

“Normal speech”

‘Thought’

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Welcome again to a new chapter, the great delay in publishing this was due to personal RL reasons, and let this statement be enough. This story is not dead and I have no intention of abandoning it, I still have so much stuff planned out.

Apart from that, I have nothing else to add but a little clarification. My intent in the last chapter wasn't for the readers to feel bad for what happened to Climb's friends. I only wanted for you all to get a grasp on what is happening in his life and how he is changing and why. I say this because I saw people in the reviews say how they didn't really care about those guys (and in fact that wasn't my point as I explained above).

That said, before I leave you to the chapter, I wanted to ask you all a question. I was thinking about writing some stuff around this story (like one shot about side characters or events that didn't affect the story). Of course, I would publish them in another story since I want to dedicate this one solely to the plot. I was thinking about some names like “TWTS: Side Stories” (yeah pretty lame) or “TWTS: Shards of the Continent”.

Let me know what you think about the idea and, if you feel like it, propose a name. Without further ado, enjoy the chapter!

**Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!);
SirWertsalot (Sorry for the excessively late reedit. Let's see
what I've been missing out on!)**

Chapter 19: The Grand Conspiracy (part 3)

The blond beauty sipped her daily cup of tea with great gusto as she enjoyed the silence of the evening and the relaxation that came with a job well done.

It has barely been more than a day since the uprising and the attempted coup, but the city was already returning to its previous peace, even if the tension was palpable down in the streets.

The gorgeous woman put her now empty teacup back on the table as she refilled it once more. All considered, their counterattack went well, considering the short amount of time they had to plan it out.

The King survived with one minor injury. She already heard from her spies how he was immediately treated by priests as soon as he reached the castle. That was relieving news. Who knew what chaos and madness would have befallen the capital if the coup succeeded?

Still, it was a shame how many good men they lost in the attack. They managed to stop the assassins stationed inside the crowd of protesting peasants, but the forces they stationed on the rooftops were overwhelmed and that resulted in the King's injury. The archers should have done a better job since they didn't have a second shot once Seven Hands' agents started shooting fireballs at them.

From there the battle was short lived. The massive use of spells ended up destroying most of the square and in the death of most of the assassins.

At least the only casualties on Seven Hands' part were just cannon fodder. They even managed to capture a couple dozen of the assailant forces. They were now in Cocco Doll's hands. After his recent fuck ups, he needed to show his usefulness once more if he didn't want to be replaced.

Her good mood was only reinforced by the report she just received from Mato. Apparently, he finished the recruiting, and she was delighted to hear how almost every Talent Holder accepted the offered contracts.

In a few years this would give their organization a boost in strength. She doubted that even the united Royal and Noble Factions would be able to stop them by that time.

Those reports, finally, were good news! She even got Satoru's praises for a job well done, something that warmed her heart even further.

So, yeah, Hilma Cygnaeus' life was going very well, and she was ready to reach even further heights alongside her beloved patron.

{Marquis Raeven's P.O.V.}

Of all the things Raeven expected when he reached the capital, a quiet city was not one of them. It was almost unreal how people just went around doing their business mere days after the death of a King and a Prince.

Imagine his stupor when said Prince greeted him at the Royal Palace before bringing him to meet said dead King, who was still very alive.

Of course, all his surprise was contained inside his head, while his face remained an icy mask with a constantly pleasant smile plastered on it.

“Your Majesty, it is a blessing to see you safe and well; second Prince Zanic filled me in on the details of what transpired a few days ago. My word! It is unheard of! To attempt on the life of the Royal Family while your line guided us since the founding of the Re-Estize Kingdom.”

He said while bowing before the throne where the King sat.

“If I had word that the situation was so grave, I would have ridden at night as well to reach the capital sooner.”

He continued in a serious tone.

“Your worry is appreciated Marquis. Even if you weren’t in time, I am sure your troops will be of great help in stabilizing the city during these uncertain times.”

The King said in a clearly tired tone. ‘It seems like his body, while healed, is not so young anymore.’ The Marquis thought, as his cold eyes scanned the King’s form before making their way toward the prominent members of the Royal Faction who offered him no sympathy, but only suspicion and distrust.

‘It was to be expected. This is indeed a major setback; it will take many months, if not years, to earn their favour again... such a pain... but most importantly... who is this new player on the board? And what do they want, I wonder?’ he asked himself.

Even if the King didn’t say anything, he was well aware of the unknown faction that acted immediately to stop the assassination attempt. It surely wasn’t the Royal Faction and most of the Noble

Faction either didn't know about it or didn't have the means nor the interest in interfering.

'There is a wild card here, and if I don't want to risk major damage, I will have to get information on them' he thought as he took his place in the court.

'Who do they serve? The king? Unlikely. They would have emerged years ago otherwise... Znac? But if so, why save the king? It would have been better to use that opportunity to assassinate Barbro and let the king die so that Znac could ascend the throne...' his eyes passed for a moment on the two Royal Princesses present at the moment. 'The eldest is yet to marry; but there is no way for Marquis Pespea would know about the attack... the second is not even betrothed, who would try to make her queen? It would be madness to think to support her! She doesn't have any talent or mind for the court and, even if she had, they would have to kill every other member of the Royal Family first.

As the court continued their senseless discussion his mind was still working itself to exhaustion just to understand what this new faction wanted. 'I may need to lay low for some time. It is not wise to play with a knife in the dark... maybe I should begin to think about a possible bride to gain favour with the Royal Faction...' he continued to analyse his situations for hours to come.

{Renner's P.O.V.}

It all went according to plan; the kingdom was still standing, and her father was still alive. Not that she cared much about that, but she needed her position as Princess for the future. This way she could continue to be a valuable asset for Satoru and help him reach his goal.

A little more than a year ago, she would have just let them all die and be done with it. She would have just disappeared in the chaos to seek something worth her time. But now it was different. Now she had something... someone she wanted to cherish for her whole life.

‘How the mighty have fallen...’ she thought, but instead of bitterness, she felt happiness. Who would have thought that those foolish romantic novels had some sense behind them? ‘No one can control the heart, and no one chooses who they love’ those were words she considered foolish at the time she read them. Now she knew what they meant; she could not stop loving Satoru. No matter what, her heart longed for that affection that only he could provide.

‘A lovesick little girl’ she thought again in more amusement than disdain.

She was aware of her situation. How her love clouded her rational and cold mind with its heat sometimes, but she could not stop it even if she wanted. She lived for years in a worthless cold world, but now the world became worth something, and it held a familiar warmth to it. She knew that the change was due to Satoru coming into her life; like a chance encounter meant to happen. As if it was written into the stars, eons before her own birth.

She giggled as one of her true smiles blossomed on her face; now she truly sounded like some lovesick girl. But what girl wouldn’t love a man like Satoru? Only he could gaze inside her heart and understand her like no other ever did. Her heartbeat began to quicken as her mind wandered into her secret section where she hid her most unspeakable desires.

She slowly and diligently removed and folded her clothes until she was stark naked. She quickly got into her and Lakyus's room's bed and blissfully fell asleep as her mind wandered in all kinds of directions.

{Cocco Doll's P.O.V.}

He fucked up, badly. He was aware of it, as much as he was aware about the consequences of his actions. While not all faults fell on him, he was still responsible for the brothels and the spying division.

For the last few days, he felt constant fear consume him; a fear that at any time an invisible blade would cut his throat and be done with it. Even if he couldn't see it, he was very aware of the chilling sensation his wraith emitted. An aura that affected not only him but all around him, something he quickly learned to use to his advantage.

The chill seemed to intensify over the last few days. He wasn't aware if it was the wraith's, the coming winter's or his own fear's fault; he only knew that it got so bad he could not bring himself to sleep at night anymore.

He has always been a pragmatic man. He had to be to survive inside Eight Fingers. He saw potential in anyone not caring about their lineage or former status. He had a good nose for profits, no matter the amorality of the business. It was for that reason, alongside his good relationship with Hilma, that he managed to adapt so well to the change in the pyramid.

He dares say that things were going even smoother than before the change. He had a very large monthly pay for his job and did not have to worry about the threat on his life as long as he was loyal.

He got relaxed, overconfident, in the last few months. He should have known the risks of some of his latest implementations.

It all crumbled down in a few hours; all his work and ambitions reduced to cinders. And all because some bastards could not control their own ambitions.

Oh, but he would make them pay! Not only for indirectly threatening his life, but also to show how useful he could be to that monster once more.

He spent the last days doing just that; gathering information to know the names of those who were behind this whole thing; and then deliver them to that monster on a silver plate.

As he descended to the deepest dungeons of his estate, he could hear the pained moans of the recent prisoners who were tortured relentlessly to know who sent them.

‘But torture did not break them. This left only two other options available. Either they were trained elite assassins, something he doubted, or someone held hostage something they valued more than their lives... which is something both sides can exploit...’ he summarized in his mind as he tried to shake off his tiredness.

“Open the cell.”

He ordered to one of the masked torturers who stood guard before one of the steel reinforced doors that led to the torture chamber.

Said guard didn’t say anything and only obeyed, probably already sensing his impatience and, probably, the chill emanated from the invisible undead.

The cell was mostly empty with only a few magical candles giving off just enough light for him to identify six figures bound to the icy stone wall by metallic shackles.

They were stripped naked and most of their bodies have been brutalized, as if rabid dogs were let loose on them. But to a more adept eye, it was very notable how all the vital areas were carefully avoided while the sensitive ones were the most ravaged.

“Good evening scum.”

He began with an emotionless tone that managed to attract the attention of the six tied men.

“I am not here to torture you, no... instead I’m here to deliver you good news!”

His statement only managed to gain more attention from the prisoners, exactly as he wanted.

“The good news his that you are not getting tortured anymore... we are just going to kill you now... do not worry it will be quick and painless... if you cooperate.”

He elaborated, and even if he could not see them, he was sure that their eyes were now filled with fear. But seeing as no one interrupted him, Cocco Doll continued.

“You see... we didn’t know what the lords of the Noble Faction could ever offer you lot for you to sustain our worst tortures and still not utter a single word... so we are here to give you all a... counteroffer.”

He said with some venom in his pleasant voice.

“In the last days, I sent various parties scouting in the territories of the most powerful members of the Noble Faction; they were

instructed to inquire about men between the age of 20 and 50 who disappeared very recently without leaving a single trace... to say we got quite the list would be an understatement... Now I'm going to tell you all the names we found so far."

Cocco Doll continued, for the first time in a week he felt like he was in control again. It was nice, to be able to bask in the stench of fear and uncertainty once more.

He took out a list from a hidden pocket in his elegant dress.

It didn't take much for him to read all the 147 names they gathered in just a few days. The dim light did not allow him to see their expressions, but he clearly saw some of the prisoners' bodies shake at some point.

After he finished, he slowly folded the list and put it back in his dress. He took a small pause to let the prisoners digest everything before dropping his final statement.

"Now... I gave order to track down every relative of these mysteriously disappeared men... all their parents, wives, children, grandchildren and even distant relatives if needed... you know about Count Lynet right?... Well, you will be happy to know that he got it easy compared to what we are going to do to those poor people we tracked down... unless we get some names that would make our current target shift from those poor, innocent people to the true masterminds behind this whole thing."

As he spoke, he was elated to feel an icy air of dread engulf the torture chamber. 'Every man can be broken... for some it may just take something different than others...' he said, satisfied by the effect he caused.

It didn't take long for the men to start talking. After he got everything, he proceeded to have them killed and replaced with new ones.

By the next morning, there were no more prisoners and an uncovered plot laid bare before him. Now Cocco Doll was grinning from ear to ear like a madman. He was sure that with the vital information and names he got, his position and life would be safe once more.

{Rampossa's P.O.V.}

The King of the Re-Estize Kingdom was in his personal solar, gazing out of the window on his capital.

His shoulder still itched from time to time reminding him of the events that transpired a few days before. It has been an eye-opening experience, something the King would not so easily condemn in its entirety.

Of course, this wasn't the first wound he sustained in his life. When he was but a prince, he got wounded during spars and even in a few battlefields. But those days were long gone; lost into the ages and decades of reign behind him.

At the time those wounds he sustained reminded him of how much he was alive and pushed him to do more. Now, this single wound showed him how he was vulnerable and being aware of it brought fear to his old heart.

But the fear he felt was not for his own death, but for what he would leave behind once he was gone.

He wasn't blind to his first son's many flaws. He could be an inspiring commander during a battle, but he would be a terrible king during court. His second son, while still young, held more

promise, but his form was as awe inspiring as a dull rock on the side of the street. And nominating him as his heir would just cause war between his two sons.

Only now he was fully realizing how bad the situation was, and his mind and heart could not stop wandering toward the figure of a certain young blond princess. She was indeed the most gifted of them all. It was such a shame she was born this late. She wasn't even 10 and yet she was more capable and already did more than all his other children combined.

He spent countless hours bedridden in the last days and that gave him a chance to think on how he could avert the disaster that would be his first son's reign. And, in the end, he finally came up with a possible plan, something that would require time and careful movements. It would probably be what he spent his last years doing as King.

His plan was divided in three steps. First, he needed to help his son's reputation to rise among the people and nobles alike. A King without followers was no King at all after all. Second, he needed for his son to begin listening to his youngest. He was sure Renner would give him good advice on how to rule outside the battlefield, as well as who to entrust and who to be wary of; that was surely the hardest step considering the strained relationship between those two, not even counting Barbro's pride. Third and final; he would have to strengthen the Royal Faction so that his son's reign would not immediately fall in the grasp of the Noble Faction. His son needed powerful allies. And that was exactly the reason why he was in his solar at the moment. He already consolidated a strong alliance with Marquis Pespea with the soon to be marriage between him and his first daughter.

But he needed more, much more than political power. He needed actual raw power to contrast all opposition. No matter how beloved a King was, he would still fall without an equally strong army to sustain him.

He had no doubt about Gazef's loyalty, and he hoped that by the time the Warrior Captain would become old he would already have found a worthy, and equally loyal, successor. But there was one more power he needed to ensure his son's reign; a rising power his own younger daughter made him aware of, a power unchecked and uncontrolled by any faction at the moment. A key to a peaceful future.

His thoughts were interrupted when he heard a knock coming from his solar's door.

"Come in."

He said and immediately the door opened revealing two servants and his second daughter, Alysanne. She was the only one of his children to have inherited her mother's purple eyes; and the more he looked at her, the more his heart ached at the thought of his lost first wife.

The servants placed tea and cakes on the table before bowing and leaving, closing the door behind them.

Without waiting for an invitation, his second daughter sat on the comfortable sofa, her long light brown hair flowing behind her in an elaborate style.

He followed her seating on the opposite sofa and inviting her to indulge in the food and drink with a gesture.

Silence reigned for few minutes around them; he had, of course, already prepared how and what he wanted to say; but now that

he had his young 15 years old daughter before him, all became ten times harder than before.

How could he deny her the future she wanted? To lock her in a political relationship she may come to hate him for? How could he say it to her face when she reminded him of Catherine so much? They were so similar he could think his lost wife had reincarnated as his daughter.

Luckily for him the first to break the silence was her.

“So, what did you call me here for father?”

She asked in a flat tone as she sipped her tea.

“I... I wish to speak of your future.”

He began as he planned out in advance. That statement managed to bring a look of surprise on her face.

“I... I see. Well... I imagine I had to expect something like that sooner or later... will I have time to get acquainted with my husband?”

She asked as curiosity took over the initial surprise. He was a little taken aback by how quickly she caught up with the situation, but then again, he was never concerned with his daughter’s education and he imagined that all of them were aware of what was expected of them as members of the Royal Family.

“The wedding is deigned to occur upon your reaching 18 years of age. That is unless your husband desires to anticipate the wedding. You may utilize this time to learn of your intended.”

The young girl seemed pleased by the notion as she eagerly nodded.

“Then, who is it that is intended for me?”

She asked in curiosity again cutely tilting her head to the right like a curious puppy.

The King mentally sighed as he braced for the storm to come.

“He is a leading member of the Merchant Guild that controls most of the coins circulating the kingdom.”

He began as his daughter fell into a state of deep concentration, no doubt seeking into her mind the name of a noble close to the Merchant Guild, but the King already knew she would not find it.

“He also controls the entirety of the Adventurer’s Guild in the Kingdom in all but name.”

He continued as his daughter began to think even harder about who such an important noble was.

“He is also the principal funder of the various Magician Guilds around the kingdom, even more than the Crown itself.”

At that statement, something seemed to click together inside the princess’ mind but before she could utter a word the king continued.

“The one intended for you is the 5th tier arcane magic caster, Satoru.”

He finally concluded.

A moment of silence followed and then all hell broke loose as the young princess rose from the sofa, her calm expression replaced by utter uncontrolled rage as she slammed both her hands on the table, causing the two cups of tea to jump and shatter on the floor.

“YOU CAN’T DO THIS! NOT TO ME!”

She roared in a rage Rampossa never saw before.

“It is what must be done.”

He said calmly as he tried to not let any of his internal emotions show on his face.

“NO! I WILL NOT ACCEPT THIS! I WILL NOT BECOME THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THE ENTIRE COURT! I WILL NOT BE THE PRINCESS WHO MARRIED A COMMONER! A WORTHLESS PEASANT!”

His daughter continued to rage and shout to his face.

‘She is more concerned about his status than the age gap...’ the king noted with a little bit of sadness.

“He will not remain a commoner for long. I have already had the feudal contract drawn up for his own demesne and its associated title. This is act to tie him to the kingdom for the period before the wedding.”

He countered as he stood strong before his daughter’s rage. He could not afford to show anything but firmness here. The slightest sign of doubt or weakness would be his downfall.

“FATHER! I-I... PLEASE! Please don’t make me do this! I beg you! This is not right! I’m supposed to marry a handsome noble... this cannot be true...”

She said as her voice became quieter, and tears began to gather in her purple eyes.

“My decision is final. This is what’s best for the kingdom, and it must be done.”

He said in a solemn voice that allowed for no more retorts. His daughter glared at him before stomping toward the door.

“I hate you!”

She spat out venomously before opening and slamming the door behind her.

Only when the sounds of her steps could be heard no more, the King allowed his pain to show as several tears fell from his eyes, only to end up keeping company to the broken shards on the floor.

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

Satoru was exhausted. Not physically, of course. His exhaustion came from the mind instead. This was supposed to be a relaxing vacation. It instead turned into a political nightmare. He had no idea what was going on anymore. But since both Renner and Hilma said it went well, it must mean it had.

He sighed loudly as he stared into the imperial city's night sky. It has merely been 5 days since the whole attempted regicide thing, and he still was clueless on what the repercussion of such an action would bring.

'Since no one important died, I hope all will be solved for when I return to the capital' he silently prayed in his head. God only knew he had enough of this crap already.

'Maybe next time I will visit the Katze Plains. At least that is a dry dead land without any political stuff going on... unless there is an undead king amassing an army of Death Knights in a tomb nearby...' he chuckled at the thought 'with my luck I wouldn't be surprised if it actually happened; I can already imagine him, running around with his minions calling himself the King of Darkness or stuff like that' this time he openly laughed at the absurd idea that was conjured into his mind.

‘But I guess that even if I decided to visit the very hell itself, I would still have to deal with a certain princess running after me’ he thought with a hint of fondness.

Speaking of which; Renner was still a mystery to him. Even when he thought he finally figured her out, she revealed a new shade of herself. ‘Are all children supposed to be so voluble?’ he wondered.

She could be such an efficient, cold-hearted machine sometimes. He knew that well. But he also knew that she could be much more; she could be kind and bring joy around her if she wanted to. She represented both contrasting opposites into one single being. Something so unnatural that it wasn’t hard to see why she scared him so much at the beginning. But then he learned. He learned to read her and understand her viewpoints. And, in the end, he could not do anything but admire such a unique existence, something impossible to replicate, the unnaturalness of nature itself.

She was what many would call a freak, or an abomination. He preferred to call it singularity. And her singularity was what was bringing them all together; Lakyus, Gazef and even himself circled around her like planets circled around a star.

After the initial reaction died down, he imagined her to be broken in some way; and, while she surely was damaged in some way, that still wasn’t it.

There was still something incredibly fascinating and scary about her. Something hidden, caged, and ready to be unleashed. And not knowing what it was caused both excitement and fear in equal measure inside the undead magic caster.

This bond the two of them created back then in that empty alley had been the beginning of something Satoru never expected to

experience before. He himself didn't know how to convey what he felt into words. But one thing he knew for sure; he wanted to know where it led him in the end. He wanted to know what kind of unique thing was hidden behind all those layers and masks.

His train of thought was interrupted when someone knocked on his door. He immediately stood up and went to open it revealing none other than the Warrior Captain himself, Gazef Stronoff.

“Sorry to bother you at such an hour Satoru.”

He said before said magic caster invited him inside his room, closing the door behind him.

Learning of the attempted coup brought great distress to the Warrior Captain and the signs of the lack of sleep were beginning to show on his face. It took all of Satoru's and Renner's convincing skills to stop Gazef from returning to the capital immediately after he learned of what transpired.

In the end, after a lot of political speech from Renner's side, Gazef finally gave up on his quest but, instead, began to guard almost obsessively the young princess herself. Something that quickly got on said princess' nerves, not that the Warrior Captain noticed those subtle hints. Those small glares and tight gestures Satoru learned to associate with annoyance were totally lost to an untrained eye. Or maybe he just spent too much time with the Princess and took up those hints unconsciously.

“Are you going to accept the invite Satoru?”

Asked the Warrior Captain, startling the undead magic caster who was lost into his own musings.

“Uhm... I think so, it would be rude to decline such an offer.”

Said Satoru. After all, it wasn't all days that you got an invitation to a guided tour into the Imperial Magical Academy done by none other than Fluder Paradyne himself.

"Then I will be there to guard the Princess."

Tiredly proclaimed Gazef; but Satoru, seeing where this was all going, stopped him by laying a gloved hand on his shoulder.

"Gazef, I am your friend, and it pains me to tell you this, but what you are doing is hurting the princess and even yourself."

He said, trying to make sense return to the knight who simply shook his head.

"His Majesty ordered me to guard the Princess with my life, there is no way I could allow-"

His words were interrupted by Satoru, who gave him a light push with his hand making the Warrior Captain almost fall on his butt.

"See? You cannot even withstand a light push from me in that condition. What are you going to do if there is an emergency? Your lack of proper rest is making you weaker and sloppier by the hour... tomorrow you will rest, and I will guard the princess so that you may accompany us to the academy the day after."

He concluded. But even then, the fire in the Warrior Captain's eyes did not subdue.

"That is not-"

The knight was once more interrupted by the magic caster.

"If you refuse, I will force you to sleep with my magic. No matter how much it pains me, I will have to do it for your and Renner's sake."

Satoru said in an even harder tone than before. For a moment, it seemed like Gazef was about to attack him but then resignation settled into his eyes.

“Very well... I will do as you say... take care of the Princess.”

He said in defeat; Satoru nodded.

“Do not worry, I will guard her with my life.”

He swore; the Warrior Captain gave him an approving look and a small, tired smile before leaving his room.

‘I really need a vacation...’ the undead magic caster lamented in his head.

A.N.

And here we are! End of the chapter! Mostly an aftermath of the whole conspiracy. Something to close the cycle but, do not worry, this event will still bring about “things” in the future. I’m pretty excited to read your reviews and what you think about all this information and hints to new, future plot points.

Someone seemed to be confused on Renner’s fascination with Satoru and where her “love” was born from, so I will try to explain it in short here:

The relationship between Satoru and Renner is complicated. It is true that Renner admires Satoru's mind for business and magical power but that was never the reason why she loved him in the first place. The true reason behind her love is how much he seems to understand her and show her affection no one would before. Her love for him comes from the fact that she feels like he is the only person capable of standing next to her, not out of fear but out of respect and admiration.

All his other "abilities" are just bonuses in her eyes. Also, she is still a child, and as many children, she seeks an adult figure to find inspiration from. (For further details I suggest reading again ch.1/4/5/9/10).

I missed your reviews for this last month, so make sure to leave a ton of them! Long or short a review is still a review! Let me know what your thoughts are!

Until next time! Stay safe!