

Beloved Dog 471

Chapter 471

We departed for the Fenrir Forest

“Farewell, everyone! We will be waiting for your safe return!”

As the servants saw us off, I left the mansion with Mr. Ekenhart and the others.

While I was used to it, Ms. Anne was still surprised every time the servants raised their voices in unison like that.

...Now that I thought about it, she pretty much never left the mansion. So that was why she rarely heard it.

Outside of the mansion, there was a fancy carriage, a simple one, and several horses.

Liza and I sat on Leo's back, while Mr. Ekenhart, Tilura, Ms. Claire and Ms. Anne got into the carriage.

And then the servants got into the plain carriage, while the guards climbed onto their horses.

“Now let us depart!”

Said Sebastian, who drove the front carriage, and the party began to move forward.

Leo waited for a moment and then followed after them.

She liked to let them go ahead, and then show them how she could catch up in an instant.

As for Sherry, Liza was holding her, so that she could watch Leo run.

This was Leo's idea. She wanted Sherry to learn how to act like a fenrir when outside.

In fact, Leo actually wanted Sherry to run to the forest, but since it was too far, she had to compromise.

Leo's main purpose was to strengthen Sherry. But she would not be able to fight the orcs if she was tired.

"Everyone is dressed differently from usual!"

"Indeed. Well, it's not easy going to the forest. You could have left your hat behind too, Liza. After all, it might get dirty."

"Hmm... I don't want it to get dirty, but I like to wear it outside. Because you bought it for me!"

While we were riding, Liza noted how everyone was dressed differently from usual.

I was also wearing clothes that would be easy to move in while navigating through the forest.

No such clothes had been prepared for Liza, because she wasn't there to fight.

Still, she was wearing her favorite hat.

She had been wearing it inside of the mansion at first, but as it felt quite strange, she only wore it when going out into the garden now.

Well, she could always have it washed later. And we could have it repaired or just buy a new one if something happened to it.

As I thought of such things, I recalled how the others were dressed.

All of them, including the non-combatants, were wearing clothes made of leather, perhaps as a precaution.

It must be for ease of movement and defense... Even Ms. Anne was wearing it.

And those with longer hair had it tied in the back so it wouldn't get in the way.

While some of the guards carried spears, in general, it seemed like they intended to fight with swords.

As the trees would get in the way, it would be much easier to handle a shorter sword.

Similarly, for the sake of movement, the guards were wearing leather armor, whereas they usually wore armor made of metal.

Though, it was much thicker than what the servants wore, and covered their whole body.

Ms. Claire was wearing the same thing she wore last time.

The only one that was surprising was Tilura.

As there was no armor for someone of her height, it had been made by special order.

And then there was Ms. Anne...

She had been so proud of the rolls in her hair, and had added ribbons so that Liza would like her. But her hair was straight now.

It was a little strange, seeing her like this.

Her hair had already been long when rolled. But now that it was straight, it would probably reach her feet. And so she had to wrap it around her head several times before tying it into a ponytail that reached her shoulders.

"Papa! Mama is so fast!"

“Aye, she is.”

“Kyau!”

“Wuff! Wuff!”

Liza’s joyous laughter brought me back from my thoughts.

Sherry also seemed to enjoy feeling the wind against her. And Leo was barking proudly as she ran.

Before I knew it, she had not only caught up with the carriages, but had passed them. And so she circled around and started to run back towards the group.

...The fact that Leo could run like this and not get tired was amazing.

The trip to Range village was much longer, and she had been running faster as well. So for Leo, this was just like a little warm up.

Chapter 472

Tilura’s nerves were calmed

“Phew...”

“Are you tired?”

“No, I’m fine!”

We stopped on the way to the forest, so that the horses could rest. Tilura was leaning against a tree.

I had asked her, as she looked like she was out of breath... But she replied loudly, as if to assure me that she was fine.

...She must be quite nervous.

“Your nerves will only make you more tired. So you should try to relax. See, like Liza.”

“...She seems like she’s having so much fun, even though it will be her first time in the forest.”

“Well, that’s true.”

Tilura was tense...probably because she was thinking about how she would have to fight against some orcs.

She must have been nervous in the carriage as well.

And even though she said that she was fine, she would be quite tired by the time we reached the forest if she stayed like this.

We would also have to walk through the forest for some time before setting up camp.

Tilura and I watched Liza, as she seemed to be having fun with Leo and Sherry... If anything, Liza had the opposite problem, and was perhaps a little too relaxed.

I had told her that there were monsters in the forest, and so it was dangerous. But she showed no signs of being on her guard or worrying.

Ms. Claire was patting her on the head now, and she was smiling.

“In any case, today, we’re going to enter the forest and make for the river. There, we will camp for the night, and then we will search for orcs on the following day. So it’s too early to be nervous.”

“But... We might encounter orcs on the way.”

“That’s true. It actually happened last time... But even if it did, the guards and Leo will deal with them.”

Tilura would not be fighting any orcs today.

And so I tried to tell her that she didn't need to be so nervous yet. But I suppose it could not be helped, as it was her first time.

"We will be going soon!"

"Yes, I understand!"

"Yes!"

As I thought about what to do, Sebastian called to us, saying that we would continue our journey to the forest.

Hmm...

"Excuse me, Mr. Ekenhart. It's about Tilura..."

"What about her? Well, I can see that she is quite nervous."

"Yes. I think that at this rate, she will be very tired by the time we arrive. Do you think I could let her ride on Leo?"

"On Leo? Indeed, that might help her to relax a little."

I called out to Mr. Ekenhart, right as he was about to return to his carriage.

Apparently, even he could tell that Tilura was nervous.

Well, he was her father, so he was observant.

In any case, I suggested that she might like to ride on Leo.

He readily agreed, and so I called Tilura.

“What is it, Mr. Takumi?”

“Tilura. Do you want to ride on Leo to the forest? I’m sure it will be more fun than going by carriage.”

“...Are you sure?”

“It’s fine. I’m sure Leo will welcome it. Right, Leo?”

“Wuff-wuff!”

Tilura had looked puzzled at first, but her face brightened with expectation when I made the suggestion.

So she wanted to ride on Leo after all... Now that I thought about it, she had only ever ridden on Leo in the back garden.

Leo barked as if to say it was a brilliant idea, and so it was decided.

I just hoped that it would be effective in calming her nerves a little...

I now had to explain it to Liza.

“Liza. Sorry, but could you ride in the carriage with Ms. Claire and the others? It will be too crowded for all of us to ride on Leo.”

“Oh, okay! I’ve never ridden in a carriage before!”

“I see. Thank you.”

“Thank you, Liza!”

Both Tilura and Liza were still small.

And so I had to ride with them so that they did not get flung off of Leo.

At least in the garden, Leo did not run too fast.

And while it was possible that Tilura would be fine, I did not want to take any chances.

However, I could not support both of them at the same time, and so I had Liza ride in the carriage.

Liza nodded in agreement, and then ran off to the carriage where Ms. Claire was waiting.

As it was her first time, she seemed rather excited about it.

“Wow! It’s so fast!”

“Wuff! Wuff!”

Tilura shouted excitedly as soon as Leo took off.

Leo could tell that she was happy, and she barked back cheerfully.

While she could not see Tilura’s expression, she could probably tell by her voice that she had relaxed a little.

“He-hey, Leo. Slow down a little. You’re leaving the others far behind!”

“Wou? Wuff!”

“I didn’t know that Leo was this fast!!”

Perhaps it was for Tilura’s benefit, but Leo got carried away and started to run too fast, so that there was quite a distance between us and the others.

While we could just go to the forest first, the others might worry about us.

Especially Mr. Ekenhart, who was anxious about Tilura... It probably had to do with his own experience with riding on Leo at such a great speed...

Chapter 473

We arrived at the forest

“...Thank you, Mr. Takumi.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

“You let me ride on Leo because I was too nervous, right?”

“Hmm. Well, while you’ve ridden on Leo in the garden, you never rode on her while she was running outside. And so I just thought you might enjoy it.”

“Hehe. I see. Well, thank you for letting me ride on Leo.”

“Was it fun?”

“Yes, very fun!”

Apparently, Tilura had caught on to my intentions.

Still, it would look bad if I admitted it now, and so I pretended to be ignorant.

But judging by the way that she laughed, she was probably not fooled. Regardless, she thanked me again.

And with a smile, she said that she had a lot of fun.

She looked a lot like Ms. Claire when she laughed...they were sisters, after all.

Was it rude of me to think that it was good she didn't laugh like her father?

Now that we had arrived at the edge of the forest, we decided to eat lunch before entering it. And so we had to gather some branches to make a fire.

The horses and carriages were left to the butler and guards who would stay, and I and the other guards gathered the branches.

Mr. Ekenhart helped us as well, and seemed to be enjoying himself.

Once we had enough, it was time to make the fire.

But when one of the butlers was about to do it with fire magic, Leo stopped him.

Just like last time, she wanted to do it herself. She did not have many opportunities to use magic, after all... Aside from wind magic..

Well, perhaps it would be good for relieving stress. And so I let Leo do it.

The others watched her with great interest.

They had not seen Leo use fire magic before.

Though, Mr. Ekenhart had seen Leo create magic water, when she made it for Liza.

He really was curious... I suppose that's where Ms. Claire got it from.

"That's amazing, Leo!"

"Oh... Good Leo, can you also make it more powerful?"

"Wuff-wuff."

“She can even use magic... How astonishing...”

“Thank you, Leo. Please look forward to lunch.”

“Wuff!”

“Kyau? Kyu...?”

“Wou-wou!”

Tilura was delighted when she saw the fire, and Mr. Ekenhart asked a question.

Even Ms. Anne looked on with surprise from a distance. And Ms. Lyra thanked Leo.

Sherry was also surprised, but Leo was telling her that she could do it too if she tried.

“Everyone seems to be having fun.”

Ms. Claire muttered as she watched the others.

As for Liza, she was currently with Sebastian, as she wanted to thank the horses for pulling her.

“I watched Leo use magic last time as well... And was very impressed.”

“I see...”

“You two get along so well. I suppose it is because you were together before coming to this place... But normally, she would be considered a terrifying monster, you know?”

It was hard for me to imagine it.

Well, Leo was very big and reliable. And I would never be able to match her.

But she was also someone who played with children and devoured sausages.

...And had originally been a maltese dog.

“...Not only are you two equal, but it even seems like Leo obeys you. That makes you look very great indeed, Mr. Takumi.”

“Me? Oh, not at all!”

I was just a salaryman a short while ago. I was nothing compared to a duke.

Really, I was no different than the average resident of Ractos town.

The only thing that set me apart was Leo and the Gift.

“In that case, should I bring Tilura and father over here, so we can kneel in front of you?”

“Please don’t do that. I wouldn’t know what to do...”

Ms. Claire asked with a childish, mischievous look.

“Hehe, of course. And while I would have loved to see the troubled look on your face, I don’t want you to hate me.”

“...I would never hate you, Ms. Claire...”

“Really? Do you mean it...?”

Apparently, she did not believe me, and so she leaned forward and peered into my face as she asked the question.

We made our way to the river

“It’s true. Besides, you wouldn’t really do anything that would trouble someone.”

What was this... Ever since we talked about going to the forest, Ms. Claire seemed to act differently...

Perhaps it had to do with the conversation we had in the garden before.

She had been quite strict with herself before. And so my words may have made her feel less constrained?

She wasn’t one to make fun of me like that before. But she also looked quite cute doing it.

“...”

“Ah! Mr. Ekenhart?”

“Lunch is ready. Sorry to disturb you two while you were having fun.”

“It is thanks to Lyra. Now, let us go, Mr. Takumi.”

“Uh, yes.”

Apparently, Mr. Ekenhart had been watching us... I wonder how much he had heard?

Well, it was nothing bad, but it was still embarrassing.

Not only that, but Mr. Ekenhart was grinning while telling us that lunch was ready.

And though he apologized, he did not look sorry at all. Which was like Mr. Ekenhart.

I wondered if Ms. Claire would look at him reproachfully...but she did not seem to notice as she pulled me by the hand towards the bonfire.

I guess she didn't care? But when I glanced at her face, she seemed to be blushing a little.

Before we started eating, Liza asked me why I was smiling. But since I didn't really know the reason myself, I made up a random excuse.

...I suppose it was because I had talked to Ms. Claire and seen an unusual side to her?

Leo looked at me and sighed, but continued to eat the sausages that Ms. Lyra had cooked for her.

"Now, please take care of the rest."

"I'll go then."

"Yes."

"Leave it to u."

We cleaned up after eating and prepared to go into the forest.

The fire was left as is, for the guards who would remain here.

Once everyone was ready, Sebastian and Mr. Ekenhart talked to the people who would stay.

There were two guards, one butler and one maid.

After letting the horse rest for a while, they would then return to the mansion.

As there were many horses and multiple carriages, they needed four people to stay.

The guards replied, and the butler and maid bowed deeply as we entered the forest....

“Are you alright, Tilura?”

“Yes, I’m still fine!”

As we walked through the forest, Mr. Ekenhart called to Tilura, who was next to him.

He was concerned because this was her first time in the forest.

We were headed to the same camp site that we went to last time. And as they were experienced, Phillip and Nicholas took the lead.

The two were using their swords to cut down any branches or tall grass that were in our way.

This made it easier for everyone else to walk.

Sebastian and one other butler walked behind them, and they were also using short swords to cut down vines and plants.

And then Mr. Ekenhart and Tilura followed them, and then Ms. Claire, Ms. Anne, Johanna and Lyra.

Next was Leo, who carried Liza. I walked next to them, while the maids and guards took the rear.

Sherry was walking between Ms. Claire and Leo.

As we were in the forest now, she was to exercise, and not ride on Leo the whole time.

“...This is a nostalgic smell!”

“Wuff-wuff.”

Liza was smelling the scent of the trees.

Beastkin had better hearing than humans. Perhaps it was also true with their sense of smell.

I understood that Leo and Sherry had sharp senses...but Liza's nose looked like a normal human nose.

Also, she said it smelled nostalgic... Surely that also had to be related to being a beastkin.

Apparently, they used to hunt a lot. It might be instinct then. I would not be surprised.

As for Leo, she was wagging her tail and seemed to be in a good mood, just like last time.

I didn't know if it was because this was the fenrir forest, or she would be like this in any forest. But it was a good thing.

...Sherry did not seem too happy... But I suppose it was because she would have to train with Leo later.

"...When the trees are this close together, it gets dark..."

"Indeed. But according to Sebastian, it gets even darker, deeper into the forest."

"Then I won't be able to see anything..."

"In such cases, you use magic. Well, or a torch. But if you have magic, you can have light for as long as you have mana."

Up ahead, I could hear Mr. Ekenhart and Tilura talking.

Apparently, Tilura was amazed by how dark it was.

But like Mr. Ekenhart said, it was quite bright compared to other parts of the forest. Like where we found Sherry.

After all, I could see my feet.

Still, while Ms. Claire had gotten tired quite quickly in the forest, Tilura was still fine.

I'm sure that part of it was excitement, but it must also have to do with her daily training.

I also didn't feel as tired compared to last time.

Chapter 475

Things went smoothly this time

"Anne. Walk more normally. ...Ah, don't grab my arm like that!"

"Ms. Claire, I cannot go on..."

While Tilura and Mr. Ekenhart seemed like a family on a hiking trip, Ms. Claire and Ms. Anne were bickering.

The reason was that Ms. Anne was exhausted already.

Ms. Claire had gotten the hang of it last time, so she did not seem particularly tired. But Ms. Anne was not used to being in the forest, and would constantly trip over the roots of trees.

Besides, she stayed in the mansion most of the time and hardly exercised, so it was no surprise that she lacked energy.

That being said, she would likely refuse if I suggested that she ride on top of Leo.

She was still afraid...

The only reason she did not stop and rest now was because Leo was walking behind her.

“Now, we are almost there, Anne. Keep walking! And stop grabbing me!”

“Ohhh... I can’t...”

“Lady Anneliese, you will be able to rest soon. Do not give up.”

After walking a little further, we could hear the sounds of the running river.

Though, since there were a lot of people and a lot of sounds, you had to strain your ears to hear it.

At this point, Ms. Anne was practically leaning on Ms. Claire’s back, while Ms. Lyra pushed her encouragingly from behind.

Johanna did not join them, as she was on guard duty. But she still chuckled at the sight.

Well, at least she hadn’t stopped...

“Nothing had appeared...”

“Indeed. Last time, you encountered orcs on the way, didn’t you?”

“Yes. Though, good Leo walked in the lead, and defeated them swiftly before anyone else could.”

“While I heard that there are many orcs in the forest, I suppose one doesn’t encounter them that quickly... And we have Mr. Takumi’s herbs this time, and cannot sense anything. So they must not be around.”

I heard Tilura and Mr. Ekenhart talking up ahead.

They were asking Sebastian about the orcs.

Mr. Ekenhart sounded a little disappointed. But I thought we should be happy that there would not be any unplanned encounters.

In fact, several of us had eaten sense enhancing herbs before entering the forest.

They were herbs that made it easier to detect the presence of others.

Aside from me, they were eaten by Mr. Ekenhart, five of the guards, and Sebastian.

Leo didn't need to eat them.

But thanks to the herbs, I could sense movement quite far away. But it seemed to be just the trees moving in the wind.

I did not sense any monsters, like orcs or trolls.

"So there are no orcs... How disappointing..."

"Wuff..."

"Well, we will start searching for them tomorrow. I'm sure it will not be hard. Still, I don't know why it's something you would look forward to..."

While Tilura was merely puzzled that we didn't see any, Liza seemed disappointed.

Leo also sighed in agreement.

While Liza was merely curious, Leo saw them as food, so the sentiment wasn't exactly the same...

I suppose she wanted to eat orc meat again. Ms. Lyra had cooked it for her previously.

From what I understood, Ms. Helena sometimes cooked with orc meat as well.

Of course, food tastes differently depending on who made it and where... Perhaps Leo just have a preference for Ms. Lyra's more simple style of cooking.

That would not really be surprising. Ms. Helena's food was more luxurious...which was not something Leo was used to.

"Wuff-wuff?"

"No, I don't think that you should go out and look for them. Don't worry, we brought food with us. And we will find orcs tomorrow, without a doubt."

"Wuff..."

Leo must have really wanted to eat some, as she suggested that she could go out and hunt some orcs.

But I didn't think that we should split up yet. And it would be best for all of us to continue on to the river.

Leo barked as if disappointed.

I suppose being in the forest reminded her of the taste...which was like pork.

"Hehe. Good Leo must be hungry then."

"Haha. It looks like it. She really enjoyed the orc meat last time, when Ms. Lyra cooked it."

The maid walking behind me laughed after observing our conversation.

And so I explained it to her.

"So that's why. Please don't worry, good Leo. You will have plenty of delicious food for dinner. ... Well, Ms. Lyra will see to it..."

“Wuff-wuff.”

“Ms. Lyra...”

“Yes, I can only help. Like with the washing and cutting... But I am not very good with the rest... I don’t know why, but there are strict rules that I can only assist with the cooking.”

“It’s that

Chapter 476

We arrived at the riverside campsite

How bad could the food be when she is cooking it by herself...?

Did she just put anything in it, or mistake salt for sugar? Something like that?

Or maybe she just liked to make everything too spicy...

It honestly intrigued me, but I suppose it would be better to avoid tasting it.

“I don’t know why it happens... But in any case, I will do my best to help Ms. Lyra.”

“Yes...that is probably for the best.”

The maid looked like she herself was puzzled, which was very odd.

Regardless, they would be cooking for a lot of people now, and they had to make something that everyone could eat.

While Mr. Ekenhart might find it amusing, Leo and Sebastian would probably be angry.

“I can see the river!”

Phillip, who was in the lead, alerted the rest of us.

While I had been concentrating on talking, I could indeed hear the sounds of running water.

And when I looked up ahead, I saw that the trees cleared out up ahead, and the area seemed to be filled with sunlight.

By the river, where the grass was shorter, we all put down our baggage.

It was all placed in one area, where one of the butlers could keep an eye on them.

“Hmm. This is a good spot. The sounds of the water are comforting.”

“Indeed... Leo seems to be having fun.”

Mr. Ekenhart took in the scene around us while listening to the flowing river.

The air tasted delicious, and the running water was calming. It was a great place to relax.

In Japan, this would be the perfect way to get away from the busy city and enjoy nature... Like a popular campsite.

Unfortunately, there were orcs here, so it wasn't safe.

I answered Mr. Ekenhart while turned to the river and narrowing my eyes.

Leo had already jumped into the water, and was swimming around happily. Sherry looked like she was drowning though.

Sherry... Do you need help?

I was about to rush towards her, but then Leo noticed and pulled her out of the water.

While she was panting, she seemed to be fine now.

So, Sherry couldn't swim.

"Oh, Liza seems to want to go in the river?"

"Indeed. ...Is she able to swim?"

Liza had chased after Leo and gone to the edge of the river.

She was dipping her toes in and then pulling out as if she wasn't sure about what to do.

"I don't know... Wait? Didn't she say, Mr. Takumi, that she had never seen clean water before?"

"Now that you mention it, she did say something like that..."

Yes...she said that while we were making our way back to the mansion.

Liza had generally drunk mud and rain water. And so she was surprised by the clean water that Leo created with magic.

I was sure that Mr. Reyndorf gave her decently clean water, but after he died, she became a target, and that was the only way to quench her thirst.

It was amazing that she did not become sick.

In any case, as someone who had not seen such clear water before, seeing a river like this must be quite the shock.

The only reason she was probably trying to enter it, was because of curiosity, and the fact that Leo seemed to be having a lot of fun swimming in it.

"While she should be fine with good Leo there...it is a little dangerous..."

“Yes. I should go then.”

“Mmm.”

And so I left Mr. Ekenhart and headed towards Liza.

“Your Grace, we are going to start pitching the tents now. You remember that the condition for coming here, was that everyone helps, regardless of rank?”

“...That’s true... And with Mr. Takumi gone...”

I thought I heard Sebastian call to Mr. Ekenhart after I left, but I paid them no mind and continued on my way to where Liza was.

Mr. Ekenhart, please do your best...

“Liza. Are you alright?”

“Papa! Yes, I’m fine... But I’ve never seen so much water before...”

“Indeed. It’s a lot more water than in the baths in the mansion...and less hot.”

“Yes...”

Liza smiled when she heard me, but quickly turned back to the river, and her expression darkened.

So, seeing this much water really did fill her with both surprise and fear.

Well, it was probably a good thing. Or else she might have just jumped into the river without hesitation.

She would certainly not be able to swim... And while Leo would save her if she started to drown, it would be best if she was not put in any such danger.

After all, it might end up being a traumatic experience.

I would not want her to hate baths like Leo did.

“Well, large bodies of water can be dangerous. After all, you cannot breathe underwater.”

“Hm... I guess...”

And so I did my best to explain to her the dangers of water.

Of course, I didn't go too far, as I didn't want her to be scared either.

It was during times like these that I would be happy for Sebastian's help... Unfortunately, he was busy with the tents.

Chapter 477

Liza was carried by Leo

“...Water is amazing, huh?”

“Yes. And when there is a lot of it, it can be dangerous. So you have to be careful. Let me see... Hey, Leo?”

“Wuff? Wou!?”

“...Kyu...kyu...”

As I wanted Leo to help Liza, I turned and called to her while she was swimming.

Leo immediately turned and barked in reply.

Only, she had been holding Sherry in her mouth, and so she dropped her into the water. And then she started drowning again...

And while Leo picked Sherry up, she was whimpering sadly as she hung there.

I doubted she wanted to go into the river again...

“Can you come over here? You don’t have to reply, or you might drop Sherry!”

Leo nodded and stood up out of the water and rang back towards us.

“Kyau...kyau...”

“Good, good.”

“Wuff?”

Sherry was released on dry land, and she sat there weakly and caught her breath.

Liza was worried, and petted her wet fur gently in order to calm her down.

After putting Sherry down in a safe place, Leo turned to me questioningly with a tilt of her head.

“It’s about Liza. She wants to go in the river, but is scared, because this is her first time seeing one. So, can you look after her, Leo?”

“Wuff! Wuff-wuff. Wou?”

“You’ll be with me mama? Then I won’t be scared!”

When I asked her, Leo nodded immediately and moved her face close to Liza.

Liza looked up and smiled. All of the anxiety about going into the river had vanished from her face now.

Yes, having someone with you would be quite a relief.

While I could have gone with her, I did not want to get wet right now.

Besides, I had to help with preparations at the campsite, as well as other duties.

I could not just play with Liza and Leo and leave everything to the others.

“Alright, I’ll leave her to you, Leo.”

“Wuff! Wuff!”

“What!?”

And so I left them, and started to walk towards Sebastian and the others.

Leo nodded and barked towards Liza.

And then Liza let out a gasp, and so I turned around to see...that she was hanging, while Leo held her up by the collar.

...So that’s how she would protect Liza.

I wasn’t so sure, and paused for a moment.

However, Liza seemed like she was having fun, so it shouldn’t be a problem.

Leo wouldn’t do anything dangerous, and I could hear Liza laughing.

She had only looked startled at first, because Leo had picked her up so suddenly.

“Mr. Takumi, are you sure that you don’t need to be with them?”

“Ms. Claire. Yes, they should be fine with Leo. Though, I was surprised that Sherry cannot swim. But I’m not worried, at least, compared to Ms. Anne...”

“Well, I carry Sherry when using the bathtub... So she has not had the chance to learn. As for Anne...she is much too tired.”

“Hah...hah... You may say that...Ms. Claire... But it’s...hah...not my fault...”

While I was talking to Ms. Claire, I heard someone panting. It was Ms. Anne, who was sitting limply behind her.

She was sitting on a large rock and leaning forward. She did not even have the strength to raise her head.

As she could hear our conversation, she did her best to protest while trying to catch her breath.

Ms. Claire had been tired the previous time we came here. But it wasn’t to this degree.

Ms. Anne...clearly needed to exercise more often... As she was practically a shut-in, she did not leave the house or walk around much.

If we were in the town, she could take breaks, and it would be easier to walk on roads. But I suppose the forest was quite rough for her.

There were no paved roads in the forest, and she had probably stumbled over rocks numerous times.

“Sebastian. Is there anything I can do to help?”

I left Ms. Anne and Ms. Claire, and called out to Sebastian.

While Ms. Claire had wanted to help as well, she was told to look after Ms. Anne, who might faint at any moment.

Well, maybe that was an exaggeration, but it did seem best to keep an eye on her.

Sebastian gave some orders to Nicholas and then turned towards me.

“Ah, Mr. Takumi. What about Leo and the others?”

“Yes. Leo is taking care of them. And so I thought I would help here, if you need? I can’t just let you and the others do everything...”

If there was something that I could do to help, then I wanted to do it. That was just my personality, and it helped me calm down.

“You said that last time, and volunteered to keep watch. Hmm... Indeed... In that case, could you gather some tree branches to make a fire? As we need more than usual, it is taking some time.”

“Yes, I understand.What are they doing over there?”

“Ah, there was a rock that was in the way, and so they are moving it. I was actually going to ask Phillip to help, but His Grace insisted on doing it. Well, at least he has some help.”

“Oh...I see...”

Chapter 478

I decided to keep watch, like the last time

Sebastian had asked me to gather some tree branches, but before heading out, I turned to another spot that I had been wondering about.

Near Johanna, who was pitching a tent, I saw that Mr. Ekenhart was trying to pick up a large rock... while his face looked very red.

It seemed like it would be better if he just rolled it. It wasn't buried in the ground, and was rather rounded.

Phillip was nearby, and Nicholas had been ordered by Sebastian to place some long, round branches on the grounds. So they were probably just waiting for Mr. Ekenhart to give up.

I just hoped that he wouldn't hurt his back...

"Now, since we are finished with that delicious meal, it is time to talk about who will keep watch..."

After eating Ms. Lyra's cooking, we sat around the fire and discussed who would stay up tonight.

There was one fire for Mr. Ekenhart and us, and another fire for the servants and guards.

As there were so many people this time, one bonfire was not enough.

Thankfully, we had gathered a lot of branches.

"Since there are many people this time, His Grace, Lady Claire, and Lady Anne can rest without worry."

"Mmm."

There were five guards, and four servants including Sebastian, so they could cover those duties without any problem.

Mr. Ekenhart nodded, and this time, Ms. Claire did not say that she wanted to join.

And while she was not terribly tired like the previous time, she probably knew that Sebastian would stop her if she volunteered.

Of course, Ms. Anne wouldn't offer to help in the first place.

She had been able to rest after we arrived at the river, but she was clearly still tired.

And so she would probably sleep well in the tent, even if it wasn't her bedroom.

I had considered giving her some herbs to help her sleep and recover, but it was probably best to not rely on such things.

I would give some to her tomorrow, if she was still tired after sleeping.

“...Mr. Takumi, will you help with watch duty?”

“Uh, are you sure? I thought you would say that there were enough people...”

Sebastian had asked me the question as I was looking around.

“Well, it is you, Mr. Takumi. I was sure that you would feel uncomfortable if we did all of the work. Am I wrong?”

“...No, you aren't.”

Sebastian said that with a smile.

Indeed, I had felt that way when preparing the tents earlier. I didn't like to let others do everything for me.

And Sebastian knew it as well.

If they were going to allow me to help, then I would do my best.

Besides, it meant the others would have a little more time to rest.

“Yes, we will accept your help then. Of course, you will be doing it with Leo. Is that alright?”

“Are you fine with that, Leo?”

“Wuff!”

“I want to be with papa and mama too!”

“Hmm... Can you really stay up? Wouldn't you rather get some sleep?”

The condition was that Leo watched with me, just like last time.

Though I had improved in my fighting ability, while being trained by Mr. Ekenhart, my detecting ability was still the same.

And so it would be safer if Leo was with me.

When I asked Leo, who was sitting next to me while wrapped around Liza, she raised her head and barked, saying that I should leave it to her.

However, Liza then said that she wanted to join us as well.

While I was happy at the thought...could she really stay up?

She had stayed up late last night, and woken up early this morning.

And there was no reason for her stay up and keep watch here

“I'll do my best! To be with papa and mama!”

“You can be with us without staying up tonight... Well, fine. But I'll carry you back to the tent when you fall asleep, alright?”

“Okay!”

“Hehe. She sure is fond of Mr. Takumi and Leo.”

“Well, she is that age when you want to be with your parents.”

Ms. Claire had been watching us, and spoke with a laugh.

“Well, we will have Mr. Takumi and Leo take the first watch then. That way, they will not have to stay up very late.”

“Thank you.”

“Wuff!”

After hearing our conversation, Sebastian decided that we should take the first watch.

And so Liza wouldn't lose much sleep at all.

After that, no one had any objections, and the order of the others was decided smoothly.

Chapter 479

I gazed at the fire with Leo and Liza

Leo and I would take the first watch, and then it would be Nicholas and Sebastian.

After them, it was Phillip and another guard. And lastly, Johanna, and another guard.

Each team would watch the fire for about two to three hours, and then they could sleep.

And in the event that there really was a monster nearby, we would ask Leo to deal with them.

I had asked her to do it. Not just because of her detecting ability, but also because there was no doubt that she would be able to deal with them.

Mr. Ekenhart and Sebastian agreed to it as well.

The two other guards who had come with us, seemed rather disappointed, as that was why they had come. But Phillip, Nicholas, and Johanna laughed and comforted them.

After all, they had seen what had happened last time, when Leo had quickly gotten up, defeated the orcs, and went back to sleep as if nothing had happened...

Still, I felt a little bad for the guards.

“The bonfire is strange. The shape keeps changing, doesn’t it?”

“Indeed. Fire does not have a fixed shape.”

“Wuff-wuff. Wuff?”

“No, that’s fine...”

By the time that everyone started to retire to their tents, Leo, Liza and I sat near the fire and started our watch.

As we were on watch duty, Liza had attached her knife to her belt. And she was now staring at the flames.

While we talked about fire, Leo raised her head and offered to do some fire magic.

Did she really like to use magic so much...?

In any case, it might disturb those who are trying to sleep, so I told her not to.

We were on watch duty so they could rest. It would not do to make a scene.

“Ah, that’s right. Liza. How was the forest?”

“It was my first time seeing so many trees! And the smells were so different, and...there were noises coming from far away. Like rustling! Also, birds? The sounds of wings!”

“I think the rustling was probably the wind against the trees and plants. As for birds... I never saw any in the forest. But I suppose they must be somewhere.”

She had talked about the smell as soon as we entered the forest.

I hadn't heard anything about bird monsters in the forest, and we had spent quite a long time searching the forest the last time, and hadn't encountered anything like that.

Besides, if they were monsters, they would have likely attacked us or other monsters.

In any case, as Liza had never been in a forest before, everything was interesting and new to her here.

And since there wasn't much danger in it, I was glad that I brought her instead of making her wait.

Had she remained in the mansion, then she would not have been able to experience all of this nature and beautiful scenery.

She was able to see a river for the first time, and enter it with Leo's help.

“By the way, Liza. How was the river?”

“Yes, Mama held me securely, so it was fine! Though, I couldn't swim like her...”

“Haha. Well, you can practice little by little.”

She really had been hanging the whole time, as Leo held her. And since it was her first time, that was enough. Otherwise, she might drown, like Sherry.

Sherry had looked quite sad about not being able to swim, and Ms. Claire had to comfort her when she returned.

In any case, apparently, Liza had also tried to swim, but it had been no use.

It was probably related to the fact that she was still hanging from Leo's mouth, but I decided to not say anything.

Besides, Leo...well, swam like a dog. I wasn't sure if Liza should swim like that as well.

There were other ways, like the crawl and butterfly... Well, I suppose she just didn't know.

Next time, I could teach her... Though, I was not a good swimmer either.

"Haaaahh..."

"Wuff..."

"Haha. Are you sleepy? You don't have to stay awake, you know?"

After talking around the fire for some time, Liza yawned as if she was tired.

And Leo yawned as well.

While Leo should be fine, it was probably about time that Liza started to fall asleep.

"...No...I want to stay awake. I can't sleep when you and mama are still up. ...I want to be with you..."

"I see... Well, you can sleep whenever you want, okay?"

Liza rubbed her eyes and shook her head, insisting that she was fine.

I could tell from her voice that she was tired, but I respected her decision.

I actually wanted her to sleep, but... I also felt happy that she wanted to stay with us for as long as possible.

Besides, I could just take her to the tent as soon as she falls asleep...

Chapter 480

Ms. Claire and Mr. Ekenhart came

I looked at the fire and then looked at the nearby tent. It would be easy enough to carry Liza there.

Speaking of the tents, there were more of them compared to last time.

Last time, there were only two, one for men and one for women. But this time there were two for men and two for women.

Me, Liza, Mr. Ekenhart and Phillip would use one tent, while the two guards, Nicholas, Sebastian, and the other butler would use the second one.

And then Ms. Claire, Tilura, Johanna and Sherry would use one tent, while Ms. Lyra and the other maid slept in the other one.

Liza insisted on sleeping near me or Leo. But Leo was too big to fit in the tent, and Liza could not sleep outside.

“...Mmm...”

We were about halfway through the watch now, and Liza seemed like she was at her limits. her eyes were practically closed as she started to doze off.

I looked down at my watch and saw that it was nearly 1 o'clock. If anything, it was impressive that she had stayed up this long.

...I suppose it was time to take her to the tent?

“Liza looks tired? Should I take her back?”

“Hmm? Mr. Ekenhart?”

“And me, Mr. Takumi.”

“Ms. Claire. What happened? Did you have trouble sleeping?”

“Hmm...?”

I had thought that both of them went to sleep...and had not noticed them approaching... I suppose it was because I was focused on Liza.

While I knew that Mr. Ekenhart could be stealthy, could Ms. Claire sneak up on people as well?

After all, she had once snuck out of the mansion without alerting the guards, so that she could go to the forest alone. So perhaps she could do such things a little...

Leo must have noticed them though, as her ears were twitching.

I should be more careful of my surroundings...

“Sister Claire...”

“Oh? What a spoiled child.”

While Liza was still sleepy, she waddled up to Ms. Claire and hugged her.

Even though she was tired, her instincts had made her go to someone who would treat her affectionately.

I suppose it was because of that incident in Ractos. It seemed to have left quite an impression on her.

Ms. Claire hugged her back and then sat down next to Leo.

And then Liza sat on her lap, while still clutching onto her.

While Ms. Claire had sat down, it wasn't on the ground. She was sitting on one of the logs that had been placed around the fire.

"Haha. It looks like Claire took Liza from you."

"Well, she is very tired. Ms. Claire, just tell me if she is too heavy. And then I will take her to the tent."

"Yes, but I'm fine. Liza is very light. ...Well, not as light as Sherry."

"Well, she is a lot bigger than Sherry."

Mr. Ekenhart laughed as he sat down to my left, where Liza had been a moment ago.

Liza had gone right back to sleep it seemed. Clearly she felt relaxed and at peace when holding onto Ms. Claire and feeling her warmth.

"She got up early this morning, didn't she? I heard that you were all in the garden."

"Indeed. She wasn't able to sleep, because she was so excited about going to the forest... And so she would be tired."

Mr. Ekenhart must have heard it from one of the butlers.

As he was now asking about us being in the garden early in the morning.

“I see. Tilura was like that too... But Liza might be more carefree. I wonder if it has anything to do with being a beastkin.”

“Father, unlike Tilura, Liza is not here to fight orcs. And with Leo and Mr. Takumi nearby, she has no reason to fear any monsters. I doubt it has anything to do with being a beastkin.”

“Mm? Hmm...indeed. While I told her about the monsters and orcs, she is not actually here to fight them like Tilura. She is with people who can protect her, and feel safe...”

“It is like she is in the forest to play.”

“Indeed. Even though it is supposed to be a dangerous place, normally... But with so many people and good Leo, it does not feel that way.”

While thinking about Tilura, Mr. Ekenhart started to muse about whether Liza’s carefree nature was because she was beastkin.

But Claire rejected the idea immediately.

I didn’t know if she was that carefree, but she was definitely positive.

And while she was not here to fight, she was curious about the forest and enjoying her time in it.

Had she been nervous or had a negative personality, then she would likely not be able to enjoy herself, even if it was safe.