

Chapter 312 - Interlude: Veronica 1



"Finally I'll also become a bloodkin..."

"No wonder, you've been such a pain with your constant whining about it being sly for Mel to be the only one."

Hearing Veronica's playful bickering, Mel also got pulled into laughing.

"Fufu, that makes sense. I mean, even a careful person like Benett would get all hyped over the prospect of becoming an immortal while still being able to stand under the sun."

"...What's wrong with that!? That haughty look of yours 's gettin' on my nerves. To begin with, how come you allowed yourself to breathe in some pervert's poisonous fog? That's so not like you, Mel." Benett harshly rebuked Mel, apparently not amused over being ridiculed.

"Bene-ane, blaming Mel is a no-no. You can only say that because you weren't with us back then! None of us had expected that Kary, that pervert who treats his daggers like lovers...would carry something like poisonous fog with him." Veronica looked very angry as she was obviously reminded of the battle in the basement of Dignified Heaven's Shrine.

Her usual, mischievous nature had completely vanished. Apparently also recalling the battle against Kary, the smile on Mel's face had also dissipated, becoming replaced by a distorted, screwed-up expression.

But, not because she remembered the stench in the basement. It was an expression full of self-loathing.

"...Veronica, you don't have to blame yourself for it. I've simply overestimated my own abilities. Mel the Flash...Hah, what a laugh! Serves me right."

Benett's wiggled her elvish ears as she listened to Mel's self-mocking remark.

'Uhh, such a reaction's troublin'... Since it was totally unexpected for that shrewd and cunning Mel to breathe in poisonous gas, I got unconsciously lured into rebukin' her strictly...' Benett thought, scratching her cheek with a finger as if to unravel a slightly complicated mental state.

Then she apologized straightly, "Mel...I'm sorry. It's just as Vero-cchi says. Although I've got some confidence in my own dagger arts, I shouldn't comment on a battle I haven't participated in myself. That Kary pervert is also strong enough a fighter to have escaped safely after having fought our guildmaster. It's only natural for you to have struggled with him."

"No, don't mind it."

"Anyway, Bene-ane, let bygones be bygones! I'll turn you into a bloodkin as <Head Servant>."

There won't be a way back afterwards. You ready?"

Benett and Veronica look into each other's eyes, nodding.

"...According to guildmaster, it's what you'd call a choice without return, right? I'm all ready for it! I leave my hand in your hands —— Vero-cchi!"

Benett jerked her square chin forward, as if to emphasize her statement. Furthermore, she extended her right fist towards Veronica.

"Oki——" Veronica smiled naturally, bumping fists with Benett.

These two were different in everything, be it race, character or head shape. But, they loved each other like sisters. Mel was naturally drawn into looking at them fondly.

And then, Veronica's face transformed into a vampiric one. Two eyes as red as shiny rubies. Blood veins popped up around her eyes, with the pulse visibly throbbing within.

Spreading both hands like a flying songbird, Veronica released an aura reminiscent of an empress. She moved her slender neck vertically, activating the skill <Bloodkin Creation>. In the next instant, Lucival blood endlessly gushed out of Veronica's whole, tiny body. No world of darkness was created as it'd happen with Shuuya, but it was a deep crimson blood carrying the genealogy of the Lucival.

Countless, transparent threads shot up into the air from the pool of Veronica's blood. Those threads swayed like some independent energy net. A Lucival pattern of interwoven blood and threads.

Just at Veronica's feet, a trembling, distorted space looking like a depression. That space looked like the bending caused by a gravitational lens at a glance, but on a closer look, it seemed as though transparent petals of chrysanthemums were repeatedly zoomed in on, giving the whole a fairytale-like flair.

The blood, which created that fantastic scenery, filled Veronica's vicinity while spraying all over. As if having its own consciousness, it meandered and waved as it kept moving towards Benett.

Benett was bare-footed. Her attire was also limited to a simple linen dress. The instant Veronica's lukewarm blood touched her toes, Benett trembled in excitement. And while she kept quivering, the blood level rose all the way up to her ankles. Slowly it kept crawling upwards, passing Benett's shins that seemed as if they had their hairs removed a little while ago. The blood's movement was a raw squirming, continuously expanding by creating bloody mesh patterns like slime mold. That blood crawled past Benett's shins and knees, reaching her thighs.

Just when it looked as if Benett was wearing crimson knee-socks, the blood started to spread across her torso, too. Compared to Shuuya, the blood's encroachment speed and quantity was low. But, her - Veronica Ravahl Lucival's - blood steadily and relentlessly wrapped up Benett's small body. As it continued to engulf her, it adopted the shape of a small blood womb. And then the womb changed into a branching crest tree.

But, although you could describe it as a crest tree, it was small, falling far behind in size compared

to Shuuya's huge Lucival crest tree. It reminded one of a small, cute bonsai tree, perfectly befitting Veronica.

Having said that, it still possessed ten big circles on its blood-soaked trunk, standing for <Head Servant Leaders>, and 25 small circles, connected with the trunk through branches and standing for <Servant Leaders>. Just like with Shuuya's crest tree, names were written inside the big circles: Viine, Rebecca, Eva, Yui, Mysty, and Veronica - the great <Head Servant Leaders> inheriting the Lucival lineage.

Kaldo's name could also be spotted within one of the small circles.

However, only at the edge of Veronica's circle existed new branches with small circles which were diverting to the sides. One of those small circles already contained Mel's name.

This was completely owed to Veronica being experienced as a vampire, and also proof of her being the only <Head Servant Leader> among those Shuuya had created so far to have attained <Blood Path - Open Third Gate>. The small circles signified her own <Head Servants>, created by using the skill <Bloodkin Creation>.

The instant the small crest tree overlapped with Benett's body, an intense flash occurred at the location of Benett's heart. At the same time, blood, which was clad in light particles, flew out of her chest into the air. The Lucival blood, which had formed the crest, fell apart, also flying into the air as if to chase after Benett's blood.

In the air, both bloods drew arcs, blending and fusing with each other. As if symbolizing the limitlessness of taoism, they formed a mark similar to the taiji drawing of yin and yang, and light as well as blood continued to spiral. While rotating orderly but at a terrifying speed like a golden whirlpool, everything returned to Benett's body once more, like the rewinding of a video.

Benett continued absorbing the returning blood and light with her body, but...each time the blood entered her body, she experienced a searing pain as if soldering iron was pressed against her skin from within her body. It was so painful that it made even thinking next to impossible...

However, Benett and Veronica smiled at each other, imparting a deep feeling of trust onto one another. Seemingly sensing the pangs of pain from Benett, Veronica's eyes trembled at times, obviously revealing her unrest.

Eventually, the last drops of blood entered Benett with a faint smacking. At that moment, Benett's name floated up in ancient letters within the small circle connected to Veronica's big circle, and Benett collapsed to the floor, unconscious.

<Bloodkin Creation> had finished without a hitch, resulting in Benett being the second <Head Servant> created by Veronica.

"Veronica, you're my mother and empress. With this Benett and I have truly become a blood-related family."

"Yep, but, I'm a girl full of big dreams, you know? As a pure girl with a soft skin, I don't really qualify as a mother, so I'll yield that role to you, Mel."

Mel widened her eyes in surprise, due to Veronica stressing this part.

"...I feel like I heard some weird flattery in there that didn't quite fit with the rest of your remark, but don't just come out and say something deeply moving so nonchalantly."

"Huh? I thought it'd earn me a scolding, though..."

"Fufu, showers of scoldings will — follow in the future♪" Mel deliberately imitated Veronica, whirling around on the spot.

Stretching out her long and slender legs as if dancing a tango's waltz, she rotated around magnificently, and then stopped, just to take a decisive pose.

Then she put on a stern expression, saying, "...Now then, is this the creation of the Veronica family that will oppose the Valmask family? The Lucival family, or maybe the Shuuya family?"

"It doesn't really matter what you call it. It's not like it's set in stone anyway. I think it's fine to keep using Remains of the Moon. I like that name, and...didn't you feel something fateful on the night of the battle at Dignified Heaven's Shrine?"

Mel, who had vaguely felt something similar, indicated her agreement with Veronica's words.

"You're right, I felt the same. I also felt something like a connection between our Remains of the Moon and the pretty, bright night sky with its moons. I was able to reunite with Dad... Precisely because of that, I think that guildmaster might be a person as they appear in legendary fairy-tales. ...I kinda believe there's also a meaning in 'The moon will be reflected in pure water' as mentioned by guildmaster." Mel put the emotions surging out of the bottom of her heart into words.

"A fairy-tale, huh...? A being like me is actual proof, no?" Veronica answered with a triumphant expression.

"Oh, you're right. Returning a vampire into a human...that's definitely something from legends..."

"Yeah♪ Even possessing a magic ring related to Lebra and Lugnad is way too amazing. But, it doesn't feel quite real to me as guildmaster is very close."

"Still I've heard folklore being handed down in the desert country of the Religious Founder Amef, stating that something similar actually occurred in ancient times."

"Oki, but in that case, legends about us could get passed on through the generations as well?"

"There's no point in passing down folklore about us since we're immortal. However, because there's an elven songstress, you could describe as minstrel, among our acquaintances, it might already be happening." Mel said while pondering with a finger placed on her chin.

"You mean Shana who's working hard at the inn? It's possible."

At that point, Veronica shifted her eyes to the sleeping Benett. The elf looked very happy, apparently enjoying a nice dream.

"...Is Bene-ane dreaming?"

"It sure doesn't look like a nightmare."

"Going by what happened moments ago, you'd think it's a painful dream, but with her looking like this, it must be a sweet dream." Veronica peered at Benett's face.

"Are you going to pull one of your usual pranks? Guildmaster mentioned something along the lines of being able to become a superman if you write "Meat" or "Inside" on the forehead."

"Pfft, the heck's up with that!? Guildmaster definitely says some totally incomprehensible stuff at times."

"Yep, fufu."

Veronica and Mel laughed.

"No pranks today. Let's have a party once she wakes up!"

"Like a birthday party, huh? What do you think? What kind of congratulatory gift would delight and surprise Benett? While at it, we should also tell guildmaster about this."

"Yep♪ Before all the matters with bloodkin and so on, I hear our important and beloved guildmaster is going to leave this place soon, so I've got to get myself pampered while I still can♪"

"I wonder whether that will be possible with Hankai-san being around." Mel asked teasingly with a smile.

"Uugh~ don't be so nasty. The other day I managed to make some significant progress when we bit each other, but...you see, even while saying he'd return the princess to Leften, his training switch apparently got flipped, and he's been totally engrossed training his ax fighting with that old onionhead...staying all day and night on the courtyard..." Veronica complained while actually looking truly happy.

"But, you like that part of guildmaster, don't you?"

"Indeed. Since I'm checking on Amelie-chan's situation, I occasionally join the group training in a format of two vs. one with Yui or Viine after having that onionhead and the Burning Knights step aside, and that's why I can fully understand what true strength actually means, and why spirit-sama keeps calling him mesmerizing!"

"Oh my, you proudly telling me back then how important a duty it is for you to protect the saint from the shadows is just a side show now?" Mel asked, narrowing her eyes.

"Uuhh, you're wrong...it simply can't be helped that I'm unable to resist when I'm near such a dreamy being like guildmaster! But, I'm still doing my work properly!"

"Fufu, let's leave it at that."

"And you see, even when I get knocked down on the floor in the middle of training with guildmaster, he'll kindly help me up, full of worry about my well-being! His expressions at those times make my heart race. Ah, right, Benett's congratulatory gift..."

Confidence indicating that she had suddenly come up with a great idea spread across Veronica's whole face. Mel, who was superior in craftiness, instantly noticed Veronica's intent.

"A night with guildmaster? I think Benett will get up soon, though."

"Yep, that's why I'll immediately send a blood message, and arrange for him to come here as soon as possible! Besides, you've surely noticed the passionate looks Benett throws at guildmaster, right?"

"Of course, I'm close to her after all. Recently I've been slightly worried as she was always sighing whenever she saw him getting along well with his chosen bloodkin."

"Since this would also include me, I can't really say much, but..."

"Then it's decided."

"Yep. Mel, you want to join in as well?"

"...You okay with that, Veronica?" Mel shyly asked.

"No, I'm not. But, I mean, Mel you also love guildmaster, don't you? Each time you meet him, you're wearing new clothes as if enjoying guildmaster's eyes being glued to you. Even right now, you're wearing a stylish uniform that turns those big boobs of yours into weapons, I've never seen it on you before." Veronica glared at Mel's big boobs.

Mel smiled wryly, taking on that cute albeit glaring stare.

"...Yep, it's as you say, but I'm the vice-guildmaster, so..." Mel muttered as if to persuade herself. "Based on that, guildmaster has been dealing with me gentlemanly. The other day he also told me, 'Remains of the Moon is originally your baby. Even if I'm the one saying it...I'd like you to keep running it from now on. I entrust the guild to you,' with a serious look. Once I consulted him about the tasks of Remains of the Moon, he told me, he said it's give and take, and then gave me various advice. We also talked together about many things, including my Dad."

"Hee, guildmaster is a lewd man, but he'll directly look at you with gentleness. He's respecting you as the former guildmaster and current vice-guildmaster. That's why you attacking with gorgeousness might actually backfire, resulting in him respecting you even further." Veronica explained while enviously staring at Mel's big chest.

Mel tenderly looked back at her without minding the glare.

"It's fine. I can fully understand the feelings of guildmaster who makes a distinction by drawing a line. He cherishes the Remains of the Moon we created and tries to protect it. And, he's a man sticking to his promises. I really respect him for all that."

"...Humph. You sure trust him deeply." Even while feeling something close to jealousy for some reason, Veronica continued, "Anyway, I'm going to call that respected guildmaster of yours over, okay?"

"Sure, let's entrust Benett to him. I have to prepare aroma candles."

"...And expensive wine, too♪"

