

Beloved Dog 391

Chapter 391

I would be able to take the katana with me to the forest

“You will also have to hire a butler. But Lady Claire should help you with that, so you do not need to worry.”

“But weren’t we talking about managing it together?”

“That has not been decided yet, but we are moving things in that direction. It is something that I will discuss with Lady Claire soon, as His Grace has already agreed to it.”

When this had first started, I thought it was something I could do leisurely by myself...but things just kept expanding...

However, they were going to hire a butler for me. And it was most likely that Ms. Claire would do it with me. So surely we should be able to manage...

I suppose Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian had been talking about it today.

But since Ms. Claire had gone to the town with us, they were not able to tell her about it yet.

“And so, we will have to create a longer list of selected people to hire.”

“Very well. While I still don’t know how many people I will hire, I will do my best in choosing them.”

“Very good.”

So the first list I had received was just a temporary one.

The scale of the operation was increasing in size, and I felt overwhelmed. But I wanted to do what I could for everyone's sake.

Of course, that also included choosing carefully from the list.

I didn't think that they would put anyone bad on the list, but there was always a possibility that someone could have gotten in there by mistake.

There was much to think about, and so I troubled over it while watching Sebastian leave in order to talk to Ms. Claire. And then I went to the garden to continue my training.

"Mr. Takumi. You can take the katana with you to the forest. Of course, your usual sword as well."

Once my mental sword training and swinging was finished, and I was wiping myself with a towel, Mr. Ekenhart suddenly said that to me.

"The katana? Are you sure?"

"As long as it is in the forest. I would like you to abstain from using it in populated areas, such as towns, but there is no one in the forest."

"That's true."

"Only people from the mansion will be going to the forest this time. And they are not the kind of people to talk about it to outsiders. So there is nothing to worry about."

"Very well. I will bring both of my swords then."

Indeed, if we were in the forest, then we would not be seen by any strangers.

While it was not quite a place that no one ever went near... It was still generally empty of people.

Especially the place where we had camped last time. No normal person would go there.

I had defeated orcs with a sword, but not a katana.

And since they were used a little differently, I was slightly worried... But unlike the time in Range village, there were other people to help me.

So even if things didn't go well, there was no chance of me dying.

While it still won't be a casual excursion...at least it wouldn't be such a burden.

"When looking at you swinging earlier, it seemed that you have become quite comfortable with it."

"Yes. I think that it happened faster than it did with the sword."

"Well, it's also because you already had some training. But perhaps you just happen to have the aptitude for it, Mr. Takumi."

"Aptitude..."

I didn't know much about that, but it did somehow feel more comfortable in my hands.

"By the way, when will we be going to the forest?"

"Indeed... Probably in four to five days. But we only decided that we would go, but haven't chosen an exact date yet."

"Four to five days... So not immediately."

"Well, there is no need to rush. As you are going to fight, you must prepare."

The last time we had gone to the forest, it was just two days after making the decision. So this was quite a bit longer.

But then again, it was because Ms. Claire had been quite insistent.

If I had four to five days...then I could observe the herb gardens, as well as make some herbs for Mr. Kalis's store.

I wouldn't want Ractos to run out of herbs while I was away from the mansion.

"Also, we should receive an answer from Range village soon."

"Do you mean, about the growing of herb gardens?"

"Yes. I sent word to the Range village chief about it. But have yet to receive a reply."

So he would receive an answer from Mr. Haines soon... As it was a message directly from the duke, Mr. Haines would not ignore it or wait for too long.

Besides, the land was the duke's property to begin with, so it was not like they could even refuse him if he made the decision.

Well, the duke wouldn't do such a thing. That was why the people loved him.

But Mr. Haines... Would he really be fine with growing herb fields around the village?

He had been very friendly when I was in the village. So had the other villagers.

Considering the matter with the wine, I did not think it would be disadvantageous for the village, but I was still a little concerned.

I did not want to do anything in the village that was not welcome...

Chapter 392

I practiced signals with Leo

"With such things included, Tilura must train so that there will be no problems when she encounters some orcs. While her skill is improving, actually facing them will be a different matter."

“Indeed. I think that my hands started to shake the first time that I fought against them. It is very different from ordinary training.”

Mr. Ekenhart talked as he watched Tilura play with Leo, Sherry, and Liza.

I had been quite scared when Range village was attacked by orcs, and I had to steel myself and fight.

If I ran away or died, then the villagers would be in danger... I had to think about that as I fought.

Had it only been me there, I would have likely just used light magic and run away.

And so Mr. Ekenhart wanted to train Tilura so that she wouldn't be caught up by her nerves.

Even if she couldn't defeat an orc, Leo and the guards would protect her. However, as her father, he wanted to decrease the danger as much as possible.

After that, Tilura and Liza helped to wipe Leo's feet, and then we returned to the mansion.

I could see how close the two had become. Tilura seemed to enjoy playing the part of an older sister.

“Now, Leo. We will be going to the forest... However, you do understand that things will be different this time? We are going to fight. But you cannot defeat all of the enemies.”

“Wuff!”

I returned to my room, and then asked Mr. Lyra to bathe Liza. In the meantime, I sat down to talk with Leo.

This time, we were going to the forest so Tilura and I could fight some orcs.

It was mainly for Tilura, but since I was going to leave the mansion and go to Range village, I had to gain as much experience as possible in order to protect the fields and village.

Up until now, Leo would always defeat any monster, but I could not rely on that every time.

And so while it was usually a time we relaxed in the room, I faced Leo with a very serious expression.

I was facing Leo next to the bed, and Leo was sitting in the middle of the room.

Leo then barked reassuringly and nodded.

...She said that she understood that she would not be there to fight.

“Alright then... Stay!”

“Wuff!”

Leo lay low on the ground.

This would be the signal for her to stay put and not jump out, even though she had discovered a monster.

It was a little different from telling to wait with food in front of her.

But she could always do this, so it wasn't really a problem.

“Next is... Run!”

“Wuff-wuff.”

Leo then stood up and turned her back to me.

This was for emergencies, when she would have to take someone and run away.

If that happened, she would carry someone with her mouth, or put them on her back before running away. But as we were in my room, she just turned her back to me instead.

Though, I doubted we would have to run with the guards, Mr. Ekenhart, and Leo there, but it was just a precaution.

As for these signals, I had already decided on them previously, and taught them to Leo.

And by going over them again in the room, I was making sure that she would react properly.

They were simple words, so Leo shouldn't have trouble with them, but I just wanted to practice once.

"Alright. Now sit down again and... Go!"

"Grau!"

Leo turned to me and sat down. Then I gave a different order.

This was when she could attack monsters outside of the times Tilura or I was fighting them.

Depending on the situation, it might be the one I used the most...

After that, I tested several other signals and confirmed that she understood them properly.

Giving orders and seeing Leo swiftly react to them made me feel like some veteran dog trainer.

Of course, it was mostly that Leo was smart, and had nothing to do with any ability on my part.

Yes, it was a wonderful thing that we could understand each other.

“Now, lastly... Intimidate!”

“Grrrrrrrrrr... Wou-grau!!”

“I’m back... Ahhhh!!”

“Ah, Liza...”

“Wuff!?”

That was the signal for Leo to growl and bark in order to scare away any monsters or beasts.

And so Leo had bared her fangs and barked and growled at me... Even if I knew it was just pretend, it was a little scary.

But immediately after, the doors opened and Liza entered.

And she seemed to be quite stunned to see Leo barking like this.

She let out a short scream, her ears folded, and her tail went between her legs as she began to shiver.

After barking, Leo also noticed her and seemed surprised.

“I’m s-sorry, Liza. I didn’t mean for you to be frightened...”

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff...”

“Mama... Is she angry...?”

“No, no. She was just practicing for when we go to the forest. That’s how she will scare away any monsters and beasts. It wasn’t because she was mad at you, alright?”

“Wuff-wuff.”

I approached Liza, who was shaking near the door, and apologized.

Leo also pressed her face towards her and barked apologetically.

Liza had assumed that Leo was angry at something, and was looking at us for an explanation.

I felt bad for scaring her.

And so I told her what we were doing, and that Leo was not angry.

Leo nodded in agreement.

“...Really?”

“Of course. Neither Leo or I are angry.”

“Wuff.”

“That’s good. I thought that papa and mama were fighting...”

Liza said with a sigh of relief.

So she wasn’t scared that Leo was angry at her. She thought Leo was fighting with me.

Because we were her parents?

For a child, seeing their parents fight would cause anxiety or fear.

I would have to be careful.

That being said, Leo and I were just buddies, not an actual couple.

Chapter 393

Someone was invading the kitchens

“But Liza? I told you before, you should knock before entering a room.”

“Ehehe... I forgot.”

“Be careful next time, okay? If you had knocked, then Leo and I would have noticed, and you would not have been surprised.”

“Okay.”

“Wuff!”

Well, children were like that.

If they remembered everything you told them to do, then raising children wouldn't be so difficult.

What do you even know about that? Some people might say that to me. I suppose I was just remembering what it was like to be a child.

While there were some things I learned quickly, there were other things that took time.

Especially since so many things had just happened in Ractos, so it could not be helped that she forgot some things.

As Liza answered honestly, Leo answered in a similar way as well.

“Alright, now Leo and I will go and take a bath... So perhaps I should call Ms. Lyra?”

“Wuff!?”

“No, it’s fine. I can stay here by myself.”

“I see. Well, we’ll try and make it quick, so just wait for a short while. Now, let’s go, Leo.”

“Wuff...”

It was now our turn to take a bath.

And so I called to Liza after preparing to go, but it seemed like she was now fine with being alone.

I think she was finally no longer afraid of being abandoned.

As for Leo, she was quite startled by the sudden idea of having to take a bath, and did not look happy as she followed me out of the room.

Outside, Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda were waiting, and so I asked them to dry Leo after I had washed her.

They had also heard Leo growling when Liza opened the door, and were quite shocked.

Well, Ms. Lyra wasn’t really. She liked to take care of people, and was eager to help with Leo. But I felt a little bad for Ms. Gelda.

Leo also rubbed her face against Ms. Gelda apologetically, which helped calm her.

“Ms. Lyra, Ms. Gelda. I’m sending Leo out now!”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Yes.”

“Certainly.”

After washing her body, Leo tried to play with the large bucket of water, and so I had to stop her and send her out to the changing room. Then I called to Ms. Lyra and Ms. Gelda.

I left Leo to be towed down by them, and returned to the bath so that I could relax.

“Still, Leo... She finally stopped hating taking a bath so much, but now she wanted to play with the water...”

I let out a sigh as I soaked up in the wide bathtub.

Well, she mostly just wanted to splash her front paws in it.

But when you were as big as Leo, even that created great splashes of water, and it felt cold as it hit me.

Besides, I wanted her to return to the room quickly so Liza wouldn't be lonely. I would try and allow her to play in the water some other time.

She used to hate baths, and I never took her to any rivers, so she didn't really play in the water.

But since she had swam in rivers since coming here, I could see that she didn't hate water as long as it wasn't hot.

I wasn't sure why she didn't like hot water...

“Mr. Takumi. I'm sorry to disturb you as you're about to sleep.”

“Hmm? Ms. Helena? And Sebastian?”

After finishing up my bath, I was walking down the hallway back to my room, when Ms. Helena suddenly called me.

Sebastian was right behind her, and had a troubled expression.

“What is it? And at this hour?”

While I didn’t know about Sebastian, Ms. Helena had to prepare breakfast, which meant she woke up earlier than any of the servants.

It was almost midnight, and so it would be difficult to get up in the morning...

I thought about such things as I questioned them.

“Well...it is a little awkward to say...”

“I will explain it for you then.”

“Uh...alright.”

As Ms. Helena was hesitating to tell me, Sebastian took a step forward and volunteered.

It was obviously something he just wanted to do for his own sake, but I kept such thoughts to myself.

“Apparently, during the last few days... Someone has been stealing the food that is stored in the kitchen.”

“Stealing food?”

“Yes. Someone is entering the kitchens at night while everyone sleeps, and is eating the food.”

I suppose the fact that they were eating the food there suggested it wasn’t someone from the outside then?

“Has anything else gone missing? Do we know of any monsters getting in?”

“Nothing has disappeared aside from the food. Besides, if there were monsters, then someone in the mansion would have been attacked already. Also, the guards protect the mansion day and night, so I doubt something could have entered without them noticing.”

“I see... So it is someone from within.”

“That is the most likely. Since they seem to be eating the food right in the kitchen.”

“Indeed...”

If someone was coming from the outside, surely they would take what they want and leave.

Unless it was some bandit who was starving and didn't care about leaving evidence.

Besides, entering a duke's household was a very dangerous thing.

If you were going to take such a risk, surely you would take something more valuable than food.

Not only that, but Sebastian said that it happened during these past few days.

In other words, it happened multiple times. An outside invader seemed even less likely.

Chapter 394

Liza was under suspicion

“While I said that it was during these past few days... It is a little awkward to say, but...”

Sebastian paused after saying that much.

He liked to explain things so much, so what could cause him to stop...

“Well...it started to happen right after Lady Liza arrived in the mansion. And has continued every day since.”

“You are suggesting that it was Liza?”

“Indeed. It is not the doing of the servants, and there is no reason for Lady Claire or the others to do it. They only need to ask if they are hungry.”

“...That’s true.”

As the servants were in the mansion even during the night, food could be prepared if it was needed.

There was no reason to enter the kitchen without telling anyone.

Sebastian managed the servants and was certain that they were not the ones eating the food.

If that was the case, then it would be easy to be suspicious of Liza.

And according to Sebastian, it had started with her arrival.

Besides, Liza wasn’t completely comfortable here yet, so she likely wouldn’t be asking the servants for food if she was hungry.

I think the reason that Ms. Helena looked so uncomfortable was because she didn’t want to tell me this.

“Still, Leo or I would have noticed it. After all, she sleeps in the same room.”

“Indeed. I am merely stating that due to the circumstances, it seems suspicious. But no one actually believes it. After all, you would have noticed it.”

On one hand, I had not noticed when Liza left the bed to sleep with Leo. So it wasn’t a convincing argument. But Leo was a different matter.

It had been like this in the forest as well. Even when asleep, she was sensitive to movement around her, and noticed the arrival of the orcs before anyone else.

So even if Leo was more relaxed because it was safe in the mansion, she would surely notice it if someone in the same room as her had left.

Sebastian and Ms. Helena understood this as well, and so they were not convinced that Liza was the culprit.

“...Still, there is one thing that is puzzling.”

“What is that?”

Ms. Helena said suddenly with a troubled expression.

What could it be? Did it connect to Liza?

“As food was being stolen, the other cooks and servants and I were watching the kitchens carefully. To see if someone would come in. We even asked Philip and the guards to cooperate.”

“And in spite of such strict security, the food continued to be stolen?”

“Yes. No matter what we did, we could not find anyone. And before we knew it, the food was gone...”

Ms. Helena, the maids and butlers were not professionals, and so it might not be too hard to escape their notice.

However, it should be much harder to invade the house without the guards noticing.

And yet whatever this was, it had succeeded in getting into the kitchens and eating without being caught. What could that mean...

“...What if it is an invisible monster?”

“Monsters that are normally invisible do exist, but... I have never heard of them being near this place.”

So they did exist...

Well, they apparently didn't live in this area. Also, it would still be strange for them to go through all of this trouble for some food.

Besides, no one had been attacked.

"Are there any other clues as to who it could be?"

"Well...we did find some fur at the scene of the food crime."

"Fur?"

"Yes. Not human hair. It looks like fur from some animal..."

"And that's what made Liza a prime suspect?"

"Indeed. When it was discovered, it had been trampled on so it turned black. But it must be from some beast or monster."

So if it wasn't a monster, then the only thing left was a beast.

Which meant Leo, Sherry or Liza.

But Leo was so big that it would be impossible for her to go anywhere without anyone noticing.

Sherry should be with Ms. Claire during the night, and since they could communicate, she could ask when she wanted food.

So that left Liza.

While Liza had hair like a human, she had ears and a tail like a beast.

Hmm... The circumstantial evidence does point to Liza...

But as I said earlier, there was no way that Leo wouldn't notice. And Leo would not have allowed it.

Because I had scolded her about eating things without permission in the past...

"Well, I do see how it would seem like it could only be Liza... Aside from the part where she could enter the kitchens without being noticed."

"Yes. I do not know if she has such skills, but she is one suspect. Of course, I don't think that she would do such a thing, especially with good Leo there. She also does not like to stray too far from you, Mr. Takumi. And so we came to consult you about it."

"I see..."

Chapter 395

I decided to watch the kitchen

I could understand why some might be suspicious of Liza.

However, as Sebastian said, Leo would not miss something like that. And it was doubtful that Liza could sneak into the kitchen without being noticed.

As for Liza not wanting to be away from Leo or me, it was less severe than before. But even that had only just started today.

Regardless, even though they had not decided that she was the culprit, they had still wanted to talk to me about it.

Perhaps I had noticed something strange about her...

"And has food been eaten today as well?"

“No, not yet. It always happens once everyone has gone to sleep... Around two or three at night.”

Well, that was quite late.

To think that something like that was happening while we were asleep...

“Hmm... In that case, I shall join the watch tonight. And I will have Leo with me. That should help us find out who the culprit is.”

“We had wanted you to watch Liza, but... Indeed. I suppose it will help if Leo is there...”

Apparently, Sebastian had wanted me to stay in order to prove that Liza was innocent.

However, if Leo joined me in the watch, then her sharp senses could help in catching the person who was eating the food.

It seemed like he only cared about Leo, but I can be useful too you know?

Well, maybe not as useful as Leo or the guards...

“Very well. We will ask you to do it, Mr. Takumi. Though, it troubles me that we have to...”

“Please don’t worry about it. Besides, Ms. Helena always provides us with such delicious food. So consider it a sign of my gratitude. I cannot allow this person to continue to steal food. And I also want to show that Liza is innocent.”

Even if circumstances pointed to Liza, I couldn’t believe that she would do such a thing.

Sebastian and Ms. Helena agreed with me as well.

After we had returned from Ractos, Ms. Claire had told them about what Liza had gone through, and the story had spread amongst the servants, who were very sympathetic.

Perhaps some of them felt that it was because she was in such a desperate situation, that she would want food and...

In any case, I had decided to watch the kitchen tonight.

And so I returned to my room once to go and fetch Leo.

Since this would mean that Liza would be alone in the room, I decided to ask Ms. Lyra to stay with her.

This was because she was most comfortable with Ms. Lyra out of the servants, and to prove that Liza had not left the room.

“I’m coming in. ...Leo, Liza... What are you doing?”

“Ah, papa!”

“Wuff?”

In order to set a good example, I knocked on the door before entering, and saw something strange...

Leo was sitting in front of Liza and raising her paw in front of her. Liza was sitting on a chair facing her and had her hand on Leo’s paw.

...Leo wasn’t offering her paw, but Liza was?

After seeing me enter, Liza got off from the chair and ran to me.

“Papa, look. Look! Mama taught me this!”

“Hmm?”

“...See, mama?”

“Wuff. ...Wuff...wuff-wuff...”

“Paw. Seconds.”

“Ah...”

Liza happily pulled me by the hand towards the chair. And then she sat down like before.

And then she made Leo hold out her paw again.

As Leo barked, she placed her right hand on Leo’s left paw. And then Leo lowered her left paw and raised her right one. And Liza placed her left hand on top of it.

It was the typical gesture dogs did for ‘paw’ and when they wanted more food.

Uhh... So a giant dog-like wolf was teaching a girl to ask for food?

“Leo, are you sure you want to teach her that?”

“Wuff. Wuff-wou.”

“Mama says that you taught her how to do it!”

I did remember teaching her that, after she had rescued her and she recovered a little. And I guess Leo still remembered it as well.

That did make me happy, but I didn’t know if it was something that Liza needed to learn.

As Liza looked up to her as her mother, Leo probably meant it as part of her education.

It was the first thing I had taught to Leo, so perhaps she was happy about it.

However, it would probably be better for her to teach it to Sherry instead of Liza.

Sherry was practically a dog, after all... She liked to sleep and relax a lot. She didn't really act like a fenrir.

"Little Liza, your hand..."

"Yes!"

"This really makes you...want to praise her..."

"Ms. Lyra..."

Before I knew it, Ms. Lyra had stepped forward and put out her hand in front of Liza.

Indeed, Liza did look cute as she eagerly obeyed.

However, Liza was a beastkin, not a pet... Even though she seemed to be amused, and her tail was wagging.

In any case, I let Ms. Lyra praise Liza as I got back to my purpose for being here.

"Leo. Sorry, but could you come with me?"

"Wuff?"

"What is it, papa?"

I changed the subject and explained to Leo and Liza that we would be watching the kitchen.

As I expected, Liza seemed like she didn't really understand, which reassured me that she was not the culprit.

As for Leo, she seemed angry that someone was eating food without permission.

“Wuff! Graaaaauuu!”

She had been scolded when she did it, and so it was not fair if someone else was getting away with the same thing... That is what she was saying.

So she still remembered when I had been upset at her for snitching...

Chapter 396

We all hid in the kitchen

“Well, I leave the rest to you, Ms. Lyra.”

“Yes. Lady Liza. Let’s wait here for them to return.”

“Okay. I will stay here with sister Lyra!”

And so I left Ms. Lyra with Liza, and then took Leo with me as I left the room.

Liza nodded willingly. It did not look like she was worried much at all.

I suppose it was because Ms. Lyra was staying with her. But I think she was also less worried about being left alone in general.

“Wuff! Wuff!”

“Okay, okay. We’re going, so just wait a little. Rushing won’t help us find the culprit any sooner, you know?”

Leo was angry at this scoundrel who was eating food, and wanted to go to the kitchen as soon as possible.

And so together, we made our way to the kitchen where Ms. Helena and the others were waiting.

As we still had time, rushing just meant that we would have to wait longer.

Perhaps I should have grown some herbs that would help us stay awake?

I thought about this, but quickly dismissed the idea.

It wasn't so much a matter of whether I could do it or not, but if I made something without enough knowledge about it, I might accidentally make something very strange.

I didn't want to create something with hidden side effects, or something that was addictive or dangerous.

I had to learn more about herbs and medicine, and could only make things that I knew were safe.

I thought of such things as we walked and noted that while Leo's tail usually wagged happily, it was currently standing upright as if angry.

"...Is it almost time?"

"Indeed..."

As soon as we arrived in the kitchen, I had Leo try to sniff out the area, but there were too many scents due to the food, and she could not determine anything.

After that, the lights were turned off and we hid and waited for something to appear.

As for the people on watch, it was Phillip, Ms. Helena, Sebastian, and a few other cooks and guards.

Aside from the pantry, there were several cooking stoves and ovens. So it was not too difficult to hide...if you were a human.

But Leo was so large, so for now, she was crouching between two stoves.

It seemed really cramped.

Even if something did appear, Leo would likely not be able to move immediately. But I told her that I would handle it with magic.

Regardless, in spite of how uncomfortable it was, Leo was determined to catch the culprit.

She could not abide the idea of someone stealing food and not being scolded.

Had I really been that angry when she did it?

Well, I think it was because I had read about it in a book. You needed to be firm so that they wouldn't make a habit of it.

Back then, we could not communicate as well... I'm sorry, Leo.

Clink.

“!”

As I was thinking of the past and feeling bad for Leo, I suddenly heard a faint sound in the dark and quiet kitchen.

I wasn't the only person who heard it, and the others immediately looked a little nervous.

I could see Leo's ears twitching.

She was trying to find out what it was that had come.

Seconds felt like minutes as we waited, and I tried my best to not make a sound in the dark kitchen.

While we wanted to stop the theft of food, it wouldn't solve anything if we merely scared it away without finding out what it was.

And so we had to capture it.

“...”

I kept still and tried to erase my presence as I stared at the kitchen.

Now that my eyes had adjusted, I could see decently well.

This was because some moonlight was coming in through the window.

Also, before coming here, we had all eaten some herbs to enhance our senses.

I could even hear the breathing of the others, which I normally would not have been able to hear.

It was probably the same with the faint sound from earlier.

Click...click...

From the kitchen entrance, I heard the sounds of something hard touching the floor.

Something had likely entered the kitchen and was searching for food.

The sounds were very quiet, and it was clear that the intruder was carefully trying to avoid being caught.

Click...click...

The sounds slowly moved towards the pantry.

And as it got closer, I could hear its breathing.

This...did not sound like a human?

Thanks to the herbs, I could hear the breathing of the others, and this sounded different.

I suppose it reminded me of Leo?

But then again, I was no expert, so I could be wrong.

In any case, the sounds of its footsteps were getting close.

The tension in the room grew as it approached.

And then...

I saw that Leo's nose was twitching.

Was she catching its scent?

Perhaps it was familiar to Leo.

Click...click...

As my attention was on Leo, the footsteps suddenly stopped.

It was as if it had noticed something.

Did it realize that we were here?

In that case, it might run away...

I turned to look at Sebastian, wondering what to do.

There would be no point in this if it ran away without anyone having seen it.

In that case, perhaps we should all move at once and try to capture it.

It wasn't close enough for me to reach it, but it shouldn't be that far away either... What should we do...

Chapter 397

We captured the food thief

“Wuff...”

As I looked at Sebastian and the others and wondered what to do, I heard Leo sighing.

Leo, the intruder will hear if you do that...

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Enough? What do you mean?”

Leo turned to me and barked.

It seemed like she was saying that it was enough, but we hadn't caught anyone yet, let alone seen anything.

What did this mean... I asked Leo quietly.

Just then, I heard the rhythmic sounds of something running from the direction that the intruder had been.

It must have heard my voice. Or Leo's.

Not wanting to let it get away, I started to get up to my feet.

The others began to move as well.

“Grau!”

“Kya!”

Just then, Leo's angry bark echoed through the kitchen.

And then there was a scared squeak.

Huh? That voice...

“Wuff. Wou!”

“Kyu...”

Leo slipped out from her cramped hiding place and barked as she moved towards the place where I had heard the sound.

She wasn't going to bite into it, but catch it.

By that time, everyone else had stood up and was looking at Leo.

“Wuff... Wuff-wuff.”

“So it was you who was stealing the food...”

“Kyu...kyu-kyu...”

Leo let out a sigh and picked it up with her mouth and turned to face us.

It must have been scared by Leo's barking, as it was now shaking.

It knew that it could not beat Leo, and did not try to resist.

Of course, it was Sherry.

Leo was holding her by the back of the neck, like a parent cat, as her limbs hung and shook.

Sherry was squeaking as if asking for help, but I could not exactly defend her in this situation.

After all, she had taken food without permission.

"Hah... Sebastian, please turn on the light. The effects of the herbs should wear off soon."

"Indeed. Very well."

After a moment, a dim light illuminated the kitchen.

Even though the effects of the herbs were weakening, I had gotten used to the darkness, and so my eyes hurt a little.

In any case, there were more pressing matters.

"Sherry... Why were you stealing food?"

"Kyau...kyuu-kyuu."

I asked while looking at the dangling Sherry.

Apparently, she was barking and trying to explain, but I could not understand what she was saying.

I thought about asking Leo to interpret, but she wouldn't be able to talk with her mouth full... Besides, it would be a hassle for me to then relate it to Sebastian and the others.

Though, Sherry seemed resigned, so it was probably fine to let go of her.

"Sorry, Sebastian. Could you go and call Liza, who is waiting with Ms. Lyra? Unless she is already sleeping."

"Very well. I will go and check to see if she is awake."

Liza would be able to clearly understand what Sherry is saying.

Ms. Claire would as well, but she might be asleep...and I didn't want to call for her at this hour.

If Liza was asleep, then I would just make Leo calm down and would interpret what she said.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. I have brought Lady Liza."

"Papa. Mama. What happened...?"

"Sorry, Liza. I know you must be tired, but I want to ask you to do something."

She had probably been waiting for us to return, as she was rubbing at her eyes.

Ms. Lyra was also right behind her.

It would probably be best to let them sleep in tomorrow... I thought such things as I asked her to interpret for Sherry.

"Yes, okay. I can do that."

“So, why have you been doing such things, Sherry?”

“Kyau...kyuu-kyu.”

“Umm...”

And so the interrogation began with Liza’s aid.

Since we knew there was no danger now, Phillip and the guards had been dismissed.

Ms. Lyra had also been sent to bed, and Sebastian told her that she could sleep for longer than usual.

After that, the interrogation was over in a few minutes.

The reason was simple. She was hungry.

While she had not lacked food since coming to this mansion, she was still young and growing... So perhaps three meals a day was not enough.

And so recently, she had taken to leaving the room after Ms. Claire slept, and followed the scent of food to the kitchen.

It was just a coincidence that it started after Liza’s arrival.

She was clearly scared, and would probably be crying if she was human, so I doubted it was a lie.

In any case, Leo. Maybe you got a little too angry?

Chapter 398

Sherry had become fat from eating too much

“I’m sure Lady Claire would have prepared some food if she knew... Why didn’t she ask her...?”

“Kyu...kyu...”

“I see. Uh, papa...”

Sebastian was right.

Ms. Claire doted on Sherry, and would surely ask the servants to bring her some food.

Liza nodded and interpreted Sherry’s excuse.

According to her, as they were familiar and master, she is not supposed to ask for things.

Leo had taught her about the relationship. Familiars were supposed to protect their masters and not ask for too much or complain...

Leo... It’s good that you want to educate Sherry, but... Maybe you were a little too thorough?

Besides, it wasn’t like Leo was my familiar...

Perhaps Leo was playing the part of a wise old crone, or was teaching her younger sister how to adapt to the human world.

“Wuff... Wuff-wuff?”

“Even still, aren’t you eating too much? That is what Leo is saying.”

“Kyu...kyu...”

“She says that she was hungry...”

As Sherry was a fenrir, neither I nor Sebastian knew how much they normally ate.

But when looking at her now, I did think that she might be eating too much.

As a growing cub, I could understand her having a great appetite, but...

Leo had calmed down by now, and had placed Sherry down on the floor.

She was about as big as a medium sized down, and a little larger than when we first found her.

She looked quite round and soft.

I had not really noticed it before, but it did seem like she was eating more than she needed to grow.

Besides, now that I thought about it, I had hardly ever seen Sherry exercise.

She usually just rode on Leo's head or back, or was carried by Tilura.

Ms. Claire also carried her often... And if she was eating more than three meals on top of that, it was no surprise that she would get fat.

"Well, Sherry. I think you may need to lose a little weight now..."

"Wuff. Wou... Wou!"

"What is it, Leo?"

Perhaps fenrirs were different, but if Sherry was a dog, then I would be worried about her health.

She would become more sluggish and easy to tire. And she might get sick in the future...

Leo had always liked to go on walks, and would obey me so that she didn't overeat, so I hadn't had to think about such things before. But I had read about it in books.

Obviously, Leo ate a lot more after turning into a Silver Fenrir, because she was larger. But she still exercised a lot, and was not overweight.

As I thought of such things, Leo started to bark as if she had thought of an idea.

“Wuff-wuff. Wou! Grau-grau!”

“Ah... I don’t know about that.”

“What did good Leo say?”

“Well...”

Leo moved her front paws and barked while explaining.

I wasn’t quite sure about her idea, but Liza and I then explained it to Sebastian.

Leo was suggesting that Sherry could train with Tilura and me.

Obviously, she could not wield a sword, but she could still run around in the garden.

That in itself was fine, but Leo was also suggesting that Sherry come with us to the forest and fight against the orcs.

Ms. Claire would have to give her permission first, and I didn’t know if Mr. Ekenhart would agree... Well, maybe he would.

In any case, she wanted Sherry to exercise and regain her wild side as a fenrir.

“As a fenrir...”

“Yes. Leo is concerned about what will happen to Sherry if she just lays around all day.”

Well, even if she was a familiar, it wasn't like Ms. Claire was going to make her fight.

And she was still quite small, so it was only natural for to be picked up and carried often.

She only ran around when she wanted to play.

Sherry showed no signs of wanting to fight like a wild fenrir, and was very lazy. And so Leo had been thinking for a while to do something about that.

She said that this would be a good opportunity for Sherry to get some much needed training, but I wondered if she wasn't still upset about her stealing food.

But I suppose it worked as a punishment as well.

"Indeed...I have never seen Sherry move around with any agility."

"Do fenrirs normally move around much faster than humans?"

"Yes. They confuse enemies with their speed, while attacking with their claws and fangs. And since they can use magic as well, they are very dangerous monsters."

"...You would never think they were dangerous if you looked at Sherry..."

"...Indeed..."

Chapter 399

Ms. Claire Apologized

Now that she had been captured and surrounded, Sherry rolled over onto her back to show that she had surrendered.

It was good that she recognized the situation, but it was strange, considering she was supposed to be a dangerous monster.

I suppose it was mainly because Leo was here.

Her belly looked very round and soft...

As Sebastian and I looked at her, we knew one thing for sure. We were in no danger around this fenrir.

“Hahh...”

“Are you sleepy, Liza?”

“...Yes.”

“I see. It is quite late... Thank you for helping with Sherry and Leo.”

“No. I was glad to help you and mama...hahhh...”

As I was thinking about Sherry, I heard Liza yawning next to me.

She must have been trying to stay awake. Her eyes were half closed and she yawned again while answering me.

I felt bad for keeping her awake.

“We can continue this tomorrow. I will have to discuss it with Lady Claire and the master.”

“Indeed. Well, I will return to my room then.”

“Yes, thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Takumi. I will also do my best with the cooking tomorrow.”

“Hahaha. That’s fine. I hope you also get plenty of sleep, Ms. Helena. Now Liza. Let’s go. Leo too.”

“Okay...”

“Wuff.”

And so we all dispersed.

Liza seemed like she was falling asleep as we walked back to the room, and so I put her on Leo’s back. She then wrapped her arms around Leo’s neck. And by the time we reached the room, she was already asleep.

Leo’s fur was very comfortable, and she was tired, so it could not be helped.

I wanted to put her on the bed, but she looked so comfortable with Leo and I thought it would be best to not disturb her.

Leo also lay down carefully so as not to wake her.

“Thank you for staying up with me, Leo. We were able to find the culprit because of you.”

“Wuff.”

I thanked Leo in a whisper, and then got into my own bed.

Still, Sherry, huh?

I suppose Ms. Claire would have to scold her tomorrow... With such thoughts, I closed my eyes and fell asleep..

It was late, and though I hadn’t realized it myself, I was also quite tired...

—

The next morning, when I opened my eyes, I looked at the clock and saw that it was shortly before midday.

I suppose that due to what happened yesterday, they had let us sleep in late. And so I washed up and changed.

When I looked outside of the room, I saw that Ms. Gelda was waiting there, and so I asked her to help Liza get ready.

When going down for breakfast...or rather, lunch, Liza put on her hat before leaving the room.

“Liza, there is no need to cover your ears when you are in the mansion, so you don’t need to wear that hat.”

“I know. But I want to wear it.”

“Really? Well, if that’s what you want...”

The first time she put on the hat, she had some difficulty as it squished her ears. But now, she seemed to be quite fond of it.

If she liked it this much, then I felt good about buying it.

And like that, we headed to the dining hall.

“I’m sorry that we are so late...”

“Not at all. I heard about last night. I’m sorry that you were troubled, Mr. Takumi, Leo and Liza. Now Sherry, say you’re sorry.”

“Kyau...”

When I went to the dining hall, Ms. Claire was holding Sherry and waiting for us.

Tilura, Mr. Ekenhart and Ms. Anne were not present, so they were probably in their rooms.

Sherry looked quite dejected, so Ms. Claire had probably scolded her about what had happened.

Even her ears were drooping sadly.

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff.”

“Kyau. Kyu...”

Leo nodded and told Sherry, ‘Don’t do it anymore, okay?’

Sherry shuddered once and then barked with a nod.

While Leo was just trying to scold her for stealing the food, it probably looked more threatening because she was a Silver Fenrir.

Regardless, I very much doubted Sherry would continue after being told by both Leo and Ms. Claire.

“Sherry is so cute, so I couldn’t help but spoil her...”

“Haha. Well, that’s how it is. You have never had a pet before, I suppose?”

“Yes. Unless you count horses.”

“Then it cannot be helped. You two will have plenty to learn together.”

I said. But I was not really in a position to talk as if I knew a lot about that.

There was still a lot that I didn't know, and I was constantly learning more.

And though having a familiar wasn't exactly the same as having a pet, both came with different mistakes when you had no experience.

It was very common for owners of cats and dogs to feed them whatever they want, because they are cute.

I had also given Leo a lot of food at first... But then a veterinarian warned me, and so I was more careful.

Just because they are cute, you shouldn't spoil them all of the time.

If they become too fat, then they might get sick. And so it was the owner's responsibility to be strict with some things.

Chapter 400

Leo started a diet plan for Sherry

"Besides, it is probably easier in some ways when they are a familiar."

"Really?"

"Yes. Because no matter what happens, you can speak to each other."

"Ah, that is true. It is very convenient to be able to understand each other. But I think that after I brought Sherry back with me...I left too much of the work to others. Sherry, from now on, I will be more strict with you, understand?"

"Kyau!"

"Wuff..."

"Kyu..."

Normal dogs and humans could not communicate clearly.

While you may be able to understand each other's emotions somewhat, once you are close, it is not quite the same thing as being able to talk to each other.

Ms. Claire was usually the one who other people took care of, so I suppose there were a lot of things she didn't know when it came to handling Sherry.

But through this incident, she seemed to have learned the importance of talking to Sherry and deciding things.

I had also failed in different ways after rescuing Leo.

We could not understand each other like we could now. And even if she seemed smarter than most dogs, I still struggled.

"That being said, Mr. Takumi. I heard from Sebastian that you wish for Sherry to go to the forest as well?"

"Ah, yes. I suppose it is to help Sherry lose some weight.... Leo wants to toughen her up."

"Wuff!"

"...Are you sure it will be alright?"

While Ms. Claire trusted Leo, she was still a little worried about Sherry.

After all, when we first found her, she had been wounded and surrounded by trolls...

Sherry was still young, and so even if she was a fenrir, she wasn't sure if she would be able to fight.

...Especially since she had never fought before.

“Wuff-wuff! Wuff...wuff-wuff.”

“Uh, Leo is saying that trolls are weak, and no enemy to fenrirs. As long as you do not let your guard down.”

“Is that right, Sherry?”

“Kyau? Kyau-kyau!”

“What did she say?”

“She said that she had been separated from the pack, and was not wary of her surroundings. And so she walked through the forest alone, due to curiosity...”

“Wuff...”

“It definitely sounds like she let her guard down... Well, Leo. Sherry is still young. So it cannot be helped.”

Normally, you would think that you would become more cautious if you were separated from the others... But Sherry had a laid back personality, and perhaps she did not know how to react in that situation.

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff!”

“Hmm... Are you sure?”

“Wuff.”

“Very well. Since we have a few days until we go to the forest, she will be able to do some training. I think it will help a little...”

“Training... Very well. If that is what good Leo says, then I will allow it.”

“Ki-kyau...”

Sherry did not seem to like this idea at all, and was clutching to Ms. Claire’s arm, but Ms. Claire had made up her mind, and so she put Sherry on top of Leo’s head.

A look of despair came over Sherry’s face. She was probably thinking about the harsh training she was bound to face... However, it was necessary for her.

“Now, let’s begin.”

“Grau! Grau-grau!”

“Kyau...”

“Ahaha!”

After I finished talking with Ms. Claire, we ate lunch with everyone, and then I quickly finished my work of growing herbs.

I gave some herbs to Milina to be made into medicine, and then I went to inspect the herb gardens.

Like Sebastian had said yesterday, the surrounding plants had wilted, and the soil looked quite dried. After seeing this, I went to a different spot to grow some herbs.

It was best to experiment as much as I can now.

Once all of that work was done, I started my training with Mr. Ekenhart.

As Sherry would also be training today, Leo and Liza were in the garden as well.

I had thought that Liza would want to help with the medicine, but she was apparently interested in Sherry’s training.

It was a good thing that she was curious about different things.

In fact, Liza was currently running in front of Leo, as if to encourage Sherry.

...Sherry was running as if out of breath, but Liza looked energetic.

Well, Sherry was mostly like that because of a lack of exercise. But Leo was also running at a similar speed to me and Mr. Ekenhart.

While Leo had been running in the lead at first, as Sherry would stop running, Leo was now running behind her.

As a fenrir, it was probably a scary thing to be chased by a Silver Fenrir...

“First...we should start by running like we usually do...”

Mr. Ekenhart said, once we had finished preparation.

“...I will run behind Leo. Mr. Takumi and Tilura can...”

“I will run in the front. Since Liza is as well.”

“I want to run with Liza and Sherry too!”

“Uh, yes. fine. Now then...”