

## CHAPTER 118: FOREST HOME

“Whatever my Profession will be,” Raiko began. “It should be magic oriented. It’s good to have specializations in general, but it goes a bit deeper for me. I haven’t inherited everything from Dream, but that Kindred’s powers revolve around magic.”

Sam folded his hands and listened to her, but kept his thoughts to himself. He hadn’t heard her talk much about herself before.

“Could be Alchemy, anything to do with Enchanting. Whatever it is, I’m hoping I can craft Infusions again.” Raiko opened up a pouch on her side, peering into it. Sam could just barely see in, and it was a wondrous display of foods. “Remember that scroll I used back in that cave where Kai and Matt, and all those other cohorts were trapped? That was an infusion scroll, one of the last I had left over. I might have another, but my Inventory is so disturbingly messy, it’s hard to tell.”

Sam chortled at that. “Yeah, mine needs some organizing too. I bet I could fit more things in there if I was able to put some shelving in there. But first I’d have to *find* some shelving.”

“I suppose you could make it, or Kai could.”

“If Lenal helped me, which is basically doing all the work and telling me where to cut it, since I can’t do a straight line to save my life that’d work too.”

“For some reason, most of the foodstuff I have in here, is sushi. I cleared that place out that I tried to take y—”

“What now?” Sam asked, sitting upright. “You’ve had *sushi* all this time and haven’t brought it out?”

“Nobody asked?”

“We were eating trashy fast food, and you had *sushi*.”

She blushed. “I didn’t know it was trashy!”

“Out with it. Now.” Sam gestured sharply. “I haven’t had sushi in *years*. It’s too damn expensive.”

“You sure you don’t want to keep it mostly to yourself?” She gave him a sly look.

“Yes, Raiko, I’m sure. Besides, a little sushi is very filling. Just don’t empty your pockets.”

“It is unreasonably so. I’m... honestly hoping Lenal can examine it and see what equivalent ingredients would take to create more.” Raiko reached inside her Inventory and took out a sushi boat piled high.

“Good idea.” Sam cupped his hands around his mouth, though with lungs as powerful as his, he didn’t need to. “Lenal! C’mere.”

Jotting something down in a little notebook, the Analyst jumped out of her sitting posture and scurried over, tucking the book away with jittery hands.

“Sorry,” Sam told her, “didn’t mean to startle you. Could you have a look at something for us?”

“O-of course!” She blinked a little too much. “What is it?”

“This.” Raiko hefted the sushi boat. It glistened in the firelight, making Sam’s mouth water. “Can you tell what ingredients are in it? Or... what might be the equivalent, so that one day we could make this again?”

“Definitely!” The elf leaned down, examining the food closely. “It smells lovely. It seems to be made of rice, dehydrated seaweed, various types of fish, some sort of soft cheese... and some sort of green vegetable.”

“That’d be cucumber,” Sam told her.

“I do not know what a kewkamber is,” she said, mangling the word just slightly.

“It’s all right, but you already guessed what was in it better than I could have.”

“I did not *guess*,” she said primly. Then she realized who she was talking to and lowered her eyes. “I could provide a more detailed ingredient list if I had more time. Analyzing is not exactly a fast Profession. May I?”

Raiko handed over a piece of sushi to her.

“Thank you.” She left, turning the round piece this way and that.

“You didn’t get these from a gas station, right?” Sam asked Raiko. They didn’t look like it, but he’d made that mistake once. It was the sort of mistake you could only survive once.

“No, it was a densely packed place with an army of chefs. It seems I didn’t mess up the haul this time.”

“That’s a relief. While we wait for Kai to come back from talking to the trees, how about we eat and look over our loot?”

Resting his sushi boat on his lap, Sam marveled at the dozen or so slices of sushi. It wasn’t a massive boat, but Raiko had clearly been thorough in her theft. Even the tiny bit of fake plastic grass was there.

He bent over and opened the [Soul Aeder’s Festival Box], considering that Komachi was his. Sam saw the shining lights and tiny fireworks going off *inside* the chest. He shut it immediately before it could break out.

“Oookay,” he said. “I don’t think this is actually *loot*, per se.”

Raiko peered into the [Kingdom’s Festival Box], multicolored light bathed her beautiful features. “Well, there’s *some* treasure in it, but it’s clearly aimed for its namesake.”

When Sam placed his hand on top of the box, he realized his mistake.

[Soul Aeder Festival Box]

*As a Milestone reward, this box has been awarded to your kingdom to celebrate your accomplishments. When opened, it provides the [Soul Aeder Festival] Event. This item can only be used once.*

[Soul Aeder Festival]

*For an entire day, all food, water, HP, and MP needs are taken care of by magical soul aeder that come to visit your home and celebrate its founding. Several randomized buffs will be applied to the entire Skyshard, with specific powerful buffs given to the leaders of the Skyshard and the members of their faction. Enjoy a day of fun, relaxation, and celebration in your own personal paradise!*

“Before you open it, I’d like to ask a favor, please.”

“What’s that?”

“That we wait until Haman returns home. Until... we find him again. He’s a soul aeder too, he would be quite happy to have a festival. Perhaps it would even be a nice thing to do with the Academy.”

Sam pulled open his Inventory and stuffed the box inside with a hearty shove. “Deal. However, I don’t plan on using this for a while, anyway. We’re not... exactly safe. And it seems a bit of a waste for 7 people.”

“We have that many?” Raiko asked.

“So long as you’re not a monster and count Chesty Chompers the Third and Komachi, yes. More if we count the mandys, and more again if we count the dullahans. I’m not sure they understand the meaning of fun though.”

## New Quest: Lost, Lost Pobul

*Raiko's soul aeder is lost somewhere within the dangers of the First Layer. His safety and condition unknown, his fate increasingly weighs upon Raiko every day. Eventually, their prolonged separation will inflict harm upon both your fellow Incarnate and her Sacred Tree.*

*Find and return Haman to the Sacred Tree and Raiko before he is lost forever to gain both Experience, Honor, and a new ally.*

Sam forced himself to keep reading and tried not to wince.

*Oof.*

How would he feel if Komachi was separated from him and he had no idea where she was, or if she was even okay?

*I'd be sick with worry every single day and do anything in my power to get her back,* he told himself resolutely.

And that was why he knew he would help Raiko in any way he could to get her Haman back.

*You know,* he said, directing his thoughts toward the Shard, *you don't need to entice me with Experience. I'd do this just because it's the right thing to do... but I do appreciate it.*

Sam eyed Raiko out of the corner of his eye, to see if she had any idea of the quest he'd received.

She was petting the straw doll at her side that resembled an otter. Obviously, Haman. Her eyes were glazed over.

That didn't seem good.

“So!” Sam said with forced cheerfulness. “Let’s eat and put away these boxes for now, yeah? We’ll celebrate when we have all our friends and family back. Kale and Haman are still out there. We just gotta find them. So we’ll hold off on celebrating until they’re both back, and then use both boxes.”

She shook her head, snapping out of it. “Right, that sounds good.”

“In the meantime, we’ve got food, shelter, and some nice company, don’t you think? Let’s enjoy it while we can. Who knows how long it’ll be until we’re near the Academy. They must have drifted far from Lenal’s broken off island if we’re still not caught up to them.”

Lenal looked up. “We are not too far, in fact.” She held up her brass compass device. “At our current pace, I predict we will witness the majesty of the Aker Academy in all its glory tomorrow or the day after, depending on the mana currents.”

“The currents are strong,” Raiko said, looking up at the Tree. “The farther we go, the more intense they’ve gotten. Almost as if they’re speeding toward something.”

*Well, that’s certainly not ominous,* Sam thought.

Raiko handed him one of the [Linked Royal Signet Rings].

### [Linked Royal Signet Ring]

(Relic) (E-Class)

(★★ Unusual)

#### Enhancements

+5% HP | +5% MP

Death Blow Resistance I | Curse Resistance I

Heartsblood Sense I

#### Imbuements

Void Mana I

*A relic worthy of Dream and War's Incarnates, enhanced by your bloodlines. With the Heartsblood Sense enhancement, the wearer can detect when his or her partner is harmed.*

*Capable of being worn by no other than you and Raiko. The items only function when both parties are wearing the rings. Its Rarity, tier and even Class can be improved with your chosen Profession.*

*Requires: King Samuel & Queen Raiko*

“Wow, that’s *good*,” Sam said. “And Void mana? How the hell is that even possible?”

“It’s your mana. These items *are* uniquely created for, or maybe even by us.”

“Does your ring have Chaos mana?”

“Yes, that’s the only way I could tell which one belonged to whom. I think we might need to equip them at the same time, or it won’t set.”

With the odd way equipment worked, Sam didn’t even need to take off the gauntlet to put the ring on. It would stay on his finger regardless of what he wore and only reveal itself if there was room to do so.

With it on his gauntlet, the ring simply vanished as soon as he bound his mana to it.

He could immediately feel his Max HP and MP go up, not a huge amount, but a quick check put him at 609 MP and 2,098 HP.

Not bad at all.

Though it was a bit of a shame that he couldn’t see the new jewelry, it had been a beautiful, geometric design of diamonds and bisecting angles suitable for a proper signet ring.

*I guess that's my seal now*, he thought. And since the ring was, in some way, made for him specifically, he wondered if it had chosen something he would immediately like.

Because he did.

At least he could see the ring on Raiko's hand. The jewelry suited her, though it drew his attention to the fact that she still hadn't been wearing any armor but an altered kimono.

Sam stuffed his face with the sushi he had. It was divine. He'd never been able to afford the stuff when he was on Earth, but he did manage to scrape up enough to have some at a decent place in O'ahu.

That was nothing compared to this.

The fish was still, against all odds, cool to the touch and full of flavor. Piece after piece practically melted in his mouth. Chewing was a mere formality.

Sam did his best to savor every bite, but all too soon it was gone, and he found himself staring forlornly at the empty wooden tray it had been served in.

And he'd been right. Such a small amount of food had strangely satiated even his growing appetite.

It didn't provide any buffs or stats, but it tasted far better than anything he'd had so far on Islegard. Considering his first encounter with food were the rations he'd been given, the bar wasn't very high.

"There's Kai," Sam said with a nudge. "I'll give him his food."

Raiko eyed him. "Are you going to eat it?"

"Just the delivery tax."

"Oh, all right. Here."

“Thanks!” Sam hopped up and headed over to Kai, plucking two pieces from the tray as he went.