting room with the kid in tow, leaving two men alone in the room.

I wasn't particularly delighted with the situation.

On the other hand, the man named Morris smiled with an inscrutable intensity as he spoke to me.

He was firm on wanting to make a business proposition.

For a merchant to propose a deal, it implies that they want to buy or sell something.

But at this point, I had neither the desire to buy anything nor anything to sell.

“Let me cut straight to the point.”

His eyes, however, were filled with an indecipherable conviction.

“What do you mean?”

“Your demonic sword... Would you sell it to me?”

“...!”

[What?]

Ceyram's incredulous gasp echoed in my mind as if it were an actual voicemail.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 89

Chapter 89: Lambert Cage (8)

I had been complacent.

I had never used any secret techniques, nor had I even infused mana into it.

To others, it probably just looked like a somewhat gloomy sword.

However, this man had clearly stated it.

He wanted to buy a demonic sword from me...

“What do you mean?”

Naturally, I replied while pretending ignorance.

“There’s no need to beat around the bush. In this city, we’re the only two who know that your sword is a demonic sword.”

If he was set on buying it, he wouldn’t be blabbering about it everywhere.

The problem was, how did Ceyram recognize it as a demonic sword?

I casually moved one hand behind my back.

-Woong

If things got out of hand, I could use ‘Shadow’s Persona’ to engulf everything in flames and kill him.

“Ha ha! You are quite wary of me. I understand perfectly. Then, I should first explain why I’m so sure your sword is a demonic sword.”

-Pat

I extinguished the rising mana in an instant.

If he was going to tell me himself, there was no need to act rashly.

“Let’s hear it then.”

Morris spoke as if he had been waiting.

“I originally worked for a grand trade association known as Albas Merchant Group. Two years ago, after its head, Zickerman Albas, was assassinated by a mysterious killer, I broke away from the organization and established my own merchant group. Since then, I have taken root in this city and grown my power to the point where I am referred to as a manager.”

Zickerman Albas.

A name that was familiar to me.

That was the man who had tried to sell off still egg-bound Nana.

I had never suspected he was a merchant under him.

Coincidentally, he was now facing the very assassin who had killed his former boss.

“I’ve always had a keen interest in weapons, including swords, so I’ve kept active in that field. As a result, I’ve seen all of the notable swords on the continent. To exaggerate a bit, I’ve seen all the legendary swords crafted by human hands.”

“So?”

“There are exactly two swords I have never seen – only two: the Holy Sword and the Demonic Sword, crafted not by humans but by divine power. Although their very existence was ambiguous, I always believed they must exist on this land and collected information about them.”

His tone held a quite confident pride.

“Then today! I finally saw it! The splendid form of a demonic sword, which has been sleeping shrouded in the mysteries of the ages and has now finally appeared to the world! My eyes are not mistaken! It’s what I’ve been longing for!”

I wasn’t trying to evaluate him, but...

This Morris, perhaps he was the type of person the demonic sword would like the most.

Perfectly mad, just the right kind to devour.

“Even if you did not know it was a demonic sword, it makes no difference! Sell me the sword! Name your price, and I will pay it! If you want another sword, I can offer multiple top-grade legendary swords! Just say the word! If only you would give me the demonic sword, I can provide anything!”

-Sssss

A black mist rose from within and began coiling around my body.

Just for reference, I didn't do this.

This phenomenon was a precursor to the sword's physical manifestation, a decision made by the other party to this conversation...

[It's been a while, hasn't it? A mere human recognizing me?]

Without any time to react, Ceyram materialized, slinging an arm over my shoulder.

"Oho..."

Morris looked up at Ceyram with an expression filled with reverence.

"Indeed! It's true that a divine weapon possesses a soul! What an honor it is, Morris, to behold the magnificent presence of the demonic sword!"

Is he intentionally trying to make things difficult for me now?

"What are you doing?"

Displeased, I looked at her and asked.

[Well, I can't stand you talking about me without me.]

It was a relief that there were no others around because this could very quickly turn into a very troublesome situation.

[Fine. Then let me ask you something. By the looks of you, you don't seem capable of wielding me magnificently in the air, so what is it that you want with me?]

I was curious too.

It didn't seem like he would be flying around waving me, and, judging by the atmosphere, he didn't appear to be the type to sell me elsewhere either.

What did this man plan on doing with a demonic sword that he couldn't even use?

“That’s correct. Since I am not a warrior skilled with swords, I certainly cannot wield you freely. However, let me ask you the opposite question. Do I need to wield you, the demonic sword?”

“.....?”

Both she and I expressed curiosity almost simultaneously.

“Why not have you, the demonic sword, wield me? Take everything I have – my money, power, even my body! All you need to do is grant me a tiny bit of divine favor!”

[A favor? Exactly what do you mean?]

At Ceyram’s question, Morris answered with a smile filled with joy.

“It’s nothing grand! After all, aren’t you a god? As a noble god! Just kindly pat this insignificant human creature...”

-Crack!

“Keuk!”

Mid-sentence, his throat was suddenly seized and he was lifted in the air.

Did Ceyram grab him?

No, I did.

I had a fairly good idea of what this man’s intentions were.

[.....?]

Ceyram looked quite surprised at my action.

Do you know what’s one of the things I hate the most?

It’s when someone makes worthless claims with a face full of bliss, fully believing that it will happen to them.

What kind of life must one live for such a nonsensical belief system to develop?

Really, divine favor from a demonic sword?

What does he see me as, and her, to come out with that kind of talk?

It's frustrating enough to want to give him a new life.

"Please, spare me..."

The man struggled in agony, but my grip did not loosen.

"What's the matter?"

Noticing the commotion, guards rushed in from the corridor.

Ceyram naturally concealed herself, and I released his throat as his breath was nearly spent.

"Hu-huff..."

"Morris, sir!"

The guards, who seemed to be his escorts, rushed to support him.

Some of them drew their swords to confront me, but,

"That's enough! Sheathe your swords...!"

Morris, who had barely regained his senses, stopped the guards.

His grotesque smile was still intact.

"It seems the master is a bit excited. You seem to hold him very dear."

I did not reply.

"I will visit again. Please consider my offer carefully..."

Almost a second later, he seemed to be in deep contemplation.

Whether to tear off this detestable garbage's neck right now.

In the end, not killing him was better than an easy death, and that decision extended his life a bit longer.

Morris fled the cage as if escaping.

* * *

-Creek

The iron door opened hastily, revealing Lisa's anxious face.

As if waiting for her, a woman sat in the room.

"You seem to have a lot to say, Lisa?"

The woman smiled leisurely, while Lisa looked clearly uneasy.

"You don't need to say it. You're wondering why the rules of the game changed without you knowing, aren't you?"

"...Yes, that's right."

Lisa did not deny it.

"Could it be that Lady Lindsay made a special decision to change the rules?"

At the mention of a reason, the woman's smile widened even further.

"Well, in this case, it might be better to talk about the conviction gained from that reason, rather than discussing the reason itself."

Her words were somewhat enigmatic.

"What do you mean?"

"Aren't you curious? That notorious Gunther was left incapacitated without throwing a single punch and lost an arm. Who is this boy and where has he come from, to show such unbelievable movement?"

Sion was clearly out of the ordinary.

Despite being just around thirteen years old, this boy knocked down grown men several times his size with a single punch, and demonstrated unimaginably fast movements to ordinary people.

The important thing was that the movements he had shown so far were undoubtedly not the extent of his abilities.

To this point, not just her but anyone who had witnessed him would have come to this natural question.

“Has Lady Lindsay found the answer?”

Lisa asked, looking directly into the woman’s eyes.

“Let me ask you instead. Do you remember that boy’s face?”

“His face?”

It was impossible for her not to remember.

Wasn’t it that face she had seen every day for the past week?

In fact, it was the very face she had seen just before.

Unless there was amnesia, there was no way she could not remember, and yet,

Lisa’s face soon twisted into an anxious expression.

“I can’t remember...”

Although she clearly remembered his head, eyes, nose, lips, voice, and tone, the image of his entire face somehow did not come to mind.

The woman had an expression as if she had expected just that.

“It’s a secret art called ‘Black Mist’ (暗霧).”

It was the first time Lisa had heard of this skill.

“In simple terms, it’s a trick that makes use of a certain power to prevent others from remembering your face. So despite having the memory, you can’t recall it.”

“I’ve never heard of such a skill!”

“There’s a good reason for that. That’s a skill exclusive to beings referred to as Mists, authorized beings in this land...”

Suddenly, Lisa’s pupils trembled severely.

“Did you just say... ‘Mist’?”

* * *

“Aaaargh!”

-Thud thud thud

The compound was filled with the agonized cries of a man and the unknown thuds.

The members could merely watch, unable to open their mouths, filled with tentative fear of not knowing when disaster might strike them.

-Crrrack! Thump! Squelch!

It was a strangely brutal sound that sent chills down the spine of those who heard it.

In fact, the members watching were so horrified, they all averted their gazes.

“Haah...”

Finally, when his rage seemed to have simmered, Gunther looked down and saw his missing right arm, which prompted him to once again roar.

“Siiioon!”

Gone was the frivolous Gunther of before.

Now, he was filled with extreme rage due to the humiliating defeat he had never experienced before.

“Please, calm down, Gunther! If you’re not careful, your wounds might reopen!”

“Shut up!”

Despite the protests of the members, he paid them no heed.

“I have to kill him! I have to kill that guy! If I don’t, I feel like I will die!”

But he knew.

No matter how he attacked, beating Sion was thoroughly impossible.

The throbbing pain of a severed arm was like a warning.

“...!”

Suddenly, he saw a crumpled pack of cigarettes in front of him.

Seeing it, Gunther recalled the encounter with Sion and the kid selling cigarettes in the slums, who was receiving bullying from the members.

That kid was now living in Lambert Cage, working odd jobs.

Suddenly, a meaningful smile spread across Gunther’s face, as if he had thought of a plan.

“That’s right, whatever it takes, I just have to kill him. If that guy dies and I remain alive, that alone is the greatest victory!”

He rubbed his severed arm and let out a maniacal laugh.

The floor was covered in a pool of blood without him realizing it.

(To be continued)

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 90

Chapter 90. The Lambert Cage (9)

Somewhere around the entertainment alleyways to the west of Lambert.

The scene was in such disarray that it was hard to believe it was a woman’s space.

Crumbled papers were everywhere in the hallway, and the smell of broken perfume bottles and cosmetics made one scrunch their nose in discomfort.

“What a mess.”

Morris, who had been clicking his tongue, soon stopped in front of a door.

Sounds that were hard to tell if they were sighs or screams came from inside, but he opened the door without hesitation.

“This is no condition for anyone, Delkia.”

Her hair was disheveled, and her face looked pale, as if she had been living like a recluse for days.

“Morris... Why are you here?”

Delkia looked up at Morris with eyes that still had life in them.

“There’s only one reason a merchant would come looking for someone, isn’t there? I’ve come to propose a deal, of course.”

Sitting in a chair, Morris picked up a paper from the floor and examined its contents.

“I never imagined it would be this severe. You seem quite infatuated with that boy.”

“What do you know?”

“Who in this city doesn’t know about your peculiar tastes? I’ve heard you’ve even stopped managing your properties lately. Precisely since you met that boy Sion.”

Morris unfurled the paper he was holding for her to see.

On the paper was an unfinished drawing of a young boy.

“I won’t waste your time, so let’s get to the point. Let’s join hands, Delkia.”

“What do you want?”

“No need to be too guarded. I am not after the same thing as you. You just want the boy’s body, don’t you?”

Delkia did not deny it.

“Take him. I just want one thing that the boy possesses. Give that to me, and I won’t care what you do with him.”

“Are you suggesting we collaborate?”

In other words, a reciprocal relationship.

They were to cooperate to achieve each other’s goals.

With a skeptical heart, Delkia asked,

“What do I need to do?”

Morris smiled and handed her an item he had prepared.

It was a small glass bottle containing a vivid pink liquid.

“This is a top-grade paralysis potion imported from the Kingdom of Garam. It’s mixed with various poisons, so just one drop will instantly paralyze the body without harming life, as all harmful substances have been magically removed. Essentially, it’s a potion that only makes a person lose consciousness.”

She examined the bottle with suspicious eyes.

“You want me to administer this?”

“Arranging the board isn’t my specialty, you see. My role is simply to supply the item, not to carry out the deed directly.”

Delkia glanced at Morris, opened the bottle, and brought it to her nose.

“...!”

As the strong scent of flowers spread, she suddenly felt dizzy and quickly removed her nose from the bottle, then immediately closed it.

“Can you do it, Delkia?”

-Twitch

Her eyes fluttered nervously, and her lips trembled.

It's said that humans turn their ugliest when their desired desires approach them.

Her creepy smile at this moment was exactly that.

"Yes, it's possible. Of course, it is..."

Reflected in her gleaming eyes was the image of a boy, stripped of his dignity.

* * *

Day 8 in Lambert.

I feel like I've done a lot, but it seems like there's not much to show for it.

It's time to think.

Why did I come here?

To kill the owner of this Lambert Cage, Lindsay Nihalov.

And what did I do for that?

I participated in the arena as a contestant, making them search for me instead.

However, contrary to my expectations, the owner of this facility has not shown themselves to me at all.

Did I underestimate Lindsay too much?

They say when a person is desperate, they start to have unreasonable thoughts, and that's exactly where I am now.

Ceyram, lying on the bed, was looking at me with eyes full of pity.

[You wouldn't make that expression even if you were chewing on dung. You've got eyes, why not take a look in the mirror?]

Led by her words, my gaze naturally turned toward the mirror.

“...”

Definitely looking pathetic.

It was a tough day yesterday.

Well, it's not like I can blame Ceyram now. Even if she hadn't materialized, there's no way I wouldn't have reacted to those words. The longer I stayed in this city, the more certain I became that nothing good awaited me. With my decision made, I immediately rose from my seat. It was time for a change of plans. If they hadn't come to find me by now, it was clear that I needed to take the initiative. Without hesitation, I left my room and headed straight for the first floor.

“Ah! Lord Sion, hello!” On my way down, I encountered a familiar face on the stairs.

“...?”

At first, I almost didn't recognize him, dressed in a neat uniform. It was the kid who used to sell cigarettes. He had found work here.

“Are you working now?” I asked.

“Yes! I was just getting the hang of the whole layout of the cage! The manager told me to familiarize myself with the structure as quickly as possible!” It seemed working gave him a noticeably brighter demeanor. Though in principle, a kid his age working was regrettable, it was undoubtedly preferable to selling cigarettes on the street at night.

“Good, keep it up. And try not to get in trouble,” I advised.

“Thank you!” His face lit up with a grateful smile. That's when I noticed the name tag pinned to his chest – . I realized I hadn't even known his name until now. He seemed to be heading toward the arena. Next time, I'd have to address him by name. I resumed my walk to the lobby.

“La-Lambert Cage employee Lisa, at your service! How may I assist you?”

As usual, the woman who juggled the roles of manager and employee greeted me. I paused to look at her closely. Her smile and the twinkle in her eye were

awkward. Something was off. By now, she should have been accustomed to my presence, but it felt as if she had reverted to being as flustered as when we first met.

“Do you need something?” she inquired.

“I’d like to meet with your owner...” I stated plainly.

Her face instantly turned pale and stiff.

“Our owner? May I ask who you’re referring to?”

“Of course, the owner of this facility. That Linae Nihalov,” I clarified.

Her panicked expression was telltale. Not suspecting something would be foolish.

“Are you looking to file a complaint? Is there an issue with our facility...?” she ventured nervously.

“No, there’s nothing. I just wish to meet them for personal reasons.”

I knew it was an unreasonable request. An unfamiliar visitor demanding a meeting with the owner was bound to be distressing. However, her reaction wasn’t just about that—it felt as though they couldn’t possibly allow us to meet.

“Well, in that case, what do I need to do to meet them? File a formal complaint?”

Finally, she sighed deeply and bowed her head. “If it’s come to this, let me ask you something.”

Her tone suddenly turned grave. “How much longer do you plan to stay at our cage?”

“Why do you ask?”

When she lifted her head, her eyes relayed an inexplicable urgency. “I don’t know what brought you here, but if there’s one thing I can tell you, it’s this: leave this city as soon as you can.”

I couldn’t help but let out a scoff. “And what if I don’t?”

“You... you’ll die,” she blurted out.

Silence enveloped the lobby. Although the exterior remained calm, inside, it was likely as tumultuous as a thunderstorm for both of us.

“I’m going to die?” I murmured in disbelief.

She nodded, barely managing the gesture.

It wasn’t exactly a threatening feeling, more like the unexpectedly unpleasant sensation of being dealt a blow to the back of the head. And although I didn’t show it, it wasn’t just the manager and me in this lobby.

Invisible from sight, guards that weren’t there before were now watching me with uneasy eyes,

Some of them even with a faint murderous intent.

Meaning, my words weren’t just thrown out in jest.

Why? Why indeed?

Why warn about death now, of all times?

Thinking briefly, it must be one of two reasons.

First, that my mere existence feels like a threat to be eliminated.

In the arena, it’s not good for one contestant to almost monopolistically dominate the game.

It might draw a lot of attention in the short term, but if I decide to keep the matches boring, the arena’s popularity would quickly fade.

Though possible, this reason seems insufficient for killing.

So what’s the second reason?

It’s the most dangerous reason for me.

That my identity has been somewhat exposed.

Through yesterday's match, I inadvertently revealed the existence of Ceyram to a merchant.

Far from mitigating the situation, I ended up confirming his suspicions.

He said no one else but the two of us would know, but that's uncertain.

That person named Lindsay must have clearly seen my match yesterday,

And he might have noticed something suspicious about me.

But regardless of the reason, there's something I can't understand at this moment.

This woman.

Why did this manager tell me such confidential information?

Essentially, she risked her life to inform me.

Or rather, judging by her expression, it's as if she's hoping for my plan to fail.

Why would she risk it all for me...

"M, Manager! We have a big problem!"

Amidst the increasingly serious atmosphere, a man's urgent cry breaks through.

The man, rushing through the main entrance, was a guide from the betting office.

"What's the matter?"

"Gunther's gang has attacked the arena... Ack!"

Behind the startled man,

A burly figure blocking the open entrance grinned wickedly at me.

Notably, he was missing an arm.

“Seems like you two were having a serious conversation? Why the gloomy faces?”

As his words ended, guards who had been waiting nearby immediately stepped forward to block him.

“What? I was wondering why I didn’t see any guards around, and they were all here?”

“Gunther! What is this madness!”

She stormed up to him in a fury and grabbed him by the collar.

“Whoa, whoa! Calm down! Let’s not be too harsh on a guy who’s already down one arm! Right?”

“Cut the nonsense! Why are you here!”

His gaze quickly shifted to me.

“Hey, Sion! Looks like you’ll have to fight me again.”

It seems my lesson wasn’t quite enough.

I shouldn’t have left one, should have taken both.

“Not satisfied with just one arm?”

“Haha! That look is still the same. I swear, if I don’t tear it out and chew it up, I might not be able to stand it! You seem to be misunderstanding, but this isn’t a suggestion, it’s a demand. You have a duty to fight me again!”

-Whizz

He threw something towards me with one hand.

It was a crumpled pack of cigarettes.

“Check this out!”

Nonchalantly, I picked it up and checked inside.

“...!”

The moment I saw the contents, my body froze.

A gold object the size of a finger.

Inside the cigarette pack was someone's dog tag.

I was somewhat stupefied.

Seeing this all too familiar name, I couldn't yet decide on the appropriate reaction,

So, I looked up and asked,

"...What have you done?"

"Your expression is really something. Nothing much! Just thought you might refuse if I asked you to fight bare-handed. So, I brought a little gift. Like it?"

Like it?

Though I wasn't sure of his intent, oddly enough, his words sounded to me like only one thing.

Is this a request to be killed?

(To be continued)