

VILE EVIL HIDES UNDER THE VEIL

Chapter 6: Dom's Raiders

“The stiffness might go away after you take the bath and start performing your routine. But don't worry. We will not sit on this. We have to have this talk. Especially because you'll have to start living in the academy's dorm a month from now on.”

Nina concluded and sent Erni upstairs. He looked like he wanted to ask more but Nina had made her stance clear. He could only retire to his room and follow his aunt's orders.

Eren locked the door behind him when he found himself in his room and couldn't help flashing a broad smile. He let his Lil beast turn flaccid as he lay on his bed. He needed to think about his next steps carefully if he wanted to have a shot at Nina.

He crafted a simple plan to continue his act further. Then he went to have a bath. Eren then stepped down and came by the breakfast table. Nina was busy concocting a basic recovery potion in her lab that was adjacent to the isolated room. She told Eren to take his seat while she finishes up with her work.

The duo had its breakfast normally. Everything seemed fine on the surface but they both could sense a subtle sense of stress in the environment. While they talked about random stuff from Eren's preparations for the academy to how to make a progress in Ranks, aunt Nina could be seen often getting caught up with her thoughts.

They were going to resume their morning talk when they heard a knock on their door. Eren cursed the person who had such ill timing. But he didn't show his displeasure on his face. He told Nina to wait while he attended to the door.

Eren opened the main door and found a burly man looking at him eagerly. He was holding another lean-built man in his arms while the latter had his eyes closed and looked to be in some trouble. The lean-built man didn't look to have injuries. But his skin colour looked paler than usual.

“How may we help you, sir?”

Eren asked in the politest way possible. He had expected a normal adventurer or two who would be asking for some potions. He would tend to their requests and send them off right away before resuming his talk with Nina. But it didn't look like these guys would leave Nina out of this.

“Boy, we came here to meet madam healer. Is she here?”

The guy didn't wait for Eren to answer. He walked straight into the shop, almost pushing Eren to the side. The previous Eren would have shown displeasure on his face by now but the matured Eren resumed his acting right away and led them to a corner that had two single beds.

Showing anger in this situation when the man was in a medical hurry would be childish. It would also diminish his image in aunt Nina's eyes.

Eren would just find some other way to take his revenge, not only for the guy rudely pushing him but also ruining his morning plans. Maybe he can influence Nina and charge them a few bucks extra. That would suffice. Or he can give them pseudo portions if he intercepted them at the right time.

Nina's apothecary had such beds because she would treat severely injured people from time to time. The man carefully laid the frail-looking man on the bed and looked at Eren.

Eren told him to wait here and went inside to fetch Nina. After a few minutes, Nina came outside with a lot of vials in her hands and some herbs. She didn't even look at the burly man. And walked towards the guy laying on the bed right away.

She checked his condition for some time. Then made him swallow some herbs first before emptying three vials in his mouth. Only then she sighed a little before announcing:

“This man is poisoned by the Singarium rattlesnake. It's good that you brought him here on time otherwise he would have been a goner. I believe you must be hunting in the Osan woods nearby to the city.

A lot of adventurers make the mistake of getting in the vicinity of the Singarium snake without consuming the antidote first. The result can be as horrible as a party wipeout.

The snakes not only can poison you by biting, but they can also poison you by releasing an odourless, colourless breath in the air. Most people wouldn't even recognize they have gotten poisoned by the snake until it is too late.

The man here must have been poisoned by the snake through inhaling the poisonous air. But if it had been a bite, you wouldn't even have the chance to bring him here. He would have already died. So he must have breathed in the poisonous air.

Of course, since the Singarium rattlesnake is only F Rank, it can only affect F Rank newbies and the hunters, adventurers, and magic beasts above that rank won't feel a thing. You don't look like F Ranks rookies though.

You are an upper-stage E Rank, almost going to get promoted to the D Rank anytime now. And this guy here is F Rank, but he is like you in a sense that he too is closer to his rank promotion. Therefore, you were safe in the exposure to the poison while this man was poisoned.

This whole scene must be the result of something unexpected unfolding in the woods. Otherwise, an E Rank hunter would surely know his way around the Osan woods. You must have been aware of the snakes' known lair spots.

There need to be multiple SR snakes releasing poison in the air at the same time to have such an effect on the person. They wouldn't do that unless they feel threatened by the enemy trespassing in their lair. Or if they were already on edge because of the previous enemy or event.

If you didn't go to the SR snakes' lair and if the poison is too severe to be released by the single SR snake, then there can be only one other possibility. Multiple SR snakes leaving their lair behind in search of a new place to settle down. And this won't happen until there's a mass shift in the power hierarchy within the forest. There's a new spoiler in the woods. And you were caught off guard because of it.

Tell me what happened?"

Although Nina hadn't stepped out for hunting for years now, her skills hadn't gone rusty. Moreover, she was a C Rank healer with in-depth knowledge about general flora and fauna. She had deduced all this with whatever information available to her. And it seemed all of Tina's hunches had been landed right on spot by the burly man's next words:

“That’s right madam healer. Just like you said, we were already aware of the Singarium Rattle snake’s lairs spread across the Osan woods and we had avoided those spots. We were hunting for a pack of Dinko deer for their hides. They are usually found by the Simar lake located at the northwest corner of the woods.

My party had entered the woods from the north side of the forest even when we had to travel a long distance to do so. We had been getting the news of Osan woods experiencing some kind of disturbance by the hunter guild we work at and some other hunter parties we know of. Thus, we decided to minimize the risk by entering from the north of the forest.

And it still couldn’t prevent the tragedy that had happened to us. On our way to reach the Simar lake, we encountered a pack of Kolhar wolves. The pack was bigger than we had anticipated. When he thought we cant defend ourselves from the pack for long, we decided to change our route.

The ranger in our party was a capable map reader and tracker. Therefore, we chose the safest route for our retreat avoiding all the dangerous spots, including the SR snakes’ lairs. At least we thought we did.

After getting rid of the chasing wolves, we stopped at a seemingly unoccupied cave to recuperate and draw our next set of plans. Basically, we had decided to retreat. We had eight members in our party. And four of them had been gravely injured by the sudden assault of the wolf pack.

We treated them with some regular potions and decided to camp out at the cave for the day. That would allow the injured people to stabilize their injuries some more. We would then safely retreat the next day.

But the ranger in our party decided to explore the cave and all hell broke loose. The cave was dimly lit so we couldn’t see much. The ranger wanted to confirm if the cave had the other side sealed or not. Should we get attacked by a beast horde in the night, we would be able to use the other exit for our escape. So the ranger’s decision wasn’t exactly wrong.

But who knew the cave had been occupied by SR snakes? The cave was not the ideal spot for snakes’ habitation. So their habitation was something our ranger didn’t anticipate at all. His exploration into the deeper parts of the cave became the trigger point for the snakes. It was already too late when we realized the magic snakes were living with us. We didn’t notice anything at

first. But the ranger in our group started showing signs of poison because it was him that had been exposed to the poison first and for the longest.

I was the only E Rank in our group. Rest all were in F Rank.

Matt, who you now see is laying on the bed right now, had been assigned a guard duty at the entrance of the cave. So other than Matt and I, everybody else was poisoned beyond whatever potions we had at the time could alleviate.

The four injured party members died first in the cave along with the ranger. Only I, Elena, and Matt survived and came out of that hell's cave. Elena was a healer herself so she could cast low-level healing spells on herself to stay alive. Matt was out of the cave for the most time, so the poison didn't turn him into a corpse immediately.

But slowly Matt's condition was getting worse. We had limited potions to prolong Matt's surviving chances. And Elena couldn't use a healing spell on him to relieve him of his troubles. So we decided to leave Elena behind at a secure spot. I would carry Matt outside of the woods and return to Elena with a proper antidote.

So we executed this plan and you are seeing me right now with Matt.

We don't know what's happening with Osan woods but it has turned into a death trap for low-level adventurers. The previous information about beasts' bases and their routes are not useful anymore. And there might be a newly evolved high-level beast present in the forest that has caused this change."

The burly man finished what he had to say and sat on another single bed, looking at Matt with an expression of utter sadness on his face.

"Hmm. I'll need to report this to the healer's association. Matt needs more medical attention than the first aid I've given him right now. He needs to be transported to the Osan infirmary. don't worry. I'll arrange transport for him to be shifted there while I go to report this to the healer's association. Meanwhile, I'll give you the antidote so that you can safely retrieve your healer. I'll need your name for my report though."

"Thank you for all you've done for us madam healer. My name is Dom. Dom Walker. I'm the leader of the party named Dom's Raiders that once existed. But no more. Not anymore. Haha!"

Dom replied to Nina's query and laughed mirthlessly at the end. It looked like he had aged 10 years while saying all this. Nina's expressions were also grim after hearing Dom's story.

But nobody noticed Eren's expressions changing after hearing the guy's name. An unidentifiable light of greed had sparked in his eyes.