

Chapter 333 - Revisit of Fortress City Hekatrail



The new office of **【Remains of the Moon】** was situated in New Town, and New Town was what anyone would call a slum. But, the vicinity of the new office was bustling with so much activity that no one would ever expect this to be a slum. The scale of the population here induced the misunderstanding that the new office was actually located at a plaza of the fortress city itself.

Scaled people (karamnians) selling woodwork, dwarves selling fur, humans planning how to build a shop specialized on ancient gold coins, an elven adamantine artisan selling adamantine arrows, a small beastman (Noir Runner) carrying wool, a catman (anmul) displaying his prowess in martial arts, and a weaselwoman (grili) laughing while holding spear and sword.

A leopardman (sebalka) spear user, who looked like the spitting copy of Kazun, glared at the tigerman (razeil) warrior with a Japanese conical hat opposite of him. A leopardman (sebalka) coachman gazed at that as if resignedly muttering, "A duel, huh?", while steering his coach, just to almost crash into an oncoming coach after derailing from the course.

A human adventurer, walking on the other side, pointed at the mark on the cheek of an elven magician. While looking up to that, a small beastman (noir runner) swordsman powerfully declared 『If it's a mark, I've got one as well』, and immediately lowered the box he had been carrying on the ground, just to extend a staff from his back. A flag unfolded at the tip of that staff, having the words 『Peerless』 imprinted on it.

Moreover, the noir runner began to sing, "In thiiiiis~ Fortress Cityyyyy~, I'm gooing to make a naaaaaaame for myseeeelf!", in a loud voice which was very uncharacteristic of his race. Immediately following, he opened up his box to the sides, and, unexpectedly, started selling weapons on the street.

Just this little extract showed already how many different merchants, adventurers, and martial arts practitioners, frequented this part of New Town, even including queer noir runners. Everyone restlessly sold all kinds of commodities they had procured from various places such as toolboxes, cosmetics cases, fur, root crops, oil, beads, wool, fish, raim pelts, meat, natural sugar, salt, cueton fruits, quarry beans, raim beans, crook nuts, magic cigars, and so on. Among them were also merchants exchanging goods with goods.

New Town truly had the flair of being a new town.

There were three major reasons for this thriving activity.

First, the existence of the ship company run by **【Remains of the Moon】**. Even right now, men of that ship company were in the middle of talking on the deck of a ship.

A tough man with finely chiseled features said, "But, I must say, it's a surprise that we could directly sail so smoothly all the way here from the Ocean Light City," to a fishman.

His name was Ghet. He had been imprisoned under deck just like other sailors after getting caught by the pirates of **【Oil Shell Miguln】**. In short, he was one of those who were rescued by Shuuya and his friends. At the time of his rescue...Ghet felt a mysterious bond with Shuuya as if having his whole body engulfed in a tremendous, orange wind. But, for a certain reason, he never voiced this out.

By the way, when Shuuya caught sight of Ghet for the first time, he evaluated his face to be similar to that of 『Captain Cook』.

Nowadays, Ghet was exerting his shrewdness as captain of Black Cat, the ship of **【Remains of the Moon】**, but just like with his ship mates, he had never mentioned this to his direct boss, Vice-Guildmaster Mel - the fact that he was originating from the Spirit Fog Island.

That island lay in the eastern part of the Heim Ocean. And Ghet had never talked about that island to anyone, but...he had boasted to his fellow sailors about the time when he belonged to the Nanaphushi Party, and told them a heroic saga of him participating in the battle over the Illusionary Silver Ship and the scramble for resources against Fishman Pirate Atenboroul and many other pirates.

"...The fame of the **【Blood Moon Sea Stars Alliance】** has a tremendous effect. Even the Harmit Troupe of the multi-country archipelago passed us by while staying away." The fishman recited the alliance names as if it was some sort of license.

"Certainly, it goes far enough to make journeying the Heim River's golden route a cozy breeze. It almost feels as if you belong to the officially recognized Twelve Great Pirate Crews."

"Gubaba, captain, you dropped a really big name there. As expected, even you don't believe that our guildmaster possesses a **【Great Pirate's Letter of Marque】**, do you?"

The letter of marque mentioned by the fishman was an official license certifying that a country gave its formal permission to attack ships of foreign countries. The twelve famous, great pirate crews had each received such a permit from different cities and countries. For a long time now, the battles over attacking and being attacked had been continuing on the Grand Sea (T/N: my fingers are itching to change change sea to line) which spanned over the Heim Ocean and Rodelia Ocean.

"...You don't need to tell me. But, Rock, are you alright on your end? You betrayed your former pirate crew, and became a member of **【Remains of the Moon】** which operates in one region of the continent, moreover, mostly on land..."

"I don't mind, captain. After all, it allows me to return to my beloved Ocean Light City. Besides, there's also a private, major reason beyond that."

"What would that be?"

"...I fell in love with Vice-Guildmaster Mel."

Ghet was startled by Rock's confession. With both shoulders trembling, he grandly spread both his arms.

"——You fell in love with the vice-guildmaster, you say? She belongs to the top brass of the highest leaders, you know...? How could...?"

Ghet felt pity for him while looking at Rock's sidelocks, gills and horns.

'Everyone knows that vice-guildmaster is in love with the guildmaster. He's the great spearmaster who's saved my life. He's got a flat face which is unusual around here, but on top of being good-looking, he's also very strong. Rock, there's no way that you've got a chance against that man. But...personal affections are free.

'Moreover, he's an important work colleague. I suppose I'll earnestly support this fishman with his love...and try to indirectly bring up the idea of a drinking party with Vice-Guildmaster Mel when we get back to Pelneet. If I tell her that it's also going to be a talk about the ship company's countermeasures against pirates, I should get Vice-Guildmaster Mel to show up as well.

'As a fishman he's of a different race, but Rock is always doing his best with his work as a sailor with basic ship operations and defense duties in various regions such as the Ocean Light City. I've gotta answer his work ethics as his captain. After all, the violent seas of Mother Nature, monsters, and pirates are awaiting us on our future trips.

'Sea God Sepiton-sama, please give your blessing to everyone on the Black Cat, and Rock's romance.

While putting on a stern expression as captain, Ghet offered a prayer to Sea God Sepiton.



The second reason was the lord of Hekatrail, Chardonnay. She was currently receiving a report from her elderly attendant Shark in a room of the lord's official residence - a big, square room.

A bluish-purple, rectangle crystal was burning inside a fireplace. The bluish-white and violet flames dyed the room in bewitching colors while looking as if they were dancing. A special aroma filled the whole place, bringing about a graceful ambiance suiting Chardonnay's private room.

"It's quite unexpected for that place to turn into a gold mine..."

"Indeed."

"I wonder whether I should take advantage of Blood and Moon here, and get on with the reformation of the slims with their low tax revenue..."

"I believe that to be a good idea. It sounds like talks about enterprises majorly investing in the Surgebald territory located in the southern part of Leften. Let's incite a revitalization of the highway by disseminating this news to the smaller and medium companies with the focus on the Hekatrail Fan Group under the pretext of maintenance for the overland routes."

While nodding at Shark's comment, Chardonney looked at the person she had added as new aide.

『Buying him was definitely the right choice. Black War God Genzaburou Mikami...I was startled when the trade with the merchants increased all at once after adopting his opinion』

"Did you also work on urban planning in the past?"

"...Your Excellency, I only knew of the 『Optimization of Profit』 by chance...until I put it into practice according to my favorite motto, which is also the name of my ability, 『Engraving Things in Mind』. Besides, since it's said that 『Only nothing can be produced out of nothing』, Hekatrail had the foundation for all this to begin with." Genzaburou Mikami said with a sharp glint in his eyes, but a cool expression that fit his glasses.

"You may look unhealthy, but nothing less of personnel sold at the Underground Auction..."

"I am deeply thankful for you having bought this unworthy me..." Genzaburou Mikami bowed in a very Japanese way without changing his steel-like gaze.

His conduct as he bowed showed absolutely no opening, similar to the very personification of a Japanese person.

Chardonney narrowed her eyes...

『...It was spot on to have participated in the auction, even if it was somewhat forced! I've obtained a clever, highly skilled man for a bargain! I had considered entrusting him with the war's shock corps to make Musaka surrender, but it looks like he'll bring about result even if I let him handle Shark's counterintelligence platoon』 Chardonney assessed in her mind while twining her curly blond hair around a finger.



And, the last reason was an effect of the alliance between **【Remains of the Moon】**, the dark guild ruling the underworld of Labyrinth City Pelneet, and **【Bloody Long Ears of the White Whale】**, the dark guild ruling the underworld of Fortress City Hekatrail. The alliance between those two guilds became known as **【Blood Moon Armed Might】** in the underworld because of their power relationship. And the other dark guilds of Hekatrail strongly felt the threat.

In this situation, the rumor of the spearmaster having single-handedly crushed **【Noctal's Oath】** reached Hekatrail. Moreover, once rumors about the major leaders of **【Bloody Long Ears】**, Combat Fairy Clydossus and Ledond of the Wind, freely frequenting the office of **【Remains of the Moon】** started to crop up...all the small dark guilds harboring the ambition to rise to power in this land genuinely started to fear the alliance of Blood and Moon.

Among them were also some strong fighters wishing to make a name for themselves by fighting and defeating the famous spearmaster, but...most recently impostors who arbitrarily took on the spearmaster's name were popping up all over the city, making it next to impossible to tell who was the real deal.

This also gave birth to puzzling disputes in some places, and because some of those impostors were actually truly strong spear users at times, it escalated the chaos even further.

Those spear users were later given a new name besides the official title of **【Eight Lights】** or **【Remains of the Moon】** - the victors of the Dignified Heaven's Shrine where the Shadow Wing Brigade found its end, **【Dignified Heaven's Moon】**.

And the folks who had been hostile to the office of **【Remains of the Moon】**, or of the new **【Dignified Heaven's Moon】**...kept striking up conversations with the beautiful receptionist with completely nonchalant faces.



"Sherry, yer the subordinate of that spearmaster, aren't ye?" A man asked in a peculiar tone.

His hair was ruffled and unkempt, but each single strand of it moved as if to entwine around Sherry's face. The mana dwelling his hair had a quality as it was necessary for techniques based on <Guidance Sorcery>.

It was a fluent movement, giving anyone the impression a spirit was dwelling within his hair, but it only woke discomfort within Sherry.

"Renshou-san, since a while now this man has been acting overly familiar with me..." Sherry possessed experience as a barmaid, but even for her it was the first time to encounter someone who acted so intimately on a first meeting with her.

While feeling as if having her whole body touched and tampered with by his thin, hair-like strands, she deeply furrowed her brows, experiencing a strong pang of disgust.

"He, Kary, is definitely a shady guy. But, he's such a big gun that you could call him the best free hitman currently residing in Hekatrail."

"...You're exaggerating. You seem quite strong yourself. I'm sure you'd be able to give me shivers..."

"Renshou-san, is this truly alright?" Deep creases formed on Sherry's forehead.

"Now, now, don't glare so much...He's my bodyguard since I'm about to sell information about the marquess' side, which was procured by **【Commandments of Rozen】**, to **【Remains of the Moon】** as present."

"I'm a bodyguard~♪ But, you sure got a nice personality...for a traitor."

"What was that?"

Seemingly having his mood spoiled, Renshou lifted an arm as if to show off his sleeve while

deploying a thin, black defensive film beneath his neck from the lower part of his gas-mask-like magic tool.

"Going by that delicious-looking mana faintly leaking out of that cuff, you're a unique dark device user?" Kary asked while recalling that there had been someone similar among his friends.

Having pointed this out to him, Renshou felt panicked in his mind, thinking 『I haven't shown him my snow blizzard technique yet, but that fucker seems pretty perceptive...』, but then spoke up after a short break while straining himself to keep up a cool and composed air, "...Did you forget that it's me who pays you money?"

"No, not at all. I haven't forgotten that at all♪"

Kary narrowed his eyes, pondering, 『Should I fight him once the job's over? It might be to my advantage. As long as I earn cash, Alford probably won't bicker around even if the client dies』.

"Then stop butting in. Besides, betrayal is an everyday occurrence, right?"

"You're not wrong there."

"...I just want to join the winner's side. Very soon Ancient City Musaka is going to be ravaged by the flames of war. I'm sure you also heard about this?"

"I did...Oseberia's army has crossed the Heim, right?"

Renshou nodded at Kary's words, then he turned his eyes towards Sherry, "And that's where you come in...Sherry. I'd like you to get in touch with the top brass of Remains of the Moon for an old friend."

"...Get in touch...this office has just opened recently. I'm no more than a branch member at present, so it puts me on the spot if you tell me to get in contact with the top brass."

Sherry stared at the leaders of **【Bloody Long Ears】** who were resting inside the office. It was a look implicitly asking Renshou, 『Could you describe those people there as top brass?』.

"Well, whatever. Let's go and greet the Bloody Long Ears members then."

"...I've got my job to take care of."

"Roger."

Renshou averted his eyes from Sherry, exchanged a look with Kary next to him while putting on a leather apron and standing up. Then both approached Ledond, who was talking discreetly, and Clydossus, who was cheerfully chatting, inside the office.

While watching that, Sherry wondered whether that'd turn alright.

"They won't start a fight here, will they? Sheesh...it really makes me feel like giving up on this job. The pay is good, but it's tough to work in a place so full of tension..."

'The work at my previous thief guild was a lot more relaxed since I only had to pass on information...okay, I think I'll stop working for 【Remains of the Moon】.

'But, I want to help Quiches with the building of a new hometown... Since farm work is really tough, I must do my best to earn as much cash as possible...yep. I guess I'll persevere a bit longer as a clerk for 【Remains of the Moon】.

'Still, for my former boss Renshou-san to suddenly show up here...moreover for a strong person like him to apologize to his former underling...I didn't see that coming. Either way, the eyes of that Kary guy are scary.

Just as she was watching his back, thinking, 'I really can't stand him since he's somehow eerie...', Kary abruptly looked back at her, and broadly grinned with his cursed smile at her. It looked to Sherry as though his expression and the saddlecloth he was carrying at his chest were entwined in a complicated manner, totally giving her the chills.



The next day after my night of happiness with Nora, a tiny Helme is buoyantly floating up and down in my visual field. Having returned into my left eye, Helme doesn't comment anything about my sex night with Nora.

I'm taking a relaxed walk with Rollo. I think the new office of 【Remains of the Moon】 should be this way...

The place is noisy and busy with people coming and going. There's also a stand selling grilled dango. This area has apparently expanded since my last visit.

By the way I've told Nora, with whom I parted ways at the inn, the location of 【Remains of the Moon】 and my home's address in Pelneet.

On that occasion I also told her that I will escort her there, but Nora answered, "...I'm happy about the offer, but that kindness of yours is poison, you know?"

"Sorry."

"Fufu, don't look so depressed...even I...no, nothing. Anyway, before I'm going to visit my sister in Pelneet, I have to put some things in order, so see you later." Nora informed me after getting up early in the morning.

Her face told me that she was reluctant to leave, but...she swiftly finished putting on her clothes so as to hide her seductive body. And then she thoroughly hugged Rollo who had returned to the inn.

After letting go of her, Nora headed over to the door with a graceful stride, and opened it. The lamp's light shining into the room looked dazzling as if a mirror was overlapping with her.

Nora looked back, casting a smile at me, and after sending a wink my way, she quickly turned on her heels. Even her way of leaving was that of a great woman...

While recalling my separation with her...I walk through the bustling New Town...and discover the new office of **【Remains of the Moon】**. It's a new office building, but I immediately know that I'm right here. The brand new signboard has the shape of a moon while depicting a black cat. That moon is probably designed in the same way as the mark decorating the surface of the thick door leading to the basement of Pelneet's **【Lodging Moon of the Labyrinth】**. It's not like that of an express home delivery service, but still easy to understand.

And then the front door is opened widely. Various people are repeatedly entering and leaving the building...as if being guaranteed the freedom of trade during the Free Markets and Open Guild Policy of the Azuchimomoyama Period.

Alright, I'm first going to enter and give a greeting. I step into the building with a feel of going undercover as a regular office worker despite being the CEO and company president.

As soon as I enter the office with my chest puffed up in pride, a cypress fragrance tickles my nose. Entering through my nose, it penetrates all over my body...

When leaving the inn, I had cleaned my body by having Helme wrap up my body with a water membrane, which also served as training for <Spirit Ball Conception>, but...being able to get a whiff of such a nice scent somehow gives me a good mood, as if having my body purified.

In such a great mood, I walk across the light brown floor with my arms swinging widely back and forth while Rollo moves her nose, sniffing the air.

The office of **【Remains of the Moon】** is crowded. There's so many different races in here that you might actually mistake this place as an adventurer guild at a glance. All of them look extremely busy.

Among them I also see a hunter with characteristically close cropped hair and a dense beard. I think the hunter is a butcher. The human, who seems to work as hunter and butcher, takes mutton meat out of his jute bag, and places it on the desk. And then he writes down the amount of mutton on a document on that desk with a quill.

Next to the butcher are dwarves who have placed a heavy-looking leathercraft on the floor.

"It looks like trade with the **【Phenimul Village】** is going to be profitable," becomes the starter for a discussion about the resale of lathe magic crystals.

The place's name tickles a light curiosity in me.

This place looks more like the office of a company than a dark guild. Well, it's only logical as dark guilds also serve as enterprises and companies, I suppose.

While listening to the conversations around me...I meet the eyes of a pretty woman when I approach the counter. Hmm? Freckled cheeks?

Oooohhhh! It's Sherry!

"...Sherry?"

"Eh? Oh, Shuuya-san!?"

The instant Sherry yells that, the office of **【Remains of the Moon】** becomes deadly silent. The staff members part to the left and right around me. They do it with such a momentum that I'm reminded of Moses.

And then...is it mass psychology or a mentality of blindly following the hoard?...a trader of horsehide crafts and merchants holding large amounts of cotton seed also move to the sides in a fluster.

Everyone also distances themselves from Rollo, causing her to meow, "Nnn, nya~?" I immediately grasp that my partner's cry means she is asking about what's going on.

Suddenly, I sense a strangely sticky gaze from behind the reception. I want to look at Sherry, I want to talk to her, but...instinctively, I make eye contact with the nasty look directed at me.

...You kidding? All of a sudden I get melancholic. Why the hell is Kary of the **【Shadow Wing Brigade】** over there? The Kary who fought Veronica and Mel. Moreover...isn't that Clydossus and Ledond next to him? In addition there's also some fishy guy with a gas-mask-like protective mask with them. However, I'm slightly confused as they don't seem to have a hostile atmosphere going.

But, I think Sherry comes first.

"Sherry, I'm happy to see you doing fine. When I heard your name from Mel, I thought that it couldn't be, but for it to really be you...what a happy coincidence."

"Yes! I'm of course doing fine, Shuuya-san..." Sherry directs a smile as bright as a sunflower at me.

But then she apparently recalls the past matter at the bar, and averts her eyes to the side with her freckled cheeks glowing scarlet. Sherry is turning the tip of her slender chin diagonally below. I naturally follow that diagonal...or rather, my eyes are drawn to her abundant boobs.

Yep! They're magnificent, huge boobs. No different from before. The past me who has played around with those big tits...somehow pisses me off now. Such wonderful breasts! Past me, what a pervert you were!

While thinking all those retarded things, "...Haha, by the way, how's Quiche doing?"

Hearing my words, Sherry looks at me face, and apparently senses that I've thought about weird stuff. After smiling cutely, "Ah, I'm sure you must be curious about her. Quiche isn't in Hekatrail. I think you've heard about it, but she's at a **【Sea of Trees】** on the other side of the **【Baldok Woodlands】**, beyond the southern Hino Village. Quiche's hometown is located deep in the mountains of that **【Sea of Trees】**, but...currently she's struggling to rebuild her hometown there by building a new village. That's why I've been also trying to do my best by cultivating 'Good Net Grass' (yoimoy), starting a breeding of raim and sheep, albeit on a small scale, and building a small

farm while cooperating with the children of Hino, but..."

Did something happen? Sherry looks kinda devastated.

"Is something wrong?"

"Cases of the fields being ruined and the cattle disappearing little-by-little keep occurring."

"'Keep occurring' means that it's still happening? Have you found out whether it's monsters or thieves?"

"Yes, we think it's monsters. Big footprints are usually left behind whenever it happens. But, the children with adventurer experience, who followed those footsteps, went missing during the pursuit..."

"N, nyaa."

Rollo had played with those children in the past. Recalling the past, she might be telling me that we should save them. If it's the children who were with Quiche...

"...That sounds terrible."

"It is. Quiche immediately went after the children, investigating their whereabouts. But, countless monster dens, including those of orcs, exist over there. Unlike the Hino Village, Quiche's new place is in a part of the woodlands. So there are things like dragons from Baldok Mountain, or the ants from the famous Bewitching Baraydus Mansion...in the end, we couldn't find the children anywhere. For this reason, we thought about hiring adventurers, but it's an unexplored region...and with the rebuilding of the village costing a lot...we couldn't hire anyone. As the children are staying unaccounted for, Quiche has been blaming herself..."

Come on, for real?

"I see...are you possibly working here to raise the necessary funds, Sherry?"

"Yes. I've been scouted by the vice-guildmaster lady of **【Remains of the Moon】**. She told me, 『You're an agent of the thief guild **【Commandments of Rozen】**, aren't you? I'm going to pay you twice of what they're paying you, so won't you offer your talents and beauty to us?』. I don't know how she obtained that information about me, but I got persuaded really skillfully. There's also the matter of me needing money, just as I told you a moment ago, so..."

"It's quite typical of Mel. Was she accompanied by an elf with a square face and a katana-wielding beauty with short, black hair?"

"Oh, yes. I was really startled when I later heard that those two were big leaders of the guild. Or rather...as expected, Shuuya-san, you're..." Noticing the attention from those around us, Sherry shook her head lightly. While fidgeting, she continued, "...the guildmaster of **【Remains of the Moon】**, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am."

"...Umm, the thing at the bar..."

She seems to have suddenly become conscious of me being her boss. Her small lips, which I had flooded with many kisses, and her delicate arms are trembling. I think she's feeling uneasy. Even though it's nothing she'd need to worry about...

I gently cup her hand with mine to alleviate her anxiety, "——Of course, it's a memory I cherish."

"...It makes me happy to hear that."

Sherry...is an adorable woman.

"Spearmaster-san, I know you've got a nice mood going there, but do you possibly have a moment?"

"I also have some business with him, just so you know."

"My business takes precedence over yours..."

Characteristic voices are directed at me. Moreover, they spoiled the sweet mood between Sherry and me.

I wonder whether I should just ignore those voices. But, this place here is the office of **【Remains of the Moon】**, and I'm the guildmaster, so far as it goes.

...No helping it.

I shift my eyes to the owners of those voices - Kary and the gas-mask dude. They're all together with Clydossus and Ledond-san being next to them.

Sherry reads the mood, "Later then, Shuuya-san...", and pulls away while lewdly fingering the back of my hand and whispering this to me.

That's a former barmaid for you...she's extremely skilled at appealing her erotic charm in a casual manner.

Without letting those thoughts show on my face, I meet eyes with Kary.

"...Kary, you sure got guts to brazenly show your dirty mug around here, don't you? I didn't forget that you poisoned Mel..."

Mel would have died if not for Veronica.

"...I'd really prefer if you wouldn't give me such a scary look."

"Hey, Kary, you didn't mention a word that you know..."

Kary let his hair stand on end as if exhibiting his combat prowess and spirit. And then he pulls off a pervert pose, showing off his nether region.

『That pose is cheeky. Should I drive an ice stake into his butt and teach him a painful lesson?』

『...Sure』

『Eh...?』

Helme has apparently expected me to retort at that. Seemingly surprised by my honest agreement, she appears in my visual field while rotating in a deformed state. She makes her butt wobble. And then, that butt shines so radiantly that it makes me think of a dazzling, beautiful cluster of neon lights.

Unconsciously, I feel like having acquired a new skill with ※Piing ※Shining Butt※. But, there's no one around to retort about what I should do with a shining butt anyway.

And then, as if the splendid retort of 『What's the point in you wobbling your butt?』 has reached Helme, she stops shaking her bum.

But, rather than Helme-chan, who reflexively drew my eyes, I think I should take a closer look at the companion of Kary. The gas-mask guy...has no openings. It's obvious that he's quite a skilled fighter. What kind of effect does that gas-mask-like magic tool possess...? Is it maybe something like protection against poisonous gas or some kind of sterilization?

His neck is also covered by it, so it might also serve as a neck protector, kinda like the face guard of a Japanese armor set. It looks oddly cool. I kinda want one as well, I think.

"...Since that spearmaster is angry...Ledond."

"Yeah..."

Clydossus and Ledond-san, who know about me, retreat while maintaining their respective styles. Well, it's a natural reaction for them who've seen me fighting in the Dignified Heaven's Shrine.

Now then, I deliberately...ignore them, the problem remains Kary, after all. If I'm going to fight him, it's got to be outside...I'll crush him there. I suppose I'll lure him out of here.

"...I think it's only natural for me to give you a scary look, but it's fine for me to assume that you came here to fight, right? If we're going to do it, let's go outside, okay?"

"...No, no, no, I didn't come here to fight. I'm not a part of the brigade anymore. Right now I'm working as a bodyguard to earn some cash. I mean, during the battle the other day, my life was in danger. I was desperate just to get away. That's why I'll gladly apologize to that Mel person——"

——Don't fuck with me.

Thinking that, I <Throw> a dagger. But, Kary instantly deploys <Guidance Sorcery>-based mana threads in front of him. My ancient dragon dagger is caught in those threads, being blocked.

"..."

Kary grabs that dagger, and licks its blade.

"——And? What do you think? I got stronger, didn't I? Ah, let me return this to you——"

"...Don't lick it."

He faithfully throws the dagger back to me. He seems to really have no will to fight. His expression is calm, though I don't check his nether region.

I don't want any daggers he's licked, but...it'd be a waste to throw away a Baldok dagger just because of that. Thus, I carefully wipe the blade with a leather cloth.

"...Ah, sorry. It's my habit to lick those."

It troubles me how to react if he apologizes like that.

"Whatever, I cleaned it off."

"Glad to hear. So, did I get you to understand? I won't fight since I don't want to die, okay? The other day I just participated since it was my comrades' battle. And, for the sake of survival, I made sure to not show my face up there while using a certain trick."

So that's why, huh? I suppose he didn't show up and remained in the basement because of that. And his current composure comes from him having analyzed my mental state in his own way. It's a way of living for the moment, not minding even if it turns into battle.

A heart of gallantry and a crazy drive for freedom, huh? I feel like I can understand that disposition at the threshold between valor and insanity - being mad and then again not.

Without telling him any of that...as if to take a stab at the emotions behind his facade, I say, "...Why did you come here then? Has it something to do with the man next to you?"

"Correct. Besides, the fight with you is a treasure for me. And that's why, although it may sound weird, I'd like you to forgive me for what I've done the other day..."

"There's no way I will, is there? But, I don't plan to chase you down if you don't fight."

"I guess you've come to an understanding...Guildmaster of **【Remains of the Moon】**. Let me apologize for Kary once more. I'm terribly sorry." The gas-mask man forces his way into our conversation.

Even if I get an apology from him...

"No need to. By the way, your name was...?"

"Oh, you're right. I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Renshou. Formerly I've been in charge of a part of the intelligence work of the Hekatrail branch of **【Commandments of Rozen】**."

I remember having heard about them.

"A member of **【Commandments of Rozen】**? I recall having heard that name before. Do you know someone with the name of Crow?"

"...You know Crow? You spell me surprised over your wide network of connections. Nothing less of a guildmaster."

It's the woman who's traveling with Kaldo. I wonder whether Yui was able to join up with them. She's got no Rollodeen with her, so it should still be too early, huh? No wait, she's a Lucival, so she might have already joined them.

I don't know since she hasn't contacted me through a blood message. On the other hand, Viine has several times complained to me about feeling lonely...

It made me worried about her training, but well, I'm sure she's going to be alright.

I've digressed, but anyway, I direct my eyes at the classy gas mask magic tool of Renshou-san. If appraised, I might find out that it's an item actually using some high technology of an ancient civilization.

No, Quiche is more important than some item I'd like to have. Suppressing my hotblooded feelings, "...She's an acquaintance. Are you also acquainted with Crow-san?"

"...I've just met her a few times, so I won't say that I know her well. I've heard that her work over in Zamalia was superb."

Melissa has told me about the work of thief guilds in the past. They seem to dabble in many fields.

If her work ethics are as superior as he says, my <Servant Leader> Kaldo might usher her in as blood family, as his <Servant>.

"Is that so? But, Renshou-san, I'm sorry to interrupt you in the middle of your talk, but I've got some business to take care of. I'd like you to keep it brief, if you could."

Indeed, I can't help but feel an urge to run over to Quiche as soon as possible. Just imagining her heartbroken expression makes me feel a pain in my heart. I want to help her in one way or another.

"...I've been wondering whether I could get hired here as combat power for the war against Zamalia..."

"It looks like you're misunderstanding something. We aren't some governmental branch office. I don't know about the contract of Bloody Long Ears, but I think it'd be faster for you to approach the local lord if you want to make some profit from war. She's been bolstering her combat forces recently."

"..." Renshou-san falters after hearing my reply.

Once his gas mask tool becomes somewhat more tasteful by changing its shape, he looks at

Clydossus who's been watching from a distance.

"Us Bloody Long Ears have nothing to do with the job this time. The marquess seems to be continuing her steady advance through the network of her own combat forces."

"I see. So the **【Blood Moon Armed Might】** won't get involved in the dispute between Zamalia and Oseberai, huh...?" While nodding at Clydossus' comment, he exchanges a look with Kary.

He dons an expression as if saying that they're going to have a chance if neither blood nor moon are going to make a move. Renshou smiles, and turns his eyes towards me.

"...I understand. Please excuse us then." After bowing politely, Renshou-san exchanges another look with Kary, "Kary, we're leaving."

"You okay with that? I think that joining up with this place will put you on the side of the winners, though."

"You heard them, didn't you?"

With his narrow eyes gleaming in joy, Kary says, "——The marquess it is then♪"

"If you got it, then let's go."

"Money rules the world, after all♪"

Kary follows behind Renshou-san with his peculiar way of walking, not even to mention the weirdness of his way of talking. I fully understand that he's become terrifyingly strong from how he moves his body. The fine shifts of his body weight, the positioning of his feet, his mana manipulation, and the good balance between <Guidance Sorcery> and <Magic Combat Style>... To be honest, he makes my heart race as someone studying martial arts, but I don't want to see his nether region anymore.

That's why, it's good to bid him farewell here.

Once Renshou-san and Kary have left, Clydossus and Ledond-san draw close.

"I'm going to quickly return to Senapua. Please ask Ledond about the details."

Clydossus seems to be in a hurry. I wonder what business Ledond-san might have with me.

"Ledond-san, right? What kind of business do you have with me...?"

"Ah, before that, I've got a message from our guildmaster for you. She's going to kill me if I don't pass it on to you." Clydossus, who's been skipping, says while looking back at me.

"What did Lezalaysa say?"

"...Come to Senapua's red-light district. She's going to prepare an exclusive inn and wait for you. She'll also take you along into the Azel Boundary that interests you. She asked whether you don't

need personal equipment for sky trips while laughing and showing a womanly face, contrary to her usual scary face."

I recall the spontaneous sex with Lezalaysa. She had mentioned that she liked the way I used my hips with an obscene look on her face. I can't forget her eyes that were reflecting heart marks.

"...Got it. I might head over someday. Tell her to look forward to various things."

"...I'll tell her precisely that. Bye then——"

Clydossus vanishes through the door with movements as if she's grown wings at her feet, making it now wonder that she's being called Combat Fairy.

"Shuuya-san, could I have a moment of your time?"

"Go ahead."

Ledond-san addresses me politely. Exactly because he's such a good-looking, elven swordsman, he's gathering the looks of the women around us.

"My business concerns the exploration of the underground beneath the Mahaheim Mountain Range. I'd like to request your assistance in the investigation of the underground corridor, a legacy of the Great Befaritz Empire..."

Yet another very interesting matter... But, I'll prioritize Quiche.

"That's very interesting. But, I've got something to do now."

"That's alright. Including our commander, we're elves, so we aren't in a hurry."

"I see. Then let me just say for now that I'll consider it. Since I've only returned to Hekatrail, I haven't even shown my face at the adventurer guild here."

"I understand. Just having you consider it under a positive light is a delight for me, Shuuya-san. The gigantic underworld world is crowded by hordes of monsters. The Spirit World, the underground worlds..."

It makes me all excited. But, I also plan to return to my Master's place at some point. It's also scheduled for me to take Mysty and the others to the underground world after she gets some results from her research...

It looks like those are all matters far down the road as of yet.

"Well then, I shall go back to the office of Bloody Long Ears. I also plan to show up at the adventurer guild, so please treat me well if we meet there."

"Got it."

Ledond-san bows politely with movements befitting of a swordsman, and leaves our office.

I immediately look in Sherry's direction, with a serious expression. It might look to her as if I'm deeply in love, though.

"...Those eyes make me very jealous, but Quiche should be in Hino or the new village. Please go and support her." Sherry says with the expression of a woman who hates something but says she doesn't.

Her worrying about her friend is beautiful.

"I'm really sorry." With those words, I turn around, and leave the office.

I run while completely lost in thought. And then, my feet turn heavy for some reason, and I stop.

——Quiche is alright, right?

I look up to the sky. Psydayle, was it? Where was that star again...? I remember how we gazed at the starry sky together.

Rollo jumps off my shoulder after throatily growling. After landing, my partner walks ahead briskly with small steps, and then looks back at me. It's a face telling me that she understands without me saying anything.

My partner tilts her head. Her drooping, white whiskers give me the impression of her laughing, but...my partner abruptly faces back forward, swinging her tail and exposing her butt. She walks forward rhythmically, but then suddenly starts running, turning from a black cat into a panther, then a horse lion, and lastly a divine beast.

I jump Rollodeen, err, straddle her. The instant I tightly grasp the rein tentacle that's appeared in front of me, my partner releases a throaty voice, mixed with a beastly breathing, and immediately kicks off after powerfully planting her limbs on the ground. A movement as if my partner has turned herself into a spring.

Rollodeen starts to sprint as leaping upwards with me on her back. Instinctively lowering my body, I shift to the stance of a horse rider. Through her soft fur, my thighs can directly feel her tough muscles working. Though, I can also tell that they're special muscles also endowed with flexibility. I'm sure a tremendous amount of muscle fibers must be spreading from her legs to her chest.

After taking hold onto the tall wall of Fortress City Hekatrail with her forelegs, as if pushing down the wall, she uses the wall as a stepping stone with her hindlegs, and immediately flies off high into the sky in one breath.

Quiche...