

96: Back into the Shadow Woods

“Bye-bye!” Ember waved to Samuel and his daughter as she, Beatrice, Olivia, and Tabitha walked away from the house, back into the Shadow Woods (but this time into the southern part, rather than the west from where they exited last night).

“Bye~!” Jenny waved to her aunt. Samuel didn’t bother saying a word. His relief at seeing his sister leave could not surpass his desire to never see her again.

Once their conversation about what to do next was over, there was little reason to linger. Olivia was itching to leave the source of the unwitting cannibalism in the city and sat as close to the exit door as she could the entire time. And the lack of love between siblings in Ember and Samuel was obvious, despite Ember’s seeming cheerfulness.

Jenny had already prepared some provisions for them to take until they reached the populated area of the city. No meat, as per the request of everyone except Tabitha who even seemed disappointed. Beatrice wondered if the mage simply played dumb but then figured that would be giving her too much credit.

Either way, with the food prepared, and the next goal set, the group had no reason to stay.

“When am I going to be able to eat such delicious, fresh meat again?” Tabitha lamented.

“Don’t you stuff your mouth full of fresh meat all the time?” Olivia asked.

Though it was a thinly veiled insult, Tabitha merely giggled and looked at Beatrice. Beatrice caught the mage’s look and smiled back. The succubus saw nothing insulting in sucking cock if that’s what makes someone happy.

As the group approached the woods, Beatrice used the chance of the light of day to look at the base of the giant walls that the house stood next to. She quickly found what she was looking for—a small gate at the base of the stone, through which the guards could no doubt quickly come to the defense of the building. Beatrice looked up and confirmed that—just like yesterday—there were tiny figures, far up above, patrolling the walls and keeping an eye on the city’s meat supply.

The group entered the forest, walking in near parallel to the huge wall that surrounded the city.

“We won’t be staying in these woods for long, right?” Beatrice asked, getting a little tired of the same scenery over and over again. As much as Beatrice enjoyed the fresh, unpolluted air and the morning chirping of the birds, she also already had in mind the next stage of her wish-fulfillment journey. And that journey had very little to do with walking on moss, over branches, and animal feces for the second day in a row.

“Ah, not really,” Ember answered. “It won’t take the whole day at least. But you do understand now why that place has to be further away from the public eye?”

“But if there is such vast space available within the city,” Beatrice wondered as she looked around. “Why not just cut down the entire forest and use this land to grow crops?”

"It's not like they didn't try," Ember said. "But something is wrong with the soil. Whether it was poisoned on purpose or damaged during one of the costly sieges many years ago, either way the result is the same. Nearly nothing grows. And even though it may not look like it, this forest is also dying."

"It doesn't look like it," Beatrice said as she looked around and under her feet where she took steps on fresh moss.

Ember knocked several times on one of the trees she passed by. The hollow sound revealed a concerning issue.

"Hollow," Ember said. "More and more each year. Cutting this forest down would provide little more than firewood. That's why a more drastic approach was chosen."

"But isn't that... Your brother?" Beatrice asked. "How did he end up with such a... Responsibility?"

"That's a long story," Ember said with a smile.

"Can we please not talk about that place ever again?" Olivia asked with a ghastly appearance.

"Only if you never bring up your kidnapped sister again," Ember replied joyfully.

Beatrice sighed.

"Oh, don't worry," Tabitha tried to cheer up her succubus lover. "They're just cranky because they didn't start their day with an exquisite orgasm... Or several!"

"Good point," Beatrice said.

"Haaaaaah!?" Oliva gasped as her cheeks turned red and she looked at the half-naked mage. Then she looked at the half-naked succubus. Both of the girls were always half-naked. Both of the girls were hot as hell. Both were very open about their libido. Perhaps it made enough sense for her not to be shocked.

"At least there's some color back on your face," Ember chuckled.