

“Normal speech”

‘Thought’

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

Yep, still alive and kicking. Too bad for the long delay. I would have liked to avoid it. Oh, I will let you know that I am not having a writer’s block or anything similar. The problems that took me away from this story are totally external.

As always, I love you all, my dear readers, so I wanted to try and make up for this chapter’s lateness. Next chapter will come out in just a week (10 days max) from this. I hope this news will make you happy and I hope this kind of long wait never happens again. But yeah... life is a bitch sometimes and we gotta deal with it. Enjoy the chapter!

PS: A VERY late Happy New Year to all of you!

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (ZeroSenpai is so patient with me. Finally have alerts set up so I can see when I get a new chapter instead of accidentally ignoring him. I wonder what we have in store for today.)

Chapter 20: A Demon, a Devil and an Undead at the Academy

The young blond girl walked down the corridors of the Imperial Magic Academy like she owned the ground she was walking on. And who could blame her? Since the moment she arrived, she was hailed to be the most gifted human the Academy has ever seen since Fluder Paradyne himself. Her blond locks fell down her

back like a golden waterfall. Her blue eyes scanned her surroundings, meeting gazes of admiration, envy, and hate. But she didn't care about any of it. She had it all; a Talent, a magical aptitude, beauty and, to top it all off, she was the heir of a Count, a loving father who took great pride in his first daughter.

She glared at a group of first years who dared to ignore her as they passed by her. The youngsters immediately felt the intensity of her gaze falling on them and immediately turned to meet her piercing eyes. They were much taller than her but a simple look to the red robes she wore was enough to strike fear in them and they immediately all bowed their heads in a silent greeting. The young girl left before they could raise their heads. She had no time to lose with those wastes of space.

This wasn't the first time she was underestimated due to her petite figure and young age, and she got used to intimidating weak minded fools by now. She was a prodigy. Normally students could only join the academy when they turned 11 but she, due to her Talent and magical aptitude, was admitted at 8. In just 2 years, she got her red robes, signifying that she became a 2nd tier caster. But the thing that truly managed to scare even the 3rd tier casters in the Academy was the brooch pinned on the front of her robe. It was golden, with the Empire's symbol engraved in it with silver. That rare item was the symbol of her status as a member of the Chosen Thirty, a group of apprentices directly under the Imperial Court Wizard, Fluder Paradyne himself.

While the honour of being an apprentice of Fluder Paradyne was a great prestige, the Thirty also got many perks from their position. One of which was to evaluate and possibly compile a request for the expulsion of other students for solid reasons.

Which meant she could get people expelled for disrespecting her or accusing them of misbehaviour inside academic grounds.

She already did that once, when, a year after joining the academy, an older student tried to push her around like she was some servant only because he was a 2nd tier caster. He went back home by the end of the week. Since then, no one dared to try and defy or disrespect her.

As soon as she entered her private room, another perk of being a member of the Thirty, she was immediately greeted by a brown-haired girl a bit older than her.

“Welcome back miss Arche; are Lord and Lady Furt well?”

She asked politely. Her name was Zena. She had brown eyes and wore a maid outfit. The small metal collar around her neck represented her status as a slave.

“Everything is fine back home Zena. Father is as ecstatic as ever to hear about my progress and mother is still recovering. The healers said that it wasn’t an easy delivery, but she will recover nevertheless.”

The young Arche answered as she unbuttoned her traveling cloak, which covered her back and arms. Zena immediately grabbed it and placed it away in her wardrobe. The brown-haired girl was just 3 years older than Arche and her mother insisted that she accompany Arche during her time in the Academy.

Arche herself wasn’t sure why her mother was so insistent about it, but she complied, nonetheless. She liked Zena after all; even if she was a slave, the two of them grew up together since Zena was 5 and she was 2. Zena’s father was a farmer who owed Arche’s father a lot of money and he ended up selling his own

daughter into, at the time, momentary slavery until he could pay his debts. That didn't last long though, since after only 2 years he got himself killed in a brawl among drunkards at an inn.

Zena became Arche's playmate, and the young noble grew fond of her older companion over time. Nowadays, she almost considered her an older sister. That was until a week ago, when she received a letter announcing the birth of her two twin little sisters. She immediately ran home to ensure her mother's condition and see her siblings.

To say that it was love at first sight would be an understatement. She absolutely adored her little sisters. They were just so cute, with their puffy faces and short blond hair so similar to hers. When she was in the same room as them, they both always tried to get her attention while cooing so cutely she couldn't resist picking them up to cuddle them. Unfortunately, she was too petite, and her mother only allowed her to take them up one at a time.

"Anything new around here Zena? I hope no one tried to take advantage of my absence to do something because, if that's the case, I will make sure there will be hell to pay!"

She declared, quoting one of her earliest experiences with boys trying to do disgusting stuff, like kissing, with Zena, who, of course, didn't want to. The luckiest ones got only some burns while others got directly expelled. She wasn't known as the Demon Child for no reason, after all.

"Not really. Sir Mellion came and asked for your whereabouts. I simply answered that you were away for personal reasons," the maid answered.

‘Good that ass can die in hell for all I care!’ she thought as the face of a not so skinny noble came to her mind. He was one of her suitors. One of those her father considered before her Talent was revealed. He had a good lineage, but he was totally unsufferable, thinking himself as the second coming of Fluder Paradyne or something asinine like that. Of course, she already made it clear to him and her father that they will never marry. No matter what. While her father seemed to be receptive, the noble heir seemed only to get more persistent with his undesired advances.

“On the other hand, today Headmaster Fluder will come to visit the Academy alongside the Emperor. The rumours say that they are escorting an important foreign magic caster for a tour of the Academy.”

At those words, Arche almost tripped as she was removing her heavy robes. ‘Master Fluder is... giving a tour to someone?... Alongside the Emperor... what the hell?... Master Fluder doesn’t even have time to train us but... he is here personally for this magic caster?’ her mind wondered in bemusement.

This must have been the talk of the whole Academy by now. Fluder Paradyne, famous for delegating everything unrelated to magic to others, taking out time from his day to tour someone around... with the emperor himself no less. This magic caster must be someone truly important.

‘Didn’t a magic caster from the Re-Estize Kingdom arrive a week before I departed?’ she wondered. At the time, she was so concerned about her mother giving birth to her siblings that she totally ignored anything else, rumours and news included.

‘Maybe I should give them a look?’ She was really curious to use her All-Seeing Eyes on them.

She was planning on getting some sleep after her journey back to the Academy, but now her interest was piqued. She wanted to get to the bottom of this whole situation.

“Change of plans then!”

She said mostly to herself, even if Zena gave her a confused look.

“Zena, fetch me some lighter clothes. I’m going to search for Master Fluder and see this new magic caster with my own eyes!”

She smirked. Yes, she will get to the bottom of this just fine.

{Imperial Magic Academy}

{Satoru’s P.O.V:}

The undead magic caster marvelled at the sight of the Academy. He, of course, already saw the impressive internal architecture during his previous visit, but, at the time, he was so early that the Academy was almost empty, with only a few students still running around.

Now that it was almost midday, the Academy seemed like a completely different place from before. Students running around to get to classes or who knew where, teachers trying to give order to that chaos and, what seemed to be, servants or maids joining the fray while bringing around giant piles of books. He was quite relieved that he could observe all of that from a safe distance, in a corridor used only by authorized staff.

“As you can see, Sir Satoru, our Academy is very... lively during these hours.”

The old magic caster, Fluder Paradyne, explained to him, answering his previous question about why they didn't use the main entrance to enter the Academy. The masked undead nodded in understanding.

"A valid point, Sir Paradyne. I am afraid I was too used to my old order, where they were very restricted on who could join, and we never had such numbers going around."

Satoru elaborated, eliciting a glance from the long-bearded man.

"Oh, and how many were part of this order, if I may ask?"

He inquired with a not too curious tone but still interested enough to press for an answer.

"41 members."

He answered curtly.

"I see, a small group then, did you have a leader?"

The most powerful human magic caster asked.

"Not really, no. We always decided on what to do next by voting."

He explained, his mind returning to those good times, eliciting a spark of joy that was immediately suppressed by the consequent pain of loss.

"More like a congregation then, a very rare organization to see these days... it reminds me of the tales of old when magic casters formed small groups often in conflict with each other. Nowadays we have only kingdom sized organizations. It is truly a shame. Competition always brought advancement in the past," Fluder explained in his usual deep and slow tone. Satoru didn't comment due to the foul mood that his friends' memory brought

to him. In that moment, he felt a small hand grab his larger and gloved one and squeeze it. He looked down, only to see the smiling face of the diabolic princess looking up at him with one of her smiles, which lasted only a moment before returning to a more restraint one.

He didn't know why, but that creepy smile brought some of his spirit back up. In just over a year, he began to grow fond of her presence. He pushed to the back of his mind the memories of his old guildmates and instead focussed on the present.

“Sir Paradyne, I can't help but notice the difference in attire of various students. Is there a meaning behind it? Or are they just part of different classes?”

He asked, now curious to have the answer to something he noticed as soon as he entered the Academy.

“Uhm, yes, there is indeed a meaning behind the colours... Blue robes are given to those who just joined the academy, while green robes signify the proficiency of a magic caster with 1st tier spells, red robes signify the student's proficiency with 2nd tier spells, black robes are given to the few who reach a good level of skills with 3rd tier spells and finally white robes are afforded to staff members and teachers.”

The old man explained to Satoru who nodded.

“There are no differences in treatment due to age here. If a student is skilled enough at 13 to use 2nd tier spells, they will receive their robes while a 18 years old student may still be stuck with his green robes due to lack of skill.”

The older man elaborated as he guided the undead magic caster, emperor, princess, and young heir to another area of the Academy.

“Wow!”

Lakyus exclaimed as they arrived at their destination. A giant hall not too dissimilar from the previous one, but considerably less crowded, stretched before them. It was mostly made out of white marble with what seemed to be a small circular arena in the centre. The ceiling was certainly the most eye-catching part of the hall, since it shined with golden light which served to illuminate the whole hall.

“This is known as the Ascension Hall, even if many students prefer to refer to it as the Hellzone.”

The headmaster explained with a chuckle, but before Satoru could ask any question, Lakyus intervened.

“Why such a dreadful title for such a beautiful area?”

She asked in clear confusion. The old man’s eyes fell on her.

“Well, you see, young heir, this area is destined for those who desire to take the trial to show they are deserving of new robes... those who succeed will get their new robes and reach a new status inside the Academy... but those who don’t risk expulsion if they don’t show enough growth since the last time, they attempted the trial.”

He explained to a dumbfounded Lakyus while Satoru was nodding in approval. ‘It may sound harsh, but the system seems to be meritocratic at least. Much more than what I could say about my school or company...’ he mused internally.

“This system allows only the best of the best to be part of the magical force of the Empire. It is also a safe method to avoid corruption since the jury of the test will be composed by not less than 10 teachers and all of them must agree on passing the student for the scholar to receive their new robes.”

Added the Emperor, who had mostly been silent for the entire time, apart from his formal greeting when they first met earlier that morning.

“Then, what happens to a student after graduation?”

Asked Renner, who, like the emperor, had mostly remained silent during the whole tour. The old magic caster took a moment to stroke his long white beard before answering.

“The fact is, Your Highness, that we don’t have an official graduation from the Academy. At 18, most of the students have already been expelled and joined the army or joined a group of Workers. Those who remain, have already been taken as acolytes by some of their teachers who saw promise in them... one way or another they all leave the Academy.”

Instructed the 6th tier magic caster.

“Are you perhaps saying, Sir Paradyne, that nobles have no power on the Academy?”

Asked then Gazef, who remained silent in the background like a shadow, following them without a word, his eyes never leaving the form of the princess.

“I can’t say some haven’t tried... Sir Stronoff, but I’m afraid... they found quite a bit of resistance against their little word games here... this is a place of learning and progress, not some cheap

tavern where you can have all you want as long as you've got a few coins."

Answered the old arcane caster nonchalantly. If Satoru had to guess Gazef's opinion judging his face, he would say that the Warrior Captain looked pretty impressed by the words of the Court Wizard.

"Yes, yes, we are all aware of your dislike for noble titles gramps; you have made it clear enough when you refused one from my father when he offered it to you."

Grumbled the emperor.

"Now, now, Your Majesty, we don't want to bore the guests with these boring political talks, now, would we? I guess, it would be better to proceed to the internal gardens."

The old man said before turning and guiding them away from the great hall. Satoru was a bit baffled by those two's relationship; the first time he saw them together, at that dinner, they didn't seem so close. Now they looked like a grandfather and a grandson sharing a day together. 'First impressions may be misleading I guess... or the situation was too formal to let such a relationship be openly shown? Well, in that case, I was not the problem since they just seem to act normal around me now... maybe it was-'. His train of thought was interrupted by Renner's whisper.

"They don't seem to like nobles, do they?"

She whispered under her breath, giving form to Satoru's lingering thought. In response, he just squeezed her hand gently to avoid giving voice to his thoughts on the matter just in case someone could hear them. They may have been courteous till now, but

Satoru knew better than to lower his guard just because someone seemed to be friendly. Punitto Moe would have scolded him relentlessly, otherwise.

The group of five moved down some more corridors, meeting only a few teachers along the way. All of them bowed in respect to the Emperor and Court Wizard. Finally, they reached an arch that gave way to an open garden where some students were laying around in the grass, relaxing or reading.

“These are the internal gardens, a private ground where students can find some relief from their usual... academic life.”

The old magic caster explained. In just the few moments they have been there, some of the students already noticed them and were either looking at them in amazement or whispering among each other. As the noise was becoming louder and louder a new voice thundered over all the others.

“SILENCE! There will be no loud chatting here! You are no plebians inside an inn! You are students of the most prestigious Magic Academy of the continent!”

At those words, every student lowered their gaze and fell silent. The one to shout was a middle aged, tall, thin man, with blonde hair and a well-groomed moustache. After he made sure that all the students returned to their previous occupation, he approached the group, deeply bowing first to the Emperor, and then to the Court Wizard.

“Your Majesty, Lord Paradyne, I deeply apologize for our student’s behaviour; they will be punished for their actions if you wish so.”

At those words, Fluder simply made a gesture as if to push aside the matter physically.

“Do not bother, Calais, there is no need for it. Let the sheep gawk at the wolves all they want.”

The old magic caster answered with his usual deep and bored tone. After hearing the headmaster’s words, the man known as Calais, turned toward Satoru, inspecting him from head to toe with his hard, leaf-green eyes.

“You must be Sir Satoru, from the Re-Estize Kingdom. I am honoured to meet such an esteemed magic caster. Words of your prowess and exploits reached even the ears of the Academy more than half a year ago.”

He said in a cordial tone as he offered his hand, which Satoru shook.

“The pleasure is mine... but, I’m afraid, you find me at a disadvantage.”

The undead said, eliciting a small smile from the teacher.

“Apologizes, where are my manners? My name is Ugulas Calais, also known as the Blind Snake. I am a member of this esteemed Academy’s staff and a 4th tier magic caster specialized in fire, ice and lightning magic. I am also part of the Chosen Thirty under Lord Paradyne,” he stated while presenting himself.

‘He must be an important man. I have heard of these Chosen Thirty before. The most talented casters under the direct tutelage of Fluder himself... but what’s with that strange nickname?’. Once again, before he could give voice to his thoughts, Lakyus preceded him.

“Blind Snake? It’s... a peculiar title.”

She said in a mildly interested tone. The blonde magic caster spared her a glance.

“Oh yes, I have been given that title after being able to exterminate a pit of Basilisks with my eyes closed to avoid their Petrifying Gaze; that was around 10 years ago.”

He explained with some pride, eliciting an amazed and excited expression from Lakys.

“That is indeed a great achievement! The battle must have been a sight to behold!”

That choice of words caused the magic caster to chuckle.

“Are you looking for magical instruction child? You certainly seem to have the spirit for it.”

He asked, but Lakys denied with a shake of her head.

“No, I’m training to be a swordswoman! But magic is still a very fascinating and respectable battle style.”

She explained and the man, surprising Satoru, smiled.

“Well then, a warrior who can respect the art of magic. Something more unique than rare these days... if that is your path then let me give you advice; always aim for the hands. A magic caster will be hard pressed to cast magic with an injured hand. The pain also helps in breaking their concentration.”

He explained to an attentive Lakys, who nodded in understanding.

“Well then, it would be better for us to proce-“

Fluder's words were interrupted by a shout coming from the other side of the garden. The whole group's attention was diverged to the noise; there stood two students, one with green and the other with red robes. The green one was looming over the red one.

"DID YOU HEAR ME RANCE! I CHALLENGE YOU TO A DUEL! YOU BASTARD!"

The green one shouted. Calais immediately mobilized toward the students with a murderous expression on his face. Lakyus decided to follow him and so the whole group followed her at a distance.

"What do the two of you think you are doing! Do you think we are in a fish market!"

He roared. The green student turned, only now realizing the teacher's presence.

"M-Master Calais! I-I apologise! But this bastard must answer for his crimes!"

The student stuttered out; the teacher rolled his eyes before addressing the red student.

"What did you do this time, Rance?"

He asked in a tired tone.

"I did nothing wrong."

The red robed boy defended himself in a lazy and relaxed tone, as if this was a common occurrence.

"Don't you lie! You bastard! You defiled my betrothed! Celine!"

The green boy shouted as his hood fell off revealing a dark brown mane and enraged blue eyes.

“Who?”

The other boy, Rance, asked in a bored tone.

“CELINE! My fiancée! Long brown hair and green eyes!”

The green boy exploded in exasperation. In that instant, a light of realization seemed to pass through Rance’s eyes.

“Oh yeah, I remember now... she was quite a wild ride!”

The red boy exclaimed before being grabbed by the robe by the green one, even more enraged than before.

“YOU PIECE OF SHIT!”

The brown-haired boy roared as the hood fell from Rance’s head revealing platinum white hair and green eyes.

“Maybe you aren’t able to satisfy her, Mountain. Maybe she needed a true man.”

Rance taunted.

“IT’S MONTAIR! YOU BASTARD!”

But before anything more could happen, Calais decided to intervene and separated the two with a spell.

“That’s enough! Stop this madness at once! Montair, return to your room, we will speak about this later! Rance, you go to my office, this time you are not getting away from this, no matter how good you think you are!”

He ordered, but before anyone could move, a new voice intervened.

“No, that will not be necessary.”

The slow tone of Fluder was low but managed to be heard over every other noise around him as he advanced through the garden and stopped next to Calais.

Montair’s face became as white as a sheet and even the playful Rance lost his grin as the legendary magic caster entered his field of vision.

“A challenge was issued... and I think that this could be a wonderful occasion to entertain our guests and show them the sparring area at the same time.”

He said, as his eyes passed from one student to the other. Calais seemed like he wanted to say something but refrained himself.

“So, what do the two of you say? Will you give us an entertaining spectacle?”

Asked the Court Wizard as the two students gulped.

{Jircniv’s P.O.V:}

What a good stroke of luck, yes, this was truly a fortuitous coincidence, and, as expected, Fluder immediately jumped on it. ‘The old fox may be uninterested in politics, but he certainly still knows how to play the game’ the emperor thought in satisfaction.

With this, their plan would run even more smoothly and naturally than before.

‘Soon, we will see your true colors magic caster’.

“Have you seen something that made you happy, Your Majesty?”

The voice of the devil disguised as a child reached his ears, making his small grin disappear. As he turned toward her, his eyes avoiding hers at any cost.

“No, Princess Renner, I was simply amused by this unexpected turn of events.”

He answered smoothly in his usual tone ‘as long as we don’t make eye contact, I will be fine’ he tried to calm his internal turmoil.

“Me too! Aren’t we similar, then, Your Majesty? To think that someone would try to steal what belongs to another, by using cheap tricks and showing off... really despicable...”

The devil said in her fake light tone. Something was wrong and Jircniv just couldn’t put his hand on it, until he understood ‘n-no, i-impossible, how could she know?! This whole time...’ as those thoughts ran through his head a drop of cold sweat went down his spine.

“You...”

He whispered.

“It would be a shame for the empire to pick fights they can’t win.”

She muttered under her breath, as she passed Jircniv, only to join Satoru’s side.

The emperor steeled his trembling hands ‘I will not lose, even against a devil like you’ he thought as security returned to his mind. Who cared if she predicted his plan? That meant nothing if she couldn’t stop it anyway. That arcane magic caster will be his, and once he was... ‘I will crush your pathetic kingdom alongside

you' the young emperor thought as his confidence returned to him and a sly smile graced his lips.

And so, the demon and the gryphon began their silent confrontation.

{Arche's P.O.V:}

She searched the whole Academy up and down, but no trace of her Master could be found. 'He must have used staff only routes to navigate around it, or... I am incredibly unlucky' but even as she thought that she was pretty sure that the Headmaster walking around students would have caused more than just a few rumors.

In that moment a newbie passed in front of her without even noticing her, which brought only more irritation to her already annoyed self. She grabbed the back of his blue robes with her staff and brought him back to her.

"And where are you going with all this urgency? Uhm?"

The student didn't even seem to be surprised or scared, just excited.

"Didn't you hear?! Rance and Montair are going to duel! And Headmaster Paradyne is there too!"

He said as he freed himself from her staff and ran away toward the sparring area. As her mind gave sense to his words, her legs were already moving in the same direction as the newbie. It didn't take long to see dozens of students doing the same, she even saw some 3rd tier caster use [Fly] to get ahead of all the others.

She noticed that all the students were converging toward the fanciest arena, a small colosseum created to mimic the one in the capital, but which could only contain 200 people at full capacity.

As one of the Thirty, she didn't even bother to try and use the main entrance and instead went directly toward the VIP entrance guarded by one teacher she recognized as Calais. He looked nervous much to Arche's confusion. She never saw him nervous before. He let her in without a word, nonetheless.

The VIP room wasn't very large and the giant of a man she found herself behind after entering didn't help. The man, or at least she assumed him to be so, wore a dark, hooded robe which covered his entire body, his hands were hidden by a pair of metallic looking gloves and even his face, barely visible from her position, was completely concealed by a dark mask with blue gems in the place of eyes.

An intimidating sight, to be sure, but it was nothing compared to what came next, after the man noticed her presence.

“Another student of yours, Sir Paradyne? They surely are persistent; she seems rather young though.”

His deep voice seemed to echo inside her soul as a chilling sensation washed over her. ‘W-What is this? I-I’m completely stuck! I can’t move!’ she panicked inside, as her body froze on the spot. In a complete state of panic, she activated her Talent, and what she saw completely shocked and baffled her. She saw nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a trace of latent magical power, which should be impossible. Even the lowest and most unskilled person in the world still had a small trace of magic. Even her newborn sisters had a small magical trace, but this man, no,

this thing didn't. It was like watching a white sheet. And that terrified her even more.

"Ah yes, my youngest acolyte. She is rather gifted, but I will have her sent away if her presence is unwanted."

The voice of her mentor snapped her out of her panicked mind.

"Oh no, that will not be necessary, I see no reason for her to leave."

The man answered.

"Go ahead young one, go and join young Lakyus over there."

The man placed a hand on her shoulder and gestured toward an empty space next to a blond girl slightly older than her. Arche forced her body to step away from the anomaly that was that man and silently walked toward the empty seat.

"Are you a student here?"

The blond girl asked her with a smile. The heir of the Furt family just nodded. She didn't trust her voice in that moment.

"Shh, Lakyus, it is about to begin."

She heard another female voice call out. Arche turned only to see a younger blond girl with ocean blue eyes and next to her, the emperor himself. Her eyes almost bulged out at the sight; she didn't believe she would meet the emperor like this. In her head, she was far more formal and composed, and look at her now, a wrecking mess ready to blow up.

She averted her eyes from the people around her and instead focused on the arena down there. She only saw this arena used once before. The combat area itself was made out of a black stone enchanted to resist most low tier magic and a white circle

delimited the border of the fighting area. If a challenger stepped, or was sent, out of it, they would lose.

But that was very rare, since the arena was almost 30 meters in diameter, and very few used magic so destructive that it would launch their adversary that far away.

Currently, two boys found themselves down in the arena. One she knew, the 2nd tier magic caster, Rance Laffor, a well-known womanizer. A disgusting pig in her humble opinion, but even her could not deny his good looks. The other looked quite plain in comparison. He could belong to a minor noble family, but she wasn't sure.

The referee was one of the teachers she had less interaction with while in the Academy and she couldn't remember his name.

"The duel issued by Montair Ivo Lais to Rance Laffor is about to begin!"

The referee announced loudly as the fully occupied arena cheered as one.

"Are you ready Mountain? Or are you pissing yourself already?"

Taunted Rance.

"I'M GOING TO MURDER YOU! YOU LITTLE SHIT!"

Roared back the now named Montair.

"3... 2... 1... BEGIN!"

As the referee announced the beginning of the duel, Montair immediately rose his wooden staff.

"[Magic Arrow]"

The magical arrow immediately formed and proceeded to shoot toward the red robed student who just rolled to avoid it. That should have been impossible. Magic arrow could not be so easily avoided by simply rolling aside.

“A rather cunning tactic, isn’t it?”

She heard the deep voice of the terrifying man coming from her left. She glanced at him only to see him seating next to her mentor who just stroke his beard.

“To use a taunt to distract the opponent and cast an illusion at the same time. Quite cunning, but it relies to much on the temper and inexperience of the opponent; wouldn’t you say Sir Satoru?”

The 6th tier magic caster asked to the now named Satoru, who just nodded in agreement.

“Really Mountain?! What is this? A children playground?”

Rance continued to taunt as Montair continued to cast [Magic Arrow] at him as the other student proceeded to dodge every last one of them. Arche was a little taken aback. As a 2nd tier magic caster, Rance should be able to end this pretty quickly. By using [Thunderlance] or even [Shock wave], the opponent would not be able to protect themselves with just 1st tier spells.

“He is already getting tired; such is the burden of inexperience.”

At those words uttered by the masked magic caster, her gaze returned to the two in the arena, and indeed she saw a sweaty Montair forcing a continuous barrage of spells in hope of one hitting his target, until he stopped as his mana decreased to critical levels.

“Are you done?”

Rance asked, this time in a more serious tone.

“Now it is my turn, isn’t it?”

He continued as his tone got darker.

“You know... you are really unlucky... if this was just a normal spar, I would have just ended it here, but since the most prestigious Court Wizard is watching us... I think I will just give a demonstration of my power... at the expense of your life!”

Rance roared the last part for all to hear as he pointed the palm of his hand toward his opponent.

“FIREBALL”

As the student called out his spell, Arche gawked. ‘How does he know a 3rd tier spell at that age? Even the most gifted magic users are unable to learn a 3rd tier spell before being at least 16!’ she thought. The other boy tried to cast a 2nd tier spell known as [Minor Shield] to try and at least absorb part of the coming damage.

But then, nothing came. The red robed boy just smirked as he put down his hand. Montair on the other hand had completely depleted his mana and probably soiled himself in fear. A few moments of silence passed before the noble heir fell on the enchanted black stone, probably unconscious from mana exhaustion.

“The winner is Rance Laffor!”

Called out the referee as the red robed student just bowed toward the crowd spending a bit longer while bowing toward the VIP box.

“A most surprising finale. I didn’t expect a bluff like that.”

Said Satoru as he applauded alongside the crowd.

“Yes, it was a fine tactic.”

Agreed the Court Wizard.

“Still, to show off against a weaker and less experienced opponent. I would not count it as a great achievement; he would make a fine actor though.”

The masked arcane caster pointed out.

“Yes, I must agree. This was more of a spectacle to be appreciated by the inexperienced who could not see the flaws in it.”

Once again agreed her mentor.

Arche was surprised. She never heard her mentor use such a colloquial tone with anyone before. ‘He almost behaves as if this Satoru was... his equal? But that... that would be impossible... right?... how could an unknown magic caster equal in power the greatest and oldest human arcane magic caster alive?’ she assured herself, this must just be a cordial tone her mentor used with those who weren’t directly under him.

‘Still, he has great skill and experience... I learned much today... and I must treasure it!... He still remains terrifying though...’ she thought as she glanced again at the masked magic caster with her Talent, but still, she got the same result as before.

“All this fighting actually reignited these old bones’ fighting spirit... it is always refreshing to see youngsters compete against each other for glory and fame.”

The Court Wizard stated with a small chuckle and an amused tone.

“Yes, indeed, these are the experiences that will help them grow. It is almost nostalgic...”

Added the magic caster known as Satoru.

“Well then, since we are in agreement, and it has been almost a century since my last exciting battle, would you agree to a friendly spar here and now, Sir Satoru?”

Arche gawked as her mind elaborated her mentor words. Surprise graced the faces of the other listeners and even the masked magic caster seemed to be taken aback by the older man’s proposal.

One thing was for sure. This would not be a day easily forgotten in the years to come for the Academy.

A.N.

And done! Fufufufu... cliffhanger! Oh well, there’s good news though. You will just have to wait a week for the next chapter.

Also, Arche-chan is here! And, oh boy, let’s hope she is not getting on Bone Daddy’s blacklist again. Also, as you can see, this Arche is pretty special. She has already been a noble for a year more than canon and she has not lost her title right now.

Well, that said, I know a lot of you will look forward to the duel between Fluder and Satoru, so make sure to leave a review with your opinion or any thoughts about the chapter. Remember, reviews are the fuel of authors and help us to go on and get inspiration!

Till next time! Stay safe! And let’s hope for a better 2022!