

You Are Not Alone

The pond has trembled.

Tiny waves erupted from the surface of the water. I sat by the side of this pond, playing with the two jewels I got. A bit later, I could hear voices, too.

"Is that fox-demon here?"

"Not, sir!"

"Search this area, then. We have to find her."

It seems they were after me. They weren't too far, guessing by the clearness of voices.

We were in a forest, but it was quite open, so they could surround me easily. I could fight them one by one, hiding from bush to bush but I had to avoid unnecessary confrontation too.

...There goes my meditative afternoon. Thanks, strangers.

There was an armed man in front of the bush I hid. He came enough close to use my charming magic.

There was no turning back after that. But I had to move, so I took the risk and I sent that man a bewitching smooch. I formed an orb in my left hand and I knocked him out with it. I noticed another one coming in front of me. I quickly hid behind a tree, rushed behind him and hit him with another orb.

"What was that voice?"

"Who knocked out Mokin and Kano?"

"The fox-demon did it! She is there!"

Crap...! They've noticed what I've done! I wasn't careful enough!

I dashed behind a small bush to stay out of their sights. This was the best moment to summon the spirit fires around me, just in case.

When I jumped out of the bush, I found six caped and armed men around me. We stopped instantly in front of each other. One of them said mockingly:

"How bold from you, jumping into all of us."

"Aww, how cute. You seriously think you have a chance."

This taunt was quite effective. Three of them jumped on me, blinded by anger. I've sapped out some soul essence from them with my orb, enough for a lengthy sleep. Seeing their partners collapsing, other two members attacked me. I tried the same thing, but they were smart enough to dodge my orb. One of them got behind me and he was ready to launch his bola to catch me. I swiftly jumped sideways to find a position for my charming spell. When it hit, he lost his mind and he got close enough to me to suck out some soul essence of him. Goodnight, sweet child - thought to myself. But at the time I thought this, something has wrapped around my legs. The bola! Someone caught me with it! I lost my balance and fell to the ground. Ow... That hurt!

"Hm-hm, you weren't careful enough, little fox demon.", said the man who gave the orders.

"Who are you? Why do you want to catch me?"

"You don't remember, do you? But how could you remember anyone who have been slaughtered by you, at the deepest of our village's nights!" - and with that, he grabbed me by my hair.

No way... Was he from Hashnum? It can't be...

That time, when I desired souls after souls, I've travelled through a village called Hashnum. That night, I couldn't stop myself. Some demonic force took over my mind, imprisoning it. When it has sated its hunger, I just saw the result. Innocent people were lying on the ground, their life essence being sucked out by me. I was trembling by my guilt and fear. That night helped to me realize how terrible I was. That night helped me to change.

"Please, let me go! I wasn't myself when I did that... That wasn't me who killed those people!"

"So, you admit it then deny it... You are guilty, no matter what."

"Ngh...! How can I convince you I'm not a killer?!"

"There is no way, sadly. The elders said you must be caught alive but... I think they wouldn't be mad if you are dead, either."

"How could you...!"

I was defenseless. When I fell to the ground, they tied my hands, too. There was nothing I can do. I've accepted my death when suddenly, the man let my hair out of his grip. A familiar voice, sharp as a blade, rang behind him:

"Let. Her. Go. Or I'll kill you."

When I looked up, the man was frozen. Behind him, there was – Hinuha?! How can she be here? Before I could ask anything, she said:

"Ahri, quickly! Take him down!"

But how? - asked myself when I noticed my hands were free. Thanks, Hinuha.

Now it was my turn.

"So, how it feels to be caught?"

With that, I finished him with a blow of my orb. His unconscious body fell like a puppet being thrown away. He and his company will sleep for a while. But Hinuha... How did she find me?

Before I could ask anything, Hinuha answered calmly:

"I know what's in your mind. I was with them."

„W-what!? Why?"

„Because this was the best way I could find you. But when they were so serious about catching or killing you... I had to move."

"I cannot thank you enough for that... But why did you go after me?"

"Well, I'm your friend, aren't I?"

„...!" I couldn't say anything.

„Even if we were forced to part ways, this doesn't mean I forgot you. Even if I haven't seen each other for long, it doesn't mean I didn't want you to see again. I searched after you so long just to let you know: you are not alone."

Everything stopped around us. I was frozen on point, being speechless, eyes wide open. But; I felt warmth inside me. I felt happiness. Such happiness that can't be described by mere words.

"Do you still search after your ancestors? Let's find them, together.", Hinuha said.

"Mh-hm!", answered with my brightest smile.

There was no point to meditate further.

I found why I came here.