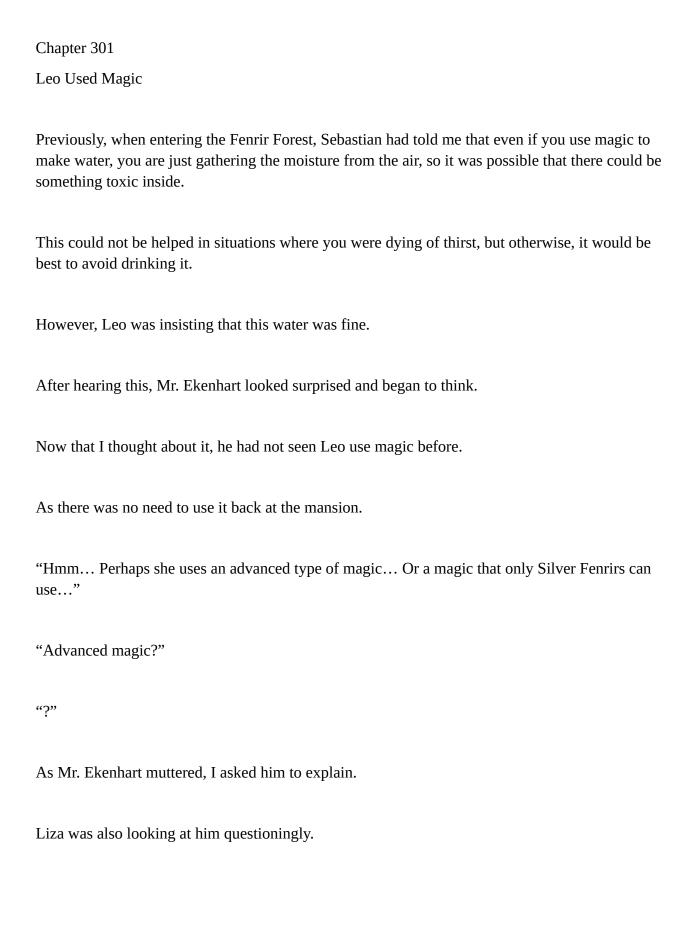
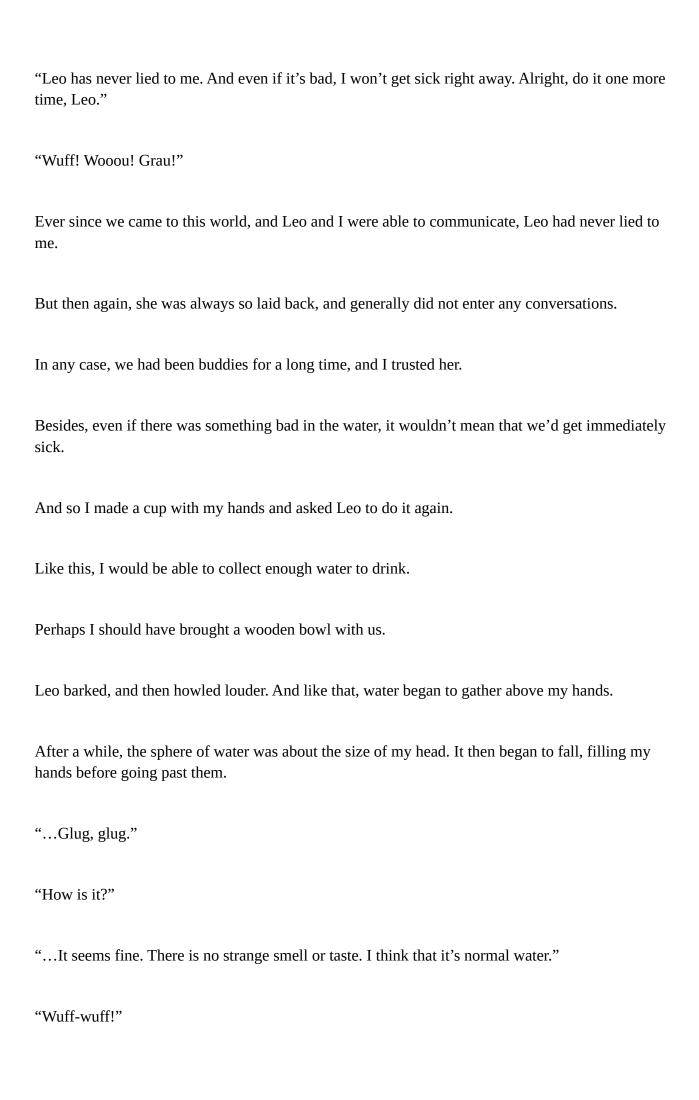
## **Beloved Dog 301**

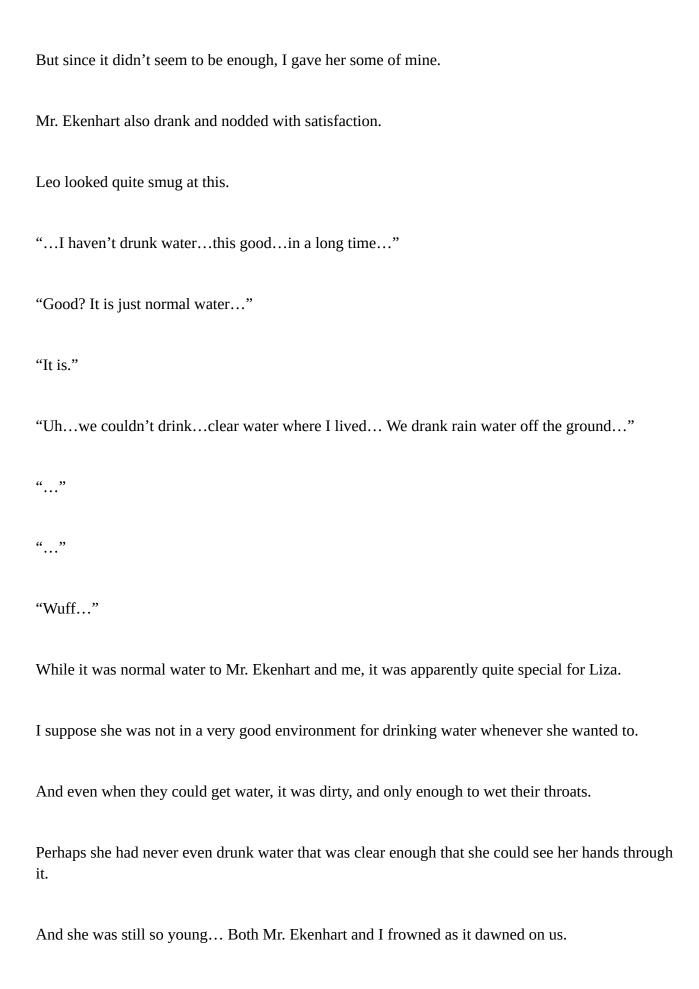




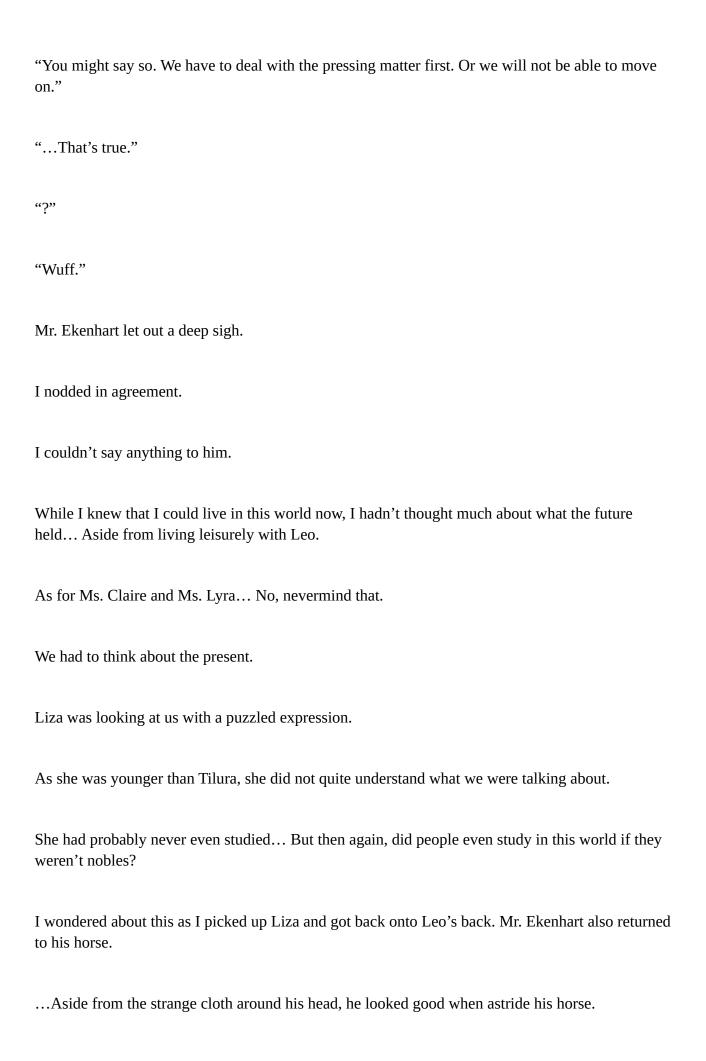


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"I see... Then I suppose it's fine if she drinks it."
"...I want to drink the...water..."
"Alright, Liza. Put out your hands in front of Leo..."
When I drank it, there was nothing strange. It was just normal water.
Well, I'm sure there were toxic substances that I couldn't taste...but it was probably fine.
Leo was nodding as if this conclusion was obvious.
And Liza had looked at me with jealousy while I was drinking.
And so I took her to Leo's face and made her put her hands out.
But since her hands were small, and would not hold much water, I put out my hands as well.
And then Mr. Ekenhart got down from his horse and extended his hands.
...I suppose he was also hungry... Or he was just interested in Leo's magic.
"Glug...glug... It's good!"
"Here, you can have more if it's not enough."
"Hmm...glug-glug. Yes, it's normal water. It seems fine."
"Wuff."
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Liza must have been very thirsty, as she quickly started drinking the water in her hands.



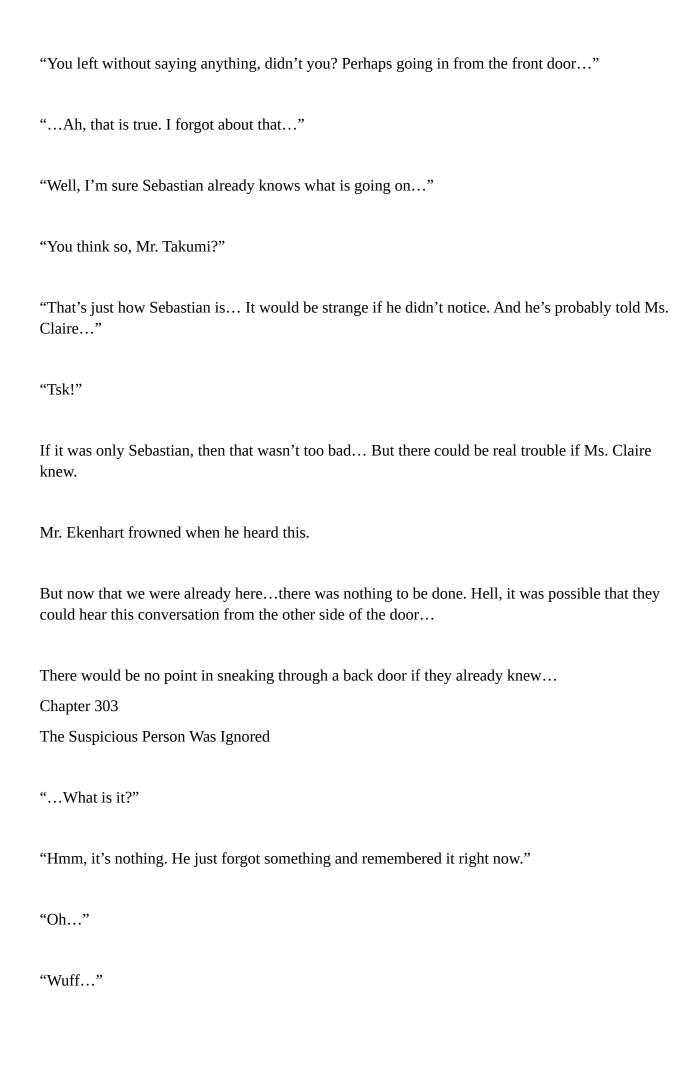




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"Thank...you."
"Hmm? What is it?"
While riding on Leo, Liza suddenly thanked me.
I wonder why?
"The...uh...for the delicious water..."
"Oh, that. It was nothing. Besides, you should thank Leo. It was Leo who made the water."
"Yes...that's...right."
I didn't think that it was necessary to thank me for some water, but I suppose it meant more for her.
When we returned, I would thank Leo for it as well.
Allso, I would ask Ms. Helena to serve some of that grape juice.
It was sure to be even more of a surprise than some clean water.
Thinking about Liza's smile made me feel a little better. And so I decided to talk to her more.
"Uh...Liza? You know that you don't have to try and talk so politely?"
"Huh? ...But grandfather said that I should do that with old people..."
"Well, there is no need to with me. You can just talk the way you like. After all, wouldn't it be
tiring?"
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"Yes...I under...stand..."
"...Or?"
"Uh... Yes. Uh...okay!"
"That's good."
"Wuff-wuff!"
It had occurred to me that she was forcing herself to talk in a polite manner.
Maybe that was why she hesitated and sometimes stuttered?
I wanted her to relax, and so I told her to talk in whatever way was easiest.
While she wasn't used to doing it, she would get used to it soon.
And so I smiled and patted her on the head.
Leo also barked happily... It was clear that she was also worried about her.
Maybe it was like how she was with Sherry. She saw herself as an older sister.
In that case... I would try and act like an older brother.
...I was not going to be the grandfather, in any case.
"Mr. Ekenhart, are you forgetting something?"
"Hmm? What?"
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Some time had now passed. And we arrived at the mansion just before the sun had set completely. On the way back, there had been some trouble...or something surprising, but... Right now, after dismounting Leo, I was standing in front of the entrance. Liza was amazed. Clearly she had not expected to be taken to such a large mansion. And so she was looking around with curiosity. But just before Mr. Ekenhart went through the door, I called out to him. I suppose he had forgotten? "Uh... I know that you wanted to cover your beard for Liza...but are you really going to go in looking like that?" "And what would be the problem with that?" "I wouldn't say that it's a problem, but..." Mr. Ekenhart had also snuck out of the mansion in order to go to Ractos. He had not told anyone about this... Well, he had left a note, but he didn't say anything to Sebastian or Ms. Claire. Now that I thought about it, it was impressive that the guards recognized him like this... I suppose they knew him well enough to tell by his build and overall air.







As I considered letting her do the work, Ms. Claire stepped out from behind the servants.



There were no traces of her strange drunkenness from yesterday, and she spoke in her usual way. As for Mr. Ekenhart, he continued to try and talk to Claire in a quiet voice, but she refused to react to him. ...Perhaps she was angry... "And the orphanage did not accept her?" "Well...they didn't have enough room right now...and Leo insisted that we bring her here..." "Good Leo did?" "Hey, hey." "Wuff! Wou. Wuff-wuff!" "I see... Very well. If that is what Leo wants...then we will support her decision!" "...You can understand what Leo is saying?" "Somewhat... Not as completely as you, Mr. Takumi." Ms. Claire said with a chuckle.

She also didn't seem to have any prejudices, and looked at Liza with a warm expression.

In any case, just like Mr. Ekenhart, Ms. Claire also accepted Leo's wishes.

connection with Sherry, who was her familiar?

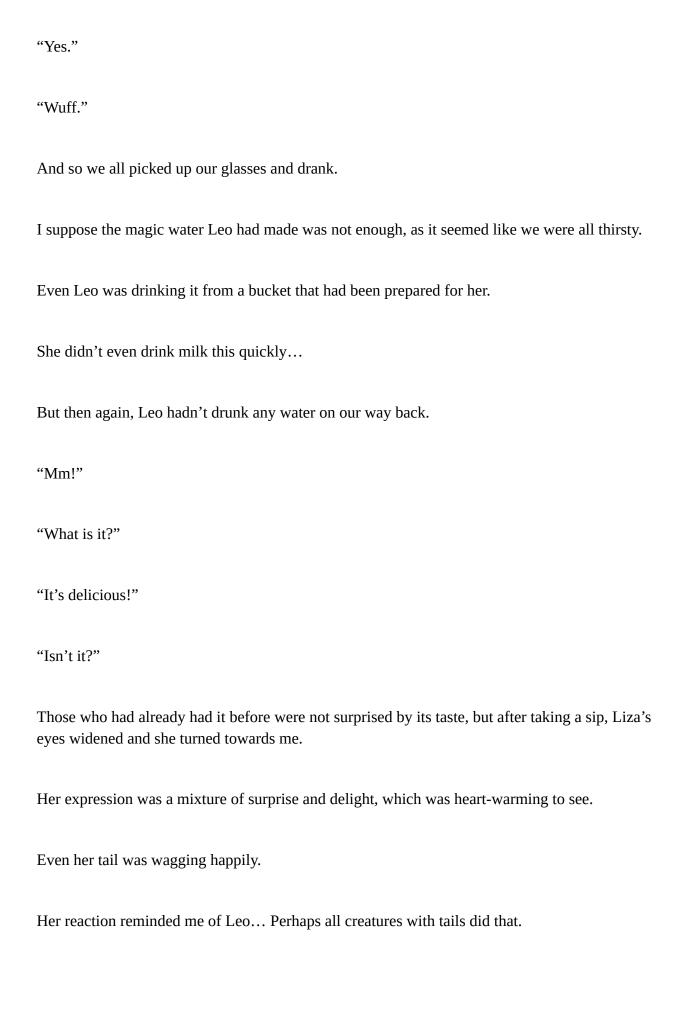
I suppose it was because she had spent so much time with Leo? Or did it have to do with her

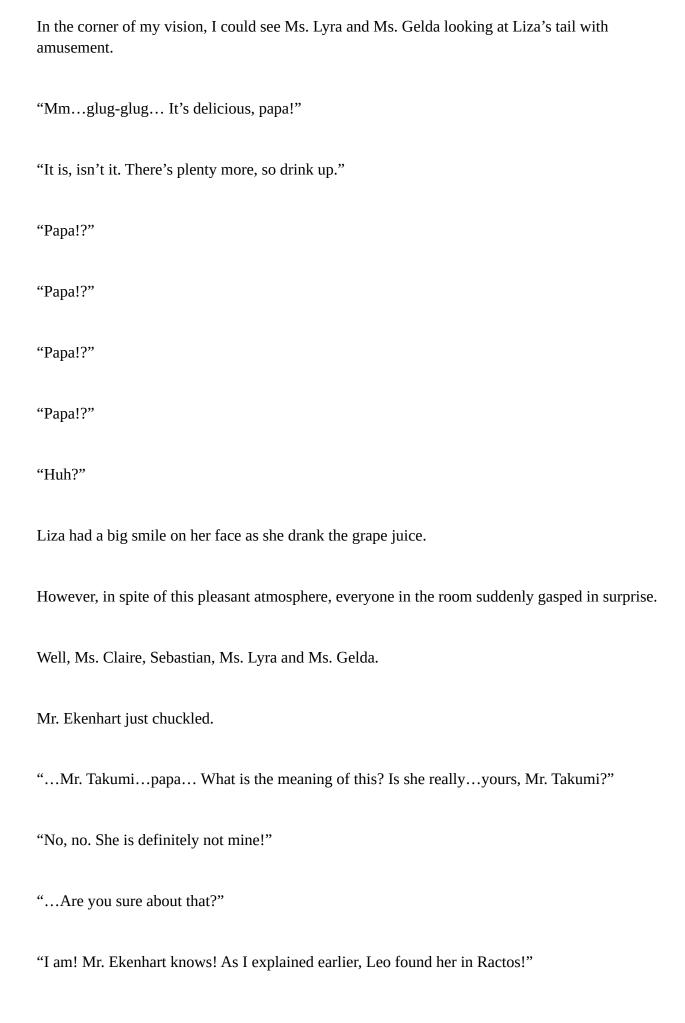


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"Wuff."
"Hey, hey... Notice me!"
"Hah... I already have. Now, who is this suspicious person?"
"Suspicious person. How rude..."
Ms. Claire then guided us to the drawing room, as it would be no good to stand here and talk. It was
also then that she finally sighed and acknowledged Mr. Ekenhart's presence.
If only he would take that cloth off of his face and stop moving around so much...
It was no wonder that some people didn't show him much respect.
Chapter 304
We Talked In The Drawing Room
"If you act strangely while dressed like that, then you can hardly expect a different outcome,
father."
"...Hmm. Well, there are reasons for this. In any case, we'll talk in the drawing room."
"Yes."
Mr. Ekenhart was relieved after she finally acknowledged him.
Well, he was probably more relieved that Ms. Claire wasn't that angry and didn't start lecturing
him...
Though, maybe his relief was a little premature?
"...Father. There are other pressing matters right now, but we will continue this conversation later."
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"...Is that true, father?"
"Hmm...it is. Mr. Takumi is not lying."
After the initial surprise, Ms. Claire looked a little crestfallen as she interrogated me.
There was something a little scary about her now...
In any case, I tried to dispel any strange ideas she got into her head.
Even Mr. Ekenhart agreed that I was telling the truth... Though, he was sweating for some reason.
Yes, Ms. Claire had an intensity now that I had not seen before...
"...Then why are you her papa...? I don't understand..."
"Well, uh...on our way here, she suddenly started calling me that..."
"Hmm? But you are papa?"
"...Liza... You're not really helping me in this situation..."
I was starting to feel a little frantic in front of Ms. Claire.
Was this how Mr. Ekenhart felt when he was the target of his daughter's wrath?
Even though they were initially shocked as well, now Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda were more
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intimidated by Ms. Claire. Only Sebastian seemed to be enjoying this.

Well, I suppose I could not rely on Mr. Ekenhart after all... He was not even looking at me now.



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"Also...I don't know your name...that other old man said it a few times...but I keep forgetting..."
"I-I see... Hmm. Indeed. ... Well, my name is Takumi. So you can just call me Takumi."
"...Takumi... Hmm... But it's easier to say papa!"
"Th-that might be, but... I'm not your papa. And so I don't think..."
"I can't? But I want..."
"Ah. uh..."
"Hahaha! Now you can't refuse. You'll just have to accept the name, Mr. Takumi."
"...Mr. Ekenhart... This is your fault too..."
It wasn't that I hated being called that.
After all, it showed how comfortable she was around me now.
However, it was awkward to be called papa when I didn't have any children.
Besides, Mr. Ekenhart had helped her too. And he had daughters already. Surely he would be better
for that role...
Perhaps it was because of the beard situation?
But I wasn't even married. And I was too young... Well, maybe not that young, but...
While I was happy that she felt that way, still...
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"...I can't?"
"…!"
I glared at Mr. Ekenhart who continued to laugh.
And then Liza looked up at me with that worried expression and drooping tail and ears.
I could not tell her that she absolutely couldn't.
Who could, when they saw such an expression on her face... Well, there were probably plenty of
people who could, but I couldn't.
"Fi-fine. You can call me papa..."
"Yay! Thank you, papa!"
"Hahaha!"
I pushed away any feelings of confusion for her comfort, and allowed it with a nod.
Liza smiled happily and wagged her tail and twitched her ears.
I suppose that was how beastkin expressed their happiness.
Regardless, after seeing that, I felt that I had made the right decision.
Mr. Ekenhart was just laughing, which made me less sympathetic about what Ms. Claire and
Sebastian would say to him later. Really.
"Hah...so I'm a parent now...even though I'm not married..."
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As for Leo, she bowed her head to Ms. Claire and barked as if to express her gratitude over this decision.

While Liza understood that we were talking about her, she seemed rather confused as well.

But one could not expect her to understand things about Mr. Ekenhart being the duke or about Silver Fenrirs being special.

She could learn about all of that little by little.

Chapter 306

Ms. Claire Was Concerned About Yesterday

"...What you really want to say, is that it's because Mr. Takumi is requesting it...not Leo..."

"...Father?"

"Mm...nevermind. In any case, it is official now. Liza will be a guest in this house. Liza, you may move around freely while you are here, understand?"

"...Yes...I understand..."

"…"

Mr. Ekenhart had muttered this observation, and had received a cold look from Ms. Claire in return.

He grimaced and then turned his attention to Liza.

I hadn't really heard what he was saying, but he should know better than to poke the bear by now...

As for Liza, she also seemed a little confused, but nodded her head as if she understood.

Every time she tilted her head or looked puzzled, her ears and tail would move. When she did this, I saw that Ms. Claire, Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda all averted their eyes.

Perhaps they were restraining an urge to touch the tail.

I had a feeling that they would be doting on Liza pretty soon. I just hoped that Tilura wouldn't get jealous.

"Now that I think about it... Why is Ms. Claire making the declaration? I thought that Mr. Ekenhart is the master here..."

"Heh. To ask that so bluntly. You are a strange one, Mr. Takumi. It's quite simple. Because I have left all matters concerning this house to Claire."

"I am the one responsible for this mansion. And that is not going to change easily, just because father has decided to pay us a little visit."

"...While the servants here all work for the duke, they do so under Lady Claire. And so it is ultimately her decision."

"I see."

"I have already made the decision, and do not wish to confuse the servants."

Is that right?

Since he was the head of the family, I had assumed that he was the main authority in this mansion as well.

I suppose he technically was, just that Ms. Claire was the one responsible for making decisions.

So it was a good thing that I had introduced Ms. Claire to Liza in the way that I had.

Mr. Ekenhart just did not look very impressive right now...that had been my main reason.

In any case, I was not surprised that Sebastian had forced his way into the conversation. He must have seen the opportunity to explain something. After all, when I glanced towards him, he was smiling with satisfaction. ...Perhaps he would go easy on Mr. Ekenhart now. "How are Tilura and Ms. Anne?"

After we had sat there and enjoyed our drinks for some time, I suddenly remembered something.

Well, it's not that I had forgotten.

But usually, if Tilura knew that Leo was here, she and Sherry would come to meet her.

As for Ms. Anne... I had been thinking about what Mr. Ekenhart told me in Ractos.

Perhaps I felt a little sympathy towards her.

"Tilura and Sherry should be in the back garden now. She will be training until dinner time. As for Anne...she is still in her room. She hasn't recovered from last night's drinking yet."

"...I see."

Tilura sure worked hard.

She diligently trains even when Leo and I are not there... I suppose that was how much she liked to move her body.

As for Ms. Anne... Well, I hope she gets well soon...

I could not really say anything about that, as it would be awkward since Ms. Claire was here.

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"Um...Mr. Takumi..."
"Yes, what is it?"
"I am very sorry...that you had to see that yesterday. I shall be more careful in the future."
"Hahahaha! I'm sure you have reason to want to drink and relax once in a while. You really do not
have to worry about me."
"Still, I apologize. And thank you."
Ms. Claire looked a little embarrassed as she bowed her head and apologized.
I suppose it wasn't her most lady-like moment.
But somehow, I felt that such things were necessary for her.
You would get tired if you remained so tense all of the time.
"Well, I suppose we can introduce Liza to Tilura during dinner."
"Yes. Tilura should be happy, since they are similar in age. And Anne...will probably be happy,
since she is already fond of Sherry."
"Hahah. Maybe."
Tilura was not easily scared, and was a very curious child. So she shouldn't have any trouble
becoming friends with Liza.
I hoped that they would be able to play together.
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And since Ms. Anne liked Sherry, it seemed likely that she would take to Liza as well.

Because of the ears and tail... Even Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda was staring at them... ...Though, Sherry was always more interested in Ms. Anne's hair rolls. "Everyone, dinner is prepared. It will be served in the dining hall now." "Yes, thank you. ... Uh, can you add another person?" "Yes. Helena saw that we have a guest earlier, and has seen to it." "Good. Well, let's go to the dining hall then." "Thank you, Ms. Claire." "Not at all. This child...Liza. Is now our guest." "Thank you. Did you hear that, Liza? They have prepared something for you to eat." Chapter 307 I Had A Feeling That Liza Would Be Popular In The Mansion "...Thank...you...?" "No, don't mention it. I hope you enjoy being here." A servant had entered and announced that dinner was ready. Apparently, Ms. Helena had prepared food for Liza as well. I would have to thank her about that later. Especially since she had also brought the grape juice.

I told Liza to thank Ms. Claire as well. And though she seemed so overwhelmed by everything that

was happening, she managed to do it.

And then she bowed her head and looked up while shaking her tail.

I could see that Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda were clenching their fists as if trying to hold them back.

Even Ms. Claire was holding one hand with the other.

...It was like they were trying to not pet someone's dog.

Thinking this, I turned to see that Mr. Ekenhart was chuckling, and Sebastian was smiling.

Yes, Liza should fit in here just fine.

"So, your name is Liza!?"

"Yes. This is Liza. While she may be a beastkin, you must treat her like anyone else, understand?"

"I understand! Nice to meet you. I'm Tilura!"

"Tilura... Older sister?"

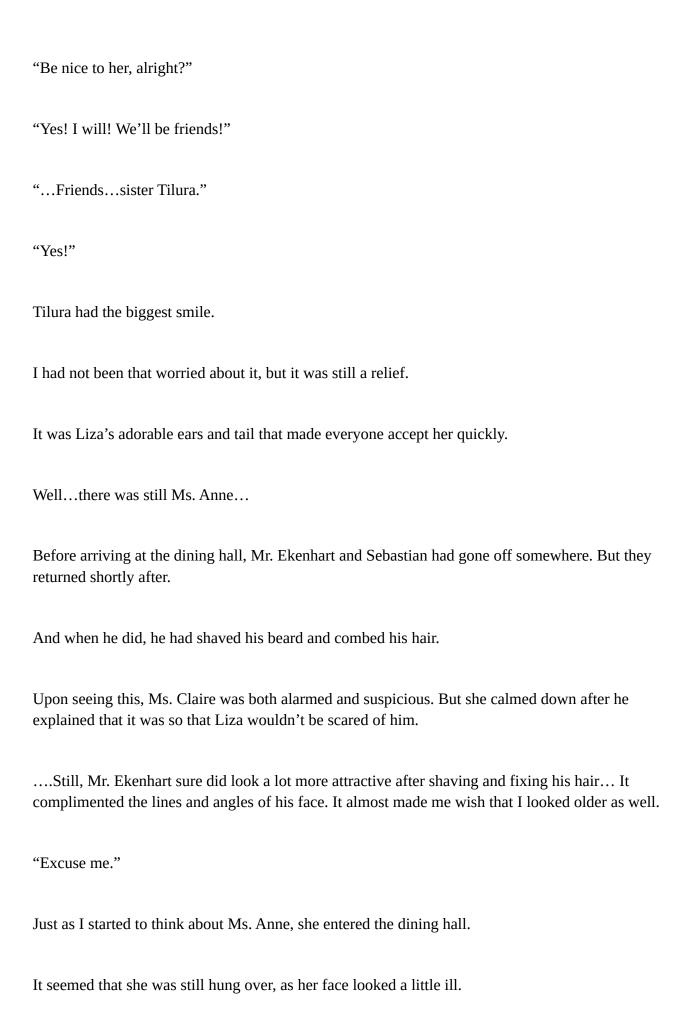
"Older sister... I've never been called that before!"

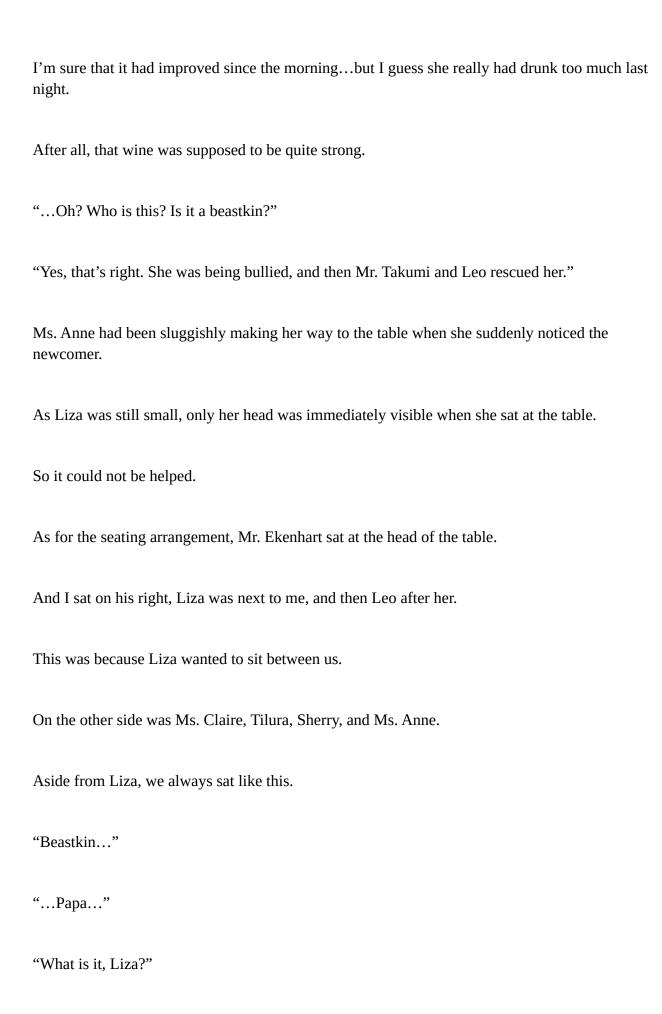
After going to the dining hall and waiting for the food to be served, Tilura returned from her training. And so I introduced Liza to her.

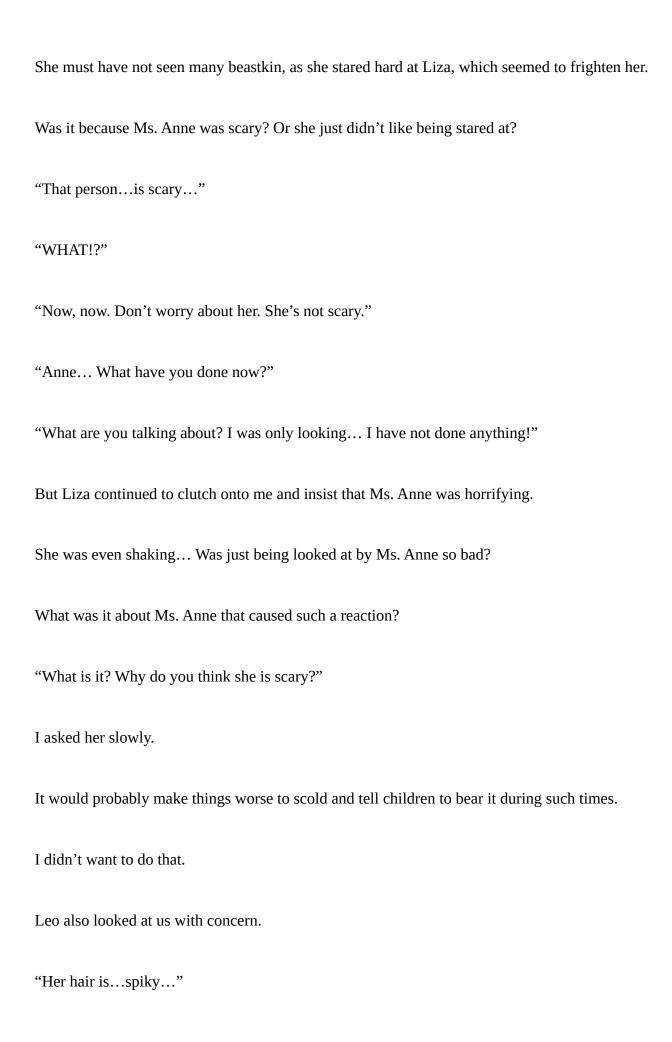
As expected, Tilura's eyes were filled with curiosity, and she seemed quite happy as she stared at Liza's ears and tail.

Not only that, but she seemed strangely pleased to be seen as an older sister.

As she was the youngest child, she had never been called that before.







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"Hair...?"
"Are you talking about my wonderful hair?"
Liza's quiet voice rang in the air as she looked Ms. Anne's golden hair, which were shaped like
vertical rolls.
While they looked a little droopy today, I suppose they did tapper into sharp edges.
But it was still hair, and wouldn't pierce anything. They looked soft enough...
I suppose the very ends could look like the tip of a rapier or other weapon...even if they were a
golden color.
Chapter 308
Ms. Anne Was In Shambles
"Hehehe...hahaha! Anneliese's hair is going to poke people! What an amusing thought!"
"Hehehe...yes, it is, father. Ahahaha!"
"Does your hair pierce people...Ms. Anne? It does look very sharp!"
"Wuff-wuff."
"Wha...what are you saying...!"
After a moment of silence, Mr. Ekenhart had burst into laughter.
Ms. Claire was also laughing...eventually, even I could not hold back the laughter.
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Tilura looked like she didn't understand what was so funny...which made things even funnier.

Leo even looked like she was amused, and Sebastian turned his head away to cover his face. As for Ms. Anne...she was shaking angrily. "So in other words, you think that my hair would stab people... That is ridiculous! Ms. Claire, Your Grace! You should not laugh so much!" "You may say that, Anneliese, but...hehehe..." "Hehehe. Yes, Anne. It's your fault for having such dangerous-looking hair. Hehehe." "Tsk! Hey, you little beast! Do you realize what you've done!" "So-sorry..." "…!?" "Hey, Anne? You should not shout at children... Anne?" After having her pride and joy ridiculed, Ms. Anne had become red with fury. ...And she seemed to have forgotten about her hangover. In any case, she then took it out on Liza, who started it all. Liza became very stiff and apologized to her. However, she did not understand what she did wrong, and tilted her head to the side... And her tail and ears as well.

From her perspective, she had merely been honest, which caused others to laugh. And so she had no

idea what she was supposed to do.



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"...NO!"
"!!"
"Ms. Anne... No one would want to be touched by you after you glared at them with bloodshot
eyes."
After hearing Liza's name, Ms. Anne had stretched out her hand across from the table.
Her eyes made her look like a mad woman.
At this rate, she was bound to climb over the table and knock things over.
This only made Liza even more scared, and she rejected Ms. Anne strongly.
Once again, Ms. Anne suffered a terrible shock.
First Leo and then Mr. Ekenhart... Liza was shocking a lot of people.
"Anne, just calm down. She is just a child. Of course, she is scared."
"Ms. Anne is scary."
"...What! Fine. Very well. I have behaved a little wildly... Excuse me."
After hearing that from Ms. Claire and Tilura, Ms. Anne returned to herself and became calm.
However, she was still looking at Liza and her hands were twitching.
"Liza. Don't worry about her. Just sit in your seat, alright?"
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"Wuff!" "...Let's...eat?" At Mr. Ekenhart's signal, everyone started to eat. Liza had been looking at me strangely as I put my hands together, but she copied me. While we ate, we then explained to Tilura and Ms. Anne about how Liza came to be with us. "I see. Indeed, I hear a lot about how the beastkin are treated badly. It is the same in my father's lands. While no battles were fought there, the older generation still feel negatively towards them." "Mmm. They know about the war. And many people believe the rumors or exaggerate and spread them. And with no one to tell them otherwise, it is treated as the truth." "Well, father. Perhaps you should try and ensure that your people are properly educated?" "Hmm... That is true, but.. Many people cannot afford to be educated... It is not a simple matter..." We were finished explaining about Liza, and now, Mr. Ekenhart, Ms. Claire, and Ms. Anne, the

nobles...the administrators, were talking as if in a meeting.

Chapter 309

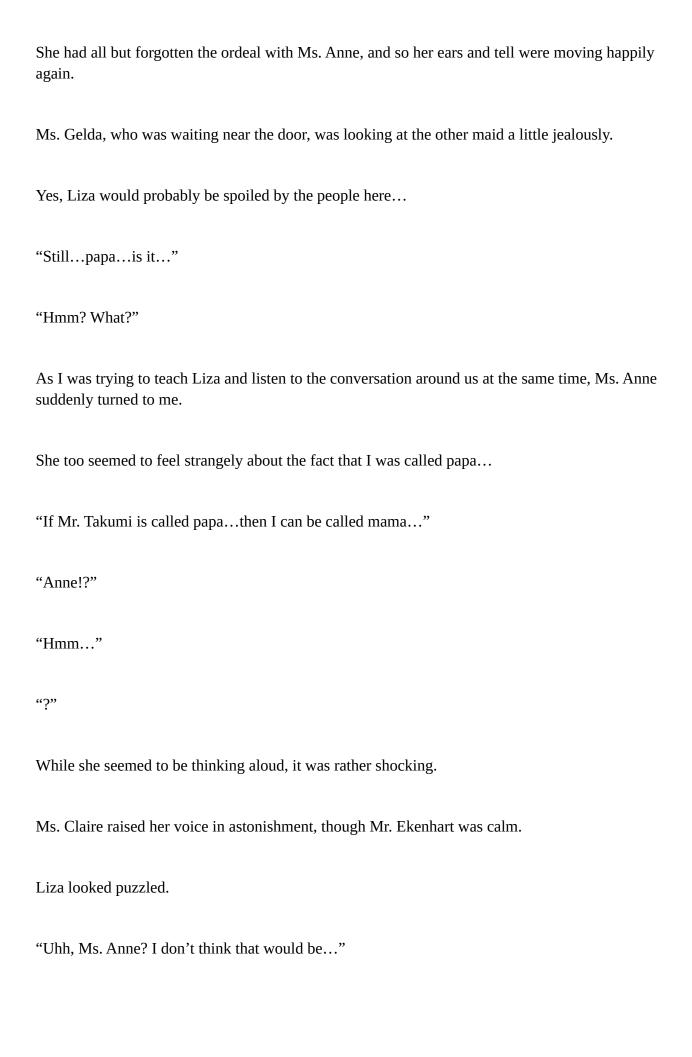
Ms. Anne Did Not Give Up Easily

As the dining hall seemed to turn into a meeting room, I listened to the others talk while eating my food.

Mr. Ekenhart was the duke, and Ms. Claire had a lot of responsibilities, so it was understandable.

...But I was surprised to hear Ms. Anne also talk so earnestly... Well, I already knew that she was prone to making suggestions about such things... But recently, she and Ms. Claire talked like some kind of comedic duo, that I had forgotten about what she really was like...





After all, Liza was scared of her. Even though she didn't look scared now, she still avoided looking in Ms. Anne's direction... "No, Mr. Takumi. While you may have rejected me...you are still not promised to anyone! So if I were to be named this child's mother... Well, it would be as if we were married..." "...So you still haven't given up..." "Of course, not! You have a Silver Fenrir! That would be very useful for my family!" "Wuff?" "...Tsk... I shall not give up!" "Hah... So that's what you were thinking about, Anne." I had turned her down quite directly... But it didn't seem to matter to her. If I was called papa and she was called mama, then we would look like a family, and eventually... That seemed to be what she was thinking. Leo looked at Ms. Anne when she heard mention of Silver Fenrir, which caused Ms. Anne to recoil. But then she moved forward as if to show her resolve. Ms. Claire sighed with exasperation. "What do you think, Liza?"

Mr. Ekenhart was just amused by the whole scene, and then asked Liza what she thought about it.

Since he had laughed at her reaction before, he was expecting Liza to say something humorous

again.

Speaking of Mr. Ekenhart, Liza now had no problem looking at his face. And so that was one of the reasons that he looked so satisfied. "Hmm?" "Uh, that lady wants you to call her 'mama." "...No...that's wrong. I already...have a mama!" "Oh...?" "...But...what about my plans..." "Your plan was terrible to begin with, Anne. So, who is this mama? Could it be...me?" "Well, it can't be me, because I'm her older sister!" Liza looked a little puzzled by Mr. Ekenhart's question. And then she looked at Ms. Anne and shook her head. Not only that, but she insisted that she already had a mama. I didn't know how she came to such decisions, but who could it be? ...Even I was interested. Ms. Claire was looking at Liza with great expectation.



As she was not one to ever enter our conversations, Leo was quite startled by this.

Mr. Ekenhart just burst into laughter, and Ms. Claire and Ms. Anne seemed disappointed. But Tilura was nodding understandingly. Well, Leo was big, female and protective over Liza on top of being very kind. And perhaps being beastkin meant that she didn't see Leo as being so different. Leo saw Sherry as a younger sister, and was also good with children, so it might be appropriate. But then again, I think Leo is younger than Liza... Liza was probably around seven years old, and I rescued Leo about five years ago. And she was close to being a newborn, so she must be younger than Liza. Well, I suppose in dog years, or Silver Fenrir years, she was an adult... "Do you like Leo?" "Yes! She is kind and warm!" "I see. Well, I guess Leo is your mama then." "Wuff? ... Wuff." It was true that Leo was kind, and she was definitely warm when you were enveloped by that fur. Liza likely didn't have anyone she could cling onto like that before, and she had the biggest smile now.

