

Lilith

A general entered the leader's office "Supreme leader, we are ready, await your command." The new Kim leader, rose from his seat and looked out of the glass window. As he smoked out a grey mist, he said "It has been 3 months since I took my father's place. I shall show the world Korea has no plan to yield. It is time to put China and America on their knees. General Suku, the time has come, prepare the launch.". His general saluted disappeared behind the door.

It was 16 August, 2290, me and my elder brother Hercules were in the centre of London, enjoying the last of the Summer sunlight before it ended.

"Darn Lilith, wait for me. Ugh, I will never play this game again." I, already at the platform, stepped into the train,

"Rush Rush bro, or it will be the 576th time you lose to me since we have turned 18." The doors closed upon the announcement, and my brother was running towards me. Suddenly the sky outside turned orange, a huge yellowish shockwave spread towards me, sweeping everyone on his feet. Pigeons on the platform and trees afar turned into dust. My brother, in a painful face, started to take another shape. His nose grew flat and white, his ears became pointy and moved to the top. His limbs, swung in agony, thickened and developed hoofs on them. Hair over his body grew long and white, he was now a goat. He was not alone, other passengers who couldn't get on the train in time also faced this shift. The platform once filled by all walks of humans now filled with all sorts of animals. The train idled, either it couldn't move, or the driver was too frightened to drive.

It had been a month since the explosion. Food in the supermarkets either ran out of supply or started to perish. We had no choice but to feast on the animals who were human. We all gathered in the city square. None wished to get home because it reminded them of their disappeared family. "We found an ox." Four men carried an ox tied upside down to us. The ox, thin without fresh grass, was old. His eyes, not filled with anger and sorrow, but kindness and relief. Somewhere in my mind I seemed to hear, in a voice of an old man: "Don't worry kids, I am dying anyway. If I could feed you guys, it would be my last wish." He was placed on the table, leaning his head aside to show his neck, it was then confirmed that the voice was real.

“Okay now,” our leader announced, “we just need a knife and a butcher. Anyone here knows how to butch?”

A difficult question that left everyone silent for a while.

“I know how to,” I stood out of the crowd, “my father is Alexander ‘Hamchop’ Hunter, the owner of Chadwick slaughterhouse. I am his daughter. I slayed my first sheep when I was 5 years old.”

Under his permission, I walked to the ox who was laying on the table and searched for his veins. “I need knives, butcher knife and a slaughter knife.” I turned to the burly men and requested. Soon I had a slim dagger in my hand. I petted the ox “It will be painful, but it should not last long.”. It was not the first time I slaughtered cattles. But this was different. Usually the animal brought to the slaughter table had been stunned, or deeply fainted instead of staring at you with a grateful but sorrow watery eyes. I pushed the ox’s face aside by his nose, stabled his cheek on the table. Usually this was done to kill the beast as soon as possible. Now, it was for avoiding his eyes. I sliced him on the neck, blood split and the ox gave out a weak moan. Thanks to my 20 years of training, his life ended within a minute. Ensured that the ox was dead, I flayed it, cleared the organs and chopped the meat. Then I passed him to the chef and cried in a corner.

Moments later, each of us got a piece of cooked meat, but not much despite the huge size of the ox. I was chewing one, kept my head away from picturing it as a man. None spoke a word or complimented the chef. I wanted to vomit, but this was the first meat we had and I had to cure my hunger. An Asian young man sat next to me, eating his bowl of meat joyfully.

“You know,” he said partly to himself and partly to me, “fresh meat is rare these days. You shall cherish it because God knows when will be our next meal. Eat up!”

“It’s different when you are the butcher,” I responded coldly, “the only thing that matters is what the beef was. I don’t want to mention it.”

He mumbled with a mouthful of beef, “Oh, how forgetful I am. You must be the legendary butcher Lilith Hunter!” he gazed at me.

“No butcher is legendary, and I am just a butcher”, I exclaimed

“Hi butcher, I am Samuel Barns. I used to be a butcher but gave up,” he introduced himself.

“You are an Asian, but have an English name and surname?” I asked.

“I grew up in London, an English name sounds normal. My father’s surname is Chan, Barns is my mother’s surname. Daddy left us early, so I am sticking with my mother and her surname.” He explained.

He continued to say something but I paid no attention to what he said. He was surprisingly chill, knowing full well (maybe he wasn’t) he was eating a human. Of course these were animals, or in the form of an animal, but I still didn’t think we shall eliminate others just for our survival. If I wasn’t hungry and wasn’t a butcher, I would rather spare an animal. But I am a butcher, slaying is casual to me. However, to this particular cattle, I had no idea what to feel.

A few days later, they got another catch. A goat, carried by eight burly men, twisting himself and cursing in bleat and baa. I recognized that tone, and I had a sick feeling inside me. They found four more men to suppress him on a wooden table stunted with the blood of the ox. Please God, let it be some goat else. Don’t let it be the goat I knew. But all my nightmares came true. They tied his legs and hip tight so that he couldn’t move. He was well fed. It was exactly Hercules’ dining habits, literally any food could feed him well, even the strange new orange grass would do. I checked him without my knife. It’s true, he was Hercules, the scar under his left shoulder made it painfully obvious.

One night a few months ago, I was chased by a few gangsters, gangsters with butcher knives. Hercules was protecting me, shielded me with his body. Their leader raised his knife high for a fatal hit. At that very decisive moment, Hercules turned to me and pushed me onto a wall, got struck in the back as a result. He fainted afterwards. Their leader then retreated as police approached. That scar, behind his left shoulder, wounded because of me. How in the world, I shall give him another on the neck.

“Hey daughter of butcher, bring forth your knives.” Ordered a random guy.

“I...I couldn’t do it.” I couldn’t do it.

I ran in the opposite direction but a beefed up giant, stood in my way, possibly maddened by hunger.

“Either you swing your knife, or you get swung by my knife.”

I rushed to my brother, facing the crowd with my open arms, blocking him from the men with knives. It shall be the time I block a strike for him. Sam emerged from somewhere and stood in front of me.

“Whoa whoa calm down Brian, I am hungry too. But there must be something special about this goat.” He said to the strong man.

That burly man, swinging his knife in the air

“Move or you will be moved.”

I did not move, Samuel did not move.

“Alright, move them away,” he said to others.

I screamed, roared, shook myself violently between the arms of two men. The howl of man and goat quickly followed the metallic chop and the crack of bones. “Noooooooo!” I broke free from my restrains, screamed and collapsed on my brother’s body, sobbing until I ran out of tears. I didn't join their feast, didn't even eat. Samuel sat silently next to me.

“Go away, it is just another meat, go cherish your dinner,” I roared to him.

He waved his hand in negation. Fixing his eyes on the sunset, he let out a long sigh. I moved myself closer to him and leaned my head on his shoulder and cried. What monster have we become. Human individuals, grew and live, all doesn't matter anymore when they are mere meat. None can rationalize with me, none shall explain to me. That was my brother.

On the next day, they took with them another animal, a wolf. But this time it was a small one, carried on a man’s shoulder. There was something special about this wolf. “He is so tiny,” exclaimed Sam who stood just next to me, “he might be a Napoleon grade criminal. I heard that the smaller the animal, the less kind they were when they were human.”. There was a star symbol on his right wrist, identical to the symbol of that leading gangster that attacked us. I stared at that gasping wolf on the table until Sam patted my shoulder and asked,

“Are you okay to butch?”

“Yes, I can butch this one. Prepare my knives,” answered me coldly.

A wolf alone without its pack is just a pity little poor dog. This monster who severely wounded my brother, and those monsters who killed my brother. I was so ready for my knife. “He is a small one. I haven't cooked one before, but I had cooked a lot of dogs back then when it was

legal to do so. I can season it with spice and make a strong broth”, the chef from behind was studying him. I didn't care how he would prepare it, I would enjoy this meal, I don't mind if human blood is in the broth. I grabbed my knife and ready to slay it. But instead of the slim knife I used for killing, I grabbed the large one for butchering. I aimed at his neck, but deliberately chopped his cheek, splitting his head horizontally by his mouth. He screamed in pain, I continued a few painful stabs on the neck until he couldn't take it anymore and died. “Hey! Hey! What is happening, stop!” Sam grabbed my shoulders and grabbed me away. I dropped my knife, and looked at my blood stained clothes and the hazy wolf. “Oh, I missed this time.” I excused myself and walked away.

What the hell Lilith! He might be a criminal and totally deserved this. But that was just too much. No Lilith, he is a gangster, and that is how justice works, bad guys get punished. Not that kind of punishment! What was that, chop chop chop chop chop and chop, but none of the chop killed. That's utterly painful. I should have done more, that didn't relieve my anger. No, no more unnecessary chopping. And by the way, what if his gang was there and saw you chopped him. Oh just shut up. Where is the broth, I want the broth. You will never find either peace and fulfillment in that soup. I went for the broth, but Samuel blocked my way.

“Look, you better explain what happened.” He glanced down at me.

“He is a criminal, like you said” I tried to pass around him.

He took a step left to intercept me and said, “He might be a criminal, but there might be more than that you go harsh on him. My dad taught me butch and none of yours looks right.”

“He killed my brother! The exact person who killed my brother. If all of you turned to animals, I shall slay you all.” I roared and pushed him away.

I sat on the highest point of a building facing the river. Samuel suddenly appeared behind me with two bowls of soup.

“Took me some time to locate you. You do know how to pick a view. My grandfather once talked about this tattered building in his book. ‘The building itself is a design of modernism as it creates an outdoor environment inside a building. Looking down from the sealed balcony on the third floor, the opened ground floor makes you feel like you are still in the street. The truck in the area further convinces you that you are not in a building despite the fact that you are’. Although I

still think that this building only exhibits trash which they label as art.” He handed me one of the soup.

“Oh look, the sun is setting.” He exclaimed.

The huge solar ball, turned orange, was sinking in the far West. The Golden warm light radiated on the Millennium Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge in front of us.

“Chasing the sunset is my childhood habit. It is just too beautiful,” awed Samuel.

“Yes, it is glad to know that no matter how our world would change, the sun never changes,” I agreed.

“It is just that there is always darkness, long darkness. And then the first of daylight shines. Each and every day. Always that stable but sophisticated.” I continued.

“Nah, I don’t think too much. I would only appreciate it.” He said.