

GHOSTS AND GREMLINS

OCTOBER 2021 REQUEST STORY

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“Did Paimon and I *really* get separated? Even though she’s always clinging to me?”

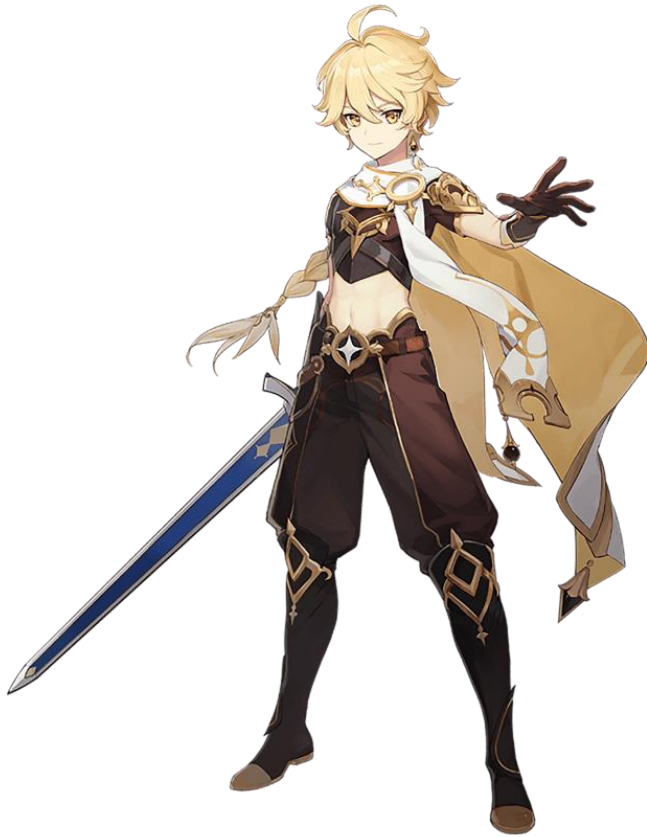
A new Domain had opened up within the depths of the eerie Wuwang Hill that was nestled in the northernmost part of Liyue, and of course Aether had been quick to make an exploration attempt within. The origins of these little dungeon-like areas remained more or less unknown to him even after the countless quests he had gone on within them, but the rewards they gave were worthwhile and at times an absolute necessity when it came to a journey that was steadily taking him to all four corners of Teyvat’s map.

Similar in aesthetic to the spookier parts of Wuwang Hill, leafless trees lines decrypt corridors as a dull blue light server as the only thing illuminating the space. At times it felt more like a labyrinth with how similarly everything appeared, and that was most definitely how Paimon had gotten separated from him. **“HEY, PAIMON!? I GUESS I’LL JUST HAVE TO EAT ALL OUR RATIONS MYSELF!”**

If anything, he had been certain that such a callout would get his tiny companion to show up. But nope, *nothing*. **“Oh well. I’m sure I’ll find her before I leave.”** He *had* to. He’d never hear the end of it if he left her behind. For now, however, it appeared that there was treasure for him to claim! In a worst-case scenario, Paimon would definitely hear the sound of a chest opening, surely?

It took the boy a moment to get the chest open, but within there wasn’t coins nor treasure. **“A *hat*?”** He’d collected all manners of artifacts throughout his journey, but this was the first time he’d found a piece of

honest-to-goodness clothing within a chest. It was a porkpie hat, in fact, and decorated with red plum blossoms he couldn't help but think that he had definitely seen the hat before. Wasn't that Hu Tao's wooden talisman on the front, too? **“Did Hu Tao beat us in here and leave her hat as a joke? I guess that wouldn't be too out of character...”** She was certainly mischievous enough, and Aether assumed she had left it there knowing he'd bring it back to her.



The issue was: he didn't have any space to carry it. Maybe that wasn't true though. He could always *wear* it, at least until he got out of the Domain? Not seeing any other solution to this issue, he reluctantly plopped the accessory atop his head. The Traveler wasn't a fan of wearing such things, in part because his hair was so thick that hats often felt tight.

Didn't this feel even tighter than he'd anticipated, though?

“Huh?” Thinking it would be simple enough to just adjust it, he naturally reached up to do so. Except... not only would the hat not budge, but he couldn't slide his finger between the hat and his hair either. **“That's... not right.”** It was absolutely, *positively* not right, actually. Even pulling with all of his strength he couldn't get the accessory to so much as budge.

It was only natural that panic would set in as the situation grew more dire, but he soon realized that he had more to worry about than he had initially realized. After all, something had grown off about his bangs – and now simply the fact that they had *literally* grown. Rather a dark, chestnut color had seemingly plagued them, stealing away the blonde that he not only had possessed since birth, but shared with his twin sister.

“Wait a minute, what's going on with my hair!?” While he didn't doubt that the hat was *somehow* the cause of it, Aether was forced to

abandon its removal so that he could take hold of clumps of brown hair that seemed surprisingly soft to the touch. Getting hold of them wasn't really all that hard though, at least considering it had so quickly grown out in the back. Falling far past his shoulders, it fell even past his butt while a reddish hue graced both the tips in the back as well as the fluffy lengths that framed his face. **"It looks like a girls' hair!"**

No, it was more familiar than that, but Aether didn't want to believe what he was thinking. It was just so *implausible*.

But as implausible as it might have felt, that didn't change the hair he was looking at with his very eyes. Nor what was happening *with* those eyes in question. For the color of his pupils inverted, turning white from black as the gold of his irises around them darkened to a bright crimson. It was a change that the young man himself could not perceive on his own, just as was the fact that those white pupils bloomed into flower shapes – sporting five petals each.

This change alone would have been enough to confirm what he feared had he been able to note it, yet there was more to be said about Aether's eyes and the shape of his face on the whole. The slants of those eyes, for example, grew more pronounced and the weight of his face grew fuller so that there was an inherent, youthful roundness to it. With lips puckering slightly and his nose taking a rounded slope, he resembled a Liyue native in general aesthetic when paired with the hair. Taking it further, though... he resembled a Liyuen *maiden*.

Of course, seeing as he couldn't perceive his own face without a mirror, this more or less went unaddressed. Something that he *did* notice, on the other hand? **"Eh!?"** His gloves had suddenly fallen from his hands and onto the floor below, provoking his attention towards his hands proper. Not only were they a size smaller, but the fair fingers had been decorated by long nails that extended an inch past each tip. He absolutely hated keeping his nails long, so that didn't make sense! Before he took his eyes off them, he bore witness to the sight of black paint spreading across each and every fingernail.

His mistake was assuming that only his *hands* had become more diminutive, though. While they had certainly been the most obvious thanks to the loss of his gloves, the boy's entire body had shrunk a few inches – leaving his outfit to sit a little more uncomfortably, but it wasn't so significant that much else would peel off his person. **"I feel reaaaaally weird! Like a Hilichurl with a cold!"**

Why was he so restless? Aether wasn't certain, nor did he pay it much mind. It just wasn't like him to be so fidgety, and as much as there was anxiety about what was happening to him, it was becoming increasingly

difficult to comprehend just *what* he was anxious about in the first place.

Restlessness aside though, the slight bit of looseness to his clothes made the change to come just a little more apparent than they would have been otherwise. His belly was *always* exposed, but that window gave a great deal of insight into the state of his figure. Not only did his waistline pinch in at the sides, but a smoothness had claimed his flesh in a way that seemingly wiped away most of his muscle mass. This was true of all of the muscles in his body though, and arms became much more twig-like while legs...

Well, there was certainly a skinnier appeal to them, but near the peak of his pant legs? Fabric appeared to tighten around Aether's upper legs, implying there was actually *more* flesh there to compensate for. Which was the honest truth, for his thighs had thickened not with muscle, but with a perky layer of fat that looked like it would hold the shape of whatever was pressed into them for a few seconds.

A similar phenomenon tightened the back of his pants around his ass, which ballooned a size so that cheeks were perky and firm – and would likely look very good in a pair of tight shorts. Cheeks grew *so* ample, in fact, that his hips were forced wide several inches to accommodate them, giving Aether's figure and even more girlish appeal than it had already developed. Which was likely for the best seeing as...

“Ah!?” *Her* thighs rubbed together thanks to the sensation of something tugging between them. Her cock and balls had just simply been yanked inside of, exchanged for a pussy decorated with chestnut pubes! ***What else would I be if not a girl, though?*** Aether couldn't really understand why it had bothered her so much? She could recall being a girl her entire life, after all! From the day she had been born in Liyue Harbor, to even day when she got ready for work at the funeral parlor!

...Wait, was that *actually* right?

It was the story of a young woman that lived and worked in Liyue, not of a young man that hailed from another world. But that connection? It wasn't made. Instead, she patted down the front of her top in response to the feeling of her nipples poking up against it. It wasn't extremely evident but her once flat chest had become *slightly* less so. The breasts that grew hardly amounted to an A-cup, but they were a telling sign of her newfound womanhood, nonetheless.

“Actually, I feel super disoriented. How'd I get about... coming here?” Trying to think about it, her flowey eyes closed a moment. Just in time for a gust of air to carry a plethora of red plum blossoms that

swirled around her body, obscuring her outfit momentarily. They dispersed just before she opened her eyes again, and when they did she was dressed in tight, black shorts and a traditional black jacket along with white socks and low-heeled shoes.

“Ugh! I feel like I was hit by a carriage pulled by a Hilichurl! Eh? Actually, how’d I end up in here anyways?”

The young woman adjusted the porkpie hat atop her head as if it was the most natural thing in the world. It fit her perfectly of course, because it was a hat that had been *made* for her to wear. Just as the rest of her outfit had been! Despite the transformation she had just undergone though, the only thing she recognized as strange was the world around her.



Hu Tao didn't have the foggiest idea how she had ended up in this Domain – although based on the scenery, it must have been in Wuwang Hill. There was a strong spiritual presence there that couldn't be found anywhere else in Liyue, and that same presence was omnipresent midst the leafless trees of the hallowed hallways.

She shrugged to herself before heading back down the path that had led to this treasure chest, humming to herself all the while. **“La~La~La~! Time to leave~!”** And she would leave, continuing on her life as Hu Tao without even realizing anything was awry. For she had become a victim of a monster that took the form of a treasure chest. One that captured the essence of one individual before passing it on to the next. Even now, the treasure chest that had been opened closed shut again...

This time containing Aether's star-decaled belt.