

The God of Jesters

Chapter 19: 2.01.3 Forbidden books.

A beautiful face for an old man, if Farhad had to say so. But his hollow eyes were what stood out the most, twisting the kind smile into something horrific. Hallowed eyes that felt almost mesmerizing, attracting Farhad deeper and deeper into them.

But being someone experienced in all of this, he just shook his head and answered.

"Anyone would, after witnessing what happened to others." Farhad was oddly calm in this situation. Though his fear had not subsided in the least.

"No need to fear it, they will be fine by the sundown." The old man assured Farhad. Whether it was successful, was another matter in itself.

"Sit, the test is not long." The old man didn't bother to say who he was, it just showed some familiarity to Farhad that the young man didn't notice at all.

And how could he, the old man have no eyes.

"What is the test?" Knowing that he cannot back down, Farhad asked. Looking at countless books strewn on the table after he sat down.

"Just pick one that interests you and read it to me." The old man explained thoroughly while he gestured at the table.

He might be blind, but he was very aware of his surroundings. Knowing where certain things were along.

"That's it?"

At this answer, Farhad was confused. This test was too simple on the surface, but the people with their heads down in the library told enough of the dangers of this test.

'Books that can cause harm.'

This felt familiar to him, he had learned about it in a book called "Magic, Curses and their Price". In which there was a mention of certain knowledge that requires a price to be paid if one wishes to learn it.

"Forbidden knowledge?..." Farhad didn't move his hand and instead looked at the books in fear.

His will was weak to the face of the old man, so all he could do was stare at the books with no description on them.

"Correct, you are the third person today that was able to identify them." The old man applauded Farhad's intelligence, before saying. "Sadly, the two before you couldn't even read more than one paragraph."

"If they can't, why should I?" Farhad said after calming down a bit.

With all the courage he can muster, Farhad continued. "I don't need that money if you allow it. I would like to leave this place."

He was a cautious man, he knows about the price of acquiring forbidden knowledge and the madness it brings to those weak.

And he considered himself to be a weak individual.

So, instead of taking a chance, it was better to just give up and leave this place.

But he knew that there was a high chance his request would be denied by this old man. As there had been none before him who left the building till now. And he was not foolish to believe that his predecessors were blind enough to not notice the danger.

Which meant that no matter what happens the old man didn't let them leave this place.

Farhad was even sure of this fact after his plan was ruined by the old man when he originally planned to leave this place.

Though, he never expected the answer from the old man would be a bit different than he expected. "If that's what you want, then you can leave."

'Hmm? Is he really letting me go?'

Upon hearing this, Farhad started to feel a bit giddy. He thought that the old man might not be as bad.

Though he forgot about one thing. He should have been looking at the old man's face to know that his words haven't ended yet.

"But!"

A single 'but'. There is always a 'but' and hearing this Farhad turned to look at the old man.

"If you leave now, you won't find a way to properly ascend in years and that corruption on your chest will just grow bigger."

Hearing these words, Farhad held his left chest where the rotten flesh of his moved slowly.

He was surprised that the old man could notice his problem and even tell the same details that doctors have told him before.

The diagnostic ability of this old man might be the best Farhad had ever seen.

"You claim to have a method to deal with this?... And fast?" Farhad asked, with some hope in his eyes.

If he can deal with his problem, there would be no need for him to live in that dirty apartment and he can go to his dorms with his head held high.

There would be no need to be ashamed of anything now, he might even get to go home.

"That, I can only answer after you read one page from this." But the old man didn't speak much, he just tapped the table. "Just one page will do."

This was a gamble, his problem was not something that can be easily dealt with. The only two common methods are curse transfer or becoming stronger.

Both of which were invalid for Farhad as he never officially initiated into a mage, hence lacking any magic circuits.

But if he didn't take this opportunity now, there won't be a similar opportunity in the future.

"I hate this." Farhad cursed his fate as he picked up the book written by...

'A Prime Daemon?'

The name of the individual was scratched off and the only thing that was mentioned on the title page was.

"Record of Taboo: Nightwood Forest."

From the pages, Farhad understood that these were copies of the real thing. But he didn't look down on this book one bit for that.

As only certain things can hold forbidden knowledge and with this book still stable without disintegrating into dust under the weight of the knowledge, it spoke enough about its material quality.

"Good choice." Farhad didn't know how the blind old man could know what he picked, nor did he wish to know, as each mage has their own unique methods and this was one of the most basic uses of magic as well.

"It was about the time I was a young Hunter and entered the Nightwood forest on the east end of Cynark kingdom."

As Farhad read, he was surprised to find that the forbidden knowledge in the book was nothing more than just a man narrating his story.

'This?... what's so forbidden about this?'

Nightwood, a generic name that is commonly used by villagers to denote eerie parts of a jungle. So even with the name of the country, it would be impossible to tell which forest the man was speaking about.

Not to mention there was no Cynark kingdom in the world anymore, he hadn't even read about its existence in any of the history books.

Not yet at least.

And while reading all this, Farhad forgot that he was only meant to read just one page. A limit set up by the old man for a reason, this was the limit one can read before their soul is extensively damaged.

But to the wonderment of the old man, he was already on the third page.

The story he was reading was also simple, the exploration of the man into the forest never stopped and day by day he explored more about this normal forest.

That was until Farhad came to the 7th page.

"Stop." At which point, the old man woke Farhad from the stupor.

His eyes were bleeding just like others and his head was swollen till it looked like a ripe apple.

All the blood had rushed to Farhad's head while his concentration was entirely monopolized by the book in front of him.

"Wha?..." The moment the book was dragged from Farhad's hand, he tried to leap toward the old man in an attempt to take it from him.

But the moment he touched the hands of the old man again, Farhad fell to the floor asleep.

"Wonderful." This was not the old man, but the woman who owned the library.

"7 pages in a row without his eyes popping. This boy seems to have potential." The woman appraised the fallen body of Farhad who was barely breathing.

"Not just any books, it was 'Record of Taboo'. This boy read it to such an extent while being so weak." This meant only one thing.

"Send others away, I have my candidate."

One page was the limit for a common man to read cursed knowledge like this. And this was after it had already been deciphered and translated by others, decreasing its impact of it on the soul by a mile.

And if he found someone to that level, that candidate might have a chance to win. And he would have collected similar winning candidates before he chose the best among them.

There were already 3 who had passed before. But now it seems that they will be sent home.

This old man has just found a diamond among coal.

"Whatever you choose, Mister Hailey. The faster you are done, the faster I can open my library again."

And with that our young hero became a helper of Maxim Hailey, a Magister from the Radiance, an international organization that dealt with cursed places.

And Maxim was here to deal with the bizarre curse of Gregory street.

He was here to deal with me.

And of course, you should already know who I am, I am the narrator of this story, I am the jester.