

Beloved Dog 411

Chapter 411

I was able to borrow a cape

“I see. You may enter. ...But what brings you here at such a late hour?”

“Uh, I have some business that I forgot about...”

After arriving in Ractos, I banged on the door and called for the guard.

There was a small window to the side, where you could see the guard’s head. I then showed him the crest.

As it was dark and raining, I had to raise the sword so that the magic light would make the crest visible.

The guard was one of the ones who had seen us before, and so he recognized me and Leo.

Still, he checked the crest in order to confirm it.

And then the gate was opened enough for Leo to pass through.

“You seem to be quite wet. Do you not have anything to cover yourself?”

“No, I didn’t bring anything.”

“I see... Please wait one moment.”

“Huh?”

“Wuff?”

For a moment I thought he had become suspicious, but that was not the case.

The guard I was talking to rushed off to the guard house.

...Well, I was carrying the duke's crest, so there was no reason to be suspicious... I wasn't a criminal or anything.

Still, all we could do was wait for him to return.

"Please use this. ...Unfortunately, we do not have anything for your Leo..."

"No, thank you. It will be a great help."

"Wou..."

The guard returned and handed me a coat that covered my entire body.

It was a little too late, as I was already drenched, but it should at least keep me a little warm. And so I was thankful.

Leo was much larger than humans, so there was none for her. It could not be helped.

Though, she sounded very disappointed. Did you want one so bad, Leo?

And so I put the coat on and thanked the guard before leaving.

While it did not cover my head, it covered everything under my neck.

With this, and the darkness of the night, it will be difficult for people to see me.

In other words, it was perfect for hiding.

And since Leo was wet, she looked smaller than usual.

It wasn't enough to hide the fact that she was a Silver Fenrir, but it was definitely a big difference.

Once I sheathed my sword, and it was dark again, you could not even see that her fur was silver... In fact, it almost looked black.

Leo seemed to understand this as well, and so she did not shake her body to fling off the water.

...Besides, she would just get wet again from the rain.

“And now...”

“Wuff...”

As I headed towards the slums, I took out the paper that Sebastian had given to me.

Since I did not want it to get wet, I stood under the roof of a closed shop.

I also dried my hands before spreading out the paper.

Leo looked over my shoulder with a curious expression.

“Hmm... Since I've been here before, perhaps that is where we should start...”

“Wuff. Wuff.”

There was a detailed map depicted on it, and there were three marks on it that showed where Deam had been sighted.

And the other paper showed you how to get to those places.

It included instructions on what paths to take in order to come in contact with people or places that were connected to him.

You could see how much Sebastian liked to explain things.

The first place I decided to check out was close to a place I had been before.

It was near the place where we had rescued Liza when she was being bullied.

“It’s possible that this Deam was watching when Liza was being attacked...”

“Wuff!”

A clearing in between buildings.

That is where we had found Liza... And the place we were now headed was on the other side of it.

Perhaps I was overthinking it, but it was possible that Deam or someone close to him was watching from the neighboring building.

...If that was true, then he would have seen Mr. Ekenhart... But perhaps the disguise would have been enough to hide his identity.

Regardless, I felt angry again when I thought about the idea of him spectating.

Leo also barked angrily as she stood next to me.

...No, no. We had to stay calm.

This was someone who had influence in the slums.

If we got too emotional, then something unexpected might happen.

And that was especially dangerous with Leo here.

“...Hah...hahh... Alright, let’s go, Leo!

“Wou!”

I took in a deep breath to calm myself and continued our journey.

First, we went to the main street that we always passed.

As it was quite late, the usually busy street was quite empty and quiet.

Still, there were fires burning at equal intervals on the streets, so there was a little light.

As there were no lampposts, these lights were quite comforting to have, and made it easier to travel.

Chapter 412

I searched the building in the slums

While relying on the light of the fires, I went down the street and continued on east for some time.
And then I made a turn to the north side of the town.

It wasn’t the same route that I went with Mr. Ekenhart, but according to the map, this way was faster.

I did not want to waste any time.

As we were no longer on the main street, there were no fires lit, and it was quite dark.

Some light leaked out of the houses, but as most people were sleeping now, it was very quiet.

“I guess we are close enough...”

“Wuff?”

Now that we were just a few minutes away from the slums, I stopped.

“Leo, eat this. I’ll eat some too.”

“Wuff.”

I took out two different kinds of herbs.

One was to strengthen your body, and the other was to enhance your senses.

I only gave the senses enhancing herbs to Leo, and then I swallowed the others.

...Eating two at the same time... It definitely tasted strange.

I had not given the other one to Leo, because I didn’t want her to do too much.

We were in a town, after all.

It could cause some trouble if Leo moved around too much. Besides, if she became stronger, it might be difficult for her to control her own strength.

We were going to be dealing with humans... And they were not as strong as trolls... And so it was best for Leo to hold back.

Once we had eaten the herbs, we made our way into the slums.

If we ate it here, even if the searching took us some time, the effect should last long enough to finish.

“It really is useful to be able to sharpen your senses. I can now see quite well, even if there is hardly any light.”

“Wuff. Wuff-wuff.”

“Well, that cannot be helped. Just ignore the sounds of people snoring.”

“Wuff...”

Even though it was still raining, I could now see my surroundings quite well.

As there was even less light than when we explored the forest, it was still quite dark. But I could at least see several meters ahead.

My sense of hearing was also improved, which meant I could hear the sounds of people breathing inside the house.

Leo was saying that it was too loud, but it could not be helped. We had to ignore it and move on.

Still...these herbs would be useful for spies.

Just by listening, you can tell what was happening inside of the houses.

If people were having secret conversations, then you could eavesdrop...

I would have to be careful so that it is not used in the wrong way.

“Here it is...”

“Wuff...”

Thanks to the herbs, we were able to arrive at the building that was our first destination, without any trouble.

It was an old two-story building, and the clearing where we met Liza was on the other side.

...I didn't expect to be back here.

Leo and I looked up at the building.

"Leo. Is there anyone inside...?"

"Wuff."

I asked Leo, just in case.

While I was able to sense a lot right now, Leo's senses were already sharp, and so she could detect a lot more than me.

Leo shook her head and I looked at the building again.

"I guess there isn't then..."

"Wuff..."

I could not hear anything, and sensed no presence.

And since Leo agreed, there was no mistake.

Well, it was the first location, so I didn't think we would be that lucky. Still, I did feel a little disappointed.

"...Okay!"

"Wuff?"

“Sorry, Leo. Wait here one moment. Hide in the shadows so that you don’t stick out. I’m going to check inside.”

“Wuff... Wuff-wuff?”

“It’s fine. There is no one inside, and I can run away easily if something happens.”

“Wuff.”

After thinking about it for a moment, I decided to go inside and search for a clue.

If Deam had been here at any time, then perhaps something had been left behind.

And if there was something that belonged to him, then Leo would be able to track his scent.

...Though, it might be difficult due to the rain. But she did eat the herbs...

Regardless, I promised Leo that I would be safe, and then I headed to the door.

“I’m going in then.”

I checked to see that it wasn’t locked, and then I opened the door.

I was wary of traps, but none were triggered as I slid inside.

“It’s very dusty...”

It was clear that no one had been inside for quite some time.

I felt the urge to cough and had to cover my mouth with my hand.

Perhaps it was due to my enhanced senses... Well, it could not be helped.

The windows had been covered with boards, and so no light entered the building as I walked through it.

Still, dust covered everything, and there were no traces of anyone having been there recently. It was completely abandoned.

I moved while dragging my feet, so as not to leave clear footprints, and then made my way to the second floor.

While the first floor had two rooms, the second floor only had one room.

“So you can see the clearing from here.”

There was one window that wasn't boarded up, and the glass was broken.

And when I approached it, I saw the clearing where Liza had been attacked.

The dust seemed thinner near the window, and there were traces of someone having been there.

So just as I had expected, someone might have been watching us...

Chapter 413

We Were Not Able To Catch Deam

“This is not a place to stay long term, but a place to monitor?”

There had been no traces of anyone here in the hallway. It was just around the window where the dust had been disturbed.

Some of the rain was even coming in through the window.

It was not the kind of place to sleep.

“Is there any other clue...?”

If Deam had left something here... I thought as I searched. But everything there was covered in dust. Even if they belonged to him, I doubted there was any scent.

Especially since none were clothes or utensils.

“So there is nothing... Well, I better go then.”

I decided that there was nothing useful, and so I left.

Deam must be very careful, and so I didn't expect to find him quickly...

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Sorry to keep you waiting, Leo. But I didn't find anything...”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Yes. No point in being disappointed. Let's keep going.”

I exited the building and told Leo that I didn't find anything.

Then I checked the map again.

I decided to go to the closest location to us.

Thanks to the herb strengthening herbs, I could read the map even without a light.

“So, I guess it will be this building...”

“Wuff.”

The second building was a ten minute walk from where we were currently.

On the outside, it looked similar to other buildings. It looked very abandoned and empty.

I asked Leo as well, and she did not sense anyone.

This one is a miss as well...?

In any case, I had Leo hide herself again just in case, and I went inside.

As expected, the door wasn't locked and opened smoothly.

But I kept one hand on my sword as I turned the door knob.

I doubted that there were traps in any of these buildings, but I had to be careful, because I didn't know what this Deam was capable of.

Well, if there was a trap, I probably wouldn't be able to do anything about it...

There was nothing in the building that caught my interest.

In fact, there was even more dust than in the first place.

I doubted anyone had been here for over a month.

Here, all of the windows were boarded up and there was no place that allowed you to look outside.

So even if Deam had been here before, it must have been a long time ago.

“Wuff-wuff.”

“I’m back, Leo. There was nothing here either.”

After I finished in the building, I came out and reported to Leo.

I didn’t expect quick results, but it was a little discouraging, nonetheless.

Such investigations took a lot of time, and you couldn’t be bothered by such things. But I wasn’t used to it.

In any case, I would switch gears and go to the last place that Sebastian told me.

...Hopefully, there will be something there... Or Deam himself.

The final destination was quite far from the other places.

When I looked at the map, I saw that it was near the northeast corner of Ractos.

And so we walked for some time until we reached it.

We walked quite quickly.

I didn’t want to seem frantic, but this was my first time, and so I wanted to find something.

Part of it was also that I would be seen by some of the residents here.

As it was the slums, even though it was raining, I saw a few people on the streets.

It was the complete opposite of the main street.

The people that I passed seemed like they didn’t care about getting wet, though they looked at Leo and me with suspicion.

While I didn't want to be seen, I did not know how to move while staying concealed, so it could not be helped.

In any case, I took in a deep breath and looked up at the building.

"...This one too..."

The building looked just like the other ones.

With my enhanced hearing, I tried listening to what was happening inside. But there was nothing to suggest there was anyone there.

Leo felt the same, and let out a small sigh.

"Well, I still have to search through it... Sorry, Leo."

"Wuff."

I said to Leo, and then I had her hide like before.

All of the alleys were quite narrow, but there was usually a spot where she could fit in perfectly.

They were too small for her to walk through, but were fine if she just needed to hide for a while.

Once I saw that she was hidden, I entered the building.

...I hope there is something this time...

"This place has less dust?"

There was hardly any furniture in the building, and there were no signs of someone having lived there.

However, there was also less dust.

What dust I could see was all in the corner...so clearly the place wasn't cleaned carefully.

And so I felt a little more hopeful as I searched the inside of the building.

Even if there was less dust, I still dragged my feet as I walked.

This was because my wet feet could create footprints.

While I was being careful, I was an amateur, so perhaps it was pointless effort. Regardless, I wouldn't think about that now.

Chapter 414

I found something that could be a clue

"...There is nothing here... I'll go upstairs then."

The first floor had nothing, just like the others.

Even if there was less dust, there were no signs of someone having lived here.

If only there were traces of dining, like utensils...

I thought as I walked over the creaking floor and made my way to the second floor.

"There are no windows... I guess there's nothing after... Hmm?"

I scanned the second floor and saw that the windows were all boarded up so you could not see outside.

And just as I was about to give up, a dusty shelf caught my eye.

There was dust around the shelf, and there were no traces of it having been used. But then the floor to the left of it looked strange.

And when I looked closer, I saw that it looked like it had been wiped.

“Was someone here...? But it doesn’t look like someone has sat or laid down here... Hmm?”

I rubbed my eyes and looked at the floor more closely, and realized that there was a gap between the shelf and the wall behind it.

It was just a few centimeters, but it was strange that there should be such a gap.

Maybe there was something to it... And so I put my fingers inside, and I felt something soft.

Hoping that it was a clue, I pulled it out with my fingers.

“This...is it a blanket...?”

It was a crudely cut piece of cloth.

And when I spread it open, I saw that it was big enough for one person.

It would be easy enough to reach from the position on the floor where there was no dust.

Perhaps someone had been using the cloth to sit or rest on.

In any case, if this was being slept on... And if it was Deam, then perhaps his scent was still on it.

Apparently, he was constantly changing locations, so perhaps he hid bedding like this so that they could be used.

“...Sniff... Hmm. I really can’t tell.”

Even though I had taken the sense enhancing herbs, I was still a human.

And so it would not be possible for me to track him like this.

All I smelled was sweat and dust... But it was clear that someone had been using it.

And if it was Deam... But then again, it was still raining.

“Wuff.”

“Leo. Sorry to keep you waiting. Here...”

“Wuff?”

Leo saw me leave the building, and she came out of her hiding place and approached me.

And so I gestured for her to come to the door.

I wanted Leo to smell the cloth, but I didn't want it to get wet.

“Leo. This might be able to help us. Could you smell it? I know it's not very pleasant.”

“Wuff-wuff... Sniff-sniff... Wuffu.”

“Yes, I know...”

Leo immediately barked with disgust.

So Leo didn't like the smell either.

I chuckled and then asked her,

“It might be difficult in this rain...but could you try and follow this scent?”

“Wuff...sniff-sniff. Achoo! Gr... Sniff-sniff... Wuff!”

Leo nodded reluctantly and then smelled the cloth again.

Then she started to sniff the air and then nodded again.

“Can you smell something!?”

“Wuff-wuff!”

Apparently, Leo would be able to track the person who had used this blanket. That was very impressive.

“Alright, take me there... Uh, do you still need this?”

“Wuff!”

And so we stepped out into the rain and started to walk through the slums again.

As Leo said she didn’t need the cloth anymore, I threw it back into the building before leaving.

I wondered if the smell wouldn’t wash away in the rain...

However, perhaps Leo’s sense of smell was just that sharp... Or it was the herbs.

Or maybe Deam was actually close by?

That would explain why she could smell him even though it was raining.

Of course, it was possible that it wasn't even Deam...

In any case, Silver Fenrirs sure were impressive.

Even a trained dog would not be able to do this, I think?

"Wuff!"

"Hmm?"

After following Leo for some time, she suddenly stopped and then barked as if to urge me ahead.

I stopped as well and looked at the road in front of us. However, I could not see anything unusual.

Though, I did sense the presence of people in the building ahead.

The sounds... It was too far, and I could not hear, because of the rain.

"You can smell the same scent where the people are gathered?"

"Wuff-wuff."

Leo nodded.

So it wasn't inside of the building... However, why would they be outside when it was raining like this...

Still, I trusted Leo and slowly walked in the direction that Leo indicated.

Towards the other side of the building, I went around and moved carefully so that they wouldn't notice.

Chapter 415

The men were gathered in the clearing

We moved through the buildings, as the gaps were wide enough to pass through, and stopped just before coming out into the clearing.

Up ahead, there was an open space where several buildings had once been.

It was bigger than the place where we had found Liza, but there were a few wooden pillars left, which suggested it hadn't been that long since the buildings were torn down.

And in the far back, towards the outer wall of Ractos, several men had gathered.

What were they doing at the edge of town?

All of them were standing while facing the wall... And it didn't look like they were resting.

"Leo. Behind me..."

"Wuff..."

I whispered so that Leo could hear me, and had her move back a little.

I then crouched in the shadows between the buildings and tried to avoid being seen.

It was still raining, and since it was night, I should be hidden.

"Surely you all understand?"

The man who stood in the center raised his voice.

It was like he was talking to the wall, which was strange.

“Hmm...is that...”

When I squinted, I saw a few people between the men standing in front of the wall.

They were facing me, and not the wall. It was like they were sandwiched between the wall and the men.

Were they surrounded?

And as I looked, I saw that the people being surrounded looked familiar.

Well, two of them did, anyway.

But even with enhanced senses, I could not see them clearly... But I thought they looked like the boys who had been bullying Liza.

Though, I could be wrong... But they were a similar height to Mark.

Still, why were they surrounded now...?

I scanned the surrounding area while perking up my ears for more information.

“It’s your fault that it escaped! Eh? Not only that but Mark was also captured... It’s your fault. You should have stayed here quietly!”

“...I’m sorry.”

There were five men surrounding the boys.

And they were threatening them while holding knives.

I couldn’t see clearly, but there seemed to be about four boys...

As they knew Mark, they must be related to him.

“Ah!? Being sorry is not going to solve the problem! Mark was arrested. And he might have talked about me!”

“...Mark wouldn't betray us...I think.”

“You don't know! Do you know who he antagonized, eh!?”

“...I don't know.”

“The duke. Damn it. And that beast was rescued by them... Do you realize what this mean!! When threatened with execution, he will definitely talk!”

“...The...duke...”

“It's too late for regrets!”

“Gah!”

“Wuff!?”

“Wait, Leo!”

The leader of the group continued to shout at the boy.

Judging by what he was saying, he was either Deam or someone closely related to him.

He knew about Liza and the duke's house.

Once the boys heard about the duke, they began to shake in fear.

Upon seeing this, the man started to kick one of the boys.

His foot slammed into the boy's stomach, causing him to cry out. Leo almost jumped out then, but I stopped her.

It was a good thing that it was raining...otherwise, they might have noticed us.

"...Kuun."

"While I feel bad for him, wait a little longer... I want to find out what is happening. ...Of course, I will go out if he tries to use that knife."

"...Wuff."

Leo barked as if to ask me why I didn't help them, but I gritted my teeth and told her to be patient.

To be honest, I was sure now that they were the ones who had attacked Liza. And I did feel a little conflicted about that.

However, I also felt bad for them now that they were surrounded by these men.

Leo was the same. I suppose it was because she liked children.

But if we were going to jump out, I wanted for it to be after we had assessed the situation a little more.

I was almost sure that this leader was Deam, but I wanted to be a certain.

If I was wrong, and Deam was somewhere else...that could be very bad.

Leo nodded reluctantly, and I turned my focus back to the men.

The men surrounding the boys were all muscular.

And the leader was bigger than the others.

They had shaved heads and were barechested in spite of the rain. And there seemed to be something written on their backs. Well, I couldn't see it clearly, but there were black lines.

"What if they find out where I live... Eh!? I'll kill you!"

"Bu-but...we only did what you said, Mr. Deam..."

"Aye, I said it. However, I didn't tell you to throw rocks in a crowd! Did I!"

"Mr. Deam only said to torment the beastkin child!"

"He said to chase after her and not let her escape. But he also said that we should avoid being seen..."

"Yes! And yet, what happened? Not only did you let it escape, but you antagonized the duke as well! You bloody fools! And right after we were rid of that annoying old man, Reyndolf! Now that the duke has been alerted, things will become difficult again!"

Chapter 416

I ran in with Leo

So it was just as Mark had said. Deam was the one who had ordered them to torment Liza.

The men continued to talk, not knowing that Leo and I were listening to them.

Hearing them filled me with anger... But it was too soon... I had to wait a little longer...

While most of the men were focused on the boys, one of them seemed to be watching his surroundings.

They were in the slums.

And so even if it was nighttime, there were more people moving around actively compared to other parts of town.

On top of that, since they were shouting, it was possible that people were watching them from their houses.

And while such people might not be completely unrelated, they probably weren't on Deam's side.

Perhaps these men wanted the residents here to watch, and so they could rule them through fear.

It wasn't unusual for people to stand above others through power in such places.

In any case, if I was going to confront these men, I wanted to do it at a moment when their guard was down.

Well, Leo could probably do it easily, but I wanted to be safe...

Of course, if they used their knives or tried to actually kill the boys, then I would jump out and intervene.

"Indeed... We'll start with you... We'll make a show of killing you. This is the slums. No one will miss you anwaay. Of course, I'll kill you all in the end."

"Ahh!"

"Mr. Deam. Are you sure about this?"

"It's fine. They are useless to me now. It was good to use children to attack other children. But there is no point now. In that case...there is only one things to do."

The leader said as he flashed his knife.

The other man had called him Deam, so there was no mistaking it now.

As for the boys, they were now huddled together and shaking.

“Hey!”

“Yes!”

Deam shouted at the man who was watching the area, who then picked up a sword that was hidden between two buildings, and then he handed it to Deam.

It was a lot bigger than the sword that I usually used.

I suppose it was called a longsword.

Deam then faced the boys and raised the sword into the air...

This was bad!

“Go!”

“Grau!”

The boys were defenseless, and so there was no way that that they would survive if they were hit by such a weapon.

As all of them were now focused on the boys, I quickly called out to Leo.

She had also been prepared to jump out at any time, and so Leo answered me and rushed towards the men.

It was a good thing that we had practiced with orders for when we go to the forest.

“Gah!”

“Wh-what...gah!”

“Ahhh! Argh!”

First, Leo swiped at Deam, who had raised his sword.

Deam was easily knocked off of his feet, and went flying into one of the buildings.

And without losing momentum, Leo turned and attacked the other men who had their backs turned.

...I couldn't fall behind either.

And so I unsheathed my sword and ran towards the men... But by then, everything was finished.

The men were thrown into the air before they even got to see Leo. And just like that, they were thrown against the wall and were unconscious.

Uh, so I don't need to do anything...?

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Ah, yes. You did well, Leo.”

After defeating the men, Leo turned to me with a proud expression.

Since they were humans, she did not use her fangs or claws, so that she didn't kill them. And so I petted her wet head and praised her.

Ah, but they were injured...maybe her claws got caught on them.

And their bones could be broken from the impact as well. Not that I felt bad for them.

“...”

“Uh, are you alright?”

As for the boys, they were stunned by our sudden appearance, and their mouths hung open silently.

Well, it was no wonder. They thought that Deam was going to kill them. And then we suddenly appeared.

...Well, I hadn't done anything.

If it was going to be so easy, then I shouldn't have even worried about the man who was guarding...

“Are you hurt? Ah, he kicked you...”

“...”

Even when I tried talking to them, they could only nod like they were broken dolls.

They must be in quite a shock...and would be for some time.

In any case, they didn't seem to be badly injured, so it was fine.

Though, their clothes were torn and they had scratched as if they had been dragged.

“Grrr...”

“Leo? Hmm?”

“Ah... What the...”

As I was looking at the children, Leo suddenly started growling in a different direction.

And when I turned to look, I saw that Deam was holding his head and trying to get back to his feet.

I suppose he was tougher than the others.

“Damn it... Who the...!?”

“Grrr...”

“Wait, Leo. I will handle this.”

“...Wuff.”

He shook his head and muttered as he stood up.

And while still holding his sword, he turned to look at us. His eyes widened when he saw Leo.

Leo growled and was about to jump out, but I told her to wait.

I couldn't let her do everything... Or there would be no point in me being here.

That being said, it did feel like I was stealing the glory from Leo by taking down Deam after he was weakened...

But I wouldn't think about that right now.

“...Who are you? And that...monster? Did you set it on me?”

“...Aye, that's right. I have come here to put an end to your crimes here.”

Deam looked at us with suspicion.

And while he was unstable on his feet at first, he regained his balance soon enough.

He had mostly recovered from the damage then.

Maybe I should have let Leo deal with him after all...

Chapter 417

I fought with Deam

“Catch me...? Who...are you?”

“I don’t need to introduce myself to you.”

I said, feeling like a hero who had come in to save the day.

I had always wanted to do this.

“Tsk... Do you know what will happen if you defy me?”

“Yes, I do. You’re some scoundrel called Deam, aren’t you? Smallfry that can only bully beastkin.”

I knew that I was getting carried away a little as I observed Deam.

He had a longsword and was ready to attack.

Now that I had told Leo that I would deal with him, it would look pretty bad if I let my guard down and lost.

“Smallfry!? You won’t get away with this... You will regret your words!”

“Well, all you’ve been doing is surrounding boys and bullying a beastkin girl... That’s what smallfry does, no? You won’t be making anyone feel regret, I think.”

“You bastard! I’ll kill you!”

As I purposely provoked Deam, the blood rushed to his head, and he came dashing towards me.

Previously, Mr. Ekenhart had told me...that one must never lose their cool during a fight.

And while there was a part of me that was angry for Liza, I did manage to remain calm.

Otherwise, Leo would have likely jumped out ahead of me.

He had also told me that it was good to try to anger an enemy in order to make them lose their calm.

Once they were angry, they would always move in a straightforward way, and it would be easier to deal with them... However, I might have made a mistake.

Mr. Ekenhart’s strategy was effective when used by someone who was skilled, but I was still...

Deam was very muscular, and clearly stronger than me. And he moved towards me at a speed that was faster than expected.

In my heart, I grumbled towards myself for getting carried away, and then I raised my sword and faced him.

“Hmm. I guess you were all talk then?”

“I could say...the same about you!”

“Tsk!”

As he rushed towards me, Deam raised his sword with both hands and slammed down with all of his might.

I held my sword horizontally with both hands and somehow managed to block it.

Deam continued to press down, but I managed to push upwards and sweep the sword to the side.

Deam frowned as he was pushed back. And then he stumbled a few steps back.

...Apparently, he really had been hurt after being hit by Leo, and his legs were still weak.

Perhaps even his arms were weakened compared to how they usually were.

“You blocked my sword... In spite of your strange appearance, you are not half bad... And now I will kill you!”

He spat as he raised his sword again.

...Why was he so angry... Well, because I had provoked him...

He likely just had a short temper.

Also, he was the one who was bare chested with lines on his body while out in the rain. He should not be able to criticize my appearance.

I was just wearing a coat.

“Die!”

“Not today!”

Once again, I blocked his blade with my sword.

But he did not have the same momentum from running, and so his attack was weaker.

However, my hands had also grown a little numb from the impact of the first attack.

And though I tried to hold my sword up, Deam pushed with his body weight.

And so I shouted and pushed back, not wanting to lose.

But even with both hands, I could not push him all the way back like before.

“Gah....aaaa!”

“Tsk...”

Deam shouted and pushed harder.

If this continued, my arms would give in and I would be cut!

I could heal mild wounds with some Loe, and Leo could handle the rest.

However...I wanted to do something about this person who had targeted Liza!

What should I do...

My feet were planted too firmly into the ground to move them or try to kick.

In any case...perhaps I should just ask Leo for help?

No, Leo had already done enough.

I didn't want to ask for help after saying I would do it...

What to do then...

Just then, I noticed something on the right side of my waist. That's right!

"Gah...Gaaahhh!"

"Oh? Just a little more and you will be cut!"

I used all of my power to stop Deam.

He seemed to detect that I was nearing my limits.

I just needed a brief opening!

"Grau!"

"!?"

Just when I thought that, Leo barked.

Deam must have thought he was going to be attacked, as he looked towards Leo for a moment.

Now!

"Gaaah!! Hah!"

"What... Ah!"

I let go with my left hand and shouted while continuing to block his sword with my right hand.

Thanks to the momentary distraction, I was able to hold him back for a few seconds.

And then I reached down to my belt with my left hand.

I gripped the thing and unsheathed it swiftly!

It was the katana.

And then I slashed horizontally with it.

As the blade was curved, it was good for slashing, and not cutting down.

And so that was how I used it against Deam.

Chapter 418

Leo was the deciding factor

It wasn't like I could easily cut him in half. All I did was slash his stomach a little.

The pain and impact then caused Deam to take a few steps back.

That was when it happened.

“Wuff.”

“Gah...”

Leo moved behind me, barked, and then swiped at Deam's head with her front paws.

Deam was not able to stand against her weight, and he was pushed to the ground and crushed.

...And though he was still conscious, he could not move.

He had also let go of his sword.

“...Leo...thank you.”

“Wuff-wuff.”

As Leo’s paws were enough to cover his face, shoulders and chest, all Deam could do was move his legs wildly.

I could see the wound on his stomach as well... And while it was bleeding, it was not very deep.

If Leo had not intervened, he probably would have attacked me again... Both of my hands were numb, so that would have been dangerous.

I suppose I could have cut him deeper, and it would still just be self defense. But I was glad that I hadn’t had to kill anyone.

It wasn’t that I was clinging onto my old values. But if I could deal with things without killing, then that was preferable.

Besides, I am sure that Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian would want to question him.

It was a good thing that I had brought my katana with me....

The reason that I was able to unsheath it with my left hand, was because I had hung it on my right side.

I wasn’t used to dual-wielding, but since I had brought it with me, I had put it on my right side so it wouldn’t get in the way.

Thanks to that, I was able to unsheath it. If I had let go with my right hand instead, I would not have been able to do it.

It wasn’t like I had been expecting this to happen...so you really never knew how something would come in handy.

“Leo. Hold him there for a little longer.”

“Wuff!”

“Grr...”

I told Leo to hold Deam down as I sheath my weapons.

While Deam was writhing around in pain, Leo wasn't pressing down with her full weight, so there was no chance of him dying.

Though, it would still be painful.

“Phew... I'll have to train more...”

I sighed with relief.

While the fight had ended quickly, I had grown hot, and so the rain felt comfortable on my body.

“Now... Uh, I don't know your names, but will you help me?”

“Huh?”

After I had calmed down, I turned to the boys.

They were clearly confused, and seemed to not understand what I was saying.

Leo had attacked suddenly, and then a battle had been fought in front of them. Perhaps they didn't realize that they were saved.

It could not be helped.

“Uh, you aren't hurt are you? I suppose he did kick you, but you can still move? In any case, help me catch these men. I cannot do it all on my own.”

“Um...but...”

Aside from Deam, there were four other men.

While Leo could handle Deam, I didn't know when the other men might wake up.

And so I wanted to capture them while they were still unconscious.

The boys finally regained some of their calm, and understood what I was saying. However, they still hesitated.

Well, this was Deam. So I suppose they would not be able to act so quickly.

“Wuff.”

“!”

“Oh?”

Leo barked while still holding Deam down, and then the boys straightened their backs and started to move.

Were they scared of Leo?

But she had saved them... I couldn't help but think that, but they had seen her make quick work of the men, so it was no surprise.

Regardless, I was happy that they were cooperative now.

“Here...”

“Oh, thank you.”

One of the boys brought me some old rope.

It was just what I needed to tie them up.

I thanked him and then they helped me tie up the unconscious men.

As they were limp on the ground, we struggled a little when moving them, so it was a good thing that I was not alone.

Once all four men were bound, we rolled them over to the spot where the boys had been standing earlier.

They were directly under the rain, but I didn't care, since they were Deam's men.

At worst, they might just catch a cold.

"...What will happen to us...?"

"You don't have to be so scared. I'm no one important. Hmm...as for you..."

Once the work was done, the boys lined up in front of me and looked quite timid.

But one of them...who was indeed in the group that had attacked Liza, questioned me.

Well, he was looking at Leo.

Indeed, what should we do with them... I had not considered that.

Chapter 419

I talked with the boys

What to do with them now...

I had only come here to capture Deam... I had not expected to find these boys as they were about to be killed.

“Hmm... Well, I suppose you should go to the guards, along with these men...”

“...Are we going to be arrested?”

“That’s what happens when you commit a crime.”

“...”

The boys suddenly shuddered.

While they didn’t want to be arrested, they knew that they could not outrun me or Leo.

Besides, who knew how they would be treated by the others in the slums...

After all, there were surely people watching us now.

Mr. Ekenhart intended to act and make some changes here, but it would take some time.

And so the boys might be in danger in the meantime.

Though these boys may not have been in the same position as Liza, from what she told me, life in the slums was desperate, and so they would have been forced to do things they didn’t want to.

Steal, because they could not buy food... Such things were easy to imagine.

Obviously, the law had to be obeyed regardless, but... I could not blame them too much, as they were still children.

What to do...

“In any case, I highly doubt you will be punished like these men will. Though, it depends on what you have done up until now.”

“Gah! Grr...!”

Deam must not have liked what I was saying, as he was growling angrily under Leo’s paw. But since I could not understand him, I just ignored it.

As for the boys, aside from bullying Liza, they had probably done things like stealing and picking pockets.

So it wasn’t like they would be executed or tortured.

I would try and talk to the guards and Mr. Ekenhart on their behalf. But in the end, it wasn’t my decision.

Oh, but...

“Um, you... And you.”

“Me?”

“Ah!”

I pointed to two of the boys, and they looked at me with surprise.

The other shuddered in fear.

...Did I really look so scary?

“You two... You tormented the beastkin girl, yes?”

“You know? But that was...”

“Aye. I know that Deam told you to do it. And why he did. However...I am currently her protector. And would like for you to apologize to her.”

“Apologize... But that is a monster...”

“Deam was lying to you. Beastkin are really not much different from humans. They even have their own country.”

“...We don't know about that. We've never even left this town.”

“Uh... I see.”

I didn't know if an apology would be any comfort to Liza, but it would help to prove to her that she would not be hurt like that again.

However, the boys still saw beastkin as monsters.

I didn't know if it was just Deam who taught them that, or someone else. But I explained to them that it was wrong.

As they had no experience outside of this town, they believed Deam easily. I suppose that Liza's tail and ears also helped persuade them that she was different.

It showed how important it was to have a proper education.

“In any case, you must apologize to the beastkin girl. And turn yourselves in to the guards... I'm sure it will not be too bad, as long as you repent.”

“...Fine.”

First, they had to be taught that what Deam said about beastkin being monsters that must be driven out of town was wrong.

The guards could talk to them, but... Perhaps Sebastian would be more persuasive.

The boys still looked doubtful, but nodded in agreement.

“Alright, now let’s tie up Deam.”

“Gah! Grr! Gah!”

Lastly, I took the leftover rope and headed towards Deam.

The boys hesitated, as he had been their boss up until a moment ago. However, since he tried to kill them, they did not seem too sorry to help.

I didn’t know how he had treated them in the past, but he was clearly not someone of great virtue.

As Deam was pressed down by Leo, I started by tying up his legs.

Now he would not be able to run away.

“You can take your foot off his shoulder now.”

“Wuff.”

Deam began to swing his arms wildly the moment that Leo removed her paw. But it wasn’t enough to be free of Leo’s other paw, which was holding his face down.

And as he could not breathe well, he became quiet soon enough.

Chapter 420

Deam said we were playing at being a family

“Tie his hands and... It would be better if we could tie his hands behind his back...but this will have to do.”

I put Deam's hands in front of his wounded stomach, and bound them.

While I was tying him, I checked the wounds and confirmed that it wasn't too deep.

He was bleeding, but he wouldn't die, even if it was left alone.

Though I was sure that the guards would take care of him, since they would want to question him extensively.

Now that his arms and legs were tied, Deam could not move at all.

Understanding this, he finally became quiet... Or maybe it was just because Leo was pressing down on his face...

"Just in case..."

In such cases, if you let your guard down, then the prisoner could escape from their bindings and run away...

As this was someone who lived in the underworld, he might know how to deal with ropes.

I could not do such a thing. I didn't know how. So I had to be careful.

"Is there any extra rope?"

"There is more over there. They used it to carry things."

"Can you bring me some?"

"Okay."

At this point, the boys obediently did whatever I told them to.

I suppose it was because they saw the state that Deam was in.

In any case, they brought me some extra rope, which I used to tie Deam up even more.

Twice. Thrice. So that it wasn't just his ankles, but his knees and thighs as well.

And then the biceps of his arms. Then the boys helped me wrap the rope around his body several times.

Like this, Deam was completely rolled up in rope.

He looked like a caterpillar. There was no worry about him getting away now.

"Good. You can let go of him now."

"Wuff-wuff."

"Tsk! Hah! Hah!"

Deam could finally breathe freely now, and so he took a deep breath.

...Had it really been that bad?

Leo's palms were so soft... But they were big.

"Now, we just have to turn them in... But how should we carry them..."

"Wuff?"

It would be easy enough if it was just Deam, but there were five men.

And even if the boys helped, it would take several trips.

As I wondered what to do, Leo turned her back to me as if to say, 'Should I carry them?'

That might work...but I couldn't help but hesitate at the idea.

I kind of thought of riding Leo as an honor...reserved for good people.

"Hah...hah... Who are you, you bastard!? Do you have any idea what you have done? I have men in other towns. Other slums. They will kill you."

"Aye, I know. You do not need to tell me."

"What...!?"

Once Deam caught his breath, he started to shout at me.

While he was threatening me...it was nothing that I didn't already know.

Though, he did look like some insignificant thug... And he was constantly moving around like he was scared... Even Mr. Ekenhart had called him a smallfry.

In any case, with Deam gone, things should be much more easier for Mr. Ekenhart and the people here.

Of course, there will also be some chaos for a while as well.

Up until now, nothing had been done because arresting Deam might make matters worse, and cause more conflict.

"You... I heard you talking about the beastkin child. What are you to it!"

"Her father!"

“Wou!”

When asked that question...there was no other answer.

Perhaps I was getting carried away, but it should be fine, as long as I wasn't saying any names.

Leo even barked next to me.

As if she was saying, ‘And I’m her mama!’

“What...? But it was abandoned. It had no one after Reyndorf died! Besides, you’re just a human!”

Deam shouted back.

Indeed, we were not connected by blood. We were not even the same race.

But that didn't change the fact that Liza called me and Leo her papa and mama.

“Yes, I am a human. What about it? Humans can raise a beastkin. And there is no reason that humans should persecute them.”

“Tsk. You may play at being a family...but they are beneath humans. Perhaps you just enjoy feeling superior? You think that you are so magnanimous for saving it...”

“Playing? Superior?”

Indeed, there might be people who enjoy feeling superior by helping those who are weak... But I didn't think of myself like that.

Though, aside from not being connected by blood, Leo was her mama.

So it was not too surprising that some would say we were playing...