

# SICKLY GIRL, BUT A DRUG ADDICT

“Damn it, we’re too late.”

With a dissatisfied expression, the Thunder Emperor kicked the Drug Control Bureau’s truck.

With a bang, the rear tire burst and the truck sank down.

Professor Yggdrasil, balancing on the shaking truck, illuminated the truck’s cargo area with the lantern he had brought.

“It’s definitely Atropos.”

Due to the nature of transporting important items, the Drug Control Bureau’s trucks focus solely on sturdiness without considering weight.

Naturally, the cargo area’s exterior shell is so strong that even reasonably powerful Athenas cannot easily penetrate it, and the tires are not much different.

The tire burst because the Thunder Emperor with SS-grade physical talent kicked it; if it had been another Athena, there wouldn’t have even been a scratch.

The truck’s ceiling, cut as if with a sharp blade.

The clean cut sections of the Vermilion Heart bottles that could only be produced by breaking them with truly strong force, not mediocre strength.

All these traces say it.

Atropos, who appeared all over the kingdom until the beginning of last year, is a monster comparable to the 'Thunder Emperor', the currently strongest Athena.

So the Thunder Emperor and Ice Emperor's claim that Atropos and Shana could be the same person is close to nonsense that even a paranoid person wouldn't believe.

"Thunder Emperor, do you see this?"

The Thunder Emperor, who had jumped up onto the truck, mumbled as she saw the red figure illuminated by the lantern.

"A skull drawn with blood!"

"It's probably not blood, but Vermilion Heart."

"Is that so?"

The Drug Control Bureau named this red skull shape the Vermilion Skull.

A mocking message left by Atropos after stealing Vermilion Heart to taunt the Drug Control Bureau.

They believed it meant something like 'Stupid fools. You couldn't stop me this time either!'

Anyway, Atropos was fast.

All the Vermilion Heart was stolen...

And now confidence was added to Professor Yggdrasil's hypothesis.

'Really.... An Athena from Regin Academy....'

However.

The professor still didn't want to believe that truth.

Having reached the stage of denying the truth, he entered a more meticulous verification process than ever before.

Hoping that there was something he had missed.

“Thunder Emperor. Cross-check the confiscated items list... and investigate if anything else is missing.”

“Yes! Professor!”

After handing the lantern to the Thunder Emperor, Professor Yggdrasil held the list up to the moonlight coming through the punctured ceiling.

All 9 bottles of Vermilion Heart at the top were stolen.

Experimental equipment was listed by category.

Further down, ephedra appears.

‘Ephedra concentrate... still remains....’

Concentrate.

Dried ephedra.

Ephedra seeds....

‘Seeds?’

They should be contained in a wooden box.

No matter how much he looked around, they were nowhere to be seen.

‘Could it be....’

Is Atropos not content with raiding the Drug Control Bureau’s trucks, but now trying to cultivate it directly?

The recipe wouldn’t be a problem for her.

Although it's highly confidential, as with the company that was destroyed this time, many criminals obtain incomplete Vermilion Heart manufacturing methods through dark routes.

"Thunder Emperor."

"Yes, Professor."

"I told you to conduct dormitory inspections while proceeding with the ability verification."

"Yes!"

If Atropos is an academy student.

And if she is planning to cultivate ephedra.

Definitely somewhere in the academy, ephedra seeds.

Moreover, not the genuine ones but the mutant variety used to make counterfeits would be found.

[Confiscated Items List]

...

— Ephedra Seeds (Scarlet Winter) x 1box

...

"Take a good look at these seeds."

The Thunder Emperor, looking at where Professor Yggdrasil pointed, tilted her head.

"Scarlet Winter? I've never heard of it."

"You probably haven't heard of it in Drug Control Bureau education."

"That's right."

Scarlet Winter.

The variety of ephedra used to manufacture the most widespread counterfeit of Vermilion Heart, also known as Scarlet Heart.

While the original ephedra's fruit is closer to a vermilion red, Scarlet Winter bears a colder, more blood-like red fruit.

The color difference is so clear that anyone who isn't color-blind can distinguish them.

Also, unlike the original ephedra seeds that resemble persimmon seeds...

"There's a clear red line drawn in the middle."

"So there's such a difference."

"You'll be able to tell at a glance."

What needs to be done now has become very clear.

However, we must not forget that Atropos had previously used Shana Midgard as bait.

Even if seeds are found with Shana.

Or, even if Shana is cultivating seeds.

We will doubt it two, three times.

Whether she is being manipulated by someone.

"By the way, Professor."

"Go ahead."

"Usually when you have something suspicious, you hand it over to the academy's investigation committee right away, don't you?"

"That's right."

With a slightly pouty expression, the Thunder Emperor mumbled while avoiding Professor Yggdrasil's gaze.

"It seems like you're especially protective of Shana, so I was a bit curious if there's a reason for that!"

The Thunder Emperor, who can't resist curiosity.

She blurts out questions that should be swallowed internally without hesitation.

Professor Yggdrasil, who knows her character well, provided an appropriate answer this time too.

"Shana absolutely cannot join hands with darkness.... That's all I'll say."

With his eyes closed firmly, the memory of his first meeting with Shana naturally appears in Professor Yggdrasil's mind.

A huge burning factory.

A girl discovered in the middle of it...

As if trying to desperately resist an approaching man, she was holding a small scalpel in her hand.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

Chirp chirp.

I woke up to the sound of small birds.

It was definitely a day with classes, wasn't it?

That must be it. Yesterday's banquet was exceptionally unusual.

Usually held right before the weekend when there are no classes, it was held unexpectedly in the middle of the week...

Today is a day with classes.

Yes. Probably.

But I don't want to get up.

My body is too heavy.

By the way, how many hours did I sleep?

If I don't check my status window quickly—.

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<< Shana Midgard >>

Regin Academy / Aesir Dormitory / 2nd Year

— Enhancement Effect 'Vermilion Heart' Applied

(Time Remaining: 2 minutes)

[Status]

Vitality 1/12

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Oh damn.

“My goodness.”

That was a really close call.

“That was truly dangerous.”

I was out for almost 12 hours?

Well, it had been a while since I exerted myself.

Was it a year ago?

Unless it's after using 'Shadow of Sisters', I usually only take short naps, so the accumulated fatigue must have hit me belatedly.

First, quickly. I need to drink Vermilion Heart.

So, yes.

I would have hidden it in the usual place, right?

I jumped up and grabbed the lever on the desk.

Then I poked the gap in the floor board with the missing nail at the front of the door.

Creak, creak.

With effort, I pressed down and lifted the board, and sure enough.

The red life waters welcomed me with a smile.

Hehe, good.

I quickly removed the cork stopper and carefully placed it down.

Throwing it around inside the room would be disastrous.

If the liquid on the stopper were to be detected during a dormitory inspection...

It's terrible just to imagine.

'Be careful not to choke... carefully....'

I put the bottle mouth to my lips.

Hoping that the 25% wouldn't trigger, I moistened my throat.

Little by little. Little by little.

Feeling with my head when my lungs breathe.

Slowly letting it flow down my esophagus.

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<< Shana Midgard >>



Regin Academy / Aesir Dormitory / 2nd Year

— Enhancement Effect 'Vermilion Heart' Applied

(Time Remaining: 717 minutes)

[Status]

Vitality 12/12

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“...Ah.”

When I came to my senses, I was lying flat on the floor.

The flood of sensations that came with the relief of surviving had pressed me down to the floor.

“I survived. Today too.”

I probably won't have to worry for a while, but I should be careful not to get into such a close call again.

“Hmm....”

I stared intently at the forearm-sized wooden box containing the ephedra seeds, then covered the floor board I had set aside.

‘Let's think carefully.’

It would be nice if I could unlock Professor Yggdrasil's safe containing Vermilion Heart while using Shadow of Sisters.

But that's impossible because magic and physical talent are completely reversed.

So the choices given to me now are two.

One is to catch the tails of people like Count Train and extort counterfeits and genuine products from them.

The other is to manufacture Vermilion Heart directly with the ephedra seeds I brought yesterday.

The former risks expanding rumors about Atropos.

I've said before that the future vision is like a house of cards in front of a gentle wind; it's easy to think of it as adding another card to that.

In the latter case, the probability of me being expelled from the academy increases.

If I get caught cultivating, I really can't lie my way out.

'If I think about which one... affects the game's future vision more....'

Obviously the former.

It's a game that malfunctions frequently, but the character 'Shana Midgard' didn't even exist around me when I cleared it.

Then I obviously have to choose the latter.

The only option is to make good plans not to get caught.

Of course, since it takes quite some time to cultivate and manufacture, during that time, I'll have to go out and get Vermilion Heart.

I now have 6 bottles left, and a 25% chance of choking.

If I choke, there's a 99% chance that bottle becomes unusable.

Because the cough bursts so loudly that I unknowingly drop the bottle.

I even placed a basin underneath because I was sorry to lose Vermilion Heart.

But dropped bottles always flew to strange places and broke.

It's like a system constraint.

'In that case... it's better to think I have at most four bottles.'

For now, tonight, and tomorrow night.

I'll have to call Atropos.

I need more Vermilion Heart until I set up a proper manufacturing environment.

It was then, as I was organizing my thoughts on my knees and stroking my cheek.

— Department head~?

Knock, knock.

Rukia's voice was heard.

When I flung the door open, Rukia in a teddy bear pajama outfit giggled and clung to me.

"I missed you, department head!! I was so worried yesterday that I couldn't sleep for a long time~!"

"Barely half a day has passed?"

"But you overslept! Kihihi. Are you now planning to skip classes and play with me?"

I hadn't planned to.

But let's say that's the case.

"Since we're already late for class, want to go somewhere with me?"

"Where...?"

"Daddy, I mean. He's at the gambling den right now."

Count Train. So you were alive?

I thought you'd become an electric chicken for the Thunder Emperor that day.

“He says he’s sorry for abandoning us and running away yesterday. And he wants to apologize, you know?”

I quickly calculate in my head.

Calling Atropos to directly obtain Vermilion Heart, cultivating ephedra in the old school building and manufacturing it directly.

...And getting supplied through Count Train.

Which of the three would have less impact on the future vision?

“It seems we have a lot to receive from Count Train.”

Rukia raised the corners of her mouth brightly.

“Right? Right?”