

A Ghost 201

Chapter 201

"I will have to simply be more aggressive with my approach... And be more cautious. But the plans cannot stop just because of her. I will not stop them... My goals are beyond what these mere mortals could even comprehend. And this woman, this ghost... despite having attained a level of power and existence that even I envy, I won't let her do as she pleases if she dares mess around with my properties once more...."

The Vampire looked into the moonlight from within the glass window as the cold breeze bathed his face. It was a beautiful night, and it made him feel somewhat nostalgic for the past of all the years he had lived since ancient times and of all the struggles he had to go through to reach this far.

He began to think about Catarina, Silvio, and Francesco, these three children he had converted into Vampires on a whim when he found them in the ruins of a fire, barely having survived and completely covered in blazing burning wounds.

They were certainly strong and admirable children back then, capable of surviving the blazing flare of hell itself... something had given him an idea back then, and he ended up giving them his blood, which ended up becoming the elixir that satiated their pain and thirst.

After that, their bodies quickly regenerated back to normal, and when they opened their bodies, the sunlight bathed their nude bodies, but there was no damage dealt to them.

Vampires were powerful but had clear weaknesses. One of the most annoying of them was their weakness in sunlight, which would quickly begin burning their entire bodies. This is why they always moved at night... unless they were to be these special Vampires.

They ended up being way more useful than he thought. Vampires that developed resistance to light, fire, and sunlight and ended up becoming useful as agents that could be sent at day and could even camouflage with normal people too.

Due to this, these units became valuable to him, and he had raised them to the strength they had currently by investing in them because he knew they were valuable enough for it.

If they could grow to the level of powerful threats, they could directly intervene in many things in daylight, and Vampires would no longer become unable to participate in many things in the sun...

He looked at the window and gritted his teeth.

‘All that time wasted with them for nothing. Damn useless kids, I should have crushed their heads when they were still kids instead of giving them a second chance... now all those resources and money I wasted on their growth... Where will I get all of that back? Tch!’ thought the man.

However, it wasn’t as if only Catarina and her two lackeys died, but also the priests that had been sent there to fight against the ghost woman. The church had better detectives than his own men, and they had already figured the assassin that took down the Duke of Affnaria might go after another duke. They connected the clues incredibly well, used special magic, and figured out the ghost’s identity was Maria after they saw what happened to her grave and more...

They sent Elderlight, a powerful Battle Pope, to protect the Duke of Benettina. Although he had given her a very hard time, she ended up ultimately defeating him with the power of her allies at her side, which were also helping her. Of course, the church only knows she’s powerful, though not exactly how powerful her allies at her side were. Even less an Elf with the power of Light and Nature with her.

After that, the incident about her escaping from the Duchy where several hundreds of soldiers that chased her down all became Undead Zombies was widely spread around the entire Kingdom and then the neighboring Nations, especially of that image she had shown to the masses where she committed vengeance against the aristocrats that had done all the horrendous things to her family. The horrid “video” where she showed the aristocrat getting violated by zombies was one of the most disgusting things people had seen in their entire lives. It further cemented her fame as an insane agent of evil and all of what was wrong in this world.

However, she had not only done this but also leaked valuable information that these aristocrats held. Alongside the truth about what they were doing to their slaves, images and documents that described what the aristocrats did to slaves became widespread, making the population of commoners know how slaves were being treated to an even more rooted level.

Since then that the Duchy of Benettina had not been the same, and the surrounding duchies all began to change as well, alongside the entire Kingdom and perhaps all neighboring nations.

The figure of the Ghost Witch of Misfortune became a fearful and dreadful omen to many aristocrats and people of high society. In contrast, for commoners fighting against the system, discrimination, and the society they were living in, she was seen as a praised figure and seen even as the one that would finally make all these aristocratic pigs pay for all the sins they had committed.

In a way, she had become something like Ghost Rider from Marvel comics, an anti-hero that punished the sinful and made them suffer for all their sins a hundredfold.

And because they all knew already that she was the Witch of Misfortune, the one whose family had mysteriously died all at once and whose Fragment of Evil which they were guarding had suddenly mysteriously disappeared as well. They knew she was going to take revenge on all those that orchestrated her death and her family's death...

Of course, the entire show ended up bringing a lot of attention. The Church within the Albraun Kingdom had become even more aware of her as a threat, probably protecting most of the dukes from each duchy, knowing they might be related to her death one way or another...

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The Church of the God of Light was far from being all that pure. It was clear as water that they prioritized the safety of the aristocrats and would use their power to protect them as long as they... well, kept their donations high for them.

But after the news of Elderlight being killed by her and how he failed to protect the Duke of Benettina, things became more complicated. The aristocrats of the Duchies of the Albraun Kingdom became way too fearful and constantly asked for more protection.

...Especially all those that knew that they had helped in the destruction of the Fuentes Family.

They knew it. The guilty knew they were the ones behind it and feared the ghost woman the most. She had already shown them through actions that she wasn't kidding and that she was an actual menace, fearless to do anything.

The church was also alarmed. It had been ages since such a powerful Undead had been born. Those that were present when she presented herself before all the people in the Benettina Duchy knew how powerful and aberrant she was. They had never seen a being that harbored this much hatred, this much dark energy, and evil thoughts within.

It was as if she was the very materialization of evil in the world!

Although many feared her, many others also saw her as their challenge. The trial they had been waiting for had finally shown. Many priests and fanatics thought she was the trial sent by the God of Light to prove their faith to finally showcase their hard work!

The Vampire Lord was fine with it. He didn't have any intentions of stopping them in the end, even though he really wanted to kill Maria. If they were going at her, it was for the best... in the end, he had to care about his own things rather than an act of small revenge.

If she were to kill the priests coming at her? That was still better. He hated that faction and saw them as a nuisance. If they were to all die at her hands, it would also be completely okay, although that would also mean that she would grow stronger from it.

After all, it was well known all around the world of Yggdrasil that all living beings had Soul Books where they could see their own Status, their stats, skills, level, experience points, and more.

Killing so many powerful priests meant she would gain insane amounts of experience points... which would end up helping her rise to an even higher level of power, and god knows how much stronger she would grow...

She already showcased a level of threat around B Rank if she was able to kill Elderlight and the Priests, or perhaps A-Rank if she had indeed defeated Catarina... of course, the Vampire Lord had no knowledge of how it went at the end. He just knew they died and assumed that she had done it all, and not that Maria just waited around while both sides killed each other while she dragged their souls out of their bodies when they were on the verge of death to benefit the most out of it with almost no efforts at all...

But of course, that was something he might never know!

Evolution was certainly a troublesome thing. A ghost was a monster, an Undead Monster. Evolution was something natural that would happen to any monster that leveled up and reached the level cap. It was fairly normal for such monsters to grow into stronger versions of themselves, sometimes evolving into completely new species at that.

It was rather clear she had become a fearful new species of ghosts never seen before. Many of those that saw her had fallen unconscious out of pure horror. They said that her mere presence generated an aura of pure horror and fear as if she was the bringer of death and disaster. Still, not only that, her entire presence generated a strange aura that seemed to decompose things as if she were a bringer of famine.

After a long time, some of the people that had studied Undead monsters in detail ended up qualifying her as a Gorgon due to the many snakes that people saw coming out of her phantasmal aura. A Gorgon was an incredibly rare species of ghost that had only been seen twice in all of history, and these two times, they had threatened entire nations.

Could the Vampire Lord fight against such a being if it grew even further?

The future was rather uncertain, but it wasn't as if he was standing in the middle of nowhere without any way for him to get some balance. He knew that there were ways for him to gain some support and regain his composure. He had many resources and servants, hundreds of Vampires were below his command, and the Vampire family would continue to grow more and more if he so desired.

And it wasn't as if Catarina was the only "elite" he had. In fact, there were many like her within his family and even stronger Vampires too. Even a selected group of four powerful Vampires that were the strongest below him...

He planned to not chase her anymore and to only look around for clues about her and probably spy on her, if anything. At the moment, what he wanted was to regain the lost resources and investments he had lost and later on think about retaliation if even possible...

The projects of chimeras and black potion creation would soon be resumed by new teams he had gathered around other duchies, so he might be able to recover the money he lost there, and this time, if possible, he would get more definite results with the chimera project.

Black Potions were fairly easy to produce, so their production had already begun once more a few days ago. Large batches would be quickly sold to the duchies desperate for some form of item that could boost their military power.

It seems that Maria ended up creating a sense of desperation in the aristocrats, which the Vampire Lord could take advantage of...

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If you were to ask me, "Would you kiss a girl?" I would have probably answered in my previous life with, "I don't know... I haven't even kissed a guy yet".

But to be honest, since my previous life, I kind of liked girls as well... so in this second life, this simply developed even more greatly as I got to know beautiful girls such as Emeraldine and Partner.

In my previous life, I had no friends, so I never created much of an emotional connection with anyone... even my male friends, which I thought were my friends, but were in fact not my friends in the end...

But even then, I never thought I would have ended up kissing Emeraldine as much as I did now. I felt... embarrassed and rather guilty. Yes, guilty.

Why? Because it felt like I had abused of our good relationship and got way ahead of myself... it is all my fault! I am just a degenerate. I know what she went through, and even then, I still went for it.

At this point, I am just experiencing new things more than anything. Even when I am already dead in this second life, I still want to "live" it to my very limits, which means not restraining myself with stupid morals sometimes.

But... maybe I went a bit too far? I really don't want to make my life focused on romantic subplots! But... it feels so nice and cozy to love and be loved...

I felt like my phantasmal core was beating faster as I experienced such a warm sensation. It made me... feel all dizzy.

Is this a cringy feeling that couples feel when they love each other? It is cringy, but the good cringy feeling that you know is actually not cringy at all, and that only because of your own inexperience in romantic life is that you find it slightly cringy...

In my resume, my mind is a mess.

My thoughts are even more of a mess than before.

So this is what it feels like...

Ahh...

Now I feel even more guilty because I ended up doing it with Emeraldine when I had promised similar things to Partner... and then there's Lucifer...

But... as long as I do it with them too later on, then it's fine, right? I never thought I would end up going into the harem route. This is disastrous, to say the least.

However, I am not going to regret it! Emeraldine is way too cute! Who wouldn't want to cuddle and kiss such a beautiful elf girl?! You would be insane if you didn't want to! Girl or not, she's hot and cute, and her personality is just the best.

After we ended up kissing each other, it escalated into a few more kisses...

And a few more and more...

And Emeraldine seemed to not be capable of stopping.

“Hahh~ Maria-sama... Kiss... kiss me... make me feel loved... I need it... I love you...” she moaned as she continued to hug me and rub her body over mine.

She was breathing heavily and getting all red as well.

“E-Emeraldine, stop! W-We have already done it...! T-There are people outside. We might be found out!” I said.

“I-I know, but... Hahh... I am so happy... Mooch~” she said as she kissed my lips once more.

“Th-That’s enough! I liked it too, but... let’s stop, for now, okay? W-We have to respect our... boundaries... and stuff,” I said.

Emeraldine was breathing heavily as she slowly calmed herself, before sitting at my side.

“Hahh... Y-You’re right... Sorry... I-I kind of got too ahead of myself!” she cried.

“You really did... But that’s okay... I allowed it, and... I kind of also started it and everything... It’s my fault... I am sorry....” I said.

Emeraldine held my hand tightly as she looked into my eyes with her beautiful green eyes.

“I-It is fine... I am actually happy... It... makes me feel happy. Don’t worry about it, please...” said Emeraldine.

“Emeraldine... You’re way too nice....” I sighed.

"I-It is just that... I've never felt like this for anyone... I-I am... Well, I am still dealing with my own feelings..." she said.

"Me too... I guess we ended up going a bit too fast there... Maybe we should take it easy? There are many things to do as well. I don't think we can properly focus on this for a while...." I said.

"I agree... for now. I am just happy as it is... this was... something I will always treasure." She said.

"Emeraldine... You really mean it?" I wondered.

"Of course..." she replied with a warm smile.

And as we ended up staring at one another for a bit, suddenly, the curtains of the carriage opened for Partner to sneak in.

"Huh? Master, did you sleep with Emeraldine? Not fair!" she said while pouting.

"S-Sorry, dear, should I have invited you instead? I just get confused sometimes, and well... Erm, we were working until late in the potions." I said.

"Hmm... I see..." said Partner.

She looked at the two of us while rubbing her chin and raising an eyebrow suspiciously.

I don't know what she was coming out with, but perhaps she was figuring out something?

...I would prefer not to tell her as she would be very jealous.

I know that she and Emeraldine, alongside Lucifer, had come to a non-aggression consensus after a while, where all three agreed on sharing my attention evenly...

But if she were to know that I kissed emeraldine before her, she would certainly get angry at her and probably sad, heartbroken, even... so I would prefer if that were not to happen.

Maybe I should give her a little kiss soon too?

Ah! I am talking about giving kisses like nothing! My sense of reality has really been shattered after kissing Emeraldine...

If it was only a little kiss, but... it ended up escalating into many, and I am sure she grabbed my body around too... Ah, so lewd... I must reject the horny.

Resist the horny!

"M-Master? Are you not coming to have breakfast?" she asked.

It seems it was a false alarm; she's hasn't figured it out.

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I am safe.

Everything is fine...

It all... happened quickly, but it ended quickly as well.

Now... time to go back to normal.

But now, every time I see Emeraldine, it feels a bit weird.

I just have to bear with it.

After Partner came to pick me up, we moved on to have breakfast, and the daily routine of distributing food for everyone began.

Over time, the people began to also cook their own stuff if they felt hungry. My clones are always assessing the food storage we got, so whenever people feel hungry, they can go pick up food for their meals.

Of course, that doesn't mean anyone can just go there and ask me for a slice of bread or something, but only when we are in the hours of eating, and that's three different hours a day.

In the morning we eat breakfast, from 7 AM up to 9 AM, then lunch is from 2 PM up to 4 PM, and then Dinner at 7 PM up to 10 PM.

It is a pretty fair horary, and the people got used to it pretty quickly, so we usually make these big stews with the prey we hunted sometimes. We distributed it with bread and other things, and we had also begun making a salad. We also distribute fruits as you can't live off of just stew and bread after all.

Today in the morning, there was pork stew with potatoes, and it was pretty refreshing. Even though I never felt actual hunger, it always feels nice to eat and fill my phantasmal stomach~

Come to think of it. I wonder how a ghost can eat. I've been eating for a while now... I know it becomes all mana over time, and there's no bathroom time for me, but how does this happen?

Does my body have a stomach?

Hmm... Well, I guess that's that.

I wonder if there are other cases of ghosts like me.

Well, Silvio and Francesco do eat too, so maybe all ghosts can potentially eat, but just never try it. Maybe because they're too fixated on whatever is keeping them in the world of the living to care about something so leisurely as eating.

Ding!

[Skill Proficiency has met the requirements]

[You have learned the [Phantasmal Stomach: Lv1] Skill]

[Requirements have been met]

[You acquired the [Gluttonous Eater: Lv1] Title Skill]

Oi! Don't bother me when I am having a meal!

System, what is this? Do you think it's funny? You've done this multiple times already!

The System was as insightful as ever, telling me how everything happened... That doesn't make it less ridiculous that it showed just when my internal monologue was talking about it!

Oh well... I might as well check this.

[Phantasmal Stomach: Lv1]

A Skill that can only be acquired after a non-corporeal phantasmal entity has eaten and digested large quantities of food. It allows for the rapid digestion of food into usable Mana and Aether energies,

increasing their regeneration speed by +50% with each level while eating any sort of meal. It allows the ability to have a Phantasmal Stomach.

Huh... I see, so my Mana and Aether regeneration increases whenever I eat meals...

And then it allows me to have a Phantasmal Stomach? What is that? Can I get an explanation for this, at the very least?

No?

...Understandable, have a nice day.

The handsome-sounding voice of my beloved System was heard across my hearing senses. Whenever he speaks, I imagine a young-looking lad with a handsome face, gray hair, and a charming expressionless face...

Oi! I am supposedly praising your beautiful voice, don't get mad with me. We are friends. And thanks for the info too! Now, can you tell me what Aether is? I know about Mana, but what's Aether?

Eh?! Such a long explanation... but I kind of get it now... So that's the true composition of a soul... So that's how it is. I always thought it was just Mana, but it can't really be that simple, can't it?

Wow...

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Aether, an energy I just discovered I had, but that I innately always felt within me. It is apparently the pillar of the existence of a soul, and it is often referred to as the soul energy.

Every person has Aether within their soul. The stronger their soul grows, the more Aether they accumulate. It is said that those that have a lot of Aether can learn techniques named Auras, Domains, and more.

And I have learned them naturally, but I think that's because I've lost my living physical body and have become a being of mostly Aether and Mana, so I am mostly different than others. Things come by easily for me in that regard, especially because by evolving, my Aether and Mana increase more.

Now that we got the explanations out of the way, it is time to move on to other interesting things within the new stuff I just got while eating pork stew...

[Gluttonous Eater: Lv1]

A Title Skill given to someone that constantly and gluttonously eats food without any need to do so, gorging in food when the body has no requirements for it. Fat people that have reached an overly obese state acquire this Title Skill naturally.

Grants the ability to consume and digest food at twice the speed, HP and MP regeneration is doubled while eating, and all stats increase by +10% when the stomach is full of food. However, you might feel a bit of nausea if you move with a full stomach...

What is this?! System, are you calling me fat!? I knew it! You were always against me, didn't you?!

You know that it is one of the greatest taboos to call a woman fat! You know that it hurts! We know that already! I know I am fat! Don't remind me...!

...Stop speaking nonsense. The description doesn't describe you. You're a unique exception to this because you eat without needing to, but not because you're fat and you're overeating, but because your ghost body does not have the necessity to eat.

I know... But still, it hurts, you know? I used to be a bit fatty in middle school and...

Ouch! Do you have to be so harsh with your beloved host?

Huh? What do you mean? Where do you even come from, then?

Then that's not holding you hostage!

Ah... Well, whatever. Fine, say and think whatever you want. We are all free here. It's free real state.

Anyways, this Title Skill, despite mocking me and calling me a fatass, is pretty good, as it comes with a nice effect that combines well with the Phantasmal Stomach Ability, so we are all good here. No weird side effects.

And I even get a bonus to my stats if I am filled with food, so this is even more incentive to eat. System, you've only made me want to eat more tasty food, the complete contrary to what you were trying to make me do...

Don't lie to me! You're fatphobic, aren't you?

No!

Eh? Hey!

...

He's gone...

Seriously?

I was so annoying that the System turned itself off.

“Maria...?”

Lucifer, at my side, looked at me with concern.

“Ehwa?!” I asked in surprise, almost dropping the spoon with soup out of my hands.

“Are you okay?” asked Emeraldine.

“Master... You’ve been standing there like a rock for a few minutes now...” said Partner.

“Are you ok, lady Maria?” asked Syllis.

“She got a few screws loose. I bet she sometimes spaces out or something. She’s that weird anyways.”
Said Catarina.

“Catarina! How dare you call me like that! I might be crazy, a degenerate, a gluttonous fat woman, but I would never have a few screws loose!” I said.

“Oh, she’s back.” Laughed Silvio.

“Welcome back, Maria-sama.” Said Francesco.

“Were you thinking things through? I hope that’s it. I really hope you were not just spacing out...” said Lucifer.

He was concerned I would be actually spacing out.

“Ugh! No, do you think I am an idiot? I was just thinking things intensively and assessing a few things inside of my Skill Book. I had gotten a few new Skills... Well, I guess I can share them with you....” I said.

I quickly told them about what I got, and everyone suddenly looked at me with eyes wide open.

“Y-You’re certainly weird...” said Catarina.

“Oh my, I wonder if we can get those Skills if we eat a lot, Francesco!” said Silvio.

“Hm! Is it worth a try? Although it feels bad if we eat all the food that the people might need, so better not.” Said Francesco.

“You’re more than right. I actually don’t enjoy eating as much as Maria-sama...” said Silvio.

“Me neither, to be honest. Anything we eat ends up burning into charcoal anyways...” sighed Francesco.

I guess fire ghosts have it rough.

“So let me get this straight, you ate so much food to the point you acquired a Skill and a Title... about overeating?” asked Lucifer.

“Yes...” I said.

“Unbelievable...” he sighed.

“W-Why are you shocked over it?! You’re also an Undead. You’ll get that Skill eventually,” I said.

“Ah... Y-You’re right... I should stop eating food then. I don’t really have to-, Ah, but flesh is necessary for a zombie like me...” he sighed.

Well, he’s technically a reanimated corpse, so yeah, he’s quite the zombie. I suppose he needs brains and flesh from time to time.

“Heh, you can’t escape it,” I said.

“Oooh! I wonder if I can get it too...” said Partner.

“I-It is certainly an interesting skill...” said Emeraldine with a cute smile, although she was a bit surprised over how ridiculous it was.

“Anyways! We should go back to the main topic... the potions! Things should be already done, so we’ll begin sharing them with the rabbits.” I said.

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Bottling up the potions would be useless as what we needed to do was to distribute them through cups. After all, why would we bottle them if we made them exclusively for the people?

So after breakfast, I decided to quickly get done with this. We went to inspect the cauldron with everyone else, and what was left was a very slimy and purple-colored liquid.

It looked and smelled hideous... but after a closer inspection.

[Mysterious Purple Potion (D-Grade)]

A mysterious Potion made from the materials from Giant Black Arachneia and several medicinal herbs. It possesses mysterious effects that have yet to be found. However, from looks alone, it seems hideous, it smells bad, and it looks disgusting.

However, apparently, it has the power to grant a greater resistance against specific diseases provoked by the Giant Black Arachneia, calm down pain, and possibly cure basic diseases that provoke fever and nausea.

--

Interesting! The System Analysis Function is never wrong! It feels like an even more overpowered Wisdom sometimes, but let's see, if things are like it says there, it should work, right?

So we had to give it a try. We decided to quickly give it to the five people that were in the worst condition, all elderly, and we also gave a cup to Syllis just in case, as he was outside the quarantine zone, so we could prevent him from getting it again and spreading it outside the quarantine area.

And after that, we decided to wait until tomorrow to see if the effects would work on the people.

Throughout the day, we spent it mostly overlooking the place. I decided to map out the surrounding area by abusing my Mental Mapping Skill and my clones, so I spread a few dozens of ghost snakes everywhere, alongside a few smaller clones which had the shape of tiny purple flames similar to Will-o-Wisps...

Ah, recalling those monsters gives me a strong sense of nostalgia. To think I used to struggle against those things, and I had to fight so many to level up and stuff... Ahh, good times- No, actually, those were not good times. I suffered a lot! I wouldn't really want to go back to it. If anything, this nostalgia only makes me realize how blessed I am now... compared to back then. I have really come quite far.

I am pretty concerned about the spiders, as they seemed weak enough that we can handle them without much issue, but I fear that whatever is in the Dungeon where they are coming from is dangerous...

I also feel like I want to see what happened to the other rabbits that got attacked by the spiders... at the very least, I want to find their skeletons and give them a proper burial.

Haha... a ghost necromancer like me talking about giving proper burials to people? Who would have guessed...

Maybe I could even ask Emeraldine to purify the corpses or something so that any lingering bad spirit can rest.

However, if they would be willing enough, I guess I could also bring their souls back as Undead... maybe, but it depends if I can find them to begin with.

For now, I decided to just rest for the moment while spending time with my friends... well, they're more like my family at this point.

Gofumin-chan was very cute today, too. Seeing this little goblin smile really makes me happy... And Takeshi and Laura too! The twins are becoming good friends with the other kids.

Sometimes I saw Bellerine wanting to join them as they played around, but she's still quarantined... I want this to be done so everyone can interact and mingle together...

After we were done with this, we all quickly rushed toward our destination and began building our own place to belong. It's not going to be easy, but... I have faith.

And about Emeraldine and everything else... well, since the kissing, she has been looking at me coquettishly sometimes... sometimes she blushes, other times she smiles adorably at me.

Partner and Lucifer might or might not have suspected something...

But for now, I want to concentrate on the main quest before doing any romantic stuff... so I will try to suppress my own feelings even more than they already are.

And then, in the morning of the next day, as I woke up with Partner cuddling with me, Syllis ran to my carriage and told me that there was good news.

The five people that were given the potions yesterday woke up without fever, and they even said they were filled with a lot of energy! Wow!

The potions worked, it seems. After closer inspection into their status, they were no longer sick either...

Now's time for plan B!

I made a second quarantine area and moved the recently healed people there for caution, as they had already mixed with the infected anyways, even after healing, and then using my phantom clones, I began to distribute the potion to everyone.

Tomorrow we'll see the results and then find out if things are doing okay.

If everyone truly gets better, then the potion was a success, and the people can be healed.

We'll disinfect them and then burn everything that was in the quarantine zone, and so they will be able to finally join back with the rest of our people.

And that night, as everyone slept, my clones reached the dungeon at long last. The entire forest surrounding it was made into a land of spider webs, so it was very hard to get through all the stickiness.

But at long last, we had arrived.

I quickly lurked into the dungeon, finding it to be an immense underground cave filled with spiderwebs everywhere... and alongside that, spiders crawled everywhere and carried eggs with them, which had even more of them inside! Baby spiders slowly growing up...

As I moved deeper and deeper into the dungeon, a dark presence began to slowly emerge from its depths.

Using my Stealth Skills and Concealment, I slowly got there.

And what I found was...

Wait...!

That's...

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A girl?

It was not a monster, nor a giant spider... nor anything I thought I would see.

What I saw with my eyes there as I sneaked using my clones... wasn't a monster to me.

It was a little girl.

...

What is this?

The little girl was sleeping on a bed made of spiderwebs and surrounded by furniture made of it as well.

Spiders sometimes wandered around her as they left her food, often captured monsters wrapped in spiderwebs.

They served her submissively while she slept relaxedly.

This is... why? Why is there a girl in the middle of a dungeon? Controlling the spiders as if they were extensions of her body? They treat this girl as if she was their leader...

Who is she?

...

Her skin was pale white like porcelain, and she seemed to have... four eyes? No eight, like a spider.

But she looked very much like a human girl.

She had two main human-like eyes, and the other six were smaller and above her forehead.

The girl had short black hair and was wearing a white dress made of spiderwebs.

I could feel an enormous presence coming from her, and it was so strong that it even made me shiver.

She's... not a normal girl, despite how she looks like. Is she possibly the Spider Queen? How can I bring myself to kill a little girl?

This...

I had originally planned to kill the Queen if I could get the opportunity. After all, they're doing something bad. They already ate half the rabbit kin. I only found skeletons around and their souls who seemed to be haunting the place.

The spiders nor the girl realize they're there, of course.

Perhaps I should stealthily grab the skeletons and the souls away and leave the girl be.

...I don't know if I am doing the right thing, but messing with someone that generates such a strong aura is really not my thing.

I am a scummy woman. I only fight the battles I know I stand a chance or have a greater chance of winning. If I end up with low chances, even by 1%, I usually don't like to fight unless I have no choice at all.

But this time, I got a chance. I can just decide to not fight and go away now that I have the chance. We'll circle around the forest... this Spider Nest cannot be messed with.

This girl clearly surpassed a threat Rank of A.

But... who is she?

System, can you tell me anything about the girl?

It seems that the System Analysis Function is trying to get something out of her, but it appears that she's shrouded in something dark that makes it hard to discern her true powers or identity.

But what is she exactly?

I could feel some innocence in her, as if she wasn't inherently evil. She was just a girl sleeping and trying to rest on her bed.

Somehow, I kind of wanted to cuddle with her and pet her head.

She was honestly cute. A girl who looked to be about five years old...

I noticed she had three pairs of arms, but they were folded beneath her dress while she slept beneath the spiderwebbed blankets.

For now, I shouldn't bother her...

System! Can you tell me anything?!

Chapter 208

—

A large spider suddenly reached up to her as its large claws petted the girl's head.

"Gishi gishishish..."

"Hungry... Feed?" asked the girl

"Ghisihhsih..."

It seemed as if the girl agreed to something the spider said.

The spider then suddenly grabbed a still living monster wrapped in a spider. It looked to be a wild wolf and bit it with its fangs.

The wolf gave a last groan and then died on the spot. After a few minutes, the corpse began to foam from its jaws as the spider gave it back to the girl.

The girl made a bitter expression. Maybe she didn't want raw monster again today.

But she had no other things to eat, so she suddenly opened her mouth as her jaws grew like spider mandibles and bit through the corpse. She began to suck the liquified interior of the wolf after that as if it were a delicious smoothie... or something.

It was creepy to see, and it impacted me greatly, but there wasn't much I could do other than feel surprised by what she did. She was like a spider in many ways except in her looks, I suppose.

She was a baby spider person...

Or something.

After she finished her meal, the spider took away the mummified corpse and then brought a bottle of fresh spring water.

The little girl drank a bit and then sat over her bed, taking out a book she had saved inside a piece of furniture made of spiderwebs.

She opened the book, and her big red eyes looked down into the book.

“ ... ”

She exuded such a strange aura of innocence. It felt as if she was drawing me in.

Without realizing it, I was moving near her using one of my snake ghost clones.

I hid beneath the bed and looked at her read.

She was so peaceful and tranquil. It felt as if I didn't even have any intent to kill her anymore.

Maybe she's just a child trying to figure out what she is or what she's doing in here.

Perhaps she's not that different from me or everybody else.

But her powers... they're terrifying.

This innocence she holds is special despite how strong she is... but I am sure that her spiders somehow are influencing her due to their wild behaviors.

If she grows only with wild animals, she'll turn into one after becoming an adult, and it might become even harder for her to socialize later on even though she has such potential.

She suddenly closed the book and sat down over the floor, curiously looking for... me.

Eh?!

She suddenly realized I was here!

“...”

She began looking around with her little hands as she suddenly managed to touch my little snake ghost.

“Worm...”

She cutely called me a worm.

I let her grab me out and wanted to pretend to be a wild animal like she thought I was.

“Worm!”

She grabbed me with her little arms as she began to shake me around.

“Uwawawaaaahh!”

I cried as I was being moved around a lot, it felt a bit nauseating, but nothing I couldn't handle.

"Worm! Haha..."

She giggled cutely as I looked into her eyes. Looking at such a powerful being from very close was chill-inducing.

She suddenly sniffed me with her tiny and pointed nose and opened her mouth.

Wait for a second...

"Nom!"

She bit me!

Ouch!

Actually, it didn't hurt. I am a ghost after all!

She didn't put any magic on the bite, so as a normal physical attack, it held no effect on my snake clone.

The little spider girl looked at me with awe and surprise. She couldn't believe I just ignored her bite like that.

She's honestly way too cute.

"Nom...?"

She asked me as I looked at her again, using my tiny snake tongue to gently lick her nose.

“No nom...”

She seemed disappointed. She thought I was a snack!

“Gishi!” I said angrily.

“Oh?”

The girl looked at me with surprise. Her crimson-red eyes opened wide to look at me.

“Wormy?”

“Gishi!”

“Wormy! Fren?”

She suddenly called me Wormy and then... Fren.

So cute...

Does she want to be my friend?

Uwah... I have a soft spot for cute children. I am very motherly.

Sure, I can be your fren, little spider queen, I don't mind...

“Gishi!”

I made a cute sound and then licked her again.

“Heheh... Fren! Fren!”

The girl held my little body and carried me in her arms.

She was very rough at that. She lacked a lot of carefulness. A normal beast might have died before she could even do all this. It was thanks to that I couldn’t easily be ripped into pieces nor eaten that I got to the point of becoming her “fren.”

Some of the spiders walking around noticed she was holding me around as they looked at her with surprise and awe, wondering what she was even doing.

It was reasonable for them to think that it was very weird to see their queen holding a weird worm and calling it a friend.

But I don’t think they’re as intelligent as she, so they didn’t really understand and just decided to continue doing what they did.

I discovered this entire colony was very much like ants. They were slowly molding the interior of the dungeon and making it bigger and more spacious for more spiders to be born.

The girl wasn’t laying eggs, though, but other female spiders were, which I called the “mother spiders.” I wonder if she just hatched from one of those eggs as an oddity, and they keep her safe due to her power? She is probably the one ordering them around, though.

She’s... so cute.

Way too cute.

She held me around, and I sneaked out of her arms, and slowly coiled around her arm and then reached her shoulder, sitting around the two shoulders she had.

She smiled as she liked my playful nature and petted me gently with her multiple arms.

“Fren!” she said.

Sure... I can be your friend if that’s what you want, dear...

Chapter 209

As I stayed with the little girl using a clone, I decided to go on as usual in my daily life. As I moved into important things, an entire day passed, and now I went to check the rest of the people from the Rabbit-kin village.

After having given them the Purple Potion, it was time to see if the effects had gone as we have planned, and to my surprise, or well, to my good expectations and hopes, things did indeed go well.

Phew, I am so relieved...

The people were actually very healthy, and every single rabbit ended up healing from the disease they had caught, and their Status showed that they were healthy.

The fever some were feeling or the weakened sensations they were feeling over their bodies had all gone away. This was a nice thing, and they had fully recovered, and I felt relieved and quite happy.

Now, the thing we had to do was to disinfect their bodies and let them out. It would be for the best, to be honest.

I had to wake up my friends so they could help me with this, but mostly Emeraldine, who was able to use spells that could disinfect stuff. I had yet to develop many spells to help in that regard. Death Magic is quite limited in its utility, although I've learned a few spells that are "outside the system" that don't show up as Skills, the same way Emeraldine, too, learned spells like this.

One of such Spells can help with the fermentation of things and maturation, too. I guess it can work in foods and other things. There are even some similar spells that help at preserving stuff, but complete disinfection seems to require a bit more thought and investigation on my part. Still, I have Supreme Magic. Anything I will, will be used... as long as it fits within my own magic affinity and elements.

After all, no matter how strong I can grow, I can't do everything. This is why Emeraldine comes in handy so much now, and all of that, you see... so it is very important to use her abilities and her magic, and she's also lovely, so she always nods happily and accepts. She is as dedicated to the people as I am.

She's really such a nice girl. My Emeraldine is a saint... I don't deserve such a bright and pure girl... I really don't!

"Alright, you guys, please give me all your clothes!" I said.

The rabbit-kin looked at me with surprise.

"Y-You mean it?"

"Won't we end up naked?"

"This is kind of... erm...."

"Well..."

"Yes! You must get naked, so we can disinfect you guys, and you can finally join society... well, our society. After that, we'll burn all the things in the camp too, so the disease doesn't spread." I said.

“P-Please, everyone, just obey her... I am sorry if this is embarrassing...” sighed Syllis.

The cute rabbit boy at my side tried to convince the people.

“So come on, get naked! Show me those bodies!” I laughed.

“M-Maria, I think you lack a bit of common sense there. It is not really easy for people to get naked...” said Emeraldine.

“Huh? Is it not? But... Ah, I get it. I will give them privacy.” I said.

I spread my domain of darkness and generated thin curtains made of shadows around the entire camp.

“This should do it, guys! Better?” I asked.

“Y-Yeah...”

“I guess...”

“Please do this quickly, though....”

After the people got nude, we showered them in spells that could disinfect them, and then we also used warm water to wash them well. After that, we gave them new clothes that I had from all the stuff stored inside my Inventory, and then we set on fire all the things in the quarantine camp.

“And done! It only took the entire day! ...Eh? It’s already night?”

I looked upwards, and it was indeed night already.

Did we seriously spend the entire day? Wow...

Well, side quest completed.

“Thank you... Maria-sama, you’ve really done so much for us. I don’t know how I can repay so much...” cried Syllis.

“We’ll be forever grateful....”

“Please, take us with you to wherever you’re going. We are good hunters.”

“We also know about all sorts of herbs, animals, and natural routes.”

“We originally used to be a nomadic tribe before we ended up stuck in this forest, actually!”

“Yeah, that’s right....”

The people were as grateful as the goblins were back then, and they all were kneeling before us.

“It’s nothing. You guys should relax for now and enjoy life. I would be happy if you could be happy as well. For now, how about you finally join the rest of the people we got here? My people are eager to meet all of you.” I said.

“S-Sure!”

“Let’s go!”

“I am starving....”

“Thank you...”

As we began to make food for everyone with the help of the people, we enjoyed a nice dinner together, eating grilled meat, stew, and freshly baked bread. I gave myself the luxury of enjoying a nice few cups of wine below the moonlight with my friends.

We laughed, we smiled, and we decided to simply enjoy and celebrate the moment. We won't have the chance to experience and live such days all the time.

Sometimes you just want to forget about everything else and just sit down and enjoy a day off, right? It is not something bad per se, nor something that people "don't do." It just comes off naturally after you've lived a lot of stuff. Sometimes we just really want to chill out and relax.

In the end, it was around twelve at night, and most of the people were sleeping by now. The ones that ended at my side were mostly my friends.

"Once more, I am very grateful for what you've done for us..." said Syllis with a cute smile.

The young rabbit boy seemed cuter today, perhaps because he was smiling so radiantly.

I petted his head.

"Don't worry, Syllis. It is just what I do." I said.

Chapter 210

Syllis' eyes shone brightly as he seemed to admire me.

"I-I never thought that people like you would exist in this world..." he said.

"People like me?" I asked.

"Good people... all of you, Emeraldine, and the rest... all of you are just good people... It is hard to believe it... you always assume that such type of people is unrealistic in this world," said Syllis.

"Is that so? Are we really that rare? And I honestly don't find myself as a good person. I just felt like I had the chance of helping, and I just did it..." said Emeraldine.

"I mostly helped because Master did it..." said Partner.

"...I cannot stand to see beast-kin suffer in such manner. As a former King that once ruled over my kin, I have developed a soft heart for weak people in need." Sighed Lucifer, mostly treating this as a bad thing for some reason.

"I-I see... I suppose everyone has their different reasons." Said Syllis.

"Well yeah, we have all our own different reasons, it is always different, and it varies from person to person, but mostly because I wanted to do something. I've always felt like I could never be able to do anything (in my previous life), that I couldn't change people's lives nor leave an impact on the world... so now that I got the power to do so, now that I can see it within my grasp, I just wanted to try it out... And I can't really bring myself to see such a cute race as rabbit-kins die miserably to disease, right?" I asked.

"C-Cute..." muttered Syllis.

"Haha, sorry, I didn't mean to offend you or your people... I won't call you guys cute anymore." I said.

"No, it's fine... I suppose it is one of our traits to... look a bit adorable..." sighed Syllis.

"Maria is like that... You can't really try to find something too deep in her actions or thoughts. She often does things out of the blue, just because she wants to... She's very free. I guess you could say that after what she went through while being alive... she just wants to have a "life" without regrets now, even now that she's dead." Sighed Lucifer.

“Oho? You seem to know me so well, Casanova~” I said while smiling back at Lucifer.

“I-I am only talking about what I’ve known about you since we met... I-It’s nothing more than that!” said Lucifer while crossing his arms and averting his gaze from me.

“You don’t have to be so shy.” I sighed.

Syllis giggled as he saw our interactions. He seemed rather happy and carefree.

“Now that you’re here, I should really tell you something important,” I said.

“Huh? What is it?” asked Syllis.

I prepared myself to tell him this, but I was having a hard time. I didn’t want to see this cute boy crying, but it was something I had to tell him because it was necessary for him to know about it. If I delay the inevitable, it will only hurt them more.

And so, I decided to speak about it...

I told him about what I found while exploring the spider dungeon using my snakes and what I saw there, the bones and the souls of the rabbit kin...

Syllis slowly grew paler as he looked into my eyes with sorrow slowly building up inside of his eyes. The light in them didn’t dissipate, but his shone brighter than before as tears began to slowly leak from his eyes.

“It has been over four years since then, but... I guess we had already assumed the worst... Even then, I couldn’t help but... always had that faint hope that my parents would one day be back, somehow... I guess,” sighed Syllis.

“Well... They’re not completely gone. Their souls and bones are here... I think there might be a way to bring them back... But it’s really up to you and then if both parties agree to this... You see, Partner used

to be just a skeleton before, but after growing strong enough and evolving, she regained her flesh and even the skeleton's original appearance... but I suppose your parents wouldn't be the same as before. They would be Undead." I said.

"..."

Syllis stood there in silence. I could understand how he felt. This wasn't something normal you asked a person about... Maybe I shouldn't have done it.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to...." I said.

"No, it's fine. I think... I don't know... In one way, I am... I just want to see my family again, even for the last time... but in another way... It... it somehow feels wrong for me to bring them back after dying so gruesomely... I think it could be for the best if they rest in peace." He sighed.

"I see... You're also the older brother of your family... So you should tell this to your sister... I don't think that's a place where I should get involved... Also, you're technically their chief now, so I will let them see the souls one last time. We'll do a purification ceremony where we'll bury their bones here and make some graves... Well, we'll purify the bones too, so they don't become Undead by themselves." I said.

"Thank you... We all really appreciate it," said Syllis.

"Don't worry. Emeraldine will also help in that regard. She's pretty good at that." I said.

"Yeah, leave it to me. I have purified many lost souls before. Freeing them from anguish is part of the power of Light." Said Emeraldine.

"You've done so much for us already... Thanks... I really mean it, thanks a lot..." sighed Syllis.

In the end, I knew this would happen. Not everyone just wants to force their people to just come back as Undead. Many would desire them to rest in peace instead, especially because spirituality and the afterlives are well-known facts in this world and not just beliefs.

I often wonder if there is the Goddess of Death Hel... and do souls go to Helheim?

Or maybe... is there another place?

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