

Chapter 282 - Remains of the Moon and Bloody Long Ears

A/N: Third PoV.



The long Heim River, extending all over the continent, also flowed through parts of South Mahaheim. A part of that river, the section from the 【Demonic Steel City Holkerbaum】 to 【Labyrinth City Pelneet】, was referred to as the Golden Route, constantly frequented by droves of ships following various purposes, be their owners countries or companies.

Right now, amongst many merchant ships, was the ship belonging to 【Remains of the Moon】, Black Cat, anchored in a part of the port in 【Fortress City Hekatrail】, which was crammed with many different ships and boats.

As the sea birds circled in the skies, crowing, a beautiful woman with smooth, long legs emerged from Black Cat's stern deck, and started to give instructions to the sailors bustling about on top of the ship.

Following her orders to the tee, the sailors opened up a part of the ship's side, and lowered a gangway to the wharf. Next, many of the Black Cat's sailors hurried down the gangway, carrying a part of the ship's cargo.

On the other hand, members of 【Remains of the Moon】 who had waited on the wharf, started to swiftly carry new cargo atop the ship.

The name of the woman commanding the sailors was Mel Socytus. She was the vice-guildmaster of 【Remains of the Moon】, and the person in charge of the Black Cat. She had been given full authority over 【Remains of the Moon】 by Shuuya Kagari, the guildmaster and suzerain of the Lucival family. In short, she was the true leader of the guild.

Alongside Mel, one of the highest leaders of the same guild, the urban long ear Benett, disembarked the ship. Next to her was Yui, one of the Lucival family's <Head Servant Leaders> and current bodyguard of Mel.

The three women left the thriving harbor, and walked through 【New Town】 which was extending outside Hekatrail's walls.

"We won't sell the goods we procured from that shady trader in Holker here, right?"

"The stuff we got in Holker are mainly ancient bones for Veronica."

"You see the horned puppet soldiers clumsily walking next to us right now? The bones are needed for these guys." Benett sent a look at the puppets walking left and right of Yui and Mel while answering Yui's question.

"...About those, I can actually create such puppets as well, but I don't have any interest in them."

"Ain't that amazin'? I only use daggers as second weapons, so I'm quite thankful about having these puppets serve as vanguards."

"They're good enough that I'd like to request you to make these as well, if you can, Yui-san. It'll avoid us wasting precious personnel. This is a matter of high importance to us, you know?"

"Sorry, I've been living the way of the katana, and I don't want to rely on anyone but Shuuya and my friends. But, I wouldn't mind making some, if it resulted in improving my katana skills."

"...Now that you mention it, your swordplay when punishing the hoodlums a little while ago was really beautiful. Sorry about wasting your time with such a silly question." Mel surrendered with a sigh.

Mel, who could be described as the actual guildmaster of **【Remains of the Moon】**, had many worries. One was the lack of capable personnel.

The leaders of **【Remains of the Moon】** were strong, but there was a limit to the places they could actually control in person. On top of their turf being big, with the Port District, Pleasure Quarter, and Gambling District, if you limited it to Pelneet alone, their territory was flooded with offices of small dark guilds, resulting in fights constantly breaking out.

Even the soldiers of the big guild **【Remains of the Moon】** often got dragged into these fights, dying in the process.

Considering this aspect, Mel regarded the horned puppet soldiers highly since they were very efficient, albeit their high material costs.

"...Mel, if we become Vero-chi's bloodkin, we'll also turn into the same Lucival race as guildmaster, just like Yui and the other bloodkin, right?"

"True. You want to say that we might become able to create puppets as well, don't you?"

"Yeah, you got it!" Benett thrust out her face as if to emphasize her square chin.

"I talked it over with Veronica, but she didn't know whether it'd be possible. She said that we might need to grow as Lucival first."

Benett's elven ears twitched, and after nodding in agreement with Mel's remark, a sharp glint crept into her eyes, "Well, whatever. Even if we could, it'd totally blow our budget. By the way, I think you two have noticed already, but we've got secret admirers followin' us. You think they belong to Bloody Long Ears, as expected?"

"We're in the **【Slums】** right next to New Town, so it's also possible that it's not Bloody Long Ears, but lil' pirate delinquents."

"If they pick a fight with us, I'll deal with them."

"Unlike the pirates aiming to board our ship, it's unnecessary to start anything from our side as long as they stick to only following us. Our office is right there as well." Mel pointed at their brand new office down the street.

"Very well. I'm your bodyguard this time, so I will obey your instructions."

"Mel, we're already in Hekatrail. Besides, this way of stalkin'...it's very likely a dark guild or thieves guild specialized in this field."

"...If you say they're up to such a level, it must be so, Benett. But, right now we've got to worry about bringing in our luggage first. Afterwards we will stock up on Zeeta's refined gold materials, and head to the meeting place with the Saramiss Company...if it looks like they're tracking us during all that of this, too...we will ask them what they want from us, regardless of whether they might be from **【Bloody Long Ears】** or some random hoodlums."

"Got it. I'll get my bow ready."

"Sheesh, you guys sure are short-tempered...isn't that like you've already decided to fight them?"



Mel's party safely wrapped up the meeting and trades, but the presences following them from behind only increased in number.

"We'll draw them out."

"Sure."

"..."

Benett, who had been walking in front, deliberately lowered her pace while nocking an arrow on her bow. Mel grew small, black wings from her feet. The splendid kicking techniques she used had become very diverse. Shuuya would probably get excited if he could have a look at them.

Understanding her position as bodyguard, Yui remained at the end of the line. While she kept her silence as she walked on, her obsidian-like eyes went through a transformation. Her usually black eyes turned into fairy-tale-like eyes full of light beams with silver snow fluttering down within. Eventually the transformation finished, turning the pair of her eyes silver.

Correct, she had activated <Beycala's Eyes>, a blessing she had received from the spirit world's god of death Beycala.

Benett activated <Hide>, causing her to disappear just as she turned at a corner, jumped atop a roof, and concealed herself there.

Mel and Yui slowly walked through the alley located beyond the corner, and soon stopped. They turned around, waiting for the people who had been shadowing them.

Soon their pursuers showed up at the street corner. They were long ears (elves). The one in front was a small elf with short hair combining streaks of silver and green. A peculiar mana was released from the deep green eyeliner around her eyes. The tattoo of a white whale being skewered on the elf's cheek was the emblem of the Second Sub-Lieutenant of the the former Great Befaritz Empire's special forces 【White Whale】.

The small elf approached Yui and Mel while followed by other elves.

"Hello. My name is Clydossus. I've come to extend greetings from 【Bloody Long Ears of the White Whale】."

"Ah, as expected, you're with 【Bloody Long Ears】." Benett yelled down from atop the roof, ready to fire her arrow at any time.

"——So, what kind of business do you have with us...?" Mel asked Clydossus while turning her eyes to her trigger-happy guild member, Benett, signaling her with a look to hold back on attacking.

Mel took several steps forward, with the black wings at her ankles clad in a peculiar aura, making it look as they were soaked in shadows.

"Did you maybe come here to crush 【Remains of the Moon】 alongside its office?" She deliberately kept talking to Clydossus to draw attention.

After looking at Mel's legs, Clydossus answered, "...No, not at all. Guildmaster ordered us to not make any moves on you."

"Is that so...? Then, what's your business with us?"

"It's simple. A harsh winter is around the corner...there's still some days left, but the "Underground Auction," an important event for many people, is going to take place in Pelneet, your stronghold. We plan to make our appearance there. And, I wanted to personally meet your guildmaster, the famed spearmaster, over there. Unfortunately, it looks like it's not going to work out...this time, but..." Clydossus explained while looking at Mel, Benett, and Yui in turns after flashing a meaningful smile.

"With guildmaster..."

"I wonder, what do you plan to talk about with Shuuya...?" Yui asked with a chilly expression.

A silver mist wafted out of her eyes.

"..."

Clydossus' men behind her felt Yui's bloodlust, reacting by placing their hands on their weapons. However, Clydossus lifted a hand at the elves who were about to draw, and signaled with her fingers, using Befaritz' army code for 『Stay put』.

After making sure that her men had fixed their attitude, "...Oh my, excuse me. You were the

spearmaster's woman? On the orders of our guildmaster...no, I better don't say it. Anyway, we've watched your new office here for a long time, and we didn't meddle with its business. I wonder whether you could pass this message on to him." Clydossus turned to Mel, putting on a fake smile, the best one she could actually muster.

"I see...but to me it sounds like a threat that you could crush our office at any time, if you feel like it."

Not Yui, who clad herself in a menacing aura, but a smiling Mel replied to Clydossus, disregarding the elf's odd expression.

"No, no, that'd be unthinkable. **【Bloody Long Ears】** is currently very busy. We're in no position to go out of our way to make enemies where it's not needed."

"...Mel, if we're going to fight, give me your order. My womanly intuition tells me that it'd be better to kill that woman right away."

Yui had sensed the skills of a murderer behind Clydossus' beauty. This time she was here as Mel's bodyguard, but her comment just now stemmed from the possibility that they might become enemies soon, and that Shuuya might take a liking to Clydossus' face and figure as a woman.

"Yui, right now is no good."

"...As you wish." In response to Mel, Yui's face revealed acceptance, erasing the bloodlust from her eyes.

"I hear Mr. Spearmaster has many women. I might have a chance as well then."

"Clydossus-san, I think you'd be better advised to not provoke Yui-san too much. Right now she's holding back her emotions as my bodyguard, but I won't be able to suppress her if she snaps."

Bowing once at Mel, Clydossus looked at Yui after lifting her head, and said, "...Yes, it sure seems so. Those eyes of yours, Yui-san, are you possibly Zamalia's——"

"Any further talk is unnecessary, Clydossus-san. You've met us now, so let's bring this to a close."

"...Very well. Then, please excuse us at this point, ladies of **【Remains of the Moon】**."

The group of **【Bloody Long Ears】** took their leave gallantly. Benett had been silently watching from the roof's back, but in her heart she had felt a cold shiver.

It's because she had noticed in the middle of the conversation, which had unfolded in the alley, that elves of **【Bloody Long Ears】**, besides the group around Clydossus, had lurked in perfect positions to launch a surprise attack on her sides and behind her.

