1781 Don't Shoot the Messenger

There were food rations in one of the carts, but Lady Tamar had also slain an Awakened Monster in the morning. There had been enough time for Rain to harvest a slab of meat before the survey team continued on Its Journey, so now, she was ready to cook a delicious supper.

Although the team wasn't big, there was a clear separation between people. The Awakened mostly kept to themselves, the survey specialists did the same, and the porters generally stuck together.

Right now, they were gathered around a fire, watching Rain roast meat with gleaming eyes.

"Wait, wait, everyone... it will be done soon! We're having a feast tonight!"

She grinned and turned the juicy strips of meat, making the melted fat sizzle. A delicious aroma permeated the air.

One of the laborers laughed.

"Rani, kid... if I was thirty years younger, I would have married you right here and now. No questions asked."

One of the tough women from the road crew gave him a disdainful look.

"Old goat, what makes you think that you would have been worthy of marrying our Rani? Dream on!”

She put her hand around Rain's shoulder protectively.

"On that note, though... I know for a fact that you have a bottle of arak hidden in your pack. Come one, bring it out..."

The mood was light and warm. Rain was the youngest of the laborers, so they treated her with a bit of affection. The women especially tried to take care of her like concerned aunts.

So, feeding them today was her way of returning the favor.

While the man went to take out the bottle of moonshine from his pack, the woman let go of Rain and looked at the sizzling meat hungrily.

Then, she said in a tone of confusion:

"I must say, though... that's a peculiar pan you have there, Rani."

Rain grinned.

"Yeah? You think so, auntie?"

Well, it was true. After all, she was using the blade of the Huntsman's axe as a makeshift pan.

The thing was too heavy to use in battle and too precious to discard. However, it was just large enough to place over a fire... the green metal was slow to heat up, but cooked meat beautifully. So, she used it often to prepare her meals.

Rain clicked her tongue,

"It used to be a demon's weapon. A handy thing to have - doesn't rust, easy to wash, and 1 can split firewood with it at the same time. I was so lucky to pick it up!"

The laborers laughed.

By the time the first portion of the meat was ready, even the survey specialists were looking at them with envy. Rain passed the strips of meat around and placed the second portion on the green axe.

There was food, a bit of alcohol, and a warm fire. The three moons shone beautifully in the night sky, and the mundane humans huddled together in the circle of light, trying to distract themselves from the fear of the wilderness with conversation.

"Hey, Pill... you only arrived from Ravenheart two days before we departed the main camp, didn't you? What did you do before?"

A bearded man with harsh eyes scratched the back of his head.

"Before? Ah, well... I was an air filtration tech back in Antarctica. No need to filter air in the Dream Realm, though, so I just worked construction here and there for the last few years."

He hesitated for a moment, then added with a sheepish smile.

"My wife and I wanted to save some coin, then move south and open a shop in one of the smaller cities, before they really developed. How great would it be, to have a store in a central location? But it's not easy to save. That's why I signed up for the road crew, The pay here is too sweet to pass up."

The others laughed.

"I used to be a civil engineer in Antarctica/

"I ran a small luxury PTV factory"

"Rich bastards, I was a floor cleaner in an underground facility in the outskirts of NQSC!

"What about you, Rani?"

Rain opened her eyes wide and fluttered her eyelashes

"Me? Oh... I went to school."

The laborers stared at her for a few moments, then laughed again.

"Gods, she's a baby..."

"How did such a precious girl end up on a road crew?"

"What do you mean, our Rani is tough as nails... tougher than the bunch of us, at least!"

When the laughter died down, the woman who had hugged her before looked at the newcomer, Pill, and asked with curiosity:

"What's the latest news in Ravenheart, by the way?"

There were no communicators in the Dream Realm, so the common folk had no way of receiving information quickly, There was little entertainment, as well, and everyone suffered from boredom.

Having arrived from the capital of the Song Domain recently, Pill was understandably the center of attention.

However, he did not seem very excited despite the situation.

Sighing heavily, the bearded man shook his head.

"That... things aren't very good right now. i don't even know what to say. It's like everyone has gone crazy."

The laborers looked at him in confusion.

"What? Why? What happened?"

Rain listened with interest, as well.

Pill hesitated for a few moments.

"You must have heard that some psycho tried to kill Lady Changing Star, right? That was already terrible enough, but now... you won't believe it... those scumbags from the Sword Domain are trying to insinuate that it was the Queen who ordered it."

There was suddenly silence.

The laborers stared at the bearded man, their expressions a mixture of confusion, disbelief, and outrage.

"No.... no way. What are they, lunatics? Why would Her Majesty want to kill Lady Changing Star?"

"What the hell is going on in the Sword Domain?"

"You can't be serious, right?"

Pill let out another sigh.

"Yeah, I get it. It's ridiculous. Actually, everyone in Ravenheart is angry about that."

He paused for a few moments, then pursed his lips.

"But it's true. They actually had the gall to demand that Saint Silent Stalker and Master Dar of the Maharana Clan were handed to them. For 'interrogation".