

Chapter 8

The Job Description

<https://youtu.be/gFw5japDG2U> Squirrel Nut Zippers “hell”

Lorelei gives Cecelia a tour

Lorelei shook Cecelia awake, “Mona, Your training begins today.”

“Where have you been? I haven’t seen you in days, over a week.”

“I’ve been scouting. I’ve needed to look and prepare. You’re to be trained today. It’s a special honor. It was my honor, but I’m used up now.”

“An honor? To do what? And what do you mean by ‘used up’?”

“Mona, don’t pay attention to an old shriveled lady like me. But I can do this service to the master now, to teach you what he taught me.”

“Mona? Why do you keep calling me Mona?”

“I don’t like ‘The-theel-ia’,” she waved dismissively, turning her back to Cecelia, “It’s so syrupy. Mona suits you better.” Lorelei coughed back a laugh, “It is a noble Irish name,” then under her breath she snickered to herself, “that also means ‘cunt’ to some.”

“Makes me sound like a monkey,” Cecelia grumbled.

“I suppose around here it might, but you need a new name. You’re in hiding, aren’t you? So you need to remain anonymous.”

“I guess so.”

“There, then Mona it is! Like I said, leave it to an old lady like me!

“How old are you anyway?”

“48, but I feel 50.”

“I thought you looked like you were in your late 60’s!” Cecelia blurted, then clapped her hand over her mouth. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean that.” Her mouth was closed, but her eyes studied the deep care lines in Lorelei’s face, the slack pasty skin, and she wondered if 48 were accurate.

She waved off Cecelia again, “There are places we can go, and others we should stay from. You will want to find the right people, the people who love and love deeply like you and I do. We’re changing the world, one person at a time, that’s what Master says. It’s bigger than us, but it begins with us. Isn’t that wonderful?”

“How do we change the world? How would I, me, ever change the world?”

“Like I said, one person at a time. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t, but we find them, we hunt for the right people. No Barcelonés, and especially no culés!”

“Culés? Who’s that?”

“Anyone wearing blue, red, and yellow. Just stay away from that crazy bunch. They’ll come looking for each other like a lost duckling looking for it’s mother! Oy! Ugh!”

“Got it. No Culés!”

“The best ones are the foreigners, especially if they look lost and alone. Then you know that they need help, that they need the Master’s help. This is who we befriend. Let’s go, and I’ll show you around, the best hunting ground.”

“You keep saying hunting.”

“Ah, just an expression—we could call it ‘picking the roses’ or ‘separating the chaff’. Come, let me show you our little neighborhood.”

Lorelei took on the roll of a practiced tour guide. “We must get that garden cleaned up better if we’re to have guests.” They walked the short narrow street that curved to the left; Cecelia couldn’t see where the street went or ended. It came to a T and they turned right past a shop with a mix of modern and vintage clothing. It had large windows, which was unusual in these ancient stone walls. Lorelei showed her various coffee shops. She told her to stay away from the City Hall—they didn’t want to be “known”, so they turned to bypass the Plaça de Sant Jaume and went down Carrer de Ferran.

“Oh, there’s a fun place down here. Turn where the big fork and spoons are.” Lorelei turned quickly to the right and pranced down this especially narrow road down to El Ingenio. “They make the big heads here, but there’s so many fun little things. It’s like a toy store for kids and adults.”

Cecelia was taken aback by the floor to ceiling display of trinkets, puppets, costumes, and shelves of heads. She turned the corner into the side room and ran straight into the short man who had frightened her so much on her wedding night. She was about to accuse him of making her break her heel, which she realized that his head was really quite large, and that it was more like a sculpted mask. “Oh, big heads,” she nodded to herself while knocking on his forehead just to confirm he was hollow. “I wonder what they’re for.”

“No time for barricading around the bush. Lets go. I want to show you the prime area.” Lorelei grabbed Cecelia’s hand and pulled her out the door with a little skip.

They took that same road down another block to where it opened up onto another plaza, the Plaça del Pi. Flat slate pavers covered the plaza, with a small stepped up area before the entrance to the cathedral. Facing that were storefronts with stained oak trim around large windows set into the stone facades. The numerous small restaurants had tables with umbrellas, their particular areas separated by a row of plants or personalized umbrellas.

“Let’s have a bite of lunch here,” announced Lorelei.

Cecelia looked up at the awning and read outloud, “El Drac De Sant Jordi. Oh, Jordi! That’s my husband’s name.” She stopped, twisted her lips and to no one in particular said, “/s he my husband?” Then turning to Lorelei, “Why does everything have to do with dragons and Saint Jordi? I swear it feels like I’m being followed around by this dragon!”

Lorelei smiled and noted this exchange with interest, but keeping it to herself just pulled Cecelia along to pick out their tapas. Cecelia thought their lunch was rather bland and soggy, and she wondered what all the hype was about tapas.

“Look around. Here is where I have met the most people, though I will say the Plaça George Orwell has had some promising characters. And Born is a good area too, but this is closest and a close catch is an easy catch. See, we live just around the corner here, and down to the right.”

Cecelia looked, and trying to match what she saw with her memories from the night of her escape and after being frightened by the big head. She thought she could put the snips of memory with the places together. She nodded as if she fully understood.

“Aurelio will teach you more, but I needed to show you around. He certainly couldn’t come out here openly.”

“No, I suppose not,” Cecelia said blankly, wondering what teaching she could be getting. She wasn’t sure what exactly she was going to be doing to help save the world, and hoped that it would be made more clear to her.

Lorelei picked up on her confusion, “Don’t worry, my dear, we’ll show you all. And you’ll see how wonderful and important it will be. Trust me.” Lorelei patted Cecelia’s arm.

The Teaching Sessions, in which Aurelio manipulates and twists Cecelia into believing that she's going out to help save the world

Cecelia was expecting to return to the apartment to Aurelio waiting there to finish her lesson and help her understand how she could help. It was 3 days before she saw him again; he was always appearing at random times. Likewise conversations sometimes went on until she was falling asleep, or other times would be ended mid-sentence and he would disappear quickly. She counted the days till this reappearing, anticipating the revelation of their good work, hoping on the promises of Lorelei that they were changing the world one life at a time.

She was just finishing lunch when Aurelio spoke behind her, "I hear you are ready. And that you have a beautiful new name, Mona." He said this name slowly. "Can I call you 'my little monkey'?"

She turned around quickly, hoping that he would look pleasing as his voice sounded. She wanted to see a human instead of this monstrosity, but she knew he would be the same. The moist joints of his exoskeleton around his mouth, so easy to make out each part in this huge form, rolled in and out as he talked. She tried to hide her disgust, "I want to know. I'd like to know more and be part of the change."

"Good," he said clicking his fangs as if to clap.

Cecelia squeezed her lips and pulled her head back while turning her face away, "Tell me. Please. And, no, please don't call me monkey. It makes me think of 'sand monkey', and that's a terrible insult."

"Ok, Mona," he tenderly stroked her cheek, "Go get the notebook I put for you on the table over there. You'll want to take notes." He continued, "First, you need to be in the right state of mind. You must be able to open yourself. Most people have shut their minds and are so closed off. That makes them closed to happiness and fullness. They're missing out, but you don't need to miss out. I will show you, but you must trust me fully first. Do you trust me?"

"I guess so."

"That's not enough!" he shouted. "You must let it all go, and be present, and know that I am the only chance you have. Only I have the true knowledge. Now say you trust me with conviction, like you already believe it."

"I trust you," she said louder.

"No, look at me, and shout 'I trust you!'"

Cecelia tried to look up at him, but once again his mouth parts were moving in and out in front of her face, the soft joint membrane stretching and folding, his pedipalps rubbing his fangs as if he were licking his fingers. Her face was turned towards him, but eyes closed, she shouted, "I trust you."

"Again! Eyes open."

She tried, he yelled. They went back and forth like this for over 20 minutes until she was looking at him, yelling "I trust you, I trust you, I trust you."

"Fine. You're ready to start." With that, he abruptly left the room.

Lorelei slowly emerged from the side room, "That went well, don't you think?"

"I don't know. I'm exhausted."

"There there," she patted Cecelia's hand, "That's how it works. It's like a good cleansing enema."

Cecelia certainly felt washed from the inside out. "Sure. I guess it is."

"Ok, bye!" Lorelei also left with abruptness. Cecelia though she caught Lorelei looking over at Aurelio's doorway right before she cut off the conversation. She wondered if Lorelei had been signaled to leave.

Cecelia was alone. The afternoon wore on slowly, and when no dinner came the evening continued with the excruciatingly slow pace.

The following morning Lorelei came with the most delicious croissants from Hofman's, a chocolate ganache filled one and a mascarpone one that was like heaven. She was so hungry that she forgot to taste them at first, but a sip of the coffee with it brought her back to the sensation of taste. She was still licking the crumbs from the wrapper

when Aurelio re-emerged.

“Enjoying your breakfast, I see. I told Lorelei to get you something special.”

“What happened to dinner last night?” Cecelia asked.

“We have a big day ahead of us. Do you trust me?”

Cecelia hopped to standing and looking right at Aurelio shouted, “I trust you!”

“Wonderful. So very wonderful, my dear precious Mona.” Then to Lorelei he said, “Don’t you need to go help someone somewhere?”

“Yes, uh, of course. I’ll go do that.” She grabbed her wrap and headed out the door.

“Really has become so useless, I don’t know why I keep her around any more. Though she did bring you here, didn’t she. But you’re my favorite. You are more precious than you know. You’ll do things far greater than Lorelei has ever done.”

Cecelia felt puffed up with this praise as she thought of how raised Lorelei looked, “I sure hope so, and I know that you’ll show me the way.”

“Of course, of course.” Aurelio started in on his speech of eternal love, and floundering men, lost men who needed the help of a woman, and nonsense about astral planes and levels of reality.

I will spare you of his hours of talking that went on through lunch and well into the afternoon. Once again, Cecelia was not given food and while she tried to stay focused on his confusing words she was also wondering if she were going to be skipping dinner also. Her eyes started to close from extreme fatigue.

“Worthless slut,” he yelled at her. “I spend all this time dedicated to you, and this is the response I get. Don’t you understand by now that I’ve been given this deep secret that I can only share with the chosen few?”

“I’m so sorry,” she straightened her back and fluttered her eyes to wide open.

“You think you can just come into my home and eat my food, and pretend to be my friend, to pretend to love me and this is how you behave?”

“I won’t do it again. Please, please, please forgive me.”

He snorted at her, “As if you deserve it, you worthless piece of shit.”

Cecelia started crying, her cries were completely silent from all the practice she had trying not to be heard crying when growing up. But tears streamed down her face as she held her breath tightly.

“Are you trying to make me feel sorry for you? You should feel sorry for me. I’m the one who’s always rejected and despised. How do you think this makes me feel?”

Cecelia reached out her hand to touch his leg, wondering if he could feel her touch through the bony exterior.

“You love me?” he asked.

“I love you. I’m so sorry. I must not have slept well last night. It must have been the excitement to have this time with you.”

“I forgive you,” he stroked her cheek, and she tried not to flinch.

Aurelio reacted in shame to this flinch; he curled up and waited for her to reach back out to him. This time she reached out more confidently and touched his paw. That was all the permission he needed to be intimate with her, that is he took her flesh and used it. It was just an act to him, a form of control over her body, over her will, over her ability to control her own body’s response to his touch.

As she lay stiff he whispered into her ear, “You need to go find the men who need your help. I will try to remain impartial, to put my love aside because their need is so great. But not yet. We still need to know each other more deeply, true spiritual intimacy. Lorelei will do for now.”

“She’ll help them?” Cecelia asked wistfully.

“Yes,” he clicked his fangs again, which Cecelia started to understand as a smile, “She’ll do for now.”

The Hunt, in which Cecelia find the first victim

As Cecelia took her leave of Aurelio, he waved to her from his hole, and blew awkward kisses of the sort that could come from fangs and spider paws. She left nervously, noting as she walked the long path through their narrow garden that the webs and sticky snail shells had all been cleaned up. She and Lorelei had brought in a new sofa and coffee table, but Lorelei had cleaned the garden on her own while Cecelia received another teaching from Aurelio.

It was just a few moments for her to walk to the Plaça del Pi, where she found it crowded with groups of people walking, taking pictures, eating, or pointing at various and random things. It was a warm afternoon, so she wore a long sleeved bohemian tunic that Lorelei had bought for her. She had said it was quite modest, but when Cecelia put it on she realized that she couldn't bend over without exposing herself. Having grown up in a country where women were covered head to toe, this tunic made her feel both scandalous and free at the same time. She had asked if there were a skirt of pants to go with the tunic, but Lorelei had just laughed. As Cecelia walked through the plaça, keenly aware that there were people all around her, she kept smoothing down the back of the tunic and pulling it down to make sure she was covered.

Cecelia wasn't sure where to go, who to talk to, where to start this quest for finding the lost and lonely.

"Are you lost?" asked a soft voice beside her.

"Uhm, no, well..."

"You don't seem to know where you're going, that's all."

Cecelia turned to see a handsome young man in his early 20's with a desperately youthful shadow of a mustache on his upper lip. He was smiling at her.

"I do and I don't. You see..."

He interrupted, "Me too! I know that I'm here, and where here is, but I don't know where I'm going next."

"Where are your people?"

"My people? Oh, my friends? They all wanted to go to the beach, but I don't like sand or getting sunburned so I came wandering."

"Alone?"

"Yes, I guess it's just me," he smiled bashfully.

"We could explore together," she cocked her head, "If you'd like to. I'm new here and I don't know my way around much."

He smiled big, "Lets!"

"So what's your name? I should at least know that."

"Call me John," he put his hands akimbo and slanted his shoulders with a swagger.

"I'm Ceci..." she stopped remembering what Lorelei had said, "I'm se..Mona."

They wandered the gothic district along many paths. Cecelia tried to pay close attention to where they were going, but the mix of narrow alleys that opened up to plaças or main roads was confusing.

They finally made it back to where they had started. It was about dinner time, so John suggested that they eat.

"Not at this place," She pointed at El Drac de Sant Jordi. She wasn't sure if her choice was because of the food or the name, and if the name if it was the mention of the dragon or Jordi. They ate at the other side of the plaça.

"I don't think this food is much better than that other place," she laughed.

He had had a few glasses of wine, and thought this was very funny. He poured her more wine also.

"My place is just around the corner here. Want to see it?" Cecelia had forgotten what her message was, but it had been drilled into her head that she must bring the people back to their home.

“Sure!” he replied loudly, and off they went.

They entered into the clean, but still bare garden area. John looked around with curiosity, “You don’t have any plants.”

“I, I just moved it. I haven’t had a chance yet.” She led him through the door and realized how bizarre her barren home must look, without even a normal bed. “Here, let me get you a beer,” she said quickly before he could react or say anything.

They sat on the sofa with their beers, looking at the wall. They had little to say, but John was hoping for some action. He didn’t get any as they both fell asleep drunk.

The next morning Cecelia pushed her slumped body back to sitting, wiping the drool from her face. She looked around for John, but there was only his wallet and a shoe. She frowned at the shoe and wondered how someone leaves without a shoe. She took them both with her as she went back to the plaça to try to find him and return his things. Surely he would want both back.

Cecelia sat at the plaça through the morning without seeing the young man, She left his shoe in the planter with the small palm with the note:

I have your wallet, come to my place to get it back. —Mona

She never heard back from John, but Jordi learned of the shoe. It was a clue that he would follow.

When Aurelio emerged again a few days later he was quite happy. He came to Cecelia hanging from the ceiling, which was unusual for him. But he seemed to have the extra energy to carry his large body this way.

“You did well, my dear Mona,” he chirped.

“Huh? How?”

“You brought the young man home with you.”

“But he left. And I didn’t even tell him the special message,” she didn’t admit that she couldn’t remember it, or even fully understand it.

“No worries, no worries. One step at a time, and you made this happen. More will happen. And a little wine is always good. I do think I enjoyed the wine a little bit myself.”

“We had beer here.”

“Well then, the beer. A little alcohol never hurt anyone.”

“Did you drink the leftover beer? Did you get drunk?”

“No, uh yes, I did take a little taste. I, uh, felt it a little. But that’s no problem. No problem at all. I hope you enjoyed your imbibing.”

“Sure. I guess. I just fell asleep.”

“Not a problem. Not a problem at all. I hope you slept well.”

“Yes, but a bit of a headache.”

“We’ll get you some Tylenol for that. You take a rest for a few days, and then we’ll see how the hunt goes again.” Aurelio clicked his fangs again, but this time it seemed like a very excited smile to Cecelia.

Lorelei gets eaten

The hunting grounds were unproductive for Cecelia. Her first catch had been dumb luck, and she didn’t have the practiced technique of a seductress. She wouldn’t have called herself that, but that is what she needed to be to attract these lost and lonely men. Her awkwardness and apologetic behavior made everyone feel uncomfortable.

“En un tres no res!” yelled Lorelei at Cecelia. Meaning 3 or none, that is quickly. “You are letting the lost soles stay lost. How can Aurelio share his secret message if you can’t bring anyone back here?”

“Perhaps if I understood the message better I could share it.”

“He’s been trying to explain it to you, simple *MONA*. And he’s getting angry with me because you’re not getting it. And you’re not doing your job. We’ve given you this free home, love and all the help you’ve ever needed.”

“I’m left alone a lot.” She frowned and pouted a touch.

“Don’t complain. Where would you be without me. Go! Go back out on the streets and see how long you survive.”

“I’ll do better, I will. I’m sorry.”

“Then go! Now! En un tres no res!”

Cecelia ran out the door without thinking about taking her bag or anything else with her.

“Your canut!” Lorelei ran after her, “your canut, you forgot it. Don’t let go of it.” She smirked at her joke that Cecelia didn’t understand. Canut/bag is also a euphemism for penis.

“Wow! She was really mean today.” Cecelia said out loud to herself, “I think she was saying Mona like it was an insult. No, she’s been so nice. Seriously, Cecelia, listen to yourself! First you’re going crazy talking like this, and secondly....I don’t know...maybe she’s just having a bad day.”

Her hunting was unsuccessful, and she came home along again. Lorelei looked quite dejected when she saw Cecelia alone.

She sighed, “No one? What are you doing out there?”

“I’ll tell him,” replied Cecelia. “You don’t have to do that. It’s my fault.”

“No, I must. I don’t have a choice.” Lorelei walked back to the hole, looked over her shoulder at Cecelia and disappeared into the darkness.

Cecelia couldn’t read Aurelio’s mood this evening. He seemed off, tense but not completely agitated. He had a purpose and a worry wrapped up in one, coming to Cecelia with the need to keep him sustained. He had had to take desperate measures, his back up plan that was a last resort. He needed something from her, and knew that bribery would work better than anger.

Ramone, who usually just dropped her meals outside, actually came in and set a beautiful table for Cecelia’s dinner. Instead of eating alone, Aurelio joined her like that first meal that she had gagged at. This was something different, something pleasurable. Paella, deep golden *Terroir Al Li’mit* (fix the “i” to have accent) white blend wine, and Xocolata amb melindros —lady fingers with a cup of rich molten chocolate for dipping.

He stayed off to her side, a little bit behind her peripheral vision, so as not to distract her eating with his appearance. Their conversations were light and sweet, talking of nothings like the weather and the types of tourists one might see. She told them of the people she had seen posing their little dog in front of the cathedral, and how people were pointing at them like the dog was a movie star. Aurelio even laughed at this.

Cecelia knew what was expected of her after a dinner like this, her body knew too and was anticipating his touch. It was all the same to her until he scratched her shoulder. He had never scratched her before; she pulled her hand back and found blood on it.

“Do forgive me, my dear,” he soothed her. “I was distracted.” Actually, he wasn’t distracted. There was a purpose in this, but it would take the rest of the summer for her to understand.

“It’ll be fine, I’m sure. I’ll just go wash it off,” she replied.

“No!” he shrieked, “Let me help you.” Aurelio grabbed a napkin from the kitchen and carefully blotted her shoulder. “Don’t forget that you have a very special purpose here. You have been chosen, a gift to me and to the world around us. This is a very important responsibility that you must fulfill.”

“I want to, I really do. I feel like this calling is so important.”

He walked toward his door, “I have to be able to trust you with the deepness, the truth, the reality that no one

else can know. I have to know that you can be fully trusted. It's a gem that can only be given to the most deserving."

She nodded her head.

"Now, Come here, girl," called Aurelio. "Come here and see what you've done."

Cecelia was startled to be asked to enter this forbidden place. She got up and moved slowly. There was a cool breeze coming from the hole, a barrier of damp air that surrounded the entrance. In that dampness was stale....Dear reader, if you are enjoying coffee or tea with your book, please put it down and wait till you're done reading this section. I want you to enjoy your coffee. Just writing this has ruined my mocha..... Staleness. That's where I was at, but this was more than stale. The air got heavier, thicker to breath as she took in the smells of old kitty litter mixed with cheap sweet perfume and rotting flesh that turned your stomach. Each breath brought a different note to her nose. The sickly sweet made her grimace, followed by the deep foul stench of wet shit that made her want to hold her breath, and the gut churning of the rotting flesh.

Cecelia turned to leave, but Aurelio brought her back with his foreleg, the stiff hairs catching and scratching her skin. He had always avoided touching her against the grain, and his left pedipalp he kept plucked as that is what he caressed her with. Today he moved her into his pointed hairs and let them propel her around.

"Come here," he pointed to a sack hanging from the ceiling, "See."

A muffled sound came from the hanging sack. It was about five feet long, something like a cigar shape or chrysalis. Aurelio poked at a spot near the top and made an opening. He grabbed Cecelia's face and turned her towards him. "Take your time. Hear what you need to hear. Know that this is your fault." Then he walked away into the shadows. Cecelia suspected that he was there, listening.

The sack spoke, "Mona. No. Cecelia."

She turned to see a mouth at the opening, the lips were purplish, the skin swollen.

"Cecelia?"

"I'm here."

"I told you. I didn't have a choice. Here I am. Don't be next. You must bring him someone new to teach. He's promised me. I'm going to the better place now. It's magical. He's sharing this honor with me. What else more magnificent can he give me?"

"What do you mean?"

"The transformation. Remember, he keeps telling you about the glorious transformation. I'm like a butterfly in its cocoon."

Cecelia struggled to breath through the stench, much of which seemed to be emanating from this sack of Lorelei. "I'm sorry." She was so confused. Was this something good, a promise being delivered? Or was what her eyes were telling her the reality? This looked and smelled like living death—the body of rot that was still able to talk.

"You must trust him. I have seen it. I am waiting for the glory. It will come to me, I know. My time is gone. I am used up, so it's up to you. You must be his helper now."

"How? How must I do it?"

"Don't be afraid to use your womanhood. You have this body to entice and beguile. Use it to bring them good."

Yes, that must be true, she thought. That is why I was always taught to stay covered up: you mustn't tempt a man. But this is different: a kind of freedom to tempt for the good. Not for me, but for him. To HELP him. Then it's OK. I can do this. I must.

"I will. You will see." She frowned and acknowledged, "No, I guess you won't see. Go to your glory and I know that I will do my part."

She turned and ran away, gasping as she came back into her own room. It felt as if the stench clung to her, on her clothes, in her hair. Cecelia ran to shower. She stood under the running water, tears mingling with the rivulets

running from her forehead. She tried to fit what she just experienced into this new paradigm that she was learning. She was trying to reconcile the excitement and dread, the hope and fear, the determination and guilt. She resolved to trust, as Lorelei had told her to. This was for the good, to help, to be a messenger. And she would flirt for the good.

Aurelio called to her from outside the bathroom, "Rest today. No, rest for a few days. Then you may go out again. To you I give the gem, the promise, the deepness."

As skinny as she was, Lorelei would still provide him with sustenance for a week. That gave Cecelia a few days to have a successful hunt. But he was worried: if she didn't succeed then how would he survive? He'd have to eat her and then who would he use for bait? Or worse yet, he would then have to venture out and risk being caught and killed. And if he survived like this alone, then who would be there to adore him. All he wanted was to be adored and worshiped. He craved the praise. And he was hungry.