

ETERNAL THIEF

Chapter 3: Little Alina

Ace moves toward the dark valley vigilantly. Cries of a child keep coming from the valley from time to time again.

When Ace reached the valley, it was dark. He only saw a little silhouette in the valley's corner with the dim light of the moon. When he hears the crying voice was coming from the little silhouette, he relaxes a little and slowly walks towards it.

By hearing the mellow voice, Ace guesses this child is probably a little girl.

The little girl hears footsteps approaching her and immediately becomes alert. She stops crying and looks at the owner of footsteps with her teary yet intelligent eyes. She becomes scared after thinking someone is approaching her with bad intentions. She suppresses her fear and tension and starts clenching her small fist.

The little girl is ready for a fight!

Ace didn't see clearly but he could vaguely see the little girl stop crying and clench her fist as if she would fight him if he approaches her. He couldn't help but admire her courage.

'She looked like four or five years old by her height and voice.' Ace guess with a hint of interest in his eyes.

Even with dim moonlight, the valley was still quite dark, so he couldn't see her appearance. Ace walks a little closer and stops two meters away from the little girl because he didn't want to scare her any further.

Ace lightly said to the little girl, "I don't have any bad motives and I'm only here because I heard your cries. Where are your parents? Do you got separated from them?"

Ace asks as gently as possible just to not scare her, but his voice was a little hoarse as if he didn't speak for a long time, and the little girl didn't answer him either.

'It seems she's afraid of me.' Ace smile bitterly. He also didn't expect her to talk with a stranger in this kind of place, either.

IF it was him in her shoes, he would've done the same or he might've yelled out loud for help long ago. This little thing was still quite brave to stand silently there and let him speak first without yelling in fear.

"Look, it is late at night and there might be some bad guys near. If you don't want to get caught by them, go to your parents' or house. It's extremely dangerous to be here by all yourself." Ace earnestly warns her, He didn't want her to be kidnaped by those thugs around the area.

Ace has been crossing this area for almost four years and knew just how dangerous this area was. Once he was caught by thugs when he was passing here and after finding out that he was dirt poor, they only beat him up and let him go. He didn't dare to imagine what would they do to this little girl.

Since he has already warned her now, it was her choice to listen or not. Ace turns around and began walking towards the exit of the valley.

When the little girl hears his warning and somehow she could tell this person didn't have any evil intention. She becomes less vigilant and when she saw this person was about to leave. Panic appears on her face and she became afraid after thinking about something.

"W-wait". The little girl call in her childish mellow voice

When Ace heard her voice for the first time, he was little stun and think in bewilderment, 'How can someone's voice be so beautiful!'

It was quite normal for him to think like this since he never even talk with anyone, much less a girl of his age.

Ace turns around and glance at her again. The little girl notice his stare and said faintly, "I don't know where my parents are and what they look like."

When Ace hears her lovely voice again, he bewilders for a second and asks softly, "Then why are you in this kind of place and crying alone by yourself?"

Hearing Ace's question, the little girl suddenly remembers something and starts crying again as if someone hit her. When Ace saw her crying again, he feels little pain in his heart that has been gone cold for a long time.

"What happens?" He quickly asks her in confusion.

The girl said while crying weakly, "I'm Hungry!"

When Ace heard this, it stunned him for a moment, and unknowingly, a smile creep out on his face. 'She's just a child after all.'

"I have food in my house if you have nowhere to go come with me." Ace didn't know why he said that but seeing a small child like her in this situation he couldn't help but think of himself for all those years ago.

Maybe Ace saw his old innocent self in her. He didn't know nor did he have the answer. But for some peculiar reason, he just wants to help her.

The little girl immediately stops crying after listening to Ace's offer. She deeply looks at the person in front of her. She couldn't see his face, but from his voice and stature, she could easily guess that he's also young, and seems sincere.

In the end, she was still an innocent little girl so when she thought that he's sincere with the offer, "Ok let's go!" She agrees to go with him.

It's not like she can't protect herself if things go awry.

Ace has a sigh of relief when she accepts to go with him because after exchanging some words with her, he didn't want to leave her alone in this palace. Now that she accepts his offer, Ace felt relief for some reason.

Ace didn't want to stay here for long and he turns around and walk toward the exit of the valley. The little girl follows behind him.

When they came out, dim moonlight was shining on the street and both of their faces become obvious.

Ace was a little curious and couldn't help but turn around to look at the little girl's face. But when he saw her face, it bewitched him.

Her face was oval with milky-white skin, a sharp thin nose, hollow cheeks, and thin cherry lips. Her big watery blue eyes were shining like stars and her long black falling hair was complimenting her pale skin perfectly. She was like a sculpture carved by a divine artisan.

Ace was instantly captivated by her otherworldly cuteness and his heartbeat races, 'She so cute' This is the only thought that comes to his mind.

The little girl also looks back at Ace. The handsome face of the little boy also overwhelmed her, especially his dark blue eyes like a starry sky. He was a little skinny, but nothingness, he was handsome.

Suddenly their eyes met and time was as if its stop. Both of their faces redden and they quickly avert their gazes. The atmosphere between them becomes a little awkward after that.

Ace quickly began walking toward his little house to hide his embarrassment. The little beauty hurriedly follows behind him. She also didn't know what happened, but that was not something good that she knows.

Ace was walking silently in front but his heart was still pounding and a sudden thought surface his mind as he said to break the strange mood, "What is your name?"

The little girl answers after some consideration, "Alina!".

'Alina huh, good name.' Ace thinks as he feels delighted for some reason.

After some hesitation, the little girl finally asks back, "What's yours?"

"Ace!" He answers without even thinking.

After some time, they reach Ace's house. It was a normal size house and the only thing that his parents have left for him. He opens the door, and the inside was extremely neat & clean. He's living alone in here for three years now.

A little boy like him, who survives alone until now, was proof of his unyielding and clever nature.

"Come in." Ace said to Alina as he enters the house.

Alina follows him inside after a brief hesitation.

Ace makes some special dishes for himself and little Alina for dinner. He learned to cook from his grandma when she was alive, and now he was an excellent cook himself. He also has saved some 'silver coins' with all these years of work and since he lives alone, Ace spent little on himself. So, he could afford to feed her one or two good meals.

(Money System in Lands of Cites or Low-Level Lands: 1 Ruby Coin = 100 Gold Coins, 1 GC = 100 Silver Coins, 1 SC = 100 Bronze Coins)

When little Alina saw those warm dishes on the table, she salivated. Her stomach growls and can't hold herself back any longer. With little care for Ace, who was watching her from the side, she ate crazily.

He couldn't help but smile. 'She seems like a little hungry ghost'

After dinner, Ace was about to go to wash the empty plates when he saw little Alina was looking at him with a strange gaze as if he was her father or something. He finds it quite amusing and cute. Before little Alina looks at him like he was a wolf who'll eat her alive. But now she looks more cheerful and friendly than before.

She said with a cheerful smile, "Thank You Big Brother Ace!" Her smile was very cute to look at.

Ace feels warm in his little heart when she calls him Big Bro. How long has it been since he feels like this?

Looking at the innocent little girl, his eyes feel hot when he touches them. There were tears in them. Maybe they were because of all those years of loneliness or he finally found someone to talk to he didn't know. He was just happy for the first time in many years.

He quickly clears moist from his eyes and said with a warm smile, "You're welcome. You can stay here as well if you like."

Little Alina becomes extremely happy to hear this because she has nowhere to go. And this Big Bro seems quite a pleasant person. Most importantly, he cooks delicious food.

"How do you get into the city if you didn't have parents or any other relative?" Ace finally asks a serious question.

'How come a little girl came to the city with no harm and those guards at the city gate didn't even stop her if she was alone?' Ace was very confused about this matter. That's why he asked her directly.

When she heard the question, She seems to remember something and her eyes get teary as she spoke in a dejected tone "I was living with my old grandpa in the forest but yesterday when I was playing in the forest old grandpa come to me and said he has something to do so we have to leave the forest and take me in this place called a city.

"After we come here, he drops me in that valley where we meet early, and before leaving, he promised to me. He'll come back after taking care of the important business and I have to wait for him there obediently." As she recalls what has happened today, she cries again.

Ace was intelligent and could make some guess what had happened after. 'It seems that Old Grandpa has abandoned her or he meet with some trouble doing something. So that's how little Alina was left alone.'

After crying for some time, little Alina fell asleep. She was extremely tired after her ordeal.

For an entire week, he and Alina would go to the same dark valley and wait for her old grandpa to return, but he never returned. Alina became sad, but she slowly accepts that her grandpa has abandoned her or he was going to do something important somewhere else.

That's how in Ace's lonely life came a little sister. He was very fond of her.

After some time, little Alina opens up to Ace, and she considers him as a real Big Brother.

Ace always takes care of her and told her stories and played with her. Ace becomes happy again as he spends more time with Alina.

Finally, in his bitter life, spring comes again in the face of Alina, and the scars from the past heal. That's how a year passed in happiness and joy.

But by the start of winter, little Alina got sick. First, it wasn't serious, with some medicine she could get healthy again. But after a week, her illness acts again, and it is much worse this time.

Ace grows terrified of this as his childhood trauma begins to act and he panicked because his parents and grandparents leave him one by one and now his little sister also fell ill. How could he take it easy?

'If something happens to her...' He didn't dare to imagine something like this, so he did everything he could to cure her strange illness.

However, after four months, her illness didn't go away. It was very strange sometimes it would act and sometimes it would show signs of curing. But no matter what kind of medicine he feeds her, they just couldn't work.

Many doctors check Alina's condition and they all say, 'it was just a cold and she will become better after taking some medicine.'

But Ace has a terrible feeling about this and thought it was not the case of a simple cold and something was wrong with her. After mulling over it for some time, Ace finally makes a hard decision.

He sells his parents' house for 10 gold coins! Since normal medicine was not working, Ace bought 'Alchemy Pills!'

Alchemy pills were made by Almighty 'Alchemists' who were profound in the way of Wondrous Medicines.. But those alchemy pills were very expensive. That's why he makes this tough decision to sell his parents' house!