

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Damn, not gonna lie, I have been going through quite the writer block as of late on this fic. Hence why I tried to shift to the special midway through to try and maybe get my mind out of that space. Spoiler, it didn't work and I kept struggling writing half of what I normally did in one hour.

Well, on a positive note, the special is proceeding very smoothly, and I can't wait to come back to Child in Black and White.

Chapter 102: All we Are and All we Seek

Renner hummed a random tune as she relaxed, laying her body against Satoru's side with a renewed sense of appreciation after she experienced months of distance from her beloved. For all she had him all to herself ever since he came back, she could still not get enough of him, this was why she had greatly insisted on coming along in this, probably short, campaign.

She had gone through great lengths to make sure this would go according to her wishes, and she would not be separated from her beloved again, even suggesting her father spoke to him in a more direct way. She had been quite careful with the wording, but she hoped that she had stirred her father toward the notion that Satoru

needed to be bound to the royal family. And now that her sister was pushing up flowers... well, the only remaining daughter will have to accept the task for the good of the kingdom.

Satoru did not tell her anything about what he discussed with her father. But she knew he was not one to be open on those things. He had always been quite reserved and cagy, even around those he cared for. So, it was no surprise he did not approach the subject. she would have to interrogate her father when they returned. But for now... she would just enjoy the alone time she got with him.

This reminded her of Azerlisia, only better, as this time their group was quite smaller, with no Gazef hounding her, or apprentices monopolizing Satoru's time.

It was only her, Satoru, Lakyus, and a couple of her team members who stuck with her most of the time... oh, and the couple thousands volunteers... but she really didn't count those, as they were just like background noise more than anything else. After all it would not be a proper conquest without a token force, not that they were needed in the first place, with Satoru there.

Speaking of which, something was on his mind as of late. Her female intuition told her as much, as the one who knew him best, she could tell when he was more silent than usual, more lost in his thoughts.

She would lie if she said that the fact he did not tell her about his trouble didn't irk her as a young woman in love, but her Satoru was just like that, it was not the first time he let her to figure out things on her own.

What stopped her from questioning him directly was that, even with his mind more occupied, he did not relent in his doting and

pampering of her. in fact, he might have become even more affectionate since they left the capital, often praising her for aiding him with paperwork and even brushing her hair, which was one of the things she loved most, even more since she made sure they grew long and silky for him.

“Umu, this is troubling... marching armies, even small ones like this, are slower than I expected... I do not wish to take more than necessary... after all, there is much to do once the land is taken... and winter is terrible for transport logistics.”

The princess heard the man mutter under his breath. She didn't know exactly what he had planned after the official conquest, but she would take him at his word. Unfortunately there wasn't really anyway to speed up things, it would be counterproductive to force the men in a forced march. Morale and combat capability would go down quickly.

Right now, they were nearing the southern border of the kingdom. They had just left E-Pespep a week before. Having the southern Marquis be forced to give them hospitality and resources, as a show of good faith and manners, had been a fun experience, even more since Seven Hands had been a thorn in his side for years and now, he had to put up a smile and pay homage to the man responsible for all of it. And, as a cherry on top, he had no way of biting back in the slightest, as Renner was a member of Satoru's entourage, symbolizing the Royal family's blessing upon this endeavor.

The southern marquis should consider himself lucky Satoru was in a hurry and only stayed one night, or else Renner could have planned something more substantial than just a powerplay. After all... she still had unfinished business with his wife.

She had to admit, seeing her oldest sister cower and not meet her eyes for the entire evening has been fun. Apparently, the bitch had finally learnt her place... even without seeing each other for years. Apparently, she even had a nephew now, noth that the almost 2 years old was nowhere to be seen when she visited. The third princess even pushed it a little by asking if it would be possible to see her nephew, making her eldest sister grow pale and having the southern marquis come up with a sickness excuse on the spot. She didn't push it any further after that, for all it was amusing seeing them squirm, she had better things to do, like looking forward to a proper bath after a few weeks on the road.

But she digressed. She had lost herself in her thoughts again, she might have caught the same illness as Satoru.

Returning to the main problem. Even if they forced a march, there would still be the problem of not knowing exactly where to go. After all the Abelion Hills were comparable to a fourth of Re-Estize in size, and the few information they had beforehand, which wasn't really much to begin with, turned out to be useless as the political scene, if it could even be called that, had surely descended into absolute chaos after the strongest members of each race marched off for the Holy Kingdom only to never return.

“Tia, Tina.”

As soon as the marquis called those names, his shadow shifted as if it was a being with its own life, and as if it was a dark pool, four hands erupted from it, followed by two whole bodies. Ever since Renner first witnessed the special skill of the assassins her Satoru had taken into his service, she has been envious, to become one with her beloved in such a way, inhabiting his shadow as if it was her home... Ah! The bliss such a thing would bring her... but alas,

she did not possess such an ability, and even if she could acquire it, the years of training would have interfered with her activities and plans too much to be acceptable.

Such a shame... she will have to limit herself to his embrace.

“Scout the hills, you have already been there in the past, as soon as you find a tribe of demi-humans return to me... in case you find nothing, return to me in two days, you know where we will put up our camp.”

He instructed the two blondes who immediately bowed in that strangely ritualistic way of theirs.

““Understood, Master Satoru.””

The blue and red assassin choired as one.

“Here... for your trouble.”

The masked caster continued before taking out a paper box from his robes and handing it over to the twins who bowed even further as they accepted the gift. Even their expressions, so unflappable and stoic, twitched, as if they could hardly repress whatever eagerness or excitement they were feeling.

And in the blink of an eye, they were gone.

The princess looked at Satoru expectantly. The caster looked back.

For all she felt quite a bit of jealousy for anyone getting closer to Satoru, the triplet of assassins had always behaved professionally, and Satoru himself has never shown any more affection to them than to the average member of Seven Hands. That was one of the main reasons why she came to terms with enduring the fact they were constantly around him... but apparently, she had

miscalculated something, as Satoru had clearly handed over something of his to them. whatever it was... she had not received one... and that displeased her.

As if reading her mind, the black robed marquis sighed as he handed over another box, identical to the one he handed over to the twins.

“You are quite frightening when you want to be princess... now you can quit giving me that look.”

He said with his usual monotone, clearly in jest, for she doubted her glare could frighten the likes of him, even though the mere thought amused her to no end.

“Make sure to share them with Lakyus... I will not be responsible for the next time you weight yourself.”

She arched an eyebrow at the strange warning as she opened the box, revealing an ordered mountain of sticks with colored balls skewered on them, with some kind of sauce on top, strangely the... food? For she didn't know what else it could be, did not smell of anything.

Her earlier annoyance completely forgotten at this new curiosity, gifted by her beloved, she grabbed one of the sticks by the non-pointed end and brought it to her mouth. Using her teeth she removed one of the balls before chewing on it. It was quite gummy, a consistence she did not appreciate, but before she could pass judgment, the external skin of the ball popped open, unleashing a fragrance of fruity flavors in her mouth. The shock of the surprise flavor took her aback and did not allow her to contain her moan of appreciation, something so unladylike that

she could not help but blush, seeing how Satoru had heard her unbecoming sound for sure.

She felt a hand mess up her hair as an amused chuckle reached her ears, something that made her pout something fierce.

“Humph!”

She felt her cheeks burning up as she averted her gaze in embarrassment. To let her beloved see such an unbecoming side of hers...

Wait...

What is she even saying?

This is Satoru...

The same man who told her to smile...

The same man who accepted her...

They have been too far apart...

For too long...

She had almost forgotten...

When she was around him, she was no princess, she was just Renner.

She turned toward Satoru, gazing up at him.

He stared back.

No judgment.

No condemnation.

Just peace.

She laid down her head on his lap, as she continued to eat up her sweets, uncaring of all the sounds she was making.

For now... she was Renner, just Renner... just a girl enjoying a piece of heaven with her love.

And she was happy.

{Climb's P.O.V.}

Climb glared hard at the campfire before him. He felt his hands hitching in annoyance, the lack of a hilt in his palm was starting to seriously bother him. Not because he somehow had the constant need to touch a weapon like some weirdos he knew.

But more like because, after spending half a life stabbing people to death, the normal response to those who annoyed you was to stick a blade in their guts or throat, depending on their height.

After all, for someone like him, murder was a habit.

Edstrom was the more levelheaded one in their little duo. With her gone... his instincts had no one checking on them. His hand moved toward the dagger he kept concealed on the side of his leg. This ruckus was getting on his nerves, truly, alcohol made beasts of men. It was no wonder he never took to it, Edstrom had been the only one who he could actually respect, for no matter how much she drank, she never lost her wits and control. Maybe that was a trait passed down from her ancestors, the nomads from the southward desert, well... he guessed he will never know now.

He felt a pang of pain stab him in the chest. It was nothing new, just another thing to get used to, like a broken limb that will never properly heal. He will get used to it, like he got used to the coldness of his bed.

He felt something bump into him from behind, taking him out from his train of thought. He turned, glaring all the while at whoever decided to get stabbed tonight.

His eyes met the puffy red face of an overweight man, clearly deep into his cups considering his stumbling feet and unfocussed gaze.

“Ah, little man! Sorry! Sorry! I will offer you a beer! After all... the good Marquis will be the one footing the bill!”

He shouted out the last part, gathering cheers and applause from the inebriated sycophants around him.

Climb could not help but notice how easy it would have been. The man had no posture, every vital spot he could think of completely exposed. A fat worm without any way to defend himself. A most pathetic sight, nothing like the ones he had been used working with.

Unworthy prey, only worth silencing for the peace the act would bring upon his ears.

“Scram...”

He decided to give the fool one final chance to keep his miserable life.

“Oi! Don’t be like that! C’mon! this old man is gonna introduce ya to some ladies... a bit older than ya, but I don’t think that would bother a vigorous youth like you!”

Apparently, this one really wanted to die.

Climb moved to stand up from his seated position, his clock unfolding from the pool it created on the ground. The thing was a tad too big, but he wore it nonetheless as it served as a badge of honor for his service in the north... and was a useful tool to get people to do as he said.

Even in the night, the silver trimming forming a hand on the black cloth shined eerily under the light of the moon and the campfire. Apparently, the men were uneducated or drunk enough to not even notice the sinister chance in the atmosphere.

It would be a good riddance, with those pathetic survival instincts, these were not men meant to fight in any battle that wasn’t a tavern brawl, just a bunch of endless wastes of precious resources.

His hand darted to the hilt of his dagger, slowly unsheathing it from its scabbard.

His eyes darted to one of the half-drunk men, the one who changed expression when he stood up, his face paling visibly and losing some of the reddening from the alcohol.

“L-Lambert... we should go...”

The man tugged the fat one’s sleeve who just waved him away.

“Don’t ruing the good mood Fab, ya scaredy cat!”

The man mocked the pale one while taking another large gulp of his beer.

“I would recognize that anywhere, you all are fucking crazy if you want to fuck with the Black Hand... I am out of here.”

The fat one chocked on his beer, coughing as his head snapped toward the glaring Climb stumbling back, followed by the others.

“Y-you...”

The fat man stuttered looking at Climb up and down, his eyes landing on the silvery hand on his coat.

“Fuck off.”

Climb repeated making sure his blade shined against the moonlight, making the annoying men finally run for their life.

He sat back down, sheathing his blade with a snort. The boy added some wood to the campfire, watching it burn. He might no longer be a member of the elite, but he would be damned before he would be left to live in some village.

He was forced into the role of a simple border village patroller. A few months of nothingness, a few months of hell in the solitude of his mind. He saw it over and over, the insane laughter, that strength that made him feel as if he was still the Climb begging in the street for a few coppers to bring to his dying mother, the insane laughter of a monster in human skin, the explosion that tore apart the only good thing worth living for in this world from him. Day or night, it didn’t matter, he saw it in every face, in every shadow, even in the campfire before him.

They could say whatever they wanted. That insane monster was not dead, beings like her did not simply die in explosions. They persisted, clinging to life like cockroaches. This world was cruel enough to take Edstrom from him while keeping that bitch alive.

He tried to seek information, but with no longer access to the information gathering of the elite in the Black Hand, it was a utterly impossible task to find her, not that it would have changed much with the intelligence service doing their job. If she didn't want to be found, she would not be found.

He had been slowly going insane. He was used to hunt and kill, like a relentless hound, this life of nothingness... of silences and never changing days... it was not for him, it might have been at some point. Maybe if his mother didn't die, that Climb might have enjoyed such a life... but he was a different Climb now. So, when he heard that the renown Marquis Satoru was recruiting for an expedition in the Abelion Hills, he jumped in it at the first chance. Everything to escape the hell of his current position, and finally be able to use his blades again.

It wasn't like his superiors could do much about it, the call to arms came from none other than the leader of Seven Hands. He was only acted as a dutiful member should, no matter his real motivations.

“Hey, can we sit here?”

He was taken out from his reminiscence by the young voice of a girl around his age. Blonde, with emerald eyes that shined even in the night, an unmistakable aura of nobility around her... and if that was all he would have told her to fuck off like he told the others. But even sharper than her features or noble aura, he could not help but notice the air of power surrounding her. as he spent

most of his life next to individual far surpassing him, that sensation was unmistakable for him.

This girl was dangerous, regardless of her calm, and even warm, tone.

Considering a confrontation would most likely end badly for him, he limited himself to nodding, hoping the girl would not be an annoyance, but considering her lack of redness or a drink in her hand, they were up to a good start he supposed.

“Hey, Riyuro, here!”

The armored girl waved at someone in the darkness.

Great! One was bad enough, now he had to endure two nuisances instead! The world must really enjoy screwing with him!

He felt a chill crawl up his spine as his body froze over out of instinct before he could even understand what happened. Two eyes shined in the darkness, two grey inhuman eyes passed over him, seemingly calculating his value before dismissing him. The whole thing might have lasted a second at most, but for him it seemed like he had been frozen for minutes. That was the gaze of a predator, an incomprehensible strong one at that.

He only perceived that level of strength once before, and if this thing was anything like that monster in human skin... there was little anyone here could have done to stop him.

The figure emerged from the shadows, revealing a furred demi-human slightly taller than him. His hand could not help but instinctively hitching closer to his blades.

“Hi, I am Lakyus by the way, this is my friend Riyuro, don’t worry! He doesn’t bite... unless you spar against him, I can’t tell you those fangs can be nasty.”

The girl, now named Lakyus, introduced herself and the demi-human who simply gave him a wave of his clawed hand, though Climb did not miss how his eyes had darted for a moment toward the hand that had been inching toward his weapon.

He had no idea who these two were, but there was no way these two were not somehow important. Leaving alone the strangeness of seeing a human and demi-human getting along like old friends, their strength was already enough to make them stand out like a sore thumb.

“So, what’s your name?”

The girl questioned him. He was weighting his options, on one hand he could not answer or leave, but that might instigate a confrontation, and there was no doubt on who would come out on top. On the other hand, he really did not want to start any type of conversation.

“Climb.”

He finally made up his mind and decided to answer in a minimalistic fashion, maybe the girl would get a hint.

“My lady, I brought you the evening ration, but I would suggest asking Lord Satoru for... better quality.”

Climb almost jumped out of his skin. So focused he was on the two before him, he didn’t even feel a third individual approaching him from the back.

“It is no problem Leinas, I am here to guard the princess, and if this is what we get, this is what we get... if I wish for something else I should go out and take it for myself, and not go leverage my position.”

Climb was not the biggest noble hater in the kingdom, by a longshot, but he also had little good to say about them. so, seeing this girl carrying herself like a noble but refusing to exploit the perks of her position, was a refreshing sight, regardless of the fact he would be happier if left alone, he still had to concede some respect for the girl. But, in hindsight, he should have expected as much, for no one who obtained that level of strength could have relied uniquely on any title. He knew by experience how hard you had to work to better yourself after all.

The scooped up some sup using the bread before taking a bite. Only the sound of crackling fire could be heard as she chewed. Climb could see it on her face, and for once in only the gods knew how long, he felt like chuckling, something he had to restrain himself from doing as the expression on her face said it all.

The girl gulped down the food, before silently placing down the soup and bread.

“Okay, we are going hunting for something.”

She said standing up, followed by her two companions. At the very least, he would be left in peace, and he even got something amusing out of it.

“Hey, Climb, are you coming?”

He raised his head, looking confused as if he didn’t understand the words that were spoken in his direction from the girl.

When he finally regained his bearings, he looked around to make sure there wasn't anyone else she was addressing, even though she called him by name.

“Talking to you, dummy, come! Let's get some proper dinner!”

He didn't exactly know why. Every logical thought told him to decline the invite and be rid of them. But something, something deeper, made his body move before he even had the chance to open his mouth.

Satisfied, the girl turned toward the line of trees in the distance, followed by a Climb who didn't even know what he was doing in the first place.

Well, at least, he would get some proper dinner out of it.

{Dark Scale Palace}

{Draudillon's P.O.V.}

The queen of the Draconic Kingdom enjoyed her evening with a nice book and a good number of wine bottles directly from the Royal reserve. After all, it was a joyous day when your enemies decided to make your job easy for you by starting killing each other.

If everything went well, they could consider this almost six-year-long war concluded by the end of the year. She was sure that even her usually calm and collected prime minister went off enjoying himself tonight.

She placed down the still half empty glass, it would not do to risk becoming tipsy, no matter the fact she had a high-tolerance due to her draconic lineage. She could get wasted afterwards, if the meeting went poorly enough.

She knew this day would come, and she felt both elation and dread in equal measures. She did things, reprehensible things, as a Queen, it was her duty also to shoulder the burdens of such decisions and the hatred they would bring on her person. But that was the double-edged blade of ruling at work, something she should have been accustomed to by now, after so many years.

And yet... this one hurt her on a deeper level.

Before she could give in into her darker thoughts, a knock interrupted her and one of her personal guards announced her guest.

The door opened, revealing none other than the hero of the kingdom himself, in all his lack of glory and usual apathy.

“Good evening, Brain, please take a seat, this won’t take long.”

She tried to steel her nerves at the upcoming discussion, pouring a cup of wine for her blue-haired guest, even though he was not one to indulge.

The man did not say a word, not that he had been ever much of a talker. And she knew he despised her guts, so he wasn’t exactly incentivized.

“We received good, no, great news today... after you managed to kill three of the beastmen leaders, the last two apparently got into a fight... details on why or how are not exactly known but the gist of it is that the Lizard King is dead and the River King proclaimed himself the Grand King of Beasts, reuniting what remained of all the beastmen under himself... by estimations, their numbers could hardly be over 30.000, less than half the numbers they had since the start of the war.”

In hindsight, this also explained why they had such a streak of peaceful months wherein no attack occurred and the beastmen were just spotted a dozen or so times.

Her and the council had initially feared a very precise and strategic attack to follow, it wasn't like they could march their army to meet the beastmen on the field... that would have been nothing more than suicide. But apparently, they overestimated the intelligence of those monsters as they were apparently just busy killing each other in a civil war.

“So, it's true, that certainly helps things for you.”

She blinked, he didn't look surprised in the slightest, but that was impossible, the news only reached the capital this afternoon, and the secret was only shared with her war council.

Her face must have expressed her bafflement quite clearly for he explained himself further.

“The snakes told me a week ago.”

Her slitted crimson eyes narrowed on him at this. She should have expected beastmen to be better spies among their kind but the council never seemed to agree on the trustworthiness of such intelligence.

“And you did not think to inform me?”

She asked grinding her fangs in annoyance at the swordsman who just waved her irritation away with a scoff.

“Would you have believed me? And even if you did, your council would have never moved risking your men on information from a beastman.”

For all she wanted to protest his words and lack of communication, she couldn't really disprove the accusation. The council would have never conceived such a risky plan as they had only based on the information of who they considered the enemy. No matter that the clan of demi-humans fought by the kingdom's side for almost half the war, there was too much bad blood to ever call each other allies, at least for a few generations.

She shook her head, it would be no use keeping pressing Brain on the matter.

“Anyway, we intend to bait them into attacking Ambassa, we have already started evacuating the city. The plan is to bait them into attacking by making it look like we are moving troops away toward the north... those animals have not managed to breach one of our cities since the beginning of the war, so, when they will finally manage to breach one of the walls, they will pour in like a swarm of starving ants... by the time they realize the city is empty we will already have started to pour down an avalanche of spells from the walls, even if they try to retreat, they will never manage to escape using that hole they created, due to its size and the fact those outside will be pushing to enter while those inside would be pushing to flee... the city of our first victory will also become the city that will end the war.”

For all the plan was great and she would have liked to take credit for it, she could not. By now everyone heard of the battle of Kalinsha, or what the historians already called the Battle of Four, for those were the people who really counted on that battlefield. The Holy Kingdom had a good plan... unfortunately, they chose to fight someone who did not necessitate of a army to annihilate their best.

And her plan would have failed the same way theirs did... if it wasn't for a certain individual who could match this Grand King of theirs.

"You want to isolate their leader, and then let me finish him off I guess."

As always, he demonstrated that his skill with the blade was not the only reason behind his strength. It took him just a few seconds to realize what his role would be.

"Indeed, after this... after this, there will be no longer a reason for you to stay... I will not retaliate... if you decide to leave."

Damn, she should have drank more before this discussion.

"So, this is why we are talking here and now, and not in your throne room."

Brain asked rhetorically as silence descended between the two.

Draudillon gave him all the time he wanted, she said all she had to, now it was up to him. This man she had forced in a role he did not want, for the good of people that weren't his responsibility.

"And what if I refused?"

The words stabbed her like a sharp glass knife. Her crimson eyes met his brown ones, finding none of the expected scorn in them.

"Will you try and blackmail me again?"

He asked, making her bite her lips, she could not say the idea did not pass through her mind... but really, who was she kidding? That had never been an option... since the first time.

“Can we stop pretending that was ever an option? Even if I tried to do that, I could have somehow inconvenienced you... but not all that much outside this kingdom, and I think you knew it.”

She laid her cards on the table, the time for lies and deception had passed. And she honestly had enough of it all... the war, the schemes, the crown, and all in between... she was just... tired.

“Why did you made me sleep with you?”

Regardless of the seriousness in his tone, she could not help but snort.

“What? Do you want to hear me say I got charmed by you or something... sorry, but regardless of how good you are with your blade, your skills in bed are average.”

He did not answer her jab, remaining stoic till Draudillon regained her seriousness.

“If you really want to know, it was because it would have been useful to manipulate that child-loving bastard into confronting you, at the same time I thought of it as a good reward for your service, and I guess... I was also curious... that’s all.”

She admitted as she already decided to be honest from the start, just one last time, in the solitude of her room.

“Is that your attempt at lying, or are you trying to convince yourself?”

She blinked at his question, what the hell did that even mean?! And she was trying to be honest and have a heart to heart here! What an asshole!

The queen scowled at the blue harried warrior.

“Ah? Is that so?! And if I am lying and you knew that I could not really threaten you in any meaningful way... Why the hell did you sleep with me?!”

She reversed the question, for once putting him on the spotlight. She had tried to be courteous, honest, even kind... and this was how she got repaid?! What an utterly infuriating man!

Brain did not hesitate, pointing at her face with a finger. Was that his way of saying he thought she was hot? But before she could call him out on his crassness and mock him on how it was no wonder he fucked snakes, when they were just the inferior version of a true dragon like her, he spoke anticipating her.

“Your eyes, that day, they were exactly like they are now... filled with that despair at not being able to reach the expectations placed on you by others or yourself... it is a look familiar to me and that I wouldn’t mistake among a thousand others.”

It took her a few seconds to realize what he just said to her face. To say it would have been better for him to say something utterly perverted and disgusting would be an understatement.

Her fangs clenched, her tails swished, her claws appeared and dug into the chair, as her eyes shined the color of blood, more and more of her draconic traits being revealed.

“You... you are saying... you fucked me out of pity?!”

She growled, ready to pounce on the man. In all her life, she had never felt more insulted and betrayed like in that moment. Every draconic and human instinct she had screamed at her to just show this arrogant man his place.

“If you call granting you a moment of relief, when no expectation was placed on you for once, pity, then yes... that was pity... given

by someone who understands far too well what it means to hit your limits and realize you were aiming at an impossibility all your life.”

Draudillon roared as she tore the table between them apart with a swipe of her claws, making the cup of wine shatter on the floor, spilling its content all over.

“SHUT UP! SHUT YOUR MOUTH! GET THE FUCK OUT!”

She roared, more dragon than human by now as she felt like a bunch of ice shards were lodged in her chest and she noticed them just now.

The man did not react apart from standing from his chair at a normal pace, as if they just finished an amicable conversation. Her slitted crimson eyes followed his figure to the door.

Before exiting, the man just turned a final time toward her.

“I will think about your proposal... I would advice you to do the same.”

In all response Draudillon whipped her tail, sending the chair she had been sitting on flying against the wall of her room.

‘Fucking arrogant bastard piece of shit human!’ she growled in her mind as she felt her rage slowly subside as she was left alone in her room. Her draconic traits slowly receding.

She took in deep breaths as she tried to stop the frenzy her boiling blood was in. She could not let her instincts control her, that was not the proper ruler she wished to be.

“I guess this is not a good time?”

The foreign voice froze her body over completely. Passing from having boiling hot blood to it literally freezing in her veins was as jarring as it could get.

She turned her head slowly toward one of the dark corners of her room, where a small dark coated figure stood now.

“W-who are you?”

She asked, sounding more uncertain and weaker than she wanted, but her draconic instincts were screaming at her to not antagonize this figure... by any means.

“Who I am is none of your concern.”

The voice was female, seemingly young too.

“It is what I have to offer that should concern you.”

The figure continued before extracting something Draudillon grew familiar with along these years from her cloak.

It was... a magic scroll, the likes she never saw before, grey and almost... scaly?

“This scroll contains a 7th tier spell... it can kill anything short of a Dragon Lord... and it can be yours... for a price...”

It all sounded ridiculous, absurd, no, there wasn't a word to describe how this whole experience felt. But even then... Draudillon could be sure of something... the figure, whoever she was, was not lying. She felt it in her bones, the certainty of every word, as real as the sun.

What she had before her, was an object that should not exist. She was sure of it... and yet, it had been offered to her. A solution... even if Brain did decide to leave... her kingdom would win, and countless would live.

It wasn't even a choice, it was her duty calling... as it always did.
The expectations of a Queen.

"What do you want?"

She asked the shadowy figure cautiously.

"Just answer a few questions, and if I am satisfied, I will leave this here."

The figure said calmly, a great contrast to Draudillon's intern turmoil.

"And if I call the guards?"

She asked in a whisper, a last attempt at a defiance she already knew was futile.

"You would discover that I am capable of dispatching everyone in this castle of yours... your national hero included."

Draudillon did not doubt the woman's words for a second. How could she, when she felt paralyzed... and strangely allured by her mere presence?

With a final gulp and a promise to herself to drink herself to sleep afterwards, she opened her mouth.

"What do you want to know?"

She asked, and even if she could not see her face, she somehow knew, the woman was smiling.

A.N.

Well, we are starting to assemble the pieces on the board for a new game. This has been so hard! Damn writer block!

Luckily for me, it seems that I got over it by the end of the chapter, but it was a grind.

Speaking of grinding, Brain certainly did his own, and singlehandedly tilted the balance of the war. Hope you all liked the Drau P.O.V. I had a lot of fun exploring these characters that never interacted in canon (not that we know anything about Drau's personality in canon, so I hope you all appreciated my version of her so far).

Climby boy met some interesting people, and Renner is the usual lunatic who just rediscovered the joy of being by her obsession's side.

Well, as always, I await your comments / reviews, curious to know what you think is happening in the background.

PS: Re-Zero Season 4 was peak, I could not help myself to quote one of my favorite episodes in all the series.

Stay safe! Till next time!