

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hey everyone! Finally managed to finish the special and concluded this chapter! God I hate when things take more than I initially planned.

It didn't help I had to help a relative move all their belonging from one house to another, and that we were stuck for half a day since god (or whoever is there) hates me and decided that one of the few days it should rain in summer was that day.

Anyway, all my RL stuff aside, I gladly present you the next chapter!

Chapter 84: A Game of Cat and Mouse

Kelart Custodio glared fiercely at the map laying before her.

This was not how it was supposed to go.

Oh, how many times she had said so in the last weeks.

Probably more times than in her entire life.

Regardless of what others think, Kelart was not a soulless being, nor a devil disguising herself as an angel.

She knew exactly what kind of woman she was.

Someone who strived to achieve her goals by any means necessary and always trying to uphold the sacred rules in doing so.

Which meant that even if a massacre was a preferable method of achieving something, she would go around to the next best option, if there was one.

This didn't seem to be the case right now.

She knew the only option they had to avert a bloodbath was defeating Re-Estize on the sea, and that should have been an easy matter, if it wasn't for the fact, it apparently wasn't.

Of their famed Holy Fleet, the strongest fleet in the continent, counting up to fifty ships created solely for war, only fifteen returned to port.

The rest was torn apart, magic was the only explanation seeing how no one had witnessed the event but a massive amount of wooden debris was found floating in an area.

Not that anyone could even begin to imagine what kind of magic would be needed to do that. She doubted even the famed Fluder Paradyne could cast such wide destruction.

And, worst of all, there was only one being capable of doing so.

The accursed magic caster Satoru.

Who was supposed to be dead, or on his way there at this time.

So, how was it possible he was here? Causing absolute mayhem among their troops?

Could he really have survived a curse not even a fifth tier divine caster like her could counter?

The simple idea was preposterous to say the least.

There was something she was missing... something important that would soon ensure her country's defeat if she didn't figure it out.

“Sister, I finished the preparations! We are ready to receive those Re-Estize dogs as soon as they grow the balls to do something other than stare at us from the other side of the bay!”

Kelart suppressed a sigh from escaping her lips at Remedios boisterous comment.

She loved her sister, but sometimes she was too much, the stress didn't help.

She knew Remedios didn't see their loss on sea like a big deal since she was specialized on ground combat, but it wouldn't hurt her to start thinking outside the box from time to time.

Still, she brought up a valid point, even if accidentally.

Why was the enemy staying still right outside their range?

If they had the marquis with them, they could have pushed the advantage their first victory gave them and assaulted the city with them unprepared.

Instead, they let them reorganize and gather information on their forces.

It was a complete turnaround in terms of strategy.

They even captured the Holy Crown. They could have pushed it, it would have costed them much to take the city but taking it would basically be equal to winning seventy percent of the war already. With a fortified city-port in their hands, they would have

no problems bringing all the troops and resources they wanted from Re-Estize and have them arrive safely.

They were giving up a huge advantage, and what truly troubled her was not understanding why.

“Did we receive any news from the capital?”

She asked, wondering if their spies might have reported something.

Calca was the one she had passed her spy network over once she departed for war, after all she had to stay there, the country could not risk their Holy Queen, a symbol of hope. The fact Kelart didn't want to see her life in danger was just a little part of the equation.

“No, silence, but I don't think we should expect much from those who rely on hearsay and eavesdropping, an unreliable bunch they are.”

Kelart took a deep breath to calm herself before the instinct of smacking her sister behind her ears with a spell took over.

The silence was another worry she had to add to the list.

The number of spies in Re-Estize was already little, considering most of them had been priests that now served only as food for the worms. The others were not nearly as high standing as them, and she feared that they might have been caught after the attempt on the Marquis' life.

She was sure he, or someone for him, had let loose the mad dogs of Seven Hands.

She would sooner swallow an holy text than believe the attempt went unanswered in some way.

Damn it!

She cursed under her breath.

They could not keep stumbling in the dark like this in a room full of sharp daggers.

A simple misstep and they would be completely screwed.

“What if we sent a patrol of angels harassing the enemy fleet? They might finally do something about it.”

The proposal was not without merit, she knew what her sister was saying, but still, they should not poke a dragon of which they didn't know every secret and ability.

A brazen and risky plan. Exactly what she had expected from her sister.

A loud and frenetic banging at the door interrupted their meeting.

“Who dares-“

Kelart immediately silence her sister's outraged cry as she used her magic to pull the door open, revealing a panicked looking paladin.

“High Priestess! Grandmaster! I apologize for the interruption but we have urgent news!”

The man said while stumbling inside.

“What's the meaning of this?!”

Asked an irked Remedios.

“A messenger has arrived... from the Wall! It's breached! The Wall has been breached, and they are coming! The demi-humans! Tens of thousands of them! they are marching west!”

The man yelled absurdities, for that was what they were.

There was no way this was a true report.

Never in the history of the Holy Kingdom did the wall fall.

Sure, one or two groups managed to slip by when the wall was undermanned, but never in numbers superior to a few thousands and the wall never actually sustain much damage.

“What madness are you spewing?!”

The first to react was her sister, who yelled in denial, giving voice to Kelart’s own thoughts.

“Where is this man? The one who reported it! Bring him here!”

For once, Kelart was grateful to Remedios for making the brash and right decision.

They had to speak with this man. Right now!

The paladin stumbled out of the room, yelling at something or someone.

Kelart felt her body move on its own as it began to pace up and down the room.

There must be a mistake, this just could not be true. It must be a ploy!

She understood the chance of an invasion, like they had many others along the years, after all they pulled men from the wall to reinforce the army. Some of the more astute demi-humans might have noticed the move and capitalized on it. That was a risk she was willing to take. But this... what even was this?!

The paladin soon returned dragging with him a filthy man with a poorly kept leather armor and eyes of someone who didn't sleep in a long time.

Hells, the man couldn't even stand on his own without the help of the paladin.

“Lady High Priestess! This is Marcos, the man who just arrived half an hour ago!”

The paladin explained, as the half dead man basically collapsed on the floor.

“Man! Stand in the presence of the High Priestess and the Paladin Grandmaster!”

And Remedios started again...

Kelart sighed, her sister completely lacked awareness sometimes.

She didn't even bother to let her displeasure be known as she immediately went for the man, casting an healing spell just in case he was injured or had any negative statuses on his person.

As her spell didn't seem to do anything to better his situation, she had to conclude tiredness was the only cause of his current state.

“Marcos, please focus, we need you here right now... then I promise you will have all the rest you need.”

The man gave a slow nod, ensuring he showed he understood her words.

“Good, now tell me what happened from the start.”

The man seemed to feel ill at her sole request, but soon his lips parted, revealing a raspy voice.

“T-the Wall... we were guarding i-it, when we s-saw it... the demi-humans g-gathered... first a few hundreds, then the n-number grew... by the next day they were over a t-thousand *COUGH*”

Marcos began to cough uncontrollably.

“Bring some water!”

She barked an order to the nearest paladin, who immediately went from the jug of water on the table, bringing it to the man.

He didn’t even hesitate as he drank directly from the jug like a thirsty animal on the verge of death. Certainly a rather unpleasant, even disgusting, display, but one she was willing to overlook given the circumstances.

The man finally left the jug as he continued his retelling with a clearer voice.

“We were alarmed, we had someone go to call for help from the others on the Wall... they never made it back, by the third day, the demi-humans numbers surpassed ten thousand at a basic estimation... we were discussing sending someone to inform the queen when... when...”

The man hesitated for a moment, prompting the instinctive reaction of Remedios.

“What?!”

The shout seemed at least to take him out of his stupor.

“I DON’T KNOW! EVERYTHING WENT UP IN FLAMES! I WAS THROWN BACK AND HAVE NO IDEA HOW I AM STILL ALIVE!”

The man yelled, clear despair and pain etched in every word.

“When I regained my senses the wall was gone, an entire chunk... at least one hundred meters or more of it... reduced to rubble and ashes... I saw the demi-humans run then... and they screamed... by the Four Gods they screamed like the devils from the deepest hell...”

The man calmed down, but Kelart would have preferred he kept on shouting if only to change the words he was uttering.

“I-I fled then... I took the nearest horse and ran for my life... I couldn’t I just couldn’t stop... I feared they would catch me... three days I rode my that horse half to death... three sleepless days to get here.”

He finished his retelling much to the grim silence of everyone.

“Coward.”

Remedios spat the word like it was the deadliest venom in the world. She was silenced by Kelart’s glare a second later.

“The horse died minutes after he arrived.”

The paladin who brought Marcos here added.

“Ah, poor boy... he was such a nice horse too...”

The man seemed almost out of it by the aloofness of his words.

“I just need to confirm one last thing Marcos, then you can go... seeing how you fled here instead of the capital, I have to guess you come from the northernmost part of the Wall, is that correct?”

It took a moment before the man understood the question.

“Y-Yes, a couple leagues from the sea.”

He confirmed her intuition.

Kelart waved her hand to dismiss everyone from the room.

Once the door closed she turned around and kicked one of the wooden chairs as hard as she could, sending it flying against the wall.

Even her sister seemed taken aback by her rare show of violence.

But Kelart couldn't help it. This was such a fucking mess!

“Fuck!”

She hardly ever gave in to her frustration, but this time she could not contain it.

“This is what the fuck they were waiting for! Those bastards!”

She continued to rage, sending the jug of water flying against the wall, making a mess she couldn't care less about right now.

“They want us to abandon the city to stop the advance of the demi-humans or stay still and let the rest of the kingdom get ravaged!”

She shouted to no one. Her sister was completely speechless from the scene unfolding before her. Remedios had never seen her spiral like this, hell Kelart herself didn't know she could till now.

“T-they did it?”

The Grandmaster asked flabbergasted at the sole idea apparently.

“And who else?! There is no one capable of blowing up one hundred meters of wall in a moment! Hell, I didn't even think he could do it!”

Kelart continued her march up and down the room, biting on her nail as her mind went one hundred miles an hour.

“Could be a lie.”

That made her stop in her tracks. The possibility passed through her mind, that would be the best case scenario, a farce to make them go away just long enough for them to lose the city.

“Either way, it doesn’t matter, if it is a bluff we can keep our position... but if it isn’t, we would condemn half the kingdom to become the demi-humans’ next meal.”

She explained gritting her teeth.

“We could send a rider to check.”

Her sister rebutted much to Kelart’s irritation.

“We don’t have time! That man killed his horse by driving it from the Wall to here in three days! For one to go there and back would take at least ten... in that same time the demi-humans could have reached the capital!”

Kelart lamented bashing her fist against the table in anger.

“Why do this?! Re-Estize would be considered an enemy of humanity! The Slane Theocracy, the Empire, even the Draconic Kingdom! They won’t stay still when their neighbor is so willing to use demi-humans to ravage their enemies!”

Remedios protested, prompting a bitter laugh to escape Kelart’s lips.

“And tell me dear sister, who exactly will prove that? For all the world knows the Re-Estize army is currently busy standing in our bay... the invasion of the demi-humans will only be counted as a random event at best or a miscalculation on our part at worst.”

Kelart said bitterly.

“But you told me! No one but that caster could have blown up the Wall!”

Her older sister protested again.

And didn't just that fact irk her to no end?

Yes, that was her exact thought... how the hell did he do it?

How the hell did he go from the fleet to the Wall and organize everything in less than two weeks?

She wasn't stupid, she knew Teleportation magic existed and she would sooner eat her legs than believe that accursed caster didn't know the spell.

Yet that only explained the movement, even if he somehow managed to convince every demi-human in the Abellion Hills to march immediately, something she greatly doubted, there was still no time for them to reach the Wall... the timeline just didn't add up!

"It's mere speculation, we don't have any proof, no nation will believe such a story without even a shred of evidence... he created the perfect alibi by being present during the initial clash on the sea... no one will believe that he somehow went from there to the Wall in less than a week and then managed to convince almost every demi-human to march there... we would look like lunatics trying to cover up our own mistakes by just attempting this excuse."

Kelart bit her lower lip drawing blood, her eyes scanning the map, darting from the Wall to the city and then the capital.

'Damn it all!' she cursed in her head as she turned toward Remedios.

"Sister, I need you to do something very stupid..."

Her older sister immediately froze over, standing at attention.

“Our enemy is expecting us to abandon the city... if we do that we would assure our defeat... So, we simply have to make them believe we haven’t moved an inch.”

She already knew her sister was about to object, but she was faster.

“We will keep everyone who already is in position there, nothing must be changed, I don’t want a single guard to be late or absent... you will take everyone else and march south, trying to intercept this invasion of demi-humans... I will send a rider to the Wall to confirm the breach... if it is true, he will come back to me to report it, if it isn’t he will march south to you to inform you to come back immediately, so coordinate with the rider on the location you will meet and in how many days.”

She saw the light of understanding pass through her sister’s eyes.

“Yes! That is perfect Kelart! You are a genius!”

Kelart almost smiled at the reminder of how many times she had heard those same words uttered by a younger version of Remedios.

“But wait! The Southern army is coming! If the invasion is true, can’t I just communicate with them and let them handle it while I return back to you?”

Kelart grimaced at the thought of the southern army currently taking their sweet time to arrive. Those fat sexist bastards wouldn’t like anything more than see the three of them fall!

“They have their own spies, they will hear of the possible breach in a couple days at worst... and when they do, they will use it as an excuse to guard their borders and never lend us a rope, if not one to hang ourselves with.”

She could see the rage on Remedios face at her words.

“Those fat bastards!”

The Grandmaster cried out in pure hatred as a smirk appeared on Kelart’s face.

“But that is just how things are sister, and by knowing how those fools would act, we can exploit it... they want to guard their borders? Fine, let them guard them for real though... once you find the invading demi-humans, do whatever you can to push them south... push them against the southern army, and once they engage, immediately come back to me.”

Kelart explained, indicating on the map the right locations where to push the horde to an attentive Remedios.

As the two sisters continued to plan Kelart could only think of one thing.

‘We will make it through! Even with this... no especially with this! This must be Re-Estize’s last gamble... once we get rid of this, we will have an opening... they are trying everything they can to not face us directly, which means they know they would lose’ the High Priestess thought as a new plan took form in her mind.

She will return to her Queen alive, and most of all, victorious!

{The Next Day}

{Gazef’s P.O.V.}

The Warrior Captain stood silent like a statue looming over his king.

This whole thing was a dreadful affair, but Gazef already knew as much. He had accepted the consequences of being the Warrior

Captain when his king, no, his friend asked him to lend him his blade in his grief.

He had accepted the harsh reality of his choice when he refused to walk away on that day.

No, even before that, when he had decided that his friendship with the magic caster Satoru was something he cherished, even if he didn't agree with some of his choices.

They were all men after all, all of them flawed in some way. He did not consider himself an exception to the rule. There was a time he thought he could uphold his values above his position. But that was a lie, not because he somehow cared of the prestige, but rather because he had learnt with time that there was no path free of sacrifice, short of standing still, and even that was a choice that elicited disaster on its own.

This world was a cruel place.

He might have underestimated how much his own student, Lakyus, was right when she said those words. He had thought her full of youthful eagerness to prove herself. But, in reality, she might have seen something that he himself had not noticed, or rather chose to ignore this whole time.

No matter what you did, someone was going to suffer for it.

He could have walked away, he could have left his friends deal with the whole matter, and he was sure they wouldn't have faulted him for it. both of them were that kind of person, even if in different ways.

And then what? Aimlessly walk the continent? Walking away every time he did not like the outcome of a choice? What would that make him?

That last one was easy to answer, he would be a coward. A coward who pretended that by walking away he had solved something, as if the events would still not unfold with or without him.

By the end of his life, he would just be able to pat himself on the shoulder, telling himself he had always walked away from something he didn't agree with. That would be all the consolation he would have... a worthless thing compared to the pile of corpses he could have saved by staying and taking a stance.

Being there allowed him to make choices, to ensure that even in disaster, needless sacrifice would be avoided.

"Your Majesty, morale his high, but the troops are starting to question why we are not moving... they are eager act, the Crown Prince's rousing speeches don't help, brawls are becoming more and more common, I would suggest to at least try a first incursion... just to give the men something to direct their pent up eagerness toward."

Marquis Pespea gave his report, not that Gazef hadn't said the same to the king in confidence previously.

The prince was certainly brazen, and he had a good tongue, but sometimes he should just listen to what he was told to do.

But that was not Gazef's place to say.

"I will speak with my son... again... but we will not move."

The king said without giving away any emotion. Though, Gazef knew he was anxious, this was the pivotal moment of phase two of the invasion, and where they would risk having a short and relatively clean war, or a prolonged mess that would possibly take far more lives than it was worth.

“With all due respect Your Majesty, we may need to-“

The marquis could not finish his protest that a certain rhythm of knocks interrupted their meeting. A sequence Gazef knew well by now, belonging to the only one his subordinates would not announce first.

“Come in.”

The door opened at his king command and immediately shut behind the dark figure that made his way inside.

“Sir Mato, is it done?”

The question confused all the nobles in the room outside of the king and Gazef, every pair of eyes was now focused on the mysterious man who had made his way in. though, no one said a thing, the large printing of a hand the color of ash on his plate armor clearly indicating who the man’s master was.

“Yes, Your Majesty, the Wall fell three days ago... as we speak, over thirty thousand demi-humans are ravaging the Holy Kingdom, our spy has just confirmed that our enemy has received the message and is making their move.”

A pregnant silence descended in the room, before it all erupted into chaos, as shouts of surprise and confusion filled the cabin, forcing Gazef to use his king’s authority to restore order.

It wasn’t until the last of the nobles quieted down that the king rose from his seat.

“Marquis Satoru has kept his word, the timing is perfect as well... I expected no less, send him my gratitude... now, I believe you already have instructions.”

The man didn't show any emotion at the king's words, nor did he show any deference. In different circumstances, Gazef may have felt the need to intervene, though the man gave him pause, he was a dangerous one, his warrior instincts told him as much. But he wasn't anywhere near him or Brain, that was for sure. Still, he was one of Satoru's best, and he had no doubt the giant on his back was not for show.

"Indeed, the barrage shall commence this evening. We still have more than five hundreds scrolls, even if most of our 3rd tier ones were used to defend the fleet... we think that wit their diminished numbers, they will not be able to keep the city for long under an endless barrage of spells."

The black-haired man explained before marching outside the room, probably to organize his men for the upcoming attack.

"Your Majesty! What is the meaning of this?!"

Questioned none other than the marquis of the east, Raeven, his pallor definitely worst than a few minutes ago.

"It is exactly what it seems like."

The king said as he returned to his chair, sitting down with an heavy sigh, as if a great weight has just been lifted from his shoulders.

"Marquis Satoru was not the victim of any attempted assassination as I heard many of you speculate at his absence during our departure... the Marquis' mission was to make sure the demi-humans of the Abelion Hills passed the walls and caused chaos behind enemy lines, severing the south from the north."

Gazef grimaced at the words, even though he had Satoru assure him that he would try and direct the horde away from populated areas, he was no fool, they would have to pass across villages.

Again, war was an ugly thing, but regardless of what he wanted, he could only protect the people by being there and not running away.

“Madness... thousands will die!”

The one to speak was one of the minor nobles who was too late in shutting his mouth.

“Lord Montserrat... do you have something to add...”

The cold words of the king seemed to whip everyone in the room into cowering, most of all the minor lord.

“No, Your Majesty.”

That was all the man could utter, his eyes glued to the floor like a child who had just received the scolding of a lifetime.

“Your Majesty, I understand the strategic value of this... if everything goes as Your Majesty predicted, we may be able to end this war in a record time... yet, we risk to face the scorn of the rest of the continent for years to come, no, even decades.”

Marquis Pespea tried to intervene.

“There are no witnesses of our involvement, even if accusations were made, it would just be the mad rambling of the defeated trying to justify their capitulation.”

Gazef recognized those as not words of his king, no, they were most likely Satoru’s or Princess Renner’s.

“Marquis Satoru will make sure to make a clean slate out of every remaining strugglers... the demi-humans who crossed the border have already signed their death sentence, be it by the hand of the paladins or the Marquis... they will be completely exterminated... I think you should rejoice, Marquis Pespea, I think taking control of part of the Abelion Hills will be greatly beneficial for your territory who lacks much farming land.”

Rampossa explained as he turned toward Marquis Raeven.

“And Marquis Raeven as well, I can imagine he would enjoy having his costal territory almost doubled.”

In a single move the king had silenced the only two lords in the room who had the power to voice their dissent for the plan.

“The northern Holy Kingdom will soon be under our rule, and the south will either leave the matter be, or continue fighting against the horde of demi-humans without our aid.”

The king left his seat once more, slowly moving toward the door of the cabin, his heavy steps etching into the silence of the meeting room.

“And that, my dear lords, is how we win a war before the first battle is even fought... as Marquis Satoru would say.”

And with that, the door shut behind the king and Gazef.

“I think acting is not exactly my forte... not at my age at least.”

The old man lamented as his posture visibly deflated, as an heavy and tired gloom fell over him.

“I think Your Majesty was quite convincing, I would say any acting capable of fooling some of the brightest minds in the entire court would be praiseworthy.”

Gazef words elicited a small sad laugh to leave his king's lips.

“You think so? If I didn't know any better I would think you were trying to earn yourself a title and plot of land with all the flattering.”

The old man said amusedly.

“Please do not Your Majesty, I can hardly watch over my Warrior Troop... I couldn't even fathom what would take to be responsible for the lives of the commonfolk.”

Gazef rebutted in false despair.

“Maybe I should just abdicate and join a theatre crew then... I could play the devoted grandfather figure... or maybe the grumpy old man who gave good advice from time to time.”

The king continued, certainly in jest.

“if that was the case, I would have to play the uncle who could not settle down... or the homeless man living under a bridge but who is secretly skilled with the blade.”

Gazef continued, indulging in the amusing fantasy.

“Ah, I should have figured that you would not let me be even without a crown... you are too persistent of a man Gazef.”

Ramposa barked out with a small laugh that Gazef reciprocated.

The two of them continued to joke around, both of them clearly ignoring the duties and responsibilities that will soon fall upon them.

But that was fine, just for a few hours... just for that long... they could dream of impossible things and be whoever they wanted to be.

{Re-Ulovale}

{Climb's P.O.V.}

Climb snuggled under the sheets. He hated the north. It was so damn cold during the night and generally it didn't get much better during the day.

“Stay still, won't you?”

He heard the mumbled words of the heat source currently spooning him.

To be honest, it had been incredibly embarrassing the first time, he didn't believe there ever was someone he shared so much skin contact with before, not even his mother.

The cold nights of late fall made sure he got over his embarrassment quickly.

To be completely honest, he wouldn't mind keeping the arrangement. After all, since he started sharing a bed with Edstrom, he had nightmares less frequently.

He had even started sleeping more than four hours straight again.

The broken visage of Rina, her face deturpated by the stampede, and the hanging corpse of Cris, malnourished to the point of being little more than skin and bones, seldom haunted him these days.

He knew this was a cruel world, but maybe, maybe he could slowly get over the rage he carried inside.

It scared him sometimes... it was like... he snapped, every time he saw one of his teammates in a corner, something inside him seemed to take over.

Without him even realizing it, he was already on the enemy, his blades bathing in the fresh blood of his victim. He hated the feeling to be honest, but he would rather live with that than have to live with another of his comrades dead and with him powerless to do anything about it.

“Get your lazy asses up lovebirds!”

Climb had the instinct to punch his commander as he yelled to them to rise up. And knowing him, this was no suggestion.

“We have work to do, don’t make me wait!”

The man yelled again, his voice like needles in his ears, before he shut the door.

For a moment he thought about ignoring the order, but much to his discomfort, Edstrom had already rolled over, leaving his back exposed to the unforgiving coldness.

He mumbled something he himself didn’t understand as he slowly rubbed his eyes, trying to get any sign of sleep off of him.

The fact Edstrom just opened the curtains, allowing the morning light to fill the room didn’t help.

He turned to protest but his breath was caught in his throat as he witnessed Edstrom remove her heavy sleep clothes, to change into her usual outfit, he could not get his eyes off the dark skin of his teammate and friend, the fact she was currently only wearing underwear didn’t help.

It was not like this was the first time they changed in the same room, but he always turned around to give her some privacy before.

But now, now he was witnessing a vision he was sure some would be willing to kill for. The sunlight hit just the right spot to make her silver hair shine and her skin glimmer. It was the closest thing to a divine image he had ever witnessed in his life.

He stopped his admiring only when he noticed her light-violet eyes fixed on him, a smirk plastered all over her face.

He blushed, embarrassed at being caught gawking.

“Well, well, it seems like someone finally chose to act their age...”

She teased in that tone of her that very much irked him.

“Shut up.”

He grumbled.

“You say that, but your friend doesn’t seem to agree.”

Climb blinked a moment at her words before looking down and be mortified at the obvious tent he was pitching.

He immediately turned around and hid back under the sheets. His face flaming like never in his life, he was pretty sure that if anyone just threw him naked in the snow right now, he would melt it in seconds.

“Ahahah... don’t be embarrassed Climby boy, it’s just a natural reaction for a boy your age, I would say you have even managed to surprise me by taking this long for me to catch you.”

Her words didn’t work in getting his embarrassment decrease, nor for his reaction to subside.

“Come on, I will leave the room... do what you have to do and then get down... we have much work to do.”

That was quite an understatement. ever since they started winning against the criminal organization that sprouted in the north, curtesy of a certain idiotic noble, they had started coming across baffling scenes... well, he said baffling, but they would be pretty scarring for someone who wasn't used to blood and torture like he was.

Pile of corpses of both their enemies and allies were found, the similarities in how they were killed a clear indication of the same perpetrator being at fault.

His group had been tasked with investigating the matter and killing whoever responsible. After all, having a deranged and sadistic assassin run around slaughtering left and right without reason was not something Seven Hands could allow.

As he heard the door click shut, he immediately came out from under the heavy sheets. He needed to get this resolved as soon as possible... he remembered when Edstrom had to show him how it was done the first time... he thought he would die right there and then out of embarrassment.

Natural she called it, something he should get used to as a man.

He got out of his clothes, maybe the cold would help him on that regard. His eyes almost bulged out when he came across a certain cloth left behind by his comrade. His hand trembled as he grabbed the quickly scribbled note next to the indument.

'Feel free to help yourself' the words echoed in his mind as his traitorous brain immediately went into a certain direction, a direction that, to be fair, was probably what the note intended to say.

He shook his head. There was no way he would do that! He grabbed the indument and took a step to put it away when he noticed it.

He looked down at the purple panties in his hand... they were still warm... the implications of that only caused his current problem to get worse.

‘Damn it!’ he cursed in his mind.

He bit his lip as he resigned himself to what he had to do as he turned toward a bucket in the corner they used to relieve themselves.

‘Damn it Edstrom!’

A.N.

And we are back rolling! Damn that special really messed up my schedule by having to divide it in two parts!

Okay, okay, that aside, we are getting into the real war now. Pieces are moving across the board. And you lot can only imagine what kind of plan a certain undead came up with alongside a certain princess.

After all, Satoru is the worthy disciple of Punitto Moe for a reason...

On another note, I am having a lot of fun with Gazef, in canon we see him being very much a good aligned and moral character, but here he is forced into a position where he is forced to choose between two evils, with no right answer and no moral high ground to stand on. I think that characters like him can truly develop only when they are presented with situations like these.

Now I am really curious to know what you think will happen next, with the demi-humans running rampant in the Holy Kingdom, a siege to come, and a political shitshow on its way with the north and south divided as they are.

And what would be the outcome of it all?

Hope to know your thoughts in a comment / review!

PS: Climb is a poor teen sharing a bed with a bombshell of a woman, give him some slack

Till next time! Stay safe!