

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hey everyone! Nothing much to say here, took me a while to give this chapter the vibe I was looking for, so I hope you enjoy the final result!

Chapter 75: At the Hands of Despair

The toll of the bells was deafening, a constant, rhythmic sound meant to echo in every corner of the capital.

Angelica continued to pack her belongings, a servants' job, but seeing the state of the palace she rather do it alone than gather even the slightest attention to herself and the fact she was leaving.

In the wake of Alysanne's assassination everyone was on edge, noble or commoner, everyone was a suspect. The entirety of the palace seemed to have been frozen for the last three days, not a sound through the halls, no pleasant chatting from the nobility, no gossiping from the maids, an eerie tense silence filled the entirety of the castle.

Three days of this and she already felt like she was going mad.

She had been unable to sleep, every time she closed her eyes, the vision of her dead friend appeared before her. Her body

completely white if not for the neck, bloated and purple due to the poison that ultimately caused her death.

A sight that she knew would haunt her for the rest of her life.

She redoubled her effort in packing everything she wanted to bring back home, leaving the frivolous dresses she had no use for, and the cumbersome gifts of the fools who tried to charm her during her stay. ‘This is a cursed city’ she could not help but come to that conclusion. Ever since she first came here, she had only witnessed the worst of humanity, if not for the fact she had Clarica by her side, or the ray of sunshine that was Alys, she knew she would have gone mad, or worse, be dragged down to their level.

And to say, that for a rural noble such as herself, the thought of spending years in the capital, as a close friend of a royal no less, would have been the dream of a lifetime a few years ago.

Utter madness she said! To spend the rest of her days in a little rural estate seemed a dream come true if compared to the hell of the capital!

Her vision blurred as droplets of salty tears began to roll down her cheek and fall on her packed clothes.

She choked down sobs as memories of her time here flowed through her mind like an unstoppable river. All those hours spent in the gardens, laughing at each other’s jokes and gossiping about the latest news.

For all she had only been tasked with observing her, Angie couldn’t help but fall for the naïve princess’ charm. She had always known, since a fairly young age that she had interests toward both the male and female spectrum, but she would have never expected she could fall so hard for someone. And worst of

all, it was someone she knew would never reciprocate her feelings. And now... now she had seen the one her heart secretly yearned for dead in her bed, she had died in her sleep they said, a painless death they said... but who cared? The fact remained, Alysanne was dead, and a piece of Angie's heart died with her.

She wouldn't even be able to attend the funeral as she would use that moment of distraction to flee the capital and return home. The disappearance of a lower noble such as herself would hardly be noticed anyway.

She sniffled as she tried to clean her face, but her eyes seemed to have other ideas and had no intention of stopping any time soon.

She should never have come here, it was a mistake, something that drastically changed her from within.

This place sucked away at her happiness, her cheerfulness.

She felt like she had been cursed to forever carry the burden of what she had witnessed here.

Maybe, with time, she could be healed from all this pain and misery. Maybe, if she returned to her father and brother, to her naïve but well-meaning intended, back among those farms in the countryside she so much loathed when she was younger... maybe her heart could be put together.

“Lady Angelica.”

She almost jumped at the gentle tone that came from behind her. She snapped around as she didn't even hear the servant enter her quarters.

“The carriage is waiting for you, Master Satoru sends his regards for a job well-done, you can inform your father that the agreement will be honored once the turmoil in the capital calms down.”

‘A job well-done’ the words sounded empty and meaningless in her mind. Could any of what happened be called well-done? No, none of this was right, none of this was meant to go like this... she had never doubted the ruthlessness of the Marquis, none did after the purge, but still... what kind of human, no, what kind of monster could call any of this a job well-done?

But alas, she had no intention of saying anything, she would never risk offending someone who had the means, and more importantly didn’t have any qualms, to delete her and her family from the face of this world.

“Please come with me, a colleague of mine will retrieve your luggage.”

The servant continued as Angie felt herself being helped on her feet.

“We all mourn princess Alysanne, she had never been the type to abuse the servants, that was enough to be well-liked around here... I am sure the culprit will be caught soon enough.”

The words of the servant wounded as hollow as Angelica’s heart. She silently walked down those familiar halls for, hopefully, the last time in her life.

Those halls that once echoed with her, Clarice’s, and Alys’ laughter, those halls that held so many memories of better days.

She didn’t know it yet, but it would only be years later, after numerous events that would shake the continent, and the death of

a single princess would be but an ordinary event, only after all of that she would set foot again in those halls.

But that was a story for the future.

{Seven Hands' hideout}

{Cocco Doll's P.O.V.}

To say the leader of the spy and brothel department was scared shitless would be an understatement. It had been years... since the change in leadership in fact that he didn't feel such dread crawl up his spine.

His stress levels were so high that he could not sleep for the last two days.

Ever since the second princess' death was announced, Seven Hands had been in a mad hunt for the culprit. They already had enough information to know it was the work of someone from the castle, and the fact one servant disappeared the exact night the assassination took place was certainly no coincidence.

The Black Hand had mobilized immediately, flooding the streets of the capital with its men, inspecting every house and detaining anyone who matched the description of the woman.

It took very little to find her, she didn't make it a kilometer outside the capital that the Black Hand was on her, dragging her kicking and screaming back to the capital.

Someone could ask, why would he be scared then? What did any of this have to do with him?

The answer was simple, he was the one responsible for sending that stupid bitch to serve in the castle in the first place! It took less

than a few hours after her capture for him to be brought before Hilma.

The deadly gaze in her eyes terrified him, for all the woman had been a close associate of him for many years, now she was his superior. He could have tried to spin their good relationship in his favor if it wasn't for the fact the monster was right there, standing in a corner as if he could melt among the shadows.

The one who put Eight Fingers on its knees in a single night, the one who became the most powerful and dangerous man in the kingdom in a couple of years, the one who brought down a Dragon Lord, one of the mightiest existences in this world, by himself.

He had been ready to die just there and then, but he was given a chance. Since the one responsible for the assassination was one of his, he was tasked with extorting the information from her.

Why, who, what, where, and when!

He needed to extract any information she possessed, to the last tiniest detail. He was not the right man for the job, he knew torture was not his forte, but he knew the men who could carry out the job.

And so this hell began, for two days, that bitch screamed till her throat went hoarse, she cried till she had no more tears to shed, she empties her bladder and bowels from fear and pain more times than he cared to count.

And yet, nothing! Not a single name! not a single word!

Her fingers were peeled, her teeth pulled out, bones were broken, limbs were twisted, he had ordered any act that would not break her mind, and even some that would, in his desperation.

But the bitch. Did! Not! Say! A! Word!

She had been healed to repeat the process, threatened with anything Cocco Doll could think of.

She just whimpered, there, hanging from her arms, her naked body bruised and bleeding.

The woman was an orphan... someone who had no family to speak of or to torture in her stead.

So why?... Why would she not talk?!

He promised her anything, he promised her life would be spared, he promised a reward even! Empty promises, but he thought her desperate and broken enough to fall for them.

She was a broken woman... at least in body... he had no idea what kind of mental fortitude she needed to not crumble, if just to embrace a swift death.

He held his head between his hands.

‘Why? Why? Why did it come to this?! Everything was going smoothly!’ the thought in exasperation. They have come so far from the criminal syndicate they once were! Every single entity in this kingdom could not afford to stand against them! There were even talk of beginning to expand in the nearest countries to take over their underground... something the previous Eight Fingers would have never dreamt of!

And now... he was about to die because some bitch poisoned a fucking tea! And she would not say why!

He wanted to bash his head against the wall, show this useless cunt what misery she brought upon everyone! How could she just stand there and take it?! What even was the point?!

She condemned them all! Even if she was paid to do it, what was the point of not answering and continue suffering?! She was captured anyway, it wasn't like she would enjoy her wealth now!

His eyes fell on a fire poker that was left untouched all this while. His anger skyrocketed as his eyes continued to dart from the woman to the fire poker.

'it's all your fault... if it wasn't for you...' the man grabbed the fire poker, its tip shining white from the incandescent heat.

He wasn't thinking straight anymore... he hadn't in a while... he couldn't say if it was due to fear, desperation, or the last two sleepless nights he spent in this damned cell hearing the bitch whimper, or maybe it was all of it finally crashing down on his mind.

He just knew that he wanted to hurt whoever was responsible for this. And there was only one he could hold responsible for all of this, and she was right there.

He felt an unhinged smirk make its way on his face. After all, she did not need eyes to speak the truth, only her tongue.

He stepped forward, his right hand gripping tightly the incandescent fire poker.

The door opened slowly behind him. Maybe his men came back for more, he turned around to order them to hold the woman's head up as he burned her eyes but the words died in his throat as the fire poker fell from his now loose grip.

There, standing in the doorway was none other than the monster draped in a gown of shadows, his shining blue games encased in his mask which was hiding the horror beneath.

It was too late, he ran out of time, he would die here for his failure. Cocco Doll's body seemed to have frozen over as he awaited his fate.

“Cocco Doll, was it? I heard you were having some problem with our guest, i have come personally to put an end to this matter.”

Cocco Doll couldn't even answer the monster's words as he fell on his knees.

“P-please, i-if we are given j-just a little more time, I-“

His pleas were interrupted by the monster in black advancing toward him.

“No, there is no more time.”

That was it, he was going to die, all the effort he put into his life had just been a waste. The monster walked past him as if he didn't exist.

“This is her... how revolting...”

Cocco Doll could only partially hear his muttered words as the monster reached the naked woman hanging on the wall.

“[Charm Person]”

Cocco Doll could only look as the masked monster used his magic on the woman.

“Can you hear me... friend...”

For all a small part of Cocco Doll was curious about the monster's actions, having no idea what he was doing, a larger part of him had no intention of interrupting whatever this was or attracting any of the monster's attention on himself.

“It hurts... it hurts...”

The woman spoke something that wasn't a scream or a whimper for the first time since Cocco Doll met her.

“I know, I am here to help you, but first I need to know why you have tried to poison the princess and who ordered such a thing.”

The black robed monster continued to speak as if he was having a normal conversation at a tavern with a friend and not talking to a tortured prisoner.

“I... I can't...”

The woman muttered under her breath, though her words were pretty audible in the silence of the cell.

“I see, so it is an extremely personal thing.”

The monster continued his conversation as if nothing weird was happening at all. His words obtained no response from the woman who was just muttering nonsense at this point.

“I see, I will have to use that one then... what a waste of mana...”

Cocco Doll heard the monster mutter before he placed his gloved hand over the woman's head.

“Friend, even if you can't tell me, I ask a favor, I am sure that you regret trying to kill a young girl... none of my friends would ever want to do such an horrible thing... even more when an innocent paid the price... I am sure the guilt you carry must be an heavy burden.”

The monstrous magic caster continued, almost sounding truthful in his fake apprehension. In all response the woman began to shed fresh tears as she nodded her head.

“I knew you were a good person, now, even if you can’t tell me, to even begin to forgive yourself for your actions, the first step is to think about what brought to them in the first place, who ordered you to do it, and why... do not tell me, just think about it intensely.”

From there, silence descended once more in the cell, Cocco Doll had no idea of how much it lasted, seconds, minutes, or even hours, he didn’t care as long as that monster’s attention was far away from him. At this point he even had no interest in understanding what was happening as long as he was left out of it.

Finally, after what seemed to be an eternity, something happened. The woman began to convulse before emptying her stomach , not that there was much left to push out to begin with.

“How unsightly... to think that this was all for such a stupid reason... there is an irony behind the parallelism I guess.”

The monster spoke nonsense to himself, his tone seemed quite displeased as if he had just lost a game of cards.

“Can you hear me Cassandra, or do you prefer Cassy, like your sister used to call you.”

The monster referred directly to the woman this time around.

“H-how... do y-you know t-that...”

The still gagging woman tried to ask between her coughs.

“It really doesn’t matter... you are a foolish woman... you could have spared all this pain if you just came to me when the Temple approached you.”

The woman trembled at his words, and this time it wasn't a reaction to pain or cold, no, she shivered like a leaf due to fear, Cocco Doll could read it in her eyes. A primal fear had taken over the woman at the realization that all her secrets were laid bare before her.

"I can even understand your plight to some extent... after all, I as well find that the bonds created by blood are far less important when it comes to choosing your family... that illness that ravaged your chosen sister's body, I could have healed it... but no, you chose to fall for the lies and promises of the Temple... and now, someone else's sister is dead for it... isn't that just ironic?"

The masked caster continued.

"N-no, no one could help... they told me when I asked... no one could heal her... only the Temple... only they had divine casters powerful enough!"

The woman violently shook her head as she denied what was being told to her.

"You are truly a foolish woman if you think only the casters of the Temple have access to the 4th tier of divine magic... but alas, what done is done, people reap what they sow... or so the saying goes... an eye for an eye... a sister for a sister... isn't that an equal price."

The monster's tone didn't shift an inch as he spoke.

"No! No! NO! PLEASE NO! I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING! PLEASE! DON'T HURT HER! KILL ME INSTEAD! I BEG YOU!"

The woman was hysterical by now, fighting against her constraint like a possessed madman.

“I have no use of your information, I already have more than enough... Are there any last words you would like for your sister to hear from you? After all I can sympathize with your love for your sister to grant you this mercy.”

The monster continued as he ignored the pleas of the woman.

“You... you are a monster! Don’t touch my sister or I will kill you! YOU HEAR ME! I’LL KILL YOU!”

The dark robed caster turned away from the madwoman, ignoring her threats and shouts. He marched away but stopped right before passing Cocco Doll, who till then had forgotten that he wasn’t just part of the room’s furniture.

“Make sure she doesn’t die... it would be a shame if those two sisters could not be reunited after all.”

The coldness of those words froze every organ in Cocco Doll’s body. For all his tone did not shift the entire time, the leader of the spy department could not help but feel like he was just one wrong answer away from becoming a new bloodstain on the wall.

“Y-yes! Of course! You c-can count on me!”

He managed to cry out as the woman continued to spout profanities and threats from her place on the wall.

“Good, speak to Hilma for any further instructions... and make sure to get to know your employees better from now on.”

Cocco Doll could only nod furiously at the monster’s instructions.

The leader of the spy department was still nodding when he blinked and the monster was gone from his sight, as if he had just melted with the shadows of the room.

It took him a few minutes to regain control of his body and being able to stand up tentatively. He looked toward the still raving woman who had screamed herself hoarse once more.

He had been given a job, and he would be damned before he failed again.

{Ro-Lente's castle}

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

To say Satoru was annoyed would have been an understatement. he was seething, or at least he would be if not for his [Emotional Suppression] kicking in whenever his emotions went over a certain range. Not that it stopped him from having a constant feeling of annoyance on the back of his mind.

First, someone attempted at Renner's life by poisoning her sugar, which meant they knew the princess' habits well. Second, Alysanne somehow ended up using said sugar and dying. Renner had not been very forthcoming with the details of their discussion when he and Hilma investigated the matter alongside the third princess. Third, his subordinates caught the culprit that refused to utter a word for two days, forcing him to use a [Control Amnesia] on her. A spell he should experiment with more if such a situation repeated itself, something he hoped would not happen.

He sighed as he reached his destination.

A door guarded by a dozen of the Warrior Troop best members. After all the assassination of a member of the Royal Family wasn't something to take lightly. Security was increased for everyone, and they were forbidden from leaving the castle by the king himself who also appointed a royal guard for each one of his children.

“Marquis!”

The captain of the platoon saluted him, Satoru just nodded at him in what he hoped seemed like a nod of approval and recognition.

“The princess was waiting for you.”

The captain said as he gestured for the door.

Satoru didn't hesitate and opened the door entering the room before casting an anti-information spell to cover the area.

“Good evening, Satoru.”

The gentle and melodic voice of the third princess greeted him as he made his way through her room.

“Good evening, Renner, I see that nothing can dissuade you from your evening tea.”

He said sweat dropping at the fact the young princess was enjoying a cup of tea even after all that happened.

“Fear and paranoia are for the weak of mind... also, no sugar this time.”

She said the last part indicating the lack of a sugar jar on the table. Satoru chuckled as only someone unique like Renner could ever joke about such things after surviving an assassination attempt.

“Also, I had a taster have a cup before me... we all have to after father ordered as such.”

She said sipping her tea as Satoru sat on the opposite side of the small table.

“I have attended the funeral today, it was expected of me... then I left to attend to that business... the culprit is the Temple, there is no doubt about it.”

He reported as that was the first point on Renner's list of things to do in the wake of this disaster.

To say he had been taken aback by the events would have been an understatement, he was completely shocked at the news, his worry only grew when Renner told him of what transpired and how she had probably been the target. From there a simple cast of [Analyze] was enough to find the poisoned sugar.

Satoru had to admit that he had a few problems suppressing his emotions at the knowledge of how close Renner had come to dying. He felt his rage escalate and being suppressed for the rest of the day.

His rage escalated once more today, once he looked in that woman's memories. To think that one of the people he had cherished had come so close to death for such a stupid reason.

"I thought as much... there are only a few entities foolish enough and with the resources to pull something like this."

The princess sighed in exasperation as she put down her empty cup and rising from her chair.

"But they did not act alone, they must have been backed by someone, someone powerful enough and with enough ambition to try and strike the heart of the kingdom."

The princess continued as she climbed in his lap pressing her body against his as if he was some kind of sofa. Not that he minded, by now he had learnt to read the little devil's mood. For all the bravado she was putting up, she was clearly troubled by these events and was seeking comfort from him.

He draped one of his arms around her, his gown serving like a bedsheet, his other hand went for her head, patting her just the way he knew she liked.

He could swear he heard a purr as she adjusted her position to be more comfortable in his embrace.

“I have a few ideas behind these backers, but the time is running out, once word reaches the Temple that the wrong princess was killed, they will get rid of anything that could incriminate them... if they haven’t already.”

She said clearly unhappy about the situation. Satoru hummed but then a metaphorical lightbulb turned on in his head.

“Well, they may have got rid of it, but if it is support from foreign entities, they are certainly not the only ones holding records of it... the merchant guild deals with any importation of foreign goods, or generally whatever enters the country, and if the smuggled something illegally, I am sure Seven Hands should know something about it... I doubt they could smuggle great quantities of goods in the heart of the kingdom without anyone noticing.”

Satoru felt satisfaction at his own reasoning.

“They may have... but it is a weak ground to accuse any foreign third party of conspiracy... unless...”

Satoru could almost see the gears turning inside that genial head of hers.

“Oh, I see... I think that would do quite nicely... after all... big sister Alysanne is dead, it would be in poor taste to let that... go unpunished.”

Satoru felt her tone shift as she spoke her deceased sister's name. 'She is probably still coming to terms with losing a sibling... it is not like I know the feeling' he thought as his mind turned to the deceased princess.

His relationship with her had not started well, but he had come to respect her efforts during the last years. She was certainly no Renner, or Hilma, or Lakyus, or Rayne and Arche. What he would call her was a useful and pleasant-enough acquaintance and colleague.

He would lie if he said he didn't consider testing his resurrection options on her. If nothing else, to at least spare Renner the pain.

But it wasn't feasible on multiple levels. First, he had a limited amount of items that could resurrect, and none of them were cost free when it came to levels, him trying and reducing the body to ashes because she wasn't high enough of a level was a very bad outcome, and he certainly had no intention of using one of his three wishes for someone like her.

On the other hand, bringing her back would have brought a lot more trouble in the long run. For once he would have to explain his ability to resurrect, and wouldn't that be a good session of bullshitting to do. Second, he would find himself stormed by people with necessity for resurrection magic, something he had no intention of selling as he had a limited amount of uses of it. Thirdly, he would bring even more attention on himself. The stunt in the Azerlisia Mountains had been enough publicity for a lifetime. He had no need of foreign countries breathing down his neck for using divine magic of the caliber never seen before, for all he knew.

And if failure was a disaster and success was even a greater disaster, the only way to win was simply to stay put and do nothing.

That said, if given the chance, he will make sure to give the poor girl some justice. After all she had been a valuable business partner for a time.

“Satoru are you listening?”

He was immediately brought back to reality by the third princess who was pouting at him from his lap.

“Apologies Renner, I had lost myself in my mind for a moment there.”

The blonde girl just limited herself to snuggle against him with even more enthusiasm.

“Very well, I will allow you to apologize to me by pampering me even more.”

He chuckled as he proceeded to do as was asked of him. After all comforting her was all he could do for now.

“As for what I was saying, I will need your help to carry out my plan, all you need to do is...”

The princess began as Satoru listened attentively, after all he had learnt by now that any plan she came up with would make them come out on top, the only question was, how much additional work was there for him.

“Don’t tell my father I was the primary objective, play along with big sister Alysanne being the target, as for the rest, be as transparent as you can... and leave the rest to me.”

Well, that seemed quite tame by the standards he was used to when it came to her plans.

But still, why would she ask him that? The rest he would have done anyway, but why would she want her father not to know... the realization struck him like lightning.

Of course! She didn't want her grieving father to have even more on his plate to know that one child died in the place of another would already be hard enough to digest, but to know that said other child was still at risk when you have just lost one... that would worry anyone to death.

'Renner can be such a considered person when she wants to... well, that is a reflection of her age I imagine, she might be going through that phase of life when she doesn't want anyone to worry for her and assess her independence' he thought as he nodded to himself.

"Oh, and another thing..."

His attention turned once more on the little devil in his lap as he heard her request.

{Gazef's P.O.V.}

The Warrior Captain knocked at the door of his King's private chambers. His old friend had shut himself in there for three days after looking at his daughter's corpse. Gazef could not blame him, it was an unsettling scene for him who had been used to the cruelty of the battlefield, he couldn't even begin to imagine what it would be like for a father to look at his child in that state.

"It is I, Gazef, Your Majesty."

He announced himself hoping for an answer he did not receive during the last two days.

“Enter.”

The whisper was barely audible through the oak door, and in any other circumstance the Warrior Captain may have wondered if he imagined it, but in this case, he would take the risk of incurring in his King’s wrath if he had indeed misheard.

He slowly opened the door, the room was dark as all curtains were shutting off the moonlight that would normally enter from the windows. He could barely recognize a figure sitting on the bed in the dim light.

His King was giving him his back, but Gazef had little intention of taking offense at that, already grateful that his monarch had let him in to begin with.

He closed the door behind him as he stood at attention.

“Your Majesty, the palace is secured and all entries are being surveilled as instructed, the Royal Family is being escorted as you asked by a constant platoon of my best men, we have no suspicious activities to report... the funeral took place this morning, as you instructed the coffin was placed next to the late Queen Catherine.”

Gazef saw his King’s back shiver as he called out the name of his deceased wife.

“Gazef, tell me, not as your king, but as your friend, what kind of man is one who does not even attend his own daughter’s funeral to not have to see her buried next to his wife?”

Gazef lowered his head at his King, no, his friend’s question.

“If you would allow me to speak freely... I would say that such a man is a heartbroken man who is still grieving a heavy and painful loss.”

The Warrior Captain said eliciting a chuckle devoid of any humor from the old man sitting on the bed.

“What a fancy way of describing a man who has given up on life... no man should have to bury his children, in what kind of world would that be an acceptable thing?”

Rampossa asked no one as Gazef had nothing to offer his friend to try and comfort him, if something like that even existed at all.

Silence descended into the room as the two friends shared the darkness of the room.

“I will forget her... not only have I lost the daughter that reminded me most of my wife in both looks and demeanor... now I will never again gaze upon her face, and this old mind of mine will forget even how she looked like.”

The absolute defeat and despair in his friend’s words broke something inside Gazef, even if he himself could not say what it was, he knew that something had irreparably shifted inside him. To witness a dear friend in such a state was too much to bear, a burden too heavy even for the strongest man in the kingdom. If he could do anything, anything at all to help his friend, he would do it. No matter how unpleasant it might be.

A knock interrupted the silence after his friend’s words, he recognized the voice of his second in command from the other side of the door.

“Your Majesty, Marquis Satoru requests an audience.”

He was about to tell the man that the king was currently indisposed by the old man beat him in speed as he didn't hesitate at all.

“Send him in.”

The old king said as his tone shifted from that of a broken man to that of a defeated monarch.

The door opened to reveal the silhouette of the giant caster who wasted no time in entering the dim lighted room while closing the door behind him.

“Your Majesty, as you ordered before retiring to your quarters, I have come as soon as I uncovered the truth behind the event that took place three days ago.”

The masked caster announced as Gazef's breath felt like it was stuck in his throat. He hadn't heard of such an order being given, but then again, he doubted his king would have been in the right state of mind to inform him.

“The ones who assassinated princess Alysanne three days ago, were none other than the heads of the Temple of the Four Gods.”

Gazef recoiled at those words, uttered with such assurance that they made as well have come from a history book.

Silence persisted in the room for what seemed to be hours.

“Are you certain?”

That was all his King asked, his tone completely devoid of any emotion, not even the depression from before touched any of his spoken words.

“Without a doubt, after we caught the assassin, I had my best subordinates interrogate her for the last two days, I myself ensured that she would tell the truth and only the truth.”

The magic caster answered without delay, his dead serious tone leaving no place for doubts about his words.

“I... see... and why Alysanne... what has she done to deserve the wrath of the Temple?”

The king asked emotionlessly.

“The Temple have been in decadence for the last years, unfortunate as it is, the existence of my organization and myself have threatened the hegemony of their control over the people and healing arts... I am afraid their assassination of princess Alysanne was a message for me to stay in my lane... also, even if I don't have any confirmation of this, the reforms Princess Renner promoted for the people went against the Temple's interest and the assassination of the second princess was also a message to the Royal Family as a whole to not interfere in their affairs.”

Satoru concluded leaving Gazef speechless at the depth and length the so-called holy men would go to keep their power.

Silence descended in the dark room as the king stood from his bed and made his way toward his desk as if to grab something from it.

With a primal roar of rage that startled even the Warrior Captain, the old king flipped over his desk, sending it crashing down on the floor.

“FOR THAT?! MY ALYSANNE DIED FOR THAT?! FOR A MERE SQUABBLE?! MY DAUGHTER HAD TO DIE TO SEND A MESSAGE!”

In the almost fifteen years he had known his friend, Gazef never saw him lose his composure like this, the shock was enough to make him hesitate from intervening to ensure his king did not harm himself.

He finally managed to gather his resolve when his king turned around facing him for the first time in three days.

Tears were flowing down the old man's cheeks, his face seemed to have aged five years since the last time Gazef saw him, but his eyes... his eyes were what froze him in place, the utter suffering and pain they conveyed could not be described by mere words, but something else was lurking behind that pain and suffering, something far darker... a rage, a bloodlust the likes Gazef could say with certainty he never saw before in any human or demi-human.

“I WANT THEM DEAD! ALL OF THEM! I WANT THEM BUTCHERED TO THE LAST ONE! DO NOT STOP UNTIL THEIR PRECIOUS TEMPLE IS NOTHING BUT A PILE OF BURNING RUBBLE! REPEAT THAT IN EVERY CITY OF THE KINGDOM! AND EVERY TOWN! AND EVERY VILLAGE! BY THE END OF IT I DON'T WANT TO SEE A SINGLE PRIEST BREATHING THE SAME AIR AS ANY OF MY CITIZENS!”

The old king cried out in rage, pain, and hatred the likes Gazef never witnessed.

And so, the die was cast.

A.N.

Whoops... someone might have blundered there... who knew the king had such a short temper when you killed his favorite child who reminded him of his lost love?

Well, I guess every man has his breaking point... but most importantly, what could our favorite devil have planned?

It certainly seem like the heads of the temple will have a chat soon enough, who knows if their bodies will follow them?

Well, can't wait to hear your thoughts on this and the possible ramifications of what will happen next, so remember to leave a comment / review with your thoughts!

Stay safe! Till next time!