

# Son of the Hero King

## Chapter 13: CH 13: THE DUCHESS

Finished with the boring yet necessary lessons for his future role as a King, Sol was now free to do what he really wished to do all day; as was the case for any day for as long as he remembered.

Walking, nigh sprinting, towards the stables while keeping his noble appearance intact, by some measure, Sol barely managed to hide his excitement, until he found himself face to face with another person — his next instructor.

"Prince Sol, I am happy that you took your precious time to come learn from this old man. I hope you had a beautiful day, today."

Smiling at the words of the white-haired old man bowing in front of him, Sol wanted to answer casually but remembered where he was.

Right now, he was outside the tower, but still close to it. He understood that he shouldn't go too far as long as he didn't awaken and obtain a reliable way to defend himself, he had to be very careful about his safety.

"Do not worry lord Gerald. You are a man I respect very much and taking lessons from you has always been a pleasure."

Having finished his piece, with elegant steps, he began to walk towards the office building while Gerald always remained half a step behind him as he followed Sol's pace.

Once they entered the office building, however...

"\*Pfft\* Hahaha, little Sol I must say you are acting more and more like a true prince, with each passing day. I remember the snotty brat that was looking at my horses with stars in his eyes, eager to ride it."

Feeling his shoulders relax, and his heart noticeably less burdened at the old man's quip, Sol smiled at Gerald's nostalgic remarks, glad to be able to converse with the wise and benevolent old man.

"Uncle, I already told you that I don't mind if you treated me more casually even outside."

Shaking his head in response, Gerald denied him of the suggestion, chastising him for even making that remark.

"You know I can't do that Sol. I represent the previous power. It doesn't matter what people know. But as long as we are in public, I must treat you as the prince you are, otherwise, I would be seen as trying to grab more power than I should dare to wield."

A disgruntled sigh escaped Sol's mouth. Politics, politics, and more politics. He knew it was necessary but it didn't mean he had to like it a single bit.

Gerald wasn't his biological uncle, unfortunate but that's just how it was. He was just one of the many retainers of the previous king before Mars — Neptune. Still, Sol really respected him and always felt uncomfortable seeing someone the age of his grandfather bow in front of him even though he knew this was how things were around here.

It didn't help that Gerald did not need to bow to him? He was a member of the Highland family, after all — one of the four Duke Families, and while Sol was the crown prince, his position wasn't absolute enough by itself to command such respect from the members of the Duke households. A certain annoying woman had already made that clear to him years ago.

Gerald gave an encouraging smile as he understood Sol quite well. One of the many reasons he liked the young lad was the humbleness he wielded toward others, and his respect for the old and wise. Sol was the sort of guy who didn't let his title get to his head like so many young shitheads from noble houses these days. Truly, these were troubling times for the next generation of the empire.

"Enough chit-chat. You should already be rather tired. So let's get this done quickly. Anyway, you already grasped the basics and just need more experience, who will you choose this time?"

"My usual ones. Black and white."

"Hahaha~!" Another cheerfully loud laugh escaped Gerald's lips as he chortled, "Those two are basically your private property now, they never let anyone else mount them."

Sol smiled at his comical accusations. White was his horse. A rare breed of nightmare horse. A rank D species. Black was his wyvern, a rank C species of the Draconic branch.

Wyverns were an extremely devolved form of Dragons. So much so that in the legend, dragons saw the wyverns as inferior creatures not unlike how humans saw apes. Still,

they were cool and since he was half-dragon, all dragon-related species always obeyed him without question.

"You are right uncle. Let's go."

Riding was one of his favorite lessons, after all. Partly because of the coolness of the act and partly because he was able to interact freely with the man he regarded as his dear uncle, akin to the father he didn't have.

"Oh. Now that I think about it. Where are Athena and Ares?"

While Gerald was his surrogate uncle, in a sense, he was the real grand uncle of Athena and Ares, the heirs of the Highland family.

Normally, they should be present during the training sessions since the two of them were already active in the army.

Sol's question prompted Gerald's face to darken, something wasn't right...

"The situation on the border is quite tense. Wratharis is causing problems again. They are trying to test the limits of our defense system. It's just a harassing technique nothing more, but it doesn't bode well for the future."

Out of the seven countries, while Lustburg had waged war with many of them, their most recurring enemy was Wratharis, the country of Beastkin, from which Setsuna and technically Milia were from.

The current Leader of Wratharis seemed to be quite belligerent so he was a real pain in the ass for humanity.

Unlike Sol who was yet to awaken, both Athena and Ares had already done so long ago and were members of the army thanks to their high talents. Athena in particular was a great force on the battlefield because of the special skills of her contracted magical beings.

Sol sometimes wondered if the names of people in this world could affect their personalities.

"Well, we are here. Take your wyvern."

The rest of the time was spent with Sol riding in the air and relaxing a little.

When Sol finally went back, after a fun riding session with his favorite mounts and his ever-cheerful uncle, he began preparing himself for the incoming night out.

Sol stood before a floor mirror — made from the finest crystal essence that clearly reflected his features — and scrutinized his attire for the ensuing event.

A white tailored suit he adorned, with the hem reaching his buttocks and the buttons embedded in the regal piece of clothing being made out of gold, yes gold, the general metals found on earth also existed here with a blend of fantasy metals to add to the list.

On his hands, he wore a pair of white fingerless gloves that had the motifs of the royal family and the church etched on either of them. His right glove had the insignia of a vermillion phoenix embedded on its back while the insignia of a dark as-night snake was stitched on the back of the left glove.

They represented the church and the royal family respectively.

Chastity and Lust — two opposing elements for two similarly influential powers. Virtue and Sin, hand in hand, that's how the kingdoms of this fantasy world ran.

To finish his formal party attire, he wore matching white formal pants and a pair of regal white shoes. Every part of him oozed grace and nobility, fit for the prince of a kingdom.

When you added his handsome looks, his golden blonde hair, and his deep and vibrant sky-blue eyes into the mix of regality and elegance, Sol was truly a wondrous sight to behold.

"\*Sigh\* I always feel weird wearing these classy clothes."

"Your highness, this is necessary. Normally it wouldn't have been a problem to meet up with the supreme daughter of the church while wearing casual clothes. But it seems like Duchess Milaris got wind of your meeting and decided to participate with her cohort."

With a calm tone accompanying her soothing voice, Milia informed him of the Duchess' participation, while inspecting his clothes and making some last-minute small adjustments. Sol, hearing her words crunched his face in distaste, disgruntled at having to come face to face with the damned woman.

"\*Ugh\* That woman..."

Mirth was evident in Milia's face as she heard Sol's bleak response to the mere mention of the Duchess, but she didn't continue the discussion. It wasn't her, a palace maid's, place to insult nor judge the leader of one of the four highest noble families aside from the royal one.

"Now this is good. Perfect."

Sol inspected himself in the mirror for the final time before nodding as he turned and took Milia in his arms and gave her a soft loving kiss on the lips — a surprising action

coming from him. And right on cue, Milia's eyes widened slightly at this abrupt action of his, before her mind took the backseat, instincts taking its place. Her eyes closed, from their astonished state, as she seemingly melted in his arms, fully relishing the kiss, and cooperating with some tongue action midway.

The kiss lasted for a few seconds before ending, mere moments but an eternity filled with love seemed to have passed for the loving couple. Driven by the feelings she held for Sol, Milia's face flushed red in ecstasy from the sudden yet welcomed act. Meanwhile, Sol had a confident smile on his face, looking lovingly at the charmingly cute face of a flustered Milia.

"Thanks for everything you do for me."

Expressing his heartfelt gratitude to Milia, he didn't wait for her reply and began to stride away from his room to his destination.

The room he was now venturing towards was rather special. The fact that two silent guards stood in front of its entrance just emphasized how important it was.

Once he reached the door, he smiled at the two stoic women standing guard and entered the room.

The room was very sparsely decorated. No, even saying sparsely was too much. It was basically empty. The only form of decoration was a magic circle drawn on the floor in the very middle of the room and next to it stood an old woman wearing a white robe with a crow perched on her shoulder.

'A Nightmare Crow.'

It was a special type of beast, among the many magical beings of the beast category, with a quality of C rank. It wasn't particularly strong, but it specialized in spatial relocation AKA teleportation, so it was a very useful species for traveling. For that very reason, anyone able to contract with the beast had a good chance to obtain its power and also land in a lucrative position, where they would be sought out by many powers — especially nobles and royalty.

The old hunchback woman wasn't the only one present in the room though. Next to her, a young blue-haired and blue-eyed girl stood with an apathetic face devoid of any emotions. It was Setsuna, his childhood friend, and knight in charge of his protection.

She was wearing a long, black kimono that stretched to her thighs with an armor plate covering her chest. Two arm guards of equally dark colors rested on her upper arms. A bluish-black obi was wrapped around her waist and held her assortment of Japanese-

themed clothes together. Seeing her, it was like he was facing a samurai girl. Which he believed was what she tried to project herself to be. A samurai warrior.

He gave a small smile to her but otherwise did not speak before facing the old woman again.

"Good evening, your highness, I hope you had a good day. Forgive me for not being able to give a full bow, my back is causing me some problems as of late, you see."

The woman gave a short bow with her head dipping slightly as she wore a slightly embarrassed expression behind her hood-covered robes, explaining the cause of her rudeness to the heir of the empire.

"Gatekeeper, please do not mind. How could some silly convention be more important than your health? If it wasn't because of how weak I was I could have simply made the travels by myself. Once again my aunt is doing too much."

Yes, the distance between the church, where the meeting would take place, and the tower was just about three or four kilometers. It was such a short distance that it was incredible how they were going to use a dimensional portal to reach it. It was a luxury, and an unnecessary one.

"Ohohoh~! Your Highness, please do not worry. Her majesty is only doing so for your own good. As the last heir of the royal family, your security is paramount to anything else. Tiring my old bones for your protection is in no way a waste."

Sol's lips tugged to form a wry smile and left the talk there, not willing to stretch it out much. The old hunchback woman was from the same generation as Gerald, making her old enough to be his grandmother, to say the least. Her position as a gatekeeper was also extremely important. She was responsible for the space protection of the kingdom, after all. Apart from the usual space abilities, she was rather special among the space magic users. Hence the responsibility projected on her was also equivalently big and stressful.

"Now your majesty, step on this magic circle with your bodyguard and I will send you to the coordinates. At the end of the party, you just have to step on the identical magic circle that is present there and ask your bodyguard to fill it with her mana and it will promptly activate and transfer you back to the tower."

Nodding curtly at her instructions, Sol proceeded to follow them to a T and stand on the teleportation circle, preparing himself for the headache to come, both literally and figuratively.

"Now your majesty, I hope you have a good trip."

"\*Ugh\*"

Stifling a groan from leaking out of his mouth Sol reeled in the headache he felt while looking around at his new surroundings. Terribly upset from the sudden spatial shift, his stomach rumbled and bile rose to the base of his throat, but he managed to keep it in and downed it back to its origin, saving himself from the embarrassment. Not like he hadn't embarrassed himself plenty already from all the stomach cleaning he did all the times he did spatial travel.

"Your highness are you alright? You should take your medication."

"Thanks."

Taking the pills Setsuna gave him, he swallowed them down before finally calming himself off his puking urges.

"\*Sigh\*. Undergoing dimensional travel without an ounce of magic is really bad for my health and conscience."

"Fufufu. At least your Highness didn't barf on her holiness robes this time."

\*Chuckle\*

A light shade of red formed on Sol's face as he remembered the embarrassing memory, one of the many he shared with the Supreme Daughter.

The barely hidden laugh from the nuns standing around didn't help him either.

If asked where Sol spent most of his time a few years back, the answer wouldn't be the tower of Babylon where he resided, but rather the church where he stood now. The church of Castitas, the goddess of Chastity was like his second home. He had many embarrassing and emotional memories here full of nostalgia over the years, memories he held dear to his heart.

"How uncouth of you to shame his highness in public. Or is this how his highness raised his slave?"

A gentle yet scathing voice of ridicule broke the harmonic atmosphere — a jet black-haired woman, the origin of the mocking tone, made her appearance seemingly out of nowhere. Behind her, stood two young boys about Sol's age as well as one girl. They were also accompanied by three bodyguards and one handsome man attired in butler clothes.

'Shadow walk.'

Nightmare Crows weren't the sole beast able to use the power of teleportation.

Dark Phantom — a higher-tiered magical being.

Sol's gaze settled on the raven-haired man standing with a smile close to 'that' woman.

It was a member of the demon race, one of the races of the world, and he was quite highly ranked too at that, with a quality of B+ rank.

'\*Sigh~\* I had hoped that I wouldn't have to meet them so soon. Just my luck, her odious face graced me at the entrance'

"I am sorry for the display my servant showed. I will be sure to discipline her at a later date."

Sol answered smoothly while ignoring the nigh perpetual scowl on the face of the woman who was taking the lead. That scowl, however, couldn't do much to hide the mesmerizing beauty she held.

The Duchess Arachne Milaris of the Milaris family. She was truly a beautiful woman. Even more so in her dark-as-night evening gown and despite her clear lack of womanly assets. To quote a sage of culture, flat was justice.

However, beauty equated to half the reason for her fame. For she was equally as powerful as she was beautiful. Be it as an individual or as a noble. She was like a rose filled with thorns.

Despite never having married, she was still respected and feared because of her prowess and talents be it on the battlefield or as a renowned artist.

While Sol was quite sheltered, he still had to meet the members of the four great families from time to time. The other three weren't much trouble. Some, even rather pleasant and became close friends of his, like the heirs of the Highland Duke family — Athena and Ares.

But the Milaris family was a little bit different. They weren't outright enemies, but the relationship between that family and the royal family was quite awkward and bitter.

The reason?

Well... Arachne Milaris was the original fiancée of his father and the fact that she was neither his mother nor his stepmother gave the answer to how that engagement ended up.

'\*Sigh~\* I feel like today will be quite an eventful night.'

He sighed for the third time today as he prayed to both Luxuria and Castitas to give him the energy to get through this day with a sane mind.



[In the Church.]

"Your holiness, they have come."

A nun bowed, conveying the news of the arrival of the guests with an expression of awe barely contained.

If one was asked who was the most influential or powerful woman in this kingdom, the opinions would vary without a doubt.

But if one was asked, who was the most beautiful. They would receive a unanimous answer.

Camelia Castitas. The Supreme Daughter of the Goddess Castitas.

Seven churches existed in this world. Correlating to the seven virtues that held dominion. Those churches all prayed to their respective twin goddesses.

Camelia, as the Supreme daughter of Castitas, was the highest authority in the church with absolutely no one to contend against her.

As the leader of the church, her power was in no way inferior to the royal family. In fact, you could even say that they faintly surpassed the royal family because of the current dismal situation the royal family faced, being without a true leader and all.

In any normal state, this dissonance would have been quite dangerous and the royal family might have tried to keep the church in check. But this was not the case for Lustburg.

The reason?

"Hehe~! My little Sol is finally coming to see me. It has been such a long time. I was beginning to think he had forgotten me. This must be that woman's fault. Lilith was always such a worrywart. Always hogging him all to herself for nonsensical reasons. Don't you think so?"

Camelia was what one could call a fangirl. And she was head over heels for Sol Dragons Luxuria, the heir of the empire.

The nun could only awkwardly shuffle around. On one hand, she was already used to the eccentric antics of this mistress of hers, what's more, she had to admit that Sol was really cute and partially agreed with her declarations.

He was basically the mascot of the nuns at this level.

Finally, the other reason was that even though there were only the two of them present in this room, she knew that she wasn't the one Camelia was talking with.

Bitter at the eccentricity of the Supreme Daughter she opted to bow her head, close her eyes, and wait for the delirious leader of the church to get out of her fantasies and invite guests in.

'I hope the future of the church isn't doomed.'