

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

Status/written text

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Another intermission before we reach the next arc. Let's just take a small pause and enjoy the other side characters for a little! I remind you that "TWTS: Shards of the New World" has been updated! AND do not lose the 2nd anniversary special! "The Witch's Dystopian Melody" which can be found on my profile!

That said, have fun and enjoy!

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (Coming from 'The Witch's Dystopian Melody,' this length was a relief. Glad to see the gang returning to their roots.)

Intermission II: Fiends and Maidens

Celicia Veyron considered herself a lucky girl. For the early years of her life, she had known nothing more than misery, even if she didn't know it at the time. What made her realize that was her coming to the nearest city, E-Patel, a trading city on the west of the Re-Estize Kingdom. For most of her life she considered having food on her table everyday as a blessing. Nowadays, she could see how true blessed people lived. Food and clothes were freely given to her alongside a rigorous education, all so she could achieve something later in life utilizing her blessing in this life, her Talent.

It was thanks to this that she caught the eyes of the underground organization known as Seven Hands, an illegal group that managed the darkest side of the Kingdom, even if Celicia didn't consider Seven Hands to be as nefarious as it sounded on paper. On the contrary, she saw mostly normal people working under it. Fathers with families transporting goods, mothers working in the organization's many canteens and inns only usable by members of the organization and even children her age running around and cleaning or doing normal errands. All of them getting paid a fair wage for their work.

It was really strange to see so many normal people working alongside smugglers, assassins and other kinds of people that would be considered lowlives. But, if there was something she understood, that thing was that, at the end of the day, they were just people. People with different skills and ambitions but people nonetheless. No monsters, or at least none she had met. No monsters like the one who came to take her beloved sister away. On that occasion she was saved by her Talent that caused Seven Hands to intervene. Otherwise, she had no idea of what would have happened. That was the day she learned that weakness was a sin, for only the strong were allowed to do what they wanted in this world. Seven Hands showed her the truth that day. With just a few words they sent the monster running away, and that was because they were feared as a ruthless organization. And yet, they did not lose themselves to their own reputation as she was shown by the treatment she received alongside many others.

She had no doubt that the only thing of worth they saw in her was her Talent but that was only fair. They clearly said they had no time for charity, and the lazy and worthless would be discarded. That was why she worked hard these past months. She will not be

discarded, and she will not be weak anymore. For her family's future, she will do her best for them all.

Her thoughts were interrupted when a plate was loudly slammed in front of the seat opposite to her, making her almost jump in surprise as a boy, a pair of years older than her, sat in front of her, his ice-cold blue eyes piercing her as soon as she dared to meet them. So entranced she was by the boy that she almost didn't notice the silver haired and tan skinned beauty that sat next to him a few moments later.

"Now, now Climby boy, don't go around scaring little girls, will you?"

The older girl said as she wrapped her right arm around the boy eliciting a grunt from him.

"Sorry, sorry, your arm is still sensitive..."

The woman continued apologetically.

"Hey there, mind if we seat here? These were the only free seats."

The silver haired woman asked, directly speaking to Celicia this time.

"N-No problem."

She stuttered, intimidated by the boy's gaze, a gaze she recognized from when her teachers got pissed but far worst. 'Is this what a murderous gaze looks like?' she wondered in no small part guided by her fear.

"Oi! I told you to stop that!"

The girl said while slapping the back of the boy's head causing him to shift his gaze toward her.

"Sorry about him. He has been like this since 3 days ago. Name's Edstrom by the way, and this idiot here is Climb."

The girl said as she ruffled the boy's hair.

"Stop that!"

Finally, the boy spoke in a low but hard tone while pushing Edstrom's hand away with a blush on his face.

"Oh, you are still able to speak, that's a relief."

The woman mocked.

"Fuck you..."

Shot back the boy.

"Anytime you want, you just need to ask."

The silver haired beauty continued, causing the boy's blush to intensify and a new one to appear on Celicia's face. She was no innocent girl anymore. Constantly being around older men and women made it hard to not get the details of what truly happened between the sexes when they got intimate. And, while Celicia never did anything, she was pretty certain she had all the information needed to perform the act, and even some more extra details.

"Stop joking around. We are not here for stupid games. We have a mission!"

The boy almost cried out as the woman took on a serious expression herself.

"I know that."

She said in a deadly serious tone. It seemed like she was another person all of a sudden, her eyes sharpened and her jaw clenched.

"You are not the only one with a grudge boy."

Edstrom said with a dangerous tone.

"For Rina and Cris..."

The blond boy mumbled.

"Speaking of which I visited him before departing. He is still relegated to the recovering area. He still panics every time he is in a room with more than 5 people..."

Celicia began to feel like she was not supposed to be there and listen to this, but it wasn't like she could move or anything. Every other table was already full and she was starting to get curious about what the two in front of her were talking about. It was now clear these two were not from around here and they were sent for a specific reason.

"Is something important going on here?"

She asked, once more grabbing the attention of both boy and woman who just shared a glance.

"It would be better for you to not know anything about this."

The boy said giving her again that bone-chilling stare.

"You should be careful to not ask such open questions like that around here girly. Other people may have a bad reaction to your curiosity. Then again, we should be careful about what and where we talk about this stuff."

The woman said making Celicia realize she never introduced herself. She blushed in embarrassment.

"M-My name is Celicia Veyron!"

She stuttered out.

"Eh? A family name? You must be one of the lucky ones."

The woman said as if it was a normal conclusion to her introduction, confusing Celicia. Seeing her perplexed expression, the silver haired beauty elaborated.

"Most of the people working here are former street rats whose only goal in life was to find something to eat every day, and whose only future was to either be imprisoned or find a bitter end when they tried to rob the wrong person... you having a family name means you have grown in some kind of decent environment, probably having a house and a family at least."

Edstrom explained to a dumbfounded Celicia who never thought about such a thing before. Sure, many people just introduced themselves with their first name, but she never thought she would be considered a lucky one in that regard. Fate bestowing a Talent on her seemed much more of a blessing right now.

"Edstrom, it's time. We need to get ready."

Said the boy known as Climb while standing up, an empty plate in his hands.

"Yes, you are right. See you around Celi!"

The older woman saluted before downing her drink and joining the boy.

"I will kill them all."

Those mumbled words from the blond boy were the last thing she heard before they disappeared into the crowd, leaving Celicia alone again.

She was not sure she wanted to know what those two were up to anymore, but one thing was for sure. Those were not the normal people she usually saw working in this area. Something very big seemed to be up.

{Ro-Lente Castle}

{Alysanne's P.O.V.}

The second princess of the Re-Estize Kingdom laid on her bed. It has been almost a month since her father disclosed his intentions for her future, and while she may seem calmer, her heart still cried in agony, rage and despair at her father's betrayal. How could he not see what his actions would represent? It would be like spitting in the nobles' faces to marry her to a commoner, no matter how rich and influential. In the Re-Estize Kingdom, lineage was far more valuable than wealth or power. She always thought her future would be to marry someone like Lord Erik, heir to the noble Marquis Blumrush, one of the founding families of the kingdom, an all-time supporter of the Royal Faction. It would be only normal to marry such a man into the royal line, not counting how dashing and gallant the young knight was.

She sighed dreamily at the thought of that noble, strong knight marrying her and living happily ever after. But, apparently, such a thing was not to be. She would instead marry a fat magic caster who was said to never show his face, a commoner who came to the kingdom not even 2 years before. What could have possibly possessed her father in doing such a choice? She always considered herself as his favorite child, in no small part due to her resemblance to her mother, her father's beloved wife.

But, alas, such a thing was no longer important. She will do her duty, willingly or not. Such was her fate as a second princess who had no say in political matters and without any support due to her lack of a decent claim to the throne.

She looked down at her body. Her perfect body she always cherished for her future husband. It all seemed like wasted time now. All those ice cold baths to make sure her skin would remain as soft as possible, all the various imported products to make her hair silky and her face smooth without any imperfections.

She stood up and immediately her handmaidens began to change her clothes for her, a luxury she always took for granted, but something she would probably no longer have once she married. After all, she had made sure to research all she could on her husband.

He was a powerful magic caster, a man always wearing black robes and a black mask, many thought, to hide his ugliness. She certainly hoped that wasn't the case. He was basically the funder of all the magician guilds in the kingdom by now, and even the adventurer guilds bowed to him due to their huge reliance on him for any equipment. He was also one of the heads of the merchant guild, imposing himself as the regulator of all that was concerning the

selling of magical items. All of this combined into a huge economical and even political leeway when it came to the kingdom economy. Even one of the most powerful nobles would be hard pressed in openly defying him. But that was all he had to his name, and the only reason her father was so concerned with acquiring his allegiance.

On the other side, he was but a commoner, inept in the matters of the court, unaware of good etiquette and lacking any lineage to speak of. By the gods, she didn't even manage to acquire his family name! A name she would bear in a few years!

She made sure to pass next to his shop the few times she went outside the castle. She had to admit it was a fine establishment, but he was mad if he thought she would be satisfied with living in such a place. No, she wanted a mansion, a mansion as big as those of the Great Six Nobles at the very least. On this she would not budge, after all he had the money for it. Unfortunately, due to his apparent visit to the Empire, of which she wasn't even aware of, she could not meet the man in person. And maybe that was for the best in hindsight. In the week after her father spoke to her she was in a constant rage and she may have said something she would have come to regret to the man.

The only thing that irked her at the thought of her future husband going to the Empire, was his company. What the hell was he thinking in bringing along her younger sister? That arrogant girl who thought herself better than her elders just because she was just a little better at academic matters? Her father didn't seem to be concerned about it though, not that she could confirm it since she refused to speak to him since he told her of her future. The court, though, didn't concern themselves with hiding their scorn and jabs at her, some even going as far as to say that her husband

fancied the company of children more than the company of a grown woman to her face.

She never felt more humiliated in her whole life, but she would never bow her head to those inferior worms, no matter how low she may fall, she will stand proud against all adversities! That was what she promised to herself. She will stand proud, as a princess of the kingdom.

Her husband may even be a brute without etiquette, but that didn't mean she could not change that, even if a little. May it be a willing change, or one imposed by deception. After all, as his wife, she would be the only woman he brought to his bed, she would make sure of it, and that position would give her all the leeway she needed to manipulate him if needed.

She decided to take a stroll through the gardens to clear her mind and get some fresh air. But apparently that was not meant to be as, halfway there, she came across her elder sister, Carine, first princess of Re-Estize, who didn't waste the occasion to sneer at her, in a far from lady-like manner, in Alysanne's opinion.

"I asked myself what happened to you in the last few weeks. I never saw you so down casted before, but now I understand. Father finally announced publicly your betrothal... ahahahah! You had no idea how much I had to refrain from laughing in that moment, but I guess that was just retribution waiting to come..."

Carine closed the distance between them before her smile dropped, leaving only a hard expression on her stone-cold face.

"Am I not right? Mother-killer."

She whispered in Alysanne's ear, making her shudder in no small amount of fear, not that it was the first time anyone called her

that, but usually they only spoke such a name behind her back or when she could not hear them. No one was so brazen to call her such a thing to her face.

Barbro, Zanak, Carine and her were all children born from good queen Catherine, the only woman her father ever loved, or so the masses said. She died giving birth to Alysanne, and that was enough to gather most of the court's hate on her. After all, her mother was a talented politician who made sure to never allow the Noble Faction too much space to maneuver and always tried to shield her father from any harm. Even her father was said to have never been the same after her death. Before he was a man with a young passion burning inside him, a fierce warrior and protector of his country. After Catherine's death, he fell apart more and more, showing only barely contained disinterest in all royal matters.

To make matters worse, Alysanne wasn't even needed in the first place. The royal family already had a crown prince, a spare and a princess. There was no need for more to be born and yet, she was born, and her mother died for it. A cursed love child. That was all she was in everyone's eyes. It shouldn't have come as a surprise to see how the court regarded her betrothal as a kind of long-awaited retribution.

"I heard that barbaric foreigners like to chain their women to the wall of their basement and use them only to pop out heirs. I wonder if that barbaric magic caster is the same..."

Her older sister glanced at her with malice. Alysanne didn't dare to look up. It would be no good to give her sister reasons to torment her more, even less now that she was married to Marquis Pespea, one of the Six Great Nobles. As she expected, her

unresponsiveness soon bored her sister who just decided to leave her alone and proceed toward wherever she was going before.

The tears started only once she could hear Carine's steps no more.

{The Sorcerer's Shop}

{Hilma's P.O.V.}

"Thank you miss. Your help was immeasurable when it came down to choosing the right equipment for a beginner like me."

Said the man in his thirties to a smiling Hilma. Nowadays, it wasn't strange to see people, young or old, try their luck as adventurers. After all, with the support of Satoru's shops, adventuring was not seen as a death sentence anymore. It, instead, inflamed the passionate youngsters or older men seeking an exciting life, or people who would not stand continuing their parents' lifestyle. This was the case for most of the new faces coming from the countryside where their best option in life was to become a farmer.

Hilma's attentive eye didn't miss the sneaky youngster who went up the stairs without anyone but her noticing. She inwardly sighed. This wasn't the first time such a thing happened.

'But still, he is just too resilient...'. The spy would end up like all the others. A blood stain on the floor she will need to have cleaned up by someone.

The mastermind was good. He used so many middlemen, it was practically impossible to track him down, even more when he had some of those middle men killed to cover up for him.

'It must take a tremendous amount of resources to continue this farce' she thought, but for every lead they followed nothing turned up, but this wasn't important. The fact that the mastermind was so well endowed with resources was just enough to cement his identity in their eyes, confirming once again one of the princess' theories.

'You are smart marquis, but apparently, not smart enough' she lazily gazed at the retreating group of adventurers leaving the shop.

"Rayne, would you be a dear and stay at the counter for a few minutes while I go take care of other things?"

She asked sweetly to the boy currently tidying up the shelves.

"Y-Yes!"

He eagerly answered with a small blush on his face. He started working here a few weeks prior to earn some money. He didn't want his father to have to pay for everything. Magic books didn't come cheap after all, and Satoru didn't seem to have anything against it when she asked him.

She went up the stairs making sure to avoid the blood pool on the top. 'I need to have it cleaned before it starts stinking' she put the thought to the back of her mind for now as she advanced toward her office. As she entered, she was surprised to see Mato standing there. She didn't expect him for another week at least.

"You are early."

She said as she moved for the desk.

"And your guards are as deadly as always."

He retorted, aware that the only reason why he wasn't a blood pool like the young man, was because Hilma instructed the undead not to harm him.

"This is what, the fifth?"

He asked amused.

"Seventh."

She corrected.

"That man does not understand when a lady says no to him."

She added, making the bigger man smirk.

"He doesn't get you like men with bigger bones."

He joked. Hilma didn't lose the hint and choice of words. 'To be so brazen, he must be in good spirits, but that is enough' she sobered her mind.

"Now, what are you here for?"

Seeing her returning to a more serious tone, Mato did the same.

"All the elite squads are in position. We await the order to strike."

He declared, receiving an appreciative hum from his superior.

"How efficient. Now we just need to wait the official order from Him and the assurances of no repercussions from Her."

She mumbled. 'There is no way I'm going to start this madness on my own volition... no matter what that Devil says... Satoru, I truly hope you aren't mistaken on this, or else...' the stress she felt since she received Renner's orders only intensified.

"Ma'am, are you sure that this is the right thing? We are not talking about a count or a priest here, this is-"

Mato stopped as soon as Hilma glanced at him with her hard stare.

"Do not speak those words, not even here. This must remain a secret until the very last moment. We can't risk even the slightest hint getting out or else it could all crumble to dust. We have ensured no repercussion will come down on us if we manage to get this done."

She tried to reassure her subordinate, but the truth was that even she was scared. 'This is the greatest operation Seven Hands, no, even Eight Fingers, ever organized... if we succeed, the entire kingdom's history will be forever altered, for the best or worst is yet to be seen... Satoru, I trust in you, please...' she offered a prayer to her savior and benefactor and his good will.

"If the others hear of this... there will possibly be a rebellion..."

At his words, the temperature in the room dropped. Hilma's eyes hardened and even Mato's stone face went rigid alongside his whole body, clear fear in his eyes, as if an invisible blade was resting on his throat.

"I don't need to remind you of what the cost of betrayal is, do I Mato?"

The blonde beauty said, her words like ice cold drops on his back.

"No, ma'am."

He managed to grunt out under the pressure that now filled the room.

"Well then, now get back to work."

He didn't waste time in trying to leave the room as soon as she dismissed him.

"And Mato."

She stopped him just before he could open the door.

"Send someone to clean up that mess outside."

She ordered, malcontent clear in her tone.

Mato could only nod in response.

A.N.

A little intermission before having the main cast return to the capital, just to break away from the gang just a little and give some insight and hints for the future.

I hope you liked my new interpretation of the royal family. It is quite canon friendly and doesn't really change much apart from adding some details, since it is going to be an important part of the future of this story and the canon description seemed quite bland. (This is not a critic to canon of course, since, in there, the focus of the main plot is very different. There is no need to give much details about all the royal families, but here it's different).

Remember to check out the 2nd anniversary special: The Witch's Dystopian Melody

Stay safe and have a nice day!