

Arc 1 – Gate of Deceit - Chapter 01 – The Fool’s Climb

Richtofen was once a grand castle, built a hundred year ago by Baron Schal Von Richtofen who was known for his power, wealth and cruelty. The baron trusted no one but his right-hand man, who later betrayed and killed him. With the baron gone, the castle was sieged. Most of it was left in ruin. The thief guild, “Gate of Deceit”, took over and used the ruin as headquarter. Most of the ruin was refortified. It was said that the members also discovered the hidden underground floor and only the higher-up would know about it.

Ranging from pranks to stealing, forgery, and assassination, the guild caused troubles and mischiefs throughout the neighboring cities. Those who tried were never heard of again, but the amount of that was low to begin with. The guild was rather picky of its contractors. Most of the jobs carried out were actually involved in dealing with the scums of the society that the authority could not touch. For a thief guild, they had some sense of justice. It wasn’t until recently that the guild began accepting odd jobs and went as far as to raid the caravan that belonged to Lumitia, the Illuminating Light.

The guild was hired to obtain whatever the caravan was transporting for very large amounts of money. With a group of 10 leaded by two of the three guild founders, Katzix Nimblefeet, a blue Daefi, and Junon Cloakfelt, a Saetra, the raid was carried out. On its way back to Elysian, the caravan was ambushed in Celentine Forest. Although the caravan was guarded by a squad of Knights, using the relic given to them by the contractor and the number to their advantage, the knights were quickly defeated before they could react. The guild returned to headquarter with the loots and rested for the night.

---***---

Katzix was lying around by the castle’s roof and enjoying the moon and his coins. Something had been on his mind recently, troubling him. It was about the guild and its very head, Sean Ynfry. Katzix had been feeling uneasy ever since Sean, a friend he trusted, began accepting jobs from something that wasn’t even of this world. Their job used to involve only assassinating corrupted politicians and raiding caravan with illegal goods. Once in a while, they would pull off a huge yet harmless prank in a neighboring town and make a name for themselves. Now, they attacked well-known nobles and even stole from Lumitia.

“I’m going to talk to Junon about this later nya.” He thought to himself.

Sean was also different. Junon had always been with Katzix ever since they were both children living in the wood. Back at home, Junon got into troubles with his dad when he refused to become a merchant. Katzix learned of Junon’s plan to run away and joined him.

Not long after leaving the forest that they got lost and ran out of food. Starving, they spotted a traveler approaching. With no choice left, they decided to attack the traveler for some food.

Passing by was Sean, an excellent fighter. The first robbery ended with both of them getting their ass kicked, especially Junon who was only good at being a tough punching bag.

"You may be fast, but your technique could use some sharpening." was what Sean said to him on that day. *"Well then, if you both have nowhere to go, why not keep me companied until the next town?"*

But the group was never disbanded and the three became really close friends. Together, they formed a guild. Sean invited his friends he met on the road over and the guild quickly expanded. Using Sean's connection, the guild took on many big jobs and even went as far as to assassinate the powerful lord of Falrenhi in Blestain, making a huge name for themselves. In only 7 years, the guild became one of most famous thief guild and marked itself on the map by taking over Ruin of Richtofen Castle.

"You were never like this, Sean nya." Katzix pondered as he walked. The thought of leaving the guild was on his mind, but he was also worried about Junon. His intuition was telling that something bad was about to happen and with the other operatives currently away from base, now would be the best time for him to move. Although he never liked the heat, the village to the southwest of Sraiwan could do as his new home. He would rather feel warmth than be dead cold.

"I better go have a quick talk with Junon. I don't want to end up fighting him for leaving without permission nya." He thought to himself. Before he climbed down the roof, He decided to take one final look of his home.

"What's going on by the southeast wall nya?" For some reason, there were a group of people by the southeast wall. There were only supposed to be up to 2 people per side at most per shift but judging from the silhouettes, Katzix could spot around four. *"Guess Junon will have to wait nya..."* Katzix thought to himself as he began making his way to the bell tower.

---***---

"Lumitia is such a slave driver..." Enfys was complaining by the southeast wall of Richtofen's castle. Him and Volfram managed to sneak in through the darkness and the blind spot. *"Go and attack a camp of thief. Like, for serious, what in the actual fuck is she thinking?"*

"The caravan was raided. The scout reported that the majority of the guild member were seen leaving Sancturia. They are likely to have at most 4 operatives at hand. Now is the best chance if we ever want to take the item back before it is gone forever." Liel communicated with the group using a wireless communicator that was given to each member at the start of the job.

"But it's still like... 30 to 4!"

"I thought you are always itching for a fight, Enfys." Volfram who was there with him remarked.

"I pick the kind of fight... and it's still a 30 to 4!"

"Quit your bitching. Most of the members are said to lack actual combat training. The initiates should be a piece of cake."

"It's as Volfram said. Just stick to the plan and we should be fine." Gwenette who was keeping watch of the guards from her sniper scope the whole team stated. *"You just deal with the*

annoying ones and I will knock the rest out for you with Liel's support. If all goes well, you should be able to reach the treasury and keep the fighting to the minimum."

"Yeah... about that plan... Sure I came up the idea of 'let's climb the wall' but that's because I didn't expect everyone to go with it. " Enfys pondered as he looked at the ruined exterior wall that was refortified by the Gate of Deceit. It was about 8 meters tall. "I know Eckgo are good at climbing and can even stick to wall for a while but don't you think 8 meters is killing it?"

"That's why we sent Volfram there to give you a lift" Liel stated. "With his strength, he should be able to boost you up by around 4-5 meters. The enemy shouldn't expect someone to foolishly climb up a castle wall like this. The higher ground will also provide us significant advantages."

"But what will I do if I fall?"

"Then with his two hands, Volfram will reach out and-" But before Liel could finish her little fantasy, Volfram had already answered.

"I won't catch you and laugh at you." Volfram grinned as he said that.

"You son of a bitch." Enfys gave Volfram the stare.

"Okay, enough chit chat, the shift is about to happen now. Don't forget the rope. We will be joining you after." Gwenette informed the team.

"Okay, yeah, that gap over there. I can grab on to that." Enfys, who was trying to balance himself on Volframs' hands pointed toward a gap in the wall about 5 meters above the ground. "Don't miss."

"Have fun ramming into the wall then." Volfram said as he lifted Enfys into the air directly toward the wall.

"Woahh" Enfys wanted to scream but he couldn't. Just as he was about to reach the exact spot, he reached out with his right hand and grabbed on to the gap in the wall. He quickly followed with his left and braced for the impact that would happen as his body slightly rammed toward the wall due to the initial force of the throw.

"He got it! Let's go" Gwenette who was observing from nearby got up and began moving toward the wall along with Liel, using the darkness to conceal them from the enemies.

As he tried to hold on to his grip, Enfys quickly looked for a spot to hold on to his foots He could spot another rock a couple of meter ahead. *"...Damn it. Let's do this"* he thought to himself as he let go of the grip and began running upward as fast as he could. Just as about he was about to fall, he jumped and grabbed on the 2nd gap on the wall.

"Just a little bit more" He thought before he rushed up again but this time, there was no gap for him to grab. He already climbed over the wall and was greeted by a random guard who was surprised that a giant lizard man suddenly jumped out of nowhere. Enfys quickly landed a kick as hard as possible to the head, knocking the guard out cold before he could scream.

"...Shit!" It was a thought that came into his mind when Enfys finally landed safely on the wall and knocked the guard out. He quickly jumped down and grabbed the spear the guard was holding and the guard to make sure the fall wouldn't make any noise. *"Phew..."* He tied the rope and threw it down for the other three to climb before finding a spot to tie and hide the guard. Soon, the second group would come for the switch.

"I didn't expect you to pull that off." Was what Volfram whispered to him after climbing up the wall using the rope *"I wanted to see you fall, to be honest."*

"If I was to fall, I would fall down, head first, with you as the cushion for my horn. Now just shut up and get ready for the second group."

As the second group approached their spot using the stair, both Volfram and Enfys quickly jumped out of cover and knocked them both out. They were both tied and hidden as well. Volfram went toward where the rope was to give the signal to Liel and Gwenette who were waiting below so that they could climb up as well. After they both climbed up, Liel and Gwenette quickly set up themselves by the spot that would offer them the most vision over the entire campground in the courtyard.

"Hopefully I won't need to snipe anyone. You have an hour. Go!"

"Aye aye, maam!"

Volfram and Enfys were about to head out when...

Clank! Clank!

"Shit!" Gwenette began looking around for the bell to see who was responsible. Inside bell tower was a blue daefi looking up at the moon.

"Guess I better take you out first then..." Gwenette thought to herself as she hovered over the blue daefi and zoomed in on her sniper rifle. The trigger was pulled the bullet went straight for the blue daefi head, only for it to be cut in half before it could reach its target.

"You're kidding, right?" The blue daefi then turned to face her before moving out, surely to head toward them.

"Enfys. Volfram. We're going to rely on you to keep us in the clear for us. Just watch out for a blue daefi. He's surely one of the guild operatives." Gwenette shouted to her team.

"Oh? The blue daefi is mine then." Volfram said as he began warming up.

"No, you. I've always wanted to see what it's like to fight someone just as fast." Finishing what he said, Enfys took out his bow and used it to slide down the rope that would take him down to the courtyard.

"You're not taking the shortcut!" Volfram shouted as he grabbed on to Enfys' left leg.

"You're too heavy!" Enfys shouted as he was trying to shake Volfram off.

"You're not shaking me off! We're going together."

"Let! Go! Woahh!" Enfys was screaming as both of them fell and landed on one of the tents, cushioning the fall and greatly attracting the attention of all the enemies nearby.

"Time for the fun!" Volfram shouted as he charged toward a group of initiates that were still confused.

"This is so not worth..." Enfys whined as he dashed toward the direction with least enemies.

"Will they really be okay?" Liel asked after witnessing the messy take off.

"They're always like that anyway. Let's focus on taking out the enemies and support them before the blue daefi gets there."