

Chapter 13 - Assassination Mission

"Burkhart shows no movements, or rather, he doesn't seem to have anything to do with us."

"So he's drinking wine after having returned to his inn?"

"Another team is watching him. They say they couldn't confirm Alfred, but at least he seems to not have joined up with Burkhart."

"Then it's fine. There are multiple high-ranking magicians, but it'll be alright as long as they don't target Dattol Stein."

Today is yet another day of us watching famous magicians, who are staying in the capital, under our lord's, Duke Bürger's, order. It's because there was an assassination attempt on Dattol Stein, who's a source of personal connections and money for the duke, just the day before yesterday.

The number of assassins trying to kill isn't that big, but every year at least seven or eight try their luck. Given that he's an excellent magician, it's necessary for the hitmen to have considerable abilities as well, making it difficult to prepare the personnel easily.

He's usually staying inside the big forest within the Basel Viscounty with guards watching over him. At present, you can describe any assassination attempt as extremely challenging. We just need to be careful in the case of several high-ranking magicians being dispatched in a group.

It's troublesome for us as watchers as well, but since this is a part of our job, it can't be helped.

"You think Alfred Reinford is going to attempt it by himself?"

"Who knows. There's many other famous magicians. The other teams are watching them, but so far there have been no reports about more than two high-ranking magicians having gathered. If it's just one assassin, they'll definitely have the tables turned on them."

"Dattol Stein will gleefully cut them up, yep."

"Even though he's got that issue, it looks like he's still beneficial to have around on the whole. He's also the reason for our wages, so we've got to protect him."

Something like monitoring people for the sake of protecting a mass murderer is nothing I can tell my family about, but if the Duke Bürger House is gone, we'll be unemployed.

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Alfred-sama and I depart to the entrance of the forest in the Basel Viscounty at the night of the planned assassination.

"As expected, they didn't use a strict surveillance for a single, high-ranking magician."

From now on we're going to move deep into the forest, and kill Dattol Stein in one of the huts where he's hiding out.

"It's not like the operation is overly complicated. We just need to kill him. Though it's also possible that we'll be finished off instead."

"I will make sure that does not happen!"

"You're absolutely right. I want to enjoy my life for a bit longer as well."

Even though Alfred-sama is only around five years older than me, he's hailed as a young genius. That's really amazing.

No, right now I should only think about killing Dattol Stein with him.

"Which hut is Dattol Stein using tonight?"

"My master investigated that part. As long as he moved alone, they weren't overly cautious of him. Moreover, famous magicians do enter quite troublesome monster domains at times. It's just, the people of the Duke Bürger House couldn't directly monitor him there."

So he found out Dattol Stein's location while pretending to be out on a job there, huh? Alfred-sama's master is a truly remarkable magician as well!

"Right now he's probably grumbling over a few cups of wine, but well, that's how we split the work, so whatever. I'm quite strict about each step of this mission."

"Let us go then."

After finishing our chat, we began to walk deeper into the forest. However, soon after proceeding for a short time, we sense the presence of someone ahead.

"Weird... Even though I should have completely hidden our presence."

Moreover, Alfred-sama has led us in a way that avoided all the soldiers positioned at various places in this forest. When we brace ourselves wondering who it might be, it's actually a person I know well.

"Hi——i, Alfred-san, Ron-chan, are you guys doing fine?"

""Candy-dono!""

"Since I was late in seeing you off, I did my best to catch up with you."

Catch up with us, he says... Candy-dono, who's no magician, hasn't been noticed by us and the soldiers around here?

"As expected, you're quite the crafty one, aren't you?"

"Oh my, I was praised by a good man. I won't be able to accompany you, but I thought I'd pass you this here."

Candy-dono brought with him a set of underwear and a great amount of magic potions.

"Wear this under your robe, Ron-chan. It'll be able to completely block powerful spells several times."

"That is very convenient!"

However, it's underwear that makes my figure stand out quite a bit. That won't be much of a problem as long as I wear under my robe, though.

"Where did you obtain this?"

"Hm——m, that's a girl's secret."

"I guess it can't be helped then."

Alfred-sama, are you really okay with that answer?

"Also, here you have some instantly-working healing potions. You just need to sprinkle them over your body."

"Those must have been quite expensive as well."

"It's for the sake of raising your chance of success. I'll bill Cardinal Hohenheim with the expenses anyway."

"That's a great idea."

Alfred-sama flashes a smile at Candy-dono's explanation. I also want to see how Cardinal Hohenheim plops down on his butt after seeing the outrageously high bill. Therefore I must survive.

"I tried to investigate a bit as well. Dattol Stein's strong magic encompasses all attributes. It looks like he often cuts up his victims after immobilizing them with 『Wind Cutter』."

"A spell for his own amusement, huh? He's got really nasty preferences."

It's certainly as Alfred-sama says.

"Somehow he appears to use a spell I've never seen before...but I couldn't find out any more than that. Sorry."

"As long as we know that we need to be cautious of an unknown spell, it might boost our chance to win a bit. Still, I must say you have a good information network."

"A girl has various secrets. Both of you, come back safely, okay?"

After receiving Candy-dono's gifts and being seen off by him, we head deeper into the forest again.

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We proceed through the forest based on the information Alfred-sama procured. When we arrive at the hut where Dattol Stein is hiding out, he's already waiting for us outside.

"Yo, I've been waiting for you."

"This is an unexpected development."

"This guy is Dattol Stein, huh...?"

"Indeed, that I am."

He's a slender, middle-aged man with his silver-gray hair swept back, giving off the aura of a smart man.

Even Alfred-sama apparently couldn't hide his surprise at this.

"What about your guards then?"

"Ah, if it's them."

It looks like the soldiers supposed to watch and protect him are lying on the ground a good way away from here.

"Did you kill them?"

"Most definitely not. I just made them faint for a bit. It's not like I'm on edge right now."

I see. I guess that means he's usually idle and won't kill people indiscriminately.

"It's because I cut up a lively boy two days ago. The other managed to get away before dying, though."

"Are you talking about Bruno?"

"I don't know his name, but the flesh of boys and girls around that age is wonderful. Many people misunderstand that there's no sensation from cutting up someone with 『Wind Cutter』, but such people are inexperienced as magicians. When you reach my level... Ah! Finally the desire to cut flesh has kicked in! I'll sate it by chopping up your bodies."

"You've completely strayed off the proper path, haven't you?"

"Deviant!"

"True. I understand as much about myself as well. But, I don't have the courage to kill myself, and I want to cut flesh as long as I'm alive. If you want to stop me, you've got no other choice than killing me!"

"Klimt-kun!"

At the same time as Alfred-sama yells out to me, I jump to the side, partially on instinct. A 『Rock Spike』 has protruded out of the ground where I stood moments ago! If I hadn't moved away, I'd have been skewered by now!

"Looks like you've got good reflexes."

Next, a huge firebird is created by Dattol Stein, just to immediately swoop down on us like a living falcon.

"Running away is pointless, huh?"

"Even when evading it, it comes right back!"

"Let's do this then!"

Alfred-sama creates smallish birds made out of water, and makes them clash with the firebird. Thereupon, both parties vanish, leaving only steam behind.

"Not bad. The other one...boy, why are you here?" Dattol Stein suddenly calls out to me while looking curious.

"To defeat you, obviously."

"With that amount of mana, second son of the Armstrong House?"

"So you knew?"

"My owner is Duke Bürger, after all. He can immediately find out such kind of information. Besides, previously your father sent some assassins my way as well. If I remember correctly, Duke Bürger should have warned him back then...and this time it's the son, huh? With a laughably small amount of mana, at that."

"That does not matter to you at all!"

Even if he tries to shake me up with such words, it's pointless...

"Klimt-kun!"

"Oh damn!"

It's not like this man just wanted to enjoy a chat! Faster than I can do anything, I'm surrounded by fire pillars!

"Ahaa, burn nicely, okay? But, I must make sure to not overdo it to not damage your body as much as possible. I mean, otherwise I won't have any fun cutting you up, will I?"

"I can't really understand that peculiar way of thinking."

"Are you okay with this? Leaving him to his death."

"I'm not worried in particular."

Indeed, I certainly can't hold a candle to Dattol Stein's amount of mana with my own. But I have Alfred-sama's support and Candy-dono's gift. No matter what means I have to use, I'll use them to get revenge for Bruno...!

"Haah!"

"You got out, eh? Moreover, you haven't been burned either?"

"An opening!"

Dattol Stein apparently got a bit flustered since I haven't been burned as he had expected. Using that opportunity to get close to him, I aim a punch charged with mana at his face!

But, as might be expected from Dattol Stein, he immediately fixes his posture, and quickly takes some distance from me.

"Pfft! I see. You punch people by putting mana into your fists, eh? That's an old trick of pitiful magicians with little mana. Your attacks won't hit me anymore. It'd be best for you to give up and scurry back home. If you were to die here, your father is going to become a nuisance. Right now, you're free to go. As long as it's just you."

Did this guy say the same to Edgar Tretter when he was on the verge of getting defeated? Close to being killed, he abandoned Bruno and ran away for the sake of surviving to win the next time. That's why he managed to get away, even while being heavily injured. Though, it's also the reason why his mind broke over it.

When I voice this question out, Dattol Stein tells me, "You seem to be smarter than your appearance suggests. Certainly, I said so to him. Since both of them were so young that it made me envious, I just wanted to see how their relationship would fall apart. I chopped up the boy, who ran away, quite a bit, but he could still walk. I cut up the other boy to the extent that he couldn't get up anymore. I told the boy still standing on his feet that his friend couldn't be saved anymore and that I wouldn't chase him if he deserted his friend and ran away. The despair on the face of the other boy when he ran away was exquisite. A magnificent, joyful sight to behold. It aroused me, resulting in me cutting him up even more."

"Scum..."

"Even as scum, I'm a superior magician who's been staying alive. As long as they're useful, any scum will be able to stay alive. This world must be crazy, seeing how royalty is actually covering me. That's why a weirdo like me continues to live on as well."

"Humph! That is going to end today! You are going to die for the crimes you have committed so far!"

"What if there are many nobles tolerating me even if they don't go as far as actively supporting me? All the leaders in this country are scum. Isn't it a fitting place for scum like me? Hating to be scorned by Duke Bürger after failing to assassinate me once, your father has left me to my own devices for years. Even you, the son of such a man, should give up on assassinating me since it'll only earn you a scolding from your father. I promise I won't chase after you."

Are you telling me to forsake Alfred-sama? What scum! You're human trash!

"You sure have a nasty character."

"That's how it works, doesn't it Alfred Reinford? Only the cunning and detestable ones survive among humans, animals, and monsters. What are you going to do? It'd be best for you to abandon him and rely on your daddy. With that amount of mana, you'll be only tormented to death by me."

Sure, if this was one-on-one, I'd be slaughtered one-sidedly. But, Alfred-sama is with me.

Besides...

"Contrary to your reputation, you run your mouth on end! Are you that scared of fighting Alfred-sama and me at the same time?"

"Dream on. I'm just curious why you came here while only possessing abilities of such a low level. Is it something like noblesse oblige?"

"That is a funny joke! I have left my family! My family's circumstances do not matter here! I simply cannot forgive you killing my best friend! I will make sure to kill you, definitely! You think I need any other reason besides that!?"

"I see. Then regret your folly while getting cut up by me. I think I'll make sure you can't move before that."

Just now I felt a bad premonition!

"Klimt-kun!"

"Alfred-sama?"

"Too late!"

"Wut!?"

Alfred-sama and I get surrounded by water that appeared all of a sudden...what the hell is going

on!? What's with this weirdly smelling water!?

"..."

"Spell me surprised. Nothing less of you, Alfred Reinford. You're not going to negate it with fire magic? But, that liquid is going to volatilize right away, and then burst into flames."

As Alfred-sama gets bad vibes from the liquid surrounding himself, he doesn't try to get rid of it with fire. However, once Dattol Stein shoots a fire spell, it immediately ignites and goes up in a blaze of fire.

"Damn it!"

I've finally gotten rid of the fire, but I've suffered burns on my limbs and face. In a hurry I heal myself by sprinkling a healing potion over my body. Alfred-sama does the same.

"This is quite nasty. Burning water...let's see, somewhere I've..."

"Is water burning there?"

Water, which shouldn't be inflammable, goes up in a blaze. Just what is that smelly liquid?

"Given that I can use all attributes, such tricks are possible as well. Using the 『Burning Water』 like this..."

"Me again, huh?"

The liquid is freely being manipulated by Dattol Stein, and after changing its shape, it even enters Alfred-sama's robe. And immediately afterwards, it's ignited by Dattol Stein.

Alfred-sama is wrapped up in flames, even coming from within his robe!

"Alfred-sama!"

"I tried to neutralize it by producing ice at once, but it was impossible to block it completely."

It looks like he got burned under his robe, and thus he's casting water-based healing magic on himself.

"At this rate, things are only going to keep getting worse."

"Once I've made it impossible for you to fight any longer, I'll heal just your skin, and cut it up nicely afterwards. For both of you. I'm looking forward to it."

That guy feels like he's already won. However, it's true that at this rate...

"Burning water...somewhere...the Bahral Wetlands?"

"Correct. I've magically recreated the smelly, burnable water over there by combining water and

fire-based magic. It was quite a chore."

"No wonder they call you a genius at magic. The rest of you is fucked up, though. There are places where smelly, burning water gushes out in the Bahral Wetlands, located far west from the capital. Since it's burnable enough to be used as lamp fuel, the locals gather it."

So he recreated that water with magic, huh?

"Well, it's convenient after all. Just like this."

"Damn it!"

The burnable liquid, which has changed its form into something similar to a snake, coils itself around my body, and immediately following that, I'm engulfed by flames a third time thanks to Dattol Stein's ignition.

In a hurry, I shake off the flames, and shower myself in a magic potion.

"Is there no choice but to block it with a 『Magic Barrier』?"

Right now I'm fine because I'm wearing the underwear Candy-dono gave me, but I don't know how much longer it'll hold out. Since it's already protected major parts of my body three times, it might be about to reach its limit soon.

"That'd be a problem. We'll be at disadvantage if we protect ourselves with a 『Magic Barrier』."

"What do you mean, Alfred-sama?"

"Our opponent can freely decide when to ignite the liquid. Defending against that with a 『Magic Barrier』 would only speed up the mana consumption."

It'd be meaningless even if we deploy a 『Magic Barrier』 as long it's still in its liquid form and given that the ignition depends on Dattol Stein, it'll be quite difficult to time a 『Magic Barrier』 right after the ignition without wasting much mana. Alfred-sama is quickly using up his mana as he's healing his burns.

Probably grasping that we're in a pinch here, Dattol Stein shows a relaxed smile as he watches us struggle.

"I can move it at will, have it enter any place, and ignite it whenever I feel like it. You won't be able to deal with this on your first encounter. Now then, let's bring this to a close now. At the end I'll chop you up while you're still alive."

Although I had come here in high spirits to avenge my best friend, I'll get killed by Dattol Stein without even putting a scratch on him? As I'm pondering about something like that, Alfred-sama taps my shoulder from behind.

"(At last our opponent has apparently decided to finish us two off.)"

"..."

"(As a matter of fact, this will give us an opportunity.)"

Alfred-sama makes me grasp something in my right hand while whispering to me.

"(This is?)"

"(A somewhat special magic crystal. It's crammed with a tremendous amount of mana, considering its size.)"

Why has Alfred-sama given me something like that?

"(It'd be great if you could give him a good punch while holding this in your fist. It's a bet of sorts, but I trust you that you'll definitely succeed, Klimt-kun.)"

"(But, I am...)"

Earlier I succeeded in unleashing a blow, but I can't believe that it's going to work a second time.

"(It's unthinkable that he's going to make such a blunder.)"

"(I'll somehow make it possible. Please get close to him at full speed, in a straight line, and use all your power to punch that guy with your right hand. Go in 5...4...3...2...)"

A countdown already!? Gah, whatever! Might as well go with this!

"(...1...start.)"

The instant Alfred-sama taps my shoulder once more, I start charging at Dattol Stein without thinking anything.

"A charge...it's not like I can't understand your feelings, but...it's too reckless!"

Here it comes!

This time a powerful fire spell approaches me to burn me to smithereens. However, I should be alright one more time.

I plunge into the huge conflagration without lowering my speed at all, continuing to rush towards Dattol Stein.

"You did well to hold out! Candy-dono, thank you!"

With this things will get dicey if I eat another of Dattol Stein's spells. I must punch him before he can cast anything else.

"The effect of your special armor should wear off anytime soon now."

Tsk, he's seen through it! However, it's not like I can stop now anyway!

"You won't be able to defend with just that robe of yours."

Once again Dattol Stein produces two snakes made out of burnable water, and tries to send them at me. If he ignites them once they get close, I'll suffer heavy burns...

"I won't let you!"

Before they can reach me, Alfred-sama ignites the two snakes.

"How meaningless. It's no problem for me to move them around as burning snakes while creating new burnable water."

"However, unlike snakes that aren't burning yet, I can extinguish them with my own water snakes once they've been ignited. It seems like you can't extinguish the fire once the water has been ignited."

I see. Alfred-sama ignited them first since he can't do anything about the snakes while they're not burning. Moreover, burnable water that has been ignited once is too difficult to extinguish for Dattol Stein as well. If they're simple fire snakes, they can be handled with water magic.

As expected of Alfred-sama to notice that flaw in such a short time.

"Klimt-kun, please keep running while believing in me."

"Of course!"

Even afterwards, a grand battle of magic raged on for a small period of time. When Dattol Stein tries to cut me up with a 『Wind Cutter』, Alfred-sama, who's closely sticking behind me, repels the wind blades by unleashing his own 『Wind Cutter』. When Dattol Stein shoots a huge amount of 『Ice Spheres』 at me, Alfred-sama forms a moving 『Firewall』 in front of me, extinguishing the 『Ice Spheres』.

I feel like the ground beneath my feet has risen a bit, but it immediately settles down again. It appears Alfred-sama has interfered with the creation of 『Rock Spike』.

"I will not let you get away anymore!"

"Humph, as long as I evade that silly charge, which seems to be the only thing you've ever learned...what!?"

In an instant, Alfred-sama creates 『Rock Walls』 in the shape of < behind and on the sides of Dattol Stein, making it impossible for him to retreat.

"We're at advantage with this being a 2-on-1. As long as you can cooperate like we do, that is!"

I suppose Bruno and Edgar Tretter were unable to do that...

"Well, whatever. Even if you punch me with your measly mana, it won't do much anyway."

Dattol Stein uses his huge amount of mana to raise his defense power in one go. He's sure a genius to make that switch at such a speed...my right fist...!

"I am betting everything on this one blow, straight from the front!"

"I'll block it!"

Dattol Stein crosses his arms in front of his chest, and sends a huge amount of mana into them on top of that. It's what you'd call an iron defense by a high-ranking magician.

"Pierce through!"

I punch his chest with all of my remaining mana and the huge amount of man stored in Alfred-sama's magic crystal.

"With your amount of mana, it's easy to block...no way!"

My full power punch first tears open Dattol Stein's arms, and then smashes into his now defenseless chest. My fist only stops after penetrating all the way through his body.

No matter how excellent a magician he might be, he's still just an ordinary human. This blow, which damaged his lungs and heart, should be fatal.

"N-No wa...why?"



"Why are you so surprised?"

It's impossible for someone of your level to not have noticed the magic crystal in my right fist.

"With your...mana...this much...firepowe...impos..."

Having his chest drilled open, Dattol Stein doesn't say anything further anymore. Once I pull my fist out of his body, he falls to the ground, and stops moving altogether.

"We did it. But..."

Dattol Stein apparently died while apparently not being able to understand why my punch pierced through his body.

"I have been entrusted with a special magic crystal by Alfred-sama. You should have been able to predict that I might break through your 『Mana Defense』, if add the mana in the crystal to my blow."

"No, that's not true."

"Why?"

"That's easy to explain. Assuming your mana is 1, the magic crystal I lent you contains several hundreds. However, in case you were to add that mana while putting it into your fist, the crystal would usually provide you with no more than 1 mana. Going by your remaining amount of mana, the supply might have been even below 1."

I see. The magic crystal can't provide more mana than my own aggregate amount of mana.

"Otherwise, you'd very likely explode. That's why the crystal won't provide more than your own maximum amount of mana. Even when it comes to offensive abilities, it follows the same principle. Dattol Stein noticed that, so he defended against your punch."

I guess that means I unleashed a blow going beyond the supplied amount of mana when he expected that he could defend against it with ease. Once I look down at the crystal, it's become gray, signaling that it's empty. So I delivered a punch that drew out everything, and not just a bit above the amount that would be supplied normally.

"I've thought that you're a little exception, and this has confirmed it. That's why I gave you this crystal and told you to hit him with all your strength. Since it somewhat was a gamble, I must apologize to you. But, you went far above my expectations."

"No, there is nothing for you to apologize about..."

If Alfred-sama hadn't gambled there, we would have been killed by Dattol Stein.

"It's a relief for you to say so..."



"You bastards!"

We have been chatting while the two of us linger in the aftertaste of our hard-earned victory, but suddenly we're interrupted in a rude way.

"I guess it's only natural after this much time has passed, huh?"

"Alfred-sama?"

"The big boss has shown up."

Once I look in the direction of the voice, I spot a dozen soldiers and a fuming man, who seems to be a very important noble and appears to be close to 70 years old. He must be Duke Bürger who has continued to cover for Dattol Stein for more than 30 years.

As a matter of fact, it's my first time meeting this man. There's another, inconspicuous, middle-aged noble next to Duke Bürger, but I think it's a safe bet to say that he's his son-in-law, Viscount Basel. He seems to be panicking while looking at Duke Bürger rather than being angry at us.

"You assholes! How dare you kill Dattol Stein!"

"Dattol Stein? Him? If I remember correctly, it's the name of a magician who died 30 years ago." Alfred-sama sarcastically says without any shame whatsoever in response to Duke Bürger's shouting.

He's hinting that the man lying on the ground can't be Dattol Stein since that person has officially been declared as dead.

"The likes of a commoner and the second son of an Earl House! Don't think that you'll be able to get away from here alive!"

Upon Duke Bürger's signal, all his soldiers draw their swords. At the same time, the underlings of Viscount Basel, who have rushed over from all over the forest, surround us.

Come to think of it, I don't have any mana left after putting everything into that one punch.

"Alfred-sama?"

"It's no problem with opponents of this caliber, but...I wonder what we should do about this."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It's possible to give them the slip and run away, but Duke Bürger is likely going to become a pain afterwards. After all, he's the younger brother of the previous king, even if he acts like that. It'll be a pain if he holds a grudge against us. Cardinal Hohenheim sure is late..."

"What are you saying! I'm perfectly on time! I'm sure you noticed me a long time ago!"

When I hear a voice other than that of Duke Bürger and look in its direction, I find Cardinal Hohenheim standing there. A dozen knights in the same outfit stand around him...they must be the church's paladin unit. In addition, I notice the presences of military forces that have spread out as if to surround Duke Bürger and his men.

"Cardinal Hohenheim...you were the mastermind behind this, eh!?"

"Even if you realize it at this point, Dattol Stein has already fallen into hell. It's too late to whine about it now."

Cardinal Hohenheim looks down at Dattol Stein's corpse while provoking Duke Bürger by treating him like a little idiot.

"Even a guy like him must receive a funeral service. I guess we'll bury him in the cemetery for those without relatives."

"You piece of shii——it!"

Even though Duke Bürger gets angrier by the minute, Cardinal Hohenheim treats all of this very calmly.

"Kill that rotten priest!"

"I wonder whether you'll be able to do that. You think you can fight off the elite paladins of the church with your dogs?"

The soldiers stop moving upon Cardinal Hohenheim's question. As might be expected, they don't want to turn the renowned paladin unit, the elites of elites among the church defenders, into an enemy.

"Haven't you noticed the military units surrounding you? You have no chance of winning, be it in numbers or quality."

"You rotten priest, don't act so arrogantly!"

"Father!"

The person appearing from behind Cardinal Hohenheim is my father, Earl Armstrong.

"Long time no see, Klimt."

"I'm happy to see you in good health, father."

"Did you kill him, Klimt?" My father asks me while looking at Dattol Stein's corpse.

"Alfred-sama and I defeated him together!"

"I see. Well done. It's an achievement that can't be recognized officially, but it's an honor for me to have you as my son."

"Earl Armstro——ong! You asshe——ole! Even though you stayed docile after I gave you a warning eight years ago——o!"

"That's the reason. Back then, the previous king was still around. Thanks to his silly consideration of your circumstances, I had to do my utmost to restrain my bitterness for eight years. I feel relieved to be able to see Dattol Stein dead today."

"Earl Armstrong! Cardinal Hohenheim! I'll bring this matter up with His Majesty!"

"Are you an idiot?" Cardinal Hohenheim spits out while looking at him as if watching an utter fool as soon as Duke Bürger claims that he'll complain to the king.

"A guy who wasn't supposed to be alive has died. So what about it?" Father apparently can't suppress his scorn of Duke Bürger either.

He looks at him with the same expression as Cardinal Hohenheim.

"I don't know about the paladins, but do you believe that I can arbitrarily dispatch the guards to surround you?"

"What do you mean?"

"You're really slow on the uptake. It simply means that His Majesty has discarded you."

"Lies!"

"You mean the rumor about you being the true king as the elder brother of the previous king? How retarded."

Duke Bürger gets even more enraged at Cardinal Hohenheim who ridicules that rumor as absolute nonsense.

"Retarded, you say!? Don't you know who I am!?"

"Try to calm down a bit and use your brain. It's different when it's brothers born by different mothers at the same time, but what would be the point in switching the elder and younger twin brother of the same mother? Do you think there's some kind of difference in ability between babies that were just born rectifying doing something like that? You were of the same blood."

"I am..."

"You've been led astray by the nonsense prattled by those standing against the royal family. Neither the previous king, nor the current one have taken you into consideration. They merely worried

about the rumors and were vigilant towards the powers trying to use you as figurehead. Right now Dattol Stein isn't with you anymore either. I guess we'll have you exit the stage of life about now."

Once Cardinal Hohenheim lifts his hand, several big guys from among the paladin unit surround Duke Bürger, immobilizing him. Next they pin down his face, force his mouth open, and toss some kind of medicine into it.

"Ugh! What have you given me!? Poison?"

"Correct. Once you die here, we'll make your son succeed a Baron House, Duke Bürger. Viscount Basel, we'll spare your family. But this territory is going to be confiscated."

I've noticed just now, but Viscount Basel is likewise being restrained by strong paladins, and has been forced to swallow the same medicine. Until the very end, he didn't stand out at all.

"Cardinal Hohenheim! Daring to do something like this to the true king...!"

"That's wrong, isn't it? You merely continued sulking that you couldn't become king because you were born moments later. That's why you created this rumor, linked up with other nobles, and amassed a fortune while using Dattol Stein. Humans are truly terrifying, aren't they? You've started to believe that your own rumor might actually be true, haven't you? Or am I wrong? Oops, it looks like you're starting to get sleepy. That's the kind of poison it is."

"What...did I...do...wrong...? I'm the...genuine king...."

With those being his last words, Duke Bürger passed away while looking as if he had simply fallen asleep. Viscount Basel died in the same way, but it might be his misfortune that no one noticed it happening.

"How foolish."

That's the last comment by Cardinal Hohenheim before he orders the paladins to restrain the soldiers affiliated to Duke Bürger and Viscount Basel and to transport the three corpses. They silently carry out the work asked of them, but as they're wearing weird face guards today, I can't tell who they are.

I guess Cardinal Hohenheim has made sure to hide their identities because of the nature of this job.

"Now then, Alfred, Klimt-dono, could I ask you to accompany me?"

"Are you going to seal our mouths?"

As usual, Alfred-sama snarls at Cardinal Hohenheim with his words being full of sharp bitterness.

"As if! I'd get killed by Earl Armstrong!"

"Yeah, I'd beat this rotten priest to death without any hesitation."

Since I'd definitely protect Alfred-sama if they tried to kill him, they won't have any choice but to

kill me as well. As might be expected, even Cardinal Hohenheim isn't gutsy enough to pull off something like that in front of my father.

"His Majesty has called for you. Time is precious though."

"Understood. I'll be fine as long as I get a reward. Including the hush money, it should become a nice sum of money."

"No one would ever be able to imagine from your gentle face what a truly shameless man you are!"

"I'm sure he'll settle down once he grows a bit older."

"I sure hope so."

Cardinal Hohenheim and father lead Alfred-sama and me to the royal palace. Either way, it's good that I managed to avenge Bruno by killing Dattol Stein.