

Love Slave 76

76 Down to Business

"I want to interview the sellers and some of the buyers as well, can you help me out with the translations?" Ace inquired enthusiastically.

"Of course, it is my job to do so," Rung replied followed by a laugh.

"Come this way. I will take you to the section that specializes in dog meat. I don't know what you've heard but, dog meat isn't eaten by every single person in this country. I, personally, don't eat it but of course there are many that do. It's a matter of preference, you know..." Rung explained as he led the way through the throng of people.

As it turned out, the wet market was very big and had many sections. According to Rung's explanation, dog meat was sold in a small section in the market because of the niche market that it caters to. It wasn't as common as poultry, pork, and beef.

"There are specialized restaurants that sells it. Usually, it isn't sold randomly or mixed with other meat..." Rung explained further when we arrived at the dedicated stores.

"So, all these stores here sell dog meat?" Ace asked to clarify.

"Yes, all of them from here to over there..." Rung replied while pointing his index finger to the end of the area.

"That's more than I thought..." I mumbled to myself.

"The market is much livelier in the morning when there are more buyers but coming now is also good because if the store is too busy the store owner will not have time to talk to you," Rung said as he led us closer to one of the largest stores.

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"Can we take photos?" Ace asked.

"Of course. Nothing to worry about," Rung replied casually.

I gulped when we got close enough for us to see the meat that was on display. The meat that was chopped up resembled any other type of meat that I've seen displayed in the meat sections of supermarkets. However, there were other more wholesome versions of the meat that basically looked like a dog that had just been skinned. I closed my eyes momentarily to collect myself. To me, it was a disturbing and difficult sight to take in.

Rung began making small talk in the local language with the store owner while Ace and I just looked on. Both of us didn't speak the local language and had to rely heavily on Rung. After a short while of chatting, Rung gave up the thumb up sign that it was fine for us to interview the middle-aged lady who owned the store.

"Why do people eat dogs when there are other types of meat available?" Ace began asking.

Rung quickly translated Ace's question into the local language to the shopkeeper. She nodded her head to show that she understood before she replied to Rung.

"She says that it's part of their culture. Many people believe that there are health benefits from eating dogs that other meat cannot provide. Some just prefer the taste," Rung translated smoothly.

"Is that belief common only for the older generations or for the newer generation as well? Is the demand for dog meat dropping over the years?" Ace asked.

Once again, Rung translated Ace's questions and the shopkeeper replied in their local language. I took out a voice recorder and a notepad and began taking notes so that I wouldn't forget even the smallest detail.

"She says that younger people don't eat dogs anymore because it doesn't conform with the culture from the West. Old traditions are starting to fade. She says that even her kids want her to stop selling dog meat. They want her to switch to sell other more normal types of meat or just quit and retire. She says that she doesn't want to do that because she still has old and long-standing customers to serve," Rung translated again.

"What does she think about people from the West or other cultures being very against the dog meat trade?" Ace asked curiously.

"She says that it's not her problem. She doesn't care what other people think. Cultures are different. There are things that she doesn't like about other countries' cultures too, but she tries to understand them. She thinks eating dog is the same as other cultural traditions, it should be preserved and passed on. She says the people who like it should get to eat it and people who don't like it can just eat something else," Rung translated bluntly.

"What are her thoughts on unethical dog farms? Does she think that it is common or if there's a solution for that?" I asked.

"She says that she doesn't source her product from those types of farms. There are many farms that operate professionally just like chicken farms, and she doesn't see any issues with that. Of course, she thinks that unethical and illegal farms should be shut down. She thinks that those unethical farms that people see in the news are overrepresented. Most dog meat farms don't look like that," Rung translated while listening to the shopkeeper's response.

After a few more questions we moved on to another stall where we asked the shop owner similar questions and got very similar responses. After interviewing a handful of shop owners, we switched and started interviewing the buyers instead. It was clear that the buyers of dog meat were from the older generation. Most were probably around my mum's age, and we didn't find any young buyers in the teenage range at all.

I had many pages filled with notes by the time that we decided to call it a day. Before we turned to leave Ace called my name to catch my attention.

"What is it?" I asked as I turned back to face him.

"Do you want to try eating it, Rina?" Ace asked quite seriously.

I blinked my eyes rapidly at his surprising and unexpected question. Since this project started, I had considered many things such as my point of view regarding the matter, but not once have I thought about trying dog meat.

“No. I’m fine, thanks...” I quickly declined.