

The Noble 366

Chapter 366: I Was The Victim.

You still cannot see it.

Being a thinking being... is a blessing difficult to grasp.

We are unique predators, and yet our greatest battle is not against others, but against ourselves.

Our reasoning is complex.

We think, we doubt, we fear... and yet we move forward.

We seek help because we understand that loneliness destroys us.

We love, because in doing so we find purpose.

And we are even capable of giving our lives for another.

We continue to fight for something that, at times, we cannot even name.

And curiously, that is what sets us apart: the ability to keep going even when we do not understand why.

Perhaps that is part of a plan.

Yes... isn't that so? Doesn't everyone fight until the end?

It is as if we were born with a single purpose:

'To be victorious.'

And a young being...?

When do they understand this?

Not at birth, nor as they grow.

Is it when something is missing? When they desire something?

So what do they do? They search for it.

And when they don't get it, they suffer.

When they suffer, they become obsessed.

And that obsession... is what drives them to achieve it.

So what?

What happens when we achieve it? Are we happy? Satisfied? Do we end our lives?

No!

We always want more.

Even if we have everything, we search, we search for whatever we are missing.

That reveals the truth:

Desire does not exist to be fulfilled, but to propel us forward.

And that alone is enough.

That alone is enough to fight to the end, to overcome others, and to take everything we can.

That's what life is: motion born from emptiness.

A war fought not for victory, but for survival.

And for that, we should be grateful: we were born with the privilege of being thinking beings.

We were born under the plan to be victors, to fight to the end, with a single, simple purpose...

'I will win.'

But...

There will always be another.

One who will watch in silence, listen, observe again; one with the same purpose as you... and when he is certain, he will say:

'I will defeat you.'

..

Hey... tell me, which one are you?

The answer? The answer is yours alone.

Is it obvious? Yes, but it may not be the answer,

maybe it's all just nonsense and there's no answer to begin with....hahaha~

What's funny? Haha~, maybe the answer I come up with.

I wonder... what will you and I be like in the first scenario I saw?

Is that my face?

Is that my—

I just want to rest...

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"Huaaahhh~... huh?"

I woke up confused; for some reason, the first thing I did was let out a heavy sigh, as if I had been holding my breath for a long time.

"I feel like..."

Yes, I felt like I had dreamed something, but I only remember the confusing ending that I didn't understand. Did I see several versions or reflections of myself, or was it something else? I feel like I'm on

the verge of remembering, but as always, my memories are fleeting, and when I feel like I remember something, it just slips away.

'Anyway, there's no point in thinking about it. Maybe I dreamed that Aurora strangled me with her thighs and that's why I couldn't breathe... Oh! It's still dark. Well, I'll sleep a little longer.'

I opened my eyes, but everything was just black, and I was still a little sleepy, so I closed my eyes again and let myself be overcome by drowsiness.

'I feel like...'

Yes, I really felt like something was missing, something I hadn't felt in a long time, that feeling of...

'Oh, here it is.'

Yes, that was it: that feeling I hadn't felt in a while, that feeling of comfort and fulfillment that I was missing; I finally felt it.

'I want more.'

But I felt like I wanted more of that addictive and comfortable feeling. Not having had it for so long made me crave it intensely, and even when I had it close to my body, I felt like it could still be improved, it was never enough.

'Huh? Oh, that's a good idea!'

I felt as if someone had given me a good idea to intensify that feeling.

Two heads are better than one, so I took the idea to make that feeling even more intense and adjusted it into the right position.

All that movement cleared my mind a little, and when I touched it, I noticed something strange.

'Huh?, this size... Selene? ...hmmm, but it's a little bigger, did it grow?'

It seemed that Selene was sleeping next to me today and her breasts had grown a little; that's what I felt, weird.

Maybe all that rubbing and massaging had an effect; although it would be bad if Eira noticed; maybe she would get angry.

"Hmmm, is she wearing a robe and pants? Mmm, well, it must have been cold last night. Huehue, so it's okay if I warm her up a little."

Yes—she was my little angel—I had to give her a little stimulation; even she might get angry if I woke her up abruptly.

So one of my hands began to rub, while my other hand began to move and remove everything that got in the way.

At the same time, the guy who gave me the excellent idea began to emerge and press against her precious place.

I felt her begin to moisten easily, which meant I was doing my job correctly.

Meanwhile, my other free hand crawled forward; I began to feel around, but before I reached her always fleshy lips, I felt something else strange...

'Hmm, there's something strange, mmmm? Is there a lot of hair? ... Selene?'

I was already feeling more awake, and what's more, Selene was the naturally hairless one in my harem — and what I felt was definitely more than just a little hair.

Finally, I opened my eyes again and saw black again—but this time I realized it was hair.

It was hard for me to believe that, even half asleep, I could confuse Elena with Selene, but it seemed that even I could make mistakes; even so, I wasn't going to change what I was going to do, since she would get angry if I woke her up abruptly, so I made sure to warm her up very well.

'Hmm, but that's strange; Elena always takes good care of herself down there and...'

"Ah! —Mngh!"

'That voice?... Shit.'

Finally, hearing an unfamiliar moan, I came to and quickly, in addition to the breasts, felt the entire frame, and it definitely wasn't any of my girls, not to mention that now that I looked closely the hair wasn't really black.

Quickly, I removed my hands and Shenlog—who was seconds away from starting an invasion—and got up, distancing myself and finally reacting to where I was and who the person with me was.

"What the hell are you doing...? Wait... yes, what the hell are you doing?"

I made sure: it wasn't me who was in her sleeping bag. With so many days of abstinence, maybe I would have crawled into her bag sleepwalking or something, I don't know what I'm capable of.

But no; she was in mine. Everything indicated that I was the victim.

'No, wait, let's see what happened yesterday...'

Just in case, I also remembered what happened yesterday. My proposal was interrupted by fight number one, which had gotten out of control, making a big mess.

That put me on the ropes, as even Aeloria had shown up, and although she was far away, I had to use all my concentration on that. It was a race against time.

The first test of the art I had been developing ended in a way I did not expect.

There were good things, such as knowing that the art had a lot of potential, or that, in addition to Quintessentia, I received a good skill from that goddess, who seemed impressed with what I did.

But there were also bad things, like there was a death, and I had to use one of the remaining most powerful defensive scrolls I have, which hurt me a lot to spend.

And when I finished, my desire had waned, and I never proposed anything to her. If I remember correctly, we just went to sleep like every other night, which meant that she was the problem here.

"...I... I started to feel...pain."

"Pain...?"

"Y-yes. Ever since I started to smell bad, my body... always hurts, but it stopped hurting when you purified me."

"Oh! Is that why you were crying? Wasn't it because my purification hurt you?"

"No, your purification... did hurt, and it hurt a lot... but I was happy that that pain went away too ...everything went away."

"So the smell and the pain go hand in hand...snif, but you don't smell bad."

Yes, I don't think I tested with what I had in my hand, but there was indeed no bad smell.

"...Last night I only felt a little pain... but I was afraid it would come back... so I came closer to you for help... Hm. But when I got close to you, I felt it going away, and when I touched you, it went away completely... and-and you smelled good, and without realizing it..."

"Don't tell me you got in by accident; rather, how the hell did I not sense you?"

I'm always on high alert; her coming closer meant she evaded my senses. Either that, or I subconsciously don't see her as a threat, like girls...

"Oh! The contract I made her sign also prevents her from doing anything bad to me; I think that was it, and maybe because she reminds me of how timid Silvia is, I let my guard down even more."

Well, when I thought about why, I understood why she didn't wake me up and why it took me so long to realize it was her.

"But smell? Well, it's true that I haven't bathed."

There's no facility here, so it's true that I haven't done so in days, and maybe her smell rubbed off on me.

I looked around, and although there were already people awake, there wasn't much activity in our vicinity.

It seems that no one wanted to get close enough to discover that she no longer smelled bad, so I took advantage of that.

Click!.

"Ah, it's gone... ah, it's back."

"You have a good sense of smell; I thought it would be dead with how smelly you were."

I must have little natural scent; for starters, my blessing means I don't smell bad no matter what I do, and I also cast purifications from time to time, so no perfume or scent sticks to me for long.

She's obviously smelling me in my natural state, and I shouldn't smell like anything, but it seems she can. Even Lily has a hard time with it.

'Hmm, but more importantly... isn't she going to say anything about what just happened? Is she okay with it? So, what I thought yesterday wouldn't be bad—even though it was a mistake, I got turned on and so did she—ah, wait, this situation reminds me—'

Aside from the fact that she got into my sleeping bag, she didn't seem to mind my near-assault, but I actually remembered something similar happening to me before, which led me to think of a possibility...

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'If she's like Silvia, then...'

Name: Ophelia Melusane

Race: Demi-human (Nidrřc)

Rank: Supreme Transcendence

Gender: Female

Statistics:

Strength: 305

Mana: 665

Agility: 286

Defense: 486

Vitality: 656

Skills:

Venefic Tenacity (Ω)

Venomous Body (S)

Venom Affinity (S)

Toxic Symbiosis (A)

Chapter 367: Totally Reasonable

'Hmm, so she's Demi-human....'

It was the first time she had evaluated a hybrid I guess like the man-beasts that have the semi-human she will have demi-human along with the true name of her race.

'And now that I think about it, it's also the first time I've heard her name.'

I found it curious, not to mention that only now do I remember that I haven't even asked her name and she hasn't given it to me either.

Although she may think I already know it, as I've noticed that she's very well known, albeit in a bad way.

It seems she was promoted to the eighth rank not long ago, but the important thing was her skills. When I read them, I felt that many things made sense.

'So if it was because of her blessing... hmm, yes, with that name, it seems that is a poison god after all. Hmm... and 'Venomous Body,' that skill...'

Her status was more than surprising. She was very specialized in poison, but leaving aside the fact that they all have high ranks, I finally found the source of her bad smell.

As I thought, it is possible that she awakened her physique and that made her acquire the venomous body skill.

As always, there is no written explanation, but somehow, as always, I can intuit what she does. Apparently, it's as simple as making the body itself produce poison and making any part of her poisonous, and I guess her bad smell was a kind of poison.

And that was working in conjunction with her blessing, which I could also intuitively sense gave her the ability to resist my purifications and break through my defenses over time.

'But she said she felt pain... hmm, maybe her physique didn't fully awaken, or maybe it's because of... hmm...'

"I... I won't do it again... I-I didn't mean to... I-I'm sorry."

"Yeah, it doesn't matter now. Since it's still early, let's talk a bit. Tell me about this pain you're feeling, you can be more specific".

I wanted to see if her problem had a solution. I didn't really have any specific reason... maybe because of the peculiarity of her case, or maybe because she looked so much like Silvia, and it bothers me to see someone like her wandering around without knowing what to do.

"...I feel... like lots of needles pricking... every part of my body... even inside..."

"Has it always been like that?"

"No... at first it just itched... and it got worse and worse... but at some point it started to hurt..."

"You said the pain started again last night, right?"

"Yes... I felt a small twinge... in my chest..."

"Hmm... I see... Come here, come closer."

"Y-yes..."

"You really don't put up any resistance, huh? How did you manage to survive until now?"

"I-I..."

"That was rhetorical. Anyway... let's see, yes, your body is definitely not normal. Hmm... you have an organ that humans don't have, and neither do snake beastmen. Tell me something: was that smell always a smell, or was it something else before?"

"...n-no..."

"Oh! Let me tell you, lying to me is not really advisable. I know when people do it. So tell me, what was it before? No, I guess it was poison, right? You started to exude poison... and you accidentally hurt someone else, and not long after, it changed to the smell, and your body started to hurt too."

"H-how... did you..."

'From the reactions of her body and her incredulous look, I obviously got it right.'

That should be obvious. She has no skills related to bad odours; they are all related to poison, and in fact, most poisons do not smell bad or are odourless.

Which makes it strange that, to begin with, she is exuding bad smell instead of poison...

If her skill, venomous body made everything in her venomous, including sweat and smell, then logically this was the skill responsible.

But how did she get into that state?

While it seemed that she had no control over that skill and it even caused her pain, that didn't mean she couldn't do anything with it.

So I took into account her personality and the fact that she even lied to me. I guess it's something she doesn't want to talk about, and most likely she hurt or killed someone; that made her not want it to happen again.

"Somehow, she unconsciously adjusted her skill so it no longer exuded dangerous poison, replacing it with something safer."

There may be one or two other factors, but that was what I theorized and came up with.

'yeah! I'm like Sherlock... hmm, I need a Watson. Oh, now I have another theory too.'

"Then let me keep guessing: the reason you're now a ball of fur is because that somehow mitigates the bad smell... at least a little, right?"

"...yes."

"Wait! Why is that a lie? No, it's only half a lie... don't tell me it's also because you like being a ball of hair."

"...i-it makes me feel comfortable."

"You feel comfortable like that? Wait... have you always been a ball of hair?"

"...yes."

"Are you serious? You're worse than her... at least she only kept the fringes and glasses.... Hmm, but then again, looking at your face, you're like her too, covering up when it's really more of a waste to do so, you're really not bad at all."

"..."

"Hmm, I guess even though the smell is gone, you don't want to cut your hair."

"N-no."

"Tsk! Hmm... but with him it would be awkward, and I'll feel like I'm doing it with some strange beast, and I don't have those tastes... or do I? Hmm... no, I don't. M-m... but if I tied it up... hmm... but can it even be tied it up?"

"?"

"Hey, really, don't you want to cut it? It won't be too much, I'll settle for you at least looking like a person."

"W-why?"

"Hmmm... well, you know, I was going to propose a relationship... hmm, how can I put it, carnal? Yes. Well, I'll be blunt: I'm horny, and I want your body. But even though I'm horny, I really don't know if I can get excited with so much hair in the way."

"M-m-my bo-bo..."

"Yes, don't think I didn't notice that you've been looking at me since I found out about your blessing. So, well, I thought that if it makes you feel better, it would be nice if you gave me your body in return. I mean, it's like an exchange: that way it will feel bilateral instead of unilateral, and you'll have peace of mind."

"...I-I..."

"Yeah, I have no problem with your distrust. It's normal to think that way... ahem. But, between you and me, do you think what I proposed makes sense? It's reasonable, isn't it? I mean, later, when I explain this to my girlfriends, I don't want to get scolded."

"..."

It makes perfect sense in my head, but sometimes that doesn't align with the girls, and I can get some blows or scoldings. Not to mention that I feel like it's too convenient... but I still can't find any flaws in my logic. It's a win-win for everyone.

"ey!, answer me! Is it reasonable or not?"

"Y-yes, i-it is..."

"Right? I knew it wasn't just me. Obviously, it's very reasonable and correct."

"..."

Yes, I knew it wasn't just me. My exchange is completely and totally reasonable. The other person involved confirmed it too, so there was definitely nothing wrong here.

'Wait... does that mean she's okay with it?'

"Hey, but even if you okay with it, it doesn't change the fact that I want to do it with someone who looks human. So you'll have to cut your hair. Down there, a few adjustments are needed too, no!, trying something so wild wouldn't be bad at all. Rather, it's better that way. Huehue..."

"I-I, this..."

"What's wrong? Oh, wait, don't tell me you don't want to do it. Do you like your hair that much? Hmm... well, I'll back off. If you can tie it up somehow, I don't mind — we'll do it in the sleeping bag like we did a moment ago... you know, come to think of it, in the dark, it doesn't really matter whether it's there or not."

"I-I-I..."

"Hey, say something coherent. 'I-I-I'. I really don't know what you're trying to tell me."

"I-I-I-uek!"

"Did you bite your tongue?...okay, I think I'm getting on your nerves a little bit. Come on, take a breath first, let's calm down, inhale, exhale..."

Yeah, I think it's kind of my fault too. Well, it doesn't help that I'm holding her face.

I think I was too direct. She's very tense, red... her eyes were wandering erratically, avoiding looking at me at all costs.

'Yeah, I guess she's not very experienced in this... wait, she's not a virgin, is she? I mean, she's over twenty-five... nah, she's pretty, so before she even started stinking she must have... wait, she said she was always a hairball.'

"...I don't distrust you."

"Huh? What are you talking about now?"

She took my advice and, after calming down, that was the first thing she said. I don't understand what that had to do with the carnal relationship we were about to start. I mean, it's good that she doesn't distrust me, but...

"Ah, right... this is because she didn't trust me. That was the main point in all this... and she's not lying."

"I... wasn't looking at you for that reason."

"/_\ Ah, I see. I guess that means my proposal doesn't make sense."

If she wasn't looking at me because she didn't trust me, that meant the exchange wasn't necessary, and it was just me overthinking it. It seems like not doing it for so long is really affecting me.

'Haaahh~ I miss girls so much.'

I feel like years have passed. Anyway, this whole conversation was pointless in the end, and starting a purely physical relationship wasn't possible. It was really a shame, she wasn't bad at all.

'Haaah~ I guess at this point I have to go back to my old ways... Today it's your turn, Palmela Handerson. After so long."

"Um... I'm sorry."

"Yes, you really don't need to apologize. Anyway, we'll have breakfast soon... but before that, going back to your pain, tell me something: besides breathing, do you practice anything else?"

"...Yes, I'm an alchemist."

"Oh, just to confirm, that's also a breathing technique, right?"

"Yes."

"I see. That means you've never trained your body in any way... other than, perhaps, some classes at your academy, right?"

"Y-yes."

"I see. You seem to have a decent talent for magic, and I guess, noticing your affinity, the instructors encouraged you to become a mage, right? Even an alchemist, and you followed them."

"Y-yes."

"Well, I think I know how to fix your pain problem before it comes back."

Chapter 368: I Don't Talk To Privileged People

Normally, having an elemental affinity means that you have potential and talent as a magician, although this is not always the case, as in Lys's case.

And yet the trainers, or rather the kingdoms, want to raise as many mages as possible, so they focus on the fact that someone has affinities or skills that help them with magic and encourage them to change their path.

In fact, many in our group at the beginning of the year, such as Ban, who had a slight affinity for wind, were recommended to start magic classes.

But I advised him that even if he did, he should not abandon being a warrior with high agility.

The same thing happened with Alice in my previous life, who was a mage for a few years until she discovered her talent as an archer.

So, while I don't think it's wrong to learn magic, it's better to stick with what you're really good at.

Ophelia's talent as a mage may be decent, since she made it this far as one, but I feel that it's not as excellent as her talent as a warrior.

Seeing that she hasn't practiced any arts, and yet her vitality is hot on the heels of her mana, it's obvious where her talent for growth lies.

I could be wrong, but that could be the cause of her pain: having a special physique, her body wants to grow, to become stronger, but she, practicing breathing techniques that only increase mana, does not.

So her body, on its own, forces growth abruptly, and that's why she lives in suffering. That was one of my conclusions, but there was another explanation, and this one had a greater possibility because it was linked to the smell, as I noticed that, for some reason, poison was beginning to accumulate in her body.

Given her abilities, it doesn't seem like a bad thing, but I wondered what would happen when it accumulated too much.

And remembering the symptoms she told me about, maybe that was the problem. For her, releasing poison was like a natural function of the body, and by restricting it in some way, she suffered the consequences.

Impeding a natural function of the body is bad no matter what. I know better than anyone that the body is a system with a delicate balance, and no matter what form I take, I always have to maintain that balance.

What she's doing is like me preventing myself from sweating or...

'Hmm, I guess the best analogy is closing the anus. Well, that's not a problem for me with purification. Oh! That's what happened to her. So, I purified everything that was stuck.'

Now I understood why the pain went away with my purification. Basically, I cleaned her up and removed those years of accumulation and stagnation of poison, only that, with how ingrained it was—or perhaps due to the influence of another ability—she felt like a part of herself was burning.

But in the end, the method is simple: she just has to start using an art.

She has to learn to use her skill to fix that imbalance she made unconsciously.

It would be bad if she started exuding poison, but I think that if she was able to alter her current state, she can prevent the poison from coming out in another way.

And the easiest way to learn how to use her ability is to practice an art based on vitality and poison, since it was an ability that affected the body, and warriors have more understanding, comprehension, and control over the body.

And if, by chance, the pain came from her vitality, which was forcing itself to grow, it would also be fixed.

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Fwoshh!

'Tsk! These chimera wolves are like pests.'

Yes, the ambush by these wolves was endless, and they continued to harass our group... I've heard that there are already some casualties in the groups.

They're not really that strong, since my brother, along with the other two leaders and their subordinates, are taking care of the most powerful ones. We're only facing wolves of 6 or 7 metamorphoses.

Even so, it's annoying that their continuous attacks are slowing us down. I want to finish this as quickly as possible, and those damn wolves aren't cooperating.

At least I know we're not far away; at this rate, maybe one more day.

'But it's curious... this sub-species of chimeras... well, as long as there's a sapling nearby, the species takes on this characteristic. I wonder why?'

'...'

'And it's always a specific species. The ones on the central continent are reptiles... those are the real problem. Ugh! I really hope I don't have to fight that chimera dragon.'

'...'

'I wonder if they all have an skill... something like synthesis or fusion.'

'...'

'It's a shame we can't have beast skill.'

'...'

'We would need the legacy of gluttony or pride... hmm, but now that I think about it, didn't the legacy of gluttony do something similar to chimeras?'

'...'

'It would be a very cheating ability... what if... we somehow seduced an intelligent one?... if it felt lust towards us, we could see its state and stab it with the spear, right?'

[[What you're thinking is not possible. That's not our territory, so don't think nonsense]].

'Oh! Qetesh, I haven't heard from you in months... but where are the limits? I mean, as far as I know, we can handle divine beasts and—although I'm not saying they're beasts—the beastme-women too.'

[[...]]

'Why not normal beasts? Some of them are intelligent, aren't they? They even acquire humanoid traits.'

[[...]]

'ey!, you bastard, you can't just come here and say whatever you want and then shut up. Hey, original, say something too! Why so quiet?'

'...I don't talk to privileged people.'

'Hey!, don't be childish, that wasn't even the point here. I feel like that bastard Qetesh is hiding something.'

'Tsk! Only a privileged person like you has the luxury to think about things like that, while I live drowned in loneliness with no choice but to use my hand. If you're going to stare, don't talk to me.'

'Tsk! How dramatic. Anyway, I just came to look, since I was bored in class. I just thought it would be a good idea to have some of those wolves to study them.'

'I'll do it if I feel like it, but I'll tell you that I don't feel like talking to a privileged person.'

'I'd say you're a pain in the ass, but that would be like spitting upwards. Whatever, help the hairball, there are two wolves that got too close.'

'I'll do it, but it's not like I'm doing it because you told me to or anything.'

'Damn, you're getting worse every day. You better try to find another way to do it with the hairball so you can get rid of that attitude... Oh! Well, I'm leaving, Astrid's class is coming.'

'Tsk, privileged.'

I'm not going to waste any more words on them. Earlier, when we were having breakfast, I was just going to see what was going on over there because of yesterday's incident...

But those bastards were doing it, it was like teasing someone dying of thirst with water and in the end it turned out to be an illusion, it was exactly what I wanted to avoid.

Those damn privileged kids, it's like that's all they ever do, they have nothing else on their minds.

Those guys don't care about me, so I won't care about them either, I'll totally ignore them.

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Fwosh!

"Hey, why do you always let them get close to you!?"

If I weren't here, she'd already be one of these wolves' victims.

"I-I'm sorry, I'm not very good at fighting."

"I really don't understand how you survived this long."

"I-I..."

"Again, that was rhetorical. Anyway, just be careful; I can't always be watching out for you."

Well, it looks like the wolves have retreated again. The leader of the pack always stays in the fog. Apparently, my brother tried to go after him, but he always retreated before the confrontation.

'That wolf looks like someone I know...or rather will know'.

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"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"Goddamn it! What the hell! Why are you looking at me so much? You're going to put a hole in the back of my head, even with - Eira, I didn't feel it so much and she wanted to kill me!"

"...I-I'm not."

"Don't deny it, I can feel your gaze. You said it wasn't because you didn't trust me, but you never explained why you were looking at me? ...So tell me, why are you staring at me so much?"

It was already too much, aside from the fact that I gave up and let her walk a few steps away from me—since it was annoying to scold her all the time—her penetrating gaze was mortifying me.

I felt like the back of my neck was even itching, to the point that I really couldn't keep up my role as David.

If I had known that everything would be more annoying and without benefits, it would have been better with the talkative guy from before.

"...I don't know."

"wait... now answer me, why are you looking at me so much?"

"I-Id... haah~ I don't know."

I had to confirm that she wasn't lying, so I moved closer and parted her hair. It seemed like there really was no reason; at least she herself really didn't know.

But seeing how she blushed intensely and breathed heavily, I could even hear her heartbeat quicken, it made me think of something.

"Hey, tell me... do you like me? Don't tell me it's that cliché of 'because I helped you' or 'I talk to you when no one else does' or 'it's because I gave you the solution to your problem.'"

"..."

I mean, I just thought of that possibility. If it wasn't that she distrusted me, then maybe it was the other extreme and she was very interested in me... and interest is a sign of love.

"Come on, answer me! It's just a yes or no, even if you lie, I'll get the answer."

"...I don't know."

"Ah!, yes... there was a third option, so you don't know."

"N-no."

"..."

'This is a bit problematic.'

Right now, I'm replacing someone. I came here undercover, and I plan to stay that way until the end.

No one must know that I've snuck in here, or it would be very problematic in the future, so starting any kind of romantic relationship is out of the question, doing something like this would only be bad for both of us.

I still feel remorseful about what happened with Vey, and I don't intend to make the same mistake again.

That's why, even though I found her to be an exotic beauty (without the hair), I only proposed a short-term, carnal relationship, making things clear so that when this was over, we would each go our separate ways, with no possible continuation or anything, just like I did with the one-sans at Lily's place.

So the idea of adding her to my harem was not in my head, nor was it under consideration.

'I really hope she didn't fall in love because of such clichéd events, those events that never really appeared when I needed them.'

Chapter 369: Three Times More Frustrating

"Look, I'll be direct. Whether you like me or not, I have no intention of starting a relationship with you beyond what I proposed before. If you don't want that, that's fine. Let's carry on as usual and behave as if we were strangers."

Yes, things may sound dry, but there will be no misunderstandings. Lily once told me something that I made sure to never forget.

["Having sex without a loving bond is fine, but pretending to have a loving bond in order to have sex is miserable. I would be really disappointed if you did something like that, sweetheart."]

Her words were right, and I can do many things, but disappointing her and the rest is out of the question.

"B-but..."

"And if by any chance you think you owe me something, or that I did it because I have some kind of taste for you, you're wrong. I purified you because your smell was killing me. And again, I helped you with your other problem simply because you look a little like my friend."

"..."

"I hate misunderstandings and cliché scenarios, so it's better if that 'I don't know' stays that way, or you clarify it in a way other than love. Are we clear?"

"Y-yes."

"Well...Now, the carnal relationship is another matter. You know, I thought about it, and it'll probably be hard for you to find a good art that uses poisonous mana and improves your vita-constitution. How about this? Your body in exchange for an art that has what you need."

"..."

Yes, I told her I had to practice a poisonous art specialized in vitality, but that was all. I didn't give her anything. There's really no reason for me to do so.

Poison isn't a very developed element on this continent, and in fact, on the magic side, it's trash, with nothing but basic spells.

And now that I think about it, maybe that's part of why she's so bad at fighting. I only see her throwing basic poison balls and spears all the time.

The arts are even worse than magic, perhaps there are few, and it would be lucky if that art is based on vitality.

She could learn another from another element, since the arts don't need affinity; they themselves produce elemental mana when circulated, and having affinity is just a bonus.

But she's so tied to poison that probably no art of another element would help her much, and even with the imbalance in her body, it could be adverse.

So I thought I'd make things easier for her by giving her one of the ones in Willian's legacy, which I think is reasonable.

'Wait... it's reasonable, right?'

"Hmm, hey, between you and me... this proposal is reasonable, right? I mean, you depends on this so that the pain doesn't come back. I'm not taking advantage or anything, right? I really don't want punishment from my harem later."

"..."

"You know, there's one who's especially sadistic and beats me up for any little thing. Like going into the girls' bathroom and appreciating female beauty in its natural state, with great appreciation and detail. I don't understand what's wrong with that."

"..."

"Hey, say something. Why are you always so quiet? Isn't she the irrational one? I mean, it's a shared bathroom, I have to bathe, and I'm just looking. She's the weird one, right?"

"Y-yes."

"Right? You know, I thought about it before, but you have good judgment. Oh, let's not get sidetracked. So what I proposed to you is reasonable too, right? What do you think about it? Your body for a art: a carnal relationship of pure pleasure. When this expedition is over, we'll go back to being strangers."

"I... I'll think about it."

"Oh! Really? You know, if it helps you decide, you can keep your hair long. I thought about it, and since it will be dark, it doesn't matter if you have it; I hardly noticed it before."

"...Does it bother you to see my face?"

"Huh? Nah, you're actually very pretty, and that's why I'm telling you to cut it. That way I'll get more excited. In fact, one of my girlfriends has vertical pupils, and I really like them. Your fangs and moles also give you a unique touch. Your dark circles too, but I see they're gone. Didn't you sleep well before?"

"..."

"Hmm... actually, if you groomed yourself enough, you'd be a real beauty who would attract many. I really don't understand the need to hide your appearance... oh."

Come to think of it, I do it too, but mine is legitimate. I have to be careful with that sexual predator named William; it's a necessity.

But I guess she, like Silvia, does it just because of her personality. Although she's even worse than Silvia in that regard.

"Anyway, I hope for a positive answer. If possible, before nightfall. I'm really at my limit, not to mention that in the morning... ugh. Well, just remember everything I told you when you think about it, and don't get distracted if the wolves don't attack."

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"I-I-I-I-I..."

"What's wrong with you now? Why do you sound like a broken tape recorder?"

"I-I-Ugk!"

"Did you bite your tongue again?"

Really, when I think about it, he's at least three times more frustrating than Silvia. He has such a hard time speaking that it stops being understandable and becomes annoying.

Anyway, she probably came to reject my proposal. When I thought about it more calmly, I realized that it was wrong to trade art for sex. I'm really not thinking straight lately.

Besides, with her personality—worse than Silvia's—I doubt she would do something like that. As shy as she is, even if she really liked me, she would probably never make the first move.

I literally push Silvia sometimes, but she's hopeless. I don't want to imagine how difficult this woman will be.

And I can't even imagine her getting involved in a purely physical relationship with no commitment. In all likelihood, she's a virgin in her late twenties, like Princess Celestine.

"I-I-I..."

"Stop it! Seriously, if you're going to refuse, just nod."

"..."

"Huh? Why aren't you nodding? Didn't you understand what I said? If you're going to refuse, just nod, it'll be easier for you."

"...I-I... huuhh... haaahh~, I... I accept your proposal... I give you m-m-my bo-bo-bo... uek!...dy."

"What!"

"Hiii, I'm sorry!"

"No, I didn't mean to scare you... I was just really surprised. I thought you would refuse. You know, I thought about it and felt bad for proposing that to you. I was even thinking of giving you the art without any strings attached."

"..."

"Ahem... but since you accepted, I don't have to think about anything anymore. Okay, when we're done, I'll give you the art in exchange. You're okay with that, right?"

"...Yes."

"Yes! we—"

"David, Ophelia, your role for tonight."

"Oh, wait here, let me see..."

Well, that was very good news. After all, she wasn't Silvia. They just looked alike. It seems Ophelia isn't as indecisive as she appears.

I went to where the guy who called me was. It's an everyday thing: we were assigned roles for surveillance, but since there were so many of us, it would only be for an hour, along with other groups positioned at different points in the camp, in case the beasts or chimera wolves came.

The guy always stands more than ten meters away and calls me. We've actually been at it for more than a day, but no one comes close enough to know that Ophelia no longer emits that stinky smell.

"Here's the time and your position."

"...Okay."

I took it and read it, and luckily it was the second hour, which meant that once I finished, I had the rest of the night off, which was great.

"Hey... hmm, are you okay?"

"?"

"You know, our leaders know about the problem with Ophelia, so they thought about changing partners if they show signs of madness."

"...I'm fine."

"Are you sure? You can even fake it, I'll be your witness. I really don't understand how you've put up with it until now."

'This guy is a busybody.'

Really, he would have been my guardian angel if this were in the early days or if I hadn't been able to purify her, but right now the last thing I wanted was to be separated from her.

'Let's see... I don't think anyone cares enough about this guy, let's try that.'

"...Honestly... I really don't smell anything bad."

"What?"

"Well, I had never gotten close to her because of the rumors... but now that I'm close, I don't feel like it's a big deal. It smells like grass."

"Huh?..."

"Yeah... I really don't understand. It was the same thing a while ago: when I found an Calyphora flower, I heard it was stinky, but it smelled really good."

"An Calyphora flower? Damn! Is your nose broken or something?"

"...I don't think so, I have a good sense of smell, I can smell the beans from dinner."

"...ah! I think I know what's going on. You're one of those people who smells things differently. I once knew someone who always complained that cilantro smelled and tasted like soap, although your case seems extreme."

"...Really? There was something like that? So perfume made with the Calyphora flower isn't a good idea."

"Yuck! That's disgusting. For your own sake, don't even think about doing that... whatever. I have to keep assigning roles. If you don't have a problem with that stinky ball, all the better, you seem like the ideal partner."

"...Yes."

Good, the guy didn't suspect anything. Now I could return to Ophelia with a light heart, finally getting rid of my frustrations from the last few days.

Chapter 370: Preparation (r18)

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"So, do you want to cut your hair?"

"Y-yes."

"Are you sure? I already told you it doesn't matter much."

"....I want to do it."

"Oh, well, that's better. It's really so thick that even if I couldn't see, it would get in the way. Do you want me to do it for you, or do you want to do it yourself?"

"...I'd appreciate it."

It really was better that way. I was thinking of doing it in the dark and imagining the girls while I did it; here it was just for carnal pleasure, so I didn't feel guilty or anything like that.

But I really think it would be quite an experience to do it with an exotic beauty like her. Maybe I'll never get to do it with a snake hybrid like her.

"Well, then, do you have any requests? I haven't done it before, but I'm pretty good with my hands."

Right now, we were on watch duty. Technically, there were many detection barriers and such around, but this is done so that there are always people active and facing things in the moment, while buying time for those asleep to prepare.

So it's not so much necessary to be fully alert, but rather to ration once the barriers are activated.

"I want to look like a person."

"Huh? Oh! Then the bare minimum, right? As long as you don't look like a ball of fur, that's enough."

"Y-yes."

"Seems like you like your hair... Anyway, any other requests or anything besides that? Don't regret it later."

"... Could you ...? No, it's nothing."

"Oh, come on! I have no problem with your request, it's your hair after all."

"Hmm... in the front, my eyes... no, just one is fine. Could you leave it covered?"

"Huh? You want bangs to cover part of your face? Well, one... hmm, okay, no problem. Anything else?"

"N-no."

Although it was a shame that she didn't leave her whole face exposed, I know she was already making a big concession by cutting all that hair, I guess it would be uncomfortable for her to get rid of it completely, considering she had always been a ball of hair.

"Fine, I'll leave her as a decent person."

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"W-w-w-w..."

"Phew! I'm done... You know, for a reptilian beast woman, you had a lot of hair everywhere. Don't worry, I rubbed some special tonic on you, so there won't be any irritation and it won't grow back for a while."

I think that having a lot of hair or not doesn't depend on a beastman's race. She was Selene's complete opposite.

On the other hand, it was a more satisfying experience than I expected. Maybe I'll start trying it out with some of the girls.

"W-w-wha-..."

"Did you get stuck again? What's the problem now? Well, just don't bite your—"

"Uek—"

"Yes, too late. Anyway... hmm, you really are a beauty. It makes me proud to turn a ball of hair into a beauty."

I was quick, and using my agility to the fullest, I cut her hair and made the arrangements. I made sure to leave everything very decent, and not just her head; I precisely shaved everything else, and when I say everything, I mean everything.

There was hair in unexpected and slightly hard-to-reach places, but I trimmed it with precision, care, and speed.

I only left her head untouched, obviously, and the lush bush I touched in the morning... I honestly debated a little while looking at it, but in the end, I left it alone.

That would add more flavour to the experience; now she doesn't have a single hair except in those two areas.

I even did a little eyebrow and eyelash grooming, and she really had great potential because when I finished she was more beautiful than I originally thought she could be.

'Yes, just as I thought, she only needed a little care, and she doesn't even need make-up, but I still feel like something is missing... hmm'

"Oh, I know. Let's see, your size is a little bigger and you're a little taller, but... a few adjustments and you're good to go. Try that on."

I feel inspired, and even though they were for Selene, I decided to give her a set of gothiclolita clothes.

"W-wh-wha-w..."

"Yes, now everything is perfect."

Without hesitation, I took everything off her again and put the outfit on her, even putting on some super sexy knickers; they were lace, originally intended for Elena, but they suited her.

Honestly, now that I see it finished, I feel like it suits her very well. It would look cute on Selene, but on her it adds a certain air... I don't know how to describe it yet, but it's really nice and suits her very well.

"W-w-w-what are you going to do?"

"Oh, was that what she meant?"

It seems like she's been stuck since I started taking her clothes off the first time. She's funny.

"The question is a bit late, but what I did was cut your hair, wax you, do a little maintenance and put you in a nice outfit. Let's see what you think."

I took out a large mirror and showed her the final result.

"Ugh!"

"What's wrong? Don't you like the cut?"

"N-no, it's not that."

"Is it the clothes? Do you want a different style? I have more, although it's a shame, because this style suits you very well. But I warn you, this is the most covering outfit I have. I have some more daring ones or... wait, I have a nun's outfit—that one covers quite a bit too, although it has some openings in places like..."

"N-no, it's not necessary... it's just... it's weird to see myself in the mirror."

"Really? I guess you must have some kind of complex, but I'll give you my honest opinion, you're very pretty. And it's not just me: now that you don't smell and you look like this, men will probably chase after you."

Yes, it's not strange, she's more than unique, and things like that tend to happen to people like her. In fact, I don't have to be a genius to figure out why she liked being a ball of fur. I hope she gains a little confidence in herself.

"...I don't want that."

"Really? Well, it's up to you. Anyway, I have a few questions before we get started: how far are you willing to go? What can you do? Do you think you have any strengths? What do you think would be the ideal size? No, wait... I forgot to ask you the important question: are you a virgin or not?"

"Yes. It's not like I care, but I'm really looking forward to it and it would be a problem if you were an inexperienced virgin, since I would have to be careful from the beginning and I don't know if I'm capable of doing that."

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We finally finished our shift and the time had come.

We went back to our place, away from the rest, and I took out my (Akihara's) great, adaptable bed and asked her to lie down and get ready while I took care of the barriers.

I started putting up several barriers to prevent interruptions or discovery; at least from the outside it would look like we were just sleeping.

"Hey! Breathe, you're turning blue. Come on, if you're so nervous, even I... nah, forget it! At least you're not a piece of metal."

But when I turned my attention back to her, she was turning blue on top of the bed, as if she had forgotten to breathe.

I felt that this would be a challenge, even more so because, as I thought, she was a virgin, but as long as it's not like Cordelia's case, I can handle anything.

"Haaaahuaaahha~ I'm fine now."

I really don't know what she had in mind when she agreed; maybe she really wanted that art, maybe now that she got rid of that smell, she wanted to let loose on things she couldn't do.

Whatever it is, I know I made things clear: nothing sentimental will come of this, and I won't force her into anything.

"Well, I'm a considerate person, and seeing as you're a virgin... I'll be as careful as possible, at least at first.... Hey, if I get too crazy, can you attack me with a spell? One that causes impact would be good."

"..."

"Hey, answer me."

"Y-yes."

"Okay, enough talk. I think this will help a little..."

"Huiuuhaaaa~"

She was really nervous, breathing heavily, trying to calm down. The closer I got, the heavier and more difficult her breathing seemed to become.

It wasn't easy, so I released some of my pheromones; that would excite her and maybe take away some of her nerves.

I wasn't in a state of wanting to put it off too long, but at least I'll be considerate while I can still think.

Instead of summoning Shenlong, I approached her black ruffled skirt and lifted it up, giving me a good view of her underwear; I could have put them on her myself, but it was a nice view.

The panties weren't really that thin, and yet they couldn't contain her lush dark green bush.

The sight tempted me too much, and I began to make room between her legs, spreading them apart; my hand began to travel from her thighs toward her center.

I could feel her trembling. Clearly, I glanced briefly at her face: at least she was breathing, but her eyes were closed and her mouth was tight as if she were holding something back.

She was very flushed, too much so; moreover, her skin was very fair, not surprising considering that with so much hair there was little direct sun on her, which made her red cheeks more noticeable.

I looked down again and, without any reservation, my hands reached the peripheries of her precious place. I felt her agitation and the high tension that suddenly formed, but I didn't delay.

"Ah!"

My fingers reached and gently touched her place; it was just a light touch over her underwear, but it caused a melodious moan, even though a moment ago her mouth was so closed that it seemed nothing would come out.

She was very sensitive.

"Mmng! Ahh! This is..."

"Yes, I guess you've at least done it with your fingers, right?"

"...Y-yes, a little."

"Ohhh, that was a lie; that's wrong, cute Ophelia. So, now that I'm going to be more rough, we'll see what I can do."

"Ah! Not there... Hmng!"

It was a little fun to intimidate her and play with her, but I didn't want to put it off; so instead I took her underwear and moved it aside, revealing her spot, which was actually wetter than I thought.

That was good and would speed things up. Without hesitation, I brought my mouth closer and began to give her direct attention.