

“Normal speech”

‘Thought’

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Hey! Welcome back. Not much to say this time. I hoped that this would come out sooner, but I had to update CW first. Also, I went through this entire story again and corrected any grammatical and spelling errors/inconsistences I could find. It should be a lot cleaner now.

Also, I found an error in an early chapter. I directly addressed the “yearly war” of the kingdom and empire but the truth is, the war has not started yet so I simply deleted that part. It was really short and I think no one remembers it, but I took it away for any new reader anyway.

Before starting, I wish to thank all of you for all your reviews. While I don’t answer most of them, I really appreciate reading your thoughts and theories. You have no idea how many bad days you all helped me through with those reviews. So yeah, I just wanted to thank you all. This is one of the reasons that drives me to put my all in this story. Thank you all!

Oh god, I said I would grumble less than usual and here we are... well hope you enjoy the chapter!

Beta reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!) ; SirWertsalot (If ZeroSenpai hasn’t started to remove these by this point, I’ll be shocked. Shocked, I tell you. Be sure to follow

and review so Bone Daddy can fund his ever-increasing adopted family.)

Chapter 10: A Crown for the Witch

The blonde girl with an elaborate hairstyle opened the door to the third princess' room. The room was empty, as expected. These days, the princess spent this period of the day outside on her room's balcony. The girl still remembered the time she questioned the princess about it. The princess simply answered that she was gazing on the city. But the girl knew better. She noticed how the princess' gaze often wandered toward a certain area of the capital where a certain shop owner lived.

The blonde noble girl herself came to adore and admire that particular shop owner after so many months of visiting, even if her motives were probably different from the princess'. He was probably the man she knew best outside of her direct family. She wasn't allowed or supposed to speak with other men after all. That was one of the first lessons she learnt as a child.

Much like the princess, she will one day be married to a man she didn't even know. She came to terms with that reality years ago, but now she could do nothing but rethink her acceptance. The one who put such doubts into her was the shop owner himself, Satoru, the arcane magic caster.

He supported her dreams of one day becoming an adventurer. He told her many tales about his former female companions, their adventures, and their successes. How they travelled to many distant lands and fought many different beings. Through joy and pain, they grew attached to each other.

There were some stories so crazy, that even she could not fully say she completely believed them, but she still enjoyed them nonetheless. It reminded her of her uncle's stories and how they inspired her. She regretted not being able to see him during this last period, but his job as an adventurer made him travel all over the kingdom.

She couldn't complain though. Thanks to Satoru, who convinced Gazef to give her secret lessons, she was now able to wield a sword better than any normal soldier. Gazef himself told her how surprised he was by her gift in swordsmanship. She was proud of it.

It has been more than half a year since she met Satoru, and her life changed quite drastically thanks to him and the princess. She could still not fathom how someone as young as Renner could be so gifted with her mind. She was grateful to both of them, nonetheless.

Speaking of the princess, she still remembered the look in her eyes when Satoru gifted her a sword for her 11th birthday. It was just an instant, but Lakyus could have sworn she saw something in her eyes; something very unsettling. But at the moment, she was too excited for the sword she received as a present.

Of course, she couldn't bring her new gift around, so they arranged for the Warrior Captain to take care of it and bring it out only when they had their secret lessons.

The short sword was made out of a dark blue metal. It had an elegant black hilt with a ruby encased in the middle of it. Satoru told her that the blade was enchanted with lightning magic around the 3rd tier. To say she was overjoyed at receiving such a gift would be an understatement. If it wasn't for the years of

strict education buried in her head, she would have jumped at Satoru and hugged him.

Shaking away those memories, she moved toward the open patio door and stepped onto the terrace where she found the princess silently sitting at a table, gazing at the city below.

“Good afternoon, you- Renner.”

She said making the princess aware of her presence. Said girl turned toward her, the usual gentle smile on her face.

“Good afternoon Lakyus, is it time already?”

The princess asked.

“Yes, Master Gazef is waiting for us outside.”

Answered Lakyus, the princess stood up and both of them left the room.

While passing through the corridors, someone called out from behind them.

“Ah if it isn’t my dear sister. Did you decide to finally come out of your room?”

The duo turned to see a woman around her late teens or early twenties. She had brown hair and green eyes. Lakyus recognized her. She was Carine, the first princess of the kingdom, escorted by her handmaidens. Lakyus bowed lightly as etiquette demanded.

“Yesterday we had to drag you out of it for your birthday and today you leave it like it is nothing... You did it on purpose to get on our nerves, didn’t you?”

She continued as a scornful expression appeared on her face. It was true. The princess' 8th birthday celebration had been yesterday and she refused to come out of her room, forcing her siblings to come and drag her out since the guards and servants couldn't touch her.

Secretly, Lakyus thought that Renner's goal was to annoy everyone as much as she could since, because of the party, she couldn't visit Satoru that day. Deep down, Lakyus agreed with the princess. She would have rather gone to visit Satoru than attend some party in her name that served no greater purpose than making nobles eat and drink.

"I deeply apologize dearest sister. You see, I'm a little shy when I have to meet so many people. Also, that dress they gave me showed too much skin for my tastes. I'm afraid I'm not as accustomed to wearing clothes that would make a harlot blush as you are, while showing off my attributes to every man I could."

As Renner spoke, the expression on the first princess' face morphed into one of rage, a vein pulsing wildly on her forehead.

"Why... you little..."

She mumbled, while gritting her teeth. Renner didn't even bother to turn toward her.

"Have fun with the cute serving boy tonight sister, or have you gotten bored of him already? No matter, I wish you a good day."

With those words Renner walked away, but they didn't even make it a few steps before Lakyus saw a hand wrap around Renner's left arm and forcefully turned her around. Alarmed, Lakyus turned too only to see a hand descend and...

SLAP

The sound of the first princess slapping Renner across the face echoed in the otherwise vacant corridor.

“YOU THINK YOU ARE BETTER THAN ME!? YOU DAMN LITTLE MONSTER!? THE GODS MUST HAVE CURSED OUR FAMILY TO MAKE A DEVIL LIKE YOU A PART OF IT!”

SLAP

After yelling into Renner’s face Carine slapped her again even harder than before. Then she pushed Renner, making her fall backward on the hard pavement. Lakyus’ right hand twitched next to her waist as if to reach for the sword she usually placed there and of course grabbed empty air. Realizing her powerlessness, she immediately jumped at her friend’s side and helped her up.

‘Is this what nobility has become? An empty shell of arrogance, pride and rage? What will become of this kingdom if the ruling class is so rotten...’ She wondered as she helped Renner stand up. The first princess advanced once more toward them, now towering over them and seemed to want to strike Renner again.

“Please, my Princess contain yourself. What will Marquis Pespea think if he hears of this?!”

Cried out one of her handmaidens. The princess calmed herself as she seemed to realize what she has done. With a fast movement, she grabbed Renner’s face with her right hand and lowered herself so that her mouth was next to Renner’s ear. Lakyus, being next to them, was barely able to hear the first princess.

“Now listen well, little monster. You will not make fun of me like you did with that oaf of a brother we share. Remember this as a lesson. Never cross my path again.”

She whispered into Renner's ear, then stood up. Her hand was still on Renner's face.

"Now apologize!"

She demanded. Lakyus saw a glimpse of something pass through Renner's eyes. She wasn't sure what it was, but she knew that Renner was not giving in.

"APOLOGIZE! NOW!"

Yelled the princess once more.

"I... apologize..."

Muttered Renner, the first princess grinned.

"No, this won't do. Say it clearer. 'I apologize, your highness'. Say it!"

Carine said with a smug grin, Renner took a deep breath.

"I apologize... Your Whoreness."

If the situation was different, Lakyus might have laughed at the princess' words and mocking tone. The first princess on the other hand snarled and pushed Renner away once more, making her fall on the pavement, before storming away with her handmaidens in tow.

As her little body hit the hard marble, Lakyus heard a crack sound come from the impact. She immediately jumped at her friend's side.

"Renner! Are you okay?!"

She asked concerned. Her friend met her gaze. Lakyus froze. This was the first time she saw such a dead expression on the princess' face.

“My... my right arm... hurts... but I can still move it.”

She said as she tried to get up. Lakyus helped her and once Renner got up, she looked at her arm. It was swollen and a small area of skin was becoming darker and darker.

“We need to take you to a priest.”

Said Lakyus immediately. Renner covered the darkening area with her dress.

“No, I want to go to Satoru.”

She stated.

“Renner, I don’t think that is a great idea. In your condition-“

Lakyus was stopped by Renner’s left hand.

“I said I want to go to Satoru. As princess, I order you to take me there.”

She said more firmly. There was nothing else Lakyus could do. An order was an order. She just hoped Satoru had something to help Renner.

{Satoru’s P.O.V.}

The arcane magic caster known as Satoru waited in silence inside his shop. The only noise was coming from upstairs where Hilma was finishing the preparations for the celebration of the princess’ birthday.

He wanted to give the child a normal birthday party. He didn’t know much about parties to begin with. In his old world, he only went to some when he was very young and his memories about them were foggy. When he asked Hilma, he discovered that

birthday parties were a luxury only nobles or rich merchants could afford. Normal people didn't celebrate them.

It was quite sad if he had to be honest. He always thought that they were very important, especially for children, who could use them as a socializing moment. In Satoru's old world, there weren't all that many occasions to socialize outside of school and work.

Before his mind could lose itself in those memories, he shook his head. To be more precise, the princess' birthday was yesterday, but Satoru was aware that she couldn't come to visit him. After all, she was supposed to celebrate that day at her palace.

Due to his inexperience with such matters, he once asked Gazef about how a royal birthday was celebrated here. The answer he received was quite disturbing. Apparently, royal birthdays of first and even second princes were a great occasion for nobles to show their loyalty and support to them. In other occasions, when the heir wasn't important, such as in this case, the party was used as a way to speak about other matters, like an unofficial meeting. Little attention was paid to the actual person the party was dedicated to. The only gifts they received were from those who wanted to court them.

'No wonder she is all screwed up socially. What kind of sick world is this?' Satoru has asked himself that question a lot of times since he began to learn more about Renner's life and how the kingdom worked. It was specifically for that reason that he wanted to give the princess a normal party as all children should have.

He heard the door of his shop opening. He turned to see the tall figure of Gazef entering, followed by the usual two short cloaked figures.

“Good afternoon... Gazef... what happened to you?”

He asked after noticing the very troubled and tense expression he had on his face. Gazef approached him.

“The princess is hurt. Can you help her Satoru?”

He asked in a low tone. Immediately, Satoru’s senses were tense too. Were they attacked while coming here? Who would be so bold as to attack a princess in the middle of the street? And why didn’t Seven Hands know about this?

“[Black Screen]”

He cast his illusion spell.

“Now we cannot be seen from outside. Lakyus, help Renner remove her cloak please.”

The older girl obeyed and removed her friend’s cloak after removing her own. Satoru immediately knelt at Renner’s height. The princess grimaced as she showed Satoru her swollen right arm and a growing black spot on her shoulder. Satoru didn’t dare to touch her arm, fearing he would worsen her condition.

“What happened?”

He asked in a gentle tone.

“I fell.”

She answered. Satoru noticed Lakyus tensing. A lie. It was obvious, but why did she lie? This was the first time she did something like this. Satoru’s eyes focussed more on her face.

There were red marks of hands on both of her cheeks ‘Was she slapped?’ He asked himself.

Now that he thought about it more rationally, it was quite impossible that she was attacked while coming here. First, no one knew about her visits; and second, who would be mad enough to attack a royalty when Gazef was around?

Also, the fact that she didn’t even want to tell him about what happened could mean only one thing. The one who did it was powerful enough that they didn’t have to worry about the consequences of hurting a princess. There was only one group of people who could do it. Her family.

An image returned to Satoru in that moment. A man slapping a woman and pushing her down on the floor before storming out of a door, leaving said woman to sob on the ground. His fists clenched as the memory played in his mind.

“Why didn’t you go to a priest or at least a healer?”

He asked. The princess smiled a little.

“They wouldn’t let me come out for days. I wouldn’t be able to visit you for at least a week.”

She admitted with a sad expression. Satoru’s non-existent eyes widened. ‘Is she so desperate for affection that she would neglect her health? What the hell did they do to you Renner?’ He thought as he immediately opened his inventory. He grabbed a lesser healing potion. True, he had a limited number of them, but he couldn’t let a child he knew suffer like that, even less if said child was enduring her wounds only because she wanted to see him. Also, it was not like he could use them himself.

“Please drink this. It should make you feel better.”

Satoru said. Without hesitating, Renner grabbed the red potion with her left hand and downed it as fast as she could. Her whole body was immediately engulfed in a green aura for a few seconds. When the green aura disappeared, her arm was no longer swollen, the black spot disappeared from her shoulder, and even the red marks on her face were gone.

Renner looked at her body in wonder.

“Do you feel better now?”

Asked Satoru. The princess’ eyes returned to him. She gave him a little smile.

“Yes, I feel very well now. I had no idea healing potions were this effective. Thank you very much Satoru!”

She said more energetically, Satoru patted her head the way he knew she liked.

“To be truthful, it is the first time I have seen such a thing myself, princess. I have never seen a potion like that Satoru. You wouldn’t happen to sell those too, would you?”

Asked a surprised and relieved Gazef.

“Sorry Gazef, those are rare items made by a secret mixture from my land. I only have a handful of them. Unfortunately, I was never skilled in alchemy like some of my old friends.”

He said as Gazef nodded in understanding.

“I’m sorry Satoru. You wasted such a precious item.”

The sad voice of Renner reached him. He turned and patted the small child once more.

“Don’t say such things. It isn’t wasted if I used it to help a dear friend of mine.”

He said. For a second, he could swear he saw one of her devilish smiles pass through her face.

“Well, shall we go upstairs now?”

He finally asked, only just remembering the party he organized.

They all nodded as the three of them followed Satoru upstairs. He guided them to the closed door of the living room. He slowly opened it and invited Renner to enter the dark room. She didn’t hesitate to step inside.

Immediately, magical candles lit up all around the room revealing the inside of the room. It was decorated with flowers and banners of the kingdom. At the center, there was a table with a giant cake.

“Happy birthday, Princess Renner!”

The two individuals in the room said loudly. One was the young blonde woman that secretly led Seven Hands. The other was a child not much older than her. He had brown hair and green eyes. His name was Rayne, the child who wanted to be a magic caster.

For a moment, nothing happened. Satoru looked at Renner. For the first time since he met her, he saw a shocked expression on her face. Sure, he saw her surprised face a few times, but she never lost her composure like this.

The undead magic caster placed a hand on her shoulder.

“I thought you would appreciate a little party with only a few people you know. And of course, happy birthday Renner.”

She looked at him, those sky-blue eyes now singularly fixed on his mask.

“Did you do all of this... for me?”

She asked, uncertainty in her tone.

“Well, even if the idea came from me, Hilma and Rayne helped a lot. Hilma prepared the room, while Rayne enchanted the candles to make them light up and fly around.”

As he finished speaking, he felt two arms wrap around his legs as the princess tried to hug him the best she could.

“Thank you, Satoru.”

She thanked him. Satoru smiled internally before returning the hug. Once they separated, Renner went to Hilma and Rayne to thank them too, making the latter blush madly as he stuttered out something Satoru couldn't hear.

“I must say Satoru, I never saw the princess so happy before. I think you did an outstanding job.”

Complimented Gazef. Satoru simply nodded. ‘It is good to see everything worked out fine. Even if she is such a problematic and frighteningly intelligent child, the truth is that she is still a child. She will be easily influenced by what she experiences in these coming years and those experiences will define who she will become...’ He thought as he looked at the smiling princess.

They spent the next few hours sitting at the table, eating the cake. It was strange for Satoru to see such a familiar scene in a middle age setting. He himself was quite pained that he couldn't eat it since, from the children's expressions, it seemed delicious.

Finally, after some chatting, he thought it was the moment to bring out his present. He put his hand inside the familiar void that was his inventory and pulled out a decorated box from it. He carefully placed it in front of Renner who eyed it in wonder.

The box itself was made of metal with a covering of soft black velvet, highlighted by golden borders all around it. The princess tenderly opened it and looked inside.

She slowly put her hands inside and gently lifted the object for all to see. The object in question was a crown. A golden crown with 7 sapphires embedded all around it. The small blue magical aura around it was barely visible.

No one said a word. All their eyes were on the crown with shocked expressions all over their faces.

“This is the Crown of Perseverance. It belonged to a wise and cunning queen whose name was lost in the passing of the ages. It is a powerful magic item that protects the user from most mental attacks.”

His words made most of the present audience gasp. Satoru himself had no need for such an item since his natural immunity protected against mental spells. He remembered finding it in one of his last gacha pulls. What little information he gave was just a diluted version of the lore Yggdrasil provided in the item’s description.

He saw Renner’s eyes were now fixed on him. Her mouth curved upwards, giving him that devilish smile he so dreaded, but this time, Satoru didn’t flinch. That was because he recognized the look in her eyes. A look of gratitude and happiness.

“Well then, why don’t you try it on?”

The princess looked at the crown, confused by his words. The crown was far too big for her at the moment. She hesitated for a moment before trying it anyway. As soon as the crown touched her head, it morphed and adapted itself to her head's proportions.

"That's so cool!"

Exclaimed an ecstatic Lakyus.

"Ohhhhh..."

Spoke Rayne in surprise and wonder.

"A crown for the future, most beautiful princess of the kingdom. Paired with both her hair and eyes."

Noticed Hilma.

"Thank you... Satoru."

Renner said as a single tear fell from her right eye.

{Renner's P.O.V.}

When she was finally alone in her room that night, Renner could no longer suppress her joy. She jumped around like an excited rabbit. Even with everything else she experienced, she considered today to be one of the best days of her life.

Her Satoru showed how much he loved her. The party and all the preparation behind it made it very clear to her. Of course, the feast at the palace was far fancier, but it was nothing compared to what this smaller one gave her.

She would have preferred for the two of them to be alone, but it was still far too soon for that. In all honesty, she didn't mind too much. She liked both Lakyus and Gazef, they had their uses.

Hilma was a good and devoted underling. The boy, Rayne, showed potential too. Maybe he could be useful in the future. If Satoru invited him, it must be so.

Of course, there was also his gift for her. The Crown of Perseverance, in her opinion, was far greater than the one her father used in official occasions. She made sure to rub it all over her eldest sister's face that evening at dinner. She didn't say where it came from of course. She didn't want her stupid siblings pestering Satoru.

Her foolish mother thought it was a gift from some noble who wanted her hand in marriage and was rather disappointed by her choice to not say who the suitor was. Her father probably had his suspicions and she knew Gazef would tell him if asked. That was fine. Her father wasn't dumb enough to go around making that information public.

Speaking of the crown, she still had it on her. She took off her clothes and stood naked as the day she was born in front of the mirror. The crown gleamed brightly upon her head as she put a regal expression on her face. Maybe it was a bit premature, but she wanted to practice for her wedding night.

She tried various poses Hilma told her about. Nothing whorish, just poses men found generally enticing and attractive. She still didn't have curves to display them properly. She sighed. Sometimes she just wished she was older.

She stood there for some time, contemplating the events of the day. She couldn't remember the last time she shed a tear of joy in her life. Perhaps she never had before. It was a strange sensation, losing control over your own emotions.

She usually loved being in control, but today she discovered the charms of unpredictability. ‘How much more will I learn from you, my Satoru? The fire burning inside me is constantly fuelled by you. Will I, one day, be able to set the world on fire with it, I wonder?’ she asked herself.

Today had also been a dangerous day. She almost showed her true smile to everyone else. The first time, she had to hug Satoru to cover her face. The second time, she couldn’t cover it and just hoped the others were too busy ogling her gift. Her smile was only for her Satoru after all.

With those thoughts, the witch jumped on her bed. As usual, she used her clothes as a blanket so that she could be engulfed in Satoru’s scent. She took a few deep breaths before removing her new crown from her head and hugging it to her chest. There was no way she would let it lay unguarded in her room. If they wanted it, they would have to chop off her hands with it.

“Satoru... Satoru... Satoru...”

She whispered to herself as if it was a lullaby. The fire continued to burn fiercely in her heart for the rest of the night.

{4 months later}

{Arwintar’s Imperial Palace: Emperor’s private room}

Jircniv Rune Farlord El Nix, the new emperor of the empire, was just a boy, or so many thought when they crowned him. A boy easily controllable and malleable. They were wrong. He was no simple boy; he was an efficient machine.

Five months after his coronation, he had put all his family to the sword. Insects crawling a tower. This was what he said about them. After that, many began to fear him. He showed no sadness

from the demise of his own family. He will undoubtedly not show it for anyone else, either.

In this moment, the emperor sat on a luxurious bed in his private chamber. Keeping him company was the magic caster Fluder Paradyne, the person he trusted most in this world apart from himself.

“Are you sure I can’t do it gramps? I need to eliminate them if I want to advance my policies. Those bigots are just a bunch of fools.”

The 13-year-old blond emperor said coldly.

“I know, young Jir. The problem is that purging the ruling class so drastically will create disorder. Also, the military that supports you will be fairly weakened by the change. Normally that would be no problem, but the growing strength of Re-Estize worries me. They could use that single moment of weakness to strike with all their might.”

The magic caster said. The emperor nodded. Normally he wouldn’t have worried about the weak military power of the kingdom, but many of his spies reported the arrival of a new player to the great game. A mysterious magic caster who acted like a merchant and managed to take over both the Magician Guild and Adventurer’s guild in only a few months. From there, he simply solidified his power and began spreading his name around the kingdom.

His spy in the Re-Estize court confirmed that he could use 5th tier spells proficiently and that he claimed that was his limit. Jircniv was no fool, and neither was this magic caster if he managed to take over so many guilds in just a few months. The emperor was

sure that the magic caster didn't show all his power at once. That would be foolish. And the fact that he showed 5th tier like it was normal worried him greatly. In the best-case scenario, that was truly his limit. In the worst case, the kingdom might have found their own Fluder Paradyne.

The army of the kingdom might be weak, but if they deployed this magic caster with the warrior captain, Jircniv feared that even Fluder would not be enough to take them down.

"Are there any news?"

The boy asked. The old man nodded.

"Yes, we already knew that the man's name is Satoru. He claims to be 27, but I doubt it. If he really reached that level at that age, he might be the greatest caster ever to walk these lands. In addition, we know he apparently has a woman working closely to him. We are unsure if she is his lover. He also seems to be on very good terms with Gazef Stronoff."

The emperor nodded.

"The best-case scenario would be to convince him to pledge his loyalty to me. He could be both a great spy and ally. We should also investigate this woman to know how much she means to him. In the worst-case scenario, we can use her to make him stay at bay."

The emperor said. Fluder nodded once more.

"Then we are in luck since the last report says that the man in question is leaving for a trip."

The emperor raised a brow.

"And where is he directed?"

Asked the emperor, curious.

“Here.”

A.N.

And another chapter is done. I know, I know. Many of you are waiting for the Empire arc, but I still needed to do some character development before that. After all, it is one of the main points of this fanfiction. What would be the fun in rushing it?

Also, I want to address a certain person who PMed me (I won't say the name for privacy reasons). Basically, they called me a p*do for some of Renner's naked scenes. At first, I thought they were trolling me, but when they were confirmed to be serious, I had to explain what those scenes meant. To avoid more people doing the same, I will explain it here.

Renner taking off her clothes is a metaphorical gesture. She is basically taking off her “second skin,” her “princess” persona. In fact, if you noticed, once she takes off her “clothes/second skin,” she doesn't restrain herself anymore. Basically, showing how psychotic she is without anything holding her back. Her “clothes” are both a blessing and a curse. She cannot live without her “princess” persona, but at the same time this limits far too much of her other side, making her feel like she is in a cage. Satoru's mask has a similar meaning, but his pragmatic approach to things makes the difference feel far inferior to Renner's.

I know a lot of people don't like this kind of metaphor, but to be truthful, it is one of the things I enjoy most in stories. I love to speculate about different meanings in gestures and what they

may symbolize. I think that fanfictions in general are very lacking on this front and I would like to add more of this.

As always, let me know your thoughts with a review! See you next time!