

Chapter 301-302: Life vein?

Asahi tucked Shizuka in bed in her room in Yotsuba Mansion. He informed the loli maid group to keep an eye on her. He returned to the store to find the girls from another world had gathered a massive crowd outside the store with their swordplay.

Saeko and Rika watched the situation escalate from the side.

“Aa-chan, guess how much we’ll earn today.”

“Enough to buy a house...” Saeko muttered as she gave a soft smile, her gaze still on a father and daughter laughing together.

“We’ll return home soon.”

Rika patted Asahi’s shoulder. “What’s gotten into you all of a sudden?”

“Don’t you miss the stinky zombies?” Asahi asked with a smirk.

“Oh hell no! That world has nothing for me. Except for my old comrades.”

“I’ll still go back to my father-in-law and ask for Saeko and Shiori’s hand in marriage.”

He also missed Yoko’s warm smile.

“Thank you... Hubby.”

Rika pulled Saeko’s cheek. “Girl, you grew up.”

“How?” Saeko asked.

“Before, you would have stopped him from doing anything for your sake alone.”

Saeko glanced at him, and he nodded. She once used to be so conscious of herself and the scars on her back. Neither she nor Asahi realized its disappearance after Saeko received the Falna.

“I’m proud of you.”

“Don’t say it like I’m a little girl,” Saeko retorted as a slight red tinged her cheeks.

Asahi stroked her cheeks with one hand. “You’re being cute again.”

“Not now...” Saeko shook her head. “I’ll join at night.”

“That’s my girl.”

Asahi threw a glance at Alise, who was stealing glances at him between her talk with Ryuu.

‘This tsundere...’

He sighed and called the group. The girls stopped the performance before they entered the store and gathered a circle around him.

The people outside were confused at his appearance, and even more when the girls obediently waited for his words.

Yuriko stepped outside and bowed to everyone. “Thank you for joining today’s special cosplay event. We’ll resume our services after a short break.”

“Um... Yuriko-san, who is that man?”

Yuriko looked toward the blonde girl who had her hand raised as if she was in a class. The girl was a regular customer of the store, yet she hadn't seen Asahi once due to him spending most of his time in Yotsuba Mansion whenever he used his avatar.

“My, he is my husband, and naturally the true owner of this store.”

“Ehhhh?”

Yuriko chuckled at the stupendous reactions of the crowd. “Do I not look like I'm married?”

“No, t-that's not. I thought Yuriko-san was...”

“Divorced?” Yuriko completed her sentence with a grin.

Many people said that to her before due to her strong front.

“No, no. I didn't mean that,” the girl hung her head.

“Don't worry. I'm used to it.”

Yuriko didn't dwell any further and closed the glass door. Though everyone could still see through the glass panels.

Asahi smiled at Astraea and others. “So, you all believe me now?”

“As nuts as it may be,” Kaguya said. “We believe you.”

Alise nodded without saying a word, looking at Astraea as though anticipating her reaction to the situation.

The goddess smiled. “I knew it before.”

“I knew it. You two were hiding something from us,” Alise grumbled with puffed cheeks.

“At least they told us now,” Kaguya consoled the sullen Alise, patting her on the shoulder.

Asahi poked Alise’s cheeks. “Well, I couldn’t tell without fully trusting everyone.”

“That's why I’m forgiving you. No hiding anymore, okay?”

“Yes, Captain.”

Alise showed a wide smile. “Alright! I’m gonna visit some more—”

Asahi gripped her shoulder before she ran away. “We’re going back.”

“But...”

“I promise to bring you back sometime.”

“Okay...”

[—Alise Lovell: Affection +6]

She revealed a bright grin. Though on the inside, she was still gloomy about leaving this marvelous city with phenomenal technology.

“That goes for everyone here.”

“Yes!” Kaguya shouted, followed by others.

Ryuu was silently watching Asahi. As someone who grew up and lived in the forest, this city affected her the most. She liked the open-minded nature of these people, completely opposite to the elves. Not everything was without fault though. She had felt many indecent desires in people's eyes and seen several thefts happening around the city.

'Some people are the same whether in Orario or this world.'

With a sigh, she looked into Asahi's golden eyes. He was ruthless when it came to others, but so easy-going whenever he was with people close to her. His affectionate side really stood out in her eyes.

[—Ryuu Lion: Affection +8]

Asahi tilted his head a little at the sudden gain in affection. As he looked in her direction, her tiny smile caught him off-guard. He returned a smile, causing her to turn away in embarrassment.

He chuckled. "Off we go."

The next moment, they were already in the Stardust Garden. After having a meal with everyone, Asahi called Aimi and the adventurers and discussed their plans to train. After some back and forth, they settled on training before breakfast. Aimi wasn't going to waste her precious morning cuddle time and wake up early for them.

The adventurers scattered, leaving Asahi, Aimi, and Astraea alone. Aimi kissed him on his cheeks before leaving.

Now left alone, the two looked at each other.

“Tired?”

Astraea shook her head. “Nothing I can’t handle.”

“Come here.”

He pulled her into his arms and let her rest her face on his chest before he started patting her head. Slowly, but steadily, he soaked her in his warmth, and eliminated all her exhaustion.

The magic of headpats left Astraea wondering about his mysterious powers. Though she knew it came from Klyscha, which was yet another surprise as the Goddess of Dreams hadn’t shown any pride or superiority for a being of her stature.

“Let’s go to Hephaestus’s place after this.”

“No problem...” she said and relaxed. “About Hephaestus... what do you think of her eyes?”

‘Is she setting me up with Hephaestus?’

Asahi wondered in confusion.

“Her eyes are beautiful.”

He always had a thing for yandere and their signature blood-red eyes.

“Really? You’re not lying?”

“Nope. Red eyes raise my heartbeat.”

Astraea remembered Grayfia and Aimi's red eyes and nodded.
"She hides her right eye because of a scar. A scar on her divine soul she was born with... I couldn't heal her with my Arcanum."

"Divine soul. The injury isn't physical?"

"Yeah."

"It'd be hard."

His Life Element mainly healed physical injuries.

(Wrong, my love. Everything in this universe has a life vein. Even souls. It's only the matter of finding it.)

'Life vein? Is it like the lines Mystic Eyes of Death Perception shows in Fate?'

(Similar but different. You can only see them after mastering the Life Element. To sense and manipulate the flow of every life with your eyes closed, that's the peak of Life Element!)

'It sounds so cool... It'd require a lot of practice.'

(Yup. You can start by sensing your child's life in Saya. It's not much different from how you created Chiaki. Alternatively, you can see the life vein of Hephaestus's soul if she opens herself to you. Complete trust with no chance of doubts.)

'It's going to be hard.'

Hephaestus had a long history of trauma with rejection from men. It would be nigh impossible for her to lower her emotional defenses to such extreme levels.

'I better start mastering the Life Element. Alright! To heal Hephaestus!'

(To heal Hephaestus!)

Astraea knew Asahi was talking to Klyscha, so she waited till their conversation ended.

“My bad for leaving you hanging. I’ll try my best to heal her.”

“I didn’t ask that,” Astraea muttered and looked up with a smile.

“But I was going to request it.”

[—Astraea: Affection +11]

“You’re so easy to read.” He swooped down and seized her lips with his own. “It only makes you cuter.”

Asahi stepped outside the Stardust Garden and scanned the surroundings.

“Asfi isn’t here.”

It was fun to have a beautiful princess stalking him. Ignoring Astraea’s weird look, he applied stealth and pulled her. Following her directions, he arrived at Hephaestus’s office in the Northwest District. The showcase of weapons captured his attention. The details in each weapon were plainly obvious to naked eyes.

“A goddess of smithing for sure.”

“Come with me,” Astraea said and held his hand. In one of the most “obscene” ways, she pulled him inside the shop and took him to the third floor.

Hephaestus was signing paperwork as usual while sipping on tea. She looked up and sighed.

“What happened this time?”

Asahi smiled. “Can’t we come to meet you?”

Hephaestus put down her cup and crossed her arms under her chest, staring at Asahi with a big frown. ‘I don’t believe you’ was written all over her face. Asahi used the trump card “Take my fairy”. Chiaki flew over and buried herself in Hephaestus’s red hair. Hephaestus groaned and started fishing for the fairy, though there was an obvious smile on her face. She adored Chiaki, especially since they shared a similar affinity with fire.

“Asahi wants to borrow your forge.”

“My forge?” she asked as confusion crossed her face. “You want to do what now?”

“I wanna make some weapons,” Asahi said with a blank expression.

Nobody believed him whenever he said this about crafting. Did no one take him as someone capable of crafting?

Hephaestus felt like she stepped on a landmine she shouldn't have. Scratching the back of her head, she gave a cheeky smile.

"Alright. Come with me."

After everything was said and done, Asahi had shut down Evilus, foiled Ishtar's plan, slew a new monster, and made a discovery about the Xenos. He did it mostly alone but the credit went to the Astraea Familia as a whole as per the Guild. The other goddesses in the alliance did their job while she just sat there, doing absolutely nothing. Letting him borrow her forge for some time didn't feel like a big deal in comparison to his achievements.

"You brought equipment?"

"Yeah. No."

Hephaestus gave a suspicious glance at his answer. Asahi shrugged, keeping silent about Biblical God's equipment lying in his ring. He couldn't say no to an opportunity to glimpse at Hephaestus's equipment.

Hephaestus walked over to the shelf on the other side of the room. It held a line of brand new short hammers of varying colors.

"What kind of weapon?"

Asahi rubbed his chin. He had to make a pair of gauntlets with the metal given by Biblical God, a pair of shining daggers for Aimi, and a set of light armor for Maya.

Asahi told his list, and Hephaestus chose three hammers and slid them into the pouch on her waist. She led them to the first floor.

Aside from the store, there was a workshop and a rather small forge.

Hephaestus was about to ignite the forge, when Chiaki returned to Asahi's shoulder.

“Leave that to my daughter.”

Asahi and Chiaki flashed a wide smile. It was the only time Chiaki got to shine!