

# SICKLY GIRL, BUT A DRUG ADDICT

After the banquet ended, during cleanup time.

Professor Yggdrasil casually brought up a topic to two Athenas while the table on the platform was being cleared.

“Student Council President, and Vice President.”

The subject was about a witch that had been mentioned in passing at the professors’ meeting a few days ago.

“Have you heard rumors about a strange witch who leaves traces at every scene cleaned up by the Drug Control Bureau?”

On the table that had been cleared of all the feast plates.

Professor Yggdrasil drew a picture with the remaining wine in his glass.

The boundaries were vague, making it difficult to see the exact shape. But if you slightly blurred your focus, a skull was visible.

The Student Council President raised her hand first.

“Atropos! I’ve heard of it! They say she’s an amazing cat burglar!”

The Vice President beside her also clung close to Professor Yggdrasil’s shoulder while stroking her blue hair.

“I’ve heard of it too. Someone who persistently targets only the Vermilion Heart recovered by the Drug Control Bureau... a phantom thief... or something like that?”

“You know exactly.”

“But... according to rumors, Atropos stopped appearing after the beginning of last year.”

“That is also correct.”

The Vice President and Professor Yggdrasil looked harmonious.

Seeing this, the Student Council President went thump.

She pushed the Vice President away with her shoulder and they became entangled.

Even with other students watching from below.

“Thunder Emperor, Ice Emperor. Enough playing around and listen quietly.”

“P-Professor! Even you use that nickname....”

“Kahaha! It suits you so well!”

“It’s all because of you!”

“I merely borrowed the title that other children use because it’s shorter and easier to call than Student Council President and Vice President. Don’t misunderstand.”

However, the two were also representatives of the students and a pillar maintaining the academy’s order.

After squabbling for a moment.

The two quieted down and positioned themselves to listen attentively to Professor Yggdrasil’s story.

“Thunder Emperor, you already know this from earlier, but Ice Emperor, this is your first time hearing it.”

“What... story?”

“A thief broke into my office. They targeted the safe.”

Startled, the Ice Emperor covered her mouth with her right hand.

The crystal-shaped earrings on her ears dangled.

“What kind of person would dare to target Professor’s safe....”

The Thunder Emperor struck the table with a hearty laugh.

“Isn’t it an incredible incident? No one with such audacity has ever existed in Regin Academy’s history!”

“Do you have any suspects?”

“There’s already one troublemaker on the list of suspects!”

The Ice Emperor gulped.

Seeing this, the Thunder Emperor slightly hinted to Professor Yggdrasil.

“The one I met when I rushed to the scene was Shana Midgard.”

“Shana... Midgard.”

The Ice Emperor wiped her lips as she recalled Shana’s appearance.

“But she is clearly....”

Hair almost devoid of vitality, close to ash color.

Greenish scars and bandages all over her body.

“I know what you’re trying to say. She’s certainly not in good health.”

“She often falls flat on the ground~.”

Following the agreement of Professor Yggdrasil and the Thunder Emperor.

The Ice Emperor also naturally added a comment.

“She always... walks around weakly with hollow eyes.”

Such a sickly girl stole from the safe?

Targeting Vermilion Heart?

“Do you really think Shana is the culprit, Professor?”

Professor Yggdrasil quickly shook his head.

“I thought so right after encountering her.”

Since manufacturing and use are at the professor’s discretion, it wouldn’t matter if he produced as much as he wanted.

But by nature, he was extremely reluctant to use Vermilion Heart on Athenas.

Although mountains of Vermilion Heart were piled in the safe due to the previous professor’s mass production.

Professor Yggdrasil managed the inventory of drugs in the safe more thoroughly than anyone else.

So he had noticed quite a while ago that Vermilion Heart was disappearing from his office.

To catch the culprit with certainty, he deliberately dragged out time and concealed the truth.

Thus, he inferred when the culprit would commit the next crime. And raided the scene.

He was planning to catch and deal with them definitively, but—.

The person caught happened to be Shana Midgard.

“I just called her because she was walking around without energy, and I wanted to make her some cocoa.”

Even Lost, the secretary who was always vigilant because of Athenas occasionally breaking into the office and stealing supplies, said there was nothing unusual.

“Shana Midgard is frail. Her recovery rate is slow, and she often trips while walking. The academy’s medical officer says she also has eating and sleep disorders.”

The Ice Emperor and Thunder Emperor nodded in unison.

“Above all, I want to believe in our students.”

Therefore, Professor Yggdrasil had one possibility in mind.

“So I thought, what if the real culprit deliberately used Shana Midgard as bait?”

At the mention of the real culprit, the Thunder Emperor and Ice Emperor’s eyes lit up.

“Compiling all the clues gathered so far. The culprit is definitely a student of the academy.”

The attacks on Drug Control Bureau trucks by Atropos, which had abruptly stopped exactly one year ago.

The implication of this fact is clear.

“And, I presume that the witch Atropos is that real culprit.”

Moreover, the safe storing Vermilion Heart would sound an alarm and electrocute anyone who touched it without considerable magical talent.

The Thunder Emperor narrowed her eyes and asked Professor Yggdrasil.

“Is there no possibility that Shana Midgard is Atropos herself? Could she have hidden her power during the ability verification?”

Though the Ice Emperor would usually find fault with the Thunder Emperor whenever possible.

This time, she couldn’t help but agree with her opinion.

“...Although I dislike suspecting a student from our dormitory. I also think we need to check, Professor.”

It's not that Professor Yggdrasil hadn't thought the same.

But his educational policy and belief that all Athenas should be embraced with trust....

“Refrain from speaking about this before the truth is revealed.”

“Hmm. I apologize!”

“I... I spoke out of turn.”

He was merely postponing the confirmation of dark suspicions surrounding Shana as much as possible.

“For now, the Thunder Emperor comes with me to the Scarlet-281 scene.”

“The place I destroyed earlier, right?”

The incident summary report transmitted from the Drug Control Bureau during the banquet clearly stated.

That a few bottles of recovered Vermilion Heart remained.

Since confiscated items can only be moved to the Drug Control Bureau after the Athena who first discovered the scene signs off, the Thunder Emperor must visit the scene.

“If my prediction is correct, Atropos will come to seize the remaining Vermilion Heart.”

“Hooh!”

“If Atropos is a student of Regin....”

The Ice Emperor said with her mouth wide open.

“The only timing she would target is... right now after the banquet ends.”

“Correct.”

Even if Atropos had already visited, they could be confident that no Regin Academy student was Atropos.

That alone would ease Professor Yggdrasil’s mind considerably.

“Shall I gather the remaining students and hold a tea party immediately? If there’s an absent student, she must be....”

“No.”

Professor Yggdrasil patted the enthusiastic Ice Emperor’s shoulder to calm her down.

“Send all the children back to the dormitories. If we stimulate them further, Atropos will sense the danger and not show herself.”

Today, it’s enough just to confirm whether Atropos appears or not.

If you try to cross too many stepping stones at once, you’ll fall into the water.

“However, if Atropos appears today....”

Step by step. It was a time when moving forward one step at a time was more important than anything else.

“For the ability verification next week. Prepare more thoroughly than ever. Simultaneously, conduct unannounced dormitory inspections.”

◆◆◆

Tens of minutes after leaving the academy.

Finally, I arrived at Eden.

“Found it... at last....”

Nine intact bottles of Vermilion Heart.

Nine bottles of finished product with the stoppers not even removed!

With this, I won't have to worry for days.

'First, one bottle...!'

In my joy, I immediately broke the bottleneck.

I don't even want to waste time trying to remove the cork stopper.

After roughly throwing the broken bottle mouth into a corner of the truck's cargo area and roughly shaking off the glass fragments from the broken part, I raised it straight to the sky.

The life water pours down and fills my throat like a high-pass.

But soon came a large gasp.

"Keck. Kack...!"

Damn it.

For the 25% to trigger at this timing.

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<< STATUS: Shana Midgard >>

Regin Academy 2nd Year Student

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[Characteristic – 'Greenhouse Flower']

"Don't leave this pitiful flower alone."

...

— 25% chance of choking when consuming food or drinks.

...

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I lost hold of the medicine bottle I was holding and braced myself on the floor.



The bottle fell on my knee and didn't make a loud noise, but all its contents spilled.

If my entire body hadn't been covered in black leather, I would have been stained red all over.

“Haah... again....”

While dripping red water from my mouth and drawing pictures on the floor, I grabbed another bottle with my black hand and broke its neck.

Similarly, I threw away the mouth, shook off the glass fragments.

And poured the red liquid like a waterfall into my mouth.

“Urp... uup... huurp....”

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<< Shana Midgard >>

Regin Academy / Aesir Dormitory / 2nd Year

— Enhancement Effect ‘Vermilion Heart’ Applied

(Time Remaining: 719 minutes)

— Awakening Skill ‘Shadow of Sisters’ in use

(Estimated Duration: 359 minutes)

[Status]

Vitality 12/12

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Status doesn't lie.

Sometimes, when I'm unlucky, status ailments trigger several times in a row, causing me to waste several bottles of Vermilion Heart.

Fortunately, not today.

I've survived.

Due to the drug effect constantly circulating, my dry sensations only come alive for a very brief moment when drinking Vermilion Heart.

In this short moment, I feel alive.

...Well, I guess it's natural since I can only live by drinking Vermilion Heart.

I can vividly hear the voices of Drug Control Bureau staff wandering around the truck.

And I salivate at the thought of the spaghetti from the banquet hall that I was just spinning with a fork earlier.

I want to hug the fluffy Pixie like a body pillow and fall into a deep sleep in this state.

— Did you hear something from inside?

— We already checked and locked everything. Are you still drunk?

— No, I definitely heard it....

There's a commotion around.

It seems they heard my presence.

Just as I was about to leave through the vehicle's ceiling that I had broken through, I saw a small wooden box.

[Ephedra Seeds]

This is crazy.

Not only Vermilion Heart but also the raw material, ephedra, surviving that inferno.

The saying that crisis is also opportunity is becoming reality today.

I'm not someone who cries easily.

But I'm so tired that tears are coming out.

...Ah.

I choked earlier, that's right.