

Welcome to the Diner of the Exiled!

A tale of the
mightiest chef
who was booted
from his guild!

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A young girl with brown hair in pigtails, wearing a white bikini, sitting in a hot spring.

Bethel

A young countryside girl.
She's surprisingly wise
for her age.

A woman with long blonde hair tied with a red ribbon, wearing a white bikini, leaning over a hot spring.

Henrietta

A female knight who
can eat anything
and everything.



**AT THE TOWN'S
PUBLIC BATHHOUSE**

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Chapter 1: The Exiled Chef

“Dennis... consider yourself exiled from this guild.”

The guild leader, Viggo, is speaking in front of everyone. Nearly every guild member has assembled here—the HQ—for an extremely important meeting.

Dennis hears his name and the word “exiled” in the same sentence and is immediately hit by a wave of dizziness. He pauses for a moment and looks at everyone sitting at the round table, as though unable to comprehend the situation. He then returns his focus to Viggo.

“You’re actually letting me go?” he asks.

“Basically,” Viggo quickly answers. His armor, a majestic gold and blue, gleams as if brand new.

Dennis takes a deep breath, then scans the table again: every single member of the guild is present... everyone except for Katey, the guild’s second in command.

The guild is known as the “Silver Wings Battalion,” and it’s probably the strongest guild in existence. It’s an organization composed of just 10 members, but it boasts a formidable reputation—it’s a first-class guild that’s recognized worldwide. The majority of its members, if not all of them, are experienced warriors and strategists. Several of them, primarily knights and soldiers, even surpass the level 80 threshold. For context, the average level cap for people is 60. Although there are certain exceptions, most never even hit that mark.

The one who has just been outed is Dennis. He is—or was, rather—the guild’s chef. Despite being labeled “chef” on paper, he actually boasts several skills: alchemy, divination, healing, herbology, support, and a thorough knowledge of cutlery usage. So while he isn’t a proper chef in the typical sense, most of his skills revolve around some sort of culinary aspect, and he had fulfilled this role

as the guild's chef. He even managed to max out his skills. Although he had worked at the rear of the guild, rather than the front line, he'd been an excellent support to his guildmates.

He's a unique exception among most adventurers, though: He's referred to as "the guild's chef" and uses a butcher's knife as his main weapon.

"Can I ask why?"

"Remember the last quest we tried to complete? You know, the one we failed? Yeah, it was your fault it all fell apart. That's why," his leader replies.

"Huh? What did you just say?"

"You used your 'Dismay Roar,' I guess because you were scared or something, and it made the Cave Dragon escape. Just a little more, and we would've been able to kill all the monsters and complete the mission."

"Whoa there. Just a minute."

Dennis raises one of his hands for a pause and slams his other on the table, leaning on it.

"Weren't you the one who told me to do that, leader? You're not wrong; I was the one who screamed, but that's only because you ordered me to do so," he says.

"I did not. Don't try to blame others for your mistakes."

Dennis doesn't reply; instead, he frowns at his leader. "Me, trying to put the blame onto others? Don't make me laugh," he thinks to himself.

Viggo's talking about a dungeon where they had been tasked to slay a rare monster known as the "Cave Dragon": a monster so rare, it only appears once a year. The guild had also planned to grab rare loot from the defeated mobs.

They'd had a strategy all planned out beforehand, but everything hadn't gone as planned. In the midst of battle, things had quickly gone south, and Viggo ordered Dennis to use "Dismay Roar" to control the mob. Although his skill was meant to give enemies the "dread" status, it actually ended up scaring the cowardly dragon away. If the battle had continued, though, other members could've died. In the end, they lost the dragon, but they had saved their guild members' lives.

Initially, Dennis had been surprised by his leader's order. He'd figured Viggo would've tried to fight the dragon 'til the very end, regardless of the lives it cost. For Viggo, the reputation of the guild was more important: he didn't want to fail the quest and upset the nobles that had tasked them with killing the monster. That was why Dennis was surprised. But since it was a logical order,

he'd respected his leader's decision back then.

And now, that decision has come back to bite him.

"We're the Silver Wings Battalion, remember? The strongest guild in the entire world! We don't fail quests. Why would I deliberately give you an order that would set us up to lose? You're the only one who's to blame for what you did. Actually, for all we know, you could be a spy working for another guild. Maybe you did all of this on purpose so you could taint our reputation!" Viggo cries.

"He sure likes to make mountains out of molehills," Dennis quips to himself. He scratches the back of his head and forces a smile as he ponders his guild's decision.

"This is likely a ploy by everyone to make me the scapegoat," he thinks to himself. "They need someone to blame for the guild's failure, and I'm the one on the chopping block. Plus, by being branded a spy, I'm lessening the impact of their failure. If they banish the traitor, they can gain the favor of the nobles and royalty who funded them. They'll end up regaining all the funding and respect they'd lost."

After ruminating on it, Dennis turns to everyone else in the room and asks, "Is everyone okay with this decision?"

No one responds.

"What about you, Florian?"

"I... I agree with what the leader says," Florian, the guild's priest, answers.

Viggo has always had Florian wrapped around his finger. He's nothing but his damn lackey. Dennis angrily recalls all the times that he'd saved Florian from danger.

"And you, Katerina?" he asks, "You agree with him?"

"Huh? Oh, well, I..."

"You've always loved my cooking. Why would you want this?"

"I, uh, I-I'll leave this decision to the leader as well."

"You too, huh? I see."

It looks like no one's siding with him, even the ones who'd normally have supported him. Realizing this, he falls silent.

"Okay, I get it; so everything's my fault. Since I was 'a coward,' and it cost us the quest, I have to be exiled. Looks like no one's against it," he finally says.

"That's right. Your qualifications and position here never really synced with ours, anyway. Everyone here is either a high-level knight or priest, after all."

“Is there something wrong with being a chef?” Dennis asks as he stands up. Viggo also rises, and his hands reach for the sword on his back.

They share a heated glare across the round table, and everyone at the table holds their breath. You could cut the tension in the room with a knife.

“If you think your shitty level 99 cooking class is any match against me, a level 99 knight, you’re gravely mistaken. Watch yourself,” Viggo warns, grasping the handle of his blade.

“And how can you say that for sure? You’ll never really know unless you try…” Dennis replies with a threatening smile.

When people reach level 90, their true strength doesn’t necessarily correlate with their number. What really matters at that point is the class specialization and which skills they’ve gained from their training. Based on their specialty, each person gets very different skills along with different strengths and weaknesses.

Dennis and Viggo specialize in two very different areas. On one side, there’s Viggo. His skillset is mainly aimed at overpowering and defeating his enemies. On the other side, there’s Dennis. His skills are more supportive, and they focus on making the most delicious food possible.

Dennis looks around him once more. The tension reaches its climax.

“So they don’t need a chef here?” Dennis ponders, “Even though this guild reached its position with my help? Who cooked for everyone while they were in the middle of exploring dungeons? They would never have cleared them so easily if I hadn’t assisted them. Who was the one who created such a strong support group? Our guild’s reputation and our support team trumps the others.”

It’s useless. No one has his back.

“Very well. Do as you please. I’m out,” he spits out.



Dennis rushes to his room and begins gathering his personal belongings. As he’s doing so, the door suddenly bursts open.

It’s Katey: the knight who’s second in charge at the guild. She’s easily recognizable by her bright red hair and matching shiny red armor. She’s also wearing a black coat with two silver wings emblazoned on it—the guild’s signature coat. Each member has one, and it makes them stand out from everyone else. She’s panting pretty heavily from having sprinted to his room.

“W-Wait a second! What’s the meaning of this, Dennis?!” she cries out.

“What do you think? I’ve been exiled,” he replies.

“Why would you even get exiled?! Isn’t that weird?!”

“It’s just as the leader says. Anyway, could you at least try to wear normal clothes around the HQ instead of prancing around half-naked in your armor?”

He squints at her, looking closely at what she’s wearing. Katey’s attire is normally scanty—rather than a traditional set of armor, hers resembles a bikini more than anything else. It covers everything that needs to be covered, but it doesn’t really leave much to the imagination. With a pair of dual swords resting at her hips, her “assets” are on full display.

There’s a good reason her armor is like this, of course: her fighting style tends to be quick and aggressive, unleashing a relentless flurry of attacks on her enemies. So, in addition to just being her style, her skimpy clothing allows for better mobility. It also works wonderfully well for the guild when it comes to asking the nobles for their patronage: their pockets seem to get significantly lighter when she’s around.

“I don’t accept this! And I still don’t get why this happened either!” she exclaims. She’s got a worried expression, and her cheeks are flushed.

It looks like Katey was told about his exile after the meeting. Although most of the party’s power is held by Viggo, Katey is a fair match against him in terms of strength. As second in command, if she had opposed his decision, Dennis might have still been allowed to stay. The others had planned the meeting out in advance to ensure she wasn’t there; they then quickly booted Dennis out and labeled him a traitor before Katey could find out and interfere.

“B-But if you’re gone, who’s going to make our medicines or potions?! And the cooking?! What about tonight’s dinner?!”

“Florian’s skilled enough to make medicine, and I bet there are others who can take over the potion master role. As for dinner… Um, sorry, but you’re on your own there.”

“Haven’t you been the one slaving away behind the scenes, though?! No one’s willing to admit it out loud, but they know as well as I do that no one’s as good as you are! Sure, they have some skills, but they’re nowhere near your level! They’re useless in comparison!”

“Yeah, I’ve got to agree with you there. What they have isn’t very useful, honestly,” Dennis replies as he continues packing his things.



Most of the private institutions that priests—like Florian—train at are lacking in one way or another. They have pretty cushy courses—for example, they never put their students through any battle simulations where they can safely level up. Without any sticky situations or hands-on battle experience, the institutions have created a place where anyone who applies can easily reach level 60 without any issues. Some of these schools cost a pretty penny, too: their tuition fees are so high, only nobles can afford to send their children to study there.

All those places really care about is the prestige of a high level, not how their students reach it. Since a person's level and achievements are available to those who are at a high enough level and know Divination, the method of obtaining said level and achievements aren't that important. Usually, these levels are obtained by repeatedly using their skills, as well as the number of skills they have total. However, the schools have people who are well-versed in the art of easy leveling.

Normal people can't even use the divination skill on these nobles because of the level gap, so that's why they're always looking for an easy way to get high levels. As long as the plebeians stay weak and obey, it's more than enough for them.

"Well, I've leveled up through more unconventional means than the rest of you. I focused on cooking instead of fighting, so I ended up doing things that you guys couldn't. Anyway, I'm sure you'll all pull through."

"No, we won't!" Katey shouts and slams her hands on the table for emphasis. She continues, "Oh shit, I can already see what's going to happen; things are gonna go downhill real fast. None of the guys on the front line have any idea of how much you've actually helped us. You're like the main pillar of the support group, and they're totally clueless! Have they even thought this through?!"

"Don't forget the rest of the support members. They help out, too. Well, not like it matters; you guys are a warrior guild, not a support guild."

"Dude! We're gonna fall apart if you leave! For real! Like poof, gone! It's going to be a frickin' mess!" she shouts, her head in her hands.

Dennis isn't wrong, though. The guild is mostly renowned for its warriors and aggressive tactics, not its support team. The most prominent members of the guild are Viggo, also called "The Blue Blade That Destroys All," and Katey, also known as "The Crimson Blade Storm." The two of them tend to go all-in on missions and destroy anything that moves.

Of course, this style has garnered the guild's warriors quite the reputation. That's one of the main reasons the guild is famous: the Silver Wings Battalion not only boasts a group of prodigy warriors and a very aggressive battling style, but it was also the first guild that reached the deep, unexplored zones of dungeons—areas which were previously considered impossible to reach.

That's why the support members have never really stood out in comparison to the warriors. With the exception of Dennis, most of them are just puppets ready to be used and controlled by Viggo whenever he so pleases. They're also primarily composed of women. That's because Viggo prefers beautiful, fair women, as well as high-level members from wealthy families.

Obviously, Viggo's choice in recruits is primarily due to the nobles' tastes. With better reputation comes better funding from the guild's patrons. Nobles are also the ones who provide the guild with tasks. Dennis knows this, and he's also aware that Viggo isn't an idiot. He tends to be careful in recruiting his members, but he has a tendency to favor his own personal taste, something Dennis is all too aware of. Viggo just prefers picking women over men, plain and simple.

"H-Hey Dennis, wait! You can still come back! I'll convince them somehow! Please, I'm begging you!"

"It's too late. I don't want to stay in a party full of ass-kissers who just suck up to their asshole leader."

"A-At least make some dinner before you go..."

"That's your last request? Food? Well, it does make me happy that you want me to stay, even if it's just for my food."

"Also, if you could make some extra food for the next few months..."

"Seriously, that's all you can think about? You're like one of those kids that just thinks about eating constantly because they're going through a growth spurt."

Dennis finishes gathering his essentials, which he packs into a small bag and slings over his shoulder. He leaves his signature black coat on the bed and passes Katey on his way out of the room.

"Are you for real?! You don't wanna come back?!" Katey cries, looking increasingly desperate.

The main reason Dennis joined in the first place was because Katey had convinced him to. Before that, he used to work at a restaurant in the city. The restaurant was owned and run by Dennis's adoptive mother, but he found

himself kicked out after they had gotten into a fight. That's when he met Katey.

Katey knew from the moment they met that Dennis wasn't merely a simple chef. It turned out that she was right: Dennis was a mercenary. A sort of rogue, freelance figure who wandered from one place to another and never really settled down in one guild, despite coming into contact with several renowned ones. He specialized in and excelled at several support-related skills, something that was generally only seen in high-class adventurers. She spied him at a bar and checked his stats out with her divination skill. Once she was certain she was right, she went over to expose his true nature.

"Why would a chef have such high alchemical skill levels?" she asked.

"Had to maintain my metallic pans somehow. You know how it works: gotta get rid of the rust and all... But then again, I'm assuming you've never cooked?"

"You also have an absurdly high herbology level. There's no way you're just a chef."

"I bet you're the kind of person who confuses salt for sugar."

"And your knife skills are at a legendary level too?! Are you an assassin or something?!"

"Well, I think that's pretty obvious. I've been cutting food up with my knives for years."

"Then why would a simple chef like you have skills that are normally used to clear dungeons, huh?!"

"Because I busted my ass for years cooking!"

"Yeah, right! No amount of effort and time cooking gets you to this point! Hey, wait a sec— All of your achievements are just from cooking. You weren't lying after all?! Damn, you've maxed your experience points in fried rice and noodle dishes. That's amazing! I've never seen anything like this before! You're an actual cooking junkie. I seriously can't believe your best achievement is 'Legendary Fried Rice'! Hahaha!"

"Are you trying to make fun of me, you bikini pervert?"

"My armor isn't a bikini! It actually has a lot of advantages, you know!"

So, in the end, Dennis was basically roped into joining the guild by Katey. She wouldn't take no for an answer. The leader wasn't very enthusiastic about accepting him, but Katey had found someone with formidable skill in his field. Viggo couldn't really refuse.

It's not a stretch to assume that Katey and Dennis are good friends. They get along so well that many party members have already speculated if they're more than "just friends." During their downtime after clearing dungeons, they'd snoop on the two of them and say things like,

"Hey guys, look—Katey and Dennis are talking again."

"Those two are totally going out. I just know it! Kyah!"

Despite their conjectures, however, this is what the typical conversation between these two sounds like:

"Dude, Dennis—a hamburger would be perfect for dinner tonight. Yep, it's definitely gotta be a hamburger."

"Hell no. We had meat yesterday, so today we're having a vegetarian meal. We need to strive for a balanced diet."

"But my tummy's screaming! 'Feed me a hamburger,' it's crying out! If I feed it anything else, it'll puke it back out."

"Sorry, but we're having some fried veggies and salad today. My body's speaking to me, too—the one that wants me to preserve my health. It's just itching to make some veggies today."

"Then perish, 'Legendary Fried Rice.'"

"Can you not, please?"

Another thought occurs to Dennis: Viggo also probably didn't like the fact that he's so close to Katey. Viggo definitely has feelings for her, and it's no wonder—she's a beautiful, stylish girl. It's just a shame that she has to open her mouth and ruin the whole thing. He's constantly making up excuses and situations so the two of them can be alone. For example, he often summons her and creates extra meetings with the excuse of "discussing the guild with the second in command." Dennis has always been able to see it for what it really is, but Katey remains oblivious.

Dennis and Katey's relationship primarily revolves around food. It's really the only thing she can talk to him about; she's a hopeless glutton. Maybe their great leader would re-evaluate their relationship if he knew.

"What are you gonna do now?" Katey asks desperately.

"Isn't it obvious? I'm gonna cook."

"That's not what I meant!"

"I have some money in the bank, so I'm going to open my own place in the countryside."

"..."

This isn't the first time Dennis has considered leaving, actually. He's always held back because he didn't want to leave Katey; the thought made him ache. This time, however, he doesn't really have the option.

"I... I was the one who found you and brought you in. You're mine, Dennis!"

"I don't ever remember becoming your property. Anyway, try to cheer up. It's not that bad," Dennis says. He pats Katey's shoulder and hoists his bag up.

"D-Dennis?!"

He can hear her desperate cries, but he doesn't turn around to face her.

"Come back, Dennis! This is an order from your commanding officer!"

"You may be my commanding officer, but you can't undo your commanding officer's decision. I'm thankful for everything you've done for me up 'til now. I'm sorry, Katey. In the end, I'm not made to be an adventurer; my place is in the kitchen. Have a good one."

He waves his hand goodbye.



A refreshingly clear blue sky greets Dennis the moment he emerges from the guild's headquarters. He raises a hand to block the sunlight as he watches the bustling street in front of him. There are couples wandering around and chatting, rich folks strutting primly with their flashy scepters, and children frolicking about.

"Whoops."

Something bumps against Dennis's leg as he's distracted watching the scene. He looks down and sees a small girl, her hair arranged in a cute bun. She probably wasn't watching where she was going. She looks back at him to see who she collided with, but she seems astounded by his height. As soon as she notices Dennis looking down at her, she lowers her gaze.

"I'm sorry... Ah!"

As if suddenly noticing something, she looks up to the sky. Dennis follows her gaze—there's a red balloon rapidly heading for the clouds. It's probably from a vendor with street performer skills. They create these balloons by blowing magical air inside them and then sell them on city streets. Those things can basically float forever until they're popped.

“Oh, so that’s your balloon?”

“Y-Yeah. What should I do? My mom just bought it for me...”

The balloon’s past the rooftops now. The two of them follow its ascent, and the young girl looks more dejected the higher it goes.

“Come on. You shouldn’t let go of the things you cherish so easily.”

He takes a deep breath and jumps up toward a nearby building. He reaches the window and propels himself off of it, soaring up toward the city’s rooftops. He deftly grabs the balloon’s string in the air and lands back on the ground safely.

The little girl excitedly rushes toward him.

“Whoa! That was amazing, mister!” she exclaims.

“Here. Don’t let go of it this time.”

He hands the little girl her wayward toy, and she takes it with a large smile on her face. There’s a woman nearby calling out for her; it’s probably her mother.

“Thanks, mister! Thanks so much!” she repeats, then quickly toddles back to her mom.

“Don’t let go of things you cherish, huh?” Dennis thought to himself.

Easy enough to say, but could he actually practice what he preached? Would he be able to stand his ground and repeat what he’d just said with pride?

Not like it would change anything now. He’d already made up his mind.

The beautiful sky and lovely weather dissipate his bad mood, and he feels slightly better about what happened earlier.

“What an excellent day to be exiled,” he thinks.

Regardless of how things could’ve been handled, it’s not like anything would change anyway. “There isn’t any point in worrying about it now,” he assures himself. He gave his all as a support role, helping out the guild behind the scenes... all to be backstabbed by them and branded a spy.

“I guess things didn’t really end up well for me,” he jokes to himself, “but it’s not like worrying or brooding over it will solve my problems. I’m still level 99, not 100. My life as an adventurer may be over, but my life as a chef has just started. Let’s do this!”

As Dennis merges into the city’s crowd, one person watches him perched in front of their window. It’s Viggo, looking down at his ex-member with an evil smirk.

“Dennis... As I expected, you really are that kind of guy.”

He leaves his position at the window, places his sword on the table, then slouches on the chair next to it.

“With him gone, there’s no one else who’d get in my way. No one will oppose my absolute rule here. Time to start putting my plan in motion...”

◇

That's why keeping some money for an emergency ought to be one of his main priorities.



Chapter 2: The Grand Opening with the Exiled Slave

Dennis, resolute and ready to open his diner, leaves the city and travels to a village a few hours away. The village isn't as busy as the place he came from, but it's bustling and thriving in its own right. Thanks to the numerous dungeons that are scattered nearby, it attracts all sorts of adventurers. He didn't really come up with much of a plan on his way there, but as he steps into the village, he realizes it's the perfect place for the small, cozy diner that he'd envisioned.

With a purse filled generously with coins and a burning ambition, he is ready to set his plan in motion. First, he has to find a building for sale—one preferably close to a dungeon. Second, he needs some furniture. Some cheap sets will suffice for the time being. As his business expands, and he makes more money, he can splurge on some nicer furniture. For now, though, there isn't much of a rush.

It is also important to save some cash for a rainy day. He'd learned this lesson from one of his favorite manuals, "Buck Naked Adventurer's Restaurant Business for Dummies, 4th Edition". He must've pored over this book a hundred times over back at the guild. He's read it so often, in fact, that he still remembers what page the advice about saving money is on: page 9, titled "First Lesson!" It warns, "In general, adventurers suck at managing their finances. Always be sure to keep a big pile of gold saved up just in case!"

Dennis reminisces on his days back at his guild, where money was of no concern to him. He could buy whatever he desired whenever he wanted it. His job had meant risking his life, but it had also paid handsomely. But the situation has changed—he's no longer the chef of the strongest guild in the world. He no longer serves the rich nobility. Now he's simply the manager of a humble diner; nothing more, nothing less.

"Whoa! This is amazing! How's this thing so cold without any ice?!"

Dennis is at a general store, peering in amazement inside a cold box. At Dennis's amazed shout, the store's owner—a rather corpulent, friendly-looking fellow—waddles over.

"Hahahaha! Well, well—that, my friend, is what people call an 'ice box.' It's a magical item! There's a blue crystal stored inside which constantly casts freezing magic. It helps keep any edibles you store inside fresh! It's a definite must if you're planning to open your own food place!" he exclaims while smiling and wiping some sweat from his forehead.

"Sounds really useful! Gimme one of these!" Dennis instantly cries, but then hesitates. "Uh, actually, wait a moment..."

He suddenly recalls the wise words on page 13 of "Buck Naked Adventurer's Restaurant Business for Dummies": "Second lesson! Ask yourself: do you really need to spend money on that item you've been eyeing?! Try to avoid splurging on your initial investments!"

"Uhhhh... I'll pass, actually. Never mind."

"Huh? You sure, lad? Everyone in your business has one of these."

"Y-Yeah. I just remembered that I can use ice magic. I've made those crystals before at an old job."

In the end, he buys only the bare essentials. He feels rather proud of himself for managing to keep himself in check. "I've read the Naked Adventurer's guide at least 17 times," he thinks, "I have no weaknesses. No blind spots."

Most restaurants that open end up tanking in the first year. Dennis isn't worried, though—he's trying to be as frugal as possible, and he has confidence in his cooking abilities. Now, what about advertising his business? To start off, he'll rely solely on word of mouth and see how it goes from there. He's not worried about troublesome customers since he has the skills to scare them off if they try anything. Anyone who tries to mess with him can answer to his superior knife skills and his maxed-out "Slash" ability. The only thing that remains uncertain is how he'll run the diner, but he puts that aside for now.

“Hahaha! Man, planning this all out is so much fun! I can’t stop daydreaming about it!” Dennis thinks to himself as he jovially skips through town.



Dennis has met with the carpenter in charge of remodeling the place he bought and the man who’s supplying his ingredients. Now he needs to think about hiring someone to help out. Although he could start on his own and be a one-man team, it would definitely be easier with someone else working alongside him. Plus, money isn’t really an issue—he has enough to comfortably pay someone the minimum wage.

He thinks back to the lesson on page 15 of his beloved manual: “Don’t think you can shoulder everything alone! Although cooking is the backbone of any restaurant, customer service is a very important aspect!”

Suddenly, Dennis notices a congregation; looks like a slave auction. They’re a little more secretive in the city, but in a rural town like this, they’re pretty much held out in the open. People just don’t really give a damn here, as evidenced by the large crowd.

It wasn’t his first time seeing one of these, and it likely wouldn’t be his last. He looks over to see who they’re currently auctioning. It’s a young girl.

“Ladies and gentlemen, gather ‘round and behold! I have a high-quality item for you today!” the thin auctioneer calls out. Dennis doesn’t recognize him as a local. He’s likely a traveling merchant going from town to town with his “merchandise.”

“This young lady is actually former nobility, if you’ll believe it! Apparently, her parents got into just a teensy little power battle with another rival family. Guess they weren’t very lucky, though, because here she is! Check her out! Look at her noble, graceful demeanor!”

The girl’s standing primly on the humble stand. In contrast to her surroundings, her beautiful, silky hair gleams silver. The merchant doesn’t seem to be lying—she does indeed look highbred.

The other traders start whispering to each other.

“Wait, a former daughter of nobility? You’re kidding, right?”

“Probably some bullshit excuse to jack up her price.”

“She does look good, though. She’ll probably be useless for labor, but I can think of some other... alternative uses for her. Hehe.”

Hmmm...

“It’s a shame for her, but I can’t exactly help out,” Dennis thinks. “I can really only accept her fate and move on. You can’t save everyone, right? If I were constantly worrying about all the injustices in this world, my nerves would be shot. Yeah, I can’t do anything about this. I should just go... but her eyes...”

The moment he saw her eyes, he stared into a void. He could just sense it: the absolute hopelessness, the complete emptiness.

Dennis recognized that look. It was like his own, back when he was younger...



Years ago, Dennis lived in the dark, dirty shadows of an otherwise glimmering city. He called a damp alley his home and lived with the sole purpose of surviving. He only moved or thought when absolutely necessary—after all, food was scarce, and using up any of his strength needlessly wasn't a good idea.

This is how Dennis had spent the majority of his life ever since he was a child. It was a miserable existence, but despite this, he never thought he was alone. He could've sworn there was the shadow of another child constantly tailing him wherever he went. Although he initially thought it a figment of his imagination, he couldn't shake the feeling of someone—or something—constantly sticking by his side.

But one rainy night, his life changed. Dennis was sitting in the alley, covered by a ragged coat that someone had tossed away earlier. He was utterly motionless, staring blankly ahead of him at the end of the alley. Suddenly, he saw the silhouette of a woman run by. Her long, black hair fluttered in the rain, and she ran past him without noticing. Unbeknownst to her, something had fallen out of her coat. With how dark and rainy it was, it would've been impossible for her to see it, anyway. Dennis had caught a glimpse of it, however; the dim light of a nearby street revealed that she had dropped her wallet, lined heavily with cash. It was more money than he had ever seen in his life.

He grabbed the wallet, pressed it against his chest, and rushed out of the alley. His first and only thought was reuniting it with its owner; he'd never thought about keeping it himself. He knew it must be important to her, at least as important as his own coat was for him. It had kept him warm and sheltered him against the dreary rain. Without it, he wouldn't have been able to survive such a cold, harsh night. He broke out into a sprint to try and find the lady.

As it turns out, his concern for returning the wallet would change his life.

When he'd caught up to her, she was looking around. She'd probably finally noticed she'd lost her wallet and was looking for it. He timidly approached her, afraid of what she might do, and presented the wallet. She accepted it—quizzically, at first, until she realized what it was.

"Oh, it's my wallet," she whispered as she looked at Dennis. "I'm confused, though. Why would you want to give this back to me so badly?"

Dennis didn't really understand her question. He knew he should answer, but he hadn't had much experience speaking with others before. When he opened his mouth to speak, his throat ended up getting caught, and he said nothing.

“You could’ve just kept it. Nothing would’ve happened to you, especially considering I’d dropped it for a while without realizing. I mean, I think keeping the money would’ve been the obvious choice. Why didn’t you?”

Was he supposed to answer? And what was he supposed to say if he did? He was at a loss for words. He just thought it’d be bad if she lost it; that’s why he’d decided to give it back.

Also, Dennis didn’t really grasp the concept of money. He knew there was a lot of money, but he didn’t quite understand its scope. His intentions were both righteous and naive.

“Well, whatever. Here, follow me.”

Dennis turned out to be very lucky, indeed—that woman had turned out to be none other than the head chef of a very noble restaurant. She practically dragged him to her restaurant. Despite being dirty and utterly drenched, she made him sit in one of the fancy chairs normally reserved only for nobles and kings. Then she quickly whipped up some fried rice and soup and offered it to him.

The moment the spoonful of fried rice entered his mouth, tears started to flow from his eyes. For the very first time in his life, Dennis cried. He was in a daze—he didn’t fully comprehend the situation he was in, nor did he understand the purpose or origin of his tears. He simply sat there, baffled and teary-eyed, and continued to eat the rice with the haphazardness of a baby first learning how to hold its utensils.

Dennis had finally discovered what it felt like to eat something truly delicious.



He wonders how she’s doing now. They had gotten into a fight and exchanged some nasty words, and she’d ended up tossing him out. Hopefully, once the diner is on track, he can pop into her restaurant and apologize properly. His thoughts are quickly interrupted by the men around him chatting about the slave.

“I bet she’d fetch a pretty penny in a brothel.”

“Yeah. Better do it now before she gets old and busted.”

“Let’s just buy her. If she’s got some weird condition we don’t know about, we can always sell her off to some freak show circus.”

“...”

“All right, gentlemen! As you can see, this girl’s a rare gem! You won’t find a slave like this anywhere else! Any takers? Who’s first?!”

The auctioneer starts scanning the crowd for bidders. Potential buyers throw up unique hand signs to tell him they’re raising the price.

“I see someone offering thirty greens! Oh, someone over there’s offering fifty!” he shouts.

Various calls spring up from the crowd, each placing their own bid for the slave.

“Fifty-five!”

“Sixty!”

“Sixty-three!”

“Sixty-six!”

“...A hundred!”

Dennis, who’s standing a bit behind the crowd, is responsible for the final bid. Everyone turns and looks at him, astonished at the high price.

“Aw crap, I ended up doing it... But there’s no going back now,” he thinks to himself.

“Very well, gentlemen! The young man over there has offered a hundred! Does anyone want to counteroffer?!”

He looks around, but the crowd is silent.

“Looks like she’s all yours, son. I assume you have the cash on you right now, yes?”

Dennis withdraws a fistful of green bills from his bag and presents them to the auctioneer.

“Hahaha! Well, well! Looks like we have quite the wealthy young gentleman over here! You don’t see that every day. Very well, son! She’s your—!”

“Wait a second! I offer one hundred and fifty greens!”

The hell?!

Dennis looks over to see who called out. It’s a large man, his face glistening in the sun. Based on his size, he’s clearly someone quite successful—definitely someone with a cushy position in life. It takes him a second, but Dennis eventually recognizes him: he’s the man from the general store he was in before.

“Heheheh... I can’t let such a sweet little cutie like her go out much. I’ll take her home and take very good care of her, yes I will...” he mutters.

“He looks like a stereotypical pervert!” Dennis thinks to himself, but then quickly checks himself. He’d hastily jumped to a conclusion just now, hadn’t he? He usually tries not to judge a book by its cover. Sure, what the man had said might’ve sounded disgusting and all sorts of dodgy, and he might look unsettling, but he’s probably a good guy deep down. Maybe he means that he wants to employ her in his house and take good care of her in that way. Who knows, right? Ruminating on all those factors, Dennis decides to keep his mouth shut.

“Oh shit, there’s Bolbo,” one of the merchants says.

“So she’s going to that creep? Oh well... I give her a few months tops.”

“Fuck! So he is a pervert!” Dennis thinks to himself, then shouts, “T-Two hundred! I offer two hundred!”

Bolbo is in quick pursuit, though, and shouts out, “Th-Three hundred! Hehehe...”

“Three hundred and fifty!”

“Four hundred!”

“Four hundred and fifty! Shit, damn, SHIT!”



Dennis is sitting inside his future diner on a chair he’d bought earlier that day. Sitting silently across from him is the silver-haired girl he’d won at the auction. Although he’s trying to relax, purchasing the girl had cost him dearly, and he’s currently counting the scarce remnants inside his bag.

“Man, I thought I had more cash than this. Between the earlier expenses and this... I think I’m completely broke,” he says with his head in his hands and sobs lightly.

The girl doesn’t reply. In fact, she’s just been staring silently at Dennis this whole time.

“Oh well,” Dennis says, trying to change his tone to be a bit gentler. “What’s your name?”

“I don’t have one.”

“There’s no way you don’t have one. You can tell me; it’s okay.”

“I had one, but I lost it,” she answers expressionlessly.

Dennis puts his elbows on the table and sighs.

“Well, whatever. What would you like me to call you, then?”

“I’m fine with Slave.”

“Don’t give me that. Anything else you’d be fine with?”

She finally breaks her stoic character and ponders for a moment, then says, “If you really need to give me a name... Atrielle.”

“Okay, nice. Got it. So it’s Atrielle. I hope we get along,” he says and claps his hands once. He’s desperate to change the mood in the room.

“Why did you buy me?” she asks.

“I didn’t really have a reason, to be honest. You just reminded me of my past, I guess,” he says while scratching his head awkwardly. He continues, “By the way, if you just wanna run away and live your own life, I’d be fine with that.”

“What’s your name, Master?”

“Don’t call me that. I’m Dennis.”

“Lord Dennis.”

“Take out the useless honorific, and we’ll be fine.”

“My Lord.”

“...Uh, my real name isn’t the useless part in that.”

She looks around, confused, and asks Dennis, “So what should I do?”

“Nothing for the time being. Just go upstairs and take a nap or something. I just wanna be alone for a bit. Half of my savings just went up in smoke because of this,” he replies and waves his hand at her, signaling that she should just go.

Suddenly, a rumbling noise erupts from Atrielle’s stomach. Dennis crosses his arms and stares at her.



“Here, eat.”

Dennis had gone to some shops that were still open to get his cookware and some ingredients. He’d returned to the diner and made fried rice for Atrielle and himself. Although the kitchen is still quite sparse in terms of equipment, he has an array of useful skills—such as “Blaze,” “Disinfect Food,” and “Boil”—that allowed him to cook whatever he wanted as long as he had the ingredients. During his time at the guild, all he would need during dungeon crawls was some seasoning. He could create full courses out of the most insidious monsters inside.

It's no wonder that Katey called him things like "The Walking Kitchen," "Cooking Incarnate," or even "Her little level 99 cooking criminal."

Dennis divides the portions between two plates and places one of them in front of Atrielle. It was nothing out of the ordinary, as he'd improvised while doing it: some finely chopped cave onions, plain white rice, some beaten eggs, a small portion of vritra meat, and a bevy of spices that he always carried with him.

Dennis begins eating the food silently. Atrielle, watching him eat, timidly takes her spoon, scoops up some rice, and puts it into her mouth. Her eyes snap open, and she jerks forward, as if hit by an electric shock. She looks at the mountain of rice on her plate and quickly shovels in another mouthful of food.

Seeing her eating with such gusto makes Dennis relax a little bit. Initially, he was worried that there was nothing left in her, that she'd been reduced to a hollow husk. Fortunately, it seems he was wrong. He's about to take another spoonful of his own food when he notices she's crying. Tears are silently pouring down her face as she eats.

"Sniff..."

"Poor thing. She's trying her hardest not to cry, but her eyes are all red," Dennis thinks. He figures it's best to remain silent.

He doesn't know what happened to her, but decides not to pry since she seems hesitant to open up for now. She just needs some good food and lots of sleep. He's certain that with a little care, most of her wounds will heal themselves. As for the ones that run deep, the ones that can't be healed... everyone shares one thing in common: the need to eat.

"Even when you're at a loss, when you're hopeless, when you think there's nothing that can be done, you can always eat. A brand new day starts with breakfast. No one's ever gotten anything accomplished without eating first, after all," he thinks to himself. He turns to Atrielle and asks, "So how's the food? Tasty?"

"...Ngh?! Kghhh!"

"Huh?! What's wrong?!"

"Ngh! Cough! Cough!"

Shit, did you choke on your food?! That doesn't sound good! Hey, are you okay?! I know you're supposed to be the silent type, but at least tell me you're okay!"



Thank you for reading the sample! If you want to know more about the story be sure to acquire the full book in our web or other platforms! We release the 7th of August. See you around!

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