

## Chapter 188: Ball

*Sharp nose, thin eyebrows, slightly droopy cheeks, faint blue eyes...* Qilangos examined himself in the mirror. He was certain that he looked no different from the unconscious man.

After he rehearsed a few of the man's gestures, he bent down to drag the man off the ground and shoved him into a wardrobe.

Then, he extended his right hand. With an audible snap, he broke the man's neck.

Qilangos took out his handkerchief and wiped his hands before closing the wardrobe door.

He slowly walked back to the mirror, wore a black double-breasted frock coat, tied a bowtie, and raised a bottle of amber-colored cologne. He dripped a few drops on his wrist, then dabbed them over himself.

Qilangos tidied his hair in front of the mirror, then walked out of the room. He clasped his hands and told his butler who was waiting outside, "Don't let anyone enter my room; I'm keeping something very important in there."

"Yes, Baron!" The balding butler pressed his hand against his chest and bowed. "Your carriage and personal servant is waiting downstairs. Duke Negan's invitation card is there as well."

Maintaining the baron's mannerisms, Qilangos nodded indiscernibly. He walked towards the stairs in an arrogant manner under the company of his butler.

*Heh, a baron who is riddled in debt, to the point of not wanting to hire a normal security guard, has actually maintained his hiring of a butler, a valet, two footmen, two parlor-maids, four chambermaids, two laundresses, one carriage driver, one coachman, one gardener, one chef, and one sous chef. To these foolish nobles, dignity really is everything... I even had to waste some of my time to learn the strange pronunciations and so-called “noble slang”... Qilangos thought to himself in disdain.*

...

Backlund, Cherwood Borough. In a particular cramped apartment.

Xio Derecha sat cross-legged on a bed and looked at Fors Wall who was reading a novel with the light from the window.

“This is so disappointing. Qilangos didn’t leave any clues behind. We still haven’t figured out what he’s trying to do in Backlund.”

They had acted according to their initial plan and lodged a police report. Then, they secretly sent a letter to the local police station and described the strange situation at the crime scene in detail. They also mentioned that the suspect could be Qilangos.

The police station responded as they had predicted. The policemen were very careful, and they transferred the case directly to the Mandated Punishers.

After a day’s time, the news that Vice Admiral Hurricane had sneaked into Backlund was widely spread among all “enforcement teams.” Xio and Fors also left the place they originally rented and hid to investigate in secret.

They didn't want to be brought back to the police station to help with the official investigation. The Mandated Punishers, Nighthawks, and Machinery Hivemind were all hostile towards non-official Beyonders. The Churches viewed them as potential criminals.

Hence, not only were Xio and Fors avoiding the possibility of Qilangos's pursuit, but they were also hiding from the "enforcement" authorities.

"If we could discover his purpose so easily, Qilangos would've been buried in a cemetery long ago, and the tombstone would be covered in weeds," Fors replied casually. "We need to wait patiently. As long as the authorities continue to take this much interest in him, Qilangos will definitely make a mistake. I've got to say, I'm quite envious of a mystical item that can allow one to change appearances."

Xio hugged her knees and looked out the window.

"I'm just worried that Qilangos will take action soon and then flee from Backlund before anyone can respond.

"If that happens, I don't know when I'll be able to advance to Sequence 8, let alone Sequence 6 or Sequence 5..."

She paused and muttered as her mind spaced out, "I don't know when I'll be able to take back the things that belonged to our family... It's been almost a year since I last saw my younger brother..."

Fors gave her a comforting smile.

“When you fulfill your wishes, please allow me to write your experiences into a story. It would definitely be an interesting and exciting one.”

“Hmm, I actually find Miss Audrey very generous. Even if Qilangos escapes, I think she'll still reward us handsomely. We've been busying ourselves for so long after all, and we've even caused Qilangos to appear.”

“I hope so... Sigh, why can't I have any fortuitous encounters?” Xio grabbed her shoulder-length blonde hair.

Fors frowned and said, “In the Beyonder world, fortuitous encounters are usually accompanied with danger. I have yet to figure out what the ravings I hear during the full moon mean, or if they will result in negative changes. Heh heh, fortuitous encounters without dangers may exist, but they are very, very rare. It's difficult for your wish to be fulfilled, unless... unless we receive the favors from an orthodox deity or the attention of some friendly hidden existence. However, it would be hard for us to tell if it was really an evil god or devil in disguise.”

Xio sat straight and drew a crimson moon on her chest.

“May the Goddess watch over me!”

...

Duke Negan was in his mansion located in Backlund, Empress Borough, where he was hosting a grand ball.

There were two parts of the mansion. One was the dancing hall located on the ground floor, which was covered with glamorous

stone slabs carved with complicated patterns. There was the duke's excellent ensemble playing music in a corner. Up the stairs, there was a winding corridor that circled the hall located on the second floor. The guests were holding their glasses, leaning against the railing, overlooking the people dancing on the ground floor as though they were enjoying a fencing match from the stands. Occasionally, a gentleman would walk before a lady or his wife to invite them to dance. If the invitation was accepted, both of them would walk down the stairs hand in hand and enter the hall.

On the far side of the corridor, there were doors after doors. They were rooms that had been allocated to the guests as their resting quarters.

But behind a French door was a corridor, and on both sides of the corridor were various gypsum statues. They were all the ancestors of the Negan family.

At the end of the corridor was another hall which could see the ball. Long tables were covered with a variety of delicious food and fine wine, and another ensemble belonging to the duke was playing relaxing melodies for the guests.

In the hall, the guests were gathering in groups. Some were seated and some stood around, chatting about all kinds of matters. Those who wished to get away from the frivolities for a while would go to the attached balconies to overlook the garden and enjoy the crimson moon in the sky.

After participating in the opening dance, Audrey Hall stood on the second floor above the dancing hall and stared at the candles on the huge crystal chandeliers hanging from the rooftop in a daze. However, she noticed that many young men were appearing to pump themselves up to come over and invite her for a dance. So, she wisely left the place and went to the corridor that connected to the dining hall.

*How boring, but my attendance is necessary... Sigh, can't they just let me observe in silence? I have to say, some people have rich facial expressions when they dance. They remind me of animals seeking mates...* Audrey lowered her head, looked at the tips of her feet, and walked in a straight line out of boredom.

Just then, the corner of her eyes caught an approaching figure. She slowed down, stood straight, and instantly became the elegant yet quiet Miss Hall.

“Good day, Baron Gramir,” Audrey greeted with a flawless smile and etiquette.

Baron Gramir had thin eyebrows and faint blue eyes. He smiled and bowed.

“Nice to meet you again, Miss Hall. You are the brightest and most dazzling jewel at this ball.”

After exchanging a few words, Baron Gramir headed for the dancing hall while Audrey continued approaching the dining hall.

After a few steps, she suddenly frowned. There was puzzlement in her green eyes.

*Baron Gramir isn't the same as before...*

*In the past, when he sees a pretty lady or madam of a higher rank than he is, and one that's relatively prettier, he would look to the side without looking at them directly. Then, he would steal glances constantly... But today, he appears very confident...*

*Also, his cologne smells off. In the numerous parties in the past, his body would emit the final note of the Amber cologne fragrance, musky yet faint, not ostentatious yet elegant. In other words, he would spray the cologne a few hours earlier to let the front and middle notes disperse before the gathering. But just now, his cologne was Amber in middle note, rich and refined...*

Audrey slowed down her footsteps. As a Spectator who had completely digested her potion, her sensitivity towards details wasn't anything other Beyonders could compare to.

Suddenly, she thought of a possibility. Her green crystal-clear eyes froze.

*It couldn't be Qilangos in a disguise, right?*

*The Creeping Hunger has the power to change a person's appearance!*

...

The more Audrey thought about it, the more possible it seemed. She felt uptight as she turned nervous and panicky.

*If he really was Vice Admiral Hurricane, what is he trying to do? It's a pity that I can't bring Susie to the ball. Otherwise, I could ask her to observe Baron Gramir... No way, I have to warn Father! Amidst her frantic thoughts, Audrey quickened her pace and entered the dining hall. She found Earl Hall who was talking to the Chief Cabinet Secretary and others.*

She flashed a flawless smile and walked over. She held Earl Hall by his arm and told the others, "Gentlemen, do you mind if I

borrow Earl Hall for a few minutes?”

“Beautiful lady, it’s your right,” The few gentlemen said in a friendly response.

Audrey held Earl Hall by his arm and moved to the nearest balcony. They found a quiet, uninhabited corner, and she said to her middle-aged father who was getting plump, “Father, I have something to tell you.”

Earl Hall was smiling fondly at his daughter, but he got serious when he saw her serious facial expression, “What’s the matter?”

“I ran into Baron Gramir earlier, but there are things about him that are different from the past. For instance, his cologne was in the middle note of the Amber fragrance. It used to be the end note. And...” Audrey continued with the things that she found different. It could be explained as being sensitive and meticulous.

After she described what she had noticed, she weighed her words and added, “I heard from Viscount Gaint that Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos has the ability to take on other people’s appearance. Hasn’t he been in Backlund recently?”

Earl Hall listened to her carefully, and his face grew abnormally grave.

But he soon flashed a smile and comforted his anxious daughter.

“I’ll take care of this. Go look for your mother and stay with her. She’s at the lounge in this hall.”

“Okay.” Audrey nodded obediently.

On the way back to the lounge, she turned around and looked at her father. She saw that Earl Hall was talking to another noble softly, and he wore a rather solemn look.

Audrey couldn't help but feel anxious. She felt that she needed to do something to make sure that her father, mother, and brother didn't get hurt.

She surveyed the area and changed the direction in which she was heading in. She left the dining hall and found Duke Negan's small prayer room.

She pushed the door closed and locked it behind her. She looked at the symbol of the Lord of Storms before her and subconsciously found a remote and dark corner.

Audrey sat down with her body leaning forward. She clasped her hands together into a praying position and supported her forehead.

Then, she recited softly in Hermes, “The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.”