

My trip to the slums this time began much as it did in Suram. At first the community leader, an elderly felyn woman, short and haggard by the name of Lynda, was untrusting of me. She thought that I was in it for some kind of profit or scheme. Unfortunately, unlike Jaren she was not a Priestess of Irena.

Without the inherent ability to discern that I was telling the truth, it was far more difficult to allay her suspicions. Rather than gathering a crowd for me to heal all at once, she took me around, one house at a time, and closely monitored me while I worked. Since I had expressed an interest in treating those with serious afflictions, she had instead led me mostly to those with minor injuries for the first few days.

It was only a bit over a week later when she finally took me to treat someone who was in real need. And this was not entirely of her own decision, but rather because she had waited as long as she could. Like the farmer's wife, it was a common affliction, just one that they could not afford to have remedied.

During my time in Dukan, I saw the servant of the ailing ninja several times. Though, if not for the fact that I was able to see their level, perhaps I would have never even noticed who they were. The man was not wearing the robes of a professional butler like I had first expected, but rather rags, his face marred with dirt and grime.

In the slums, he seemed to blend in as just another face in the crowd, no doubt the result he was aiming for. For those first few days, I saw him stealthily observing from the crowd as we passed through one worn out house after another. He did not make contact, simply watching me.

Out of curiosity, I had spread my world sight once while I was treating a young girl with a broken arm, and discovered that he was hiding in the rafters of the house directly above us. It took all I had in me not to jump in surprise, though I must have given enough of a reaction for him to grow cautious as he had left a moment later.

In total, it took me just over two weeks to get through this one community of the slums. By the end of it, their leader was far more kind, enough so that she put in a good word for me at my next destination. Though, once again I found that same servant there. His face had changed, making him look like a different person, but the information displayed to my eyes above his head was the same.

It was only after I had gone through the entire second community when he approached me. When he did so, he walked with a limp, his health bar lower than what I had seen it previously. *Don't tell me that he hurt himself so that he could put on this act?* I thought to myself incredulously.

"S-sir." The man muttered wearily. Right now, he looked like an elderly lycan man, one leg dragging limply behind himself. His body was thin, as though malnourished, and his face was full of aged wrinkles. "Can you... can you really heal people? Even those that the priests have forsaken?" His voice came out as a dry croak, his lips dry and cracked.

I nodded my head, doing my best to control my expression. "That's right. Are you in need of healing as well?" I glanced above his head, purposely looking towards his health bar that had been emptied by a third.

The man laughed dryly, shaking his head. "No, no, not me. Someone important to me... he is ill. No, can you even call this an illness? We don't know what's wrong with him... the priests can tell us nothing. He simply... doesn't wake up."

A *coma*? My eyes widened a bit as the suspicion crept into my mind. "Take me to him. I can't promise anything, but I'll do what I am able."

A smile appeared on the man's face, and he nodded his head. "Yes, yes, thank you." He spoke excitedly, turning and limping back the way he came, stopping after a few steps to turn and beckon me to follow him.

I did so, and soon he had led me to a small, cheap inn at the edge of the slums. Though, to call it an inn seemed almost unfitting. It was more accurate to label it a homeless shelter. A kind young woman poured soup into large bowls for various patrons, barely giving us a nod as we entered.

A few of the people in the dining area I recognized as those that I had recently cured, and it seemed that they recognized me as well. They waved towards me, sending their thanks as the servant and myself ascended the stairs. "Please, please, he's just inside."

As he pushed the door open, I stepped into the room. Lying on a blanket that had been spread across the floor was a young man, looking still in his teens. His clothes, while dirty, were a far cry from the rags that his servant was wearing. However, the curious thing was that his health bar had not even appeared above his head, meaning that he was either uninjured, or already dead. And given the slow, gentle rise and fall of his breath, it was clear that he was at least not dead.

I furrowed my brows, stepping forward and kneeling down next to the boy. *Udona, anything you can give me?* I asked towards the Goddess of Life hopefully.

*How about you see for yourself?* She offered back, a small smile in her tone. *I'll fill you in if you can't come up with anything. You're playing the healer, so it is best to see this for yourself.*

Grimacing at the lack of anything helpful, I placed my hand on his head. There was no fever, though if his condition would have caused one then his health bar should have appeared. "This happened before the last announcement?" I asked, glancing back towards the servant.

"Yes, yes, that's right." He nodded his head quickly. "Is that important?"

Honestly, I already knew it to be the case. I was just trying to make conversation to get things moving. "I need as much information as I can get to determine what's wrong. Casually using my energy without understanding the problem could do more harm than good."

Taking note of how the farmer had measured my level, I reached down and gently lifted the boy's wrist. It felt heavier than normal, confirming that his classes had trained his body. "Was he in a battle before this incident?"

The man's eyes widened briefly, but he shook his head. "No, no battles. He's not fought in over a year. Just..." The servant briefly hesitated, before speaking. "Shortly before we arrived in this city-- we travel together, you see-- he had a fitful dream. Ever since, he's refused to awaken."

"A dream..." I muttered, thinking about something. "Whose priest did you take him to?"

"Naturally, to Udonas." The servant spoke, as if it were obvious. "They are the best healers in the land."

It started to make sense to me now. The spirit was still something that the living had difficulty controlling. It took Tsubaki decades to master it enough to become the perfect self, and that was with the full repository of knowledge on the energy at her disposal.

To confirm my theory, I spread my world sight, specifically checking his body. Sure enough, I found his spirit, damaged and frayed as if it had been cut open. "Something attacked his spirit directly in the dream." I said quietly, not sure if my ki could repair this. It had spiritual energy as a component, but that was just to bind it to myself.

The man's face visibly paled at that, looking to the boy laying on the blanket. "His s-spirit? Are you able to cure him?"

"Me... maybe not. But I think I know someone who can." As I thought about it, there were three existences that sprang to mind, who would be proficient enough in manipulating the spirit to repair such damage.

One, naturally, was Irena. But I couldn't exactly summon a goddess here and maintain my cover. The next was Tsubaki, who was even less likely to allow me to keep my cover if I summoned her. As for the last one...

"Please, anything..." The man spoke weakly, and I had the feeling that his tone was more genuine now than it had been the entire time he had spoken to me.

"Are you able to erect a sealing barrier around this place? I need to perform a ritual, and I don't want to scare everyone."

For the first time, a trace of suspicion crept across his face, but he wiped it away and nodded. "I have some talent in that..." He turned, his back facing me as he began to work, making sure that I could not see exactly what he was doing.

It took about ten minutes for him to finish. "It's done... please, call whoever you need."

I gave a small nod, slowly standing up. "Don't be alarmed." I spoke, giving a small warning. Soon, my voice began to echo as it resonated with the natural energy.

"My name is unimportant. I am the wandering saint. I call the one who rules the spirits of nature. Come, and appear before me, the Uncrowned Queen. There is a lost soul who requires your mercy."

I could practically feel the servant tensing up when I summoned the natural energy of the surroundings. Since I didn't use my 'normal' introduction, the summoning was likely not to be as effective as normal, but I had also acquired the Voice of Nature. Given that, I was confident that I could make her appear.

And, sure enough, barely a moment passed before a portal opened up in front of me, leading to a green void. A fair, slender leg stepped through, before the rest of her body did as well. She still wore the same dress of leaves and vines as she had when I created her, her features not reflecting the many years that had passed.

When she stepped fully through, the portal closed behind her. A brief flicker of surprise flashed across her face, and she quickly sent me a message telepathically. *You wish to remain hidden, my lord?*

I was shocked that she had instantly been able to see through me, given that my current body did not look like my normal one, but at the same time she was no doubt extremely gifted at reading souls. I gave a small nod, and she smiled. Her voice rang out again, throughout the room, though her mouth did not move.

"What have you summoned me for, wandering saint of origin?" She asked, tilting her head to the side.

"The young man behind you. His spirit has been damaged, and it is beyond my ability to cure." I did not want to immediately test this theory, given that there was a decent chance that his spirit would reject my energy, only hurting him further.

Her eyes opened widely at that, and she slowly turned around. Much like I had done, she dropped to one knee, placing a hand over his head. "This was not the work of one of mine."

"I did not think it would be. I merely hope that you can cure him." I glanced back after saying that, and saw a brief glimmer of hope in the servant's eyes.

"To fix what has been torn, I must replace that which has been lost." She said, turning back to face me, and then the servant. "Warrior of the hidden tribe, can you make this decision on behalf of your master?"

Suddenly, the servant tensed up, a silver dagger appearing in his hand as he stood upright. "How did you.."

"I see all that is within the world." She answered, just as cryptically. "All that happens and has ever passed can be seen, if I will it. A monster of the soul has consumed a part of your master. Knowing this, I shall aid the forces of beyond to purge it. However, in order to replace that which has been lost, a decision must be made."

"What decision?" He asked through gritted teeth, his hand still clutching the dagger. He looked like he was ready to strike at a moment's notice, just barely holding himself back.

"I must mend his spirit in the ways of the world. When I am done, he will never again be what he was. He will be half of what I am, one who speaks with the world itself. The other half, as you are, one who walks its surface. Until his final day, he will walk this line, never belonging to either side fully."

"You mean, he will be half world spirit." The servant asked incredulously, earning a nod from the woman. "How confident are you that this will work?"

"If it were one of my own that did this, the chances would be low. With I myself acting, there will be no failure. I simply require consent be given. His life will not be as long as one belonging fully to one people, but I can promise that he will continue to live." She continued to speak, her mouth still unmoving as she knelt on the floor.

"In the name of my lord, I offer consent." The man spoke, the dagger in his hand disappearing. "Whatever punishment he sees fit to bestow, I shall accept. World spirit queen, do as you will."

She nodded at that, turning to face the boy again. A soothing, melodic tone rang out from her body as she placed a hand over his heart. I could sense a transfer of energy, directly from her to

him as her voice rang out again. "Arise, noble of the hidden tribe. In the name of the spirits of nature, I wake you from your slumber."

As soon as her words ended, the young man's eyes snapped open. His eyes, originally a murky brown, shifted to green, a faint glow hidden within his pupils. Above his head, I saw his level shifting, increasing by one.