

Chapter 2 Part 7

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Currently, Princess Valtrune and I are on our way to the royal castle of the Kingdom of Reshfeld.

In the aftermath of the engagement annulment, she is taking this step to sever ties with Prince Yuri formally.

During the graduation ceremony at the military academy, the Princess and the Prince had clearly taken opposing stances. However, simply taking a stand doesn't officially break off an engagement between the royal and imperial families.

The annulment of the engagement is only finalized when formal letters are exchanged.

In my previous life, their engagement had continued even though their relationship had deteriorated. This had prevented her from securing her position within the Empire, effectively closing the path to becoming an empress.

—Which is why a formal annulment of the engagement is necessary this time.

"Aldia. I believe the annulment of the engagement will proceed without a hitch. But if an emergency arises, I'm counting on you."

I nodded, gripping a certain object she had given me— a small magic tool that could briefly record voices. Ideally, it won't be necessary, but it's a precaution, insisted upon by her.

I accompany her precisely because we've considered unforeseen circumstances. And moving in a way that meets those expectations is my first task.

"I will execute everything according to your plan, Your Imperial Highness."

"Thank you. I find that very reassuring."

Our resolve is set.

We pass through the gates of the royal castle and approach the one who stands in our way. The interior of the castle is lavishly designed, not a place for commoners like me, but this time is an exception.

"Valtrune von Felsdorf requests an audience with Prince Yuri!"

I had been allowed entry under the pretext of serving as her escort. We proceed down a corridor where someone seems to be waiting for us—it's Prince Yuri, a person she would likely detest the most.

"Heh, so you came after all, Valtrune. I thought you wouldn't dare show up."

The Prince looks down on us with disdain, mocking her stoic expression.

"Cut the talk. I'm here to break off our engagement."

"What's the point...? You were the one I discarded. Trying to *repeal* it now would be pointless!"

I'm tempted to sigh at his arrogant attitude. It's truly foolish. Why does he think she would cling to the engagement with him?

She is the Imperial Princess of the Empire, and he is oblivious to the fact that they are on equal footing, completely disregarding any diplomatic considerations.

Despite his barrage of disdainful words, her face remains unchanged, speaking dispassionately.

"Is that so? Then let's officially annul this engagement with the approval of His Majesty the King."

To her, breaking off the engagement is neither painful nor troublesome.

Prince Yuri, however, gradually looks displeased, perhaps because her reaction wasn't what he expected.

"You seem quite composed."

"It's just the fact."

"———!"

Then, his anger turns toward me, who stands beside Princess Valtrune.

"And who is the man beside you? He looks of low standing."

The Prince doesn't know me. We've never directly interacted before, likely because I'm a commoner. That's why he understands that I am not a noble.

"He is my escort."

"Oh? So, the *Imperial Princess* has such a scrawny commoner as an escort. Haha, now I see the level of the Empire!"

"Haa..."

Prince Yuri continues to provoke. However, she doesn't even cast her gaze at the Prince.

Sighing, she ignores him and starts walking toward the room where the king resides.

"Aldia, let's go."

"Yes, Your Imperial Highness."

I obey and follow closely behind her.

"Hey, wait!"

The Prince seems to be bothered by being ignored.

He tried to grab her shoulder forcefully. However, I didn't overlook it. Just before his hand touches her shoulder, I firmly grasp it, preventing the forceful contact.

Normally, such an act of disrespect toward royalty would justify immediate execution. However, right now, I am acting under the guise of the Imperial Princess's escort.

"How dare a commoner like you touch me...!"

The Prince's face turned bright red with rage, but I did not hold back.

"She is the Imperial Princess of the Empire. I cannot allow any further disrespect."

"———!"

Hearing the commotion, the surrounding guards swiftly encircled us.

"Do you even know what you're doing?"

"I'm merely fulfilling my duties as the escort of the Imperial Princess."

"...You bastard!"

He boils over in rage, glaring at me.

"Guards, behead this insolent fool!"

"B-But... he's the escort of Her Imperial Highness Princess Valtrune..."

"I don't care! Do it now! This is an order!"

Confused, the guards draw their swords.

Once ordered by the Prince, there's no talking back.

—Can't be helped, then.

"If you intend to proceed, then I shall also fight you seriously."

I have my own feelings about this, too.

The insults Prince Yuri has thrown at my lord, Princess Valtrune, have been numerous. As her knight, I've been holding back, but irritation is welling up from within me.

Meeting the Prince's hostile gaze, I glared back. Then, the Prince's face suddenly shows signs of fear.

Was he that scared?

"...H-Hurry up!"

At the Prince's words, the guards start closing the distance.

Amidst this growing tension, the hand not holding the Prince is gripped by Princess Valtrune.

"That's enough."

When I turned around, she had a somewhat troubled expression on her face.

"Aldia, now's not the time. I understand how you feel, but causing a scene isn't wise."

"But..."

"I know, it's for my sake, isn't it...? Thank you. But calm down, okay?"

She probably saw right through my heated emotions.

I take a deep breath and let go of the Prince's hand.

The moment I let go, he rubs the part of his hand that I had grabbed and steps back toward the guards.

"...Don't think you'll get away with this!"

Even when glared at, I feel no particular fear.

"....."

"Ugh... damn it, are you making fun of me!?"

Until now, his anger was apparent. But recognizing the change in the situation, he displays a malicious smile.

"Well, fine. It's best to dispose of trash like you right here. Do it, you all!"

Having been released, he now speaks with more confidence than before.

"Your Imperial Highness, permission to unsheathe my sword..."

"It can't be helped. But you must not kill the guards."

"Understood."

I slowly draw my black sword that's been hanging at my waist.

The guards also began to aim their swords at me.

They can't go against Prince Yuri's orders. Hence, they have no choice but to oppose us.

"If you point your sword at me— you should be prepared to lose a limb or two."

As I take a step forward, the atmosphere suddenly shifts.

Deliberately pressuring the opponents, the guards start to move anxiously.

Then, they all come rushing at me in unison—a coordinated, nimble movement.

"Take this...!"

—I see. Their swordsmanship is not bad at all.

The skill level of the guards is quite refined.

As expected from those entrusted with guarding the royal castle, they are on an entirely different level compared to the students of the Philnotes Military Academy. They've staked their lives on this job.

Their movements are well-coordinated, and each one is highly skilled. They maintain distance from one another and attack me without interference.

"—Haah!"

"Yaah...!"

"Fuah!"

They don't flinch, even against my intimidation. They're fully prepared.

While carefully dodging their attacks, I clash swords against them with great force.

I find a moment's opening and knock their swords away.

"WHA...!?"

Indeed, these guards are strong.

From the fact that Prince Yuri could command them, it's clear that the guards have strong trust from the royalty.

...However, that's all there is to it. With the level of these guards here, they will never reach me with their swords.

One of the guards' sword flies through the air and sticks into the floor a short distance away.

"Haah!"

"—Fuah!"

I also knock away the swords held by the nearby guards.

"N-No way..."

The guards make faces as if they don't understand what just happened.

"Do you still want to continue...?"

"T-That's..."

"I don't mind if injuries occur."

They stop moving altogether at that.

"What are you doing? Stop fooling around and take his head already!"

The Prince's heckling flies over, but the guards no longer close the distance. There's not a single step taken towards me.

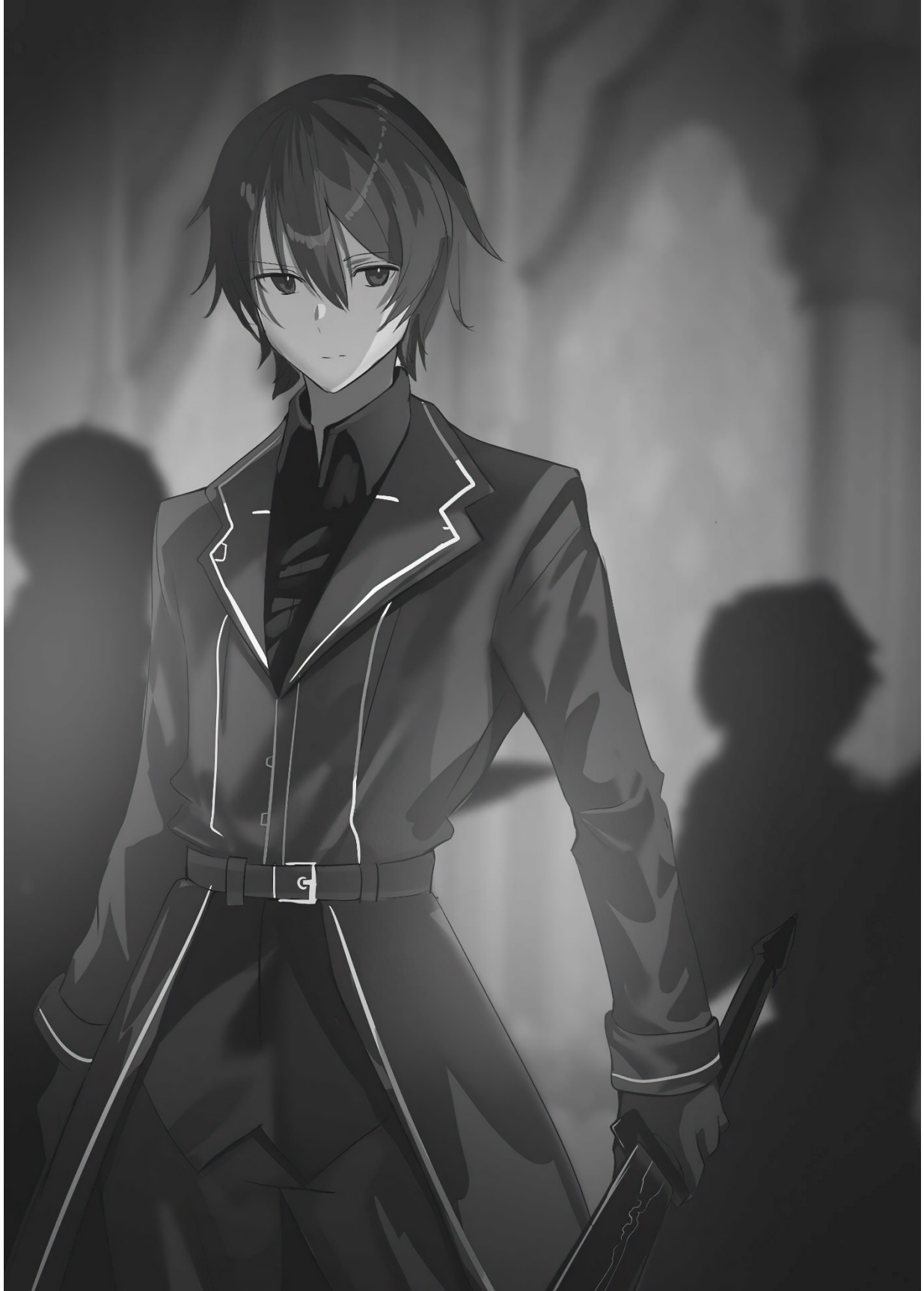
"Shall I cut off both of your arms next? If you're willing to stake your lives, I'm more than happy to oblige."

"———!?"

As I tell them in a threatening low voice, the guards all at once turn their gaze towards the Prince.

"...We can't."

"What did you say? Your voice is so soft that I can't hear you."



"Your Royal Highness... We can't defeat him."

"What? ...Hey, say that again."

"I said we can't defeat him! The difference in our abilities is too vast!"

With those words, the guards began to sheath their swords one after another.

"Huh? Don't spout such nonsense! He's just one person!"

Judging from his attitude, the Prince probably couldn't measure my strength.

I can't help but feel sorry for the guards who are being asked to do something unreasonable.

"Aren't you all soldiers serving the proud Kingdom!?"

"No matter how many times you ask, the answer is the same. It's impossible!"

"Fools! It's your job to make the impossible possible!"

The guards of the Kingdom gathered here are exceptional. They are well aware that they're being overpowered.

The Prince may not understand, but I have put tiny cracks in all the swords held by the surrounding guards. If they aim their swords at me one more time, their blades will undoubtedly shatter.

The outcome of this match has already been decided.

"...That's enough. Prince Yuri, you have lost."

As if forcing him to face the cruel reality, Princess Valtrune speaks sternly.

"Don't joke around! Aren't you all ashamed to lose to such an insolent youth!?"

"Saying such things is pointless. My escort will not lose to anyone... One look at his swordsmanship, and you should easily understand the difference in their abilities."

"Quiet! Don't speak so arrogantly!"

"But it's the truth."

Upon hearing this, a sense of humiliation seems to have surfaced on the Prince's face. This skirmish doesn't carry much weight. It's nothing more than a response to the insult made by the Prince against her.

"Your Imperial Highness, I apologize for showing you something unsightly."

"It's fine, Aldia. It was a good opportunity to reaffirm your strength. Besides, you held back well. No one is dead thanks to you."

At Princess Valtrune's words, the faces of the guards turn pale again.

"If it is Your Imperial Highness's command, I intend to accomplish anything."

"I feel truly reassured that you're here, Aldia. So, you heard that, Prince Yuri? Please don't make me choose the worst option, okay?"

"—Damn it!"

From her expression, it's clear. It was a cheerful demeanor, as if all the stress she had been holding onto was instantly relieved.