

## Beloved Dog 291

Chapter 291

We Talked About What To Do With The Girl

“I’m sorry, good wolf...for saying that you were going to eat me.”

“Kuun...”

“Ahh!”

“Wuff? Kuun. Kuun...”

“Don’t worry. She was just surprised.

She had stretched out her small hand anxiously and then touched Leo’s face.

Once she realized it was alright, Leo moved in closer and then licked the girl’s face, which caused her to shout in alarm.

Leo in turn was surprised by this, and seemed to apologize. But the girl laughed and petted Leo again.

They would surely be fine now.

Still, on closer inspection, the girl’s face was quite dirty...

Perhaps it had happened when she was being bullied, but there were also bruises on her face... Maybe that was why Leo had licked her.

Well, Leo just did it as a sign of affection. So she probably wasn’t even thinking about that.

“...Mr. Ekenhart. Is this girl a...”

“Mmm...a beastkin... It is rare to see one in this country... I suppose that is why they were hunting her...”

“A beastkin?”

Now that I was relieved that she was no longer afraid of Leo, I approached Mr. Ekenhart and talked with a hushed voice.

This girl had things that a human should not. She had beast ears on top of her head and a tail.

The ears...were more like a fox than a dog.

The triangular ears that pointed up and the tail that was fluffy like Leo...

But leaving that aside, Mr. Ekenhart was talking about how she was a beastkin.

A beastkin... Aside from the monsters, here was another reminder that this was a very different world from the one that I had come from.

“Mmm. There is a country of beastkin, after all. But this country is filled with humans, and so you rarely see anyone else. Especially during these past few years...”

“I see... I had no idea that such people existed.”

“So you’ve never seen them, Mr. Takumi?”

“No. In my world, such people only existed within fiction.”

I talked to Mr. Ekenhart while watching the beastkin girl play with Leo, who she had been scared of just a moment ago.

While the ears on her head were brown, they looked almost black now, and so did her tail.

The rest of her skin had cuts and were filthy, as were her clothes. A girl this young should not be in such a state. Even seeing her there with Leo, the overall picture was quite sad.

“Mr. Ekenhart, this girl must be washed up and her injuries treated...”

“Indeed. Or something like this might happen again. Still...where can we take her... Perhaps there is an inn nearby? At least she can wash up?”

“Indeed... But then again...”

“Is there a problem?”

“No... But I suppose it would look odd, wouldn't it? If people saw you carrying an injured beastkin girl to an inn.”

“You think so?”

Perhaps it was just me then.

But if this was in Japan, then people would probably call the authorities.

Because we were clearly not her parents.

And all eyes would be on us, since we were with Leo.

However, Mr. Ekenhart didn't seem to share this concern, and looked rather puzzled.

But then again, if Mr. Ekenhart wasn't remotely concerned with what people thought, then he would have shaved off his beard.

I can only imagine what Ms. Claire would say if she was here.

“Perhaps someone you know... What about Mr. Kalis?”

“Yes, we could go there... Though, since it is just a store, she will not be able to wash up.”

“I see...”

While that was the first place I thought of, like Mr. Ekenhart said, it was just a place that sold herbs...

So I suppose that meant Ms. Isabelle’s store would be the same.

And then I had an idea.

“...What about the orphanage?”

“The orphanage. Yes, that is just the place to take such a child. And the children there are so well behaved, so we wouldn’t have to worry.”

“Yes...”

That was where Milina used to live.

If we explained the situation...then Ms. Anna should take care of her.

“...Hmm?”

“What is it?”

“No, Leo...”

After we decided to go to the orphanage, I turned to Leo and the girl, but realized that something was wrong.

While the beastkin girl was still smiling as if having forgotten everything that happened before, Leo was shaking as if holding something in... But what?

“Wu...ff...”

“What is it, good wolf?”

“Wa-choo!!”

“Ahhhh!”

It was just when the girl had noticed that Leo was acting strangely, and had opened her mouth.

Leo then shook her whole body and sneezed on her.

And so a great deal of saliva and snot ended up hitting her.

She let out a surprised shout and then looked stunned.

It was even dripping on the ground... I guess a sneeze was quite powerful when you were that big... I would have to be careful when around Leo's nose from now on.

Chapter 292

We Took The Girl To The Orphanage

“Th-that was a shock...”

“Wu-wuff! Kuun... Kuun...”

“Ah... Now she'll really need to take a bath.”

“Indeed... I suppose one should not pet Lep on the nose too much...”

Leo looked at the girl apologetically and then started to lick her face.

...That seemed a little questionable...but I suppose that was Leo's way of showing that she was sorry.

Mr. Ekenhart and I chuckled and approached them.

"By the way, what is your name?"

"Uhh... Liza!"

"Liza. And how old are you?"

"Hmm. Seven...I think."

"You think? You're not sure about your own age?"

While we were headed to the orphanage, I talked to Liza as she rode on top of Leo's back.

She had been so frightened at first, but now she was used to Leo. She even had her arms around Leo's neck as she held on.

Apparently, this was partly due to how sorry Leo looked after sneezing.

...After that, Liza had laughed and hugged Leo.

Perhaps she did not care as much about things because she was part beast herself... But that sounded like a slightly prejudiced way of thinking, so I pushed it out of my mind.

"I don't know where or when I was born... I only remember my grandfather... And he said he found me when I was still a baby..."

“...Found... So it’s been about seven years since then. ...It is a common enough story in the slums. That is why there is an orphanage... Hmmm...”

Upon hearing our conversation, Mr. Ekenhart nodded and seemed to be deep in thought.

I suppose as the lord of these lands, this problem was very serious for him.

“...And what happened to your grandfather?”

“...He died not long ago...”

“I’m sorry for asking. It’s probably not a good memory?”

“No. It’s fine. He was very kind... So I do not want to forget.”

“...I see. You’re very strong.”

However, Liza’s eyes were still filled with tears.

She must have really liked this grandfather who had raised her.

But even if it was painful, she did not want to forget as she moved forward. It was impressive.

“But, why were those children hurting you?”

“It started happening after my grandfather died... Because...I am a beastkin...”

“I suppose he was the one who protected you from them... This wouldn’t have happened if we noticed it sooner...”

“...They really bullied you just because you are a beastkin?”

So the old man was protecting her... But why would anyone want to hurt such a young child...

Just because she was a beastkin. I could not understand it.

If anything, you would think people would be taken in by how cute she was.

She had a tail and ears, after all.

“Well, I will explain it to you later. Right now, we have to get her washed up.”

“...Very well.”

Said Mr. Ekenhart, who still had a stern expression. And so we hurried on to the orphanage.

Liza did not seem to care about being dirty, but we could not just leave her like this.

...Especially after Leo had sneezed on her.

Though, strangely enough, it had washed away some of the dirt and grime...

“...Still, I’m surprised that you didn’t cry at all.”

“...It hurt and I wanted to cry... But I already cried so much after my grandfather died. So I thought that for him, I have to be strong.”

“...I see... That’s very commendable.”

Even now, though her eyes were moist, she would not shed any tears.

She must be trying very hard to not cry.



But to put a child through such a thing... I became angry at the people who bullied her again. But I didn't let it show.

I would praise her and pat her on the head later.

"It's nice to see you again. Is Ms. Anna here?"

"Oh? Mr. Takumi!? It has been so long! Yes, I will call her right away!"

"Wuff."

"Thank you."

After arriving at the orphanage, I talked to the woman who was cleaning.

She was the same person who had been cleaning last time... Was she always out here like this?

I suppose it was her job.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. What brings you here today, Mr. Takumi?"

"It's good to see you, Ms. Anna. Well... There is someone who needs to borrow your bath..."

"Our bath? Oh, that child!?"

"Yes. Would that be alright?"

After being called by the woman who was cleaning, Ms. Anna came out to greet us.

I then told her why we were here and showed her Liza, who was clutching onto Leo.

Upon seeing her, Ms. Anna understood perfectly.

However, Liza looked a little confused to be in a strange place.

Still, she was not scared, which showed that she at least knew that these people were not hostile.

“Where did this child... And she is a beastkin... Well, I understand. I will have some hot water prepared at once.”

“Thank you.”

“Not at all. Go and prepare the bath.”

“Yes, right away!”

“Wuff-wuff?”

“Hmm? Ah, that’s right. Ms. Anne. How are the children?”

“Oh, yes. Just fine. They are playing in the garden right now.”

“Leo wants to play with them... Will that be alright?”

“Yes, of course! I’m sure they will be overjoyed!”

Ms. Anne knew what Liza was at once, and though she looked a little troubled, she quickly said that a bath would be prepared.

She then gave orders to the woman who was sweeping, and she ran into the orphanage.

After seeing this, Leo seemed to be wondering where the children were, and so I asked Ms. Anna if Leo could play with them.

Since she had played with them last time, it seemed that they would be happy to see her again.

## Chapter 293

### I Told Ms. Anna About What Happened

“Please come this way then.”

“...Huh?”

“Don’t worry. These are nice people, so you can go with them. They’re going to give you a bath.”

“...Yes. Okay.”

As the bath was ready, Ms. Anna came to take Liza to it. But Liza seemed a little confused.

This was a place unknown to her, and so she had been surprised.

But I smiled and assured her that it was fine, and so she nodded and followed Ms. Anna.

I was glad to see that she trusted me now.

“She’s taken to you, eh?”

“Do you think so? Well, I’ve been trying to be careful so that I don’t scare her...”

“Wuff-wuff!”

“Haha! Haha!”

I talked with Mr. Ekenhart as we watched Leo play with the children in the back garden.

Since Liza had been so frightened when we first met her, I had been extra careful when around her. But I didn’t know how well it was going.

However, she had talked about different things on the way here, and judging by her facial expression, she had lowered her guard quite a bit now.

Though, it was more because of Leo than me... And Leo's sneeze.

"Mr. Takumi...uh, Liza, was it? I took her to the bathing area, and she is now being washed up."

"Thank you. I really am sorry for coming here out of the blue..."

"Not at all. You have been good to us, Mr. Takumi. Besides, the children had wanted to meet Leo again. You are always welcome here."

After leaving Liza with others, Ms. Anna came to see us.

I apologized once again and thanked her.

Ms. Anna's eyes seemed to shine as she watched the children play with Leo. And I could tell how much Leo enjoyed it.

This was like a paradise for her... Because no one was afraid of her.

"Uhh... And who is your friend?"

"Hmm? Me?"

"...You're hiding your face."

"Oh, of course. ...It's been a while, Headmistress Anna."

"...Your Grace?"

"Mmm."

“Forgive my rudeness! I did not recognize you!”

“I do not mind. Please be calm and raise your face.”

“...Yes.”

Ms. Anna had been curious about the stranger who lurked next to me.

And so Mr. Ekenhart removed the cloth from around his face and revealed himself to her.

Now that his intimidating features were on full display, Ms. Anna looked confused for a moment before realization hit her.

She then prostrated herself on the ground.

But Mr. Ekenhart told her to raise her face and made her stand.

“So...uh...and the child?”

Ms. Anna asked me, but she kept glancing over to Mr. Ekehart.

He just chuckled and allowed me to explain it.

“Well, it really just happened a moment ago... Leo led us to the north side of Ractos.”

“The north side... Why would she do that?”

Ms. Anna seemed to know about how things were on the north side.

It was no wonder... As she ran an orphanage, she would know where orphans usually came from.

“Yes. We didn’t mean to go there... But Leo seemed to be looking for something. And then we found a child who was being bullied.”

“Bullied... Ah, because she is a beastkin.”

“Yes, it seemed to be the case. And so we had to help her... And then we thought about bringing her here to have her cleaned up.”

“I see. So that is why. But this beastkin child...”

Ms. Anna now understood why we had come here.

However, she still looked troubled.

I suppose it had to do with her being a beastkin?

“Is there a problem? I’m sorry, I really don’t know much about such things...”

“Hmm... Indeed... We must tell Mr. Takumi about the matter of beastkin. Can you do it, headmistress?”

“Very well.”

I tilted my head and asked Ms. Anna and Mr. Ekenhart.

Mr. Ekenhart nodded and left it to Ms. Anna, who then explained to me about the beastkin.

Leo was playing with the children, and Liza wouldn’t be back for some time, so I had to learn while I could.

Still, I wonder if Sebastian took a liking to explaining because Mr. Ekenhart would always make him do it for him?

I wondered, but since it was not important right now, I pushed it out of my head.

“It was....when I was still a child, so nearly thirty years ago... There was a war between this country and the country of the beastkin.”

“...To be precise, it was thirty-two years ago.”

Ms. Anna seemed to recall the time as she talked.

Thirty-two years... Mr. Ekenhart would have also been a child back then.

“And while these lands were not turned into a battlefield, things were most terrible in the places that were.”

“But it’s a neighboring country. Were relations really that bad?”

“Well... I do not know much about diplomacy...”

“We were on rather friendly terms once. But there was an incident and things changed. By the way, the beastkin country is to the north of this one. And my lands are towards the south of this country. That’s why we were not affected much by the war.”

War, huh... Where people from different countries kill each other...

There were various reasons, such as countries wanting power and land.

As the duke, Mr. Ekenhart might know more about it, however, he seemed like he didn’t want to talk about it. Perhaps he could not.

And since I did not want to pry and cause any trouble, I decided to leave it alone.

Chapter 294

I Asked About Why The Beastkin Were Discriminated Against

“The war between the countries involved many soldiers and civilians, causing death to spread everywhere... And once both countries were ravaged by war, a certain rumor started to be whispered here.”

“A rumor?”

“Yes. That the beastkin were monsters and completely different creatures from humans... That they are evil creatures who attack humans.”

“...”

“I do not know where the rumor started. Perhaps it was done to unite the country against the beastkin.”

They didn’t know who had spread the rumor, but it succeeded in making people think that the beastkin was dangerous.

By doing this, the people would be united as they went about the war effort.

Though, it was also possible that it was just something said by someone without thinking, and it happened to spread from there.

“Though, now that the war is over, the rumor has mostly died down... Even if there are still people who believe it.”

“That they are dangerous? But Liza doesn’t look like she is capable of such a thing.”

“Yes, you are right. They are simply our neighbors... They are not monsters. However, there are some ways in which they are more physically capable than humans. But that is all.”

“Though, that also encourages the rumors...”

“Encourages? Because they are physically more capable?”



Here, Mr. Ekenhart added to Ms. Anna's explanation with a serious expression.

But I didn't know why having high physical ability affected the rumors...

"Well, I think it is a kind of jealousy, perhaps. They are born with a little more strength... In fact, there were times when during the war, three human soldiers had to take on a single beastkin."

"...So they are simply stronger than humans."

"Mmm. Most of them, anyway. And so perhaps it is people who are jealous that spread such rumors."

"I see..."

Humans could be very jealous of each other, so it would be no surprise.

"After the war, diplomatic relations improved between our countries. And so it is possible to travel there and back. However, people still talk... And so in some places in this country, people discriminate against the beastkin. Especially near the north, where most of the fighting took place."

"I see... I suppose it cannot be helped."

While I felt strongly against it, from the perspective of the people involved in the war, perhaps they could not help but feel angry towards the beastkin.

"Well, things are relatively peaceful in other territories... Still, do you think beastkin would come to such a place for no reason?"

"No. It is not a place you would visit for pleasure..."

"Indeed. And so you do not see them that often in this country."

"But since they are seen less, more people are starting to believe the old rumor... It is a bad environment."

“In other words, that was why Liza was being attacked in the slums...?”

“Because they believed what they heard. Most people here are better educated, and know the truth... But in the slums...”

It was filled with ruffians.

In other words, many did not learn or have opportunities to be educated.

And so they believed in old rumors, not doubting that beastkin were monsters.

Now that I thought about it, the boys who had been surrounding her had called her a monster.

“I see... That is a difficult problem.”

“Yes. Children are especially quick to believe such things... While the children here are taught that the beastkin are just like us... Outside...”

“Hmm... I will have to discuss this matter with Sebastian as well. I myself have rarely seen any here, and did not think about it much... But there seems to be beastkin in this town now. If we look, we might find others who live here for some reason or another.”

The three of us thought hard on the matter.

Thankfully, I could hear the cheerful sounds of Leo and the children playing in the garden.

This kind of talk could get very heavy... And I did not like to stay like that for too long.

“Indeed... I suppose the old man who rescued her must have known what beastkin are like.”

“Mmm. I think it is people who were born many years before the war that know the truth. In spite of everything, they understand that they aren’t monsters.”

We didn't know how old this man was... But since he was called 'grandfather,' he must be older than Mr. Ekenhart.

As they had good relations before the war, there would have been plenty of beastkin who came here, and so people from that time would not have believed the rumor.

Liza was lucky to have been found by such a person.

...Though, she wasn't lucky to have been in such a situation to begin with.

"Mr. Takumi. What do you intend to do with her now?"

"Uh... I have not thought about that. We were just thinking about getting her away from those children who were hurting her..."

"Well, it was pretty bad..."

"It was?"

"Aye. We should probably tell Ms. Anna about it."

"Yes, indeed."

While I hadn't thought about what to do with her. For now, we would tell Ms. Anna about how we had found her.

"It...is no wonder you wanted to save her then... To such a small child..."

"Discrimination can sometimes take hold of a person easily... So that they do not need much reason..."

"That is true. That person is bad... Once they think that, it is enough."

Ms. Anna thought about Liza with a serious expression.

Was it like mass psychology...?

When someone was different from the others, that difference was considered bad, and if someone said this out loud, then others would believe it.

And no one would do anything different, because then they might become a target.

Obviously, it wasn't always like that... But it was something I had observed plenty of times back in my old world...

Chapter 295

I Asked The Orphanage To Take Care Of Liza

“Headmistress, and what about the children here?”

“Oh, there is nothing like that here. After all, we watch over them closely. And besides, most of the children here have unfortunate backgrounds...”

“Hmm... In that case, I suppose it is best to leave Liza here?”

If the adults watched over them carefully, then it was unlikely that she would be bullied.

And as Ms. Anna said, this was an orphanage, and all of the children were here due to some circumstance.

Those who know pain are kinder... I had heard something like that before... Of course, it was still better to not know pain at all.

In any case, I agreed with Mr. Ekenhart that Liza should be kept in the orphanage.

Unless the slums changed, then Liza would meet the same fate there. And it was difficult to see what was happening in such a place.

At least in the orphanage, she would not lack for company, and Ms. Anna and the others would take care of her.

“Ms. Anna. Perhaps I am being presumptuous to ask this of you... But could you take care of Liza?”

Thinking that this was the safest solution, I bowed my head as I made the request.

“Mr. Takumi! Please raise your head! You are the one who helped us when the children were suffering from the illness. If you have a request, then I will do what I can to help you!”

“In that case...”

“However... I am sorry. We cannot take Liza...”

Ms. Anna looked frantic when she saw that I had bowed my head.

And then she said that she would do what she could to help. So I thought she would agree to it...but she did not.

“Why is that, headmistress?”

“I am sorry... But we have so many children here already... There are not enough rooms and beds... And so we will not be able to take her in...”

Ms. Anna answered Mr. Ekenhart’s question apologetically.

Indeed, when treating the illness with the Ramogi, I had seen how many children were in each room.

Sometimes, there were two sleeping in a single bed...

Perhaps they could get more beds.

But the rooms were also quite full...

“But didn’t Milina leave?”

“As she is an adult, she was separate from the children. Those who do not leave sleep in a different place... Sometimes, that means sleeping in the hallways...”

“Mmm... So there are that many... We will have to do something about that...”

So Milina had slept in a different place from the children before coming to the mansion.

According to Ms. Anna, the children took up all the rooms and beds. And the people who worked here who were adults would sleep in the hallways when there wasn’t enough space.

Upon hearing this, Mr. Ekenhart was deep in thought.

As the lord of these lands, the management of the orphanage was his responsibility.

Not enough rooms. Even if the place was to be rebuilt, it could not be done immediately...

Besides, it might not always be like this. And it was possible that after a larger building was constructed, then the number of orphans would decrease.

I wished that I could help, but there was nothing that I could do... And I didn’t know if they would listen. But if I could think of something helpful, I would make a suggestion.

“Still, what should we do... It would be a shame to have to return her to the slums after she has washed up...”

“Yes. As long as they don’t look kindly on beastkin, it will just happen again...”

“Mmm...”

“Now that I think about it, why did Leo go over to where Liza was?”

“Indeed. It did seem like she was searching for Liza from far away. Perhaps there was a reason for that?”

“Indeed... Leo. Do you have a minute?”

“Wuff?”

I suddenly remembered that Leo had guided us to Liza.

Even before we entered the slums, she seemed to be anxious about something.

And so I called Leo, who came over while having ten children stuck to her.

...They really did like Leo...

“Leo. Were you searching for Liza from that far away?”

“Wuff? Wuff-wuff. Wuff.”

“What did she say?”

“Uh, she says she smelled something that was like her own kind. And while it wasn’t her kind after all, she sensed that it needed help...”

“Hmm... Because she was a beastkin...”

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff-wuff!”

“Oh? Is that so?”

According to Leo, while they were not monsters, beastkin were important for beast-type monsters.

And so she felt a kinship towards them, and thought that she had to help...

I then relayed this information to Mr. Ekenhart and Ms. Anna.

“Important to good Leo... I have heard that many beastkin have beast monsters as familiars. Perhaps that is related...”

“...Do you mean, like silver fenrirs?”

“No, Mr. Takumi. Even beastkin do not have silver fenrirs as familiars. Well...maybe they would have fenrirs thought.”

So, even beastkin couldn't have silver fenrirs.

But they could have fenrirs. So beastkin might find it easier to have beast familiars compared to humans.

...Though, there was a fenrir living leasurely in the mansion, who was a human's familiar...

Regardless, this connection might be why Leo could sense that someone was asking for help...

## Chapter 296

### Leo Was Quite Adamant

“Still... If good Leo felt it was important... Then that is even more reason to do something about Liza.”

“Wuff?”



“Uh, Leo. We were just discussing what we should do with Leo. Apparently, they won’t take her at the orphanage, because they don’t have enough rooms...”

“Wuff!?! Wuff-wuff! Wuff!”

“Huh? Is that right? But... I don’t think...”

“What is it, Mr. Takumi?”

“Uh, Leo says... That she always meant to take care of Liza...and that she will bring her back to the mansion... But we need your permission, and Ms. Claire’s...”

“I don’t mind.”

“Huh?”

While Leo may have intended to do that...we were just guests there. So I didn’t want to trouble them by bringing in some kid as well... However, Mr. Ekenhart agreed with a nod.

“I am saying that you can take her back to the mansion.”

“Uh...are you certain?”

“Mmm. After all, it is what Leo wants. And so we must support her in any way we can. Besides...”

Mr. Ekenhart gave his permission without a second thought.

But was it really alright?

I doubt that Mr. Ekenhart, Ms. Claire or the people of the mansion would mistreat her, but... They were already taking care of us. Besides, Ms. Anne had also recently moved in...

As I wondered about this, Mr. Ekenhart moved closer and whispered to me.

“Surely you understand, that you cannot just return her to where we found her?”

“Yes, of course, but...”

“Leo will have to go and help her every time that she is in trouble... Now that is something that could cause chaos.”

“True...”

Apparently, helping beastkin was very important for Leo.

If Leo did go to help her every time she was in danger, then maybe people would stop picking on her... However, it was true that Leo suddenly appearing there could cause confusion.

Besides, there was no guarantee that we would even be around, and Leo wouldn't be able to stop it... I didn't want to think about how Leo would react if something happened to Liza...

She might go berserk and destroy the whole town.

No, Leo wouldn't do something like that... Though, maybe that was what Mr. Ekenhart feared.

“Our house honors Silver Fenrirs. And so I will support good Leo's opinion!”

“Wuff!”

Mr. Ekenhart then stepped away from me and made this declaration.

Leo nodded approvingly.

So, that was decided then... Though, would Ms. Claire be upset that the decision was made without her?

“I’m back.”

“Wuff.”

“Liza...you’re clean now.”

“Yes. Thank you!”

While I was still thinking about whether or not this would be alright, Liza returned from her bath along with one of the workers.

She was wearing new clothes and all of the dirt from before was gone.

Though, they did not have any clothes for beastkin, and so her tail came out from her back.

...I guess it was too much to expect them to have pants with a hole for the tail.

Right now, she adjusted her pants so the tail came out from her waist.

I had been worried about her being in an unfamiliar place at first, but it seemed like she was used to it now.

She looked just like the other children, and was smiling and cheerful.

Yes, after seeing her like this, I definitely agreed that it was better to take her back to the mansion.

And so all of my doubts were pushed away... It was the power of a child’s smile.

Speaking of Liza, her ears and tail were brown, just like a fox.

As if to express her cheerfulness, her ears pointed in the shape of triangles.

Her tail was fluffy, just like Leo's.

As she looked at me or at Leo playing with the children, her tail would wag and her ears would twitch, which was rather cute.

“Mmm. You look much better now that you are clean.”

“...There is a scary old man over there...”

“Wuff?”

“Uh...Liza?”

“Wh...what did you...”

Mr. Ekenhart saw that Liza was clean and nodded.

However, Liza muttered something after seeing him.

She seemed to be scared, and hid behind me while grabbing onto my leg.

Leo pushed her nose towards Liza as if to reassure her... But the problem was Mr. Ekenhart.

I didn't know if it was because she called him old or scary, but Mr. Ekenhart was taken aback.

One would think he had been struck by lightning.

It reminded me of Leo, when she had been taken for a people eater.

Hmm? One of the children who was attached to Leo was now walking towards us...

“...Will you play with us?”

“...I can?”

“Yes!”

“Uhh...”

“It’s fine. Go on and play with them.”

“...Okay.”

The girl who had moved away from Leo was not pulling Liza’s sleeve as she invited her to play.

She seemed to be the same age as Liza, or maybe a little younger.

Perhaps the kids here thought that Liza was another orphan.

But Liza had looked up at me as if uncertain.

I suppose she didn’t have much experience with playing with other children, and so she didn’t know what to do.

And so I smiled and pushed her back with some reassuring words.

She smiled and nodded, and then went over to where Leo and the other children were.

“Wuff?”

“I’ll deal with the matter. So you can go and play.”

“Wuff!”

Leo had turned to me questioningly, and so I nodded and told her that she could go.

Upon seeing this, Leo nodded and then went off with Liza and the children.

Chapter 297

Dejected Mr. Ekenhart

“Kyah!”

As Liza seemed hesitant to go to the other children, Leo pulled her by the sleeve.

It was like a cat and a kitten... Only Leo was a dog...a wolf, and Liza was a fox.

Well, I could let Leo take care of her now.

...As for the other problem...

“Mr. Ekenhart...”

“Mr. Takumi... But Liza was fine earlier. Why is she suddenly...”

“Well, your face was covered... Even Ms. Anna didn’t know who you were... So she probably thought you were a stranger?”

“...Hmm... Still, one does not like to scare children... Tilura never reacted like that...”

“Well, it’s probably because you were there ever since she was born.”

Mr. Ekenhart was sitting in a corner and leaning against the wall.

And I wasn’t the only one who was amused. Ms. Anna and the other workers were also chuckling.

The duke was... No one knew how they should react.

“Tsk...”

“Well, well. Cheer up. After all, you were one of the people who helped her, so I’m sure it will be fine.”

“That’s easy for you to say, Mr. Takumi... Still, what can I do so that she won’t be scared...”

I approached Mr. Ekenhart and patted him on the shoulder consolingly.

For a second, I wondered if I should be acting so familiar around him... But at this point, he seemed more like some friendly old man who was just your neighbor.

Besides, he didn’t seem to mind.

“Well, you do have a rather intimidating face... So I don’t think it should be surprising...”

“Do you think so? Grrr... I thought that growing my beard out would make children like me...”

“Uh...”

“...”

Both Ms. Anna and I looked at each other.

That’s why he grew out his beard?

I had always thought that beards had the opposite effect...

Maybe if it was in an interesting shape... But Mr. Ekenhart’s was rough and wild looking... It did not give the best impression.

While I had not known her for very long, it was clear that Ms. Anna and I were thinking the same thing... Which of us would tell him what we were thinking?

“Since you’re the one who runs this place and has known Mr. Ekenhart for a long time...”

“No, no. I could not say such a thing to His Grace... You must do it, Mr. Takumi...”

“Oh, I don’t think Mr. Ekenhart would be offended if you do it, Ms. Anna...”

“But surely it would be better for a man to tell him? Now, don’t be shy...”

“Mr. Ekenhart is troubled over how children react to him. And since you know so much about children, your advice would be valued more...”

“Not at all...”

“Definitely so...”

Such was the argument we had with our eyes.

...Well, I suppose it was all just my imagination.

However, she was chuckling as if we really were saying such things.

“So...Mr. Takumi. What should I do? It seems that Liza and Tilura like you well enough. So you must have some advice?”

“Uh...”

Mr. Ekenhart had suddenly raised his head and asked for my opinion.

...Tsk. So it was going to me after all.



Ms. Anna looked at me triumphantly and with a smirk, said, ‘Yes, Mr. Takumi. Do tell...’

Hah... I had no choice then. Well, Mr. Ekenhart would not easily take offense, I suppose...

“I think that... No, there is no guarantee that it will work, but... Perhaps that beard...”

“The beard? It is quite impressive, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is. ...But I think you could tidy it up a little... To be honest, I think it’s your beard that makes you frightening to some children...”

“Wh-what!? You are blaming the beard!? That is...ridiculous...”

While it was difficult to say, I ended up blurting it out.

However, Mr. Ekenhart did not take it well. He was clearly in great shock as he fell back down on the ground.

“My beard...”

“In the first place, Mr. Ekenhart. Why do you leave it like that?”

“...A long time ago, I used to shave it... But shortly after Tilura was born, she looked at me and started crying... I was aware that I looked intimidating, but... It was quite a shock... However, shortly after, I went on a long journey. And I did not have time to shave before returning.”

“And Tilura saw you like that?”

“Yes. And though she used to look at me and cry, this time, she stretched out her hand towards me and laughed... Ever since then, I had this idea that I should leave my beard as it is... Of course, I do trim it during social events...”

“So that’s the reason...”

He had been sad that he made Tilura cry, but when he grew out his beard, it made her happy...

It reminded me of the story about Ms. Claire getting married. Mr. Ekenhart seemed to often misunderstand his daughters and be affected by them.

Perhaps Tilura was merely curious about this unusual beard, and it had nothing to do with whether he looked scary or not.

In any case, perhaps she had never been scared of him, and it was just bad timing when she cried... Perhaps it was because she was used to being around women, and would have cried even if it was someone else.

## Chapter 298

### He Decided to Shave His Beard

There was no way that Tilura remembered this story about crying because of her father's face when she was a baby...so I could not confirm anything. But I felt as if he had rushed to conclusions.

Perhaps Sebastian could have told him... But then again, Sebastian was the kind of person to find it amusing.

Besides, maybe he would have thought that it wasn't his place to say anything.

In any case, this was all just speculation... But I had a feeling that I wasn't too far off.

"...Uhh... While it's not like that with everyone, some children are afraid of beards."

"But none of the other children in this orphanage were?"

"..."

"Well..."

I glanced over to Ms. Anne, and she closed her eyes with an uncomfortable expression.

Hmm... I guess there was something that she couldn't say.

"Well, I think the children here are generally more used to being around adults. Perhaps Liza is not... Besides, she was bullied in the slums. And you know, many of the people there were not cleanly shaved."

"...I see... Well, I suppose you are right..."

I went there for the first time today, and there was no one who had a cleanly shaved face.

Perhaps Liza had been bullied by all kinds of people after her grandfather died. Perhaps one of those people had a beard.

And so that was why she was scared of Mr. Ekenhart.

Ms. Anna looked at me gratefully for covering for her.

"It may be as you say, Mr. Takumi... Very well. I shall shave my beard after we return to the mansion!"

"Hahaha! I think that's a good idea..."

Because Mr. Ekenhart's beard made him look like a bandit.

He was sure to look much more handsome if he shaved.

"Besides, Tilura is much older now. So she will not cry regardless of how I look."

"Indeed. If anything, I think she'll be proud at how dashing her father looks."

"Do you think so? Hehehe. One hopes..."

Mr. Ekenhart chuckled as he imagined her reaction.

All fathers wanted to be loved by their daughters, and Mr. Ekenhart was no exception.

“Now...I suppose we should take Liza and leave soon.”

“Yes. Though they seem to be enjoying playing with the others... It cannot be helped.”

“...I’m really sorry.”

“Do not mention it. There are too many orphans for this place as it is. We will have to do something about that soon.”

“Yes, thank you, Your Grace.”

Mr. Ekenhart got to his feet and muttered as he watched Leo play with the children.

I did feel a little bad about taking her away when they were having so much fun... But as long as Leo and I were there, she shouldn’t be too sad.

As Mr. Ekenhart promised to do something about the orphanage, and Ms. Anna bowed, I called to Leo.

“Hey, Leo. Liza. We’re leaving now!”

“Wuff? Wuff-wuff.”

“Kyaa! Ahaha!”

When I called Leo, she turned to me questioningly at first. Then understanding what I said, she started to pull Liza by the sleeve towards us.

Liza was surprised but then started to laugh.

It was nice seeing her so happy and carefree.

...Though, the sight of a giant wolf biting the sleeve of a little girl was a little unsettling...

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Good. Thank you, Leo. Did you have fun out there?”

“Wuff!”

Leo let go of Liza next to me and then she rubbed her head against me.

And so I used my whole body to press against Leo’s cheek and patted her on the head.

Leo nodded happily.

“Now, Liza. We have to say goodbye to the children here for now. Don’t worry, you can come back and play with them later.”

“...Okay. I understand. ...Thank you, everyone...it was fun...”

“Come again!”

I turned to face Liza and told her to say goodbye to the children.

She nodded a little sadly and thanked the children for playing with her.

I suppose she hadn’t been able to play like this before, so it was no wonder that she was sad.

“We will come back. Besides, there is a girl like you where we are going. I’m sure you’ll become good friends.”

“...Really? So I don’t have to return to that place?”

“Yes. We won’t return you to a place where you will be bullied. Don’t worry, you’re going to a place with a lot of nice people. No one will hurt you.”

“...Okay... Uuu...”

“There, there...”

It seemed that Liza had been worried that she would be sent back to where we found her.

And once she understood that it was not the case, she began to cry.

While she did not make any loud sounds, the tears she had been holding back began to flow.

And so I hugged her and gently patted her on the head in order to comfort her.

“Now, let’s go, Mr. Takumi.”

“Yes. Are you ready, Liza?”

“...Sniff...Yes!”

After awhile, Mr. Ekenhart called out to me. He had already wrapped up his face in the cloth again. And so I let go of Liza and got up to my feet.

He had probably done that because we had to walk out in the town again, and in order to not frighten Liza.

And so I extended my hand to Liza and asked if she was ready. She sniffed, wiped her eyes and then took my hand with a smile.

I would have to be careful so that she did not have a reason to cry like that again.

Chapter 299

We Were Stopped By The Guards

“Well, thank you for everything.”

“You are always welcome here, Your Grace. And you too, Mr. Takumi.”

“Thank you. Go on, Liza.”

“Yes... Thank...you.”

“You’re welcome. I hope you will visit again?”

“...Yes!”

At the entrance to the orphanage, we said goodbye to Ms. Anna and then left.

After prompting her, Liza was able to say thank you as well.

While it was a little awkward...it was probably normal at that age.

If anything, it was impressive given that she was in the slums. Her grandmother must have taken good care of her.

“Wuff? Wuff-wuff?”

“Hmm? That’s right. Liza, do you want to ride on Leo?”

“...No, I’m fine... I will walk like this... I like holding hands...”

“Very well then. But you can ride on Leo when you get tired, okay?”

“Yes.”

“Hehe. She’s really taken to you, Mr. Takumi.”

As we headed towards the western gate, Leo looked at Liza questioningly.

Apparently, she was wondering if Liza wanted to ride on her, but she preferred to walk for now.

Leo looked a little disappointed...but it was fine, since we would ride on her anyway, once we left town.

Mr. Ekenhart looked at us and smiled.

...Well, maybe I just assumed that he was. His face was still mostly covered.

“Excuse me, do you have a minute?”

“Yes?”

“Wuff?”

“Hmm?”

“...?”

We were just about to come out to the main street, when a few guards appeared from the side, and one of them called out to us.



I wonder what it could be?

Most of the guards here seemed to know about Leo...

“There was a report about a monster appearing in the town.”

“A monster?”

“Wuff?”

The guards were looking towards Leo.

Well, Leo was a Silver Fenrir. So she was technically a monster...

And while many people knew that Leo was not the kind that would attack people, it was still possible that others had seen Leo and alerted them.

“A large wolf with silver hair... A Silver Fenrir. The Great Leo? So you must be Mr. Takumi?”

“Huh? Ah, yes. I am...”

After getting a good look at Leo, the guard seemed to understand what was going on.

Mr. Ekenhart must have sent word to the guards.

And so they were satisfied now that they saw me and Leo together.

“Sorry to disturb you! We rushed to investigate after the report. But it was just you, after all...”

“No... I suppose someone saw her and was scared.”

“I am relieved now that I know you are from the duke’s house. However...who are they?”

The man quickly bowed and apologized to us.

But it was fine, and I wasn’t mad anyway.

However, the guards then turned to Mr. Ekenhart and Liza.

After having so many people looking at her, Liza became afraid and hid behind me while still clutching to my hand.

“According to the report...there was a strange man with a monster. And he took a young girl from the slums...”

“Ah... So you thought that the girl was taken by the monster.”

“Mmm... First she is scared of me, and now I am treated as a suspect...”

“Who is that man?”

If they knew where she came from, then it must have been someone from the slums.

Perhaps it was the people who had been bullying Liza.

After all, they had been screaming about a monster as they ran away.

As for Mr. Ekenhart, he would look like that, given his head was wrapped in a cloth... But that didn’t stop him from being offended.

It was either show his face and scare Liza, or hide it and be treated like a suspicious person...

He had sharp eyes and was very tall on top of that, so it wasn’t really surprising.

No one else around town looked like he did.

“Hah... Very well. I shall talk to them.”

“Hehe. Thank you.”

“Where are you going...?”

“I’m going to talk to those people.”

Mr. Ekenhart sighed and walked towards the guards.

Liza saw this and questioned him hesitantly.

She was fine with him as long as she couldn’t see his face.

After all, that was what she saw when we helped her.

“There. Now you know who I am.”

“You-your Grace!? My-my apologies!”

Mr. Ekenhart unwrapped the cloth and showed his face to the guards.

They were surprised and quickly fell to their knees and apologized.

“Mmm. Well, I didn’t bring any guards with me today. And with my face covered, you had no way to know that it was me.”

“Yes, Your Grace!”

“However...”

Mr. Ekenhart then lowered his voice as he spoke to them.

As his voice was quiet, I could not hear him well... But it seemed like he was telling them about what had happened.

As many people had seen us go to the orphanage, it was necessary to explain.

It was impossible to not stick out when Leo was with you.

“Hmm?”

“Is...something wrong?”

“No, it’s nothing. Nevermind.”

Liza saw me reacting to the few words that were audible, and she looked at me questioningly. So I reassured her that it was nothing.

Mr. Ekenhart was probably telling the guards what to do about it now.

Not just about what happened to Liza, but he was likely thinking about what to do with the slums in general.

Chapter 300

We Departed From Ractos

As I watched Mr. Ekenhart and the guards talk, I noticed that Leo was nodding her head behind me for some reason...

Could it be that while I could barely hear them, Leo was able to hear the conversation just fine?

And it seemed like she was agreeing with Mr. Ekenhart’s explanation...

Did she really understand? Or was she just pretending to?

“...Sorry to keep you waiting. Now, let’s go back to the mansion.”

“Yes.”

“Wuff.”

“Under...stood.”

At the end, Mr. Ekenhart told the guards to prepare a horse for him at the western gate, and then he returned to us.

After he covered his face, that is.

...While Liza stuttered when she talked, she was trying her best to be polite.

And so after we saw the guards go on their way, we also headed to the western gate.

“The horse has been prepared, Your Grace!”

“Hmm. Thank you.”

“...Why do you need a horse? You could just ride on Leo...”

“Wuff?”

Once we arrived at the west gate, a guard brought the horse to Mr. Ekenhart.

It seemed a little unnecessary... Leo could carry two to three adults just fine.

And so Leo and I looked at Mr. Ekenhart questioningly.

“But you and Liza are going to ride on Leo, are you not? And it might be bothersome for me to hold onto you while you have to make sure that Liza does not fall off.”

“Ah, I suppose that is true.”

“Wuff...”

“?”

Now that he mentioned it, it did make sense.

This would be Liza’s first time riding on Leo while she is running, and it might be difficult to keep my balance if Mr. Ekenhart was there as well.

However, Leo seemed disappointed, as if she was saying that it would be perfectly fine. Liza had a puzzled expression.

“Now, let’s go to the mansion.”

“Yes.”

“Wuff!”

“...Understood.”

Mr. Ekenhart got onto his horse, and I picked up Liza and got onto Leo’s back.

Then Leo started to run and follow the horse that was up ahead, but... There was less rocking than usual?

“Thanks, Leo. For being considerate.”

“Wuff!”

“...Woah!”

Leo was trying to run without shaking too much, so that Liza wouldn't lose her balance.

I thanked her, and Leo barked as she came up to the side of the horse.

I didn't know she could do that... And even when running so carefully, she was able to keep up with the horse. It was very impressive.

Perhaps Liza had never experienced such speed before, as she let out an amazed gasp and watched the scenery flow around her.

While we weren't even going that fast, it was something new for her.

“Haha. Is it fun, Liza?”

“Yes...! I've never...rode on anything so fast!”

“I see.”

As Leo rode next to Mr. Ekenhart's horse, Liza became excited.

Even if she wasn't living in the slums, she was not really the age to be riding horses.

Mr. Ekenhart turned to look at us and then smiled...or so it looked.

As his face was still covered, maybe it just seemed that way...

Grrrrr...

“Hmm?”

“Ah...”

While riding on Leo, I heard a faint, familiar sound.

As I wondered about it, Liza looked down as if embarrassed.

She had been so excited just a moment ago. Could it be that...

“Liza. Are you hungry?”

“... Yes.”

She answered in a quiet voice.

So that sound was her stomach after all.

Considering that we were on a running Leo, it must have been pretty loud for me to be able to hear it.

I suppose she hadn't eaten since we found her, and so it was no surprise that she was hungry.

And while she was now used to being around us, she was still quite reserved, so she didn't want to say anything.

When I looked into the distance, I saw that the sun was starting to set, and it was getting dark... It was already evening then.

Now that I thought about it, I was quite hungry as well.



“Once we arrive at the place I am staying at, I will have something prepared for you. Can you wait a little longer?”

“...Yes! ...But I am thirsty...”

“Hmm. I see...”

“Wuff!”

“Hmm, Leo? Mr. Ekenhart!”

I thought that once we arrived at the mansion, I could ask Ms. Helena or Sebastian to have something prepared.

And while Liza nodded in agreement, she was now saying that she was thirsty.

Well, waiting a little longer to eat was one thing, but being dehydrated was rough.

As I wondered what to do, Leo barked one and then slowed down.

I asked her what was wrong while also shouting out to Mr. Ekenhart.

As she had stopped so suddenly, there was quite a distance between us.

“...What is it, Mr. Takumi?”

“Uh, Leo just stopped and... Also, Liza says that she is thirsty...”

“Woooouuu. Grau!”

“Oh!?”

Mr. Ekenhart came rushing back to us on his horse.

I explained the situation to him as I took Liza down from Leo's back. Then Leo growled and barked.

In the next instant, a sphere of water appeared in front of Leo and then dropped down to the ground.

"Leo...are you saying that Liza should drink that water?"

"Wuff-wuff!"

Leo nodded in reply.

Since Liza said that she was thirsty, Leo wanted to give her some water.

"But I heard that water made with magic wasn't pure, and it's possible that there are substances in it that you should not drink..."

"Wuff-wuff! Wuff. Wuff-wuff!"

"Huh? This water is fine? Hmm, I don't know about that..."

"...I have never seen a Silver Fenrir use magic before... Mr. Takumi. Is Leo saying that the water is drinkable?"

"Uh, yes. She says that it's fine to drink it. But I was told that you shouldn't drink water that was gathered with magic..."