

Garden 77

Vol. 3 Chapter 11.2 - The little sunshine clears away dark cloud

In a dark room, a man with silver hair was sitting in an armchair. His motionless gaze was fixed on the garden outside the window. As dawn broke and the orange sunlight began to shine, he gazed longingly at the sparkling green and red garden under the bright midday sun. Until the day turned to dusk and the twilight fell, when the purple rays folded into darkness, his vacant eyes only saw the garden and the old cabin standing there like a specter. From the melting snow of spring to the refreshing early summer, through the dreary autumn, and into the serene winter snowy nights, the man never moved from that chair.

Kloff was deeply curious about who he was. He moved his feet and approached him, and in the dark shadow of deep melancholy, Kloff saw his face. It was me.

Kloff opened his eyes, startled. He couldn't tell whether his eyes were already open or not, so he rubbed his eyes and then noticed a maid gathering lanterns in the distance in the garden. He let out a sigh of relief. He was back to reality.

Kloff had another gruesome nightmare after a long time. It seemed that letting his guard down had affected his sanity too. When he opened his eyes, the darkness had already subsided. In the haste to turn around, Kloff's foot caught the leg of an armchair. It hurt terribly, but he hurriedly limped his way out of the room, searching for light. Then, he went straight to Aeroc. He made a vow to himself that he would never set foot in that eerie room again.

Martha was busy learning her duties for a while. And the butler was busy teaching her, so he didn't pay much attention to anything else. In the meantime, Kloff had important matters to take care of quickly. Right after dinner, he called Aeroc to the study.

Kloff had looked up various laws related to the unborn baby. Indeed, re-registering Aeroc as an omega had significant challenges.

There was a risk of losing assets due to inheritance laws, and there was a high possibility that he would be sued by other relatives to redistribute the inheritance. Even if Aeroc claimed that they didn't have an interest in the assets, the Count succession itself could be problematic. While the current laws of the country allowed omegas to inherit without discrimination, the deep-rooted traditions of the aristocracy class did not. If this issue were to arise, it would surely become scandalous in various ways.

After some thought, Kloff decided to indefinitely postpone their legal marriage. As an economic bureaucrat, his rise to power was in full swing, and one day, he would have influence. When that time came, Kloff would change Aeroc's surname to Bendyke, regardless of who tried to interfere. Kloff had no intention of getting the Count title taken away. It would simply be handed over to any alpha who was born first. However, he needed more time until he could claim Aeroc of Teiwind as his partner.

"Is there really no way?"

"Well, we can just give up everything and run away in the name of our love."

"..."

When Kloff explained like that, Aeroc looked surprisingly disappointed. Kloff was glad to realize that he wasn't the only one feeling anxious. Giving the thick document to Aeroc, he saw a shining golden ring, just like his hair, embedded with a blue diamond on his finger. As Aeroc read the long contract to replace their wedding vows, Kloff's gaze drifted to the ring.

Kloff had hoped for a tearful proposal, at a beautiful place where only the two of them were present. But that simple hope had long since been shattered. The day after Aeroc came out of his heat, as soon as he regained consciousness, Aeroc pushed away the alpha who was weighing heavily on him and rummaged through Kloff's jacket without properly dressing himself, finding the ring. Kloff, who rolled off the bed in his sleep, protested heavily, "What is it?" Then he saw Aeroc nonchalantly put the ring on.

Realizing the situation belatedly, Kloff scolded him for touching other people's belongings recklessly, but Aeroc shot him a cold gaze and said, "Other people's belongings? You weren't going to give it to me? Do you have another omega?" Aeroc had scarily interrogated him, silencing Kloff immediately.

Even when Kloff said that it was true that he was going to give it to him, but not like this, and to take it off so he could put it on for Aeroc, he just shook his head and kept his hand clasped. He had kept wearing the ring since then. Even when sleeping, and also when bathing. Kloff felt happy that he didn't take it off even for a moment, but he couldn't help but feel some regrets.

"If you become their legal representative and guardian, do you have full authority in the event of an emergency?"

"Yes, I've listed as many contingencies as I can think of as a separate line item."

It was a very detailed contract. Once signed, it would bind them until death, especially stating that Kloff had almost the same authority as parental rights regarding Aeroc's children. Aeroc, who actually read it properly without being asked this time, signed without hesitation. It was so easy that it felt strange.

"There are two more copies, here and here."

Without another word, Aeroc signed, and then he handed the fountain pen to Kloff, who also finished signing all three copies. One would go into Aeroc's safe, one into Kloff's document safe, and the other into the safe of the notary officer who also served as the lawyer. As he filed the papers away, Kloff smiled at Omega, who was now legally his possession.

"We can't get married, but if you want a simple ceremony, we can have it. Of course, as long as you adhere to the maximum limit I set. We need to maintain our assets to ensure we can raise our children properly so they wouldn't starve."

Aeroc's initial reaction was one of being pleased, but after hearing the final sentence, he grumbled with a displeased face.

"As if I would let our children go hungry."

"It costs a lot of fortune to marry off six children. Wait, why do I know that?"

Kloff was confused himself, furrowing his brow and rubbing his chin. Aeroc snorted.

"...Because you're a scrooge. Speaking of which, you had given me worn-out clothes and only enough potatoes to keep me from starving to death."

Like a man with a grievance, Aeroc vented his incomprehensible dissatisfaction.

“What nonsense are you saying? You’ve only worn suits made by the finest tailor and eaten lavish meals that cost as much as a week’s worth of expenses for an average household until just now.”

“Forget it, it’s only me who feels unjust.”

Aeroc stormed out in anger. No matter how much Kloff thought about it, Kloff couldn’t understand why he was like that. Kloff even wished someone could interpret it for him. How could the words an omega, who was having his child, be harder to decipher than hieroglyphics unearthed from an ancient civilization?

Kloff shook his head and stood up. Whether he understood or not, he couldn’t just stay still when the currently pregnant omega got angry and left. As the sinner who impregnated him, Kloff was destined to become a slave for the next ten months, his alpha instincts didn’t let him resist his imprinted omega partner. Therefore, no matter how much reason he cried out, his body followed the remnants left by Aeroc.

“Today, it’s smoked salmon with a simple sauce on top of a hearty vegetable soup. And there are fruits, and your favorite buttered bread and marmalade. You said you were tired of apple juice, so I got you tomato juice.”

Every morning, when Kloff came in with the meal, Aeroc quickly got out of bed and sat at the table, wearing the happiest smile in the world. His beloved husband was nowhere in his sight as he ate his meal.

He picked up a fork in one hand and a spoon in the other, his hair still tousled from the night before. After tasting the vegetable soup first, he commented, "It's edible now," delighting Kloff, but soon added, "But it still has a burnt taste," trampling down the joy.

While Kloff sipped his half cup of black tea, Aeroc finished the vegetable soup and buttered bread and then stabbed the fish dish with his fork. Kloff was now more aware of Aeroc's habits and realized that he didn't like the dish with just that single gesture.

"You don't like salmon?"

"No, I enjoy it."

"Did you eat it in a different way?"

"It's not that... Did Martha make this?"

Kloff was taken aback as Aeroc knew it right away.

"How did you know?"

"Just a feeling. It seemed like that."

“Martha’s cooking skills are reliable. It’s definitely delicious.”

“I know.”

Aeroc responded easily without even tasting the meal. Aeroc poked the fish with his fork and took a bite. Unlike his hurried eating, he chewed slowly until it would have mostly melted away before swallowing. Then he furrowed his brow.

“If you don’t like it, don’t eat it.”

“I’m going to eat it all.”

“But you’re making such a displeased expression.”

“It’s not because I dislike it. It’s just...”

After taking a sip of water, Aeroc remarked, “I regret that I was stubborn and didn’t eat this delicious food back then.” Then he eagerly finished the salmon. It was still an incomprehensible statement, but ultimately, it seemed that Aeroc liked the salmon, so Kloff smiled brightly.