

Chapter 7 - Halfdead! The Trolls

The coach - the four-wheeled Hunter's Wagon pulled by one horse - carrying Shea, Elenia and me runs at full speed towards the west. The carrier, equipped with a plain canopy, is simple, but spacious, allowing for many materials to be loaded. And above all, because of its cheap make, it's possible to discard this part if it gets dangerous.

"It's a standard for hunters going on long trips. By the way, the price is uniformly set to six silver coins, including the coachman." Elenia casually explains to me.

Even an exclusive horse rental for hunters has been set up as a business, and they've set the prices so that they'd still remain profitable even if they lose the coach at a pace of once per two travels, she tells me.

"I see. Looks like hunting has completely taken root as an industry."

"Moreover, the carrier's size has been designed so that coffins would perfectly fit in if you place them sideways. So it's also convenient for transporting dead hunters." Shea adds this practical piece of information without any hesitation.

"That's definitely a nasty convenience..."

I for once don't want to take any advantage of this convenient service.

Anyway, it means there are plenty of jobs besides hunters when it comes to work related to demonic beasts.

"It's the same for the horse, but we'll also hire another person once we reach the village."

"Oh my god! Lady Shea, you're actually hiring someone? How rare! Is it possibly a tracker?"

"Yeah, I'm familiar with one over there. She'll be necessary for the troll hunt."

Tracker...a job I heard about for the first time.

"What's a tracker?"

"Just as their name suggests, they're people making a living from tracking demonic beasts. Us hunters are pros at killing demonic beasts. Trackers are like pros at detecting the whereabouts of specific demonic beasts, I'd say."

According to Elenia, it's sometimes extremely difficult to find the subjugation targets for quests. For example demonic beasts who mostly live underground, demonic beasts who dwell deep in the mountains, or water demonic beasts...

If you can't find the targeted demonic beast, the quest will end in failure. It's also possible to lose one's life if you're attacked by the demonic beasts instead. Because of that, hunters hire and then work together with tracker who are well-informed about the way of life and territories of demonic

beasts.

"An experienced trazkar is far more reliable than the likes of hunters who boast about their own skills."

For Shea to give her such a high evaluation means that her tracker friend must be quite good.

"What kind of person is she? Is she so remarkable?"

"She's got the skills, but she's also got the heart in the right place."

"Which means?"

"『When looking at a bird, close your eyes and strain your ears. When looking at a human, close your ears and closely look at their bearing』 is an ancient proverb passed down among the yughul." Shea answers slightly melodically as if reciting a poem.

It looks like yughul add unique intonations when passing on proverbs. It gives off an exotic atmosphere, and it's a melody that sounds somewhat nostalgic...

"...So, what does that mean?"

Unfortunately I completely failed to understand the meaning.

"Whether a hume is trustworthy or not. Listening to what they say when making that decision just misleads your judgment. Take a proper look at their bearing instead of their words. And, determine whether you can trust them with your own life." Shea nimbly peels an apple with her knife, and carries a piece to her mouth.

Just those hand movements already tell a tale about her being a sword master.

"When I met you for the first time, Teo, you looked frightened at a first glance, but you didn't back away. That's why I judged you to be trustworthy." Shea adds indifferently.

Even just remembering it, I have to admit that it was a terrible tragedy. I don't recall how I acted when I was absorbed in my work, so it's probably just as Shea says.

"The ability to judge a character is yet another important skill of a hunter. If this perception dulls, it'll lead to death."

Shea silently keeps peeling the apple and repeatedly brings pieces to her mouth with the knife. Her rustic behavior somehow makes me sense beauty from it. I'm sure that must be a functional beauty that lacks any wasted movements brought about by Shea's bearing. Feeling that, I have a hunch that I can somehow comprehend Shea's words.

A tracker whom Shea judged to be trustworthy. I wonder just what kind of person she is...

"Even if you tell me to show you all of a sudden..."

Hmm, what would be good to show her...?

I show her my hammer, crucible, the chisel for seals...and the materials that seem usable for enchantments I collected on the way.

"Tell me, tell me, what's this?"

What drew Nao's interest is an ear of red wheat. It's twice as big as the wheat ears used for eating.

"This is the ear of Explosive Wheat. If you crush the seeds, you can use them as material for fire enchantments." I hold up the ear in front of Nao's eyes.

"Hoho, it's so bushy. Ei, ei!" Nao chops away at the ear.

The wheat's ear sways lightly as if shaking its head. This causes Nao's ears to stand on end.



"Uhoh, nice thickness...ei. Ohhh, ei, ei, ei. Oh, I see, I see...ei, ei, ei, ei, ei, ei." Nao continues to pommel the wheat's ear to the right and left.

She looks somewhat excited about all this. After repeating the cat hooks for around fifty times, she finally looks satisfied, and stops with the ei's.

"...Nao is a pro when it comes to tracking mountainous areas. She's especially the best when it comes to tailing larger demonic beasts."

"Nya, nya." Nao adequately and exaggeratedly agrees.

"...To be honest, I don't really understand how Lady Shea judged her to be steadfast." Elemia whispers into my ear.

"She must have something to her, no? Something only a high level pro would understand..."

Although I try answering her like that, I don't understand what it might be myself either.

"Maybe Lady Shea is simply a cat lover." Elemia whispers further.

She's right, I feel like that possibility is totally there, but...I've got no choice but to trust Shea's words here.

And then after adding plenty of foodstuff and a new party member with the tracker Nao, we leave the town. At last it's going to be the beginning of the troll subjugation, our real job.

Advancing north from the town, we enter a small settlement that got attacked by the trolls. Abandoned houses with no hints of life. On top of many residents having been kidnapped, those who stayed safe have evacuated to Edilgen. We investigate the uninhabited settlement, looking for traces left behind by the trolls.

"Mmh, this way ~nya. They entered the mountains further north from here, I think ~nya." Nao senses those traces very easily, and begins the pursuit.

"Nothing less of a tracker trusted by Lady Shea. Looks like she's already found something."

"Uohhh! Here, here, take a close look! It's unmistakably the poop of a young, male troll."

"It's nothing I want to take a close look at, though..."

Nao proudly points with her boot, causing Elemia to wince back. Either way, it's a fact that she found the traces of a young troll.

While following those traces, we head into the mountains on foot. According to Nao, swamp trolls act in groups, and build nesting places. Their nesting places are mostly built in wetland belt areas deep in the mountains, making it difficult to spot them.

Accordingly, you first look for young males that leave the colony and descend the mountains to search for food, Nao explains.

By the way, she's leading our little party as we proceed into a dense conifer forest. The ground is slushy and clammy, littered with moss-covered fallen trees. A wetland belt no hume would usually enter.

"Come, come, come, look! There's other poop ahead! These ones are bigger ~nya."

"I told you, I don't want to look at it, sheesh!"

According to Nao, it's at least two male trolls. Moreover, quite the big specimen.

"The poop is still fresh, we're quickly closing in on them. See, we're making good progress ~nya!"

"Yep, it's a nice pace. Alright, let's take a moment to grab a bite?"

"Lady Shea! As always, your timing for the food breaks is way too messed up!"

You can't really expect any tact from a beastman and a cursed tool user. We continue the pursuit with only Elenia taking light, mental damage.

