

## **Chapter 252 - Ten-ten-dutea and Painting Class**

I hung at Zaga's lips.

"You see, there are countless others besides adventurers. Before being a labyrinth city, it's a huge city. Just the other day, a silver-haired woman of a race with five eyes caught my attention. That woman introduced herself as Elvin, and talked about earning money as a bounty hunter."

A bounty hunter? Is she arresting villains?

"A bounty hunter who's not an adventurer, that works?"

"You didn't know?"

"No I didn't. I will remember the name Elvin. Having five eyes is unusual. No one like that is close to me——"

When I looked at Viine,

"Yes, most of them also work as adventurers, but there also exist people focusing on bounty hunting. Including the 【Chasers】 and 【Sand Falcons】, the image of them pursuing slaves with the approval of the Religious State in groups is strong, but there's also many bounty hunters working alone in Southern Mahaheim. Many of their organizations have connections to the adventurer guild. Since there's many criminals, a great variety of skills and techniques to track runaway criminals seem to exist. Ah, master, you can also work as a bounty hunter. Please allow me to accompany you on such an occasion by all means..."

Because of blood? Certainly...it'd be possible if I used <Blood Chain Search>. If the victim leaves its blood on the criminal or vice versa...I can track the blood. Such a bounty hunting route...I think I'll leave that to a female reincarnator saying things like 『I ain't gonna forgive y'all』 as Isekai Sukeban detective.[efn\_note]A reference to a manga series called Sukeban Deka. You can look it up on wiki here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukeban\\_Deka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukeban_Deka) . It's an old shojou manga about delinquent high school girls acting as detectives. There's also a live TV series of it starring various Japanese idols, loosely following the manga story. It's one of the many series not translated into English (and probably never will, seeing how old the work and how dead the author is)[/efn\_note] In that case, an Isekai Detective Story. A cap on an afro is... No, I guess it'll head down the route of the foundation of an isekai homicide department. Using my skill to track blood, I'll shine in my role as space detective!

And then it'll develop into me chasing after a fiendish criminal. That very criminal will deliberately leave blood traces on site to throw me off track.

Anyway, it's no use to dwell in such delusions.

Looking at Zaga, I said, "Zaga, please carry on."

"Sure. I was asked by Elvin to reinforce and repair a wooden carriage pulled by a huge turtle. Carriages are outside the area of my expertise, but I repaired the parts I could handle, and reinforced a part of it."

He says it's outside his field of expertise, but Zaga is a craftsman, so...he probably managed to get his job done properly.

"Zaga, won't you be able to build a carriage, if you make up your mind to do so?"

"Maybe I could. Oh, by the way, I did the repairs while using the Magic Black Soft Steel you gave me, Shuuya."

Oooh, it was of use to my friend Zaga...that makes me really happy.

"And you know what? That Elvin had a criminal elf with her. At first she looked like a slave with her collar and whatnot, but...I was wrong. She roughly pulled the chain connected to the collar without handing that criminal elf over to the authorities. She seemed to enjoy keeping that elf in this state on purpose...a silver-haired woman with a truly nasty personality. Even Bon acted strangely and didn't get close to her... The dwarf driving the carriage was also taciturn and eerie. Anyway, they gave me the impression of being anything but normal." [efn\_note]By the way, MC encountered those guys already in the city a few chaps back. For those not remembering all the trivia information dumped by the author. ;-)[/efn\_note]

"Hee, they sound kinda interesting. Where can I find that woman?"

"Since she talked about the desert, she might have gone north."

A bounty hunter who departed into the desert area, huh?

"I see. Anyone else?"

"Sure. My acquaintances of White Brotherhood have apparently hit it rich with a treasure chest. They came here to sell a rare clay metal called Magic Green Brain Fluid. Also...a pretty, lil' lady with black hair came here as well...her name was Ayla, I think..." [efn\_note]Another character who has already appeared, but usually under a different name[/efn\_note]

"Ayla? Other than them, did you see those short twins, the child adventurers I mentioned the other day?"

Apostles of an evil god, related to the spirit world, or maybe an unknown...

"...Oh, those mysterious children who are sorcerers and adventurers? They haven't been here most recently."

"Enchanto!" Bon also agreed with his round eyes sparkling.

It looks like he hasn't seen them either. Are they in the labyrinth then? Or they could have wandered off to another area in order to subjugate a huge monster like the Evil Dragon King. Or it's also possible that they moved to the 15th or 20th floor, using the transfer area within the evil statues on the fifth floor.

Well, I got no clue. I guess I will ignore them as long as they don't come messing with me. Moreover, I'm curious about the woman called Ayla, who piqued Zaga's interest.

"...I see. So, who's that Ayla?"

"Ah, yeah, yeah. I fixed her magic wand while repeatedly refining the Refined Demon Ore, which can be mined in the labyrinth mine, as base with your Magic Black Soft Steel."

"Enchanto!"

"Yeah, it's also thanks to your enchanting and mana, Bon."

For the metal I gave him as present to have been of use here as well...

"...Ayla was really happy. She was full of fighting spirit, yelling 『This will allow me to master the familiar Guu! It'll become my power! It might allow me to go meet that man!』, but that instead gave me a strange impression of her."

"Enchanto!"

I don't know a woman called Ayla, though. Since she's a black-haired woman who caught Zaga's interest, she might be a beauty?

"You see, it sure is rare for Zaga-san to roughly breath through his nose. Was she a black-haired beauty?"

"Humph! Just so you know, even I get excited when seeing a nice woman!"

Zaga felt shaken by Rubia's teasing.

However, I was pretty sure he was married with his smithing hammer exactly because he's a dwarf, but it looks like I was wrong.

"—Therefore, we're going to close shop for today, and head over to Shuuya's home." The bashful Zaga suddenly declared while roughly breathing through his nose.

He pointed at me with his beard bouncing back on his chest.

"I don't really mind, but that's quite sudden."

"Enchanto!"

"Yahoo, I always wanted to visit Shuuya-sama's mansion!"

Rubia and Bon frolicked around while looking happy. While repeatedly doing thumbs up, the two of them demonstrated a weird dance using their whole bodies, including their fingers. Since Rollo joined in as well, it was quite funny.

"...Very well, I'll lead you there."

I left the workshop, exiting towards the street with everyone. As expected, Rollo didn't transform into her form resembling a black horse lion.

My partner briskly walked in front with small steps. The fur at the back of her paws swaying around

while looking as if they'd cause a strangely rhythmical sound was adorable. As all of us watched Rollo's back, we proceeded along the streets.

Following the main road where Zaga, Bon, and Rubia lived brought us close to the Martial Arts District and the Arena. The merchants going back and forth on the shopping district's main road were a wild mix of all kinds of races.

Elves, though they seem to be called long-ear race, well anyway, most of them were elves, dwarves, and humans. Weasel beastmen were rare. The five eye race mentioned by Zaga a while ago...wasn't present. But there were some races with four eyes.

A guy with a mohican hairstyle was shouldering a big iron pole. A sound similar to the music of a radio-cassette player blared out of the iron pole. He was of a human race you'd see make an appearance in an end-of-the-century battle.

There was also a store crammed with people so huge that they'd fill a hut by themselves. It looked like they were playing some lottery. I wonder whether they've got Lotto 6 or Lotto 7 here.

In addition, there were a plethora of stalls. Bon bought two bins with shady liquids at one of the stalls using alchemy. The bottles were made out of glass...but their prices were a bit expensive... Zaga didn't scold him though. Rubia also looked as if it was the most natural occurrence of the world.

Bon placed his mouth against the wooden lid of one of the bottles in his hands, and opened it. Then he put the narrow end of the bottle into his mouth just like that. He drained down the shady liquid in one go as if finishing off a bottle of milk.

Bon, who had finished drinking, muttered quietly, "Encha, nto..." as if saying 『Feels good』, 『Yummy...』.

Then he drew close to me with brisk steps. "Enchanto——" said Bon while standing on his tiptoes and stretching himself to the limits.

Since his eyes are so cute, I feel like wanting to call him Bon-kun.

He held out the other glass bottle to me. Is it bottled beer? It's not a skit where we wear attires with thunder patterns, but it feels like he's telling me 『Lad, you drink 's well!』.[efn\_note]It's a reference to older Japanese comedy skits. Not going to expand on that.[/efn\_note]

"You're giving this to me?"

"Enchanto!"

Looks like it.

"Okay, thanks." I said and safely took the glass bottle with the shady liquid from him.

"Encha, encha!" He was urging me with "Drink, drink!"

"Nn, nyaa?"

"Enchanto!"

Rollo, who had been walking in front, came back to us. Bon spoke to her.

"Nyaa."

"Encha."

"Nyan, nyao?"

"Enchanto!"

Rollo might have pressed him with 『Donya have one for me nya?』. Well, whatever. For the time being, I suppose I'll drink this shady stuff...

Given that I felt somewhat uneasy, I shifted my eyes to Viine.

"...Master, the name of this product is Ten-ten-dutea. It's also called Refined Gold Tea and Ten-ten juice."

Ten-ten? Du-tea? 『Call of Duty』? [efn\_note]テンテン (tente) can mean moving here and there, and ten also means heaven/sky, though neither as katakana ofc. デューティー (dutea) - if you leave the last ー away, it's the katakana for duty.[/efn\_note]

Is it a juice that'd start a gunfight or something?

"It has an effect of momentarily boosting your mana and strength, and it allows you to recover from fatigue, I hear. Ten-ten grass and medium magic stones seem to be its main ingredients, but its recipe has been kept secret, naturally. It appears that an excellent black-haired artisan said to possess the right arm of god, who belongs to the Refined Gold Company which is mostly owned by the Premiere Enterprise, succeeded in developing that liquid."

"Premiere Enterprise?"

I feel like I've heard that name somewhere.[efn\_note]Chapter 115[/efn\_note]

"It's quite famous as refined gold. I drink it sometimes, too." Zaga supplemented Viine's explanation while nodding.

"Indeed. In the area around the arena and the Martial Arts District it's preferably drunken by those related to the arena, but since it's delicious, normal people like it as well. It's one of the very commonplace beverages."

I guess it's something like a health drink.

"Thanks for telling me."

"Anytime! It's an honor to be of use to you." Viine smiled.

Her gesture of brushing the silver hair behind her ear was the very picture of an intelligent secretary. I nodded with an 『Aye』 towards my excellent secretary-san.

And then I lifted up the bottle in my hand in front of my eyes, and tried to peek into it. The color of the liquid was dark purple, and orange grains were floating inside like tadpoles.

To drink this...you might need a bit of courage.

"...It's appearance certainly looks a tad worrying, but it's unexpectedly tasty." Viine told me across

the tadpoles.

"Delicious..."

"Fufu, don't worry. Bon-kun always buys ten-ten-dutea. However, it's the first time for me to see Bon-kun buying it for someone else."

"I guess it's a thanks for the cap."

After Rubia said all that, I put the bottle's end into my mouth, trying to drink the dark purple liquid with the orange grains.

...Yum, it's a taste where the faintly sweet grains make me feel something like a fresh morning... It also goes down my throat easily, allowing me to finish it in one go just like Bon did. As the effect showed itself immediately after drinking, it was absorbed by my stomach right away, I suppose... I felt the mana in my body surging. What a strange juice. Is it making me burn with a call of duty?

"...Master, did it suit your taste?"

"Yep, quite so."

"Then I will go buy ten-ten-dutea directly at the company next time." Viine said while being thoughtful.

"Enchanto!" Obviously agreeing with her, Bon nodded.

Bon kept staring at Viine's pretty, silver hair.

"Bon-kun, are you curious about Viine-san's beautiful hair?"

"Encha? Enchanto~"

After tilting his head in response to Rubia's words, Bon took off his cap, revealing his own head. He was showing off his naturally curly hair as it was typical for dwarves. It seems he's comparing it with Viine's hair.

However, the traces of the baseball cap that had covered his head visibly remained in his hair.

"Ahaha, Bon-kun, your hair is bouncing up with a boyoyoon~ How funny~"

"Enchanto!"

Bon-kun pulled one eyelid down and stuck his tongue out towards Rubia. And with his tongue sticking out, he ran ahead, passing Rollo.

"Jeez~ Even though I just told you that your hair style was comical."

I yelled towards the running Bon, "Bon~, thanks for this ten-ten juice!"

"——Encha? Enchanto!"

Bon looked back to me with a face saying "Really?" After doing a thumbs-up, he ran ahead while playing with Rollo who had run up next to him.

As he walked along the street for a while, Bon stopped, and looked at a painter.

A dwarven painter? It looks like he piqued Bon's interest. Moreover, if you include the audience watching from a distance, quite a few people were watching that dwarven painter. He might be famous. The painter had a splendid afro and a mustache. A thick bandana was wrapped around his forehead.

Mana was leaking from inside his forehead as if being transmitted from his forehead to his hair. With his smiling face he resembled Bon a bit, but his physique was bigger than that of Bon. His attire was a simple piece of clothing. He was a dwarven painter with a certain aura around him. While varying the shining brushes with a length of around two inches put in a paper package, he elaborately drew three models on three canvases. I'm sure those shining brushes are special items endowed with mana. Moreover, he was drawing at a terrifying speed with magnificent brushwork. His palette with the embedded jewels was conspicuous as well. Rather than its appearance, I think it was more extravagant as a tool.

He looked like the very definition of a painter. The pictures on the canvasses were exceedingly elaborate. From the background to the people. He also added a colorful landscape while making sure that it'd match with the model.

He finished drawing the three paintings in no time. However, that afro and his mustache...they remind me of 『The Joy of Painting』. "See? It's easy, right?" That phrase left a deep impression in my memory. I liked that weird old guy.

While recalling the past, I stared at the painting of a landscape. The coastland road within the vanishing morning mist was masterfully done. The fog or mist, the expression of the lightly drifting colors was indescribable.

One among the paintings drew my attention. It was a place resembling the landscape where gigantic rocks modeled after elven heads were scattered on the ground, in the outskirts of Holkerbaum. There was also a place that seemed to shine stingingly like a garnet. It must be Holkerbaum after all.

I think it was around the time when I went on the guard request while riding Popobumu. I believe those rock ruins are relics of the Great Befaritz Empire.

"...A master painter, huh?"

The dwarven painter passed the finished paintings to the three models and received money from them. Since his paintings contained mana as well, they might have some kind of effect.

"...What pretty paintings. It's also obvious from how many customers he has."

"N, nya." Rollo returned on my shoulder.

She lifted one paw as if to indicate her agreement with Rubia, releasing a cat punch into empty air.

While caressing her head, I asked everyone, "...Is he different from a <Magic Painter>?"

"It might be different and then again not. Basically, the combat occupation that employs monsters while using magic picture frames is <Magic Painter>. Of course I believe that a <Magic Painter> will possess artistic quality as a painter just as their name suggests. However, combat occupations also have various, subtle differences depending on the individual."

"I hear that there also exist combat occupations called <Magic Painting Brush User> or <Heart of Painting Arts Style>. There's combat occupations strong at close combat by hardening the tips of a brush with magic. There was even a client in the past who had been a master of iron brush strokes. He was a soldier possessing the combat occupation <Iron Brush Stroke Silver Needle>. That guy was talking about "Powerful brushwork surpasses alloys. My majestic brushwork creates a refreshing air from a lofty peak after becoming Fierce Dragon God Great Yspal."

"Hee, that <Iron Brush Stroke Silver Needle> sounds kinda strong. If there exist soldiers with such brushes, that dwarf might be a famous artist and a strong warrior hiding his power, or something like that?"

"I wonder. If you take into account that he doesn't possess a store, doing his business at the roadside, while possessing that much painting skill, he could be a simple traveling painter, but wait, is that also the reason why he's a hidden martial arts master?" Zaga answered while looking at the dwarven painter.

A wandering painter and martial artists...how damn cool. Earning money by drawing pictures, he travels around to different areas with those funds. And once he reaches a city at the end of his travel, he once again sells paintings to get new funds...

He might be believing, 『I have no place to call home. If I had to name one, it'd be Planet Sela, I'd say』.[efn\_note]A reference to a quote of Snufkin of the Moomin series.[/efn\_note] As I was admiring him while imagining things like that on my own accord...

"Those brushes and his forehead..." Viine muttered and said 『Master』 to me with her eyes.

Mana was dwelling in those silver eyes of hers. She had apparently checked the spot on his forehead, where the mana was spilling out from, with Magic Observation.

Towards Viine, I answered, "...You're right."

The dwarven painter might deliberately hide his forehead, but I didn't put that in words. Apparently thinking the same, Viine nodded.

Zaga and Bon were both watching the painter. Rubia showed interest in the painter's skill.

"...Zaga, he's a dwarf just like you. Do you know anything about him?"

"No clue. I mean, I've got plenty of dwarven acquaintances, but it's not like I know all the dwarves. Although we're called dwarves, there're some who have blood relationships dating back to ancient times, and likewise others who are completely unrelated."

I guess that makes sense.

"Rather than that, his skills are splendid. He might be a painter capable of handling metals."

"Enchanto."

Zaga and Bon had apparently their craftsmen hearts stirred.

"If you like his skills, how about getting him to draw something?"

"Nah, no need. Let's go to your place, Shuuya."

"Really? What about you, Bon?"

"Encha, encanto!"

"N, nyaa."

"It looks like Bon wants to go on as well. Rubia, you okay with that as well?"

Zaga quickly translated the Bon language.

"Yes." Rubia confirmed, too.

Thus we continued walking through the market overflowing with spirit as befits a different world. I enjoyed the isekai back alley stroll with everyone. I imitated Bon's way of walking, pranked Rollo by pulling her tail, and got sometimes advice from Zaga such as 『That store is really dangerous. If you enter, you'll get forced to eat something called pollack roe pot』. After stopping at a store selling pretty underwear, I bought some nice panties for Viine.

Bon got strangely excited when I was about to buy the panties, saying, "Encha, enchaaa? Enchaaa," but I ignored him. We went looking around at the people living in the city. After enjoying a tour of shopping and unknown cultures, we headed to my place.