

Chapter 2 - Story 33: Premonition (End)

Everything burns. Burns. Burns.
Houses, trees, cattle, and people.
Everything burns. Burns. Burns.
Screams, bellows, and death agony.
Everything burns. Burns. Burns.

"W-What's all this!?"

The dance of crimson flames and the rage of black flames fill the Head Priestess' field of vision. As if responding to her shocked voice, the two flames dance in a further accelerated ecstasy. The location seems to be some unknown human city. However, the big city, where several thousands or tens of thousands might live, was now truly a sea of scorching flames. The streets, where people and horses should come and go, are now paths for the burning hot winds to pass through. The houses lining up on both sides of those streets are glowing bright red due to the fire and heat, just to crumble down one after the other. And, the things that used to be people had all transformed into living torches. People that writhe with their whole bodies enveloped by flames. People that aimlessly wander within the flames like ghosts, seemingly having exhausted even their will to try extinguishing the fires by now, and then collapse on the spot after having used up all their strength. Young mothers, who cover their babies trying to at least save their own children, were enveloped by the flames. Young siblings, who held each other's hands, are squashed below buildings that collapsed after burning down. Men and women, who seem to be lovers, are swallowed by the flames while embracing each other. All people, no matter their age and gender, were engulfed by the flames. No, it's not just people. Horses, whose manes caught fire, run around the city as if having gone crazy. At the roadsides, birds frantically flap their wings, trying to put out the flames devouring their wings. One can catch a glimpse of dogs who raise heartbreaking howls from within buildings covered by flames. Every single object in the city is enveloped by flames. Every single life is in a scorching hell that burns everything to nothing. Huge burning jars were tossed into the city while the sounds of whooshing are audible above the Head Priestess' head. The jars that dropped on the buildings and ground scatter large amounts of oil that was contained within. Devouring that oil, the flames blaze up even more fiercely. Even though the entire city is already wrapped up by flames, countless oil jars are still thrown into the city in succession while leaving crimson traces in the sky. A dreadful, powerful will could be felt from that. The unyielding will to thoroughly eradicate this city, without leaving a single resident, insect, grass or even piece of garbage behind. 'Just who is it?' Once the Head Priestess wonders about that, her consciousness is carried outside the burning city, as if in response to her question. What awaited her there is a rampart built as if completely surrounding the city. Catapults were lined up in rows atop that rampart. What's loaded onto those catapults aren't stones, but oil jars with burning clothes. Dwarves are restlessly bustling around the catapults to shoot the burning oil jars into the night sky one after the other. Not only dwarves, but even humans, dinosaurians, harpyians, elves, and zoan watched the blazing

city while shouting something and thrusting their fists in the air.
And, in their midst stands a single human man.

"...! Don't tell me! That's the boy...?"

The Head Priestess discovered traces of the boy called Soma within the face of that man.
'How many years from now on is this? Or is this already several decades later?
The Head Priestess, who has trouble to judge from a human's appearance, doesn't know.
However, she definitely perceived traces of that boy in the man's face. And, above all else, the seal, which glaringly shines in a crimson color on his forehead, is without a doubt the mark of Aura, the Goddess of Death and Destruction.
But, even so the Head Priestess couldn't quite relate that man to Souma.
'It's the eyes.
The boy called Soma, whom the Head Priestess had seen, tends to be somewhat dreamy, but he still had pure, childlike eyes only reflecting a bright future.
However, what's dwelling in the eyes of this man is bottomless despair and hatred.

"Just what!? Just what did happen to that boy!?"

And then her field of vision blacks out once again.



Inside a huge tent.
She could sense the presences of many people inside, but the interior of the tent inside the vision is dim, preventing her from knowing who's present.
Just one person inside the tent is clearly visible for the Head Priestess, as if a spotlight was pointed at them. Without a doubt it appears to be that future Souma.
He covered his face with both hands as his body trembled repeatedly. His posture of shrugging his shoulders as if to huddle his own body looks as if he's holding back something that tries to leap out from within his body.
Various emotions keep busily appearing and disappearing, appearing and disappearing in his eyes that peek out through the small gaps between the fingers that cover his face.
Rage. Sorrow. Fear. Hatred.
And what dyed those eyes at the very end was boundless despair.

"Damn you, Aura! Damn you! You ill-natured, malicious goddess!"

What escaped his trembling lips were curses.

"I——was it for this sake!? Was it for the sake of this time!?"

That was wailing at its finest.
A grief so intense that it made one wanting to cover their ears, an invisible, bleeding heart filled those words to the brim.
'Just what had taken place, allowing for someone to succumb into despair to such an extent?
'Just what had to be done, allowing for someone to succumb into despair to such an extent?

As if answering the Head Priestess' questions, he eyes were attracted by something that was laying besides the man shouting in anguish.

Placed there is a box, decorated with gorgeous ornaments.

'What's inside the box?

'Did the content force him to go insane to this extent?

The Head Priestess' gaze goes beyond the box' lid, and just as she was about to look inside,

"Peeping, eh? What a bad child."

The voice of a girl reverberated in her mind.



"...! Just now, what...!?"

The Head Priestess' consciousness was sent flying alongside the girl's voice.

Even though she could have seen something important if it had lasted a little bit longer, on the brink her consciousness was slapped back into reality all of a sudden for some reason.

Due to the shock of her consciousness being brought back from within the vision into her own body in an instant, the Head Priestess, who felt dizzy, stiffened up her body in surprise.

A presence is behind her.

In addition, it's an extraordinarily, powerfully and evil presence. Even compared to the presences of The Seven, who helped out the Head Priestess until now, it's a huge presence that isn't inferior in the least. The Head Priestess' body became petrified forgetting to even breath, like a frog that's being glared at by a snake.

At that moment the moon, which had been hidden behind clouds so far, was allowed to peek out a bit. With that moon in the back, the shadow of someone, who stood behind the Head Priestess, suddenly extends above the Head Priestess.

It looked like the shadow of a human. Moreover, the shadow of a young girl with long hair.

"The future is so interesting because it can't be seen. What boorish children to not even understand as much. A future that's not fixed as of yet is something like the secret place of a virgin that still doesn't know of impurity. What savage brothers and sisters I have, to try peeking at it by unveiling it with brute force."

The girl's voice speaks as if singing.

No, to the ears of the Head Priestess that voice sounded like the roaring of a terrible beast.

The growling of a sly, old beast that lived for so many months and years that it might overwhelm others.

As if scared by it, the presences of The Seven disappeared one after the other.

"But, only this time I shall forgive you, my children. After all I was shown something very interesting, my beloved brothers and sisters."

The Head Priestess was horrified.

"This isn't anything like a human girl."

"My kind Souma, you will continue to be a deadly poison from now on. My foolish Souma, you must exist as deadly poison from now on."

The girl's voice was filled with deep sadness and pity.

"How pitiful you are, my dear Souma. If you become just a little cold hearted, you will stop being a deadly poison. How cowardly you are, my dear Souma. If you muster your courage just a bit, you don't need to be a deadly poison. Ah, how gentle and foolish you are, my beloved Souma."

The girl's voice completely changes into delight.

"You are a deadly poison. The deadly poison of this world. A terrifying, deadly poison that destroys the order, kills people and erodes the logic of this world. The pain increases, the stronger and more potent the poison. The suffering increases, the more heterogeneous the poison. In order to escape the unbearable pain and suffering, people will yield themselves to ecstasy and madness."

There were signs of the girl inclining her head adorably behind the Head Priestess.

"Say, my dear Souma. Are you going to be swallowed up by the ecstasy and madness of this world's people at this rate?"

The girl breaks into a small giggle.

"But, for now grow up big and receive everyone's love. Grow up strong and receive everyone's respect. Grow up dreadful and receive everyone's hostility. To the extent of allowing you to understand all the ecstasy and madness."

The girl's shadow spread its arms widely as if blessing something that hasn't been born yet.

"My cute Souma, are you going to become someone that destroy the world?
My precious Souma, I'm sure you will become someone that marks the demise of myths.
My terrifying Souma, without a doubt you will become someone that kills even the gods."

Her mad, cackling laughter echoes in the vicinity.

"Ah! Souma, Souma! My cute, adorable and terrifying god slayer!"

The Head Priestess' fangs chattered in such a fear that she couldn't even close her mouth.

"This is something absurdly frightening.

"This is something outrageously ancient.

Her mind becomes completely blank owed to the excessive dread.

And, before she realized, the presence behind her had vanished.

The instant she realized that, cold sweat suddenly gushes out of the Head Priestess' body.

Even though she just sat on the spot, a fatigue as if she had continued to run across the plains for countless hours assails her body thanks to her tremendous nervousness and fear.

"That was the Goddess of Death and Destruction, without a doubt.

Having experienced the goddess, who she only knew from legends, from nearby, the Head Priestess feels strong misgivings.

Until now she was conveyed thoughts by the Beast God, with whom she got in contact during many

ceremonies, stating that Aura is a compassionate goddess that should be respected and loved deeply. For that reason the Head Priestess didn't harbor as many apprehensions towards Aura as others. However, after having actually experienced Aura, the Head Priestess realized that she was completely different from her imaginations so far.

'That goddess is somehow suspicious. Something is amiss here!

'It's not that I was overlooked that I'm safe like this right now. It's merely because that goddess completely ignored my existence. In the eyes of Aura I probably didn't even register as a small bug, like a grain of sand lying next her favorite toy.

The Head Priestess stares at Souma who's still lying in front of her.

And then her body quivered once again.

'This child is dangerous!

The Head Priestess was convinced of that.

When she actually encountered Souma, the Head Priestess was disappointed and surprised in her mind by the gap to the rumors calling him "Divine Son of Destruction" who wields a dreadful power which she had heard until then.

'Even though he recovered the plains, and even assaulted the city that serves as entrance to those plains, the situation of the plains' zoan isn't necessarily secure yet. If the human country closes in again while leading a huge army, it won't just end with the zoan being pushed back into the hilly area again, but it will probably make it impossible to regain the plains ever again.

The Head Priestess, who understands at least this much, had placed her hopes in the being called "Divine Son of Destruction" who wields a mighty power, even if the power of death and destruction might be frightening.

However, whom she actually encountered was a human boy who doesn't seem to wield such frightening power at all.

'In the end rumors are just rumors.' Believing that, the Head Priestess embraced the strong feeling of holding this time's ceremony of premonition just in case.

However, once she opened the lid, she only found scenes of horrifying destruction and slaughter within.

'Something like him falling short of his reputation is preposterous! This human boy called Soma is definitely the Divine Son of the Goddess of Death and Destruction. He's the very definition of "Divine Son of Destruction."

'Shouldn't I kill this child right here and now?

That feeling wells up within the Head Priestess' chest.

'If I murder Soma now, the plains' zoan, who finally started to unify after a long time, will become all scattered again. If that happens, we will be cornered once more by the humans, and this time the zoan will be certainly driven into extinction,' the Head Priestess could easily guess all that.

'However, if I leave this child alone, a terrible destruction and slaughtering will unfold not only among the zoan, but on the entire continent. Mustn't I kill this child in this place, even if it will spell the plains' zoan's ruin, in order to prevent that?

The Head Priestess puts strength into the hand grasping the machete.

The heart in her chest throbs wildly.

'If it goes badly, there's the possibility that I will be annihilated by Aura the instant I turn my machete against Soma. But, Aura won't do anything. I think, even that goddess won't directly interfere.

'No, even Soma being killed here might be an entertainment for that insane goddess.

'In that case it's convenient.

Having resolved herself, the Head Priestess tried to swing her machete down at the sleeping Souma's chest, but at that moment, Souma stirred slightly and turned over.

Due to that timing, the amulets, which hung around his neck in great quantities, jangled and fell out.

Those were the charms Shyemul had forced onto Souma while praying for his safety. And, what awfully stood out among those amulets is a crude necklace that seems to have been made by a child for fun and which can't be called good-looking no matter how crude its make might be. That stopped the Head Priestess' hands for some reason.

The Head Priestess' breathing comes to a halt and she ends up freezing like a stone sculpture. After a short while the Head Priestess exhaled the air in her lungs and sheathed the machete in its scabbard.

And, after loudly clapping her hands twice, she orders the shadow attendants, who returned after hearing the signal,

"I will go back while it's still hasn't been noticed that I slipped out. —You guys are to clean up here."

With a sidelong glance at the shadow attendants erasing the traces of the rabbit's blood and the patterns drawn on Souma's cheeks and forehead, the Head Priestess started to descend the mountain while accompanied by just a few guards.

The regret and worry of her wondering whether she had done the right thing, and relief swirled within her chest.