

Beloved Dog 181

Chapter 181

I Hadn't Thought About How To Transport The Wine

In order to pay Mr. Hannes for the wine, I stopped my training and returned to the room where my things were kept.

Then I took out the gold and silver and handed it to Mr. Hannes.

“Yes, thank you.”

“Really, you don't have to do so much for this village...but thank you.”

Said Mr. Hannes and his wife gratefully.

“Still, how will you carry all of that wine with you?”

“Ah...”

I had been thinking so much about buying the barrels of wine, but had not considered how I would carry them...

Each barrel weighed a few hundred kilograms, and so it was not something I could carry alone.

Not only that, but there were over twenty of them... Leo wouldn't be able to carry them either...so I wasn't sure what to do...

“I hadn't thought about that... But yes, they will need to be carried...”

“You saw through the sphere and the illness, but are still forgetful of other things...”

Mr. Hannes looked stunned at my lack of foresight.

Well, it wasn't like I had done any detective work. It was all because of Leo... It had nothing to do with my own intelligence.

In any case...I had to think of a way to carry them back. If only I had told Phillip to ask Sebastian if there was a way...

However, I had made the decision after they left, so it could not be helped.

"What should I do..."

This was not a problem where Weed Cultivation would help me.

While I did have herbs that raised one's physical ability, that would still not allow you to carry a barrel that was hundreds of kilos...

"We do have some wagons in this village... But it won't be enough to carry all of them at once..."

Mr. Hannes said, after thinking it over.

As they delivered the wine barrels to Ractos, of course, they would have wagons.

However, they did not have enough to deliver them all at once.

And so it would likely be two or three...maybe four or five barrels at a time.

"The merchant is arriving tomorrow, yes? The one from the count's territories...how will the wine be delivered to them?"

The count's territory was even farther than Ractos.

Not only that, but since they did not make the journey often, they would have to carry a lot each time.

In that case, I wanted to know how they did it.

“The merchant comes to sell us grapes. And so they have several wagons, much like a caravan. The grapes are unloaded here, and they take the wine barrels instead.”

“...I see.”

Well, that was the natural way to do things.

I didn't know why I expected some other special method.

“I'm sorry, but I'll think of a way to carry them before I leave this village. Even if it means taking them a little at a time.”

“I understand. It is no problem for us at all.”

Mr. Hannes was not against the idea of carrying them one by one. However, I wanted to remove them from the village as soon as possible.

It wasn't like they were being careless, but I still worried that someone might drink it by accident.

The wine I had bought made people sick.

And so if someone drank and became ill, then I would feel somewhat responsible.

And that was not why I had bought the wine.

“Well, I'm going to train a little and then go to sleep.”

“Yes, good night.”

After dinner, I said good night to Mr. Hannes, who was going to bed, and then I went out into the back garden.

While I needed to think of a way to carry the barrels, I also couldn't forget my training.

Because you never know what might happen.

"Phew... Too bad there isn't a bathtub here..."

I returned to my room and wiped myself with a towel and some hot water.

The chief's house might have been bigger than the others, but unlike a nobleman's house, it did not have a bathing room.

Well, perhaps that was just considered normal in this world.

After wiping myself, I settled down quietly in my bed in order to sleep.

"...Now that I think about it, I've never slept alone since rescuing Leo."

She had been so weak on that first day, and so I ended up staying up the whole night and watching her. It was all a nostalgic memory now.

And ever since then, Leo had always slept close to my bed at night.

She was still a maltese back then. So she would sometimes crawl under my blanket. Or I would wake up and see her resting on my stomach.

If she did that now, I would be crushed...

And ever since coming to this world, we were always together.

We were in the same room at the mansion, and whether we visited a village or a forest, we stuck together.

And even during those nights where she couldn't fit inside the tent, there was still Sebastian and the others.

And so this was the first time in a few years where I really slept alone.

“Of course, I'm too old to say that I feel lonely... But still...”

I thought to myself while going over those memories with Leo.

While I had sometimes been a burden to Leo, and sometimes I had to take care of her, they were all good memories to me. And I felt myself smiling as I drifted off to sleep.

The next day, I woke up as the sun started to rise.

I got ready for the day and then left the room. Mr. Hannes and his wife were already awake and just about to eat breakfast.

“Good morning.”

“Good morning, Mr. Takumi. Breakfast is ready.”

We greeted each other and then I sat down at the table to eat.

They were both elderly, and it seemed that much like many other elderly people, they slept early and woke up early.

Of course, it would be rude to say such things, and so I kept it to myself.

After I finished breakfast, I did some light jogging before going to the back of Mr. Hannes's house in order to make herbs with Weed Cultivation.

According to Mr. Hannes, the merchant would arrive shortly after lunch, and so I had time until then.

Chapter 182

A Different Merchant Arrived

"...He would usually have arrived by now... I wonder if something happened...?"

I was in the living room, and some time had already passed since we ate lunch.

Usually the merchant who sold the grapes would have arrived in the village already, but he had yet to be seen.

"Was he ever late in the past?"

"There were times when he was delayed a little...but not this long..."

In fact, the sun would probably start to set soon.

Even if he was going to be behind schedule a little, it seemed too late.

Perhaps something had happened on the road...?

"Chief! The merchant is here!"

"Ah, I see. So it looks like it was nothing after all."

As we sat there worrying, Rai started shouting from outside.

Apparently, the merchant had arrived safely.

...But what was the reason for the delay?

“But chief it doesn’t seem to be the usual merchant. Though, he still came with the grapes...”

“What do you mean, Rai?”

“I don’t know. But father went out to meet him at the village entrance.”

“So it’s someone who you have never seen before?”

“No, I’ve seen him just once before. But it’s not the usual man.”

Rai and his parents lived in the house that was the closest to the entrance.

And so they often managed who came in and left.

In any case, he had noted that it wasn’t the merchant who usually visited.

...But it was someone he had seen before...

“Mr. Hannes. Could it be...”

“... Yes, it may be the merchant who brought the glass sphere. As I am quite sure that Rai would have seen him that time...”

Mr. Hannes moved closer to me and we whispered to each other secretly.

According to Rai, this merchant had been here just once before... Children often have good memory... And so it was our suspicion that this was the merchant who brought the sphere.

However... Why had he returned...? Had he brought a new sphere? Or did he want to confirm that the disease had been spread...?

In any case, there was no point in staying here and thinking.

We had to go and find out.

“Mr. Hannes. While I said that I wanted to meet the merchant... Things have changed, and so I will conceal myself instead. After all, if it is who we think it is, he might get suspicious.”

“I understand. Then I will go out and deal with him.”

“Please pretend that you are ignorant about the sphere and the illness.”

“...Very well.”

After discussing it with Mr. Hannes, we left the house.

I wanted to sneak close enough to them in order to hear their conversation while still being out of sight.

Otherwise, he might become tight-lipped.

And so I separated from Mr. Hannes along the way and went around the houses of the village so that I could head to the entrance from a different direction.

“From this position, I should be able to hear them...”

In the shadows of Rai’s house, I hid and looked at the entrance.

Thankfully, the sun was starting to set, and the area had become dim. It was unlikely that I would be caught.

...It wasn’t quite a stealth mission, but it reminded me of some games I used to play.

Only I was an amateur, and so it wasn’t perfect.

“Ah, that’s right... I can use that.”

I took some herbs that I had made out of my bag.

In the Fenrir Forest, I had the others eat it. A herb that made your senses sharper.

With this, it would be easier to listen to their conversations, even if they were far away.

“...Hmm... It really does taste bad... But my hearing has improved.”

The effect could be felt immediately.

Things that I couldn’t hear before, like distant footsteps and horses. Even the sounds of a creaking carriage.

I should be able to hear Mr. Hannes and the others as well then.

“...What does...? But I definitely...but...”

I heard a man muttering near the entrance.

While he had only muttered it quietly, due to my sharpened senses, I was able to catch some of it.

This must be the merchant’s voice. He sounded baffled by something.

While the area was becoming dark, thanks to the herbs, I could see just fine.

And though the village entrance was too far to make out clearly, there were a few people standing there.

“That must be Rai’s parents...and the man who is a short distance away is the one who muttered.”

The man and women who stood in the village would be Rai's parents.

And the man outside seemed to be explaining to them why he was delayed.

But there was another man standing a few steps away from him. He was probably the one I had heard.

He wasn't talking with the others, and looked like he was just observing the village. But I could not see his expression or get an idea of what he was thinking.

And further behind him, where the horses were kept, I could see a few wagons.

A covered wagon..?

It wasn't like the carriages that I rode with Ms. Claire, but a wagon that was covered by a large tarp.

It was likely filled with the grapes that were to be sold.

"Still, something feels wrong..."

If only Leo was here with me. She had much sharper senses, and could probably tell me something... But she was not here.

I had asked her to go to Sebastian, which was also very important.

"...Sorry to keep you waiting."

As I thought of such things, Mr. Hannes slowly walked towards them.

While I had been running, Mr. Hannes had moved slowly in order to give me time to get into position.

Mr. Hannes then glanced briefly in my direction. Uh, please don't do that. They might see me.

"I'm sorry. We took longer than expected... You see, one of the wagon wheels got stuck in the mud..."

"Ah, how very unfortunate..."

Now that Mr. Hannes had arrived, the man who stood at a distance now joined the others.

He then told Mr. Hannes what the other man had been explaining to Rai's parents.

Apparently, they were late because their wagon got stuck in the mud.

And since the load was so heavy, it had been difficult to free it again.

Well, if what the man said was true, then it would explain why they were late.

Chapter 183

I Felt That Something Was Wrong

"Still...something feels strange... While there are several wagons, I don't sense the presence of many people..."

Obviously, the wagons were drawn by horses, so there should be drivers.

And yet, there weren't enough people to drive all of them... Unless they were inside of the wagons?

"So, how are the grapes? Have they grown well?"

"Hmm, ah, yes. They are quite fine."

"But, this is the second time that the usual merchant hasn't come. Did something happen?"

“In-deed. He was busy with a different matter, and so I had to come this time as well.”

The person who Mr. Hannes was speaking to was likely the merchant we were talking about...

According to him, the other merchant was merely too busy.

And he had been paid to take his place and deliver the grapes.

While I was watching them from far away, there was something vague about the way he answered the questions.

He kept pausing... Perhaps it was just the way that he talked, but it seemed like there was something else on his mind.

“Well then, we will buy the grapes, as we always do...”

“Ah, uh... Yes... Well, you all seem to be in good health?”

“Yes, we are. I suppose it was because of that charm that you gave us. Our wine has also been very good. The village has never been more lively.”

“...Oh, indeed... And you put the charm in the place that I told you to?”

“Yes, of course.”

As soon as Mr. Hannes started to talk about buying the grapes, the merchant showed concern towards his health.

Apparently, he had told Mr. Hannes that it was a charm, and must be placed in the storage house.

Mr. Hannes assured the man that he obeyed this exactly, and then he glanced in my direction.

He might as well have winked.

“...And the wine. Are the villagers drinking it as well?”

“Yes, of course. We have to ensure that it tastes good. Besides, we are all very proud of the wine that we made... There will be no compromises.”

“I-I see... How odd...it was definitely a real magic tool...”

Mr. Hannes told the man that they were all drinking it.

And then the man began to mutter, so that Mr. Hannes couldn't hear him. But I was able to catch it.

Just as I thought, it was a magical tool...

And he had known and deliberately put it here.

He wanted to use the wine to spread a disease.

“In that case...he is acting strangely because he doesn't understand why the villagers aren't sick.

After all, not only were Rai's parents and Mr. Hannes just fine, but the village looked the same as usual.

That's why he spoke so falteringly.

“Is something the matter?”

“N-no. Not at all. In any case, as for the grapes that I brought...”

In spite of his confusion, he returned to the subject of selling the grapes.

And so they began to talk about prices and quantity.

“...Yes, something is strange.”

When I heard about the amount of grapes...and looked at the number of wagons, I couldn't help but feel...

“What is it... This feeling...?”

I muttered so that no one could hear me. Then, in order to get a better look, I moved out of my hiding place.

As it was much darker now, I could remain hidden as long as I didn't move too close.

“...Hmm. This...grapes...? No, it can't be... Could it be the people that came with the merchant?”

I moved ten steps closer while staying in the shadows of the fence that surrounded the village.

Thankfully, Rai's parents were standing between us, so the merchant wouldn't be able to see me.

At this distance, I didn't even need to use herbs to hear them.

“Now, I should be able to tell... Hmm...”

While listening to their conversation, I turned my senses towards the wagons.

I already knew that the merchant had intentionally placed the glass sphere here to make people sick.

Now I had to figure out why I felt something was wrong.

And as I focused my attention on the wagons, I started to get an idea.

“...It's not people....and definitely not grapes... Could it be!”

As I searched for their presence, a thought hit me, and I couldn't help but raise my voice a little.

While a few heads turned to me, they could not see anything, much to my relief.

Well, Mr. Hannes did give me a knowing glance.

In any case, back to the wagons.

I had sensed such presences before.

In the fenrir forest... The creatures that Leo had defeated in a flash...

"Monsters...orcs... Why are there orcs in the merchant's wagon...?"

I had heard from Ms. Claire that orcs were monsters that killed humans without prejudice.

In fact, all the orcs we had encountered in the forest had attacked as soon as they saw us.

However, the orcs in the wagons seemed to be calm. They showed no signs of aggression.

Were they bound up...?

"Still, carrying orcs in wagons... Surely they aren't going to be sold...?"

I had heard from Ms. Claire and Sebastian that some people sold monsters.

Perhaps there was a place where such things were done... But this merchant had come to sell grapes.

So why did he have wagons full of orcs...?

But it did seem like he had grapes as well. Two wooden crates had been brought out, and I could smell the sweet fruits.

However, considering the amount of orcs...it was unlikely that there was the same amount of grapes that Mr. Hannes had just said he would buy...

“So this is why...”

The merchant who Mr. Hannes was speaking to.

He did not have the same number of grapes as he claimed.

There would have been enough, if the wagons were carrying only grapes, but there were orcs there instead...

Chapter 184

I Realized What Was Wrong

“Well then, here is the money.”

“Thank you. Take it.”

“Yes.”

They had finished talking, and Mr. Hannes gave the money to the merchant.

The merchant then passed it to the other man for inspection.

“...Yes, that’s the right amount.”

“I see... So the payment is received then.”

“Yes. Now, if you would unload the grapes..”

“Of course, we’ll do it immediately.”

As I was closer, I could see the merchant clearly now.

The merchant was very stout.

But compared to the merchants I had seen in Ractos, including Mr. Kalis, his clothes looked quite expensive... They did not seem like the kind of clothes that a merchant would wear during a long trip... Perhaps there was a reason that I just wasn’t aware of.

Now that negotiations were finished, the man was smiling happily... However, there was something fake about his expression.

As if he was plotting something...

It was also possible that this herb not only sharpened your senses, but made you see things you wouldn’t normally see...like subtle changes in an expression.

“Hey, take it out. All of it. I don’t know why, but that thing had no effect... So just release all of them.”

“Are you sure? I thought we were going to release them to the wild later...?”

“We have no choice. Or do you want to deal with things yourself?”

“No... Very well...”

The merchant gave orders to the other man.

Even though he was talking quietly so that Mr. Hannes wouldn’t notice, I could hear everything.

However...what was he referring to...?

The wagons were filled with what I assumed was orcs.

That was when I realized the danger we were in.

“The merchant with the glass sphere...orcs... Could it be?”

I prayed that I was wrong as I started to move away from the fence.

Just as the man jogged over the wagons.

“Who are you!?”

“Mr. Hannes. Please run away!”

“Mr. Takumi!?”

The merchant raised his voice, but I ignored him and rushed to the wagons.

Mr. Hannes was stunned by my actions...but this was no time to explain things in detail.

“This place is dangerous! Just run away!”

I shouted, and then moved towards the man near the wagons, who was shocked at the sudden intrusion.

Then I unsheathed my sword and thrust it at him.

“Stop right there!”

“Damn it!”

But I wasn't used to pointing a weapon at people, and hesitated a moment.

The man pulled out a knife and blocked my sword.

“Tsk!”

“Amatateur... Do you want to die?”

He had been able to block my attack so easily, which made him assume that I was an amateur.

“Oh, what is this now...? A bandit has been hiding in the village? What is the meaning of this, chief?”

“...Uh, well...”

The merchant called me a bandit and began to make accusations towards Mr. Hannes.

“What are you doing? Ignore that bandit and do as I say.”

“Aye!”

The merchant moved in between us and shouted at the man.

And so the man immediately headed to the wagons.

“Stop!”

“Oh? Do not point your sword at me. It’s dangerous... I see you haven’t been a bandit for long...”

When I tried to chase after the man, the merchant stepped in front of me and smiled.

While I had some experience with monsters and have been training hard, I had never been in a serious fight with a human, where I meant to hurt them.

...And being raised in a peaceful country caused me to hesitate...

“Well, it doesn’t matter who or what you are. Because there will be no one here once we are finished...”

“Stop!”

“Hehehe. Now...it is your turn.”

“GYUOOOO!!”

I shouted for him to stop, but there was no way that they would listen to me now.

The man continued to the wagons and unlocked the chains from the outside.

At the same time, the cry of orcs rang from inside and I could hear the clanging of metal.

...He had released the chains that held them all at once.

“Now, it’s not safe for us either...so we will take our leave.”

The merchant said with a chuckle. And then he climbed onto his horse and took off.

The other man then followed after him on a different horse.

“Damn it!”

“Mr. Takumi!”

Mr. Hannes shouted, but I ignored him.

I should chase after the merchants...but now, dozens of orcs had come out of the wagons, and they were glaring at me.

“Tsk! I have no choice then... Elemental Shine!”

“Gyuooo!?”

I immediately used the light magic that Sebastian had taught to me.

Unlike Leo, I was not able to fight so many orcs at once.

And so I decided to blind them temporarily and escape.

Thankfully, the sun had set completely, and so the light was so bright that it blinded the orcs... I was very grateful to Sebastian and his teachings then.

“Mr. Hannes. Run!”

“Mr. Takumi. The orcs!”

As the orcs stood there, stunned, I dashed over to where Mr. Hannes stood near the entrance.

“Apparently, the wagons had orcs in them instead of grapes. They will attack if we don’t escape!”

“...I see. Then I will call the other villagers! Hey!”

“Yes, chief!”

Mr. Hannes nodded at my words and then shouted to Rai’s parents. Then those two bounded off into the village.

It was good that they acted immediately.

“And what will you do, Mr. Takumi!?”

“I will...try to buy some time so everyone can escape... Mr. Hannes, take the others and run!”

There were dozens of orcs... I didn't know the exact number...or if I could even buy enough time.

However, by running in a different direction and luring them away...I might be able to help the others... That's what I thought.

If only Leo was here with me... She would have been able to defeat the orcs in seconds...

Chapter 185

I Fought for the First Time

“You don't mean!? Mr. Takumi, you must run away with us!”

“The orcs will chase after any humans they see. Someone must lure them away from the others!”

But the village was filled with elderly people like Mr. Hannes.

And there were many children. They would not be able to run away with much speed.

If we all traveled together, the orcs would catch up immediately.

Someone had to be bait...

“GYUOOOO!”

“Damn it. They're here!”

One of the orcs was running towards us from the wagons.

It seemed that some had been behind the wagon, and were not affected much by the light.

“Mr. Takumi!”

“Hurry, Mr. Hannes! I’ll take care of this one!”

“Gyuooo!”

The orc shouted as it charged towards me with its spear!

I dodged it and then swung my sword and cut off the arm that was stretched out!

Compared to Mr. Ekenhart or Leo’s movements, I was very slow, but somehow managed to dodge him.

Perhaps it was due to the herbs that sharpened my senses.

And while this was my first real fight against a monster, unlike with the merchant, I was able to attack without any hesitation.

“Gyua!”

After having its arm cleaved off, the orc glared at me with bloodshot eyes.

From behind, I could hear Mr. Hannes running away, as well as the sounds of a bell ringing in the village.

It was probably a bell that warned the others of danger.

They used to ring similar bells in Japan whenever there was a fire.

“Guooo!!”

The orc in front of me began to attack with his spear once again!

He was slower, now that he only had one arm, and his movements seemed more random.

And so it was even easier to dodge him this time.

“Damn it. So this will be my first fight!”

I shouted as my sword came down over the head of the orc, right after he swung down.

Blood sprayed from the orc’s head, but as I wasn’t used to it, it was not enough to cleave the head in two.

The orc stumbled around, but was not dead.

“I can’t spend so much time on just one orc...Damn it!”

And so I swung my sword again while it was still off balance.

I had meant to slash at its neck, but the orc moved, and I ended up cutting the stomach instead.

...This was bad. The other orcs were moving now, and could surround me in no time...

Damn it.

If I was surrounded by that many orcs, I would surely die.

“Stay down!”

“Gyu! Gyuooo!”

This time I just swung at it randomly. And then again and again!

It was bleeding so much that it must be close to death... That's what I thought as I cut and cut.

After swinging many times, the orc finally fell to the ground and stopped moving.

“Ha...ha... Finally...”

I was out of breath from swinging so many times.

In the meantime, I could see that the other orcs were no longer affected by the light, and were ready to attack me.

Damn it. I was supposed to lead them away from the village in order to buy time. But that wouldn't be possible now...

“I'll use the light one more time then... Light Elemental...”

“Gyuoooo!”

But just as I was about to use the light magic towards the orcs, a blade shot out of nowhere and pierced one of them.

The orc fell down with the blade in its chest. And the other orcs looked around uncomprehendingly.

“What the...?”

“Mr. Takumi!”

As I looked at the orc, a voice rang from behind.

When I turned to look, it was Mr. Hannes.

And behind him, there were other villagers as well.

“Mr. Hannes. Why are you here?”

“We owe you a debt for saving this village Mr. Takumi. And so we will not leave you here and run away.”

“Exactly, Mr. Pharmacist!”

“We will fight too!”

“We can’t abandon you!”

They all shouted together.

And in their hands, were short swords, knives, axes and even hoes.

They had been gathering weapons while I fought the orc.

It had not been that long, but they had come together to help me.

“But there are so many orcs.”

“That doesn’t matter. We may be humble villagers, but we’ve fought monsters before in order to protect this place.”

“Indeed. Besides...didn’t you see that throw just now? Well, I wasn’t actually aiming at that one, but...”

“We can fight mere orcs!”

Mr. Hannes and the villagers fully intended to fight as well.

We had encountered a troll on the way here...so I suppose there really were orcs and other monsters in the forest.

And since they cut down the trees to make the wine barrels, it made sense that they would sometimes have to fight monsters.

That was comforting, but...

Even as they talked, more and more villagers gathered.

And all of them were wielding a weapon of some kind.

“But people might be hurt...”

“As the person who saved us, your death would be a bigger loss to this village.”

“Yes! We don’t care about some injuries. But we cannot allow you to be hurt or killed by the monsters.”

“It would be a great disservice to the duke who sent you...and of course, to you as well!”

“Everyone...”

“Mr. Takumi, now is not the time to talk.”

They all wanted to fight against the orcs.

I was grateful to hear their words of gratitude towards me... But even as I thought this, the orcs had regained their wits and swung their spears as they moved towards us.

And so I made up my mind.

“Very well. I understand. Let’s fight them together! But please, don’t be too bold and reckless!”

“Aye!”

I shouted at them after making up my mind.

Battle wounds could be treated with Loe. But nothing could be done if they died.

...Surely there was no herb that brought people back to life...

In any case, it was not good to think about people dying right now... While we were up against dozens of orcs, I prayed that we would make it through without any casualties.

Chapter 186

I Cooperated with the Villagers and Fought the Orcs

“Gyuooo!”

“We can fight too!”

“Fight in pairs or groups of three! Don’t try to fight an orc on your own!”

While still a little bewildered, the orcs began to charge at us.

Some of them had started to attack the horses that were tied to the wagons, but more than half were coming towards us.

...I felt bad for the horses, but it did give us a better chance.

“In general, orcs just charge straight ahead! Dodge their spears and then attack them!”

It had been that way earlier, but they did little else but charge at their target.

And so as long as you stay calm, it should not be too difficult to dodge them.

The villagers were going to attack in small groups. And as long as they could avoid the spears, even those who weren’t used to fighting should be able to deal with the orcs.

“Gyua!”

“Good, now! Go!”

“I’ve cut down many trees with this axe! Take this!”

“These orcs are nothing compared to the monsters in the forest!”

Near the entrance, the orcs that reached us first attacked. But the villagers dodged their spears and then surrounded them. Then they began to attack with a variety of weapons.

...Perhaps they fought like this whenever they encountered monsters in the forest. They appeared to have good teamwork.

“I can’t fall behind then! Hah!”

An orc charged at me in a straight line. I moved away from the thrusting spear and cut its arm, just like before.

There was little to fear once they lost their spear arm.

However, my swings must have been too weak, as the arm didn’t come off completely...

“Haa...ha...”

Still, one after another, we managed to take down the oncoming orcs.

It was because they weren’t too fast, and the herbs had sharpened my senses. However, I was starting to pant loudly as well.

Clearly, I needed more training and combat experience.

Besides, I had never actually swung my sword this much while hitting against something.

And unlike when swinging through the air, I had to keep moving my body, which was very tiring.

“I can...still go...”

All around me, the villagers continued to kill the orcs. But there were still more than half of them left.

And the villagers were tiring, just like me.

“...Some recovery herbs...no, there is no time for that...!”

If we all ate the herbs, then we could continue to fight without being affected by fatigue. But there was no time.

The orcs that had instinctively attacked the horses were now turning towards us and moving.

While we had the numerical advantage, they had momentum, and we were starting to be pushed back.

Even as I thought of this, a single orc charged at me.

I cut it down and muttered.

“If only I had a herb that raised my physical abilities...”

While it wouldn't be a dramatic transformation, it would still make things a lot easier.

And not just for me, but for the villagers as well...

But there was no point in wishing for that now. And perhaps I was relying on Weed Cultivation too much...

Right now, I had to figure out a different way of getting through this situation.

“Hahh...ha... And...stay down!”

I cut the orc’s legs and knocked it to the ground.

As it tried to get back up, I thrust my sword into his chest.

...While this was my first battle...I wasn’t doing too bad.

Perhaps I was getting used to it. Even if there was something in the far back of my mind that was repelled by it all.

But right now, I had to ignore it.

“Gyuooooo!”

“Gah!”

“Hey! Damn it!”

“Bastards!”

Nearby, one of the villagers slipped on some orc blood, and I saw that an orc had taken the opportunity to pierce him.

But then the other villagers surrounded the orc with their weapons.

The villager who was injured could still get back to his feet, so he couldn’t have been hurt badly. Still, it seemed like he had been cut on the arm, and could no longer hold a sword.

So, they were starting to get injured...

“Watch out!”

While I could see it clearly, the orc was in a position where the villagers couldn't see it. And it was raising its spear.

I shouted at them, but they were too distracted by the wounded man!

“Damn it! There's no time!”

I spat, and then I dashed forward and stretched out my arm so that the sword moved between the orc and the villagers.

Clang! The sound echoed as sword and spear met.

The villagers finally realized what was happening and they turned their weapons towards the orc.

“Pharmacist! You!”

“Hah!”

“Gyuua!”

Two of the villagers swung their swords while the orc's spear was still raised.

And after being cut a few times, the orc crumbled to the ground.

“Are you alright, pharmacist?”

“I'm fine. What about him?”

“Fine, thanks to you... But I can't hold my sword...”

“You don’t have to. Just fall back immediately if you can’t fight! As long as it’s only a wound, I will be able to treat it later!”

“...Pharmacist...very well. I don’t want to get in your way... I’m sorry...”

Upon hearing my order, the wounded villager retreated.

It would be much harder to fight if we had to protect him at the same time.

And as long as he was alive, I could use some Loe on him later.

“Gyuuoo!”

“Damn!”

The villagers moved on to the other orcs.

And then a different orc thrust its spear at me, but I managed to dodge it.

However, even though there was an opening, I could no longer attack...

“My sword...!”

After blocking the spear to protect the villagers, my blade had been broken in half.

It had been given to me by Sebastian not too long ago. Though, I had used it a lot for training... perhaps I should have anticipated this.

Besides, it had been hitting the bones of the orcs that I attacked.

Well, it could also mean that I wasn’t using it properly...

Chapter 187

I Was Injured

“Gya! Gya!”

“Tsk!”

Upon seeing that there would be no counterattack, the orc continued its assault with the spear.

I somehow managed to dodge it, but I didn’t know how long I would last like this...

I wanted to pick up the sword that was dropped by the injured villager, but the orc wouldn’t let me.

And the others were too busy dealing with the enemy in front of them... What should I do...

“Gyua!”

“Damn it!”

The orc seemed to get frustrated that it couldn’t hit me, and it began to charge at me as if to ram me with its own body.

While I could dodge a spear, I wouldn’t be able to dodge the orc’s body.

And so he crashed into me. And for a moment, I couldn’t breathe...

Then its arm shot out to grab me!

“I won’t...let you!”

Before it could get a good grip, I put my hand on its chest and pushed myself away.

The arms grasped the air instead. Once again, I found myself wishing that I had herbs that enhanced my physical strength.

If I did, I might be able to fend the orc off with my fists...

“...Hmm?”

As I was thinking that, I noticed something strange.

The orc wasn't moving anymore.

“What?”

Not understanding why, I looked closely at the orc's face. There was no light in the eyes, and it was clearly dead.

“What happened...? Hmm?”

While the orc's sudden death was surprising enough, I also felt that there was something wrong with my hand.

When it had been touching the orc, I could feel the skin and fat under my fingers. But then there was something else....

“...Could it be!”

Where my hand had been, a familiar leaf had sprouted, and a plant was growing little by little.

“...Weed Cultivation...”

It was a phenomenon I had seen many times.

Only, it was usually when I placed my hand on hard earth, and activated Weed Cultivation. And then a plant would grow at an impossible rate.

But that had now happened on the body of an orc.

“No... Was it because I was thinking about a herb that would strengthen my body...?”

It was when I was thinking that, that I touched the orc.

This had happened a number of times in the past. Where I would be vaguely thinking about something and accidentally activate it.

But...could Weed Cultivation really work when you weren't touching the ground...?

“...That's very...gah!”

“Gya-gya-gya!”

As I was distracted by Weed Cultivation, I didn't notice the orc that was approaching from behind.

And so the orc was able to hit me in the head with its spear!

Thanks to one of the villagers, the tip of the spear, where the spearhead was, had been broken off, and so I wasn't pierced. However, it came down heavily on my head... The impact was strong, as if I had been hit by a club.

I was unconscious for a second, but managed to come back and glare at the laughing orc.

“Damn... Mr. Ekenhart told me that I must never stop moving during a fight...!”

The battle had not ended.

More than half of the orcs were left, and fighting the villagers.

I never knew when I was going to be attacked next, and yet I had made the mistake of stopping.

But it was too late now to remember whatever lessons Mr. Ekenhart taught me during sword training.

“Gyua!”

“...Damn it...”

The orc had an expression that looked like a triumphant grin. And then it raised its spear high into the air.

After being hit on the head, my body did not move as I wanted it to, and it seemed as if I could do nothing but stare...

But if I got hit like that again...and this time, it would be much harder...it would be the end of me.

I shouted for help, but no one noticed, as they were busy fighting. And so the spear came swinging down over me.

I had told the villagers that they must not die, and yet I was in the most danger... I just hoped that I would be the only one...

...Leo. I'm so sorry...

As I closed my eyes, my thoughts were only of Leo, who I would have to leave behind...

“Grau!”

“Gya!?”

But as my mind was filled with remorse towards Leo, a familiar voice rang in my ears... Leo's bark. And a scream.

Was I going crazy?

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff?”

“...What?”

I had been ready to meet my fate, but the blow never came. Instead of a spear, something was licking my face... And I had felt it many times before.

“...Leo? Is that really you!?”

“Wuff!”

I opened my eyes, and there was Leo’s familiar face.

But why was Leo... Didn’t they return to the mansion...?

“Gyuoooooooo!!”

“Wuff... Wou. Wuff. ...Grau!”

“Ah, Leo!”

As Leo peered into my face, I noticed that another orc was charging at us. Leo just let out a sigh and nodded. Then she pounced on the orc with all of the speed of the wind.

In a flash, her claws shredded the orc to pieces, and it fell to the ground before it could even let out a cry.

And then Leo ran off towards the other orcs that were fighting the villagers.

...If Leo was here, there was nothing to worry about.

“...Phew...so...I’m alive then...?”

My head still hurt from the previous blow, but I gritted my teeth and took in a deep breath.

At least it didn’t hurt as much as before.

I let out a sigh and looked at my surroundings. All of the orcs were already dead, and the villagers were stunned.

They were stunned by Leo’s strength.

“Good...it seems like no one was killed.”

From what I could see, the orcs had not been able to kill anyone.

Of course, there were some who were injured, but at least they were alive.

“Mr. Takumi!”

“Mr. Hannes! What a relief to see you!”

“And you as well! But Leo...”

“I don’t know why she is here, but I’m thankful for it.”

“Indeed... I don’t know how we can thank you, Mr. Takumi...”

Chapter 188

Sebastian Came As Well

Now that Leo had defeated all of the orcs that were around the village entrance, Mr. Hannes rushed towards me.

I was relieved to see that he was unharmed.

In the meantime, Leo continued to attack the remaining orcs.

Leo really was strong.

“Hahaha. I wasn’t much use, outside of buying a little time. I’m just glad that Leo is here. If you’re going to thank anyone, thank her.”

“Of course, we are very grateful towards Leo. But we are grateful to you as well, Mr. Takumi. We had enough time to prepare, because you stayed here and fought... Besides, I was moved at how desperate you were on our behalf.”

“Now you’re exaggerating. I only fought the orcs that were already right in front of me.”

“No, that’s not true. You bought us plenty of time. Without that...they would have swarmed into the village and caught us off guard.”

“...Well, if it was a help to you, then I am glad.”

While I thought he was saying too much, if my training had allowed me to be of use, then that was good.

I could not claim to have defeated many orcs, but I had been able to slow them down with my light magic.

“Wuff!”

“Oh, Leo. So it’s done?”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Thank you, good Leo.”

As I spoke with Mr. Hannes, Leo returned after defeating the last orc.

Very good, Leo.

“Thank you, Leo. Thank you so much.”

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff.”

I thanked Leo while petting her thoroughly.

While there was still a sharp pain in my head, it wasn't too bad now, and I could move just fine.

Leo wagged her tail happily and looked very pleased to be petted.

“Still, why are you here, Leo? Didn't you go back with Phillip?”

“Wuff? Wuff-wuff-wuff... Wuff! Wuff. Grau. Wou-wuff-wuff-wuff. Grau. Wuff.”

I supposed that Leo was answering my question, but it was so long that I didn't understand her.

Perhaps the pain in my head was making it difficult for me to concentrate.

Usually, I have no trouble understanding her...

“Sorry, Leo. I'm not sure what you are saying...”

“Wuff...”

Leo looked crestfallen when she heard this.

I really was sorry. It was just the pain.

“I will explain it to you, Mr. Takumi.”

“Huh?”

While I was apologizing to Leo, a voice rang from behind me.

It was a familiar voice, but...surely he would not be here...?

“...Sebastian!? Why are you here!?”

“Hohoho. Good Leo carried me. She really is a fast runner.”

I held my head and turned around. And there was the old man with the gentle smile and sharp eyes...Sebastian.

“I didn’t expect to see Leo here, but now even you...?”

“We can talk about that later. First, we should deal with this mess.”

“Ah, that’s right.”

“Mr. Hannes. We must treat the wounded. Also...can you deal with the dead monsters?”

“Yes! Of course! I’ll call the people who know how to do it!”

If I couldn’t understand Leo, I could just ask Sebastian.

However, Sebastian said that it was more important to deal with the current situation.

...Which was obvious, as there were people who were wounded... So the explanation could wait.

And so Mr. Hannes went off towards the other villagers.

“Ah, that’s right, Sebastian!”

“What is it?”

I was going to leave things to him, when I suddenly remembered something.

The merchants. They had escaped as soon as they unleashed the orcs.

I didn’t know how much time had passed, but we should be able to chase after them and take them prisoner.

“There are people who brought those orcs here. I believe...they went towards Ractos on horseback...”

The village entrance was on the west side...which was in the direction of Ractos, and they had been moving in a straight line.

...Though, it was possible they would make a turn later on...

“Hmm...I saw two people on horseback on the way here... Could it be them?”

“If there were two horse riders, then I think it is likely them.”

“I see... We prioritized getting here as soon as possible... But I do remember being suspicious.”

“Those two were the people that brought the glass sphere that Phillip had. And the ones who unleashed the orcs on us!”

So, Sebastian had seen them on the way here while riding on Leo.

In that case, it was likely that they really hadn’t changed course, and were heading towards Ractos.

“I see... Very well. We will chase after them at once. Johanna!”

“Yes!”

After he understood this much, Sebastian made the decision immediately and called Johanna.

I hadn't realized it until now, but she was helping the wounded villagers a short distance away.

And Phillip was there as well.

“We will borrow horses from Mr. Hannes...the chief, and head to Ractos. As they are on horseback, we must go quickly.”

“Yes, understood!”

“Ah, wait a minute!”

“What is it, Mr. Takumi?”

I stopped Sebastian and Johanna as they were about to leave.

There was a better way than to follow the merchants on horses.

“We'll have Leo chase after them. She is much faster.”

“...Indeed...but are you sure? ...Shouldn't she stay with you...”

“I will go too. Is that all right, Leo?”

“Wuff!”

In Spite of Injury, I Chased After the Merchants

If we chased them with Leo, then we should be able to catch up with the horses in no time.

Sebastian wanted Leo to stay with me. And so that just meant that I had to go with Leo.

Besides, I was still angry towards the merchants for unleashing the orcs on us.

“Very well. In that case...Johanna and I will go with you.”

“Certainly!”

So Sebastian and Johann would come too.

Well, even with Leo, it would be better to have others there if we were going to capture them.

This was a little different from killing some orcs.

“All right. Leo. While you’ll have to run again, can you take us?”

“Wuff... Kuuun. Kuun.”

“What...what is it?”

When I asked Leo to carry us, she rubbed her face against me and licked the side of my head.

Usually, she would have agreed right away... What was the matter?

“...Mr. Takumi...!”

“Huh? What is it, Sebastian?”

“Your head!”

“Head...? Ah...”

“Wuff. Wuff.”

As I tried to think of what Leo was doing, Sebastian raised his voice in surprise.

He was looking at the side of my head... And when I touched it, I felt that it was wet.

I then looked at my hand, and it was red with blood.

Apparently, my head had started to bleed after being bludgeoned by the orc.

So that’s why it had continued to throb with pain... Leo was worried, and started to lick the blood off...

“I suppose I’m a little injured... Uh, does anyone have a cloth...”

“Please use this.”

“...Are you sure? It is such a pretty handkerchief.”

“Nevermind that! Your injury is more important!”

As I asked for something to wipe away the dripping blood, Johanna offered me a clean handkerchief.

While I felt bad about ruining it, I accepted it gratefully.

“All right. Now, let’s go and catch those merchants.”

“Mr. Takumi... Are you sure? A head injury can lead to something much worse...”

“Well, while there is some pain...I should be fine. And if necessary, I’ll make some Loe and heal it.”

“...Very well But if I determine that it’s too dangerous, you must stop and heal yourself at once.”

Both Leo and Sebastian were looking at me with concern.

And so I smiled and told them that I was fine.

Besides, I thought that catching the merchants was more important now.

If we didn’t hurry, we might lose them for good.

I had always been like this, back during my other job. Where I would prioritize other things than take care of myself.

“Sorry, Leo. Can you take us?”

“Wuff.”

I asked Leo again.

Leo replied with resignation and then lay low so that I could climb onto her.

“Good. Now, let’s chase after them. In the direction of Ractos town, yes?”

“Yes. That’s where they were headed when we passed them by.”

“You heard him, Leo. Try to run as fast as possible without shaking us off.”

“Wuff!”

After Sebastian, Johanna and I were on top of Leo, she ran from the Range village entrance and towards Ractos.

We had asked Phillip to stay behind and help the wounded villagers.

“Tsk...it hurts more when you’re shaking...”

“Should we stop?”

“No, I’m still fine.”

Leo was running a little slower than she had when we first went to Range village. Still, I couldn’t help but grimace from the pain as I held onto her.

Sebastian looked at me from behind with concern.

But while it was worse than when I was standing still, it wasn’t unbearable.

Of course, I wouldn’t want it to continue much longer, so I would treat it with Loe as soon as I had time.

“Wuff?”

“I’m fine, Leo.”

Leo also barked as if worried.

She was doing her best to slow down. I’m sorry for making you worry, Leo.

“Ah, there they are!”

“Two horses... Yes, it must be them.”

“Indeed. Leo, approach those horses.”

“Wuff!”

After bearing the pain in my head for a little longer, we found the merchants near the area where I had met up with Phillip and Mr. Hannes.

They were clearly riding towards Ractos.

While it was darker now that the sun had gone down, the effects of the herbs had not died yet, and I could see well enough to confirm that they were the same merchants.

Though, they would have been blurry shadows for Sebastian and Johanna.

...Now that I thought about it, Leo could also see well in the dark.

“Leo. Go and surprise those horses!”

“Wou!”

Once we were close enough, I gave Leo the order.

While I felt bad for the horses, it would be the easiest way to stop them.

...Well, perhaps there were other ways. But I was in no mood to rack my brain for them.

“Hah-hah-hah...Grau!”

“What!?”

“Huh!?”

By the time they could hear Leo’s heavy breathing as she stuck out her tongue, she was already right next to them and barking.

The horses were so startled that they stopped and began to move around wildly.

The merchants could not control them, and they fell to the ground.

...I hope they were not injured... Such thoughts did not occur to me at all.

Even someone like me could feel no concern over the wellbeing of someone who had unleashed orcs on a village.

“Ha...thanks, Leo.”

“Wou.”

“Johanna!”

“Yes!”

After passing the horses, Leo stopped suddenly.

Severe pain shot through my head, but I ignored it and thanked Leo.

Then Sebastian and Johanna immediately jumped off and dashed towards the fallen merchants.

Chapter 190

We Captured the Merchants

“You are now our prisoners.”

“Don’t resist us!”

“Tsk... Who are you people!”

“Ahhh...damn it! What do you want!”

Sebastian shouted intimidatingly as he ran to the merchants.

I thought I heard some anger in his voice... He usually spoke so calmly...

The merchants, who were clearly in pain from falling off of their horses, shouted back as well.

However, it seemed like they could not get back to their feet.

“Who are we...? We serve the duke... Does that clear things up for you?”

“Tsk. Let me go... The duke!?”

“Stop moving! Or Leo will...”

“Grau!”

“Ahh!”

“What is that monster!?”

As Sebastian tied up the merchant, he told him that we worked for the duke. The merchant then became visibly flustered.

Johanna was trying to tie the other one, but when he continued to struggle, she threatened to set Leo on him.

Leo understood what she was doing, and so she also unleashed an overpowering howl.

As it was dark, they had not seen her clearly at first, but they were now shaking with fear.

...I was glad that they had calmed down, but it was quite rude to call Leo a monster.

“But Leo is so cute.”

“Wuff.”

I petted Leo consolingly, and she rubbed her face against me.

While everything wasn't finished yet, she was probably relieved that this part was nearly over.

Or perhaps she was still worried about my injury.

“Now, there is nothing that you can say to defend your actions. You will be taken away... Resistance is futile... Do you understand...?”

“Damn you...”

Sebastian spoke in a quiet, low voice in their ears after they were tied up.

He did not forget to glance at Leo suggestively.

This had the desired effect on the two who saw Leo as a monster. They had completely lost the will to struggle.

“There, there...calm down. We're sorry for startling you. Don't worry.”

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff.”

As for Johanna, she was talking to the horses in order to calm them down.

Leo joined in, and rubbed her face into them.

I was just surprised that they didn't run away... Well, perhaps they were too scared to run.

"Now, Mr. Takumi. We have caught the two culprits."

"Thank you. Should we put them on Leo?"

"No... The very thought of such people riding on Leo fills me with unease. Thankfully, we still have the horses. And so Johanna and I will take them with us on horseback."

"Very well. ...And I agree with you. Besides, they called Leo a monster."

Sebastian decided to carry the prisoners on the horses.

I did not like the idea of letting them ride my adorable Leo. They had insulted her, set the orcs on Range village, and placed the glass sphere there, after all.

"However...shouldn't you do something about that injury first?"

"Ah, that's right."

While my head still hurt, it had been especially bad when Leo stopped suddenly. So the pain felt mild once that had subsided.

Compared to that, this was almost nothing... I was almost impressed with myself for bearing it for so long.

"Now, I'll make some Loe with Weed Cultivation..."

"Please wait."

Just as I was about to activate Weed Cultivation, Sebastian stopped me.

While I wondered about this, Sebastian approached the merchants and took out a long strip of cloth.

...Where had he been carrying that?

“You will be wearing these. ...So you can taste the fear of not being able to see.”

And then Sebastian blindfolded them.

It was during times like these that there was something about Sebastian that sent a chill down your spine... It had been that way with Nick as well.

“It is fine now. ...I didn’t think you should be showing them it.”

“That’s true. Thank you.”

Sebastian was making sure that the merchants could not see me use Weed Cultivation.

Indeed, it might be bad if they found out about my Gift.

They weren’t the kind of people who would keep their mouths shut.

“...All right then.”

“Well, it looks like being injured has no effect on your Gift.”

“...Now that you mention it...yes. Injuries and the state of your body seem to be unrelated to it.”

I placed my hand on the ground and picked up the Loe that grew.

It was something I had done many times at the mansion,

But as he watched, Sebastian noticed something.

So Weed Cultivation really was unrelated to injury... But the pain in my head would probably affect my concentration, which would make using magic difficult.

“Uhh...the injury is...hmm... This is awkward.”

“I will do it.”

“Ah, thank you. I can’t see where it is exactly.”

“Yes.”

I cut open the Loe leaf, exposing the insides. But when I tried to apply it to my head, I had some difficulty.

As I couldn’t see it myself, I had to rely on touch, but even that was hard, as the pain had spread throughout my whole head.

Johanna offered to help. She then took the Loe so she could apply it.

...The horses...were being watched by Leo... They were rubbing their heads together playfully.

“Sebastian, could you create a light?”

“Indeed. ...Light Elemental Shine.”

“I can see much better now...so here it is...my, that is quite bad... I’m surprised you made it this far.”

“Uh...it’s really that bad?”

“Mr. Takumi... So you were pushing yourself after all...”

Johanna asked Sebastian to create a light, and so he activated the magic.

Just like before, he made his sword glow, which allowed Johanna to inspect my injury.

Compared to making a sphere of light in your hand, it was not as bright, which made it easier on the eyes.

But more importantly, my injury... Johanna was quite surprised when she saw it.

...Well, it did hurt pretty bad...

Sebastian was now admonishing me for downplaying it... However, I hoped he would understand that it was necessary so that we could capture the merchants.