

Vile 27

Chapter 27: First Crime Scene Revealed

The interruption arrived at Nina's apothecary!

Eren went to get the door like always. When he opened it to welcome their guest, he saw a short but muscular man staring back at him with interest. Behind him, there were a bunch of people. It looked like the short-statured man was their leader. This bunch seemed stronger than Dom's party to Eren. but it also seemed that they were on edge regarding some trouble.

"Nina's Apothecary. How may we help you?"

Eren greeted them with respect.

"Hello, young man. Is madam healer inside? I want to talk with her regarding the patient she had treated a few days back."

"Sir, she's inside. Please come in."

Eren extended the welcoming greeting only to the short man. He understood Eren's intentions and told the people with him to wait outside. He met with Nina before speaking out:

"Greetings, madam healer. It's a pleasure to meet you. Sorry to bother you during your work. My name is Lin Karr. I'm a D Rank hunter employed as a regulatory officer by Osan Braveheart Hunters' association. My visit today is regarding an ongoing investigation.

We know from our records that a hunter by the name of Dom Walker had sought you out for one of his member's treatment. The patient was poisoned by the Singarium Rattlesnake through the air.

Dom Walker is currently missing while the rest of his team's status is presumed to be dead, all except Matt. Our association has launched a formal investigation regarding the same, to confirm their status and proceed with other formalities.

"We also tried asking Matt but he says he wasn't exactly conscious after the poison started affecting him seriously. So I was wondering if you could shed some light on exactly what happened that day? And what was Dom Walker thinking about when he left your place? And was he alone when he left?"

'I'll tell you what happened. My man Dom was digested alive by Reen who, as we speak, is sitting on the shelf as a coffee mug in my room. I'm sure he must have turned into a waste product by now. If Reen poops that is!'

Eren said all that in his mind of course. Externally, he observed silence and looked at Nina. The latter just nodded and told Lin all that had transpired that day. Lin then asked about what potions were given to Dom and confirmed he was heading to Simar lake as his previous intel had dictated.

"Alright. Thank you for your time, madam healer. I was wondering if you still accept official on-field missions. I have formed a party that is waiting outside. We are going to Osan woods carrying multiple missions right after we leave your place.

We don't have a C Rank party. But your share, should you choose to accept the mission, will be according to the C Rank party's pay. The healers' normal practises have been stopped. So I mustered some courage to ask if you could spare time for us."

Lin said all that and bowed a little as a sign to show respect to a higher-ranked entity than him. He knew he was asking something unusual by wanting to avail the services of a C Rank healer while he and his party members were so much below her in ranks.

Usually, a party's rank would be decided by the majority of its members' ranks. For example, an E Rank party would have more than 60% of their members in E Rank. The rest of the numbers can be filled by some more E Rank hunters if the party is lucky. Otherwise, the filler numbers would be occupied by F Rank members or even rankless members doing menial jobs.

Dom's party was an F Rank because most of his team members were in F Rank, even when he himself was an E Rank. On that note, a team leader's status would usually be a rank higher than their party members. That means an F Rank party would normally have an E Rank entity serving as their team leader whereas an E Rank party would typically have a D Rank entity serving as their leader.

In hunters' and adventurers' communities, it was considered rude to ask a higher ranked entity to lead a lower-ranked party when the difference between their rank was this high.

This would usually imply that the higher-ranked entity needs to 'carry' their team members, should they choose to accept the offer. They would also be forced to accept the missions based on their team's rank and not on their individual rank. As a result, their pay would be reduced even if the entire team prioritized the higher-ranked entity's share.

So that entity would have to invest more effort while receiving fewer benefits. Who would opt for something like this? So even asking about such a request was met with the harshest response from high ranked entities.

Lin's party was an E Rank party with him acting as their leader. Eren guessed that the hunter association must have already obtained some intel about Dom's party before visiting the. He's coming here to ask about the case was just a ruse. His real intentions were to ask Nina to join his party.

Lin was a smart guy. He had already cleared that Nina will be paid according to her Rank, irrespective of the mission's outcome. That removed the monetary objection Nina could raise against the latter's request. But that didn't solve the issue of respect a higher-ranked entity needs to be given.

Eren didn't think Lin was the kind of guy who would ask a high ranked entity to 'carry' him and his team members at the cost of bowing his head. He was a D Rank himself after all. Then that can only mean the circumstances and the associations have nudged him to ask for Nina's help.

Lin also asked about Dom first as a way to make Nina realize that she needed to extend her help, as a form of an obligation to her patient's well-being.

If Eren could see through Lin's camouflage, Nina could too. She immediately guessed that there was more to the story than Lin was letting on. She had to ask to confirm her suspicions:

"What aren't you telling me? What happened in the Osan woods that you needed a C Rank healer to be dispatched there?"

Nina didn't mince her words and asked Lin in a threatening tone. His absurd request was one thing. She didn't like when things were kept in the dark from her.

Lin bowed even deeper at Nina's response before responding:

"You will be briefed as soon as you accept the mission and leave this place with us, madam healer. We are not trying to hide anything from you. It's just that... we don't want to cause a mass panic yet."

Lin looked at Eren at the end of his statement when he was saying it. Nina didn't fail to see through his actions and pressured Dom once again:

"I'll take responsibility for Eren. he will not speak of this matter to anyone until I tell him to. Now, speak. What did you find in Osan woods?"

Lin seemed conflicted after Nina had said to him. He knew young boys like Eren would have a loose mouth, especially when they tried garring to the girls they know and want to woo. But Nina had taken responsibility for him. He could only take a long sigh before obliging:

"As you said madam healer, the issue is regarding Osan woods. Our investigation team was dispatched to Osan woods after Dom Walker did not report back to us for an extended period. His info and status had become sensitive due to the Osan woods disturbance. So we prioritized his safety when dispatching a team of investigators.

The team used the intel given by Matt and soon found the trail left behind by Dom's Raiders. It followed it to a natural cave near Simar lake. The team started its investigation there and found out there was indeed a huge nest of SR snakes in the cave, in line with the intel previously received. But it doesn't exist anymore.

We also found out that after Dom had left your place, he had rented two horses from a rental agency. He headed to the Osan woods right after that. We don't know whom the other horse was rented for as there was no name mentioned in the agency's record. But that's not the issue here.

We also found out that Dom had successfully reached Elena with an unknown person and treated her out of her condition successfully. But instead of exiting the forest as he should, he went back to the cave. Now here is when things take a turn for the worse.

We found that the demon beast went through evolution at the same place. The members of Dom's Raiders had their bodies vanish into thin air, probably because of it. But surprisingly, Dom and Elena also died at the same place, sharing their party members' fate at the same place, same way. We couldn't recover any of the members' bodies from the crime scene. The historians are also facing some problems casting their investigative spells. Therefore, we can't confirm exactly what happened to them.

Our primary investigation also tells us that there's foul play involved. Because we found that someone had extracted a Mana Blessing of unknown Rank from the deeper parts of the cave. We are still looking for the unknown person with whom Dom visited the woods for the second time. We believe they both are the same person. We are yet to find clues about them."

Lin concluded till here and let Nina process the information. But she replied just as quickly:

“This is something the hunters’ association can deal with using their resources. It doesn’t explain why you would need me involved in this mess, does it?”

“Well...”

Lin took a long pause before coming clean:

“We’ve also estimated the rank of the demon beast at the site. It was a D Rank beast that has been evolved into a C Rank. Therefore we require you to be a part of the mission in your capacity as a C Rank healer. Otherwise... Let’s say... there would be more casualties than anticipated.”