

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hey there, took me a while to finish this, but I am sure that you will get why while reading this.

But without further ado, enjoy the chapter!

Thanks again for the support dear readers and make sure to enjoy the chapter!

THIS CHAPTER HAS NOT BEEN BETAED YET! (I will upload the betaed chapter as soon as I get it!)

Chapter 49: A never-ending Tunnel

Yozu patiently waited for his Lord to finish eating his favorite meal. For all their Clan Lord was a patient Quagoa compared to the common folk, if there was something that could break his calm that thing was interrupting his meals.

And for all Yozu was recognized and prided himself in being one of the greatest of their race, he didn't fancy his chances against the strongest Quagoa to ever exist since the rise of Pu.

In his youth Yozu was lucky enough to find strong minerals and so had no problem competing for the scarcity of food. He thought

that the struggle for the bare minimum would be his fate for the rest of his life even after rising to a decent position in the clan.

But that nefarious destiny never came to be due to the ascension of the grand leader sitting before him right now.

Pe Riyuro wasn't just powerful, he had a plan for the Quagoa race, he envisioned something more for them than just constant infighting and starvation. He did not take the heads of the Clan Leaders he defeated, he offered a hand in peaceful cooperation under his rule.

When Yozu bowed in submission to him it wasn't due to his power, but due to what he represented. A new golden age for the Quagoa, a reliving of the legend of Pu, maybe even greater than that!

The result was already showing. Their race had never been so united before, different clans fighting alongside each other, gaining more resources, and growing in strength proportionally to their merits in battle. New food sources and technologies were discovered thanks to the dwarves captured as slaves.

Their numbers were constantly growing and food had never been so plentiful. If Yozu could go back to his former self he would have immediately left the nest in search of his Lord far before said Lord came to him, in order to aid him in the subjugations of the clans beforehand so to not waste precious years in such a foolish war.

He could only fathom where the Quagoa would be by now if the Clan Leaders immediately recognized Pe Riyuro as their Lord instead of wasting time and resources fighting a losing battle.

But alas, that was their way of living. If their leader didn't show his supremacy he would have never become what he was today, no matter how cunning he might have been. Strength was still the main source of respect among his kind.

“You are far too silent, tell me what brings you here great warrior.”

The words of his Lord brought Yozu back to reality. Apparently, Pe Riyuro had already finished eating while he was immersed in his own thoughts.

“My Lord, we have sent scouts along the main tunnels, the invasion of Feo Raidho proceeds without much delay, once we have cut off the last exit from the mountains for the dwarves they will have no chance, they will either be cornered and slaughtered or try to force their way through our lines... either way, once this victory is assured, there will be nothing else stopping us from claiming the entire mountain under our rule.”

Yozu assured his Lord who seemed to ponder his words for a few moments before speaking.

“You are a trusted ally Yozu, even a great strategist, and it is exactly for that reason that I find your plan disappointing...”

Those words took Yozu by surprise, making him stumble back on his words and try to gauge where his plan failed.

“You know better than me that the dwarves, while weak, are far superior in technology to us... Feo Raidho is the best fortified city apart from their capital, one way in, one way out... if we force their hand they might collapse the entire tunnel on us... that would make us not only lose precious Quagoa and resources but would also make it far harder to breach their borders again.”

That was indeed a possibility Yozu had taken into consideration but alas, there was no other way.

“My Lord, that is why I sent scouts all along the tunnels, if we discover their guards’ schedules, we could manage to sneak up on them only making ourselves known at the last minute, the dwarves will have no time to react.”

He explained his plan to minimize the risk of failure, Pe Riyuro nodded in agreement making Yozu grin as his strategic mind was again recognized by their great Lord.

“That is a sound plan, though if anything goes wrong we will still fail miserably... I instead, have another plan to make our victory nothing but certain.”

His Lord grinned as he explained what they would do. By the end of it Yozu could not help but be amazed by the seemingly endless wisdom of his Lord while sporting a grin of his own to mirror Pe Riyuro.

The dwarves were finished, and it was just a matter of time.

{Lakyus’ P.O.V.}

The noble heir was supposed to be having the time of her life since they arrived in this kingdom! It was just like in the tales she read about! A crumbling kingdom in need of help! An army of demi-humans invading! An adventure worth of a true hero hellbent on bringing justice to the world!

And yet, here she was, in a gloomy mood walking down tunnels barely illuminated by scarce lanterns, pondering what was she even doing here.

This is what she had dreamed on just a few years ago, an occasion to show what she was worth and rescue the innocent, bringing justice. Justice... what even was that? Justice was not a so simple concept to wrap her mind around.

The holy books spoke of demi-humans as little more than rabid beasts to be put down for the most part. But that could not be right, she had seen it with her own eyes... the struggle and misery the lizardmen experienced, and yet, even when they had been already attacked by humans, they offered them shelter and listened to what they had to say.

Where was the evil, child-eating race the books so much spoke off?

Little Luck was the sweetest thing she had ever met, and yet in the eyes of most humans he would be but another monster.

Even those goblins which attacked them while they were traveling through the forest. Did they try to kill her and her group just because they were humans? Or maybe they were just another prey, the same way you would hunt a rabbit to not starve that day?

Could anyone fighting for their life or their family's life be considered evil? Even if they end up hurting other in the process?

She did not know, she could not come to understand such a thing, she knew what she wanted. A place where races could talk over their problems instead of killing each other.

An idealistic dream to the more optimistic and a childish fantasy to those who lived such a life of violence.

Was there really no solution to this? She remembered what Ziguru told her, this world was cruel and unjust, the strongest dictated the rules and the weak either obeyed or perished.

As she was absorbed in those thoughts she didn't even notice that the group had abruptly stopped, resulting in her bumping into the larger form of Gazef.

“What-“

She began but stopped when her gaze met another, or it would be better to say multiple ones from the darkness in front of their group.

“Quagoa!”

She heard one of their guards cry out as the dwarves went into formation. Their shield raised as if to form a wall.

“What the hell are they doing here? So deep into the kingdom...”

Another one muttered.

“Uhm so these are Quagoa, quite the weird specie...”

She heard Satoru mumble even though the demi-humans were shrouded in darkness, maybe seeing no matter the light was one of the enchantments on his mask? Yeah, knowing how much of an experienced explorer and adventurer he was, that seemed like the most probable option.

“Five.. six... seven... umu, they don't seem like much... Rayne, Arche I leave these ones to you.”

The masked magic caster continued as his two apprentices gawked at him in mixed astonishment and horror.

“W-what?!”

“You can't possibly be serious Master!”

The two protested vehemently as all others, Lakyus included, stared at the magic caster in bewilderment.

“Do you think I gave you those fancy items just for show? You have learnt the art of magic for years by now... it is about time you put those skills to the test in the real world...”

His words echoed in the dead silent tunnel.

“That’s the spirit! Nothing better than a nice battle to the death to break the ice!”

The excited voice of Lin joined in agreement with Satoru much to Lakyus’ chagrin.

“Have you agreeing with me makes me rethink my words...”

The magic caster muttered loud enough for everyone to hear.

“How harsh... as I said, a man after my very heart.”

The black-haired explorer teased as if they weren’t just being in the middle of a confrontation.

“Well, you two, what are you waiting for?”

The magic caster pushed his two uncertain and scared pupils forward, prompting them to push through the wall of dwarves and stand in the metaphorical no one land.

“Wait!”

This was wrong, she just knew she had to do something. The battle hasn’t started yet! She was sure she could do something to avoid any meaningless bloodshed.

She pushed through the dwarves to reach Arche and Rayne, directly standing in front of them.

The demi-humans were barely visible in the darkness, for all they were just a little taller than her, she felt some sort of intimidation under that almost animalistic gaze in their eyes.

“E-estimated members of the Quagoa population! W-we have no harmful intention toward you! But you are currently in breach of the Dwarven Kingdom’s borders and-“

She couldn’t even finish before the demi-humans charged her without a single word. To say she wasn’t ready was a mere understatement, she didn’t even have her hands near her sword.

She heard a panicked scream from behind her, probably either Rayne or Arche if not both.

She needed to move, to do something, to at least put the two out of danger.

But there was no time for that. She raised her arms, the demi-humans’ claws would cut through for sure, but her vital spots would be somehow covered.

Then she was blinded by light, a powerful light that casted away all shadows. When her eyes recovered, she blinked a couple times to adjust her eyes to the darkness which engulfed the tunnel once again once the light was gone.

The demi-humans were no more as the only sign they had existed at all was the slight layer of ash covering the ground in front of her.

“That was foolish, possibly the most foolish thing I saw you do in all those years.”

The dark and foreboding words prompted her to turn around even though she already knew who that voice belonged to.

Towering above her, and the two younger children, stood Satoru. His mask’s gaze fixed on them menacingly. She had never

understood till now how terrifying he could be. He was not even hostile toward her and yet, her entire body could not stop shaking.

She flinched as a large, gloved hand moved toward her, she shut her eyes in fear even if she knew he would not do anything to her.

She felt something soft press and caress against her face, she opened her eyes slowly only to realize that Satoru had just finished cleaning up her face with a now very much bloodstained handkerchief.

The menacing aura was gone now, this was just Satoru, the mysterious and kind magic caster, she had no idea why she ever imagined otherwise.

She remained there staring at him in silence, there was just a certain stillness in her mind, something she could not describe, as if her perception of the world has totally changed in a single second.

She felt something impact on her body, she lowered her gaze only for her eyes to meet a furious gaze. The sheer emotion in those blue orbs almost completely overwhelming the young swordswoman's mind.

“What were you thinking, you idiot?! You were about to get killed! Do you understand?!”

She felt her body being shaken as the princess shouted in her face.

Before she could even start to muster an answer, her attention was stolen by someone snapping their fingers in front of her. Her gaze followed the slim arm till her eyes found the familiar black ones of a certain frowning explorer.

“Oh my, the poor thing seems to be in shock... let me guess... first time having someone try to kill you out of nowhere?”

Her words were registered little by little by Lakyus' brain. ‘Was I about to die?’ she wondered in a so unnatural calm. Judging by what Renner said that seemed to be the case, but then why was she so calm... her body seemed incredibly heavy as if she would have to use all her strength only to move a sole limb.

Her head was starting to hurt to as the shaking didn't stop, by now she could not even understand what Renner was saying, as if all sound had been cancelled. She felt dizzy and her vision got foggier and foggier. And then she knew nothing but the bliss of darkness.

{2 hours later}

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

They were forced to make up camp earlier than expected. They were still a day or so away from the capital and this little delay may cost them another night in the camp.

Though, Satoru was not very concerned about that, no, what he truly was upset about was how his little experiment had gone wrong.

He just wanted to see how those two would try and apply what they learnt. If they needed it he would have helped, after all there was no point in them being harmed. He would have intervened if that was the case. But then Lakyus had to get in the way and try to talk things over... he had no idea where that came from... what was she even trying to achieve? Talk things over, that had a time and place, which was not that particular moment.

“Master Satoru...”

Those words brought his gaze back to the children sitting on their knees in front of him, eyes fixed on the ground.

“I-I am sorry for... freezing up like that... if I moved, if I did anything at all-“

Arche began in a trembling voice.

“I am sorry too! I should have done something!”

The pained and apologetic voice of Rayne joined her.

The magic caster shook his head, there was really no need to apologize, he had come to realize his flawed thinking already.

He thought that the two of them could defeat the group of Quagoa, it would have been an hard fight but the demi-humans really had no chance if the two casters played their cards right, and if anything went wrong he was there to rectify it.

But that way of thinking was exactly where he was wrong. He was continuing to look at this in game terms, sure, the casters advantage in level and weaponry would have made been enough... but what about the human factor? This was no game, here people would not respawn if they failed and they were much aware of that.

He had sent two 12 years old children into their first deadly battle expecting them to think critically about it and come up with a good strategy.

Instead, reality decided to slap him in the face.

Fear, shock, inexperience, those were all things that should have been expected for such a situation. Yet he failed to realize it.

Was this why Lakyus tried what she did? Did she realize what he missed? Had he really been outsmarted by a not even 13 years old?

Maybe he was only that much detached from reality, he who could not feel much in terms of emotions unless he wanted them suppressed. He who had yet to find any sort of opponent matching even slightly his power. Even after all those years he had yet to get accustomed to this world being reality for all it worked still on Yggdrasil rules for the most part.

“We have disappointed you Master, even after all you did for us, we are very sorry.”

He was taken out of his self-reflection by his two apprentices continuous apologies. Seeing those two so down casted made him feel kind of guilty in some way.

He used both his hands to pat the two children’s head, stopping their stream of apologies.

“I am sorry you two, I thought you were ready to stand on your own against a worthy foe, but apparently I failed to take in account that there was more than skill to a battle, an amateurish mistake particularly for me.”

He said as he ruffled the two’s hair slightly. They both raised their gaze revealing slightly puffy eyes which were currently wide in shock.

“It was foolish of me to think that you would not be affected by the sheer pressure of your first true battle, This was a major miscalculation on my part... it has just been so long since I got desensitized to my opponent’s bloodlust and killing intent, I

forgot how overwhelming it would be for those who never experienced it.”

He said apologetically, he hoped that this would be enough for damage control, though he wondered how else he should approach this, there must be a way for them to get accustomed to this. Maybe they were just too young... a shame.

“Master Satoru...I... I am just so sorry.”

Arche stuttered out as tears poured down her cheeks.

“C’mon now you two.”

He said as he pulled them both in an embrace, for all he knew that seemed to work quite fine for calming children. He remembered his mother doing the same when he was upset, and it seemed to have worked just fine when he tested it on Renner.

The two of them slowly calmed down much to his relief.

“This might have been premature but if you wish to become a proper magic caster you will have to face this challenge sooner or later... during a battle, no matter how desperate it might seem, you must clear your mind and remain objective, emotions have their place, but once you are being controlled by your own feelings you have basically thrown the battle already... Lakyus demonstrated it well enough I think during her sparring matches.”

He tried to give them the advice Punitto Moe gave him years ago, even though the contexts were very different.

The silence that followed was pretty awkward, he had no idea if it worked and was eager to pull away as he was not very eager for prolonged physical contact, though, every time he tried he was pulled back by the two children clinging to his robes.

He could forcefully remove himself, but that would be counterproductive for what he was trying to achieve. So, with a heavy mental sigh, he resigned himself to his fate.

Luckily for him it was just a matter of minutes before the two of them let him go for good.

“Now calm yourself and return to your studies.”

He said while moving toward the tent’s exit.

He didn’t receive an answer but the small smile on their red puffy faces were a good omen.

He left the tent only to leap from a bad situation into a worse one as he immediately ran into the worst person possible.

“Hi there!”

The black-haired woman smirked at him as she waved from the campfire they set up. He could have ignored her and gone on his merry way, but unfortunately some of his Japanese social customs were far too deeply rooted in his brain for that, so he incautiously waved back, prompting the young woman to approach.

“So, how are the twerps doing? Kinda hard to forget your very first time.”

She asked with her usual devious smirk.

“Shaken up, but fine otherwise, I was about to check on Lakyus.”

He tried to cut the conversation short like a true Japanese business man, in short, he tried to change subject.

“I still remember my own first time... it was in a cleaner place than this, though, I found myself facing a true monster devoid of mercy.”

She continued with some kind of faraway look in her eyes, completely ignoring Satoru's words.

“Don't we all feel the same?”

He decided he didn't want to go through the hassle of arguing with her and just limited himself to go along with whatever she wanted.

“That's fair... but that one was a real monster I never managed to overcome.”

The look in her eyes shifted, for a couple seconds Satoru didn't see the usual teasing glint in her eyes, but something deeper, an abyss that seemed unexplored and never-ending.

It was just a moment and if he wasn't an undead, Satoru would have sworn that was just a strange hallucination, but that was not the case.

“So, what was your first time?”

She asked curiously as the undead thought about it. It had been so many years that he could not remember the first time he actually felt scared for his avatar... well, there was that time, though he could not remember if it was the first... oh, to hell with it! It's not like she was about to fact check him!

“Many years ago I found myself cornered by four individuals, there I thought my life was over for good... instead I ended up being saved by the one who would become a dear friend.”

He summarized as the black-haired woman brought her hands up to cover part of her pale face.

“Oh my! How scandalous! Four on one... that is just so naughty!”

He felt like facepalming at her comment, figures... and he thought they were having a serious moment.

“The only naughty one here is you... you shrewd woman.”

He rebutted, still a little annoyed at having played right into her wordplay.

“Oh my... are you going to spank me for being a naughty girl?”

She asked as she closed the distance between them, not daring to touch him but still putting her face just a few centimeters from his.

Normally he would have left by now but the sudden movement revealed something very interesting to him, and apparently she didn't notice at all.

“What is it? Beastman got your tongue? If you want to have fun I am all in for it... though you will have first to put me down into a one on one on the battlefield.”

She purred right in his face, if Satoru could, he would have be grinning by now, he just got something she was hiding, and she didn't have a clue about him knowing. He missed that sensation of having the upper hand and even her teasing could not deter his just acquired good mood.

“Maybe another time, I am a busy man that cannot waste time playing childish games.”

She pouted like a child as she retreated her face from his.

“Well, for not liking to play with children you have an awful lot following you around.”

She rebutted and he could not come up with a proper response to that.

“Your point?”

So, he decided just to be petty for once.

“None, just an observation.”

She smirked again in that infuriating way of hers.

“For your information, I only select the best of the best.”

He would not let her have the last word on this.

“Oh... am I part of that selection?”

The masked undead just scoffed at her as he walked past her.

“I think you are a little too old for that, now, are you?”

He mumbled so that only she could hear him before proceeding onward toward his destination.

{Middle of the night}

{Lakyus' P.O.V.}

When she opened her eyes, she felt like she had just woken up from a long dreamless sleep. She felt her body aching all over and her head kind of still pounded with vigor. Even if she just woke up she felt so tired and just wanted to return to sleep.

“Look who just decided to wake up.”

The low and tired voice greeted her, even if the tone was morphed by her tiredness, she could never mistake her first friend's voice for anyone else's.

She moved her eyes from the ceiling of the tent to the disheveled princess sitting next to her supine body.

“You look terrible.”

Lakyus whispered with the ghost of a smile on her face.

The emotionless expression the princess was sporting faltered as a frown took over her face and her tired eyes squinted maliciously at her.

“Sorry about that, my handmaiden is just the worst, she is doing all she wants all the time and worrying me to an early grave.”

She snarled in response much to Lakyus amusement. Seeing Renner all worked up was one of the cutest things, just behind seeing her pout.

“Can you explain to me what the hell were you thinking back then?”

The princess broke the silence with the last question Lakyus wanted to answer right now.

“How much time has it been?”

She decided to avoid the question by changing the subject.

“Hours, it is probably the middle of night outside by now.”

Well, that answered the question of why Renner seemed so tired, still she didn't understand why doing all of this.

“Why are you still up?”

She asked as Renner pushed a pillow under her higher back so to put her in a position, she could drink from without risking choking.

“Isn't it obvious, you moron, I am taking care of you, it took me an hour only to convince your watchdog to leave you to me for the night.”

‘Leinas was here?’ she wondered in her mind, sometimes she forgot that the silent knight was shadowing her to repay her debt.

“Still... you could have let Satoru do it.”

She protested as Renner brought a flask of water to the older blonde’s lips. The fresh beverage flowed down her throat like the most refreshing of divine drinks.

“He needs his rest, he is the one who is casting the barrier currently protecting us, you know? And if we meet more of those demi-humans, he will protect us, but that is only if he can get a good rest... also I can sleep in his arms tomorrow while we travel if I don’t close an eye this night.”

That last part was mumbled but Lakyus picked it up nonetheless, not that her mind was in a state of analyzing that phrasing, she would probably not even remember it by morning if that headache continued like it did now.

“Why don’t you answer my question now?”

All her hopes of escaping that conversation flew away with those words.

She turned away from her friend as she took a deep breath.

“I don’t know.”

She finally whispered loud enough for only Renner to hear, even if someone else was eavesdropping just outside the tent.

An uncomfortable silence stretched between them until Renner couldn’t take it anymore and began giggling much to the surprise of the older blonde.

“Well, that is truly a relief... For all I tried I could not come up with any sensible answer to your behavior lately, it was either you

yourself didn't know or you went mad... I would prefer much the former."

The princess explained as she joined Lakyus inside her makeshift bed.

"Waah! Hey!"

She protested as the two of them squished against each other to make sure they had enough blanket for the both of them.

"No protests you fool! I am too tired for arguing and these caves are far too cold for me to sleep alone... also I nursed you, so to repay my kindness you will be my heat source for this night, make sure to not let your princess catch a cold, you are still my knight remember?"

Lakyus had no retorts to that and so limited herself to do as ordered embracing the smaller form of the princess to share their body heat.

Another silence descended upon the two as the swordswoman tried to come to terms with what happened that day. She had never frozen up like that, not in the arena, not against the forest goblins, not ever during training or against Lin.

But then again, she never felt such fear crawl up her spine, the feeling of being so defenseless at the mercy of someone who came at her with the sole intent to kill. It was like she was alone and disarmed before a dragon.

"Tell me Lakyus, why do you fight? If you really wish to bring peace and understanding to this world, and you think forcing it through violence is wrong, why do you fight at all?"

Again, the one to break the silence was Renner as she rested her head against Lakyus' chest.

Well, that was quite an easy answer for her. She knew exactly what she was and what she wanted to achieve.

“I am surprised you don't know the answer already... I do it because it makes me feel good, every slash, every successful block and parry sends a shockwave of satisfaction through my body... I love pushing myself beyond my limits, challenging myself everyday to be better than the day before... I do not fight to prove a point or to gloat or to diminish others... I fight because fighting makes me happy.”

Sha stated clearly, there was no doubt in her mind that this was the absolute truth.

“But you also fight to protect, to make sure people do not suffer needlessly, don't you? You fought Dragon Tusk's leader to protect my honor... but truly, you wanted to save them all, didn't you? You knew what would happen if they stayed stubborn... but you used your strength to save them... even if they didn't want to be saved.”

Those words shook Lakyus to her core, her throat was suddenly dry and she could not speak anymore.

“That is why you tried to speak to those demi-humans, wasn't it? Because you wanted to save them, because you knew that they would die if they did as they wanted.”

Lakyus felt like every word was a dagger plunged into her very heart.

What was this? How could Renner know things about her she wasn't even sure of herself?! She wanted to tell her that she was

wrong, that she got it all wrong! But she couldn't for in the depth of her heart she knew that there was truth in her words... she knew that she couldn't run from reality.

Was this how it felt to have a heart-to-heart conversation with your best friend? She always thought that the books describing it were just fantasies not meant to depict real life, but now she wasn't so sure about it anymore.

“You tried to talk to them because you were ashamed of forcing your will on the Lizardmen, didn't you?”

Lakyus tightened her arms around Renner who didn't protest at all.

“You think you can read my mind!? How arrogant can you be!?”

She snarled, she knew this was wrong but she could not help herself. Why must she always be right?! Why couldn't Lakyus just be in the right for once against her?!

“Then tell me this is not true... Tell me that I am a liar... Tell me you don't want me to speak to you ever again.”

The younger girl continued. Lakyus was just about to do that, but the words would just not leave her mouth, she hated this, she hated this so much.

“Why... why are you doing this to me, we are supposed to be friends...”

She sniffed. Gods damn it! She was about to cry like a child!

“That is why Lakyus, you are my friend, my only friend... This is what true friends do, they tell each other the truth no matter how painful it may be, they face problems together... or so Satoru said, don't you remember in his stories?”

Lakyus remembered well, she did, and those were truly precious memories she would hold dearly to her heart for the rest of her life.

“Also... Seeing you destroying yourself like that from the inside... just hurts me too much to remain silent...”

She gulped at that, was she hurting Renner? By simply doing... this? But that was obvious, now that she stated it, it was only natural... if they were friends, real friends, she of course would be hurt by seeing Lakyus like this... she was ashamed of herself for not seeing this before.

“I don’t want to tell you how to live your life, that is something only you can decide, but I just wish you would stop hurting yourself over your morals.”

Lakyus continued to listen as the princess shifted against her.

“What would have happened if you fought and defeated those demi-humans? You could have decided to spare them, even tried to convince them to change their ways... but by doing nothing you chose to give up the challenge before it even started.”

But that was wrong, that was exactly what she didn’t want to do!

“That is exactly what is wrong with the world, we should not be forced to change through a violent imposition!”

She rebutted for the first time in the entire conversation.

“And how do you think that you could bring change without imposing it? Violence is not the only imposition of power in this world, a king uses his political power to impose his will and desires everyday, a merchant uses his money to impose their will on others everyday... but that is not necessarily wrong, we do not

live in a world where everything is wrong... a king might use his power to force laws that would benefit the population, even if he ends up hurting some people, a merchant can use their money to open businesses and help others who were unwilling to be helped before... the same way a warrior can impose their will through violence to stop a war that could claim countless victims... that is what you have done back in that village Lakyus, you prevented a war... if that isn't using your power for good, I don't know what is."

Lakyus' jaw hanged open, she could just not say anything against what Renner said, was it wrong to impose their will on others even if it was only to help them?

"You are an incredibly rare gem Lakyus, you are kind and compassionate, wanting to bring happiness to everyone... but would you stand against, fight and defeat those who wish to ruin the happiness you brought? Even if that would mean imposing your will on those who wished to destroy what you have achieved?"

Again, she found herself without an answer to that.

"I don't know."

That seemed to be the answer to her entire life apparently nowadays. The princess just sighed as she moved her hand to caress Lakyus' damp cheek... gods damn it! Was she crying again without even realizing it?

"You are continuously running through a never-ending tunnel that goes in circles, so stubbornly fixated on looking for an exit in front of you that you do not even glance at the many paths you pass next to."

Yeah, those words seemed to summarize her current state of mind just fine.

“One day, I hope to know your answer.”

The tent fell silent after that, Lakyus continued to hug the younger girl, that seemed to be her only comfort in her current state of misery.

‘One day I will have an answer, I swear it! In the meantime, please don’t hurt too much over me...’ she had never felt so scummy before. Truly, she was pathetic, needing to have a reality check from a girl not even ten years old.

What a worthless swordswoman she was.

A.N.

Eheheh... now you might see why this chapter took me so long, apart from the writer block. I don’t know how many times I rewrote dialogues in this chapter, it never seemed to fit well enough or to convey what I wanted it to.

I hope the end result didn’t disappoint.

Please let me know through a review/comment, this is quite important as this is the first time in any of my fics I am attempting anything like this. Also... sweet character development!

Till next time! Stay safe!

PS: Yes, what Lakyus (and partially Arche and Rayne) went through was traumatic shock from a near death experience, which I heard can be pretty severe in some cases.