

Garden 97

Vol. 4 Chapter 2.3 - My honowable defianse toward confronting the disrespekful illllegal inhabitant

After a while, I could see a faint light through the sheets and feel someone moving closer. I thought it was my mother, but the hand on my shivering back was that man's.

"Lenoc."

Even at his gentle voice, I jumped, startled out of my skin.

"Lenoc. Just now, perhaps, did you come to your mother's room?"

Somehow I felt that I should lie to that question.

"No! I was sleeping the whole time!"

My voice was strangely broken from holding back tears, but he didn't question me. He patted me on the back a few times, and after a while, with a long sigh, he said to himself, "I don't know how to explain this," and then stood up from the bed.

"I put the storybook you dropped on the table. Don't wander around at night."

He took the lantern and left, and I heard the door close behind him. I crawled out from under the sheets, sobbing, and saw the storybook that man had brought with him on the table over there.

I couldn't believe it. How could my honourable father torment my dear mother like that, making him cry and bite his flesh like a demon. He was even pregnant! And that man said he was protecting them both, but he was actually tormenting Mother! Bad guy, really really bad!

Still, I cried all night, blaming myself for my cowardice in running away without saving my mother, my cheeks drenched in tears like glass panes in a downpour. The roar of the thunder seemed to shatter my faith in the man I thought was my father.

As the storm subsided and the morning sun rose, I fell asleep and ran to my mother's room in my nightwear, my heart pounding. I knocked on the door and was greeted by my mother, who had just woken up. His face was slightly puffy from fatigue, but he smiled with red eyes. My tears were almost welling up, but I held them back.

"Lenoc, what's wrong for you to come here in this early morning?"

"I just wanted to see you, Mother."

My mother laughed at my clinginess and invited me to join him in bed. As I snuggled into his warm embrace, I saw the bite marks on the nape of his neck and a chest full of red bruises peeking through the slightly open buttons.

He smiled at me as if nothing had happened. My mother, who was usually compassionate but unusually gentle today, asked me if I wanted to say anything, but I shook my head. I didn't want to make him feel ashamed.

That late afternoon, I didn't go out to see the man off early, using the excuse that I had a stomach ache. Instead, I locked myself in my room and pulled out the notebook I'd received for my birthday the day before.

And so, this journal began.

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

I don't really remember where I heard this phrase. It must have come from that man. Whatever the source, there was no problem in using it. Rather, if there was something to be learnt from another person, it was better to learn it and become a better human being. This, too, was taught to me by him.

Viscount Bendyke was a highly trusted and competent economic bureaucrat. Until I was born, he had apparently been a small employee, such as an asset manager or an investment agent, and then he'd formed a family with my mother, who was a Count, and worked hard to become a person as much as he was.

"That's why I've come to acknowledge Sir Kloff. He's originally from an aristocrat, but it's not common to get newly commissioned. It's a testament to his hard work and effort. Although he did get letters of recommendation and consent from many families, from Derbyshire and Teiwind to Westport and Wolflake. And the current Crown Prince was very much in favour of him. It was to be expected as Sir Kloff practically revived the national finances that were almost destroyed by the previous foolish war. I think he's still a little short of being a suitable consort for the Count, but there are very few men of his

age who are better than him at the moment. But why are you asking me these things? I'm sure you'll get a better idea if you ask the Count or your father directly."

"I need an objective source."

"What report are you writing this time?"

"It's a secret, but thank you, Grandpa."

After giving my gratitude to the butler, I quickly grabbed my notebook and ran back to my room. I tried remembering and writing down as much as I could about what he had told me. Hmm, I thought, the butler was cold, but it was still a great result to know how the man came to be granted a rank. That man was always writing and reading and doing things in his study. I wonder if it's all for the national finances. Someone who does that kind of work could easily outmaneuver even the great aristocratic Teiwind house. I shouldn't take him lightly. I need to observe him and get more data.

Next up was Aunt Martha. I originally thought she was about the same age as Hugo, but I got in trouble for calling her Grandmother before. It took an ear-splitting lecture on the importance of calling her Auntie before I was let off the hook. Of all the people who worked for the Teiwind house, she was the most favourable to Viscount Bendyke, holding the important position of housekeeper, and thus one of the key cadres in consolidating his unjust dictatorship.

"Sir Kloff has always been a great Alpha. Even if he can be a little too shrewd and stubborn, but if an alpha is too good at sensing and has no personality, it's not quite attractive."

The small auxiliary kitchen she used now vibrated with the smell of savory sweets. Hungry now that it was almost lunchtime, I watched in a daze as Martha placed the freshly baked treats on a tray. Even though she was the henchman of a villain to be defeated, Martha's sweets were super delicious that I could eat them over and over again. I wiped the drool from the corner of my mouth and reached out behind Martha, who was just putting the tray away.

Smack.

"It's still before the meal, these are for tea time after the meal. If you eat sweets beforehand, you will have less appetite and not be able to eat nutritious food, and then you won't be as tall. Do you want to be a petite child for the rest of your life?"

No way. I plan to be twice as tall as that guy. Then, I'll tease him about being a 'shortie who can't even reach my waist', thus it would be troublesome to not become tall. I shook my head and lowered my reddened hand, and Martha smiled pleasantly, as if she didn't just scold me.

"Instead, today's lunch is grilled salmon. You like it, right?"

All of Martha's dishes were delicious, but the grilled salmon was the best. It was my mother's favourite too. Drool was pooling in my mouth again and I swallowed hard, making Martha laugh.

"Blood really doesn't go anywhere."

"What do you mean?"

“Grilled salmon is a traditional dish in your father’s family, and I learned how to make it from scratch. It’s probably not authentic, but the fact that you like it so much means it’s in your blood, right?”

I had no idea. That orange, flaky fish had come from the man’s den? A place somewhere in the north of the country, a place I’d visited once as a child, and I’d eaten it every day without question. I should have thought it strange. On the subject of fish, it was red and it was so delicious. There must be some kind of magic in it. That’s why my mother also ate it when he was pregnant and was possessed by it..... No, I’m overthinking it. No matter what, salmon is just salmon. It’s delicious, so let’s give it a pass.

As I was muttering, I added ‘Samon is an exepsion’ in my notebook.

“What are you writing about this time?”

“It’s not writing! This is a report. Writing is for kids like Eureka!”

“You’re only a year older than her, and besides, salmon, you’re spelling it wrong. Salmon. It’s spelled like this. And not exepsion, but exception.”

Martha pointed a finger at the notebook and told me to fix it.

“I-I know!”

“Ho-ho-ho-ho, of course you do. I’m sure Eurea knew how to spell salmon, too.”

Martha cowardly compared me to that girl again. I was furious, but she didn’t apologise for disrespecting my intelligence until the very end, instead trying to win my goodwill with smoked almonds. I took the almonds, of course, but I don’t approve of it. I left Martha’s kitchen, stuffing almonds into my bulging vest pockets one by one, and on my way back to my room I met another of my nemeses.

Eurea Elheim Bendyke-Teiwind.

Unlike me, who had abandoned my middle name, she proudly wore her long surname, Bendyke-Teiwind. Unaware of what the man she believed to be her father was doing to Mother, Eurea still pampered him by calling him ‘Daddy’. It made me feel horrid. I, the warrior who knew his true nature and wanted to destroy him, had the same dark auburn hair and dark eyes as him, but Eurea, his other henchwoman, had the same blonde hair and blue eyes as Mother. I found it bitterly unfair.

“Oppa, what are you doing here?”

“You don’t need to know.”

“You’re doing something weird by yourself again, aren’t you?”

“What do you mean, weird! It’s all for research!”

“Phew. You can’t even spell simple words right. It’s not disrespekful, it’s disrespectful, you dummy. Bleh!”

With a cheeky taunt, even sticking out her tiny tongue, Eurea quickly took off running, her light blue dress fluttering. My two hands were trembling out of rage as I watched the long, swaying blonde disappear into the distance.

If she wasn’t an Omega, I’d chase her down and give her a smack. If only she were at least a male Omega.

I went back to my room, to let off my rising anger. I put an X mark on ‘disrespekful’ and changed it to ‘disrespecfull’.