

Pseudo Resident's Illegal Stay in Another World

Chapter 51: Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (2)

☪ Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (2) ☪

Luna was keeping a meter's distance from me at all times. Whenever I tried to close the distance between us, she would faintly tremble, and promptly distance herself again.

Predictably so, Luna seemed to have been mindful of the happenings of the previous day, even though she spoke nothing regarding that matter.

My eyes were repeatedly drawn toward Luna.

I felt akin to a soft bubble rising in my heart every time I got a look at her profile paired with the absolutely comical view of her pink twin tails dancing with the wind. I felt as though my heart was floating in the air, as light and as unbridled as a father.

"The weather is nice, isn't it?"

I glanced around, hearing Luna's words, and observing the state of the weather.

There were a few clouds here and there but the sun was radiantly shining in the sky—unobstructed and unfettered.

A cool breeze was blowing under the gentle warmth of the mellow sunshine. It was the very definition of the typical spring weather. The perfect time to go for a walk and have a picnic. Should I take some time and invite Luna to a walk in the park?

"The shoes you gave me are really comfortable, Hassan!"

Ah, now that I think about it, Luna was currently wearing the sandals I had gifted her. The size specified for the footwear had been the result of complete guesswork on my part. I'm glad that my guess wasn't off the mark, seeing that they perfectly fitted her small soles.

"Somehow, it feels as if you're holding my soles, for some reason. It's rather ticklish." Luna kept smiling, laughing with every step she took. It was a smile not dissimilar to one who was trying their best to hold back their urges to laugh after being tickled.

"I'm glad that you liked them."

"Ha-Hassan..."

“Huh, yeah?”

“What happened yesterday, it... It’s a secret between us, okay? Even the gods don’t know about it..”

“Ah, oh, yeah.”

And thus our conversation ended once again.

Due to the silence, all I could do was look around at my surroundings while thinking about this and that, as we roamed the streets. Before I could even notice, we had reached the masterfully-crafted magnificent building of the Mars Guild.

“Ah, Mr. Hassan, Miss Luna. Welcome. I’ve been eagerly waiting for you guys.”

Daphne, the receptionist, was welcoming us with just the slightest bit more warmth tinged in her voice than usual, her hands and eyes diligently kept moving through multiple books and documents, always keeping track of her work.

“I heard Mr. Hassan did quite well during this expedition. I’m very proud of you as a receptionist. Here are 15 silvers— your pay for this commission.

15 Silvers? That’s more than the promised 10 Silvers as the reward of the expedition. I felt so agitated, elated, and restless by this unexpected windfall that I felt like I couldn’t sit still.

The bag, that she handed me, was quite heavy since it contained 15 Silvers in total. Just holding it and shaking it a little, hearing that delightful jingling sound of money, was enough to make me feel full.

One, two... Alright, there were no mistakes, there were exactly 15 Silvers.

“This is more than I expected. Wasn’t the reward 10 Silvers only?”

“You can always give the additional 5 Silvers back if you don’t like it.”

“Ah, no. I was just wondering why the sudden increase in the reward.”

“It’s because we ended up having to reward fewer people. Anyway, with this, we’re now done with the settlement. And finally, Luna has officially been promoted to the bronze tier after her contributions during this expedition and previous quests.”

Luna trembled in amazement at Daphne’s words.

“R-Really?”

“I’m gonna measure your Karma first though. You have no problem with that right? Tap your finger here, please.”

Daphne pointed out the fountain pen from the last time in Luna’s direction, urging her to use it. It wasn’t just a simple fountain pen but a genuine epic-grade relic called the needle of appraisal or something along those lines.

Drawing blood through the tip, its abilities were put into display as it used said blood as ink to write one’s karma— stats as I like to call them.

“I-I don’t want to go through this again....”

“Don’t be such a crybaby.”

Hesitantly, Luna proceeded to press the pointy end of the fountain pen on her thumb. Soon after that, red drops of blood were drawn out through the sharp end, wetting the tip.

Daphne then took out the fountain pen and soon frantically started writing, as the pen moved on its own rhythm, on a small yet oddly wide piece of paper similar to the one I had seen before during the time my karma was assessed by this very pen.

[Stats] Name: Luna Knox Dotty

Level: 8

Strength: 2

Agility: 5

Stamina: 1

“Wow, you’ve developed so much, Miss Luna! What the hell?! The last time I checked you only had 1 point on each attribute and your level was only 3. What happened?! How did you get so strong?”

Daphne, after being done jotting down the information, couldn’t believe what she was seeing with her own eyes. She could only blink her eyes in obvious disbelief, shell-shocked by this outcome.

Luna was in as much disbelief as her, she opened her mouth wide and repeatedly tapped my arms in excitement.

“L-Look at that, Hassan! I’ve improved so much! I’m strong now, right? Right??!”

Unlike Luna and Daphne, who were clamoring in surprise and excitement, I just responded with a cursory “Oh, I see.” and didn’t show further reactions. Well, I was already aware of the overall improvements in her stats when I checked her pulse the last time around, so it didn’t come as a surprise to me this time around as it did for the two excited girls.

What surprised me, in fact, was the confirmation that such meager growth was actually very difficult to achieve.

If even Daphne who was used to seeing a lot of different people while doing her job was surprised then it was only a testament to how hard it was.

“Hmmm-.”

Daphne only stared at the paper for a time. She then let out a low and long “Hmmm...” before speaking again.

“Well, it would be a lie to say I’m not interested in your means but that’s probably a secret, right?”

“My means? I-I don’t know. What did I do? What I did? It was just the same as usual.”

Luna, who had been silent, clearly in deep thought, suddenly blushed as if coming to a realization of some sort.

“I-I don’t know.”

“I see. Anyway, you’ll get your bronze certification plaque soon. I wish you the best in the future. And Mr. Hassan...”

“Y-Yesh.”

Instinctively, I became nervous after hearing her call out my name.

Perhaps, because I was still affected by our first meeting, my palms were sweaty, and felt my face tingling each time I faced this woman.

“Go over there, Mr. Hassan.”

Point—

Her well-trimmed index fingernail was pointing to what looked like a fairly large door. Was it perhaps a special type of room attached to the Guild building?

“What should I do there?”

“Just go. You’ll see when you enter. Alright, next one!”

Since Luna had some work to do in the afternoon, we went on our separate ways, with me going into the area by opening the large door Daphne pointed to. Immediately, what could only be described as a large vacant space appeared in front of me.

The ground was pretty flat with sand placed all over it, I could also spot all kinds of training equipment along with stacks of hay and dummies all over the place. An exercise yard? Or rather training grounds, perhaps? Something like that, I guess.

I could also see both women and men holding weapons such as swords, bows, and spears, attacking the dummies.

Pak— Kwak— Kwajik—

The gruesome sight of them viciously hitting the defenseless dummies was so terrible that I couldn’t help but want to turn my head right away. That was a joke, of course!

“Hassan of Samaria. You came just in time. I’ve been waiting for you.”

I turned my head in the direction of the voice suddenly addressing me from behind. Soon, I saw the sight of Hippolyte with her long brown and her matching chocolate skin.

Could anything fit the idea of a wild horse-like woman dressed in armor better than this?

That aside, god-damn, I couldn’t even notice her closing in on me like that. I felt no presence from her. Had she been an assassin aiming for my life, I would have died without a single clue.

“M-Miss Hippolyte!”

Strangely, just having Hippolyte come near me was enough to make my legs feel weaker and my heart tighten. I was, in many ways, very vulnerable to this type of strong woman. From what I can sense, my body seems to have become permanently affected by this debuff.

“... You were waiting for me?”

“Yes, it has been decided that you will be promoted to the bronze rank, Hassan. This fast pace of promotion is pretty much unheard of throughout the history of Sodomora’s Guilds. Well, it’s not like something like this never happened but this is still pretty big. The higher-ups of our guild would like to confer a title to you.”

“A-A title?”

I had heard of titles or whatever they are called before, they were akin to nicknames that were only provided to famous and reputable adventurers.

Among the silver-tier adventurers that followed Elfriede, one of them had a title. It was something like Ittoryu Nalbil. ¹Ittoryu here means One Sword. Probably a One Piece reference too.

Anyway, titles were only given to those with great skills or those who somehow distinguished themselves in the adventuring field. And I couldn't see how I was fulfilling either.

"Do you have any specific title in mind? Like what do you want to be called?"

"I'll go with Hassan of the Samtoryu..."

"Well, no use asking you now since it has been decided already."

Then why did you still ask, dammit? I really wanted to argue, but thinking of how Hippolyte could easily launch an intangible sword slash flying across great distances I just coyly bowed my head.

"Frankly speaking, this title bullshit is just for appearances' sake, we're not like those bitches from the Minerva Guild. Your name, Hassan of Samaria should be enough as is."

"S-So what's my title?"

"As I said already, Hassan of Samaria. It was proposed by Lord Destroyer since it was based on your hometown and could represent it to the world, nicknames are pretty popular these days."

Hassan of Samaria, wasn't that what I've been called for a while already? And fuck, I'm not from Samaria.

It was now officially impossible to get the Samaritan label off my skin.

That aside, I felt goosebumps at the mere mention that this title was suggested by Lord Destroyer.

"Can't I refuse?"

"You can do whatever you want. Just keep in mind that that's still what you will be called inside the Guild even if you don't acknowledge it. Just like how I was nicknamed 'Hippolyte the Empress'."

"Oh, Empress."

Empress? Really? Well, it wasn't like it didn't fit her all. It actually did somehow, but it still sounded very funny to me. Now that I think about it, wasn't there a speed skating Olympics champion with that nickname too? ²Lee Sang-Hwa

"It suits you."

This woman was a real powerhouse of this Guild. She was even an incredible adventurer and simultaneously a magnanimous person that forgave me for groping her chest. There's no harm in flattering her a little, right? It was about time that I made use of the boot-licking skills that I picked up while working under that witch, Elfriede.

"Empress Hippolyte. Sounds very awe-inspiring. It has a great aura to it too. Like you'd be able to cut down and decimate anything and anyone with a sword in hand.

"Well, I don't really like this nickname, but having an official nickname does have its few perks. My popularity increased a lot and even more, people want to fight me when they see me on the streets."

"Wait, is it really good to have more people want to fight you?"

"Yes, of course. Karma grows the more battles of life and death you have. A Samaritan as cruel as you should know it best, right? The sight of you scaring away that horde of crocodiles still makes me shudder every now and then."

"I-Is that so?"

"Anyways, the Guild expects a lot from you and the other rising stars. So, I sincerely advise you— struggle hard, harder than you have ever before, only that way will you be able to maintain this position of yours among your peers."

"My peers? I actually have peers?"

"You'll find out more about it when you meet them, it will be sooner than you expect. That being said, Hassan, bronze-tier adventurer, I approve of your use of these training grounds, so come here to swing your sword, often."

It seems that I was allowed to use the training grounds, having been promoted to the bronze tier now. However, I didn't feel very excited about this...privilege.

Could sweating myself to death under the scorching hot sun improve my sword skills? Well, probably, but I was a complete beginner without an ounce of knowledge about swordsmanship.

Just when I was smacking my lips lost in thought, Hippolyte spoke.

“Speaking of that, I wanna see your skills since you’re already here. Swing your sword with the intent to kill the dummy there.”

“D-Do I really have to?”

“Come on...”

ゴゴゴゴ³JoJo reference, obviously.

Hippolyte’s body was emanating some kind of intense pressure.

Holy shit, is she gonna start ORAIing out of nowhere now? Scared at that prospect, I was left with no choice but to unsheathe my sword, I had no choice but to slash as hard as I could at the dummy despite my trembling hands.

I held a sword in each and blankly stared at the dummy.

“Think of the person you hate the most.”

The dummy’s face briefly overlapped with Marco’s face, before it soon changed into Elfriede’s face, with her oh-so-hateful silver hair and red eyes.

Even now that I had finally become free, the things that happened during my time with that crazy witch were enough to make me seethe in anger. Even now, I sometimes woke up panicked and terror-stricken.

“Y-You fucking bitch!” “

Swoosh—

I struck the dummy made with wood and straw two times, deep cuts were left on it after I slashed my swords in a cross shape.

“Hmm... Very strong emotions, very strong indeed. You must be thinking of your parents’ enemies, right?” “

“Well, something like that, I guess.”

I felt exhausted and out of breath after using all my strength at once. Soon, Hippolyte stated her evaluation of me with cold and hard facts, not caring at all about my panting state.

“That was about it. Nothing but emotions. The level of your swordsmanship felt even lower than that of a beginner. As if I’m looking at a kid that has been holding a sword for less than a year. Well, not like it’s the case right now.”

Hippolyte quickly denied her own words, however, that remark had actually hit the bullseye.

But damn, I didn't expect her to directly guess I was a beginner after seeing a single move of mine. Her eyes were much more discerning compared to that wannabe shaman.

"Tell me, Samaritan. Why did you call yourself the Three Swords Swordsman when you're just using two swords."

"W-Well... the last one is a hidden blade"

"I see. I think I can roughly guess your situation now. Just bring it on, nothing is going to be more accurate than this."

Hippolyte fell silent after humming to herself for a while, she then suddenly faced me and clapped her hands. She didn't make her intentions very clear with her choice of words but she seemed to be asking for a spar with me.

"Y-You're not going to use your sword?"

"Yes. My arms are more than enough to deal with you. Besides, a trained warrior's fists are no different from a weapon, after all. This is fair."

Lightly clenching her fists, she lifted them high in the air. Her fists were shaped like slanted rabbit ears. Even though I had no knowledge in this field, I felt that her posture was similar to the typical Muay Thai posture.

Anyway, it was a fight between someone bare-handed and someone wielding a sword.

It reminded me of one of those old martial arts movies where they used 3 Dan Kendo. I remember hearing once that sword-wielders were, by default, three Dans higher than bare-handed people.

Did it mean that the person holding a sword was in a more advantageous position?

But I couldn't see myself winning against her at all even if she only used her fists. Damn, can't she just randomly shoot some wind slashes?

I, for some reason, had a deep feeling that this woman could kill me with just a snap of her fingers.

"Are we really doing this?"

"No need to be scared. I won't kill you."

Hippolyte then tied a string to her waist.

“If you are able to take away this belt, I’ll grant any wish you might have. Isn’t this supposed to be the greatest motivation for a man? Right?”

Holy shit, you’ll really grant me any wish? No man, in both worlds I’ve lived in, wouldn’t be excited by this offer. And it just so happened to be that I was a fucking man too.

I’ll ask her to massage my shoulders. There are a lot of places I want her to rub. Although it didn’t feel bad to massage others, what I liked the most was receiving one myself.

“Alright, let’s do it. You better keep your word.”

“Alright. I swear it on the River Styx.”

Hearing her answer so arrogantly, I began wondering if this was a spar or perhaps a duel.

Despite, my initial excitement, I still couldn’t figure out a way to attack her and we ended up just doing a staring contest for a while. simply staring at each other for a while. Soon enough, people ended up gathering around us and making a fuss.

“What? What’s happening over here?”

“It’s Hippolyte, looks like she’s fighting someone.”

“For which bastard should I prepare a coffin again? Let me see his face.”

“Black-haired Samaritan? A Samaritan in the Mars Guild... It should be that guy, right?”

“It’s probably him. I’ve been hearing his name a lot in the past few days.”

Thus, the crowd surrounding us formed a makeshift arena. Damn, I really had no choice but to fight Hippolyte now, didn’t I?

“Good, then I’ll be going first.”

Kick—

The sound of feet kicking the ground with tremendous force resounded and Hippolyte disappeared from her spot. I wasn’t exaggerating, I really couldn’t find her anymore.

What is this? Damnit, is it magic?

As I let panic take over me for a while, I suddenly felt a chill on my jaws, so I hastily looked down.

Before I could even understand what was happening, I saw the sight of Hippolyte, slightly crouching under me as she swiftly raised her right fist and delivered a sucker punch right in my abdomen.

“Guh, guaaaak-!”

Body Blow, Clean Hit⁴Fighting game terminology. They were written in hangul but are pronounced like in English.. The crowd watching this scene also went “Ugh-” or “This must have hurt”, seeing me cry out in agony and pain.

Of course, I had no idea what was happening, I wasn’t registering anything that was happening around me at all, and my mind was completely blank. Soon, I was bombarded with a combination of hits on my chest and abdominal areas.

Bang— Pak— Pak—

It hurt so much, as though my body was being repeatedly smashed with a stone. Soon, I fell onto the ground after stumbling back and forth for a while.

Elfriede’s punches were already pretty strong, and after getting repeatedly beaten by her, I got conceited, gaining confidence in my resilience and endurance. Expectedly so, the punches delivered by a witch couldn’t hold a candle to that of a warrior.

All air escaped my lungs and I felt it hard to breathe again, frantically coughing as a result. Some sand even found its way into my mouth but I felt so weak that I couldn’t even muster enough energy to spit it out.

Damn, the passionate events of yesterday made me have the illusion that this was actually heaven, but I was once again reminded that the cruel world I was thrust into was without a single shred of doubt the worst corner of hell.

“Isn’t he gonna die at this rate? Somebody stop her!” ”

“How do you want me to stop Hippolyte, you bastard? Why don’t you stop her yourself?”

“Wow, not even the Samaritan can face Hippolyte.” “

“That’s a given really... matter of course. Hippolyte has already reached Achilles’ realm, she’s just been refusing the Gold-rank promotion.”

I could hear the lengthy and noisy clamor of the crowd spread all around me.

Inhale— Exhale—

For a while, all noises went silent and my panted breaths were the only thing registering in my mind. But soon, even those noises died down and the world was suddenly drenched in silence.

Biiiiiiii—

In that mute world, I could see those people pointing fingers at me. I could see their teeth, pealed out due to their crooked smiles, shining under the rays of the sun, forming mocking smiles.

These bastards were making fun of me, weren't they?

How dare these irresponsible motherfuckers, watching from a distance, laugh at me?

UNACCEPTABLE!!!

"G, uaagh..."

"What? I thought I had hit him enough to make him pass out. I can't believe he can still stand up after that. How resilient! Did you reflexively move so as to avoid any hit on your vital areas?"

"Whoo..."

"It's certainly not a skill that you can get after being beaten once or twice. You must have led quite a rough life in the wild. You have no way to win this, but, do you still want to continue?"

The female warrior raised her fists again and returned to her initial posture.

"Do you really want to take this belt away?"

As expected, despite saying she forgave me, Hippolyte was still resentful about the matter of me groping her. Well, it would have been weird if she simply forgave the man who saw her nude, no matter how unintended that was.

Just as I was going to answer her, I noticed that I couldn't open my mouth at all.

『Looks like you're in a tough situation. Want some help?』

A strange voice whispered in my ears.

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Footnotes:

- 1Ittoryu here means One Sword. Probably a One Piece reference too.
- 2Lee Sang-Hwa
- 3JoJo reference, obviously.
- 4Fighting game terminology. They were written in hangul but are pronounced like in English.

Chapter 52: Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (3)

☪ Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (3) ☪

Even breathing felt cumbersome and the only thing I wanted to do was to lie on the ground. But, I was somehow able to stand up again, using my sword as a clutch by stabbing it into the ground.

The fear that I would be mocked for the rest of my life, if I were to keep lying on the ground and fainted on the spot, was so powerful that my body started moving on its own.

It didn't matter if I were to be mocked back when I was a mere slave under Elfriede.

However, as the free man that I now am, there was no way I was going to let myself get reduced to a mere laughing stock for these motherfuckers. Such prideful and reckless thoughts brought strength to my body again, enabling me to stand in front of that woman.

“Whoo...”

“Just... keep... laying... down. It... feels... better... to... lie... down, right? You... have... done... more... than... enough... already.”

Out of breath after blocking all my futile attempts at breaking her defenses, Hippolyte's voice became more sparse, making it hard to understand them.

How long has it been since the last time I was held down by violence like this? I think it was around middle school... I stole my father's wallet and got a good beating after I got caught.

No, I could recall something even more recent. It was back when I arrived in this world, I was captured by hunters, mercilessly beaten until I lost consciousness, and forcefully enslaved. Of course, my life of slavery was the last thing I wanted to think of right now.

Damn, that time, I was still able to stand up after all the pummeling my body went through. But what about now? Can I really win this bet? Screw it. What should I do?

It happened when I was gasping while my mind was filled with hesitation about my next course of action...

『Looks like you're in a tough situation. Want some help?』

A clear voice that spread out like ink on a blank sheet of paper, resonated in my ears.

It was the voice of a male, brimming with a confident note and a clear tone. It sounded similar to a loud bursting noise or a lion's roar.

『Since it seems hard for you to answer, just nod your head.』

I don't know what this was about. But, after coming to this world, I had already a plethora of events that went beyond my understanding and reason itself.

So, was something akin to magic is being used on me this time around? Wait, could it be... Could a wizard be hiding inside this crowd?

Whatever was actually happening, it was an offer that I had nothing to lose by accepting in such a desperate situation. Sadly I didn't have the energy to think about anything complicated right now, so I just shook my head slowly, denying the offer.

『Did you just refuse without even thinking about it? Why is that?』

Was he seriously asking me why? Did the guy think of me as a fool who would accept such a convenient and dubious offer?

As I've mentioned before, I believe in the fact that there is no such thing as a free lunch, especially in this barbaric world. Each favor has a hidden intention behind it, so most of these scheming bunch attempt to disguise it under the veil of goodwill.

Also, that man, whoever or whatever he was, just used magic to deliver his voice straight to my ears. I'm sure that he will ask for something big as recompensation.

Rather than being manipulated by that kind of person, fighting fair and losing is way better, in my opinion.

Having settled that matter, I was about to take a step...

『What an interesting lad.』

With those words, the voice slowly faded out, and soon everything began gradually going slower and slower before... finally, everything stopped.

The sand blowing with the fluttering of the wind, the clamor of people, flying birds, and falling leaves were all hardened in the middle of the air as if they were frozen in place.

The same thing happened to my body as well.

Only my eyes and thoughts were left out of this phenomenon. It was an unbelievable situation that went beyond all sense of reasoning, no matter how much I pondered and looked around.

Damn, what even is this? Is this some new kind of pre-death premonition? Does this damned world have such a ridiculous concept too? While I was immersed in such thoughts...

Whoosh— Thwack—

An object, or perhaps a person, freely falling from above lightly landed in between Hippolyte and me.

The first thing I could see was the fluttering of a red cape, immediately following it was the image of brown hair that was let loose, and a helmet worn on a head. Under the helmet resided caramel skin that seemed to be almost glowing under the sun.

In this suspended world, a man wearing what seemed to be a set of impenetrable armor was looking at me, grinning widely as though to show off his pristine white teeth. It was a very cheerful smile, but somehow I felt a chill crawl up along my spine at that sight.

『It's indeed nice to see you up closer. First, I'd like to thank you for choosing me instead of Minerva. Minerva was outraged due to that. Anyway, consider this as my way of giving you a gift for choosing me.』

With a swift move, the man held the knot on the side of the frozen Hippolyte's armor.

Twang—!

He pulled the knot like it was a grenade pin, snapping Hippolyte's armor.

Then, he spoke again, 『This is actually against the laws of Olympus, so I'll leave right now.』 After the word, he jumped again and disappeared out of my sight.

The fluttering red cape disappeared alongside his presence. At the same time, the world, which had been frozen still, slowly began moving as though someone had finally supplied it with the once-lost energy that was required for it to run again.

Starting at a snail's pace, the movements of the world gradually accelerated, until it finally recovered its original speed.

Twang— Clatter—

At that moment, the armor wrapped around Hippolyte, as she was standing in front of me, fell off, leaving her copper-colored skin exposed for everyone to witness.

“Wha- What!?”

I reached out to Hippolyte with all my force, not wanting to waste the opportunity her momentary shock gave me.

I don't even know what I am doing at this point, but I knew that I had to take advantage of this opportunity.

The suffocating pain running through my body and the aftermath of my actions were the last things on my mind. Such an opportunity wouldn't present itself again.

“O-oh, my God.”

I could feel Hippolyte covering her body, freezing on the spot, and clicking her tongue. Her inability to adapt to this sudden situation rendered her fully immobile.

It was the first time I saw her always fiery eyes waver. At the same time, she used one hand to cover her chest area and held the other one toward me as if trying to catch me.

The conflicting actions of someone who was both a woman and a warrior were clearly showcased in this.

“Where did you-?”

Hippolyte was trying to stop my palm from extending to her waist, but her hesitation, a result of her inner conflict made it impossible for her to do so.

Damn, I got it!

With my right hand, I could grasp the belt around Hippolyte's waist. Now, all I had to do was pull as hard as I can and everything would finally come to an end.

However, as I was about to snatch the object that would decide my victory, my wrist was caught by a firm iron grip. Holy fuck, I thought someone tied a noose around my wrist but it was just Hippolyte's hands instead.

Clench—

Moreover, the iron grip was applying so much pressure that I felt like my hand was about to break then and there and I was left with no choice but to scream out in agony. What the fuck was going on with this ridiculous grip of hers?

This was exactly the sort of feeling you'd get by having your arms squeezed to mush by a fucking machine.

"Ughh... arghh!"

Due to this, my hand, which was holding onto Hippolyte's belt, also lost all of its strength. She then twisted my arms, making me fall to my knees right on the ground.

"Just surrender. If you keep struggling, your bones will be crushed to powder."

Shit, my bones will be crushed? Even though there is the miracle of healing magic, can it heal back the broken bones which have been crumbled into pieces? It will be a tremendous loss to become a disabled man in such a world where people cannot even dream of pensions or welfare for the disabled.

"I- I surrender! I surrender! Eugh!"

"Phew."

Only then did Hippolyte let go of my hand with a small sigh. Damn it, I felt like I was going to tear up due to the tremendous pain I felt in my throbbing arms. It hurts a lot, god-fucking-damnit. I hope it's not broken.

Fortunately, after checking for a bit, it didn't seem to be broken or cracked. However, if Hippolyte had put some more strength on that ridiculous grip of hers, my arm would have literally been broken to pieces.

Throb, throb.

Was this fucking real? How could a person have such a grip? It seemed like her muscle density and physique may be structurally different from ordinary people like me.

"Phew, I have been unusually acting a little out of it. That really caught me off guard. However, it's your loss. Still, you were the first to be able to even grab my belt. You should feel proud of this accomplishment."

Clank— Clank—

Hippolyte picked up her armor lying on the ground and immediately put it back on her body. However, when she noticed the abnormally torn knot, creases formed on her forehead.

In the next moment, she glared up at the sky with a deep frown etched on her face.

* * *

“It doesn’t look like anything is wrong.”

Daphne, the receptionist, evaluated me by looking at my swollen arm with a red handprint covering the swollen part.

I was amazed at the fact that a person’s handprints could remain like this for such a long time.

Damn it, who the hell did I even decide to compete with? This is why men should be mindful of their schlongs. Nothing good could ever come out of thinking with their lower body.

However, along with my throbbing arm, the throbbing of this dastardly dick of mine was not even showing any signs of calming down anytime soon. It’s been in this situation from the moment I had seen Hippolyte’s mesmerizing bare skin and hints of her beautiful bosom earlier.

Damn you, dickhead, why don’t you calm down a little?

Anyway, I had completely and utterly lost. Meanwhile, I had a strange experience in the middle of the fight.

What the hell was that? I don’t remember what happened because I was so out of it back then. All I remembered was that it was a very significant event.

Daphne spoke again as I was lost in my thoughts.

“Anyway, you managed to grab Ms. Hippolyte’s belt. That’s an amazing feat you did there. You can add one more line to your lifetime achievements.”

Can I really add just that to my lifetime achievements? This somehow reminded me of the bulletin board posted by the adventurers to promote their names.

Something like [Hassan: Hippolyte’s belt toucher.] Was it really okay to add such absurd things to the bulletin board?

“Is that such a big deal?”

“Think about putting your head into a sleeping lion’s mouth and returning safely. Wouldn’t that make you want to brag? Whoo...”

I imagined putting my head in the lion’s mouth as Daphne explained. Indeed, if it was to that extent, it could be a story worth sharing while drinking out with friends.

“It’s just as great as that. It’ll help your career as an adventurer.”

“Ah-ha-ha. By the way, when will the next request come?”

It wasn't that long since I had returned from the previous expedition, but I was still hungry for more money. I didn't have a home in this world, after all, and living from one inn to another was terribly cumbersome.

It was ridiculous to have to pay every time you wanted to have a good place to sleep.

I want to quickly make money and then get a house of my own. It would also be good to get promoted to the silver tier, that way I will be able to have my own space and permission to start my own business.

I was considering opening a small health center with Luna if I were to get such a space. Luna was good at making alcohol with bee ingredients or concocting an elixir.

Meanwhile, I could give massages to customers and get paid for that. I think we will have good chemistry in working together.

We'll have about ten children. I'm not the one giving birth anyway, so the more the better.

However, I am a little worried whether Luna, who has such a petite figure, will be able to give birth to so many children. Shall we compromise and reduce it by half? How about five? Seems doable.

“Mr. Hassan, that's a disgusting look you're giving there. What are you thinking about?”

Damn it.

“Ms. Daphne, can't you just keep your opinions to yourself and not just throw them out like that?”

“I also want to do that, but your expression is just that much disgusting. So, I had no choice. Anyways, it'll take a while until the next request. I have some things that need to be dealt with first. Whoo...”

Daphne sighed again. She has been sighing like this for a while already.

I think I already vaguely know that she's suffering from an excessive workload. In that case, it's no wonder that she might feel mentally burdened. But this time it felt a little different.

“Are you feeling sick?”

“What? Oh, I’m just feeling a little bloated. Maybe it’s because I only sit and work for the whole day. I feel like my stomach wasn’t able to digest the pheasant meat I ate for lunch very well.”

“Oh, indigestion. Can you show me your hand, then?”

“Huh? Hand? Why?”

Daphne’s eyes couldn’t become any fiercer. I was worried that there might be another mishap as I had previously suffered a lot due to her misunderstandings.

Still, it was regrettable to miss the opportunity to get task points.

“I-it’s nothing weird. You know that I have a blessing, right?”

“Oh, right. There are a lot of bastards who try to touch my hand using several such excuses. So, you should stop doing this kind of thing, too.”

After that, Daphne’s hand reached out toward me. Although her thin and long hands were very beautiful, her palm was surprisingly rough and unsophisticated.

“I’ve felt this before but... Have you ever wielded a sword or a weapon before, Ms. Daphne?”

“Oh? How did you know that? Did you do a background check on me? Stalker!”

“D-damn it!”

“Haha, I’m just kidding. That’s right. I used to be a bronze-class adventurer. However, I couldn’t wield a sword anymore because I had seriously injured my shoulder. I’ve been recognized for my abilities, so I ended up working here like this.”

“Aha...”

Is it similar to a military mutual aid association for disabled soldiers?

Learning that people who got injured while working as adventurers will be given other work opportunities like this is somehow surprising to me.

Anyway, I put my fingers on Daphne’s wrist. Then, like last time, letters appeared in my mind, along with a tinkling sound.

[Stats] Name: Daphne

Level: 6

Condition: Indigestion» Excessive Sweating»

Ah... While looking at those letters, I thought they kind of reminded me of something. Last time, Daphne also had the word "Indigestion" but this was the first time I saw the excessive sweating condition, however. She must have gotten that disease somehow since the last time I checked her condition.

"Mr. Hassan, I have a question. What do you find out when you touch my wrist like this?"

"It's about sensing the pulse. It's just, how to say this? Think of it as reading the flowing karma through your body by sensing your pulse. Uh, can I press the palm of your hand?"

"Try it, then."

Anyways, I quietly grabbed the thick flesh between her thumb and index finger and pressed on it with some force using my thumb.

This is called the Hegu acupoint. Pressing it when you have an upset stomach will improve the blood circulation of the body. This method is super effective to help relieve digestion issues.

If it was only a palm massage then I think there was no need to worry about it being thought of as an illegal medical practice. I think I won't get subjected to a Stone Festival just for doing this.

Later, I should spare some time to find out what was qualified as a medical practice in this world.

Squeeze—

"Uh, uh, oh, it hurts!"

"I didn't press it that hard, but seeing that you feel so much pain, it must be because your blood circulation and energy flow are clogged up."

Squuuueeeeeeze—

I kept pressing that part. Actually, it's better to stimulate this part as strongly as possible, even if it hurts. However, Daphne began to twist as if she could not bear it anymore.

"Ugh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh... I-it feels so weird! This is sexual harassment! Ahh... O, ouch!"

What the heck was this? This was such an unexpected reaction. So, I was taken by surprise and immediately dropped her hand.

Ding!

『Daphne's Indigestion has been healed.』 『Task points + 10』 『Current task points: +47』

“Burrp-.”

Daphne's pale face turned beet red as she began burping nonstop.

“What, what? What is this...?”

This was supposed to come out sooner, but what can I say? Life was truly living :devolving:.

Wanna unlock all premium chapters? Check the Membership Chapters will seamlessly unlock no need to bother buying coins anymore.

Chapter 53: Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (4)

🌀 Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (4) 🌀

“Buuuurp...”

Daphne blushed, her face turning beet red, as she let out a soft burp. This seemed to be something new to her as she bombarded me with questions right after.

“W-what was that? What was that just now?”

Daphne seemed to be wondering how her indigestion condition suddenly improved. Hiding my surprise, I tried to calmly answer her queries to the best of my abilities.

“There is a distinct place where energy passes through a person's body. If you stimulate that area, the congested energy circulation will improve, and your body will feel energized due to the improved circulation.”

“Energy? Is it like Mana?”

Was energy something similar to Mana? I honestly had no idea about that. In the first place, I was never able to sense the energy that was coursing through my body, the same was the case for the Mana the people of this world can sense and manipulate.

Both of them had similarities that were beyond my understanding. However, from what I can understand, their attributes seem to be similar, so maybe we can say that they're the same thing? Even though I believe that this concept is too absurd, in alternative medicine, half of the truth can be covered as long as the bullshit you spouted was convincing enough.

"You can think of it as something similar. Who knows, it could be the same thing too."

Still, just in case, I answered as vaguely as possible to leave some leeway if I ever were to need it in the future.

"Treating Mana falls under medical practice. You didn't do any illegal medical practice out there now, did you?"

Hearing Daphne's question, I could already see the vision of innumerable pebbles flying toward me. Fucking hell, I absolutely don't want to become persecuted at a Stone Festival like that.

"Well, i-it's just a massage, nothing more. It's okay to give a massage, right?"

"Hmm, that's true. Anyways, it was a very interesting massage session. I almost slapped you there because, at some point, it suddenly started feeling really weird. I'm glad I believed in you and held it in."

"Well, please be more trusting of me in the future."

"Wow, but it's really amazing. I feel so refreshed. What is that even? It really hit the spot. Can I also massage myself as you did just now? I often feel uncomfortable in my stomach, so it would be perfect to know such a massaging method."

As the sun had already settled behind the horizon, the guild had become empty and quiet, devoid of the bustle of the adventurers. Due to that, my talk with Daphne lasted for quite a while.

Since I still had to wait for Luna, who was supposed to meet me here anyway, and I had nothing left to do, I agreed to Daphne's request of teaching her that massaging method. Besides, it was a good occasion to dig up all the facts and stories of this world that I was unaware of, at least the ones that will be beneficial for me.

"Should I press here?"

Daphne pointed at the part where I had previously pressed with my thumb. She vigorously pressed on the thick flesh of her left hand with her right hand.

"It does hurt!"

Actually, the Hegu acupoint is a spot that anyone can easily stimulate with their opposite hand, so even someone who has zero knowledge about massaging can also use this technique. I kept reminiscing about the anatomy of the human body alongside the antique drawings that I saw hanging in my father's study.

Damn I wasn't interested in that shit previously, so I couldn't remember them well because I saw them such a long time ago. If I knew something like this was going to happen, I would've done my best to memorize those things.

"Yes, if you feel a slight bulge or moderate discomfort in the pit of your stomach or have mild indigestion, just press on that part. If pressing on that spot doesn't work or if the indigestion is particularly severe, you'll need to apply pressure in another place.

"Another place? Is there really another place? Where is it?"

"It's on your feet."

"F-Feet?"

Daphne stared at me again, suspicion brimming in her eyes, as she felt flustered and anxious about the mention of "feet." The people of this world were very conservative and sensitive about their feet. In fact, the level of their awareness and the subsequent importance and protection they related to it was comparable to their nether regions.

But, of course, the opposition here, when asked to show them their feet, was significantly lower than in that area.

"A-are you going to touch my feet now?"

"No, I didn't say that. I just laid out the fact that there's a spot in the feet. And pressing there does work really well."

"It works well...?"

Daphne gazed at me while biting her lower lip. Soon, after glancing around at the lobby of the quiet guild and her receptionist colleagues who were chatting at the back, she rose from her seat.

"Then, Mr. Hassan, let's go this way."

Grabbing my arm, she started leading me somewhere else.

"Well, where are you trying to drag me now?"

"Shh, be quiet. You have to keep it a secret."

I was taken aback by the abruptness of her actions. Yet, I followed her calmly because I didn't think she was trying to kidnap me or take me to a place to get me beat up by bad guys.

Soon enough, Daphne led me to a room that looked like a typical warehouse where all kinds of scrolls were covered in dust and piled up everywhere. Was this like an archive room? It didn't look to be a significant place anyway.

"Mr. Hassan, can you promise to keep this a secret?"

"What? What for?"

"B-Because you're going to touch my foot now. If that fact spreads around, I can't get married anymore. Or will you take responsibility for me then?"

Why are you telling me to take responsibility all of a sudden? This green-haired woman was being ridiculous right now. She often had the habit of misunderstanding and then going full throttle after that, it was a little hard to deal with.

Yet, she was still amiable and pretty enough that stalkers would follow her.

Hearing such a woman ask if I would take responsibility for her in such a cramped space unconsciously made my little brother very excited. Damn you bastard! Why are you rising up so frequently these days, huh?

"Of course, it's a joke. I'm not like the innocent Kore. I don't want to seduce a man by using that move. Anyway, I'm just asking you to keep this a secret."

I couldn't help but feel immensely excited at the thought of being able to share a secret with a woman. Moreover, the guilt of perhaps doing something questionable made me feel even more thrilled.

"Uh, okay, I promise to keep this a secret."

"Then, swear by the River Styx that you will keep what will happen from here on a secret."

Ugh, I didn't really like this part. Did she want me to experience that hellish stomach ache again? I'd really like to decline that part.

"Well, that's a little..."

"You don't want to do that? Then I'll scream right now. Do you know what would happen if I were to scream in this situation?"

In the next moment, Daphne quickly tore off some of the buttons neatly fastened to her work clothes.

“If you get caught like this, you won’t be able to get out.”

“D-damn it... Just a second, please.”

“Then, you just need to promise me. Now, say you swear by the River Styx.”

“Okay, I see. I swear.”

“Good.”

That’s when Daphne finally smiled contentedly. I was nervous, thinking that the cursed state would show up again in my status. Fortunately, no words appeared in front of my eyes.

Swearing by the River Styx doesn’t seem to automatically give you that status. Was there a specific condition for that?

“Well, then...”

Ssk— Ssk —

Daphne sat on a pile of papers and began taking off the sandals that covered her feet.

Soon, her tiny white ankles were revealed before my eyes. It was a typical Greek foot in which the second toe was longer than the big toe. Is her feet size 230? I wasn’t sure but that should be rather close.

“I-I’m feeling very embarrassed, so hurry up and press that spot already. I can’t leave my seat for too long.”

After that, Daphne reached out her foot to me.

Since it was a skirt-type work uniform, her smooth white legs, and skinny ankles were clearly revealed for my eyes to witness. Moreover, as she had been wearing footwear for a long time, her feet were slightly sweaty.

I sat in front of Daphne, balancing my body on one knee, and gently grabbed her feet.

Compared to her rough palms, the soles of her feet were soft and tender, somewhat like a baby’s skin. I often wondered just how the people of this world tended to take care of their feet, which were hidden inside footwear, more thoroughly than their hands which would often be visible to the eyes.

Sniff— Sniff—

It smelled like sweat. She did have an excessive sweating condition, after all. Of course, it was not at a terrible level, but it was just a natural thing as a human, so it's not worth paying attention to. So, I kept going.

“Then I'll press down on your Sham acupoint now.”

After wrapping Daphne's right foot with my hands, I proceeded to press my thumb on the top portion of her foot, about 2 cm deep between her big toe and second toe.

The exact place of this acupoint was where the second toe and the big toe started to divide.

This is called the Sham acupoint. It is a vital point in the meridian massage technique and a good spot for eliminating all kinds of diseases.

It always felt strange whenever I exaggerated an acupoint as a vital acupuncture point.

Damn, but it was true that most acupuncture points were indeed considered to be important. There were virtually no unimportant acupuncture points. That's why you can't trust alternative medicine.

Squeeeeeeze—

“It's gonna hurt a little here. So, bear with me for a bit.”

Just pressing the Sham acupoint was already painful for most ordinary people. However, bloating due to indigestion or unclear body circulation would increase the resulting pain of pressing on the acupoint by a lot.

“Ah... Argh, it hurts....”

Squeeeeeeze— Squeeeeeeze—

With my thumb, I kept stimulating the soft soles of her feet and the top part of the Sham acupoint. I think I can stimulate it for another 10 seconds before it becomes too painful for her to endure.

“I-it hurts, but I have to say that it feels so refreshing. I feel good. W-what is this? It's the first time I am feeling something like this. Oh... uh... oh...”

A woman moaning in either pain or pleasure was quite the spectacle to me. Although I understood that this was nothing but a massage, blood had already rushed to my schlong, making it throb in eager anticipation.

In the first place, feet were somehow a kind of erogenous zone for the people of this world. Being allowed to touch that part was already a crazy thing.

“Oh... Ha... Oh... Oh...”

“Should I stop pressing it now?”

“N-no... please press a little more. I-I feel a strange sensation... But it's in a good way. It feels so good. Mr. Hassan, p-please press it a little bit harder. Has...”

Pressing her feet in a small room like this and listening to her moan somehow excited me to no end, and my hands eventually started to sweat from the tension and the atmosphere.

Of course, there was some sweat coming from Daphne's feet as well. Nonetheless, my hands and Daphne's feet were both now wet from each other's constant sweat.

“Oh... M-Mr. Hassan, p-please press it a little bit harder. Uh, oh, oh, I feel something tingling!”

She wanted me to press harder? Damn! To be honest, I was already simulating the acupoint rather strongly.

Pressing with further strength would be harmful to her feet. Using more strength didn't always give better results, after all.

“H-hurry, hurry up, a, a little more... Oh, oh, yeah, yeah, yes!”

However, I was quite unsure of the consequences of defying Daphne's wishes, so I resolved myself and kept pressing as hard as possible, just as I was asked by her. Using my index fingers, I vigorously pushed her acupoint as though pushing a stamp on a piece of paper.

“Oh, there's something big, something big, something... big... Oh, Ah, Ah, Ah! Oh!”

Then, with her toes stretched out toward me, Daphne's body curled up hard, her body arching like a bowstring. Due to the sudden movements of her body, she slipped from her seat atop the pile of papers and fell on the floor. Her body started flinching violently as soon as she fell on the floor.

“Uwaaaa!”

Flinch— Flinch—!

Her curvy waist kept bouncing up and down, her whole body twitching with no signs of stopping. It really looked like she was having a seizure. At the same time, a stream of letters appeared in front of my eyes.

Ding—!

『Daphne's Excessive Sweating has been healed.』 『Task Points + 10』 『
Current Task Points: +57』

Oh, the task points I've accumulated have exceeded the halfway mark of 100. So, it was not only for pressing the red spots. It also worked when I pressed on other places too.

When I was thinking about how it was also a beneficial experience for me...

“M-Mr. Hassan, I-I... ugh....”

Still feeling the effects of massage, Daphne laid on the pile of papers and then gazed at me.

Her green eyes were moist and somehow full of satisfaction.

As she gasped for air, sweat dripped down from her nape, and her slightly unbuttoned front revealed her prominent collarbone and bountiful cleavage.

She opened her red lips and said in a breathy voice.

“I, oh... Mr. Hassan, i-it was a great experience.”

“Oh, yes, I'm glad that you're satisfied.”

“N-next time-”

Just when Daphne was trying to say some more words...

Knock— Knock—

Startle—

Daphne and I were utterly startled to hear someone knocking on this storage room full of scrolls.

Hey, Daphne? Are you inside? It's not time to get off work yet. How could you leave the counter? The visitor you are in charge of has come. The girl with pink twintails hair, the one who looks like Kore. ¹Koreis the Greek word for Young Maiden or Young girl, it, however, could also refer to Persephone, Queen of the underworld. It was the name

she used to have as a human, before getting kidnapped by Pluton/Hades. In this context, it just means naive.

“Oh, yes, yes! I’m here! I was searching for something! I’ll clean up a bit and return in a jiffy! I have found everything I want now!”

Then, come out soon.

After shouting to the staff member outside, Daphne hurriedly tidied up her messy appearance and softly warned me, “Mr. Hassan, please come out a while after me. I don’t want to get into any misunderstandings and I assume neither do you.”

Speaking till there, she hurriedly left me behind.

Thanks to that, now I ended up alone in this archive room.

When I thought about the things I did just now, I couldn’t help but put my palms in front of my face and take a few whiffs of my hand.

Sniff— Sniff—

Surprisingly, my palm didn’t smell at all. Then, I checked the situation outside after waiting inside the room for a while.

After roughly noticing that no one was walking through the hallway, I secretly opened the door and pushed myself out of the storage room.

“What are you doing here, Hassan?”

At that moment, somehow, I felt a cold shiver run through my body when my eyes met a pair of emerald-colored ones waiting for my arrival in the hallway.

“Lu-Luna, how did you get here?”

“We promised to have dinner together, didn’t we? Why are you sweating so much? What were you doing?”

Then, Luna suddenly sniffed my body. I shivered at that move, so I pushed her cheek away from my body.

“Hey, why are you suddenly smelling me like that?!”

“Hngg... That’s okay. I like your smell. But, you smell a bit different from usual. Where did I smell this before? This smell is rather familiar. I think I smelled it recently too....”

Sniff— Sniff—

Luna continued to sniff the smell around my face. This girl's nose was more sensitive than I previously thought. I didn't even know that my body was emanating Daphne's scent.

More than that, why was I feeling so scared about her smelling me like this? I'm not sure why, but I was suddenly feeling like a sinner who got caught doing something terrible.

"I-it must be the smell of scroll papers. There was a lot of mold on the papers inside that room."

"Scroll paper..."

Luna's bleary eyes suddenly opened wide after murmuring a bit about the scroll paper, and then she furrowed her brows in thought.

"Why, what happened? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Scroll paper!"

After saying that, Luna brought out a scroll paper with a seal made out of red wax and placed it on my hand.

"W-what is this?"

"It's scroll paper."

I know, but what kind of scroll paper is this?

We're back to a stable release rate, lets fucking goooooo.

Wanna unlock all premium chapters? Check the Membership Chapters will seamlessly unlock no need to bother buying coins anymore.

Footnotes:

- 1Koreis the Greek word for Young Maiden or Young girl, it, however, could also refer to Persephone, Queen of the underworld. It was the name she used to have as a human, before getting kidnapped by Pluton/Hades. In this context, it just means naive.

Chapter 54: Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (5)

🔖 Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (5) 📄

The scroll that Luna handed me was quite antique looking. It was made of a very thin sheepskin that was flattened with a hammer.

The way it was wrapped with a seal made me think that it just might be an exquisite document of sorts.

This kind of scroll document usually came from the government offices of this world. For example, these documents often circulated within the city hall or those shitty slave management centers.

And the scroll issued from such a place was always deemed to be a very important document.

“What’s this?”

“Open it up, and see for yourself.”

Luna spoke with an unusually calm tone, accompanying her voice. Perhaps because she usually speaks with so much enthusiasm in all of her words, her calmness was somehow scary.

What kind of scroll did Luna shove at me now? Was it something like a marriage registration document?

With such outlandish thoughts in mind, I unwrapped the scroll’s seal with my trembling hands. Unrolling the scroll, I quickly skimmed through the content inside.

『The rights to the land and the buildings in the 5th street area of Sodomora West Gate were transferred to the Bronze Tier adventurer of the Mars Guild – Luna Knox Dotty. Sodomora Market (인)』Signature.』

“Oh, what is this?”

“This is a certificate of ownership for the land! What do you think? Isn’t this great?! Now I have my own hideout!”

Luna jumped in utter delight. I also felt surprised and happy at the same time. I’m not sure what this meant, but no matter how you looked at this situation, didn’t it mean that Luna was now the owner of a building now?

Of course, she was already a lady who owned a lot of land back in her hometown. However, those lands were, unfortunately, non-transferable, in other words, unsellable. Anyway, the fact that she could buy a building and land in the city’s center was already remarkable enough.

“Wow, that’s great. Look at you! How did this happen?”

“Let’s go! I’ll tell you once we’re there.”

Then, we walked out of the guild and went down the street toward Luna’s new home.

Luna walked so fast that it seemed like she was almost running. I even had difficulty following her pace. Well, Luna’s agility level was much higher than mine, after all.

Soon, after departing from the city’s central area, we arrived at the west gate of Sodomora. It was a kind of slum area with many hooligans hanging around its vicinities.

Since it had already been a while since I have become active around the west gate area, somehow, I was able to become familiar with this place already.

Swish— Swish—

As Luna and I walked and reached the corners of an alley, a group of bastards was eyeing us with interest. I wasn’t sure if they were muggers, thieves, or simple pickpockets but I knew that they didn’t have any good intentions. Somehow, the place we finally arrived at was...rather familiar...

“Isn’t this that place? The cabin.”

This place was the same cabin where me and Luna diligently indulged in carving those Moai totems.

You could also call it a dilapidated wooden warehouse as well. However, no matter how you named the cabin, the last thing you could call it was luxurious.

“That’s right! This is the only place I can buy with all my money. But I had to buy it at a high price. I spent all my money on it.”

“How much did you have to spend to buy this place?”

“Three golds! Actually, two golds were loaned... Anyways, I bought it as soon as possible because they said if I don’t buy it now, it will be sold out soon.”

Luna spoke some more, but honestly, I wasn’t able to register any of her words anymore.

Oh, fucking damn it, three golds? I can’t even begin to imagine just how much that amount of money was. Three golds were the equivalent of three hundred silvers. I can’t even calculate just how many 3 coppers soup bowls you could get with that amount.

Anyway, Luna seemed to have more money than I thought.

But, why did she buy this place for so much money? Was there any oil under here? I couldn't help but ask Luna because I was very curious about her intentions behind this purchase.

“What are you going to do here?”

“I plan to establish a workshop. Here, I'm going to make a brewery, an elixir store, and many many more things that I have thought up to establish!”

“Ah...”

Indeed, it occurred to me that we already had this conversation before. Luna planned to set up a workshop after promoting to the bronze tier and subsequently becoming eligible to get a loan. I just wanted to think of it as a little far into the future. But it seemed that Luna's ability to act on a plan was better than I thought.

Come to think of it, Luna was surprisingly really competent in the strangest of matters. Was this what a spiteful city like Sodomora did to a soft girl like her? Making her do such things, go to such extreme lengths in order to survive living in this wretched place?

“But there's still a lot to prepare. I have to fix the exterior. And several things need to be prepared for the interior too...”

“Did you only buy the land?”

“Yeah, well, just that, but isn't it cool though? This is my land! All mine! Let's go in! Come on!”

After unlocking the rusty chains and locks, Luna went inside to find a rather dusty warehouse.

“This is a nice place. That's how it feels like. I've been paying attention to it for a long time already.”

This place is... nice?

I didn't realize it when I came here to make the Moai statues because I didn't pay much attention to my surroundings. Now that I got the chance to take a closer look, however, I could see some details that I previously failed to notice.

The overall size of the cabin was about the right size for a studio. If you put in a bed, a closet, and a desk, there would be little to no space left to fit anything else.

I wasn't sure if this place was enough for a girl to run a workshop alone. However, what I immediately understood with just a glance was that... this place was really too old.

Drooping spider webs, dirty straws, along with animal hair were scattered all over the dilapidated warehouse. I think it would still take a few days of cleaning even if we did our very best to barely clean this place up.

“Wow, i-it’s a wolf spider! Holy shh!! “

Suddenly, Luna, who was looking keenly at a corner of the warehouse jumped in excitement and quickly ran toward that direction, flipping something over with both hands when she reached that place.

A giant creature escaped in surprise and shock because of her sudden intrusion. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say I almost jumped about a meter high when I saw that creature sprinting toward me.

“W-What the fuck?!”

It was a spider. A palm-sized spider, damn it. Was it a tarantula?

Man, I didn’t even want to touch such a dangerous, furry, and colorful-looking spider. As I stated previously, I was okay with bees but spiders were another matter altogether. In fact, I was fucking terrified of spiders, dammit.

“Hassan! C-Catch it! Don’t let it run away!”

“Hiaaaak!”

Luna seemed to be running around trying to catch this furry creature, but I just wanted that spider to disappear from my sight as soon as possible. In the end, Luna used her full speed to catch the spider, capturing it in the confines of her palms.

Holding it by its legs, Luna smiled as she stuck it out toward me as if trying to show off her spoil.

“Wow, it’s really big. I’ve never seen a wolf-spider this big before. So lucky!”

Kong— Kong Kong—!

“What’s wrong with this spider’s cry?”

“It’s a wolf spider. Is this the first time you see a wolf spider, Hassan? Anyway, they’re pretty precious as far as medical ingredients go. They can also be sold as a pet for about 20 coppers. Isn’t this cute? It is not poisonous and has a gentle personality to boot. Actually, it is very cowardly.”

Grrrrr— Kong— Kong— Urrrrr— Kong— Kong— Kong—!

Damn it, no matter how I took a look at it, I couldn't imagine it having a gentle personality. All I could see was a beast that was eager to bite my nape and tear it apart. It was like an assassin sent by nature.

It felt like a lie that such a rainbow color creature was deemed not poisonous. However, Luna turned around the palm-sized spider she caught, rubbed its stomach with her finger, and then spoke again...

"Wow, it's a female! I have to raise it well. Now, go in...."

Then, she opened the old jar in the corner, drove the spider into it, and closed the lid. It was only after the spider disappeared from my sight that I could breathe a sigh of utter relief.

"Damn it, this is so scary."

"I don't think you ever mentioned being scared of spiders, Hassan, or did you?"

"I'm as scared as one can be."

"Spiders are cute. Anyways, if we put a chair and a desk here, then put a furnace in this corner and buy a large pot and several different things, it'll look good, right?"

Luna explained her plan by pointing her finger at every dark corner of the cabin. It just looked like an old cabin to me, but for Luna, it seemed like a kind of stepping stone to use and leap forward to achieve her grand dreams.

But I couldn't really understand what the picture of the future she held in her head was, so I just nodded along.

"So, you're not going to be an adventurer anymore?"

"No, I will still remain an adventurer. This business won't be profitable for a while. Also, I think it's time for me to go around looking for ingredients. Speaking of that, Hassan..."

Luna hesitated a lot, as though what she was about to say was very important to her.

"What is it?"

"Well, for... for the time being, can you pair up with me...."

"No."

At that moment, Luna's expression turned sad after hearing my response. She must have been full of expectations and hope that I would agree. Tears were forming in the

corners of her wide-open eyes and it looked like she could cry at any moment so I chose to speak again...

"I'm just kidding. You want to form a party with me for a while, right? Of course, I'd love to do that."

Luna was a mysterious girl to me in many ways. In other words, the longer my relationship with this girl pertained, the more advantageous it would be for me.

Above all, Luna was growing rapidly. Maybe she could surpass me in ability and soon become the leader of our adventurer party.

Of course, it didn't necessarily need to be like that for me to form a party with Luna. I just felt good just by being near her.

"Hassan, you are not lying, right? Really? You will pair up with me, right?"

"Yes, rather than that I'm more curious about another thing."

"Huh? Is there anything you're curious about me?"

"That's... I was wondering just what are we? Just what is the relationship between us? I don't think we're merely party members at this point. Right?"

After hearing my question, Luna blushed heavily and shut her mouth as if she wasn't willing to say anything about that matter. During this moment of silence, this cramped cabin suddenly felt bigger than it was in reality.

Luna finally spoke up first after a moment.

"Hassan, what do you want us to be...? What do you want to view me as...?"

"I don't know, maybe like a g-girlfriend?"

It was the most courageous moment of my life.

Wouldn't it be better to call this "the first confession in my life"? After all, prior to this, all I experienced was getting dumped before I even had a chance to confess.

I stared at Luna, waiting for her reply, while my heart was pounding a mile a minute.

Luna looked down at her feet as if she was too shy to answer. It was cute to see her toes fidgeting inside the confines of her sandals.

"Ha-Hassan, actually, I have a confession to make..."

“Confession?”

My heart sank at the word of confession.

Yes or no. It was either these two answers or something unusual that often was just another form of rejection.

“What are you trying to confess?”

However, I still asked carefully just in case. Luna hung her head low and hesitated for a long time without answering.

“Tell me. I won’t be angry with you.”

“...Last time, when I was on night duty. I prayed to Lady Knox, the mother of the night.”

“...”

This seemed to be an extension of the story that Luna had been trying to relay to me but could not continue due to the unexpected situation we got caught into. Nothing would disturb us now. There were only Luna and me in this small space.

Because of this, I had no choice but to look at Luna’s lips with a tense expression.

“Knox answered my prayers for the first time in my life. Of course, it was similar to a hallucination. It was like I was dreaming in my sleep...”

Luna stopped talking again after saying that.

“Why, what is it? Keep talking.”

“S-She said that unless my marriage partner was a God, he wouldn’t be able to handle being with me, At the very least he should be a hero with great achievement. Only then is it possible for him to marry me.”

I felt like I was hit straight in the back with a hammer.

Although Luna doesn’t seem to know that Knox, the goddess of the night, is her mother, I already knew who she was because I could say that I had met her once.

Plainly speaking. Knox was the mother of Luna, the girl who might become my girlfriend. And that mother didn’t like me.

The reason was that I was far from a great male God or the hero that she spoke of.

I was just Hassan, the unregulated worker, an illegal resident.

Is this what people termed as a parent's opposition? It felt like it was something else. However, nothing other than one's parents' objections came to my mind as I heard her speak so it should be similar to that.

But Knox had already given me a blessing. Didn't that mean that she liked me?

I spoke to Luna.

"But, uh, we were together yesterday. Regardless of your vow of chastity...."

Just like an ant drifting in the water, desperately struggling to catch something, I was also racking my brain hard to find a way out of this situation.

Luna answered.

"I... was only allowed that one day only..."

"What?"

I, now, understood how people could crumple to their knees when facing great despair.

At that moment, I felt like a doll hanging on a single thread. Soon, the thread loosened, and I, the doll, had fallen on the floor, shattering into a million pieces.

"So you're going to marry someone else someday?"

Luna shakes her head at my question.

"I don't want to do it unless it's you. I didn't even think about doing it with anyone else."

At Luna's words, I could feel my body gain its strength back. This is not the time to sit around like this.

"So what do I have to do to become that kind of hero?"

Where can I even get that license? Damn it, of course, no one would be able to provide it to me.

Some time passed.

On the next day.

What I heard from Hippolyte on the training ground shook me to my very core.

"There's a way to get that license."

Wanna unlock all premium chapters? Check the Membership Chapters will seamlessly unlock no need to bother buying coins anymore.

Footnotes:

- 1Signature

Chapter 55: Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (6)

Hassan – Sodomora's Rising Star (6)

Luna told me that she would be busy with various paperwork and cleaning up the warehouse, or cabin as she liked to call it.

“I have a lot of things to buy, and I think I’ll be busy today. So, see you tomorrow, Hassan!”

“Okay.”

After separating from Luna in front of that inn, I decided to head back to the guild building.

There was nothing much to do for me there. But, for some reason, I suddenly became obsessed with the idea to become stronger.

So, as Hippolyte advised me before, I tried to swing my sword at the scarecrow a few times. However, not soon after I started I sensed something or someone from behind.

Whoosh—

“Is that you, Miss Hippolyte?”

“Oh, you realized it was me without even looking.”

The only person who would pop up behind me like that was this damn Hippolyte. So, I didn’t really need to guess to get it right.

Anyway, I ignored the approaching Hippolyte and continued to swing my sword at the scarecrow. It was perfect for moving your body roughly if you just wanted to vent and relieve your anger then it couldn’t get any better.

Then, Hippolyte suddenly spoke.

“You’ve been working hard since this morning. It’s good to have the ambition to improve oneself. I can feel a purpose in the way you’re wielding your sword today. You must have been so upset that you lost to me, right?”

Her words reminded me of the duel I had the day before. I wasn’t really sure if someone could even call it a duel. She unilaterally beat me, it was complete dominance.

But I didn’t feel begrudged that I had lost to her. It was a fight that was impossible to win in the first place.

In order to feel that something was unfair, I personally thought that you had to lose by a narrow margin, or both the participants had to be of equal skill. However, I didn’t feel like explaining it to her as it felt like a chore.

“You can say that.”

“Hassan of Samaria, I thought you were a true scumbag. It turns out you’re still much better than your peers. All right, at least I’ll correct your posture for now.”

Grab—

After saying that, she just went on and grabbed my arms, clinging to my body all of a sudden. Damn, did she have no sense of restraint at all?

Of course, my back was only met with the texture of her hard armor, so there was nothing to be excited about, but my personal space being invaded like this always made my heart pound for no reason.

“At a slightly slanted angle, if you slash it down like this, from the collarbone to the side...”

She held my hand as she explained to me the correct trajectories of slashing the sword. But, if I had to be honest, I couldn’t concentrate at all.

The reason was none other than Hippolyte herself. How should I say this, well, from her I could smell the scent of perfumed oil mixed with the faintest whiffs of sweat perhaps. Anyways, whatever it may be, the fact of the matter was sent that smell was enough to make blood uncontrollably rush toward a man’s lower region.

As if it was a wild beast, I was scared that I would be devoured by this raging sense of lust and horniness that I was feeling right now.

“All right, you’re pretty talented. Of course, there’s still much to improve. Visit this place often in the future. If I have the time, at the very least, I’ll correct your posture.”

After correcting my posture, Hippolyte walked away since she had some duties to attend to. As I was facing her back, looking at her drifting further away, I couldn't help but ask.

"Well, Miss Hippolyte. What should I do to become a hero?"

I have come to this world for about two years already. And in that time, I've heard people talking about heroes quite a few times.

But I didn't think it was related to me at that time, so I wasn't interested. Of course, I didn't believe that it was related to me even now if I had to be honest. Actually, why did I use the "hero" word instead of "hero"? It sounds a little bit silly.¹The first Hero was in Hangul, while the second was spelled as pronounced in English.

"Hero?"

Hippolyte only slightly turned her shoulders and head to look at me. Her expression seemed to be saying "What is this punk trying to say?" or something along those lines.

"Are you asking me how to become a hero class?"

"That's right. Do I have to get a license to get recognized as a hero?"

"Yes, there's a way to get that license."

Holy shit! There really was a license for becoming a hero. I was just asking for the heck of it, but I never imagined that there would be an actual license for something like that.

"Where can I get it?"

"If you follow the path of Mars, you'll naturally reach it."

After saying that, Hippolyte pointed her finger toward her bosom. Because of that, I immediately thought about her bulging chest and the huge bosom that was surely contained within that bulge.

What is this? Are you bragging about your big breasts? Of course, they are big enough to brag about alright. After having touched it myself, I know just how big they are. I couldn't hold it all in one hand, after all.

"What's wrong with that distasteful expression of yours? It's disgusting. What kind of dastardly things are you imagining? I'm talking about the identification tag, damn it!"

Ah...

Only then could I focus and see the shining silver identification tag hanging on Hippolyte's chest.

That was similar to the dog tag that you would get in the army. The difference being that this was for adventurers, not military men. Like the adventurer's tag. Every time you raised in rank, the material of the identification tag changed from iron, bronze, silver, and gold, in that order.

"People usually term anyone who has the gold identification tag as a hero. It can be compared with Kairos, the great teacher who hung a gold necklace on his disciples."

I don't know who this great teacher was exactly. Anyway, what I understood from this was that the gold-tier adventurers were called heroes. If not, then maybe the adventurers who were able to enter the realm of heroes were probably eligible to become promoted to the gold tier.

Anyways, that gold identification tag could be called a license or verification of sorts. Damn it, just when I thought that I was able to clear up one of my troubles, another one popped up.

From Elfriede, who could use magic without the use of spells, to Hippolyte, who could shoot sword slashes like it was nothing. There was even that Lord Destroyer who could wield a gigantic hammer and swing it around like a toy. You're telling me that all of these ridiculously strong people were only silver-tier adventurers?

Just what kind of monsters could reach this realm of gold rank that even these ridiculous bunch weren't able to achieve?

"Becoming a gold-tier adventurer isn't going to be easy. There are many things to consider, starting from your reputation in the surrounding area to you also needing to win sufficient popularity among the citizens."

"What? You also need to care about your popularity and image?"

"Despite being skillful, there are many people who cannot reach the gold tier because they are cruel and violent and people don't acknowledge them. Sometimes there are adventurers who don't get accepted because they are arrogant and conceited as well. For example, Altair from the Minerva guild."

Hmm... You also need acknowledgment from other people, huh? That was probably the most difficult condition that I needed to fulfill. I'm Hassan of Samaria, after all. More often than not, I would get despised and teased rather than acknowledged for my deeds.

"But having an aspiration is a good thing. Hassan, if you're an adventurer, always aim for a higher place. And... About last time..."

“Y-Yes?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

* * * * *

I walked around the park after having a small lunch. I got myself a two-copper burrito from the streets as my lunch for today. As expected, hitting a scarecrow did not suit my aptitude.

And even if I simply practiced 100 days in. At this rate, it might take weeks, months, or even years for my strength to rise by even one level.

“Long live Chaos!”

Ding—

[Stats] Name: Hassan

Level: 8

Strength: 2

Agility: 2

Stamina: 3

Task: 57

Blessing: Blessing of Chaos » Imperfect Dexterity » Night’s Cloak »

I creased my forehead as I looked at the letters and numbers hovering in front of me.

Didn’t I already have a mysterious ability that would make people wonder in awe if they were to learn about it? I’m sure that I will be able to grow twice as fast if I were to use it efficiently.

However, in this world, using something like this was considered an illegal medical practice that was heinous enough to be beaten to death. Is there any way to wriggle around this?

“Look, who has come? Isn’t this the new Baraboroy that I haven’t seen for a while?”

After wandering in the park, I arrived at the library of Sodomora. Of course, although it was called a library, it was more like a cramped secondhand bookstore.

However, the knowledge that was piled up here would be able to enrich my mind.

“So, Baraboroy, what do you want to find out in this place? Rather than coming here, it will be faster for you to search for it in the wilderness outside the gate.”

A skinny grey-haired librarian spoke to me in a sarcastic tone after seeing me enter the store.

Of course, I knew this was his way of joking around, but his sense of humor was rather dry. This was what happened when you buried your nose in books for too long.

Rattle—

On the man’s neck, there was a blue name tag. After glancing at the name written on it, I asked kindly in my own way.

“Well, Mr. Erimantos, I’m here to borrow some books. Do you have an encyclopedia?”

“Encyclopedia? I have. What are you going to do with it?”

“I’m thinking of reading it.”

“What a surprise!”

Damn it, could you use a book for any other purpose than reading it? I suddenly felt like opening the librarian’s head and looking into his thoughts.

“A Samarian, who wants to brush up his knowledge? This really feels like a novel experience to me. But we have to maintain the procedure now, don’t we? Show me your identification tag.”

Therefore, I showed Erimantos, the library keeper, my identification tag that was jingling around my neck.

This was a bronze tag I had just received from the guild, and every time I showed it around, I couldn’t help but feel very proud about it. I was now a bonafide bronze-tier adventurer!

“Hassan of Samaria, I have checked it already. But I must say, you really got an ugly necklace there.”

Erimantos narrowed his forehead when he saw the fist-sized necklace hanging around my neck. I wasn’t sure if an educated person like him could sense some mysterious power from my necklace.

“I can’t believe you really put something like that on your neck. Don’t you feel anything? I can feel something unusual coming from it.”

“I don’t feel anything. Anyway, please give me the book quickly.”

“Hmm, is it a Samarian special mental protection? Anyway, please wait.”

Erimantos disappeared among various old bookshelves. When he came back, he was holding a large and heavy-looking book in his hand.

“Here you are. You will have to pay for it if it is lost or damaged.”

“There, I’ll sit at that desk and read.”

“Okay then.”

Receiving the thick and heavy book from the librarian, I went and sat at a table in the corner of the library. The title on the cover of the old book was—

『How to Act Like a Continental for Dummies』

Damn, this is the exact same book I read last time.

I flipped the thick book cover and started reading from things I remembered to the part I was curious about.

『Knox, the goddess of the night? An existence of the beginning. As one of the Protogenoi, she’s in charge of the dark night. It is said that as a pre-Titan existence, her power is unfathomable.

She lives in Pluto’s underground palace, at the deepest part of Tartarus, where even the gods are reluctant to enter.

That alone will tell you how big her prowesses are. However, since she rarely comes out of her place, there’s nothing much to be known about her』

Luna’s mother seemed to be a very mighty goddess.

Damn it, then why the hell was her daughter, Luna, a Chikorita? Was she not her real daughter or what?

No, maybe Knox is a powerful Chikorita then? A Gigantamax Chikorita? Shit, that alone was already quite scary.

Schliff— Schliff— Schliff—

I kept flipping the page and stopped at a page with familiar words written on it.

Uh... uh...

I found it. It was in the very back of the book.

『Asclepius? A healer who is said to have lived decades ago. According to the literature, it is said that he lived in the Acheron region, and he was active near Babylia or Kalkata.

He was a very talented healer. He could point out someone's condition just by looking at the other person's eyes.

However, his outstanding skills became a source of trouble and eventually caused anger among the gods. Asclepius eventually revived the dead with his medicinal prowess and went against the will of Pluto, the ruler of the underworld.

For this reason, he was struck by lightning by Jupiter, who was in charge of the laws of the gods. He was trapped in the deepest level of Tartarus and suffered eternal torment and anguish.

However, it is said that Asclepius was released from the underworld at the pleas of Apollo, the god of light, who is his father. Then he was raised to a high status in Olympus and was revered as the god of medicine.

From this event, the relationship between Pluto and Jupiter seems to have been significantly shifted and twisted, and the sudden appearance of underworld remains in various places seems to be Pluto's protest.

In addition, many changes have occurred on earth, with new laws on medical practices being designated so as not to repeat Asclepius' mistakes.』

So Asclepius is the god of medicine.

Damn, I couldn't believe there was someone who could judge someone's condition just by looking at their eyes.

I thought it was already extraordinary to see letters when I touched someone's wrist, but I couldn't even imagine being able to know one's ailments by only looking at them. It was already not within the realm of medicine.

However, I finally slightly understood why people of this world were so wary and guilty about illegal medical practices.

“If you don’t understand anything, just ask, Barbaroy. I’m free at the moment, so I can answer some simple questions. I hate ignorant people, but I don’t hate the ones who want to learn.”

The librarian hinted at me, who was searching through the book and trying to cram all those pieces of information inside my head.

That was right, there were very few customers at the moment, and the information in the book felt boring. Nothing made the time go by so quickly as talking to someone else.

I didn’t miss the opportunity and opened my mouth to ask because, coincidentally, I also had some questions.

“Well, I have a question about medicine.”

“Medicine?”

Erimantos, the librarian, looked really surprised after hearing my query.

His face was like a person who asked a kindergarten student to ask him a question and in return was asked what the mathematical brain teaser, Poincaré conjecture was. Then soon, his eyes began to glitter in interest.

“Medicine, for now, is an unlucky study. Well, since you’re curious about medicine, just ask what you want to know.”

“To be exact, I’m more curious about its distinctions than about medicine itself. What are the categories of illegal and non-medical activities?”

“Are you asking about the Asclepius Act? Well, it’s not written in detail in that book. So, about the Asclepius Act...”

After murmuring to himself for a while, Erimantos took out a thick book from a corner. Something about the code of laws was written on the cover, but I couldn’t get the full name.

Erimantos opened the book, rummaged through several pages, and started to read a part out loud.

“Here it is. It defines violations as illegal medical practices. First, receiving patients on the street without authorization from temples and treatment centers. Second, a case where a healing magic user who has not reported to the temple demonstrates magic on the patient’s body without permission. Third...”

“Uh, I’m sorry, but how many are listed there?”

“Around 155.”

Shit, that was a lot of rules. Would I even be able to memorize all those things in my head? Asking a few relevant questions seems better.

“Well, I have a question. Let’s say, I’m massaging Mr. Erimantos’ palms.”

“It won’t be happening. I don’t have a hobby of holding a man’s hand.”

“I’m just giving you an example. So, if you massage someone’s palms or back to heal their stiff shoulders, can this be considered an illegal medical practice?”

“It’s a pity that you don’t know such basic things even though you’re a savage from the wilderness. If a massage is considered a medical practice, you will have to arrest all the men who knead a woman’s chest. Can you regard just a kneading as a medical practice, huh?”

The medical science and medical techniques of the wilderness seemed to be really inferior or so was Erimantos muttering to himself. Maybe he just lost interest in me, so he cut off the conversation.

Anyway, to sum up, does it mean that there was no risk of getting stoned to death? What? Damn it, I have been scared for no reason at all.

Still, it would be a big problem to attract people on the street and ask them if they wanted a massage or open a massage shop like a mat seller. You’ll attract more attention than you needed and something troublesome will surely pop up.

For the time being, I should only massage the reliable people that I am acquainted with and steadily obtain task points.

Having roughly solved all the questions that I was bothered by, I returned the book and got up to get out of the library. Shouldn’t Luna be almost done with her business by now?

“See you next time, Barbaroy.”

“See you again too.”

I was on my way to the street after such a brief greeting.

“Tall body, black hair. Everything checks out.”

“Are you Hassan of Samaria?”

When I turned my head to the sound of someone calling me from behind, I saw city guards armed with armor, shields, swords, etc. coming toward me.

What is this? Why are these people looking for me? Damn it, I didn't know what was happening, but my legs were shaking violently, and I felt like my whole body was drained of blood at that moment.

"...What's the matter?"

"You don't have to be wary of us. We're not trying to take you away. Rather, we're here to ask for your help. Do you happen to know a woman named Luna?"

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Footnotes:

- 1The first Hero was in Hangul, while the second was spelled as pronounced in English.

Chapter 56: Midnight Negotiations (1)

☞ Midnight Negotiations (1) ☞

"Do you happen to know a woman going by the name of Luna?"

Inquired the guard who called me up on the street. I was scared until just now, thinking if he was trying to interrogate me. I even had the thought of being arrested for doing something illegal without realizing run through my mind.

But, hearing Luna's name from the guards' mouths made me utterly dumbfounded.

"Luna? The girl with pink hair and twintails?"

"That's right. Bronze-tier adventurer from Sodomora's Mars Guild. I heard that she formed a party with you, Hassan of Samaria. Is that correct?"

"That's true, but...just what the hell is going on...?"

"I don't have enough time to explain all the details. First of all, I need you to come with me to the guards' office."

Following his words, I headed to the guard's office located in the west gate area, wondering whether to call it an escort or a watch.

Luna was probably the last person in the world to have anything to do with these armed soldiers. Then, just how on earth could Luna's name come out of their mouths?

I wanted to ask them about some details, but no matter how many questions I mustered myself to ask, they just answered with the same, "Go and check the details yourself." and shut off my prying attempts.

Just as I started worrying about the possibility that I had fallen into the guards' trap in disguise, I arrived at the guard's office in no time.

The guard's office is similar to a local police precinct with bases in certain areas of the city, such as the west gate, the north gate, and the south gate. Their scope of work is also similar to the modern counterpart back on my homeworld.

Creeeeaaak— Clank—

Scream —

When the office's iron door was opened, and I entered through, tough-looking musclemen with armor and weapons turned their unruly gazes toward me. One of them asked the guard who came with me.

"Is he the one?"

"He is the Samarian, yeah. I found him in front of the library and brought him back. What is the victim doing now?"

"She became quieter after I gave her some food. All the beef jerky I had kept as snacks is all gone now."

After speaking till here, the guard pointed to the prison cell in the corner of the office with his chin.

When I moved my gaze following the chin gesture, the scene of a petite body entered my eyes. Her back was facing the cold wall and her small body was curled with her head buried between her knees.

The way she was sitting on the floor while hugging her knees made her look like a large egg. However, those distinctive twintails didn't leave a doubt as to who she actually was.

"Luna, what are you doing over there?"

Why was Luna locked up in a cell? God damn, I couldn't help but scream in surprise at such an unexpected situation. Then perhaps because she had heard my voice, Luna slowly raised her head.

“...Hassan?”

“Yes, it’s me, Luna! What are you doing here? How could you end up locked up?”

“Hassan! L-listen! I got swindled! All the money I had left, every single bit of it was swindled! I’m broke now!”

Luna’s face was flushed, a shade of crimson colored all over her small head, as she shouted at the top of her lungs. All of her leftover money had been swindled? Just what did that mean?

Anyway, it was my first time seeing Luna so angry. She was crouching inside the prison cell, but whenever she recalled what had happened to her, she started fuming again as though she was not able to control the overflowing anger inside her.

“Deer! Be careful of the deer!”

After turning away from the upset Luna, I couldn’t help but question the guards in the guard’s office about just what in hell had happened to her.

“Well, sir. Why is Luna locked up like this?”

“She was too upset and uncontrollable when she came to us to complain, so we decided to isolate her for a while to let her calm down. The only room that we could use inside the office was the prison cell, and you know the rest.”

“Still, how could you lock up a person, moreover a victim, like a mere criminal?”

“You should see how much strength such a petite body of hers could produce. Although she looks a little calmer right now, I had to go through heaps of trouble just to contain and isolate her. Why don’t you go inside and try to comfort her?”

Clank— Clank—

“Hiik!”

As the guard tried to open the prison cell, Luna began to tremble again, perhaps still anxious about what happened to her.

Looking at a human acting like an abandoned animal that trembled out of fear somehow was pitiful yet funny. But real pet abandonment is still an atrocious crime.

Anyway, I carefully walked through the open door of the prison cell.

“Hey, what the hell’s going on?”

“M-my money. It took my money and ran away with it...!”

“What? What do you mean? Who ran away with your money?”

“A-A deer ran off with my five silvers!”

A deer ran off with her five remaining silvers? Damn, the more I listened to the story, the more I couldn't wrap my head around it.

Perhaps because Luna and I both were too overwhelmed by this sudden situation, we had problems explaining and understanding each other and coming to an understanding of the current circumstance.

Therefore, I thought the first thing I needed to do was to calm Luna down, who was crying so pitifully. So I went beside her and started patting her on the back. I also grabbed Luna's palm with my other hand to examine her condition.

Sweep— Fiddle—

Familliar letters showed up in my mind after I touched her small wrist.

[Stats] Name: Luna Knox Dotty

Level: 8

Strength: 2

Agility: 5

Stamina: 1

Condition: Desperate》 Bad Meals Lover: 227

Blessing: Curse of Knox》 Curse of Erebor》 Mild Depressive Anger

Depressive Anger?

Among the several curses in her status, seeing an additional word, “Depression Anger,” that newly appeared made me wonder deeply. Just what happened to her to make her upset to such a terrible extent?

So I pressed the red spot floating on Luna's pinky finger with my thumb.

To be exact, it was the lesser surge point. It was located around 2 cm above the pinky fingernail.

I remember pressing this part is effective when someone is in a state of shock.

It would be nice if I could feed her with a clear mind pill. But seeing her tremble and shiver, I deemed that perhaps there was no need for a pill or any external medicine.

“Ugh...Ugh...! Ouch...!”

『Luna's Mild Depressive Anger 》 has been healed.』 『Task points + 10』 『Current task figures: +67』

Oh, it's working.

“Huft...”

I asked Luna, who was sighing aloud.

“How is it? Don't you feel much calmer now?”

“Well, first of all...”

* * * * *

So, this morning.

After going our separate ways, Luna reportedly had a busy day cleaning and repairing her newly acquired hut.

It took more than half a day to clean up and tidy the abandoned cabin that had already existed for decades.

“After I finished with all the cleaning, I was so worried about the holes in the walls and the dilapidated ceiling that I couldn't just stand still. So I was going to buy some wooden planks to repair them. But I didn't have enough money...”

Luna hesitated as she recalled what had happened to her back then. We were sitting at a table in the corner of the office and talking calmly.

“It's because I only had about five silvers left, so I was running around looking for lumber with it. I found someone who told me that he would sell the cypress planks I wanted for just five silver.”

Thus, Luna headed to the south gate, where a middle-aged man piled up a lot of boards.

Naturally, Luna wasn't familiar with the geography of the south gate because she was usually active in the west gate area, around the slums of Sodomora.

Since the southern gate faced a long forest, so she had some suspicions, but the idea of selling wood planks in the woods wasn't really that far-fetched.

The story continued; Luna and the seller walked out from Sodomora's south gate to enter the forest together.

Like its name – Deer Forest – many deers with long necks appeared around the forest.

While Luna was amazed by the picturesque view, suddenly, those deer flocked around her and licked her palms, shoulder, and face while acting cute.

“But then, one of them bit my moneybag and ran away! That man also ran away with it! I'm sure the deer was cooperating with that man to lure me in and snatch my bag!”

Luna raised her voice again as if her anger had yet to subsidize.

So, to conclude Luna's words, there was a man, the main mastermind perhaps, he sided with a deer to lure Luna into a secluded place so that the man-animal duo could snatch her money.

“Was it really the deer, the one that did the stealing?”

“I told you already, didn't I!? Anyway, I tried to chase after them, but they were so fast that I couldn't even chase them for long. I lost all my money. So I rushed to complain to the guards but they locked me up like this...”

“This lady went on a rampage. Although she looks like the naive and pure Kore, she isn't an ordinary girl in the least. As expected from a bronze-tier adventurer.”

“Oh, I understand.”

I felt like I could roughly figure out how out of control Luna had been before she got confined in the prison cell.

So, with a complicated state of mind, I was racking my brains to come up with something to speak. At that moment, the guard with a bronze helmet, who had been present from the start, decided to speak up to me.

“Hassan of Samaria, I think this case is definitely related to the deer swindler of the South Gate. I often hear complaints and rumors of a deer that robbed people's moneybags.”

Shit, just which son of a bitch came up with this deer swindler trick, huh? These sonuvabitch robbers from this outlandish world were really creative in finding a way to cheat someone's money out of them more efficiently.

However, even though I was lost in my own train of thought, the guard never stopped his speech.

“The damage done by him has exceeded 100 silvers already. When the damage goes over 100 silvers, that person can be treated as committing a serious crime. But he’s such a sneaky bastard that we can’t catch his trail at all. Hassan, I heard that you’re strong enough to catch a lion with your bare hands. Is that true...?”

Lion? While thinking along the lines, ‘what lion,’ I remembered dragging the witch—Nemea’s cat, out of the underground waterway with my party not long ago. That was truly an incredibly huge cat we caught.

As Marco blabbered around, the cat seemed to have turned from just a very big cat to a full-fledged lion in their eyes.

“Uh, how do I explain this? Um, that’s a very complicated situation we had to go through...”

I couldn’t just go and lie to the police guards who maintained public order and captured criminals, so at that moment, I was trying to explain the reality behind that falsified piece of information.

“Since you can capture a lion with your bare hands, it will be easy for you to catch a trivial deer. Why don’t you take a request from us and show your loyalty to your party member?”

“Request?”

When I heard the word request from the guards, I became so shocked that my mouth opened wide; my jaws almost touching the ground. It wasn’t mandatory to only submit a request or a quest through the adventurer’s associated guild when you wanted to avail the services of an adventurer.

For example, city guards like them and government offices, charged with maintaining public order, or temples in general were capable of legally requesting the adventurers for individual quests.

According to Elfriede’s colleagues, quest requests from public institutions were both cheap and extremely difficult most of the time.

The quests commissioned by the temple, for example, were the lowest-paying service among all the forms of individual requests, because these ‘services’ were derived from faith, and thus couldn’t really be refused.

Even though it often felt like forced labor, which required one to do hard work at minimum wages when hearing of such requests, adventurers still were eager to receive such quests requested from public institutions or temples.

The reason for that stemmed from the fact that... The adventurer who was commissioned from such a public and governmental body or a temple would always be deemed highly skilled by everyone.

Moreover, I think it also provided a significant amount of positive scores in terms of contribution to the guild. These scores greatly affected the ranking systems of adventurers and served as a great boost for their future.

To make it easier to understand, it was a quest that would give me a small compensation but in return would help me in racking up a lot of experience for upgrading my adventurer rank.

When I was a slave, I also used to wonder if someday I would be able to become an adventurer who would be requested by a public institution like those famous adventurers.

Should I say that I was a bit bewildered by the fact that I could suddenly fulfill that dream of mine just like that? Somehow all of this felt surreal to me.

“What do you think? Will you do it or not? A compensation of 50 silvers is still quite a lot of money.”

The guard with the bronze helmet covering his head asked me again. The metal scales on his armor were clunking loudly with the slightest of movements. Under the barbute helmet, his blue eyes peeking through, showing faint traces of deep fatigue, were staring at me.

I was really scared for no reason, even though I didn't do anything wrong. It seemed to me that the guard station somehow had a certain aura surrounding it that would stimulate the innate fear and uncertainty in any individual who was brought inside the building, even if they didn't do anything wrong.

Soon, the man wrapped in that bronze barbute helmet added some more words.

“We can't give more compensation because we don't have enough budget. If you finish this well, in addition to your guild contributions, you will also have the opportunity to form a connection with us, the west gate guards, and come to us for anything as much as you like in the future.”

Successful completion of this work would create a small connection with the government offices, including getting contribution points. Plus there was next to no reason for me to refuse such an incredible offer.

However, some things in life didn't require such reasons to exist.

"My, my money... Deer...."

My companion, Luna, was shocked to the extent that she had become absolutely devastated. I couldn't just sit still and do nothing.

Moreover, she had been robbed of 5 whole silvers, dammit. If it was me in her place I couldn't even imagine being able to fall asleep at night. I would probably be screaming at the top of my lungs with unquenchable anger.

"All right, let's do this."

"I like your answer, it's pretty cool. Then I'll provide you with some information about the deer swindler and the locations of some of his hiding places. I don't really know how good your skills are Samaritan, but I'd still be vigilant if I were you, Samaritan."

"Be careful?"

"That swindler was originally a famous bronze-tier adventurer before becoming the thief he is now. He was also a prominent hunter. Perhaps that's why he is able to get away without leaving any signs or traces. Since he can tame wild animals like deers, he is probably also blessed with some kind of blessing from a god."

Oh my, he was someone who had a blessing, huh?

Seems like I really should be careful with this.

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Chapter 57: Midnight Negotiations (2)

☞ Midnight Negotiations (2) ☜

As usual, the two moons were shining brightly in the sky at the time we got out of the guards' office. They were covering each other's brilliance, resulting in the creation of beautiful nail-shaped shadows.

"Is that a New moon or a Crescent moon?" muttered Luna to no one in particular, making me recall my grades in Earth Science.

“I’m sorry, Hassan. You’re in trouble because of me...”

Luna talked in her characteristic shrill voice after her anger had subsided.

With money being one of the proofs of her achievements, losing it probably ended up in a loss of confidence in her own abilities. One can’t help but start doubting themselves once one’s wallet starts getting thinner.

“I already said that I’d help you, didn’t I? So let’s do it together. I don’t have anything to do anyway.”

“But I can’t just keep receiving your help forever. I’m the one responsible for the cabin. I have to do it myself.”

Luna’s objective of doing everything herself without asking for others’ help, was in itself very commendable. But I couldn’t help but feel a tinge of sadness settle within my heart at her declaration. It really felt like she was drawing boundaries between us. A thin line differentiating my matters from hers.

Even if Luna, obviously, didn’t mean it like that, it still felt that way to me. It was also surprising to me how her words were enough to make me feel so lonely and lost.

I had thought till now that it was only Luna who was relying on me all this time. But now... It seems that I was unconsciously also relying on her mentally.

In this filthy world where even fucking wild animals like deers could empty your pockets and rob you of all your worth, Luna’s gentle and pure persona made my whole body feel lighter. Her very existence was like a beacon in the dark to me as I kept struggling alone in this barbaric world without a single person to rely on.

It was a lonely and grim life that I was leading.

My life could never be compared to those who had a reliable partner with them, a partner with whom you could share all your hardships and grievances.

“From now, don’t blindly follow other men as you did. What would you have done if something dangerous had happened to you, huh?”

“ ... ”

Perhaps because she realized her mistake, Luna looked mortified and said nothing in response. Adding salt to her wounds like this would accomplish nothing and Luna also seemed to have realized her mistakes. So, in the end, I just decided to stay silent for the rest of the walk.

After walking in silence for a while, we finally reached Luna's cabin located on the west side of Sodomora.

"Are you really sleeping here?"

"I don't have enough money to pay for an inn."

"I can lend you some money if you want."

"No, I don't want to get into the habit of borrowing money from others. One day, it will suddenly grow beyond what I can manage. I am already 2 golds in debt, I can't go much higher than that."

Luna's decision seemed final. She was probably thinking something along the lines of "I can't live alone while being in someone else's debt" and I totally understood her mentality.

I, however, couldn't shake my unease about leaving her alone in this place.

Although I didn't feel like picking at the poor, I couldn't in good faith say that Sodomora's slums were the safest place for taking residence.

You could hear the sounds of people falling down from who knows where and even shrieking like "Ugh, ugh..." without even concentrating on the noises.

This place was situated in the western back alleys of Sodomora. Robbers, vagrants, and sick individuals with bandages wrapped all over their bodies resided in this god-forsaken place. Their pale yellow eyes, peeking out of their indolent faces, seemed to be flashing in the dark as they watched over these black alleys.

Even I, with my sturdy body and fully armed with three swords, felt nervous every time I passed through this place.

I couldn't even imagine just what might happen should Luna sleep in a shady neighborhood like this all alone. Who knows, maybe a homeless guy would just enter this cabin to seek shelter from the winds,

So I asked her once more.

"Are you really going to sleep here?"

Luna replied in a matter-of-fact tone.

"What's wrong with this place? It's pretty nice since I cleaned it."

Swish—

Just as she uttered those words a gust of wind blew from somewhere, shaking the planks full of holes hard, making it seem as if the whole cabin was on the brink of collapsing

Luna shuddered with the intrusion of the cold wind.

“Well, it’s a bit cold. But I’ve slept in places worse than this. Anyway, thanks for your help today, Hassan. Goodbye, and see you at the south gate of Sodomora tomorrow!”

Luna seemingly made up her mind to sleep here no matter how much I objected to her decision...

Her stubbornness was similar to a prisoner on death row or perhaps it would be better to compare it to a monk on a quest for asceticism.

Was it like a punishment she inflicted on herself for losing all her money? I had no way to know about that right now.

“Then I’ll sleep here too.”

I ended up spouting out the words that had been lingering on the edge of my tongue for a while already. I wasted too much time thinking of how I should word them and as a result, I just ended up crudely declaring my words.

Luna frowned slightly as if she was puzzled as to what the hell I was saying,

“Hassan, sleeping here? But why?”

What did she mean by “Why?” exactly? I had no clue whether she was truly wondering just why I wanted to stay here with her or if it was just some form of fancy rejection of my declaration.

Well, I don’t think Luna was smart enough to reject someone like that. So, it was probably just her curiosity about my intentions for being here with her.

“I can’t?”

“It’s going to be very windy here though...”

“Guess we should just stay close to each other then.”

Although I didn’t have much time to think about what to say, it seems my wit and smarts shone perfectly in this situation. Two people raising each others’ temperature by sharing their warmth during a cold and breezy night wasn’t unheard of.

I was desperately racking my brain for more words to add to my reasoning, fearing that she would refuse my suggestion.

“It will be a little warmer for both of us if we stick close together under a warm blanket. Won’t it be better than trembling in the cold alone?”

“Hmm, is that so? I agree, then!”

Oh yeah, it worked! Well, to be frank, as someone who had enough of being homeless, I thought sleeping in a cramped cabin would feel very uncomfortable.

But compared to my previous hellish experience, this could be considered as playing a game on easy difficulty.

Moreover, the presence of Luna’s warm and soft body couldn’t help but make me feel a little bit emotional.

Rustle— Rustle— Flap—

After laying the old blanket on the floor, I and Luna put our shoulders together and sat with our backs leaning against the wall and covered ourselves with my long raincoat.

Not as bad as I thought it would be.

“Not bad.”

“Isn’t it? It’s a nice place. I can feel a kind of subtle magical energy nearby.”

Luna began bragging about her cabin, saying how much she liked this place or how this place gave her some weird voodoo vibes that she liked as a shaman.

As a servant of Knox, the god of superstitions, she seemed to have a deep belief in the vibes of certain locations and the corresponding energy they emanated.

Anyways, my attention was currently focused on Luna who was excitedly chatting with a sparkling luster in her eyes rather than the cabin she was so enthusiastically describing.

Looking at her side profile, her twinkling eyes were the first thing I noticed, then came her surprisingly long eyelashes, and her sharp nose that had the perfect amount of curvature and no flatness or thickness to it. It was perfect, in a word.

Her jawline was thin and slender. It went perfectly with her milky white and soft skin creating a pretty feminine outline.

I could feel the warmth and softness of her skin from the contact between our shoulders especially vividly.

Did I really sleep with this girl before? Now that I think about it, what happened before felt like a dream on a midsummer night.

Because I was rather hectic and clumsy with my first time, some memories of that day were distorted or magnified in my senses. Regrets about the things I hadn't done with her or parts that I hadn't touched or licked were welling up inside me.

Sniff— Sniff—

Luna's characteristic cool and minty smell entered my nose as I sneakily sniffed her scent. The smell felt strangely sweet and refreshing today. Perhaps it was because she had not yet bathed.

Throb—

Damn, despite knowing nothing would happen today, my schlong was quickly rising in my pants. This bastard is really the king of positivity.

"Anyway, that's what ended up happening! So how is it? You understand why I choose this place now, right? 3 gold really isn't a lot for a place like this. It's actually a great deal, in fact! I could probably sell it for twice the price in the near future."

Luna concluded after muttering by herself for a long time.

Since I was entranced by Luna's side profile, I only roughly listened to what she was saying to me. In Summary, she was basically partaking in this world's version of real state speculation.

That wasn't what mattered to me right now though.

"L-Luna."

"Hmm? Yeah?"

Luna turned her head toward me with a curious expression plastered on her innocent face. I couldn't help it anymore and slowly moved my head closer to hers, inching my lips toward her own.

I did it because there was nothing I wished for more right now than feeling the softness of her shiny lips again. However, Luna's slender fingers gently touched my chest and pushed me away...

"Oh, don't, Hassan..."

"Why? It's just the two of us, after all. No one will know it if we just do it quietly and secretly."

At that moment, I remembered the effects of the new blessing I had gotten, the “Night’s Cloak”...

“Night’s Cloak” could reduce the probability of being discovered while doing secretive actions in the dark. Could it be that doing ‘that’ was also included in its repertoire? To be frank, I couldn’t think of anything more secretive than ‘that’ act...

Luna quietly spoke while I was lost in my muddled thoughts.

“It’s not just the two of us. The wolf spider is here too.”

Luna pointed toward a pot in the corner of the room. Holy shit! I couldn’t help but tremble violently at the realization that a spider the size of my palm was nearby.

“And there’s also Lady Knox.”

Point—

I moved my gaze toward the spot Luna was pointing at with her index finger. At the end of my sight, I could see some kind of strangely-shaped wooden statue there.

It was about the size of my palm, I thought it was just a random interior prop at first.

“Is that really Lady Knox?”

“Yeah, yeah, it’s a simple statue. Pretty well-made right? I made it based on the voice I told you about last time.”

Hearing her words, I stood up and approached the so-called statue of Lady Knox. Now that I looked at it from up close, I became speechless. I didn’t know just how to describe this monstrosity.

Damn, this doesn’t look like a statue at all. If I had to describe it, it looked closer to a cursed object than a statue of a goddess. Something that you would insert in the puzzles inside of a maze as a key piece to open a secret door in your typical horror game.

Its appearance was a mix between an owl and a human. It honestly gave me the creeps just looking at this abomination. What was particularly creepy about it were its two wide-opened eyes which felt like they were strangely gazing at me.

“Why did you suddenly make this?”

“From now on, I have to pray to Lady Knox every day before going to sleep. She said she wanted to hear about my day and thoughts from now on.”

“I see.”

This felt like a girl reporting to her parents about their day. I pictured Luna sitting silently while chatting in her own mind. It was a surprisingly cute scenario in its own way.

“T-That aside, do you believe me, Hassan?”

“About what? The deer that ran away with the money? It does sound a little fake, to be frank...”

“No, about how Lady Knox talked to me in my dreams. Other people would tell me to stop lying to them... It actually felt like a dream to me too at first.”

Aha! It seems that despite the fervent belief in God of this world’s people, Luna herself didn’t seem to think that she actually spoke to Knox.

Only a few people could receive the blessing of the gods or hear their voices in this world. Most people would just abide by the “Greater beings obviously existed” philosophy or something along those lines.

That said, the me, who actually met Knox and talked to her while she was hiding under the blanket by possessing Luna’s body already, had no doubts about Luna’s claims.

I returned to Luna’s side. I guess I should be content with only her warmth that I could feel through my shoulders for now. Still, I have to do something eventually.

“I believe that you really talked with Knox, Luna. I think it actually happened.”

“R-Really? It’s real?”

“I suppose so.”

“It feels very convincing when you say it, Hassan. Why did the Gold of Light directly help you last time though? I only heard something like this happening only in myths and legends. It’s the first time I actually saw someone receiving a God’s help with my own eyes.”

Luna spoke out in admiration when reminiscing about what happened back then. Suddenly, I was also reminded of what happened in Acheron’s swamp.

An arrow of flame pierced through the unending fog and blew away all the moisture in the swamp. That experience was very taxing. A similar thing happened during my duel with Hippolyte.

The man who appeared in the middle of the suspended world claimed he was one of this world’s gods.

Could he be Mars, the god of struggle? Him quite literally talking about how I chose him over Minerva was probably a reference to how I joined the Mars Guild instead of the Minerva Guild.

That only meant that man was actually Mars, the god of struggle.

Wait, wasn't it said that Hippolyte was the daughter of Mars? Did a father just strip his daughter's armor? What? I don't know anymore.

"That's amazing, Hassan. It's actually fascinating now that I think about it. Are you really someone great? Are you perhaps Jupiter's son?"

"Whose son?"

"Jupiter, the god of lightning and thunder!"

What? Damn, did she just curse my parents or something? I was taken aback for a moment by her words until I realized what Luna really meant.

Actually, 'Son of Jupiter' is a term that I've heard quite a lot. Luna said it as though it was a great compliment but it actually was a kind of contemptuous insult.

Because it basically meant being a child with unknown roots. A child without a father.

Jupiter, considered the greatest deity in this world, was quite the playboy in reality and fattened the bellies of quite a number of women wherever he went.

That's why many women who gave birth to fatherless children would say 'This is Jupiter's child'.

"My parents are still alive and kicking back in my hometown." I think.

"Really? Then how can you get the attention of so many gods without being the offspring of one? You even made them break their 30 years of silence..."

Luna fell into deep thoughts. It seemed to me that she wasn't able to understand the reasonings behind the miracles surrounding me.

How would Luna react if I told her that I wasn't Hassan from Samaria but actually Hassan from Korea?

Luna fell so deep into her own thoughts that she ended up drifting to sleep before I even realized it.

It was now time for me, who had been gazing at her sleeping figure for some time already, to close my eyes too and preserve my strength for tomorrow's action.

Shiver—

A chilling cold began permeating the cramped cabin, making me shudder. At first, I just thought the chilly wind was getting through the multiple holes in the planks covering the cabin but...

Crack— Crackcrack—

Damn, I remembered that I already experienced this abnormal bone-freezing cold once before.

『I. Have. Arrived.』

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Chapter 58: Midnight Negotiations (3)

☞ **Midnight Negotiations (3)** ☜

Crack— Crack—

No matter how old and perforated this barn was, it was a bit excessive if I could see my leaking breaths on a spring night,

This was obviously an abnormal weather event. Also, I experienced a cold sensation that seemed to be seeping deep into my body down to my very bones.

『I. Have. Arrived.』

As soon as I heard an eerie voice echoing inside the room, I jumped up from my sitting position.

Standing up, I immediately proceeded to prostrate deliberately to the simplified god statue that Luna made in the corner of the cabin. It had been staring at me with hostile eyes for a while already so I reckoned the goddess of the night had used that to descend into this place.

Plop—

“Lady Knox! Did you really descend to this place?”

『Which direction are you prostrating at? It's this way, not that way.』

The voice that leaked out was not coming from the god statue but from behind my butt.

No way! She didn't descend into my butt, right? Okay, that stupid idea disappeared as quickly as it came to my mind. I was able to understand everything when I saw Luna swiftly taking the blanket and covering herself from head to toe.

“Are you going to descend using Luna's body this time too?”

『Yes, I am. But I won't take too long.』

Lady Knox, who took over Luna's body, covered herself with the blanket and the quilt lying on the floor. She covered herself in such a manner that not even a strain of her hair could be seen.

Anyway, I changed my direction and prostrated toward the direction Lady Knox had descended. That was... I prostrated toward Luna wrapped from head to toe using the blanket and quilt.

I don't know why, but I often thought that kneeling down flat on the floor like this was a good move to preserve my life in front of higher entities.

“I-I was wrong!”

『This God hasn't said anything yet. Yet, I don't feel bad seeing you repent for your mistakes. You're a commendable child, so I won't punish you right away. Let me hear your excuses.』

“T-Thank you!”

『So how did it feel like, you small, useless thief? How do you feel about devouring something that this God cherished and cultivated with all her might? How did it feel to enjoy my precious?』 ¹Might not seem very relevant right now but the word used here has two meanings. It could refer to a situation related to taking everything while gambling or in a situation of rape.

“P-Pardon!?”

Devouring? How could she use such a strong word to describe that? I felt that my face was literally getting hot due to embarrassment.

『Don't pretend you didn't. This God has already learned about everything before descending here. I've been taking care of her since she was small and I've kept her

safe from anyone who dared to touch it, but then how dare to touch, trample, and even get a taste of her?』

“W-Well, it’s...”

Knox seemed angry that I had touched her daughter, Luna, in such a reckless fashion.

The floor began to freeze from the bottom of that ridiculous quilt, so I could only tremble in fear and the chill permeating from all around me. I might just freeze to death at this rate if I kept kneeling flat on the floor like this!!!

『Tell me, how did she taste? Tell me how you feel about what you’ve tasted! Right from how you felt when you touched her. Tell me, in detail!』

“Uh, I...”

No, shit, how could I even discuss such a thing?

In front of my girlfriend’s mother, how could I say that Luna’s breasts were so soft that they could be held in just one of my hands and that the warmth and softness of them were wonderful and fantastic? Which crazy bastard in the world even dares to say something like, “Does she take after you, Ma’am?” ²A way to compliment your in-laws by saying that one of your partner’s good traits was inherited from them.

Of course, someone in this hideous world might just be brazen enough to utter those words, but I definitely wouldn’t, at least.

『Why don’t you quickly say it? Or should I freeze your useless mouth and make you unable to taste anything in your life?』

I couldn’t tell because she was covered by the blanket, but I could clearly sense that Knox was really angry right now. I was so scared that I couldn’t do anything but kneel down and tremble in fright.

Fortunately, I’ve relieved myself become I came here, if not, I would definitely have wetted my pants already.

『Hurry up! Tell me everything! How did my precious taste? Tell me!!!』

“Well, uh, okay. Please calm down. Whoo...”

Damn it, this will be the end of my life, I can feel it. However, even if you enter a tiger’s cave, you still can survive if you keep your head straight.

So, after steeling myself for my eventual death I frantically raised my head. I think this was the first time I used my brain to such a degree in all my life.

Anyway, if possible, it would be better to just go with a nonprovocative and vague approach, Anything will do as long as it doesn't upset Knox.

"Well, she tasted very good."

『Hmm. Is that it?』

"She was small and petite... It felt so good when it came into my arms... I thought she was well taken care of so I liked it very much."

『So how did she taste? Was it sweet?』

Sweet? Damn it, how could you explain a person by their taste?

"Well, yes. She was very sweet. At the same time, she tasted a little sour as well... but I felt like I wanted to keep tasting her more."

『How dare you want to keep tasting it even though she is not yours? You mean that you would continue to steal and devour something that this God took care of if given the chance?』

"That was a slip of the tongue...! I was just going to say.... that's how good she tastes. Anyway, I-I'm sorry."

『However, it's the first time that someone has tasted and evaluated her.』

Of course, it's the first time. Damn it, I had no idea that I would be saying these embarrassing things in front of Knox one day.

Wasn't Knox referred to as a mighty goddess from Tartarus's abyss? Indeed, like a goddess who lived in hell, her way of thinking was very hellish. She was indeed a hellish goddess!

『I raised her with great care. I oversaw her for 100 nights and was so nervous about its 1,000th day that it would get screwed up by a bad beast that wants to devour it. I was nervous that the bugs might get a taste Do you even know what parenthood feels like?』

"I'm so sorry..."

『However, what's already happened can't be changed. It's impossible to undo what's already happened, even for this God. Anyway, I'll make sure to keep an eye on such

mishaps from now on. I won't allow a thief like you to lift a finger in front of her in the future.』

Ta-da!

The words that were spoken from beneath the blanket made me dizzy. I immediately thought of this situation to be similar to your typical drama where parents opposed the relationship between a boy and girl in love.

After experiencing such a thing in person, my mind became blank and my back was covered by cold sweat.

『Swear to the Styx River that you'll never touch her again!』

“It's...”

I was quite literally in a life-or-death crisis, hesitating while standing on that two-pronged path. One of the two was clearly the path that led to death and complete demise.

I clearly knew the answer as to what path I should choose, but somehow the words wouldn't come out of my mouth. How could I give up on Luna? Let alone make a promise by the river Styx to never touch her again.

“A-As expected, I can't. I can't promise that.”

『What? Are you going to continue sucking her nectar with that dirty mouth of yours? You have some guts, I'll give you that. All right, then let's make a deal. If you can promise that you won't touch her anymore, I'll give you appropriate compensation.』

“Compensation?”

『Yeah, it can be a substitute, for example, something like this.』

Swish.

A tiny palm was sticking out from under the blanket. It was Luna's thin and slender palm. On top of it was a very round and shiny billiard ball-sized bead.

It was like looking at the universe inside a glass ball, shining with a dark navy blue luster and pristine white grains that resembled flaky salt.

『What do you think, don't you want it? I let it sit inside a Titan's tears for not only ten but 20 nights. Of course, it is no match for the precious I cherish the most, but it is already a treasure in itself. If you are a mortal, you will be able to sell it and live well for the rest of your life.』

Indeed, Knox's words were quite convincing. I then picked up the Night Tears bead, it felt very surreal to touch.

That bead looked like a pretty expensive thing to me, even to the inexperienced eyes of a noob like me. To think she was trying to appease me with something as precious as this. Is Luna's existence that important to her?

『You don't like this? How about this? Men like this kind of thing or so I've heard.』

Ssk— Ssk—

The hand that was holding the bead went under the blanket again and eventually reached out back while holding something else.

How could I explain that thing? A crooked wire? A poorly-made stick? I don't know what it was just from looking at it.

“What is that?”

『Don't be surprised when you hear this. This is Jupiter's thunderbolt, which fell into the deep abyss when he misfired it once. Although it has lost all of its divinity, there is no weapon like this in the mortal world.』

Zap— Zap—

I immediately knew what those sparks shimmering along the red copper would do as I heard the word “thunderbolt”.

That was like a copper wire filled with a deadly dose of high-voltage current. Even without touching it, I could easily guess how it might feel to come into contact with such a dangerous-looking thing with my bare hands.

“W-Well, that's a little...”

『What? Even this isn't satisfactory for you? Wait a minute. I'm sure there's something you'll like.』

Then, Luna, no, Knox began to move around in the blanket. After a long time, I slowly spoke first to clarify the matter to her.

“I... whatever you take out, I won't give up.”

Humph.

That statement made Knox stop moving.

『Even if you lose your life? Do you think it's that good?』

“Well, it was the best thing I've ever tasted in my life. I won't be able to taste anything else so delicious ever again.”

『Hmm, I honestly don't feel bad when you say it like that. I wanted to raise her well to entertain the other gods. I have confidence in myself. Erebor was looking forward to the harvesting day.』

What the heck is this? You're planning to make Luna entertain the other gods? Who the hell even is this Erebor?

After hearing that, I couldn't suppress the rising anger inside me. Even if she is her parent, how could she treat such a young petite girl as though she was an object? Did she think she could do whatever she wished with her?

I stopped prostrating and slowly got up. Then I said in a tone of anger.

“That, that's not acceptable. Knox, i-it's mine! I can't give it to anyone else!”

『What? Are you trying to say that it's all yours? How disrespectful! Have you contributed anything into raising it?』

“A-Although I didn't, Lu-luna has promised me! I'm never going to hand her over to anyone else!!”

Wow, damn it! I went and really said it. Not gonna lie, that was pretty sick, even coming from me. I even dared to refute a woman who could erase me with just a snap of her fingers.

I wasn't sure but I probably have grown my nerves after going against strong women like Elfriede and Hippolyte. Of course, compared to them, Knox was the real deal, completely incomparable to those two women.

Nevertheless, I've said everything I wanted to say! I wasn't going to die now, was I? Should I gauge her mood from under the blanket?

『What are you even talking about? This God is talking about the apple she was raising in Tartarus.』

What? Apple? Which apple? What was she talking about?

I couldn't keep up with the sudden unexpected turn this story took. Apple, apple... Immediately a certain memory struck my mind.

It was an apple that I ate in my dreams on that first intimate night that I spent with Luna. Its name was Apple of the Darkest Night. Now that I think about it, perhaps the thing Knox was speaking about was the apple and not Luna!

『What does Luna have to do in this conversation?』

Damn, I was the only one who had been talking nonsense all this time. I'm screwed, seriously screwed, damn it. I need to salvage this somehow.

If she found out that everything I said was about Luna, this would definitely be the end of me. I was going to die a terrible and miserable death. I couldn't imagine how horribly I was going to die. Has my time finally come...?

"I-I was also talking about the apple. The apple was so good. It was so delicious!"

『Yes, of course, it was. However, the mortal body cannot handle ingesting the apple. No matter how you wish for it, that fruit cannot be yours.』

"W-Well, I think so too. I was out of my mind for a moment there. I just realized how big my fault is for thinking something like that. Please forgive me."

I prostrated to Knox again. Knox replied to that in a warmer tone.

『That's all right. This God is the mother of the night. The dark night has an endlessly broad mind so I'll forgive you. Then, you promise that you won't touch the apple again, right?』

"Yes, of course. How can I be so reckless and foolish all over again? I'm just a little worm."

『Well, while you might be a little dull, you at least know how to quickly self-reflect. Yet, this God can't just let you give up only with words alone. I'll compensate you.』

Swish—

Soon, her hand came out from under the blanket again. There was a small coin in her palm.

Compared to the beads and the broken thunderbolt that she had offered so far, this one looked way inferior, so I was looking forward to the goddess explaining its functions.

"Well, may I ask what it is?"

『You're really not so bright now, are you? Can't you already guess just by seeing it? This is a coin.』

Hello everyone, been a while. I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter, definitely one of the funnier ones in this novel lmao. Just a really nice interaction overall. I hope you guys enjoyed it as much as I did while I worked on it. Thanks for reading and see y'all soon.

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48 Footnotes:

- 1Might not seem very relevant right now but the word used here has two meanings. It could refer to a situation related to taking everything while gambling or in a situation of rape.
- 2A way to compliment your in-laws by saying that one of your partner's good traits was inherited from them.

Chapter 59: Beware of the Deer (1)

☞ Beware of the Deer (1) ☜

『You're really not so bright now, are you? Can't you already guess just by seeing it? This is a coin.』

I knew that it was a coin already. It would be fucking weird if I didn't even know that.

However, as it was an object from Knox, I expected it to be a coin with some form of special powers, or perhaps it may even be a rare relic.

But then, Knox's next words broke all of my expectations.

『It's just a coin. It's also called 1 copper. The mortals seem willing to risk their lives for this small round thing. I assume you are the same, right?』

“Well, that's true, but...”

『This is the only earthly possession this God has. It's something I've been interested in and cherished for a long time, but I'll give it to you.』

Cling— Gurlll—Tuk—

Knox moved her hand and rolled the coin toward me. It spun a circle around me and then stopped exactly at the spot where I was prostrating and fell over in front.

Ssk —

When I slightly turned my head, I could see that it was really just a regular copper coin.

The copper coin was embossed with the face of a once-great hero. The size was similar to a 500-won coin. In fact, the value was equal to a few 500 wons at most.

Anyway, I felt relieved that, at the very least, I was able to survive this situation. With that in mind, I held on a sigh of relief from leaking and picked up the coin.

Then a sudden stream of letters came inside my head followed by a *Ding* sound.

『Achievement “Mom, please just give me 1 Copper!” completed, rare relic ‘Coins I lost at night’ acquired.』 『Task points + 100』 『Current task points: +167』

Oh, so the result of attaining an achievement was my task points increasing by 100 points, huh? This way of getting achievements and task points was really similar to a game system, wasn't it?

While I was not very familiar with how karma and mana worked in this world, something like this, however, was very easy to understand for me as a modern person.

“Please accept my deepest gratitude.”

『You are not very bright but you do have good manners. Anyway, the allotted time is almost up. Any longer than this and I will get caught by those dimwits from Olympus, so I'll be leaving now.』

“Go home safely!”

『Oh, one more thing, Boy. This God takes care of an apple like one does to one's child— with sincerity and affection. It's my job to keep the bugs and birds from taking it away. The same thing is also applied to my daughter, Luna, who is like my other self...』

I thought that she would be speaking about some more things, but, Knox's voice slowly dropped like a radio that had run out of its batteries.

Maybe Knox wasn't aware of the specific restrictions or the time set for her to appear in this world. While talking, it seemed like the connection between the mother and the daughter had been abruptly cut off without her assent.

Anyway, even after Knox stopped talking, I still maintained that prostrating position without lifting my head for a few more minutes.

Knox's imposing presence disappeared after a while, and with it, the unreal feeling caused by this weird situation that was akin to walking on clouds quickly faded away as

if time had finally resumed. Soon enough, I grew aware of what had just happened to me.

Damn it, I can't believe that I talked back to a literal goddess and refuted her back there. It was an impossible thing to do without having a lot of guts and plucking up some courage. Has my schlong finally taken over my brain?

After surviving the threshold of life and death somehow, the sudden feeling of relief along with the nervousness that still persisted made my body lose all its strength.

After a few more minutes of being immobile, I was barely able to get up and fit into my raincoat for warmth. I was using it instead of the blanket for obvious reasons.

Snore— Snore—

Luna was sleeping soundly as if she didn't notice the calamity that I just went through just now. She completely trusted me and was sleeping calmly and comfortably.

"Sigh, at least I managed to survive. Long live chaos."

[Stats] Name: Hassan

Level: 8

Strength: 3

Agility: 2

Stamina: 3

Task: 67 → 167

Blessing: Blessing of Chaos » Imperfect Dexterity» Night's Cloak

My mouth which had previously become stiff due to the tension slowly curved up and formed a radiant smile. I couldn't believe that my task points went up to 167! This was a very good sign for me in many ways.

Did this mean that anything Knox gave to me would be a rare relic? I didn't know that even a simple 1 copper could wield such a great meaning when that belonged to a God.

Just in case, I would keep the 1 copper that Knox rewarded me in my other pocket.

However, it was very monumental to me that the task points finally reached over 100. There were a lot of things that I could do with that many task points.

What I was most curious about right now was this necklace that I took away from the necromancer not long ago.

The epic relic —The Black Star of Acheron¹To clarify, it is referred to as Pluto's Black Star in Chapter 45. This is just an alternative name for the relic. The original name is still Pluto's Black Star. — could reportedly be strengthened by just using a hundred task points.

The letters naturally floated into my sight once again as I fiddled with the necklace.

『Would you like to use the 100 task points to strengthen The Black Star into Pluto's Eye?』

『Yes.』

『No.』

I moved my hand without hesitation and promptly pressed the 'Yes' button. When I pressed the letter in the air, a long loading window appeared before my eyes with a beeping sound.

I heard a deafeningly loud sound soon after.

Clang— Clang—

『Strengthening? 39%』

Clang— Clang—

『Strengthening? 67%』

It felt like I was playing a speculative game. As I was getting a bit nervous, wondering if there would be a probability mechanic in strengthening or some other mechanic of that type, a sudden and small sound akin to that of exploding firecrackers rang in my ears.

『You have successfully strengthened the equipment.』 『The epic relic, The Black Star, has been safely strengthened into the epic relic, Pluto's Eye.』

I didn't know what it was, but it seemed that the strengthening process had been successful anyway. Now, just what the hell was going on? While I felt a little suspicious, some additional letters showed up in my mind.

『Pluto's Eye』 Kore said that she didn't like the dull underworld. To Kore, who was depressed, Pluto gave a necklace that looked just like his eyes, but Kore

didn't like the color of it. So she threw it into the river that flows through the underworld.

It can protect the wearer from mental corruption-related magic and blessings.

By consuming 100 task points, you can strengthen Pluto's Eye by + 1.

Strengthening probability 80%

This fucking strengthening option did have a probability mechanic, after all.

* * * * *

"Hassan, get up. It's already morning."

"I-I'm up, Elfriede...!"

"I'm Luna."

"Oh, it's Luna."

It was only when I woke up that I could finally breathe a sigh of relief.

I dreamt about getting beaten up and whipped by Elfriede, but it didn't feel like it was just a dream because it was too vivid.

I must have had a nightmare because of my current state of being in low spirits. A lot of things happened last night, after all, it must have affected my psyche.

"On top of that, who is Elfriede? You also called this name last time."

Luna blinked her eyes with curiosity. I didn't want to explain my slave life or about Elfriede to this girl. We would never cross each other's paths anymore, so there's no need to dig up my dark past.

"A very bad person. You don't have to worry about it though."

"Perhaps she is a female?"

Crease—

The middle part of Luna's brows tightened into a small wrinkle.

It was something that you wouldn't notice if you didn't really look closely at her expressions. But perhaps because I had grown used to her usual bright expression, the difference was clearly apparent to me.

At once, I felt goosebumps trail all over my back. And all traces of sleepiness in my body disappeared with that single glare of hers.

“Well, how should I explain it? It’s a bit complicated. Anyway, let’s get ready!”

I did my best to change the subject. Luna’s serious gaze persisted for a while. But soon, she shouted in an extremely energetic and cheerful tone.

“Anyway, take a look at this! Hassan, you did it, didn’t you?”

There was a simple statue of Knox at the end of the direction Luna was pointing towards. However, it was very different from the strange shape it had last night.

The statue was in the form of a woman in a long, drapery dress, sitting in the lotus position on a platform with her robe pressed down.

While giving off a mysterious aura, the folds and curves of the dress were insanely detailed, it was finally fit to be called the statue of a God.

“You did a great job! I feel as if you made it after seeing Lady Knox in person! It seems to have a cool magic power as well.”

“Really?”

But damn it, I wasn’t the one to carve it. How did that statue change shapes like that?

Was it Knox? Maybe the sight of the grotesque statue made by Luna was simply too much for her to bear.

Anyway, we left the cabin early in the morning and had a simple meal at a nearby inn. As always, it was the super cheap dry bread, milk, and watery porridge combo that we had, and as usual, its taste left much to be desired...

“It’s delicious! Right?”

Luna, however, was more cheerful than ever. Poor Luna! Her taste buds must have been ruined beyond repair. Even if I boiled a rock and gave it to her to eat, she would probably also say it tasted delicious and munch it down.

Of course, looking at it from another angle, it could be called a great blessing to have this kind of talent in this world filled to the brim with tasteless foods.

After finishing all the meals, Luna and I left for the streets, heading towards Sodomora’s south gate. The south gate was full of all kinds of shops, including the marketplace, so the whole place was bustling from very early in the morning.

I felt like I would have been easily distracted by the items sold by various merchants and the auctions that were going on all over the place, had I not been here with a purpose today. With thoughts about what I had to do in mind, I kept myself from being distracted and headed straight toward a certain place.

Lapu, Lapu.

I remembered the name of the swindler I had to chase and catch today. His name was Lapu. A former Bronze-tier adventurer of the Mars Guild.

He was a promising hunter, but one day, he was caught in a case of money fraud and was subsequently ousted from the guild, resulting in him becoming a crooked scammer.

Until yesterday, he had nothing to do with me. But today, fate had it that I was chasing after him in high spirits. I had all the intentions to make the bastard pay for all of his wrongdoings.

“Look at this, Hassan! It’s a squirrel!”

However, Luna, who had been the one to get robbed, was distracted by all the junk sold in the market. Weren’t you making a big fuss at the guard station just yesterday?

It was impossible to make one’s anger completely disappear. Even though I had healed her Depressive Anger, I didn’t believe that it would’ve been enough to make her completely forget about all that pent-up fury.

“Squirrels are cute!”

But Luna looked cute even as she was staring at the squirrel sitting in her hand with her gleaming and enchanting eyes.

“Yes, you’re cute. I-I mean the squirrel is.”

“Right? It actually tastes even better than it looks.”

Damn it, so squirrels around here was supposed to be eaten? Well, this was a useless concern in a world where protein-based food was rather rare... But seriously, this is quite shocking even by taking that into account.

“Here, you can go back.”

Luna released the trembling squirrel from her hands and began walking again. In any case, we must find Lapu, who frequently appeared in this south gate area.

However, how were we supposed to lure that bastard out when he was able to cause losses of up to 100 silvers, which was equal to 1 gold, and still not get caught by anyone?

“Hey, Luna.”

“Hm?”

“How did you find that swindler?”

“When I just entered the market, that guy came and started talking to me first.”

“Hmm.”

Was he the type that targeted someone who was easy to trick? That should be the case since Luna indeed looked like a person that could be easily conned.

My query led to zero results. And with that, there were no leads we could pursue. This was why I wasn't sure if we could find a clue even if we went around this large south gate market area.

“Let's scatter and look for him. We should meet up in front of that fountain over there later.”

“Okay!”

That was how I and Luna decided to disperse and look for that damn swindler by ourselves. Although there was a sketch of the guy, it was useless to try to find anyone with a similar face because he was capable of escaping from the guards.

But I could tell a person's identity just by touching their wrists. Assuming that Lapu is his real name, I would be able to identify him using this method.

No, no. I'd rather have him find me instead of looking for him. These swindlers were always in search of an easy target to trick and loot.

My mind recalled a story that I had heard a long time ago. So, I picked up a stone from a nearby road, sat on the ground inside a crowded park, and then began grinding the hard ground with its surface.

Ssk— Ssk— Ssk— Rattle—

The sound of me grinding the stone against the hard ground attracted a lot of people's attention.

In some ways, people already stared at me because of my physique and appearance. And now I was also doing something strange, so it was natural to attract a lot of people's attention.

It was hard for me to act like that when I had a rather timid side to me, but I had no doubt that this method would surely entice him to approach me.

"What are you doing?"

Then someone approached and talked to me. I spoke to him as if it were a matter of course, like what I was doing was nothing extraordinary.

"Well, I'm going to grind the stone and make a needle."

"What? You'll grind a stone to make a needle? That's the craziest thing I've heard this year. Let me see if you can do that."

Then he burst out laughing in a maniacal fit as if he was going crazy from my words and went back on his way. I still continued to grind the stone on the ground silently.

At that moment, a lot of people took interest in me and talked to me.

"Crazy guy."

"How barbaric."

"Isn't he the Samaritan who caught the lion?"

However, when I did what I had to do silently without answering much, people got tongue-tied and soon left as if they had lost interest in me. It was a bonus that everyone was looking at me like I was a doormat.

Of course, some of them looked at me with expectant eyes.

"It seems to be something meaningful. That's interesting."

"Maybe it holds a philosophical meaning. something like to never stop trying until you achieve whatever you want."

"No, on the contrary, doesn't it mean that there are some things that are impossible no matter how hard you try?"

I never stopped grinding the stone on the ground despite many reactions from the crowd. Being patient until your target took the bait was the basic rule for fishing. I think that the swindler wouldn't miss this kind of easy target.

Rattle— Rattle—

How long had it been?

“Hassan, I found him! He’s over there in that square! Why are you grinding stones on the ground like that?”

“I know right?!”

I threw the damn stone on the floor without looking back. Damn it, I’d been doing that for nothing!

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48 Footnotes:

- ¹To clarify, it is referred to as Pluto’s Black Star in Chapter 45. This is just an alternative name for the relic. The original name is still Pluto’s Black Star.

Chapter 60: Beware of the Deer (2)

☞ **Beware of the Deer (2)** ☞

I slowly walked behind Luna after throwing away the stone in the park. For a while, we walked in silence, before Luna pointed her finger toward someone in the marketplace.

“There! There he is! That’s him...!”

Luna whispered carefully to avoid getting caught by her target— Lapu, the swindler. That guy already knew Luna’s face, so he might run away if realized his whereabouts had been found.

It was unlike how Luna usually would act, but it was wise of her to quickly seek me instead of going after the swindler all alone.

Anyway, so that was him, huh?

Gently—

From a distance, I looked around the marketplace and watched the man wandering about in a steady gait.

Lapu, the swindler, was a middle-aged man in a cloak that was as oversized and long as the one I was wearing right now. He had a head full of light brown hair, meanwhile, his face was marred with innumerable scars and wrinkled folds.

The eye patch he wore on his left eye was slightly different from what Luna had described. He probably altered his appearance and took a new identity.

“How should we handle him? Should we attack him at the same time?”

Luna took out her silence totem from inside her raincoat.

She looked like she could no longer wait to hit that wretched man on the head with that totem of hers. Of course, it would be weird if you could act calmly while looking at the bastard swindler who scammed you of all your money.

However, the opponent was an unidentified mugger with a bounty of 50 silvers to his name. He wouldn't be an easy opponent that you could catch by simply knocking him out and putting him down.

He might have all kinds of unimaginable tools and tricks hidden under his leather cloak.

Most hunters who wore such long clothes obviously had a lot of sneaky tools that they could use against their opponents. So, there was nothing wrong with being careful.

Other than that, we must also capture that deer that formed a gang with him. So it was better to attack him when he joined with that deer.

“Oh, who is this? Isn't this the Samaritan fellow?”

While tailing after that swindler, someone talked to me from behind. I only had a few acquaintances in this city who would talk to me like that. That was why I immediately turned my head back, wondering who it was, when I heard that distinct female voice.

The first thing I could see after turning back was her blonde hair, tanned skin with a slightly light-reddish tone to it, and the small freckles scattered on her face.

The next thing I noticed was the copper armor with a red cape attached to her back. Finally, a set of gaiters and gauntlets could be seen protecting her limbs. She gave off the typical vibes of a rural female warrior.

I felt the sight of her blue eyes blinking rapidly to be quite familiar too.

What was her name again? Wasn't it Renee from the Sword Maidens?

“Luna is here, too? What are you two doing? Are you out on a date?”

“I don’t have time to deal with you, go away.”

Renee was interested in us as though she had stumbled onto an interesting situation. But I didn’t have time to pay attention to her because I was on duty to catch a pair of thieves.

Moreover, that swindler, Lapu, was quick to slip into the crowd. It was to such an extent that I thought I would immediately lose his trail if I lost concentration for even a second.

In order to not let him slip away, should we just go and attack him right now? Renee just kept talking to me while I was seriously contemplating our next course of action.

“Why are you acting so cold? We’ve done a request together. Isn’t it okay to at least tell me what you’re doing?”

“We are carrying out a request. There... I’ve told you what we are doing now, so go away.”

“I see, a request? Hmm, I was wondering why you were trying to stay low and kept looking forward like that. Are you trying to catch a criminal with a bounty on their head? Then, I think it should be a request from the guards. It hasn’t been long since you were promoted to the bronze rank, but you’ve got a request from the guards’ office already! You guys are doing better than I thought.”

Wow, the way Renee was able to draw up such a conclusion, which was really close to the truth, with such a small amount of information was kind of impressive, to say the least. As expected, the intuition of a bronze-rank adventurer who went through numerous struggles was really otherworldly. Their hard work didn’t go in vain and their perceptions never failed to deliver.

“Could you please leave now that you know the truth? I’m about to lose the guy I’m chasing.”

“You’re really cold. Then good luck. I’m busy, too. I must go to the deer forest because I have a transaction to conduct.”

Luna reacted to the word “deer forest” before me.

“Deer forest? What kind of goods are you going to trade?”

“An armor I used to wear. They’re taking it off my hands for 50 silvers. I paid around 30 silver for it when I first bought it, so selling this piece of junk for 50 silvers is quite the deal.”

How could someone want to pay more for something that has been already worn and used? For some reason, this story sounded extremely familiar, like I had heard it

somewhere else before, but I thought it was just a coincidence and decided to not bother with it anymore.

So we went our separate ways and continued tailing Lapu, the swindler to his destination.

Without doing anything suspicious or talking to anyone, Lapu focused on walking out of the south gate and eventually heading to the open field beyond.

We could see the deer forest beyond the open field, filled with tall and sharp trees.

The deer forest was full of trees and grass. There were also a lot of bugs and birds chirping here and there, making the whole forest very loud and noisy.

“Wow, there are so many bugs around us. It’s practically worth a small fortune.”

Luna talked while looking around as if she had to make a tough decision to let go of the opportunity to make money.

She looked like she wanted to pick up some herbs and mushrooms and catch some bugs as soon as she can. Yet, since we had a mission to chase after someone, she couldn’t do that and became restless instead.

“Let’s do that later. More importantly, just what kind of animal leaves so many footprints?”

On the forest ground, many stalks of grass were trampled all over the place by many sets of footprints.

It was apparently the traces of a four-legged beast with two claws obliquely sticking from its soles, could these possibly belong to a deer?

“W-Watch out for the deer, Hassan.”

Luna’s pink twin-tailed hair was trembling intermittently, perhaps because she remembered what had happened to her before. I wasn’t sure if it was because the experience of being ripped off by the deer still remained like a trauma in her psyche.

That was not the most important thing here, anyway. The more urgent thing to do was to find where Lapu — that bastard — had disappeared ever since entering the forest.

So as I was surveying the surroundings to find out where the heck that swindler bastard had fled to, Luna spoke in an urgent tone...

“Shh, I hear something, Hassan.”

“What did you hear?”

I also followed Luna’s words and listened to the surroundings, but I could only hear the insects, birds, and— I wasn’t sure if the last noise I heard was that of a cicada or something else.

“I can’t hear anything.”

“Here, this way.”

After saying that, Luna started moving swiftly while lowering her posture. Avoiding the narrow path and slowly passing through the tree and bushes for a while, Luna finally stopped walking.

“There, he is there! He is talking to someone.”

I could see Lapu, who had been out of our sight, in the direction Luna pointed out with her fingers while we hid in the cover of the bushes.

Damn, how was she even able to hear Lapu talk from such a distance? Did entering someplace like a forest increase her physical and sensory abilities, including hearing? Was this an ability she got for being a grass-type Pokemon?

Although I had a lot of doubts about her abilities, soon, I was also leaning with my ears open to listen to what was coming out of Lapu’s mouth. I couldn’t hear well because of the bushes covering him, but Lapu was talking to someone at the moment.

“This time, it’s real. It’s a Maiden’s possession. I’m sure that your situation will improve, my friend.

Purr— Purr—

I was wondering who the fucker was speaking to. But I was only able to spot one damned deer near him. But, like, how could a person even talk to a deer?

Although there were lots and lots of crazy bastards roaming the world, this was my first time seeing a person talking in such a serious tone with an animal.

“Wait, I sense a presence. You should stay away for now.”

Lapu lowered his posture and keenly listened to his surroundings. At the same time, the deer who was talking to him went hiding behind the tall grass.

Luna and I were also on high alert as the swindler was wary of his surroundings, so we held our breaths, opting to make no sounds. Did he notice that someone was spying on him?

As expected of a Bronze-rank adventurer. I now understood how he could trick people without being caught. We better launch a surprise attack as soon as possible, but grasping the correct timing in this situation isn't easy.

He was like a thorny hedgehog, not resting or letting go of his guard even for a split second.

"...Who's there?"

That swindler suddenly shouted toward the tall grass.

"Are you the one who posted the transaction notice on the guild market?"

Out of nowhere, a maiden with freckles and a familiar voice appeared from behind the grass and spoke to Lapu.

"Yes, are you the female warrior?"

"Yeah. You want to buy the armor, right?"

Damn, it was really Renee. Renee did say that she was going to conduct some deal in the deer forest but I didn't expect it to be with that swindler.

"Is the armor you're wearing for sale? Can you confirm that this is something you have frequently worn in the past?"

"Yeah, it's definitely what I used to wear and use on a regular basis. I think I used it for about a year already."

"Then your mana must have permeated all over the armor. It's not a waste of 50 silvers then."

"Old man, you sound like a damn pervert. I would've chopped you down right now if you weren't going to pay me. Then give me the money first."

"I'll get the goods first and give you the money later."

"What, you don't trust me?"

"It seems that we can't trust each other. Then how about this? I'll put the silver bag full of coins on this stone and you take off your armor and put it over that rock. On the count of three, we both will run towards our items of interest. Deal?"

What kind of deal was that?

Hearing this was enough to tip me off. It was clearly a fraud.

Having played all kinds of video games from an early age, I was familiar with all types of phishing and fraud schemes, this suspicious transaction method was alarming all my honed instincts.

“All right.”

Renee readily accepted the offer and began taking off her armor in a swift move.

Her sweaty cotton T-shirt hidden under the armor and the shorts that were barely covering her smooth and plump buttocks were fully revealed before my eyes. My pupils stretched wide open at this somewhat erotic scene.

“D-Don’t look...!”

Luna covered my eyes so I couldn’t witness the scene of the female warrior undressing. Just as I was about to ask her what the hell she was on about, something unexpected happened.

“What is this... A deer?”

“Run, run!”

“Wait, shit, you fucking bastard! Why don’t you stop right there?!”

With a loud howl, rough movements began to spread in all directions, and the sounds of bushes and branches breaking abounded the open space.

“Shit, stop there!”

Renee’s bewildered voice was heard between the grasses. I took off Luna’s hand, covering my eyes, and immediately stood up.

“Shit, let’s go after them!”

If I knew this would happen, I should have just attacked from the get-go. I then heard Renee’s screeching voice after running for a while.

“D-Damn it...He is really fast. The hell...”

I finally found Renee resting with her arms on a tree while gasping for air.

“What are you guys doing here? Why are you even here?”

“We came after the swindler. Where did he run to?”

“Shit, is he that swindler? That damn deer went to the left, and that human bastard went to the right. Bastards! They better pray that I don’t catch them.”

Renee shouted furiously with her sword drawn. Luna then suggested to Renee in an urgent voice.

“Renee! You chase after the deer! That man is ours!”

“Shit, no. I’m going to beat that bastard with my own hands. You guys follow the deer!”

Then Renee got back on her feet and started running in the direction where Lapu had fled to.

It didn’t matter where we went because eventually, we had to catch both the deer and the man.

“Luna, then let’s hurry up and go!”

Luna and I were heading in the direction the deer had run off to.

“Footprints! There are footprints here!”

I could see what appeared to be fresh deer footprints in the direction Luna pointed towards.

Damn you, deer bastard! I inwardly swore to kill that fucking deer and make its leather into a quality quilt for Luna’s cabin. I pulled out my sword with such thoughts in mind.

Drrr...

Drrr...

Suddenly, deer with unnatural scarlet eyes and disordered antlers popped out of nowhere. Wait, they were surrounding us?

Above all, holy damn, just what kind of fucking deer had such scary long Dracula-like fangs?

They looked like huge elks with antlers galloping above their heads. Their eyes were even more horrifying as they looked like those of predators that wanted to rip off my flesh rather than the innocent eyes of a herbivore.

They were drooling too. With their long heads and antlers combined, they were way over my height and of a huge size overall. Their muscles also seemed very sturdy, and in a way, they looked like kangaroos running on four feet.

“L-Luna, what are they eating? They look so hungry.”

“Deer from this forest can eat anything.”

“Do you know how to talk to deer? You know, something like the voodoo stuff you usually do.”

“How can I talk to a deer? Hassan, sometimes you talk about weird things in the most serious of ways.”

The f-fuck!?

Just when I began feeling immense shame after being scolded by Luna...

“But shall I try? I improved a lot recently, so maybe I can pull it off.”

Tap. Tap.

After saying that, Luna approached the around ten-something deer while trembling hard in fear. She soon put her fingers on her head, making a shape like antlers, and began doing some strange imitations.

“Hurr, purrr, purrrr.”

Plop— Plop—

One of the deer saw that and approached Luna. Damn, was it really working? Was interspecies communication possible in this world? While I was thinking about that...

Hurrrrrr!

“Gyaak!”

The deer swung its huge antlers and crashed into Luna with what seemed like the force of a literal truck!

Shwoop—

Luna flew due to that ruthless strike and hung on a tall branch as if she was a wet laundry caught on a clothesline.

“L-Luna!”

“Eek”

“These fucking bold bastards, I will give you a reason to fear humans!”

Just like that, my anger rose to the top of my head like a boiling volcano ready for eruption. I immediately drew my sword and shouted at the top of my lungs.

“Come here, you fake vegan bastards, I’ll kill the first one who comes at me!”

Right after I finished that vigorous shout.

Plop— Plop— Plop—

All the fucking deer started running toward me while pointing their antlers forward at the same time.

“Damn it, come one by one, you fuckers!!”

The plural of deer is also deer so it might feel confusing to some folks but that’s just how it is. Believe me, it’s confusing for me too. English can be so weird sometimes...

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