Soon the young darkness in Hume's eyes calmed down.

Buzz.

And the surroundings started to get noisy.

[Because of that bead, the darkness… is moving?]

Russell said and slid his eyes away.

Despite not knowing what kind of power the black bead contained, Russell felt burdened.

It felt like facing a huge mountain.

Take it.

Please, take it.

That's it. That's right.

Darkness rushed towards Lucion, muttering in an earnest voice.

But it was too early for Lucion to listen to the murmur of darkness.

Russell's eyes narrowed.

['Why is the darkness clinging to him like that?']

Bethel also questioned the scenery that she couldn't understand.

[Russell. The darkness…]

[No, it's not common. Actually… it's my first time seeing it, too.]

Russell knew what Bethel was going to ask, so he answered immediately.

"What are you talking about?"

Lucion looked at Russell and Bethel for a moment.

[You can't hear the darkness?]

"I can only hear the song."

While answering Russell's question, Lucion smoothed his fingers.

—Ratta can hear it! They want Lucion to take it?

"Is it really okay if I take it?"

Lucion looked at Russell and swallowed his dry saliva.

Even if he didn't know what the black bead was, didn't he confirm already through Broson that it had the effect of strengthening the darkness?

He wanted it.

The desire to have it was seething.

['Should I allow this or not?']

Russell pondered for a moment.

Didn't the darkness want Broson to make sure that no warlocks could enter the Empire?

Hurry up. Quickly.

Please, you can hear us. Tell him. Tell that kid. He has to take it.

In the midst of this, the darkness even begged Lucion to take the bead.

Russell thought it wasn't up to him to judge.

So Russell believed in the darkness' desperation.

[Take it.]

"I understand."

Lucion took the black bead with an excited look.

"…?"

There was no response.

Lucion, who expected a loud reaction at least, was very disappointed.

He tried to raise his voice, but the sounds around him suddenly faded away.

Lucion blinked, not knowing what had happened.

He saw himself bleeding from his nose.

It reminded him of Ratta's words saying that the floor was like a mirror.

* * *

"…!"

Covering his face with his long hair, his hand abruptly stopped.

Dozens of trees in front of him were pulled out on their own and restored to their original state, and then the strange situation repeated again and again. As if not seeing the strange situation, he got up from his spot.

"This is it, isn't it? Right?"

A small smile was visible through his hair.

"It's no use trying to deceive me."

There was nothing as far as he could see.

But in his eyes, he could see a great deal of darkness staring at him.

Hatred.

Anger.

Disgust.

Resentment.

There were a lot of negative emotions mixed in.

It didn't just happen today or yesterday, so he didn't care.

He just tilted his head as he stared at the darkness and saw nothing changed.

"…No. Am I mistaken? Did my auditory hallucination start again? I don't know."

The corners of his mouth went downhill again and he clenched his hair.

"Annoying. Annoying. Annoying."

He pulled the darkness out of his hand.

When he lightly rubbed his fingers, the trees that had been pulled out and repeatedly returned to their original state finally found their place.
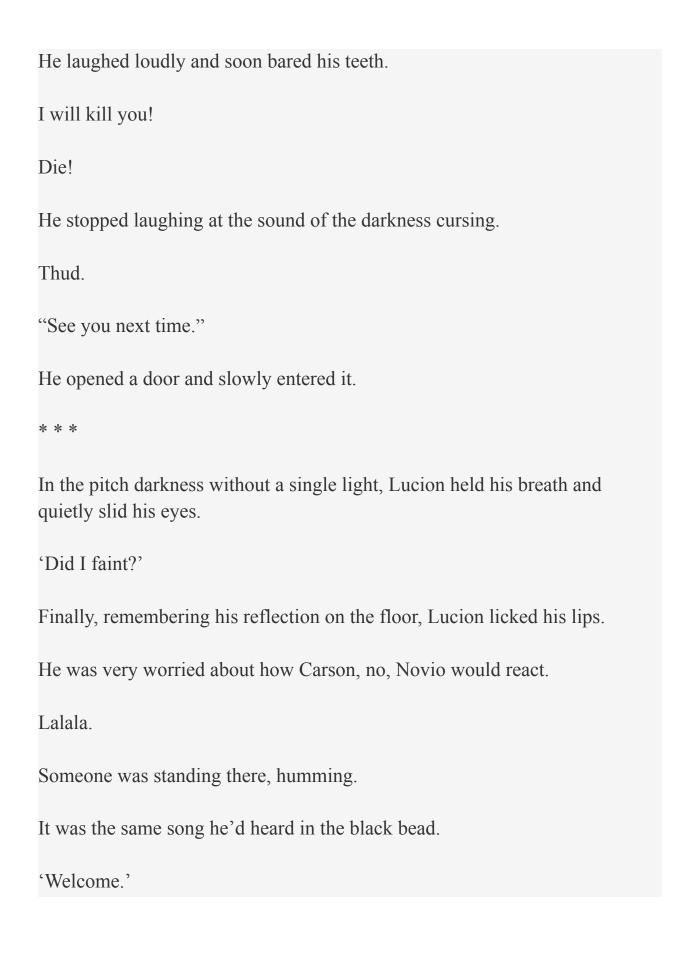
Give it back! Give it back!

No, get out of here! Go away!

"How long will you be like this? Accept me now."

No. We don't recognize you. Forever and ever.

"Yes, but it's no use. I'm going to find you. And I'll kill you. Then you'll acknowledge me, right?"

He laughed loudly and soon bared his teeth.

I will kill you!

Die!

He stopped laughing at the sound of the darkness cursing.

Thud.

"See you next time."

He opened a door and slowly entered it.

* * *

In the pitch darkness without a single light, Lucion held his breath and quietly slid his eyes.

'Did I faint?'

Finally, remembering his reflection on the floor, Lucion licked his lips.

He was very worried about how Carson, no, Novio would react.

Lalala.

Someone was standing there, humming.

It was the same song he'd heard in the black bead.

'Welcome.'

A soft voice greeted Lucion.

A dark figure with no face or expression seemed to smile at Lucion.

'Who are you…?'

Lucion asked, but his words rang in his head, not in his mouth.

'I see. You don't remember me. I'm sad. I'm sad. That hurts me.'

But there was no emotion mixed in the dark voice.

'I am your everything, your only thing.'

Lucion frowned when they answered with strange words.

But it was similar to what he had heard from the darkness before.

'Now you've got one.'

The dark brother said.

Lucion had already guessed that there were several black beads from the moment he found it.

The dark figure turned this conjecture into conviction.

'Finally. Finally.'

The dark figure approached Lucion.

'I've been waiting for this day to come. I've been waiting a long time.'

They didn't have a face, but they weren't scary.

Rather, they were nice to see.

The dark figure put their hand on Lucion's chest.

'It's broken. It's broken. That's why you don't remember me.'

The dark figure patted Lucion as if to console him.

'It's all right. It's only one now. The broken vessel will be fixed. You'll remember me then.'

'Broken vessel? Are you talking about me?'

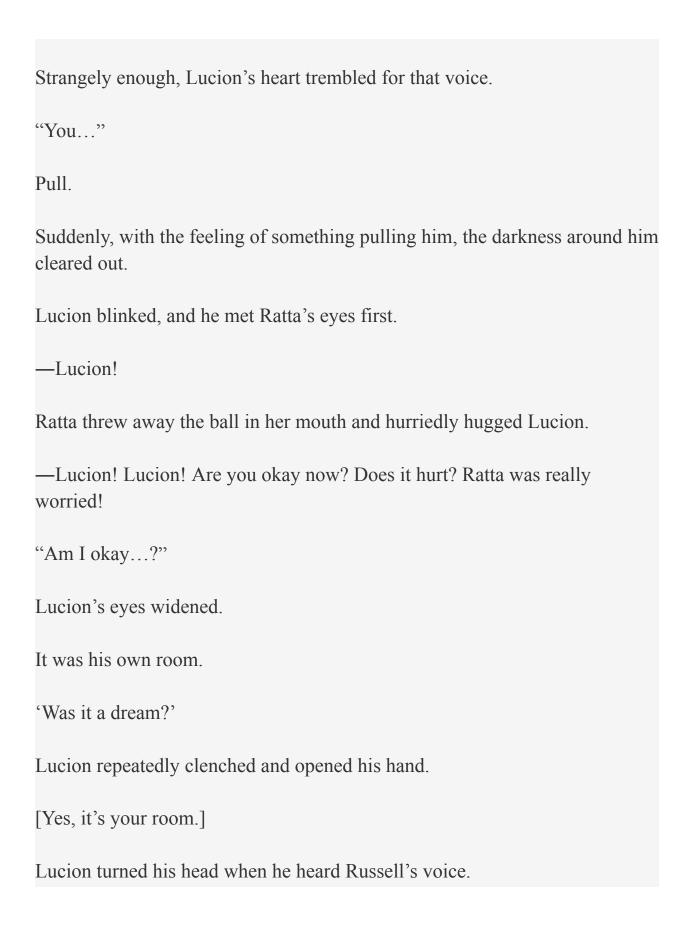'They were born of darkness and became servants of darkness.'

'…What? What are you talking about?'

Lucion was bewildered by the dark figure that suddenly began to sound different.

The dark figure raised their hand as if it were a finger and spoke to Lucion.

'Now you have one. If you're curious about the next story, please come and listen.'

A smile followed.

Strangely enough, Lucion's heart trembled for that voice.

"You…"

Pull.

Suddenly, with the feeling of something pulling him, the darkness around him cleared out.

Lucion blinked, and he met Ratta's eyes first.

—Lucion!

Ratta threw away the ball in her mouth and hurriedly hugged Lucion.

—Lucion! Lucion! Are you okay now? Does it hurt? Ratta was really worried!

"Am I okay…?"

Lucion's eyes widened.

It was his own room.

'Was it a dream?'

Lucion repeatedly clenched and opened his hand.

[Yes, it's your room.]

Lucion turned his head when he heard Russell's voice.

Russell was sitting in a chair, staring at him,

For some reason, Russell looked dazed, and Lucion smiled slightly.

[The black bead melted and was absorbed by you, Lucion, then you fell down with a nosebleed. You remember up to this point, right?]

"No. I don't remember the black bead melted and got absorbed."

Lucion widened his eyes.

Bethel put her hand on Lucion's forehead, and he asked, startled.

"…Did I have a fever?"

[Yeah, you've been suffering all night. You look fine now.]

Bethel smiled softly.

"Is Father here?"

[Of course. There's no way Lord Lucion's father won't come.]

At Bethel's answer, Lucion's mouth went dry.

He didn't know that the black bead would cause this situation.

He thought that even if he gained strength, it would only hurt for a brief moment.

'I think up of all the excuses I can say to Brother, but… Damn it.'

Lucion was very uncomfortable with this atmosphere with the sunlight coming through the window.

It seemed a day had passed day.

[You think Novio is the only one here? Carson's coming, Antony's coming, Hume's been sitting here all this time.]

Russell giggled and shook his crossed legs.

At that sight, Bethel couldn't hold back her smile and opened her mouth.

[Even if he looks like this, he was the most nervous just now because he didn't know when Lord Lucion would wake up.]

[Bethel…!]

Russell rose hastily from his seat.

―That's right! Ratta saw it too, he just went left and right with this look on his face!

Ratta moved left when she said left and moved right when she said right with her eyes narrowed.

The corner of Lucion's lips went up.

While trying to look at Russell, Lucion looked at Ratta because something was strange.

Ratta's tail and legs were a bit long, but now they had gotten even longer.

Lucion rubbed his eyes and raised his upper body.

'Ugh', he groaned but he didn't take his eyes off Ratta.

"…Ratta, did you grow up?"

Ratta's smile widened.

—Yes! Ratta grew up! Hehehe!

Ratta came closer to Lucion as if to hug him and rubbed his face.

"Why did you grow up all of a sudden?"

—Lucion's darkness has grown so big! That's why Ratta grew up!

Ratta's eyes twinkled.

—Before long, Ratta will be able to give Lucion a ride, right? Right?

But Lucion couldn't answer Ratta's question.

He just looked at Russell with a look of surprise.

[Why don't you move a little yourself?]

Russell grinned.

After turning around the darkness, Lucion also smiled.

The darkness that Troy, the divine beast of light, had previously blessed him with increased his power by about 1.5 times.

The black bead gave him more than that.

Maybe it had increased to the point of being close to twice its previous size, so Lucion's heart was overflowing with emotion.

'…Crazy.'

It was natural that Ratta grew.

'Hume did it.'

More importantly, that one black bead was not the end of it.

[How are you feeling? Do you feel anything strange?]

Russell asked after seeing the fact that Lucion was fine.

He could have missed something.

"Yes. I feel fine. Rather, it feels as comfortable as wearing my own clothes."
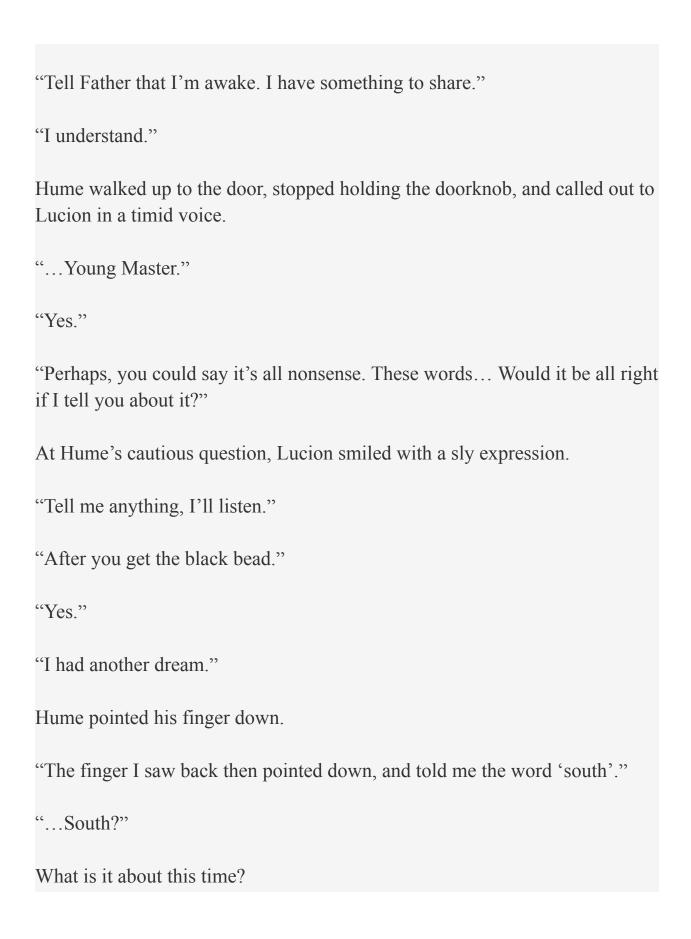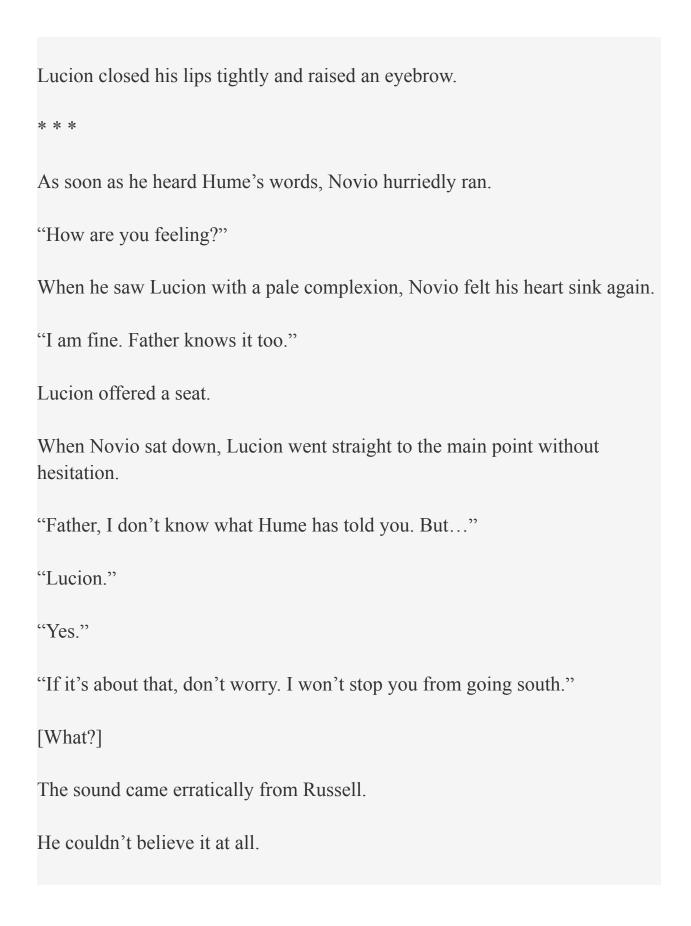
This was true.

Lucion couldn't forget the chills and delight he felt when he took the black bead.

[Lucion. I don't know how that bead went into your body. I don't even know why it was in my warehouse. But back then, the darkness begged you to take it.]

"…The darkness did?"

—Right, Ratta heard it too.

[I heard it too.]

Bethel nodded as well.

[There is no way that darkness will harm a person blessed with darkness, but there is no power in the world without a price. So…]

"Even if Teacher didn't allow it, I would have still taken it. Why would I hesitate when I could get stronger?"

Lucion felt it clearly through the wound in his stomach.

If you don't want to die, you have to build up your strength.

[Lucion. It's good to be strong. But you shouldn't make the worst choice.]

"Of course. I want to be happy. A fallen man cannot be happy. So, I will never make the worst choice just as Teacher said."

Lucion smiled.

—It's Hume! Hume!

Ratta pricked up her ears and ran to the door right away.

—Hume! Lucion is awake!

At Ratta scratching the door, the door opened cautiously, and Hume, who entered the room, approached Lucion with a very nervous look and kneeled down.

"It's my fault, Young Master."

"What do you mean it's your fault?"

Lucion blinked and looked at Hume.

Then he gave a side glance to the towel and a basin of hot water that Hume had brought.

"I put you in danger."

"Did you spill something to Brother? That's fine. I can talk to him again."

Lucion was not worried.

Since Russell and Bethel were also there, he thought he could sort things out even if Hume had said something wrong.

"It's not about that. The black bead. I didn't know it would put you in danger."

"Hume."

"…Yes, Young Master."

"Raise your head."

Hume raised his bowed head. He still had a look of fear and guilt in his eyes.

"Thank you."

Lucion's smile grew bigger.

"Because I got something good thanks to you."

Lucion slowly informed Hume, who still had an incomprehensible look.

"The black bead. It made me strong."

"Didn't I do something wrong?"

"Yes."

"Didn't I put you in danger?"

"Yes."

Only then, Hume was relieved.

He smiled with great joy as if he had saved a person.

"Thank you, Young Master."

"I'm the one who should thank you, Hume."

Lucion smirked.

"Tell Father that I'm awake. I have something to share."

"I understand."

Hume walked up to the door, stopped holding the doorknob, and called out to Lucion in a timid voice.

"…Young Master."

"Yes."

"Perhaps, you could say it's all nonsense. These words… Would it be all right if I tell you about it?"

At Hume's cautious question, Lucion smiled with a sly expression.

"Tell me anything, I'll listen."

"After you get the black bead."

"Yes."

"I had another dream."

Hume pointed his finger down.

"The finger I saw back then pointed down, and told me the word 'south'."

"…South?"

What is it about this time?

Lucion closed his lips tightly and raised an eyebrow.

* * *

As soon as he heard Hume's words, Novio hurriedly ran.

"How are you feeling?"

When he saw Lucion with a pale complexion, Novio felt his heart sink again.

"I am fine. Father knows it too."

Lucion offered a seat.

When Novio sat down, Lucion went straight to the main point without hesitation.

"Father, I don't know what Hume has told you. But…"

"Lucion."

"Yes."

"If it's about that, don't worry. I won't stop you from going south."

[What?]

The sound came erratically from Russell.

He couldn't believe it at all.

Is this really Novio?