

Chapter 303 - Underground Auction's Second Part

The members of the Asura Religious Organization carry the valuable items to their respective winners. Kazane has removed her own mask, holding a staring contest with the auction documents in front of her. And Mirai's voice as she orders her subordinates to hurry so as to not delay the auction's process can be heard from the other side of the curtain.

Outside reigns a freezing night, but...the air in the auction's venue down in the basement is packed with heat and enthusiasm. Two groups are mainly responsible for the heated atmosphere ruling this place. Neither of them have participated in the auction's first part.

One is my old friend Earl Makfol. His subordinate Bimiyal is with him.

"We'll acquire the items, and return to Holker by the end of the day."

"Yes, milord." Bimiyal smiles as he replies to Makfol's loud yelling.

The second group is...

"We cannot afford to lose to Makfol!"

"Your Highness, it's going to be a problem if you stand out too much."

...obviously Second Prince Fals, even identifiable through his mask. Next to him are Remrona and the maid with the appraisal ability.

Centered around those two groups, the bidding wars over items keep intensifying. Other enterprises and dark guilds are undauntedly participating in the bidding, but many complaints about the bids shooting up too quickly can be heard here and there.

"Holy Sword Lussor." "Ritual - Sacredness Azaya." "Martial Light - Sacredness Izaya." "Treasure of the Pagee Family." "Fake Magic Treasure Map Level 15." "Tarbuonge's Tooth-Mark Replica."

Such items keep finding new owners.

"Next up, a Mythological item. A transparent crystal gem. It's the entry of Samalitan, a treasure widely known all over the world. It's an ancient relic excavated from a ruin of the ancient ghost race. It's said that its surface occasionally projects sceneries of the realm of the dead. Bidding starts at 25 platinum coins."

A huge, egg-shaped crystal has been carried on stage. This treasure is very popular, too. Starting with Makfol, many enterprises, individuals, and even Collector keep raising their cards, turning the bidding into a fierce competition.

"Replica of the Spirit World Eight General Skull." "Ayser's Leopard Sword, one of the Spirit World's 68 swords." "Demi-human Picture Book." "Star of Orness." "Trident." "Slate of Right Emperor Aramo." "Snow Treasure of Setsdarts that can be counted to the Divine Domain's 88 Books." "Rare Treasure Five Finger, Wind Ant's Card."

The Mythological and Legendary items change owners through especially intense bidding wars.

Gradually Collector's presence begins to stand out. Shiki keeps winning bids each and every time by raising her card with an unconcerned look. The Eight Lights and enterprises turn their attention to her, but Shiki doesn't mind.

A magic symbol is carved on Shiki's forehead. Magic crests have surfaced in her eyes - her demonic eyes. Her chest possesses two great demon queen breasts, packing a serious punch. Each time Shiki boldly raises her card, her demon queen breasts, or in other words, her boobs sway at the perfect timing. It wakes the urge in me to salute their wonderful efforts.

She's wearing a high-class dress. Its fabric, similar to strings combining wool and silver threads, gently flows from her hips to her buttocks while overlapping as if to extol her great breasts. You could say her attire is styled like a dress, but isn't actually one... It surpasses the modern fashion I know of.

However, her amazing appeal towards just me makes me...happy, but the looks of Viine and the others are scary. I predict Shiki's boobs to have a touch like white, silky fruits. And, if I squeeze my face between those huge bazookas while matching the angle...I think it'll allow me to test out divine works of art capable of granting me blissful happiness. I should be able to develop the Boob Research Society's techniques on those.

Undoubtedly... Come on! Are these soft twin hills the incarnation of Eden and Shangri-la? is what I feel like shouting at those splendid boobs.

I can also see the female Goldiba secretary, and Shiki's male vampire attendant.

『Shiki is Lebra's apostle. Just what is her aim...?』

A tiny Helme appears in the right-upper corner of my visual field. She adopts a thinker's pose while gently buoying up and down.

『Shiki's aim, huh? It's definitely not just limited to her wanting to show off her breasts. She invited me in front her excellent-looking subordinates』

『She's also gathering unknown items』

『Guessing by the principles of her actions, she plans to strengthen Queen of Twilight Lebra's control in Pelneet, defeat various apostles, be they from the evil domain, domain domain, or the Spirit World, and allow Lebra to descend on Sela?』

Once I ask Helme through telepathy, she points the tip of the syringe she's holding in one hand at a boob of Shiki.

『Something like that...but, I guess it could be possible?』 Helme asks while tilting her head.

『Hmm, it's not really realistic, though. Well, either way, it'd be what you call, "emptying the sea with a spoon"』

『That's a complicated proverb』

『It means arbitrarily deciding big things based on lacking discernment』

『Is that an admonition towards yourself, Your Excellency?』

『Aye, but this is really hard. I want to be careful, but it might also cause me to become too careful, right?』

『Fufu, Your Excellency, you are who you are. Your thinking might have already reached the caliber of a ruler』

『I don't see why you'd praise me here』

『Okay then, although it resembles what you mentioned moments ago, I wonder whether it isn't Shiki's expectation to reinforce the Queen of Twilight's influence on Sela while using and fighting the apostles of other dimension』

『She has also been using Manabu alongside other excellent adventurers. So you can say that possibility is very high. For the rest she might simply realize things that would delight the Spirit World's queen』

『...Yes, it might be one of the reasons why she's using her impertinent boobs to seduce you, Your Excellency』

Helme's cheeks puff up a bit. She might be regarding Shiki's chest as a rival.

Even as we hold such a conversation in my mind, the auction's second part continues. The people in charge are running about, very busily. Other than Collector, the enterprises also keep stocking up by winning item bids. I watch the auction's progress while chatting with Yui, Viine, and Mel, without participating in the bidding much.

...Illusionary Wolf Wand, Mepharla's Finger, Map of the Ancient Elve's Great Corridor, Seed of the Demonic Spirit Sound Wave, and Sickle of Life.

"The next item is Legendary. Magic Spear Gundayl which has, according to legends, pierced through Wild God Femt after a throw by Wild God Gujute. Bidding starts at 15 platinum coins."

It's a short spear with a blue blade...I'm interested but will pass on it. In the end Makfol, who's restless for some reason, wins the bid. With rough snorting, he extends the point of his conductor's stick, saying, "...It's going to join the collection in my mansion," with an ecstatic expression.

While Makfol looks very satisfied, the auction keeps going. Unknown items such as Keysmand's Blade, Battle Eyepatch, Foggy Rice Cake of Poisonous Evil, and Eyeball of the Lightning Spirit Bodoyl are being won by enterprises.

"Next, Mythological class. Its name is Stone of Divine Evil. As you can see, it's not leaking mana, but you can check that dense mana fills the small spot in its center. But, we don't know anything

besides its name and rank. It appears to be a Mythological item many appraisers failed to appraise. Bidding starts at 30 platinum coins."

Divine Evil Stone...that shape, is it possibly...? I naturally lift my card, joining the bidding. My rival is Collector. But I prevail and win the bid. Collector glances at me after revealing an unusually mortified expression.

While leaning back so as to show off her seductive, plump chest, she talks to the Vampire standing behind her. The vampire nods several times at her words, and then turns his face in my direction with his bloodshot eyes glaring.

Is he from the Valmask family? Or another family like the Halzelmar family? Maybe he's someone related to Lebra, Lugnad, or something like that...

As Shiki's group is looking my way, the Divine Evil Stone is carried over to me. Accepting it, I swiftly put it away into my item box.

"Congrats, Shuuya. But, I didn't expect that you'd want a stone."

"I'm sure he's planning to decorate the living room with it."

"..."

"I don't know whether I'll use it as decoration, but there's something that interests me about that stone."

I explain, but well, I think I'll let it rest in my item box for a while. —That spear is special.

Yui and Viine look at me with curious looks. Mel quietly lets her pen fly across the necessary documents.

The auction continues. The Corpse of Holy King Hogmalta, Bone Helmet's Ring, Alost's Garment, Needle of Terrifying King Noctal, and Painting of Spirit King Chirim are purchased by Chianelas' enterprise, and other unknown enterprises.

"Next, special items prepared by Kazane of the Asura Religious Organization. A set of Water Mirror of Nightmare, Flute of the Dream Sucker, and Dream Bottle."

A huge mirror, a transverse flute and a glass bottle are carried on stage. A big tree in a nightly scenery is reflected in the mirror. It's apparently called a water mirror, but to me it looks like a bronze mirror. The leaves of the tree are richly colored. Shining butterflies are perching on its great number of branches.

"These are items related to another world. According to Kazane, "They are items capable of catching dreams, and you might become capable of catching dreams as well. However, it's also possible that you will be caught in nightmares for eternity...", so you need to be careful when handling them. Bidding starts at 55 platinum coins."

I feel like those are cursed items, but as they seem to be rare, a fierce bidding war unfolds. The one

winning the set for the hefty sum of seven large platinum coins is a beautiful woman called Quira Hoseley.

Is she someone belonging to the religious organization? A card with the mark of Ausra's Religious Organization has been placed on the table where she's sitting. Well, I doubt I'll have anything to do with her.

Returning my look to the center stage, I wait for the next item.

"The next item is One Eyeball of the Blood Bone Nymph."

The new item is an eyeball floating within a glass container filled with a formalin-like, transparent liquid. A crimson pentagram and small star marks are carved into the eyeball's surface.

『Strangely it's emitting no mana』

『The liquid is probably special. There are several, small, silver vertical stripes outside the container, and it looks like a talisman and sap have been applied on the lid』

"A long time ago, a famous monster hunter was defeated in the battle against a Blood Bone Nymph, an S-Rank subjugation request in a desert region, but he succeeded in stealing one eyeball from the Blood Bone Nymph thanks to a magic tool he had with him. Its origin is unknown, but it was brought to this Underground Auction after it reached a certain company. It requires an excellent practitioner, but it might be a good opportunity to obtain Demonic Eyes for those who are confident in their qualification as vessels. Bidding starts at 45 platinum coins."

I join this bid, and succeed in buying it after a while. I feel pretty good since I've won out in a bid war against Chardonnay, Bloody Long Ears, Makfol, His Highness Fals, the Primiel Enterprise, and Collector. At the end it turned into a one-on-one with Collector, but since I've got the assets left by the upstart Eribol in addition to the profits of Remains of the Moon, I had enough leeway.

"You sure like weird stuff."

"You've planned to acquire Demonic Eyes?"

"It might be a good idea to transplant them into someone else other than me. I don't know how you do that, but well, for now it'll become part of my collection."

Since the container with the eyeball is brought to my table, I put it quickly into my item box.

The next items are...Venulon's Book, one of the Spirit World's 493 Texts, La Doola's Rainbow Voice, Lily Nostrum, Crown of Deep Earth God Tolod and Black Pope Nostalius, Dark Curse 'Detection Tool' (Glasselya), Third Score of the Demon King——

『Finally, it's here!』

『Aye——』

My objective. Everyone at my table nods simultaneously. I join the bidding war revolving around

the Score of the Demon King. Enterprises, dark guilds, and unknown individuals keep raising their cards. Soon it turns into a duel between me and the Hekatrail Fan Club, but I persist in the end, winning the score.

"Congratulations, the guildmaster of Remains of the Moon, Shuuya Kagari-sama, has won the bid."

Yay! It's a big amount of cash, but I've secured the Third Score of the Demon King.

"Nn, nyao." On my shoulder, Rollo also rejoices, saying 『Yahoo nya』, while unleashing air cat punches.

After repeating that several times, she taps my shoulder with pad punches. Her soft pads are irresistibly cute.

"Rollo, our business at the auction is done with this."

"N, nya."

If I use the Score of the Demon King and the Horn of a Highcellcone at a Tear...I might be able to go to the Spirit World.

As I'm rejoicing, Chardonnay, who has been targeting scores, looks at me through her mask. She might be glaring. Taking a safe approach, I return a bow after flashing a smile at her.

Still, the marquess has also won many Mythological items at the second part, including the high-class combat slaves of the first part. Just as expected, she's got scolded by her gray-haired aide Same for having spent too much money. However, even while getting a sermon from him, she laughs while hiding her mouth, replying, "It's fun. It's been correct to have come here."

A beautiful, long pouch envelops her hand. As I'm watching her adorable gestures, a staff member of the religious organization approaches our exclusive Eight Lights seat carrying the item I won, just like before. It's a masked, modest woman wearing an apron with the organization's logo embroidered into it. The Score of the Demon King, which has been placed on top of a deep blue, thick cloth tied around her hands, is jet-black... Monsters drawn with white painting and musical notes have been recorded in complex patterns on the score's surface. It kinda looks like a slightly wet newspaper. And...since ripples of vast mana leak out in belt-shaped vortexes, it's very obvious that it's a cursed item.

"——It's alright to touch it directly. Please take it."

It's alright?

"Thanks," I pinch the score between my index finger and thumb, receiving it from the staff member.

I'm holding it between my fingers, but as she said, it seems to be alright to do so. The staff member turns around after bowing once, returning towards the curtain where officials in charge leave and enter.

『Your Excellency, this resembles the card item Kazane used in the past』

『But, it doesn't seem like an item classified as first-level danger degree』

『The staff member didn't touch it directly, though...』

Helme is wearing a nurse outfit. While being clearly wary, she points her syringe at the score.

『Want to try touching?』

『I will refrain』

It's fine for me to touch the score, but maybe Helme has a bad compatibility with it as spirit.

"Shuuya, you're touching it directly, but it doesn't have any effect on you, does it?"

"It's fine. But, since you're worrying, I'll put it away."

Once I store the score away, the venue stirs slightly. Of course because of the new items that have appeared on stage.

I fully understand the commotion. It's a large garbage truck and a small car. Both seem to be pretty wrecked, with traces of having been squashed by a giant from above. Moreover, the car has a somewhat different build from the ones I know of. The parts, which used to be doors and engine, use metals clad in mana. At some places, fine patterns reminding me of electrical circuits have been carved into a crystalline, transparent metal.

"Those are boxes of Demonic Steel that have suddenly fallen from the sky. Just before they could be melted down as crafting materials, an enterprise with many trade routes in the west acquired these items. Bidding starts at 30 platinum coins."

I participate in the bidding, thinking that Eva and Mysty might be interested in those. After winning without a hitch, I store them away into my item box.

What's exhibited next is an unknown food called Puppkupur.

"If you eat this, you will feel a special sensation of elation, and you will become able to fly due to some power. However, it's a dangerous item since you will end up flying too high in the sky."

While wondering what she means with some power, I identify the Puppkupur displayed on stage as mysterious juice that releases foam at the top and bottom. Since I have no interest in it, I just observe the bid. Chianelas' enterprise wins the Puppkupur.

Afterwards, the auction keeps proceeding fluently. Before long, the final item has been sold.

"This ends this year's Underground Auction. Everyone, we hope that you will be blessed by good constellations, and look forward to your participation next year."

The Eight Lights simultaneously stand up with the final address of Kazane. Each organization leaves the venue in groups. Now that the auction is over, the same applies to the agreement of

neutrality. Everyone has sharp expressions. It's a situation where it wouldn't be strange for fights to break out at any moment.

"Shuuya, we're going to the inn where Bloody Long Ears are lodging, right?" Yui asks while turning a stabbing look at the leaving Bloody Long Ears members.

"That's the plan."

"Guildmaster, here, the documents."

I receive several sheets of paper from Mel. With my eyes I ask Mel what these are.

"Those require your signature, Guildmaster."

"Sure. I'll sign them right away, so wait a moment."

"Okay."

Picking up the quill, I sign the parchments, and pass them back to Mel.

"Well then, we're going to head over to Dignified Heaven's Shrine Briant."

I leave the exclusive table of Remains of the Moon, moving to the edge of the venue. Alongside big merchants and dark guild members, we leave the building after climbing the stairs and passing the hallway. Walking across the courtyard dotted with stepping stones, we exit towards the main street.

The number of carriages parking along the street is big. The place is overflowing with a swarm of soldiers protecting the Second Prince, mercenaries, guards, and combat slaves accompanying the executive managers of enterprises, and personnel that's probably associated with the Eight Lights, including bodyguards completely clad in black clothes. The black suits are returning to their inns in order to protect the guildmasters of the dark guilds.

As I'm watching the spectacle on the main street, "Master, scaled people, who seem to belong to Baycala's Hand, have been following us..."

Just as Viine has pointed out, only those guys aren't returning to their inn. They're right behind us. Since the other Eight Lights aren't here any longer, it's pretty weird.

"Looks like it."

"...They seem to be looking at me?"

As they appear related to Baycala, it's got something to do with Yui's Demonic Eyes, I guess? However, Yui shouldn't have used her eye powers at all since before the first Eight Lights meeting...

"Since they belong to an Eight Lights guild, I think their inn is in the same direction, but still..."

Turning around, I meet the eyes of the scaled man who introduced himself as Aconit. Just like last

time, his discerning gaze is sharp. His scaly skin is violet like that of the Evil Dragon King, and I feel some Magic Combat Style that befits him as guildmaster of **【Hands of Baycala】**. He's the dog of Oseberia's Duke Langreed. He hasn't deployed the hand-like mana he showed off before. But he's the guy who meddled with **【Remains of the Moon】** by using **【Black Glove】**.

"Guildmaster, those are the guys who incited **【Black Glove】**, right?" Mel causes a faint mana in the shape of black wings to manifest at her heels.

She's getting ready for combat.

"Indeed, but keep your feet at check, Mel."

"It's alright." Mel answers with a calm look as might be expected of a vice-guildmaster.

She dons a face making it clear that she knows of the various implications of dark guilds, officially and unofficially.

At that moment, Aconit chats me up, "Hello, Shuuya-san of Remains of the Moon," while accompanied by his subordinates.

He has rolled up the sleeves of his shirt, revealing the conspicuous scaled skin beneath. His pants use a camouflage coloring, and have an even amount of leather belts and pockets.

"You got some business with me, Aconit-san of Hands of Baycala?"

"...Yes, I do indeed, but first I wanted to have a close look at the leaders of Remains of the Moon and their aides who dealt such a heavy blow to us."

"Heavy blow..." Mel mutters, taking a step forward.

The underlings behind Aconit place their hands on their weapons.

"Aconit-san, is this Langreed-sama's order?"

"No, this time we've only received orders by His Grace in regards to the auction. Next we have the important task of transporting the high-grade items and high-class combat slaves we've obtained. In fact, the transport of those slaves is the most important job for Hands of Baycala. We've been asked to safely deliver the goods of the auction to His Grace. I've heard that dark guilds such as **【Noctal's Oath】**, **【Sparrow Tiger】**, and **【Shafa's Lightning】** got attacked on their way back from the auction by overly ambitious bandits and dark guilds...though, all of the attackers have been repelled as far as I know."

I guess it's kinda reckless to pick a fight with groups of Eight Lights.

"Then, what's your business with us?"

"The beautiful, black-haired woman with the katana over there, is she a leader of yours?"

Aconit points at Yui. Yui's expression clearly tells me, "I've told you."

"Is there anything with her?"

"Yes, do you have a moment?"

Aconit separates from his underlings. I guess he's asking me to follow him. I leave the others, walking next to Aconit.

"...Just as the name **【Hands of Baycala】** suggests, I also belong to the upper clergy of the Baycala church worshiping Death God Baycala-sama."

Hearing that, Yui gets slightly flustered. She blinks repeatedly, slowly shaking her head. Going by her attitude, her behavior and look means that she wants me to pretend to be unknowing.

"Nn, nya?" Rollo reacts to Yui.

She bumps her head against Yui's foot. When my partner starts to rub her whole body against Yui's leg, Yui picks her up and hugs her.

I shift my eyes back to Aconit.

"Baycala church. That's a term I hear for the first time. Why does that church have any interest in her?"

"It's because I can sense a special divinity of Baycala from her. Using my position in the dark guild, it's my duty to gather those who have Baycala's power dwell in them like divine princesses, shrine maidens, or priestesses."

"I see. I'm sorry, but since she's dear to me, so I won't hand her over to your church."

A light of obstinacy gleams in his eyes.

"...Understood." He says, but his face betrays that he doesn't agree at all.

"Okay, I got another appointment."

I leave Aconit. He returns to his subordinates with an expression full of disappointment, while I head back to the three beauties Yui, Viine, and Mel.

All of them are holding a paw of Rollo, massaging Rollo's paws happily.

They've got such a relaxed mood going, but suddenly a blood message from Veronica reaches me.

『Guildmaster, it's an emergency! The man with the black-winged circlet we've been tailing has moved. Many strong-looking subordinates have gathered around him. It feels like they're acting while fully aware of our pursuit. It's eerie』

『Those guys, huh? Are they following us as well?』

『No. It looks like it has nothing to do with us. According to Bennett, they're the Shadow Wing Brigade. A group that seems to consist of their leaders has simultaneously launched an attack on the Dignified Heaven's Shrine. The guards of the Asura Religious Organization and the inn employees have been slain instantly by a dark-skinned man on the first floor. He's a skilled longsword user with his eyes moving oddly like snakes. Bennett says that we should immediate armed action, too』

『The Dignified Heaven's Shrine, right? We'll be right there』 I answer.

"Mel, it's a blood message from Veronica. It looks like that fishy group, which contacted us the other day, has invaded the inn of the Eight Lights."

"I see. It's good that I've prepared things just in case. I'll call for an urgent gathering of all leaders of Remains of the Moon, including Paulsen of Slaughter, Ice Bell Angie, Bug User Zeeta, Strong Fist Kazun, the Massacre Sisters, and Swordsman Robalt."

Mel spreads black mana from the heels of both her seductive legs. Then she retrieves several communications scrolls from the pocket at her bust. Those scrolls have a shape I've seen somewhere before. Going by her previous remark, she has apparently prepared something in advance together with Bloody Long Ears, if something should happen after the Underground Auction.

I ask myself whether she's supposed to be Zhuge Liang [efn_note]Please check : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhuge_Liang [/efn_note] , but don't spell it out.

"It's a battle that give me a deja vu. It reminds me of the battles between fellow Sorcery Nobles." Viine recalls her hometown.

It's not like she's feeling a deja vu from the scrolls owned by Mel. Rather, it's about the Sorcery Nobles crushing each other in the Underground City Da'Umezalan on a daily basis. ...I'm sure, fierce battles are even nowadays unfolding in the underground, delighting the Goddess of Magic Poison Misea.

"...The dark elf's underground society, the demonoid empire, gnomes, and dwarves...it sounds like it's terrible in many ways. But, immediately starting a war after the Underground Auction has finished could be called very typical of dark guilds."

"Is it some kind of tradition?"

"Yep. It definitely makes sense, too. Pelneet is the stronghold of Remains of the Moon. Since the target is a dark guild with their stronghold in another city, their number of guards, locational advantage, aftermath after having accomplished the objective and the escape routes are all completely different."

Yui-sensei, the same Yui who taught me swordsmanship, explains. Since she's experienced working for various dark guilds, she's apparently capable of imagining the thinking of the Shadow Wing Brigade.

"Well then, I guess we're going to head over to the Dignified Heaven's Shrine, the place in question."

I should send a blood message before that, though.

『Mamani, I don't think us and the Leften princess are the target, but a hostile organization has made its move. Just as I've explained to you previously, focus on the protection of my mansion together with Ajul while leading the Blood Beast Corps. Your duty is to guard the princess』

『Understood. We will increase our wariness』

I also contact my <Head Servant Leaders> through blood messages, asking all of them to head to the mansion as additional guards of the princess

Mysty tells me that she'll catch some sleep in the middle since she's got lessons tomorrow.

"Rollo, please."

"Nn, nyaoo."

Everyone gets on Rollodeen, who has transformed into a form combining a black panther and a horse lion.

"Mel, please lead the way to the Dignified Heaven's Shrine."

"Okay."

"Rollo, keep a slow pace, okay?"

"Nya."

My partner starts to slowly walk through Pelneet's nightly streets.