

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

I have gotta say, I have gotten a little nostalgic and reread the entire fic. There are definitely some things I would rewrite in different ways and I couple things I would twist a little more.

Maybe there will be a little bit of rewriting once I finish it. But I am rambling now.

Hope you enjoy the chapter!

THIS CHAPTER HAS NOT BEEN BETAED YET! (I will upload the betaed chapter as soon as I get it!)

Chapter 58: One-Hundred Twenty Thousand Reasons

Everyone stood silent in the conference room. This was different from the usual council room as that was a place projected to emphasize the councilmen and their stands through height and position, while this conference room put everyone on the same level, at least physically.

On one side of the room sat the eight councilmen representing the Dwarven Kingdom. Opposite to them sat the newly healed King of the Quagoa, Pe-Riyuro. While seating in the middle of the room were the Re-Estize's party.

Lakyus would have wanted to sit with Riyuro as he was alone, but Renner prohibited her from doing so as it was imperative for them to remain clearly neutral on this. The blonde swordswoman wanted to protest her words but bit her tongue and followed her friend's lead on this, they had agreed to trust each other after all, and Lakyus was unwilling to go back on her word even if she had to repress her instincts.

The tension filled the air, cutting through it like a hot blade through butter, the two opposing party were staring each other down, mistrust clear on their faces.

“Very well then, now that all parties involved are here, we can begin this first meeting, to avoid any future problems, all that will be said today will be transcribed for future records.”

The one to break the silence had been Renner, her melodic and child-like voice would have probably sounded ridiculous in such a setting, but Lakyus could not help but feel a certain sacred solemnity in it, and no one else in the room seemed to actually find the situation humorous in the slightest.

“With this, I proclaim the first official peace talk between the Dwarven Kingdom and the Quagoa Dominion open.”

The third princess proclaimed as the scribes in the meeting room's corner began to furiously write down everything on their scrolls.

The Quagoa Dominion was a name they came up with the day before, as the group of Quagoa had needed a name for themselves in order to not seem just like a bunch of demi-humans running around aimlessly. No matter that that was exactly what every dwarf probably thought, as Renner said, this would be a

fundamental point in the future to make sure this talk had some semblance of legitimacy to it.

“I, Renner Theiere Chardelon Ryle Vaiself, third princess and fifth in line for the throne of the Re-Estize Kingdom, will serve as a neutral party and conciliator in this meeting. Serving as my assistants and witnesses are Marquis Satoru of the Re-Estize Kingdom and Lakyus Alvein Dale Aindra, heir of the most ancient and noble house of Aindra, from the Re-Estize Kingdom.”

The princess continued putting as much authority as Lakyus thought possible in each word as the scribes hurried to catch up with their records.

The Regency Council members introduced themselves one by one, some more apathetic, some clearly uneasy, and some even reluctant. On his side Pe-Riyuro introduced himself as the King of the Quagoa.

“Now that all parties had been introduced we can declare the negotiations officially open, is there any points you would like to bring to the room’s attention?”

Renner asked as silence descended once more on the room, the only sound audible was the frenetic scratching of quill against paper in the scribes’ corner.

“I would challenge the legitimacy of this talks, if there is really a chance to have peace, me and my fellow councilmen would like to have assurances that any deal or agreement will be respected from the other side.”

Lakyus felt like biting her lip in order to silence herself from groaning at the Cabinet Secretary’s words. This was going exactly as Renner predicted, the only way the council could go against

them was to stall for time, and bringing in question the authority of Riyuro to speak for his entire race was the easiest way to do it.

“I have ruled as King of the Quagoa for more than twenty years, never since my ascension was any of my decisions challenged, the tribes will acquiesce to my choice on the matter.”

The demi-human growled out, clearly having his authority challenged was not something he would stand for.

“Yet, you have been captured, who is to say that another King had not been brought forth in the meantime? In that case your words would have no value on the matter.”

The dwarves were walking on eggshells, to say such a thing in Riyuro’s face the Secretary must have had balls of adamantite, it would be almost admirable if that didn’t go directly against Lakyus’ goals.

“Tsk, there is no other King apart from me, and even if some fool tried to, as soon as I return, I will put them in their place... do not pretend to understand our culture dwarf.”

Riyuro did not back down, his words clearly intended as an insult. The room was heating up.

“Lakyus.”

She heard Renner whisper her name and she knew exactly what she was asking for. In a swift movement she grabbed her sheathed sword and used the hilt to hit the ground, the loud sound silenced any argument that was about to begin, bringing everyone’s attention back to the Re-Estize party.

“We are losing the focus of this meeting, Secretary, there is no indication of King Riyuro losing his position among the Quagoa,

and King Riyuro, please refrain from instigating an arguments with veiled insults, if we feel like some words or statements are not appropriate, as mediators, we will intervene, there is no need for either of you to lower yourself to petty insults.”

Once again Lakyus could do nothing else but admire the absolute calm and composure of her friend, it seemed like she was born for such a position, Lakyus highly doubted she could handle such a delicate situation so seemingly easily.

Both parties settled down at those words.

“Well then, returning to the main point we were addressing, both parties have shown an interest in seeking peace and trying to go past each other’s wrongdoings and grudges, to finally bring an end to this war and create a united front for a stronger nation.”

Renner said as the Commander in Chief immediately stood up with a whole bunch of papers in his hands which he proceeded to deposit in front of the princess before turning and addressing Riyuro directly.

“The Dwarven Kingdom is ready to accept this peace if our demands are met in full.”

He said as he took a deep breath before continuing.

“The Quagoa forces must be disbanded and must retreat from all the occupied settlements, all dwarves taken as slaves or prisoners must be returned immediately, the capital Feo Berkana must be returned to us, and the Quagoa must return to their previous territory before the incursion of one-hundred years ago.”

‘Well, that is bad’ Lakyus could not help but worry at those words, Renner already predicted that the dwarves would do anything in their power to try and make this negotiation hell, they thought that

now that they had Riyuro they could just automatically win the war and so had no reason to treat with the Quagoa on even ground.

She glanced at Riyuro who had his fangs on display, clearly enraged at the demands made, she just hoped he would follow the plan. She tried to meet his gaze and tried to give him a reassuring nod. He seemed to somehow see her or, at least, calm down as his facial expression slowly relaxed.

“Those are quite unfair terms, is this negotiation not meant for the creation of a united underground nation where both dwarves and Quagoa could live as equals?”

The King of the Quagoa questioned as the entire Regency Council seemed taken aback by his words. They probably expected him to blow up or something, and so ruin the negotiation all-together.

“Indeed, King Riyuro, this is the goal of this negotiation, so we are eager to hear your own demands for this peace to go through.”

Renner offered as Lakyus noticed the slight twitch of her lips, as if her friend was trying to refrain from breaking a smile.

“The Quagoa ask few things, we are ready to accept cohabitation in the settlements we have occupied, we will not stop dwarves if they wish to return to their old cities, but we will not abandon our homes where generations grew in the past decades, we will return all prisoners and slaves, these are the terms we give as further agreements can be arranged for once the current threat is disposed of.”

The Quagoa’s words seemed to both unnerve and confuse the Regency Council who began to whisper among themselves.

“King Riyuro, what threat are you referring to?”

Questioned the Cabinet Secretary as Lakyus could not help but cover her face to hide her smile. They had fallen for it, just like Renner said they would.

“The White Dragon Lord and his kin of course, as soon as they hear about this peace I have no doubt that they will demand your servitude as they demanded my race’s, that is in the best case scenario, there is also the possibility of them perceiving this as a direct threat to their authority and so will just attack us both with the sole goal of exterminating us.”

Riyuro was playing his part perfectly as they agreed beforehand. The subject had already gone past the alliance, now bringing attention to a shared and deadly threat, sending the dwarves’ organized party into a panic.

“Then that is even more of a point in favor of not going through with this!”

One of the councilmen cried out, clearly unnerved by the words of the Quagoa King.

“Oh, is that so? And prey tell, what will happen once the winner of this conflict is decided? I will tell you, the White Dragon Lord will fly in and force whoever won into his servitude, and I promise you, as I have been under his thumb for my entire life, being in his service is little more than being a slave.”

The Regency Council was in complete disarray after the King’s declaration and Lakyus noticed the Cabinet Secretary’s gaze burning through Renner as if he had been personally offended. On her part the princess didn’t even seem to notice as she remained as stoic as she had been since she entered the room.

“That is indeed why this peace is necessary, not only to put an end to the war between two races, but also to bring down the reign of terror of the White Dragon Lord.”

She said louder to make herself be heard above the muttering and panicking of the Regency Council.

“Is that even possible at all... t-to kill a Dragon Lord.”

The Commander in Chief asked in disbelief as he turned toward the Re-Estize party, though, the one to answer that question was none other than the Quagoa King himself.

“Oh yes, everything can be killed, I assure you of that, we Quagoa have the number to overwhelm the dragons but lack the strength, you dwarves have the weapons but lack the numbers... I was not joking when I previously said that there was a big possibility of the Dragon Lord perceiving this peace as a threat to his absolute domination.”

His words seemed to cut deep into the already unsettled dwarves. Lakyus, on her part, had no idea if such a thing was true at all. She had never seen a dragon before, and from the tales she heard in her youth and Satoru, she highly doubted they could pose a threat to such a being, even if allied under one banner.

“So, we are just going to launch an assault and prey for the slim chance of winning?! Is this what this whole meeting is about?! Organizing an elaborate suicide move for all of us?!”

The Commander in Chief questioned seemingly infuriated at the sole thought.

“That is exactly it, Commander in Chief.”

Those words spoken in such a candid and velvety voice froze everyone in place. Even Lakyus, who was the most used to Renner using that tone, could not help but feel a cold shiver ran down her spine.

The princess gazed upon each councilman, not sparing even Riyuro, before continuing.

“The Quagoa and Dwarves will fight a desperate battle for freedom from the cruel rule of the White Dragon Lord, they will bleed alongside each other on the battlefield facing the greatest threat they had ever known side by side, and they will succeed against all odds, that will be the cornerstone to build upon for the future of this alliance.”

Lakyus could not help but grimace, if there was anything she was against in all of this, this part of the plan was it. But she could only bite her tongue to silence her protests.

Her friend told her from the start after all, this will not be achievable without sacrifices. By sacrificing some, she could spare countless generations to come, for all she found it distasteful, Lakyus could not deny the truth behind those words.

That didn't mean she liked it in the slightest still.

“How? How do you even know we could win?”

The Cabinet Secretary asked, a mask of inscrutability hiding his true emotions.

“I don't think you can, I know you will! That is because, the one to bring down the White Dragon Lord for good will be Marquis Satoru himself.”

The silenced room seemed to get even more silent, so much that Lakyus was sure she could have heard a single muscle move at this point.

“You... how do you know any of this would work? How can you be so sure?! This is pure madness! This is-“

The councilman who spoke was silenced once Renner turned his way, the slightest twitch of her eyebrow signaling her annoyance, something Lakyus was fairly sure only she could notice.

“This is your only chance at freedom, or would you prefer to remain a bunch of ants hiding under a rock? Living in fear of what will come next? Living in the shadow of a glorious past long gone and forgotten? Do not be naïve! It maybe will not be today, or tomorrow either, but one day, one day something will come and find a weak and divided prey to feast upon... this is your only chance, it is time to decide about your future and not mumble about what could have been.”

The princess words seemed to shock and irate the dwarves in equal measure, all but the Cabinet Secretary who remained calm as his other kin seemed ready to protest her words.

“Do you think me a fool councilmen? Or do you consider Marquis Satoru a fool who would act recklessly? If we are stating something as a fact, it is because that will be the outcome without a doubt.”

She continued with an ice-cold tone that would not allow for any rebuttal to her words.

“I will take over from here Renner, I think you have got your point across.”

Satoru spoke up for the first time as he placed his large hand over the princess' shoulder as she gladly stepped down to leave her spot to the masked caster who seemed ready to address the entire room.

“After intensive questioning of King Riyuro on my part, I have come to an understanding of what kind of threat we are currently dealing with. The White Dragon Lord is certainly a formidable foe if you do not know his abilities and how to counter them.”

Those words seemed to capture every single occupant of the room's attention. Even the busy scribes paused their scribbling to listen to what he had to say. The most intense gazes certainly belonged to the Cabinet Secretary and the Commander in Chief, though, the fiery gaze in Riyuro's eyes was not to be easily dismissed.

“Apparently, the White Dragon Lord is rumored to be capable of third tier arcane magic which he mostly use to defend against fire spells, his natural weakness, he of course possess the natural aptitude of dragons for both physical strength and magic resistance.”

The magic caster calmly listed off the abilities of the Dragon Lord.

“Apparently during the years he spent under the Dragon Lord's rule, Riyuro had managed to gather an information that had turned out to be the key to the Dragon Lord's soon to be fall.”

He paused as everyone was now hanging from the edge of their seat, Lakyus included as she could not help but admire more and more Satoru's analyzing capabilities and how everything he said

simply seemed like the most natural of conclusions and not the result of an in depth analysis.

“The Frost Dragons main reason for retreating inside the mountain is their ongoing war for the dominance of the Azerlisia Mountinas against the Frost Giants, a war, that for all their bravado, they were apparently losing, else they would have had no reason to retreat within the mountains.”

Everyone apart from Riyuro seemed surprised by the revelation.

“But, what does that change for us? We don’t have any allies among the Frost Giants, they would never consider allying with us either...”

One of the councilmen spat out as if he didn’t see the point in any of this.

“Eh, are you stupid or something?”

Those mocking words came directly from the Quagoa King who now gazed at the councilman who spoke as if he was a complete fool.

“The overgrown lizards have only three advantages in battle, their physical strength, their frost breath, and their flying ability, they would be a formidable foe for any races, even someone battle hardened like the Quagoa... but the Frost Giants cannot be armed by their frost breath, meaning that flying around them would result in nothing but being shot down with arrows or targeted with rocks... their mere ice immunity make the Frost Giants capable of nullifying two of the three advantages the Frost Dragons have, so the only way for a Frost Dragon to take down Frost Giants is to land and use their physical strength.”

Riyuro explained with a growing grin on his face which seemed to unnerve most of the dwarves.

“But that means... that for all the power a single Frost Dragon possess, if they land and are swarmed by Frost Giants, they would not stand a chance!”

The Commander in Chief exclaimed in realization.

“Exactly, the true reason why the Frost Dragons retreated is due to the Frost Giants numerical superiority.”

Satoru confirmed the dwarf’s words with a nod of appreciation.

“As I prepared for this voyage, I have used the Adventurer Guild to inform myself on the possible foes we could encounter, and Frost Giants were one of those foes, they are usually reported to work in large groups, they are probably organized in tribes as well, they are considered foes to avoid on all costs if unprepared, only Orichalcum Adventurers with the right gear may engage them and have a chance of winning.”

The masked caster relayed the information, though, the only ones who seemed to fully grasp what that meant were the Cabinet Secretary, the Commander in Chief, and Riyuro.

“Hence why those blasted lizards have done nothing but embolden their numbers as much as possible during the last two centuries, they are planning to strike once they have a sufficient number of Frost Dragons in order to not lose due to a numerical disadvantage.”

The Quagoa King spat out as if every word was pure venom to his tongue.

“Yet, I fail to see what this has to do with our chances!”

The same councilman who protested before shouted again. Before Riyuro could open his mouth, something he clearly wanted to do judging by the look in his eyes, Satoru himself decided to address the dwarf.

“You see councilman, with all the information we have, if you would consider the Frost Giants as the Frost Dragon’s worst enemy, then I would be their absolute nightmare.”

Satoru proclaimed silencing the room once more.

“I have various magical artifacts in my possession that could just negate any ice damage, I am capable of flying, and while I may not be as physically strong as a Frost Giant, I still am fast enough and can teleport away if they come too close... but if it was just that then, it would be like dealing with a more annoying Frost Giant and nothing more... no, what truly set me up to be their worst nightmare is my ability to use magic on the 6th tier caliber, I have a few fire spells in my arsenal that could easily reverse the fate of a battle... arrogant as they are, they will never take a simple human being seriously, their arrogance will be their undoing.”

Lakyus could not help but wonder how did he talk about ending a Dragon Lord and his kin the same way as if he was discussing the weather. Was this truly the gap between someone who considered themselves strong and someone who the world consider strong?

If she did not know Satoru, she would have thought of him as uncaring and cold, while in reality his personality couldn’t be more different from what he was showing.

Was this how the world could be changed? By adapting to what others wanted you to be? Renner did much the same... and it was working.

But Lakyus didn't want that, she wanted to be herself, to uphold her values and do not stray from her path, and she was doing just that, but she could do so only by relying on someone else to play the role required, else she would have not accomplished anything at all.

“And what are your conditions, even if we come to an agreement with the Quagoa, what is Re-Estize getting out of this for their assistance?”

Asked the Cabinet Secretary, he seemed to have given up on his previous attempt at resistance and was just cutting their losses by now.

“After this new nation has been created, our demands are few, economical treaties for exchange of goods without import fees, a seat on the new council as an observer and ambassador, and a share of the treasury in the Royal Capital once it has been reconquered... in exchange Re-Estize will lend their armed support in this conflict, you will have priority for a marked in runecraft products, and Re-Estize will recognize your authority over the area as a legitimate nation.”

Renner calmly explained surprising the dwarf. For Lakyus wasn't a genius when it came to politics, she still had been still educated as a noble and so could easily understand that what Renner was asking was a very reasonable and fair request, even advantageous for the dwarves. Every other noble would have probably demanded a giant compensation seeing the advantage Re-Estize clearly had here, but Renner wasn't like that, they wanted to build

a good relationship with the underground nation and economically crippling a nation they just fought tooth and nail to establish would have been the stupidest move possible.

“Well then, if there are no more objections I think we should finalize this.”

Renner declared as she waited for someone to speak up, though, apart from some dwarves fidgeting, no one opened their mouth.

Lakyus almost jumped from her seat when the meeting room’s door slammed open as a dwarf she never saw before ran inside.

“What is the meaning of this Maldo?!”

The Commander in Chief bellowed as he stood up from his seat glowering at the soldier.

“I-it’s the Quagoa Lord commander! They are here! Tens of thousands!”

The soldier shouted much to the aggravation of the still precariously balanced situation.

“What is the meaning of this Quagoa King?!”

Asked a furious secretary as he glared at the only Quagoa in the room who seemed as perplexed as many of them were. After seemingly regaining his composure Riyuro stood up.

“That is impossible! They could not have come here after conquering Feo Raidho!”

He bellowed as if his words could deny reality itself.

“Feo Raidho? What are you talking about? There has been no such attack!”

The Commander in Chief said in a both cautious and confused tone.

“It seems like you were still keeping secrets from us King Riyuro, pray to elaborate on your statements?”

Renner asked, her tone as calm as if nothing was happening in front of her, though Lakyus could hear a certain undertone of annoyance in her voice. She too was quite stunned by her new friend’s words, she truly hoped he did not try to cross them and take advantage of her.

No... she should not think like that! She was sure there was an explanation to this!

She gazed up at Riyuro hopefully, though he averted his gaze so to not look in her eyes as he gritted his teeth.

“Before I was captured... I left orders to my army to regroup in the tunnels and join the main army who was already marching on Feo Raidho with the intention of conquering it... I thought they had been successful and that you all already knew about it, so I did not bring it up... apparently, someone decided to defy my orders and marched the army back here.”

The Quagoa explained in a barely controlled raging tone.

“You! You were planning to trap us inside the mountain!”

One of the councilmen accused in panic.

“Yes, we were at war in case you have forgotten, I was just planning to win.”

Riyuro rebutted making most of the dwarves go pale as they realized how close they got at being completely defeated and probably exterminated.

Lakyus could not help to feel a bit betrayed inside, she knew he had no intention of lying, but this was truly a shrewd move, to give the dwarves a glimpse of hope after capturing him, only to lose the war immediately after. He would have even sacrificed himself in order for his people to live on, that was something she had to respect.

The duality of the situation tore inside her as she could not completely condemn the action but felt guilty in admiring it too. Well, that was something she will have to deal with another time as there was no time to ponder such ethical dilemmas.

“We will have time to discuss this later. Maldo! What are the Quagoa doing?”

The Commander in Chief asked as he put the matter aside in order to not descend in a useless squabble with an army at their doorsteps.

“T-they captured the bridge, taking the guards by surprise as they did not expect such a massive assault... they then released the guards to send us a message as they neared the city.”

The soldier spoke before hesitating and glancing at the Quagoa King.

“Speak soldier! What kind of message is this?”

The Commander in Chief demanded authoritatively making the soldier stand at attention in reflex to his tone.

“T-they demand the release of their K-King in exchange of their retreat!”

At those words all the occupants of the room turned toward the demi-human.

“Tsk, don’t look at me, I already told you I had nothing to do with this.”

Riyuro spat those words.

“Be it as it may, we need to-“

The Secretary began only to be interrupted by the Quagoa King slamming his fist on his desk.

“Let me go out there, I will deescalate the situation, and we can continue this negotiation once this mess is solved.”

Riyuro declared as he stood up from his seat.

“Absolutely not! If we allow you to leave we will be completely exposed! You and yours will just turn around and assault the city! Not even Lord Satoru could stop those numbers!”

The Commander in Chief protested as the dwarves guarding the door prepared their spears.

“Wait! Everyone stops!”

Lakyus had no idea who just spoke, she blinked as everyone was suddenly looking at her, even Renner and Satoru.

Ah! Was that just her? Did she actually speak up without noticing just out of instinct?

She glanced around with her eyes, Renner looked at her with an unreadable expression and Satoru’s gaze seemed to pierce her even from behind his mask.

Was she doing something wrong? No, Renner would have already said something if that was the case! No, those two... they were expecting something from her! Yes! That was it! She had to do something!

Her posture straightened as she advanced with all the confidence she could muster.

She stopped in front of Riyuro, gazing directly into his eyes. She believed in him, those moments they shared in the last days were true and gave her a prospective on what kind of person he was.

“Riyuro, do you want the best for your people, no, for everyone around you, be it ally or enemy?”

She asked firmly as her gaze didn't leave his. He seemed to falter at her question, his grey eyes narrowing on her.

“Yes, I do as long as they think the same.”

He answered with dead seriousness.

“Then let's go and show your allies what we have managed to accomplish, for a peaceful future.”

She said as a genuine smile crept on her face.

She glanced back at Renner who remained stoic, but she knew that gaze, that told her that whatever happens next, the end result was on her.

“This is absolutely ridiculous!”

The Commander in Chief protested as he advanced on her.

“Commander, do you remember what I told you when we first met?”

She questioned as she turned around to face the dwarf.

“I told you I would help you win, I did just so, and now we can either do as your ancestors did and plunge the blade in your enemy's chest, or offer them a hand to stand up for a better future together.”

Her words echoed in the silent room, she felt an intense gaze on her figure, she raised her eyes only to meet the two blue gems in Satoru's mask.

“Let them pass... we either win or die at this point, we can linger on this choice no longer, we are out of time and options.”

The one who ordered this was the Secretary himself who collapsed on his chair with a hand over his greying beard, seemingly exhausted by this whole ordeal. Protests did not miss to start but both Lakyus and Riyuro where out of the room by then.

{Riyuro's P.O.V.}

The Quagoa King marched through the gates of the city, something he never thought he would ever do again till the last days.

For someone who was so resigned to his own death he was certainly feeling a concerning amount of drive inside him. But he had to do it, this... this might be their only chance at not only finally getting some peace, but also free themselves from the Frost Dragons' control!

He must admit he had been skeptical the first time he had spoken with that monster garbed in black. He must admit, some of the questions he asked had surprised him, what kind of dragon had he seen that he had to ask how many wings they had? Or if they could use multiple elements? Hell! When he told the monster about the Dragon Lord being capable of 3rd tier spells, he could swear the caster sounded almost disappointed!

Of course, he had been reassured after he heard the plan. This was truly their best shot at freeing themselves currently.

He has had his own plans in motions of course! He had already found few Quagoa capable of resisting the cold quite well. His plan was to make them breed in order to pass down and improve this trait to the point they would have a small army of ice resisting Quagoa they could use to bring down the dragons.

Such a goal was a long term one, far beyond his own lifespan, but he had planned to at least remove the dwarves' threat once and for all before dying and then focusing on the dragons.

All those meticulous plans were thrown out the metaphorical window once this bunch arrived.

He glanced at the unexpected companion flanking him. The golden haired human seemed as calm and assured in their success like this was the natural outcome. In the past he would have judged such a behavior as one born out of arrogance, but he knew better now, after only spending a few weeks with this human, he understood that she just naturally assumed that everyone would want the best for themselves and those around them.

He mentally shook his head. If a month ago someone told him he would be captured, swayed from his plans, and would be actively working alongside the dwarves, he would have probably smacked them black and blue for their audacity in saying such bullshit to his face.

And yet, he was exactly here now.

He knew what was coming, he knew what was necessary, his kin did not have the brains to understand the implications of their own situation. What they would see is just him apparently going mad and wanting to cooperate with their sworn enemy.

He knew he could work this out, but he will have to do a lot of work for this to be a successful venture. And the first phase was dissuading his kin from the thought of him being somehow controlled or gone mad.

“Whatever I do, do not interfere and play along.”

He mumbled under his breath to the shorter human who just gave him a curious look before slowly nodding.

They were now approaching the gathered Quagoa host, hell, if he didn't know better, he would have thought his entire race was here, there were at least 40.000 here. He grimaced internally, some probably died during this march, they just did not have enough resources to feed such a giant host when gathered together.

His gaze hardened as he saw who was standing in front of his host. Yozu, alongside the rest of the Clan Lords, he took a deep breath, preparing himself for what he had to do.

“My King! Welcome back!”

Yozu greeted him with a grin Riyuro had to fight against himself to not reciprocate. He really wouldn't know what to do without this one, even if they were from different clans, Yozu was the only one he considered on his same level when it came to strategies and politics, unfortunately, their power was not so nearly even.

“Yozu, are you the one who ordered our kin to march back?”

He questioned, going directly to the point, trying ot remain as emotionless as he could.

“Yes-“

Riyuro didn't even let him finish beyond that word before he slammed his fist against Yozu's jaw, sending him sprawling on the ground.

“IS THAT SO?! YOU FANCY YOURSELF A KING NOW?! I GAVE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS! AND. YOU DIDN'T. FOLLOW. THEM!”

He shouted as he accompanied each word with a kick on the back of the downed Quagoa.

“And YOU! ARE YOU TRAITORS AS WELL?!”

Riyuro questioned in false rage as his eyes pierced each one of the other Clan Lords who stepped back from him.

“EH? Come here now! Let me show you who is the King and remind you who gives the orders!”

He spat those words as he pushed aside Yozu's battered body with one of his feet.

The Clan Lords were reluctant, but they knew as well as him that they could not back down from such an open challenge, not in front of this many of their kin. They would be branded as cowards and their authority would be challenged, that was the way of the Quagoa, King or not, backing down was the worst dishonor a living Quagoa could suffer.

So, with some reluctance, the Clan Lords charged him.

The battle, if you could call it even that, barely lasted minutes as his fists and kicks sent Clan Lords flying or made them black out.

He huffed in exertion as the last of the Clan Lords fell to his feet.

“And don't you forget who you swore your allegiance to next time!”

He declared as he gazed at his soldiers to see if there was anyone who wanted to throw hands as well. Though, all he could see were scared or admiring gazes, certainly this was a display he needed to show after his defeat against Lakyus. Beating the Clan Lords, the strongest of his kin, all together was meant as both a redemption for his image and a reminder of why he was the King to those who had started doubting him after his defeat.

“What the hell Riyuro?!”

He glanced back at the human who looked at him disapprovingly as she was already working on the Clan Lords with that spell of hers.

Yozu seemed to have been already healed from the worst of it and now was dumbly looking from him to her. Riyuro never saw his second in command ever pull such a dumbfounded expression, if the situation was lighter, he would have broken down laughing.

Given the situation, he limited himself to just huff and turn around on the Quagoa he just delivered a beating to.

To be honest he was glad Yozu called off the attack on Feo Raidho, for all it was a foolish move in the perspective of their previous plans, it would have also been a disaster for their current one. They did not need any more spilled blood between Quagoa and Dwarves if they had any intention of making this work.

He patiently waited for Lakyus to pass his Clan Lords one by one. She must have exhausted her magical reserves as she started sweating profusely after the fifth one, and was breathing heavily by the time she was done.

On their part, the Clan Lords just remained silent as they observed the human work, their bafflement couldn't be more clear as they

continue to glance at her and him. It was no surprise that they were completely lost.

And he knew this would not get any better any time soon.

“Now get up from your asses and go settle down the troops, once you are done, we are all returning to the city.”

His words were received like he expected, most of them looked at him completely lost or as if he had gone mad. Though, no one dared to open their fat mouth after the beating they had just received.

As they left, Riyuro walked back to Lakyus’ side.

“Hey, do you need any help? Do I need to carry you back?”

He whispered in a teasing tone, though he would have done it if she was really exhausted to that point, after all, it was kind of his fault.

“N-no... I-I just need to catch my b-breath...”

She was completely spent, and her weak tone showed just that.

“If you are sure... I still can’t believe you have convinced me to go along with this... are all humans as weird as you? No, I already know the answer to that...”

He shook his head at his own words, at this point he was mostly talking to himself.

“Still, I can’t believe your reason for doing this, that goal of yours... do you truly believe you can do it?”

He asked, curious to know if the human next to him truly believed a world such as the one she described was really possible.

“Well... if it can be done once... I don't see why it can't be done a second or third time... also, my goal is not my only reason for doing this.”

Her words prompted him to focus on her, waiting for her to elaborate.

“You told me the Quagoa number around 70.000 while I know there are around 50.000 dwarves... so I guess, I have at least 120.000 more reasons to do this.”

She gave him a weak smile before slumping against him. He caught her in his arms out of instinct. He could not help but grin down at her form.

‘Tsk, you are such a pain, if you get hurt due to some stupid shit here, I have no intention of dealing with the displeasure of that monster back in the city’ he reprimanded no one but himself for letting her do this. He sighed and adjusted her in his arms as if she was an infant.

‘Well, I guess there is nothing else to do now but to completely go in with the plan’ he felt a little sadness come over him. That was surprising as he had been ready to die just a few days ago, and yet now he realized he would have liked to see if Lakyus’ goal was truly achievable.

‘Look at me, being all sentimental, she would have bashed my face in... still...’ he looked down at the unconscious human in his arms.

‘It’s such a shame I won’t get to see what you will do next...’

A.N.

Oh boy! That was a big one! I mean, it is 7k, so not exactly too much compared to my usual 6k, but you have no idea how many times I rewrote dialogues! This has been such a pain to make it come out as I wanted!

Still, we are getting in the action now! Eh, I bet no one of you expected this arc to end up in an all out war between the allied dwarves-Quagoa against the Frost Dragons!

Oh, and bone Daddy has got his hands full apparently! All those juicy dragon materials he could get now... hope you are all excited to see a nerfed Ainz vs Frost Dragons rematch!

Let me know your thoughts and predictions with a comment / review!

Stay safe! Till next time!