

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hey there! Fancy meeting you all here again... just enjoy the chapter and leave a review, will you?

Also, NEW COVER! A talented fellow, Art of Envy (find him on Deviantart) is the artist who realized this beautiful thing, so make sure to give his works a chance and maybe, if you are interested, commission something from him.

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (Been a while guys. Hope all of you are as excited to the madness to come as I am.)

Chapter 27: A Matter of Duty

The noble Marquis heir slammed her fist against the wall of her room. She cursed everything she knew in that moment, every last one of noble birth... except Renner, never Renner!

She was blocked here, imprisoned in her own childhood home, for this could no longer be considered her home anymore. This was nothing but a prison, a prison her mother and father forced her into.

'You will be engaged by the end of this year and married on your 16th birthday. No more adventures! No more foolish dreams of

swords and glory! You have already embarrassed our family enough as it is, and now you will do your duty!’

Thinking back at those words was painful enough. Them coming from her father was the last nail in the coffin.

She jumped on her bed, the same bed her mother tucked her into not many years before. ‘Why can’t I be myself? Why must I submit to what others want of me!?’

Angry tears flowed down her cheeks as she cursed the world and its unfairness.

Everything was taken from her, her sword, her freedom, her future... all turned into ashes as she could not rebel against what was above her... or could she?

A sparkle ignited at the sole thought. Renner did it after all. She rebelled against what all her family wanted from her and did whatever she liked. She was no broodmare to be chained. She was a wild and cunning cat who showed her fangs only when her desires were threatened, one who fought tooth and nail for her freedom... that was probably the thing Lakys admired most about her golden princess.

And even if Renner was the reason she was currently in this predicament, due to her dragging Lakys with her to the empire.

‘That wasn’t Renner’s fault.’

She was convinced of that notion. If it wasn’t for Renner, she would have never met Satoru or started training under Gazef or met master Brain... she would probably still be a child ignorant of the world around her and still playing around as a wannabe knight without skill or notion of what that actually meant.

No! This wasn't Renner's fault! This was HER fault! Her weakness was the fault. If she wasn't so submitted to her family, she would not be in this predicament. If she really wanted to be a knight before anything else, she would not still be here, waiting to succumb to her parents' wishes.

She did not want a fiancée. She did not want to carry on the family's name. She did not want to sit around doing nothing but popping out children! She wanted her sword! She wanted her armor! And, above all, she wanted her freedom!

And she shall get it, by any means necessary! That was a promise! She will not be weak anymore!

{Satoru's mansion}

{Rayne's P.O.V.}

They both ate in silence, gazes linked to their dishes, no sound apart from the fork lightly scratching the white plate.

He knew he should apologize but the words eluded his mind right now. That was awkward... he never saw a girl like that and, even if his parents never said anything, he was sure there was something wrong with doing so, otherwise, why would he feel so guilty?

"I'm sorry."

He finally uttered out in a small voice, his eyes still downcasted. His fellow student seemed to ignore him as she continued to eat in silence until she let her fork fall on the empty plate, causing an amplified clattering sound due to the silence.

"You are a pervert, aren't you?"

The blond caster hissed out, reminding Rayne of the occasional wild and feral cats that passed next to his old house. Rayne blushed profusely at the accusation.

“I-I am not!”

He protested vehemently causing an angry grimace to appear on the girl’s face.

“Why in the name of the Four would YOU come inside a BATHROOM without KNOCKING if you aren’t a pervert!?”

She angrily snarled back at his defensive rebuttal.

“I am just not used to knocking! That’s all! Why were you even naked in the first place?!”

He rebutted, not wanting to be on the receiving end all the time.

“Why?! It’s called taking a bath you unwashed peasant!”

She cried out as her face became as red as her flame spells both in shame and anger.

“You always come back to that! So, what if I am a peasant?! You are just a noble cunt!”

He yelled back. He wasn’t sure what the last word meant, but he heard his father say that once before his mother smacked him on the head with a pan, so he guessed it was a bad word. And seeing how her mother reacted he shouldn’t have been surprised to see a plate flying toward his face.

“YOU! UNCIVILIZED! BEAST!”

He heard the noble girl cry out as he ducked to avoid the plate which fragmented into a thousand pieces.

“YOU JUST WANTED TO SEE MY BODY DIDN’T YOU?!”

The girl continued yelling as more plates began to float thanks to her magic.

“See what?! You are as flat as a wall!”

He shouted back as he casted his own spell to create a small barrier between him and the incoming plates. He did not master this spell at all, but he just needed to block some plates, not an actual incoming spell, so it should have been fine, or at least that was what he thought before most of the plates passed through his barrier and almost decapitated him.

“YOU PERVERT! DIE!”

‘This is worse than when mother starts yelling at me!’

Rayne panicked as he hunkered down under the table. It was useless to say but Rayne never had much contact with the fairer sex in all his life apart from his mother, and so it was to be expected for him to make unwise choices such as this one, not that he regretted opening his loudmouth right now.

‘Girls are scary!’

That was the only logical conclusion his brain could come up with.

“I must say, that choice of words was most unwise my student.”

The deep dark voice that could only belong to one person interrupted the sound of breaking plates.

Rayne shuddered and paled. There was only one way this could get any worse, and that was by having his master appear at that very moment.

“M-Master Satoru!”

He heard Arche squeak out in shock and panic as the plates stopped flying around.

“I initially came here to tell you that today’s lesson is cancelled due to a sudden problem that just came up this morning... But now I see I should not have worried myself too much as you seem to be able to practice on your own just as well.”

His voice never shifted but for some reason Rayne felt like he just fucked up really badly.

“M-Master I-“

Arche tried to say something but was abruptly interrupted by the masked magic caster.

“But I think a short lecture should be in order anyway.”

Satoru said before pausing for just an instant.

“Everyone should value order and cleanness in their home and workplace... that is a lesson that does not depend on your occupation... and so, you shall now clean this room and then proceed to clean the rest of the mansion you are currently using.”

Both of their jaws dropped at their master’s demand.

“B-but Master! It will take at least the whole day! And I don’t know any cleaning spells!”

The noble girl protested while Rayne meekly agreed as he came out from under the table.

“You better get started then. I will hire no servant to do the job you should perform by yourself. You should already be thankful that Rayne’s mother insisted on cooking for the both of you already.”

The magic caster continued relentlessly on his way of thinking.

“If you wish to continue learning under me you will do so under my rules... I will not have my students live as pigs but at the same time they shall not live lives totally depending on others’ support for the most mundane things.”

The caster finished with a tone that clearly admitted no more rebuttals. The first to react was Rayne.

“Understood! Lord Satoru!”

He said in his most dignified tone as if he just didn’t crawl out from under a table while hiding from an angry girl.

“As you wish Master.”

Arche bowed with a light sigh in her tone.

“Very well then. I will see you tomorrow.”

With those last words their teacher disappeared into thin air.

‘That explains how he managed to get here without any of us noticing’

Rayne said to himself in awe even if that wasn’t the first time he saw his teacher do such a thing... to think magic could deconstruct

and reconstruct entire human bodies without any damage... a truly amazing feat in his eyes.

“I can’t believe this... I will now have to scrub floors like a commoner servant...”

The noble girl mumbled under her breath to the great amusement of Rayne.

“I have a lot of experience being a commoner so, if you ask nicely, I might give you a few advice.”

The remark didn’t go unpunished as Arche made a move to hit him with her staff, missing him miserably as he ducked.

“You imbecilic dolt! Start scrubbing or I will use your loudmouth as a cleaning cloth!”

She roared as she blushed in embarrassment.

‘The blush really looks cute on her I guess’

He started working disregarding that last thought.

‘Still flat as a wall though’

He glanced at his fellow student as she got down to start cleaning her mess.

{Ro-Lente’s Castle}

{Renner’s P.O.V.}

She sipped her evening tea with glee. Not because of the flavor of course. It tasted like mood water in her mouth. The glee came from a totally different source altogether. Her plan was going exactly as it was meant to.

She herself was quite pleasantly surprised from that fact on its own. Who would have guessed that she could manipulate her own family so easily. Her plan was well thought but she never imagined that her father would be so easily convinced of being put into an imaginary corner that actually didn't exist.

The Noble Faction was far from being united. They were just a bunch of foolish, prideful and arrogant people who would betray each other as soon as the throne was free for the taking. There was no way they could coalize with the Royal Faction, even less the Empire's Nobility, and yet, her brother and father ate out of her hand all the same.

She prepared herself to fight tooth and nail to get at least some semblance of fear and distrust into her father's mind, as she was sure her brother would be far more receptive to her words. She even was ready for him to ask for the verification of the validity of signature on the documents she brought. If such a thing came to be she was sure she could get away with it, after all the signature on the paper was authentic. What was actually altered was the content of the letter itself, but without an accurate magical testing such a thing would not be even considered as many just focused on the validity of the signature above all.

The plan was tested for any possible outcome, and even in the worst case, she and Satoru would stay clean handed.

The door of her room slammed open as a woman strolled in, scowling openly at her without a care. Her chestnut hair fell along her back in an elaborated style and her dress was far more appropriate for a female half her age, not counting the ugly look in her blue eyes which completed the picture and assured her of the identity of such a woman.

Her mother, Josefin Theiere Chardelon Vilen, a worthless woman whose only accomplishment in life was being able to sleep with the king while drunk and most vulnerable during his years of mourning after his wife's death. And, of course, Renner's personal womb lender.

Her mother's family's goals were so blatantly clear it hurt. A noble house of small renown, almost resenting the lower nobility in wealth and territory. They hoped for her to be born a male so that they could push upon his claim to the throne in the future, maybe even hoping to assassinate her older brothers. But, alas, she was born a girl and all her mother's plans went up into smoke, even more after her father made clear he didn't quite enjoy her trickery as he, in one of his few moments of fury, exiled her mother's family from the capital until further notice.

All but her mother left, as she was meant to remain to take care of Renner herself, who her father graciously recognized as her daughter giving her a royal title and name, not that she remained much more than a bastard in the rest of the nobility's eyes. But she digressed. Her mother spent all her time among parties and other noble occupations, leaving Renner's education and growth to whoever was available, if not Renner herself.

"You! You shame my name!"

Her womb lender spit out as if every word was drenched in poison, making Renner come out of her little memory train of thought.

"Oh my, is that so?"

She said, disinterest in her tone as she just spared a glance at the woman calling herself her mother.

“Going around with that commoner MAGIC CASTER! You... you! You shameless whore!”

That almost brought a sardonic smirk to appear on the princess' face.

‘Look at that, the pot calling the kettle black... what a twist...’ she thought with a small part of amusement.

“Lady Vilen, to what do I owe the pleasure?”

She asked, giving her an exaggerated and quite mocking bow, which only served to irk her mother more.

“You insolent... do you have any idea of what I had to endure due to your childish games?! I was mocked! Looked down upon by even the lowest baron! I, the mother of the princess who ran off with a COMMONER!”

She cried out, her fury only increased by Renner's uncaring attitude.

“But this will go on no more! I already had started talks about your future engagement to Baron Montserrat's 3rd son, who should be around your age!”

That stopped any good mood Renner currently was experiencing as an icy cold dead mask fell over her face. Noticing the shift in the girl her mother smirked for the first time.

“You were always a disappointment. You were meant to be a boy and you came a girl. You were meant to be our pillar and you were our fall. You will now serve as a bargaining chip, and you will finally feel the humiliation I felt!”

She declared.

“Father will not allow this.”

The 3rd princess said. No emotion could be heard in her tone.

“Do you think he cares even a little for what will happen to you?! If that was the case, you would at least be worth something!”

Her womb lender spat as she closed the distance between them before snatching Renner’s crown from her head, taking the young princess by surprise.

“This will make a worth enough dowry for the Baron I guess.”

She said to herself, but Renner could no longer hear her. Ahe was feeling too cold to pay attention from anything else. Something was taken from her, something very important. She felt like someone had just skinned part of her body in a single swift movement. And something was boiling inside her, something rancid and twisted, an emotion she didn’t feel for the longest time, the cold hands of fear grasped her.

“Give it back...”

She said, no longer in total control of her body for the first time in her life. The noble lady ignored her plea continuing to analyze her crown intrigued.

‘Give it back, that is mine... Give it back, that is mine... Give it back, that is mine... Give it back, that is mine... Give it back, that is mine... Give it back, that is mine... mine... mine... mine... mine... MINE... MINE... MINE’ a voice growled into her mind.

“GIVE IT BACK!”

That was the first time she remembered raising her own voice in such a manner, as if her own body was now controlled by someone

else. She took a step forward prompting her womb lender to finally give her attention back to the third princess.

The grown woman immediately went wide eyed and stumbled backward, the abrupt movement causing her to trip over her own gown and miserably fall on the ground.

Renner's precious gift fell from her grasp and said princess immediately took it from the ground and placed it back on her head, an action which caused her to calm down quite a lot before she decided to address her progenitor currently lying on the ground with a stupid expression on her face.

The princess felt a snarl growing on her face as she looked down at the filth who was attempting to separate her from her beloved.

“Get out of my sight... or I will have your head on a spike by the end of the evening.”

She said, her words as cold and piercing as ice spikes, and, to her surprise, her womb lender actually listened. Maybe it was the shock, maybe the fear, but in the end, Renner was left alone in her room.

She immediately went to lock her room and then sit on the floor, right next to her mirror. Her hands went for her crown, and she immediately pressed it against her chest, caressing it as she lost herself inside the glowing blue gems encased on it.

‘Soon, very soon, no one will stand in our way... this kingdom will know what it means to go against us...’

She sealed those words with a chaste kiss on her golden crown.

‘Let us burn this horrid and twisted world together... my Satoru.’

{Raeven's manor}

{Raeven's P.O.V.}

He didn't like this. He didn't like this at all. His new bride wasn't ugly. That wasn't the problem. The thing he didn't like was to have to marry at all.

He certainly would have had to at a certain point. That was part of his plan from the start, but his hand was forced far before the right time.

He would have likely pointed at the second princess or a distant cousin with royal blood but strengthening the ties with the Royal Faction was far more important now than ever if he wanted to maintain a certain level of trust after what happened with the utter failure that was the attempted coup.

It was his duty to marry, to carry on his family name. He just wished that such a thing would have been more in his control over being pressured into it.

Not that his bride lacked anything to begin with. She had a certain charm to her, and she had the right connection and pedigree. It was unfortunate she couldn't keep up with him on most political matters. She lacked the mindset a true noble of the kingdom should have to succeed.

Speaking of success, his investigation brought progress to his primary objective, to discover who was behind the king pulling strings to ensure his safety. And to say he was surprised by the answer would be an understatement.

Seven Hands, the organization formerly known as Eight Fingers, the most prosperous criminal syndicate in the whole kingdom. His

intrigue was only deepened by discovering such a thing, and his question morphed from who to why.

It should have been a simple matter. Discover who was currently controlling the organization and so discover why they were interested in keeping the old man alive.

Easier said than done. His investigation, which costed him both many men and much coin, led him to an unexpected place, the Sorcerer's Shop, the central figure of all magical aspects of the kingdom, the funder of the Magician Guild and primary partner of the Adventurer Guild. But that just didn't make any sense.

How in the world would a business established 2 years prior put under its foot, not only the most prominent guilds in the kingdom but its criminal underground? Anyone holding this much power should be a prominent figure of the kingdom, ready to jump the throne as soon as an occasion presented itself.

And yet they apparently saved the king.

That puzzle just didn't turn out to be anything he expected it to be, and the only way for him to find out what in the world was happening there was to take a direct approach.

Since the apparent leader, Satoru the Magic Caster, left for the Empire, he started sending his most skilled spies and then assassins to discover anything they could on the elusive man and his associates. A waste of resources. That was what his endeavor turned out to be.

He didn't only lose many loyal and skilled men. He also didn't gain almost anything from his endeavor.

The Magic Caster carried out his business in the empire and returned just a week ago. And if he couldn't get his hands on him, he would try to see who his nearest associates were. The woman, Hilma he believed, was out of question as his previous actions proved her to be well guarded. Gazef Stronoff was another the Marquis easily discarded as the man was nothing more than a glorified warrior in service of the crown. That left out only two.

Lakyus Alvein Dale Aindra, a juvenile heir to her house who just stood a rank below his own, someone he dismissed as well as he knew her father and, while he was loyal to the crown, he didn't have the mind to orchestrate what happened and not gloat about it or ask rewards for his action.

That left out only one person. The Third Princess of the kingdom, an even younger girl who didn't even reach her tenth year of age yet. This fact irked him in no small part, as he couldn't accept such a child had actually bested him. It was absurd to think such a child was moving things behind the scenes like some kind of puppeteer as men five times her age just ignorantly moved according to her tune.

'But when all ordinary and credible options were taken out one by one, the only thing left was to accept that the extraordinary and incredible was the right answer.'

Even if that was Raeven's mindset this specific occasion stretched even that toward a breaking point.

He would need to be completely sure of his deduction before taking any action. If the princess was really one of the masterminds behind this, she would have just become the most dangerous member of the royal family in his eyes.

He was already dancing on thin ice here. He could not afford to make any more mistakes. If he wanted the crown on his head before he found himself on his death bed, he needed to surpass even this adversity.

‘Be like a mountain... let the raging wind chip away at your armor but continue to stand steady, let the wind hit any spot they preferred, and no matter how much it hurt, let no emotion be shown on your face, so they may never discover your weaknesses’ those were words he wished to impart on his heirs before he left the world.

“My husband, the hour is late. You may wish to finish whatever you are working on, on the morrow?”

And speaking of heirs, it seemed like his wife demanded some of his attention tonight. Internally shrugging, he stood up and left his work for the day yet to come.

Heirs were important as well for his plans. The more his wife could provide, the more he could use them to advance his plans and expand relations on the political spectrum, not to speak of cementing ties and loyalties once the crown passed heads.

And, seeing how his wife was eager, he may as well enjoy himself while advancing his plans. This was only his duty after all.

{Ro-Lente’s castle}

{Satoru’s P.O.V.}

The undead marched through the halls, escorted by Gazef. To say he didn’t expect to be summoned like this would have been an understatement, but seeing how Hilma didn’t seem concerned in

the least he imagined this was all part of Renner's plan, so it should be fine if he just went along with it.

'Jeez, I should try to keep up more with what those two are up to, just to at least know if I will have to do stuff like this in the future...'

He convinced himself to do so in the years to come.

Returning to his current situation, the mood seemed to be quite gloomy, the royal palace was mostly silent with just a few servants scurrying around quickly as if not wanting to be noticed.

Even Gazef himself seemed disheartened as he was lacking his usual serene expression when he was in his company. Satoru could not help but feel like he was missing something very big and obvious by now. And he didn't like it at all.

"Gazef, how is your Warrior Troop doing?"

He asked, trying to lighten up the mood. He knew how much pride and love the warrior had for his organization. That change of topic brought an almost unnoticeable smile on Gazef's face.

"Everything seems fine. Losses have been far less since we started buying from the new magic items shop in the city."

He said with a drop of irony in his tone which managed to bring out a chuckle from the masked caster.

"Happy and obliged to help. After all, you are still my best buyers by a long shot."

He said not untruthfully as the Warrior Troop was now composed by around a hundred soldiers, far more than any group of adventurers.

The falling sun came out from its hiding place and cast its light through the giant window, projecting the human and undead's shadows on the wall.

“Satoru...”

The Warrior Captain began before pausing, seemingly unsure of how to continue what he was about to say, a conflicted expression on his face. Satoru remained silent. He really had no idea what this all was about but there was something very fishy going on around here.

“The King is awaiting you. Please let us not let him wait more than necessary.”

He finally said with a more somber tone.

“Umu”

With nothing to say, the undead limited himself to shrugging off the weird feeling he was having before following the strongest swordsman in the kingdom.

The awkward silence didn't last long to his delight, even if in hindsight he would have gladly taken it over what was about to come.

They stopped in front of a very expensive looking door prompting the Warrior Captain to knock four times before receiving an invitation.

He opened the door and gestured for Satoru to go inside before him, something he would rather not do as he felt crushed between a rock and a hard place. He nevertheless swallowed his

premonition and proceeded inside. What he found could not help but confirm his fears.

The king sat behind his desk, wearing a far more informal attire than the first time they met each other. On his right, a young noble sat not far from him grimacing and glaring at Satoru openly, while on the king's left a young, blonde devil princess comfortably sat with an inscrutable expression on her face.

“Sir Satoru, it is a pleasure meeting you again. Unfortunately, the circumstances don't seem to be as pleasurable, but please, have a seat.”

The overlord said nothing and simply sat on the offered chair, not before reinforcing it with a silent spell. The relaxed posture of the king disappeared as Gazef closed the door behind him.

“I have been informed that you have been busy these last two years, Sir Satoru... becoming the fundamental turning stone of the Adventurer Guild, the funder of most, if not all by now, Magician Guilds in the kingdom, while managing to grasp a peak role in the Merchant Guild... all while taking over the underground of the very kingdom.”

The king said with a calm that greatly unnerved Satoru, making him break a metaphorical sweat when he heard the last point of the list.

‘W-what is going on here?! Is this a setup?! Am I going to be arrested?!’

Satoru could not help but internally panic at the thought of what his current situation was morphing into.

‘But who? Who could...?! Was it Renner? Did she denounce me?!’

At that thought, his gaze immediately fell on the third princess who looked back at him, those placid sky-blue eyes revealing nothing to him.

“That last one would be most concerning to me. You understand that I as a king could not let such a thing slide... and yet, here we are, for Renner was most graceful in explaining what you did for the kingdom in the past years... you organized the underground not only to be harmless toward normal citizens but also putting a leash on many rabid dogs who only would have been detrimental in the long run... putting down those who could not be controlled and creating programs to take out of the street less fortunate citizens, giving them occupation.”

The king said, surprising Satoru who wasn't sure what exactly the man in front of him was trying to imply.

“The organization is still acting against the law and could be a danger to the integrity of the kingdom but it is still a clear improvement of what it was before... do not misunderstand me, Sir Satoru, I am still greatly unnerved and even furious at what you have been doing behind my back, but I still can see the benefits of having someone such as you in charge of the darkest part of the kingdom, ensuring peace and stability will continue... I am sure you will continue to serve the kingdom as a loyal citizen would.”

The king now practically pierced him with his cold gaze. For once Satoru felt like worshipping his passive Emotional Suppression as if it wasn't for that he would probably be crying by now out of sheer panic and fear.

“I... understand... but I am sure, there is more than this...?”

His tone might have seemed dark and calculating but that couldn't be farther from the truth. He was done. Mentally exhausted and he just wanted to go home, so he may as well know if the man in front of him knew anything else.

To his surprise, his words brought a sigh from escaping the old man, his posture deflated, and he suddenly didn't seem as intimidating.

“The truth is that... we need your aid Sir Satoru, as I am sure you already knew.”

Those words surprised the undead as it was just the last thing he expected after what the king told him before.

‘It might be better to stay silent and see where this goes...’ he said to himself after passing over his momentary shock at the shift in the mood of the conversation.

“I am grateful for your intervention in what would have been our most certain demise... even if such an act was solely for your own gain... and I am in need of your help once more.”

Satoru's businessman instincts immediately kicked in as he found that opening to capitalize on it.

“Ah, my king you surely exaggerate. I had little to gain from your fall... what I truly sought was stability and, of course, Renner would have been sad if you all died.”

Since she was probably the one who spilled the beans, Satoru didn't feel too bad in using her as a tool to get out of this predicament.

“You admit it then. You are currently in control of the whole underground of the kingdom?”

The king rebutted, seemingly ignoring his comment.

‘You are getting so spanked after this... Renner...’

Said princess just barely moved her hand as if to gesture to Satoru to go on.

“Is there a point in telling a lie everyone knows to be such?”

He asked rhetorically. No one answered him.

“Let us just get to the point then.”

The king said as he moved forward in his chair.

“The rebellious nobles of the kingdom, all those who attempted on our lives or conspired to take the throne from us, all who would see our line go down into ruin... all of them, will have to die.”

The cold words left the king’s mouth and reached like winter wind howled at a mountain, and Satoru was once more left without words. He of course knew of the attempted coup as he was the one who stopped them or, at least, the one who provided the manpower to do so. Hilma already informed him of the responsible nobles’ names, but he just had no use for such a thing as he had no intention of getting tangled into politics.

And now he was in the exact position he wanted to avoid, all according to a certain princess’ plans apparently.

The king passed a bunch of sheets to him. Satoru took them with little hesitation before giving them a look. If he had eyes they would have widened by now. The sheets were just but one huge

list of nobles, with their ranks, occupations and position at the moment.

‘These are...’ Satoru’s own thought paused due to his own shock ‘... far too many!’ he concluded in his head. The number of traitors went near the hundred.

‘Are there even so many nobles in the kingdom? Do the royals even have any allies?’

He had no idea of what to think right now. If he was surprised before that they would ask such a thing of him, he could now see the reason for such a request. Their enemy simply surrounded and outnumbered them to a critical degree.

He felt a bit of guilt at accusing Renner so much of setting him up. What was she even supposed to do with a kingdom rebelling? She wasn’t even 10 years old for crying out loud. He could not really blame her for what she had done. She just wanted to survive. What was wrong with that? She even technically asked him by submitting it to Hilma. She just assumed he probably understood it by looking at the failed coup, something he apparently underestimated in gravity.

But now, it was too late. Too late to stop what was happening and too late to retract his offer to Renner. He was just left with one choice, and he had no one but himself to blame for it.

“You understand clearly what you are asking of me.”

It was a statement, not even a question. The king nodded in confirmation nonetheless as the noble next to him, probably the prince now that Satoru thought about it, snorted in clear disdain.

“Your service to the crown will not go unnoticed or unrewarded, I can assure you that.”

The king assured him.

“Just go and have them killed to the last member. I want their line eradicated from this world.”

The prince ordered in what was supposed to sound like an intimidating tone, even if Satoru was sure Renner could do a better job at it than him. For all intents and purposes, Satoru was sure he could do what was asked of him, after all Hilma and Renner already organized everything apparently.

He didn't really care of the lives lost, as they were but power-hungry worthless men in his eyes, no different than those in his old world. But he knew such men were also responsible for the wellbeing of the lands they ruled over and, without them, chaos would take over.

“What about the future of those lands? What of those who will suffer and had nothing to do with any of this?”

He asked, as hurting the common people would severely affect some of his business and the Merchant Guild in general.

No one spoke for almost a minute before the princess, silent till that very moment turned toward her father and brother.

“Satoru is right father. What of the children who had nothing to do with this?”

She asked innocently putting a drop of guilt in Satoru's soul. After all, he was merely thinking about his own losses while Renner was actually concerned with innocent children. To say the truth, he

never even thought about them in the first place, but his words could also be interpreted in that way now that he thought about it.

“We must of course kill them as well! To the last infant! Those who bear traitorous blood must be purged or they might follow in their ancestors’ footsteps!”

The prince announced ruthlessly as Satoru noticed Gazef going rigid and clenching his fists at those words. But, as many things went, the final decision didn’t fall on any of them. Instead, it fell on the one who didn’t express his opinion yet.

Satoru remained silent as he waited for the king to make his final decision.

“What would happen to the children if we left them alive?”

Finally asked the king as he turned to his younger daughter.

“Father!”

Began to protest his oldest but he silenced him with merely a glare.

Renner caressed her golden locks as if she was thinking about something mundane like what she was going to have for dinner.

“Uhm, I think I would have them transferred to the capital and put together in some new establishment... like... an academy for nobles we could say... a place where they shall be reeducated on what it means to be a loyal noble of the kingdom... so that, when they come of age and are deemed ready and loyal enough by the royal family... we will put them back in their lands to administer it... I thought that if such an experiment was successful, we might

repeat it for the generations to follow, even if in a less violent and traumatic way.”

She explained her idea which actually sounded very good in Satoru’s mind, as that would allow for a competent and educated class to take over, instead of what happened now with nobles basically educating themselves and doing as they believed was best.

He didn’t have the best experience with centralized education, but still, that was the 22nd rotten century he was experiencing, a time where people were just mere instruments to exploit... context was very different from that here. That was what he believed at least.

The king seemed to have a contemplative expression and even the prince seemed to be placated by that. Gazef, instead, openly gave the princess an encouraging smile which wasn’t missed by the magic caster.

After almost two full minutes of silence, the king finally returned his attention to the masked magic caster.

“Proceed as Renner instructed. That is my final decision... you may now go and only return once the deed as been done. We do not need for voices to spread more than they already have... this is your duty as the last trump card of the kingdom”

And with that, the fate of the kingdom was turned upside down once more.

A.N.

Hi there! I hope you enjoyed the new chapter and hope to see a review from you all. Things are surely escalating right now and only I know how everything is going down, but still, I am greatly

amused to see people actively speculating on what will happen next.

Have a nice day and stay safe! Till next time!