

Beloved Dog 451

Chapter 451

I was asked about the fight with the orcs

“Well then, I was thinking about watching you train... If you could start now.”

“Sorry. I know you’re already busy with the slums, and I’ve gone and increased your workload.”

“Hoho. It is fine. Besides, work that helps to improve the land is quite pleasant to do.”

“Mm. Indeed.”

Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian had come out to the back garden in order to watch me train. However, I felt bad for taking up their time.

But when I apologized, they smiled and said that they enjoyed it.

As for me, I never really enjoyed having to work. It was something that I had to do.

Well, part of it was because of the overwhelming workload. I didn’t even have time to feel any kind of emotion over it.

Of course, I suppose there was a sense of achievement when things went well. But I would then just feel tired at the thought of the next job.

That being said, working at a company was different from being the lord of these lands. And so I felt just a little jealous of Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian, who enjoyed their jobs.

...Well, perhaps I would start enjoying myself, once I started to grow those herb fields?

After talking for a short while, Sebastian returned to the mansion.

And then I trained with Mr. Ekenhart and Tilura, just like we always did.

As we would be going to the forest soon, Tilura was also more motivated than usual.

Though, due to this excitement, she once lost grip of her sword, and it came flying towards me and stabbed into the ground. That was a little scary...

Of course, Mr. Ekenhart admonished her, and she quickly apologized.

When the sword came flying, Leo had moved her tail in front of me protectively... I was thankful for that.

And so while praising Leo, I had Tilura pet her tail in order to help her relax.

This seemed to work for the most part.

...Though, she seemed to grow tense again when she picked up her sword. But I guess Mr. Ekenhart would keep an eye on her now.

“Mr. Takumi. There is something I wanted to ask you.”

“Hmm? What is it, Tilura?”

After training for a little longer, I stopped to catch my breath. And then Tilura approached me.

Apparently, she wanted to ask me something.

“How was it? Fighting against orcs?”

“Ah...fighting against orcs...”

“Tilura. Why don't you ask me?”

We would be going to the forest to fight orcs, and help measure our ability.

“Have you ever seen an orc, Tilura?”

“Several times. But the guards would always defeat them.”

“Hmm. I see...”

“...What about me...?”

So it wasn't like she had never seen any orcs.

Well, they were common monsters, and lived outside of the fenrir forest as well.

They had even attacked Range village... And Tilura did leave the mansion sometimes.

And so she would have had opportunities to see orcs.

Perhaps it was during her travels to the main house.

In that case, she might have seen some battles from a distance. But if that was the case, she should probably ask the guards who were with her at the time.

Well, I was the one who she always trained with, and had fought orcs quite recently.

So maybe it was easier to ask me.

As for Mr. Ekenhart, he seemed quite sad about his daughter not relying on him very much...

He knew a lot more about fighting than me... But I suppose it could be that he was too strong, and so she didn't think that his advice would be very helpful.

Besides, since he always had guards accompanying him, it was possible that he hadn't fought any orcs for some time.

"Well, if you've seen them, then you know that they are about the same size as humans, and walk on two legs."

"Yes, that's right."

"But though I have fought them, I don't know much about how they live... In spite of looking heavy, they are very fast. And strong."

"They are fast?"

"Well, they seemed fast. I don't know if they are that agile... They are good at charging in one direction, at least."

"...Hmmm."

I recalled the orcs I had seen in the forest, as well as the ones I fought in Range village, and told Tilura about them.

While they were bipedal, they liked to charge a lot. Perhaps it was due to their similarities with pigs and boars.

But I had never seen them make sharp turns or move in an agile way.

And since I was used to seeing the way that Leo and Mr. Ekenhart moved, they did not seem like much of a threat to me...

While I was explaining this, Mr. Ekenhart nodded, showing that I was not saying anything that was wrong.

It was his way of trying to enter the conversation.

“And so even if things get dangerous, I don’t think you should turn your back on them and run away. Though, perhaps if you are in the forest, they won’t be able to charge straight.”

“Indeed. Orcs cannot make sharp turns suddenly. They have to stop after charging if they want to turn. That being said, if you do get hit, the force is enough to knock you off of your feet.”

“Oh...I see...”

Tilura sighed as she listened to us.

Mr. Ekenhart had finally joined in, and added to my explanation.

Regardless, I was thankful, because it was a subject that I lacked knowledge in.

Chapter 452

Anti-Orc Training

“They are also very strong... Though, I was less experienced at that time. And so my sword broke...and I got wounded...”

“Yes, I heard about that! Orcs must be very strong if they could hurt you, Mr. Takumi.”

“Well, you should not lower your guard, that is for sure. They are not friendly monsters. Unless you can run away, then it is kill or be killed...”

“Additionally, Tilura. You should never lower your guard around any monster. You should always go all out and treat them as if they are strong. Though, if there are a lot of them, you might have to save your energy.”

They were attacking in order to kill you.

I wasn’t really sure why they were hostile. Perhaps humans were food for them.

The trolls had attacked Sherry, so it might be normal for monsters to fight each other. But humans were often defenseless, and had to be more careful.

Like Mr. Ekenhart said, there would be times when you had to save your strength.

However, it was probably too early for Tilura to be thinking about that.

“Wuff!”

“Yes, I know they aren’t dangerous for you, Leo.”

Leo, who had been watching from a distance, walked up to me and barked once.

She was saying that orcs were small fry and we should leave them to her. But that wouldn’t help Tilura at all.

The whole purpose for this trip was to have Tilura fight orcs and show the results of her training. So there would be no point if Leo did everything.

“Wuff? Wuff-wuff.”

“Mama says that Sherry can help too!”

“Sherry is... I suppose Leo means for it to be part of her diet... But you shouldn’t bother Tilura okay? You can help her only if she is in danger.”

“Wou...”

“Thank you, Leo! I will do my best, so please watch! I think I should be able to defeat the orcs without your help!”

“Grau!”

While Leo looked a little disappointed, she barked in support of Tilura.

Perhaps Leo had wanted to show off in front of her...

“When I fought them, the orc was like...”

“Like this?”

“No, Tilura. You will be knocked down by their strength if you do that. You are still small, so don’t try to win with strength!”

“Wuff! Wuff!”

“You can do it, sister Tilura!”

At the end, we did some anti-orc training.

I recalled when the orc had come towards me, and helped Tilura to imagine it. And then Mr. Ekenhart judged the way that she moved.

I hoped that Tilura would not get injured when she really did fight in the forest.

Leo would move to help her immediately... But I would still bring some Loe with me, just in case.

Once we continued our training, Leo and Liza moved a short distance away, and then cheered us on from there.

“Rosalie?”

“Yes! I was just visiting!”

After training, I separated from Tilura and Mr. Ekenhart, and left Liza and Leo in my room so that I could go and take a bath.

And when I returned, I saw that Rosalie and Liza were playing with Leo.

“Thank you for playing with Liza.”

“Not at all. I should be thanking them, if anything...”

Rosalie said modestly. She seemed a little nervous.

“Ah, that’s right. Have you taken a bath yet?”

“Huh? Oh, not yet! I’m sorry!”

It took several days to reach this mansion from Range village.

And so was covered in dirt and dust and would likely want to take a bath.

“You don’t have to apologize. Perhaps you could go with Liza? Ms. Lyra is waiting for her now, and I’m sure she wouldn’t mind if you joined her.”

“Oh, uh... Of course! Yes. Excuse me!”

“Uh, Rosalie!? Papa, mama, I’ll go then!”

“Wuff.”

“Take your time!”

Rosalie had turned a little red as she dashed out of the room. Had I said something wrong?

Well, I suppose telling a girl that she should take a bath might sound a little insulting...

Regardless, I'm sure that Ms. Lyra would treat her well, and I hoped that she would soon be back to her normal self.

Chapter 453

I woke up to a comfortable sensation

...When I woke up, I felt something soft covering my face and upper body. It was like I was being enveloped.

“Hmmm...”

“Wuff?”

Considering what had happened yesterday, I thought it might be Liza. Though, I heard Leo's voice as well. Regardless, my vision was blocked.

“Liza... Is that your tail again?”

“Wuff. Wuff.”

Only Leo barked, and I did not hear Liza...

And so I raised my hand to touch it. Ah, this...

“...Is this your tail, Leo?”

“Wuff!”

The thing finally moved off of my face, and I could see.

And so I sat up and looked around the room and saw that Leo was sticking her tail in my direction.

Liza was still sleeping, but was near the corner of the bed and looked like she was about to fall off.

“So it was you, Leo.”

“Wuff... Wuff.”

Leo turned around. And once she saw that I had woken up, she bent down and moved her face near Liza.

She was trying to push Liza away from the edge, but it was not going well.

“Did you wake me up because she was about to fall off?”

“Wuff-wuff.”

I said quietly, so as to not wake Liza up, and Leo nodded.

So she had noticed that Liza was going to fall, and did her best to prevent it. However, since she could not move her well, she used her tail to try and wake me up.

If she barked or moved onto the bed, she would wake Liza up, and so she had no choice but to use her tail...

“Well, it’s morning anyway. So you might as well have just woken her.”

“Wuff?”

“Mr. Takumi, Leo, Liza. Are you up?”

“See?”

I looked out of the window. I had an idea of the time, judging by the position of the sun.

And so I knew that Tilura would be visiting us soon.

Just as Leo tilted her head to the side, Tilura's voice rang from outside.

As we slept at the usual time, no one had stopped her in coming to tell us that breakfast was ready.

"Wuff..."

"Well, I suppose you were only thinking about her sleeping well, and so you forgot about the time. Tilura, you can come in."

"Excuse me."

Leo looked a little discouraged when she realized that it was fine to wake up Liza.

Well, since she always slept next to the bed, in case she fell off, it was understandable that she would be concerned.

"Good morning... Is Liza still sleeping?"

"Yes, good morning. She is sleeping more soundly than usual... And she's about to fall off."

"Wuff-wuff."

"Hmm?"

Liza looked so happy that I hesitated to wake her up now.

It was no wonder that Leo had not wanted to wake her up either.

But as I thought this, her ears started to twitch.

Apparently, she had heard the sounds around her, and she slowly opened her eyes.

“Morning, Liza. Did you sleep well?”

“...Mmm... Papa?”

“Wuff.”

“Good morning, Liza.”

She was not completely awake yet, and looked around with dazed eyes as she sat up.

Her ears were moving busily, as if to take stock of the situation.

She then rubbed her eyes and looked at me.

At the same time, Leo and Tilura greeted her.

“Ah, papa, mama. Good morning! And sister Tilura!”

“Oh! Haha. You are energetic this morning.”

“Wou.”

“Such energy when she just woke up!”

Her head finally seemed to clear, and after recognizing us, Liza jumped off of the bed and onto me.

I caught her, while being impressed that she could move like that after just getting up.

It was a good thing that I trained every day... Or I probably would have dropped her...

I chuckled with relief. Though, Tilura was a little surprised.

I suppose Liza could do such things because she was a beastkin.

Or maybe she was just active.

“Alright. Now that you’re up, you should go and wash your face. Can you take her, Tilura?”

“Okay!”

“Yes, I’ll go! Rosalie is also waiting outside, so we’ll go together!”

“Oh, she is?”

“Uh...good morning.”

“Good morning, Rosalie.”

I put Liza on the ground and told her to get ready for the day with Tilura.

Apparently, Rosalie had also come as well. When I said her name, she stuck head out from behind the door and greeted us.

Last night, when she returned with Liza, she had apologized, but I told her that I could have worded it differently and apologized as well.

She had then gone back to Mr. Haines, but I suppose she was still a little embarrassed about it.

Chapter 454

Liza and Rosalie helped me

“Good morning, Rosalie!”

“Good morning, Liza!”

“Alright, Mr. Takumi. I will go with Liza now!”

“Yes, thank you!”

Rosalie answered as Liza greeted her cheerfully. The three of them really did seem to enjoy being around each other. I was happy to see it.

I watched them leave while talking excitedly, and then I started to get ready as well.

“Wuff...”

“Are you still tired, Leo?”

“Wuff. Wuff.”

“Haha. So you got up early. Maybe you should sleep a little?”

“Wuff!”

“Well, just take it easy then.”

While I was getting ready, Leo yawned sleepily.

She was scratching her ears with her hind leg, and seemed drowsy.

Apparently, she had woken up early when noticing that Liza was about to fall.

I thought that if that was the case, she should sleep more, but Leo did not want to miss breakfast.

Well, eating was important too.

Aside from seeing Mr. Haines off, I had no plans today... And so Leo could just take a nap.

Besides, she may be a little sleep deprived after recent incidents, like Sherry stealing in the kitchen, and our midnight excursion to capture Deam.

Back in Japan, she slept a lot while I was out working. But here, she mostly matched my sleeping schedule. So it would be good for her to take naps once in a while.

We were going to the forest tomorrow, and I would have to prepare. But she would have plenty of time until then.

“Phew. That should do it.”

“Did I do a good job?”

“Aye, very good, Liza!”

After eating breakfast with everyone, I made herbs with Weed Cultivation and worked in the fields until midday.

Since we were going to the forest, I made more than usual, and Liza helped me.

Mr. Haines and Rozalie were astonished to see the herbs grow out of the dirt from nothing.

That was how everyone reacted when seeing the Gift for the first time.

“Ehehe... Mama, I was able to do it!”

“Wou. Wou.”

I patted Liza on the head and praised her, and then she proudly showed the herbs she picked to Leo.

Leo also replied happily.

...Yes, we were both really soft towards her.

As for why we had gathered the herbs from the field, it was because they did not look like they would multiply any further, and we did not want them to affect the surrounding grass and flowers.

I did leave some that hadn't grown fully yet, but we would have to see what would happen to them.

When I inspected the soil, I saw that it had dried from having so much nutrients absorbed so quickly, and it looked like sand.

It was just a small area, but it was like a desert, and the grass around it had died.

This could be quite dangerous if not used carefully...

In any case, this was the change that Sebastian had been talking about.

I had seen what happens when using it on an orc, after all.

I suppose I didn't notice it earlier, as I had always grown them while more spread out, or in smaller numbers.

As the dried area was not too big, adding some new soil and fertilizer would probably return it to normal... But I would have to avoid planting the herbs in one area from now on.

The last thing I wanted was to dry up all the land around Range village.

That was why Sebastian suggested planting the herbs across a large field, and have more people help with managing it.

"So it is quite tiring. Even if it looks easy..."

“Yes. It is simple, but if you keep doing it...”

“Mama. You can blow the wind a little harder!”

“Wuff!”

“...As always, Liza shows no signs of being tired.”

After growing and gathering the herbs, we were joined by Milina and helped with concocting the medicine.

Once she saw Liza helping with it, Rosalie said she wanted to try it as well.

As it was simple work, I thought it might be good for her to experience it, and so I had Milina teach her while I used magic wind.

I had gotten the hang of it now, and it was easier to maintain the wind magic.

Of course, it was still a little tiring.

“Well, Liza does have a shocking amount of energy...”

“Hoho. So this is the medicine that you mixed in the wine that we drank yesterday.”

“Yes. The idea was to drink this with wine...to improve your health. While the taste is a little different, it's better than drinking this by itself.”

Mr. Haines smiled as he saw Rosalie doing her best to help. And then he muttered while looking at the finished medicine.

In this powdered form, it did not look very good.

And while it would be effective if drunk like this, the wine made it more drinkable.

While it wasn't that we absolutely had to mix it in wine, the idea was to make Range village's wine a popular product, and so we would only sell it like this for now.

Besides, we wanted to do something about the association with the illness...

Chapter 455

It was time to see Mr. Haines off

"Indeed the taste is like that. But after drinking it during dinner, I felt a little better than usual this morning."

"Haha. Well, as for whether the effect is felt immediately, it seems to depend on the person..."

Apparently, Mr. Haines could feel the effects after just drinking it a few times.

However, I really didn't think this was the kind of drink that is effective that quickly... It was more of a supplement, anyway.

It could be the placebo effect. Or maybe Mr. Haines was just malnourished.

"Papa. Can I start the next one?"

"Hmm. Ah, yes. Let's move on to the next one then. Rosalie, perhaps you should switch places with Milina now?"

"...I'm sorry. I said I would help, but ended up being pretty useless..."

"That's fine. It is tiring work. Liza just doesn't get tired, so she is fine. You still helped, even if you took turns with Milina. Isn't that right, Milina?"

"Yes. I can only do so much by myself... So let's do it together!"

“Okay!”

As Liza wanted to continue making the medicine, we moved on to the next batch.

“We have finished preparing the horses.

“Thank you.”

“You even took care of our horses. Thank you so much.”

“Thank you!”

After we were finished with the medicine, we all ate lunch together, and then it was time for Mr. Haines and Rosalie to leave.

If they left the mansion at this time, they would be able to arrive at Ractos before it was late. And after staying there for one night, they could return to the village.

Johanna had come and told Sebastian that the horses were prepared.

As they were taken care of at the mansion, they were not tired, and were ready for the journey ahead.

Mr. Haines and Rosalie then thanked Sebastian, and bowed deeply to Mr. Ekenhart and Ms. Claire, who had come to see him off.

“Well, you are a guest. So it is only normal. ...I’m sure you will have a lot to do when you return, such as explaining and persuading others. But do your best.”

“Yes, of course. Please leave the villagers to me. ...Once they know that Mr. Takumi and Leo are coming, not one of them will object to the plan... If anything, they will hardly be able to wait, and will start preparing to welcome them. It will be harder to make them calm down.”

“Haha. Well, that is good to hear!”

“Here is some of the rosé wine and medicinal wine.”

“Yes, thank you.”

As Mr. Haines was talking to Mr. Ekenhart, I wondered if our arrival really would cause such excitement.

Indeed, I know that we saved the village, but... Well, as long as they didn't think we would be a nuisance, it was fine.

I suppose it was also because Leo was so popular with the children.

Mr. Haines and Mr. Ekenhart laughed while they talked.

And then Sebastian stepped forward and gave him some wrapped up bottles.

It would be easier to explain everything to the villagers if he could show them the actual wine.

The bottles contained about five hundred milliliters, and there were five of each type.

It was a lot to carry, but they had the horses and...

“I have finished preparing as well.”

Said Nicholas. He was dressed in the same equipment he wore when going to town.

He was to accompany them as a guard on the return journey back to Range village.

Mr. Haines had insisted that this was not necessary. As they would be mainly sticking to the main road, it should not be dangerous. But Mr. Ekenhart said that it was best to be sure.

Besides, they needed someone to carry the wine and other belongings.

Even if the horses would be carrying them on the road, it was too heavy for Mr. Haines or Rosalie to carry them once they entered the town.

One wondered why they didn't take less then... But I suppose it was an excuse for Mr. Ekenhart to send a guard with them.

After all, Mr. Haines was the chief, and it would be very bad if something were to happen to him.

"Good bye, Rosalie."

"Yes. When you come to the village, I will introduce you to all of my friends!"

"I'll look forward to it!"

"And everyone is looking forward to playing you again, Leo!"

"Wuff-wuff!"

The children were saying their farewells too.

As the mansion was filled with adults, I was happy that Liza would be able to play with a lot of friends in the village.

Leo was also looking forward to it, and wagging her tail happily.

"Ah, that's right. The hat that you're wearing...could I buy one too?"

"Hmm. I don't know. Papa?"

"Huh? What is it?"

“Rosalie wants a hat like this too. Could she buy one? I can’t give her this one, because you bought it for me...”

“Indeed...”

“In that case, I will speak to the tailor.”

Yesterday, Rosalie had said she wanted ears and a tail like Liza.

And then she had seen Liza’s hat, which she liked so much and wore most of the time, and started to want one too.

Mr. Halton had made it just for Liza, and so I didn’t know if you could buy it. That was when Sebastian opened his mouth.

Chapter 456

It was nap time

Sebastian said that he would send a message to Mr. Halton, so that he could prepare a hat for Rosalie.

Mr. Haines was incredibly grateful for everything that was done for them.

Apparently, they would visit the tailor before leaving Ractos.

It should be fine, as Nicholas knew where it was, and Rosalie would get the same kind of hat as Liza.

...I’m sure it would be popular with the children in the village as well.

Maybe I should talk to Mr. Halton about it. After all, it could become a popular product...

No, I wasn’t a tailor, and so I would leave it to other people.

While I was a customer there, it would be strange for a complete amateur to try and give them business advice.

I suppose it was a habit from my days as a salaryman.

Back then, I had made a lot of suggestions like that... And in most cases, they were rather desperate, and my boss would just mock me in the end.

“Well, we should be off then...”

“Yes. Please be careful.”

“Please be safe on your return journey!!”

“!?”

Mr. Haines and Rosalie had said their farewells and were about to exit the door.

And then the servants bid them farewell in unison.

And just like Liza had, Rosalie flinched in surprise, which was rather amusing...

“She really is sleeping comfortably...”

“Hehe. Tilura as well. They look happy.”

After Mr. Haines had left, I wanted to train as always, but Mr. Ekenhart had ordered that there be no training.

He did not want us to be tired when going to the forest tomorrow, and so we were to rest today.

Indeed, it was not like we would find orcs as soon as we arrived. And so we would have to walk through the forest for some time.

And even if Leo, Mr. Ekenhart and I would be fine, Tilura was not used to being in the forest, and might lack the energy.

If it came to it, I could also use my fatigue recovery herbs, but I didn't want to rely on them too much, and so I would just obey Mr. Ekenhart.

He said that relying on herbs too much would affect my growth. I then asked him about how he relied on sleeping herbs, but he changed the subject.

Well, as this was mainly for Tilura, I would not pry too much into it.

I had nothing to do now, but then I remembered that Leo had looked sleepy this morning.

While it was nice to sleep in my room, since we had nice weather, I suggested that she could nap outside under the sun.

And then, not only did Leo agree, but Tilura, Sherry and even Ms. Claire joined in.

Leo had gone out and yawned loudly under the sun before rolling up on the ground. And then Liza and Tilura lay against her while wrapping themselves in her fur.

Even Ms. Anne, who usually stayed in her room, had come out to sleep with the others...

...I wonder if the sun would affect her hair... Well, that wasn't my problem.

Sherry had also rolled up on top of Leo's back, and seemed very comfortable as she slept.

Leo had given her a break from her usual exercise.

I suppose she was also preparing for tomorrow... Well, it was probably mostly because of Leo's nap.

In the meantime, Ms. Claire and I sat down at a table with some shade, and drank tea while we watched them.

“Now that I think of it, are you not so busy today?”

“Well, a lot of work has been completed. Besides, I do like to take it easy sometimes as well.”

“I see... Indeed.”

Ms. Claire had been busy with work related to the slums.

It was partially my fault, but I tried not to think about it.

Besides, even if I apologized about it, she would just tell me to not worry.

Ms. Claire had also been busy with other matters concerning the herb fields and joint management, so it was a good thing that she could relax now.

...On the other hand, Sebastian seemed to be keeping Mr. Ekenhart very busy.

“While I cannot use a sword... Tilura seems to have improved greatly under father’s instruction...”

“Yes. She enjoys it a lot, and is very passionate about it. And though I started at the same time as her, I feel like I am only one step ahead because I have a little real combat experience... It is actually hard to stay ahead of her.”

“Hehe... So Tilura may surpass you. Part of me would like to see that...and the other would not... I am conflicted.”

Ms. Claire talked as she watched her sister sleep.

While she was smiling, I felt there was a little sadness in her eyes as well.

Perhaps it was because her little sister could do something that she could not, and that would create a distance between them that would grow over time.

Ms. Claire would often strictly demand Tilura study, which sometimes got a very negative reaction from Tilura.

However, it was still true that the sisters trusted each other and got along well.

I suppose she was both happy and a little sad to see Tilura's growth. It was a feeling somewhat familiar to me as well.

Chapter 457

I talked with Ms. Claire

"Maybe Mr. Ekenhart feels like that. He is watching your growth as well. And while it might not be something felt a lot at our age...I have felt something similar."

"Father... If that were the case, he would not have been so eager for me to get married. Even if I was the reason for that... Still, have you, Mr. Takumi? I thought you didn't have any siblings?"

Mr. Ekenhart was nearly twice as old as me, and had a lot of life experience, including the raising of his daughters.

And so he probably would have felt a mixture of happiness and sadness as well.

"Previously, I told you about when I found Leo."

"Yes. You found a young leo on a rainy day..."

"And since she was not well for some time, I stayed indoors and watched her... And when she was better, I was able to take her outside. And Leo was very popular with children."

“Hehe. I cannot imagine how good Leo was back then, but it’s no surprise that children liked her. It was the same at the orphanage and Mr. Kalis’s store. And here.”

While Ms. Claire hadn’t seen it, Leo was also very popular in Range village.

Perhaps children were able to see the kindness within, even if she was a Silver Fenrir and powerful monster.

Of course...it was not like that with every child.

“While it may be hard to imagine her being small, she still liked to run around and jump and play.”

“Well...I can imagine her running. But jumping around... I would like to see that.”

“Haha, indeed. It would be very difficult for her to do that at this size... Well, she would play with children like that, but...”

I thought back on those fond memories as I talked to Ms. Claire.

This was when Leo used to play with the children in the neighborhood.

I was still a student at the time, and even though I had a part time job, I still had some free time.

And so I would take her out on regular walks so she could play.

But then a few years passed, and I got a full time job, which kept me busy...

And one day, when I took time in my busy schedule to take Leo outside.

We met a boy, who had been one of the children that Leo played with.

He was in elementary school when we first met, but he was a junior highschool student, and had grown quite a lot.

Still, Leo and he recognized each other, and were quite happy at first.

But then he was called by another boy from somewhere else, and he was distracted, and ended up running in that direction.

Leo had watched him leave and looked a little lonely. But now that I think back on it, she might have been a little happy as well.

Or maybe it was just me.

Boys at that age were very impressionable, and would want to play with friends or have other interests. And so he would care more about that than some dog he used to play with.

And though he was just some kid that Leo played with, and I didn't even know his name, it was still a little like seeing your younger brother grow up, and I felt sad as well.

It made me feel sentimental about how children always grew, and would not always stay in the same place.

Perhaps that was a little different from what Ms. Claire was feeling. But growth was something that made you both happy and sad.

"I see. I know I should be happy about it. But one cannot help but feel lonely."

"Indeed. However, that is just you. I don't think the person growing should feel anything but happiness. You wouldn't want Tilura to worry about you, right?"

"Of course not. She is my younger sister, and should never have to worry about me."

"Haha. Your pride as the elder child."

I didn't know, because I didn't have siblings... But I heard that older siblings tended to feel that way, no matter how close they were.

When I was a student, one of my friends complained about how his younger brother got good grades, and their parents would compare them.

He did not want his brother to beat him, and so that motivated him to study harder.

“Of course, I will do my best to stay ahead of Tilura. Well...except when it comes to skill with a sword.”

“Haha. Yes. I suppose you should just do whatever it is that you excel at.”

“I agree with that. However...what do you think I excel at?”

“Huh?”

As Ms. Claire did not train with a sword, it was one area where she had already lost to her sister.

While it may be important for her to stay ahead, as the older sister, they were humans who had different ways of thinking. And so I had told her to do what she did best.

However...she then asked me a question that I found difficult to answer...

Chapter 458

I thought about Ms. Claire

“Something that suits you...”

“...”

Ms. Claire stared at me as she waited for an answer.

And so I thought about her.

Perhaps she felt a little anxious, as her hand seemed to quiver a little as she held her teacup.

...Apparently, this was a very serious question for her.

She did not seem like someone who wasn't confident in herself... But in any case, I could tell that this was not the time to make a joke or say something strange.

“Well...umm...”

“...”

I had first met Ms. Claire in the fenrir forest.

She had gone there in order to find herbs to cure Tilura's illness.

It was a bold thing for a lady to do, when she could not even fight. She could have waited, or brought guards with her. But I suppose she felt like she had to do something when her sister was ill.

While it was sweet, it was also reckless.

This impulsiveness might be a result of being influenced by her father.

She was also very curious about things, and was not scared of Leo when we first met.

The second time we went to the forest was because Ms. Claire wanted to fight other fenrirs or Silver Fenrir.

Aside from that, we also went to Ractos together, and she had hugged Liza gently etcetera.

There was also that time we were together in my room... Well, Leo was also there, and it had been a little awkward.

After thinking about all of that, I started to not know what to say to her...

Hmm...

“...Uh, you don’t have to think about it so seriously. I...was just wondering, that’s all. I didn’t think you would have so much trouble with it.”

Ms. Claire seemed a little frantic when she saw that I was thinking hard.

But her look suggested that she indeed really wanted to hear an answer.

So, how should I reply...

“Well, you know... No, I’m sorry. I cannot think of a clear answer.”

“...I see.”

“However...”

“Yes?”

I did not know Ms. Claire long enough to say anything for sure.

While I had grown to know her more than most people, there was still a lot that I didn’t know.

There was probably a lot that she didn’t show me...

However, I did have my own idea of her, that I could tell her about.

“You are a kind person. Most people would not have gone to search for herbs in the forest, even if it was for their sister. You help to look after Liza, and it’s partially because of you that she feels safe here.”

“...”

As I talked while looking straight into her face, Ms. Claire seemed to turn a little red.

Was she getting embarrassed?

“That being said, going to the forest alone is dangerous. So I hope you won’t do that again...”

“That was...!”

Ms. Claire turned her face away when I brought that up.

While her going had led to us meeting her...I still wanted her to avoid any danger.

I suppose it was similar to how she worried about me.

“And though you are sometimes harsh with others, it is usually because you care about them. You are always thinking about others. In general, I think you are a kind, intelligent and wonderful person.”

“...It’s because...as a duke’s daughter...as a lady...”

“Even if that is the case, it is still a good thing. Besides, perhaps I should not make comparisons, but Ms, Anne is also a noble and...”

“Anne is... Her mind is not quite right. Just look at her hair... And she says her suggestions to Count Barsler were so he wouldn’t disturb her sleep...”

“Haha. Yes, that is true.”

I was surprised by that as well.

Regardless, she had acted very grand and like a noble at first. But she was more quiet recently.

Maybe she had affected by Ms. Claire and the others. However, she was definitely easier to talk to now.

And she did unexpected and amusing things.

“Back to the topic at hand... I think that you are a true lady. Though, there are times when you really let loose. Like when you went to search for fenrirs.”

“...I am sorry about that.”

“No, not at all. I knew that you were interested in Silver Fenrirs. Having some restraint is good, but... I also think it is good to push the way you think to the forefront as well. After all, you do not want to let others crush you.”

When I brought up the time she suggested we go to the forest, Ms. Claire became very apologetic.

Of course, I didn't mind going at all.

Though, I was surprised that she pushed back against the objections of Sebastian and the servants.

Chapter 459

I succeeded in surprising Sebastian

“In any case, I suppose that I think of you as someone who is both kind and strict, and can surprise people by your ability to act...?”

“Being kind is good... But what about surprising people?”

“I don't see the problem with that. At least, I find it quite amusing. So I think you should stay as you are.”

“As I am...”

While Ms. Claire wasn't sure about it, I did not see that trait as a negative thing.

If anything, I wished that she would surprise me more often. Was it rude to think that way?

Besides, I suppose it was less amusing for her servants and Sebastian.

No, Sebastian might enjoy it as well.

“Sorry that my thoughts are quite scattered. I wish I had a better answer for you...”

“No, I am just glad that you took the time to think about it. Thank you.”

She said with a smile, and blushed slightly.

I didn’t really know how to react during such times.

And so I would say things that were unnecessary.

“Uh, well. You could just do reckless things occasionally, and amuse others.”

“...You want me to be reckless in order to entertain you?”

Ms. Claire said with a look of annoyance.

And while that expression was also amusing... I really had said too much.

But there was no taking it back now.

“I sometimes think that you care too much about how things should be, that you do not show yourself as much as you could. I think you should be more selfish, and do whatever you want, I guess?”

“...And that would amuse you?”

“Well, yes. As long as you aren’t hurting others... But I know you wouldn’t do that. I just enjoy seeing you more lively.”

It sounded strange when she worded it like that, but I had a feeling that it was what she was interested in.

“It reminds me of how you told little Liza to not hold back and be so modest. I see...”

“Haha. I’m sorry for sounding like I’m lecturing you.”

“No, it’s fine. I was the one who asked you.”

It might have been rude of me to say so much, but Ms. Claire was smiling.

Apparently, she was not upset.

“I shall...think about it then.”

“But maybe don’t think about it too much?”

“Since it was you who said it... Oh, very well. I shall not take it too seriously or be in a rush.”

“Hmm...”

It was then that I heard a voice coming from some distance away.

Ms. Claire seemed to hear it as well, as she turned her head in the direction that it had come from.

Liza had been sleeping against Leo, but her ears were now perked up and twitching.

“It looks like it is time for them to wake up?”

“Indeed. As they have slept well, I bet they will have plenty of energy now.”

“Hehe. That should be fun.”

“Haha, yes.”

Liza rubbed her eyes as she woke up.

And then Leo, Sherry, and Tilura began to move as well.

Only Ms. Anne was still in a deep sleep while drooling

I averted my eyes and Ms. Claire and I smiled. Now that we had finished our tea, we made our way towards Leo and the others.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Ekenhart.”

“Mm... I was not waiting long. What is it? You said you had something to show me before dinner.”

After the others woke up, Ms. Claire and I played with them for a short while.

And then I remembered something, and asked one of the maids to go and call for Mr. Ekenhart.

As it would be dinner soon, I received a message to meet Mr. Ekenhart in the dining hall. And so I left the others in the garden and went to go meet him.

Mr. Ekenhart was already waiting there, and Sebastian stood next to him.

Due to Liza’s influence, he kept his beard shaved recently.

And sitting there in the back of the room with Sebastian gave him a great sense of authority.

He was the duke, and not just some friendly old man.

“Yesterday, we talked about making Loe...”

“You wanted to have it prepared for soldiers in different locations.”

“Yes. And so I made some, so we could start by having some stocked up in this mansion.”

“Already? That was quick.”

“I know that Sebastian was supposed to decide, but... Since we are going to the forest tomorrow, I thought there should be some stored here, just in case. As Liza and Rosalie helped, it was not much trouble.”

And so I took out the Loe and showed it to them.

Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian had not expected me to prepare it so quickly, and so they were quite surprised.

...As for me, there was something satisfying in being able to surprise Sebastian.

Chapter 460

I made too much Loe

“Well, since I made it without permission, you might not want it yet... I can always just keep it.”

“...As it is a rare herb, we would gladly accept it regardless. I see, because we are going to the forest.”

“Yes. But with Leo and the guards, and Mr. Ekenhart... There is little chance of being injured. I suppose I am being paranoid?”

“No, we are grateful. I am still worried that something could happen to Tilura. And so I can relax now. Though, if the guards were injured from orcs, then it would mean that their training has been insufficient.”

“Your Grace...I don't think...”

As Loe was rare, I doubted they would not take it, and I was right.

But putting that aside, Mr. Ekenhart was also worried about Tilura.

Even though it had been his idea, he still felt a little anxious.

It was probably similar to what I had been discussing with Ms. Claire. He wanted her to grow quickly, but also didn't want her to do anything dangerous.

Still...Mr. Ekenhart sure was strict when it came to the guards.

And so Sebastian looked at him admonishingly.

I had heard that orcs could be dangerous for even guards, if they let their guard down... Of course, it was different for Mr. Ekenhart.

He was skilled enough to hit Leo. And during the mock battle, I had barely been able to see his movements.

Sometimes, I wondered if he was even human... Well, he had to be, since he had two daughters.

“Hmm, what is it, Mr. Takumi?”

“...No, it's nothing. In any case, I made all of this, just in case any one of us is injured.”

“...Surely that is too much?”

“Mr. Takumi...that much Loe is worth a fortune.”

The two looked surprised when they saw me place the Loe on the table.

Oh? It's too much?

Uh, aside from me, Leo, Tilura and Mr. Ekenhart, there would be a few servants and guards as well... So it would be at least ten people.

As I had to make other herbs as well, I had to be careful that I didn't use the Gift too much... And so I had just made two for each person.

I didn't know the exact numbers, so I had made a little extra. There were thirty placed on the table.

“I thought that it might not be enough...”

“Going to the forest will not result in that many injuries. A place that would require that much Loe would be too dangerous to go to in the first place.”

“I see... Well, indeed.”

With Leo there, orcs and trolls would not be that dangerous.

While a horde of them would be dangerous, that seemed unlikely, considering my experiences in the forest.

We knew that there would be other fenrirs, because we found Sherry, but Leo would deal with them...

It wasn't decided yet how many days we would be staying there, but I could always make more if it was needed, so I understood what Mr. Ekenhart was saying.

“Well, we can take some of it with us to the forest...and use the rest elsewhere. Since Mr. Takumi is fine with the wholesale price, we can count as part of the stock that will be sent to the soldiers.”

“Huh? Oh, since this was made for the forest journey, and I might use it... I don’t need to get paid.”

“That won’t do, Mr. Takumi. You have a contract with the duke. To be honest, even at the wholesale price, buying this much Loe will be difficult...but it must be done.”

“Indeed. While Mr. Takumi is modest, because he is being allowed to live in this house, we cannot take advantage of it, as long as there is a contract.”

“Hah... I’m sorry for getting carried away and making so many...”

Mr. Ekenhart wanted to give the extra Loe to the guards, like we had discussed yesterday.

That was a good thing, but since I had just gone ahead and made it, I hesitated to accept payment.

Sebastian was nodding in agreement with Mr. Ekenhart. It looked like I would have little choice.

Perhaps I should be happy to get paid, but since they had been so good to me, and this was an unexpected expense for them, I felt sorry...