

Pseudo Resident's Illegal Stay in Another World

Chapter 26: Nemea's Cat (2)

☪ Nemea's Cat (2) ☪

West gate of Sodomora, the slums.

The client who had asked for me was said to be there. I have only been in Sodomora for a week and can't think of anyone I was on friendly terms with.

I don't think I had a disposition that was unique enough for people to choose me. I have no clue who's asking for me no matter how much I think about it.

"Wow, not many Iron-Tier adventurers get commissioned by a client. As expected, you're a great guy, Hassan!"

Contrary to me who was very confused by this situation, Luna was making a fuss as if she was very impressed by it.

Although I was the one being requested, she seemed to have grown more confident in herself instead, as though the one to get commissioned was her not me. It felt ridiculous to me if I had to be honest.

"So who is it? Doesn't it say who? What is it that we should do?"

"It just has the location written on it."

On the parchment, I received from Daphne, was the location of the client along with the promised reward and a signature. Nothing more.

Very uninformative and crude, I know, but that's how it is. No use complaining about it in a world without any proper system.

I ignored what the request will entail nor was I curious about who the requester is. The only reason I'm following this unfamiliar road to an unknown location was because of what was written on the latter part of the piece of parchment.

『Basic remuneration of 2 silvers. More can be negotiated depending on the amount of work.』

2 silvers.

Two whole silver coins!

I don't know what was waiting for me, but what I knew was that I was going to get 2 silvers out of it. There's no way I can turn down such a great opportunity at earning money.

It's a huge amount of money. 2 silvers are about 200 coppers.

Just when I was happily and excitedly thinking about my newly earned money after having used 5 silvers on acquiring the protective gear...

"B-By the way Hassan... Although we're a fixed party already, there are some things we have yet to discuss..."

Luna who was walking next to me addressed me in a tentative tone.

Not good, not good at all. Nothing right can come out of her mouth when she starts talking like that. Damn, what is it this time? I hope it isn't something too bad.

"What is it?"

"It's important... Hmm, don't get mad, or get me wrong, just listen... From now on, I'm gonna talk business, without any ulterior motives."

"What are you trying to talk about? It's alright, just say it."

"...I don't think we've talked about profit distribution...yet..."

"Ah..."

Come to think of it, I didn't think about that at all. I thought dividing things equally among all the party members was the way to go, just like how we did during that quest from the guild, which also happened to be my very first one.

"I-I'm okay with forty percent..."

"Forty?"

Luna's shy voice surprised me. I was thinking along the lines that a 50-50 split would be the fair way to go.

"Forty? Are you sure?"

"Well, then thirty..."

Wait, why is she going for a lower cut?

“I think it will be difficult even for me with less than thirty...”

She was acting very servile. Her helpless attitude was enough to give me flashbacks of my time as Elfriede’s slave.

If it was Elfriede, that misbegotten and merciless bitch, I would have been relentlessly whipped already in such a situation. But I, a 21st-century citizen of Korea, didn’t want to be the same as that damned psychotic elf.

“Okay, call! Thirty percent it is. Done deal!!”

“R-Really? Holy shh! You’re really giving me thirty percent?!”

“I can even give you a little more as a reward depending on your performance during every quest we undertake.”

“What, what? You’ll give me even more...? Whoah, you’re lying, right!? I won’t be easily deceived, I tell you!”

Shit, I’m being questioned even when I’m showing my goodwill. So unfair! But, I guess that’s just how this world is.

Most people who showed goodwill here were scheming bastards. Of course, she’d doubt me.

The heart of generosity in this world is just as dry and tasteless as the food served here. It was rare to see people help each other or show goodwill without any particular reason.

“S-Swear by the river Styx, Hassan!”

“What?”

Damn, do you want me to go through that hellish stomach pain again? I feel like the title of “Long Splitter Hassan” that I had previously outrun was catching up to me again right now. This is enough to make me shiver uncontrollably in fear.

“W-Well that’s a little bit... Do I really need to swear by the river Styx?”

“But... You’ll be punished if you act in vain and break your vow. S-So if you change your mind...”

“There is no need for that. We’re in a regular party now. We have to trust each other.”

Of course, it was a little hypocritical and fake of me to have said that. Talking about trust and things like these without even writing a contract made me a little uncomfortable too.

I and Luna had a boss-and-subordinate-like relationship, rather than one based on trust and friendship, after all.

In this situation, Luna had no choice but to do as I say.

Of course, It's not like I was gonna be abusive to her or rob her of her money.

I just didn't want to swear a Styx's oath. Not one that I would be forced to uphold at least, because, although I always did my best to do what I promised, I wasn't the best at it if I had to be honest.

Anyway, it looks like the problem was settled for now.

Luna, however, was still muttering to herself while making strange sounds such as, "Hmm"s and "Ah"s but didn't talk to me again for a while.

But just when we were near the place that was inscribed on the parchment...

"D-Do you like me?"

"What?"

I was so confused by this unexpected query that I couldn't stop a question of my own from popping out of my mouth.

For a moment, I had a feeling that I was going to be making a very unsightly expression, so I pretended not to be embarrassed and adjusted my expression and emotions as best I could before asking.

"What did you just say?"

"I was wondering if you liked me... You wouldn't treat me so well if you didn't, otherwise."

"Hah?"

It was the first time since elementary school that I had been asked that question. My head began overheating as I didn't know how to answer her.

Can't you interpret my offer as just me being reasonable? I didn't think she'd go and imagine something like this. This was honestly very embarrassing.

What should I say? Luna then interrupted me while I was agonizing about what to reply to her...

"I-I might not be able to answer your feelings, Ha-Hassan..."

What the fuck, I got dumped before even confessing? Confession: 0, Rejections: 1. I felt thoroughly humiliated at these statistics of my love life. My KDA has been thoroughly ruined from the get-go. [1]

“I swore an oath of chastity to the mother of the night, Knox. That’s why I can’t date or connect in body and soul with a man...”

“Ah—”

I’ve heard about vows of chastity before.

Many people swore an oath of chastity; some to get a blessing or gain the favors of a certain god, while others did so to express their gratitude after being blessed.

Of course; I had only heard of it. It was the first time I’ve seen it in person like this.

“So you made a vow of chastity to Knox?”

“Yes... if you touch me, you’ll be punished by Knox...probably...”

Luna answered with little confidence in her voice.

Providing what I knew about Luna and what happened last night, she might be the daughter of the being called Knox. It was like a mother protecting her daughter’s chastity or something.

It made little sense that a girl that wandered the world in such a skimpy outfit hadn’t been kidnapped or sold anywhere.

As a matter of fact, my parents were also strict enough to set a curfew for my sister. In any world, sons are raised and then released into the outside world while daughters are always more cherished and well-kept.

Now that I think about it, my sister was very cherished by my father while I was subjected by him to eating all kinds of weird food. Something about a foolish daughter and genius son or so he used to say.

“Sigh, I think you’re misunderstanding something here. Let’s talk about it calmly later. We’ve arrived already.”

Having someone to talk to made long distances feel rather short. I couldn’t help but narrow my eyes and crease my forehead when I noticed the familiar street.

Squeak— Squeak—

A wooden signboard with beakers and potions engraved on it was swaying with the wind. I know of this place.

“Welcome, my friend~”

A woman appeared out of the rusty door of the shop. Her conical hat was hiding her flaming red hair and huge watermelon-like breasts.

Anyone who had seen it once would never be able to forget it.

“I was waiting outside since I didn’t know when you were going to arrive~ Come in~”

“Sit anywhere you want~ I’ll bring a cup of tea, well, two cups of tea, wait for a little~”

The witch moved behind a corner filled with junk and debris and then disappeared from that spot.

I could hear Clatters and Clicks and other loud sounds coming around that junk-filled corner. She truly seemed to be preparing tea.

I was sitting on a long chair made of a kind of leather I had never seen before. There was no way I could hide my uneasiness and quivering heart so I just closed my eyes while waiting for her arrival.

“Ha-Hassan, look there...”

After facing the witch, Luna hid behind me and began shivering like a meerkat facing a lion.

Then, she busily moved her eyes and started looking around when the witch left to make some tea.

“...It’s full of snakes.”

Luna’s gaze turned to a glass container that was rather well made and transparent for an object of this world.

My eyebrows frowned instinctively at the sight of the snakes that were immersed in an unknown liquid, probably alcohol or some other kind of chemical compound.

It was because it reminded me of the snake liquor that used to fill every corner of my house, back in my world, for as long as I could remember.

“Woah, it’s a snake. It has three heads. It’s a three-headed snake! So rare!”

Luna's eyes lit up like a kid on Christmas morning. She went close enough to that glass container to smell it and then peered into it to get a good look at the snake.

Hiss—

"It's alive."

Luna screamed with joy when she saw the snake inside wriggling. I have to quietly warn her before an accident happens which would definitely end in our demise.

"Hey, stop it!"

"B-But I've never seen something so amazing before. Who's that woman? Is she really your friend?"

"I don't know. Anyway, just come and sit down for now...!"

"Y-Yes."

Just when Luna followed my orders and discouragedly pressed her butt on one of the chairs, the witch appeared from the previous corner holding a wide tray.

"I've made you guys wait a lot~ This is my own creation~ Try it~"

The witch took out a wooden cup and handed it to Luna first. There was a very suspicious-looking liquid contained inside it. It was also bubbling as if it was boiling lava.

Churn— Churn—

What kind of color is this? Why is it fluorescent? Nothing good can come out of drinking this, I'm positive about that.

It's not an ordinary tea no matter from which angle I look at it. After living in this world for two years, I wasn't dumb enough to drink something a witch was handing to me.

"Whoa, it's delicious. What is this? It gives off a slightly burning aftermath in my mouth. It's really soothing."

Luna who had already drunk her share shouted excitedly. Damn, what a reckless girl. How are you even still alive after being so reckless all the time?

"Won't you drink yours, Hassan? Can I have it, then?"

"Yeah, just drink it all."

"Holy shh! I like this so much!"

“The little one seems to like it~ It’s my latest creation~ I just got some Hydra blood from a friend and successfully neutralized it~ I also added pepper among other things to brew this connotation of tea~”

“H-Hydra blood? How could there be such a thing?”

Luna started crying because she had just drank two shots of the tea without even knowing how it was made. The witch laughed at her reckless behavior.

“Don’t worry~ I deprived it of its divinity until it was at a level where it’s harmless to the human body~ Your pink hair is rather cute~ You don’t see this color a lot around here~ Where are you from little one~? Do you mind if I draw some of your blood~?”

“H-Hiik—”

Luna trembled in fear like a little furry animal in front of a gleaming predator, and then fell down on her butt. Without hesitation, she hid behind my back for protection, just like someone at the bottom of the food chain would do.

“Just kidding~ I can’t help but want to make fun of cute children whenever I see them~ How cute~!”

“A-Anyway, I heard you needed me for something?”

I tried to change the mood and grab the attention of Nemea who seemed to be having fun teasing Luna. I wanted to pass as little time as possible in this different world version of my father’s health center.

“Yes, my friend~ I’m still new in this city and have yet to know many people~ I thought I could trust you with this, my friend~”

“So, what am I to do? Only the reward was written, nothing else.”

“It will be a piece of cake~ Nothing too difficult~ There’s something precious to me I’d like you to find~ My pet cat~ My poor white cat has disappeared~”

“So, you want me to find that white cat?”

“Yeah, I’m glad you’re quick on the uptake, my friend~ My cat probably left the shop the last time, when you touched me~ I had left the door open at the time~ That stinking cat tries to run away every time I take my eyes off it~”

“Hassan touched what?”

“That little thing hates being hungry more than anything~ I don’t know how much pain it must be going through right now~ Fortunately, I have a rough idea of where it is~ It likes dark and damp places~ There are not many places it could be in~”

“Wait, Hassan touched you? I wonder what that means...”

“Well, that’s a little too soon for a kid like you to talk about.”

This quest is very sussy. And as you guys know, nothing can go right for Hassan. Nemea trolling Luna at the end was pretty funny too lmao. Thanks for reading and see you next time.

Chapter 27: Nemea's Cat (3)

☾ Nemea’s Cat (3) ☽

When I came out of the store, the sun was still shining brightly on the street.

I had no way to know the exact time, but looking at the sun’s placement in the sky, it’s probably around 2 o’clock in the afternoon.

“May Mars bless you, my friend~ you too, little one~”

Nemea, the witch, waved at both me and Luna as we left the store. Moments after, she closed the door without leaving us the time to answer her back.

The moment she was out of my sight, I was finally able to heave a sigh of relief. It really felt similar to the experience of coming back safely from a straight trip to the wolf’s den.

“Hassan, you can’t trust that woman.”

Luna, who had been in a bad mood after being exposed to Nemea’s relentless teasing, finally opened her mouth and uttered those words of caution.

Her narrowed eyebrows and stuck-out lips, forming a cute pout, told me all I needed to know about her first impressions of the witch.

I couldn’t help but ask.

“Why?”

“That woman is too suspicious. She’s not an ordinary person. She must be a monster in disguise!”

Damn it, what are you even talking about again?

“Why do you think so?”

“Her chest is the size of a human head! No one in Ideope had such a big bust. She is surely a bad person.”

I don't know what kind of calculations she went through in that dull head of hers to determine that a big-chested woman equated to a bad person. Maybe Luna, who was showing some symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome, thought it was a matter of course.

“She's the one that's paying us, don't needlessly badmouth her.”

Although we were already far from the vicinity of the store, I was still afraid the witch may have heard us.

It wouldn't be weird since she called herself a witch. Maybe she was using some kind of magic I wasn't aware of to overhear our conversation? For a witch, that felt like a plausible scenario.

“At any rate, I just don't feel good about her. Can't we just give up this job and do something else?”

“Oi, you think I have a lot of friends that can provide quests with a reward of 2 silvers? Does it look easy to you? We still need money to eat, you know.”

“No, but...”

“And you want us to do that just because you don't like that witch?”

“...”

Luna shut her mouth completely after I pointed out the unreasonableness of her argument with a harsh scolding.

She probably had a lot she wanted to say but couldn't find the right words for them, or maybe she was just sulking and didn't want to talk anymore.

My sister usually kept her mouth shut whenever she got angry.

Like a turtle that retreated into its shell, I would see her tongue hide behind the confines of her sealed-shut mouth. From then on she would start acting like an iron fortress that rebounded every attempt at striking a conversation with her. Well, that's how it usually went with that troublesome sister of mine.

From experience, I knew that the best course of action is to leave such a person alone for a while.

So, we walked down the street in total silence, no words were exchanged between us.

The situation was a little bit uncomfortable but I had to stay strong here. If I relented now, she might get used to the idea of sulking to get what she wants. I shouldn't try to soothe her anytime soon. Well, that's how it should be.

Anyway, our new destination was clear. The witch said that her cat, or the hell whatever she was raising, would probably be frolicking around in an underground aqueduct.

Underground waterways were a very familiar place to me as I used to go in and out of them when I was living my life as a slave.

Of course, that was back in Kalkata. But, I didn't see any reason why it would be any different here in Sodomora.

They all were damp and smelly places with enclosed corridors that made you nauseous just thinking about them. Lepers and vagabonds of all forms infested its every corner, spread all over like a horde of plaguing rats, laughing gloomily with shriveled and dismal eyes that had lost all hopes in life. They were the kind of people who didn't mind going to any and all lengths for the most minuscule of benefits, as they had lost any attachment to life. Going fully prepared to such a place was strictly advised.

"Hey, you've said that you've been here for a few months. Do you know any general store around here?"

"..."

I asked her, thinking that she would have stopped sulking by now. But, contrary to my expectations, she didn't respond a single bit, merely glancing at me with eyes that seemed to express that she was still angry with me.

If it was my sister, I'd have started rubbing her hair while sweet-talking her. "You're so annoying," she'd have replied while feeling slightly shy and embarrassed.

"There's one there."

As if sensing my discomfort, Luna reluctantly spoke in a high-pitched voice that did little to hide her annoyance.

『Ruth's General Store』

That's what the sign was showing.

Dililing-

A bell started ringing in a high-pitched tone when I opened the door. The first thing I could see inside the store was a cloud of dust blasting out of it and all sorts of rubbish and junk stacked all around in messy piles. This indeed feels like a general store, alright.

It was just like that small general store that you could see in almost any neighborhood or the mini stationary store in front of your primary school as a kid.

"Who is it?"

Asked a middle-aged man with thick muscles as he trudged out of the store. A necklace with a square plate reflecting a bluish tint was hanging around his neck.

It was the identification tag of the adventurer's guild. A tag that exhibited his identity as a bronze-tier adventurer.

He looked like a clerk or maybe the store owner? But it seemed that he was also an adventurer.

Luna really took me to the right place this time. They even had things that we would definitely need and some that I didn't even think of before but would be useful on our journey, nonetheless.

"What do you need?"

"We're going down to the underground waterways. We need torches and preserved food, do you have them?"

"Ah... Right. The underground aqueduct. A lot of people are heading there these days, I have everything you need."

The bronze-tier middle-aged adventurer handed me a package that looked as massive and heavy as the military gear I used to wear during my time of service. The volume was rather big and the weight quite significant, it seemed to contain many things. I wasn't sure if all of it was necessary or not.

"A torch, wood for making bonfires, dry rations, water, bandages, insect-repelling herbs... I swear by Lord Mars that nothing necessary for your trip is missing."

"Can I check what's inside?"

"You're free to do so as long as you do it under my supervision."

“Give me a minute...”

Rummage~

After asking the owner’s permission and opening the package I could see all kinds of necessary-looking items as he had informed me.

When it comes to items that were bundled in a bag, some bastards in Kalkata would often replace the goods with stones. Taking that horrible experience into account, I couldn’t be careless. But by the looks of it, it seems there wasn’t such a thing in Sodomora.

“How much is it?”

I asked after packing all the things again.

“It’s only 50 coppers.”

50 coppers — a little more than I thought.

“You think it’s a little expensive, right? But there’s a reason for this. I’m charging you 10 more coppers for a raincoat.”

“A raincoat?”

“Yes, this city’s underground waterways are poorly managed, putrid and turbid water fall from all directions, flooding the corridors. You’ll end up drenched from the stray splashes or direct showers if you don’t wear something appropriate, especially this pink-haired girl...”

The shopkeeper glanced at Luna.

“You can’t go there without shoes too. If you buy sandals, I’ll sell them to you along with two raincoats for 50 coppers, making a total of 1 silver for everything.”

Damn, 1 silver. Although I was getting 2 silvers from this quest it also meant that 1 silver coin from my reserve funds had to be used too which drastically reduced the gains for this quest.

Feelings that I was somehow being deceived began building up in my heart, right until the owner hammered the final nail into the coffin that was my feelings.

“Listen to me before you regret it later. You’re from the Mars Guild, right? That’s the only guild that accepts Samaritans as far as I know. I’m from there too, so I’m selling it cheap, as consideration for a fellow guild member.”

“Hmmm.”

Just as I was humming in hesitation, Luna closed the gap between us and spoke quietly in a whispering tone.

“I don’t need sandals, Hassan. I like walking on my bare feet.”

To be frank, I’m not sure if she walks on her bare feet because she likes it or because she can’t afford to buy shoes. But, in any case, I think that Luna needed sandals too.

No matter where you have lived previously, the sewers weren’t a place that was sanitary enough to walk on barefoot.

And because feet were also called the second heart for humans, close attention must be paid to them.

“Sigh, 1 silver. Alright, I’ll take it.”

“Wise decision, Samaritan, you definitely won’t regret it. I don’t know why anyone bothers visiting these underground waterways. Still, if you find anything that looks useful, bring it here. I’ll buy it from you.”

Although it felt like I was cutting off a part of my own flesh, parting with my precious fund reserves, I still decided to agree to his deal and pay one silver for the underground waterway exploration package, a pair of raincoats, and sandals for Luna.

The term ‘Raincoat’ was very appropriate since it was just a hood that was attached to a sack or some straws hewn together... maybe. I wasn’t too sure about the materials, as they looked all kinds of weird.

Of course, I didn’t have any right to complain since most, if not all, clothes sold for less than 1 silver were this crude and sloppy.

“What do you think?”

I put on the ragged coat and then asked Luna that question. She narrowed her eyebrows and then casually replied in a leisurely tone.

“You look like a murderer.

Fuck off.

“How about me, Hassan? It’s a little long, isn’t it? Don’t I look dumb in it? I sure feel dumb, at least.”

The raincoat that barely fit me, was long enough to reach Luna’s feet.

She looked like a kid that was wearing an adult's clothes. It was very funny to look at. But, even though it was a bit regrettable, in a way, I also felt relief that her body was now a lot less exposed.

Luna's usual clothes attract way too much attention. They were perfect to provoke unnecessary quarrels or cause troublesome incidents. It would be a lot better for us today if she dressed properly like this.

"It looks good, don't worry. Are the shoes fitting?"

Well, I say shoes but it felt more like sandals with two strings strapped on a thick leather plate. Although it wasn't much, the difference should be enormous compared to walking barefoot.

Luna looked at her feet and then replied in a slightly annoyed tone.

"I feel a bit heavy wearing them. Maybe, because I'm used to walking barefoot. But... I like it. You didn't have to buy them for me, though. S-So, thank you, Hassan."

Her gratitude left me a little dazed.

Even though I had lived for almost two decades and a half I was still a little clueless as to what kind of expression I was supposed to make after someone praised me or showed their appreciation.

"I'll pay you back later."

Or so she said while smacking her lips in resolution.

"How cute, it's good to be young. Now that I think of it, me and my wife also explored this and that together when we were your age. Well, take this, it's a map of the underground waterways issued by the Sodomora government office. It would normally cost 5 coppers but consider it a free service."

Free service? Damn, I never thought I'd get a favor from others. This is such a nice shop.

I need to memorize the location of this store. I'll definitely come here again to stock up on items before adventuring.

"Check this out! It's a water puddle! It's so comfortable to walk on it with shoes."

Splash- Splash-

Luna began running around the mud and the still water puddles to the point where the newly-bought shoes were all wet from the mud and water. Seeing her doing that while wearing an oversized raincoat made her look exactly like a little kid.

“Well, that’s the point of buying shoes. You’ll be able to walk over irritating terrains and substances without having to feel any of them. It’s really convenient that way.”

“Oh! S-So it’s like that, huh? You’re even smarter than I initially thought you to be, Hassan.”

Was this really a matter of being smart or not? I felt like I was being teased rather than praised, damn it!

After running around for a long time, Luna finally came back to my side and calmly followed me to our destination.

She seemed to be feeling so good that it swept away all the negative feelings she had for me following the argument we had, just after leaving the witch’s house.

The only thing I could think about after seeing this was that in addition to showing symptoms of Asperger’s Syndrome she seemed to be showing signs of ADHD as well. Will I be able to heal her by slapping her a little as I did with Daphne?

I was seriously considering that option while wondering if the terrifying mother of the night, Knox, would appear again if I did slap her.

“Look here, Hassan. I think this is it.”

Luna, who was vigorously walking beside me, suddenly said with a really discouraged tone.

It seems that the cause of her loss of enthusiasm was what she was looking at right now. Luna was staring straight down at a dark and gloomy-looking hole in the middle of the road.

According to the owner of the general store, this was the entrance to the underground waterways.

Whisper-

The strange, slightly eerie sound of the wind coming out of it was like the wails leaking out from the depths of the abyss. I felt like I could hear the cry of beasts and the screams of people if I listened carefully.

Although Kalkata’s waterways were disgustingly dirty they didn’t feel as menacing as this one. Damn, do we really need to go there?

At that time, Luna came closer while blankly peering into it. She then softly whispered in a quivering tone.

“...Those who dared to come here... Abandon all hope!”

“What’s that?”

“It’s what’s written in Pluto’s underground ruins. From ancient times, many underground places have been discovered to be connected to Pluto’s ruins. M-Maybe this is one of them.”

Luna took a deep breath after muttering out that disturbing piece of information.

I felt very nervous because, although we were just stepping into an underground aqueduct, it felt more like stepping into the gates of hell.

“Didn’t she say the cat was named Whitey? Won’t it come out if we just call it?”

“Oi, No matter how much you want to avoid going inside, isn’t that too far-fetched?”

“You never know, it just might work. Whitey, Whitey, are you here? Answer me if you are...”

Luna screamed into the hollow halls of the dark hole and listened carefully, praying for a response. But, no answer came back, shattering her naive hopes.

“Th-This is weird why isn’t it coming out.”

“Of course, it won’t come out if you say it like this. You need to use cat language, you dummy.”

“Is that so? Meow, meow!”

Damn, should I really be forming a party with her?

Remember guys, big-breasted women are not to be trusted. Or so would Luna say, not that I’d disagree with her... Anyway, thanks for reading and see you later. I had a lot of fun translating the , it’s gonna be a blast.

Chapter 28: Nemea's Cat (4)

☪ Nemea’s Cat (4) ☪

“Meow, Meow.”

It has been a while since Luna started producing these weird cries from her mouth.

“Oh, I was just wondering who was calling me, from some time ago, so it was you, brother!”

I turned around feeling a presence behind me, and all I could see was a conical hat. For a moment, I was engulfed in a deep fear that the witch might have overheard us and then followed us here to take her vengeance. But, after I noticed the big nose under it, the fear was replaced by a seething feeling of anger.

“Buzz me a tooter before you just pop out, you creep.” ¹*This was especially hard to localize. Raws said blinkers, like car blinkers and Hassan was asking Marco to light them up to notify him. We had to go out of our way and pull things out of our ass to localize it as hooter, or basically honking of a car horn. This way the next line makes sense.*

“What’s a tooter? Anyway, I just came because I heard a pleasant voice calling for me. It seems that Lord Mercury, the great god of encounters, is looking after us.”

Clap- Clap-

Marco raised his hands while holding what looked like dentures and began making weird noises while clapping them between his palms.

“Ah, this is my new instrument, Castanets. I have no choice but to use this since my Lyre got destroyed while fighting the hateful goblins. When you clap them like this a sound will be produced from the groove insi-“

“I didn’t ask, you bastard. What the hell are you doing here? And... Who called you, again?”

“Were you guys not calling for Whitey? That was my nickname as a kid.”

Luna, who had been silently listening to our bickering until now, beat me to it and answered instead.

“Whitey is a cat.”

“It’s a cat? Damn, I thought you guys came to see my underground performance.”

“You’re performing underground now, big nose?”

“My name is Marco, not big nose, alright. And yeah, I perform every week on the streets and the undergrounds. Didn’t I tell you during the drinking party?”

“Did you, now?”

Luna stared in my direction while narrowing her eyes thinly. Her eyes seemed to be asking me if I could remember what he was talking about. But the memories of that day were completely shut out from my mind and I couldn't remember much even if I tried my hardest to recall them.

"You don't seem to remember anything, do you? Anyway, are you guys going down the underground waterways to search for a cat? To meet here despite coming to this place for different reasons can only be said to be a fateful meeting."

I didn't interact with this Marco guy a lot but the minuscule time we did was enough for me to notice he liked to attribute all kinds of things to the power of fate. I guess that's how most street musicians are.

I don't know if being a bard can be considered to be a good fortune or a tragedy. After all, bards were sensitive folks that staked their lives around their ability to overdramatize every tale they could get their hands on.

To put it bluntly, these were the type of people that placed the fulfillment of their artistic needs over their need to satiate their hunger.

To put it even more bluntly, they were just poor souls that were completely disconnected from the reality of their situation and the world they live in.

"You said you often perform in the underground, big nose. You should probably know the way around here, right?"

"Yeah, sis. Do you need any guidance? You said you were looking for a cat, didn't you?"

Marco, the big-nosed musician, was a better person than I had initially thought. Well, he was still a guy that lived in a dangerous world and made a living only wielding a single instrument. So, it would be weird if he didn't have a few tricks up his sleeves.

Although he was completely useless in a battle, the fact that we got one additional helper was somewhat reassuring in itself.

In this world where battle tactics were still primitive, numbers were the mightiest force that could topple over everything else.

But then again, that probably means we'll have to split the reward with him.

One silver has already been spent on this quest, and the back of my head was running all kinds of selfish calculations till then. An additional take on the reward pool wasn't something my mind was going to allow right now. What should I do now?

"You won't get any share of the reward though, big nose."

“Sigh, do you think this Marco is a person that is only driven by money, sister?”

“Yes.”

“Ideope’s people indeed have a good eye for people! Money rocks! In accordance with the laws set by Lord Mercury himself, I’ll only take 10% of the commission.”

10%? Increasing our manpower for a measly 10% doesn’t sound too bad to me.

“Marco, you’re a corrupted and half-baked artist. Okay, you win. You’re getting that 10%.”

“Artist? Did you just call this Marco an artist? I’ve heard people call me an entertainer or a clown but this is the first time I’ve heard someone call me an artist. What’s this warm feeling welling up in my chest? Anyway, let’s get going!”

We slowly went down the hole leading to the underground aqueduct.

As I descended the ladder, the first thing I noticed was the dark and damp floor along with the red eyes of rats, infesting the underground sewers, that were as big as my fists.

Blaze-

Even with our torches lit, the rats showed no signs of fear or running away. I felt a shiver run down my back at this horrifying realization.

Squeak- Squeak-

Having attentively listened to my liberal art classes, I was well aware of how these rat bastards carried all kinds of germs and illnesses and caused overwhelming and unrestrained chaos in the middle ages.

It’s not hard to predict what the outcome of being bitten by a rat in this world, where the art of medicine was still crude and underdeveloped, would be.

“It’s a rat! So cute! I wanna hold it!”

Luna, however, didn’t seem to be sharing my worries, as she naively knelt down and held out her palms in the direction of the dastardly rats. A few of the rats quickly came close and began rubbing their heads on her opened palm.

“Yo, what the fuck, put them down!”

“Why? They’re cute. Rats are Lady Knox’s servants, you know.”

“Shit, it doesn’t matter! Just put them down already! They’re dirty and filthy!”

“Hmm-“

Luna frowned with an expression of incomprehension at my sudden nervous shout and reluctantly released the rats back to the bottom of the gutter.

Squeak-

In a world where talks about the existence of germs and viruses would be dismissed as senseless blabbering of a buffoon, my actions may appear as nothing but an unnecessary fuss to the others. But I had no choice but to still do it as rats were a no-go.

I get mad enough to grind my teeth when I remember all the hardships I had to go through because of these filthy bunch back when I was a slave.

“Hmm, Samaritans are afraid of rats. How unexpected.”

“Sister, everyone fears at least one thing. Didn’t the great Achilles die because his heel was bitten by a rat?”

“True. But there are so many rats here, much more than the amount back in Ideope’s gutters.”

Luna’s lips curled upwards, seemingly excited at the sight of all the rats squeaking all around her. Marco on the other end was pathetically clapping with his denture-esque instrument.

“Sodomora’s gutter’s rat swarm has an interesting story behind it. It was said that a long time ago, a musician used his flute to drive the rats aw-.”

“Anyway, let’s go.”

“Let’s talk about it later then.”

I was afraid his useless chatter would go on for way too long than I was able to handle, so I decided to move on. It was also because I noticed that the raincoat was becoming increasingly wetter because of all the water falling around us.

It smelled disgusting as these were sewers where all kinds of nasty things were flowing. Probably, even a healthy country would have been ruined if it had such an abominable place, even worse was the fact that this place was also filled to the brim with filthy rats.

“There are a lot of rats around here, it’s not strange for a cat to be snooping around in this place. Do you know what that Whitey looks like?”

I remembered the appearance of the white cat, that the witch described, at Marco's sudden question.

"Its fur is pristine white all over. You could immediately tell it apart by simply looking at it."

"A white-furred cat huh? Definitely, something you don't see every day in Sodomora. Anyway, mark my words, we'll find it real quick."

So, Marco, me, and Luna continued making our way through the dark, damp, and gloomy underground road. Although our trip could be said to be going seamlessly, for now, the same couldn't be said about our task.

I knew for a fact that looking for a cat in such a big city wasn't easy, to begin with. It was highly likely that this quest would take us multiple days to complete.

Nemea, however, said that she would pay us more if the quest took longer.

Believing that we would get extra money for this, we quietly moved our legs and advanced through the filth-covered road.

We can't fail or give up on this quest as it will be harder for us to rank up to the silver rank if we do.

"Meaaaow."

"Sister, I have to say, you genuinely have a great talent for making cat noises."

"It's a matter of course. In Ideope, the first thing you learn to become a voodoo shaman is how to imitate animals. It's because we have to communicate with a lot of things. We talk to each other's soul through these cries."

Luna and Marco were chatting nonchalantly, seemingly unaware of our serious situation.

This reminded me of the group assignments that we were assigned in the liberal arts class during college. Even then only the leader of the group would hurry the others to work while they would just mindlessly rattle like these two buffoons.

"Anyway, let's keep going."

"Meeeeeoww-"

Damn it.

I had been walking for a long time while listening to these strange cat sounds until...

Kareureuk-

“What the hell?! Did you guys hear that?”

I suddenly stopped when I heard a sound that was remarkably similar to what Luna was making. It was coming from a corner where the sewage was clogged, and I could see decayed garbage and dead rats floating around that place.

“You heard it? How should I say this? I was just scratching my armpits, brother.”

“I didn’t hear anything.”

Luna shook her head in plain denial.

Marco, standing next to me said in a tentative tone, “Are you having hallucinations, brother? I hope you weren’t cursed by that obsidian stone we touched last time.” all that while having a regretful expression, full of pity for me, as if doubting my mental sanity.

....

It’s strange, I’m sure I heard something just now.

“Were you listening, Hassan? I told you it was me.”

“No, it was something else. It was the sound of a living being, I’m sure of it.”

Kareureuk!

“Y-you’re telling the truth? Yeah, something really just made a sound over there!”

Luna, who was previously skeptical, suddenly screamed in surprise and pointed to the corner where I originally heard the sound from.

“Wow, the cat must have actually heard my soul speak! My voodoo skills must have reached a new height!”

Damn, how could a cat actually react to such a bizarre mimicry or this soul thingamajig, as Luna liked to call it... Is this the world that is in the wrong or is it just me? I was having a literal headache at that bizarre thought.

Still, I was glad to have finally gotten a clue about our task. It was now time to check the place where that sound came from.

“Brother, that place... I’d rather not go inside.”

Marco, who until now had been talking and singing with excitement lacing his every word, suddenly grabbed my shoulders and tried to dissuade me from going to that place with an unprecedented serious expression.

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“I-Is there a monster inside?”

“No, it’s just very dirty inside. It’s so smelly that even the vagrants wouldn’t dare to go inside there.”

Man, what can I even say? Why did you have to hold my shoulders and talk in such a serious tone just to warn me about that trivial thing, you damn bastard?

Thinking about it more deeply though, he was indeed right. Was Marco smarter and more hygienic than I thought? Marco just went a few steps higher in my hygiene ranking list with that remark.

Luna began sniffing next to me.

“I don’t think I smell anything though.”

The stench around us was so strong that it made my nose crook immediately, but Luna seemed oblivious to it and shrugged her shoulders. It seems her sense of taste and smell are completely nonexistent at this point. What a poor girl!

“Sister’s sense of smell is so amazing.”

“I’ve been training since I was a kid! I’m not even affected by the vilest smell. But even so, I still have something good for remedying that.”

Luna suddenly shoved her hand inside her raincoat and took out a small shell from it.

“This is mint oil, you won’t smell anything bad if you rub it under your nose.”

She then dipped her fingers inside the white and thick liquid contained in the shell and smeared it in the center of both my and Marco’s philtrum.

Smear-

It was a sensation that I couldn’t decide whether it was hot or cold, seeping through my nose and traveling directly up into my head.

This sensation reminded me of one of the punishment games we used to play in my middle school’s cafeteria, where we had to put toothpaste under our noses. It felt exactly the same actually.

It was a little bit uncomfortable but a lot better than smelling the disgusting stench of the sewers.

“Argh, it burns, I-I’m gonna die! It smells like mint.”

“Don’t make a fuss, bastard! Lets’s go inside but be careful, we still don’t know what kind of things could be present there-“

I gave a brief warning to the party and then prepared myself to draw out my sword at any moment.

Sichik- Sichichik-

My hair stood on its end when I noticed something akin to a black wave surging toward us. Rats. Fucking filthy rats, and a whole ass lot of them. It was a swarm of rats that congregated together so much that it looked like a literal wave of living rats.

“Oh, damn it! What the hell!”

“The rats here love mint! It’s because of the residues of the mint-flavored beers, that drop on the ground, ends up flowing here.”

“Oi, you should have told me about that earlier!”

The rats quickly encircled me, Luna, and Marco.

Not only that, they kept jumping from all directions of the surroundings as if spamming the spacebar key. They were continuously climbing our bodies and then clawing or gnawing at everything in their wake, almost tearing our bodies apart.

“This shit! Damn rats!”

I began shaking my torch and a sword in the air in a threatening manner, to get the rats away. It’s finally time for this great Hassan of the Santoryu style to shine.

“I’m gonna behead all of you like I did with the goblins, bastards”

Scratch-

“Hasagi!” ²This is a League of Legends reference. Hasagi is the spoken phrase of Yasuo. This means ‘Cutting Edge’ or ‘Towards the Dawn’ we kept it because it’s cooler.

Squeak- Siksik-

But these little devils were fearless and kept gnawing at my raincoat with their tiny razor-like teeth, completely ignoring my sword swings.

Damn, the 110 coppers worth of raincoat that I just bought ended up being these rats' meal.

“L-Lemme try something! Sik- Siksik-! Siksik-!”

“Hey, what are you doing?”

“I’m making rat noises. I’ll try convincing them to leave us alone with my voodoo of soul communication. A-Arg! H-Hey guys, stop, we’re friends! Si-Sik!”

“Stop messing around! Just start swinging something away!”

This wicked wave of rats that were surrounding and swarming us was simply a bunch of evil robbers. At the current pace not only would we have to pay for new clothes but also for treatment. This is going to cost way more than just two silvers!

Just as the words, “Let’s run away” were going to get out of my mouth...

...

A gentle melody suddenly began flowing out from somewhere in a rhythmic flux and in that instant, as if the stop button of the rat swarm had been pressed, all of the menacing rats suddenly froze in their spots.

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Yo, hope you guys enjoyed this chapter. Honestly very happy to see Luna and Marco’s antics again, definitely one of the highlights of the novel. Nothing much to say beside that, ever heard of the flutist of Hamelin? It’s gonna be relevant later. Anyway, see you next time.

Footnotes:

- 1 *This was especially hard to localize. Raws said blinkers, like car blinkers and Hassan was asking Marco to light them up to notify him. We had to go out of our way and pull things out of our ass to localize it as hooter, or basically honking of a car horn. This way the next line makes sense.*
- 2 *This is a League of Legends reference. Hasagi is the spoken phrase of Yasuo. This means ‘Cutting Edge’ or ‘Towards the Dawn’ we kept it because it’s cooler.*

Chapter 29: Nemea's Cat (5)

🌀 Nemea's Cat (5) 🌀

Damn it, I've never thought that I'd meet my demise by being bitten to death by filthy rats. Maybe I wasn't cut out to be an adventurer after all.

This fucking damned world. Will I ever be able to go back to the earth where I lived? How will I even do it? Just when I seriously started contemplating these questions...

...

A gentle melody suddenly began flowing out from somewhere in a rhythmic flux and in that instant, as if the stop button of the rat swarm had been pressed, all of the menacing rats suddenly froze in their spots.

Slowly, the filthy vermins started backing up one by one, and then, they disappeared in some corner of this god-damned place in the same fashion that they had attacked us — in a swarm.

"... I thought I was going to get ransacked."

I was only able to calm my rapidly beating heart after they all had hidden back somewhere in the shadows. Looking around, I could see Luna and Marco crouching on the ground, shuddering in fear, maybe waiting for their eventual demise.

"Oi, all the rats are gone, you guys can wake up now."

Only then did Luna lift her head and look around.

"I-I thought I was going to die. I guess my heart-felt persuasion using my soul-speak ended up working on them."

"I can't believe we just got attacked by rats! Mint should be avoided at all costs from now on inside here. Whew, that was such a close call!"

"Is everyone okay? Make sure to check your bodies for any rat bites."

The party got up at my words and we began checking each other's bodies for any injuries and bites. Although our clothes were thoroughly ruined we didn't seem to have been injured at least.

I don't know why it happened, but I was very glad that it did. We were incredibly lucky that the rats had escaped, when they did, otherwise, this gloomy place would've turned into our graves.

..

Then, I heard that gentle melody again and turned my head in its direction. It was probably a tune produced by a wind instrument.

Step- Step-

At the same time, I felt someone's presence, approaching us. Soon, someone's shadow was reflected by the light of my torch.

The first thing I could distinguish about the person was a dark gray-colored robe.

Underneath the robe, there laid pale white skin and thin lips that had a long instrument placed in between them. But, the most eye-catching thing about the unknown individual was the cleavage of her up-lifted chest area that was clearly visible from under the robe.

A woman? I got relieved for an instant, but, in the very next moment, quickly tensed up and prepared myself to unsheathe my sword again at a moment's notice. No regular woman would casually wander the underground like this. She was definitely dangerous.

The woman, who had suddenly arrived before us, took the flute off her thin lips and uttered in slight incoherent speech.

"Fateful encounter. Thanks to Lord Mercury."

Although a little inarticulate, the voice itself was very gentle and pure, matching the sound of the soothing melody she had produced from her flute.

I could feel the words laced with fatigue and dissatisfaction building inside of my throat disappear just by listening to her tranquil voice.

"A flute's tune that controls rats! Y-You're Hamelin, aren't you?"

Instead of wondering what she was doing here, Marco opened his mouth and asked for her name instead. The gray-robed woman opened her thin lips and answered him with the same gentle tone.

"Such a nickname, have had. I'm Augeas, honored guardian shepherd of the..."

"Damn, I never thought I'd get the chance to meet the Hamelin! This is such a great honor! My name is Marco, Aksa Marco! I've lost count of the number of months I've been wandering this underground hellhole in search of you!"

Marco began babbling non-stop, at the woman in front of us, while foaming from his mouth like a cockroach that had just consumed boric acid.

Although he had been overwhelmed by the rats and nearly died a few moments ago, he got excited and heated up like nothing of the sort had ever taken place in the first place.

Seeing Marco's great enthusiasm at meeting her, I became somewhat interested in this woman too...

“Hamelin the flutist! Can you tell me the secret of music that can charm rats!”

“Divulge secret, I can not. I felt, familiar feeling.”

I could feel her gaze from under the robe be directed at me.

Flash-

At that moment, her bewitching red eyes, which were twinkling from under her dark robe, met mine, and a creepy feeling shot straight up my back. My knees momentarily lost all their strength and I nearly fell down. Damn it...

I'm not able to pinpoint what it was, but something was telling me I shouldn't get involved with this woman. Only a few people in this world could make me feel like this. None of them was good news for me, however.

This woman too was probably one of them, meaning bad news for poor old Hassan.

Controlling rats with just a flute! I can't imagine how such a thing could be possible unless you sold your soul to the devil.

“A familiar smell. Nemea's friend. Aren't you?”

My vigilance that had been raised lowered down a little at the mention of the name — Nemea. Because, I surmised that, the name of the witch that had tasked me with finding her cat was probably Nemea, the name the flute-bearing woman spoke of.

“Oh, y-yes. T-Thank you for saving us.”

“Amazing karma. But unripe, still. Two? No, three or more. Warrior of the gods. No, just a toy. Poor thing...”

The woman with the flute began mumbling incomprehensible words to herself. Soon, she clicked her tongue, turned back, and began walking. Then she said, without turning back to look at us who were very confused by her incomprehensible behavior.

“Follow me. Cat you're looking for. I have.”

Then she continued walking away just like that. Whether we were overwhelmed by the situation or because of her weird atmosphere, we didn't know, but we couldn't take off our feet from the ground and just stared at each other blankly, not moving a single inch from our spots.

I was seriously thinking about what to do when Luna interrupted, voicing her unease about the matter.

“I-I have a bad feeling about this.”

“Sister, is this your opinion as a shaman?”

“No, that woman’s breasts are too big. They look so big despite being covered with a robe. She must be a monster disguised as a human. Exactly like that witch who commissioned us this task.”

“Damn it, you still haven’t given up on that.”

Even though I dismissed Luna for her incoherent logic, I too was unsure about whether it was safe to follow this woman or not, although for different reasons.

Well, that uncertainty didn’t stay for long. The dismal sounds of the rats beginning to squeak again along with a cold wind brushing along our napes made the decision easier for us to take. Soon, we all followed her simultaneously as if our backs had been pushed by some unknown force. Fear — should be an apt name for that, I guess.

* *

“Oi, can we really follow her, Marco?”

The woman showed no signs of stopping even after walking for so long.

I lost count of how many times we had circled this winding underpass, I can’t tell where we are even with the help of the map now. We were completely lost in this damned place.

I obviously couldn’t help but worry and asked Marco again.

“Oi, big nose, you seemed to know that girl, are you sure she’s reliable?”

“It would be hard for you to find a musician or a bard in Sodomora that doesn’t know her. Her story is somewhat of an urban legend or akin to a ghost story. I never thought we’d meet this way.”

Why are you talking about a legend when I’m asking you if she’s trustworthy or not?

“In any case, she’s a great musician!”

What can I say? It reminded me of how my sister, a fan of idols, ditched studying at night to attend a concert.

That day I had to uncaringly listen to the ramblings of that blabbering little cunt until I fell asleep from boredom and annoyance. Marco was acting just like my sister from back then.

He was acting crazy after meeting the idol he had always admired. There's no way someone in this state can make a sound judgment.

"Unbelievable! How could that woman shapeshift into a human..."

It seems that once again I was the only sane person in this ragtag group of lunatics.

Even if all he did was just nagging, in a way, the old-fashioned Plato's stories would at least be somewhat helpful, something these rascals were incapable of. I never thought I'd miss that decrepit old man.

"Nemea's cat. It's inside."

The woman suddenly stopped, so we shut our mouths and stopped alongside her.

The flutist woman stopped at a dead end blocked by a cage, akin to an underground prison, and then slowly caressed the rusty iron bars with her slender fingers.

Sweep-

It was kind of weird to look at — the way she caressed the bars, was almost erotic. Wasn't this sexual harassment?

"So, you're saying the cat is inside? Are you sure?"

"Yes. Different from Nemea Erimantus. Always tell the truth. Sometimes truth more smelly than lies. Ugly."

I have no clue what she was talking about but it seems Nemea's cat was over there. I think I could even hear it if I attentively listened with my ears perked.

"There, go. Check it out yourself."

The woman broke the lock with a bang. Even though the lock was rusty and corroded, still, breaking it with your bare hands... How incredibly strong!

"Anyway, let's hurry up and get done with it. You said your name was Oygayas or something? In any case, thank you."

"It's Augeas. Hamelin enough, if find Augeas hard."

"Well, let's get to work then. Oi, let's go."

I felt impatient at the mere thought of elongating my stay with this freaky woman, so I quickly went through the gap in the cage's frame.

“W-wait for me!”

“I’m coming too.”

I could feel the woman’s red eyes placed on my back, an unflinching gaze directed at me, until I finally disappeared around the corner.

She was looking at me with a gaze that felt like it could stab holes in me, did I do something wrong? Was she mad at me for calling her gay? ¹He called her Ou-gay-us. Hence the reference.

Or maybe she was angry because I had cut her favorite rats in half back then? That’s all I can think of right now.

Not being subjected to her piercing gaze anymore, after turning around the corner, I finally let out a sigh of relief.

“Huh, wow, that was laborious.”

“L-Look there! It’s white fur!”

Then, Luna began screaming, in that high-pitched tone of hers, while pointing at something on the floor.

I looked at the ground while touching my nigh-deafened ears after Luna’s scream. There, I could see a few handfuls of long white hair lying on it.

“Sister, let me check.”

Suddenly, Marco knelt on his knees and picked up a few twigs. He then sniffed them and took out his tongue to lick and taste them. It was a pretty disgusting thing to witness.

“It’s cat fur. It must have been starving for a long time. It’s malnourished.”

“Hey, that’s very intriguing. Can you really tell that by just tasting it?”

“Cats are good for pain in the muscle joints, you can use their fur to make comfortable pillows or furniture to regulate the pain. Also, you can make good musical instruments out of their fur. She must have been cute when she was still among us — the living. Thank you kind beast, your final gift will not be forgotten. Ho, there are some strands here too. Hehe, it’s good that I had tasted the fur, now I can make a comfortable pillow out of them with this residual fur. I’ve struck gold!

I can say for sure.

This is hell.

Maybe I actually died a long time ago after falling into a manhole or being hit by a stray flying rock. That's probably why I was in hell right now. There's no way I could describe my current situation otherwise. I was about to lose everything if the cat is dead as Marco described.

Kareureuk.

As if to lift my mood, which was gradually falling into despair, and sweep the depressive thoughts away, the incoherent cries of some kind of animal resounded from deep inside the hallway.

Not only that I could also feel something trudging toward us with light steps on the wet murky floor of the hallway.

"Wow, it's a cat! Look over there, Hassan! It's a white-furred cat! It's probably Whitey!"

Luna shouted excitedly and pointed at a spot in the dark, she seemed to have a rather good vision. Shortly after that, I could finally see a dazzling figure, boasting long white fur coming over. Definitely a cat...

A... big... cat.

"Brother, isn't this cat a little too big? Am I dreaming?"

"D-Damn it!"

Kareureug!

It was the size of a small-sized car, more akin to a lion or a leopard than an ordinary house cat.

Such a fierce beast running toward us made the blood run out of my face and I felt I wasn't too far away from wetting my pants, then and there.

"Damn it, r-run away!"

"That would be for the best!"

"Hi-Hiik!"

"Oi, what are you doing Luna? We have to get the hell away from here."

Luna froze like a rat in front of a cat. I had no choice but to forcefully grab her shoulders and shake her to make her come to her senses.

She just turned white and began trembling. Even after my relentless shaking, she still seemed out of it. Damn it, should I just abandon her? Just when I began thinking about it...

Swoop-

With the sound of something sharp cutting through the air, my body was flung into the air, hitting the floor in the next moment.

Crack- Clatter-

At the same time, the package I was holding exploded in all directions, scattering all kinds of junk and debris on the floor. Damn it, my 1 silver package!

“How dare this bastard ransack my belongings...”

I adjusted my posture while full of rage. In front of me, a giant cat, rather a damn lion, was growling at me with a mouth so wide open that I thought it was a cave entrance. The eerie darkness inside didn't help much to dismiss those thoughts.

Kareureuk!

“I can do it!”

Damn, I can't, these fangs were the size of my forearm.

Gyargh!

Nervously, The lion began stirring, with its claws, through the remains of my torn package as if searching for something.

Kyaargh!

Well, the sight of it turning around and scratching at the ground certainly didn't look normal. It seems even animals suffered from mental deficiencies in this world.

Anyway, this lion bastard being busy was the perfect opportunity for us to escape without having to fight it.

“Oi, wake up! We have to get away!”

“W-WE can't Hassan! We have to bring him with us!”

“Damn it, that's right. How the fuck are we going to do that?”

Dealing with wild beasts was something I'd rather not do unless you gave me a K2 rifle with plenty of 30-round magazines. Only then could I do something about it by showering it with a continuous barrage of bullets.

"Oh man, damn it, we can't deal with this! No human can, let's just give up!"

"N-No! I think I know what's wrong with it!"

Luna pointed at the floor with her finger while discouraging me from running away.

"It's that grass! The insect repelling herb! It's probably that! Cats go crazy about it!"

Luna pointed at the grass on the ground that had been removed from the underground-waterways exploration package. My eyebrows narrowed in lack of understanding of the matter at hand.

"As expected, sister has a way to get us out of this predicament! Hail the sister!!!"

"Hassan! I'll try to burn the herbs, s-so, in the meantime, deal with the cat!"

Luna fearlessly began reaching out toward the place where this white wild beast was raging about. The lion in the form of a cat, then began nervously swinging its paws at her.

Kaak!

"Hiik-"

Kang-

I could hear the sharp sound of metals colliding along with Luna's scream. I felt a sharp pain in my raised left arm and gritted my teeth in immense suffering.

"Fuck, I won't last for long too! Argh-!"

I began to crumble under the onslaught of the claw attacks that would have surely severed my arm if not for my trusty 5 silvers armor.

At that very moment-

Ding-

[Stats] Name: Nemea's Whitey

Level: 15

Condition: Dirofilaria immitis (Heartworm) » Diabetes » Asthma

Red spots began to appear on the slightly stained, white, and neat fur of the lion-cat.

Another chapter that was very fun to translate, I just can't get enough of their antics lol. What do you think about Hamelin?

As most probably noticed she's inspired by the flutist of Hamelin. A German urban legend about a musician who could lure rats away with his magic pipe. I remember watching a cartoon version of it when I was younger. Anyway, it's kinda interesting lol. See you guys next time and don't forget to review the novel if you have the time.

Footnotes:

- 1He called her Ou-gay-us. Hence the reference.

Chapter 30: Lions Are Prideful (1)

🌀 Lions Are Prideful (1) 🌀

It was said that people, when faced with extreme situations, often used wits and means previously unknown to them. They would accomplish wonders they previously thought impossible.

I was able to think about multiple things, drawing up multiple scenarios to get out of this perilous circumstance, while blocking the claw that swung like a cleaver, and it was also the first time my mind had been showing such amazing capabilities.

Ding-

Red spots appeared on the beast's body with the usual sound and letters that accompanied said sound. I never thought that I'd ever see acupoints on a beast's body. It was surreal.

It reminds me of the time when my father used to practice acupuncture on the chicken he raised.

Damn it, it seems the weird practices that he was doing were actually legit. I thought it was plain bullshit!

Kareureuk.

“Ugh-“

Anyway, there was an issue that was more pressing to think about right now. It was obvious to me as to how to escape the attacks of this beast's foreclaw.

As it was a huge beast, the strength of its front paws was beyond my imagination. No, I was even scared to imagine it. It reminds me of Elfriede's overwhelming physical strength. The only result of me being hit by its attacks is ending up as a flattened sandwich, ready to be eaten as the lion-cat's snack!

"Oi, oi, hurry up and do your thing, Luna!"

"Wait a little bit more! It's so hard to light it up! Is it because I'm wet?"

"Ugh, damn it, fucking groundwater!"

"Wait, brother! I'll cheer you up with some battle chants!"

Tak- Tak- Tak- Taktak-

Marco began playing his instrument in a battle chant. I still didn't know whether to call that instrument of his castanets or cashew nuts. It was just too bizarre.

Tak- Tak – Tatak-

Tak-

Fucking bastard!! We're probably gonna end up in this lion-cat's stomach and the best idea you can come up with is to play that god-damned instrument? I'm gonna go fucking mad because of this damned musician!

Kareureuk!

It seems that the lion-cat was also angry at Marco's heartless acts — leaving me, his friend and party member, to fend off the lion-cat by myself while he played around with his absurd-looking instrument. So angry the beast was, at him, that...it actually ignored me completely and ran in anger toward Marco, smashing his torso with its front paws.

"W-what, why, why did it come my way! L-Lord Mercuryyy!"

Kak!

The lion-cat kept punching Marco, with its big cat paws, as if enjoying his reactions to its assault.

Puk- Puk- Pukpuk- Puk-

Although it looked like the soft paws of a cat, when it was used to punch at someone, it looked quite a bit scary because of the weight and force behind it, which made it quite lethal. I'm so glad I'm not in his place.

"Gaeg, Gag, Hikhik, Hak!"

Marco made a funny noise with each hit from the gigantic cat. Because he couldn't handle the pain, he ended up becoming a musical instrument himself. Truly, he was a model figure for all street musicians.

"Damn it, bastard. I'll never forget you, even after you die! Your sacrifice won't be in vain."

"I-I'm not dead yet, please save me... Don't write me off as dead already, brother!"

"I-I'm done! I-I lit it on fire! Smoke... smoke is gushing out!"

I heard Luna's joyful voice from behind me. Smoke began spreading everywhere at the same time Luna spoke out her words of joy.

A peculiar yet indescribable stench began spreading around with the advent of the dark-gray smoke.

Keureureu- Keureureu-

The body of the pristine-white lion-cat, who had been busy bullying Marco until now, twitched violently, its body turning towards Luna and me with an abrupt and hasty jerk.

"Oi, oi, this should work right?"

"Cats become crazy when they smell it. It also weakens their senses, enervating them and making them fall asleep if inhaled long enough. D-Don't worry, the beast will go down in no time."

I wonder if trusting Luna was a good thing? I couldn't decide if it was or not, no matter how many times I thought it through, in that split second.

What I could see in front of me right now was a lion-cat with teeth, that matched the ones of the ancient predators called Sabertooths, hanging from its mouth and saliva dripping through them, dropping on the groundwater in sticky droplets.

Most noticeably, the eyes of the beast were red and bloodshot, like a savage and heartless entity out for blood and gore.

"T-That's strange, why isn't it collapsing yet? Maybe the effect was halved because it's too big?"

“Fucking... Damn it!!!”

Geuaag!

The white lion-cat soon angrily roared at us with its mouth wide open. The power and intimidation behind that roar were so great that Luna fell with an “Heuu-” sound right into the ground, landing on her buttocks, and began sinking into the reeking groundwater.

It didn’t seem weird to me that her feet loosened from the fear of the great roar of the lion-cat. Had I not been used to Elfriede’s overbearing intimidation, I would have probably wet my pants. Even if that were not to be the case, I was sure, at least, that I would’ve probably been in a worse condition right now than the scaredy-cat Luna.

Ah, damn it. I had to suffer for two years under that vicious, psychotic girl, and now, that I finally freed myself from her wretched clutches, I was gonna end up as animal food in this smelly and damp underground waterway?

I’m unwilling.

“Bring it on, you damn animal bastard!”

Kareurek!

Both me and the savage lion-cat jumped up at the same time, our bodies overlapping as both of us engaged in a contest of strength. It seemed to be trying to knock me down by squeezing on my shoulders with both of its front paws.

“Oi, Luna! It seems to be working!”

Compared to before, its strength and vigor were significantly reduced, so it was relatively easier to fight it now. Alright, this hopeless endeavor now just became worth a try at least.

So, I clenched my fists, I clenched them as hard as I possibly could, using all of the strength in my body, and aimed directly at one of the exposed red spots on the savage beast’s stomach.

Puk-

Kareureuk-

It looks like the effect of the punch on the white beast was quite good, the lion-cat’s body shook greatly after getting a taste of my fists.

I followed up on the created momentum and rapidly began hitting any red spots I could see on its stomach.

Takakakakakaka-

“Die, bastard!”

Kagaeck!

However, contrary to what the painful cries of the lion-cat might make one think, it showed no signs of falling down at all, stubbornly standing still on its spot.

Maybe its thick leather-like fur made it impervious to human fists. Anyway, my hands were hurting so bad that I was more likely to go down before the beast would.

Kareureureuk!

I, inevitably, was the one to lose strength first, and the lion-cat pressed on my shoulder as soon as it noticed my exhaustion. I had no choice but to fall backwards under the might of its strong paws.

Kareureu...

But against my expectations, the lion-cat didn't attack or bite me at all, it just blankly looked down at me with an unfocused gaze. Maybe it was deciding from where to take a bite of its food, which is me of course, first?

Kareureu-

The lion-cat seemed to have made up its mind as it shove its head right into the nape of my neck. I had no way to stop this animal that weighed hundreds of pounds from pressing down on my poor body.

“I'll be eaten alive! Damn it, help me, you guys!”

“Hassan! Hold your breath!”

Clink-

Soon a terrible smell began spreading along with the sounds of shattering glass. It was simply indescribable. It stank like the hottest and smelliest pits of hell. I was almost doubting that even hell might not be cruel enough to inflict its sinners with such an unbearable smell. The effluvium was simply that bad.

“Gasp, sister, what kind of smell is this? I'm unable to breathe!”

“Paralytic Toad Oil! Each bottle costs 1 silver... Anyway, are you all alright, Hassan?”

Luna checked in on me. I was mostly fine, aside from the smell that made my nose crook and nearly fall off from its place, that is. Seeing this lion-cat bastard suffer filled me with energy and unprecedented vigor.

Kareureureuk!

“Damn, this shit stinks so fucking bad!”

I noticed that the lion-cat flinched for a moment, and I took advantage of that small opportunity by tying my arms around its neck, like a tight noose, as hard as I possibly could.

Akekek, kaek, kaek

“Take this sleeper hold, bastard!”

Kaek, kaekaek

The lion-cat struggled in distress as if it was in great agony.

“Bastards, don’t just gawk from there, help me beat it up, already!”

“I’ll help you, Hassan!”

“I am here too, brother!”

Only then did Luna and Marco come to their senses and press on the lion-cat’s body as hard as they could.

Although they repeatedly got repelled by the beast’s frantic struggles, they didn’t give up. Did these guys actually have some guts in them? I can’t fall behind then.

“Damn iiiiiiiit!!!!”

Gaeg- Gaegaeg- Gaeg-

The lion-cat then began to continuously gasp as if something was stuck in its throat.

I thought it was a sign of it weakening, so I clenched my teeth hard, agitated as I used every last bit of my strength that I had saved till now, and tightened my choke-hold around its neck; dead set on bringing this fucking animal down.

“Uuuuuggggh!”

Gaeg-

Ding-

『Healed Whitey's Heartworm』 『Task Value + 10』

The lion-cat finally dropped to the ground as if it was dead, the sound of something being spit out was also heard before its collapse. My hands relaxed at the same time. Whoo, damn it. I thought my arms were going to come off from holding the dastardly animal for so long.

“B-Brother! Brother defeated the lion! My god, is this for real? Brother subdued a lion with his bare hands!”

“Hassan! Alive! We're still alive! What do you think? Wasn't I helpful?!”

“More than anything, my battle music certainly played a big role...”

Luna and Marco got up from under the drooping lion-cat's body and began making a fuss. I too was very happy about our impossible victory, but the tiredness that spread throughout my body didn't let me celebrate. In the end, all I could do was just keep panting with a rough breath.

“What is this? It seems like some kind of a bug... Oh, what do we have here, this is actually a Heartworm!”

Luna grabbed the rough ball of fur that the lion-cat had just spit out.

The size of the curled-up worm was about the size of the marbles that were usually sold in stationery stores when I was young, and the shape was very similar to the round body of an Armadillidium Vulgare — the potato bug from my world.

“It's pure black! Wow, it's a real Heartworm! We're so lucky! It must be the blessing of Lady Knox at play here!”

“Sister, why are you making a fuss because of a worm that looks like a salt-sprinkled snail that's pulled straight out of its shell?”

“This kind of worm nests in the hearts of cats! It is primarily used to make elixirs by drying and grinding it into powder. Wow, since the cat is rather big, the worm is relatively big too!”

“Dried insect powder? That's one surefire way to reduce someone's appetite. Do people in Ideope enjoy eating things like this?”

“It doesn't have much of a taste, although it's very good for health! The completed elixir sells for around 6 silvers, so even after splitting equally, it's 2 silvers for each one of us!”

“Bastards, if you can afford to talk, tie up this bastard beast here...”

On the very brink of exhaustion, I did my best to firmly grasp the last vestiges of my consciousness and picked up the rope that was tossed on the floor. It was fortunate that a rope was included in the exploration package.

We then used the rope to tie the giant lion-cat’s feet, even tying it three times for good measure, lest the beast may regain its senses and easily tear its constraints apart. We also tied a knot so that the constraints wouldn’t come loose.

“Damn, it’s finally over...”

I was finally able to celebrate... Barely so. Then I felt a sudden movement behind me, it was Hamelin, the female flutist, who appeared from the dark and came our way with heavy footsteps.

“Interesting results... Expectations exceeded. A bit sloppy. Passable. However...”

The flutist disappeared into the darkness from which she had suddenly appeared after having muttered inaudible gibberish.

“What is it, damn it? Passable? What would failure mean then? Anyway, let’s get out of here as soon as possible, I wanna take a bath.”

Thus, the quest to find Nemea’s cat came to an end. Damn it, there’s no way this savage beast can be considered a cat.

When I came out of the underground waterway, the world was covered in a veil of dim darkness.

“Oh lord, look at that. Look at that white fur. Is that a lion?”

“It looks like a cat, though; so cute!!!”

“But it has the size of a lion, doesn’t it? So it’s probably a lion... I don’t think you can find any cat of this size.”

“Damn it, you bastard, are you questioning my statement? Let’s duel, I’ll send you to Pluto, fucking bastard.”

“Come, you one-balled bastard. I’m gonna cut off the other one and turn you into a eunuch.”

A lot of attention was directed toward us as we were carrying the giant lion-cat on our heads. Some of them even began addressing us with compliments and questions.

“What a fine catch... such great fur! Did you hunt it yourself?”

“Actually...”

When I was about to answer, Marco, who was lifting the lion-cat’s ass, answered instead.

“Yes! This Samaritan brother here killed this lion with only his bare hands! This bard Marco has seen it clearly with my own two eyes!”

“Wow, damn it, I can’t believe he captured that humongous beast with his bare hands. He is not your run-of-the-mill savage. I would wet my pants like a little girl if that beast just gazed at my general direction.”

“Isn’t this guy Hassan? The one that slashed a hundred goblins. He has the same black hair as the rumors.”

“Have you been exiled to the city by your brethren because you killed too many people in the wilderness?”

“From what I’ve heard, he was once called the human butcher, when he roamed the wilds. They say he’s a great bastard.”

Wait, damn it, what the hell is happening? Is there a Hassan, besides me, that I don’t know about?

“Brother, it seems you’ve become quite famous now thanks to me. Don’t worry, there’s no need to thank me since we’re brothers...”

“Oi, damn it, is this your doing? What the hell have you been spreading about me?”

“I never lie brother. I only speak the truth, it’s just that sometimes the truth is uglier than the worst of lies.”

This bastard was spouting the same words as that flutist woman, Hamelin. He seemed to like her words a lot.

But... Where the fuck is the truth in these rumors? Rather than it being the ugly truth, everything is only heinous lies, you damn bastard.

I honestly felt bothered by all the attention that was centered on me. I should give back this monstrous beast to its owner and get my money as soon as possible.

“Brother, can I put it down here?”

“Yeah, you worked hard, bastard. She said it was a cat but damn is this bastard heavy, I feel sore all over just from carrying this heavy beast... Hmm?”

“Leave my 10% in the Guild’s front desk. I have a job to do in the underground waterway. So, umm, I’ll be leaving right now.”

“Oh, big nose. Before you go, take this- It’s a Moai totem.”

Luna took out a Korean Moai statue-shaped totem from the now crumpled and old-looking raincoat, that she wore, and handed it over to Marco.

“What a great way to stimulate my artistic libido. Anyway, let’s talk later, gotta go...”

Marco laid down the lion-cat in front of Nemea’s alchemy shop and hurriedly left the scene, not even looking back once as if he was going back to take some kind of hidden treasure.

“Big-nose, that boasting bastard. His big nose will really get hurt one of these days if he keeps doing things like this.”

“It’s all right, Hassan. My expertise as a voodoo shaman is telling me he’s gonna get stoned to death someday.”

“Y-yeah...”

Still, he was of great help no matter what I say about him, it was good that we met him in the waterways.

I honestly don’t think his guiding capabilities were needed, but without him, I and Luna would have to move this huge cat or lion or whatever this bastard beast was alone.

In other words, I’d have to move it on my own. It was honestly dreadful just thinking about it. Of course, Luna was helpful in her own way too.

If Luna hadn’t burned the grass and used her toad something oil at the critical time, I might have ended up in this lion-cat’s stomach already.

“You did a great job too, Luna. You were very helpful.”

“R-Right? I can do it if I try!”

After using a potion worth one silver the cost of this quest went straight to 2 silvers.

It was an utter waste of money but I didn't say anything because I didn't want to dampen Luna's mood with this info.

"Then, can I leave too, Hassan?"

Luna hesitated as I was about to knock on the door to Nemea's shop. She was holding a leather water bottle while looking rather conflicted as she looked back and forth between me and the bottle.

She looked like a child that was holding her Christmas present, and just couldn't wait to unwrap it to see what's inside.

She has been in this state since she got her hands on that worm, that Heartworm or something.

"What are you going to do?"

"The freshness of the ingredients is of key importance when making elixirs. I'm gonna get the rest of the ingredients right away. I don't think the shops are closed yet so I have to go now. If I stay up overnight making it, then the elixir should be ready by tomorrow morning."

"Why don't you wait till we both get paid together for this job? We both worked so hard for it, you know..."

"...I-I don't want to go in there."

"Hmmm..."

"See you in the guild tomorrow morning, Hassan!"

"Oi," Luna disappeared from her spot with a smile and a mischievous "Hehe..." sound without even letting me finish my words.

Sighing at her antics, I knocked on the store door while being inwardly bewildered by the ridiculous sight of the pink twin tails disappearing behind the corner of the merchant alley.

Knock- Knockknock-

"Ah~ You've arrived, my friend~ See you later, then~ I have to deal with guests now~"

Nemea's soft, slightly lethargic voice came from across the door of the shop. I wondered if there were some other guests she was tending to. Soon, however, the door opened and a swarm of filthy black rats stormed off at my feet, disappearing into the darkness of the night.

Sisisik!

“Damn it, What the hell!”

“Oh, my goodness~ It’s whitey~ Look how thin my poor little thing became after not eating for a while~”

The witch clicked her tongue in pity after opening the door and seeing the white-furred beast lying almost lifelessly on the ground.

No matter how many times I looked at it, it seemed like a big lion, rather than a cat, that ate well enough and was in pristine condition. It looked in no way slender or thin. It also was very energetic for someone supposedly starving. It’s terrifying to think of how the fight would have gone if it was in perfect condition.

“Come in, my friend~ There’s a lot I want to talk about~ You seemed to have met Hamelin too~”

“The story has already spread all the way here?”

“Witches have many eyes and ears and they’re everywhere~”

How did you hear this piece of news so fast in a world without cell phones? As expected, she had some terrifying surveillance magic up her sleeves.

Of course, science wouldn’t develop with such convenient magic around. If you just think about it, magic is actually a deep-rooted evil.

“Whitey~ How long will you lie down~? Hurry up~”

Clatter-

“Oh damn it, you scared me!”

The giant beast, that I previously thought was unconscious, ripped the rope that was tied to its front paws like mere grassroots then stood up and turned to face the witch.

And then it started to rub its head on the hem of the witch’s skirt, like an obedient pet. This scene was so fucking scary it gave me goosebumps all over my body.

Kareureureuk

“Did you get a massage?”

Kareureuk!

“You spit out a bug too~? Hehe~ My friend, it seems like Whitey liked it~ Well, I did like it too~ I can still remember that day very vividly~ That’s definitely cheating~ Don’t go out as you like from now on, Whitey~ Okay~?”

The witch and the cat entered the store while I was in a daze, seeing their interactions.

“What are you doing~? Hurry up and come in, my friend~ It looks like the kid isn’t here with you~ There are a few places I want you to take care of with your magic hands~”

Did you guys like this chapter? Luna had been surprisingly useful lmao, and Marco was just Marco. It’s getting really steamy , the first R18 chapter is getting closer and closer. See you soon.

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