

Beloved Dog 171

Chapter 171

Phillip Was a Sleeping Drunk

“Right this way, pharmacist.”

“What is this?”

“It’s where we store the wine that’s made in the village.”

I had been led to a stone building that was situated near the south rim of the village.

There, unlike the rest of the houses, which were made of wood, was a stone storage house for wine.

...Now that I thought about it...I had once heard that storing wine in stone buildings helped with the scent, and gave it depth and raised the alcohol content... Well, something like that.

So perhaps this stone building was part of the reason that the wine I drank last night was so good.

“...Hmm... After you.”

“Very well. ...Uh, Phillip?”

The villager opened the heavy door and told me to go inside, and so I did.

The smell of good wine filled the air. And it was so strong that I could feel the alcohol.

...Some people might even get drunk just by being here.

And that’s when I saw him. Phillip was holding what looked like a glass sphere as he lay on the ground.

“...Is he asleep?”

“It looks like it.”

“Now that I am finally well again, I was looking forward to getting back to work...and then I found him here like this... But I didn’t know what to do...and so I called for the chief.”

“I see. I should be apologizing to you then. This place must be very important...”

“No, not at all. It was a wonderful feast. And it is not as if he has done anything terrible.”

It seemed like Phillip was just sleeping on the ground, and I could hear his regular breathing.

The villager had come here, hoping to get back to work, but found him like this. And not knowing what to do, had gone to call Mr. Hannes.

Well, he was from the duke’s house, so perhaps that was why he hesitated.

Still, Phillip... I’m surprised he didn’t catch a cold, sleeping out here...

As it was a place to store wine, it was much chillier than it was outside.

And he was sleeping on the ground, which would be especially cool.

In any case, this was an important place for the village, and so as forgiving as Mr. Hannes and the others might be, it was not good that he entered without permission.

“...Phillip, wake up! You cannot sleep here!”

“...Mmm...aahh...”

As he slept comfortably with reddened cheeks, I approached him and slapped his cheeks.

Phillip quickly opened his eyes and let out a lazy murmur as he slowly sat up.

“...Mr. Takumi...? Where am I...?”

“This is where they store the wine. They won’t be able to work if you sleep here. Now, get up.”

“...Store...ahh...so that’s why it is so cold...cough! Cough!”

He finally understood what had happened, and then tried to get up to his feet. That’s when he erupted into a fit of coughing.

...So he really had caught a cold then?

“Phillip?”

“Ahhh... My head hurts... And I feel so heavy...”

“...Are you...feeling ill?”

I peered into Phillip’s face, which was quite red, as he stood up shakily.

He seemed a little more stable than he was last night, but he was sluggish and swayed.

Could it be that his face was red due to being sick, and not because of the alcohol...?

“This is not good. We should take him to the house at once!”

“Very well.”

“I will help you!”

Mr. Hannes had been watching, but he now stood next to Phillip and supported him. He also suggested that we carry him to the house.

The villager helped us, and like that, we carried Phillip away.

As Phillip seemed like his legs were weak, he could not stand well, and so we had to support him until we reached the house.

“By the looks of it, this is the same illness that overtook the village...”

“I see...”

“Cough! Cough!”

We took him to the room I had slept in, and laid him down on the bed.

Mr. Hannes placed a hand on Phillip’s forehead and after some inspection, said that he believed it was the same illness.

Indeed, he seemed to have a fever, and his face was red. He was also coughing, just like the children at the orphanage and Rai’s parents.

...It was because he had to sleep in such a place...

“Hah... It cannot be helped. Can I ask you to prepare some water?”

“Of course. But, what are you going to do?”

I sighed and asked Mr. Hannes for some water.

Mr. Hannes looked very puzzled, as he had no idea what I needed it for.

“Well, if it’s the same illness, then Ramogi should heal him. So he needs to drink it.”

“...Yes, but we used up all of the Ramogi yesterday. There is none left...”

“I had a little more prepared while you were busy. Just in case it wasn’t enough.”

“But...how did you do that...?”

“It’s not important. We need to treat Phillip first. If we do not act quickly, then someone else might get sick next.”

“...Very well. I will bring it right away.”

“Thank you. ...Now...”

If it was anything like the cold that I knew, you would build up antibodies after getting sick once, and so you would be less likely to catch it... But I wasn’t really sure if things worked like that here, so it was better to treat him as soon as possible.

After Mr. Hannes left the room, I looked through my things and took out the Ramogi that I had prepared.

As it was just the plant, I placed it on my hand and activated the Gift.

It was then dried and turned to powder.

“...It gets easier every time... Hmm?”

Just as I was musing over my Gift, Phillip began to move on the bed. And then the glass ball in his hand fell to the floor.

He had been holding that ever since we found him sleeping in the wine storage house...

Chapter 172

I Asked About the Strange Glass Sphere

“I’ll put it here for now.”

“Here is the water.”

I picked up the glass sphere from the floor and put it down on the table next to the bed.

It was then that Mr. Hannes came with a wooden bowl of water.

“Cough! Cough! Cough!”

“Drink it carefully and don’t spit any of it out.”

“...Cough! ...Ah... Glug.”

As Phillip coughed violently, Mr. Hannes helped him sit up, and I made him drink the water with Ramogi.

Phillip somehow managed to drink all of it.

Now, he should recover soon.

“Oh? What is that...”

“Ah, it was what Phillip was holding. I put it over there so it wouldn’t roll away.”

Now that Phillip had finished drinking, it was just a matter of waiting for it to take effect. That was when Mr. Hannes noticed the sphere on the table.

“So he brought it all of the way here.”

“But what is it?”

He had been clutching it preciously, even when sleeping.

It wasn't as perfectly round as the sphere I had seen with Ms. Isabela in Ractos, but it was still round enough to roll if there was nothing in its path.

"That was brought a short while ago by a merchant. He said that it would help improve the taste of the wine if we put it in the storage house."

"Improve the taste..."

Would such a thing really work...?

I had never heard of anything like that in Japan... But perhaps this thing was magical and had special effects.

...Though, I didn't feel anything from it...

After I had started to practice magic with Sebastian, I was able to detect magic energy. Though, only a little.

And there was something about the glass sphere that felt wrong.

"I think it was...a little over one month ago... It wasn't the same merchant who we buy grapes from, but a different merchant. And he left this here after the visit."

"One month..."

There was something about it all that made me wonder...

"What else did he do in the village, aside from giving you that sphere?"

As it bothered me, I asked Mr. Hannes for more details.

“Apparently, the merchant who usually visited us could not come. And he brought the grapes instead.”

“I see...and he just left the sphere as well.”

“Yes.”

So a different merchant from the usual one came and left that sphere along with the grapes for the wine...

“Now that I think about it, where are these grapes grown?”

When I was at the mansion, wine had not been served even once.

I didn't know if Ms. Claire or Mr. Ekenhart drank, but it seemed odd that something like wine was not served at all in a noble's house.

“Quite far away from here... In the lands of the count. We buy them from him and make the wine. Apparently, they do not have enough trees to make the necessary barrels.”

So unlike these lands, the count did not have vast forests.

Still...the count, huh...?

“Is this Count Barsler?”

“Yes. Count Barsler. As he likes wine, in exchange for selling us grapes, we send him our best wine.”

I didn't know much about nobles in this world, but that name was familiar to me, because I had heard it recently.

Count Barsler... I did not expect to hear that name here...

Over a month ago...wine and grapes...the glass sphere...that store...the same disease that was spreading in Ractos...

While I was no detective, it seemed obvious to me that there was a connection.

“Do you send any wine to Ractos?”

“Well, it is the closest and largest town. So, of course, we send it to them. However, we cannot send too much, as much of it goes to the count...”

“Hmm...”

So they did send some to Ractos, but not a lot... In that case, it wasn't too odd that none was served back at the mansion.

While it wouldn't be impossible to acquire, perhaps they didn't care to go through the trouble.

They did live much more comfortably than most people, but they didn't seem to care too much about certain luxuries.

“I'm quite interested in this wine now. After all, it was very delicious. And since this sphere must be returned, perhaps I could take a look at the storage house?”

“Of course, Mr. Takumi. And I am happy that you have taken an interest in our humble village.”

The whole village worked together to earn a meager living, so they were happy to have their work praised.

And while it may seem a little deceitful, I would take advantage of that and inspect the wine...

I didn't know why, but I felt I might learn something that would connect it to that store.

“...As for Phillip...he seems fine now.”

“He is no longer coughing, and is resting peacefully.”

I picked up the glass sphere from the table as I looked at Phillip.

The Ramogi had been effective, and he was no longer coughing painfully, and his face was not red.

It would be best to just let him sleep for now.

“I’m sorry, but if he wakes up while I’m not here, could you give him the same soup that I had this morning?”

“Yes, very well. We will be preparing lunch soon, so we can have something ready.”

“Thank you.”

Before heading to the storage house with the sphere and Mr. Hannes, I asked his wife for some soup.

That soup was hot and would warm him right up. It was the best thing for someone who had drunk so much and was recently ill.

After all, the Ramogi had no effect on a hangover.

Well, I wasn’t actually sure that he had one in the first place.

Chapter 173

Leo Detected a Strange Presence

“Wuff?”

“Leo. Have you been playing with the children?”

“...Wuff... Woouuu.”

When I stepped out of the house, I saw that a few children had gathered around Leo and were playing.

Leo noticed me and separated from the children once and walked over.

However, she suddenly stopped and tilted her head to the side. Then she began to growl suspiciously.

“What is it, Leo? Did something happen?”

“Wuff. Wuff... Wouuu...”

Leo continued to stand still and growl towards me.

What the hell was happening? But she just shook her head and growled again.

...Maybe it wasn't me, but what I was holding...?

“This?”

“Wouu! Grau! Grau!”

When I held out the glass sphere in front of me, Leo began to growl even louder.

Mr. Hannes froze after hearing this.

Even the children, who had been staring curiously in our direction, were frightened by this sudden change in Leo.

“...I'm sorry, Mr. Hannes. But could you hold this for now?”

“Ye-yes. ...Is everything alright?”

“I’m sure it is. Barking like this doesn’t mean that Leo is going to attack anyone.”

As Mr. Hannes looked at Leo with mounting terror, I handed him the glass sphere. Then I smiled and told him not to worry.

“Wuff...”

Now that I was no longer holding the glass sphere, Leo’s expression turned to that of relief.

So she really had sensed something from that glass sphere.

“Now, now. You shouldn’t bark so loudly, or you might scare the other people.”

“Wuff...”

I said to her gently as I petted her to help calm her down.

Now that Leo understood that the children had been scared, she lowered her head and groaned apologetically.

“Still, what happened? It’s not like any monster suddenly appeared. Did you sense something in that glass sphere?”

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff...wou.”

I asked, and then Leo nodded once and then began to bark her explanation.

Hmm... So you do sense something wrong in the glass sphere...

“What does it feel like? Is it similar to the presence of a monster?”

“Wuff-wuff. Wou-wou-wou.”

Leo shook her at this suggestion.

Uhh... It is like the thing you felt faintly when we first came to this village...?

But what could that be?

“Only in this village?”

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff-wuff. Wuff-wuff-wuff.”

Hmm... But you don’t feel it in the village anymore...

But you felt something similar in the town of Ractos... Uh, at the orphanage?

So she felt the same disagreeable presence at the orphanage... As for what this village and the orphanage have in common...

“Could it be...the illness...?”

“Wuff!”

Leo barked affirmatively.

So the thing the two places had in common was the illness.

They also both had children, but that couldn’t be the reason that Leo was disturbed.

After all, Leo liked children, and would not have negative feelings about being around them.

“In other words, you sense a similar sickly feeling from that glass sphere?”

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff. Wuff.”

Leo nodded again.

According to Leo, not only was the feeling she had similar...but it was stronger in the glass sphere.

“What does this mean... The same presence from the sphere...but stronger...”

“...What is the matter?”

As I pondered over it, Mr. Hannes asked me what had happened.

I had such a serious expression, that he had become worried... He probably thought that there was something wrong with Leo.

“Ah, I’m sorry. No, Leo really is fine now.”

“...Is that so? But you looked very concerned about something...”

“Yes, but it’s not about Leo. Right, Leo?”

“Wuff.”

I forced a smile while talking in order to reassure him.

Leo also nodded so that he would not be afraid.

However, Leo continued to stare at the glass sphere in his hand... As she sensed something bad from it, she could not ignore it.

“...Everything...really is fine then?”

“Yes.”

“Wuff.”

Mr. Hannes asked again.

I suppose it was because he hadn’t really gotten used to Leo yet.

And unlike the children, he had his position as the village chief, so he would be more cautious than most.

And so Leo and I answered again firmly, and he finally sighed with relief.

“So, if Leo is fine, then what is troubling you now?”

While he was relieved, he was still curious about the other thing.

“About that... Mr. Hannes, I think that sphere might be dangerous.”

“This thing? But this is supposed to make the wine more delicious...”

Mr. Hannes seemed like he still trusted the merchant who had brought it.

Well, this was the person who sold them grapes. If they didn’t trust each other, then they could not trade.

“The reason that Leo was acting oddly earlier is because of that sphere. She says that it has a similar presence to the illness that had overtaken this village...”

“Wuff. Wuff.”

“This sphere? Surely not...”

I explained to Mr. Hannes what Leo had said.

And then Leo nodded in agreement.

But as for Mr. Hannes, he looked at the sphere with disbelief.

“Let me ask you this... The sphere was brought by the merchant a little over a month ago. Now, when did the disease start to spread?”

“...Indeed, that was when he came... As for when people started to get sick...about one month ago. At first it was just one person, who worked in the storage house. And then it spreaded from there...”

“I see...”

Chapter 174

I Speculated About How the Illness was related to the Glass Sphere

That store in Ractos was also started about a month ago.

I didn't know the precise date, but it was the same time as when this sphere was delivered to this village.

From there, they would have prepared by buying all the medicine stock from the other stores, so they would be ready to sell once the illness began to spread.

That way, they could easily make a profit.

There was no concept of prevention here. Obviously, there were no masks... If it was contagious like a cold, then it would not take long for it to spread.

As Range village was a short distance away, it had taken them longer to go and buy the medicine.

...My guess was that the neighboring count had planned this. And if this glass sphere was what caused it, then it would connect all of the dots.

“The glass sphere is the cause...in that case...but wait... Can a single sphere really do that...? In the first place, it had spread in Ractos much too quickly for it to have started here... Mr. Hannes had only just recently left the village...”

I ignored the others as I was deep in thought.

I could not understand how the sphere worked, and how the illness spread.

But then again, this was a world of magic, and so perhaps there was no hope of me understanding it...

“In any case, it shouldn’t have spread that far if it started in Range village...”

The people here had been suffering from the illness.

So no one could have gone out and made the journey.

And so how could it have spread to Ractos...?

“Mr. Hannes. Ever since that sphere was placed here, has anyone gone to Ractos? Aside from you and Rosalie, of course.”

I asked Mr. Hannes, who had been staring at me suspiciously while I muttered to myself.

“To Ractos? Ractos is the town that is closest to us, and so that is where most of our wine goes. And so someone delivers it at least once every five days.”

“I see...”

Could it be that the person was sick, and that was how it spread...?

Hmmm... But could someone who was just there to drop off some wine really be the cause of it spreading through the whole town...?

Wait... But why was the sphere placed in the storage house in the first place?

If it was the sphere that made people sick, why not put it somewhere where more people were likely to gather?

And if you wanted it to spread in Ractos, then you should put it near the plaza.

“Hmm...I don’t know...”

“...What is it?”

“No, it’s just the cause of the illness...I feel like I should know, but I don’t...”

“The cause of the illness?”

“Yes. The glass sphere and the store that you almost bought medicine from... The spread of the illness in Ractos and Range village... It all happened at the same time. And so it must be connected...”

“Surely it cannot...”

I tried to think of an explanation... If I could, it would mean that we might be able to do something about the store.

Evidence. Well, maybe that was asking for too much. But I wanted something.

Especially since I saw the suffering of the children at the orphanage, as well as Rai’s parents.

“Mr. Takumi... I’m sorry to have caused you trouble...”

“Ah, Phillip. How do you feel?”

“Not terrible, thanks to the Ramogi... Well, I have a slight headache...”

“A hangover. It’s because you drank so much wine yesterday.”

As I was talking to Mr. Hannes and thinking, Phillip came out of the house.

He looked a little pale, because of his hangover, but was otherwise fine.

“Still...Mr. Phillip...what is that in your hand?”

“Ah, hair of dog, you know? Drinking a little helps cure a hangover.”

Phillip was carrying a cup that was filled with wine.

Indeed, I had heard about people drinking alcohol in order to alleviate the symptoms of a hangover... But I think it was just that the alcohol numbed your senses so that your head didn’t hurt as much. That was all...

“Ah, Mr. Hannes. Thank you. Your wife’s soup was excellent. But so is this wine.”

“Well, it is something we are proud of. And so I am glad to see that you enjoy it.”

Not only did Phillip drink the soup, but he was also starting to drink wine...

Well, it really was delicious...

In fact, Mr. Hannes was so pleased by this complement, that he had completely forgotten about the previous conversation.

“Wou! Gau!”

“What is it?!”

“Ahhh!”

Phillip had been laughing and was about to take a sip.

Just then, Leo started to bark at him.

It was so sudden that Phillip and Mr. Hannes were shocked.

“What is it, Leo?”

“Wuff-wuff. Wou. Wou-wou.”

I petted Leo in order to calm her down, and then I asked her why she had barked.

She was usually so quiet, and would not bark without reason.

Phillip had frozen with the cup in his hand. Leo’s eyes remained fixed on it as she explained it to me.

Uhh... You can faintly sense something in the wine that is like the glass sphere... The smell of disease...

From the wine?

“The wine... Leo. Are you sure?”

“Wou.”

I asked, and then Leo nodded.

“...Phillip. I don’t think that you should drink that wine.”

“Mr. Takumi?”

“Leo says that she senses something bad from it...”

“Wh-what?”

Mr. Hannes finally shook himself out of the shock of hearing Leo barking.

...Leo was just trying to help, and she isn't actually scary at all, Mr. Hannes.

“I'm sorry to trouble you, but could you have several wine barrels brought out from the storage house? There is something I need to confirm.”

“Confirm?”

“Yes. I think your village's wine might be very dangerous. I need to be sure.”

Chapter 175

The Wine Was The Cause

“Our wine is dangerous... I don't know what you mean, but if that's what you wish, Mr. Takumi. Very well. I will call the others and have some barrels brought out.”

“Thank you. I'm sorry for the trouble.”

“Mr. Takumi, what's going on? What is wrong with the wine?”

Mr. Hannes was very proud of the wine that his village produced. And so it could not be pleasant to hear this.

Still, because it was me who was asking, he agreed, which I was grateful for.

Phillip was still holding the cup in one hand as he looked at me with a puzzled expression.

“Phillip. I'm sure you know all about that malicious store in Ractos.”

“Yes. Sebastian has told me a lot... What about it?”

“I believe that they are somehow related to the illness. And I think I might know how they did it.”

“You do!?”

“It’s thanks to Leo. I doubt that humans would have realized on their own.”

Was it just a feeling or perhaps also a smell... But Leo had reacted to the glass sphere as well as the wine.

And thanks to that, I had been able to connect the dots in my head.

Now I just needed to wait for Mr. Hannes to bring the wine, and I could be sure.

It was all thanks to Leo.

As I waited for Mr. Hannes, I explained to Phillip about the sphere and illness, which also helped me organize my thoughts.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

While I talked to Phillip and praised Leo, Mr. Hannes came with several other villagers.

They brought five barrels. Each was being rolled by two or three people.

As they were high enough to reach a person’s chest, they must weigh hundreds of kilograms if full.

As carrying them would be difficult, it was best to just roll them.

“Thank you, Mr. Hannes.”

“So, Mr. Takumi. We brought the barrels. What will you do now?”

“Uhh, I will have Leo smell them.”

“Smell... And what will that tell you?”

“Leo is sensitive to bad smells and presences. So she will know if something is wrong.”

I said, and then Leo walked up to the barrels.

“Very well. Fetch something to pour the wine...”

“Wait a minute. I’ll have Leo smell it like this first. Go on, Leo.”

“Wuff.”

Mr. Hannes was going to pour the wine into a cup first, but I stopped him.

I wasn’t actually sure if the wooden barrels would interfere, but I wanted to know.

And if she couldn’t do it, then I would have them pour it into a cup.

“Wou...wuff. Wuff. Wuff...wuff-wuff.”

Leo obeyed and slowly pushed her nose towards the barrels and started to sniff them.

The other villagers stepped back and watched so that they wouldn’t get in her way.

“Grau!!”

After sniffing the first two, Leo approached the third and then barked once.

It looked like I was right.

“Leo. What about the other barrels?”

“Wuff... Wou. Grau!”

The fourth was fine, but she barked again with the fifth.

So the third and fifth barrels were suspicious.

“Wuff-wuff. Wou-grau-grau!”

“Hmm.”

“What did Leo say?”

After sniffing all of them, Leo told me what she had sensed.

Phillip, who was watching, was very curious about what she had said.

“Uhh, the third and fifth barrels have the same smell and feel as the sphere and the wine that Phillip is holding. In other words...”

“It feels just like the sickness that is spreading in the town...?”

“That’s it. Mr. Hannes. Is there something different about those two barrels?”

I told them what Leo had sensed after smelling them.

My guess had been correct, and the barrels of wine had the smell of disease.

Well, only two of them... But why...?

“The third and fifth are much younger than the others. The other three were stored near the back and have rested for many years. Much like the ones we served during the feast.”

So the wine I had drunk last night was from the back of the storage house.

That was why Leo hadn't reacted to it.

“Younger wine... And where are those barrels kept?”

“Near the entrance. We keep the older ones near the back. Both the taste and smell change with age... We send both to Ractos as separate products.”

“I see... And that sphere was kept near the entrance?”

“Yes, that's right.”

After hearing this, I was completely convinced of it.

Mr. Hannes was still holding the glass sphere as he answered.

“Thank you, Leo. It's because of you that it all makes sense now.”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“But, what does it mean?”

“Won't you explain it to us, Mr. Takumi?”

As I thanked Leo and petted her, Mr. Hannes and Phillip begged me to explain it to them.

While many thoughts had gone through my head, I had to explain it to them or they wouldn't understand.

"Uhh, well. Some of this is speculation, but... I will start with the cause of the illness."

I moved away from Leo and faced Mr. Hannes and Phillip as I talked.

"As you well know, Phillip, there is a store in Ractos that is selling diluted medicine and herbs."

"Yes."

"The store that I nearly bought from."

"Indeed. That store opened in Ractos a little over a month ago."

"A little over a month..."

That was when Mr. Hannes realized that the store had opened at nearly the same time as the merchant had brought him the glass sphere.

Chapter 176

I Summarized the Spread of the Disease and the Store in Question

"During the same time that the store opened, an illness began to spread through the town of Ractos. And if I'm not wrong, it was the same time as it spread in this village as well."

"Yes, that's right."

To be precise, the store opened close to two month ago, and the illness started to spread about a little over a month ago.

So they had guessed at the timing and started to buy all the medicine.

“This malicious store used the spread of the disease, and bought all the stock from other stores so that they could be the only place that sold them. Not only that, but all of their medicine was increased through diluting it.”

“That is what we know based on Sebastian’s findings, isn’t it?”

“Yes. But how they knew of the right timing... After all, if it didn’t spread, then not many people would buy from them, and they would not have made much of a profit.”

“So even if they had control of the market...it would not mean much.”

There was no point if the demand did not increase.

After all, they paid the same prices as customers for the medicine, not the cost price.

“And now we must talk about the glass sphere that Mr. Hannes is holding now.”

“This...?”

Mr. Hannes’s eyes went down the sphere.

Phillip and the villagers also looked at it.

“I don’t understand how it actually works, but... That sphere seems to be transmitting the disease. It is an object meant to spread it.”

“What!”

Upon hearing this, Mr. Hannes gasped and dropped the glass sphere.

It fell to the ground and rolled towards the wine barrels before stopping.

“I think it’s fine to touch it. Perhaps it is only effective for things like wine. I don’t think it has a direct effect on people. Otherwise, Leo wouldn’t have let me touch it.”

“Wuff!”

I said to reassure Mr. Hannes, and Leo nodded in agreement.

And then Mr. Hannes sighed with relief.

While there was no evidence yet, I did believe that it didn’t work like that... Otherwise, the merchant who brought it would have also become sick.

That’s why it took some time for the illness to spread through the village.

“As for the wine that Leo smelled something bad in... I think they were affected by the sphere, and that’s how the illness spread. You become sick after drinking it...”

“So...it’s the wine that we made that...”

Mr. Hannes was shocked when he heard this.

The other villagers were the same. They had worked so hard, and were proud of their village’s wine. And now they had been told that it had played a role in spreading a disease.

“Obviously, the merchant who brought the sphere would be working with the people from the store.”

“That’s why they knew when it would start spreading...”

The wine was always sent to Ractos.

If they knew it would spread like that, then they could take a risk, and buy all of the medicine in the town.

There was no doubt in my mind that the grape merchant and the people from the store were working together.

We already knew that the store was connected to the count, and the merchant with the sphere had come from the count's territories.

...But just how much this count was personally involved...I did not know...

"So it was our wine... What have we done..."

"You are not to blame, Mr. Hannes. It was all because of the merchant who tricked you into placing the glass sphere there."

Mr. Hannes was terribly distressed when he understood that their wine had spread the disease.

But it wasn't the making of the wine that was wrong, but the person who tampered with it.

So there was no need for him to feel that way... But I suppose he could not help it.

"Phillip. Please put that sphere away safely, so that it does not touch anything else."

"Very well. But, what are you going to do? Won't it be better to just destroy it?"

"It will probably be used as evidence. So we cannot destroy it now. Well, it will be something that Sebastian can decide..."

"Oh, he will be delighted to hear of this."

"Also, take this with you. Just in case."

"Ramogi. Very well."

"You must drink it if you feel the smallest sign of the illness."

“I understand.”

“Also, don’t drink any of the wine without permission.”

“Ah...last night, I was so drunk already, and someone I befriended recommended it to me... But I don’t feel like drinking any more after hearing what you said, Mr. Takumi.”

Considering how drunk Phillip had been last night, it would not be strange for him to sneak into the wine storage house for a quick taste test.

And a combination of the cold floor and drinking the wine near the entrance had caused him to become sick in the morning.

Even if one of the villagers had told him to do it, it was not good to drink so much. I would also have to be careful... Though, I hadn’t gotten drunk at all...

“Still, most of it was thanks to Leo, for being able to tell the difference... And Phillip helped as well.”

“I did? Of course, I agree with you about Leo, but...I didn’t do...”

“It’s thanks to the fact that you fell drunkenly asleep in the storage house, that we found the glass sphere. That’s a big contribution, isn’t it? Though, you must be careful about your drinking.”

“Ahahaha...yes, I will.”

Phillip wrapped the glass sphere in a cloth as we talked.

In fact, had Phillip not found the glass sphere, we might not have figured out the cause of the disease.

It was then that the depressed-looking Mr. Hannes approached us.

“...Mr. Takumi... What are we to do now? I never would have thought that our wine would cause such a thing...”

“Mr. Hannes. ...Hmm. Yes...”

Even if I didn’t blame them, it would be difficult for them to not blame themselves.

And so merely offering encouraging words was not enough.

I would have to think of some way to prevent them from being too hard on themselves.

Chapter 177

I Asked Leo to Sniff Out the Barrels

“In that case, please bring the barrels out from the storage. We must find out which of the wines is safe to drink.”

“Ye-yes, you’re right. Very well. I will have all the villagers work together to bring them out.”

“You don’t need to rush too much. Since we have the sphere, you can take your time.”

I said, but the words had little effect on Mr. Hannes and the others.

Regardless, it was best to have them act now, and so they would have less time to think negative thoughts.

But it was as if they didn’t hear me...and the villagers rushed towards the storage house. Still, Mr. Hannes would be kept busy for now.

“Leo. Sorry to ask you again...but you’re going to have to sniff out the barrels again.”

“Wuff.”

The smell and presence was very disagreeable to Leo, and so I felt bad for her.

I didn't think she cared much about wine, but she had been upset enough to start barking because of the smell.

Still, she nodded firmly as if to say that I should leave it to her... I really was grateful for that.

"Mr. Takumi, the glass sphere is secure now. ...What should I do? Should I report this to Sebastian?"

"Indeed... I'm not sure..."

I would like to inform him as soon as possible.

He might know what this glass sphere is, and what we should do with it.

However, even though we knew the cause, there was still a lot that I wanted to do here in this village...

"Mr. Takumi, sorry to keep you waiting. The rest of the barrels will arrive soon."

"Good. Please inspect each one with Leo. If she barks or growls, that means the wine is dangerous. Otherwise, they are safe, and can be returned to the storage house."

"I understand."

"I'm counting on you, Leo. I want you to bark or growl when you find a bad barrel, so that Mr. Hannes and the others will know. You don't need to do anything to the barrels that are fine."

"Wou!"

As I was wondering what to do with the glass sphere, Mr. Hannes and the other villagers returned with the barrels.

And I could see other villagers following them from behind... There were so many barrels, I would have to make it up to Leo later.

And so I left them to deal with the barrels. I had to think about our next move.

I continued to talk to Phillip as Leo and Mr. Hannes got to work.

“Once they are finished, we can ride on Leo and return to the mansion.”

“I’ve thought of that, but I don’t think that I can return so soon.”

“Why is that?”

“Everyone in this village drinks that wine. And that’s how it spread... I think it’s likely that people will get sick again...”

“Well...that is possible...”

There were probably people who were already sick, and just hadn’t shown any symptoms yet. It could end up spreading all over again.

And so I thought that I should make more Ramogi and watch them for a short while.

If it was similar to a cold, then maybe they would have built up a resistance to it, but I wasn’t sure.

Besides, there would be some people who hadn’t gotten sick yet, but would soon enough.

As this was where it all started, I thought it was necessary to see it to the end.

“Because if they need Ramogi, I will be able to make it quickly.”

“That’s true. There will be no need to fear the illness if you are here, Mr. Takumi. ...However, then word won’t reach Sebastian until much later...”

“And so I have an idea, Phillip.”

“What?”

If I couldn't go, someone else could go instead.

But it couldn't be anyone from here. They were busy with the wine and disease.

Besides, they weren't used to riding on Leo. But Phillip was, and he could be trusted.

“Phillip. What if...you were to ride on Leo and return to the mansion instead?”

“...On Leo... But, I am a guard. I can't just leave you here, Mr. Takumi...”

Phillip had actually come as an escort for Mr. Hannes, but once we arrived at the village, he became my guard.

And so for Phillip, it did not seem right for both Leo and him to not be close by my side.

“I'll be fine. This is a peaceful village. I am in no danger of being attacked. Besides, it is for occasions like this that I learned to use a sword. And some magic as well.”

Though, the magic was just to buy a little time.

However, it was better than nothing. Sebastian had told me of the importance of running away. Even if something did happen...it didn't mean that I had to fight.

But this was a peaceful village, and so anything like that was very unlikely.

“Well... It's true that you will probably be safe here, but...”

“So you agree? The people have welcomed me here, and they have been good to us. I will be fine.”

“...Very well. I will go to the mansion and send Leo back to you as soon as I arrive. But please don't push yourself too hard while you're here.”

“Yes, thank you.”

I had managed to convince Phillip.

Though, he didn't need to remind me to be careful... I intended to only make what Ramogi that was necessary and at a leisurely pace.

Now, I just had to wait for Leo to finish sniffing the barrels, and ask her to run back to the mansion.

...Really, I seemed to rely on her for everything.

“Wuff. Wuff!”

“Oh, Leo. Are you done? Thank you!”

“Wuff!”

A few hours later, Leo was finished with the barrels, and she returned to me with a wagging tail as if to make a report.

I petted the proud Leo on the head, and then fed her some sausages that Mr. Hannes's wife had prepared.

As she had worked hard, I had to reward her generously.

“Thank you. Mr. Takumi and Leo.”

“Mr. Hannes. How many barrels were left?”

“Indeed... About half of them...”

“I see...”

Chapter 178

I Watched As Leo and Phillip Returned to the Mansion

After Leo was finished, they discovered that only half of the wine could be drunk safely.

Perhaps they should be glad that it wasn't everything, but for such a small village, this was a great loss.

Once I return to the mansion, I would like to discuss with the others if there is anything that can be done.

I couldn't help but think this as I saw the tired faces of Mr. Hannes in the villagers, who had been pushing the barrels.

“In any case, make sure that no one goes close to the dangerous barrels. They should be separated so that they are not touched.”

“Yes. I'll see to it.”

“Leo. I'm sure that you're tired after all that...but could you do one more thing?”

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff?”

I told them to isolate the dangerous barrels, so that no one would drink them by accident.

Also, I told Leo what I had discussed with Phillip.

Leo said something about not being that tired, and then she tilted her head curiously... It was almost as if she was eagerly expecting me to make a request... Even her tail was wagging... Did she like it when I asked her to do something?

“As soon as possible, I want you to carry Phillip and take him back to the mansion.”

“Wuff. ...Wuff?”

“Me? I’m going to stay here for a little longer.”

“Wuff...”

“I’ll be fine. I said the same thing to Phillip. This is a safe village where there is no danger of being attacked by anyone. ...But if you’re so worried, come back as soon as you can.”

“...Wou!”

Leo quickly agreed to going, but was questioning my decision to stay.

As she seemed worried, I insisted that it was safe. I then joked that she should return as quickly as possible, and she nodded with enthusiasm.

“...Of course, don’t be in such a rush that you shake Phillip off of your back, okay?”

“Wou...wuff.”

Leo was so concerned about me that she nearly forgot about Phillip.

If she ran as fast as she could, no human would be able to stay on...

So it was a good thing that I reminded her.

...Phillip would likely be injured if he fell.

“So, Mr. Hannes. I will be staying here for a little longer, if that is all right?”

“If it is you, Mr. Takumi, you may stay for as long as you want. From the illness to discovering the trouble with the sphere...you have saved this town. And so you are always welcome.”

As I waited for Phillip to prepare his return journey, I told Mr. Hannes my reasons and asked if I could stay.

I had sort of made up my mind before I even asked him, so it was a good thing he didn't refuse...

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Are you ready, Leo?”

“Wuff.”

And then Leo lay low so that Phillip could climb onto her back.

As this was his first time riding her, he seemed a little scared. However, he would likely be fine, as he was used to riding on horses.

“Phillip. Take this.”

“...Ramogi?”

“Yes. Since my return to the mansion will be delayed, it will affect the stock in Ractos. This is just enough for a few days, but it will have to do for now. Also, since you were exposed to the glass sphere, if you see any symptoms...”

“Drink the Ramogi... Yes, I understand.”

“Good.”

While Leo was sniffing the barrels, I had used my time to make some extra Ramogi.

The villagers were all concentrating on the wine, and the children were watching Leo. So I was able to work privately in Mr. Hannes's house.

Medicine was important in order to stop the further spreading of the disease.

While they would run out of the other herbs and medicine, right now, I decided to focus on Ramogi.

“I’m counting on you, Leo. Always be aware that your rider is secure.”

“Wuff!”

“...Thank you, good Leo.”

“Phillip, just tell Leo if she is going too fast. Leo, listen to what he says, all right?”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“I understand. I’ll be careful and hold on tight so we can get there as soon as possible.”

Leo nodded reassuringly as she stood up.

Phillip was more fit than I was, and he was a rider, so perhaps Leo could run faster than she did with me.

That would mean reaching the mansion a lot earlier... It would be best to give Sebastian and the others the information about the glass sphere and the illness as soon as possible.

“We’ll go then. Please be careful as well, Mr. Takumi.”

“Yes, thank you.”

“Wuff!”

I said to Phillip, and then Leo barked once before dashing off.

“...That might be a little too fast... Leo?”

She practically disappeared right in front of us.

I didn't know if she was overexcited or just wanted to return quickly... I would have to pray for Phillip's safety... Well, Leo was surely smart enough to think about him...

“Now, Mr. Hannes.”

“Yes.”

“Please take this, just in case.”

“...Ramogi? But everyone is already...”

“While you separated the wine barrels, perhaps some people have already drunk it. And there may be people who are already ill but haven't shown symptoms yet. ...I just think you should be careful.”

“Very well. You saved this village and are a pharmacist who serves the duke. I will not question you.”

That was how Mr. Hannes saw me. The duke's pharmacist.

Well, I suppose it wasn't completely inaccurate...

Regardless, I wasn't going to give him any more details.

And so I handed Mr. Hannes the Ramogi.

It wasn't much, but I could make more if needed.

I Thought About the Wine that was to be Destroyed

“Ah, that’s right. Mr. Hannes. Is there any place outside that no one will see you? Also, I would like some clean cloth...”

“A place that is secluded? ...Well, you could go behind my house. As it is at the edge of the village, no one will go there. ...But, what are you going to do?”

“Well, since I’m not returning to the duke’s house, I thought I should work a little. I cannot just sit here idly...”

“But we really wouldn’t mind if you took things easy... But I see that you are a passionate person. In that case, please feel free to use the space behind my house. I too will make sure that I don’t bother you there. And I’ll bring you the cloth at once.”

“I’m sorry to trouble you.”

After mentioning that it was the work related to the duke, Mr. Hannes assumed it was something that he should not see.

And since I wanted to keep Weed Cultivation secret, it was good that it was a place where nobody would go.

Even though I was here to ensure that everything was well with the town, I did not feel like resting and doing nothing.

In that case, I might as well make some herbs and medicine to send to Ractos later on.

Of course, since I had my sword with me, I also meant to continue my training... It was best to do these things when you had time.

Mr. Hannes was about to leave in order to get the cloth when my stomach suddenly sounded loudly.

Now that I think about it, I haven’t eaten lunch yet...

“I’ll have something prepared for you first.”

“Thank you...”

This happened back at the mansion as well. It was rather embarrassing...

But at least it wasn’t in front of Ms. Claire.

“Please eat. I made this with the other villagers.”

“Thank you.”

After some time had passed, I was back in the center of the village, where the feast had been held the previous night. And I started to eat lunch

According to Mr. Hannes, unless there was something that kept him away, he would eat his lunch here and watch the village.

Lunch... Well, it was actually a little late now, but I thought that it would be quite nice to eat and watch the people while the sun was still high in the sky.

It must be something he did because he was the village chief.

And now, it seemed to me that the village had brightened up considerably, now that they were all healed.

“By the way, Mr. Hannes. Half of the wine can no longer be used... How will that affect the village’s income?”

Perhaps it wasn’t something that concerned me. But as I observed the village, I started to think about how much they must rely on their wine production.

It was a small village, and so if half of their wine could no longer be sold, then it must be a great loss?

“Indeed... If I am being honest, it will be quite severe. And while it won't be easy for everyone, we will have to live in moderation for some time...”

“I see...”

So it really was a heavy blow for them.

I didn't know how the seasons worked in this world, but for a village of this size, you would have to save up in order to survive during the winter.

“Hmm...”

I ate the food that was made by the villagers as I considered this.

Losing half of the wine meant they would be in a dangerous position for some time...

And while I was no expert, I doubted that they could make up for the lost wine in just a few months.

Perhaps it was something that would take years.

Also, the wine was so delicious. It almost felt like a waste to throw it all away just because it had the scent of disease...

I suppose that was the Japanese side of me talking.

“The market price for wine...no, that might be too expensive...perhaps the wholesale price...”

“What is it, Mr. Takumi? Is the food not to your liking...?”

“No, the food is delicious and quite satisfying. I was just thinking about the wine that is to be disposed of...”

“Oh?”

I had been muttering to myself while I ate, and Mr. Hannes had interpreted my scowl as a sign that I was not enjoying the food.

But it really was every bit as delicious as what we had yesterday, and there was no need to worry.

Even if it wasn't anything fancy, there was something comforting about it. I was just a common person, like them, after all.

...Indeed, in spite of their upcoming troubles, they were still serving me such good food. And so I wanted to do what I could.

“Mr. Hannes. I want to ask you about something...”

“Yes, what is it?”

“The wine that you can't use... Could you sell it to me at the wholesale price?”

“What!? You wish to buy that wine!? However... You said that it cannot be drunk, as it will likely make people sick...”

“Yes, that is true. It cannot be drunk... However, I think I might be able to do something about that.”

For instance, maybe you could kill the pathogenic bacteria by boiling it...and then it could be used for something.

Of course, I didn't know if there even were pathogenic bacteria in this world. Or if it was fine to boil wine.

In the first place, boiling it would get rid of the alcohol content.

Well, I didn't know what could be done, it was merely an idea.

“I’ll have to consult with others before deciding how to use it. I just think that it might be used for something. Of course, I don’t mean to use it to spread the disease even farther. Don’t worry.”

“I trust you, Mr. Takumi. However...I cannot sell something that is likely to be thrown away...”

Sebastian had so much knowledge, and might be able to think of something.

And if he couldn’t, perhaps Ms. Helena would know something.

...And if I still couldn’t find a way, I would have to throw it out.

I was currently being paid to grow herbs.

And since I had nothing to spend the money on, surely spending it on something like this... After all, it was for the village, and so I didn’t see it as a waste.

Just in case, I had actually brought some money with me at Sebastian’s suggestion.

...Though, I never thought that I would end up using it.

Chapter 180

I Purchased the Wine

“Are you certain...?”

“Yes, I am. The wine in this village is very delicious. Just think of it as my way of thanking you for introducing it to me.”

Mr. Hannes was hesitant, but I could see that he also wanted to agree to it.

Obviously, the village would suffer if they had to dispose of all of it, and so if someone wanted to buy it from them, it would be a great help.

He had to think about the good of his people, which meant that he could not be too reluctant.

“...Thank you. I would be glad to sell you the wine. However, I think the price should be lowered even more...”

“No, it’s fine. I don’t want to buy it at a discount. It’s not like I’m entering the wine business with this...”

“But you’ve already done so much for our village... I don’t know how we can repay you... But now, we will have enough money to buy grapes from the merchant who is visiting tomorrow.”

Mr. Hannes agreed, and so it was decided that I would buy the wine.

He was so grateful towards me, that he seemed like he was about to burst into tears. However, what he said immediately after caught my attention.

“...Tommorow? The merchant is coming?”

“Yes, according to the schedule. He visits once every few months to sell us grapes. But without your help, Mr. Takumi, we would not have been able to buy much.”

So if things went according to schedule, the merchant would come to the village to sell them grapes.

The merchant from the count’s territory...

“Will it be the merchant who gave you the glass sphere?”

“If it is the usual merchant, it will be a different person.”

“I see...”

Had it been the same merchant, we could capture him... I had thought. But apparently, it wasn’t the same person.

Perhaps that merchant would never return. After all, he had already accomplished his goal.

And the other merchant probably had nothing to do with the matter of the glass sphere... Well, I should still have a talk with him anyway.

“Would you mind if I spoke with this merchant tomorrow?”

“It is possible, but... Is there something you are worried about?”

“No, but I do have some questions, like how involved he is with the merchant who brought the sphere.”

“I see... As this person comes regularly, I do hope he had nothing to do with it...”

For Mr. Hannes, this person was someone they did business with regularly.

And so they were well acquainted. He would not want to think that the person had wanted to hurt the village.

I didn't know what the truth was, but surely he could tell me something about the merchant who brought the sphere.

After all, that merchant had visited as a replacement.

“Alright, I'll start making the herbs then.”

After the late lunch, I went to the back of Mr. Hannes's house and got to work.

Mr. Hannes had gone off to check the barrels and calculate the price.

He also gave me cloth to wrap up the herbs, so I was fully prepared.

“...That’s good...but now that I think about it, I have to do it all by myself now....”

Obviously, as I wasn’t in the mansion, there was no one to help me.

I had to pick all of the herbs and wrap them up after dividing them.

It was simple enough if I was only making Ramogi, but if there was a wide variety of herbs, it could take quite some time.

...Well, it’s not like I lacked that at all, so I would do it at a leisurely pace.

“...Still, while I thought that I was used to working quietly alone...it does feel a little sad.”

Back at the mansion, Ms. Claire, Ms. Lyra, Tilura and Milina were often there as well.

Sebastian as well... I then realized that I was rarely alone since coming to this world.

It wasn’t just the people here, but Leo was always there.

And since I took Leo’s presence for granted, her absence was felt even stronger. Like something important was missing.

And so I was reminded to be grateful to have people close by as I continued on with my work.

...I told myself that this wasn’t to distract me or escape reality.

“There you are, Mr. Takumi.”

“...Ha...phew...Mr. Hannes?”

After making some herbs, I started to jog around the village to keep my body from getting sluggish. That was when Mr. Hannes called out to me.

I caught my breath and then answered.

“What are you doing here?”

“...Ha...hah... Oh, I was just running for a bit of exercise.”

“I see.”

We were currently on the side of the village that was opposite of Mr. Hannes’s house.

Close to where the barrels of bad wine were being kept.

I hadn’t been thinking of which direction I was headed in, and had just ended up here by accident.

Perhaps Mr. Hannes had been looking for me... I felt a little bad about it.

“Mr. Takumi, I have finished making the calculations for the barrels.”

“How much will it cost me?”

“...So you haven’t changed your mind?”

Mr. Hannes seemed like he still didn’t quite believe me.

“It’s fine. I just want to help so you can continue to make your delicious wine.”

“Very well. Thank you so much. As for the price...”

And so Mr. Hannes told me the wholesale price of the wine.

As there were a lot of barrels, I expected the price to be quite high. But it was less than I thought.

But then again, it was also possible that Mr. Hannes had added a discount and not said anything...

Regardless, I was just relieved that I had brought enough money with me.

To think that I was carrying enough money to buy half of a village's wine... It was hard to imagine, and so different to how things used to be for me.

It was because the duke's family paid me well, unlike the company I used to work at.

And I was also grateful for Weed Cultivation, which allowed me to easily prepare herbs that had such high value.