

Chapter 302 - Nereis'Kary and Azure Hundred Demon

I walk towards my mansion while continuing to speak with Nereis'Kary.

"So the king has a weak constitution, and the prime minister holds the real power in the state?"

"It's my fault as well. If I had only noticed the plot of the prime minister, whom we had deeply trusted as retainer counseling my father, a lot earlier, I could have rallied the nobles to my side..."

Guessing by Nereis'Kary's expression...she's apparently blaming herself. But, she had been kidnapped, and went through the painful experience of being treated like a slave. I guess she's a kind person wishing for peace, just as rumored.

"Why did the prime minister entrust you to Hogbar Shafeed of **【Noctal's Oath】**, Princess? You ought to be an important hostage who could be used as a political tool. Normally you'd expect the prime minister to lock you away in a cellar or some tower."

"Exactly as you say, I've been forced to sleep on dried weeds for some time. I was taken out of my cell and handed over to Hogbar as a warning to the other nobles that their royalty had fallen into the hands of the minister's private dark guild. It's also proof that his authority in the country has grown considerably." Nereis'Kary explains sorrowfully.

It reminds me of Confucius' saying "There can be no government without the trust of the people."

"That's..."

The dazzling evening sun shines down on the princess and me, creating shadows like arrows in our wake.

"Going by your expression, Zamdo achieved immediate results by shaking up the royalists. The news of me having become a slave is serving as a show of power to the domestic and foreign powers. Zamdo has been in the process of making Leften his own with his commendable schemes in this last year. I'm sure he plans to become king...the Eight Light Hogbar mentioned something in that direction, too. But, I'm..." Nereis'sKary last words cut off as she's started to cry.

However, the last year mentioned by her...it sounds like a sarcastic comment towards me...now it's too late to feel a heartrending depression.

"...Princess, please excuse my comment as one not knowing his own position. I'm the guildmaster of **【Remains of the Moon】**, and hold the title of Eight Lights, but in the end I'm no more than a sparmaster who's fumbling through darkness. But, there are times when I understand that I made a mistake when light pierces through the darkness. That's why, please do not worry about me." I say in order to persuade myself.

The setting sun dyes her cheeks in a light crimson. Her face, which had new make-up applied to it, is beautiful.

"Light...you're right, just like now. I'm very grateful to you for having rescued me from Hogbar. For

me, you're an existence exceeding the Knight of Twilight, Shuuya-san."

I assume the Knight of Twilight is someone similar to a Great Knight.

"Princess, you embarrass me if you say all that while looking at me so seriously."

"Fufu, you don't need to be so polite with me. Right now I'm just a woman who's been saved by you, Shuuya-sama."

A smile forms on her face, at long last. My bloodkin, who have been listening to us, nod after looking at her with faces full of sympathy.

"Very well, you don't need to use honorific language with me either. So Nereis'Kary, do you wish to return to your homeland in this situation where Zamdo will likely become the new king?"

Nereis'Kary smiles at my question, "Yes, my answer is no different from before. I wish to return. Zamdo got hold of the political power, but it's not like he's gained full control over the royalists and the intelligence agency. Earl Surgebald in the south of Leften might be able to welcome me. It'd be no problem if you could simply bring me to him."

"Earl Surgebald..."

"Do you know of him? He's the leader of the peace faction and has Baron Comtes as his excellent subordinate."

I remember having heard about him during my travels.

"No, I feel like I've heard his name being mentioned in the past, but I don't know anything in particular about him."

Walking diagonally in front, Nereis'Kary nods, "I see. His territory is in a region bordering Oseberia and Zamalia, and was famous for its bad public order, but starting with last year, the public order in his territory as well as the Comtes Barony improved drastically. Nowadays it's become an important military base in the south."

"Hee, an important military base? Okay, I got it. It has to wait until the auction ends, but I'll take you there."

Hearing my promise, her eyes gleam as if a flame of hope has been lit.

Nereis'Kary's small lips move, "Thanks. I've heard from Hogbar that the Eight Lights are the top of the trash, assembling the leaders of the underworld, and scorned them for it, but it's the complete opposite, isn't it? They're gentlemen who are always cool, kind, and intellectual. Once I regain my authority——"

"Wait a moment. It's not that I've saved you for the sake of getting a reward."

Rescuing a beautiful princess is a standard template. But, I've got another objective, too. After bringing the princess to Leften, I want to visit Quiche and my friends in Hekatrail. I wonder if

Cherry is doing fine. While at it, it might be a nice idea to return to the Goldiba Village while flying across the elven Terramay Kingdom.

"...Then why?"

"It's because you're a woman. You pleaded to me to accept you."

"Woman? That's why you...?"

Seemingly recalling her previous words, Nereis'Kary hangs her head in shame. Since Rebecca's stylish coat is draped over her shoulders, her negligee isn't visible any longer.

"...Woman." She's musing.

It's not like I plan to make a pass at her with everyone watching us. Yep, there's no way I could, seeing how coldly Viine-san is looking at me.

"So, about that Zamdo, is he also a believer of Terrifying King Noctal, as the name of Hogbar's dark guild suggests?"

"...I don't know whether he's a believer. But he apparently had connections to organizations worshiping Terrifying King Noctal, including **【Noctal's Oath】**, from the very start."

So he used his religious links and a simple gathering of troops, eh?

"Do you think his subordinate Hogbar would start a war against me to recover you?"

Nereis'Kary ponders with one of her slender fingers placed on her chin. We've already passed the arena and entered the streets of the Martial Arts District, so we're going to arrive at the mansion very soon.

"Shuuya-san, you're an Eight Light, so I find it difficult to believe that he'd openly challenge you to a war. However, just as it's obvious from Hogbar tormenting me, he's got a rough temperament. If he spots a chance at victory immediately after the auction ends, it's possible that he will attempt to recover me. However, judging by the circumstances, he might also put priority on returning to Leften... Currently only the leader Bowkiller Muu should be at his side. He left his younger brother Nuha, a martial arts dropout, Contractor Haze, Cleaner Tatami, and Toto of the Phantasms behind in Fa'Dyke. I believe he'll come up with some way to attack you alone after gathering all his leaders in one place and getting everything ready to strike, Shuuya-san."

I guess I'll strengthen my mansion's defenses after the auction, just in case. There's also the new combat slave, Azure-kun, but I'll entrust things to the Blood Beast Corps.

"...Are there many organizations related to Terrifying King Noctal in Leften?"

"Yes, there's a lot of them. For a long time now, fervent worshipers of Noctal have been throwing their weight around in the underworld of Leften."

For a long time...

"I couldn't particularly sense the vibe of a spirit world god's apostle from Hogbar, but he seems to be under the influence of one. It's also possible that a genuine apostle manipulating him from the shadows exists."

The gods of the spirit world naturally like environments like former battlefields and lawless areas. Other gods of the spirit world besides Terrifying King Noctal could also be meddling with Leften.

"Is that so? The apostle of gods..."

Nereis'Kary cups a hand over her mouth, surprised.

"Have you never heard of places with many monsters or lands with shady circumstances?"

"There are countless weird stories about the Indomitable Lion Tower. Besides that, there are several spots in the wilderness where monsters continue to spawn while the needle-leaved trees don't grow normally..."

Yep, just as I thought, there's plenty of such things. I should also ask her what Hogbar might be capable of.

"Okay, I see. Lastly, I'd like you to tell me if you know anything about what Hogbar's organization has been doing in relation to dark guilds."

"It looks like he's planted spies in various dark guilds. He also had an infiltrator slip into 【Owl's Fangs】, but Hogbar mentioned in frustration that he was killed by someone."

Hee. Hmm? Owl's...don't tell me... It wasn't that dual-wielder, right?

At that moment, we arrive at my place.

"This is my mansion."

"Whoaa..." Nereis'Kary is astonished by the big gate.

I retrieve the porcelain figures of Alray and Hueremy from my pocket underneath the gate, and pour mana into them. Then I release the cats towards the courtyard.

"Nn, nyaaa."

At once, corps commander Rollo starts to order Alray and Hueremy around.

"Nyao." "Nyaa."

Having received their instructions, the cats swiftly run towards a corner of the courtyard. At that moment Popobumu rams the wooden door of the stable open like a raging bull, entering the stage with a loud trumpeting. Immediately following, he chases after the cat corps.

『Your Excellency...』

『I know, you want to join the fray as well, right? Come out!』

『Yes!!』

Helme spirals out of my left eye, lands on the courtyard, and heads out with her lower half still liquid while releasing water sprays. She's got a mobility that would put any T-1000 to shame.

"Yaay~ Welcome back, spirit-sama!"

"Oh! There's rainbows thanks to the water sprays!"

"Wow! Let's chase after them!"

My servants, who have transformed into Helme believers, run towards one of the big trees growing on the courtyard. The cats are all running around the tree. Popobumu chases after them while trumpeting, and the Millennium Plant sings splendidly. Lured in by the music, Helme performs a water spray dance. And the servants offer prayers towards Helme.

"I want to join as well."

"Then go."

Souther runs off. Her fluffiness...is damn adorable. I can't see her as anything but a small sheep dog.

"Me too...no, I'll hold back. I'm going back to our lodging house."

"I'll come with you."

"It's a charming scene, but I have to fold the laundry."

Bia gets almost drawn in as well, but the Blood Beast Corps members except for Souther remain calm. They walk over to their boarding house.

"...It's surprising to see how big your mansion is, but above that...you sure are mysterious people." Nereis'Kary's eyes sparkle, obviously because she got charmed by Helme's dance.

This means, the Helme Faith has won yet another believer...

"Spirit-sama and everyone else seem to have fun." Rebecca comments while watching the chaotic animal party.

"It'll cost you a participation fee if you want to join them."

"Why are you taking money from just me!? But, unfortunately I have no time today since I've got to help Betty-san! Otherwise I won't be able to pay any money!"

"As a salesgirl, huh? Give my regards to Betty-san."

"Sure. By the way, I've participated in that mysterious auction...Underground Auction, was it?...for the first time in my life, but I had lots of fun."

"That's great to hear. The second part will take place tomorrow evening."

A treasure-lover like Rebecca should look forward to that one.

"I'm interested as someone who loves treasures, but I think I won't go."

"How unusual. I was pretty sure that you'd attend and yell around "I'll buy this!" full of excitement."

"I mean, there won't be any items I could buy with my funds like the magic treasure maps. It was fun to watch the auction's first part getting all hyped the longer it went on, but would you buy things for me while providing a big sum of money? Besides, I've got training after helping out at the tea shop."

I could buy something for her since I've got some pocket money. Still, for Rebecca to consider things modestly...it might snow tomorrow. Or rather, it looks like it's going to really snow since we're in winter now.

While thinking about such stuff, "...Certainly, training is important. Someone, who's going to survive the time after the collapse of civilization as legendary Blue Flame God fist user, must go through harsh training regimens." I crack a joke.

However, with the effects of her blood as Lucival and as High Elf, her physical abilities have definitely risen steeply.

"Legendary?" Yui asks seriously, apparently not taking it as a joke.

"I've apparently inherited the blood of the Blue Flame God, but I'm no one so outrageous. However, if it comes to blue flame fists——" Rebecca exhibits her Kulbul Boxing Style stances while speaking with a smile.

She thrusts out a fist in front while it's clad in blue flames like an aura. The blue flames are swaying beautifully.

"That fist is cool."

"Thanks, Eva. But you see...actually, Kul—— bul—— doesn't teach anything besides these thrusting techniques. That's why I won't be able to fight as skilfully as all of you or anything."

"I can promise you that you've got stronger compared to before. I'll also try to form a fist with my violet mana——"

After touching Rebecca's blue flame fist all over, Eva releases her mana from her whole body. In front of our eyes, she creates a weird, swaying, violet fist as if shaping clay with her violet mana. But, the flames not having burned Eva even after she touched Rebecca's burning fist means that Rebecca can have the flames discern between friend and foe?

As I'm pondering about that, Rebecca extends her white hand towards Eva's violet fist after erasing her blue flames.

"——This fist-like lump is big, but it doesn't seem to be more than a cluster of mana."

The mana fist created by Eva ultimately just looks like a fist, huh? Rebecca's finger sinks into the violet mana. Looking closely, Eva's fist creation...might be somewhat indecent.

"Unavoidable. It's too difficult to materialize it physically like Shuuya's crooked mana hand." Eva sticks out her tongue as she has apparently read my mind, and smiles.

"Naturally. I mean, I've acquired <Magic Hand guided by Thought> only after going through many hardships."

"That mysterious mana hand sure is handy."

"Master occasionally uses it during combat. I think it's a magnificent skill with a wide range of possible applications."

"He got the skill cause he's way too amazing with his Magic Combat Style and mana manipulation, right? Even my blue flames can't pull off something so skillful."

"Since there are people around who can and who can't even use Magic Combat Style, we now belong to a terrifying combat race, don't we?"

"Nn, I had some confidence in my mana manipulation, but after watching Shuuya I learned that there's always someone above you." Eva agrees with Yui's comment.

Thereupon, her violet mana wraps itself around my body.

"...Eva, I'm being enveloped by your mana..."

"Sorry, it's because I thought about you."

"Shuuya's hair is standing on end." Rebecca points at my hair with her index finger. "Let me fix it for you."

With a broad grin, she tidies up my hair through Eva's mana by combing her fingers through it.

"Fufu, you weirdo. Anyway, I wanna keep chatting with you, but it'd sadden Betty-san if I didn't come as promised."

"Nn, take care."

"Farewell, Blue Flame successor."

"See you."

"See you again."

"Yep, see you later, princess."

After flashing a smile at everyone, Rebecca swiftly whirls around, and starts running like the wind. Her golden hair flutters in her wake.

"I won't come to the second part either. I have to help out with the preparations over at Dee's place."

"Sure."

"Nn."

Eva proceeds through the courtyard in her magic wheelchair after showing me her angelic smile.

"Princess, please come with us. We'll show you the way."

"Okay."

Yui silently takes Nereis'Kary's hand while pushing Eva's wheelchair.

"Let's drink some black tea, too."

"Nn, will prepare treasured sweets. I'm sure you'll like them as well, Princess."

"Are those possibly Rebecca's treasures?"

"Nn, secret from Rebecca."

"Oki."

Such a confidential talk about sweets develops between Yui and Eva. They go up to the terrace while climbing the barrier-free slope. The princess is accepting it with a smile, but she looks a bit dumbstruck.

Now then, I'm going to talk with the Azure Hundred Demon who's next to Viine.

While staring at his mysterious face thinking that he looks kinda sullen, "Okay, first off, I haven't heard your name yet, so could you please tell me."

"Mine name is Ajul Tzuytzukunk Milinomimuri, master."

Tzuytzukunk...I want to change it to zuck-zuck-zuiin. But one thing I can say for certain: that name has to be unique in this world.

"...It's shorter than Bia's name, but it's still a tongue-twister."

"I don't mind you calling me as you please."

Let's go with something simple here.

"Then I'll call you Ajul from now on."

"Understood. I'm Ajul."

"Ajul, I've heard you can use a sword, but please tell me what skills you've learned."

Ajul's strange lips move while the eyeballs on the rink squirm in all directions.

"I can use <Rebellious Slash>, <Rebellious Grapple>, <Rabbit Kick>, <Sword Demon>, <Thrusting Sword>, <Willow Slash>, <Calendar Slash>, <Ripple>, <Beheading Turn>, <Temporal>, <Four Thrust Slash>, <Blue Hundred Eyes Speed>, <Dragon Eye Artillery>, and <Hundred Eyes Tempest>. My combat occupation is <Mysterious Blue Swordmaster>."

Going by the skill names, he appears to be strong. I can immediately put him to use.

"If I give you a sword, are you going to cherish it?"

"Of course. And I shall loyally carry out your orders, master."

"In that case..."

I take the Mad Sword of Lanwen out of my item box. I planned to use it at some point... This curved magic sword with its sickening blade pattern was used by Kreuz in the past.

"Take this. The creator is the Spirit World's Eight Wise Master Lanwen. It's one of the 68 swords forged by Lanwen. It used to be Mad Spirit Knight Hazan's favorite during the Spirit World's Great War. Legends say that he used it to slay a part of the Spirit World Dukes. An acquaintance, an excellent appraiser, told me all of this. Also, it seems possible to acquire <Calm Sword - Speed King> said to have been created by Hazan."

I hold out the Mad Sword of Lanwen, but Ajul's four arms don't move. His eyeballs move around, showing his panic.

"...Master, you're going to give this to me?"

"No need to hold back. By the way, I'm a spear user——"

After stabbing Lanwen's sword into the courtyard's ground, I show him what I mean by summoning Baldok and Ganghis into my right and left hand. I nimbly use my fingers as if performing pen trick arts, continuing to rotate Baldok and Ganghis in my hands. Then I move the two spears from my fingers to the back of my hands. While gazing at my arms' skin, I shift arms and spear to my back, making both spears cross, as if playing around.

At that point, "Your Excellency~ Are you going to train~?"

Helme yells while releasing water from both hands. She has apparently seen me wielding my spears.

I stop, "—No, so feel free to keep pouring water on Rollo and the others."

"Okay~"

While answering Helme's reply with a smile, I shift my eyes back from her, who's happily scattering her water, to Ajul.

"If you believe the item's value to be too high, don't worry— If you absolutely don't want it, we can head over to a blacksmith friend of mine, and look for suitable weapons for you, but what is it going to be?"

"...I shall accept master's feelings. Please allow me to make use of this while treasuring it."

At that moment, I make Baldok and Ganghis, which I've been smoothly and flexibly moving with my self-taught style...derived from the Wind Spear Style, disappear. Ajul is surprised when sees how my weapons vanish from both my hands in an instant.

Maybe because he's surprised, or because of some habit, his eyeballs rotate sideways...it looks funny. Even while surprised, he nods his ring head with its somewhat long neck, slowly approaches the green magic sword stabbed into the ground, grabs its long leather-bound hilt, and lifts it up. His eyeballs squirm as he checks the blade of Lanwen's sword. He's overwhelmed as he seems to keep staring at one spot of the magic sword.

Even his gene expression might be completely different. Seeing him like that, makes me actually feel the diversity of life surpassing any structural evolution theory, insect framework, and epigenetic structures.

Once again I stare at the round hole in the middle of his ring head. ...Truly amazing.

While looking at Ajul with eyes full of respect, "...Ajul, I'm an adventurer, so I might take you with me to the labyrinth, to training sessions, and all kinds of adventures. However, for the time being I'll have you guard this mansion."

"Leave the guarding to me. I've had experience working as a gatekeeper."

Seemingly full of confidence, he flashes his large biceps by showing off the upper arm of one of his arms while placing another arm on his chest.

"Is that so? I'm looking forward to your performance then. Also, I think you've understood after coming to this mansion, but since you're going to live here together with my servants, Popobumu, and the magically created cats, you'll help them out with shopping while escorting them at the same time."

"Understood."

"Okay, I'm going to create your room now."

"...Now?"

"Yes."

While focusing on <Tree of the Evil King>, I invest some mana, causing trees to manifest from my hands. The trees grow all the way next to the front gate. While thinking of the interior of a hut, I create it with the trees. It's bigger than Balmint's home - one room with a bed, a table and a chair.

"You surprise me, master..."

"I'll have the servants take care of your meals. Ajul, please patrol outside the grounds, too."

"—My great lord, please entrust it to me."

Seemingly deeply moved by the quick creation of his hut, Ajul genuflects, bowing his ring head.

"Ajul, you don't need to use such formality with me."

"You are a lord worthy of frank admiration. You can also become the boss of the Hundred Demons."

"What's that about? Anyway, get up now."

Ajul stands up.

"So, you seem to be called Azure Hundred Demon, but why?"

Ajul's eyeballs all focus on me.

"Azure Island Jelganlard. It's the generic name of the island where a hundred demons live."

Island. I imagine the southern sea befitting his blue scales, but...

"An island, huh? Why have you become a slave?"

"After leaving the island, I arrived at the Maritime City Leedbaqua. From there, I wandered to Socteria and Sedolzen. Since I was asked to guard a caravan heading for an ancient labyrinth ruin said to be related to the Roshmale Ruins, I agreed. But, we encountered ethereal monsters called shapsi. Everyone except for me was possessed by those ethereal monsters, and as a result of me being too late in responding as I didn't know how to deal with it...everyone died. Then I was blamed by a knight order for being the one responsible for their deaths."

"What an awfully wrong accusation."

"I thought so as well. I slaughtered many of the knight order's humans, but as I was outnumbered, I got arrested, and became a slave afterwards."

Outnumbered...so that's the reason why he was turned into a slave. Just having stayed alive might already be called a miracle.

"I fully understand. Please work as our protector from now on, Ajul."

"Understood. Let me thank you, master. It might be sudden, but I shall patrol the area right away. Please give me permission."

"You're very eager about your work. But sure, go for it."

Ajul gentlemanly lowers his head towards Viine. Then he lifts his head, stares at his new home with his many eyeballs, and after gazing at the servants, Helme, and Rollo's corps frolicking around, walks towards the gate.

I face Viine, "Let's go to the main building. Time to spend some relaxed moments with the princess and everyone else, I'd say."

"Yes, I shall stay next to you."

Tomorrow evening starts the Underground Auction's second part. I'm excited to see what items are going to be exhibited, besides my aim, the Score of the Demon King. There's also my rendezvous with Lezalaysa after the auction. Given that I plan to leave the princess here, I mustn't forget to assign the Blood Beast Corps as her guards.