

Chapter 305 - Battle of the Dignified Heaven's Shrine



It's a cool night where the slightest sounds seem to echo into the far distance. Even surpassing the chilly periods at the end of a year, an immense number of silver holes blankets the sky. The two beautiful moons shine like guideposts for Rollodeen.

We arrive at Dignified Heaven's Shrine, situated along the Heim River, north of the Warehouse District and northeast of the Second Ring Road. The inn is a long, vertical building with three stories. That building is engulfed by such a conspicuous, reddish-brown membrane that you can even tell within the night's darkness. The shapes of the roofs and elegant eaves look warped.

The first floor's membrane has a faint color and small thickness, but the membrane as a whole seems to become thicker and more pronounced as it gets higher. It means someone among the Shadow Wing Brigade possesses an ability or an item to produce such a barrier.

All this in mind, I jump off Divine Beast Rollodeen. Mel and Yui also get off, but in a way as if bewitching me with their pretty legs. On the other hand, Viine has her usual issue. While gently clasping her hand, I help her down while propping up her back.

At that moment, I smell a thick scent of blood. Veronica has boldly gone ahead, deploying her <Inhalation of Odor Technique> - Veronica's rich pheromones as <Head Servant Leader>

She approaches us with her eyes having become vampirically bloodshot. At her feet, a cute, white cat, and next to her Bennett with the top part of her bow peeking out from her shoulder.

Having reverted into her black cat form, my partner greets Magit by touching noses. During this lovely greeting, Veronica's small lips move.

"Guildmaster, the first floor is smeared with blood! It looks like there are several casualties among the members of other dark guilds, besides those related to the religious organization. The members of Shadow Wing Brigade have apparently gone around from the basement to the second floor, slaughtering all the guards employed by the Asura Religious Organization."

Next Bennett speaks up, "According to the Card Master of **【Sparrow Tiger】** and the Five-armed Momota of **【Shafa's Lightning】**, who left the inn——"

「My fellow dark guild members started a fight with a member of Shadow Wing while thinking of it as amusement at first」

「Early on it looked like they had fun fighting, but all those involved died」

"This is what they told me with serious looks. It sounds like they were messed up quite badly."

Bennett is calm. I guess she's more collected and cool as an old elf than Veronica, whom I've turned into a Lucival. Even if one becomes stronger as Lucival bloodkin...their emotions and disposition

doesn't change much.

"I see. Although they reaped what they sowed, the other dark guilds suffered casualties as well, huh?"

"If we had stayed over at this inn, things might have turned out differently."

"Sure, but right now, we're outside the inn."

Buildings are clustering the inn as if many small houses have been built around a mini tower. Given that there are several alleys too, it looks like plenty of escape routes exist.

"...Okay, I'll give you your orders. Our objective is the rescue of Guildmaster Lezalaysa while quickly getting rid of all potential obstacles. I call it rescue, but I think Bloody Long Ears is going to be alright...well, it was scheduled for me to chat with her from the start. Moreover, the only ones trespassing into the inn will be Yui, Viine and I. Veronica, Bennett, you will secure the perimeter around the inn, including the sky and underground. The other Remains of the Moon members will likely arrive here very soon as Mell called them over."

"Okay, we'll gather our troops while the leaders will cut off all escape routes alongside our soldiers. We'll leave the inside to you, so you can leave the outside to us."

Veronica and Bennett nod at Mel's remark. I'll entrust handling Remains of the Moon to them. It makes me experience a feeling of all of us moving in the same tune.

"We have our own things we have to do." Yui draws Fierce God - Spirit Wind.

As she has apparently poured mana into the katana, a wind blade envelops the metallic one. With my Magic Observation, I can see small, mana blades disperse on end while surfacing on the katana's blade. Honestly, I don't wanna get cut by that...

Even if I managed to block the first strike, it'd be impossible to defend against those unknown sword blades. I kinda doubt it, is that really just a Legendary weapon?

"...I'm completely ready. Let's go slaughter them." Viine plainly reveals her high-strung excitement.

And seemingly believing that it'd support her claim, she shows off Rasheena's Bracelet. With the Jade Snake Bow she received from Goddess of Magic Poison Misa flung around her back and the Evil Dragon's Magic Sword Gadorices sheathed in the sword belt suspended at her hip, her preparations are in perfect order just as she declared.

I assume that it'll turn into an indoor-battle in the inn, but her beam arrows from a distance or her preemptive attacks through the bracelet might work.

"N, nya." Rollo separates from Magit and meows cutely after having transformed into a black panther.

Her black fur's surface that seems like beautiful velvet under the moonlight looks even glassier than usual. Her licking the pad on her forepaw makes her appear even cuter. *censored cat porn*

As I'm watching her with a smile, Rollo meows lightly after noticing my gaze, and then brings her body close to my waist. The flexible black panther is adorable, but since she's rather big, her bump packs a bit of an impact. But, without minding that, I keep smiling while stroking the bushy fur underneath her throat. Rollo looks up to me while growling happily. Then she bends the tip of her erected tail like the handle of an umbrella, making it obvious that she's enjoying my caressing.

At that moment, Veronica says, "...Magit and I will go ahead, going underground first."

"Veronica, wait, I'll come with you. Bennett, once everyone has gathered here, instruct them to adopt "Enclosing Moon" just as we talked about in advance."

"Roger that." Bennett nods at Mel's coded term.

After nodding as well, I stop massaging Rollo. Bennet swiftly nocks an arrow onto her bow, shooting it into the night sky. It's a special flash arrow.

She looks around her, checking the vicinity that has now become bright, and runs off like a ninja. Veronica and Mel, who look like parent and child, watch Bennet leaving. After exchanging a look with me, both of them head towards a stairway that appears to lead to the basement of Briant, taking Magit with them.

"Now then, we'll head in."

"N, nya."

『Your Excellency, I'm coming outside』

『Roger』

"Oki."

"Okay!"

With Viine's energetic confirmation as a signal, Helme spirals her liquid body out of my left eye, lands on the ground, and instantly transforms into a beautiful woman.

"Fufu." She performs a Helme pose by turning her waist while wobbling her butt.

I won't use the Burning Knights and Catiza yet.

"You know what to do, right?"

"Everyone except for Bloody Long Ears will be regarded as hostile."

"We'll annihilate them with teamwork."

We run towards the inn's entrance with Rollodeen and me in front, Yui following on the left, Viine on the right, and Helme right behind us. The first floor's barrier also extends to the area in front of

the double-door, but it's thin as the members of other dark guilds have escaped through it.

We can easily pass through the membrane. However, we're greeted by blood-smearred dead leaves laying on the floor. There's also branches and twigs among them. In addition, traces of flesh blood seem to dye the place all over.

I'm slightly confused by the ground being blanketed with leaves. Additionally, the corpses of huge lion beastmen, headless corpses, and other corpses are strewn all over the floor.

"...Shuuya, I can understand the corpses, but what's with those leaves?"

"——I can sense another kind of mana from each and every leaf. It doesn't seem to be offensive or defensive, so I'd say it's a detection type."

"Nyao, nya, nya~"

Seemingly considering it fun, Rollodeen unleashes panther punches at the dead leaves. The leaves are easily cut by her claws, go ablaze, and vanish.

"Just as Spirit-sama has said, it appears that the leaves are connected with each other." Viine shoots a beam arrow at the floor.

It pierces through several leaves, and just like with Rollodeen's claws, these go ablaze as well.

"They seem to only serve as tools for detection. Let's go."

While treading across the leaves, we walk through the central hall with its array of potted plants that have now transformed into blood trees lined up, heading deeper into the first floor. Soon, a broad flight of stairs heading up to the second floor comes into sight.

I can clearly sense the inn's decorative sense from the squiggly, wood-crafted handrails. The instant I place a foot on the first wooden stair, I detect a magic source response at the top of the stairs.

"Someone is waiting up there."

"Alright. It might be an opponent specialized on surprise attacks. We should get ready to take evasive actions."

"You're right, I can feel a faint response. I'll ready my bow."

"Leave the backup to me."

Immediately after we reach the top of the stairs once I've talked it over with Yui, Viine, and Helme, a yellow sword flash suddenly assails us.

Yui and Rollodeen dodge to the left, Viine to the right. I jump back while holding up both palms as I'm basked by a dazzling, yellow light that seems to burn my eyes. Of course I make sure to land carefully so as to not fall down the stairs behind me. Since Helme is floating above the stairs while releasing sheets of water spray, she evades the sword flash.

"I guess my perception didn't betray me. ...Who's there? For you to dodge my <Flying Slash - Three Lightsword Gleam>..." The creepy voice comes from a dark-skinned man with remarkably plump ears.

He reveals a dumbstruck expression while maintaining an alert, iai-like stance. [efn_note]Iai is a sword technique where you swiftly draw your sword, cut your opponent, and sheathe your sword again, all in one motion[/efn_note]

Viine's beam arrow is heading for his head. But the man lightly wields his yellow broadsword vertically with body movements typical of a sword style practitioner. Arrow and blade clash, resulting in the arrow easily being cut right in half.

So he can slash apart a special arrow that could even be called a Goddess arrow, huh?

Having been split apart, the two parts of what used to be a beam arrow stab into the floor left and right from him. Next, Helme shoots an ice pebble at him, but that pebble gets cut in half as well. The two parts have precisely the same size.

At that moment, Yui, who has closed the combat distance, thrusts out the point of her katana towards the man's chest. A sword thrust with the blade charged with mana. Her thrust movement, which makes it look like arm and blade are one, is damn cool. It's so quick that it wakes the urge in me to name it Wind Thrust.

The man moves as if creating a clone of himself on the spot, trying to dodge Yui's thrust. However, Yui's katana is as fast as a sharp gust of wind. Her sword tears a part of the man's armor clothing on the right shoulder apart. As blood dances through the air, Fierce God's invisible blades produce cuts across the man's entire body. A small shower of fresh blood sprays out of all those cuts.

The man sways with his balance falling apart, as if buckling from his knees, but even after being cut, his expression remains calm.

"...A mastery swordswoman, a magic katana and a thrust unavoidable with <Flow Shift>, I have ne——"

Since it's no duel, I've got no intention to let him prattle on. I shoot <Chain> from both my wrists at him. The two chains head for his head with the speed of bullets, but suddenly his plump ears squirm like snakes.

While emitting mana from the earring holes, his earlobes abruptly expand in front of him after branching out finely.

My two chains end up entangled in his grown earlobes

"——Hoh, you sure possess a strange projectile weapon." The man talks while unleashing his ears that are stretching out mysteriously, but that's something I want to say here.

His earrings have come off, too. I think it's his hidden skill, but those are definitely amazing ears. A middle-aged swordsman with mysterious, plump ears.

As if eroding <Chain>, his ears keep expanding while tangling around the chains...

"...Same for you."

After making the chains disappear, I draw the steel hilt from my hip. In a flash I change into the black outfit of the Gatrance form, leaving the shoulder dragon out on my shoulder, and then summon Baldok into my right hand.

"——They vanished!?! I thought it's a similar hidden skill, but it seems completely different from mine." He chats on with his snake-like, expanded earlobes floating lonesomely in the air.

"I think the difference here is the spirit poured into it——" Immediately after saying this, I charge in a forward-bent posture while holding the steel hilt in my left hand.

I'm aiming for the man's abdomen. His armor's plating seems to be hard, but I'll drill through it. As soon as I close the distance to the man with Magic Combat Step, entering spear range, I powerfully step in with my left leg, twist my waist, transferring power from my arm to Baldok, and fire a <Thrust>.

In an instant the man contracts his ears, which have been deployed in front of his chest, downwards, takes several steps back, and thus evades Baldok's <Thrust>, a black mist engendering darkness wraps up his head. In that moment, where Helme perfectly hit him with her magic, Yui charges in from the left front.

The blade of Fierce God, which is overlapping with the white mist released from Yui's eyes, looks as if it's blurred.

"If you're trying to steal my sight...guuaahhh!"

Yui's sharp sword thrust drills into the man's chest. The man manages to react, but isn't in time. Still, it's not just Yui's attack. Helme's ice pebble stabs the man's leg, the darkness spirits released from Viine's bracelet coil around his legs, and Rollodeen's tentacles also entangle around his legs.

That's why he had no chance and easily got his chest penetrated by Yui's blade. After quickly pulling out her katana, Yui keeps her distance.

However, even while blood gushes out from the wound on his chest, the man is still alive.

"He's tough, isn't he? It looks like he's no human——"

At that moment, I extend my <Chain> towards his head a second time. The chain coils themselves around his neck without giving him even the briefest moment to catch his breath, and after tightening down on it, the tip of one chain flies upwards in a straight line, like a streak of lightning, embedding itself in the ceiling.

Immediately following, I hook the other chain into the ceiling chain, using it as anchor, bring the tip close to me, grab it and keep pulling. The man is dragged into the air, hanging from his neck.
[efn_note]I changed the whole procedure as the author made up some bs that doesn't work

logically[/efn_note]

"Guooooohh——"

Dangling in midair, he drops his sword, and resists by thrashing his body around while quickly tearing at the chains constricting his neck. He entwines the chains with his unique earlobes, but all he manages to achieve is a slight reduction of the tightening around his neck.

Before long, all power leaves his arms, and he stops moving altogether. At the same time, the fallen leaves scattered on the ground turn into dust and vanish alongside a miraculous ringing.

Once I erase <Chain>, the man falls to the ground. We defeated him, but he was formidable enough to oppose our teamwork for a short time all by himself.

"Let's head to the third floor."

"Nn, nya." Rollodeen extends a tentacle towards Yui's cheek.

"Fufu, thanks, Rollo-chan. But, the man just now was a considerably skilled swordsman."

Rollo has apparently praised her.

"You could say that he held out long with His Excellency, the Demonic Emperor of the Holy Lucival army, and his main retainers, as his opponents. Any normal person would have died instantly. He was an opponent who didn't give me an opportunity to drive an ice stake into his butt."

Helme has come up with new terms again.

"Those are words very typical of you, spirit-sama. Our opponent must have been a leader of the Shadow Wing Brigade. Even Yui's thrust, which he saw for the first time, only shallowly tore off his leather armor. It's no understatement to call him above average."

"All of you, leave it at that. Let's go."

"Okay."

As we climb the next flight of stairs, we find the dome missing. The walls have traces as if they were cut unnaturally. The whole floor has turned into a new rooftop with a cold wind blasting alongside the floor. Thanks to the moons' illumination, and the flash shot by Bennett, it's bright up here. The reddish-brown barrier adds its own, peculiar reddish tinge to the light spreading in the vicinity...

It's beautiful, but a fierce battle is still raging on the roof. A strange, jet-black beast is fighting against members of Bloody Long Ears. The beast looks like a chimera, fusing a lion, hawk, and a fairytale-like hippogriff. It has transformed the wings on both sides into assemblies of many blades, and keeps extending those long, black blades, trying to stab the bodies of the Bloody Long Ears members. The beast also fires blades from its black wings towards the place where a steel armor and an elf wielding a mace are confronting each other.

The elf twists her body after smashing her mace against the steel armor once, and then retreats. Probably with the goal of assisting the mace-wielding elf, another elf with mana in his eyes and bow in hand shoots arrows at the beast. Several of them stab into the beast. But, they don't seem to have any effect. The beast's chest appears to be very thick, so it doesn't even twitch from being hit by the arrows.

The beast keeps getting showered by arrows. But without minding the plethora of arrows penetrating its body, it shaves off the floor with its talons as if to create rubble, and blows away the walls with its pointed tail as if the walls didn't exist to begin with, continuing its attack against the escaping elves.

"——Sevicekel, you okay? Those arrows seem bothersome." In the middle of melee, a cat beastwoman addresses the beast.

While talking, she deals with a chain attack of sword flash, targeting her torso, and sharp thrust, aiming at her head, which seem to be a Bloody Long Ears-styled combo attack by Melichek and Misev. She suffers a shallow cut, but the rest is warded off by her splendid, defensive swordplay of delicately shifting the mana-clad demonic swords in her four arms.

On the left side, Clydossus cheerfully says, "It's a tough beast. Fars-onee-sama, please give us another flash," while escaping the black blades unleashed by the beast.

"——You're well aware that it's impossible to fire it consecutively, aren't you?" The beautiful elven woman called Fars answers while dodging the black blades approaching her at hair's breadth.

Nearby, the black-haired man, who introduced himself to me as Galroh and appears to be the guildmaster of the Shadow Wing Brigade, uses his magic sword to exchange heavy blows with Lezalaysa's. Lezalaysa throws her magic cigarette at Galroh in vexation.

A stalemate?

There's a difference in numbers, but the battle between Blood and Shadow appears to be in an equilibrium.

Moreover, on the far right of my visual field, I spot a woman hurling chains of lightning spells without chanting. The Brigade's magician, huh?

As she moves her slender, beautiful fingers, which are extending out of her fingerless gloves, as if playing on a piano in the air, electricity is generated from their tips. The electricity flashes with yellow and bluish-white lights rapidly alternating. Lightning flashes, electricity, and bundles of lightning. As those bundles of lightning keep overlapping in the air as if it's a game of cat's cradle, the lightning takes the shape of a small person. The small doll crackles, obviously discharging electricity from itself, and independently dances through the air as if possessing a free will.

Once it spots the enemy elves, it seemingly narrows its aim down to an elf with an eyepatch, and shoots small lightning towards that elf from its fingertips. The magician, who created the lightning doll, continues her piano-playing-like movements. Moreover, she releases thick lightning from her fingers as well, making those chase after the escaping Bloody Long Ears members.

"You're Thousand Lightning Lalay, right?" The one-eyed elf, who's wearing the eyepatch teeming with mana, identifies the lightning woman.

All the while he chops down the small lightning with his curved, crescent-moon-like katana that's clad in wind. In the air where katana and lightning clash, supple mana flakes scatter about like smoke. However, as it seems like he has received an electrical shock through his fingers from cutting the lightning, the elf's movements have become sluggish.

"Hah, you can't block them completely, now can you? I'll numb you down a lot more♪" Lalay comments gleefully.

Next to their battle, I can see a dwarf I remember having seen somewhere before. It's an onion-headed dwarf with axes in both hands. Yellow gems are embedded in his fists. That dwarf squares off against an elf holding a yellow magic sword and another elf wearing a dark blue attire while wielding a magic ax wrapped up in flames.

It's a 2-on-1. Even under these circumstances, the elf and dwarf holding axes close the distance in a straight line, striking ax against ax as if rampaging like mad bulls who were hit by a bullfighter's lance. Fire mana overflows from the magic ax. The dwarf increases the yellow light of the gems embedded in his fists.

"It's been a long time for big bro to have been pushed this far..." The other elf says while watching for an unguarded moment of the dwarf with his magic sword at the ready.

He appears to be the younger brother of the ax-wielding elf. Distorted noise of blunt weapons denting while repeatedly exchanging blows reverberate between dwarf and elf.

Suddenly, the dwarf's power wins out slightly, causing the ax-wielding elf to lose his balance. Perceiving this as a chance, the dwarf bumps the metallic part of his thick pauldron against the elf's waist with a grim expression. The elf gets blown away.

"Log! Damn you, Resurrection!" The other elf gets angry over his brother being knocked down.

As he hurls out those words which bare his emotions, he stabs out the point of his sword with a force as if trying to gouge out the dwarf's chest, but the dwarf keeps his calm, slowly rotating one of his axes sideways, blocking the magic sword by entangling it with the ax.

"——The hell?"

The elf's stance falls apart. As his right hand is forcibly turned away to the side, the dwarf drives his left pauldron's metallic part, the opposite one that he had used just now to blow away the older elf, into the solar plexus of the elf in one fluent motion.

"Guuaa!"

The elf is blown away with his body bent at the stomach as if he's pitching forward. He tumbles across the ground while dropping his sword and causing smoke from the friction, and comes to a halt at Rollodeen's paws.

"N, nya."

Amusing herself, Rollo presses the pad of one of her paws on the elf's face as if stamping a seal on it. She might want to say that he smells nicely.

"Are you alright?" I address the elf whose name I don't know.

His face looks pained, though I doubt that it stems from him sniffing Rollo's pad.

"Guuoo, it hurts...You are...Remains of the Moon..."

After the elf brushes Rollo's paw away, he reveals an imploring, relieved expression as he looks at us. It appears he knows about us.

Even the dwarf, who's overwhelmingly powerful enough to prevail in a 2-on-1 while keeping a majestic air about him, checks us new arrivals out.

His connected, thick eyebrows, and the onion-shaped head. Is he possibly...

"——Hey! You are..."

Yep, as expected, it's Hankai.