



ROUKA GOD

HEROINE BOOK 6: KANBARU SURUGA

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TRANSLATION: HAREMLESS

The reason I decided to purge the Swamp God, as you may all have guessed, was that it was interfering with my wholesome and sound business ventures. What a despicable god, destroying without a second thought all the sincere and faithful hard work I had been humbly doing in good conscience over the years as a productive member of society. I had no choice but to proactively engage in some defensive measures against the Swamp God in order to protect my rights. Of course, that sincerity and faith was in money, and the rights I was protecting were my rights to deception. And of course, none of this was done on my nonexistent good conscience. Though none of this changes the fact that claiming so in my good conscience is perfectly within my sincere and faithful rights.

But no, even if that weren't the case, even if it were wrong or just a lie, if the web of lies that were the charms I had been spreading with all my might, my storm of baseless rumors, had all completely disappeared, I would have to step forward, regardless of gain or loss.

“Don’t worry about it”, “Just leave it be”, “Pretend you don’t know anything about it”, “What will be will be”, “Forget about it”, “It’s not like you’re going to die or something”

... The Swamp God had used these words to render my charms useless, so I had something to say back to her.

“Hey there, Kaiki-san.”

The Swamp God said as she welcomed me. Surprisingly enough, although you could hardly say she was very serious about it, the person revered as a god and who bathed in the adoration of all the middle school students in the area was a kid with bleached brown hair wearing sweatpants. Her bleached hair seemed more like a way to torment her body rather than a fashion-conscious decision about her appearance.⁵⁶

“? How do you know my name. I don’t remember knowing any kids as rotten as you.”

“Hahaha, you see, I’ve been having lots of talks with the kids who’ve been getting involved with you, Kaiki Deishuu-san. ‘Kai’ like a heap of shells and ‘ki’ like a dead tree. Deishuu like ‘*dorobune*’, a boat stuck in the mud. I always thought they were just exaggerating when they said you were like bad luck grew a pair of arms and legs. Seems pretty spot-on to me.”

The Swamp God said with a little chuckle, then took a pack of gum out of the pockets of her sweatpants. Then, still with that frivolous smirk on her face but a sharp tone, she said, not taking a single step back,

“You must be a pretty horrible adult, tricking kids like that.”

“What we’re doing is practically the same. Although unlike me, you might say that you’re tricking people but only an idiot would fall for your tricks.”

“I’m just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what sticks, still ironing out the kinks, you know? I didn’t grow up tricking people or getting conned myself so I’m still a beginner. I know you’re a pro and all so give me a break if I’m not exactly a master con artist yet. I’m really sorry

⁵⁶ Bleached hair used to be, and still is, a sort of youthful and rebellious hairstyle in Japan.

if my little child's play is getting in the way of your con scheme. I really am."

I've never heard less sincere words. And that's coming from someone without a speck of a conscience. On a whim or maybe because I was getting a bit annoyed, I decided to flatter the kid a little.

"Don't be so humble, you're actually not bad. You even managed to weed out all the rumors I've been spreading around. I learned a thing or two I might use in the future."

I had said that on a whim to have her think I was really complimenting her, but that might not actually be a bad idea. A conman's repertoire only grows by incorporating young, new ideas. But I guess an elementary school kid's would still be too young.

"I'm not in elementary school. I actually graduated middle school a while ago."

"Is that so, all you kids look the same when you get to my age."

"A lot of people tell me I'm hard to approach because I act like an adult."

"I think that just means they don't like you. I know someone quite like that."

"Hmm... Someone like that, eh? Whatever."

The Swamp God popped five pieces of gum out of the package she had been playing with in her hand all at once and threw them into her mouth. Kids these days, no manners, but I guess chewing gum is her way of getting herself fired up.

"Want one?"

"I don't like candy. I'm an adult. A grown-up. The only thing adults want is money, or promises. I'll be fine if you promise me you won't get in the way of my business anymore."

"Sure thing. Got it. I won't get in your way anymore."

On the surface, she promised me right away. But as a professional in telling lies, I've never seen a more obvious lie. It was more like she had just openly declared she hoped to maintain the status quo between us going forward into the future.

What else would it be.

From my point of view, the Swamp God's silly "life counseling" is starting to be a real problem for my business. But from her point of view, the lovely little con I've been spreading around like the plague is the only reason she can still go around doing her misfortune collection.

Our goals are completely different.

Like they say, the doctor's only in business because people get sick. Although the only way the Swamp God can treat her patients is with the placebo effect.

"Unfortunately, it appears negotiations have broken down. My only option now is to crush you so mercilessly you'll never be able to do business here again."

"You aren't very mature for an adult, are you."

She didn't flinch an inch from my threat. I suppose this is what they mean by "bending but never breaking". Or maybe she thinks I'm not serious. If so, that would be correct. Really, even I have no idea when I'm being serious. Maybe I never am.

"No need to be so forward, Kaiki Deishuu-san. Want to give my 'life counseling' a try? See what it's like to throw all of your troubles into my deep swamp."

"Throw my troubles into your deep swamp? Are you trying to act like a ghost or something?"

"Get outta my swamp!, I guess that's more like a swamp monster.⁵⁷ Deishuu, like a boat stuck in the mud... Mud and swamp. Muddy swamp, muddy swamp."

The Swamp God laughed at her own incomprehensible joke. She really did look like she was still in elementary school when she laughed. Did she say she already graduated from middle school? Now that I think about it, she looks like she could be in high school... Actually, no she doesn't. I have

⁵⁷ She's pretending to be *Dorotabou* (泥田坊), a monster in an old folktale who would appear night after night from a rice paddy (which are very muddy at the bottom) and scream "Give me back my field!". His name literally means "Muddy Field Boy".

no reason to give her the benefit of the doubt, but even with it she looks like she's in middle school at best. I suppose looks don't count for much.

"No matter what you drop in, I can't give you back a golden axe⁵⁸ or a silver axe or something. I'm not cut out for being a goddess. All I am is a Swamp God."

"Are you offering to take my misfortune, then?"

The Swamp God listens to people's tales of their misfortune and then quietly takes them away. It doesn't accept any compensation in return, which I don't particularly agree with, but long story short, misfortune itself is what it takes as its compensation. Or so the story goes.

"Interesting."

I said, because it wasn't interesting at all.

"Alright, so hear me out. Right now I've actually got something on my mind that's really troubling me. It keeps me up all night and it's making me miserable. So just until a while ago I've been dating this girl in high school, but she found out I was only in it for the money and I've been on the lam ever since. I'm going crazy looking over my shoulder all day thinking she's going to come and stab me or something, which is why I started doing all these bad things I never wanted to. It takes the edge off my nerves, you know. What do you think I should do?"

I had just thought that story up on the spot and I realized what an unrealistic situation it was to be asking for advice about. But the Swamp God paid no attention to my painfully obvious lie.

"Don't worry about it."

She said.

"Just leave it be, pretend you don't know anything about it, what will be will be, forget about it, it's not like you're going to die or something. Got it?"

⁵⁸ She's referencing one of Aesop's *Fables* called *The Honest Woodman*, where a man drops his axe into a river and the god Hermes pulls a golden axe and then a silver axe out of the river, and asks the man whether they are his to test his honesty.

“... I’m sure that’s what you tell everyone, but she actually told me she’s going to kill me, you know?”

I was hoping to put some pressure on the Swamp God with a serious request, something a kid couldn’t just brush off with some clever words. And so I told lie after lie.

“Even if I forget about it, she’s never going to let me off the hook for the rest of her life.”

“Not really, you’re not really all that important to her. You’re right that she might really want to kill you now, but eventually some nice guy is going to come along and heal the wounds you gave her.”

“...”

“She’s not even as hurt as you think. You’ll be a memory in the past in no time. So, don’t worry about it.”

She had no proof for anything she was saying. All she was doing was going along with her usual plan, I could tell. She was certainly an inexperienced beginner and not exactly very eloquent in her speech, but she was still running a fine con. I was just flattering her before, but this kid could probably trick most adults too.

But not me, obviously.

I doubt there’s really some “nice guy” out there who’d make a good couple with her, and “she” doesn’t even exist in the first place. She doesn’t exist.

That said, having seen her techniques, I couldn’t just leave without showing her anything in return. I may love money, but I don’t like being in debt.

“Swamp God. Since we’re both here, why don’t I show you some of my techniques.”

“No thanks, I’m fine. I’m not interested in any charms.”

“Come on, it doesn’t have to be right away or anything. I’m thinking we might have a long way to go with each other in the future.”

“I’m glad you think so, let’s hope the both of us do well. So, what are you going to do?”

“Relax, it’s nothing dangerous. I was just thinking of introducing a customer to you that I think you’d be able to help sometime not too long from now. I think you’ve got a lot of potential, that’s all.”

“A customer? You want to set up a barter agreement with me or something?”

I said nothing in reply to the Swamp God’s question.

In place of a response,

“It’s really something I should be doing, but I get tired of things quickly and I’m not really cut out for collection. So I’m letting you take the job, I’m trusting you with it.”

I said.

“Swamp God, one day all the misfortune that’s been sitting at the bottom in you is going to pile up and appear on the surface. And you’ll run into some friends you forgot about. That’s the lesson you should learn from meeting me. So when that time comes,”

Make sure you don’t miss it.

The Swamp God had a suspicious look on her face. She was probably bracing herself not to be tricked, but in reality that was completely useless.

She had already tricked herself into thinking her life wasn’t full of misfortune.

By taking in other people’s misfortune.

I didn’t have to do a thing to trick her.

Not to mention I have no duty to open up her eyes. But because one day I will have to take on that duty.

Swamp God.

Let me give you a devil.