Chapter 246 - Tsuan's Past and Violent Devourer Hal'Konk

I had the finger Catiza turn into Tsuan. He wasn't naked, but wore simple clothing consisting of one linen cloth. Apparently they could tamper with their clothing to some extent when outside.
Tsuan stretched his body as if performing radio calisthenics. Looks like he was checking the general state of his body's joints.

"...Boss, I can freely move my body."

"I can see as much."

"Yeah, it's weird. Recently I've been always feeling as if I was asleep." With those words, Tsuan stretched his arm, and looked at the fingertips.

The muscles on his arms looked surprisingly tight.

"A sensation of sleeping, you say?"

"It doesn't allow me to sense the outside. Catiza has..."

"Endure it. Especially the times when you're my finger or arm, okay?"

"N-No need to mention it. I mean, Boss, you're my, no, our Emissary of Light Evil." His tone gave away that he was slightly flustered about something.

It might be related to something said in his mental conversation with Catiza and Purin. Well, that's their privacy. Let's avoid meddling in that.

"So, Tsuan, I want to hear about your past."

"Past..." Tsuan's shaved eyebrow that had a scar reacted by twitching while he muttered that word.

"It's fine to keep it in the range of what you can tell me."

"Roger...I don't mind telling you anything I can, boss. I come from one of the cities in【Religious State Hesliphat】called【Outer Demon City Lindabalm】. It's a pretty big city."

"Religious State Hesliphat, huh...?"

The village where I saved Rubia... Fortona, the city where I made contact with Water Goddess Akreshys, was also in Hesliphat's territory. It was the country of the adventurer Zaji who took an arrow to his knee.
I wonder whether Zaji is still staying over there.

"...Boss, did you happen to visit the religious state?"

"Yeah, I went to the【Beltzam Villa】and【Fortona】, the eastern【Holy Kingdom Arkamneris】, the even further eastern【Ancient Empire Befaritz】, and also【Sadeyula's Forest】."

"Boss..."

"What's up?"

"No, seriously, you're way amazin'. I mean, in my eyes that's incredible since you're the Emissary of Light Evil...but you see, if you speak of the【Great Forest of Evil Haunts】spreading out east of the holy kingdom, it's the area with the famous【Tear of the Spirit World】, a cause of the crusade, y'know? Demons pop out from that place in swarms...a place full of demons you can't do anything about without an army corps at your side...you did well to get through such a place..."

It seemed to be surprising for Tsuan.

"Well yeah. But, I just went through it in a beeline for the sake of a certain objective. It was a trip, or rather, adventure of me passing through the forest at an astounding speed."

"For an objective? What kind of objective was it?"

"Right now she isn't here, but it was to keep a promise with my black cat, Rollodeen. I have fulfilled that promise now, resulting in her regaining her divine beast form."

"Ah, that ridiculously strong kitty, eh? I can agree with that...again, suddenly voices...from within my head..."

Tsuan was a cool man with a bucktooth, but somehow...his eyes become crossed whenever he's talking with the main host Catiza in his mind. His face is oddly funny then.

"...I see, okay."

"Come again?"

At that question, Tsuan's eyes returned to normal, and he answered, "...Catiza said she was frightened that she might have been eaten during her time as caterpillar, or somethin' like that."

"Okay, so, our conversation got a bit off-track, but I'd like you to tell me about your past, stuff like your youth and so on."

"Sure. So, in my youth...I was a templar affiliated to the foreign office of the curia's section 3."

"Section 3? I have heard that there's a Labyrinth Administration Bureau or an 8th Demon Extermination Agency, but is that somehow related?"

"It's as you say. And my ex-wife, who I divorced, should be living in Lindabalm, my hometown. I wonder whether she's still leading a happy life..."

Painful emotions kept appearing and disappearing on Tsuan's face.

"What's the name of your ex-wife?"

"Vivian."

Vivian, eh? His wish to meet her was written all over his face.

"...If you want to meet your ex-wife...I think it's still far down the line, but I guess I'll head over to【Lindabalm】at some point?"

"Eh? That's okay?" Tsuan's face brightened up at once.

"Yeah, I don't mind. After the auction, kind of like when I'm on a journey anyway. Though I think you still gotta wait for a good chunk of time..."

"No problem! My hometown, eh...? I wanna see the face of my ex just once, even if it's from a distance."

...Is it what you call loving someone even after separating?

"Is your ex-wife an actress or songstress?"

"She's a beauty, but she hasn't entered any of those theater troupes the pope likes so much. My ex-wife Vivian is my childhood friend, y'know? I don't wanna boast, but she's a real babe. And we had a relationship of having promised each other to grow old together. When I was promoted to templar, she was really happy for me. Back then was the happiest time of my life..."

Back then...

"However, the times of me being away from home because of work increased, and we started to grow distant..." Tsuan kept speaking while his expression took a turn for the worse. "...We fought, and I left Vivian...I guess it's owed to that...as is obvious from the wound on my face, I blundered in a battle against demons, my job as templar, and got heavily injured. My life fortunately...was saved by the healing magic of a high-ranking priest, who possessed the holy symbol on his cheek or at the outer corner of his eye. However, with this injury as reason...I retired from being a templar. Because I had a face I couldn't show to the others, I ran away from my hometown...and before I realized, I had embarked on a【Great Desert Goldix】journey. While passing through many smaller oasis villages, desert cities, and religious cities, I successfully worked as escort of peddlers as I listened to rumors about the desert thieves band【Divine Terrifying Ogres】, blood bone nymphs, and the Billymaneck Company, and managed to safely cross the great desert and the Rad Pass."

Afterwards I kept listening to his long story about his long journey of visiting various cities in South Mahaheim. When I had heard the basic rundown, I asked him about the single digits of Section 8.

"...The single digits of the Section 8 Demon Extermination Agency, eh? If it's Linkalsen, Dacotesolm, or Fobin, I happened to see them when they came and left the curia. They boasted about having destroyed several undead flocks in the outskirts of Lindabalm while donning somewhat different types of expressions, ones tinged with madness... They were a largely built man, a slender, handsome man, and a petite beautiful woman, but especially the tall guy, Linkalsen, has abnormally sharply-chiseled features. Earrings filled with mana, needles, and long, narrow objects seemed to have been stabbed onto his well-defined face as if forming a new skin...he was

weird and scary." [efn_note]Reminds me of Illumi in HxH[/efn_note]

...Hee. Fear...feels kind of like a terror knight.
He said that just those three had slaughtered a large amount of monsters. Just going by their dreadfulness and madness, I suppose it's set in stone that they possess abilities exceeding those of Mad Knight.

"...I see. Thanks for telling me."

"...Speaking of templars, boss, you seem to also use light spears that would put any templar to shame? Catiza telepathically said that it's amazing, and that you've used the light spear spell without chanting..."

His eyes had become crossed once again. I'll leave him alone.
Next I'm going to try out the cloth armor coat I had appraised. I stared at the surface of my item box on the right wrist. In the center was a glass panel, similar to the ones covering the dial of a watch. The panel's borders were adorned with solar prominence-like symbols.
I retrieved Hal'Konk's dark green coat, and the black leather Arzen Boots from within the item box. Next I put on the boots with the leather at the ankles spontaneously tightening with a whoosh.
Ooh...awesome. They were also neat during the training the other day, but they are damn fine boots, I must say. They've even got a feature to automatically match the feet's size. And, I could feel how my physical abilities went up by just wearing the boots. It looks like they will take care of me for many years to come.
Next up is this dark green coat. It's something that was called High King Hal'Konk and Violent Devourer Hal'Konk in the spirit world, and it seems to test the mental fortitude of its wearer, but...I wonder, how is it...going to feel in my case?
While feeling a mixture of anticipation and anxiety, I put my arms into the Hal'Konk coat wearing it atop my leather clothes. Immediately after I tried putting it on while gently straightening the creases of the dark green fabric, my mana got absorbed by the inner side of the coat.
Then, a crack formed on just the metal plating of the protector located on my right shoulder. A flash of light surged out of that crack, and I could hear a sound similar to a hard-disk working from there. Moreover, many small metal objects in shapes similar to bean sprouts grew out of the crack.
The flock of small, linear metal vines squirmed as if each of them had an individual consciousness. They kept changing their shapes while wriggling like the bellows of an accordion when it's played. As that mysterious shaping repeated itself, the sounds of Tingsha, an instrument of Tibet's Mikkyou, reverberated. Their shapes settled into life-forms resembling tiny ogres or metallic midgets. Moreover a song, which I couldn't understand, started to play.
Those tiny, metallic life-forms pressed their hands against the metallic plating with the deep crack at their feet. Once the metal plating dented in, the metallic life-forms began to strike it, causing the metal plating to change its form. The life-forms had started to process the metal plating. Seemingly possessing the power blacksmiths or alchemists, the life-forms...
Are those metallic beings something like spirits? Helme might know something, but...
Transparent mana escaped the metal plating in waves. Furthermore, the crack in the plating disappeared. The life-forms were drawn into the plating, and vanished.
The mana waves trailed down along the coat's surface while creating slanting rays of light as they repeatedly overlapped with each other. Once the mana waves had spread across the whole coat, they idly covered the coat without leaking outside.
The coat shone with glitters as if having a will. It had reached a point where the coat had received a coating with a special gilt-like solution. Silver leaves sprouted at the white and golden branches at

the collar. Furthermore, crimson flowers bloomed at the branches. And, when the plating's crack had vanished, it took the shape of a dragon's head with a crest.
A dragon's face, huh? The metallic life-forms have apparently been absorbed by this crest.
However, Hal'Konk's dragon head metal plating, huh...?
The dragon was elaborate, as if it had been made by Zaga. Its eye sockets looked like holes, but those holes seemed to be like snakes. The lower eyelids were represented by recess-like chiseled features.

Suddenly the mouth of the dragon head moved, "...Mmhwheee...mana of someone new, deliciooooous."

It spoke to me with a weird voice similar to air escaping a balloon...

"Boss, something weird..." Tsuan had been observing the course of events.

Seemingly having wrapped up the telepathic conversation with Purin and Catiza, he fixed his eyes on my coat. Hmm? He held two Khukuri-like swords with shining blades in both hands with backhand grips.
Tsuan's new weapons? The knives' blades had countless light thread-like engravings, which had been generated by <Spirit Cursing Chain Net>, added to them.
I held out a hand towards Tsuan, and after nodding to show him that it was alright, I turned my eyes to the dragon head on my shoulder.

"...Someone new? You're right, I'm the new wearer of this coat. My mana was absorbed by it, but are you Hal'Konk?"

"...Mmhwheee...correct. I rule, over the spiral, of eating, and being eaten. I'm Hal'Konk, who survived, after being sucked, into the star of abyss! That is meeeee...mmhwheee. New wearer, I woke up, after a long time, because of your mana!"

So it was him who absorbed my mana after all, huh? Was the test of mental fortitude about having your mana siphoned?

"Hal'Konk, why did you absorb my mana?"

"...Mmhwheee, it was for the sake of, examining, whether you're suitable, as my lord!"

Lord, eh?

"So, what's the outcome?"

"...Mmhwheee...not yet. It's still not enouuugh. Let me eat mooore...let me!"

"Let you eat more....as in what?"

"...Mmhwheee...demonic. Monsters, flesh, metal, give me, one, two, many, to eat! Let me devour...mmhwheee...if you do, I'll approve of you, as my new lord...and then, we shall, perform, the final ceremony...we shall!"

I suppose he'll devote his everything after approving of me as his lord. But, what should I let him devour...?
As I was pondering, Hal'Konk's eyes gleamed like neon signs.

"Mmhwheee...close-by, I feel, something draconic, let me devour...let me!"

Close-by? Speaking of draconic, is it the Blue Eye of the Evil Dragon King in my bandolier?
I took it out of one of the pockets of my bandolier I wore beneath the coat.

"Mmhwheee...that, I want eat."

This, huh...? It's an item raising the power of the water attribute by just carrying it with me. It also has an extraordinary feature allowing me to create ice magic if I pour mana into it. What should I do? Should I let him eat it?

"...Will anything change by allowing you to eat this?"

"Mmhwheee...change, will change."

...I'm torn. It's a fairly valuable item. However, Hal'Konk is a Mythological item. It's also possible that the Mythological coat will gain in power by absorbing the Blue Eye of the Evil Dragon King. Also, I'm a lancer, not a magician. Yep, the answer was obvious, I guess.

While laughing a bit, "...Very well. Hal'Konk, I'll give this to you."

"Mmhwheee...give!"

I pushed the blue eye into the mouth-like part of the dragon head, and in that instant, the blue eye was absorbed as if sinking into the metal with a plop. The dragon head squirmed after absorbing the blue eye. Its eyes gleamed even stronger than before.
And then, a blue eye popped out...in the socket of one of the dragon's eyes. It was the Blue Eye of the Evil Dragon King I had just given to it. I guess it became Hal'Konk's new eye. A blue eye, a turquoise sphere, a sky-blue eye reminding me of summer.

"Mmhwheee...tasty, tastyyy. Buuut, still, mooore, let me eat mooore, let me!"

"...It's still not enough, huh?"

Oh! I'll try having him eat the divine domain light ring I received from Buu-san.
I sent mana into the bracelets which had sunken into my upper arms. And then I concentrated on the command to remove the bracelets. In the next moment, the violet bracelets, which had been assimilated into my upper arms, separated from my arms, and floated up. The two floating bracelets passed through the coat, and returned into my palm.
The broken light rings. A while ago I had planned to show these to Mysty, but...whatever. I'll try to feed those to the dragon.

"...I'll give these to you."

"Mmhwheee..."

I pressed the two, unevenly patterned bracelets against its mouth part. Just like the blue eye, they were absorbed right away.

"Gugoooeeeeehhh...fuck, disgusting..."

Looks like he didn't like those. Even though they were stained and broken by an evil god, they are originally weapons of the divine domain...
But still, although he groaned in a weird way, he didn't spit them back out. And the dark green cloth started to bulge in a circular shape as if the light rings had activated at my upper arms.
Once the cloth expanded in a spherical form as if enclosing my upper arms, silver-colored branches appeared on the surface of the swollen cloth, just like at the area around my collar. The branches depicted a design of bordering the swollen surface area of the cloth. It was a design that looked as though it was depicting new light rings on my arms.
...It looks like his name as glutton isn't just for show. That stupid thing even ate the light rings it hated.
I think I'll test sending some mana into the bulging...I turned my eyes at the ring-shaped swelling at my upper arm. I'll precisely send mana into the ring drawing connected to the silver branches.
The instant I did so, the silver branch patterns glittered like crystal powder dancing in the air. Moreover, the long sleeves were folded up to the silver patterns at my upper arms. The coat had transformed into a short-sleeved version.
Just as I thought about this, violet rings appeared from the branch patterned circles. And in the next moment they turned into a tube-shaped protector with my many rings connected with each other down to the lower part of my wrists. The same light rings as before. Their color was violet, though. It was a light ring armor.
It had changed slightly. Previously the rings had assimilated with my arms, but now they had assimilated with the arm part of Hal'Konk's coat.

"Mmhwheee...not this, mooore, give me delicious food, give!"

It appears that even the absorption of the broken light rings wasn't sufficient.

"...Wait a moment."

Once I focused on my upper arms and thought, "Return," the silver patterns on my upper arms shone. At the same time as the unevenly colored bracelets that had reached down to my wrists were sucked up and vanished, the dark green cloth extended back down to my wrists again. I guess I can switch them around as I like. This part is no different from before.
It's handy. Now then, let's look for something to give the dragon to eat...
Hmm, what would be good...

As I looked around my room, "Mmhwheee...that, over there, something draconic..."

The violet armor of the Evil Dragon King, which had been moved from the living room to my room as it was planned to get it repaired, entered my visual field. (T/N: There you go, Infinity. ;-))
The torn Overcoat of Illias had been placed down on the wooden floor. Given that Hal'Konk absorbed the blue eye...he would certainly eat the violet armor as well.
...The evil dragon armor of Zaga & Bon, an armor that went through many fierce battles together with me. It got damaged in the battle against Evil God Steertop's fragment.

I went to the place, where the memorable, violet scale mail armor had been put down, and touched it with my fingers... The places where it had been torn...were completely and roughly ripped apart. What was similar to a god's blow probably possessed a terrifying sharpness. I traced the punctures of the tapered horns with my finger. It was almost as if the skin of my finger would be cut...
Well...I had planned to repair this armor, but... It might be interesting to have Hal'Konk devour this armor, and thus have him absorb the power of an ancient dragon.
But before that, I think I will have him eat the torn, light-gray overcoat on the floor.

Once I grabbed it, "Mmhwheee...all of, violet, want eat."

"No, first this. Eat——"

I pushed the overcoat in my hand against the armor plating modeled after Hal'Konk's dragon head. In the next moment, the Overcoat of Illias dented in at the central part of its gray fabric as if being sucked up by a vacuum cleaner, and was absorbed into the dragon head with a tremendous speed while making a sound as if air was pushed out of a balloon. The overcoat was gone in no time.

"Mmhwheee...this, confusing...something, slightly disgusting, mixed into, delicious, tuut——"

Hal'Konk spit out something while complaining. What he spat out was a cross with white mucus clinging to it, and God of Wisdom Illias' crest which had been embroidered with a black thread into the cloth. It looks like he absorbed everything else besides those two objects.
A small symbol shaped like a Silver Volck surfaced on the left chest part of the dark green cloth.
That mucus is a Silver Volck? The dinosaur-shaped monster that brought Eva close to death. I recall Zaga mentioning in the past that he had used Silver Volck materials for this overcoat.

"Mmhwheee...next, want to, eat all."

"Just a sec."

Just as he wished, I had him absorb Rearbreath with its conspicuous dragon design, the gauntlets, the lower arm protectors, the torn violet thigh armor, and the violet greaves that had fused with the shin protectors.

"Mmhwheee...satisfiiiied. Mmhwheee...satisfiiiied..."

Hal'Konk-kun is pulling an ahegao? [efn_note]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahegao [/efn_note]

"This much, mana...overflowing. Mana, sensed its divinity. Long, ago. For the first time...my looord. Approve. Perform, last ceremony!"

The dragon head spoke as if it was his last moment, shining in the most dazzling light today. Immediately after, the metal of the dragon head widened its mouth, and sucked in the dark green coat armor connected to its mouth.
For real? He's eating himself?
Before long, all of the dark green cloth had been sucked into dragon head metal plating on my right shoulder, leaving only the dragon head behind. Besides that, I only wore the bandolier and the leather clothes I had worn below.

"Mmhwheee, it's the finale! Eat me! Then, the real deal."

"Wait, you're telling me to eat you?"

"Indeed, new wearer."

Eating the shining metal...I'm kinda not convinced.
I cast a fleeting glance at Tsuan who had been simply watching the course of events in surprise, but he waved his arms, gesturing to me that I shouldn't ask him.

"Mmhwheee, hurry, eat!"

For an instant, the shopkeeper's comment about it being a second degree cursed item or something along those lines crossed my mind. However, I guess that's the flow of events. No helping it...let's eat it.
I touched the dragon head's shining metal plating.
It feels metallic, but...is it okay to eat this? Moreover, the real deal will follow after eating it...that's what this guy said.
Once I tried to grasp the metal with the fingers of my left hand, it was light. It could also be seen as a cookie... I pinched it between my index finger and thumb, brought it to my mouth...bah whatever, I don't care anymore...and bit into it.
Eh? Oh? It has a texture similar to beans, or red kidneys. It's unexpectedly soft...moreover, it's sweet and has a taste like a Japanese salad.
It made me want to retort with, "Why the hell are you sweet!?", but I steadily wolfed it down. The instant I ate up everything, I blacked out. I was engulfed by a sham-sensation of continuously sinking into the boundary between dream and reality while being dragged down towards the bottom of a deep swamp. As I felt a lukewarm wind grazing my body, that sensation suddenly stopped. And then my surroundings turned into something like an ink-painted place.
What the hell is this? A sensation as if having eaten a hallucinogenic mushroom?
At my feet, a line of ink kept streaming while being stirred by the wind. I don't feel its touch, but it's like a river of ink. As a test, I try to walk through that ink-painted world...
When I had advanced a bit, small silver grains started to fall down. They seemed to flutter down like glistening snow. It was fairytale-like and pretty...
As I stared at the sky as if gazing at the landscape with somewhat deep emotions, suddenly a light, which reminded me of a faint, dim paper lantern light, floated up in front of my eyes.
What's that? Where did it come from?
I extended a finger trying to touch the circular light, but the faint light transformed into a crescent moon to dodge my finger, and then rotated downwards. The crescent moon turned into the shape of a laughing smiley's mouth. And then, two ping pong ball-sized eyeballs came into existence with a popping sound on the left and right side of the crescent moon, and a big mouth that seemed as though the central part of the crescent moon's shape had expanded downwards.
A pair of matching golden eyes, but human eyes, which stared at me. It moved its big mouth as if chewing on its words.

"You devoured the Violent Devourer, didn't you...?"

The crescent moon, which could also be described as apparition, addressed me while emitting an unusual radiance.