

Since we've split the work among four people, it finishes after around one hour. After cleaning his body, we take off the bloodstained robe, put on new, clean clothes, and Cardinal Hohenheim prepares ice so that the corpse won't decay.

It looks like he feels responsible for Bruno's death in his own way.

"Now then, let's hear it, Cardinal. Three days ago, I told you to wait with this job for a week. So why did you assign such a dangerous job to Bruno-dono despite that? You should have known that he wouldn't be able to kill that 『Cutthroat』 with his abilities. Even if you're a layman when it comes to magic."

After we finished fixing up Bruno's remains, Alfred-sama asks the cardinal about the details. Disregarding his own advice, he calls the cardinal's responsibility into question.

"It's because there would have been more victims after a week. Besides, he was together with Edgar Tretter. I thought they would be able to win against that mass murdered as a duo."

What!?! Edgar Tretter accompanied Bruno on that secret mission?

"What happened to him?"

"For better or worse, he has survived. He carried away heavy injuries, but he managed to escape while barely alive. We immediately gave him healing, but he's probably broken at this point...there's no other choice but to leave him in the custody of the church."

"What do you mean by broken?"

Edgar Tretter! You ran back home by yourself while abandoning Bruno!?! What a cowardly man who doesn't hold true to his reputation!

"Klimt-kun, no matter what you're going to say to Edgar Tretter, it'll be very likely pointless. Right, Cardinal Hohenheim?"

"Yes."

Cardinal Hohenheim curtly answers Alfred-sama.

"What are you talking about?"

"You see, even among adventurers you'll occasionally encounter such people. Edgar Tretter barely survived, but his mind has died after receiving too much of a shock."

"It's as the leader of Twilight of Dawn says. His wounds have been fully healed, but his mind is already broken. We'll try to heal him at a remote church in the countryside, but...I think it's going to be a hard endeavor. He'll probably spend the rest of his life like a living corpse."

Edgar Tretter has been the top of the magician class at the prep school, and was called a prodigy as they appear once every ten years. Yet he... Unbelievable!

"Alfred-sama."

"Certainly, he's a 『Talented Magician』, but the murderer is a 『Genius』. Moreover, the murderer is close to fifty years now. It's the period when a magician reaches his full swing. Cardinal Hohenheim, an amateur when it comes to magic, ordered the assassination by Edgar Tretter and Bruno-dono after only adding up the amount of mana. And both of them failed at it. It's your blunder, Cardinal Hohenheim."

"I have nothing to say in my defense. You're right, all of this is my fault. I ended up becoming impatient, because I didn't want more chopped-up victims to appear."

"As a result of that, Bruno-chan died and Edgar Tretter died mentally as well. Why did you panic like that?"

"I'm a corrupt priest rumored to be a plotter or demon on the streets, but I do possess a virtuous mind, at least I'd like to believe so. The idea of letting that murderer do as he pleases for even a day longer made me sick. That's all."

"I see. So you do have some good intentions, so far as it goes."

"You're saying you failed when you hurried in good will...? I understand. Also, I'll explain the circumstances to Klimt-kun since he probably hasn't understood much. I think it'd be unfair to treat him like an outsider at this point..."

Alfred-sama has decided to give me a full explanation of what has perspired this time.

"Just as you thought, the murderer is an extremely skilled magician. Even the amount of his mana is top class among the high-ranking magicians. His alias in the underworld is Cutthroat, but his true name is Dattol Stein." Alfred-sama continues, "He became conscious of his talent in magic as soon as he reached an age where he understood what was going on around him, and fostered that ability at a good pace. Even at the prep school he was heralded as a prodigy appearing once in a decade. Moreover, he was a true genius. Within less than a year after graduating, he was apparently called the best magician rookie of that time. However, he had a huge flaw... He had a peculiarity making it mostly impossible for him to live normally among normal people. In exchange for having absolutely no interest in women, he got his sexual pleasure out of cutting up flesh. It looks like he realized it when he tore bugs apart with the magic he had just learned in his childhood. I think most people experience something like that. They'll kill bugs as a game during their early childhood."

"Well, it'd have been all fine if it had stopped at that point."

"Yes, most of the people leave it at that. After turning into adults, they reflect on why they had done something so cruel. But, he was different. Gradually he couldn't get any satisfaction out of cutting up bugs, and thus his target changed to animals when he was a prep school fledgling. During his school days, he often helped with the extermination of stray dogs and cats. There was no reason why a superb magician would accept such jobs which didn't yield any good money. No, there was one. It was the ideal way for him to release his pent-up sexual desires. The people of that time didn't realize that, thinking of Dattol Stein as a very nice person..." Alfred-sama explained.

"You investigated well to have found out so much about events from 50 years ago."

"My master looked it up for me."

"Oh my, you have someone you'd call master? Is he a decent guy?"

"Of course I do. But, please find out yourself whether he's a good guy. Dattol Stein, who graduated from the prep school, finally couldn't be satisfied with animals anymore either. He started to actively hunt down large monsters, which also became unsatisfying, resulting in him putting his hands on people at long last. Gradually the frequency of his adventurer party members going missing increased. As might be expected, the adventurer's guild became suspicious of him."

Adventurers who worked together with an excellent magician were regularly killed by monsters. Moreover, Dattol Stein, who was supposed to be such a great magician, couldn't save them nor retrieve their corpses. It's only natural that the guild would consider it unnatural for him to claim something like that.

"And then, one day, Dattol Stein failed in killing one of his party members. While heavily injured, the adventurer managed to escape to the guild, causing everything to come to light. This is how the crimes of the murderer Dattol Stein became publicly known."

"And when did that happen?"

"30 years ago."

"You're saying the adventurer's guild left a mass murderer at large for 30 years? The guards didn't step in or anything?"

"That's the troublesome part about him. A joint investigation by the guild and the guards found out that Dattol Stein had killed more than a hundred adventurers. No matter how excellent he might be as magician, he shouldn't be able to escape the death penalty for this homicide. However, there was a person who sheltered him in absolute secrecy. Publicly they pretended that Dattol Stein had died. It was Duke Bürger, the younger brother of the previous king. He was the king of the generation before who set up the Duke Bürger House. The brother of the already dead previous king faked Dattol Stein's death, and hid him."

This means, the guild or the guards couldn't do anything.

"Moreover, Dattol Stein was normally living in the Basel Viscounty, a territory in the outskirts of the capital. Since it was outside the guards' jurisdiction, they couldn't arrest him."

Well, nobles are approved by the Kingdom, but it's difficult to meddle with the circumstances of a noble's territory. I can understand as much since my father has told me about this in the past.

"Viscount Basel had taken Duke Bürger's daughter as wife. Also, His Majesty not touching on this matter is..."

"I'll tell him the rest. There's only a few people in the Kingdom who are aware of it, so let me warn you: Don't tell anyone. I won't take any responsibility even if you die."

Just what kind of behind-the-scenes situation could it be for me possibly dying if I were to expose it?

"Duke Bürger is supposed to be the previous king's next youngest brother, but in reality they're twins. There were rumors about them resembling each other closely, but that's only natural. After all, they were twins. And Duke Bürger should have thought the following in his twisted mind: 『Maybe I'll be able to succeed the crown of this country』. Therefore he used the current and previous king's position of not being able to interfere with him easily, and tried to amass his own power. Since a duke can't own any territory, the sources of power are limited to fortune and personal connections. He repeatedly formed marriage relationships with the nobles with territories around the capital, and as for Dattol Stein, he lent him out to nobles he hadn't befriended yet or those who were connected to him through marriage. Dattol Stein is a genius who can skillfully use all magic systems, not only the ones to cut up things. He was very useful for helping in the development and maintenance of a territory."

As a reward for that, Duke Bürger took care of his life necessities while sheltering him, huh?

"On top of that, Duke Bürger accurately dealt with his fetish."

"It'd be one thing if he had only sheltered the criminal, but he even went as far as actively assisting him in releasing his sexual desires."

"He assisted him? Although not quite, he belongs to royalty, doesn't he?"

It's absolutely unthinkable that doing something so retarded would be okay!

"It might be the absolute worst to do as a person. However, when it comes to royalty and nobility, this doesn't seem to apply necessarily."

"What kind of hair-splitting is this supposed to be!?"

There's no way for me to accept such an excuse!

"In short, accepting the small evil for the greater good, I'd say. The fields increased in number, floods diminished, water issues were resolved, and bridges and roads, construction projects desired for many years, were built in the territories of many nobles thanks to Duke Bürger dispatching Dattol Stein for territorial development. It made many residents happier," Cardinal Hohenheim explains.

"But, sacrifices were necessary on a regular basis, right? I can't believe that Dattol Stein changed his way in his current lifestyle."

"Correct. Right now he's killing several people by cutting them up with his 『Wind Cutter』 once per month. Of course there's no way to use the residents of the nobles, who asked for help in their development, as living sacrifices, and thus they're being provided from the slums in the capital and similar places."

Many people who never would miss even if they were gone, live in the slums. It looks like the people of the ducal house are luring such people to their territory with the prospect of work, just to

have Dattol Stein chop them up.

"And this has continued for 30 years? That's completely messed up!"

Why have the royals and nobles of the capital...no, His Majesty ignored such inhumane acts?

"Out of pity, I guess."

"Out of pity, you say!?"

"Yes. Duke Bürger is the younger twin brother of the previous king, but there are rumors that he might actually be the elder brother."

"Are those rumors true then?"

"No idea. I can't say either. It's not like I've been present at the birth of the twins. However, it's difficult to prove something like that beyond any doubt."

"A devil's proof, in other words, huh? The nobles, who are unhappy with His Majesty, would likely kick up a fuss while rallying under Duke Bürger's banner behind the scene."

"As a matter of fact, such nobles already exist. It's a complicated issue to determine who was born first between twins."

At present, the twin born later is regarded as the elder brother in the Helmut Kingdom. The one born second being regarded to be the older twin stems from the idea that he's been deeper in the womb of the mother. In other words, he was made first and that's why he's the elder brother. However, I hear our northern rival, the Holy Urquhart Empire, regards the one born first as the elder brother. They follow the idea that the one born first was completed as human first, and thus is able to come out first.

But, several hundred years ago, the way of thinking between both countries was actually inverted, and nowadays there are still some areas left where one twin is killed upon birth as it's regarded as an ominous omen.

To sum it up, the evaluation criteria is somewhat ambiguous.

"Even if you decide the order of age by the order of their birth, you'll always find some people who'll complain about the decision. Especially when it comes to the children of a king. The birth of twins will inadvertently become a seed of trouble. Accordingly, the king, who fathered them, altered the records to set Duke Bürger as younger brother who was born one year later, and made him into a Duke so as to avoid a conflict over the crown succession."

So these particulars are the reason why the current king finds it hard to talk back to Duke Bürger, his uncle, on various matters.

"Duke Bürger himself probably feels unhappy about this arrangement and harbors ambitions towards the throne. However, he's a Duke. Since he has no territory, he's been building his own faction through personal connections, which he obtained through marriage and the involvement of

Dattol Stein, and money which he can earn by lending Dattol Stein. Dattol Stein is a murderer, but he won't lay a hand on the nobles, who receive his help in the development of their territories, and those noble's residents."

"It's because Duke Bürger provides him with all the sacrifices he could need, right?"

"Correct. In the first place, Dattol Stein has no attachment to money, status, or fame. He gets sheltered, and all his necessities are taken care of during the mediated work. So, as long as they prepare sacrifices for him once a month, he'll be satisfied with that."

"For a politician, it's difficult to make a judgment in such a case. He kills several people once a month, but he's still an excellent magician and convenient for developing territories. At least Duke Bürger must be thinking that there's more advantage to keeping him around than the death of several people per month."

"While at it, he can earn good money and build some personal connections, right? So is he attached to the crown after all?"

"Who knows. I don't know his true motives. However, I can say this much: Dattol Stein should die."