

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hi there! Happy new year! I took a bit more than usual due to the special and also due to the fact I have been really undecided if I wanted to add a scene or save it for the future. In the end I chose to go all in and risk it. Hope you like it.

Enjoy the chapter!

Chapter 72: Passage of Time (Part 4)

The night air felt eerie, probably an effect of the rain that fell over the capital for the last three days. Evileye was quite disgruntled at having to track among the wet grass, but she knew she could not put this off any longer.

The mud under her boots made her wish to just use a [Fly] spell, but somehow every time she used magic, that caster seemed to immediately notice, and she couldn't allow to be caught right now with such company.

“What do you want?”

She asked the cloaked figure leaning against a particularly old-looking oak.

“My, my, between you and the old lizard I have no idea if politeness is just something humans have developed... is this any way to greet an old friend?”

The croaking old voice of the hag cackled in amusement.

“What do you want Rigit?”

The masked undead asked again without falling for the old human’s provocations.

“Why do you think I am here, you are not an idiot Evileye, don’t force me to talk to you like you are one, it has been two years.”

The cloaked old woman completely lost any of her previous amusement as her tone turned dead serious.

“It is a difficult task... I am constantly watched, even to get here, to the outskirts of the capital, it took me a while to lose those spies.”

Her words were abruptly stopped when she met the eyes of the old hag, she was clearly reading through her bullshit.

“Is he a Player?”

The question was straight and direct, no way for her to avoid answering now.

“Could be, I can’t be completely sure, his demeanor is nothing like the one of the few I met in the past... he certainly is no human, of that I am sure, but then again, that only muddles the waters further as his behavior could be explained by his non-human race.”

Evileye gave voice to her deductions.

“So, we are at the starting point?”

Rigrit asked, clearly disgruntled at Evileye's words.

"No, I wouldn't say so... I had time to talk with the individual and his closest associates... Satoru is competent in magical theories and mostly application, but he is not even near the level of competence a 6th tier caster should have, if the information about his Talent was true, that could explain the lack of certain knowledge, but still,.. it is highly suspicious, this combined with the complete lack of any evidence or record of his existence before he arrived in Re-Estize certainly points in the direction of him being a Player."

Evileye continued, her words capturing Rigrit's attention once more.

"So then, what makes you doubt his nature so much?"

The necromancer asked curiously to know what else the vampire had observed.

"It his... exactly his nature that makes me question it... you know, we have seen them, the Players, the called themselves Gods, Kings, Demons, the brought calamity upon the continent one way or another... and now, this one hardly refer to himself using any fancy title, the worst I heard him say was that he enjoyed collecting rare items... he is completely uninterested in politics, his titles clearly being forced upon him seeing how disgruntled he is whenever any duties are required of him."

The short caster explained before taking a small pause to let her words sink in.

"Could be an act until he is ready to--"

Rigrit words were interrupted by Evileye's.

“It’s been more than four years, he spends most of his time entertaining children and furthering his knowledge, even his businesses and control over Seven Hands has been delegated to others... for fuck’s sake, he spent the last year aiding the third princess with reforms benefitting the common people...I can see no plan brewing, and I spend most of my time alongside the man and his accomplices, so tell me what grand masterplan you are envisioning since I clearly can’t see it.”

She continued stating the contradicting behavior she had observed during the last year.

“The Azerlisia Coalition would be a good point to begin.”

Rigrit retorted.

“Oh please, I heard the story one-hundred times... coming from multiple sources, last but not least, a certain Warrior Captain you yourself said couldn’t lie to save his life... Satoru wanted nothing to do with that conflict, the two who forced his hand were none other than the third princess and that wannabe heroine you invested on.”

Evileye waved her words away with a gesture of her hand.

“Why are you defending him like this?”

Rigrit asked suspiciously.

“I am not defending anyone, I am laying the facts for what they are, what in interest would I have in defending anyone?”

Evileye protested her accusation vehemently.

“I don’t know, you tell me... are you compromised?”

The accusatory tone didn’t drop, something which irked Evileye to no end.

“What is this now? You first track me down and basically force me to go and investigate and then you don’t want to trust my words?”

She questioned spitting every word like venom.

“Why have you been here for two years, and never once contacted us until I came here and forced you to?”

The old necromancer asked plainly.

“What should have I contact you for? To tell you I had no clear answer? Like I did right now?”

Evileye rebutted.

“It is not like you to act this way, I know that something is up with you., I know you.”

Those three last words made Evileye’s blood boil, metaphorically of course, as a scowl appeared on her face.

“No, you fucking don’t.”

She hardly ever swore but her frustration was at an all time high right now.

“We are friends, I know-“

Rigrit tried again but Evileye just saw red and took a step toward the old woman.

“No, we aren’t and we weren’t either...”

For the first time since this conversation started Evileye could see clear hurt in the old woman’s expression. But that only served to enrage the short blonde further at the audacity of the old woman to even make that assumption.

“You don’t know anything about me, you understand nothing about me, none of you ever did... all those empty words served nothing when all was done and I was left alone once more... you all go on those self-righteous bullshit about saving the world and how it is your duty... well! I never asked for it! I was forced into it! I gave up everything for it! I have seen all I loved die, see their empty shell walk around for years, and then be cleansed in fire... don’t tell me you know what that feels like! You have no fucking idea how it feels like!”

Evileye did not intend to vomit out all those repressed words and resentment. She really did not mean for it to happen... they just... slipped out... she really had a hard time repressing her emotions as of late.

Rigrit just looked at her silently, her old eyes wide and full of emotions and unspoken words.

“Well, and I was starting to believe you had matured over two hundred years, you are still the same crybaby...”

Evileye felt the urgent need to curse at the old human once more, but she dared not open her mouth in fear of another tirade spilling out. She didn’t want any more of her feelings to come out, she had already spoken more than enough.

“But at least, it seems like you have found someone who can make you mature... so, is it the caster?”

The old hag continued with a slight smirk.

“Fuck off, I don’t know what you are talking about.”

Finally, Evileye spoke once more after making sure she recomposed herself.

“This kingdom was the lowest of human cesspits, and in just a few years it became the heart of commerce and magical development of the continent, all thanks to one single entity... even if it turned out he was a Player... what would you even do?”

Evileye questioned as she tried to change the subject back to why they were here in the first place.

Rigrit offered her no answer, not even her eyes betraying any emotion behind them. A perfect poker face.

“You are going to jeopardize ten million lives just to take out someone who may or may not be one of them? Someone who isn’t doing anything to harm the world, no, that is actually doing something to better it?”

The vampire continued trying to get an answer out of the old woman.

“For someone who said she has no attachments, you seem pretty adamant in convincing me there is nothing to be done here.”

Those words stung as she knew them to be true. Evileye averted her gaze prompting an exasperated sigh from Rigrit.

“What a child... I should have expected this would have happened sooner or later... anyway, I got what I came for, Tsa sends his regards.”

She said as she popped some of her backbones.

“We both know that is a lie.”

Evileye said with certainty not expecting the Dragon Lord to care enough, not after what she saw him do to one of their own.

“So, are you going away and disappear again now?”

The old woman asked as she prepared to leave.

“I... I think I will remain a little longer.”

Evileye admitted, the old woman giving her a grin.

“I though so.”

She said simply before walking away.

“Wait!”

The vampire cried out as the necromancer immediately stopped.

“What are you going to do with that girl, you gave her that sword, I know what it means... but I warn you, if you try and manipulate her like you did with the others... it will not end well.”

Evileye said thinking back at said girl and exactly who she was surrounded by.

“Don’t worry, her heart is already in the right place... and to be honest... a few humans, a couple demi-humans, and a dragon, it is all rather... nostalgic, wouldn’t you say?”

The old woman turned toward the masked caster, unshed tears glistening under the moonlight.

“For all it was worth, I always considered you my friend.”

She said before walking away and leaving Evileye alone on the outskirts of the capital.

‘You just got all sentimental on me, just after calling me a crybaby... who is the crybaby now?’ Evileye asked no one in the silence of her mind.

{Arwintar}

{Arche’s P.O.V.}

“CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS?!”

The irate words of Arche echoed in the room.

“Shhh, keep it down or the entire palace will hear you.”

Rayne tried to calm her down.

“Augh, I hate it when you make sense.”

She said as she collapsed on her bed with a groan.

“Don’t you have anything to say about this?!”

She continued although in a lower tone.

“What do you want me to say? You are the heir of a noble house, I guess it is pretty normal for your parents to try and engage you, I mean, the only reason why Lakyus is not engaged is because her parents are too scared of Master Satoru, but apparently yours are not worried at all.”

The boy continued as his eyes never left his handywork.

“You mean to say they are too stupid to realize there are implications to their actions outside of their own immediate vicinity.”

She could not help but lament. In these last two months she had seen her father and mother make asses of themselves time and time again, not even realizing when people were insulting them in front of their faces with just a bit of wordplay.

It was true the last time she lived with them before the academy she was just eight years old, but could her vision have been so biased she did not recognize their idiocy at the time?

“You said it, not me, I am just a humble servant.”

Rayne shrugged his shoulders as he bowed forward to inspect his work.

Those words dropped a lump of guilt on Arche's stomach. She felt so bad for having to treat him like a servant for all this time. She even had to argue an entire evening with her parents to have him use the room next to hers and not let him sleep with the rest of the servants. She had to bring out some bullshit about how he was the son of a very rich merchant who didn't want to follow in his father's steps and had ended up in the service of Master Satoru, and how antagonizing his father would not have been a good idea.

It took her three hours and a lot of exhaustion to convince them.

"Here! It is all fixed up! Can't say it is as good as new buuut I tried my best."

He handed her the crimson scarf his mother made her, now with a visible series of stitches linking together the part of cloth previously torn apart.

Arche gently took the scarf in her hands like she was handling a treasure. The sight made the anger at her mother skyrocket. She couldn't believe her own mother would throw it away just because it looked like peasant clothing to quote her exact words.

The only reason she didn't throw away the rest of her gear given to her by Master Satoru was because it looked sellable.

And hadn't that been another huge argument! She couldn't believe her parents could be so obtuse to not realize the meaning behind the gift. The excuse they gave for their actions was as asinine as it could be. Apparently it was not clothing adapt to a young lady such as herself.

Bah! As if she would go around in some stupid gown! She would trip every two steps with the freedom of movement she was used to.

Luckily for her Rayne managed to find the scarf and wash it before fixing it.

“Thank you... I didn’t know you had sewing skills.”

She said as she glanced up at the boy who had flushed a bit and scratched his neck as he did every time, he was nervous.

“Well... you know, since we became adventures, I thought having such skills would be useful in the long run... no point in going around with your clothes in shambles... so I asked my mom to teach me.”

The boy admitted averting his gaze.

“I never saw you practicing.”

The blonde said suspiciously.

“W-well, I always did it when you weren’t watching or were sleeping.”

The boy confessed.

“Why?”

She inquired as she could make no sense of the secrecy.

“Uhm... I thought that sewing wasn’t exactly... something manly and thinking about it made me embarrassed.”

The boy explained clearly reluctant at broaching the subject.

“Do you like it?”

She asked curious to know.

“W-well, kinda, I mean, I think it’s relaxing.”

Rayne admitted clearly uneasy at how she would receive his words.

Memories of that morning wasted with the vain boy who thought learning some life skills was beneath him resurged in her mind bringing a large amount of frustration to the blonde.

“Well, then I can tell you that you are fare more manly than the prick I was stuck with all morning!”

Arche said without hesitation making the boy blush from his neck to the root of his hair.

“W-what?”

He stuttered out just before Arche managed to realize the implication of her words.

“I-I didn’t mean it like that... no wait! I meant it! Ah, no! j-just don’t think too deeply about it!”

She tried to salvage the situation without much success seeing how she seemed incapable of explaining herself.

“A-anyway! Don’t be ashamed of anything that you like! And don’t ever keep secrets from me for such stupid reasons!”

She said crossing her arms and fiercely glaring at the slightly younger boy.

“Ok.”

Rayne whispered as he gave her a little smile that sent tingles down her spine. She swallowed as her mind came back to all the times, she had explored the boy’s body during those cold night

sharing a tent together. His legs, arms, back, and chest, they were all so different from hers... it was only natural to be curious!

Oh gods, she felt a blush creep up her face, she needed to distract herself immediately.

“So, it was that bad?”

She blinked as the words sunk in, she raised her head to look at the boy inquisitively.

“W-what?”

She asked confused.

“I mean, that guy, you didn’t seem too pleased.”

Arche snorted at his words. That would be an understatement. who would ever find such an obnoxious fool likeable?

“Don’t get me started! My parents told me I would be fine with him, he is a gentleman they said, he is interested and accomplished in magic they said... augh! I never met such a pompous ass in my entire life! All he could say was all me, me, me... he had his head so much up his own ass he could probably look out of his mouth.”

She said disgruntled at the recent memory.

“And about his magic? All a bunch of crap! He is seventeen and thinks he is a big deal because he can cast a 2nd tier spell! I learnt that when I was eleven! He thinks himself the second coming of Fluder Paradyne! You should have heard him... it would have been hilarious if it wasn’t so delusionally depressing...”

She continued with a mocking tone eliciting an amused smirk from Rayne.

“And, worst of all, the fool even thought he could lay his hands on me!”

At her declaration Rayne jumped off his chair, all his previous amusement gone from his face.

“What?!”

The boy cried out.

“Yeah, he grabbed my face and tried to kiss me at the end.”

She admitted with a disgusted face at the thought. Rayne on his part widened his eyes and got into her face.

“D-did you let him?!”

He stuttered out.

“Fuck no! Who the hell do you think I am? Some cheap girl who will kiss the first pretty boy with an inflated ego she meets?!”

She immediately rejected the idea.

“It is my first kiss, I am not wasting it on some cheap wannabe lordling.”

She muttered out outraged at the idea.

“And why do you even care to begin with?”

She asked inquisitively as the boy stepped back from her immediately.

“No reason! I was just curious you know... uhm yeah... curious! I never had my first kiss either, so I was curious to know what it felt like if you did it... yeah, that’s right!”

The boy stumbled over his own words clearly trying to come up with some excuse.

“Do you want to kiss?”

The barely hearable words killed any sound in the room as both of them looked at each other in astounishment. Rayne was clearly embarrassed and Arche absolutely baffled at her own words she had no intention to say out loud.

‘No, no, no! The hell am I saying?! This is stupid! So stupid! Why did I say it?!’ she panicked in her head as she gulped down her saliva, waiting for what the boy would say now that she had laid that card on the table. Her heartbeat was skyrocketing, and she could feel her blood pumping faster than ever.

“W-with you?”

She gave him a deadpanned expression worthy of the stupidity of those words.

“S-sorry, that was stupid of me.”

Silence descended once more after his apology as the two of them continued to stare at each other, sea blue into grass green.

Slowly, she saw a trembling hand come toward her, she didn’t react when said hand cupped her cheek, not that she didn’t want to, but she was just paralyzed in that moment.

She saw as Rayne visibly gulped as his face got nearer and nearer to hers, their eyes never leaving each other. He stopped abruptly when their lips were merely a centimeter apart, she could feel his breath on her face, and she was pretty sure he could feel hers.

“Arche... I...”

The brown-haired boy whispered.

“Shut up, you dolt.”

Arche whispered back before closing the distance between them and locking her lips with his.

She felt a lightning pass through her nerves as they made contact. For a moment nothing moved, the entire universe seemed to have fallen silent, and time itself stopped. The following instant the two of them were clumsily and uncoordinatedly trying to deepen the kiss.

It was so messy, but gods it felt good. She didn't even realize when she fell back on her bed while Rayne was upon her crushing his body against hers as if trying to make as much skin contact as possible and melt into each other.

But she didn't care. All she cared about was continuing to sloppily kiss those soft lips pressed against hers.

They continued like that for what seemed to be an eternity of warmth and bliss until a very much present need for air presented itself.

They separated, both gasping for air, as they looked at each other.

"That was... I mean... you are..."

Rayne tried to say something between pants, but Arche had no intention of hearing him out as she grabbed his face with both hands on his cheeks.

"I told you to just shut up and kiss me."

The blonde said authoritatively as she brought down his face on her to once more smash their lips together, the two of them finally finding a rhythm in that chaotic exchange of passion and desire.

She felt lulled into reckless abandon by that bliss.

She closed her eyes as all her worries disappeared and the only thing that existed in that entire universe was them and their lips hungrily going at each other.

And all was right with the world.

{Ro-Lente's Castle}

{Renner's P.O.V.}

She took a step back as the blade danced before her eyes in an arch, her opponent just moved her head back to avoid the slash and caught her wrist in her hand bringing an end to the exchange.

“That was good Renner, your precision is kind of outstanding for someone who just started a few weeks ago.”

Lakyus complimented as she let go of the princess' wrist.

“It is just a matter of exercise, once the muscle memory is formed it really isn't all that hard.”

Renner said without much fanfare. She sheathed the blade under her gown, completely invisible from the outside.

“Be it as it may... it kind of makes me jealous, I mean you incredible with your mind and now it turns out you are good even with a blade.”

The older blonde pouted as she stated the injustice of Renner's natural gifts, eliciting a chuckle from the young princess.

“Oh my, I never took you for the jealous type... it is just a dagger though, I doubt I would manage with a sword of any kind, that is more your style... also I don't really find any enjoyment in it, this is just an insurance.”

She shrugged her shoulders as she stated the facts as they were.

“That is even worse! You don’t even enjoy it and you are still great at it.”

Lakyus lamented hanging her head down in exasperation much to Renner’s amusement.

It was true though, now that she had been part of the political spectrum for a while, she had no doubt she had made some powerful enemies among the nobility. Even more with her constant reforms for the common people, most of which, without Satoru’s support, would have never seen the light.

Not that she expected to be attacked directly as Seven Hands were very much in control of the castle and the whole capital. But still, trust was a weakness, and in this world, weakness meant death. It would be foolish on her part not to learn how to defend herself,

Since the only two people she was willing to trust were Satoru and Lakyus, she couldn’t expect the two of them to be there for her all the time.

“But, do you really think this is necessary... I mean, if there is someone trying to hurt you...”

Lakyus words were almost a whisper but Renner clearly saw something pass through her emerald green eyes. Something she didn’t manage to recognize for the instant it lasted.

“Don’t worry about it Lakyus, for the time being there is nothing to be afraid of, but, as Satoru always says, those who think themselves prepared for every possibility will be the first to die.”

The princess repeated the caster’s words as the warrior nodded in understanding.

“Still, if you suspect anything, promise me to tell me, you have that Message scroll on you for emergencies but it would hope you would tell me sooner.”

Lakyus said in one of her most serious tones Renner hardly ever heard her use.

“My, aren’t you a bit too worried about me?”

Renner tried to lighten the mood but apparently Lakyus would not have it this time as she immediately grabbed Renner by the shoulders.

“You are my best friend, if something happened to you... I... I...”

The clear desperation in those green eyes was something Renner never saw before. This was clearly something that bothered the girl a lot. The sincerity of it made Renner almost want to crack a smile, but she refrained as she just cupped the older blonde’s cheek with her hand.

“I promise you, don’t worry about it, I will be fine.”

She calmly said as she gently caressed the older girl’s cheek like she would when petting a puppy.

The moment was lost when the door to her rooms slammed open.

In came her oaf of a brother, steaming as usual, she started to believe there was nothing but water in that empty skull of his.

“Dear brother, welcome, I had no clue you would be coming to visit me today, can I offer you a cup of tea?”

Her calm and dignified demeanor only served to piss him off more, a past time of hers as of late.

“Cut the shit! Why did you do it?!”

He roared.

“I am not sure what you are referring to.”

She continued her oblivious act only, she was pretty sure some of his veins were going to pop at this rate.

“The fucking magic academy! Why did you force me to give the speech?!”

He lamented, enraged at the event he had been forced by father to perform at.

‘So, he figured out that I was the one who suggested his name, or someone told him’ the princess thought, she expected as much, it wasn’t a secret anyway.

“This humiliation! To address the uneducated masses as if the Royal Family was bending backward for them! as if they mattered at all!”

Her foolish brother continued to spew nonsense after nonsense. Apparently, the outcome the last ten times some nobles tried to mess with the people weren’t enough for his brain to register the shift of power.

“I am the laughingstock of the nobility! And you were supposed to help me! And what have you done?! Nothing!”

She glanced at Lakyus who looked unperturbed by her brother’s attitude, but in reality she could see the frustration on the older girl’s face.

“Lakyus, could you please leave us to get some tea?”

She asked politely as the knight reluctantly obeyed and left the room.

“Brother, pray tell, who were these nobles who you feel so offended by?”

She asked calmly as her older sibling just scowled.

“Count Lumiere was the most vocal, and even Baron Calais dared to snicker in my direction, the rest I couldn’t even remember the name! A count and a fucking baron! I am the Crown Prince! How dare they even think they can as much as look at me in a way I don’t approve of! Let alone humiliate me!”

Renner mentally sighed at the idiotic tirade born of inflated pride and unearned ego. The exact two things that would allow her to manipulate most of the court, but at the same time, the biggest pain to deal with.

“Brother, those are minor nobles at best, their territory insignificant in the grand scheme of thing.”

She began.

“Exactly! And if they dare to mock me! Who knows what the higher nobility is saying?!”

He interrupted her continuing to spew idiocy after idiocy.

“They are saying nothing about you, that is the truth.”

She said with certainty in every word.

“AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?!”

He roared, slamming his hand on the table in clear frustration.

Renner didn’t dignify that reaction with words as she just moved and retrieved one of the kingdom maps from a drawer before placing it on the table between her and her confused brother.

“Tell me brother, where exactly are the Four Great Nobles right now?”

She asked gently.

“In the heart of their domains, they haven’t been seen in the capital since the purge of those traitors! All except for that upstart magic caster!”

Renner had to refrain from using her concealed dagger to stab his throat right there and then as she limited herself to bite her internal cheek.

“And I imagine you noticed how Marquis Satoru is using his time at court to push my reforms without opposition... he has been left with all the influence he wants at court, and why do you think the other three are staying put as Marquis Satoru undermines all their influence at court?”

She questioned while placing pins on the locations of each of the Four Great Nobles.

Silence persisted in the room as clearly her brother had no answer to give.

“Tell me brother, what was the outcome of the purge? Why is it a turning point in our kingdom’s history?”

She questioned again, trying to not sound as if she was addressing a mentally challenged individual.

“Enough with your riddles! What does this even have to do with what happened today?!”

The crown prince yelled as apparently his tiny brain had been too overwhelmed by a few simple questions.

‘No wonder Boullope thought to overthrow the dynasty if this was the future’ she thought as the stupidity on display was becoming too much to stand even for a patient girl such as herself.

“The purge eliminated all the traitors, but that was only the instant effect, what truly changed since that moment was the people... the common folk, merchants, bakers, smiths, even the beggars, they all understood one thing... if they bent together, they could overcome any of the nobles that oppressed them.”

She glanced up at a confused prince.

“Count Mirel, Baron Suwel, all the others countless nobles who opposed and refused to apply the new reforms, or simply thought they could just push their own people into submission... they are all dead, their mansions burned, their sons butchered, their wives and daughters... better not to dwell on them... do you understand what this means?”

She looked expectantly at the young man who stared down at the map as she pointed at each domain annexed to their neighbors after the noble line inhabiting them was extinguished.

“Marquis Pespea is constantly trying to mediate between his lordlings and the common people to avoid chaos, Marquis Blumrush’s territory is suffering a silent civil war, Marquis Raeven has no longer control over part of his lands and is trying to avoid losing more... this is why every noble worth something has not been seen in the capital in the last two years... they are all risking their necks for their lands and titles.”

She explained the situation each of the most powerful men in the kingdom found themselves in.

“This is absolutely unconceivable! We must do something! The common rabble can’t just do whatever they want!”

Renner felt like facepalming at the absolute idiocy spewed out of her idiot brother’s mouth. Of all the conclusion he could have reached, he chose the easiest self-destructive.

“Do something and you will have the one million inhabitants of the capital knocking at your door... and let me assure you brother... once the guards are faced with their own brothers and sisters in overwhelming numbers, they will just turn around and stab you.”

She said indifferently.

“This! This is all that magic caster’s fault!”

Renner just rolled her eyes at that level of incompetence and ignorance.

“Satoru certainly showed them how it is done, but it was inevitable, sooner or later they would have risen up in rebellion, and once they saw how effective it was, they would have razed this kingdom to the ground... they rage would have been an uncontrollable inferno, but now... now we are in control.”

Her words immediately caught the crown prince’s attention.

“What? How is this being in control with half the kingdom ready to rise up in rebellion?!”

He cried out clearly unable to see the larger picture.

“Oh, didn’t you hear a word of what I said?”

She asked annoyed, shutting her brother up with a glare, something she didn’t expect to work.

“The people have no trust in nobles, nor in royals... but you know who they trust? The one who delivered justice to them, the one who feeds their poor, and the one who heals their sick... it is no wonder Satoru is the only one of the Four Great Nobles who can afford remaining in the capital, all the while the population in his territory doubled in the last two years and the commerce had shifted east with the Empire, Draconic Kingdom, and now Azerlisia Coalition as our major exporters, his territory is thriving all the while the rest of the nobility is constantly hanging by a thread.”

She laid down the facts like she was talking with an eight years old, which wasn't far from the truth in her opinion.

“Why do you think father is adamant to marry off Alysanne? Why do you think he has never once protested any of my reforms in favor of the common people?”

She questioned, not really expecting an answer.

“He... he is trying to put the Royal family on the same level of the magic caster in the eyes of the people!”

Her brother exclaimed as if he had just unraveled a mystery as old as the world. Renner refrained from smirking as she saw his satisfied expression as if he had just come up with the answer without having her basically spell it out for him without saying the words. That was the only way to make people like her brother listen to you. If you just told them the answer, they would feel humiliated by their own lack of brain. But if you let them reach the same conclusion, no matter how much you push them there, they will think themselves some kind of genius.

The door to her rooms opened as Lakyus marched in with the requested tea, she immediately served the crown prince as it was customary even if it was clear she would have rather not served him at all.

“Thank you Lakyus.”

Renner said as she accepted her own cup of tea.

Silence persisted in the room as her brother sipped the hot beverage before offering her a smirk.

“I see now, this is why father had you assigned to aid me... you aren’t bad at this little sister, but I want to be informed before you do anything next time.”

He ordered in a serious tone. Renner almost rolled her eyes at his attempt of asserting dominance as if he had not behaved like a fool since he entered the room. But she had no other choice if she wanted her plan to proceed to the next stage.

“Well, I tried, you have declined any of my invitation to tea so far.”

She said in the less confrontational way she could muster which had her brother shut his mouth in clear shame, but clearly the man was too full of himself to even attempt an apology.

“I have been busy.”

He mumbled under his breath.

“I am sure the crown prince has many responsibilities.”

She said without trying to sound condescending.

Silence descended in the room once more as they sipped their tea.

“Now then, what is the next move.”

Those words brought a small grin on Renner's face, coincidentally she hid it behind her cup.

'This was too easy... you are all done for...' the realization that the hardest part of her plan was a success made her want to jump up and dance right there and then.

'Soon, me and my Satoru will have what we deserved all along' she thought as she recomposed herself mentally before placing the cup down and offered her brother a pleasant smile.

A.N.

Here we are! We are setting up the stage for the next arc and the ones to come after it. Next will be the last of the time skip chapters and we will then officially enter the next arc.

Wow there is a lot of stuff that happened this chapter, I am curious to know what you have to say about the Evileye scene, as well as your speculations for what the little devil known as Renner is planning. Also, it took me a while to decide if I wanted to do the Arche x Rayne scene here or wait another arc, though I think that them being hormonal thirteen years old is a good excuse to bring their relationship to the next level.

Curious to hear your opinion, I await your comments / reviews.

Stay safe! Till next time!