

Chapter 300 - Start of the Underground Auction's First Part

"Yo, Melissa!," I call out to Melissa after she stops speaking with Dino-san.

Melissa looks at me, and blurts out in surprise with her blue eyes trembling, "Eh?"

Her expression betrays that she can't hold back her happiness. The silken shirt and the long cardigan suit her well. Her neckline with a frilly edge continues all the way from her collar to her chest, allowing a peak on the mark of her thieves guild as well as on her collarbone and a part of her breasts.

It reminds me of my first meeting with her. However, Melissa's charm has gone up by another level...

"Aaaahhh, Shuuya-san——" Melissa yells while jumping into my embrace.

I can smell her nostalgic...nice scent. Back then I kissed her in her room...while she was suffering.

I also recall the face of her little sister. I wonder whether that girl's doing fine.

"How are you doing? How's your sister?"

"Erika is so lively that she gets on my nerves, especially since she keeps pestering me about news about you." Tears run down from the outer corners of her eyes as she answers me with a giggle.

And then Melissa stares so closely at my face that it actually makes me embarrassed. She looks pained.

"I wanted to meet you. I really, really wanted to meet you..." With those words, she stuffs her face into Hal'Konk's coat.

However, currently we're in a section of the venue. We draw the smirking looks of people belonging to other thieves guilds, dark guilds, and companies.

"Ah jeez, Melissa. Just when I thought that you were awfully fidgety, you leap into Shuuya-san's arms all of a sudden. You wanted to see him again so much?" The elven woman, Dino-san, says.

A boyish haircut with a pure green hair color. Two eyes with beautiful eye lines. Diamond-shaped earrings attached to the edges of her long ears. A lipstick glittering in pale green on her lips.

All of it makes her look very stylish.

The characteristic tattoo of the elven race is visible on her cheek. It depicts an animal resembling a bear.

Dino-san has placed her documents on the table. A quill is nearby, too. As always she gives off the aura of being a capable woman.

Addressing her, "Dino-san, I'll pay the promised money...Melissa?"

I gently place my hands on her shoulders, and softly separate our bodies. Melissa's white face is dyed crimson.

"...I'm sorry. I've just been overcome with emotions."

"Don't worry, it's the same for me as well. Being able to feel your warmth that hasn't changed from back then makes me very happy."

"Sheesh, your way of talking is as smooth as ever."

After taking a look at Melissa's bashful expression, I take out ten platinum coins, and hand them over to Dino-san. She puts a coin between her fingers, and stares at it.

I've heard from Master Achilles about the existence of a world similar to that of 『Master Shinken』. [efn_note]Master Shinken refers to Joumei Koike, a famous Shogi player. I've no clue about his life, but I suspect that the reference here is about Dino scrutinizing the coin like a pro, seeing through everything in moments.[/efn_note]

Her pale green manicure glitters again.

"——Very well, I've certainly received the payment. But, Shuuya-san, you're an Eight Lights now, so I wouldn't have minded even if you had ignored this contract."

Dino-san places her hand over the necklace on her chest, and puts the coins inside the necklace's decoration. An item box, huh? I gotta say, there exists a ton of items similar to Doraemon's tools.

However, rather than such a commonplace item, I'm interested in Dino-san's spotless, translucent skin. Her clothes allow a peek into her decollete, naturally including the upper part of her bulging breasts. I can faintly see her seductive blood veins beneath her skin. Either way, you gotta admit, Dino-san is also a gorgeous beauty.

"...No, a promise is a promise."

"...What a faithful man you are. Melissa is very eager about the negotiations with Gate of Hidden Evil for letting her use their branch in Pelneet. I kinda feel I saw a part of the reason why she fell in love with you."

"Dino-san, please stop it...ah, considering it rationally, it's so embarrassing." Melissa notices the surrounding stares, causing her cheeks to burn scarlet.

"I don't mind the looks. Feeling your softness is more important to me, Melissa."

"Aauh, you tease...please stop saying all these shameful things!"

"Fufu, you've got a nice relationship going there... Oh, the religious organization has climbed on the stage. The first part of the auction is going to start very soon. Let's sit down."

We're urged by Dino-san. The people around us also sit down. The illumination from the lamps on the walls intensifies. The light gathers in the middle through magic, kinda like spotlights shining upon a stage.

Excitement flares up in the room.

I spot Chianelas. He's wearing high-quality leather clothes befitting an enterprise's executive manager. Currently he's giving instructions to normal employees. Is he going to exhibit his merchandise? Or maybe he's planning to buy something?

"...Well then, Melissa, Dino-san, I'm going to return to my table."

"Eight Lights-sama, please give me, Dino Hildecore, the honor to do business with you again as General Director of Belgart's Head Office." Dino-san says with her face as the boss of a thieves guild.

"Shuuya-san...umm, please do your best with your work." Obviously holding herself back, Melissa's face reveals a complicated mix of happiness and sadness.

I'm sure she must have her work as a member of a thieves guild, too. Dino-san quickly starts to sign the documents on the table.

"Melissa, you keep at it as well, okay?"

"Yes!"

We cheer for each other with our words and looks, and then I turn around after nodding at Melissa with a smile, heading back to the table with Yui, Viine, and Eva.

It's the table of an Eight Lights member as boss of Remains of the Moon, and has a pretty tablecloth. The organizers have paid a lot of attention to the details as the table clothes' colors differ slightly for each Eight Lights member.

"Welcome back. That woman was Melissa-san, right? She's a beauty..."

"Nn, she hugged him..."

"She requires special attention. It makes me happy if I think of it as Master having personal connections in other cities, but I've got to keep a very close eye on the nature of your relationship that will apparently continue from now on. To be honest, I'm not amused as a woman."

"Yeah, but we have to get used to it as his bloodkin. I'll show you how I'll use this jealousy as nourishment for my growth. I'm going to improve my katana techniques, so that I can cut anyone."

Yui-san, those words sound very mature, but...could you stop saying all that while looking at Melissa with your <Eyes of Baycala>? Don't tell me...is she planning to assassinate Melissa behind my back? No, I guess she intends to find out whether Melissa is sleeping with me. Shit, I should hold back on having sex with Melissa in celebrity of our reunion.

"...You're right, there's also the option of sucking her blood."

"She certainly looks delicious."

"Nn, the blood of a beauty..."

Viine's silver eyes turn red, and blood veins pop out next to the outer corner of her left eye... Yui agrees with her as well, and Eva's smile is kinda chilly.

It's very obvious that the girls have become very sensitive about my former women.

"...Calm down, you three, okay?"

"Sure, but my katana might move very calmly and naturally."

Does she plan to cut Melissa with her katana, or what?

"Nn, my steel orbs might drop down very calmly and naturally?"

Eva-san, you're going to use your steel orbs with your ESP?

"Yes, I calmly feel the power of an evil dragon from Gadorices."

Seemingly having suppressed her power as Head Servant Leader, Viine-san's eyes have returned to normal, but she's still saying some ominous things there.

Well, I guess it's their very own way of expressing their love for me. As I'm looking at them with a feeling of slight anxiety...

Yui laughs. Eva returns to her usual, angelic smile, sticking out her tongue. And Viine smiles gently.

"Haha, Shuuya, it's alright. I won't do anything."

"Nn, just teased you a bit."

"Indeed. I wouldn't do anything that would trouble you, Master."

I see. So they intended to make fun of me. Good grief...they sure led me around by the nose with their womanly viles, or rather, I guess it's my own fault. Let's keep it at a level where I won't be sorry later down the line.

But, I'm slightly relieved. Stretching my back to relax a bit, I look at the table next to ours. It's the seat of Bloody Long Ears.

My eyes meet with Lezalaysa's as she smokes a magic cigarette. Next to her sits Clydossus and the classy elf called Sergeant. Lezalaysa smiles broadly at me while puffing out the smoke.

Despite the scar, her face is still beautiful, causing my eyes to be unconsciously drawn to her. Her

smoking a cigarette really fits well with her overall style. Her aura makes me actively sense her personality and strength as someone who has survived many, many years. She's the very definition of a mafia don.

As I'm watching Lezalaysa-san with a look full of respect, she asks me, 『So we're neighbors, eh? Wanna have a chat?』 with her silver mana as if to brag about her mana manipulation.

Just as requested, I move over next to Lezalaysa-san.

"If you look at the research material, a lot of it is plain text, but it's also using encryption codes. Without a doubt, these seem to be documents that will help us with the decoding," says the Sergeant with a sombre tone.

"Commander, is it really okay for Shuuya-san to hear our confidential information?"

"Yeah, he's already my sworn friend. Besides, he doesn't know what it's about anyway, right?"

Let's pretend to be clueless. Despite knowing that it's an encrypted text of the Azel Boundary's epitaphs.

At that moment, a woman, who wears a silver mask, announces, "...Everyone, it's time. We're going to start the first part of the Underground Auction!", while standing atop the round stage in the center of the venue.

It kinda has the atmosphere as if looking at an altar.

"Okay, I'm going to return to my table then."

"Sure."

Returning to our table, I focus on the stage.

"...Just as usual, please show your intent to buy an item by lifting the card placed on your table. Let's start then——" The hostess explains before extending her hand upwards.

A high-class combat slave, the first exhibition item, is led in through the opening in the curtain where her hand is pointing at. The slave walks up next to the hostess. Going by his appearance, he seems to be a normal human...a combat slave with a dull, parchment-like facial color.

"The first item is a Yalg Bay - also referred to as Eight-Ogre Species - said to have been found in the vicinity of the Elephant God City. Albeit limited in number, he can transform into the people he touched. He's from a unique race capable of transforming into eight different people at the most. His combat skills don't seem to be particularly outstanding. The bidding starts from 30 platinum coins."

Hee, being able to transform sounds nifty for spy activities. The Yalg Bay demonstrates his ability, changing his appearance in succession after cladding his body in mana.

For a second his way of transformation reminds me of Catiza. But, the Eight-Ogre Species' ability

seems ultimately limited to changing their appearance. The aggregate amount of mana doesn't change.

As I'm observing the shapeshifter, some people raise their cards.

"Hyperion, Dualbell Enterprise, and next, the representative of the Hekatrail Fan Club have raised their cards——" The hostess calls out the names of the companies while pointing with her finger.

One card after the other is raised. Once I look in the direction of the Hekatrail Fan Club, I notice that it's Chardonnay. She's wearing a mask with the eye holes being bordered by gold. Though I think it's plenty obvious that she's a marquess even without her wearing such a mask that'd remind anyone of the phantom of the opera.

But, it looks like no one has pointed it out to her. Hmm? Wait. The Hekatrail Fan Club was Chardonnay's group? That means, she's been the one buying up the Scores of the Demon King? I guess I'll have to negotiate with her if no scores are being sold at the evening of the second part? Well, chances are that they'll be exhibited anyway.

I suppose it'll turn into a competition between us.

"Next, 95 platinum coins by the Sarpelin Company. Okay...any other bidders?"

The hostess tries to raise the price as much as possible, talking while letting her eyes wander across the gathered members of companies and dark guilds.

"At present, the bid is at 95 platinum coins. Oh, Bloody Long Ears has raised their card. Now it's at 100 platinum coins. Anyone else...?"

Chardonnay, who was about to raise her card again, sends a cold glare in the direction of Lezalaysa-san. Are they acquaintances? They seem to have some connection.

"...Okay, it looks like there are no other bidders. The winner is Bloody Long Ears of the White Whale."

The shapeshifting combat slave is led to the table where the members of Bloody Long Ears are seated, not the one of the Eight Lights where Lezalaysa-san, Clydossus, and the Sergeant are sitting. Well, we're talking about Bloody Long Ears here, so I guess they'll flexibly use him as a spy. He seems handy for poisoning, too.

"We're moving on to the next item——"

"Guuoooo, let go of me, you lowly vermin!" The one brought in next suddenly roars.

It's a huge man with short, blond hair, looking very pissed off. He's from a race possessing big, angel-like, white wings on his back. He's putting up some resistance even while having chains tying down not only his neck, but also both hands and feet.

"As you can hear yourself, this item uses an unknown language. And, it's the first appearance of this race at the Underground Auction. According to the information by the exhibitor, he seems to be of

an unknown race originating from the Azel Boundary. We will start at 50 platinum coins."

The crowd in the hall stirs.

"——I see such a race for the very first time in my life."

"Can he fly with the wings on his back?"

"In such a case, he'd be usable as a scout, and soldier for urgent missions. But, does the effect of the slave collar not work? It'll be necessary to tie him down with another method if he's to serve our side. All the more so, if he can fly."

The members of companies and dark guilds excitedly talk among each other.

"What the fuck is this place!? I'm no fucking spectacle! Release me! Release me! Release meeeee!"
The Azel inhabitant kicks up a fuss, screaming.

However, it only causes the surroundings, including the Eight Lights, to laugh at him. Seeing how I understand what he's saying...I can't really laugh at it. Including my bloodkin, no one in this venue understands his language.

"Damn you aaaall! I have to get back to Emi..."

His body trembles with a sense of defeat. He looks pitiful. However, the auction proceeds without caring about his feelings. Either way, I don't plan to buy him out of sympathy.

The cards go up in succession, and in the end Chianelas' enterprise wins the bidding at a price of 3 large platinum coins. Can Chianelas handle him? Well, he's got many other combat slaves, so it's none of my business, I guess.

"Next up is an item you should pay attention to. It's a human who has achieved great feats on the battlefields of Tartime, Redline, and Ilzon, going by the name of Black War God in the western Seven Florseil Kingdoms."

A black-haired man is led onto the stage. No matter how you look at it, he's a Japanese. However, his health looks bad with shades remaining beneath his eyes. Of course he's collared. He's wearing a military uniform vividly resembling those worn by elite officers.

After throwing an unfriendly look my way, he spreads his arms to the sides, apparently planning to give a demonstration, and creates a square object.

『The quality of his mana manipulation is quite high. He's looked at you for a moment there, Your Excellency』

『He did? He seems capable, but he's a guy, so no thanks』

That's his ability. I wonder how big a cube he can create. Also, the hostess said that he achieved great feats on battlefields.

Of course, he's popular among all companies, mercenary bands, and dark guilds looking for military power. The cards keep being thrust into the air...and the final winner is the Hekatrail Fan Club. To have invested the huge amount of five large platinum coins...that's a marquess for you. Well it's easy to imagine that she plans to use him in the war.

The auction continues smoothly.

First up, a small gnome who can't be a combat slave, no matter how you look at it. But just as I think that, he suddenly starts to split apart into many clones...what a weird midget.

Next, a demihuman resembling the lamia Bia, but with snake arms and a lion head, said to be a survivor of the Ancient Arzen Dynasty.

Next, a human capable of turning into a sword. Outwardly, she's a woman, and since she's also pretty, she piques my interest, but I don't buy her.

Following her, an amazon who's been living in the cultural sphere of the Arzen Dynasty. She's a tall fishwoman with tails and fins on her back, and golden skin.

The one appearing after her is a cute, one-eyed, tiny race. Having only one eye is unusual, but her voice is way too jarring and grating on my ears.

The one led on the stage next is a human capable of turning a part of his body into a spider. His face is swarthy and chiseled, making him look refined.

"He can't speak as he has no tongue. We named him spider human. According to the exhibitor's information, he was picked up by a ship of a maritime company in Naval Port City Socteria while adrift on the ocean."

『He's completely different from my mist. His mana manipulation doesn't look all that skilled either』

If Helme says so, it must be right. He might be able to use Sage Art.

The price goes up, and in the end, the slave is bought by the Eight Lights member, Garon Aconit.

Next up is a huge dragonewt with a dragon's face. The hostess advertises him as having experience in the labyrinth down to the eighth floor.

Just as described above, one rare combat slave after the other is exhibited and bought by dark guilds and enterprises.

I also spot Collector among the buyers. When our eyes meet, she flashes a sweet smile at me. I'm almost charmed by her, but manage to resist at the last moment.

Once I look back at the stage, it's just the moment when a race with four eyes and arms enters. I'm slightly surprised to see a demon species with four eyes here. Out of reflex, I check its face.

Pheew...it's great that it's not Rulizeze. She should be currently enjoying her travel on the surface

while heading for her hometown.

The demon is bought by Adolianne.

"Next is the extremely rare race called Azure Hundred Demon."

Azure Hundred Demon, she says!?! That's a damn cool name. As I'm looking forward to its appearance, the person being led on stage is...what the hell's wrong with that head!?

The skin consists of shiny, blue scales, but the head is ring-shaped? The center of the ring has a hole with the size of a soccer ball. Come on, just where's the brain supposed to be?

It's a big species so weird that it wakes the urge in me to make such retorts.

The ring itself isn't overly broad, but colorful eyeballs decorate it at fixed intervals. I can grasp the mouth being at the lower part of the ring, but I've no clue where to find its nose and ears.

Still, where's the brain? Has it been crammed inside the eyes or in the ring?

Besides its head, it has a thick neck, broad shoulders, and a buffed chest, as typical for demon races. Its body with its four long, thick arms is huge on the whole. As there are no bulges at its chest, it must be male? He's muscular, but unlike the guy from the Azel Boundary, this one here is docile.

A chain is tied to the collar around his neck, but he just keeps watching his surroundings without making a racket. His many eyes restlessly move around. He seems to be from an interesting race...I wonder just how many of those eyeballs he possesses.

Going by his four arms, you can consider him to be a race that can handle close-combat weapons such as swords just like Rulizeze or Togma. His posture seems to be relaxed, and his legs are also long and muscular, like those of track-and-field athletes. He gives me the impression that he might have learned some kind of martial arts.

He seems strong, and might be a good addition as exclusive guard of my mansion. I mean, Alray and Hueremy, who I planned to act as gatekeepers, are currently inside my pocket.

The instant I've considered all that, I naturally raise my card.

"——Eh? Shuuya, you're going to buy it?"

"Master, you don't know how much the Scores of the Demon King is going to cost, do you?"

"You're right, but he piqued my interest, and thus I'll buy him."

The Hyperion Enterprise and I keep bidding, and when the bid reaches two large platinum coins and 30 platinum coins, I win. Azure-kun is taken to the table where the members of Remains of the Moon sit. He doesn't show any intent to resist, staying calm and relaxed all the time. His head is a ring of blue scales, though.

Everyone except for me goes over to welcome the new addition, and introduce themselves to him. I

guess I'll chat with him later when tying the slave contract. I'm curious what weapons he uses. Once my bloodkin finish their conversation with Azure-kun, they come back to my table.

"And now our last item. She originates from the Indomitable Lion Tower. The bidding starts at 50 platinum coins."

The one led on the stage is a human woman wearing simple linen clothing. Her looks are ordinary, but...looking closely, she has no feet and floats. Mana and something like foam is being released at the end of her legs. No doubt about her possessing a skill, racial power, or unique power.

"....."

"Kakakaka!" Hogbar laughs from his Eight Lights seat that's slightly away from ours.

Apparently she's a slave put up for auction by him. And while Hogbar looks very joyful, which isn't typical for cat beastmen, he pulls at the chain bound to the collar of the pretty woman from yesterday. He's been treating her like some kind of fashion show.

As I'm looking at her state...

"Such races live at the Indomitable Lion, huh?" Viine mutters while staring at her mysteriously floating legs.

"Nn, similar to me?" Eva comments while looking at her own metallic legs.

"She's different from you. She's releasing mana from her strange legs."

"Nn, you're going to buy?"

"No, I'm not really interested. Well, she's still a beauty, though."

I don't wanna pay any money to that beastman.

"That means...the Azure Hundred Demon, who drew your attention without being a beauty, is a very rare exception."

"True. I was sure that Shuuya would put priority on them being beauties." Rebecca says with blue flames blazing in her eyes.

She has come over from the other table together with Eva.

"Since I'm full of questions how he can stay alive with a head shaped like that, I can fully understand master's interest in him." Mysty has also come over without any scruples.

"Nn, talked a bit, but the shape of his head is funny. I'll try to directly touch it later."

"Because of his four arms, he seems as strong as Rulizeze or the cat beastman divine king ranker."

As we continue such a conversation, the Hekatrail Fan Club wins the bid over the footless high-

class combat slave. Chardonnay sure is splurging there.

"Everyone, this brings the first part of the Underground Auction to an end. The second part will take place tomorrow evening. Those who have won bids, please come up to pay for your items."

After paying the money to the person in charge, I join up with my bloodkin and the members of **【Remains of the Moon】**, and listen to the story of Azure-kun while performing the contract then and there.

"Best regards from now on, Azure Hundred Demon."

"I'm pleased to meet you, master."

I ask him what he's usually eating, and also what weapons he prefers. Eva, who wanted to touch his ring head, directly places her hand on his head. Using that opportunity, I continue talking to him while she reads his mind.

According to Eva, he basically doesn't lie, just like Bia.

After finishing the chat with Azure-kun, all of us leave the auction's venue in a peaceful, relaxed mood. Climbing the stairs, we return to the corridor with the red carpet, and then leave the mansion through the entrance door while being watched by the eyeball magic tools on the ceiling.

Thereupon, from the right side of the grounds...a largely-built man with a unique aura shows up. He's wearing a black falcon circlet on his forehead. A cat beastwoman with swords at her hips and back follows behind him. Just like a person completely clad in a black armor and other people. All of them are approaching us.

I wonder what's going on. Going by their lineup, I suspect, a dark guild...