

“Normal speech”

‘Thought’

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

**Ok, ok I messed up! I know, I am aware of Ainz’ resistance to 6<sup>th</sup> tier magic! I just messed up the wording! And no, he didn’t actually take damage from that last spell. He himself said that ‘he wasn’t sure’ since he never felt pain in this story before. In the original LN he was able to recognize pain pretty easily during the battle with the SS’ angel. The whole discomfort thing was nothing more than the passive resistance reaching its limit. Imagine it as if you put one finger above a candle, the more you lower it, the more uncomfortable you will feel until you actually pass from uncomfortableness to actual pain. Well, Satoru’s passive was just at that point. If he got just a little lower, he would start feel pain. At least this is how I meant it to be read, of course all went out of the window when I messed up the explanation about his passive resistance, so yeah... still my fault anyway... I, of course, corrected it as soon as I could after some of you wrote it in the reviews.**

**On a side note, happy to know you all liked that chapter, it certainly was a big turning point for Renner and Satoru (even if he is still convinced she is just a lonely child cherishing her beloved friend).**

**Hope you have fun with this chapter too... the empire’s arc is coming to its end... but who knows what will happen next?... spoilers... me!**

**PS: The first chapter of TWTS: Shards of the New World has been published if you didn't know already... go give it a look if you want to see more of the side characters!**

**Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (Dang, I got so into the last chapter, that I missed that fact about his passive as well. I recently published a far less good story of my own if you felt like checking it out! Synopsis: The guild master of Seraphim finds himself dreading away the final weeks of YGGDRISIL until he decides to host one final dance on a whim. How will he react when his meticulously created paradise remains as the clock strikes midnight?)**

## Chapter 22: This Witch's Ambitions

A promise, a pledge, a vow, an oath, a commitment, a bond... an engagement... yes, she rather liked that last one. Usually, it was an event in which the two exchanged both a promise and gifts... but there was nothing usual about her and her beloved. And what greater gift could he give than what he already gave her? And what gift could she give apart from herself?

Yes. This was as perfect as it could be. They exchanged their oaths, and their destinies were forever linked together.

The Third Princess smiled one of her true smiles, directed at no one in the empty room she was inhabiting. It has been a month since they reached the Empire's capital and, even with that foolish emperor's ambitions, everything was going perfectly in her life.

Not even the fact that Satoru spent most of his time in the last two weeks inside the academy could deter her good humor. After

all, he made it up to her during the many afternoons spent inside the Court Wizard's private library.

There, her beloved, her and, sporadically, Lakyus, spent hours researching precious lost knowledge about the world and, mostly, the 8 Greed Kings and 13 Heroes, subjects that seemed to fascinate Satoru to no end as he learned more and more about them.

The Princess giggled as she felt all giddy inside. There was nothing better than spending time with her betrothed in all but name. Who cared if she was 20 years younger? Love had no age. Her father would have to come to terms with that, and she was pretty sure she would be able to convince him in time.

They would soon go back to Re-Estize and then she would be able to start her plan of becoming the officially betrothed to Satoru. But before that, she has a pest to put in his place. Someone that could potentially get in her way if his plans came to fruition. And she had exactly the right plan to achieve just that.

As she formulated that thought, the door of her room slowly opened, revealing a sweaty and stinky Lakyus. She was dressed in a boyish way. 'It was a matter of mobility' the noble often said when the princess asked about it, but Renner couldn't help but notice how such clothes showed much more of her still growing body than any noble dress would ever allow. Her hips were getting thinner and more adapted to her rising height; to top it all off, she was also developing some visible, impressive muscles for her age and gender.

To be completely honest with herself, she was pretty envious of her friend... 'friend... my friend?... did I just refer to Lakyus as my friend? Uhm... but isn't she? She helped me many times... she is a

constant presence in my daily life... isn't that what a friend is supposed to be?'. Normally the thought of having a friend would most likely upset her... but if the term was associated with Lakyus she actually didn't mind.

"Do I have something on my face?"

The heiress asked, noticing the intensity of the princess' gaze.

"You are my friend Lakyus."

The blue-eyed girl said without hesitation, eliciting a confused expression from the young noble.

"Uhm... yes, I guess."

She answered, unsure what to say after the princess' statement.

"You are my only friend."

Those words just added to the confusion and caused a bit of redness to appear on Lakyus' face.

"T-thank you."

She said, as silence fell over the room until Renner jumped down from her bed and exited the room, leaving Lakyus to her own thoughts. 'You better be grateful... I don't say that to everyone I meet!' the 8 years old princess huffed in her head.

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

He looked in fascination as the teacher proceeded to explain the theory of casting and mana manipulation before proceeding to demonstrate it with a basic 1<sup>st</sup> tier spell.

He had no idea that theory of casting was a thing at all until now. He didn't pretend to have understood everything but the theory

behind what he considered instinctive was actually very fascinating to listen to.

He had no idea that casting spell had such a big strain on the mind of humans; first you had to gauge your own mana pool, then use your knowledge on the spell to start casting while at the same time pulling out the right amount of mana to cast the spell. If you drew too little mana the spell would not be cast, but, on the other hand, if you pulled too much you might overcharge the spell and harm yourself with the spell, not counting the consequential waste of mana. The control you had to have to cast a spell in this world was unreal. The higher the tier, the higher the control and natural magical prowess needed.

‘Only 1 among 50 will ever reach the 3<sup>rd</sup> tier, and only 1 among 2000 the 4<sup>th</sup>... and to think there are children so skilled’ as the undead magic caster thought that his gaze fell on the young blond girl who sat next to him, as she took note after note about the lecture.

To say that he was taken aback when Fluder tasked her with escorting him around during his time in the Academy would be an understatement. But just after two weeks he could already see why the old Court Wizard made the choice he did. To say that the young girl was gifted was an even bigger understatement. She was a prodigy, capable of such mental focus that she could already cast 2<sup>nd</sup> tier magic with proficiency at the age of 10. And on top of that she was a Talent Holder; a Talent that mixed perfectly with her already talented self. No wonder some students considered her the second coming of Fluder Paradyne himself.

“So young Arche, have you not already heard this lecture? Aren’t you a bit too advanced to listen to these basic lessons?”

The young girl jumped a little as his soft-spoken words reached her focused ears. She stammered a little before turning toward him and answering.

“I-I think that a-a true magic caster should always b-be ready to learn, e-even when reinforcing already established k-knowledge... after all, e-everyone has a different approach to casting m-magic... there i-is always something new t-to learn from an experienced c-caster.”

She whispered while stuttering a little. He nodded in approval. After all, she was right. He himself always made sure to observe his adversaries very carefully. You never knew when you could learn something you would use to your advantage in the future.

“A good mindset... you are still too young to stop learning, no matter your natural gifts... remember, the moment you stop learning is the moment you will stop growing.”

He said to a dumbfounded Arche who slowly nodded in understanding.

“I-I see... thank you for your words, Lord Satoru.”

She thanked him, to his confusion. It wasn’t like he said something deep or anything.

The rest of the lesson proceeded as every other day until the teacher addressed Satoru directly.

“Ah, Sir Satoru. Maybe an illustrious caster such as you, who studied in a faraway land, would like to enlighten us on some new theory of casting? It is unlikely that these notions are the

same as the ones you were brought up with; maybe you could share your knowledge with some fellow students of the art that is magic?”

The teacher asked, as all eyes in the room immediately fixed on the large form of the masked magic caster.

‘Oh crap... why me... Why? Why? Why? Why?...’ the undead panicked internally before his Emotional Suppression kicked in and stopped his rampant emotions.

Without even knowing what he was doing, Satoru stood up from his seat and made his way toward the stand where the teacher stood. Said magic caster offered Satoru an encouraging smile as he made space for him on the stand.

The moment the masked undead stood on the stand in front of the students, he actually realized he had nothing to say at all. He knew nothing of the theory of casting and even less on mana manipulation.

**‘GOD DAMN IT! WHAT IN THE WORLD SHOULD I SAY?! I WAS NEVER GOOD AT SPEECHES! THAT WAS TOUCH-ME’S OR ULBERT’S THING! EVEN PUNITTO WAS BETTER THAN ME!’**

This surge of sudden panic was not easily repressed by his passive skill, which continued to try to calm him down to no avail.

In the meantime, if the panic wasn’t already too much, the silence in the room was becoming less anticipating and more confusing as it was almost a minute that Satoru stood there without speaking a word. ‘JUST SAY SOMETHING ALREADY!’ The magic caster opened his mouth, but no sound came out. He felt his mouth dry up even if it wasn’t physically possible, but then a memory surged into his mind.

“The inhabitants of this world... are not created equal...”

He finally spoke, mimicking what Ulbert told him once, the day after his last relative died, maybe of overwork or maybe in an accident. Satoru couldn't remember clearly.

But now that he spoke, all the eyes in the room returned once more on him. He had no choice but to improvise and follow his instinct and memory.

“Some were born into wealth, some were born with incredible powers, some were born into misery; but all of them have been given a chance to better themselves, to grow stronger.”

This one, he remembered, was from Touch-Me.

“But in the end what are we, if not ants climbing a mountain to reach the top, and the more we climb the mountain of greatness, the lonelier we get and the more friends we see fall into the abyss below.”

He continued; 40 specific beings made their way into his mind.

“And yet, we climb, we aspire to the top; relentlessly!”

He paused. The silent was pregnant with anticipation.

“When we are capable of magic and casting, we think of ourselves as invincible, of being above common warriors... I once saw one of my warrior friends being taunted by a flying magic caster. He thought himself mighty, flying around in the sky... in his arrogance he never saw the blade of my friend flying toward him and impaling him through the heart... that same friend taught me to avoid slashes and to fight in close quarters.”

He recalled one of Touch-Me's PVP matches in his mind, modifying it a bit when he put it into words, of course.



“Do not underestimate your enemy or your ally... always be ready to learn from those who seem weaker than you, or else, you will tumble down the mountain and fall into a pit of stagnation!”

At this point, he was just spitting out everything that came to his mind at the moment or what he remembered hearing in the past.

“There is no right or wrong theory of casting; and if you really wish to climb to the top you will not simply be set on imitating what others created... if you wish to achieve true greatness, you must analyze what was created, point out its flaws and strengths, and then develop your very own method, as flawless as you can, so that future students may in the future do the same with yours.”

He said, following Punitto’s logic and applying it into the current situation.

“Most of your names will be lost in the ages, or never even remembered at all, but that is not the point! You will still live on inside the art which is magic! You will live on in every movement and word used to cast a spell! This will be your legacy to the world! And for that very reason, magic must be respected and admired, for that is the legacy of thousands of casters that came before you! Their very essence is in every last one of you, no matter how talented you may be! And when we become old and frail or simply laying on the ground with a sword piercing our chests, we will not fear what comes next or what we left behind... because, as long as there will be anyone using magic, we will still live on inside them!”

He concluded, as silence ruled once more over the room. ‘Ah I hope that was enough to distract them from the actual question... it is just a fancy way of saying I have no idea what

theory of casting actually is...' he truly hoped fervently that this whole deranging nonsense that went nowhere actually satisfied most of the listeners.

Said students continued to look at him as no one dared to break the silence he created after that speech. As Satoru wondered if they expected more from him, the sound of clapping reached his nonexistent ears. His eyes darted toward the origin of the sound only to find Arche standing and vigorously clapping her hands with a big smile on her face.

Then the dam broke as the other students followed her example and stood while loudly applauding, some even cheering, his performance. The undead was dumbfounded at what was happening 'ah... uhm... I don't think I get it... what just happened?'

As he stood there completely baffled the teacher approached him and took his still slightly raised, gloved hand in his to shake it.

"Ah! Sir Satoru! What a magnificent and illustrious speech! Truly! You managed to channel the very spirit of being a magic caster into words! Even I, as old as I am, find myself reinvigorated by your words, urging me to learn even more and leave a great legacy behind!"

The excited teacher continued to shake Satoru's hand. 'I-I don't think I get what is happening...' the undead lamented in his head with a heavy sigh 'I don't possess any kind of charisma passive skill... do I?' he asked in resignation.

"Now I can see why Lord Paradyne praised you so much! He must have felt that dedication you have to the art of magic! I am sure that many of my students have been greatly humbled by your

words today! Myself included! So, allow me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your words!”

The teacher continued, to Satoru’s further embarrassment. ‘Please let me just leave...’ the undead cried out in desperation.

{Arche’s P.O.V.}

As the students began to leave, while sharing excited whispers among each other, the young noble advanced toward the black cloaked magic caster. ‘That was actually very beautiful...’ she thought as her everchanging opinion on the man before her changed once more.

At the beginning, she just considered him a very scary person, due to her Talent leaving her in the dark like never before. Then, with the duel, she began to admire his magical prowess and could do nothing but respect him for what he was, a talented magic caster. Then she began to learn more and more about him, as she was appointed to be his guide for two whole weeks by now. In that period of time, she realized that he wasn’t only talented, but that his very presence commanded a certain degree of authority, like she never felt before. And now, she discovered that not only his magical power was to be admired but his charisma as well. She couldn’t help it. That speech could give purpose and reignite the fire in even the most untalented of magic casters, making them believe that their lives are not expendable and will become the foundation of the future.

And she was no exception. She felt his words echoing in her very soul, giving her a pleasant tingling sensation of purpose. Not that she lacked it before, but still, she felt reinvigorated by his words. She could not wait to start learning something new and she could

not help but wonder what else the masked magic caster had to offer if this was the mere result of a simple speech.

‘He is still scary tho...’ she thought as she got closer to the 5<sup>th</sup> tier magic caster who appeared like a mountain when compared to her petite frame.

“That was a beautiful speech, Lord Satoru.”

She complimented in a small voice, still feeling intimidated by the bigger man.

“Uhm... thank you, young Arche.”

He answered with his usual deep and calm tone, which sent shivers down her spine. ‘Blast that! He is still terrifying!’ she cried out in her head while forcing a smile on her face.

“S-should we go?”

She asked, trying to cut short the time they had to spend together.

“Yes, let us go. I wish to visit the library once more today. Thank you for your company today. I wish you a good evening.”

He said, as he casted a spell and teleported away.

‘That would be useful... I would be able to visit my family far more often...’ she lamented as her thoughts began to wander toward her two baby sisters. Their small hands all over her face, those cute cooing and giggles, those eyes full of wonder; she shuddered in excitement at the sole thought. ‘Yes, I must learn that spell!’ she steeled her determination.

{2 hours later}

{Fluder’s Private Library}

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

The undead sat on a reinforced chair as he read the old book in front of him. Even after a year and a half since his arrival, he still had problems understanding the written language and, sometimes, still needed his Translating Item to understand the more intricate language.

Normally he would have considered it a great achievement to be able to read a different language in so little time. The unfortunate truth was that, once you understood the words, the construction of the phrase was quite similar to normal Japanese. The only major difference being that the alphabet was more limited, and many words were written very similarly to others, making it easy to get confused. He already resigned himself to the fact that he would never be able to write or read like a native.

But he digressed; those were not important thoughts at the moment. The true treasure laid there, in his hands. Eulogy and Legacy of the Consumed Kings; he of course already knew of the legend that were the 8 Greed Kings, but to have a book presumably written just a few years after their fall, was something else entirely.

The story, of course, was far from lacking in unbelievable details, like how the 8 Kings, presumedly, conquered the whole world in a few years, something Satoru doubted considering there was no map of the whole world, something that would not be missing if the story was true. The more likely version was that they took control of the continent after slaughtering the Dragon Lords.

The most important information, in Satoru's opinion, was their use of what is described as 10<sup>th</sup> tier magic, something too oddly specific to be just a mere coincidence. To not speak about their

floating fortress Eryuentiu, a name that had no meaning for most New World's inhabitants but not for Satoru. 'the tree in the center of the world... such a fancy way of speaking of Yggdrasil...' after hearing of that name, their power and the fact they appeared out of nowhere, Satoru had little doubt about the true nature of the Kings of Greed.

'Other players...' such realization gave him both a feeling of dread and hope. Dread of what would happen if other players like those appeared in this world, and hope of his friends coming as well to this world someday in the future. But that was just a distant dream for now.

This changed much for him. He was not alone here, and it was possible that other players arrived alongside him in this world. He has never been more relieved of his fake identity than in that moment. The fake information about him that he made public would be his shield against all possible players in the future; and, if the need arose, he could always use that fake background to take his opponent by surprise.

It was also very probable that the so called 6 Great Gods were players as well. 'Such megalomaniacs, going around calling themselves gods or some other crap... such a nice way of not painting a target on their heads' he thought ironically.

On the other hand, he could not be so sure about the 13 Heroes or the Evil Deities; if compared to the others, they didn't really seem so powerful... but, still, he could not dismiss the possibility of them being smarter and actually trying to hide their power like he did. That hypothesis would, of course, be countered by the fact that they were almost all dead by now.

Still, he needed to be careful. There was far too much he still didn't know about this world, and his ignorance may cost him his life in the future. 'I need to gather more intelligence and see if infiltrating Eryuentiu is possible. To know what hides up there would be a great step towards ensuring my safety' he stated, making it a future goal of his.

That train of thought was interrupted when the blond princess approached his table with a pile of books in her hands. 'she has quite strong arms for being just a child...' the undead thought as the demonic princess laid the pile, almost as high as herself, on the table and sat next to him with a content smile.

Since that night when he made his promise to her, she had been very affectionate with him, even more than before, not losing any occasion to snuggle on his side or sit on his lap. She also would refuse to go to bed unless Satoru patted her and wished her a good night. 'Such a needy child...' he thought, not that it bothered him. He was used to her antics by now. 'Uhm... it may be just a phase tho... maybe when she grows up, she will actually seek to distance herself...' he thought as he compared her behavior to one of the children in his old world.

'Maybe she just needs to find someone her age she can connect to... puberty is still a thing as well... she might enter a rebellious phase in a few years' he continued to wonder. He guessed many would have been put off by her possessive behavior, but he really didn't mind. He felt much the same toward his friends and Nazarick. The fact that she was a neglected child surely added to her case of possessiveness toward one of the few who appreciated her.

"-toru! Satoru! Are you listening to me?!"

The insistent tone of said princess made Satoru return to reality.

“Ah... forgive me Renner, I was dwelling on some other important matters.”

He said, eliciting a pout from the small girl. ‘waaaah... she really seems pissed off!’ he thought, alarmed by seeing her eyes glaring at him so vehemently.

“Are there more important things than hearing what I have to say?”

She asked dangerously as she puffed out her cheeks, morphing her glaring gaze into a quite cute expression Satoru didn’t miss. With a chuckle, the undead put his gloved hand on her head, patting her and ruffling her hair just a bit.

“Of course not, you are always the most important matter to me.”

He said, gaining a smirk from the princess who took advantage of his lowered guard to shift and jump on his lap.

“Well then! I offer you the chance to make it up to me now! Be grateful!”

Satoru snorted in amusement at her ironic and demanding tone.

“As my queen commands.”

He answered. The blond girl paused a moment, giving him a puzzled look, but then laid back on him accepting his embrace.

“You are a comfy bed, Satoru.”

She said as she snuggled against him while he picked up another book.

“Pleased to serve.”



He said with a chuckle at the girl's antics, 'is this how it feels to have a niece... or maybe even a daughter?' he wondered in the silence of the library.

{Just outside Arwintar}

{Lakyus' P.O.V.}

"Did you enjoy your break girl?"

Asked the blue haired swordsman as he lifted the fake wooden sword toward said girl.

"I had no need for it in the first place!"

Responded the noble blond girl with a confident grin plastered on her face, eliciting a scowl from the more experienced man.

"Don't be an arrogant ass, newbie! Resting body and mind is necessary for them to develop in the right way. This is even more true during the years you are passing through."

Brain explained, while sidestepping the lunge attempted by Lakyus and slashing his wooden sword her way. The noble blocked the slash and jumped back putting distance between the two of them.

"Uhm, you are getting better..."

Her teacher grunted out as he disappeared using his true speed to get in front of the girl in an instant and sending her onto her butt with just a lunge aimed to her chest.

"... but you are still not good enough to get away from me safely."

He sent a grin her way, which was returned by a determined glare.

“One day... I will be the one sending you to the ground.”

She answered, the man shrugged.

“What did I say about those types of taunts?”

He asked annoyed.

“You are allowed to gloat only once your opponent is dead or broken on the ground... and even then, you will gloat with your guard still up.”

She repeated his words and got rewarded with an approving nod.

“Good, now get back up!”

He ordered with a firmer tone this time. Immediately, Lakyus jumped up, demonstrating a certain degree of resilience and eliciting a grimace from the blue haired retired swordsman.

“I see your training with Stronoff is giving some results.”

He admitted as Lakyus flashed him a grin.

“I already told you! I will become the greatest swordswoman in the world and change it for the best!”

She announced before her expression turned from joyous to contemplative.

“Do you think I have a chance?”

She asked.

“At what? Changing the world? I already told you that it is a fool’s errand!”

The man said while taking a stance.

“NO! I mean at the tournament the emperor organized!”

The young noble clarified with an embarrassed look. The emperor, in fact, insisted on giving them a good spectacle before their departure from the empire; and what better way could he do it in, if not by using the greatest Colosseum ever built in the continent, if not the world? 'Maybe I should have waited before immediately announcing my participation... oh well, no turning back now!' the green-eyed noble thought as a tinge of doubt invaded her mind.

"Eh, if you don't immediately get drafted against the strongest participant, I bet you could even reach the semi-finals."

That comment she didn't expect. Her teacher rarely, if ever, complimented her openly. Instead, he often displayed her weaknesses and didn't miss any chance to punish her errors. To hear him give her such a positive incentive was something more unique than rare.

"D-do you really think so?!"

She asked with shining hope in her eyes, which brought a grimace to her second teacher's expression.

"Now don't get all sentimental on me! You would be able to reach such a goal only because most of the participants are nothing more than brutes with no real skill... only there to see if they can get some money from risking their lives... there will be no honor or skill in their fighting style, an easy prey for someone who received lessons, such as mine's and Stronoff's!"

He elaborated his previous statement, as Lakyus grunted. 'of course... I only have a chance because the others are too bad... nice way of giving me some confidence...' she lamented internally. A month ago, she would have been so stupid as to say

those words out loud, only to receive a blow on the head and being called arrogant and childish by her blue haired teacher. Now she knew better than voice her opinion on the matter.

“No more talking! Let us go back to business now!”

Her teacher interrupted her train of thought with a blow aimed at her neck, like many times before it, ‘if you are not in danger, you will never sharpen your combat instinct’ those were the words he used to describe his attempts on her life. She used her own wooden blade to block the blow nonetheless, before retaliating in kind.

{That evening}

{Emperor’s private chambers}

{Jircniv’s P.O.V.}

Who would have guessed that what initially seemed like a trivial and easy task would have turned this way? A silent war raging between two countries for a single man. ‘The irony... easy things are always the hardest to achieve...’ the blond emperor said as he placed a hand on his face.

His last move was a big gamble; to send such a promising student as bait for a magic caster, basing it on an assumption which could be false, was a desperate move; and he was desperate indeed, no matter how much he didn’t want to admit it. He was even starting to not sleep well and that was taking a lot out of his appearance as well. He had begun to have bags under his eyes and he could swear he found some hair in his pillow a few days before.

He sighed, the sooner this was going to end, the sooner he will have to take a break from work and take care of himself in peace.

‘Maybe I could retire for a month or so to my estate in the plains outside the capital with a few of my favorite maids and-’ but before he could even finish that thought a knock coming from the door echoed in the whole room.

“Your Majesty! The Third Princess of the Re-Estize Kingdom is here to see you!”

Those words spoken by his guard outside his personal chamber just served to make a bad day become a terrible day. Not counting the anxious and dreading sensation slowly growing in the bottom of his very soul. ‘What does that devil want now?’ he asked no one in exasperation.

“Send her in.”

He answered in the most cordial tone he could muster in that situation and mood.

The door opened and said monster came inside with the elegance dictated by her social station, but no matter how much a wolf tried to resemble a sheep, it could never become a sheep, and the emperor knew this because he was the same.

“Please have a seat princess, to what do I owe this visit?”

He greeted with the respect he needed to give to uphold royal standards while he still averting his eyes ‘do not make eye contact’ he reminded himself. The devil princess sat on a chair in front of his desk without a word. He continued to stare down even if he could feel her eyes piercing him.

“We are alone, there is no need to pretend to have some kind of societal respect for each other now, Jircniv.”

She said in that monotone tone he so much detested.

“Is that so... Renner?”

He challenged, not wanting to appear any weaker than what he already was and inadvertently glancing to her face, something he immediately corrected by focusing his gaze on her hair.

“You like to appear tough, don’t you?... hanging your family like that... I’m just so scared...”

She taunted but he didn’t succumb to her provocation, refusing to comment on the matter.

“To be truthful, I can respect that... they were in your way, and you eliminated them... it is only fair after all...”

She continued in a cold tone.

“You thought you could do the same to me, but it didn’t go as you expected, right? But the thing is, Jircniv, that I never wanted to be your enemy in the first place, you are the one who kept antagonizing me to gain Satoru to your side...”

She continued as the young emperor began to feel something cold tangle around his body, ‘how in the world is she doing this?’ he wondered as he steeled his resolve.

“You want to conquer the Kingdom, don’t you? But for doing that you must first gain total control over the empire and pulverize your opposition; those pesky and lazy nobles... am I right?”

She asked as she placed both hands on his desk. Jircniv was not even surprised anymore of the fact that she knew his plans. She was a devil after all. He could not afford to lose his mind over how she caught up on his line of thought.

“And so? What will you do about it? A war between us with the current conditions would be devastating, and, no matter who won, in the end we will all lose.”

He stated, even if he knew she already came to that conclusion as well. She instead giggled at his words ‘what a horrible sound, coming from such a twisted human...’ he thought trying to keep down his dinner.

“Ahhh... I am grateful we are already on the same page; this will make the next part so much smoother...”

She said before pausing to give effect to her next words.

“Join me Jircniv, be my ally. Let us join forces and bring a new age upon this world.”

At such a declaration he would have normally laughed and, if the proposer was anyone else, he would have thought them a fool, but he could not say the same for the entity before him.

“You will never conquer the Kingdom, and, even if you did, the nobles would fight to the last man to stop you and in the end, you would just be the emperor of a barren, useless and problematic land.”

There was sense in her words. Even Jircniv could not deny it. That was indeed a possible outcome even if he managed to execute his plan.

“And so? What would you propose? In which way could I convince you to help me in taking over your country?”

He asked, eliciting an amused shake of her head from the princess.

“You can’t.”

She said simply, confusing the emperor who expected some hard and heavy price for her cooperation.

“You seem to still be missing the point.”

She said, amused as she stood up and circled around the desk to reach him. His eyes continued to follow her hair as a prey would warily glance at its predator.

With a swift movement from the princess' part, she delicately grabbed the side of his face and forced him to stare at her blue lifeless eyes, their faces just a few centimeters apart.

In that moment, he felt like his heart stopped beating and that delicate touch felt wrong, so very wrong. He was still higher than her in that position, but he felt so small in comparison. Whoever said that looking down on someone would boost a person's confidence, didn't know shit apparently. The cold sensation in his body intensified and dread crawled up his spine. Her face reminded him of a dead body's visage, but the horrific difference was that hers still moved, forming expressions he didn't know a human could make in the first place. To top the whole thing off, that dead stare seemed to pull him in like the first time he dared to glance at her.

Her voice was barely a whisper, but it resounded with the power of an army in his fragile mind.

“We both desire greatness in this world... but, by fighting each other we will achieve nothing but misery. Why don't we fight together to achieve it instead?”

That thing, he refused to address her otherwise, proposed him. And in that moment, he truly found himself lost at a fork on the road of life. Two roads laid before him. Only one could bring to



greatness or maybe both in different ways; both may as well bring his ruin, and yet, he had to choose which one to walk. And so, as the blue dead abyss marked his soul, he chose.

{That night}

{Renner's P.O.V.}

That went rather well. The boy was not a fool, but he was still a useable tool. She would not have to dispose of him at least. That was a good thing. She didn't have the patience to do it.

To think she needed all this time to realize what Satoru meant; she felt quite foolish right now. He gave her a ton of inputs, some of which were rather obvious, like his gift for her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday.

'I will make the best of what I have, isn't that right Satoru?' she thought 'why settle for mediocrity when you can aspire to reach the top? Why should I bend to the world to achieve my goal when I can force the world to bend for my sake?' she asked no one in the darkness of her room.

'As my queen commands' she repeated in her mind the words he told her that same day, 'to obtain the crown would be so easy... it would take time, but the road has already been paved by Satoru for me... how could I be so blind till this day?' she shook her head as she heard Lakyus shift in her bed.

'Why should I have my father's or anyone's approval? Once I become the ruler no one will be able to stand in my way... to question my authority... and to stop me from sharing my life with who I want!' and in the end who cared if she was the last child and heir in line for the throne?

'I will just have to squish some more worms, I guess... yes! That would be rather nice actually!' she began to lightly giggle at the thought.

'And in the end, we will stand above them all. Isn't that right, my Satoru?'

**A.N.**

**Oh boy, that is not what bone daddy meant to do at all... what have you just done Satoru?**

**Hope you all liked that. This chapter was mostly to present the final part of the Empire Arc and to foreshadow the next plot points.**

**And yes, I wanted to use some Lovecraft vibes during Jircniv's P.O.V. (I'm a big fan after all), and yes, for those who were wondering, Renner was the eldritch horror in this version, while the poor emperor was the one curious/smart/foolish enough to glance into the abyss.**

**Reviews are the fuel that make this author's brain work, so please, no matter how short or long, leave a review! All feedback is appreciated! (Not counting the fact that I'm curious to know how you think Renner will execute her plans).**

**See you next time and stay safe!**