

Beloved Dog 431

Chapter 431

I woke up comfortably

“In any case, thank you. For looking after her. I’m sorry that you had to stay up late yet again.”

“Wuff.”

“Not at all. This is my job. Besides, I do enjoy taking care of children.”

I thanked Ms. Lyra, and apologized for the trouble.

Leo also barked quietly and bowed her head.

After everything I had said to Deam, it seemed like Leo thought of Liza as a daughter even more than before.

Ms. Lyra smiled and said it was no trouble at all. She had very gentle eyes when looking at Liza. There was something motherly about her as well.

“I feel like a mother when taking care of her.... And it brings back memories of the orphanage. ... Oh, I’m sorry. I’m just rambling now...”

“No, I think that Liza would be happy that you feel that way.”

She had taken care of smaller children a lot at the orphanage, so Ms. Lyra was used to this kind of thing.

As I was not Liza, I could not say for sure, but it was clear that she was fond of Ms. Lyra. So I thought that she’d be happy to know how Ms. Lyra felt.

She was the closest with Ms. Lyra, after me and Leo.

“Well then... Please excuse me.”

“Thank you. Please rest well.”

“Wuff-wuff.”

And then Ms. Lyra left the room.

“Well...I’m tired. So we should go to sleep as well.”

“Wuff-wuff.”

“...Leo?”

“Wuff?”

Now that Ms. Lyra was gone, I moved over to the bed in order to go to sleep.

Leo moved next to me, and I could smell the dampness of her fur...

It wasn’t a terrible smell... But it was pretty strong.

I hadn’t noticed it before. But Leo had not taken a bath since she came out of the rain.

And while the maids and butlers had wiped her with towels, the smell had remained.

It was like when we would go out for a walk in the rain, and Leo would come back wet. The smell of rain and beast.

Even if I was used to it...it was probably too strong for Ms. Claire and the others.

I hadn't noticed it before, because the dining hall was filled with the smell of sausages.

As Leo looked at me with a puzzled expression, I made up my mind.

"Alright, you're taking a bath first thing in the morning."

"Wuff!?"

Leo was surprised by those words.

She could not believe her ears, but was kind enough to keep her voice low, so as not to wake up Liza.

But even though Leo did not like it, it could not be helped.

"Liza might...say that you smell bad too, you know? You wouldn't want that, would you?"

"Wuff...wuff..."

Leo looked disappointed that all her hard work was being rewarded in such a way. But she nodded in resignation, as she did not want Liza to think that she smelled bad.

It was too late to bathe Leo tonight.

And I felt bad for giving her the bad news right before bed, but I had already made the decision as soon as we stepped out into the rain.

There had been mud as well, and her fur had lost its sheen.

Leo had such beautiful fur, and it should be kept clean and without stench.

To console herself, Leo rested her head close to Liza and closed her eyes. And I too got into bed in order to sleep. But before I closed my eyes, I thought that I saw Liza smile as her nose twitched.

Perhaps she sensed that we had returned, and felt relieved...

—

“...Hmm?”

“Ah...”

“Wuff?”

Was I dreaming...? I felt something fluffy against my face.

And then I heard two familiar voices.

Liza and Leo?

“Hmm...?”

“Ah, did you wake up, papa?”

“Wuff-wuff.”

As I wondered who it was, my consciousness returned fully from sleep.

And then I heard Liza and Leo’s reaction.

Was it morning?

And so I opened my eyes, but it was dark.

Well...it seemed more like my vision was blocked?

“What the...?”

I raised my voice and grabbed whatever it was that was blocking my vision.

It was soft and fluffy, and made me want to go back to sleep.

“Haha! That tickles...”

“Oh, Liza?”

“Good morning, papa!”

“Wuff!”

I sat up, and something fell off of my face.

Next to me, I saw Liza with her back turned to me, and Leo, who had her head resting on the bed.

“...Good morning. Was that your tail?”

“Yes! Mama said you might enjoy it! And it was easier than putting my ears on your face!”

“Wuff!”

“I see... Uh, huh... Thanks.”

Apparently, it was Liza’s tail that had been blocking my vision.

While it was different from Leo’s fur, it was definitely quite fluffy.

Chapter 432

I trained a little longer than usual

While Liza should not have known about what Leo and I were doing last night, she seemed to have sensed that it was for her.

I suppose that she had a sharpness that came from being a beastkin.

Or perhaps this was just her being mischievous, because we had left her alone yesterday.

While I hadn't suffocated, covering someone's face while they were sleeping was rather questionable.

Still, I would not mention it.

...Was I being too soft?

"...Uhh... Papa!"

"Oh. What is it, Liza?"

"Sister Lyra was with me yesterday, but I was sad that you and mama were gone..."

"Oh...really? Sorry about that. We'll try to stay with you as much as possible."

"Yes..."

Suddenly, Liza looked like she was about to cry, and she wrapped her arms around me.

Apparently, she was sad about our absence last night.

It was unfortunate that though we acted for her, we ended up making her sad.

And so I patted her on the head and said that we would be with her as much as possible.

I was probably being too soft, but I didn't have much experience with such things.

Well, there was a father of two daughters in the same house... But Mr. Ekenhart wasn't a good example to follow...I think.

He was also quite weak when it came to Ms. Claire.

"Good morning."

"Wuff!"

"Good morning, Mr. Takumi, Leo, Liza."

And so we got ready for the day and then went down to the dining hall.

It was already close to lunch time, and so we were not able to eat breakfast with everyone else.

When we entered, Ms. Gelda and a few maids were there, preparing the food for us.

I greeted them, and quickly ate the late breakfast.

Ms. Helena's food was as delicious as always.

After that, I gave Leo a bath, and then went out into the garden to use Weed Cultivation in order to restock on some herbs, and check up on the garden.

Ms. Claire and the others were busy dealing with the slums, and they were apparently eating lunch in their rooms.

And so I joined Tilura and Sherry, who had finished with her studies, and Leo continued her diet training with Sherry.

As for Tilura and I, we started our usual sword training.

Fighting against Deam had shown me how lacking I still was, and so I trained harder than usual.

In the meantime, Leo, Sherry and Liza continued to run around like they did yesterday.

I wondered if Liza wouldn't get tired... But also was just running around enough for Sherry?

Perhaps Leo should teach her how to fight as a fenrir.

Well, I didn't know about any of that, and would just have to leave it to Leo.

"Mr. Takumi. You seem to be training harder than usual?"

"Really? ...I suppose I am."

While I was resting and drinking water, Tilura questioned me about my training. She didn't know about what had happened last night, and so she was puzzled.

"Well, something happened. And it made me want to get stronger."

"I see. That is a good thing!"

Even if she didn't know the reason, Tilura nodded happily.

But my reason was simple.

It was merely because I had felt like I was in danger at one point, during my fight with Deam.

Had he pushed through my defenses, then I could have been injured. And so I wanted to be able to handle a sword better.

In the end, it was Leo who got him...

If I wanted to protect Liza, then I would have to get stronger.

That being said, while training was good, I did not want to get too consumed with pursuing power either.

Besides, even with an expert like Mr. Ekenhart nearby, I had never felt bad, or that I wanted to surpass him.

“Mr. Takumi. Lady Tilura. I see you are training.”

“Hmm? Phillip?”

“What is it?”

After we finished resting and returned to our sword training, someone called to us.

It was Phillip, one of the guards.

As they generally guarded the outside of the house, it was unusual to see him in the back garden.

Aside from that, I was also a little concerned about Sherry and Leo, who were still being chased around by Leo.

Liza was smiling, but Sherry looked like she was about to collapse.

Even if it was necessary for her diet, I didn't want her to be pushed too far...

Chapter 433

Phillip came to watch our training

“His Grace and Sebastian said that I should come and check up on you two. Especially, you, Mr. Takumi.”

“...Me?”

“Mr. Takumi?”

So Phillip had come to see us after being asked by Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian... I wonder why?

“His Grace wondered that something might have changed with the way you think after last night’s events.”

“The way I think?”

“What happened last night?”

“And from what I saw at a distance...you did seem a little different.”

“Really?”

I had spoken to Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian after returning to the mansion. And perhaps they had sensed a change come over me.

Perhaps it was my regret over how things went with Deam...

There were definitely times when I thought I was acting normal, but others found me easy to read.

...They had even known I meant to go to the slums.

“I have watched you train with the master occasionally, and at Range village as well. And you seem more determined now.”

I didn’t know that much about Phillip, but he was the leader of the guard at this mansion.

I had not noticed him observing me before, but I suppose there were things he was able to see from it.

As for Tilura, she knew nothing about last night, and Phillip did not enlighten her. And so she puffed out her cheeks in annoyance.

Right now, they wanted her to focus on her studies and sword training. It was too early for her to be concerned with other issues.

Perhaps Tilura also understood that we were hiding things, and couldn't help but be sulky about it.

She probably wanted to be treated like a grown up.

I had been like that at her age.

“Mr Takumi... Do you know what is important when fighting?”

“The most important thing?”

Phillip usually talked in a more casual, amused way, but his eyes were very serious now.

As for the question... Sebastian had told me that it wasn't just about defeating your opponent, and that it was sometimes important to run away.

Survival was more important than anything.

“That I survive. And protect who I want to protect... I think?”

“Hmm. I see. Then let me ask you this... Say, a blade is rushing towards someone you wish to protect. And it is unlikely that you will make it in time to stop it... What will you do? Obviously, no one will conveniently appear to help. You have no hidden powers, and you cannot block the attack.”

For instance, if Deam's sword was swinging towards Ms. Claire or Liza...

I had fought him recently, so I used him in this scenario.

What would I do...

Deam's sword had been heavy.

He had put all of his weight behind it, after all. And there was no way that I could block it from the side.

And Leo would not be able to help me.

I had to do something on my own.

"...I suppose I would knock the person I wanted to protect out of the way, and get hit in their place..."

"I see. That would indeed be an effective way to protect someone. However, you will then be wounded or even die. And then the enemy will be free to attack their original target. And you won't be able to do anything about it."

"That's true..."

As I had not done anything about the enemy, the outcome would be the same in the end.

So, what could I do...

"Perhaps you could ignore the enemy's sword, and just swing at the enemy with all of your might instead. But it's possible that you won't be able to do it before the person you want to protect is cut down."

"Indeed... That would not be a good move."

"But you could avoid the death of everyone. Sacrificing one person will lead to protecting yourself."

“...”

I understood what he was saying.

If sacrificing one person could save myself and others, then it may be necessary.

However...if I was ever in that situation...I felt that I would still want to protect that person.

That was just my personality.

“I know it was a mischievous question... But the point is that the situation will change with every fight. There will be times when you must protect someone. Times when you have to defeat an enemy. Times when you have to abandon friends and survive.”

“Yes, that’s true.”

It really was a mischievous question, given there wasn’t even a right answer. Because it changed based on the situation.

There was no real answer.

Chapter 434

I asked about the guards training

“Indeed, indeed. It seems that you believed in the one answer, and have been training based on it. I suppose you have decided on who your enemy will be...and defeating it is your goal. But I don’t think you were thinking about survival, or about protecting anyone?”

“...I see... You might be right.”

It was true that I had probably started training with the intention of being able to defeat others.

Perhaps my fight with Deam had made my mind go in that direction without really realizing it.

And so I was grateful to Phillip for pointing it out.

Mr. Ekenhart had likely seen it as well.

He was really sharp when it came to things related to combat... Not so much other things... But Sebastian and the others made up for it.

“The strength to defeat an opponent. The strength to protect others. They seem like the same thing, but they are not. When defeat means death, then escape is also an option. And so avoiding danger and enhancing your ability to escape could make you strong.”

“Indeed. Though, I don’t know about only training to run away.”

“It is just an example. There are many ways of being strong. You could even hit enemies with magic from a distance where they cannot retaliate.”

“Yes, that would be one way... Does such magic exist?”

“Well, I don’t know anyone who can do that.”

“...Now that I think about it, Sebastian had said something...”

“What did he say?”

“About how Mr. Ekenhart’s guards train differently. Compared to me and Tilura. He said that I should ask you about that.”

“Ah, I see...”

“Mr. Phillip suddenly looks disheartened!”

Phillip had been talking quite normally up until now, but his expression suddenly darkened.

Even Tilura noticed this, and raised her voice in surprise.

...Was the training so bad that he didn't want to remember it?

"That was... Well, His Grace is very strange..."

"He is?"

"Yes. As a duke, he is usually quite busy with his daily duties... And yet, he would follow us closely during the early part of our training."

"When he had free time?"

"I don't know. It beats me how he was able to do it... In any case, he teaches us very thoroughly at first."

I could imagine it, since it had been like that when he first started teaching me and Tilura.

But I suppose it was possible, since he could spend his time more flexibly in this mansion.

Besides, Tilura was his daughter.

And since Leo was with me, she was also able to help with the training, and then Mr. Ekenhart returned to the main house.

Phillip had likely been trained in that house...

The duke had many responsibilities, on top of running businesses... I didn't want to think about how busy he was.

Though, I had heard that his businesses were doing well.

“At first, the training was similar to what you are doing. A lot of running and strengthening our bodies...”

“Yes, the basics then.”

If you did not have the strength to move while carrying heavy swords and spears, then you would not be able to fight.

“We had to run distances that it would take a horse several hours to cross, but not take twice as long. Or train while carrying boulders...”

“...”

Tilura and I were stunned.

A few hours by horse... If that was two hours, then you would have to run that distance in less than four hours.

That could be dozens of kilometers...you would have to run at top speed the whole time. It would be worse than a marathon.

And then the muscle training with rocks... I could see how weight training was effective, but carrying a boulder that was over ten kilograms...

Tilura and I realized how easy we had it.

“By the way, when you were finished with all of that, there was even more training waiting for you. And once we were used to the basic training, we got to the real guard training.”

“...And what was that like?”

“I don’t like to think back on it.”

If that was what the basic training was like, what did they do after that?

Phillip's reluctance to talk about it just made me even more curious.

But he had a far away look in his eyes now.

...Perhaps it was better to not make him remember?

Chapter 435

The training was quite severe

“...Ughhhh...”

“Phillip!?”

“Is he crying!?”

He must have remembered something, as Phillip's eyes welled up with tears, and then he covered his face with his hands.

So it really was something that I shouldn't ask about.

“...Ohh.... Excuse me. I forgot myself there...”

“Not at all...”

“I have never seen him look so weak! He is usually so silly!”

Phillip wiped away the tears and apologized to us.

I wasn't sure what to say after that.

But Tilura did not hesitate to speak her mind... Well, it wasn't far from the truth.

He had been like that in Range village.

“Well, in any case. We were talking about the training...”

“Uh, yes.”

While he looked a little hurt by Tilura’s comment, it seemed that he would continue to talk about his training.

“First, we were taken to the forest near the house.”

“To the forest?”

What did their training as guards have to do with the forest?

Now that I thought about it, Tilura and I were also going to the forest. Perhaps Mr. Ekenhart just liked to go there.

“The forest was filled with traps that he prepared.”

“What kind?”

“Pitfalls, and flying arrows. Of course, none of the traps would kill you immediately, but...you would still get injured. We had to make our way through the forest while carrying a wooden statue.”

“A wooden statue?”

“Because we couldn’t use real people in our training. So we protected a wooden statue instead. But since it didn’t move, we had to carry them.”

I guess they could practice guarding and carrying supplies at the same time then.

“Navigating your way through the forest while avoiding traps is quite draining mentally. Also, if someone else was caught in a trap, then we had to help them. Unless you could not...”

“What happened to those you couldn’t help?”

“They get left behind. And so they must stay there for the whole night. And someone would help them the following morning... Even though there were no monsters in that forest, you still had to stay there for the whole night. When it happened to me, I thought I was going to die.”

“Well...you have my condolences...”

I did not want to think about what that would be like.

It could rain while you were inside of a pit. And in a dense forest, you would not be able to see the sky.

It was no wonder that he felt like he would die there.

“Our main priority was to escort our target out of the forest safely. So even while the others were dropping like flies, you had to continue to carry your target.

“Hmm...”

“And once you reach your destination outside of the forest, the training is over. And then comes the evaluation.”

“Evaluation?”

“Yes. To see if the target is alive... If there is any obvious damage to it, then you have to do it all over again. And with only a short rest inbetween. That is why we were so desperate to get it right the first time.”

Well, it certainly sounded tiring both physically and psychologically.

As I was just listening to his account, I could only imagine how severe it was. But it definitely did not make me want to experience it.

It sounded like something you might do in the military.

“Well, that was just one of the ways we trained. Some of the other ones were worse.”

“Father...was doing such things...”

While I felt a little afraid, Tilura sounded more like she was impressed.

That was a strange thing to be proud of your father for...

“And once we went through that training, we started to train with swords and other weapons.”

“So it was after...”

I suppose he wanted to toughen them up and build their bodies first. It was quite different compared to the way he trained Tilura and me.

“As for the weapons, we test with various ones to see what suits us the most. And then we train with that weapon. That training is also quite hard... Would you like to hear about it?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“...!”

Tilura and I were training with weapons, so it was close enough. Besides, even if I was somewhat interested, I felt bad for making him talk about his training.

Tilura must have felt the same way, as she also shook her head.

Chapter 436

We had a visitor

“I see, that is good. ...Well, like that, we learned that there is a lot more to protecting a target, than merely becoming stronger.”

After seeing that we did not want to hear more, Phillip sighed in relief and his expression brightened.

Well, now that I had talked to Phillip about it, perhaps I would talk to Nicholas next time.

If he didn't mind, that is.

“But as you and Lady Tilura are not training to become guards, you only have to continue and do as the master has instructed.”

“...Indeed. Clearly our goals are very different, and that is reflected in our training. I understand that now.”

“So do I!”

Tilura and I nodded at Phillip.

Mr. Ekenhart thought a lot about such things, and would have planned something that suited us specifically.

And so it would not be good for me to get carried away by these feelings of inadequacy, and start trying to do other things.

Deam had made me a little frantic, that was all.

I had felt that I had to become stronger in order to protect Liza.

But I never thought like that just a few months ago. And so I really didn't know what to do now.

So perhaps Mr. Ekenhart had detected the change, and asked Phillip to come and talk with me.

...Or I might just be giving him too much credit. But it was clear that there was more to him than met the eye.

“During my training, I sometimes wondered why I chose to do this... Surely there was an easier path... But now I am Lady Claire’s guard. Being able to protect someone who is so pretty has rid me of any regret.”

“...Is that so? Hmm. I don’t understand.”

“Haha. Well, it’s something that men should relate to, isn’t that right, Mr. Takumi?”

“Huh? Uh...perhaps.”

I did understand what he was saying, but it was awkward to talk about it in front of Tilura.

We finished talking with Phillip, as well as the training that Mr. Ekenhart made us do, and then we rested.

Now that he had spoken to us, Phillip returned to his work at the mansion.

“By the way, Sebastian, father, and Claire seemed very busy?”

“Yes...”

Tilura asked as we were wiping our sweat with towels and quenching our thirst with water.

Usually, one of those three would have come out to the garden to watch us.

Well, Mr. Ekenhart would participate.

And so Tilura was puzzled by their absence.

“Sebastian seemed especially busy...”

“...Did you call me?”

“Sebastian!?”

He should have been the most busy out of the three, and yet when I muttered his name, he suddenly appeared behind me with his usual smile.

“Hohoho. Did I surprise you?”

“...I suppose you did that on purpose?”

“Whatever do you mean?”

Sebastian did not look sorry at all. In fact, he looked very amused.

That was one way that Sebastian and Mr. Ekenhart was similar.

“Well, enough of such games... Mr. Takumi, a guest came to see you.”

“To see me? ...Is it related to yesterday?”

“No, it is not. Well, to be precise, Mr. Hannes came to see His Grace and Lady Claire. But it concerns you as well.”

“I see... Should I go to the drawing room?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. I will go at once.”

“Thank you. I will go and call the master...”

And then Sebastian hurried back into the house.

So he called me first...

“Mr. Takumi. It looks like Leo and the others are finished as well?”

“Ah, it does look like it...”

As I mused over Sebastian’s timing, Tilura told me about Leo and the others.

Tilura was not surprised about Sebastian’s sudden appearance... I suppose she was used to it after living with him for years.

Chapter 437

I talked with Mr. Haines

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Kyu... Heheh!”

“It was so fun running around, papa!”

After running for so long, Leo and the others came rushing towards us.

It was no surprise to me now that Leo didn’t look tired at all, but... Liza wasn’t even panting and was still energetic.

I suppose it was because she was a beastkin?

On the other hand, Sherry let out a weak bark and was panting with her tongue sticking out.

And she seemed quite unstable on her legs. Was she alright?

“I’m glad you had fun, Liza. ...What about you, Sherry?”

“Wuff! Wou-wou!”

“Kyu...”

Leo was saying something about Sherry being weak, while Sherry barked in protest.

Well, if Liza was fine, then it was a little sad that Sherry the fenrir was so exhausted.

“...Well, you can rest here, Sherry. As for Tilura...”

“I will watch over Sherry!”

“Very well then. Liza, you should stay with them as well. Maybe you can continue to play when Sherry regains her energy. A guest has arrived, and I have to go talk with them.”

“Okay, papa!”

“Kyau...”

“Wuff?”

I didn’t know what had brought Mr. Haines here, but we were bound to discuss the herb fields.

Liza would just be bored if I took her, so it would be better for her to stay with Tilura and Sherry.

Leo then tilted her head and barked as if to ask me what she should do.

“Leo, you come with me. Mr. Haines is here. So you can meet him.”

“Wuff! Wou-wou?”

“Rosalie... I don’t know. I didn’t ask about her. Well, let’s go and see.”

“Wou!”

Leo barked loudly when she heard that Mr. Haines was here, but then she immediately asked about Rosalie.

Rosalie was very fond of Leo, and they had played together a lot in Range village, and so Leo remembered her.

While Sebastian had not mentioned her, it was possible that she had accompanied him.

In any case, as the others drank water and rested, Leo and I returned to the mansion.

“Excuse me. ...Mr. Haines. It’s nice to see you again.”

“Ah, Mr. Takumi. And Leo. It is good to see you! Everyone is doing very well in the village, thanks to you.”

“Hello Mr. Takumi and Leo!”

“Wuff-wuff!”

I entered the drawing room and greeted Mr. Haines, who was sitting inside.

And Rosalie was sitting right next to him. So he had brought her along after all.

After I greeted them, they immediately got up to their feet and bowed deeply.

They were grateful for what I had done for them, healing the sick with Ramogi, and stopping the orc attack.

...I didn't feel that it was necessary, but I suppose they were being extra formal, because we were in the duke's house.

Leo also barked to greet them, and wagged her tail when she saw Rosalie.

"And what about the wine?"

"We have not produced any more since then. After all, the merchant set the orcs on us... I don't know where we will get grapes... Besides, there are the children."

"I see..."

"Good Leo! You are as fluffy as ever!"

"Wuff! Wuff!"

As we waited for Mr. Ekenhart, I sat across from them and asked about how things were in the village.

Leo and Rosalie started playing... Well, she was grabbing onto Leo and feeling her fur.

...It was a good thing I had bathed Leo.

But I was more interested in the wine in Range village.

The merchants had made orcs attack the village, and were also the ones who spread the sickness.

Even if a different merchant was sent, they did not trust anyone who came from the count's lands.

Also, they did not want to return to being as busy as they had been before.

“However...I think that you will be asked to start producing the wine again.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes. Though, I cannot tell you the details...”

“Is this related...to using lands near the village?”

“It is. Is that why you are here today?”

“Yes. I received a letter directly from the duke. We were to prepare a field... He even told us the exact location... And while it is an honor to serve the duke, I still wondered why...”

Mr. Ekenhart’s plan was to add herbs to the wine and sell it as a medicinal wine.

Well, he also liked the taste of the wine.

In any case, we had to have wine for that, and fields had to be prepared.

But Mr. Ekenhart’s letter didn’t explain any of that.

But judging by the time it was sent, not much of the details would have even been decided.

And since the duke had written the letter himself, Mr. Haines probably thought it would be more polite to come here in person, instead of writing back.

Chapter 438

Mr. Hannes met Ms. Anne

“I am quite old... And so my son and his wife told me to take Rosalie with me, just in case something happened. They could come with me, as they were busy in the village...”

So that’s why Rosalie was here.

Indeed, Mr. Haines did look quite old, so it was no wonder that they would worry for him.

Sebastian was probably the same age...but he was definitely an extreme case.

I shouldn't compare him to other people.

As for Rosalie's parents, I had met them the last time I was in Range village.

They both seemed to be very kind and gentle people.

"If you are worried about getting grapes for the wine, I think it will be fine. Though, you may find it difficult to believe..."

"Not at all! You saved our village. And so we have no reason to doubt what you say."

Well, I wasn't sure if they should trust her completely, but Ms. Anne had given her word, so it should be fine.

"Thank you. As for the fields..."

"I will talk to you about that!"

"...Mr. Ekenhart?"

"Wuff!"

"Wa!"

"!?"

Just as I was about to explain, the doors burst open, and Mr. Ekenhart entered the room.

...Had he been listening from outside?

Ms. Claire was glaring at him from behind, and Leo had an admonishing expression, so it must be the case.

Also, Ms. Anne was also standing behind them. I wonder why...?

Mr. Hannes and Ms. Anne was not acquainted.

But she looked quite nervous...and also silly, due to her hair.

“Mr. Haines. His Grace, Duke Ekenhart. And you already know his daughter, Ms. Claire?”

“Mm.”

“It’s nice to see you again, Mr. Haines.”

“The d-duke!? Ex-excuse me! I am Haines, the chief of Range village! Rosalie, over here...!”

“It is fine. Best not disturb her if she is playing with Leo.”

“Ah...as you say...”

I stood up and introduced Mr. Ekenhart to him, since Sebastian was not here.

Apparently, Mr. Haines had not seen Mr. Ekenhart before, and he was surprised and apologized while introducing himself.

“Well, while there are a lot of things to discuss, such as the fields and wine... First of all... Anneliese.”

“...Yes.”

Mr. Ekenhart moved towards Mr. Haines, but then turned and called for Ms. Anne.

Ms. Anne answered and then stepped forward with a nervous expression.

But her hair rolls and ribbons ruined the effect. Even Rosalie was staring at them now.

“Who is this?”

“She is Anneliese Barsler. Count Barsler’s only child.”

“Then that means...”

“Yes. She is related to the man who had your village attacked.”

Upon hearing this, Mr. Haines looked so shocked that his eyes were about to fly out of his face.

Well, Mr. Haines knew first hand about the orcs and the sphere, so it was no surprise.

They had even been selling the wine to him.

Mr. Ekenhart nodded, and admitted that it had indeed been Count Barsler who did all of that.

“And so why is such a person here?”

“Well, there are various reasons. But she was left in my care. Do not worry, her house will not be able to work such evils again. Isn’t that right, Anne?”

“Yes, though it was my father’s doing, as the heir to the house, I give you my word. Also...”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course. After all, I shoulder my own share of the blame. Even Claire said that I cannot be so arrogant because of my position.”

For Mr. Haines, she may be someone to hate.

After all, she was the daughter of Count Barsler.

And even though I had healed everyone in the village with my herbs...he would still hold a grudge.

Chapter 439

The angry chaos caused by Ms. Anne

Even as he listened to Mr. Ekenhart's explanation, Mr. Haines was glaring at Ms. Anne.

While she was not the head of the house yet, she had given her word, so perhaps Mr. Haines could rest easy... No, likely not... Even her hair suggested that she was not normal.

But for a moment, when I saw Ms. Anne answer with downcast eyes, I thought she had grown since the first time I saw her.

“...Now, Anneliese.”

“Yes...”

And then she took a step towards Mr. Haines, while Mr. Ekenhart and Ms. Claire moved away.

What was she going to do?

Mr. Haines looked both angry and cautious. I could not blame him.

“...I am sorry!”

“!?”

“Wuff?”

As she stood there, Ms. Anne closed her eyes.

And then after a few seconds, she suddenly threw herself to the ground, prostrating herself, and shouted that she was sorry.

Of course, her hair rolls lay limply on the floor as well.

Mr. Haines and the others were terribly surprised. Even Leo looked up in alarm.

Rosalie did not understand what was happening, and watched with a confused expression.

“Even though it was my father, I still bear some of the responsibility! And what he did can not be forgiven! While I might have made a suggestion, and though I was half asleep when I said it, he carried it out all on his own... No, I will not make excuses. I will not try and take the easy way out! Even if I just muttered such suggestions to him in order to make him leave me alone... It does not change the fact that I put the idea into his head! But I never thought that he would actually do it... Still, I will represent my house and apologize! I am sorry! With all of my body and soul, I apologize! I was very wrong! So, uh... Well...I... Umm. What happens now?”

“...”

She kept shouting for so long that I was more impressed with the fact that she did not run out of breath.

But by the end of it, she seemed a little confused herself.

And so she had to ask Mr. Haines what to do... Clearly, she was not used to apologizing to people.

“Hah... Anne. Don’t ask something like that at the end.”

“But I’ve never done this before! How should I know what to do!?”

Ms. Claire sighed as she admonished Ms. Anne.

Perhaps it had been Ms. Claire who persuaded her to do this.

And while Ms. Anne shouted like she was angry at Ms. Claire, it was clear that she was frantic.

Someone in her position would not have to make apologies very often.

Not only that, but she would not have known that Mr. Haines would be visiting today... Even I hadn't known.

Someone like Sebastian might have known... Regardless, it would have been sudden for Ms. Anne, and she would not have had time to prepare.

It had been bold of her to start by falling to the ground like that...but I think she was just causing more confusion now.

"...Well, so there it is... Anneliese has repented for what was done. While I won't tell you to forgive her, surely you can give her a chance?"

"Huh? Oh, uh, yes..."

While Ms. Anne was still on the floor, Mr. Ekenhart spoke to Mr. Haines.

Mr. Haines looked like he was lost for words, and did not know what to do.

It had all been so sudden, after all...

Though, I wondered if this wasn't intentional on Mr. Ekenhart's part.

Mr. Haines had been glaring at Ms. Anne at first, but all of the anger was gone from his face now.

He could avoid having an angry, explosive confrontation, and bring Mr. Haines over to his side... That would be quite a strategy. Or maybe I was just overthinking it...

Chapter 440

Mr. Ekenhart also apologized to Mr. Haines

“You can stand back now, Anneliese.”

“Really? But I haven’t done anything yet...”

“Anne, it’s enough. Besides, I think your presence here is just confusing Mr. Haines.”

“...Very well.”

Ms. Anne seemed like she hadn’t had enough yet, but she somberly got to her feet and exited the drawing room with one of the maids.

I suppose she was still confused as well.

She had bowed on the floor but felt like she hadn’t done anything.

It showed how desperate she had been.

“Ah, thank you.”

Sebastian then entered the room, and a different maid poured everyone some tea.

We were sitting at the table now, with Mr. Ekenhart and Ms. Claire facing Mr. Haines.

Sebastian stood next to Mr. Ekenhart, while Leo and Rosalie played a short distance away.

Now that things had calmed down, Mr. Haines tried to call Rosalie over to sit with him, but Mr. Ekenhart stopped him.

He saw that Leo was having fun, and thought that it was wrong to disturb her.

I didn't know what he was thinking, but it wasn't like Leo would get mad over such a thing. But I suppose it was also in his best interest to treat Leo with reverence, because she was a Silver Fenrir...

I suppose Leo being special gave him more authority...

When Leo and I had gone to the village before, the people had not really been afraid of her. But I suppose it was necessary to occasionally make her look important.

"In regards to Anneliese, I am taking full responsibility over her. Do you have any objections?"

"No. If Your Grace is keeping his eye on her, I could not ask for more."

So Mr. Haines was satisfied.

That was how much he trusted Mr. Ekenhart.

"However, it is true that I failed to realize what the count was doing, which caused great harm to Range village. And so as the lord who governs these lands, I apologize."

"No, no, not at all! There is no need for...please raise your head!"

"Mmm. Thank you."

Mr. Ekenhart had clearly never dreamed of something like this happening, and he was terribly shocked by it.

Someone who would not hesitate to bow to others... I suppose it was because she was raised by such a father, that Ms. Claire was not arrogant about being from a noble house.

"Now, about the wine..."

“Yes, Your Grace. We people of Range Village have been thinking about quitting wine production altogether.”

Mr. Haines said with a shake of his head.

“Hmm. And is this because you can no longer trust the people that you used to buy from?”

“That is one reason. But not the main one...”

“Ah, the children then?”

Mr. Haines nodded and then turned to look at Rosalie, who was playing with Leo.

He had gentle eyes and seemed happy to see her like this.

“Yes. Up until now, the village was so busy that the children were often neglected. And while I thought it was necessary for our survival... I am not sure it was the only way. After all, if we fail in the raising of the children, then what future will the village have in the end?”

“Indeed... If your children all leave, then the village’s fate will be sealed. It is a difficult problem... but one that cannot be ignored.”

Even when in front of the duke, Mr. Haines was able to say his opinion clearly and show how much he understood the situation in the village. He really was a good chief.

Mr. Ekenhart listened to this and nodded with a conflicted expression.

There was a saying about how children grew even without parents... But when it came to the village’s survival, they would have to do better than that.

Children with few good memories were unlikely to care about the village once they were adults.

It was a common thing in Japan. The young would leave villages and go to the city.

“By the way, chief. How were the village children with good Leo?”

“Wuff?”

Mr. Ekenhart suddenly changed the subject.

Leo heard her name and barked with a puzzled expression.

It’s nothing. You can keep playing with Rosalie.