

Chapter 296 - The Sisters' Preliminary



A certain passage in Pelneet.

As Nocturne quietly kept watching the surface, people completely wrapped in robes started to appear, out of the streets, out of alleys, and from roofs. Bird masks peaked out beneath the women's hoods. They kept amassing in front of a store where a black curtain had been lowered, as if to line up the military boots each of them was wearing.

The only clear trait all of them shared were their long ears. Some of them even had blood dripping from their ears.

Indeed, they were the core members of Bloody Long Ears, who had infiltrated Pelneet several days ago.

A single small elf with beautiful hair, interweaving silver and green colors, stepped out of the group, and systematically knocked on the wooden door several times...as if to sound a code, while donning an expression so innocent that one would think she would never hurt the smallest fly.

Immediately after she finished knocking, a voice asked through the closed door, "The regular contact from Massuh?"

"Yep, the women are doing great."

"Okay, I'm opening."

Convinced that this was the regular report of an imperial spy, the man opened the door, just to have a rapier stabbed into his black eyes.

"Ahyaaa." Screaming weirdly as the slender sword drilled all the way through his head, the middle-aged man collapsed back inside the store.

With a satisfied look, the small elf shook her boyish hair in front of the door, pulled out her now bloody rapier, and quickly swung it downwards, creating a bloody trail at her feet. Her ears were sticky with blood spurts other than that of the man she killed just now.

The name of the woman, who had become a Bloody Long Ear in name and reality, was Clydossus - a leader of the dark guild in question.

"—Was this the last one?"

"Yes. But I must say, the Frong Company was quite skilled at concealment."

"Mmh, for what it's worth. I hear they even evaded the pursuit of Great Knight Remrona." Clydossus proudly answered to the Bloody Long Ears members.

"Don't act all high and mighty. It was me who found them by using what I obtained in the Azel Boundary, okay?"

"You mean, you among others, stupid Gucci?"

"What was that, Log, you idiot!?"

The two elven brothers were leaders of Bloody Long Ears. Both had rather rough personalities, but they were strong enough that Lezalaysa had taken them with her into the Azel Boundary. Both had swords and axes hanging at their hips and backs.

The elven man called Gucci, who had grown out a beard, clasped the magic tool they had acquired in the Azel Boundary with his right hand. A small, indigo blue breeze was being emitted from that tool.

"Yeah, yeah, you twins also did your best, okay? However, in the first place, all of this was possible thanks to the report Curél brought back."

"Clydossus, Twins, get in contact with Prince Fals afterwards, to tell him that the imperial rats nesting in Pelneet were exterminated."

"Sure thing. But, guildmaster, for Back Nails Belly and Iraboe of the Magic Flute to have been done in by imperial trash like this...I find that hard to believe." Clydossus' words lacked her usual cheerfulness.

That's how much of a shock it was for Bloody Long Ears to have two of its members at captain level killed off.

The elven woman with broad shoulders, who Clydossus had called guildmaster, twisted her face. She was Lezalaysa - the commander and guildmaster of Bloody Long Ears.

"Yeah, although they got help from the first prince, Adolian's warning came true. I guess it's my blunder. Maybe I should have added more captains to the team?"

The one reacting to Lezalaysa reflections wasn't Clydossus.

"Guildmaster, the enemy consisted of people skilled enough to take one arm off Curél. It's also possible that we would have lost even more people if you had done that. We're lucky that we didn't send more of our men," said an elven man with the name Melichek, alias Sergeant.

"...The Empire, hmm?"

The anger of Lezalaysa over having lost two comrades, and moreover, two leading members, who had survived since the Befaritz Empire, was terrifying.

"Although Adolian had given us the information, his dark guild is based in the Empire. It's also possible that we were outwitted by that mysterious woman, supposedly passing on information about the Kingdom to the Empire behind the scenes..."

"Guildmaster, aren't you overthinking things?"

"One ought to always suspect ulterior motives, correct...?" Lezalaysa's face warped.

Clydossus instantly guessed from Lezalaysa's expression that she wanted to vent her anger by rampaging. Hence, Clydossus put on a serious expression, and spoke up.

"Adolian is fanatic about the Underground Auction. He should be against the war between Oseberia and Radford. I'm sure he'd hate for the auction to be delayed because Pelneet was devastated after the Empire got the upper hand."

Those words were Clydossus' very own attempt at soothing Lezalaysa's raging emotions.

"It might be so exactly because he's so fanatic...but, seeing as we've got no proof, I'll leave it at that. We will prioritize getting our revenge on the enemies of Belly and Iraboe. Murdering them is a sin far heavier than that of the undead dwarf."

"Revenge means crushing the Black-Hairs who have been continuing to toy with the Kingdom, right?"

"...The war against the Empire is still going to continue for a good while. For this reason we can slowly and carefully target them from the shadows after the auction is finished."

"Yes, ma'am." Melichek swiftly saluted.

""Yes, ma'am!""

""Roger.""

Including Clydossus, the twins, an eyepatched elf, and an elf with their lower face hidden beneath a mask, the soldiers as well as the other leaders of Bloody Long Ears saluted all at once. Just from their movements, one could immediately understand the reason why Bloody Long Ears was rumored to be a private military contractor of the underworld.

"...Still, us being able to slaughter all these abnormally excellent covert operatives is clearly owed to Curél having been able to bring back the valuable information, even after losing one arm."

"About that...Sergeant, have you been able to secure that Makoto alchemist said to be capable of transplanting a magic arm for Curél?"

"That's...we lost track of the alchemist in question after he headed to Lalarbuin Mountain..."

"How useless..." Lezalaysa scrunched up her eyebrows once more, touching the scar on her face with a hand.

"...As for Curél, we ended up incurring a huge debt with the spearmaster who saved his life."

"That's the same as having a debt with Remains of the Moon."

"You having told us far in advance to not pick a fight with 【Remains of the Moon】 turned into a benefit, didn't it guildmaster?"

Clydossus and Melichek commented.

"It might have played a big role that we knew about the spearmaster's strength in advance. It was correct to stay vigilant of him."

"Indeed, the Spearmaster and Black Cat...even the members, who seemed to be their underlings, apparently wiped the floor with the imperial soldiers..."

Clydossus recalled her past encounter with Shuuya. 'If I had only gained his trust by getting closer to him back then..., ' she regretted, despite being a woman who rarely ever regretted anything.

"It's a fact that one of our members was rescued by the spearmaster. And it was proven that his strength was no lie, but instead goes beyond being the real deal. After all, strong fighters skilled enough to defeat Curél are rare..." Lezalaysa's mood improved visibly for the first time this evening after hearing about the spearmaster.

'Her face has brightened up. It's unusual to find men with flat faces around here, but he's still handsome. Even our mannish guildmaster is still a woman. This means...isn't it quite possible that he'd fancy guildmaster over me?' Clydossus kept pondering while arbitrarily indulging in unfounded suspicions.

Even Lezalaysa, who had wandered the battlefields with Clydossus for many, many years, didn't predict her silly thoughts.

Continuing unknowingly, Lezalaysa asked, "Sergeant — is the deployment of our troops complete?"

"Yes, ma'am. We've received a message from Kazane that the venue will be in the Noble District."

"We'll head over then."



We've been peacefully spending our time at home after coming back from Fran's rescue. The Millennium Plant's music causes the courtyard to be shrouded in a melancholic atmosphere. Popobumu and Rollo are asleep. So are Alray and Hueremy, next to them as cats.

Helme isn't to be found anywhere near the Millennium Plant. Instead, she's skilfully standing on the top of the big tree on the courtyard's inner right. She's gazing into the distance, as if to take a look at the Martial Arts District and Pelneet. At the same time, she's releasing a drizzle from her hands onto the courtyard below her, causing a big, pretty rainbow to span between the tree and the ground.

Watching Helme's mysterious behavior, the servants are kneeling, praying towards her. ...At this

rate, Helme's Holy Scriptures might actually be written very soon.

I've been doing my spear training on the courtyard, just as usual. Currently I'm repeatedly practicing 『Joint Wing - Revised』, a cartwheel motion with two spears after crossing the feet. Leaning Ganghis on my shoulder, I deliberately throw myself off-balance while doing the stepwork. As I face an imaginary enemy within my spear range, I extend Ganghis downwards while shifting my hold of the spear, unleashing a strike that fakes a difference in timing. In other words, I'm continuing to grope for a unique dual-spear style.

——The battle against Takebayashi deeply edged itself into my mind, into the nerve system of the Extra Skill <Demonic Cerebral Spine Revolution>, the foundation of <Natural Gift of Magic>. Not just once or twice, it caused an infinite amount of critical periods.

Takebayashi mentioned a <Naturally-Gifted Body>. Maybe that's related to my skill? Though I'd say that it's a slightly different type of skill. While pondering about all this, I do my basic martial arts training.

I think it's time for the next training step. While perceiving how Helme lands on the stone paving, I erase Baldok and Ganghis.

"——I'll go with axes next." I take the Weeping Ax of Tofinger, which I've recently been practising with, out of my item box.

I also retrieve Ring of Mist Mirage, and put it on my finger.

"Your Excellency, shall I act as your sparring partner?"

"Sure, but I'm going to use Sage Arts and the Weeping Ax of Tofinger, okay?"

"Ah, you mean the mist ring allowing you to make yourself invisible and to create that phantom which bit me the other day? I shall also release mist, albeit only from half my body!" Immediately following, Helme's lower body half dissolves into fog, leaving only her upper body behind.

Her magnificent boobs are swaying. However, I kinda don't get the meaning behind her turning only her lower body into mist.

"Alright, come at me."

It's training for me to focus on Sage Arts while in battle.

"Okay!"

Helme changes both hands into ice swords, and thrusts them out at me.

Has her speed gone up because half her body is mist? As I'm slightly confused by Helme's quick thrusts, I retreat several steps.

"This is the mist's effect!"

"Sure looks like it——"

In order to trigger the effect of Tofinger's Ax, I swing the ax in my left at Helme's torso, but she repels the green ax blade with the ice sword in her left. Having anticipated that, I try to drive a mid-kick into the boundary line between Helme's body and the mist. Assuming that she's going to block the kick, I focus on swinging the ax in my right down at the top of her shoulder.

However, Helme's mist coils itself around my foot. With my foot caught by the mist, my balance breaks apart.

"For real——?"

After letting one ax fall to the ground, I prop up my body with the now free hand, but Helme uses that chance to unleash her ice sword at me.

"Fufu——"

"——Ouch!"

The arm I use to protect my torso is cut upwards from the palm. The ice sword is repelled by Hal'Konk before it can dig into my torso, but my lower arm has been cut for the first time in a long while as I'm using Hal'Konk's short-sleeved version right now.

My sixth finger, which has been attached to a part of the injured palm, turns into Catiza, and wriggles its way towards the Millennium Plant as a caterpillar.

Immediately after I take some distance while readying the ax in my good hand, Helme fires an ice pebble at me. At once I parry the pebble approaching my chest with my ax. But, matching her timing with the pebble's impact, Helme swings down an ice sword at me.

"For you to be able to use combo attacks...as might be expected of a spirit——"

While praising Helme, I ward off the diagonally approaching ice sword with the ax's blade, and immediately close the distance to Helme with Magic Combat Step instead. Then I launch a series of punches with my right fist against her shoulder and collar area.

"Kyaa——"

Helme quickly is thrown off-balance by the swift jabs, and falls back with a light scream.

At that moment, I focus on Sage Arts. At the same time as I experience how a great amount of my mana is consumed, a heavy fog begins to envelop the vicinity, creating a small mist space, just as I had envisioned.

Not just me, but Helme is also shrouded in mist, both of us disappearing from normal sight. Using that moment, I activate the mist clones of my ring. At the same time as a clone appears, I activate <Hiding>.

I withdraw a bit deeper into the mist, leaving behind a clone that has some of my mana.

"...Fufu, this feels great." Having forgotten the mock battle, Helme has started to happily dance within the mist.

While watching her with Magic Observation, "I'm going to continue the training."

"Sure. There are two of you, with completely identical magic sources. This would confuse any enemy."

"Well, I paid attention to my mana——"

While making the clone attack, my main body approaches Helme as well. The instant Helme faces my illusion with her ice swords, it disappears like a blurring video clip, and having been behind the clone, I powerfully swing my ax at Helme's torso.

"——Kyaaa."

After getting hit by the ax, Helme falls to the ground while releasing sprays of water.

"I totally fell for it——" Helme says casually, and stands up with a break dance move while healing her body.

"Are you alright? If you need mana, you can return into my left eye, okay?"

"Thanks a lot for the offer, but I'm fine at the moment."

"I see. Then I'll keep going with the training."

"Okay, I will water Millennium-chan after taking a little break... Ah, Ca-chan is eating Millennium-chan's leaves!!" Helme gets panicked, watching her beloved Millennium Plant getting eaten.

She quickly runs out of the mist, heading for the terrace where the plants including the Millennium Plant have been lined up.

I pick up the ax lying on the ground, and ready Tofinger's Weeping Ax after turning it into its two-handed state. Speaking of axes, they remind me of Hankai and the Red Storm Tiger, Bucchi.

At that moment, "Shuuya! It's foggy, but you're in there, aren't you?"

"He's been training, as expected."

"It's because he's a spear-maniac hero!"

Remrona and Fran have suddenly dropped by. Once they pass the front gate, they run over to me with those words.

"The mist doesn't work against my third eye."

"My left arm can see you as well."

The girls approach me, and grab my arms. With both my sides restrained, I'm forcibly carried in front of the big gate, as if being dragged across the stone paving.

"You girls sure are pushy."

"Whatever, come."

"Yep, yep!"

Still, I'm happy since both of them are beauties. For a change, Rollo doesn't run up to me either. She's been dozing on the roof of Mysty's workshop. Now she raises her face with her eyes open, and looks this way while narrowing her eyes, but without doing anything in particular, she goes back to sleep.

Moreover, my bloodkin are all out right now. The Blood Beast Corps has headed out for a day trip to the two towers on the fifth floor to collect some large magic stones. While judging in my mind that they should come back anytime soon now, I leave my home while being taken along by Remrona and Fran.

"Please wait a moment. I'll put away this ax."

"Got it."

"So you're also using a weapon I've never seen before, huh?"

While nodding at Fran, I store Tofinger's Weeping Ax into my item box. Like that, we come out at the main street, and leave the Martial Arts District while getting glared at by a man with his beard drooping all the way to the ground, apparently someone belonging to a swordsmanship school, passing an elf who's juggling a spiked orb, and being shadowed by a female dwarf. We proceed to the Second Ring Road.

As I look at the signboard of the Psion store and the arena, we exit onto a street used by various magic beasts.

"...Shuuya, please consider today to be a preliminary before our genuine thanks."

"Preliminary..."

"I mean, it's only natural, right? My big sis and I had our lives saved by a hero."

I keep walking at the roadside with the sisters linking my arms on both sides. There's a delicate difference in the sizes of their boobs... Fran's are slightly bigger.

"How's the war going?"

"We obtained a temporary victory thanks to Galkiv's strenuous efforts."

"Oh, nice."

I keep asking Remrona and Fran about the details. Apparently Galkiv's company has played a big role in creating a chance to break apart the enemy formation. Moreover, because I secured the fort, Oseberia has launched a big counteroffensive, but the Empire put up a fight by fielding a dragoon squad and other Black-Hairs. At that point, the Special Ground Brigade and a division of the War Steel Ogre cavalry, who had remained in the rear, took a roundabout path, and clashed with the Magic Dragoon Corps led by the crown prince. Right now, it's a situation allowing for no educated guess how it's going to turn out.

As I listen to their stories, the sight of the battlefields naturally surfaces in my mind.

Galkiv has been doing his best, so I'll allow him to meet with Rollo once he gets back.

"We're going to have another strategic meeting after this."

"Also, it's scheduled for an envoy of the marquess to visit from Hekatrail."

"Just as Fran says, we've still got a lot of work ahead of us. Right now we have a little break between all the meetings."

The sisters look at each other.

"So that's why it's also a chance to let some stress out?"

"Yep."

The two state happily.

"In that case, I'm cool. Fran's life——" In the middle of my remark, my lips are stolen by Fran, and then I get dragged into a back alley.

If it's this kind of surprise attack, I'm all for it. As I rejoice over this, I july enjoy the feeling of her soft lips. I put my arms around her, tightly hugging her. After a little while, I let go of Fran.

"...Fufu, hero-dono, that's one part of our thanks."

"Fran, getting a headstart is unfair. Next is my turn——" Remrona lightly leaps into my embrace after standing on her tiptoes.

Just like that, her lips touch my face many times over.

"...Since I'm rather short, I can't keep this up for long——"

"What if I do this?"

After I lift Remrona's small body while holding it firmly, I properly steal her lips. Once I separate my face from hers, she beams a smile at me. Her accentuated dimples are lovely.

In such a way, I keep being presented with a dense, passionate kissing festival by the two.

"Fufu, at this rate my lips are going to swell."

"Remrona, yours are small, so I unintentionally——" As I'm talking to Remrona, I receive another passionate kiss from Fran.

As the kiss comes to an end with our mouths connected by a thread of saliva, "——I won't lose out to nee-san."

"Fran, the sensation of your upper lip is really great. It allows for a nice switch from a gentle to a deep kissing."

"Are you unhappy with my lips then?"

This paradise-like back alley moment...immediately comes to an end. Having my hands pulled by the girls, I'm led to a restaurant with wonderful black tea.

It seems to be a high-class restaurant by a specialized royal purveyor which is frequented by military personnel. I'm being treated to a feast of tender Lahme meat, and various other delicious dishes using beans.

After eating and chatting in a private room, the two tightly clench my hands, and bring them to their chests. Both whisper with moist eyes, "Can you hear my heart racing?", and "Shuuya...", and as if to emphasize at the end that the real thanks would follow soon, both nod at each other, and let go of my hands.

"That's how far we'll go for today."

"See you, Shuuya. Fufu."

With smiles on their faces, the sisters stand up and walk towards the restaurant's exit while leaving a lingering scent in their wake. I can see that both don expressions full of regret. I guess, it's just a small break in their otherwise busy work schedule. Still, I'm thankful for that break. I'm happy to have felt their love. However, that day has also left me slightly unsatisfied.