

“Normal speech”

‘Thought’

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

As promised, here is the next chapter you all were waiting for. The duel of the century is here! In one corner, we’ve got a decrepit old man who wishes to see the Abyss of Magic. In the other, a clueless undead who doesn’t know better than to be excessively paranoid about his own existence! In the stands, we’ve got a chuunibyou in the making, a prideful boy, a psychotic girl, an overconfident caster and a perplexed warrior!

What will happen? You will find out in the next... oh wait! You are actually finding it out just down here!

Ok, ok sorry. I just wanted to fuck around in the AN since I didn’t know what to write here.

This came out early but I was blown away by how many reviews you left in just a day! Thanks for the support! I hope to see the same or more for this one!

Oh well; enjoy!

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (I’m not even sure what to type after that introduction. Although, that could also be from the fact that I’m editing this at 11 PM during my graveyard shift. Nah, that can’t be it.)

Chapter 21: Spar under the Sun, Promise under the Moon

Satoru was stunned. Of all the things he expected from the day, being challenged by the greatest human magic caster to a... friendly sparring, was not one of them. The visit to the Academy has been great so far. Finally, he was able to witness how magic was taught in this new world.

He still didn't know the details of the teachings, but since he presented himself as a 5th tier magic caster, most people expected him to already know about it. Unfortunately, the only knowledge about magic he possesses had come from a VRMMORPG and he knew how to use magic the same way an infant knew how to eat and drink. In short; pure instinct.

He did not have the slightest idea of how magic actually worked or how to learn new spells, and a confrontation between him and the Court Wizard would have brought many undesirable questions, no matter the outcome. If he lost, he couldn't just use cheap spells or his reputation would be ruined, not only in the Empire, but the Kingdom too, if word of the duel reached the wrong ears. If he won, the outcome would have been even worse. By beating Fluder, even in just a spar, he would attract the attention of the entire continent on him, and many uncomfortable questions were sure to arise from it.

And so, the only logical, and less damaging, action would be to politely refuse.

"I think that is a splendid idea! Wouldn't you agree Lakyus!"

The blond princess exclaimed in a tone Satoru recognized as totally fake, but that could probably fool many if they didn't know the princess like he did.

"That would be incredible! A spectacle of a lifetime!"

Joined her the young noble. Jircniv frowned at the eagerness of those two.

‘Yeah, I would do that too if I had the skin to do so... the emperor mustn’t be so happy about this either, I guess’.

But now a new doubt arose in the undead’s mind. ‘Should I accept... Renner seems to agree with the proposal... but why? She is smart. She must have thought about this whole thing... and she is confident that the best option would be to agree... while I think the exact opposite... I would really like to know what is going through your mind in this moment...’ he thought.

It wasn’t like he didn’t trust Renner’s judgement. She showed her genius side more than enough during their meeting and through how she handled the attempt on her family’s life for him to recognize her superiority when it came down to planning. But still, this would be the first time he would follow her blindly. Was he truly ready to do that step?

He looked down at said blond, who looked back at him with that simple fake smile of hers, but her eyes, her eyes told it all. The absolute confidence, the undying admiration, the warmth he himself brought into her life. And so, he steeled his will and jumped.

“I think a little spar would not hurt anyone, but still, you wouldn’t mind making it a bet, would you, Sir Paradyne?”

At his words, the old man actually smiled, or well, it was more similar to a smirk, like a cat who just found a fat mouse to feast on.

“And what would you ask if you won, Sir Satoru?”

Gone was his placid and slow tone. Now he was fully intrigued by how the events were unfolding.

Satoru just took a few moments, as if to show that he was thinking about it, but instead he had already decided a long time ago. 'I want the most valuable thing of all... of course!'

"Well, I am still rather young and a scholar at heart. My simple desire is to have access to the most possible quantity of rare knowledge you can provide."

Those words elicited a chuckle from the 6th tier magic caster who vigorously nodded in agreement.

"That's quite the unique request. Most would have asked for some position or even to become my personal apprentice... but you, you ask for the chance to better yourself on your own instead... Marvelous! Simply marvelous!"

Exclaimed the now excited old magic caster.

"In that case, if I win, I would like for you to teach at this academy for the remaining time of your stay in the Empire."

Fluder countered. After a few moments Satoru offered his hand.

"It's a bet then."

He said as the Court Wizard shook his hand.

{Arche's P.O.V.}

The young blond noble could not believe this, and apparently the crowd of students who began to leave didn't either. The referee just announced the spar between her mentor and that terrifying magic caster. As soon as the words left the referee's mouth, the crowd immediately cried out in shock and excitement as many students outside, who heard the announcement, began to

forcefully remove other students to pass and see the battle of a lifetime, forcing the teachers to intervene and stop the various fights that started over simple seating places.

Arche herself could not believe it. She not only met her mentor and the emperor on the same day, but she was about to witness a true show of the Empire's mightiest magic caster's magical prowess. A dream come true for countless students. To see the true depth of the Abyss of Magic, as her mentor calls it.

As the fights slowly died down and various students were forcefully removed from the stands, she heard a voice coming from her right.

"Ah, Princess Renner. I am afraid this is not a good matchup in your favor. Fluder knows his fair share about fighting, as many legends of the Empire circle around him."

The emperor said with a smirk, as he looked down at the empty arena. 'Princess?... is she royalty from somewhere? I never heard that name before. It sounds like someone from Re-Estize or maybe the Holy Kingdom?' Arche wondered as she studied the younger blond girl.

"Ah, Your Majesty, I am afraid you are sorely mistaken here. Satoru may be young, but he has knowledge far surpassing his age. I am sure he could win given the chance."

The girl said. The confidence in her voice was almost enough to convince anyone her words were true, but Arche wasn't anyone and she knew better than that. 'Utter foolishness. There is no way some foreign magic caster could stand up to Lord Paradyne!' she thought, but remained silent, avoiding causing a scene with a foreign princess.

“So, you are a student of Sir Paradyne?”

This time the question was directed at her, but instead of coming from the duo she was focusing on, it came from the older blond girl. Arche turned toward her.

“Yes, I am a member of the Chosen Thirty, the acolytes of Master Paradyne.”

She answered in a cold tone.

“Wow, that is so cool! And you are so young too! You must really be smart if you got here so quickly!”

Her praise brought a bit of a smug smile on the magic caster noble girl.

“I possess a most unique Talent and tendency for magic; it is only a matter of time before I was afforded such a position.”

She inflated her ego even more with her own words, but that didn't seem to work on the older girl as her previous genuine smile just faltered for a moment.

“Ah, I see... your Talent... well, I wish you good luck with that...”

The older girl paused a moment.

“My name is Lakyus Alvein Dale Aindra, sole heir of Marquis Aindra from the Re-Estize Kingdom.”

She continued, introducing herself with a noble touch to her tone totally absent before.

“My name is Arche Eeb Rile Furt, heir of Count Furt of the Baharuth Empire.”

Arche answered in kind to her introduction with her own. But before anymore could be said, the referee attracted, once more, the attention of the entire arena.

“Presenting the challenger! Lord Fluder Paradyne!”

In that moment, from one of the entrances to the arena, the white robed magic caster entered, slowly advancing toward the inner circle marking the limit of the fighting ground. The arena erupted in cheers.

“And the challenged! Sir Satoru from the Re-Estize Kingdom!”

A polite applause welcomed the black robed caster as he entered from the opposite entrance and joined Fluder inside the fighting circle. When they stopped, they were 15 meters apart, the usual distance used for these kinds of duels.

“Are the challengers ready?”

Asked the referee. No one answered.

“Very well then. 3... 2... 1... BEGIN!”

As the referee announced the beginning of the duel, he immediately retreated from the arena, surely hoping to get away from the barrage of magic predestined to come. The whole arena got dead silent as all eyes focused on the two participants.

And still nobody moved. The two casters looked at each other, but nobody made a move. That lasted almost a minute before, out of the blue, a magic circle appeared in front of Satoru, spitting out a powerful looking [Lightning] spell, which was immediately countered by another [Lightning] from Fluder, causing both spells to cancel each other out.

Just by that simple exchange, most of the crowd and even Arche were astonished. ‘H-He didn’t even have to call out the magic... or use a hand to cast it... it just appeared out of nothingness...’ Silent magic was already a skill few were capable of, but using it on a 3rd tier spell was unheard of. The simple level of mind focusing that such a move would require would be unreal, and would leave anyone totally spent. ‘And yet...’ she noticed how the masked magic caster didn’t even seem to flinch a little.

Of course, she had no doubt that her Master could block a 3rd tier spell, but to block such an unexpected attack was a completely different level.

“[Grand Fireball]”

The 6th tier magic caster announced his spell, as a giant ball of fire came into existence, rushing towards his adversary, who simply stood there unmoving. ‘What is he doing?! He can’t escape a 4th tier spell!’ Arche screamed in her mind, and true to her words, the spell hit the caster, exploding in a river of flames that quickly died down.

As the smoke cleared, a gasp of surprise could be heard from the stand, and even Arche’s jaw dropped at the sight. The magic caster known as Satoru stood there, unaffected by the spell, as a dome of purple energy surrounded him like a giant sphere.

Only one thing was on Arche’s mind in that moment. ‘T-these two are amazing!’.

{Satoru’s P.O.V.}

‘OI! What the hell was that?! I thought this was just some friendly spar! The hell are you casting AOE magic for?!’ The usually calm undead raged in his mind against the older caster. He just

thought that this was going to be easy, just casting some 3rd tier spells before calling it a day. He now knew he was sorely mistaken. The caster in front of him had no intention of holding back.

“I’m impressed, Sir Satoru. I do not recognize that spell. May you enlighten me on what it is?”

Asked the old man, as if asking about the weather. ‘Of course, you don’t recognize it! This isn’t even a spell! It is just my passive activating!... Now think Satoru... think!’ The human turned undead tried to give a plausible explanation.

“This is indeed a very rare spell to witness... it’s called Dome of Gale, and it is a 5th tier spell... that can absorb the mana of any inferior tier spell that touches it!”

He announced, as his mind was trying to come up with some more crap about it. ‘Misinformation is just a great tool sometimes... and it’s not like I can tell him I have a passive skill that nullifies all spells on level with, and below, the 6th tier...’ he sighed.

As he looked at his adversary to see if he bought his crap, he was taken aback by the almost crazed look the man wore on his face.

“To think... that such lost magic existed! I am really grateful for this revelation Sir Satoru.”

The man said, as a large smile appeared on his face.

“Y-You’re welcome...”

Mumbled Satoru, who had no idea how to answer that crazed look in the man eyes. ‘Just focus on the battle’ he thought to himself.

(Boosted magic: Magic Arrows)

He cast the silent spell as 10 magic circles appeared in front of him, shooting magic arrows at the target. Fluder on his part was taken aback by the spell just for a moment before countering.

“[Teleportation]”

He said, as he disappeared and reappeared just behind Satoru.

“[Grand Fireball]”

The explosion of his own spell pushed the 6th tier magic caster back, while Satoru faked flying forward, before landing on his feet five meters from the arena’s boundaries. The crowd exploded into cheers at the sight.

‘I guess they bought it... good. But I have no intention of looking like a fool’ he thought, as he cast (Lopsided Duel), a spell which countered [Teleportation] by teleporting the caster alongside the target.

“[Grand Fireball]”

Satoru cast his spell loudly, just to lull the older caster in a false sense of security, and, as he hoped, the 6th tier caster immediately teleported away, activating his counter spell and bringing Satoru alongside him.

The human caster certainly didn’t expect that, since as soon as he noticed Satoru behind him, he tried to teleport again, but he was not fast enough.

“[Dragon Lightning]”

The usual dragon made out of lightning struck the old man’s back, eliciting a grunt of pain from him as he flew away using a silent [Fly].

Once he was at a certain distance, Satoru spoke.

“It isn’t wise to use the same trick twice, Sir Paradyne.”

He said, in his usual calm tone. Fluder just smirked.

“I guess not, but it is advisable to have a plan B to fall back to, just in case.”

He said, as Satoru noticed the ground below him glowing red and blue. ‘Crap! When did he set mines?!’ he thought as he used a silent [Teleportation] to flee just a moment before the ice and fire mines exploded. ‘Those must be 5th tier elemental mines... I didn’t expect that... this old man is dangerous. He surely has the experience. Unfortunately he lacks the power.’ His train of thought was interrupted by a [Dragon Lightning] piercing through the smoke screen and hitting him straight.

He faked a grunt of pain while he didn’t even receive any damage. He still had to maintain his 5th tier magic caster persona after all.

He used (Invisibility) and (Fly) to rise into the sky unseen. He looked down at the old magic caster that, while still hovering a meter from the ground, was still focused where he previously stood. ‘Well then’ (Twin magic: Lightning mine). Two small light orbs began to float in the sky until they stopped around 10 meters above the Court Wizard. He flew down toward the smoke again and dispelled his [Invisibility].

Without even waiting for the smoke to clear, he roared his next attack.

“[Iceball]”

The counterpart of [Fireball] shot toward Fluder who, instead of wasting mana, just used his ability to fly and dodged the attack by flying up. 'As expected' he thought as his previously casted mines began to glow before exploding. But the old magic caster noticed that and teleported away just in time to avoid the explosion.

After reappearing, Fluder immediately turned around as if expecting Satoru to follow him again. 'I already dispelled that spell. A trick doesn't work two times, but the paranoia it creates can be used as a distraction.' As he thought that, he pointed his hand at the older man and cast [Magic Arrow] once more and, again, 10 arrows flew toward the 6th tier magic caster, who noticed just in time to put up minimal defenses in the form of a magical barrier.

The barrier could only withstand so much and 4 of the 10 arrows hit the target, forcing him down toward the ground. 'Did I go too far? Well, he started it...' the undead defended his actions in his mind.

As Fluder touched the ground, Satoru decided to speak.

"Ah, Sir Paradyne, shouldn't we stop now? We both received quite an amount of damage from our exchanges, after all."

He said, as the older man dusted himself off.

"You are, of course, free to quit Sir Satoru, but it will be my win then. Do not underestimate your elders. We may turn out to be far more durable than we look."

He said as he raised both hands.

"[Flaming Wave]"

A big magic circle appeared in front of the man as the 6th tier spell was cast, and immediately a sea of flames erupted toward Satoru. 'AND YOU CALL THIS A FRIENDLY SPAR?! WHAT THE HELL!' the undead said as he did the first thing that came to mind and used a silent (Fire Resistance) spell on himself.

As the fire died down, he was not focusing on the battle anymore. The only thing he was interested in was the tingling sensation he felt around his body. That was a first for him. 'Is this... how taking damage feels? I should be immune though... something for later' he asked himself in wonder. It wasn't even painful. It just felt odd. He wasn't sure if that was because of his undead nature or if the damage was so mediocre. He could not even feel actual pain. Instead, just discomfort.

"That was... uncalled for... wouldn't you agree... Sir Paradyne?"

He asked, faking panting. The old man just looked at him, a certain degree of disbelief in his eyes. 'I didn't want to use this, but that move didn't leave me any choice' he thought in resignation. Of course, he didn't spend a year in this new world without trying to create misleading information and explanation if part of his true power was revealed.

He would have, of course, preferred to not have to do this, but he could not shrug away the fact that he survived a 6th tier spell with minimal damage.

"I am afraid... Sir Paradyne... that my robe can protect me against many types of damage, and fire... is among that list."

He said to the surprised magic caster, who closed his eyes for a moment before opening them and looking intensely at him.

“That may be the case Sir Satoru, but then... why is my Talent not working on you.”

Those words actually piqued Satoru’s interest. ‘So, he is a Talent holder. I should have expected something like that.’ He reprimanded himself for his carelessness.

“Oh, and what does your Talent do, if you don’t mind me asking?”

The curious undead asked. He would very much like to know what type of Talent the most powerful human magic caster possessed.

“It isn’t really a secret, even more within the Academy. My Talent allows me to see the tiers a magic caster can use, and when I look at you, I see absolutely nothing, even after you cast those spells in front of me... I wonder why that is?”

The Court Wizard said, as he looked at Satoru again. ‘Wow, thank God I have the concealing ring, or, by this time, my cover would be totally screwed. But still, isn’t that quite overpowered as a Talent?’ As a fighter who used brains and tactics, Satoru knew well the advantage of knowing the power of one’s foe freely, just by looking at them. ‘Well, since I came out with the item excuse already, I may come fully clean now’ he thought as he prepared to answer but then a thought immediately came to his mind ‘IS THAT WHY HE WAS LOOKING AT ME CREEPILY ALL THE TIME?!’ he asked no one as his Emotional Suppression kicked in.

“Is that so? Then I may have an answer to your dilemma; you see, Sir Paradyne, this enchanted mask, among its many enchantments, has one that blocks certain types of divination

magic and information magic. Your Talent could be neglected by the enchantment on my mask.”

Lied the undead, who received a not so convinced glance from Fluder.

“That could be possible, but still... such enchanted items should be considered at least legendary. I have no idea how you could come in the possession of such items.”

He said, while Satoru internally chuckled at the irony of such an affirmation.

“Let me have some secrets still, wouldn’t you, Sir Paradyne? Also, I must thank you!”

He announced, eliciting a questioning look from the older caster.

“And for what reason should you thank me, Sir Satoru?”

The 6th tier magic caster asked. Satoru chuckled loudly this time.

“Since you revealed your Talent with such eagerness, let me return the favor.”

He paused for a more dramatic effect.

“My Talent is called Arcane Wisdom, and it allows me to instantly learn almost every arcane spell that affects me positively or negatively.”

As his lies sank in, the older magic caster’s eyes widened, and his jaw even dropped a little. As if to demonstrate the validity of his claim, Satoru pointed his hand to the side and called out the spell.

“[Flaming Wave]!”

Immediately, a copy of the previous spell cast by Fluder came to life. As the flames died down, Satoru began to fake heavy breathing, as if the spell took much out of him. 'Distorting information and feeding lies to possible enemies is the way to achieve victory after all; isn't that right, Punitto?' Satoru rhetorically asked.

"So, you see, Sir Fluder, I must thank you; thank you for making me a 6th tier magic caster."

After his words, there were just a few moments of silence, as the whole arena quieted down from the previous uproar. And then...

"AhahahahahahAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH!"

The roaring laughter of Fluder could be heard echoing around the arena as the man laughed quite madly before pointing a finger toward Satoru.

"YOU WILL GO FAR, BOY! HARVEST ALL THE KNOWLEDGE THIS WORLD HAS TO OFFER AND BRING US INTO A NEW AGE OF MAGIC! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE IT! HOW FAR INTO THE ABYSS WILL YOU SINK, I WONDER?!"

After the outburst, the old man seemed to retain some manner of control and calmed down.

"This was indeed a good spar; I admit my defeat to you, Sir Satoru."

He said, as he prepared to leave before being stopped by Satoru's next words.

"I think a draw would be more appropriate, seeing the situation; what do you say, Sir Paradyne?"

Satoru tried to compromise. ‘He is mad, but I still can’t claim victory against him. The aftermath of that would be a nightmare to deal with!’ he cried out in his mind, hoping that the old man would see reason and accept his offer.

Giving him a half-crazed smirk, Fluder nodded.

“So be it then!”

He announced before both of them retired and staff came down to repair the tremendous damage caused to the arena.

{Emperor’s Private Chamber}

{Jircniv’s P.O.V.}

The emperor of the Baharuth Empire was refraining from putting both hands on his face and crying in frustration. Even here, in the intimacy of his personal chambers, he refrained from doing so.

‘This whole thing was a disaster! But how was I supposed to know that this magic caster would be so powerful?! And even gramps didn’t help with that proclamation of his skill in magic! I must absolutely put that caster in my service before word of this gets out of the empire!’ he thought in desperation. He could not allow one of the pillars of the empire to crumble like this. He could not show such a blatant weakness.

To put salt in the wound, he still had the smug face of a certain third princess impressed into his mind. ‘That bitch!’ he spat as his hands curled into fists. That pleasant fake smile and that condescending tone she used while bidding him goodnight were infuriating. She clearly thought of herself as above him. But he was the Emperor! And she was nothing but a foreign princess! He will bring that caster to his side, no matter the cost!

As he thought that, he didn't notice his door opening and a familiar old man stepping into the room.

“So... did you have fun gramps?”

The young emperor asked, half ironic, half annoyed with the man before him.

“Yes, yes, in fact, I learned far more than I expected from this short exchange.”

Said the now calm magic caster, eliciting a grunt from the emperor.

“Then tell me gramps, was all that farce necessary?”

Jircniv asked again, while his eyes scanned the man before him, failing to read him as always.

“There was no farce, young Jir. Magic must be praised and respected above all, and that kind of Talent is the nearest thing to perfection I've seen in a long time, maybe even my whole life! Think about the possibilities such a thing would open to us! The ability to copy any spell cast on oneself!”

He exclaimed with renewed excitement. ‘Here he goes again... he just can't control himself when speaking about magic, can he?... but we are discussing politics here!’ he sighed, frustrated with his current situation.

“Damn it, gramps! This isn't about magic! This is about politics! If word gets out that you acknowledged this man as your equal, the empire will lose one of its advantages against the other countries!”

He finally exploded. But the old man didn't lose his composure.

“Oh, young Jir... let them think what they want. In the end, only someone idiotic would think the two of us would go all out in a simple spar, in front of so many witnesses.”

The old caster’s words were well calculated, just enough to stop the emperor and force him to listen.

“We offered a good show to entertain eventual spies, but... none of us went all out. Do you really think that 6th tier spell was something special? Just a more powerful version of Grand Fireball, nothing more. Spies learned nothing new about me apart from confirming my rumored use of 6th tier magic.”

Fluder said, offering a small smile to the emperor.

“Sir Satoru, on the other hand, uncovered many of his cards, his powerful items, his Talent, and his probable limit.”

The magic caster continued, rapturing the emperor in his words like he did when he was still a child.

“You think he told the truth?”

Jircniv asked, no longer furious.

“Oh, gods no! He surely said what everybody wanted to hear. But the truth? No, that he didn’t. Half-truths have always been the best lies, after all... isn’t that right, Jir?”

The white bearded caster asked rhetorically. ‘So, you didn’t actually lose your mind after all, did you gramps?’ the emperor thought, far more relaxed this time. Fluder seemed to have it all under control.

“The information about his Talent, are probably half-truth. It would explain why he got so powerful so fast, and how many would not notice his actual power beforehand. But still, I largely

doubt the details he gave about his magic items were accurate or even partly truthful.”

He continued his explanation while taking a seat in front of the emperor.

“We should try and recruit him. His support may be invaluable in the future. Even more so if he can be bound to the empire through marriage or other powerful means. I agree that leaving him able to do what he wants would not be wise.”

Finished the experienced magic caster.

“And then, how do you propose to bind him to the empire? All our offers could be countered by Re-Estize, and they already have the advantage of him actually having a working business there, something he would have to abandon if he joined the empire.”

Countered the emperor, before a thought hit him.

“But then again... that little monster was far too sure that he would not join us... do they know something we don't about him? Something that could potentially be used to bring him to our side... or at least, blackmail him with?”

He put his thoughts into words; the Court Wizard stroked his long beard in deep concentration.

“Your Majesty, could it be that... he has peculiar tastes... when it comes to the fairer gender?”

He half asked, half proposed. That phrase was like opening a dam for the emperor. ‘Could it really be that?... it would make some sense... why else would he stay in the kingdom that hates magic the most? And why else would he bring along the youngest princess and such a young noble?... Both girls in fact!... could it

really be that he...' the young boy's mind began to wander into a totally unexplored ocean of thoughts.

After all, most powerful men were no longer guided around by what would be most advantageous for them, but instead, by what would make them happier. Fluder was a clear example of that. But even if that magic caster had such a... perversion, how could he take advantage of it. 'I can't easily prove something like this, and I can't just parade some young girls in front of him to see his reaction... this speculation holds merit but even if proven correct, it would not help us... unless! We can give him something far more valuable and interesting than those two!' As an evil smirk passed through his face, the emperor immediately turned toward his mentor.

"Find me the most talented female magic caster below the age of 11. We are getting that magic caster to our side... whatever the cost may be!"

He proclaimed as the Court Wizard only bowed in response.

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

He was satisfied with how the day went, even with the unexpected end of it. 'Who would have guessed? Challenged to a spar by the strongest magic caster...' he thought, as the end of the duel resurfaced in his mind.

After agreeing to a draw, they both decided to follow their part of the agreement. Satoru would visit the academy, not as a teacher, since he excused himself by saying he didn't feel ready to teach, but as an observer. And Fluder would open his private library to him for further research, while taking out some tomes of course.

When he came back to the VIP room before leaving, he found an excited Lakyus, impressed Gazef and... strangely satisfied Renner waiting for him. All of them complimented his performance, much to his embarrassment, since he didn't really put much effort into it, and he was sure that some of the more strategic of his guildmates would have scolded him for such a display. He silently accepted the girls' praises, nonetheless.

Speaking of which, Lakyus was still gushing over him down in the hall of the inn alongside Gazef and Brain, who seemed curious about the exchange, while the diabolic smiling princess was currently with him in his room for a cuddling session.

He himself was surprised by how much of it he was managing to take. He wasn't a physical person at all in his last life, and the lack of interaction with women didn't help. But, somehow, Renner managed to pierce a way through that barrier and find a place in his cold, nonexistent heart. 'Is that because she is an outcast as well?' he wondered, but before he could elaborate on that thought, said princess interrupted him.

"You did very well today, Satoru... Now the emperor knows he can't take you from me, no matter what he does."

She said surprising him. 'Is the emperor trying to bring me to his side? I didn't notice at all, but... if Renner says so, there must be some truth to it... ah! What a mess! I can't get these word games at all!' he thought in exasperation.

"Are you sure, Renner? He didn't seem all that interested."

Those words elicited a cute giggle from the girl.

"C'mon Satoru! Don't be mean! He was trying his best!"

She said energetically, while one of her creepy smiles formed on her face. At the same time, a moonlight's ray illuminated her face as it just entered the room from the door window that gave way to the balcony.

Satoru turned toward it. Even after a year, he still marveled at the sight of the night sky. No matter how wealthy one became, one could never see it in his old world. The moon shined brightly. It was almost full, and only a few stars, due to the city's light, could be seen accompanying it.

"Isn't it beautiful? Every time I look at it, I am reminded of your mask. A sea of black with 2 shining stars."

Said the princess, as she followed his gaze.

"I always wondered... would they get bigger if I could get closer to them?"

She mumbled under her breath, but Satoru heard her anyway. 'Aren't you quite the romantic, Renner' he said in his head, just before an idea immediately took precedence.

Without saying a word, he stood up, surprising the princess laying against him. He picked her up as a parent would a child and went toward the window. He opened it with his free hand and went outside while casting a silent (Fly) on himself.

The only thing he heard was Renner's surprised gasp as they began to quickly ascend through the sky, leaving the lights of the imperial city behind. Moving higher and higher, even above the clouds. He only stopped when even the clouds were nothing more than a formless mass, tens of meters below him.

As soon as he stopped, it took only a second to hear another of Renner's gasps. This one seemed more in awe compared to the first one though.

"As you can see... they don't get any bigger at all."

Said the undead magic caster, jokingly, as he felt something being placed on his masked face. He turned to see Renner's small hands placed on his mask, as if she was caressing his cheeks. The moonlight was reflecting in her sky-blue eyes as her golden hair shimmered like gold dancing around in the wind.

The only word that came to Satoru's mind to describe that vision was 'beautiful' as if he was admiring a painting that only came once in a lifetime. The image could not even be ruined by the unnaturally large smile, more similar to a grin, that the princess was exhibiting before him. Instead, it all added to the surreal scene, making it an immortal and unrepeatable moment. Something only he could witness.

As his mind went into shock by this, he noticed the girl's eyes fill with unshed tears that proceeded to trickle down her cheeks as the moonlight continued to make them gleam even more.

"I... would really like to know... what hides behind this mask."

She whispered, even though no one could have heard them even if she screamed. Satoru was too truly entranced by the scene and the turn of events to say or do anything.

She moved closer to him, her face a few centimeters from his.

"But, even more than that, I am grateful... grateful that you came into my life... this dull and grey life that had no meaning before you entered it."

She continued, as the stream of tears continued to fall. She placed her forehead against his mask, her eyes directly against the blue gems of his mask, covering the two red dots that were his.

“Do not leave my side Satoru. Always come back to me... I need you so much... if you went away... I would have nothing more to live for.”

She continued to whisper. The undead’s emotions were going rampant by now. He himself didn’t know what he felt exactly, and his Emotional Suppression wasn’t helping him figure it out.

“Promise it to me... no matter what... you will come back to me.”

She said, as her petite form completely pressed on him.

It should have been easy. Two simple words, two simple small words, but inside of him, he knew, that if he said them, it all would change. His future would be set on a path he didn’t know yet. But despite his fear of the unknown, despite his Emotional Suppression and despite his love for the freedom this world gave him, he said them anyway without hesitation.

“I promise.”

And in that moment, the fate of the two changed, intertwining with each other into a path that would change the world. But neither of them knew it yet.

A.N.

Well, that was something I guess... really curious to know what you think about this.

I hope no one was disappointed by the spar. It wasn't supposed to be a serious fight in the first place, and it still ended up in quite a clash and became a source of development.

Well, my job is done here. Now it is time to let me know your thoughts with a review. So please review, would you?

Also ANNOUNCEMENT: the first chapter of TWTS: Shards of the New World (TWTS side stories) is going to go up in a week or so, stay tuned!

PS: To Mr. Big, I would love to answer your question, but without an account it would be hard since I can't just start answering reviews in these notes. So yeah, please create an account, or instead you can find me on Discord in the Overlord Fanfiction server, in the channel "fanfiction-by-zero-sama".

Stay safe folk! Till next time!