

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Here we are again! Hope you are all doing fine! Enjoy the chapter!

This is a stabilizing chapter, or you could call it a transitional one. After all the excitement of the past few it is time to recollect what we have left.

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**Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!);
SirWertsalot (Hi)**

Chapter 30: The Love of a Daughter

Arche set aside the letter in her hands, letting the sheet fall soundlessly on the table right next to another letter, one written by her mother and filled with love. It was almost outrageous to set it next to the one she just read for the fifth time.

Her mother's letter contained the words she always wanted to hear from her parents, how they were proud of her and how much they loved her. They told her of her sisters who were proving to be troublemakers even from the crib. That notion brought a little smile to her face.

The letter continued detailing what recently happened in the empire and how the emperor himself nominated her father as the minister of festivities, a prestigious role that would make him part of the inner circle of the emperor. Arche, even with her moderate experience, largely doubted that last part.

She was far more relieved to know her family was all right. Since she heard of what transpired in the empire, she had been worried sick that something horrible befell her family while she was away.

Like many other nobles, her family opposed the emperor, more silently than others due to Arche's position but still, her father didn't lose any occasion to tell japes at the emperor's expenses, in the privacy of their mansion.

The emperor showed he would annihilate anyone for far less of an offense than her father's, and still they remained where they stood before. That made little sense to Arche since she read her mother's letter.

And then the second letter came, handed over to her directly from one of the empire's emissaries.

The emperor wrote to her, pleasantly asking how she was fairing and not so pleasantly reminding her of her duty toward the empire. Of how he expected an answer from her as soon as possible. It didn't take a genius to guess what the emperor wanted from her, and she had no way of refusing him.

Her father was currently in the capital and, judging by his duties, it was possible her mother would reach him in just a few years, giving the time to her sisters to grow a little before introducing them to the capital.

'Nobles die like flies these days' the words the emperor wrote on his letter echoed in her mind bringing no little amount of dread to the young noble.

Being used hurt. It hurt so much to know your own country and mentor used you to achieve their own goals. At first, she wanted to fight back, to show them that she was no pawn to be used but, in the end, all resistance would be fruitless and only put her family even more in danger than they already were in.

With a heavy weight now lying on her stomach, she stood up taking her ruler's letter into her trembling hands. She advanced toward the fireplace. With a last heavy breath leaving her dry lips she threw the letter into the flames, the fine fabric immediately catching fire and turning into ashes alongside its dreadful words.

'I will do what I have to do, to ensure my family's safety' she thought solemnly.

She almost jumped in surprise when she felt a hand being placed on her shoulder. She immediately turned only to come face to face with her fellow apprentice, Rayne.

"Hey, you need to help me clean up the training room today, don't slack off!"

He said with a pout, Arche immediately took a step away from the boy pushing his hand away.

"Don't touch me, you perverted peasant."

She spat as she collected her things from the table.

"Whatever you say, just hurry up... flat wall."

The boy rebutted before leaving the room quickly enough to avoid the flying quills directed at him.

'Stupid dog!' Arche cried out inside her head as all other worries disappeared as she began to run after the boy, vengeful wrath in her eyes.

{Ro-Lente's Castle}

{Josefin's P.O.V.}

The noble lady was afraid. She had been for the longest time, but now she was totally terrified. Her family was gone, her title was gone and even all her possessions were gone, confiscated by the crown.

This is why she was currently hiding in the most unused part of the castle, where no one but a few servants each day were seen passing by.

A sweet word whispered into the peasants' ears to ensure they brought her food, and a few empty, run-down rooms were all she could find to survive. Not that she had slept much ever since seeing the hellish parade of the cursed magic caster.

A shiver ran down her spine at the mere thought of that bloody landscape, a forest of death was the only image coming to her mind every time she closed her eyes to rest. The thought of her family being among them only managed to cause her more distress.

How long would it be before someone reported her? How much time could she sustain herself? She could maybe disguise herself as a servant, even if the sole thought sickened her, but that was all she could do to survive and avoid her family's fate.

She thought at first, she could shield herself with her daughter, but that was out of the question as she seemed to be one of the masterminds behind the carnage.

The child... no, the devil, for no child could ever possess such a twisted gaze and distorted features, surely was finding amusement in seeing her squirm like this. To think she had carried that thing inside her for months. It made her sick at the sole thought.

But she will have to endure, for there was nothing else left for her but to pursue revenge; to see all who saw to her downfall suffer a thousand times what she suffered. And for that she would need time.

She didn't waste a moment and already came up with a plan, and the first step was to disappear, mimic herself with the other servant, discard her expensive gown, her jewelry and her name. Sacrifice all in the name of revenge.

Her gaze darted around her, she could spot a few servants here and there, but no one too isolated by the other to approach safely.

“Are you lost my lady?”

She almost jumped at the deep voice coming from behind her. She turned only to see a gardener with a pair of shears dangling down his waist like a sword.

“No, and never come up from behind me like that again!”

She demanded instinctively; the big man just shrugged.

“Let the cunt be Mors. She isn't even half as pretty as the gals at the brothel.”

Another man she didn't notice before said as he stood up from the bush he was caring for with another pair of shears in his hands.

Josefin's hands tightened into fists, repressed rage boiling up into her stomach. Still, she suppressed it; she had a mission, and she would not let it fail because of her pride.

"Hey, don't I know you?"

The noble lady immediately turned toward the new voice, a young woman with brownish-red hair. She wore a maid outfit, and her black eyes were piercing her, seemingly analyzing every feature of her face.

Fear crawled up her spine. She could not be found out. Not now.

"S-shut your mouth! I will have your family hanged!"

She said with all the confidence built up in her 35 years of being a noble. That threat usually shut anybody up, but instead the woman limited herself to send her a smirk.

"Jokes on you, they are all already dead, thanks to noble cunts like you."

The maid said venomously. Josefin's eyes darted around, searching for an escape route but finding them all closed up by other servants. She gulped as they were slowly but inexorably encircling her. She had no idea when they got so close. She had been careless and too distracted by the maid to care.

But she had no intention of ending up like the rest of her family. With a swift movement, she stole the gardening shears from the man behind her. If she could kill one, she was sure the others would flee in fear.

The choice was simple and obvious, the maid was the easiest pick. She would make an example of her and use the ensuing shock to make a run for it.

She barely took a couple steps forward before she felt her hand being grasped by a bigger one. The grip was strong and tight, and no matter how much she tried she couldn't get free. No, instead the grip was getting tighter and tighter by the second.

She heard her wrist crack and then snap like a twig, a searing pain pushing a cry out of her as the shears fell from the grip of her broken hand.

She was about to shout for help as loud as she could before a hand clasped around her mouth, muffling any possible sound.

“You pissed off the wrong kind of guys, you little bitch.”

She heard the deep voice of the first gardener whisper into her ear. She could now hear her heart drumming in fear in her chest. This was not supposed to happen! This was all wrong! She was supposed to have her revenge! To kill her enemies!

Her eyes widened. There, before her, now stood the maid, a grin from ear to ear splitting her face in two. A pair of long shears in her hands. As she got closer and closer, Josefin began to struggle with more energy than ever before.

Still, she could do nothing more than try to kick everybody around her as both her arms were now held in place by the two gardeners. Tears threatened to escape her eyes as the shears were now mere centimeters from her chest.

The metal was now touching her exposed neck sending another shiver down her spine. Even worse, she could feel a hot liquid

trickling down her legs, meaning she had lost control of her bladder at last.

The courtyard was now totally silent as she didn't dare to struggle anymore in fear of cutting herself.

The cold metal trailed down her body and as it reached the border of her gown it continued cutting through, all the way down her chest, belly and legs, until the expensive dress was perfectly cut in two.

As the maid finished her work, Josefin felt a hard grip pull on her clothes, ripping them from her and leaving her barely decent with her corset and underwear still covering her.

“Man, look at this fabric! Never felt anything so soft in my life! It will sell really well!”

She heard someone comment from behind her even if she didn't dare turn in fear of what would happen next.

“She is damn hot though, look at that ass.”

The noble grimaced as the shame of the situation hit her in full now. She had been too concerned with her life till this point to even consider the implications of what was happening.

‘Endure it, endure it! As long as I can leave with my life, I will endure it!’

But her body had different opinions from her mind as the tears freely started flowing down her visage.

“Pffft! Look! She even pissed herself in fear! Ahahah!”

The mocking female called down to her shameful situation. Josefin averted her gaze from anyone around her and instead began a staring contest with the ground.

“I think that this may be enough.”

The voice of the maid holding the shears reached her, causing a little spark of hope to lighten in her heart.

“You know what to do.”

Those were the last words the noble heard before she felt hands all over her body. They grasped for anything they could find. Jewelry, gloves and even her remaining clothes covering her modesty. They were all yanked away from her, leaving her as naked as the day she was born, thrashing to try and stop what was happening.

She tried to bite the hands covering her mouth, but her efforts were wasted. She felt the strong hands push her to the cold ground and then she saw a booted foot descend upon her stomach, the violence of the stomp making her gag. But that, unfortunately was merely the beginning.

More and more feet of all shapes descended upon her every part. Arms, legs, belly, chest, crotch, face, nothing was spared their wraths as they continued to kick and kick until even the searing pain began to feel numb and Josefin’s head began to feel light as a sensation of nausea filled her.

She had no idea for how long her body endured that treatment. The only thing she knew was that, by the end of it, she was having a hard time even breathing.

She felt the strong hands holding her, probably broken, limbs begin to pull her, dragging her alongside the paved ground and finally dropping her there.

This, at least, would be the end of her torment. She could only look up at the sun by now as she didn't feel like she could lift even one finger. But she will not give up! She will rise again! She will have her revenge! And then...

Her thoughts were interrupted by something strange entering her vision, something dark beginning to cover the sun, like in one of the rare and famous eclipses she heard in stories as a girl. Maybe it was her mind playing tricks on her, or maybe one of the kicks damaged one of her eyes. And yet the sun was being more and more obscured by that thing.

Dread began to rise once again inside her, a dread comparable only to the one she felt when she met the gaze of that child, no, that monster she thought was her daughter.

Almost on instinct she opened her mouth to scream, but only a whisper came out due to her crushed throat.

“R-Renner...”

The name of her own mother came out of her lips, a desperate cry for help, reminiscent of a lost child. With that the world went black, and she knew no more.

(Merchant Guild's headquarters)

{Goldfinger's P.O.V.}

“THIS IS A DISASTER!”

The loud voice of the Master of Luxury almost made everyone's ears blow off. Aruma Faustus, also known as Goldfinger, felt the urge to use his hands to cover his ears in fear of permanent damage.

No one said anything though. It was an unspoken truth that no one wanted to acknowledge.

“THAT FUCKER-“

The Master of Luxury opened his mouth again only to be interrupted by the Master of Metal.

“For the love of the Four shut that trap, Einzarch!”

The bald man exclaimed exasperatedly, eliciting a glare from the other man who pointed a finger at him.

“AH! FIGURES YOU WOULD BE ON HIS SIDE! YOU HAVE BEEN MAKING FAR MORE PROFIT SINCE THAT BASTARD STARTED HIS BUSINESS HERE!”

That comment visibly irked the bald man.

“YOU! How dare you accuse me of preferentiality!”

The Master of Metal stood up in his rightful fury.

In the guild there were few things worse than being accused of preferentiality toward someone or oneself. To act in one's own interest was the same as betraying the guild fundamental reason of existence. It was no wonder those two seemed ready to settle things with their fists. And it was for that exact reason that the position of mediator existed.

“Gentlemen, please, calm your spirits, or I will be forced to have you removed from this council.”

Goldfinger said calmly, forcing the other two to begrudgingly back down. This was the power of a mediator. He could have any Master temporarily removed, or even, with the approval of the other councilmen, expelled. Of course, this huge power could be counterbalanced by the Masters, who could have him removed by a majority vote.

“I know all you dignified gentlemen. I have been a mediator for the Merchant Guild for more than 20 years, so do not doubt I understand the direness of the situation.”

The mediator sighed.

“For all we find enjoyable to use noblemen as a source of amusement...”

He began with some Masters even chuckling at his words.

“It is undeniable that much of our markets are moved by them and their... expensive orders.”

He took a pause sipping his hot tea he had prepared exactly for this occasion. Rose petals and cinnamon was his favorite combination when he had to calm his nerves.

“The death of more than half the noble population and seizure of all their properties by the crown has been a hard blow for all of us.”

He stated the obvious and it didn't take long for the Master of Luxury to interrupt him.

“Stop avoiding the damn point Goldfinger! The only thing I want to know is how we will deal with the fucking caster!”

Einzarch blurted out his disapproval of the handling of the meeting.

“Where is he to begin with?”

Interjected Maya, Master of Bread, the oldest among them. A big woman who climbed to the top starting from her father’s bakery in the capital almost 60 years before.

Goldfinger grimaced as his grasp around his cup of tea tightened.

“I... didn’t send him any communication about this meeting.”

He said gaining the attention of the whole room. In more than 20 years he never committed a single breach of protocol, leave alone a blatant one such as this. It was a matter of honor and duty, things that his grandfather drilled in his skull since a young age.

“I thought it would not do to have the esteemed Marquis Satoru neglect his duties to the kingdom for us.”

A blatant excuse even to his own ears but a necessary one for the paperwork to come.

“And so? What are we to do with this? It is useless to cry over spilled milk.”

The Master of Carts spoke for the first time, lying back on his seat seemingly contemplating the ceiling.

“Bah, you would say so! You are the one who suffered less from all of this!”

Einzarch rebutted vehemently eliciting a laugh from the Master of Carts.

“You are a fool Einzarch... I had always known there was something wrong with this whole thing. That man had far too much revenue for the products he asked me to transport... that meant he had another way of transporting them.”

Gaul, Master of Carts, continued in a mocking tone. Goldfinger grimaced at the mention of that, he had been doing his own research in the last few weeks, and what came out of it wasn't good at all.

“What are you implying here Gaul?”

The Master of Paper interjected.

“Isn't it obvious Bok?”

Said Welhem, Master of Bricks, with a smug tone. That made a bell in Goldfinger's head ring in alarm. His eyes flew all around him to the face of every last one of the Masters. ‘The disparity in reaction is too opposite, even for them. It is clear what lies behind Satoru now, how he built his whole branch in such a short time’ the whole thing was strange from the beginning. At the time he had nothing but suspicions to bring to the table, but the current situation clarified any doubts remaining. ‘And yet, even though they should understand the gravity of this... could it be?!’ the realization hit him harder than he was prepared for.

He immediately stood up as his seat fell backwards, a considerable act taking into account his large belly.

“I wish to step down from my position as Mediator!”

He announced immediately, shocking many of the Masters into silence.

“Now, now, don’t be a fool Goldfinger, you know exactly why you can’t do that.”

The Master of Metal, Airon, calmly stated.

‘It is worse than I thought!’ the current Mediator thought as he looked around.

“You betrayed the Guild... since when... tell me Airon! How long have you been in Seven Hands’ pocket?!”

Goldfinger slammed his fist on the table causing his cup of tea to jump and shatter on the ground.

“I betrayed nothing and no one... I always prioritized the interest of the Guild over my own.”

The Master of Metal admitted without shame.

“YOU BASTARD!”

Einzarch yelled as he seemed ready to murder the Master before him.

“Oh, don’t fucking start again boy, the only reason you are mad is because you had the most revenue out of us all until the magic caster arrived... if here there is one guided by mere self-interest, that one is you.”

Maya scolded the Master as if she was scolding a child.

“You damned old hag! You too!”

Einzarch seemed ready to explode by now, the Master of Paper and Master of Wood seemed seemingly outraged.

“Eight Fingers were an unreasonable and risky business partner, nothing like the current Seven Hands... I never saw anyone pay as punctually as them.”

Added the Master of Bricks, Welhem, confidently. Goldfinger felt like his legs were about to give out and so he sat back on a free chair.

“It is time we take up the mantle and start leading this kingdom toward a better path... a path of efficiency and order... no more foolish taxes crippling the guild for the mere enjoyment of the nobles... no more laws limiting out import and export.”

Gaul explained as he received a nod from Maya, Airon and Welhem.

“So, you wish to take over the Guild?”

Asked Goldfinger after a few instances of silence, eliciting a sigh from the Master of Metal.

“You are not looking at it in the right way Aruma. You are insisting on it being a grab of power from our part, but is it? We never threatened any of you. We have not been threatened into this... we evaluated the offer and took it. If you wish, we will put it down to the vote, as the Guild’s laws demand, but the result will be the same.”

Airon calmly explained and then Aruma understood just how much the Masters were fooled. ‘For 20 years I worked so hard... so hard to ensure our independence, to ensure no one will ever have

enough power to subjugate the Guild either from within or from outside... all gone to waste'

He felt utterly destroyed by the realization.

And the worst thing was, he did it with his own hands. He first invited Satoru into the fold to get an easy access to both the Magic Items' market and the Adventurer Guild. Who would have thought that the key to success of the last year would have turned into a deadly poison.

"And what of our independence? What will it be of our own freedom when we will have to rely on Seven Hands to stand tall... and what will it be of us if we choose to not cooperate?"

He voiced his concerns, but it seemed to be to no avail as the Masters just shrugged.

"We would not be fooled by such a thing. We are not joining Seven Hands. We are merely accepting it as a favorable business partner."

The Master of Bread said with smugness in her tone. 'Yes, maybe for now... but once they infiltrated into the Guild and climbed high enough...' the dreadful thought could not help but pop into Goldfinger's mind.

"We will not force you to accept how the Guild is going to be led, you are free to leave as we are a democratic entity."

Airon said as he stroked his long beard.

He had been played. Any choice he would take, in the end it would all be going according to Satoru's plan. 'You may have won this

round Satoru, but war, the war is still raging, and only one shall remain standing' his fists tightened.

His eyes scanned the Masters before him, from the relaxed to the worried to the furious. War was waged and he wasn't ready to lose yet.

{Satoru's Mansion}

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

"Our proposals have been accepted."

The blond attractive young woman reported with a serene expression to the undead seating on the sofa in front of hers.

"Umu, that is a relief. If it went bad, I could have been ostracized by the Guild and I would have lost much."

The undead said with relief in his tone. He was seriously worried over the outcome of his coming out. Not that it would have served him any benefits to feign ignorance. By now it was pretty clear to all those in power who stood behind Seven Hands. And seeing how some members of the Guild already started doing business with him long before this moment, it was unlikely that knowing who stood behind Seven Hands would have changed much. They were all men of business after all.

Still, the possibility of failure still existed, and Satoru felt satisfied as all went according to his ideal, with the help of Hilma of course.

"Also, I thought it would be wise to let you know that your pupil from the Empire just received a few missives through a personal envoy of the Emperor..."

The woman continued her report as Satoru's thoughts went toward his older student currently sleeping in this very mansion.

The events unraveling in the Empire weren't lost to him, but he didn't have the time to examine them or gather information. He was far too preoccupied with his own problems, but still... as a teacher, it had been pretty bad of him to ignore his student's plight till that moment. 'She is still just a girl' again he felt like he let Yamaiko down in some way.

"How is the takeover doing? Any resistances?"

He asked pushing back the thought of his old friend. Hilma sipped her tea, seemingly in thought about the matter.

"Yes, the majority of common people did not have any complaints. For them it is just a change in who they give their taxes too, nothing more... merchants had some complaints, but they were silenced by our new deals with the Merchant Guild."

She took another sip.

"I have been informed by Mato that the borders have been secured and patrols are being organized to make sure everything remains in order."

Satoru nodded in satisfaction. He met the man a few times and he seemed a reliable guy. As big as Gazef but not even close to his level if he remembered well.

Still, his new domain was far too large for his tastes. He would have much preferred a single city like E-Rantel over a small kingdom worth of land.

Yet, he had to do the best with what he had, meaning he now had direct access to the Azerlisia Mountains. He felt a twig of excitement at the thought of adventuring there to see if the rumors about Dwarves, Dragons and Giants had some truth to them.

What a wonderful time it would be, going around exploring the unknown, discovering new realities, recalling old times. He, Renner and Lakys would have a blast doing so, he was sure.

He paused. Since when did he start including the two girls into his activities? The realization didn't bother him. It was just surprising to know how much the two insinuated themselves into his daily routine. During his travel to the empire, he learned to appreciate their company outside of mere tea parties.

Lakys reminded him of a strange mixture of Touch-Me and Takemi, while Renner, well... she reminded him of himself a little, but Punitto Moe surely had infiltrated her mind. There was no other way to explain how the girl became so sharp.

He felt an invisible smile creep up on his face. Those were fun times, before everything went down so badly.

His musings were interrupted by a knock to the door.

"Come in."

It was Hilma who promptly answered in his place. Immediately one of the guards entered the room, his black steel armor marking him as an elite of the Security Department.

"My Lord Satoru, the Warrior Captain requested a meeting."

The man said bowing deeply to his liege and making Satoru's Emotional Suppression skyrocket at the mannerism of the soldier.

"Umu, where is he?"

Satoru asked unsure if he actually wanted to speak with the man.

"Just downstairs my liege."

The man said without hesitation.

"I see... let him in then."

'I may as well deal with this sooner rather than later I guess' he evaluated. To be honest he expected the man to confront him sooner or cut ties with him completely. He did not expect the delay from someone who reminded him so much of Touch-Me's righteous spirit.

As the man left the room Hilma stood up and downed her remaining tea.

"I think it would be best for you to handle this alone."

She said as he could do nothing but agree.

"I will see you this evening."

With those parting words she left the room as he waited for his unexpected guest to join him.

It didn't take long for the strongest warrior of the kingdom to arrive. He wasn't wearing any armor or formal clothes, instead, the leather jacket he was wearing could be seen on any farmer or innkeeper.

The soldier escorting him stopped in the frame of the door alongside two others of his companions.

“Leave us, I am not to be disturbed.”

He said with a dismissive gesture who prompted the guards to leave the room and close the door behind them. He spent a lot of time in front of the mirror practicing that and a few other poses and common sentences. It would not be proper to seem too informal considering his new status.

“You seem to have acquainted yourself well to your new position, Lord Satoru.”

Gazef said as the undead gestured for him to seat down. The Warrior Captain kindly obliged.

“I apologize, I wasn’t expecting any guest. The tea is cold.”

As a Japanese, Satoru could do nothing but apologize for his lack of decorum.

“Do not worry, I didn’t come here for tea.”

The man said, his gaze piercing Satoru’s skull. The magic caster merely nodded.

“I see.”

He said, short and to the point. He had no intention of addressing the elephant in the room. He would rather leave that task to Gazef himself. After all, it was him who came here for this reason.

The silence stretched for long minutes, black gazing into blue, a relentless stare contest to force the other to speak first.

“I want to know, Satoru, on our friendship, hoping it was ever as true as I thought... tell me, what are you aiming for?”

That was something the undead didn't expect from the Warrior Captain. He expected him to charge directly toward Seven Hands. Instead, he was going in a far wider direction.

Hearing his silence, the warrior probably assumed his unwillingness to answer. His gaze darkened.

“Was this what you aimed for? What you always aimed for since when you met the princess?”

The anger in his voice was clearly displayed.

“Did it all go according to your plan? Dragging us all away from the capital to prompt an attack from the noble faction and then come to our rescue as a savior?!”

He continued as the dam in his mouth was broken leaving only an endless and relentless river of accusations.

“Was I?! Lakyus?! Princess Renner?! And even Brain?! Part of your plan! Pawns to be used to achieve the power you yearned for so much!”

The raging betrayal in his words hit Satoru like a 10th tier holy spell casted by the highest ranked angel.

“Is that what you think of me Gazef? A power-hungry noble? Someone who will have no regrets in using men, women, and children to achieve his goals?”

The dark tone rumbled from his chest up to his mouth, his annoyance filling every word.

“Do you think I ever wanted all of this?!”

Now it was his time to lose his temper, his fist tightened as betrayal filled his very being.

“I expected you to come and accuse me of hiding things... that would have only been fair... you had all the rights to do so... and instead, here you are... accusing me of using all the ones around me and exploiting their bonds to my own advantage.”

He felt his passive forcing his raising rage to expire as only ice-cold fury remained.

“I thought of you as a friend Gazef, a reliable person, and here you are assuming all of this was some great plan...”

The Warrior Captain seemed to want to rebut his words, but Satoru didn't give him the chance.

“Why did I take over Seven Hands? They were a thorn in the side of the kingdom and me as well... why did I rescue the king? It was because I didn't want to see Renner cry... why did I destroy the rebels? It's because they would have killed you all, people I grew to care for... why did I accept all these troublesome titles and responsibilities? It's because I had no choice in the matter, as if refusing was a viable option!”

He poured every last of his frustrations into his words. The truth flowed out of his mouth in a liberatory way, as if he was lifting a huge weight from his soul.

“You stand here accusing me... how about you try to take my place? What would you have done? Letting everybody die?!”

His repressed anger went up and down, battling against his passive skill.

Silence descended between them. Gazef seemed taken aback by his barely contained outburst, looking up at him with his wide black eyes.

Only now Satoru noticed he was actually standing. He did not know when it happened, but he sat back on his sofa, a bit clumsily due to his embarrassment.

“You can despise me, you can hate me, but I will go on... to live to the fullest of my possibilities and cherish the bonds I created here... no matter what.”

His usual dead calm tone returned, but he meant every last word, nonetheless.

{Ro-Lente’s Castle}

{Renner’s P.O.V.}

To say she wasn’t a little anxious would be a lie. After all, none of what would happen was in her direct control. Sure, she issued the orders, but in the end it all came down to the ability of the agents. Hilma assured everything would be fine, but she had learned a long time ago that trust was misplaced in anyone but herself, or Satoru of course.

The pleasurable breeze between her hair was a reminder of the late spring period they were currently experiencing, but that wasn’t the reason whys she was currently standing on one of the balconies in the most isolated area of the castle.

This was the hiding place of her worthless womb lender. The one who tried to set her up with a filthy noble brat from the countryside.

She felt like puking at the mere thought of someone who wasn't Satoru touching and caressing her. That could not go unpunished! She was no mere tool to be moved around by worthless garbage like her. She was a Queen! And she shall not be disrespected by anyone.

As the one she was waiting for appeared in the distance she immediately noticed the few servants in the area shift positions as she instructed before.

Getting a few of Seven Hands' members to infiltrate the castle as servants was one of the best moves made in the last weeks, with the chaos of the false coup still unfolding. Hilma and Satoru now had ears all around the castle while she could command them as she pleased to do her bidding.

The clueless maggot looked around her, as if searching for something, not that she cared in the slightest. She was so absorbed in her own mind that she didn't even notice the man approaching her from behind.

And from there, everything went down. The fool was surrounded. The acting servants closing all the possible escape routes while her womb lender was busy being a brat. The serving girl did an excellent job in making sure she was distracted for long enough.

The moment the fool finally realized what was happening she started freaking out like a rat in a barrel. And, like a cornered animal, when all other options were gone, only the most radical instincts remained.

The being calling herself her mother grabbed a pair of shears and tried to swing them around her like a mad dog.

Renner scoffed at the display. She had seen the top of the top when admiring Gazef, Brain and even Lakyus' swordsmanship. In comparison this was nothing but a toddler giving a tantrum.

The woman was easily disarmed and then the fun began.

The young princess looked down as the noblewoman was humiliated and beaten to a pulp. The whole thing didn't even take ten minutes.

Once the Seven Hands' members were done, they moved the motionless body of the woman toward the right spot, just below the balcony from which Renner observed the whole thing.

As soon as her womb lender was in position, she immediately began to push the heavy stone vase in front of her. It was heavy and it would have been better to leave this part to someone else, but this was a personal matter.

She already saw Satoru kill. She saw Lakyus kill. It was about time she did her own.

She was actually curious to know how such a thing would feel. To take the life of someone you detested as much as she did.

The heavy object finally gave away as it was pushed too far over the edge, and it plummeted down like a rock in a well.

For a few eternal instants she could only hear her heart drumming in her ears and then a huge crash accompanied by a satisfying squish.

She immediately looked down to see the form of her womb lender lying down on the cold ground, a broken stone vase in the place of her head which seemed splattered all around her as a pool of blood was beginning to form, soaking the stones around her naked corpse.

A true smile broke out on the princess face as she looked down at what remained of her repulsive relative. And yet, where she expected satisfaction only emptiness stood. She felt nothing for what she did. The form of the squished naked human below her caused her no pleasure or regret. It just needed to be done.

She stood there for just a few seconds, contemplating her own emotion or lack thereof, before vacating the place.

‘Now, let us hope this whole ordeal comes to an end soon. It has been more than a month since I last was alone with Satoru. This is not an acceptable time frame...’ she pondered to herself as she felt a certain craving down within her begin to rise. She missed his gentle pats and touches. She missed sitting on his lap and laughing when Lakyus returned all covered up in mud. She missed his deep chuckles and his stories. She missed being tucked in her bed by him. A lone tear rolled down her cheek.

She missed... feeling alive.

A.N.

Hope you all enjoyed this bit of character development, or would assessment be a better word in this case?

Still, there is much to be done and I hope I will see you all next time as well!

Remember to leave a review/comment with your thoughts! They are always welcomed! And a special thanks to all my P atreons!

See you next time! Stay safe!