

The Regressed Son of a Duke is an Assassin chapter 1

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Chapter 1. Betrayal and Regression

Father always used to say,

“Live a comfortable life without doing anything, simply accepting the life you’re given.”

“The well-being of our family will be taken care of by your siblings, so don’t give it a second thought.”

“That’s how you can best contribute to our family.”

Those were the words he spoke when he had no expectations of me.

However, human words often change with the times, and after I gained strength, his words to me changed as well.

“Live for the family.”

“Your brother Aschel is everything to our family.”

“Lead a life for Aschel.”

A life not for myself, but for the lord of our family.

A life for Aschel Vert, the eldest son and my older brother.

Without wishing for anything, merely following like a shadow and supporting him in succeeding in everything he did—that was the expectation.

Someone once said,

“There is nothing more foolish than living one’s life for another,”

Yet, I did so.

Thus, I helped him accomplish everything he started.

Empire succession disputes.

The subjugation of the Demon King's army.

The war to unify the continent and so on.

Sometimes as a hero, sometimes as a savior, and ultimately as the unique guardian of the continent.

To me, my brother was everything, my all.

Foolish, you say?

Others said so too.

Do you need to live your life for someone else to that extent?

I answered,

My life for my brother is a life for me.

Aschel's success is Sian's success.

Riches and power are mere luxuries to me.

Even if I am scorned and called a shadow, if it can bring even a little peace to this harsh world, that to me is the highest aspiration.

But someone once said,

Desires are not something easily achieved, even small ones.

I did not believe in those words.

I thought my desire was being fulfilled even now, by my brother's side, and I tried to deny it.

That's right. That's how it used to be.

But why, why have I found myself facing this wretched situation now?

* * *

“Cough!”

Dark red blood spurted from my mouth.

It seemed my heart had taken a blow.

My vision was getting blurrier.

I could still see more than twenty enemies wielding swords at me.

The capital, Suje, had skillful assassins that well exceeded ordinary ones.

Given that Empire's renowned swordsmen, knights, and mages from across the continent were all revealing their murderous intent towards me, it was a truly magnificent sight.

"What a spectacle, one you couldn't even buy. A knight who stands alone against the greatest masters of the continent... Even Lord Aschel would have found it impossible."

Although I couldn't see clearly through the blood, I could tell by his voice who it was.

"Bo... Boris..."

Boris Lehelm, the head of the Ushif Empire Magic Academy.

One of the key forces of the Empire, along with the Knights of Light.

Although I disapproved of his actions, because he had reigned as my brother's right hand, I had excluded him from the list of threats.

But to think he would backstab me like this.

"It is quite interesting. Indeed, you are the brother whom Aschel trusted."

His face was already irritating to me, and watching him laugh in this situation was very upsetting.

Should I just use my secret technique to escape, regardless of my surroundings?

"If you're thinking of using a secret technique to escape, think again. There is a ninth-degree magic barrier in place here. Even if you use it, it will only reduce what little life force you have left."

Ha, it seems like he's really prepared.

"Is this the Emperor's command?"

"The Emperor knows nothing. To him, Sir Sian's death will be attributed to an unknown assault by assassins."

Assassins?

Ridiculous.

Who are they to mention assassination before me?

Now the barrier doesn't matter.

I'll draw out all the power I have to escape this situation.

Black mist emanated from the dagger in my hand.

—Whoosh!

The rising mist enveloped me, seeping through my body, enhancing my overall physical abilities and gradually healing my wounds.

“As I heard, you're an assassin affiliated with Mist. Now that it's come to this, I must report to His Imperial Majesty that we have disposed of a heretic disrupting the order.”

“Go ahead and report if you survive. But I'll bet not even a single tooth of yours will remain, let alone your mouth.”

Suppressed murderous intent was bursting out.

When had I ever released such fury?

I would eliminate all the traitors around me and then go to my brother.

I need to report the current situation and discuss future actions...

“That's enough, Sian.”

A familiar voice tied up my heightened nerves.

I knew the owner of this voice.

But why should it be here, now?

Even through my blood-stained vision, that man was clearly visible.

“Aschel, brother?”

My superior, the commander of the Knights of Light, the guardian of the continent, and bearer of the holy sword.

Aschel Vert. Why was he here?

Holding the divine sword flooded with a holy aura, he walked steadily towards me.

The knights surrounding me parted ways for him, and I was unable to take any action as he approached.

The fury that had swelled up inside me was quickly turning into despair.

“You seem to have no idea why I’m here.”

How could I know?

“What does this mean?”

My angry stare fell squarely on him.

“Don’t be angry, Sian. You’ve done your duty very well, for the family, for the people, for the country, and for me... You’ve worked tirelessly for years, and now I just want to unburden you of that weight.”

What is this nonsense?

Unburden me by killing me?

Why? What did I do wrong?

I’ve been running for twenty years without a break!

I have always been by your side like a shadow, accomplishing everything!

And now you want me dead?

When Boris appeared, I did not feel this way.

The moment I truly realized I had been betrayed, indescribable rage boiled up within me.

“Have I done something wrong?”

“Wrong? Do you not know your own mistakes? A person can kill over a hidden piece of bread due to mistrust. But you, haven’t you entangled yourself in a place you shouldn’t have and managed to conceal it from everyone? Surely, you are not ignorant of your crimes?”

My teeth were gritting.

Enveloped in rage and injustice, blood trickled from my bitten lip.

Concealed?

Have I ever harmed you?

After thoroughly using me and profiting, now you're saying this?

Ah, I understand.

It doesn't matter what I did; that's not the point.

They were afraid.

Afraid of the existence of an assassin beyond the knowledge of the world.

Afraid that the peace of this world, completed by me, and the secrets related to it would become exposed.

“There's nothing more dangerous than ignorant trust.”

That foolish god's words came to mind.

At the time, I dismissed it as nonsense, but I never imagined that it would come back today and pierce me like a dagger.

“Heh heh...”

I began to laugh inexplicably.

After devoting myself to a man I believed was everything, my brother, how pitiful was this?

Even the dead in hell would scoff at this.

“Why do you laugh?”

“The mightiest hero in the world, now trying to kill his own brother out of fear. How can this not be amusing?”

Compassion flickered in his eyes.

“How pitiful. You are merely a repulsive murderer, not human. In all the time we were together, I never fully trusted you, not even once.”

The golden strike of the holy sword penetrated my heart.

“Aagh!”

The mist that had seeped into my body began to dissipate.

My weakened legs collapsed, breaking the balance of my body.

“Rest in peace, Sian. Let’s hope we never meet again in the next life.”

Never meet again?

Without me, you would not have lived to be a hero, dying in a civil war within the Empire, and now you say this?

The regret that gripped me momentarily turned into anger.

I steadied my trembling hands, picked up the fallen sword, and prepared to fight back.

I didn’t care if my body exploded.

I would gather every bit of mana from my body and cast the secret technique.

Just once.

Just one shot at a vital spot that ensured no possibility of recovery...

–Schlick!

With a cruel sound, I saw Aschel’s holy sword through the haze.

Beneath it was my dagger, wrapped in a black aura, falling pitifully,
along with my two hands still gripping its handle...

“Truly a dangerous man to the very end.”

Not even a scream, I couldn’t even feel the pain.

At the end of my path with nowhere else to go, all the futility and void of the world came rushing in.

As my face was buried into the rough dirt, tears of blood fell.

A desolate feeling of being left alone in the world.

With each fading breath, I felt the shadow of death approaching.

What a foolish life it has been.

If only.

If I were given another chance at life,

I would live a different life.

A life focused solely on me, where I could achieve everything by myself,

a life without serving anyone...

“...”

My breath stopped, my senses dulled.

The cold shadow of death was enveloping my body.

I accepted this embrace without any resistance.

* * *

“...Sir.”

Huh? What’s that?

Sensation returned amid the pitch-black darkness.

“...Young Master!”

Though I couldn’t see, I felt someone shaking my body.

What is this odd and uncomfortable feeling?

As if a maid was scolding me like they did when I overslept as a child...

“Sian, Young Master!”

I jolted awake as a loud voice hit my eardrums.

As I came to my senses, I was faced with a woman whose face was not unfamiliar.

“Emily?”

The maid, eight years my senior, who had taken care of me while living in the territory.

It had been nearly 20 years since we last met, yet she looked exactly the same, not aged a day.

“Why are you here?”

I asked her thoughtlessly.

“What are you talking about, Young Master? Were you dreaming?”

Dreaming? A dream?

What absurdity are you—

Instinctively, I touched my face and was dumbstruck for a whole three seconds.

Skin smooth without a scar, hands delicate like fiddleheads.

No muscles, just skin and bones, legs too short to even reach the end of the bed.

This was certainly not an adult’s body.

At best, a 10-year-old boy’s, not yet even enrolled in the academy.

“This isn’t quite what I’d expect hell to be like.”

I pinched my cheek absent-mindedly while looking at my reflection in the mirror beside my bed.

This was indeed a younger version of myself during the worst time of my life, that face was unmistakable.

“Pull yourself together and get ready. You have a duel with your fourth brother today.”

“A duel?”

“The same household swordsmanship you always do. And you’d better prepare yourself well today because it’s not just anyone you’re facing – it’s the infamous fourth Brother Krantz...”

Not just my body had regressed.

The swordsmanship dueling taking place in the territory, a daily occurrence.

Everything I had experienced was happening all over again.

Is this really just a dream?

Were all those things I went through, all just an illusion?

It felt as if even my brain had shrunk to the size of a pea, so overwhelmed was I.

Sighing, I caught Emily’s eye as I held my forehead.

“What...?”

Above where she was tidying up, a decorative item was swaying precariously, about to fall directly onto her.

“Look out...!”

Acting on instinct, I bolted from my seat and rushed toward her.

-Thud!

“Look at this mess. Can you believe this is the room of a noble... Eek!”

“What...?”

As she turned her head after bending down to clean, I was nearly upon her, our eyes meeting.

Startled by our sudden closeness, it made me feel slightly uncomfortable.

“What is it, Young Master?”

“Uh... well, that is...”

Above in my outstretched arms, the decorative item was propped up.

Just moments away from falling, it would have taken a split second to hit the ground.

It was impossible for a 10-year-old boy to react and catch it.

That’s when I realized.

This situation was no mere dream.

I had returned.

With all the memories and sensations of my past life...

“...?”

Emily’s confused face made the moment all the more intriguing.

(To be continued)