

Chapter 4 - At the Bar

"Thanks for waiting. Here are your two ales."

"Three ales coming up for this table."

Still I must say, Bruno has really lots of connections. He's been introducing me to one part-time job after the other. Doing one-time or short-period jobs is a lot more welcome to me than doing the same job all the time since it allows me to get to know the outside world well.

Tonight I'm working at a bar after having been introduced to the owner, who's close to Bruno's parents. This bar is close to the adventurer guild's headquarter, resulting in many of the guests being adventurers. Given that we're on our way to become adventurers too, it's definitely not a wasted effort to learn about full-fledged adventurers in advance.

"Hey, big lad, bring us three ales as well. Also, another serving of stew."

"Got it."

Adventurers put a lot of emphasis on ability and don't really care much about manners. I don't have any talent in serving customers, but since it's no issue as long as I can carry the orders around, I've been doing my job without running into any troubles.

"Say, what party are you going to join after graduation?"

"I haven't decided yet."

"Wanna come to us? We'll gladly welcome a magician."

"Hahaha...I'll give it a thought."

Bruno is really popular with the female adventurers. He's often chatted up when bringing the orders to a table surrounded by just female adventurers. I'm also a magician, and it's not like I don't get any invitations either, but as expected, I guess, I'm not all that popular with female adventurers.

"Haah...I'm pooped." Coming back to the kitchen in the back while holding empty plates and mugs, Bruno spits out a sigh as soon as he enters.

"It must be difficult to be popular."

"Klimt, you have it nice since you're only getting invited by male adventurers, you know?"

"Even I have been looking forward to an invitation by female adventurers."

"It's not all just sunshine when you're getting approached by many people." The middle-aged cook, who's been preparing the stew in the kitchen, speaks up, obviously forcing himself into our

conversation. "You gotta be careful with female adventurers who come to a bar in a party and try to recruit young male adventurers and prep school fledglings. Especially you, Bruno."

"No kidding."

"What's this about?"

Getting many invitations should be great since it'll give you a wide selection of places to go to after graduation. On top, the party consists of women. It's just proper as a human being and man to gently help them out. Otherwise they'll have it tough in the adventurer's world which is mostly dominated by men.

"Haa——ah, you truly come from a good family, don't you? In contrast to your appearance."

The part about my appearance was unnecessary.

"How is it related to coming from a good or bad family?"

"You see, many women struggle as adventurers since it's a world dominated by men where only skill and strength count."

Probably because of that, many women give up on it once they get married. At the very least, I hear that there's many women who drastically cut down on the number of jobs they do.

"But you see, the ones needing special attention are the women who have surmounted those hardships or are doing fairly well at present. In many cases, such female adventurers will bare their fangs instead. Especially if it comes to newbies like Bruno. The position as a young adventurer is weak in a party made up of women, but if a capable male adventurer enters their little circle, it happens that their human relationships break down," the cook explains. "It's not like all female adventurers plan to continue being adventurers until the bitter end. Some will marry and retire, if they get a chance to do so. Now imagine someone like Bruno entering such a place. Even a child would understand that it'd develop into a fierce scramble over him."

A young, handsome, capable magician has entered their workplace. All the women would aim for him, turning those, who were friends until now, into rivals. He's right, it'd definitely bring about various troubles.

"It'll be alright if the party only dissolves over this, but there are also bad cases where party members kill each other or abandon a wounded member in a monster domain. If such things are found out by the surroundings, it's usually the male party member who gets shunned the most."

"Makes sense, seeing how he'd have completely destroyed a party that worked properly. If you're actually the cause for that, you won't find a new party anymore either, I suspect."

"Even the adventurer's guild will keep a very close eye on you. A magician might find plenty of other jobs, but for ordinary adventurers it could spell the end of their career. Of course there also exist tough guys wandering from one female party to the other without paying much attention to such a bad reputation."

Because such guys usually don't have any real abilities, but look handsome at least, the female adventurers accept them into their parties against their better judgment.

"So they're like parasites, huh?"

"That's how it is. There are all kinds of men. The same can be said about women. Youngsters, who believe that female adventurers are all good women only thinking of the best, are going to have the rug quickly pulled under them. You need to watch out, guys."

"Indeed."

"Hmm, I see."

As expected of a cook who's watched various kinds of adventurers from his kitchen over many years. His words are a trove of knowledge!

"It's a foregone conclusion for you, Bruno, but I must be careful as well!"

I'm a youngster, and a magician albeit an elementary one. Since magicians are rare, adventurers compete over them, so it's possible that some will try to cheat me as a young and innocent student. Moreover, I'm still a minor and a novice. It'd be best for me to stay cautious.

"Thank you very much for your warning. I'll be careful!"

"Umm, listen lad, considering it normally, you're not wrong, but in your case it might be slightly different."

"What do you mean?"

"Unlike with Bruno, it's obvious that things would escalate if they were to try cheating you. You seem like a scary guy to piss off, and going by your appearance and physique, you don't look like an inexperienced youngster either. Won't it all work out if you play things by the ear?"

Hmm, true, my body is big, and I'm often regarded as much older than I actually am, but...I wished he hadn't deliberately retorted on that part!



"Hey, let's have some fun once your shift's over."

"I need to clean up the store afterwards."

"Aww, no need to worry about that. Just leave that task to the other folks working here."

"I won't do something like that."

"Hey, bitch! Does that mean you're turning down my invitation?"

"Dear customer, could you please stop yelling?"



After a while of normally working as a waiter, I notice how the poster girl of this bar, who's working as a waitress right now, suddenly starts to quarrel with an adventurer at a nearby table. This place serves alcohol as one would expect of a bar, and thus it regularly happens for guests to forcibly try making moves on the waitresses after becoming drunk. It's nothing unusual, and the poster girl would skilfully ward them off since she's accustomed to those kinds of incidents.

It'd be fine to not pay that much attention to it, but since there are also times where things escalate more than usual, we've been told to step in her defense when necessary. And right now it might be such a situation.

"Listen girly, just follow me to the next store."

"Customer, I'm currently in the middle of work."

"Don't worry about it. I've made a lot of cash today, so I'll take over your work's pay for today."

"This bar lacks manpower, so I can't leave."

"That's nothing you'd need to worry about, right?"

"Customer, could you please give her a rest?"

"Shut up! Don't butt in!"

Since the guy keeps pestering her no matter how much she refuses, the bar's owner steps in, but the male adventurer doesn't listen to the owner at all. He's probably drunk quite a bit in celebration of having earned a good amount of money.

He's definitely annoying, but since it's still not at the level where you'd call the guards, it's my turn, I suppose.

"I'll handle it!"

"Me too."

"Bruno, you stay out of this." As Bruno and I are about to head over to the poster girl, the cook holds back Bruno. "It's unfortunate, but if someone with your appearance goes there, guys like him will just look down on us all the more. It'd be best for just the big lad to head there. After all, it's not like this requires big numbers."

"You heard him. I'm off!"

This also means that my threatening appearance has its usefulness!

"How regrettable. It'd have been a great opportunity to get on the good side of this bar's poster girl by saving her gallantly."

Certainly, that girl does look cute. That's likely the reason why many guests try to invite her, but since it doesn't seem like Bruno likes her, I'm sure he's just joking around.

"Okay, then I'll get some affection points with her!"

At once I head over to the table with the drunk adventurer to rescue her.

"Customer, this place isn't that kind of a store!" I step in-between those two with those words.

"What? Who the hell are you? Are you bastard really complaining to Zippo-sama, the ace of 『Brigade of Dawn』...!?"

"Customer, is something wrong?"

Although he'd been so energetic at first, it's a total let-down how he's become so meek all of a sudden. No matter how threatening I might look, the other guy is the ace of his party and a veteran adventurer. Something might be wrong since it's not like he'd need to be frightened of an adventurer fledgling like me.

I must make sure to not get careless!

"I've got business with that girl, so you should stay out of it as an outsider!"

"Maybe, but she's in the middle of work. It's not very admirable of you to get in her way."

"It's got nothing to do with you!"

"No, I'm working here tonight, so it does matter to me."

"Uugh..."

Considering that he's been boldly hitting on a woman, that guy sure doesn't man up now. But, that's nothing I should think about now!

"Shut up, and get lost!"

I see. That's an experienced adventurer for you. Judging that he can't win against me unarmed, he tries to draw the sword hanging at his waist!

But, it was obvious to me that he might try to do something like that! After all, I belong to the Armstrong house, an authority in military circles.

"I won't let you!"

"Wh-!?"

But, just as the adventurer has placed his hand on the sword's hilt, I grab the hilt, covering his hand with mine! This is a secret technique of the Armstrong family, allowing our men for generations now to prevent an opponent from drawing their sword with our big palms.

A long time ago, at a time of a lot of bloodshed between nobles because of the continuously on-going wars, this technique was used to stop battles inside castles and similar. Nowadays it's only passed on among families like my own, though.

"Let go!"

"Give up."

With his level of strength, he'll never be able to draw the sword against my will.

"Fuck! You an adventurer or what!?"

"I'm still a prep school student."

"Liar!"

No, I'm really an under-aged student!

"You gotta be a veteran adventurer! Why are you doing a part-time job at a bar!?"

"I'm truly an under-aged student..."

"As if there would exist any under-aged students like you!"

It's something I'm often told, but I'm telling the truth here! I'd like him to believe me!

"Give it a rest. Your behavior is a pain to watch."

At this point, someone chides the drunk adventurer from another table.

"Who do you think you are, asshole!?"

"You really want to know? I'm not a self-alleged celebrity like you, though."

The one leaving his seat with those words isn't as tall as I am, but he's a male adventurer looking to be in the midst of his twenties with a muscular body. Since he's carrying a special, order-made greatsword on his back, I think there's no doubt about him being an adventurer.

However, his way of talking is quite peculiar. To be honest, it gives me the impression of not really suiting him. [efn_note]I mistook him for a woman at first.[/efn_note]

"Don't bother me with that weirdo speak, dude."

"I can't help it. I've been talking like this since my birth. However, look, my way of speaking does not trouble anyone, but your behavior is trouble for others, isn't it?"

"That ain't anything I wanna be told by you!" The drunk shouts at the other adventurer.

"You're yelling at me while unable to draw your sword and being one-sidedly cornered by a child who isn't even an adventurer yet? How laughable."

"What was that!? You think that's an attitude you can take with Zippo-sama, the ace of 『Brigade of Dawn』!?"

"I don't know you. I mean, you're completely unknown. Even I should be more popular than you."

"Now you've said! Who are you supposed to be!? It's going to be a huge disgrace if I don't know you!"

Hm——m. This drunk adventurer is ignoring me completely, huh? Even though he still can't draw his sword because of me...

"You see, I'm called Candy. Other people call me 『Bloody Candy』."

"Hey, Bloody Candy...he means that Blood Candy who's slaughtered a pack of wild bears all by himself without receiving a single scratch?"

"I've heard he's called bloody because his body was full of bloodstains despite being completely unhurt."

"Or rather, he frequents this bar as well? There have been no rumors about him showing up in any bars, though."

"He definitely looks fairly capable. Almost as if you're going to be cut down if you show the tiniest opening."

"Still, the way he talks is weird as heck."

"The name's Candy, so I was sure it's about a woman."

"So he was a guy, huh?"

"His way of speaking is somewhat womanly, I'd say?"

I can hear various people whispering among each other around us. I didn't know, but it looks like adventurers with awfully brutal nicknames like Bloody Candy exist, despite the name sounding like that of a woman. Well, it appears he's the living example of that.

"Bloody Candy, you say..."

"Oh my, it looks like you know me? So, what is it going to be? Are you going to fight me after having that boy remove his hand? I'm sure it'll become a huge disgrace for you. Or..."

"I'm leaving!"

The effect of Bloody Candy's fame is tremendous. The drunk adventurer pays his bill in a hurry, and rushes out of the bar as if running away.

"Sorry for all the trouble. Everyone, please enjoy yourself."

Thereupon, the usual atmosphere immediately returns to the bar. Still, for such amazing men, who aren't even magicians, to be around... The world of adventurers sure is full of unknown surprises! I want to quickly graduate from prep school and become a full-fledged adventurer!



"Thanks, Klimt-san."

"No, don't mind me. I feel like I haven't done anything anyway."

After the bar closed, I'm thanked by the poster girl for the timely rescue, but I can only regard it as Bloody Candy having been of much more use than me.

"That's not true, you know? You splendidly stopped the drunk adventurer from drawing his sword."

"Every once in a while some stupid adventurer will draw their sword after getting drunk, but I think you're amazing for preventing that. It's precisely because of your decisive action that the man called Bloody Candy could drive away the drunkard without it developing into a fight."

Being praised by Bruno and the bar owner doesn't feel bad, to be honest.

"Still, he was awesome."

"He had no openings."

Even though I didn't feel any mana from him, he chased the drunk adventurer, only using his fame and intimidating air. I'm sure he's as capable a man as the rumors say.

"His way of talking was odd!"

"Well, you see...going by the gossip, he's calling himself a girl."

"A girl?"

Such a rough girl shouldn't exist in the first place. Maybe he's a woman who's disguising herself very skilfully?

"No, that's unthinkable. He was born as a man, but he considers himself a woman. In our business we see all kinds of people, but occasionally you'll also encounter people like him."

I see. People are all different.

"Klimt, you don't really pay much attention to such things, do you?"

"I can't help it since I was born like that!"

It's not like I chose to be born into a noble family or anything. I guess that's just how I am.

"It looks like it's not just your body that's big, but also your heart."

"True, it kinda feels very manly."

I'm praised by the bar owner and the poster girl, but I can't really make much out of their words. I'm still a bloody youngster, after all.