

Chapter 12 - Mad Magician Dattol Stein

"Today is yet another day where I am completely exhausted."

"No kidding."

"But, tomorrow will be off."

"Ah, I have to work on a slightly different matter."

"Are you going to search for a pet again?"

"No, it's another job."

I've brought up the topic of tomorrow's free day with Bruno on the way back home after we finished today's hunting, but it seems like he's accepted a solo job. Candy-dono allows us to take other jobs when Twilight of Dawn has no official work. During our time as rookies he's forbidden it because of the danger of overwork, but he lifted the ban for Bruno and me a while ago.

It's been approximately one year since I've joined Twilight of Dawn. It means I've finally lost my status as a rookie.

"What kind of job is it?"

"It's nothing big. I'll be done in half a day."

"I see."

At that time I don't probe into it much further, and on the morning of the next day I spend my time reading a book about magic after sending off Bruno without a care.

"Now then, the new book I borrowed from Bruno...hmm, it is ominous how the pages are so crumpled despite it being a new book...no, it must be my imagination."

In the future I'd terribly regret letting Bruno go by himself.

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"Haa? Bruno has died!?! That is not funny."

Even though he had told me that his job would be over in half a day, Bruno never came back home on that day.

On the next day, as I was looking for him, a young priest called out to me. Once I asked him what kind of business a priest could have with me in the middle of the city, he told me that Bruno had died.

I interrogated him fervently, thinking that he was pulling my leg with a stupid joke, but his answer always remained the same. And then he led me inside a building standing all alone on the grounds of the church's headquarters.

Once we entered a room, I spotted a human figure lying on a crude bed with its whole body covered by a white cloth.

A young magician is next to the bed...and I'm surprised to see that it's Alfred-sama. I also have seen the other man in the room in the past, an elderly man wearing a priest's garb. He's scheduled to become the father-in-law of my sister Nina, and is being treated as demon and schemer in the Kingdom while still being in his fifties.

"Cardinal Hohenheim..."

"Could you confirm his identity before we hand over the remains to his family? Showing him to the bereaved family would be a bit...his face should still be okay, though."

"His face?"

What is this old geezer saying...? Even that priest had been lying around about Bruno having died or some such. It's impossible that Bruno passed away.

Thus I remove the cloth only at the face so as to curse at them for it being someone else.

"Bruno...that is impossible! There is no way that Bruno could have died!"

Why?

He should have left home to finish a simple job that would be done in half a day. And yet, why did Bruno die during such a simple job?

"Bruno! Wake up! Stop kidding around! You occasionally do things like that to startle me! I know that!"

For some reason Bruno doesn't wake up, no matter how much I shake him. The time for mischief is long over!

"I think you should quit it. Take off the rest of the cloth."

Being told so by Cardinal Hohenheim, I remove the cloth covering Bruno's body...



"What the hell is this!?"

Why does Bruno's body have so many deep cuts all over? The wounds are so deep that you can see the intestines and bones. A sharp blade...no, a powerful 『Wind Cutter』?

"Bruno told me that he had accepted a job that would be finished in half a day! So why did it turn out like this?"

Why did Bruno die?

Expressly calling me to this place means...this demon is involved in some way. And Alfred-sama as well?

"So it's Bruno after all, huh? I didn't think we made a mistake, but we had to make sure just in case. We're going to hand back the remains to his family..."

"You damn fiend! Don't put on airs, and answer me!"

Even though a person has been killed in such a gruesome way, and moreover that person being my best friend! No matter how you look at it, this has been no suicide or accident. Bruno was slaughtered! And yet...even if he might become Nina's father-in-law, this guy...!

"You're still so young. Immediately surrendering yourself to your violent emotions, huh? Don't you consider my current social status and your own sister, second son of the Earl Armstrong House?"

"Uugh..."

This guy's son is going to marry Nina...? This horrible demon! Does he intend to torture Nina?

"Did you calm down after becoming terrified?"

"I can't really appreciate how you're treating him, Cardinal Hohenheim."

"Alfred."

"I'm not so close to you that I'd allow you to call me without honorifics, you know...? It sure looks like you don't have any friends, though."

Is Alfred-sama intending to help me out here? Going by the atmosphere, these two don't seem to be on good terms at all.

"His death has been caused by your amateurish, know-it-all judgment, no? He died because of that. It's a terrible misconduct for a priest serving God. And then you shut him, who rages over his best friend's death, up with your status and authority, using his family background against him. You're a truly despicable man."

"Could you tone it down a bit. You're the magician said to be the youngest number one ever, right?"

"I don't feel overly happy to hear this praise out of your mouth."

Cardinal Hohenheim and Alfred-sama continue to glare at each other for a while, but this tense atmosphere is broken apart by the new person entering the room.

"Is this the right place to fight?"

"Candy-dono! Why are you here!?"

I had planned to tell Candy-dono about Bruno's job on his day off and him not having returned in the end after this.

"I also possess my very own information network. Bruno-chan..."

Candy-dono looks very sad after seeing Bruno's corpse.

"This boy is a member of my party. If it's pioneering or construction work using magic, I wouldn't mind him doing it during his day off, but Bruno-chan was killed by a magician. On top of that, a pretty powerful one. Did you possibly use Bruno-chan to assassinate that magician?"

Candy-dono directs his full bloodlust at Cardinal Hohenheim as if to shoot him to death. I'm used to it, but it wouldn't be strange for any amateur to faint from it.

"Indeed, I did."

So this demon can also withstand Candy-dono's bloodlust, huh? Nothing less of a fiend like him.

"A newcomer magician in the upper intermediate level? No matter how you think about it, it'd have been impossible for him to win. You, could you finally give it a rest..."

In the next instant, Candy-dono moved behind Cardinal Hohenheim so fast that I couldn't follow it with my eyes, and quietly pressed a hidden knife against his neck. I couldn't react at all.

"Alfred, don't you think that it'd turn into a major drama if he killed me here? You'd be accused of the crime as well."

"You, who have many influential enemies in the church, are in a room that's locked from the inside while not having brought any guards with you. The clergymen wishing for your death might turn this into an accident or suicide."

"So you say, but don't you think that it's the proper path as a human to save me here?"

Even though that demon hasn't any significant physical strength, he doesn't even twitch at having a knife pressed against his neck. He's a man you cannot be careless with!

"I don't think he'll do anything like that."

"Hoh, why do you think so, leader of Twilight of Dawn?"

"Oh my, for you to even know about such a paltry, little adventurer as me. Anyway, if I really had

tried to kill you, I might have been killed by him."

I see. If Candy-dono had tried to kill that demon for real, it's unimaginable that Alfred-sama would have been unable to prevent it, huh?

"You're an unpleasant man. Because you know this, you're not frightened in the least, right? Because you have no worry that you'd get killed. Do you think that you have some kind of divine protection because you're a priest?"

"Hah, don't be silly. The higher someone serving the church climbs in rank, the less they believe in things like divine protection."

"And yet you became a priest?"

"I became one despite that. I belong to a noble family affiliated with the church for many generations now. Something like God's divine protection doesn't exist, but I believe that the church is necessary to maintain the peace of this country. And yet, everyone believes in divine protection somewhere, deep in their heart. I may not be excluded from that either."

"Hm——m, I don't give a flying damn about your beliefs and thoughts. For starters, there's something we must do now."

"You're right. The state of that corpse is terrible. Returning it to his family like that..."

"Indeed. I'll help as well. You're a nice man since you properly pay attention to such things. Just like the rumors say, Alfred Reinford-san."

"The cardinal over there is the only snob in here. I'm a normal man."

"Humph, don't run your mouth as you please."

Before Candy-dono can say anything further, Alfred-sama suggests to close up the wounds on Bruno's body. He's not only a superb magician, but also a very kind man.

"I'll help as well."

"What are you scheming?"

For that rotten priest to do something that won't bring him any money, hell is going to freeze over.

"Even though you're still a young man, you've quite the shrewd way with your words, Armstrong House's second son."

"I have a name. It is Klimt Christoph von Armstrong!"

"You previously said something very rude and tasteless to him, didn't you? So you just reap what you've sown."

It sounds like Alfred-sama doesn't feel the slightest hint of kindness for him either.

"Good grief, I guess I'm heavily outnumbered in this place, huh...? I requested an underground job of Bruno-dono in absolute secrecy based on my own thoughts. Just as I had expected, he didn't mention it to anyone, and kept the details of his work hidden even from his best friend Klimt-dono. Unfortunately he failed on his mission, but that's my cross to bear. Even though the act in itself was righteous, something like God's divine protection doesn't exist. However, since he failed, I'm the one bearing the heaviest responsibility. That's why it's unthinkable for me to return such a disfigured corpse to Bruno-dono's family. That's all there is to it."

"Cardinal Hohenheim..."

"Klimt-kun, he has some slightly less objectionable parts as well." Alfred-sama says while tapping my shoulder.

Once I hear his gentle voice, it feels like my hostility towards Cardinal Hohenheim melts away for some mysterious reason.

"Anyway, we have to close up these cut wounds. I'll put him into new clothes as well."

"It is a great help that you are here, Candy-dono."

"I'm proficient at sewing, but if possible, I wanted to sew clothes suiting Bruno-chan perfectly."

We begin to close the wounds by sewing the cuts together on Bruno's body after splitting the work areas. Without feeling scared or disgusted at all, I simply focus on that work so as to alleviate Liese-jou's sadness as much as possible.