

Stepping out of his bedroom Allanon was quick to notice how alive the castle seemed to be. The maids were rushing here and there into each guest room with fresh bedding... every room except his own. It figured as much. Due to the nature of his curse Allanon had been ostracized by almost the entire castle by order of his parents. Of course, there were some in the castle that were still loyal to Allanon. One of which the prince could tell was trying to sneak up on him. He glanced over his shoulder and spotted the familiar mop of white hair. "Ah, good morning Cecil. I assume you know why the castle is so lively today?" Upon being noticed, Cecil leaned against the cold stone wall of the castle and nodded slightly. "I managed to overhear from a couple of the kitchen staff that the castle is expecting guests. One Earl of Mittagessen... I'm afraid despite my network of informants I don't know who that is..." Cecil scowled a bit while balling up his fists. He glanced up at Allanon and was taken aback by the mage's sour expression.

"Oh, that would be the newest title he's acquired... He was formerly the Duke of Mahlzeit until he demanded my father give him a new title or he'd cut off supplies to the capital... He's my uncle Reuben," Allanon explained with a grumble. The gears slowly spun in Cecil's head before it fell into place. "Oh. Your father's younger brother. I've read the reports..." the white haired assassin nodded in understanding and glanced up at Allanon. "If he's coming here... is he demanding another title? Doesn't he realize how expendable he really is?" the mage prince nodded as he began wandering down the hallway. Uncle Reuben was the younger brother to King Alban. As was tradition within Ebenholz the eldest son of each generation would be dealt with to prevent the Curse of Verwustung from fully maturing. Therefore the second born would be given the throne. Unfortunately, Allanon's grandparents did not stop after the birth of Alban and a few years later prince Reuben was born. Much like Alban's elder brother, Reuben

was carelessly dismissed to an outlying provincial city on the outskirts of Ebenholz and given an empty title.

“It would seem uncle Reuben is still as greedy as ever. He won’t recognize tradition and abdicate his supposed claim to the throne. It would appear he is trying to undermine my parents and claim Mittagessen as the royal city instead of Zerstoren where Verswutung’s head is located. While not located anywhere on the Fell Dragon’s slumbering body, my uncle is trying to claim that the farming center of Ebenholz is the true Capital city.” with a low grumble of annoyance Allanon slowly began descending the stairs with Cecil close on his tail. “I would wager a guess Reuben has begun signing shipping receipts with ‘King of Ebenholz’? That would explain why the Nightshades have been in a tizzy...” Upon hearing mention of Cecil’s order of assassins, Allanon turned to ask him a question. “Dragon below... Are they seriously considering moving to a middle of nowhere city and taking orders from a tyrant?” Cecil could only shrug and frown, giving Allanon another cause for a low groan. “I need breakfast...” he muttered while gripping the bridge of his nose.

The kitchens were in a similar state of cleaning as the bedrooms as Allanon entered and he quickly did his best to not interrupt the confusing flow of the servants. Huddled in a far corner of the kitchen the mage prince was surprised to find Gaspard peeling potatoes of all things. The knight looked up from his task and let out a small shout of surprise followed by a small hiss when the knife slipped and cut open his finger. “Ah! Good morning Allanon! I’m sorry I was not there to greet you this morning. It... would seem I have been drafted into the kitchen today,” he motioned to the bucket of butchered potatoes and grimaced a bit. “Would you believe me if I said I came in here looking for a snack for Kovalt? True story.” Gaspard could only chuckle a bit as he looked between the knife in one hand and his bleeding thumb in the other. “Hold on now...

we wouldn't want you to ruin all your hard work," Allanon spoke lightly and knelt down to look at the finger. "I'm sure the royal physician would say you need stitches and two weeks of rest..." the mage prince stated as a purple flame sprung to life on the tip of his finger. He muttered a small chant in Draconian and the flames licked up the blood while sealing the wound. "You've been dealt worse by Kovalt. Care to join us for breakfast?" Allanon questioned while motioning to Cecil who was munching on a cream filled pastry he pilfered from a passing chef. "Anything to get out of peeling potatoes. I was terrible at it when I was training to be a Royal Guard and my skills have not improved since then. I fear they may have gotten worse," Gaspard chuckled a bit and eagerly followed his friends to the dining room.

Despite not being heir to the throne anymore Allanon was still granted a spot to eat in the dining room. Allanon naturally assumed it was because his parents had already eaten... or that the table still needed a washing. Regardless he took a seat, flashed his two retainers a blush when he heard the chair creak under his bulk, and tried to laugh it off. Cecil and Gaspard took seats on either side of the prince and in no time flat they were presented with stacks of fluffy pancakes, greasy sausages, and fresh baked biscuits. "So... I hear your uncle is arriving today..." Gaspard stated nonchalantly as he bit into a sausage. He was met with a murderous glare from Cecil who was quick to stop when Allanon spotted him. "Yes... I fear what my parents are going to do in order to end the issue once and for all. Whatever they do to him will most likely be pointed in my direction if it succeeds." "Well you've escaped assassin attempts in the past... What's the worst they could do then?" Gaspard questioned and turned to Cecil when he spoke. "Public execution." The room turned deadly quiet and both young men turned to Cecil. "What? It's the truth. They'll make up some phony crime he committed and sentence him to public execution. Though... if I recall correctly he's even pudgier than you. That would make the guillotine and

the gallows damn near impossible with how fat of a neck he has... that would only leave burned at the stake.” Cecil explained as he playfully elbowed Allanon in the stomach while he ripped open a biscuit. He took a pad of butter and a knife to it while looking between Allanon and Gaspard. “Was it something I said?” he questioned and was met with a resounding yes from both.

“I often forget how morbid you can get Cecil...” Gaspard complained while stabbing his pancakes. “You also forget he is a trained assassin.” Allanon corrected with a soft chuckle. “I am no stranger to death. For all I know this meal could be poisoned,” a sly smirk crossed Allanon’s face as he noticed his two retainers pause eating. He burst into a small fit of laughter which his two friends began nervously laughing. “Is now a good time to mention I’ve developed an immunity to most poisons?” Cecil blurted out and was immediately beamed in the head by a biscuit thrown by Gaspard. “Point taken...”