

Chapter 297 - Meeting (First Part)

The year is almost over. For a few days now, the daughter of Kazane, Mirai, has been visiting my home to talk about the Underground Auction.

"A practical use of Demonic Gold craftsmanship!? For you to use the powder of Crescent Mandayn and firebird horns..."

"Yep, it's thanks to Zaga and Bon-kun's help."

"Enchant!"

"However, rather than Bon and me, it's your own talent, Mysty. Didn't you get an invitation from the General Military Sorcerer Council the other day?"

"I did. But, let's forget about Hekatrail...no, matters of the past, okay?"

"Oh, right. Sorry, my bad."

Going by this talk, it's obvious that Zaga and Bon have started to frequently visit Mysty's workshop.

After a short time of me watching the process of their work...

"Yay, I did it! Master, take a look."

"Enchant!"

"Oooh, it succeeded."

The sorcery doll is still just a frame, but...she has succeeded in activating it thanks to Zaga and Bon helping her with the embedding of Munjay's Rock Heart and the Belbaque Core. Though, I feel like I've seen the illusion of some kind of orc-human hybrid appear for an instant in the back of the sorcery doll...

It's great that no monster has sprung forth from the experiment like it happened the other day. Still, it's a fact that the sorcery doll has powered up.

Munjay's Rock Heart has properly fused with the Belbaque Core. A bluish-white liquid is circulating through pipes connected to the metallic, crystalline body. The heart and the white, metallic skeleton enclosing the heart in a spherical shape are squirming, unnaturally expanding and shrinking drastically.

"Next is the imprinting of the detailed operation commands, and the quality of the exoskeleton's strength. Thanks to Munjay's efficiency, it's become possible to take it along into the labyrinth, and turn it into a handheld version."

"It's still unfinished, but you're a genius, Mysty. I can't believe that you really managed to build something of a higher quality than the latest sorcery dolls employed by the army."

"Enchant!"

"Fufu, thanks. But, I'll say it over and over again: all of this has just been possible because of your crafting techniques, Zaga, and your enchanting magic, Bon-kun."

"What a humble girl you are. But, you're right, it's still incomplete. The Cornald part can be slightly more compact."

"Yep, we need to radius the parts protruding on the surface. And several test runs are ahead of us, too..."

Trial & error, huh? It sounds difficult, but she looks happy. Zaga and Bon's faces are also full of pride.

"Okay, I'll leave you guys alone then. Mirai is going to show up soon."

"Sure."

"Enchant!"

"Roger~"

After watching Mysty, Zaga, and Bon rejoice while giving each other high fives, I leave the workshop. It proves to be the perfect timing as I just see Mirai showing up at the front gate.

The members of the Blood Beast Corps, who finished their large magic stone collection, are carrying out mock battles among each other in the courtyard, but Mirai pays no attention to them.

"Good day, sorry for being slightly late."

"Let's go to the living room."

"Okay."

After joining up with Viine, the onee-sama who has been coaching the Blood Beast Corps, we head to the main building, and then lead our guest to the living room.

"Please take a seat."

"Excuse me then."

Together with Viine, we start the meeting with Mirai. She informs us about the venue of the Underground Auction, and then tells us that a room has been prepared for us on the highest floor of the Dignified Heaven's Shrine Briant, the exclusive inn for the Eight Lights. However, I turn her offer down.

"The Embodiment of Iron Briant is the inn's owner. Is anything worrying you about the inn?"

"I don't really know that Embodiment of Iron guy, but I have this mansion here, you know?"

"...Very well. It looks like my mother was right. Still, we will keep a room open for you, just in case."

"Did Kazane say anything about me?"

"Yes, a future that might be related to you, Shuuya-san. Though it's full of uncertain elements. It looks like black wings are appearing and disappearing within. As precautionary measures, we have increased the number of guards, and changed inns to Dignified Heaven's Shrine."

Is that Briant owner a former, excellent adventurer? Either way, it looks like Kazane and Mirai got a lot on their hands.

Next she asks us whether we have any items we wish to exhibit, but since that's not the case, I honestly tell her that we plan to enjoy the auction by going around as potential buyers.

"...Can't you tell us in advance what items will be exhibited?"

"To some degree, yes. We are the ones running the checks on the items, but there are also some items which are still being kept hidden from us."

Then I'll probe about my objective.

"Are you going to exhibit Scores of the Demon King?"

"Yes. Given that some companies are on the move in order to secure goods before the auction, several scores might not show up at the auction, but generally some scores are always up for bidding. Of course, no fakes, but the real deal."

It's not like there will be none, but if some companies can also buy goods before the auction...

"Can you get in contact with the selling companies? I'd like to also buy a score ahead of time, if possible."

"I think that will be difficult. As far as I have been informed, all those companies operate outside this city."

"I see."

If it's a problem, I'll obediently use the auction to acquire it. It's not like my life depends on getting the score either... Sorry if it's going to take some time, Ciphot.

"Okay, let me confirm: You will attend the meeting held on the day before the auction begins?"

"I will."

"Understood."

"Is food going to be sold during the auction? Like it's done during festivities."

"No. The first part will be an exhibition of high-class combat slaves. The second part will host various, mysterious items. Anything unnecessary will be kept out."

"Hee."

Afterwards the conversation shifts towards normal chit-chat, covering topics such as Mirai's favorite food, her hobbies, Kazane's reincarnators, the identity and ideology of the Asura Religious Organization, and questions such as whether I can touch the mark on her forehead, whether she has a boyfriend, and what Adolian looks like.

Then, after some time, Mirai goes back after saying, "...Please excuse me at this point then."

"Master, at long last the meeting is right ahead of us, isn't it?"

"Yeah, I'm somewhat nervous."

The plan is for me to attend the meeting together with Viine.

"It's going to be fine. Mirai mentioned it, didn't she? That it's just going to be some greetings. We just need to focus on getting ready for it."

"You're right, I guess."

Eva, Rebecca and Mysty are busy doing the things they want to do. Yui and Kaldo should return any time soon now...

Kaldo has joined up with his old friend who he had called over from Zamalia. Her name is Crow, the gentle type of a beauty. Both of them came to me to ask about tips on how to successfully build a dark guild, but...since there's a lot of stuff I don't really know, I've sent them to Mel. Nowadays they are getting ready to go on a journey.

By the way, it immediately occurred to me that Crow and Kaldo have a relationship as man and woman. Yui seems to also be aware of it, but doesn't really mention it. Well, it's their own private matter, so I won't probe into it.

Now then, there's another person I should contact before the auction.

"...I'm going to head over to Chianelas' mansion."

"Okay."

Viine and I get on Rollodeen (Horse Lion). We arrive at Chianelas's mansion in the Noble District in no time. While carrying Viine, whose ears are clearly drooping, in my arms, I walk into the residence since the gate has been left open.

"Viine, I'm going to put you down."

"Okay——"

Just after I do so, she gently kisses me on the cheek.

"Fufu."

With a happy and bashful expression, Viine walks ahead with her hair fluttering. Somehow I get the feeling that the number of her surprise kisses has increased recently.

Just like before, this place sports a garden with a rich artistic sense. The mansion itself is art deco-styled, built out of cypress and marble.

After encountering a servant at the entrance way, and having her guide us into the mansion, we reunite with Chianelas. I tell him the rough outline of me attending the auction as one of the Eight Lights.

"...I see, so you're going to attend the Underground Auction through another route. Understood. Leaving contracts and all that aside, I still would like to have a good relationship with you in the future, Shuuya-san."

"Of course, the same applies to me as well."

"Since I own a shoe company and a cotton candy shop besides high-class combat slaves, I will gladly give you the special combat boots that aren't up for sale in my shop."

"Hoh..."

"They have been created while utilizing various skills. Since they are custom-made, they are rather rare, and don't appear in the Underground Auction either. I'd like you to make use of them by all means. Additionally I'm also planning to sell a new merchandise using banago, which I have procured from the capital through the southern sea route, and run business transactions using cotton candy. I will sell these cheaply to you, Shuuya-san——"

With a smile, he talks about various matters, including business, with me and Viine.



And then, the day before the auction.

"Good day, Shuuya-sama. Are your preparations well in order?"

As always, Mirai has a mark on her forehead. At some point I asked her for the reason behind the mark. She said that she liked the stories about India she heard from Kazane, and thus started to paint that mark on her forehead with a magic make-up set ever since.

Given that she's wearing a miniskirt, my eyes are drawn to her bare legs against my better judgment...

"...Yes, everything's fine."

"Okay, only three attendants can go with you to the meeting. So, who's going to come with you?"

"Me." Yui speaks up.

Recently she has changed her hair-style a bit. Her ears are clearly visible now since she's tucked her side hair behind her ears. She apparently recalled our conversation from a little while ago where I asked her whether she wouldn't be inclined to show her ears a bit more since they're cute.

Yui has draped the scabbard of Fierce God - Spirit Wind over her left shoulder. Moreover, she's activated <Eyes of Baycala>. She might be practicing with the white mist released from her eyes' outer corners. Her eyes' ability isn't based on mind force like Eva's, but I wonder how it's going to develop from now on...

Since she's staring at Mirai, she might have added her as a target for being too familiar with me. Though I could be wrong about this, too.

"...Me too." Viine stands up from her chair.

Her beautiful silver hair is gleaming with a luster. Her face's right side is covered by her silver mask. Her red-scaled longsword Gadorices is affixed to her sword belt, which is hanging down from her waist belt. Her smooth, slender, and long legs, which vividly remind me of a pit babe, are simply irresistible.

Viine meets my eyes, flashes a smile at me, and readjusts her mask. That kind of casual smile...has the power to make any man happy.

"Me as well. I'm the vice-guildmaster after all."

Mel will be present as representative of **【Remains of the Moon】**. She also possesses beautiful legs that don't lose out to Viine's in the slightest. I'm pretty sure she'd actually be able to make a living as an actress.

"Understood. I've brought a carriage with me, so..." We exit my mansion, being led by Mirai.

Outside the courtyard, parked in front of the front gate stands our exclusive carriage. While walking towards it, I pour mana in the porcelain cats. They transform into two real cats.

"Nyaaa." "Nyao."

"Nya."

I gently caress the heads of the three cats. Mirai silently watches the whole scene.

"Alray and Hueremy sure love you as much as Rollo-sama, Master."

"I'll be happy if that's the case."

"Rollo-chan, they are your retainers, aren't they?"

"N, nyaon." Rollo points her face proudly upwards, meowing her approval.

"...Are you about done there, new cat-loving Eight Lights-sama...?" Mirai hurries me with a sarcastic tone in her voice.

"Sure, we'll get on now——"

"Okay."

"Yep."

Together with Viine, Yui, and Mel, I board the canopied carriage.

"Nn, nya." "Nyaa." "Nyao."

Rollo moves to enter the carriage. She jumps on the wooden step at the carriage's side, and skilfully proceeds on the top of my shoulder. All her steps have left some scratches behind on the carriage's cladding...

Haha, I'll simply pretend to not have noticed it.

I turn my eyes towards Yui and Viine. "This evening we'll meet the Eight Lights. Are you nervous?"

"I might get jittery once we're actually at the venue."

I nod at Yui. At that moment, Alray and Hueremy climb on my lap. It allows me to feel their adorable paws and body weight.

"Nya." Rollo meows down from my shoulder at the two new arrivals. In response, the two turn into small cat ornaments.

I put the two strap-like ornaments into Hal'Konk's pocket.

"How obedient!"

"I think they listened to Rollo-chan's instruction."

The carriage starts moving while we have such a relaxed mood going.

『Your Excellency, it would take but an instant, if we rode Rollo-sama, wouldn't it?』

Helme-chan says from the edge of my vision, sitting on Yui's shoulder while wearing a nurse outfit. But yeah, she's right...with Rollo we'd get there in no time.

『...That's true, but we're going along with their procedure since it might follow some kind of

etiquette』

『Okay, I shall heighten my vigilance to immediately spot any suspicious magic sources』

『I think it'll be alright, but go for it if you want』

As I chat telepathically with Helme, the carriage moves towards the northern part of the city as that's apparently where they'll hold the meeting. After continuing to chat with Yui, Viine, and Mel about the deliciousness of ten-ten-dutea and its black-haired inventor, the carriage comes to a halt.

"We've arrived. Please get off."

With just a glance at the mansion, it's obvious that we're currently in the Noble District. The mansion's entrance is a common, grid-patterned gate. Passing the garden, we enter the building through a big, open door. Then we continue walking through hallways with red carpets.

Rollo is resting on my shoulder as a catloaf. Viine and Yui are walking on the left and right, slightly behind me. Mel is directly behind me.

When we were told that only three people would be able to accompany me, it actually caused a hot dispute about who would go with me, but...I'll omit that part. I chose Viine and Yui. Mel can't miss this meeting because she's the leader of Remains of the Moon. Since I've stayed quiet about Helme in my left eye, Mirai hasn't said anything about her.

Of course she didn't notice Catiza on my right hand either. I thought that it'd be obvious if she only took a closer look at my hand, but maybe it's actually an unexpected blind spot. Well, if Catiza had been an arm and not a finger, I'm pretty sure anyone would have noticed her right away.

"...It's here."

"Here?"

"Yes."

As I'm pondering about Catiza, Mirai stops walking. We're in a hallway with oblong walls, but somehow I sense a mana flow?

Mirai applies a hand on the wall close to her, causing a straight tear in the wall where her hand is touching. Next the wall opens up to the sides from the tear. An automatic door...that's a surprise.

"Whoa! A new room appeared." Just as Yui has pointed out, a deep room has revealed itself.

"A mechanism like that..."

"Nya!"

Everyone is astonished. Rollo even unleashes air cat punches.

"...I hear it uses the same technique as Magically-created Houses. It's only for the time of the

Underground Auction, but since the 【Asura Religious Organization】 is employing many of the craftsmen affiliated to the Odobariel House, we can set up such things, too." Mirai explains.

Kazane's 【Asura Religious Organization】 to which Mirai belongs, eh? I don't have a clue how much they earn through their religious activities, but it does look like they have a good chunk of money at hand.

"...I know of Magically-created Houses."

I have the one I received from the pink-haired princess with me. The name of the Odobariel House must be known to some extent since I've also heard about it before.

"I see. Those items don't appear on the market often. Anyway, this way please." Mirai smiles, and steps into the space behind the wall.

Her legs are wonderful. But, right now I'm here as guildmaster of 【Remains of the Moon】. Hence I'll leave the ogling at that. I let my eyes wander across Yui, Viine, and Mel, and after nodding at them, we follow Mel.

Behind the wall lay a huge room with a big, round table in the middle. People, who appear to be the tops of dark guilds, are sitting on armchairs around the table. Given that several green magic lamps have been installed at the edges of the table, as if to illuminate its contour, the faces of the dark guild bosses are glowing eerily. Because purplish red torches are also shining onto the table from the walls of the room, it creates a peculiar color mix of green and purplish red.

Moreover, the designs drawn on the walls with brushes look like they're on fire because of the torches' flames.

Either way, now's not the time to look around. I head to the table in the middle. ...Now I feel a bit nervous.

"...We are slightly late, but we arrived safely."

"Good work, Mirai. Come over here." The one calling out to Mirai is a shady woman with a golden mask.

"Certainly, Adolian-sama. Please sit down in the open seat over there, Shuuya-sama."

"Sure."

After Mirai points at the seat, she leaves my side.

...Grave looks accompanied by intense mana are stabbing at me from the bosses. A pressure I haven't ever felt before. ...It's way too scary, but without showing my feelings, I sit down on my seat with a bold attitude.

The boss sitting on my right is a cat beastman. The one on the left seems to belong to a race of fishmen. Mirai positions herself behind the woman who has been called Adolian-sama and who sits directly opposite of me. Next to Adolian is an old woman, Kazane, who's also wearing a mask.

However, what could it be? I'm not really used to a tense atmosphere like this...it's kind of like attending an executive meeting hosted by the CEO while wearing no necktie... especially with the seated guildmasters all having various appearances, peculiar to their respective races.

At least that's how I feel. However, only in regards to equipment I don't feel like my dark-green coat is losing out to theirs. Well, it's Mythological, after all. It has a shoulder dragon, belts, buttons, and is plain at some parts, but because of its silver tree branch design, it's pretty nifty.

Viine, Yui, and Mel have lined up behind my chair.

"...Okay, we're going to start the Eight Lights Meeting. I'm looking forward to fruitful discussions with all of you." Once Kazane makes the opening speech, the table's center squirms.

Something like a galaxy belt manifests. Fine threads of vivid lights illuminate our eight faces. We've truly become Eight Lights in name and reality.

The shining guildmasters nod in a composed manner.

"The various exhibition items were checked not long ago. Make sure to bring a full wallet. Following the regular procedure, the first part will begin tomorrow morning, and the second part in the evening of the next day. Any objections?"

"I don't mind."

"No problem."

"Sure thing."

The various guildmasters voice out their approval.

"Understood." I also confirm.

Thereupon, an elven woman with a large build and a scar on her face stares intently at my face. She's a beauty, who has mana dwelling in her blue slit-eyes. She's pretty, but also very obviously a tough fighter. She's using a Magic Combat Style technique, smoothly manipulating the mana across her whole body.

『The elven woman's mana manipulation is top notch. ...Her aura is clearly different from the others in the room. Same can be said about the elven man and woman behind her』

『No doubt...』

I've seen the woman behind her before. She's the one who had invited me to their guild back during my stay in Hekatrail. Clydossus who met with Yui, Mel and Benett. The elven man is unknown to me. The scars on his face give me the impression that he's a veteran warrior. Not a single fault can be found in his mana manipulation.

When my eyes meet with Clydossus, she sends a cute wink my way. It kinda feels like a heart is

flying my way from her eye. However, she's the Clydossus who had ordered Fran to investigate me, and also to kill me. That means, the elven woman sitting in front of Clydossus...is her boss and guildmaster, huh?

As the woman keeps observing me, Kazane speaks up again.