

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Oh my, we are finally here. Renner is finally going to have her fun fun time, and not in the way you are thinking, you naughty readers!

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: After discussing it a little with some of you readers I decided to put up a P atreon. Now, before any of you scream about me being some 'heartless, greedy, etc'. This P atreon is mainly for giving the possibility to those who wish to support me, to actually do so! This story will NEVER be hidden by a pay wall, or anything like that!

Now, that aside, I actually want to give something to those who decide to support me, so, the members of the P atreon will have early access to future chapters. I have also decided to have a stable schedule for updates from now on. So, every 30th of each month a new chapter will be uploaded, BUT for P atreon members, they will get an additional update on the 15th of each month! Chapter 29 is already accessible on P atreon!

If you wish to support me and get early access to the future chapters of this story, here's the link: [p atreon \(dot\) com / zerosenpaiwriter](https://patreon.com/zerosenpaiwriter)

STORY COVER! A talented fellow, Art of Envy (find him on Deviantart) is the artist who realized this beautiful thing, so make

sure to give his works a chance and maybe, if you are interested, commission something from him.

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (Words and stuff. Hope everyone enjoyed the latest season of Overlord.)

Chapter 28: The Night of a Hundred Suns

Otris was a happy man, look at his inn! Full to the brim with men and women having a good time and him cashing in almost what he would make in four months of work just in one night. His wife would be happy for sure.

“C’mon Climby boy! Let’s have a drink!”

A tan skinned woman dragged a younger boy with her to the counter. Otris never saw anyone that young drink before, but he wasn’t one to question paying customers, even more when he was in a good mood like today.

“Edstrom! You know we can’t drink on-“

The boy was interrupted when the woman grabbed a full bottle of grape juice and showed it in the blond boy’s hands, while she took a beer mug for herself.

“I know you can’t drink you idiot! I don’t want to have you puke all over me again or in our bed!”

The woman answered as she slammed a silver coin on the counter. Otris just took the coin without saying anything, after all they didn’t seem related at all, and he surely did not want to know what kind of relationship theirs was.

His was just a mere inn in a village on the countryside, far from the distant cities where powerful men and women were said to have a taste for little boys and girls. He just let the thing go as it was none of his business.

“Hey old man! BRING MORE BEER HERE!”

One of the other customers called out to him. He grumbled at being called old. He was just in his mid-forties after all, far from being an old man, even if his daughter called him that from time to time.

Sighing, he took a few clean mugs and began to fill them once more.

{Ro-Lente’s Castle}

{Renner’s P.O.V.}

“What do you mean, you will not approve the betrothal?!”

The woman who called herself her mother almost cried out as her father pushed back the contract she had laid down for him to sign.

“Mind your tone, my lady. You are still speaking to the king.”

The man in his middle fifties said, an ice-cold look in his eyes as he looked down upon the noblewoman.

The third princess just sat to the side seeming not particularly interested in what was happening, but in truth, she was paying rapt attention to each word the two adults spoke.

It wasn’t hard to see the resentment between the two. One felt tricked and manipulated in a moment of weakness to reach a goal,

while the other felt unrewarded for her efforts into squishing her way into the first one's bed.

The result of that exploiting, trickery and deceit was Renner herself, a child of ambition and sorrow, born of hate and guile. This wasn't the first time she saw them argue since her father exiled her womb lender's family from the capital. She remembered feeling frightened the first time it happened. She didn't understand why this was happening, but with time came wisdom and, in the end, now she saw nothing but cockroaches arguing over breadcrumbs ignoring the wider world. In all other occasions that would have not concerned her but in this case, those were HER breadcrumbs they were arguing about.

"You want me to sign this! This insult to my name!"

Her father spat with a disdain Renner never saw on his face before.

'Did the coup and the current situation force a resurgence of the old man's spirit? He was known as the Iron Prince in his youth for his prowess with a sword, but I thought of those as rumors. Maybe there was some truth behind them after all' she thought in a little bit of amusement at seeing her womb lender taken aback by her father's shift of attitude.

"T-the Montserrat are a noble family from the foundation of the Kingdom."

She tried to salvage her point, but only managed to make her father scoff.

"A line with some skilled general on one generation and an utter fool the other! A baron and a third son! Do you have any IDEA what the court would think of THIS! A THIRD PRINCESS AND A THIRD

SON OF A BARON! WE WOULD BE THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THE CONTINENT!”

Her father roared in the noblewoman’s face who seemed to retreat like a scolded dog.

“Now get out of here. I’ve had enough of your foolishness for today.”

The king said as he calmed down and returned to his usual lethargic mood. The woman just left the room without uttering another word.

Silence descended in the room once more only to be interrupted by a coughing fit of the king who seemed frailer than ever before.

‘The golden age is dead and gone it seems’ the princess silently evaluated before rising from her seat.

“Renner.”

Her father called her name stopping her from leaving.

“Yes, father?”

Her voice was calm and collected, a far cry from the satisfied glee she felt inside at her womb lender’s dismissal.

“What do you wish to accomplish with this? You are no ordinary child... of that I am aware. You are far too cunning for your age, and you accomplish things many would be unable to with seemingly little effort.”

The king’s tone was devoid of any emotion as if that would somehow intimidate her, as if she didn’t expect that question already or even prompted for it in the first place.

'You all are so predictable... such short-minded fools who can't see deception if it slapped them in the face'

The disappointment didn't last long as that incompetence was the reason she was allowed to do as she pleased to begin with.

"Father, I do not understand why you are bringing this up now. I only wish to secure our family's position and to not get killed in the process."

She said nonchalantly as if she was speaking of the weather, but her father's gaze didn't relent.

"You could have escaped, away from the kingdom. Maybe even get a primal position into the empire with the friendship you have created there."

The man said, sending the conversation into a direction Renner didn't expect. She was waiting for the old man to be concerned over their position and push all the burden onto her shoulders but instead it seemed like some fire was still in him.

"What are you aiming for Renner? It is clear to me you do not care for many. You don't have any bonds with your siblings, nobles are not concerned with a third daughter, and you pushed away every other person in your life."

'So, he was looking from time to time. He wasn't completely oblivious to everything'

She glanced at him, but his words served only to anger her further.

'And yet... he did nothing...'

The realization almost brought a grimace on her face.

“There is only one reason behind my actions. Satoru.”

That admission said aloud seemed to be liberatory, as if a huge weight was lifted from her chest, and this was probably the only truthful thing she ever said to her father.

“Is that so?”

He said, but Renner was done with this. She was furious with herself for letting those words slip from her tongue.

“Even if you know what is to be of him.”

And that was the last straw, a truth she wanted to ignore for as long as possible. Without saying another word, she opened the door and slammed it behind her with all the strength her young body possessed.

‘I will sooner burn this world down than let Satoru be someone else’s!’

She clenched her tiny fists. She looked out of her window and saw the night sky burn with the power of a hundred suns and then everything went black.

...

She woke up sweating profusely, the details of the dream still fresh in her mind. She herself was unsure of how her mind came up with that alternative version of her conversation with her father today.

She calmed down trying to separate her dream from reality. She didn’t reveal anything. She didn’t mess up. She was just the loyal daughter, the princess concerned for her country.

She was still Renner the Third Princess, but maybe, just maybe there was a reason why her mind showed her this. Maybe she didn't want to be the Third Princess anymore. Maybe she just wanted to be Renner.

Her gaze went to her window. If she looked closely, she could almost see the faint lights coming from the horizon, as if a hundred suns were rising at the same time.

'Let the flames of our passion burn even brighter. This is only the beginning of the inferno, which is to come. Isn't that right, my Satoru?'

{Edstrom's P.O.V.}

The black cloak was awful, heavy and uncomfortable, not to say useless altogether for someone like her. With her darker skin, she would have blended in with the dark night just fine. They even waited for the new moon so that they could act unseen and unnoticed until it was too late.

Their group was the one designated to jump over the walls while the other two groups distracted the guards at the main gate.

They just made it at the bottom of the wall when a couple of explosions could be heard going off in the distance, that seemed just right. Using their [Fly] scrolls the group easily passed over the wall and entered the mansion from one of the windows.

"Now maggots! We received clear orders from the boss. Kill all who stand in your way. Cut off the head of every noble you find. You can't miss them. They all have a whole tree stuck up their ass! Every child below the age of 10 is to be taken, if possible. If they resist or prove to be a liability just stick a knife through their ribs and be done with it!"

He instructed for the 10th time that day, making Edstrom's eyes roll in exasperation.

“Show this filth why the Black Hand is the most feared among all! Now go!”

Immediately, the group scattered into smaller units, everyone going in a different direction. It wasn't long before they met someone. A maid running through the corridor in the opposite direction. As soon as her gaze met their group, she fell backwards in a fetal position as if to protect herself from the incoming attacks. They passed her without a care in the world. After all, this wasn't their target.

Marcel, the older man currently leading their squad, pulled out a knife and pointed it between the maid's eyes.

“Where are the living quarters of your master, bitch?”

He said hurriedly.

“D-down the h-hall! O-on the l-left! P-please don't kill me!”

She cried out in fear as Marcel proceeded over her.

“You heard the cunt! Move your asses!”

The group moved forward as one single entity with multiple limbs. As instructed, they turned left and found themselves in front of a platoon of guards, not that they didn't expect such protection for a high-ranking noble such as this.

They were clearly outnumbered 3 to 1 but that was all worthless in the face of the hard reality. Quality beats quantity. They took out of their long cloaks their scrolls after receiving the command from marcel.

The five 3rd tier lightning spells impacted the wall of metal, reducing the men behind it to a melted mess of skin and steel. Not expecting their vanguard to fall in a few instants, the remaining men couldn't do much apart from standing there to be killed by the five of them.

Now free to advance, they found themselves in front of two well decorated doors.

“Coll, Robar, with me... you two take care of the other one.”

Marcel instructed the other two men to follow him towards the door on the right, leaving her with Climb to deal with whoever inhabited the other room.

Apparently, the noises and news of the attack on the front gate didn't reach this part of the mansion yet as she could hear no sound coming from the door in front of her.

With the lightest tap possible, she began to open said door, revealing a dark but lavishly decorated room. The most noticeable thing was the large bed with red velvet sheets in the middle of the room, a single figure sleeping angelically in it.

Making sure to reduce her noises as much as possible, Edstrom advanced toward the bed, one of her scimitars ready in her left hand.

They were ordered to take the brats, but she had to confirm this one was one of those she was supposed to take prisoners. The blond locks fell over her beautiful young face as she continued to sleep.

Next to her, Climb looked down at the young girl with an unreadable expression, even if he seemed tense.

'Boys will be boys I guess...' she couldn't help but muse in her mind.

To her surprise, she had to stop her young companion as soon as he took out his enchanted dagger from under his robe. She shook her head to stop him from plunging his blade into the girl's chest. It took a few instants for him to comply.

'What the hell is wrong with him today? I thought he liked the little girl... is this what a murder crush is supposed to be?' but maybe this wasn't the best moment to ponder what went through the young boy's head.

With a mental sigh, she moved to take hold of the girl. She gently lifted her, but something was wrong. She was far heavier than what she expected. As the body left the sheets, she noticed that the body under the cover was far bigger than she expected. This was no girl, but a young woman at best. Could she have been deceived by the dark? No, that was absurd! She could never have made such a big mistake in judgement. To give such an effect, the woman should have curled up her body to its limits... but if that was the case, that meant... Edstrom had no time to finish her thought as a pair of scissors were already aimed at her neck.

She let the now revealed young woman fall but not before she was able to inflict a cut on the left side of her throat which immediately started to bleed profusely.

Edstrom stumbled back with a hand over her newly inflicted cut, not deep enough to make her choke on her own blood, but too near to that level for her own comfort.

The young blond woman didn't lose her momentum and like a cat tried to jump her again only for a black and golden bolt to slam into her side and make her fall miserably on the hard floor as the boy

now standing over her brought down his knife without any mercy, stabbing the noble's throat over and over even after the girl's hands stopped moving.

“This is for Rina! You bitch!”

He said glaring at the corpse beneath him before kicking its face. Due to its torn apart throat, the kick was powerful enough to separate the head from the rest of the body.

In the meantime, Edstrom already bandaged up her cut making sure it would not get infected. ‘Fucking bitch almost cut me open there... you got a good eye boy...’ she thought as only now she understood the previous uneasiness of her companion.

“How did you know?”

She asked as she tested if everything was right with her voice as well. Climb glanced at her as his face shifted from anger to concern.

“Are you alright?”

He asked back, clear worry in his tone, making him utterly adorable in her eyes.

“Of course. It will take more than a pretty face to put me down boy. You should know it by now... but really, how did you know?”

She asked again. The boy blushed a little.

“S-she looked different, far too rigid... as if she wasn't sleeping at all. Her forehead and cheek muscles were totally tense.”

He said, surprising the silver haired woman who didn't expect such a level of attention from the child before her. ‘It seems like he is

recovering from that event' she thought to herself before deciding to mess with the boy.

“So, you are experienced in watching girls sleep?”

The boy's blush became a flaming inferno all over his face.

“I-I just w-watched Rina a c-couple of t-times!”

He admitted, stuttering every word, surprising Edstrom who didn't actually expect him to say that.

“You are a little pervert, aren't you Climby boy?”

She said smirking.

“AM NOT!”

The blond boy protested vehemently.

She had to admit she rather liked this part of him. Since the whole plaza fiasco, he became detached, always brooding and even talking to himself from time to time. Fortunately, these were sparse moments that happened when he was particularly pressured or tense. The rest of the time, he was still his own little thing who got flustered too easy for her to not do it.

“Are you done shouting boy?”

Asked Marcel who just entered the room, a severed head in each hand.

“Good thing you are done.”

He added while glancing at the head of the girl, barely a woman, lying not too far from them.

“I see you got jumped Edstrom.”

Taunted Coll as he pressed a fresh cloth on the cut to his leg he apparently received not long ago.

“You’re one to talk Coll.”

She shot back with a shrug of her shoulders which actually caused more pain to her open wound.

“Well, if you are so eager to make it a competition, we could go back and check out which of our wounds is worse in a more private environment.”

He smirked at her.

“Maybe in your dreams. Why don’t you instead go to the baths and do it yourself.”

She said, returning the smirk.

“It’s a lost cause, Coll. She is more interested in that boy than you.”

Robar interjected; Edstrom didn’t have to turn around to know that Climb was probably one step from passing out.

“Enough chitchat. Get out of here so we can turn this place into a graveyard of ashes.”

Ordered Marcel, returning the situation to a more somber tone.

{Arwintar}

{Jircniv’s P.O.V.}

The emperor of the Baharuth Empire was troubled. No, troubled would not be the right word. Spiteful would be the more honest term to use in this case.

Everything went according to plan. The false documents fabricated gave him legitimacy in eradicating every noble opposing him. Once the army moved the nobility could do nothing but watch as they fell like gutted lambs.

‘In the end, all your title, names and lineages, all worthless before raw power. Where is your might now? Where is your right to question me? Where is that supposed power you all spoke of?’ he asked no one in the dead of night.

Of course, replacements were already being put in place even if that would cause a certain instability for the months to come. Still a worthy endeavor, nonetheless.

So why did he feel so irked? Why did he feel like this whole victory didn’t belong to him? The answer was easy. Really, he knew the answer, no matter how petty it was.

He was simply not the one in charge of the plan, and that, no matter how petty it was, irked him to no end.

‘That devil managed to transform my moment of glory into her own little game of power’ that reality made him want to vomit.

He was the Emperor, a far greater position than third princess, and still he was the one taking orders here.

‘How could this come to be?’

That was a question that tormented him since the devil left the capital. How could he, the great emperor, be pushed around like a stable boy?

And, unfortunately for him, the answer was as simple as it was terrifying. The blond devil planned everything. Every step, every event was manipulated so that he was forced into this position of instability in his own heart of power. The battle was lost before he even first met the enemy. That was a hard but undeniable truth he came to understand in the weeks after said events transpired.

He could have done nothing to stop it and every step he took to counter her served to just enhance the perfect scheme revolving around him.

And the worst thing was... he couldn't even complain with a clean conscience. After all, her plan allowed him to do whatever he wanted without worrying about eventual attacks from the kingdom.

But as an old saying goes, the snake will lie there and let the mighty lion think they won until it was the time to strike back and inject the lion with the fatal venom of their downfall.

The devil was a cunning opponent, but he would not give up, for he was the greatest emperor the empire will ever see.

His eyes fixed on the dark horizon imagining it burn with the flames of conquest he will engulf the continent in once the time was right.

{Boullope's mansion}

{Mato's P.O.V.}

In all his life Mato never thought he would be looking at one of the Six Great Noble's estates getting assaulted, even less if it was an assault led by him. As one of the many men working under Zero, he never thought he would rise much into Eight Fingers as he was one who tended to try and deescalate conflicts when possible, instead of using his brutal strength to solve every issue.

Of course, he wasn't a hypocrite. He was a big boy after all. Everyone told him that since he was six, but in all his life he found himself leaning as much as possible towards diplomacy while using his fists when the right time came.

He wasn't the strongest of the bunch, but he was respected, even among Eight Fingers. That was the exact reason why he now was leading the security department, recently nicknamed the Black Hand. Many of his former colleagues teased him saying it was due to his black hair, something that rather annoyed him.

Brushing that thought aside, now he had bigger fish to fry. The assault didn't go as well as expected, he really didn't think the marquis would hire Workers from the empire as a personal guard. It was quite a smart move.

First, it would be hard to track their traces, and most would not expect them. Second, they were quite expendable. After all, dead men will not have to be paid. By the same logic, someone would think that they wouldn't be loyal but when a dog is pushed into a corner, it will bite no matter who the master is. And third, and most important, they were powerful, a trump card that could reverse the result of a battle.

And that was exactly what was happening right now.

He did not underestimate the marquis. He sent 300 men armed to the teeth against the walls of the marquis' fortress, and everything seemed to go fine at first. They even managed to conquer the gate and enter the plaza. Then all went to shit once the damned Workers arrived.

They blasted his men apart with magic and martial arts. Workers were trained war machines. It was no surprise his men would fall, but to his pleasant surprise his men didn't lose themselves and scatter around. No, they instead created a wall of shield to withstand the incoming spells as well as they could. The warriors couldn't use their martial arts to break through their line as that would mean being surrounded by enemies by all sides.

But even with that, the situation was dire. He already lost a third of his men, and from his current position on the walls he could see his troops falling minute after minute.

The courtyard they were currently fighting in was claustrophobic, a sole entrance and exit with a corridor like shape. The perfect place for a defensive position and to avoid being encircled but also a deathtrap if used in the right way.

“Go tell the men to retreat. Let the first line launch another assault and push the enemy into a corner.”

His subordinate and former partner Kurz looked at him, his green eyes as wide as plates.

“Mato, this is a suicidal move. They are going to push them back, but they are going to get slaughtered by the counter offense!”

He protested.

“They will not have the chance to counterattack.”

The black haired bulky man answered as he gestured for the fifty men standing on the walls with him to take out the heavy artillery.

“We will take care of their families, but we are not allowed to fail here.”

There were no more words to be shared as the blond man grimaced and then proceeded to jump down to relay his orders.

‘You are a changed man, Kurz. As you are now, you are not fit to lead... I, on the other hand, will damn my soul to hell for all eternity for this’

A drop of guilt slipped into him. He despised to have to do this, but he will do anything for Seven Hands to remain standing.

After his family died when he was younger, he never thought he would feel like belonging anywhere else. The period with Eight Fingers was just surviving, but once Seven Hands came to be, everything changed for him.

He was assigned his own team and subordinate. The responsibility was just an inconvenience at first, but just in a few months he felt like he was being part of something again.

He joked, he argued and laughed with all regardless of the ranks. He saw former killers settle down and start a family. He saw thieves and murderers start anew. And when he understood that he felt part of it all, it was far too late to do anything about it.

What Seven Hands became in his vision was a haven, a safe place for all those who sought to exist in a world that continuously pushed them down. And for that dream, he would do anything.

The majority of his forces retreated while the first line rushed forward as he ordered. The Workers didn't seem to expect this as they were pushed all the way to the other side of the courtyard, amassed in one place. 'Like rats in a barrel' he thought 'but you will not have time to bite back' and with that he gestured for the men on the wall to proceed.

Many were hesitating to follow his order. To be the cause of death of the companions they laughed and joked with, but that hesitation he would not stand for.

“MEN! YOUR COMRADES HAVE OFFERED THEIR LIVES FOR THE CAUSE OF EXTERMINATING THE FILTHY AND CORRUPT! THEY HAVE SHOWN YOU THEIR RESOLVE! NOW YOU MUST SHOW THEM YOURS! LET THOSE BASTARDS BURN IN HELL!”

His loud and powerful voice rang across the walls as his subordinates activated their scrolls and a rain of fireballs descended upon both their comrades and the Workers.

An explosion resembling a thousand thunders made the whole wall shake as smoke filled the courtyard. The result of their assault didn't let them wait as what remained of the Workers was little more than piles of smoking ashes.

With a heavy heart he continued to push forward.

“ALL REMAINING MEN! ADVANCE! BRING ME THOSE SWINES' HEADS ON A SILVER PLATE!”

The remaining hundred men charged forward with raging cries of war.

“I bet those nobles are shitting themselves by now.”

Kurz said as he jumped back on the wall, his unruly blond hair flowing around now that they were untied.

“I bet they are...”

Mato sighed as screams from servants and other staff echoed through the estate turned fortress.

“Mato, we have known each other for more than 10 years now...”

Kurz began as Mato stayed silent, waiting for what his friend had to say.

“I will not question your methods, nor will I protest with sacrifices, but if you ever send me towards my death... I want your word you will take care of Jen and Gem.”

The green-eyed man around his thirties said in a serious and low tone so that only he could hear him under the rumble of the charging men.

“Kurz, five years ago I saw you piss on a corpse out of spite for him managing to cut you.”

The statement was enough for the blond man to lower his head, in shame or guilt Mato could not say.

“I am a changed man. Since I met Jen and my little Gem was born, I will gladly offer my life for them or to erase the memory of what I was before, but I need your promise... promise me that you will take care of them, and I will go to hell and back if you say so.”

The two men met each other eyes, resolute green meeting hard ice blue, and even if it was only a second the stare seemed to last an eternity for the two of them.

“I promise, they will be cared for.”

The bulky man swore. After all, Kurz won't be the only one being taken care of. In each of those men's contracts it was stated that in case of death during duty, their families will be offered works by Seven Hands, and if they were too young, Seven Hands will sustain them until they reached a certain age.

Hilma called it insurance policy, an unfamiliar term, but a welcome concept as most men were ready to die on duty. Mato had no doubt that the suicidal operation he orchestrated would not have come to be if not for that reason.

Of course, men didn't wish to die, but in the raging battle the knowledge of their loved ones being taken care of was a huge deterrent against insubordination, revolts, or straight up defect.

With a shake of his head, -he returned to reality. He would have time to ponder on Hilma's methods later, as of now he had a couple of heads to recover and a mansion to put to the torch.

{The Sorcerer Shop}

{Hilma's P.O.V.}

To say the undead was troubled would be an understatement. Hilma could not read his facial expression of course, due to it not existing in the first place, but the gloomy atmosphere surrounding him was unmistakable.

The thought of what would transpire this night and what was probably already happening should have depicted him as a power-hungry, sadistic and ruthless individual, but that could not be farther from the truth. Satoru was still the most caring person she had ever met. The countless lives he took responsibility for and

bettered spoke for themselves, and even now he diverged the original plan so to spare from the princess' plans many innocents who had no fault.

And yet, all that the common men will see is a ruthless executioner and a person to fear instead of admire. That was exactly why she wanted to stay by his side and support him no matter what.

“Tell me Hilma, what did I do for this all to happen?”

The words were cold and hard coming from Satoru's mouth, but the anguish and exasperation weren't lost by Hilma.

‘You chose to encourage a sick princess into doing this’

That would be the easy answer, but that would also be the unfair one. Satoru hardly understood the human's heart. He was oblivious to many subterfuges not to say that he was stupid... no, he was very cunning and ruthless in many fields of life but some human interactions and the meaning behind them were totally lost on him. Maybe that just was his limit as an undead or maybe he wasn't used to human interaction on that deep of a level.

Whatever the case, the fact remained that they both were exhausted from the whole ordeal. She herself didn't have a tranquil sleep in the last month since the princess announced her intentions.

“This isn't your fault Satoru. There are things that even your might can't accomplish or stop from happening... maybe different choices would have allowed you a more comfortable existence, and yet, so many others would have suffered without you... children would still be starving in the streets, adventurers would still be dying like flies, magic would still be despised without proper

reason, and I... I would still be a husk of the person I could have been.”

Those words came straight from her heart. The emotions she felt and never managed to give form to, flowed out of her mouth in an endless river. And she was convinced of it all.

“Your choices may have brought much suffering and yet, they also brought so much joy to countless others... you should really see both sides, and don’t beat yourself up over only one of the two.”

She sat next to the giant man, no, the giant undead and placed one of her delicate hands on his giant gloved one. She was unsure if undead considered that a sign of comfort or if the heat of her hand was causing him discomfort instead, but she still lightly closed the grip around his fingers, the only part of his huge hand she could wrap her hand around.

The metal was cold, and she felt a chill go down her spine. She had never been so close to him before... no, that wasn’t exactly true. She had been that close before when she tried to poison him. A humorous thought right now as that would have been the most useless type of attack against him.

“You don’t understand Hilma, this is my fault. I got into this mess because I was too focused on my own business and not on the whole picture, and now I find myself wrapped in this political mess...”

The undead continued. Hilma could swear she almost heard a sigh, even if that wouldn’t be physically possible considering his body. It pained the young woman to see her savior so utterly down casted, but she really had no idea on what to do. If he was a man of flesh

and blood, she still could have done something but alas, fortunately and unfortunately at the same time, he was not.

“I am sure you know already; the princess is not who she claims to be at court. There is far more to it than a little fragile thing.”

She dared not to say more, for she was aware that Satoru knew of the princess' nature and what she would bring down upon them all, and yet, he persisted in associating with her... and indulging her... and Hilma just couldn't understand why.

There was really no reason for him to do so. All she accomplished could only be achieved by using his power to do so. Sure, she had a brilliant mind, there was no doubt about it, but still a brilliant mind was nothing without the power to apply change into the world.

“Why do you keep indulging her? Why do you believe in her so much? What's in her that you seem to see only in her and no one else?”

She vocalized her thoughts into words as she didn't see a reason to not ask such questions in the first place.

The undead just looked at her for the first time in that whole conversation. His red dots seeming to pierce her very soul as he freed his hand from hers and placed it on her shoulders, giving her goosebumps due to its coldness.

“Hilma... I asked myself that same question enough times already... and yet, all that comes to mind are her own words... of how the world was dull and grey before she met me, of how little she valued her own existence and that of those around her... it is so very familiar. The hate, the lack of a reason to go on, I have

experienced it all... then I found some joy, a reason, the friends I met by accident in a world without meaning.”

The words of the undead were hypnotizing. She almost never heard him speak of his past before. The only times he did so was to compare something he wanted to implement in Seven Hands to his previous experience, but nothing remotely this personal.

“I found a reason to be. A reason to go on and return. All those friends with their dreams and goals inspired me to have something myself... they saved me from my probable demise more times than I thought possible. We laughed, we cried, we fought together... but the dream could not last and one by one they all disappeared...”

The desolation in his words hit Hilma the hardest. She never heard Satoru put such emotions in his words before. There was a mild joy in them, but it was clearly drowned by what she judged to be resignation.

“Tell me Hilma, knowing this pain as well as I do... how could I deny a child the same possibility I was given? To abandon her to her loneliness in a meaningless world? Could I even face my friends again, when the time comes, if I did so? To face their disappointment and disgust at me?”

Hilma didn't respond. She could not say much to begin with. She as well lived a life most similar to what Satoru described, but at least she had a goal, survival above all. But maybe that was just her human nature speaking. Maybe other races, like undead, didn't have the same drive to survival as she did. And yet, the princess was human, a human lacking a reason to live, continuing to exist because it was too much of a bother to do otherwise. In short, a being without any morals or faith in humanity.

“But even with all this... I think there is still more, a certain... fondness to that little girl. A fondness that will not let me leave her... or maybe those are just the ramblings of a fool who does not understand human life at all. After all... I am undead.”

Hilma looked away. She almost felt like she was hearing something she wasn't supposed to, experiencing such a different way of seeing life even if still so inherently human. She could not help but wonder, who was Satoru before coming here?

Her gaze flew to the sky above, clearly visible from the window, a moonless sky only illuminated by distant stars, all burning brightly like a hundred suns.

{Raeven's mansion}

{Raeven's P.O.V.}

The marquis felt like yawning as this night didn't seem to want to come to an end. He glared down at his paperwork. Being one of the Six Great Nobles was no easy task if one took the position seriously. He could no longer count the sleepless nights of this last two weeks.

He was too preoccupied with his own territory. The south-western part of the kingdom wasn't usually this active. He now had to deal with peasant protest and general public disorder. He really had no idea how this came to be. The problems went from actual concerns to anything possible.

He now had a whole village refusing to pay taxes because rain was scarce this season! Rain was SCARCE! As if that was HIS problem! He really didn't know where to start complaining now. And for some reason he was sure this was no random occurrence.

He had no proof of course but strangely this all started happening when he started poking the metaphorical wasps' nest too hard.

This was certainly a nuisance. His territory thrived primarily on commerce by sea with the Holy Kingdom and even the Arlgrand Council State from time to time. These protests were hindering his endeavors in advancing this aspect.

He could send his guards, sure, but to what end? Antagonizing his subject even more and risk full out revolt? No thank you very much! That was what a braindead count would do just to show how big his pole was and paying by having his people push a pole down his throat.

The protests were generally peaceful for now and he certainly didn't want to escalate things. The only thing he didn't need right now was the court looking at him like an incompetent noble with a rebellion in his hands.

'Once I get to the bottom of this, there will be hell to pay' he swore as he continued to work deep into the night, only being interrupted when, a couple hours later, a servant entered bringing him some Empire imported tea. It was far more delicate and lighter than the qualities you could find in Re-Estize and it already helped him go through far too many sleepless nights.

He immediately savored it like a man dying of thirst in a desert. Coffee would have been a better source of energy, but he could not stand the bitterness.

He felt the warm, almost incandescent, fluid flow down his throat but, at the same time, he could not shake away the sensation of a gelid feeling crawling up his spine. The servant left his room without another word and as the door clicked behind the maid the

Marquis felt a sharp object being placed on his jugular. His pen stopped writing as his whole body went into overdrive, tensing every last muscle in his body.

“I would suggest to not try to move or scream... if you value your life.”

A low, feminine voice whispered in his ear. Raeven didn't dare to even turn around to face whoever was speaking to him.

“Dear Marquis, you have been a nuisance as of late, always poking your nose where it didn't belong... it was only natural for us to respond in kind.”

The voice continued, sultry and amused at the same time.

“S-seven H-hands.”

Just whispering that name made the sharp object cut his skin lightly, not enough to draw blood or cause any scarring.

“Uhm, you overestimate yourself Marquis. The one operating in your territory is merely us, the Black Hand... did you ever hear the tale? Of the necromancer Hashimar and his acolytes; how they worshipped death as a merciful and equal god? Of how death bestowed him with a hand made out of blackness itself? And how just merely being touched by it would cause instant death, no matter who or what it was?... if not, you should read more tales, in particular the ones commoners use to read to their children.”

The taunt was not met by Raeven who certainly didn't wish for the knife or whatever it was to cut any deeper into his throat.

“No reaction, eh? You are indeed a smart one... many nobles already lost their life due to their long tongues and pride.”

The voice continued; the Marquis didn't move as he waited for the point of this to be revealed.

“If Seven Hands truly came down upon you with all their might, your territory would be nothing more than a scorched plain of ashes by now.”

The woman continued as she caressed his shoulder with her free hand.

“But enough chitchat, we just came here for two things... first, to introduce ourselves to such an esteemed member of the court... and second...”

The woman paused as the knife gently caressed his throat.

“To let you know that we will not tolerate any more of your shitheads coming to gather info on us, and next time... it will be your head we will cut off.”

She said as he heard screams come from outside his slightly opened windows.

“Seems like time is up... enjoy your sleep my lord.”

She said in a mocking tone as in an instant the knife was gone from his throat, and he had just enough time to turn and see a figure jump out of his window before his door busted open.

“MY LORD! The stables caught on fire! And the armory too!”

The captain of his elite guards cried out. ‘Those are on the north side’ he thought as he inspected his throat to see if there were any cuts.

“I sent all available men to extinguish the flames!”

Raeven's eyes widened as he slammed a fist on his desk in rage.

"YOU FOOL! Someone just attempted on my life! They are escaping through the south gate!"

His guard captain seemed to be taken aback by his outburst.

"GO! What the hell are you waiting for!"

The noble roared standing up.

"B-but the fire!"

The man tried to protest only to be interrupted when Raeven slammed his fist on the desk again.

"Let the servant deal with it! CAPTURE THOSE ASSASSINS!"

The man jumped as he never heard his lord scream so much before.

"YES! At once my lord!"

He said as he ran away.

Raeven let out a raspy breath as he fell back on his chair totally exhausted as the adrenaline of the moment slowly left his body. 'This is not over yet... you will see... the crown... shall be mine!' his eyes wandered out of his window, the same window his would be assassin jumped out of.

Even while he sat there, he could see the stables burning in the distance, the all-devouring fire consuming wood, beasts, men and dreams all the same, fueling his flames with them and burning ever brighter. But no fire could compare to the one inside the noble

Marquis' heart, for it was a fire born of pride, greed and resentment, burning with the intensity of a hundred suns.

A.N.

And here it is, the turning point of the kingdom. I can't wait to see what you all think about it. Let me know in a review.

Also, yes, an operation of such scale as this would normally be impossible but the thing is, Seven Hands are pretty overpowered with all of Satoru's magic items and their numbers in general. Take into account that those nobles weren't even expecting an attack to begin with since, really, most of them did nothing to provoke it and the few responsible for the Coup were those attacked by the biggest numbers. Judging by my research, castles, while not in war period, were usually guarded by 50/100 soldiers which aren't really that big of a number. Even more so if they were distracted by a diversion during the whole thing. So yeah, easy picking for Seven Hands there. Well, this is just me rambling about stuff here so I will just stop.

And, if you don't want to wait for the next chapter, feel free to join the P atreon! Next chapter is already available there! Thank you all for your support!

See you next time! Stay safe!