

Chapter 3 - Poison to Death! The Wyvern

T/N: The author uses for those subjugating demonic beasts the term "subjugation people." This works in Japanese, but not so much in English. I'll call them "hunter" as short for "demonic beast hunter."

After being pulled into accepting the margrave's request without being given much of a choice, I was treated to a luxurious meal as I've never eaten before, and then courteously sent back to the inn in a carriage. The difference in treatment was glaringly obvious, considering that I got dragged in front of the margrave like a criminal.

Even though I was full of anxieties and fear, my exhaustion immediately caught up with me and I fell asleep as soon as I got back to my inn room.

—And now, one day later, I'm waiting for Shea at the entrance to the central plaza, situated not far away from my inn. It's planned for me to accompany her to the guild. 『Guild』 refers to the association managing the hunters in the Wildinne Margraviate.

Many people trying to make a living from killing demonic beasts - in short, hunters - are staying in this area which is adjacent to the outlands, the habitat of the demonic beasts.

The guild handles many tasks such as paying the rewards and referring jobs to the hunters, managing the insurance money paid out in case of death or injuries, investigating the number of demonic beasts, and acting as intermediary between hunters and merchants wishing to purchase the looted beast parts.

I was taught all of this by the guards who had kidnapped me yesterday. Probably plagued by pangs of guilt, they treated me so politely that it rather got a bit annoying.

Anyway, I was told that even a magic blacksmith like me needs to register with the guild if I'm going to head out on demonic beast hunts. Otherwise, no insurance money would be paid out upon my death, nor would the guild be able to put up any relief requests in case I ended up isolated in the outlands. The guards informed me of these matters very courteously, too.

And at the end, I was even told, "Sorry for abducting you before..."

I wait for some time while reviewing all this information in my mind. Suddenly I spot a woman walking straight in my direction from the other side of the main street.

It's Shea. As always, she wears a getup drawing the attention of those around her. Moreover, it's an outfit heavily focusing on functionality. And yet, even though her revealing outfit should gain her enough attention from the men, strangely not a single one calls out to Shea.

Rather, the people open a path for Shea. Very likely not consciously, but instinctively. This phenomenon might stem from Shea emitting the aura of an expert fighter, palpable even by ordinary people.

Heading through the cleared path, solely focused on me, Shea comes to a halt as soon as she arrives in front of me.

"Did you have to wait?"

"No, not at all."

"Good. Let's go then."

With only those few words, Shea starts walking again, heading for the guild. Even in front of me, her companion, the crowd of people breaks apart, opening up a path.

"Wow. Is that what you call the "Ki" released by a master?"

"Hmm? What are you talking about?" Shea tilts her head to the side with a puzzled look.

"No, I mean, look. The people are naturally opening a path for us." I explain my impression to Shea.

"Oh, the reason is this." Shea picks up the rustic necklace dangling at her chest with a somewhat boastful expression.

Come to think of it, she had also worn this necklace during her battle against the orcs, hadn't she? Does she like it so much?

"This is?"

"A fang of the Black Dog. It actually contains a powerful curse, and just wearing it triggers a special effect that causes weak creatures to scurry away."

"Why the hell are you using something like that as an accessory!?"

"Yughul always carry a part of the demonic beasts they defeated so far with them. For me it's this one."

So that's why she looked so boastful moments ago!

"Still, isn't that something you'd equip on the battlefield?"

"Having this on me keeps annoying men away. It's an unexpectedly handy item to have inside a city." Shea blurts out calmly.

I see. So it can also be used as playboy repellent... However, its effect actually works against men and women of all ages.

Walking unobstructed thanks to the Black Dog's fang, Shea and I continue our journey to the guild.



The headquarters of the association managing all hunters is a square brick building. The columns of windows, systematically divided into three rows, indicate that the guild's building possesses three floors.

A stone gate is visible right in the middle of the building. The decorations are kept to a minimum. However, this construction, barring any unnecessary pretense, adds to the dignity instead.

With Shea in the lead, we pass through the gate, entering the building.

"Welcome to the guild. Oh my, what a pleasure to see you, Ms. Shea. And, young lad, nice to meet you. I'm the receptionist Sarah."

As soon as she recognizes Shea, the receptionist runs up to us. As typical for the people in this area, her hair has a chestnut-color. She's a lovely woman with a voluptuous chest. Her beauty isn't stingingly cold like Shea's, but rather, a soothing one... I'm pretty sure she's the guild's poster girl.



"I'm glad to meet you. I'm Tea Korpi, umm, a magic blacksmith."

"Oohh, a magic blacksmith. I see, I see. Magic blacksmiths with approved skills are definitely in high demand. Please do your best, oki?"

We're standing in a spacious, stone hall. A counter where requests are accepted lines up deeper inside. Round tables and chairs have been set up nearby, serving as a place to exchange information and to wait. One of the boards on the wall is plastered with many requests.

A dozen hunters are present in the hall, and some of them look our way after noticing our arrival... Furthermore, the looks of those strong hunters are obviously filled with hostility towards Shea.

"Hey, the Cursed Tool User got a man with her."

I can hear words appearing to be malicious gossip, accompanied by snickering. The bearded men smirk while holding their beers.

Shea ignores all of that while I'm confused, not knowing what to do. Even I can tell that they aren't Shea's buddies...

"Sarah, can you please register Tea?"

"Suuure. Please fill out these forms here. I'm really sorry for this being such a filthy place. You must feel disturbed with all those scary-looking, gruff guys around. But don't worry, they're all going to die soon anyway!"

Ms. Sarah has an unexpectedly nasty way with her words! With my heart racing as I'm worrying whether the other hunters have heard her, I fill out the blanks on the registry forms. There are surprisingly many passages I need to check closely such as the guild's basic rules, the exemption from responsibility, the penal regulations, and so on.

"I'll go and pick a suitable request." Seemingly having judged that the registration would need some time, Shea heads in the direction of the counter, leaving Sarah and me behind.

She walks in a way that invites her silver hair to sway. Once more the crowd clears the space around her while at the same time showering her with hateful gazes.

"Tsk, fuckin' barbarian race (Junk). She's creepin' me out."

"If she wasn't the margrave's lil' favorite, a bitch like her..."

According to the margrave, Shea is one of his certified hunters. She should be someone with top-notch abilities in the world of hunters, but it's pretty obvious that she's not welcome around here.

"Hey, what's a barbarian race (Junk)?"

"Barbarian race (Junk) is a discriminatory term for a small ethnic group mainly living in the west as nomads. The term itself means they're an uncivilized, lowly race living from selling trash."

I-I see. It was a discriminatory term... And yet, Ms. Sarah cheerfully explains in a way that's easy to understand while smiling brightly.

Ms. Sarah is quite peculiar in her own way as well, though.

Anyway, her being insulted with such a word means...

"Say, it may sound a bit weird, but isn't Shea somehow hated?"

"Yes, and it's not just 'somehow' either! Ah, but I'd like you to not misunderstand. It's not merely limited to her being hated. It feels like she's also feared at the same time." Ms. Sarah declares boldly with a cheery smile.

Though she doesn't really need to get all detailed on the nuances in Shea's ostracization.

"O-Okay. But, what's the reason?"

"That's because Ms. Shea is young, a woman, a Yughul, the one who killed Black Dog, an extremely skilled hunter, and the margrave's favorite."

"So basically all of her."

"Yep. In short, it's jealousy. Ah, another big reason you mustn't forget is her ridiculously gross and brutal combat style."

Ms. Sarah is also thorough in explaining all the reasons for Shea's ostracization.

"I see...Shea has a hard furrow to plough."

"Their bodies are tough, but they sure are sly and underhanded. Oh, wait, body build and character got nothing to do with each other. It's wrong to discriminate against others for their appearance." She resolutely and shrewdly tells me loud enough so that everyone around us can hear her.

Ms. Sarah seems to have a straightforward character that dislikes talking behind the backs of others... Still, her qualification as poster girl for the guild is pretty much non-existent.

"But you see, Ms. Shea is also a stubborn girl, completely unwilling to compromise the tiniest bit. Even though I've said that she's hated, it's not like no one wants to party with her, seeing how she's one of our best hunters. But, far from simply turning those people down. She goes as far as completely ignoring them! But you see, I'd love her to do her best in training some younger folks since she's a certified hunter."

And yet, Ms. Sraha doesn't hold back on talking loudly. At long last, her voice has apparently carried all the way to Shea, who's handling the formalities at the counter. She looks back in our direction, glaring at full force.

Ms. Sarah, the fake poster girl who picks fights at every front...

"Excuse me, but what does certified hunter mean?"

"Certified hunters are top-ranking demonic beast hunters who have been officially acknowledged by the margraviate's administration. Unlike normal hunters, they possess various, special privileges. Moreover, they're paid extra in addition to the regular subjugation rewards. Mo-re-ov-er, they're granted a rank equivalent to a knight and can call a small patch of land their own. It's the only path for commoners to enter nobility."

"Those are amazing special privileges."

"You can obtain status, money, and power. However, you need overwhelming abilities to do so. That's why those scarred, old ruffians wouldn't be a match for Ms. Shea even if they ganged up on her. Since they'd get totally trashed, their options of getting back at her are limited to speaking ill behind her back."

The grim men tremble with their fists clenched tightly. Ms. Sarah seems to be completely unconcerned, but...I feel like I'm in danger here.

"Don't worry. Even without you acting all jittery, they won't be able to make a move on Ms. Shea's partner. At most they'll spread some weird rumors. Please fill out the documents without paying any attention to them."

"Okay. Hey! Wait, I don't want any weird rumors being spread about me!"

"Still, for Ms. Shea to finally have partied up with a magic blacksmith. Nice, nice."

"Finally, you say?"

"It's normal for fairly strong hunters to target big game while getting supplied with enchanted weapons by hired field smiths. Even if you deduct the pay for a field smith, the income is on a completely different level. Almost all of the first-class hunters have exclusive field smiths working for them. I doubt those old misers over there got enough money for one, though."

"You're saying this deliberately, aren't you...?"

I concentrate on filling out the documents for the sake of not continuing this topic any further, and finish writing down everything in one go.

"This should be everything, right?"

I pass the three sheets back to Ms. Sarah after having filled them out completely.

"Hmm, let's see. Yep, looks good. Okay, please sign here."

"Okay."

"Also, here, here, here, and here. Afterwards, sign here, and also on the back of this paper."

"That's way too much signing!"

"Sure. Lastly, sign here. Okay, thank you. Now then, this number here will be your registration

number. Later you'll receive an identification card with this number recorded on it. If you have that, it'll be handy since anyone will be immediately able to tell who you are in case of your death. You also get a free body bag with the insurance you signed just now." The poster girl yaps about body bags as if it's plain, common sense. Moreover, with an innocent smile...

Once again I fully realize that I've come to an outrageous place. I didn't expect that it'd be easy to procure mithril, but for things to turn out like this...

"You done, Tea? I got us a job."

As I'm wallowing in self-pity, a notification preordaining yet another development arrives. It's a parchment that's brusquely thrust in front of me by Shea.

~ Request Acceptance Form ~

Request Content: Subjugate the wyvern that appeared in the eastern Nibrel village

Danger Grade: Level C

Further down, it lists all the information currently known about the request. It's stuff like the count of victims, information about the target, the demonic beasts spawning in the area, etc.

"I'm going to accompany her on this one, right...?"

"Of course. This is why you registered with us. Besides, don't worry. The body bag is already covered."

"...Danger Grade Level C, what does that actually mean?"

"Eight out of ten hunters, who've received basic training, will come back. That's become the criterion for Level C." Ms. Sarah explains something terrifying with her usual polite tone and bright smile.

"...Umm, it's relatively deadly, isn't it?"

Recalling the scenes of the day when we got attacked by orcs, I feel how my stomach becomes heavy all of a sudden. The guards, who had been slaughtered back then, were probably endowed with basic abilities, too.

"Please don't worry. Ms. Shea has hunted down Bilrutong the Black Dog, a Level S beast and one of the Six Calamities. Something like a Level C request is kinda like a picnic for her."

"Really?"

Somehow feeling that Ms. Sarah is exaggerating things, I check back with Shea. Shea nods in reply.

"However, picnics have fairly high mortality rates in this city."

"Come on. No way."

What's the point in using a picnic as a reference if you then raise the picnic's danger level!?

"Anyway, it's very rare for Ms. Shea to form parties. You'll draw the attention of everyone. Please do your best, oki?" Ms. Sarah encourages me with a lovely smile.

In the back, I can feel the rough guys' murderous stares on me. But, I'm still far from being experienced enough to tell whether I'm being observed with eyes full of fear.

