

The God of Jesters

Chapter 4: 1.03.1 Love is in the air.

It didn't take long for these people to accept me as their own and be free to walk inside their village.

They were so welcoming after the information I provided, that they even gave me a small abandoned hut with basic amenities available in it.

"For food, you need to work. Come to my home next warning, I want help with some pelts." The old man with a ruddy beard suggested while he pointed toward his home.

A home which was hard to ignore as it was the biggest house in the whole village.

Which meant this old man should either be the richest in this village or the village chief.

Though if I have to say, it was probably the latter. As the respect, others give to this man would be evident even to a blind man.

And I very much had sharp eyes and perceptive ears.

Though, I wondered why this man nor others around him did not mention this.

"I will surely come to you, as it would take some time for me to heal." These men asked for clarification about my identity, but none of them ever introduced themselves, which was a sign that none of them wished to form any relationship with me.

So to give a stranger like me a small home was much appreciated.

"Thanks for this great gift everyone. I promise to pay you back for everything that you gave me today." I thanked the masses for their accepting hearts, even though I intend to leave this place before I have to eventually pay it.

Though before they left like Meena before them, I wished to confirm one thing once again.

"Is this place fog or mist prone? As I recall seeing lots of them this morning" I asked.

But as I expected, the answer remained the same. They truly don't know what I was even talking about.

Usually, a misty forest is a normal occurrence. Though it's something that can only exist for a certain period of time in a day and completely dies after the sun comes out at its peak.

But the fog that followed me didn't seem to be the same, because even during the hottest time of the day. The fog remained in place, waiting for me.

This means that I would have to be careful about that fog.

"I might just be tired. Right, little Grifter?" I asked while looking at the silent rat that was eyeing me silently.

A look that I was getting used to.

Before, due to its siblings and other competitor rats, I never gave much attention to Grifter. But the more I leaned in on the little guy, I found just how special he was.

If possible, I truly wished for Grifter to survive this journey.

"Now I will feed you, so get ready."

Opening the bounds of Grifter, I fed him some of the dried flesh from the man that I found on the tree.

Oddly enough, to the little Grifter, even if he was making ugly faces while consuming it. The flesh didn't seem to be poisoned. And could be consumed without worry.

"Don't rush so hard, this isn't your last meal," I said while breaking off pieces of flesh while giving them to the rat.

"Oh, my shirt, you pooped in my pocket as well."

"Hmm"

The moment I said these words, I noticed something. Something I have forgotten about.

"They are probably being sincere, nothing more." But I thought, I was thinking too much.

So after removing my clothes and then checking the dried-up injured under my shirt. I could only sigh.

"I need to wash." Even though it's a boring activity but a mandatory one.

And not like I can live in a community with this smell for long.

So after some rest, before the sun sets. I left my small hut and headed toward the place where the sound of running water was coming from.

Along the way, I saw how this village usually lived. As it was mid-day, most of the people were already inside their homes hiding from the sun. But for a few, the work never stopped.

Some were Tanning leather, others were skinning animals while some were dying leather.

"Lots of leather." Considering there were no pastures in the area nor any open fields, the village seems to focus on things they can actually acquire in their hands. Which was the leather from hunted animals.

'No wonder it was so calm in the forest, all of the beasts must have been hunted by them.'

This news was sad to me, it would seem that the villagers in this place lacked understanding of doing things in moderation.

If they killed everything, then the biodiversity of the jungle would be harmed and there would be no more animals in this forest unless they are artificially reintroduced to the place by other people.

A sad occurrence if I have to say so. But why should he care?

He might like to stay here and watch these villagers when they eventually become aware of the mess they have created, but it would take too much time and I plan to leave this place as early as possible

"Hmm."

Though, since arriving in the village, I just learned some great news. The fog that had been following me all this while has stopped at the precipice.

Which meant that the fog feared this place and gave me the chance I was looking for.

This simple fact also made me happy.

A lot happier than I might have expected myself to be.

"Hmm, but exploring the origins of that fog also seems pretty interesting."

Though, I know this foolish thought would leave me dead.

What I considered the river before turned out to be a waterfall. A torrent fell into a small pond down below.

"Hmm, where does all the water go?" I wondered as I tried to look deeper. But found only hollow darkness in the pond, with no sign of an end to it.

It was pretty scary and made me wonder if this was even a safe thing to do. Who knows what might be hiding in the pond and this something might just drag me down and drown me.

The stories of sirens and drowners have been famous for a long while.

"It's not dangerous. Don't be scared you can jump in." A voice sounded from a rock, a voice I was very familiar with.

"Everyone comes to wash here and rarely any accident happens."

The young woman that I met on the road before slowly came out of the rock and looked at me curiously. The fear that she showed me before was nowhere to be seen in her eyes and instead it was curiosity.

I don't think she hates me anymore. Which is good.

"Are you sure it's safe? I can't see the bottom." I was curious what this woman had to say about this.

"What?... Do you wish to swim down and find what the limit of this pond is?"

"Let me tell you. No one knows, so just forget about it."

"Oh yes, I forgot to mention my name, I am Meena. And sorry for before. It's not every day you meet new people this deep into the forest."

"I am Mirage and this little guy is Grifter." I reintroduced myself for the third time to this young woman. But this was a lot more formal than before.

"I would also like to thank you for leading me here." Of course, I would have reached this village eventually even if this woman didn't help me as much.

But there was no need to explain that to her. She needs to think she helped me and holds some sway over me, making her think she is in a higher position than me and hence would talk to me with more confidence.

And this is exactly what I wished for.

Because for some reason, I wanted to talk more to her. I probably liked her as well.

"What is it like in cities?" She asked as I proceeded to take off my clothes, unashamed of her existence.

I was going to bathe here and get rid of the dirty smell on my body. I even collected some herbs on my way here which have a heavy herbal smell to them. Which ought to get rid of my own smell.

So I proceeded.

"They are disgusting places, filled with disease and horrible people. Life in the countryside feels much more peaceful and calming." I said while keeping Grifter under the shade of a rock and then slowly taking off my underwear.

Which caused the girl to wince.

"Please, at least have some shame in the presence of a girl." She said while hiding her face behind her hands. But I can see her peeking in on me. Which felt childish. It was not like I couldn't notice what she was doing.

But even if she did that, I was not ashamed to show my body to others.

"It's your fault for being here while I was taking a bath. And I have no other clothes or towels with me, so I have to go in naked."

"So meet you late, after my clothes dry off." I gave her red cheeks one last look before jumping into the water and witnessing the void of the pond for the first time so closely.

I have to say, this was truly a horrible and scary experience, it felt as if this hole would suck me down.

Though, for people living in this village, this might be normal.

So when I surface again, I wish to talk some more to Meena. I noticed that she has long left this place.

Leaving me with my only companion, which was a grifter who was silently munching on the flesh I gave him.

"Who knows, I might just settle down here."