

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Well, nothing to say here, this is the last part of the time-skip.

Hope you enjoy!

Chapter 73: Passage of Time (Part 5)

She hummed a tune old she doubted everyone apart from her remembered it. It was something her aunt used to sing her when she was still a babe who could barely take her first steps. It always used to come out when she was relaxing, and now she was clearly in her element, writing in her notebook.

“I tell you, one of these days I will find you holding your hand in pain from all that writing, it’s not good for your tendons.”

Raymond’s voice interrupted her writing.

“Aaand now you ruined it.”

She stopped and put her pen away as she closed her notebook and leaned back on the wall.

“I still can’t believe you dyed your air and used lenses to fool one of the most powerful casters in the continent... the others are still quite mad you used one of the sacred artifacts to create a fake clone.”

Raymond shook his head disapprovingly even though the half-elf could only sense amusement in each of his words.

“And how was I supposed to fool someone who could spot illusion magic from a mile away I just went through my rebellious teen phase... every girl has one at some point of their youth.”

She joked as she played around with a strand of her snow-white hair.

“A rebellious phase you say? I think you are a tiny tad too late for that.”

She immediately brought a hand over her heart as a fake and exaggerated shocked expression appeared on her face at the words.

“Oh my Ray-Ray, are you perhaps calling me old?”

She asked with a predatory glint in her eyes, as if taunting the man to try doubling down on his statement.

“Not at all... you haven’t called me that since I ended my time with the Black Scripture, if anything, I would say you have remained as youthful as you were back then.”

That non-answer brought a smirk on Zesshi’s face.

“Cheeky little shit, I bet you tell that to all the beautiful girls you meet.”

She teased as the cardinal just shrugged his shoulders.

“Not really, only to those who used to beat my ass regularly.”

Zesshi almost sputtered as she erupted into a belly laugh the likes she didn’t have in decades.

“Kinky... I never took you for the type who would enjoy that kind of rough play... no wonder you kept coming back to me on almost a daily basis when you were a young lad.”

She continued to smirk as this was one of those times she could just be herself without anyone trying to convince her to do something or leverage her duty against her.

“For all I enjoy your more playful side, I have come here to report something I think you might find interesting.”

The half-elf rolled her eyes, here it was again... she didn't even to voice the sentiment, the moment she started enjoying the exchange, her good mood was immediately shut down.

“There was none of this nonsense when I talked with him...”

She muttered under her breath as her mind came back to the exchanges she had with a certain amusing caster. If it wasn't for the fact even she understood she had been gone for too long, she would have liked to stay and investigate those last words of his.

“What?”

Raymond asked, confused as he probably heard half of her mutterings.

“Nothing, go on...”

She waved her previous words away with a gesture, her good mood now completely gone.

“I just came out form an emergency meeting... there was an... accident with Quaiesse's sister... she murdered the Shaman Princess and stole an Artifact of the Gods before fleeing the Theocracy altogether.”

The strongest Godkin raised an eyebrow at that, this was not something she expected. She knew the blond bastard, after all he has been her punching bag at a certain point in time, like everyone else in the Black Scripture. Though, she only heard rumors about this sister of his, not good enough to make it into a scripture, and quite uncontrollable if the rumors had to be believed.

“You want me to track her down and bring her and the relic back?”

She asked, already knowing the answer.

“No, I proposed... but I was overruled on this one... they used your past transgressions to justify the lack of faith in your reliability in handling such a delicate work.”

He spat out as if the very concept disgusted him. Seeing him all worked up on her behalf amused the half-elf.

“Well, that’s a shame... so, she is headed for Re-Estize?”

The silence that answered her words was telling.

“I guess they don’t want risking me taking a detour to visit an old friend... they are so paranoid... rightfully so, seeing how I am itching for a serious rematch after a year.”

The chagrin on Raymond’s face was all she needed to know she was spot on the issue.

“Well, I just hope this doesn’t come back to bite them in the ass.”

She said putting the matter aside, not that she had ever been much interested in it to begin with, the thing was that it had just been so boring as of late.

Maybe she had just been spoiled with all the excitement she got from her last vacation. Races at war, delusional knights, scheming

princesses, and mysterious casters... a recipe for an unexpected and unique dish to say the least.

She even took the advice of a certain someone and began writing her own story with the inspiration she got from the excursion.

“This wasn’t the only major point that was discussed... no, in fact, we could call this the less troubling part of the meeting.”

Raymond’s words actually managed to take the Godkin aback as she wondered what event could cause the loss of an Artifact to be considered a secondary point of discussion.

Her gaze sharpened as she waited for the Cardinal to continue.

“We heard rumors from our spies in the Holy Kingdom.”

Raymond began as the secret weapon of the Theocracy listened, every word making her eyes grow wider in shock.

{Ro-Lente}

{Alysanne’s P.O.V.}

The princess smiled as she presented her plan to her betrothed.

“Following this schedule, we would only reduce the production rate of 10% while the transition between the Magic Guild and the Magic Academy happens.”

She explained by pointing at the diagram she had come up with the day before.

She had spent the last month on this, seeing how the Magic Academy needed competent individuals if they wanted it to succeed but removing said individuals from the Magic Guild would cause major production troubles, to the point a reduction in production of the 30% or 40% wouldn’t be far from the truth.

That was unacceptable of course! The good name of a noble Marquis was on the line here! The Marquis who would one day join her in sacred matrimony no less!

“Umu, this is a prospect that would make the transition last six months compared to the initial two... but with less damage on the market overall... an acceptable compromise.”

The dark tone of the masked caster would seem unimpressed or even disinterested to most, but by now she had learnt that this was just how he sounded all the time, the fact he was even there and giving his opinion were already signs of his interest in the matter and her work.

“If I may, this is a very detailed schedule and optimistic view on the timings, in such delicate work human error must always be taken in account... I would say a more realistic estimating would be 15%”

He explained as he pointed at the most critical stages of her six months schedule. Alysanne bent over to check out the points in question, and indeed, the timing was tight but she didn't think it would be tight enough for someone to delay the work. Though, she wasn't experienced in the work itself as she only worked the numbers out and so may lack a certain more practical prospecting on the matter.

“It is still an excellent plan nonetheless, I doubt anyone could come up with something better than this... we have stocked up items for a reason after all, if we bring some of those out to supplement the decrease in productivity, I think we would be all right.”

He continued as he placed one of his gloved hands over her shoulder. The coldness of the metal sending tingles all over her back, she appreciated the gesture of affection nonetheless.

Satoru was certainly the strangest man she had ever known, not that that list was long, but somehow, she still believed he was an exception to the rule.

He never flaunted himself, nor his riches, nor his titles. He behaved like an ordinary man, she was sure that if it wasn't for his stature and fanciful attire, he would hardly be spotted in a crowd.

That attitude transferred into his social interactions as well, the man would go hours without uttering a word if he had nothing meaningful to add to the conversation.

It was all a far cry from the nobility she had known and admired since her childhood. The boasting, the pleasant chitchat nobility often used to challenge each other, the subtle looks and gestures, veiled threats and show of standing in the royal race to the throne.

And yet, this man didn't show the slightest inclination of joining the rest. Remaining cold to all, even his fiancée. Or so she thought.

The thing she had missed for so long about Satoru, something that Hilma hinted at and that Alysanne understood while observing him without prejudice.

He was the definition of a practical man. Someone who interacted and surrounded himself with only those who possessed the skills, or had the potential to develop skills, that could be useful.

To those people, he showed his interest, he offered his own thoughts, he openly gave his affections and gifts.

His was the definition of actions speaking louder than any boasting or titles.

And so, she worked hard to show her value through her actions. It took her being fooled by the one she thought her friend, her heart being shattered, and the realization of her desire to just end it all, to finally push her away from the world she had known for her entire life.

But she finally did it! Her value was recognized, not on the basis of her name, or her title, or her looks, but only of her skills.

“You should submit this to Hilma for a final look over, but I am impressed with your dedication.”

Alysanne smiled at those words. It had been so nice to hear words of appreciation from someone who never lied to her, be it for her good or otherwise.

“Thank you, Satoru,... oh right! My father asked to speak with you about the new equipment for the Warrior Troupe.”

She told her future husband before she lost herself in her train of thought again.

“I see, Gazef told me about it, their numbers have been increasing, I think the troupe has just reached one hundred members... they have become quite the formidable foe.”

His words were true, seeing how the Royal Faction had no longer any opposition to speak of in the kingdom, they have been consolidating their power. Part of the process was the creation of an elite force dedicated to the protection of the Royal Family and national borders.

The Noble Faction always opposed the growth of the Warrior Troupe as they tried to keep the Royal Family's power in check, even some more conservative members of the Royal Faction were silently against the move as it would make the King an harder piece to keep in check.

But, by now, anyone who held any minimal amount of power to oppose the decision was a few meters beneath the earth.

With the Warrior Captain at their head and Marquis Satoru's support at their back, the Warrior Troupe has established itself as a symbol of national pride and power, not different from the Chosen Thirty of the Baharuth Empire, or the Paladin Order of the Holy Kingdom.

"Now, if that is all, I think I have an appointment with Silviette."

The man's words were a clear dismissal much to Alysanne's chagrin. For all she appreciated his matter of fact attitude, she still would have preferred for him to use a little bit of tact when dismissing his future wife. No one was perfect apparently.

To put salt in the wound, he was meeting with that little red-haired vixen Alysanne had the displeasure of meeting a couple times during her time as an accountant.

The girl never openly defied the second princess of course, but there was something in the way she smiled, Alysanne could not help but imagining the girl mocking her in her head while she gave her that smile. It irked her to no end.

"Ah, Satoru, I also wanted to thank you for your gift, it is much appreciated and truly a delightful surprise."

She tried to stall her dismissal with this. Not that she didn't intend to thank the man in the first place, but if it could serve to delay that infuriating girl, it was even better.

This time around her betrothed actually showed up for her birthday. Not that the man suddenly became talkative, he spent most of his time chatting with either the Warrior Captain, her younger sister, or the sporadic brave noble who tried to approach him.

His presence at least didn't give way to uncomfortable question like the previous time. She resigned herself to receiving no gift once more, so imagine her surprise when she was delivered one the day after.

In true Satoru's fashion, the man had decided to deliver her gift far from prying eyes or without any fanfare the noble court would have expected.

This behavior would usually mean the gift was not up to standards and so would only be seen by the receiver and not the entire court who could use it as a reason to mock the giver in the future. But she doubted that was the case considering the type of man and the fact no one sane would ever dare to say something to besmirch the most powerful man in the kingdom after the king.

The gift itself was probably worth more than all her other gifts combined, considering the fact it was a unique piece she never saw the likes of before.

A tea set made out of a strange white stone alongside ice-cream cups made out of crystal. The beauty itself would have made them worthy of a king, but what truly made it a gift among gift were the glowing inscriptions on every piece, they were Runecraft

items made to be incredibly resistant and keep the temperature of the food or liquid as it was when served for hours.

She hasn't been able to wipe the smile off her face for days after receiving it and trying it out with Angie.

"I am glad you liked it, I will have you know that I never saw Lakyus more apprehensive than when she came back from the trip, she apparently was not informed that the set was enhanced to be quite resistant. She ended up bringing it manually all the way here in fear of breaking it."

Alysanne gave a light laugh at the image. She knew the girl only through sight as every time she appeared she was by her younger sister's side, like she was her personal knight or something.

Speaking of which, her sister has been silent for the longest time now. Not that they used to speak before, but giving each other dirty looks wasn't outside the range of possibilities the few times they had the displeasure of sharing a room.

She just imagined the little girl finally came to peace with the fact Alysanne was going to marry her... she didn't even know how to define Renner and Satoru's relationship. For all she saw, the blonde girl was extremely attached to the caster and probably held his opinion in the highest regard. From Satoru, she only saw him behave like a sort of older brother. He certainly recognized her mind for the wonder it was, Alysanne wasn't delusional enough to deny that, but their relationship never went beyond exchanged conversations or a gift.

She never felt the need to intervene, after all Renner was still in that phase of life where she sought attention from the adults around her. She will grow out of it in a few years.

By then Alysanne would be married, maybe even with a child of her own on the way. She felt her cheeks heat up image brought up by her train of thought.

“Alysanne? Is everything okay? It seems like you were spacing out.”

She blinked as those words made her return to reality.

“Ah! Yes! Everything is fine!”

She almost shouted as she vigorously nodded, her face still burning.

“I-I will leave you to it then! Have a pleasant evening!”

She gathered all her material in her hands before fleeing the room without looking back.

She absolutely needed some ice-cream to calm down.

{Black Scale Palace}

{Draudillon’s P.O.V.}

The Dragon Queen waited patiently in her chambers for her guest.

She of course never received guests this way, she didn’t need rumors behind her back more than she needed another beastmen invasion at this point.

But this was one of the only places where she was sure they would not be overheard by indiscreet ears.

A knock interrupted her silence.

“Your Majesty, I am here.”

The voice of her Prime Minister called from behind the door.

“Send him in.”

She answered as she tried to hide the bags under her eyes before the door opened and a man stepped in. a man who had been the talk of the kingdom for some years, a man who became the beam of light in the darkness for thousands of her citizens.

“Good evening, Brain Unglaus.”

She greeted the blue-haired man.

“Dragon Queen.”

He answered with his usual dull tone, something she got used over the time.

“Please, have a seat.”

She said as she waved at a prepared small table with a bottle of wine and two glasses. The man obliged her as he sat on one of the free chairs while Draudillon took the other.

“Wine?”

She asked as she got ready to serve him a glass.

“No, it dulls the senses.”

She didn’t know what else she should have expected from this man, she should know him well enough by now. She proceeded to fill her own glass nonetheless.

“Haven’t you had enough already?”

He asked as he indicated the various empty wine bottles in one of the corners of her room. She snorted at the accusation.

“We dragons hardly get influenced by alcohol, it would probably take a whole barrel for me to even feel slightly tipsy.”

She admitted without any fanfare.

“So, why did you call for me?”

He went straight to the point, not that she expected any less.

“I am quite surprised you actually showed up, seeing how this was no official summon that would cause problems if you refused, instead... for once you could have refused, and yet you came.”

She mused aloud more to herself than him.

“It only happens that I have something to tell you as well, something that would be better said in private.”

She smirked at his words as she downed half the glass in one gulp.

“Ah, that’s why then... you seemed a little too agreeable, but I warn you, if you are going to profess your eternal love for me, I will have to shut you down.”

She joked even to the man didn’t seem to find that nearly as amusing as she did.

“Anyway, I am quite sure if you accept my proposal I will have no problem with whatever you are going to tell me.”

She lost her smile as her tone returned to a dead serious one.

“I want you to kill Cerebrate.”

Whatever response she expected from her words didn’t come as the blue-haired man didn’t bat an eye at her request, his face like stone.

“He has become a liability, he constantly fights with adventurers and even force some to leave out of sheer annoyance, he is a disgrace of a human being who is no longer needed since you took his place as the hero of the kingdom... he also hates you with a passion for it.”

She explained trying to elicit a reaction from the man before her, which never came as he continued to look at her, his gaze unreadable.

“So? What do you say? I will of course arrange the circumstances, you will receive no backlash or punishment for this, I am sure whatever you wanted to ask can be arranged for.”

She pressed on after the silence stretched in the room for far too long than she was comfortable with.

“I’m leaving.”

That was all he said making Draudillon’s jaw fall wide open at the brief statement, as if she could not understand the meaning of those simple words.

“P-pardon?”

She asked as she hoped she just misheard him or misunderstood his meaning.

“That was what I came here to tell you, I am leaving the kingdom in a few days.”

The man repeated without flinching or hesitating in the slightest.

“You must be joking! Why?!”

The queen demanded as she slammed both hands on the table, making the glasses and bottle almost fall over.

“There is nothing more for me here, I reached my limit with my development here, I need to find a new place to start over to further refine my blade for that confrontation.”

Those words spoken with such calmness served only to enrage the dragon queen even more.

“How dare you? HOW DARE YOU?!”

With a swipe of her hand she sent the both glasses flying and crashing on the floor.

“You can’t just get up and leave! YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY! A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THIS KINGDOM! TOWARD ALL THE PEOPLE YOU GAVE HOPE TO! THIS ISN’T ANY LONGER ABOUT YOU! IT IS ABOUT MILLIONS OF LIVES!”

She raged and, for once, something seemed to resonate within him, his expression changed to a conflicted one for a moment before shifting back.

“Nevertheless, this is what I decided, your people put on me a title and a burden I never asked for.”

His words were cold, and stabbed her soul like a hot knife through butter.

Silence persisted in the room as Draudillon fought an internal battle she already knew she lost from the get go.

“Fuck this shit, fuck this kingdom, but most of all... fuck you.”

She spat out venomously as she took hold of the still nearly full wine bottle and downed it like it was water in the hottest of deserts.

Once done, she launched the empty bottle away, smashing it on the wall.

With a final sigh of resignation, she used her strength to rip off her clothes.

“What the hell are you doing?”

Brain asked now more confused than ever before.

“Ah yes, I forgot, you are not a degenerate piece of shit... at lest not sexually.”

She said as she continued to rip off her clothes while at the same time her body began to grow. Bones elongating, muscles shifting and inflating, her feminine curves returning and filling in nicely much to her pleasure.

Once she was done she stood there, a buxom figure with tantalizing crimson eyes, midnight black hair, and a few dragon features here and there, but most importantly, fully naked.

“I already told you, you can’t convince me to do your bidding by offering me your body.”

The blue-haired warrior said as he now stood, far more uneasy than before s he backed away from her.

“A shame... those snake ladies must be good then, by now I am not surprised someone so strong would be into such freaky fetishes.”

She said as her hand caressed her natural form, something she didn’t in years.

“Should I start screaming now?”

She asked no one.

“W-what?”

That was all the man managed to ask as he took another step back.

“You see, now I know you are just a vile, selfish, piece of shit who only cares about himself... so I don’t really feel bad about doing this.”

The queen continued as she flaunted her naked form before the clearly uncomfortable man.

“Now I know that the only thing you care about is your freedom, the freedom to do as you wish regardless of how many will suffer.”

She continued as she took a step toward him.

“If I scream for the guards now, what will they find... a poor queen, naked on the ground, her clothes ripped apart, her assailant gone... the rumor of the defiled queen will make it across the continent in no time, people love their gossip after all, you will become a wanted criminal in all the human nations... your precious freedom would be gone forever.”

She explained as her reptilian eyes pierced his human ones as the realization of his current situation hit him. She could see the very much unconcealed hatred burning in those orbs.

“You are a vile woman.”

That was all he could say between his gritted teeth.

“Ahahah... I am a politician good sir, I never claimed to be a good person.”

Her fake laugh sounded empty even to herself, she really despised this, but if it was the only way to ensure the safety of her kingdom and citizens then... she will do what she has to do.

“Now it’s your choice, would you rather have a good time and obey... or run out of this room and see what happens?”

She asked as she fell back on her bed waiting for the answer of the blue-haired warrior she both admired and despised since the moment she met him.

{Arwintar}

{Rayne's P.O.V.}

He stood there silently as she saw Arche give her goodbyes to her family. All apart her father as he apparently had been called for an emergency meeting.

“You should stay Arche! There is no point in going back now! Think about your future!”

Her mother tried to convince her for the umpteenth time. And as usual Arche just shot her down immediately.

“There is still much I want to do before I decide to settle in one place mother,”

The blonde noble said as she ruffled the twins' hair much to their amused giggling.

“But what about your betrothal?”

Her mother continued.

“It is already finalized, isn't it? Father told me as much the first time you two approached the subject... without bothering to inform me beforehand.”

The young caster almost spat out those words as her mother visibly flinched.

“Don't be like that Arche, your father knows what's best, he chose him taking in account your own interests.”

Her mother insisted.

“Yes, my father knows me so well... he isn't even here to see me off.”

She retorted much to her mother's chagrin.

"You know that he had no choice, the emperor called an emergency meeting after the sudden death of the Archbishop, the church is in chaos with the other two bishops either sealing themselves away for a repenting fasting, or renouncing their positions."

Her mother continued.

"I know... I just need time mother, it is a lot to take in, I wish you two would trust me more."

Arche said as she cooled down.

"But we do dear, I know how you feel, but trust me, you will understand one day."

Her mother hugged Arche.

"Just don't force me to marry him."

He could hear her whisper in her mother's ear.

"I will see what I can do... but you should give him a chance at least."

Rayne had to refrain a small smile from creeping all over his face. Considering how Arche all but demanded for him to lock lips with her every evening, he just knew that whoever this noble boy was, he was not going to have an easy life satisfying the starving girl, that is if she let him lay his lips on hers at all.

The thought brought a pang of pain and sadness to his chest. He wasn't stupid, he knew that nothing could come of this, all their stolen kisses, those were just experimentations and moment of passion. The two of them just came from worlds too different from each other for it to ever be more than just that.

It was one of the realities of this world he came to realize with this trip.

He tried to bring himself out of that depressing train of thought by imagining the face of Vulmitar when they are going to show him their new-

“Something funny boy?”

He immediately returned to reality, straightening his posture as the eyes of Arche’s mother pierced his soul.

“N-no Madame Furt! I was just thinking about seeing my family back home.”

He explained as her glare diminished.

“I didn’t ask for your life story, just answer the question next time.”

She said before completely ignoring him like the interaction never happened.

He felt someone grab his arm, it was none other than Arche who looked like she had just swallowed a particularly nasty-tasting lemon.

“Let’s go Rayne.”

She whispered as she dragged him away as quickly as possible.

“How can you even stand being treated like that?”

She whispered to him as they walked through the corridors.

“Well... when you first arrived, you certainly weren’t as bad, but your attitude was similar.”

He admitted as his fellow apprentice, friend... he didn't even know anymore what they were, looked at him with a betrayed expression.

"I mean, I was probably a little shit too considering I had little to no manners, for all my parents are great, cuddling me as a child didn't help in correcting that behavior... you were the one who did that in their stead."

He continued, not willing to ignore his own faults.

"Hey, do you remember that time in the bathroom--"

He tried to lighten up the mood but he ended up receiving a light slap on his face, not that it hurt but he was still taken aback.

"Don't remind me of that!"

Arche was blushing crimson right now as she glared up at him.

"You apparently need some more manners if you still think it's okay to bring up such embarrassing memories..."

She muttered under her breath.

'Cute!' that was all he could think before instinct took over and he planted a kiss on her lips making her melt into it for a second before pushing him away.

"Not here in public you idiot!"

She whispered half mad half embarrassed.

"So, later?"

He teased only to receive a catalyst upside his head

A.N.

Slightly shorter chapter, but this was all I had planned for the time-skip arc, so I decided to cut it short instead of dragging it out for no reason if not adding a few more hundreds words.

Well, as always I am eager to read your comments / reviews and your predictions on what the next arc is going to be.

Till next time! Stay safe!