

CHAPTER 119: SUSHI PARTY

The big Hawaiian looked at Sam, then the tray, then back at Sam chewing. “Did you take my food?”

“*Defrivery fax*,” Sam said around a mouthful of sushi. He thrust it out in front of himself before he took anymore. Perhaps he wasn’t as sated as he thought.

“Sushi?” Kai looked surprised. “How did you know I loved sushi?”

Sam shrugged. “Just lucky. You can thank Raiko though. She apparently cleaned out some place and has more than enough for everybody.” He hiked a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Lenal. “Lenal is also looking into what it’s made out of so we can try to replicate it with Islegardian ingredients.”

“I could tell her,” Kai said, inspecting one of the rolls. “My cousin works at the restaurant this is from. You know a boat this size is over \$300, right? And it looks like Raiko got the fancy ones too.”

“Well, go tell her then!” Sam said, still reeling from the price tag.

“After I eat,” Kai said, lifting the plate delicately in both hands. He passed by Sam and murmured something to Raiko.

Whatever it was made the woman blush and grin. She clearly had no problem facing down hordes of monsters. But offer her a sincere compliment, and she’d melt into a puddle, unsure what to do with herself.

It was cute.

On his return, he picked up a second tray of sushi and headed over to Komachi. She snored on, which was unusual for her. Her

Ascension must have taken a lot more out of her than even he had thought.

But, just to be sure, he put a piece of sushi under her nose.

Her tiny pink nose twitched once, twice, thrice, and then her eyes popped open. She made a hasty, almost aggressive meow and devoured the piece of sushi.

Before Sam had the chance to react, she had swiped all of the sushi off the tray and was popping them into her mouth as fast as she could, as if Sam would take the food away from her.

“Komachi, slow down,” Sam advised. “You’re going to get sick, and nobody is taking your food away.”

That seemed to mollify her a little. She looked up adorably, eyes wide black pools with a thin ring of emerald. “Machi?”

“No, Komachi,” Sam said. “It’s all yours. I’ve already had some.”

Sam sat down next to Raiko and nudged her with his shoulder gently. “Thanks for the food.”

She smiled at that. “You’re welcome. I’m pleased I actually picked something of good quality.”

He looked her up and down thoughtfully. “You did. But even if it was all McDonald’s or something, that’s still better than I imagine a lot of places. You’re single-handedly feeding us, and apart from the [Zuu Meat] which doesn’t seem edible to most, we haven’t actually found any food. It’s a little worrying.”

If he thought her reaction to Kai’s compliment was significant, that wasn’t even on the same planet as Sam’s compliment to Raiko. “Right, well...”

“Raiko, you good?”

“Yes,” she practically squeaked, then stared into the fire, mortified.

Sam tried not to laugh. “All right.” He cleared his throat. “As I was saying, we probably need to secure another source of food. I imagine all that stuff you nabbed isn’t going to last forever. Especially when the Academy joins us. I don’t think you expected to have to feed so many people.”

It took Raiko a little bit to regain some composure. “What I have certainly won’t, and it’s not giving us additional effects that food probably should be. None of this is mana rich, basically.”

Raiko motioned to the sushi Komachi was eating. “I’ve been hoping it has to do with the Tiles. Growing food. There were the mandragora’s vegetables that they brought with them, but they’re taking time to grow anything else. Being simple creatures exposed to a new world, maybe they need some guidance as to where to plant.”

“Our Skyshard did level up quite a bit, I bet we have more room for extra Tiles now.”

“Yes, and we might be able to re-arrange them. I’ve left what mine started with largely default, which I suppose is ours now.”

“Once we can find all the mandys again, I imagine they’ll want to find a spot they can farm. They did have some seeds with them, but we should try to find some more. There’s a reason humanity only exploded once farming was invented. I assume the other races are largely the same. Too bad we don’t have a [Farm Tile].”

“I wish I understood how it was made,” Raiko said. “Is it from advancing a pre-existing Tile, placing a certain one next to another one, or what?”

“That would be good to know.” He looked over at Lenal. “It seems that the professors were working on that same question. Maybe they’ve found something more by now.”

“With any luck,” Raiko said.

“Which brings me to a question I’ve been wondering about.” Sam drummed his fingers on his knee, not quite sure how to proceed.

“With your body back now and us heading to the Academy... if something happens and we’re attacked, are you going to be okay? You don’t appear to have any armor.”

“So long as the Tree lives, I’ll live, it seems.”

“That doesn’t seem like a great plan, Raiko.”

“No, I’d rather it not come to that. I can’t emphasize that enough. As for my armor, it’s in such a deteriorated state, I didn’t want to risk wearing it.”

“If it’s armor, I can probably maintain it. My [Basic Maintenance] skill applies to most types of armor and weapons, even ones that aren’t strictly metal. However, if it *is* metal, I can usually do a much better job.”

“Are you sure you have the time and energy to? It’s why I didn’t ask.”

“Fuck no, I don’t,” Sam told her enthusiastically. “But the wall is built. We... seem to have a running theme of no doors, however, including on our wall.”

“Eh, somebody else can deal with the doors.”

“But aside from that,” Sam continued, “I don’t think there’s anything big to do. I’ll rest tonight, and tomorrow morning I can work on your armor before we arrive.”

“I’d appreciate that greatly.”

Sam got up and stretched. “I only wish you’d have brought it up sooner. We both need to be in peak fighting form.”

“Do you expect the faculty to fight us?” Raiko asked, clearly amused at the suggestion.

Sam could just imagine books, pens, and chairs flying at them.

“Let’s just say I’ve learned it’s best not to make assumptions. Goodnight, Raiko.” Sam motioned to Komachi, who was busy licking her paws clean.

Her mimic, however, was very receptive to the cat’s wishes and rose up on dozens of little corgi paws at once, following after him.

After assigning most of the dullahans to patrol the Skyshard, keeping a lookout for both any aggressive monsters and the mandragoras, Raiko silently went off to the Sacred Tree.

Most of the group had turned in already, but there was an offering to be done. No need to bother anyone else with it.

A single dullahan, with some of the militia mandragora that had grown attached to the spirit possessed armor, watched over the sleeping people of Sil’mara.

Or rather, the King and his subjects. *Is that what we all are now? A Knight and a Sage turned monarchs?*

Unwaveringly loyal, those dullahan would sooner sacrifice themselves than allow whoever was in their charge perish. That was why they were born, after all.

To protect the living, because they had died doing just that. They weren’t so much ghosts, however, but the next stage of life for certain spirits.

At least, that’s what Raiko believed. She’d discovered nothing else that contradicted that, no theories with any sufficient proof, anyway.

Kneeling before the Sacred Tree, she made an offering to three gods. Or rather, two Kindred and one god.

None of them were Dream. She never so much as lifted a finger to help Raiko. Certainly not directly. Perhaps that was what all that bloodline business was, but likely not.

I earned that through my own merits and deeds, she thought, full of neither malice nor pride.

One offering to the Hidden One, who Raiko suspected, did not receive quite so much love from his followers as he once professed, and the other two to Kindred War and Kindred Ardor.

To War, it was the wicked axe of that giant oni she slaughtered as her hollow self. She wasn't quite sure what he would appreciate, but the spoils of a fallen enemy in a justified battle seemed in line with his methods.

And to Ardor, something far kinder. A mandragora had blossomed and gave her its beautiful pink petals, so that was the benevolent Ardor's offering.

Whereas the Hidden One's offering was just a written down secret. Nothing too serious, or even that secretive, but even the Hidden One wouldn't know certain things about himself.

As silly as that was.

Finally, she let the Ascension through.

She only held off because she wasn't sure what would be revealed. Komachi showed more of her hidden nature, so what would Raiko reveal to others? Something of herself, something of the Kindred?

She wasn't sure, so she preferred to just not take the risk for the time being.

Considering the shadows grew alive around her, shifting into colorful two-dimensional fantastical creatures, it was probably for the best.

Imperfect Ascension Complete!

You have now reached Copper Rank.

You are awarded an extra 26 bonus points for possessing a Path near your Job level at the time of Ascension.

Rank Up!

Your [Ninja] Job has reached Copper Rank.

You now receive the following per level:

+6 Agility | +4 Resonance | +3 Control

+3 Arcane | +2 Dexterity | +2 Mind

+1 Awareness | +1 Insight

+2 Bonus Points

Level Up!

Your [Ninja] Job has reached Level 20.

+6 Agility | +4 Resonance | +3 Control

+3 Arcane | +2 Dexterity | +2 Mind

+1 Awareness | +1 Insight

+2 Bonus Points

Level Up!

Your [Ninja] Job has reached Level 21.

+6 Agility | +4 Resonance | +3 Control

+3 Arcane | +2 Dexterity | +2 Mind

+1 Awareness | +1 Insight

+2 Bonus Points

Level Up!

Your [Ninja] Job has reached Level 22.

+6 Agility | +4 Resonance | +3 Control

+3 Arcane | +2 Dexterity | +2 Mind

+1 Awareness | +1 Insight

+2 Bonus Points

Raiko stared a long while at the stats Ninja now earned, astounded by the sheer power amassed per level up just for becoming Copper Rank.

Is that 24 total stats? How can Ninja possibly earn so many? She couldn't help but wonder why.

The specialized nature of the Job, maybe. You needed to survive Glyph trials to integrate them into your mana and even begin to wield them, but that was a momentous feat achieved on old Islegard.

Her sleeve of Glyphs did remain after the apocalypse, just inert until she started to pick up Glyphs again.

And yet, the weaknesses of Ninja remained plain. Without any Vigor gained, she'd have to rely on bonus points to shore that up or look for another source to gain HP every once in a while.

It was fine to have weaknesses in favor of even greater strengths, just not so much if that led to getting one-shot.

Technically, Raiko could survive a one-shot blow, but not in the same way a Fighter could.

It wouldn't be a pleasant experience, death never was. Even if it was not true death.

You have [Ninja] spells to select from.

Raiko sifted through a number of them. Some were too narrow in scope, others just not as fitting for her purposes.

There was one, more than any other, that stood out to her. She wavered between improving her offensive capabilities versus increasing utility and support even further.

While some of their group were spellcasters, Raiko didn't consider any of them hard hitting magic damage dealers. Not yet at least.

In the past, she had been quite good at destruction wrought through magic.

What if they encountered an enemy that was highly resistant to both physical damage and Sam's Breaker bloodline? Unlikely, yet possible.

Picking up a spell that shored up that weakness of their group might be a good choice to make.

Hopefully I'm not just falling back into my old ways, Raiko thought.

[Rift: Ancient Magic]

(Ninja Spell) (F-Class)

(★ Common)

Spellcraft practiced by sorcerers, witches and wizards long ago that draws on the potent arcane energies of the wild elemental planes.

Charge a font of Chaos mana through your blade and unleash a highly destructive rift of ancient magic.

Additionally, the more enemies struck before Ancient Magic is fully cast, the greater the magic damage inflicted.

Ancient magic inflicts burst damage upon a single target, but with a steeper MP cost and a longer casting time, it can be shaped into a volatile multi target spell. Unpredictable and ever changing, the elemental alignment of this spell shifts with your Chaos mana.

Raiko found that particularly curious. A Ninja spell, a type of forgotten magic, that was styled after Chaos mana.

Shouldn't this be a Path spell then?

Perhaps not, considering Raiko's mana was effectively fully converted into that Apocalypse Gate.

Despite the Ninja Job being a mage archetype with an emphasis on speed, [Chaos: Elemental Wheel] prevented Raiko from conjuring any specific type of mana at will.

If that Ninja spell was Ancient Fire Magic instead, then most of the time, it would be completely inaccessible to her.

Raiko would have to infuriatingly wait until her Chaos mana rolled over to that element, and who knows when that would happen. She had no way of influencing it thus far.

Without mulling over the decision any longer, Raiko picked up [Rift: Ancient Magic].

She grinned at the influx of knowledge, and channeled the new spell into her waiting blade, watching the rippling Water mana play across the weapon.

The surreal vibrance of the Ancient Magic was startling. It reminded her of one of those kingdoms that was destroyed by their own Mage King.

“Well, that's foreboding.”