

Aランク冒険者の スローライフ

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An A-Ranked Adventurer's “Slow-living”

– A-Rank Boukensha no Slow Life –

- Volume 1 -

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[Bananas]

- STORY -

Aldred, the leader of a kingdom's A-ranked party, [Black Silver], has accomplished the task of slaying a dragon. However, he who has pursued strength his whole life has lost sight of his goal from taking down a monster of the strongest species. As he worried about what to do next in his life, it was the scenery of Nordende that popped up in his mind; A rural village by the countryside, full of natural beauty, which he only visited once during a quest in the past.

After declaring the disbandment of his party, he heads towards Nordende for a comfortable, relaxing life.

Prologue

Retiring from being an adventurer

I was an orphan, one of the many children who was left behind at a church, with no knowledge of the names or faces of my parents; just another orphan in poverty that could be found on any corner.

Because the church operated on a small budget from people's donations, it was difficult to feed all the orphans who were left behind there.

Even though I worked and worked every day, I did not ever get a decent meal. A day with hard bread and plain soup was considered a luxury. At bad times, there would be nothing to eat for days.

I hated to live like that every day, so I decided to make some money putting my life at stake.

At first, I was using a stone-shaved wooden rod, that couldn't even be called a sword, against the monsters outside of the city.

It doesn't take much for things like monsters to kill a child, but I thought it was better than working at the church in poverty. You can obtain raw materials and meat if you kill the monsters, and turn their materials into money by selling them, their meat into food by cooking them. I thought that was the way I was going to survive.

If you register at the adventurer's guild, you will receive quests to kill different types of monsters. The moment I found out that I could be earning even more, I registered in the guild on that very same day.

Imitating and stealing the techniques of skilled adventurers, sometimes by asking them to teach me, I started subjugating monsters one by one starting from goblins and worked my way up.

Others who knew of me and were doing the same things as I was, started to team up with me, and we hunted monsters together with our lives at stake.

Monsters with high capabilities could be dealt with more efficiently if they were hunted by people in a party.

At times there were casualties, but it couldn't be helped. In this harsh world, it was natural for those who lacked strength and luck to perish.

I hunted monsters over and over again as I became an adult, and finally became an A-ranked adventurer as they called it in this kingdom.

Strength is everything when it comes to survival.

If you have strength, you can make money, you can eat good things, and sleep in soft futons.

I polished my skills in the pursuit of strength, and carried out quests with my companions. At this age of 27 years old, I defeated a dragon, a monster of the strongest species, thus gaining enormous wealth and fame.

Then, I suddenly realized.

I don't starve anymore. I am plenty strong and wealthy; I no longer have trouble living a life.

There's no need to hunt monsters anymore.

There's no need to fight battles with my life on the line.

When all those thoughts came to mind, I lost all my energy, as I lost sight of my goal in life.

Although I find it pointless for me to hunt monsters now, they still fill this world with danger.

I was asked to subdue atrocious monsters many times, but I couldn't fight while in

such a state of mind, so I declined the quests.

I'm already 27 years old. That's already past the age of my body's physical peak; my abilities and reactions are starting to go downwards. I couldn't continue this merciless adventurer lifestyle without a goal in life as my emotional support.

It's just about time I retire from being an adventurer.

If so, how should I live my life from this point on?

Stay in the kingdom's capital like this and build a luxurious home and live carefree?
No, that's not right.

Become an instructor in the adventurer's guild and nurture the younger generations?
Although I have abilities and techniques to some extent, it would be strange for a man who no longer wants to fight monsters to teach others how to engage in mortal combat. I would feel sorry for the people getting taught.

Peerage, knights, royalty escorts of frontier regions with a lot of monsters...? There were many other choices out there, but they were all occupations that involve fighting.

Since I was not tight on money, recently there were some strange people coming up to me trying to tag along. Because of that, I was getting sick of living in the capital.

Man, I already want to distance myself from life and death battles and leisurely live a normal life somewhere.

At that moment, a scene of a place suitable for that came up in my mind.

A small village with flowers of vivid colors spreading and changing according to the season.

Farms and fields, beautiful rivers, all surrounded by big mountains.

Blessed by nature, their food was very delicious. Their population was low, it was a quiet place where everyone was self sufficient and lived in peace.

Certainly, that place was called Nordende. That's right, it was before I met my companions, I went there after taking up a quest, it was a village in another country.

I had only been to that village once, but maybe it's because of the beautiful multi-colored field of flowers there that it was deeply engraved in my memories.

Back at that time, I finished the quest quickly and was looking at the flowers all day long.

...It might not be bad to settle down at Nordende.

I might not be able to get married there because I'm way past the prime marriageable age, but living in a small house, plowing the fields and hunting, such a calm life-style might not be too bad. Moreover, I could see the plains of beautiful flowers every day.

It was also spring on my last visit there. The radiant colors of flowers in pink, red, orange, yellow and white will be in full bloom.

My heart starts pounding as I thought of how I could see that scene once again. I was not able to get motivated ever since the dragon subjugation, but now I feel alive again.

I want to go there right now.

So with that thought, I called up the members of the party "Black Silver" and gathered at an inn.

Lately I was getting all kinds of different looks in the guild, so I couldn't relax at all.

"Today we will disband our party"

"...I see"

"Well, I thought it was going to come to this"

Elliot answered wearing a very solemn expression on his face, and Kiel muttered with

his arms crossed behind his head.

These two, who're looking at me as if they were possessed by something, should have seen this coming as well.

Well, this kind of thing happens regardless of me being the cause of it or not. Humans can't be fighting forever.

And the members other than me are also at a considerable age already. Because we have been questing together all this time, they were all over the age of 20. Now that we have money, there's no need to continue the dangerous career of being an adventurer. There are many other options for people at our levels.

"Are we really disbanding?!"

Kurune^[i] got up vigorously and yelled.

"Well, the leader says he wants to quit. You are still 22 years old. But for us guys, we are approaching our 30s. Isn't it about time we quit the merciless occupation called an adventurer? Elliot even has a lover. Even if the leader didn't say to disband, wasn't he going to quit anyways?"

"That's right. I don't want to make her worry so much"

Hearing the words from Kiel, Elliot answered while glancing over.

I had been expecting that as well.

"B, But..."

Kurune looked down with strong lingering affections.

It's sad for companions who acted together for many years to depart from each other. You could say that's how I feel as well.

"Whaat, if we're not dead, we can always meet again at any time!"

With those cheerful words, Kiel blew away the depressing mood.

“That’s right. I will be serving in the king’s order of knights, so you’ll be always welcomed if you ever come to the kingdom’s capital”

With that, Elliot’s expression also changed to a soft one.

Kiel has always been like that. He was always the one making up the mood in the party, making us feel at ease and sometimes even pushing us forward.

“Hmm? Elliot will still be working? Aren’t you already swimming in money?”

“I feel restless if I don’t work a lot. My girlfriend’s father is also the leader of the knights so I can’t afford to refuse...”

We are all surprised to see Elliot muttering while showing a bitter smile.

“I knew you had a lover, but I did not think she was going to be a noble...”

Speaking of the leader of the knights, he is a militant type of nobleman. So that means Elliot is being adopted by his wife’s family. Then, there was no way for him to refuse.

“Everyone has their own path to follow huh...”

Kurune wipes the tears dropping from her eyes as she muttered.

She seemed to have come to an understanding.

“How nice~ Elliot is a noble huh~”

Kiel rocks back on his chair as it makes squeaky noises.

“What about you, Kiel?”

“Oh, me? I will travel across the countries with the big lump of cash we got from subjugating the dragon. Eating delicious food freely here and there, and while holding

a woman, I'll be spending money like a king"

Were you happy that Elliot asked? Kiel showed a friendly smile as he responded.

What Kiel just said were very natural human-like behaviors. Even so, I have not even considered doing those things; I guess it's just not what I'm into.

"But still, you haven't changed at all"

"I still look like myself, Don't I?"

"That's right"

Everyone laughed at Kiel's remarks like how it's always been.

"I..."

"Whatever you do doesn't matter, Kurune"

When Kurune tried to say something, Kiel interrupted.

"Why is that?! Tell me!"

Kiel made Kurune angry by teasing her. It's how the conversations usually go, and it puts a smile on my face.

"I will become a teacher in the magic academy because I was invited"

"Hehh, a teacher, huh..."

Kiel said it with an expression which also represented how we all felt.

"Eh? I'm becoming a teacher in "That" famous magic academy you know? It's okay to show a little reaction like how you just were with Elliot"

"No, even if you tell me that, I have no idea about the magic academy that nobles go to"

Kiel replied as if it's whatever, while Kurune showed an expression like she couldn't believe what just happened, and looked at me and Elliot.

"Sorry, I am a beginner in this stuff"

"I, too, know nothing but the sword"

"Hah....." (*Sigh*)

I also think that I don't even have to be asked. It's impossible for an orphan who took up the sword and became an adventurer to know about some magic academy that nobles go to.

"So what about you, leader? What are you going to do?"

Kurune, who just finished sighing, changed her direction to me and asked.

Kiel and Elliot also focused their gaze this way as if they are also wondering.

"Me? I will live in Nordende"

""...Where?!"

Chapter 1

Departure from the kingdom

There are going to be rude, intrusive people no matter what kind of village or settlement you try to live in.

However, that is fine with me. Since I'm moving to a village far away, normal people there would not recognize me or know of my fame.

If they don't know about me, then I will just be buried as an ordinary man who knew a little something about swords.

My reputation of being a dragon slayer is only spreading within big countries and the adventurer's guild, after all. I wouldn't need to worry, as there is no branch office of the adventurer's guild in Nordende.

"It's across the neighboring country, Vespania, located in the deep far west of the kingdom, Slypheed"

"That's extremely far away. Wouldn't it take at least a month and a half to get there on horse carriages?"

Kiel muttered in shock as I told them about the approximate location of Nordende.

I will be heading across the big country of Vespania, going through various cities and villages, probably camping out in the open here and there. They're things I'm already used to in my long life of being an adventurer. The last time I went there, I was by myself as well, you know.

"But, I do think that unless leader were to live in such a far place, there's no way he can live in peace"

"Elliot, I'm no longer your leader"

“Sorry, it’s a habit from calling you that all these years. Then, uh, Aldo”

I lightly reproved his mistake and Elliot called me by my name with a refreshing smile. Since Aldred was long to say, people close to me just call me Aldo^[i].

“I’ve been calling you leader all this time, so even from now on, I’ll keep on calling you that”

“Ah, I know what you mean!”

I have no idea what they were talking about, but the rest of them insisted on calling me “leader” still.

To me, I feel a bit lonely because only one person here calls me by my name, but it’s not so bad when I see the carefree smiles on their faces when they call me leader.

“If we’re talking about countryside villages that are far from here, there are many of them. Why did leader choose Nordende of the Slypheed kingdom?”

Kiel inquired as he sat cross-legged on his chair.

He is being fidgety as usual, with movements just like a monkey’s. He even matches them unnecessarily with his excessively monkey-looking face.

“Yeah. Why there?”

Kurune asked while tilting her head slightly, and Elliot also seems wanting to know from the way he’s looking at me.

“...There was something there when I was there by myself around nine years ago. It was the scene of beautiful fields of flowers along the calm and relaxing village that I could not completely forget, even to this day”

“”“ ””“

I told them honestly the reason why I’m going to Nordende, but Kiel, Kurune, and Elliot are all staring at me silently with their eyes wide open.

What? Why are you all so shocked?

“Why the silence?”

“...No, it's nothing. Leader did say just now that he couldn't forget the scenery of beautiful flowers... right?”

When I asked Kiel, the person who was sitting the closest to me, he replied in a puzzled tone.

“That's right... for lead... I mean... Aldo, who was only devoted to the sword, to like flowers... That's unexpected... right, Elliot?”

“Erm, you're asking if that has also surprised me?... Nah, well actually... to be honest, it doesn't seem to suit Aldo at all”

Elliot said some harsh things after he fumbled for words.

Yeah, I know. Who wouldn't be surprised after hearing from a grown man with the title of a dragon slayer like me, who was interested in nothing but swords, to say that he liked fields of flowers? It doesn't match me. However, just let me be! I really like the flowers and the nature there.

“Well, that is why I am moving to Nordende!”

Like that, I declared it very clearly. However, Kiel and the others had an expression as if I said something hard to understand, as though they were still doubtful of me.

“...Un, are there actually some evil monsters residing in Nordende, or are you going to seclude yourself in the mountains there to do some secret training?”

Both Kurune and Elliot nodded to Kiel's words in agreement.

So even now I'm still being suspected of being someone who's only interested in the sword... I guess it couldn't be helped.

“I no longer have the desire to pursue strength anymore. You guys are the ones who've been with me the longest; can't you tell that I mean it?”

I am not someone who would disband the party with some half-hearted feelings. I spoke with serious eyes while having those thoughts in mind.

“O, Oh”

“That’s how it is, I guess...”

“I got it now”

They all nodded. Did they finally understand how I feel?

“Well then, let’s call it a day. I don’t plan on returning to this kingdom, but if you guys have spare time in the future, come pay me a visit me in Nordende. I’ll always welcome you”

To disperse this tense atmosphere created from the upcoming separation, I put in some cheerful words.

“Yeah. It might be interesting to see what leader will look like when he’s working as a villager”

“I cannot imagine it at all”

Kiel showed a full smile showing his white teeth, and Elliot replied with a bitter smile.

Please don’t treat me as an exhibition animal or something.

“Yeah, well... I don’t know if I’ll be able to have such long vacation days to come visit, but I’ll make something happen”

Even though we’re all walking down our own paths, the bonds we have created from being in the same party will never be severed. A warm feeling spread throughout my chest as I had those thoughts.



We disbanded our party promptly afterwards. We finished it up with a fun last meal together in a tavern, where we reminisced and talked about the memories we had, and the times of us questing together; like the time when somebody did something during a quest, and a bunch of monsters came out and how a certain someone got so scared, to the point of almost pissing their pants thinking they were going to die.

Anyways, various stories were brought up and we had some good laughs.

From this point on, there will be way fewer opportunities for us to get together again with all of us present, but I think it's all good if each one of us can follow our desires and find our own happiness, since we no longer need to fight with our lives on the line anymore.

Kurune broke down in tears at the end, which almost made me do the same as well, but I endured it somehow. It wouldn't be a good closure if the leader, who declared the disbandment of the party, also breaks down in tears from the break up.

At the end, we did our team huddle, praising each other for the good fights, and parted with a smile saying "until next time".

Like that, the kingdom of Abalonia's A-ranked adventurers party, 『Black Silver』, officially disbanded today.

The next day after the party disbanded.

I quickly packed up my luggage in the inn, then covered my whole body with a hooded robe and left.

It's best if I leave this country quickly while keeping it on the down-low.

I left the detailed procedures you had to complete at the adventurer's guild for our party's disbandment to Kiel and the others. I would have definitely made a scene if I were to walk in there myself to do them.

All the guild's staff, royalty, and nobles would have tried to stop me.

Normally, it's only the leader of the party who can disband the party. But, with enough party member approvals, it is allowed for party members to start the procedures to disband the party by majority votes as well.

That is something which is written in the guild's rules, so there are no problems at all.

It is bad manners for me to not show up in person, but it's for the sake of my peaceful life. I have made enormous contributions to the guild up till now, so I'm sure they can forgive me for being selfish just this once.

The horse-drawn carriages stopped near the city capital's gate, and along with our pay together, some villagers and I got on the carriages with our luggage. The kingdom's capital is crowded with people from the celebrations of the dragon-slaying right now, so the security inspections for carriages leaving the kingdom is rather loose. As there are countless men who have black eyes and black hair, I got out without anyone suspecting a thing.

No one will know that you're a dragon-slaying adventurer if you don't wear any adventurer equipment, after all.

If words leaked out beforehand, I thought of donating all my money to the poorest people in the slums before leaving, but everything seems fine right now.

After getting out of the kingdom, the rocking carriage proceeded through the bumpy roads.

The procedures to be done in the guild are to be carried out a bit later in the day, so everything should be okay.

Eventually, they will send someone to me for an interview, and personnel dispatched from the guild should show up one day.

Kiel is good at the kind of stuff like deceiving and stalling the guild, but it would only be a matter of time before they find out the truth.

I have to get to somewhere far before the commotion starts.

I turn my sight away from the small ramparts of the kingdom.

Then, I closed my eyes, imagining the scenery of Nordende.

Chapter 2

Nordende

I continued the journey on the gently sloped road.

The grain fields and vineyards on both sides of the road paint the whole area a rich and lush green.

In the distance, there are rows of mountains under a clear, blue sky. I still have not seen a human figure yet. Maybe they are working on the fields somewhere, so I just can't see them yet.

It's been a month since the trip began from the kingdom of Abalonia.

I have finally arrived in Nordende.

The scenery looked identical to how it was nine years ago, with the exception of the sizes of the cultivated lands. as they looked a little bigger now. But, it's only natural for the area to expand, as nine years have gone by.

The scent of earth and the smell of grass tickle my nostrils as the gentle wind blows.

I closed my eyes for a moment to the feeling of wind blowing towards me, then I gazed at the scenery that stretched as far as the eye could see.

If I continue to head straight on this road, I should be able to find some village homes ahead. Then, behind there, should be where the flowers that I was once captivated by are at.

That was the place I even dreamed of during the trip. I feel a little anxious after thinking about it again.

Suddenly, something came into my field of vision as I looked at the beautiful vineyards. It was a person who was walking while carrying a jute bag on her shoulders.

Then, a woman who was working in the vineyard came out.

She has lightly tanned skin, with a barrette clipping up her red-colored hair behind her head. Her height seems to be in the 160s, in centimeters, but her physique is unclear due to the thick work clothes she's wearing.

The woman with red hair walked towards me elegantly, with her red-colored eyes looking right at me. Her strong will power is displayed by the sharp look of her eyes.

For the time being, it would be awkward if I stay silent, so I should say something to let her know that I don't have any hostile intentions.

"...Hello"

"...Hello. Um, and you are? I have not seen you around here before, so I couldn't help but worry since you've been zoning out doing nothing while standing in front of someone's fields"

She is glancing over with the eyes of someone who saw a suspicious person.

Seeing her as someone who returned my greetings gracefully, she doesn't seem to be a bad person for now. Her tone was a little severe, but from her point of view, I could be seen as a suspicious person who was standing in front of her fields. Oh well, a newcomer coming into a countryside village will usually be greeted like this.

"Um, my apologies. I'm someone who came here, wanting to move into this village. I am not someone suspicious"

She muttered "Hmmm" in a light tone in return.

"...Black hair and black eyes, huh..."

"Eh?"

I didn't quite catch what she said just now because of how quiet she was, so I unintentionally let out a questioning reply.

"Oh, It's nothing. So, where did you come from?"

"The kingdom of Abalonia"

She looks unsatisfied from my answer, but if I hesitated to answer here it would make

me look suspicious, so I answered her honestly.

“You came from a place that is extremely far away, huh? Well... you didn’t look like a thief to me when I first saw you anyway. I’ll guide you to the village chief’s place”

“Thanks”

When I came here nine years ago, I never got to pay a visit to something like the village chief’s house. It’s reassuring to have someone to guide me around.

“There’s no point in leaving a stranger wandering here by himself, because it would make the people around uneasy. Come with me”

The girl waved her hand at me as if she’s saying “don’t sweat it; it’s not a big deal”. Then, she turned around and started walking.

While thinking of what a open-hearted person she is, I started to follow her while keeping quiet.

As I followed behind the woman, village homes with brown-colored rooftops that are lined up in rows very close to each other could be seen in the distance. Perhaps there, the most condensed part of the village, is the central part of the village.

Aside from that area, there are fewer houses, and they are scattered over the place.

There should be several hundred people living in this village if the population hasn’t increased explosively since the last time I was here.

We kept on going for a while as we crunched through the road of soil and grass. Then, we encountered a man who was pushing a wagon.

“Oya, Aisha, who is this man?”

Naturally, the man who doesn’t know me stopped his feet and asked.

He called this woman, Aisha.

“I came to move here”

“Ohh, I see. That’s something I don’t hear about every day. I look forward to being

friends with you!”

“Thank you, I look forward to it as well!”

I bowed my head to the man who was showing a friendly smile.

“Oya oya, you are quite a mannered person”

The man looked like he was a little taken aback, then he replied while smiling brightly.

Maybe I had awakened to the natural reactions that were ingrained in me since the start of my adventurer days from the relationships I had with my senior adventurers. Back in those days, even though I was just a newbie adventurer, I displayed the same, respectful formalities as one would have if they were trying to become an apprentice of a strict craftsman.

“...He would like to receive permission from the village chief to move in”

Aisha-san, please, there’s no need to broadcast what we’re doing.

She seems to be the type who would say everything out loud, clearly.

“Hmm... If it’s this guy, I think it’ll be alright. Well, let me know if he gets approved”

The man seems to be quite accustomed to how Aisha acts, and started pulling his wagon while smiling cheerfully.



After running into similar scenarios a few times while walking with Aisha, we have reached the central part of the village, where many private homes gathered.

I can feel the gazes coming from the men who are doing various types of housework, and the women who are drying laundry. I’m already used to this, since it was like this all the time in the adventurer’s guild after all.

It’s the same thing no matter if you are a newcomer to a village or a newbie adventurer starting out.

Although, it feels better here because being here isn’t at the same level as being

suddenly surprised by the stares of rough adventurers. However, being surrounded by eyes from the distance feels uncomfortable in its own way.

If I didn't have Aisha accompanying me here, it would have been much worse.

I would like to be able to get to a point where I can completely ignore everyone's eyes.

Let's just take a look at the scenery around for now.

Compared to nine years ago, the number of flowers planted seems to have increased, and this village feels like it's even more glamorous than before.

There are flowers in warm colors like red and yellow, as well as in cold colors, like blue and purple.

I feel nothing but joy when I look at those homes.

That one household over there seems to have used different colors to showcase a skillful gradation.

How do you plant it in order to get it to be like that?

Nordende's flowers are so beautiful, after all.

Even though flowers can't become food that can be eaten, I would still take my time to carefully nurture them in my own home.

"This village is always so beautiful when the flowers bloom"

"Always? Have you been here before?"

Aisha, who was walking ahead of me, looked back and asked in response after catching the mutters I let out while checking out the flowers from the villager homes.

"Just once, nine years ago"

"Nine years ago?!"

Aisha shouted with a voice that's a little loud after hearing what I said.

For a girl who seemed like she could always keep her composure, it was surprising to see her surprised.

“Yeah, but is it really that surprising?”

“No, it’s nothing. Sorry about that”

To my question, Aisha gave an answer in a brittle tone to move on with her verbal mistake.

No, wait, even if you say it’s nothing, you got me really curious about this... Did I do something when I was here nine years ago? I can’t remember it well.

“We’re here. The village chief’s house”

I wanted to ask Aisha again what she was surprised about, but it seems we have arrived at the village chief’s place.

It’s a large house built slightly away from the central buildings of the village. Among these buildings, there is also what looks to be some type of warehouse that is used to store food.

Lush green grass is growing all around the surrounding area of the house. It looks like it would feel really comfortable to lie down on the grass.

“Here, huh...”

“Well then, hurry and go in”

As soon as I start to prepare myself to go in... ***knock* *knock***, Aisha already started knocking on the door.

...Hmm what’s happening? Why am I feeling nervous even though I’m not meeting a person of high social standing? Is it because of the possibility of me not being able to live here if the village chief says no? I feel like I don’t even get this nervous when fighting monsters.

Before long, I heard a female voice coming from behind the door answering “Haii”.

“I, ah, come on in-”

After hearing that reply, Aisha opens the door with no worries and enters the house. Is it okay to not wait for the person on the other side to open the door herself?

“Hurry and come in”

After Aisha said so, I entered with her together while being a little hesitant still.

“Ara, I knew it. It’s Aisha-chan”

The person who greeted us was a beautiful woman with wavy blonde-colored hair and jade-colored eyes.

I thought this person should be quite old, but she looks like a wife who managed to keep a beautiful face that showed no signs of aging.

...I think I have seen her somewhere before. Is it just in my head?

“Fiona-san, aren’t I old enough for “-chan” to not be added behind my name anymore when you say my name?”

“I have been watching you play like my daughter ever since you were a little girl, so Aisha-chan will always be a child in my heart, you know?”

The lady fended off Aisha’s protest with a smile.

Aisha seems unable to come up with another retort, and her body moved a little as if she’s embarrassed. Apparently, for a straight-forward person such as Aisha, Fiona is an opponent who she is no match for.

“So, you brought a guest who I have never seen before here, huh? Are you introducing me to your boyfriend?”

The lady calmly looked this way with her jade-colored eyes.

Having Aisha as my girlfriend wouldn’t be the worst idea, but she looks like someone who would hold her man under her thumb.

“That’s not it. He came from the kingdom of Abalonia, wanting to move into this village.”

“Oh my... coming from such a far place. Come on in and talk in detail with my husband, who is the chief of this village”

“Haii” (Aisha)

Rather than looking like my girlfriend, she looks more like someone who lives in this house. In order to have a talk with the village chief, we were guided to a room inside by the village chief’s wife.

Chapter 3

Tranquility of Apple Mint Tea

As we walked down the hallways inside the home of the village chief, Aisha turned to Fiona-san and said,

“Hey, Fiona-san. Flora isn’t here?”

“Yes, that child isn’t here because she went to gather some fruits. I think she will be back by sunset”

“...Then, please tell me when she gets back”

“Sure”

Aisha suddenly stood up after Fiona-san’s reply.

“Okay then, I’ll head back because I was in the middle of work”

“A, Ah. Thank you for guiding me up to this point”

I thought she was just going to bring me to the village chief’s home, but from the conversation they just had, it seems like she wanted to meet a person named Flora.

So since Flora isn’t here, she would naturally head back after bringing me here. It’s a simple reason that can be understood easily.

Aisha quickly turned around and went outside.

“I wanted you to stay for some tea, but there’s nothing I can do since there’s field work to be done”

Fiona-san muttered while wearing a gloomy expression. It’s the expression of someone who is watching their child, who hasn’t been home in ages, leave again after having just returned.

Then, she took her eyes off the door and said to me, “Let’s go”, and we started walking again.

“This is the village chief’s room”

“Okay”

knock**knock, Fiona-san started knocking on the door after hearing my reply.

“Chief. There’s a guest to see you here. Aisha brought him here”

“...I see. Come on in”

Upon hearing the response of a male’s voice coming from inside the room, Fiona-san opened the door.

I entered the room after seeing Fiona-san hinting me to do so with her eyes. Then, I saw a dandy man with clean-cut features standing there with a pleasant smile on his face. His age is likely in the late thirties.

He is wearing a red jacket with long, white colored sleeves, and long brownish pants. However, it looks like they were made of slightly better fabric than the clothing of the villagers.

I wonder if you have to at least dress like that when you are a chief of the village.

In his room, there is a bookshelf and wardrobe which look to be made of simple wood, with a sofa set up on the side. And, deep within the room, there is also a work desk where he seems to do his paperwork and such on.

“This person wishes to move into this village”

“Hoh~ that’s something I rarely hear about. There hasn’t been anyone coming to visit me from outside the village since long ago. Please, go ahead and take a seat”

The village chief invited me to sit down with a smile after being informed by Fiona-san.

“Okay, excuse me”

“I’ll make you some tea”

Fiona-san leaves the room as I took my seat.

By the way, I’m happy for that because I’m quite thirsty right now.

“I am the village chief of Nordende, Ergys”

“Aldo. I came to live in this village from the kingdom of Abalonia”

I thought of giving him a fake alias, but after thinking about it, I decided not to. It should be good enough just using my abbreviated name “Aldo”.

The name Aldred and Aldo are originally quite common anyway. From the church I was once in, there was another person with black hair named Aldred, and there was an Arnold and an Alto as well. Even during my adventurer days, I’ve met another Aldo as well.

So even if someone in this village has heard of a dragon-slayer named Aldred, the person themselves would not think the “Aldred” from another country would be the one in their village.

There is no branch office of the adventurer’s guild here, and even if there was one, I don’t think they would know exactly how I look. The Rumors of the dragon-slaying heroes are exaggerated as they spread, in some regions some have even said their leader was a prince from a ruined country or he was a beautiful man with blonde hair and blue eyes.

“That is an extremely far place you come from. Would you tell me why you have come to live here?”

It took me about a month and a half to get here. Since that was me going at full speed by myself without having to worry about monsters, it would probably take an average person about two months to get here. Naturally, he would wonder why someone would come to a place so far away.

“It’s because I was here once nine years ago. Since then, I still cannot forget the beautiful sight of the fields of flowers here...”

“Ah, so it’s about that. The fields of flowers are our village’s pride. Even I could not get

tired of watching those beautiful flowers that change colors according to the seasons”

Ergys-san nodded as if I somehow had him convinced.

“Travelers and villagers from neighboring villages have also wished to migrate here before for similar reasons, but it’s the first time we’ve had anyone from the Abalonia kingdom. You must quite like it here”

He showed a faint smile that was much gentler than the smile he had before.

I understood from the dialogue we just had, that Ergys-san really loves the flowers as well. After I settle down, it might be nice to have a nice long chat with him while flower gazing.

As I started thinking of such things, Fiona-san came back knocking on the door.

White steam comes pouring out of the tea cups on the trays, and with it comes a refreshing, sweet scent.

“That’s a nice smell”

I took a deep breath unconsciously to take in this sweet aroma.

“It’s apple mint tea. It’s freshly picked so it smells nice, right? I’ve added some honey too, if it’s to your liking”

“It’ll calm you down once you drink it”

I reach out for a cup on the table after being urged on by the both of them to try it.

When I took a sniff at the apple mint tea, I could smell the sweet, fresh smell of green apples. I tilt the cup slowly as I drink it to enjoy the pleasant smell at the same time.

The refreshing sweetness of apple mint runs through my nose, and spreads in my mouth as the drink goes down my throat.

The tea gradually warms my body up, and I can feel the fatigue leaving my body.

“***Hahhh***... it feels so relaxing”

When I let out a sigh of relief, Ergys-san and Fiona-san both giggled.

“At last, you have eased a little, haven’t you?” (chief)

“Yes, Aldo-san is a bit too tensed. Your tone and attitude were making me feel a bit tensed myself”

Now that they mentioned it, I start to notice it as well.

My tensions seem to have not yet been lifted since I have been on the alert the whole time during my journey here alone from Abalonia.

Jeez, I have already arrived here. There’s no guild staff, royalty, or nobles here. I should relax a little.

“Sorry, It’s because I have been traveling alone”

Since I was talking to people older than I am I couldn’t really do it for our first time meeting. But, now I can feel a natural smile forming on my face.

“It couldn’t be helped since you came such a long way. Just settle down here and take it slow from now on”

“Does that mean... that I am welcomed to live in this village?”

“Yes, there are no problems with the people here as well”

I am quite pleased that I received permission from the village chief.

I did it! I can finally live in Nordende.

“Aisha isn’t someone who would bring a bad person here. She might be an open-hearted person, but she has quite the discerning eyes for people, you know?”

Since it’s a must to pass by the vineyards to enter Nordende, Aisha must have naturally developed the perceptiveness to see the nature of the different types of people as they pass by.

At first, I was a bit scared by her.

“There are no vacant houses near the central part of the town right now. But, there is a place you can live in that is not too far from here, what do you say to checking that out?”

“Yes, please”

“With that said, you still wouldn’t be able to move in this quickly, just spend the night here to get rid of the fatigue you accumulated from the trip. We can go check out your place tomorrow”

I am very thankful for his offer. For a long time now I have been on the pattern of riding on a horse carriage, resting at some inconspicuous places, to moving on foot. I am quite tired from repeating that process for who knows how many times.

It will feel good to be able to get a good night’s sleep without having to stay alert throughout the night.

“Thank you for all you’ve done for me so far”

“Yes, we’ll take care of you”

I thanked her while lowering my head and Fiona-san replied with a smile.

It was a conversation of nothing special, but it gave me a feeling of warmth.

I wonder if this is how it would have felt if I had parents. This is a very pleasant feeling.

“By the way, Aldo-san. Do you have anything you’re especially good at? Or is there like something in particular that you’d like to do? If there is, I can introduce you to the right people. Men in the prime of their life are highly welcomed in all kinds of workplaces as they are in high demand”

...Something that I’m especially good at, huh.

My biggest specialty is subjugating monsters, but that isn’t what I want to do here.

From what I’ve seen, there are few occurrences of monsters appearing here, but I am not needed to step in for that.

If I can, I could use the skills I developed from being an adventurer for hunting, or

maybe plowing small fields.

Plowing a field by myself, and eating my own crops... I would like to live that type of self-sufficient lifestyle.

As for hunting, I've already hunted an infinite amount of times to secure food during my adventurer days. Although I'm not very skilled in using tools like keels^[i] to hunt, a bow and arrow I can handle.

But, for agriculture, I'll need someone to teach me since I've never done things like that. However, it should be fine if I hunt and farm separately.

"...Let's see. I'm confident in my hunting skills, and I also want to try cultivating a small field"

"Ohh, that would make the people here very happy since there are only a few hunters in this village. I'll introduce you to the hunters of this village after you get settled. Please teach them about the ingredients and animals that can be taken from the mountains. As for the fields, depending on what you want to grow, the choice of the person I'd introduce you to changes, so give some thought about what you want to grow and tell me"

"Thank you, again, for all you've done so far"

Since they've done so much to help me, I'll have to do my best to hunt. I want to do something back for them, too, by any means.

"No, no, Aldo-san is already a member of the village. I'll help you, not only as the village chief, but also as an individual"

Ergys-san laughed while being somewhat embarrassed.

Despite how he looks, he might be a pretty shy person.

"Aldo-san, what would you like to do for now? It's still a bit early for lunch, but would you like something to eat?"

Certainly, I am a little hungry, but there's something I would like to see before eating.

I still have some preserved food left, so I can eat that for lunch.

“No, I will go check out the fields of flowers”

Ergys-san showed me a bright smile after I answered him as I stood up.

Chapter 4

Fairy of The Flower Garden

After putting my luggage in a hemp bag inside the village chief's home, I went outside with some portable food, such as cheese, berries and biscuits.

I still remember the way to the fields of flowers, somehow.

If I'm not wrong, by heading west from the village's center plaza following the tree-lined avenue, I should be able to reach the field of flowers.

I walked south from the village chief's house, and headed west from the plaza.

The number of people and houses gradually decreased as I walked, eventually entering a road surrounded by trees.

The way the lush green leaves are swaying from the wind is as if they are welcoming me.

And, as if the trees are luring me to go deeper and deeper, I continued to advance.

If I listened closely, I could hear the sounds of insects in brushes and the chirping noises of birds on trees.

I could not afford to enjoy the relaxing nature like this back in the days as an adventurer, as I was always at some place where many monsters resided.

If I knew how refreshing this felt, it would have been nice to go for picnics or walks here with my party members.

Even though in those days, all I did was to try to become stronger, as I was desperate to live.

When I passed by places such as these in horse carriages, I feel like all I did was either sleep, or I was doing some kind of muscle training, while ignoring anything else. It makes me think about what a waste it was back then.

I feel like I now understand a little about the feelings of my party members when they looked at me speechlessly during those times.

The air became heavy as I walked deeper down the tree-lined path. It started to resemble the forest which I had once been to.

“However... If I go out from here...”

The beautiful field of flowers should be there. I am near my destination.

I can feel my feet moving faster and faster as I advanced step after step.

crunch, ***crunch***, I moved my feet with all my might as I treaded on the road of soil. My pace gradually increased to double what it was.

What is ahead is the place I yearned for.

I wonder how many times I have dreamed of this moment since the day in the kingdom when I remembered about this place.

I dug out what's left of my memories from nine years ago, and used my imagination to fill in the blanks that I was missing.

Even so, not once have I been able to remember this scene well enough. I always thought to myself that, “No, it wasn't like this”, every time I put together an image in my head.

However, this is the real thing here, the spectacle that has not faded one bit since nine years ago.

The road with trees on both sides came to an end, with a dazzling light coming from the end of the path.

I ran towards that light– and there it was, the vast field of flowers.

The flowers in colors of a radiant red, pink, orange, yellow, and white are fully in bloom, and they spread as far as the eye can see. The colors of these flowers are something which I could not fully describe in words due to my lack of knowledge and poor vocabulary; I just know the flowers have a wide gradation of colors.

This is like a flower carpet made of many types of flowers.

The few types that I see as I get closer are Rapeseed blossom, Tulip, Poppy, and Kiruruku^[i] etc.

The sky is also all clear, dyed in the color of blue.

When the wind blew from one direction, the sweet scent of the flowers drifted across as the flowers themselves swayed to follow.

“.....”

I stared at this scene without blinking. No, I mean, it could be better described as it being too beautiful for me to take my eyes off.

Witnessing a scene so beautiful that one would not think it could exist within this world... It's almost as if I, alone, was isolated in a separate dimension.

As I looked at this other-worldly scene that is interweaved with colors, I thought to myself-

There's no need to talk about the memories of my dream anymore, the scenery before my eyes is much more beautiful by comparison.

The colors, the flowers, and the feel of the air are all different from how I imagined them to be. On top of that, I could not imagine the smell, the wind, or the sounds. My imagination was lacking.

I thought the scenery from nine years ago was engraved in my mind because it was that unforgettable. However, it's a known fact that human memories can be quite off.

“...I'm finally here”

Those words leaked out of my dry mouth.

This is the scenery I dreamed of; the place I have yearned for in the past month and a half.

Here I am now.

Tears came out as warm feelings filled my chest from the various emotions of happiness and excitement mixing together.

I wipe the tears off my cheek in a hurry with the back of my hand as I surprised even myself from that.

I wonder if these tears formed from being deeply moved from all the emotions. I have no idea.

This is my first time experiencing something like this.

I feel confused from not understanding the emotions I'm feeling, but it feels like the hole of emptiness that was created since I became a dragon slayer had been filled a little.

I finished wiping my tears, and I started walking again after my emotions had calmed down.

I wanted to enjoy this spectacle of beautiful flowers from various different angles, not just from one view.

I chose the areas without flowers blooming to walk on.

As my line of sight changes, I see more types of flowers.

Flowers in shapes that I have never seen before, some strangely short, some strangely long, some with many layers of petals stacked together. It's a shame that I have absolutely no idea what they're called.

However, it's somewhat fun to think about it. What their names are, when they might bloom, and the meaning of their names.

I go through the field of flowers as I enjoy the colors and smell of them, along with the smell of soil and grass. Smelling the pleasant fragrances of the flowers that stick to my clothes as I walk, it feels like it's okay even if I don't wash them. I suspect the floral fragrance coming from Fiona-san is also created from using the flowers.

I walked over a hill while thinking of those things as I gazed at the flowers.

I've already walked about a hundred meters in distance after crossing the hill, but the

field of flowers still continued on ahead.

Moreover, their shapes and colors are even slightly different from the ones I saw before.

Just here alone, there were many different types of flowers.

Another thing that is different from a moment ago would be the trees that stood alone in the distance.

Neither large nor small, they are trees that you could find anywhere, but they blended in strangely with the flowers here.

Just like that, I would like to take a break under the trees there.

It would feel nice taking a nap while lying down in the shade of the trees. This definitely would be a good place to avoid heat in the summer time.

I walked towards the trees that I wanted to lie down under.

I was reminded of the season of summer from my thoughts. However, I know the flowers here in particular also changed their colors depending on the season as well.

Who was it that taught me this?

I can't seem to remember it well, since it was nine years ago...

I decided to chase those thoughts out of my head, since it's easy to create false memories if you try too hard to remember something while being confused.

It's not something important right now. Let's just enjoy the beautiful sights here.

Then, I reached the side of the tree as I enjoyed this beautiful sight thoroughly.

"My feet are a bit tired, I guess I'll take a break here?"

The moment I start to settle down in the shade of the tree, a female came out of the field of flowers.

With radiant, blonde-colored hair that reached down to her waist, and big, round jade-

colored eyes that are like emeralds.

I could see that she's younger than I am, as she has a bit of a baby face, but her facial features are just like a doll's.

Her slender body is wrapped in a white blouse that brings a sense of cleanliness, and her curvy hips are wrapped in a dark-blue colored skirt.

The "fairy" who has unexpectedly dropped by in this garden of flowers is no doubt, a beautiful woman.

From seeing the various flowers and fruits from the basket she had in hand, I understood that she had been gathering those for a while.

The fairy-san is looking at me with a stunned expression.

As it was getting somewhat embarrassing from just looking at each other, I decided to talk to the fairy-san for the time being.

"...Um, hi"

"-?!"

The fairy-san's shoulders shivered after I started the interaction by giving my greetings.

Maybe she was startled from a twenty-seven-year-old man suddenly talking to her.

Anyway, in order to not frighten her any further, I put on a gentle expression on my face without moving another inch.

".....E, erm..."

The girl was mumbling in a faint voice bashfully, with a face that is a little red.

She restlessly took her round, jade-colored eyes on and off me. Is she a shy person?

When I thought that was the case no matter how I looked at it, an expression appeared on the girl's face, as if she readied herself after having gathered all her courage and...

“...H, Hello!”

She yelled. And she ran off in the direction of the village.

While I looked at her small back becoming smaller and smaller as I blink, I muttered to myself.

“...Is my face really that scary?”

Chapter 5

Reunion with the Fairy

When my eyes suddenly opened, the sun had already moved to a much lower position.

The evening will come very soon.

After watching the back of the girl who ran away, I ate the cheese, raspberries, and biscuits that I brought.

Since my stomach was filled, I felt sleepy and laid down in the shade of the tree, but it seems I had fallen asleep as it felt too comfortable.

It was more comfortable than what I imagined. I was shrouded by coolness right under the shadows of the tree with the sunlight blocked, as I was also accompanied by the sweet scent of flowers. Every time the wind blew, my earlobe was gently tickled as the grass emitted a *ssssssaaaaa* sound.

It was as if I became one with nature.

Oops, now isn't the time to be immersed in such sentiment. In a little while, this blue sky will be dyed in the colors orange and red as the sun sets.

I'm not living alone in an inn right now.

Forgive me if I am late for dinner, even though I am indebted to you guys.

At the very least, I need to make it there before the sun completely sets.

I got up in one go to shake off the slight sleepiness that I still had. Then, a butterfly landed on my nose briefly before flying away.

Although the butterfly soaring in the air caught my attention for a second, I bolted off with a sharp, sudden movement and started running back to the village chief's home.



The sky was stained with a reddish-orange color, then it became completely dark shortly after. I arrived at the village chief's house and firmly opened the door.

"Welcome Back"

Fiona-san peeked out and replied from the back of the house as I walked in the entrance of their house.

"...Ah. Yes, I'm back"

It feels like it has been forever since I was welcomed so warmly like this.

That's why my reaction was a bit slow.

My friends from back in the party would have just greeted me lightly, like, "Oh, you're back", "You're late-", "You were training again?"

Such friendly welcomes aren't bad, but Fiona-san's welcoming words gave me a feeling of being cared for, and it put a warm feeling in my chest.

Maybe it's because I've always longed for a mother's love.

I had previously thought that if I could live a slow life in Nordende, it's fine even if I don't get married.

But just now when I thought that I could have someone to welcome me home like this, a little bit of desire for a wife came out.

"Come over here, dinner's ready"

Fiona-san beckoned me over with her hands as she smiled.

A stimulating and appetizing smell drifted from deep inside the house. I can strongly smell the herb-seasoned meat as well as the smell of cheese.

My stomach growled as it was stimulated from the smell. As I thought, the cheese, raspberries, and biscuits I ate from afternoon weren't enough.

I entered a room inside while rubbing my stomach as it complained about hunger.

Inside, there was their living room which was also connected to their kitchen. There was a sofa on the side, and a kitchen table big enough to seat about six people around it.

“Ah, welcome back Aldo-san. What did you think of the field of flowers that you haven’t seen in such a long while?”

Ergys-san asked with a smile while seated.

“It was really beautiful. A lot more beautiful than I imagined... I fell asleep from the overwhelming feeling of comfort there and took a nap, so I returned late. Sorry about that”

“Don’t worry about it. You’re right on time, as dinner is about ready. You say you fell asleep, was it under that tree?”

“Yes”

“That spot is good, right? It has a cool breeze when you lie down, and the soft grass that grows on the ground there gives a nice cushioning. I would go there for a nap even now if I had the free time”

To me, who was enjoying that to my heart’s content until a little while ago, I couldn’t agree more to what he just said.

“That place is popular among the villagers, no matter how young or old, whenever they have squabbles. They all lie down there and take naps after they finish arguing and fighting with each other”

Said Fiona-san with a gentle tone as she set up the tableware.

I see, I was lucky to have occupied that spot for half the afternoon. Perhaps, the woman I ran into there was also trying to take a break under the tree there.

However, she ran into an unfamiliar man there. Maybe that’s why she left.

“That tree brings back tons of memories”

Ergys-san muttered full of nostalgia. It's a tree that was nurtured by the feelings of the villagers.

That sounds somewhat nice. That sort of thing.

"Yes, we also met each other under that tree, didn't we? When we were still kids, we always got in big fights over who gets to nap on that spot"

"Because we were both kids, yeah"

Ergys-san turned to Fiona-san as he was caught off guard by her words, and he responded with a bitter smile.

Ohh, so even Ergys-san, who has such a calm personality, had a childhood like that.

"And, the most wonderful memory was the time you confessed to me there..."

"...Fiona, it's embarrassing to say this out loud in front of Aldo-san..."

Ergys-san replied to the ecstatic Fiona-san while looking embarrassed.

"Hoho, you confessed at the most memorable place for the both of you, huh?"

I looked at Ergys-san as I teased him with a smile on my face.

"It's a story from back when I was young. L, leaving that aside, Aldo-san, let me introduce you to our daughter! Oi, Flora!"

"Yes- coming!"

An ear pleasing voice came from the kitchen area after Ergys-san called.

"“She ran back in, didn't she?”“"

Seeing the panicking Ergys-san, Fiona-san and I giggled.

Ergys-san looked a little uncomfortable as he waited for the owner of the voice to come out.

Before long, as if Ergys-san's daughter finished arranging something in the kitchen,

she came back out to the room in a hurry.

“This is Aldo-san, who decided to live in this village”

I was surprised as I saw Ergys-san’s daughter, Flora.

This is the woman I met under the tree of the field of flowers, a woman with blonde-colored hair and jade-colored eyes.

Did she realize it as well? Her eyes are locked wide open.

“...Aldo...”

My name was faintly called out from her beautiful, pink-colored lips.

“From a little while ago...”

I kept my mouth shut as the “fairy” who ran away earlier talked to me.

“Oya, did you guys meet from somewhere?”

Ergys-san asked as he was suspicious from seeing our surprised reactions.

“Yes, under the tree of the flower field earlier”

As I answered like this, Fiona-san started teasing me.

“Ara ara, meeting under that tree just like us, huh?”

“But we didn’t get in a fight there though?”

All that happened was her running away after I greeted her. Somehow I became sad when I replied to myself.

A woman who ran away just from me greeting her...

Ergys-san coughed as if he felt the flow of the conversation had gone unsteady, or he was afraid that sparks might come flying out.

“I see. This will save us some time then. Like I said, Aldo-san is going to spend the night

here, so take care of him as well, Flora”

“..”

Ergys-san said it again with emphasis, but Flora still showed no reaction. She is just staring right at me.

“Flora?”

“Oh, right! I, I understand! I’ll go bring the food out now!”

Flora returned to herself from hearing Ergys-san’s voice and went back in the kitchen in a hurry.

She ran from me again. But, nevertheless, we’ll be eating at the same table afterwards.

“Sorry Aldo-san, my daughter is a shy person. She’s going to bring the food out now so please wait a moment”

“Yes, thank you”

Ergys-san managed to ease the mood a little just as it was starting to get somewhat awkward again.

Flora is someone shy, right? It’s not because she’s scared of me or hates me, right?

I took a seat as I wondered.

Chapter 6

A Delicious Pot-au-feu

“Ohh, it sure is a feast today”

Ergys-san said happily as he looked at the dishes on the table.

In front of our eyes was a pot-au-feu^[i] that is full of ingredients such as potatoes, carrots, sausages, cabbage and broccoli. A stir-fry made using vegetables and mushrooms with butter, fried chicken with herbs, and bread which was cut into bite-sized pieces with some creamy cheese on the side.

It's no exaggeration to call this menu a feast. Just looking at it put a smile on my face.

“We have a new resident in this village starting today. It's a celebration for that”

“Yeah. We're celebrating tonight. Let me open a ten-year-old wine”

“Thank you”

I slowly lowered my head and thanked them after listening to their heart-warming words.

I have already encountered such kind people all the way out here in no time. I am so deeply moved that tears almost came out.

Ergys-san got up from his seat in a hurry and left the room, and before long, he returned with a wine bottle in his hand. As he had a somewhat delightful look on his face, I really understood that he saved his best wine for last.

“...Nordende?”

I accidentally muttered out the brand of the wine.

“This wine was made at Aisha-chan's place”

Ah, right. Aisha is a grape farmer, and I see that she simply used the place of production as the wine's brand name.

As Ergys-san is in the process of uncorking the wine, Fiona-san brought out four wine glasses without asking.

"Aisha-chan's wine is smooth and easy to drink. Even though our Flora doesn't really like wine, she still likes the wine that Aisha-chan makes"

Flora is softly hitting Fiona-san's shoulders with her hands while looking downwards, seemingly embarrassed.

Hehh, I'm looking forward to this.

So, that straight-forward Aisha was the one who made this wine... Well, her personality and the grapes have nothing to do with each other.

The sound of the cork popping echoed in the room, then each of the wine glasses were filled to the brim with red wine. The rich aroma of grapes hung in the air.

"Well then, a toast to celebrate a new resident of the village, Aldo-san!"

Matching the words of Ergys-san, each one of us lightly clinked our wine glasses together.

The unique, high pitch noise from clinking wine glasses together sounded in the room, and everyone brought their glasses to their mouths.

"Wow, this is easy to drink. It's so smooth"

As expected from a ten-year-old wine, the taste has a mild sweetness.

The astringency is just right. If it's like this, even people who don't like the distinctive astringent taste of red wines can drink this.

"Was this to your liking?"

"Yes, very much so"

I want to drink this every day.

“The cheese here was also made in this village. It totally goes well together with the wine”

Ergys-san might have sensed how much I liked this wine, so with a somewhat happy look, he recommended the cheese to go with it.

I quickly take some cheese as I was already drinking the red wine, so it would be a waste to not try the cheese out together with it like he said.

Then, I rubbed some of the creamy cheese onto a piece of bite-sized cut bread.

As the piece of bread got quickly covered in a thick layer of cheese, I put the mouth watering food into my mouth.

The taste of the cheese with a thickness that is just right spread in my mouth all at once.

Then, as I enjoy the taste of the cheese with a little chewing, I also take in the smooth wine.

The rich flavored wine and the cheese, with a smell and taste that’s just right, have the perfect affinity with each other.

“This goes so well together!”

“I know, right?”

Ergys-san answered me with a smile as he puts some cheese on a piece of bread and enjoys it with wine as well.

Flora and Fiona-san, who are sitting in front of me, seem to be eating the wine and cheese with good manners.

This combination of cheese and wine with the same place of origin has reminded me of something Kiel had said in the past. He said that if the distinct flavors of the wine and cheese go well with each other, they would not overlap and fight. Following his words, I feel like the combination of this wine and cheese goes so well together that it’s like a marriage.

I was not interested in wine at that time, so I can’t remember what else he said.

However, I feel like I can drink any amount of glasses with this combo.

I continue to eat and drink before the cheese cools down, as it won't taste as good when that happens.

In the middle of eating, I noticed there was cheese dripping down from Flora's mouth due to it being too creamy, but I did not stare at her directly. I mean, I understood that she was embarrassed as her face was red already.

After that, eighty percent of the cheese was consumed, and I start with the huge pot-au-feu that is in front of me.

I cut the large potatoes into halves in a flash, and put them in my mouth.

It was properly seasoned with salt, pepper, and herbs. The flavor of the soup which was sucked in by the potatoes was the best. It gave the simple, steaming hot potatoes a nice highlight.

It was quite different from the simple pot-au-feu that was served in inns.

The spoon scooping the soup does not stop.

"This pot-au-fu is super delicious. You can even start your own restaurant"

"Ara, that's good for you, Flora. The pot-au-feu you made is being greatly praised"

"T, Thank you very much"

Flora glanced at me with an upward gaze as she spoke.

Her face and ears are pure red as if she was really embarrassed. Her looks resemble Fiona-san but inside she's more like the shy Ergys-san.

At the same time, I also have a taste of the carrots, cabbage, and broccoli.

According to Ergys-san, all these vegetables were grown in this village as well. The broccoli and carrots were personally grown by him.

They were sweeter than the other broccoli and carrots that I've ever eaten before, and they had a firm crunchiness to them.

So this is what freshly picked vegetables taste like, huh.

Since I am now having a taste of what fresh vegetables taste like, I want to grow my own crops more and more.

Then, I have a taste of the juicy sausages and bread dipped in soup.

I felt Flora glancing at me here and there as I ate the pot-au-feu, but she did not say anything to me.

I did not really mind it because she's probably just observing if I was going to praise the food she made.

I was also in charge of cooking in my adventurer days, so I really know how that feels. It's a happy feeling when you see other people savoring the meals you made yourself.

Ergys-san and Fiona-san were watching Flora with warm eyes as they took notice of her state. Although there was a silence, it was a pleasant silence without a hint of awkwardness.

Finishing the pot-au-feu, as I moved on to the fried chicken with herbs and the stir-fried mushrooms & vegetables, I noticed that Flora was fidgeting restlessly in front of me.

Even though she held a fork in her right hand, that hand isn't moving at all. She looked at the empty pot-au-feu plate and then my face.

As one would expect, I have no idea as to what she wants.

Since my stomach isn't bulged yet, maybe I should shamelessly ask for seconds. It was such a delicious pot-au-feu that I decided to ask for more.

When I opened my mouth to ask, Flora spoke to me.

"Um, would you like me to refill the pot-au-feu?"

"...Yes, please"

"Got it!"

Flora, who asked timidly, showed a bright smile like a blooming flower as I hand her the plate.

She put away the fork in her hand, then she received the plate with both her hands and happily walked to the kitchen.

After that, she returned with a plate full of pot-au-feu for me.

“Here you go”

“Thanks”

Seeing her so happy also brought a broad smile to my face, and she also shyly smiled in return.

Maybe she has gotten a bit more accustomed to me. We smiled to each other as we talked, and she also got to ask me some questions as well.

It feels like our distance had shrunk a little by having this dinner together. I’m sure she won’t have to run away the next time we meet.

After that, I had two more rounds of pot-au-feu.

[i] a soup based stew of french origin, somewhat popular in Japan

Chapter 7

High Hopes

After being satisfied from the dishes that were made with Nordende's homegrown ingredients, I was offered a bath out of Ergys-san's attentiveness.

In the dressing room located at the very end of Ergys-san's house, I start to undress myself.

Normally, if a person wanted to use a bath, they'd have to walk to the well and back several times to fill the bath up with water, and then heat it to the right temperature.

It sounds easy to do, but it's really hard work.

For that reason, a bath is actually considered a luxurious thing to the people of this village, as they usually just clean their body with a wet towel. They would only take baths about once a month, and any time other than that would be only in times of celebration.

I'm so happy and grateful that he still prepared a bath for me when we just met not too long ago.

As I was about to tell him that, Ergys-san said to me with a smile, "It's just the right time for you to go in"

I am ashamed of myself for napping in the field of flowers instead of helping out with the preparation of the food or bath.

When I get my first catch from the mountains, I should, first and foremost, pay a visit to Ergys-san's home to give them a share.

Having that feeling carved into my heart, I entered the bath area after taking my clothes off.

Inside the bathing area, there was a round-shaped tub made from wood that looked big enough to fit four people inside.

This is a large bath tub. If it's just one person, it would be big enough for them to stretch their feet all the way out to relax.

White steam rises up from the tub, and the starry sky that I was peeping at through the window disappears.

The room was dark since the sun was already down, but thanks to the moonlight coming in from the windows, it was just bright enough for me to see.

I want to dive into the bathtub right away, but I'll wash my body first because I don't want to dirty the bath.

I sat on what feels like a handmade wooden stool, scooped up some hot water from the tub and poured it on myself.

"Ha..."

The hot water ran down my body, and I could not help but let out a sigh from the refreshing feeling.

Oh, what a comfortable feeling this is.

But damn, right now I feel like I reek of someone of age. No, wait, I'm twenty seven years old, so I'm plenty old enough already.

While I was having such thoughts, I dumped water on myself from above the head, then around the center of my lower body.

Haaa, it's like the fatigue I accumulated from the trip had all left my body together with the dirt.

I wonder if it'd feel even better when I soak myself in the hot tub.

Since I want to get in as quickly as possible, let's hurry and finish cleaning myself.

"Ergys-san definitely had said that there is soap in the corner of this room..."

After letting my eyes wander about, I found the soap on a small table located in the corner of the room.

Then, by simply grabbing it and rubbing it on my towel, a floral scent started to drift in the air.

“What is this?”

I took my hand that I grabbed the soap with and sniffed it without thinking, and there was the floral scent.

When I took a look at the soap through the moonlight, I noticed that not only is the soap not in the color of grey, but it was light brown, with flower petals on the surface of it.

Perhaps it's made like that so the soap can absorb the scent of flowers. Maybe there were herbs kneaded into it as well.

It is a very relaxing smell. It might have the same calming effect as the herbal tea I had. I feel relaxed.

This soap might be a product exclusively made in Nordende, since there are tons of wonderful flowers here. If there weren't all these flowers here it would have been a hard task to make such a soap.

Surely the villagers here have gone through many trials and errors in order to come up with this product.

I frothed up my towel as I was feeling impressed.

Then, I rubbed my entire body with the towel. After I was done with my body, I soaped my head and face together, and then poured the hot water over my head.

While I paid attention to not be wasteful with the hot water, bubbles foamed as they took away the dirt.

With the bubbles covering my entire body, I feel so refreshed. It's as if I had been reborn.

Now then, since I'm done washing my body now, next is this bath from Ergys-san's good will.

I put my towel on the edge of the bathtub as I got in, then I gently stretched out my

legs and let my body sink slowly.

“Ah...”

A low pitched voice leaked out of me unintentionally from the overwhelming pleasure.

The fatigue that was accumulated from the long journey dissipated here in the hot water.

I rest my head on the edge of the bathtub and further stretch my limbs to relax.

As I look up and exhale, I can now see the moonlit night through the window that was opened just wide enough.

There are countless stars glistening brightly in the sky.

I stared blankly at the starry sky as I wondered if the bathtub was placed in such an area so the person taking a bath like this can see this sight out the window.

How long has it been since I got to calmly watch the night sky like this? I never thought of doing this for a second when I was back at the capital.

I don't know if it was because the street lights were always on at night, but I had never thought that a thing such as the night sky was beautiful. I guess when you live at a different place, the sceneries you see and how you feel will be different as well.

“Maybe I should go star gazing once I have settled down here”

I'm sure that the night view would be nothing less than perfect.



After I enjoyed the starry sky with the bath, I changed into a rough shirt and trousers and headed into my room. It was a large room set up with basic furniture such as a bed, table, chair, drawer and a mirror. Perhaps this was a vacant guestroom that they've prepared in the case of sudden visitors like me.

I organized my luggage in my hemp bag and swiftly jumped onto the bed.

It was the long missed feeling of a soft futon. During the trip I couldn't stay in high end

inns and many of the nights were spent camping out.

Although I am confident in my abilities, it was still mentally taxing to stay alert through the nights in forests and caves. It was a piece of cake back when I had my party of friends because we could take turns to keep watch.

I am just now fully realizing how fortunate I was to be able to feel safe when sleeping at those places.

To further enjoy the feeling of this soft futon, I start rolling on the bed.

There's the same floral scent from the soap earlier on this bed and futon as well.

It's a really pleasant smell.

I also smell really good due to washing my body with that soap.

Aside from smelling my hands, I also touched my skin and felt an elasticity like mochi^[i].

What the heck is this? Was my skin always this good? Is a skin beauty enhancing component from flowers also mixed in the soap? Actually, that had to be it. I am convinced of that from remembering Fiona-san and Flora's fresh and youthful skin.

...Tomorrow I'll know where my house will be.

A home in Nordende. A place where I can call home to return to.

Even though I don't have a warm family like Ergys-san, I'll still be really happy if I have a place to return to at night that isn't an inn where I can only stay temporarily after paying money.

I can put my furniture however I like, and use it however I want.

It would be nice if I have a yard that I can plant flowers and grow vegetables on. Since I'll be making my own meals from now on, the kitchen also needs to be roomy.

Just thinking about it brings joy to me, and my cheeks started to loosen.

Even with my wild imagination of ideas of how I will decorate the interior of the house

just for myself, the most important thing after all will be—

“...I hope it will be in a location that is close to the field of flowers”

Yes, if it's like that then I can see the field of flowers soon again.

“Tomorrow, will be the beginning of my new life”

With those last mutters, my consciousness falls into the depths as I fall asleep.

^[i] Chewy Japanese rice cake sweets.

Chapter 8

A New Home

The next morning.

After we had breakfast together in Ergys-san's home, it was time to visit some vacant houses in order to decide where I'll live.

When I was going out with my luggage on my back, Flora and Fiona-san came to see us off.

I quickly bowed my head to these two to show my gratitude.

"Sorry, and thank you for everything you've done for me. I was really happy to have such delicious meals and a bath to use"

"No, no. You might have a hard time living alone from here on, so don't feel hesitant to consult us if there's anything you need"

"Yes, there are still lots that I don't know, so I'll be depending on you from now on"

It's my first time living the village life. I'm now living in an environment that does not exist in my country of birth. I will have no choice but to trouble them since there are still many things that I'm not familiar with.

Being able to meet and connect with these nice people while I was in such state of uneasiness really blows it all away.

Just from having someone to show me the ropes made me feel plenty reassured.

Right now, I am only taking without giving, but I will definitely return these favors once I've settled down.

"...U, um, I made a boxed lunch for you"

Flora walked up to me and held out a basket.

When I rolled over the cloth cover of the basket after receiving it, there were plenty of sandwiches inside.

“If you don’t mind, please eat these for lunch”

The scene of Flora twiddling her fingertips as she spoke was very cute.

Today is the scheduled day of choosing my new home around the village. After we decide on the house, I’d have to clean up fast, and ready the place for me to sleep in by night. The lunch box is going to really help out.

“Thank you. I really appreciate it”

“N, no worries. Please come eat at our place again sometime”

She smiled shyly as she replied to my words of gratitude.

There aren’t a lot of women out there who are this cute, this good at cooking, and this attentive to others.

I might have hit on her if I was a bit younger. Well, even though that’s what I say, I probably couldn’t even hit on a girl properly since I was a sword freak.

Besides, she’s eighteen years old. That’s already two years after reaching adulthood. There’s no way the men of this village will not go after such a lovely girl like her.

I’m sure she has a lover somewhere.

“Flora, don’t I get one?”

“Your share is right here, made just the way you like it. I made it myself, you know?”

“Ohh, thank you as usual”

When Ergys-san asked, Fiona-san answered him instead as she handed him a basket.

From the exchange Ergys-san just had with Fiona-san, I can tell that they are a very happy couple. Their casual way of talking to each other shows that.

While I was looking at the way they act, Ergys-san turned around.

“Now then, shall we get going, Aldo-san?”

“Sure!”

Now that Ergys-san and I both had received our lunches, we headed for the vacant houses.

““Have a safe trip””

““See ya!!””

Ergys-san and I both answered to the overlapping voices of Fiona-san and Flora who saw us off.

I was looking forward to my new house, but as I walked away from this heartwarming one, I started to feel some lingering emotions.

I’ve only spent one night in their home, but it was one of the best times of my life.

“We’re living in the same village, so you can come visit us anytime”

“...Yeah”

There will be chances for more happy memories from now on.



“Now then, I have went and checked out the vacant houses yesterday, but do you have an idea of what kind of home you’d like?”

Ergys-san asked when we reached the town square, which is the center of the village.

Since this is the center part of the village, it would be more efficient to decide what kind of home I’d want before choosing which direction to go from here.

“Yeah, I guess my first choice would be on the west end near the field of flowers”

I was able to answer right away as I already had an idea in mind. Yup, that was the most important thing after all.

“Oh, that’s fine. There is plenty of unused land over there, not only would you be able to use it to grow crops, but it’s also near the mountains”

Oh, thank god. It seems like the west end is just what I want.

“For the time being, let’s go over there because there are four vacant houses”

With those words, Ergys-san walked towards the west with me following behind.

I walked alongside Ergys-san on the same paths that I took yesterday.

As we continued to walk on the long road, there were the same sparsely inhabited homes that I saw yesterday. It’s way less populated here compared to the area around Ergys-san’s house, but I don’t mind because a relaxing and spacious home is what I want.

There would be all kinds of inconveniences if I were to live in the center of people’s homes anyway because of all the disassembling and blood draining work to animals that I will have to do as a hunter.

All of the houses we see here have large yards around them, so they all had some kind of crops growing. Of course, that included flowers of brilliant colors as well.

The homes are also surrounded by many trees, with a stream flowing nearby. This area gives off a really pleasant feel.

As I check out the private houses that are in my sight, a large, two-story home has caught my attention. That house was surrounded by walls of stone, and there was even a gate built at the front of it.

Maybe it’s because I’ve naturally grown observant over the years that I could see that a bit of their unkempt roof has started to come off. Nevertheless, it was still the most luxurious house among all the houses I’ve seen so far.

It looked like a house built for nobles.

While feeling impressed looking at this house, Ergys-san stopped in front of it.

“This is one of the vacant houses of the west end”

“...It’s a big house”

I muttered as I looked up at this big house.

No, this is different from the home I imagined. I feel like I wouldn’t be able to manage a house this big.

It would be impossible to do that without hiring people.

“A long time ago, some nobles came and built this house. However, nobody could take care of it because it was too big. I didn’t expect that you would be able to either, Aldo-san, but I just thought it was much more interesting to introduce this home to you first rather than the small ones”

I see. That’s a valid point. It was kind of interesting to know that there’s this kind of home in this village.

“Mind if I take a look inside? I want to see the nobles’ architecture”

When I was an adventurer, I visited the mansions of nobles whenever I was nominated to, but I’m quite interested in what their private homes are like.

“Almost all the furniture and household appliances inside were taken for reuse. Is it fine if we just move on to the next one?”

“Yes, that’s fine. Let’s go since I am the one troubling you for all this”

With those feelings, I walked towards the other vacant homes to the west in order to check them out.

The second house was an ordinary looking house, but I passed on it because there were too few rooms and the house doesn’t get much sunlight.

The third house was similar to the normal-sized homes in the town center area. Although it wasn’t very roomy, I had a favorable impression because it had a bathtub in there. But in the end, I passed on it too since it was too close to the neighbouring houses. It wasn’t close like just being a few meters apart, but close enough to the point where all the houses were almost touching.

As I said, that would be inconvenient in the future if I bring back hunted animals there.

The smell of blood would waft everywhere.

After checking out the third house, we moved to the fourth one.

“I’m confident in this next one as my recommendation. I wonder if you’ll be pleased with this one, Aldo-san. Well, if it isn’t to your liking either, we can look at more houses in the south”

“I understand. I can’t wait to see it”

Since I don’t want to live too far away from the field of flowers, I hope this next house is good.

Keeping those feelings in mind, we walked through the bushy grass, and then crossed a bridge over a small river.

And from that point on, we continued walking through more bushy grass for a while. Then, the scenery opened up as several scattered private houses came into my sight.

The view is good, the sunlight is good, and the homes are not clustered up.

Since my basic requirements were cleared, it looked to be okay. It’ll be fine as long as the houses aren’t highly damaged. I mean this IS Ergys-san’s recommendation, he wouldn’t be recommending a highly damaged house to me.

“Here we are”

As Ergys-san stopped and said that, there was a one-story house that was slightly larger than the average homes here.

Maybe there were people living here until not too long ago, or maybe the age of the house is just not standing out? I can’t see any deterioration of the roofs or the walls.

The large warehouse next to the house also gives me a good impression. With such a large warehouse there, I can do my work in there.

“It looks good. Is it okay if I check out the inside quickly?”

“Oh, sure. Please, go ahead”

Ergys-san answered my question as he opened the door, so I immediately went to take a look inside the house.

The moment I entered, it hit me. This house was matching the image of the house that I had in mind for so long and there was no need to look for anything more.

“Oh...”

I let out a voice of admiration as my eyes wandered.

There was a large room where the living room and kitchen connected. The walls are painted in the color of white cream, and there were bricks mixed in some places as well. The wooden floor is dark brown and it's coupled with a nice scent.

“This place has just the right feeling of calmness to it”

This is how it feels without any furniture. If I set up the right furniture for this house, the atmosphere would feel even better.

“Ee, it's quite nice, right? Moreover, there is a large bath that's plenty big for you in this house, you know?”

“Really?”

I was surprised by Ergys-san's proud words.

It would be rare for there to be a bathtub in a normal villager's home.

“The person who lived here before was someone who liked a nice bath. Since there is a stream and a well nearby, he often boiled his own bath. Well, getting the water to the right temperature was tough though”

I was a bit curious about this big bathtub, so I headed to that room which was deep inside the house.

When I opened the door of the narrow change room, there was a big, square-shaped bathtub inside.

Ohh, it's not smaller than the bath in Ergys-san's house. So, the reason why the change room was strangely narrow was so that the previous owner could increase the size of

the bathtub even if it was only by a little bit.

I can understand his feelings of disappointment just from looking at it.

For someone like me, I don't care much as long as it's a bath so I will certainly make use of it. Preparing hot water with one person is pretty tough, but it's not a problem since I have magic tools.

Magic tools are general tools made from the magically enhanced mana stones of high level monsters.

You engrave the magic circle of a spell you want to cast on the tools, and the spell is activated through the mana extracted from the mana stones.

For ordinary people, magic tools are valuable items that can allow one to take it easy their whole life. However, even for people like me who have zero talent in magic, they are still convenient tools that grants us access to magic.

Although we had the wizard, Kurune, in our party, there were still times where she would run out of mana. But, chances are no one will get injured still because of the magic tools everyone carried on them.

Well, that much should be natural for the once A-ranked party of the kingdom.

Even that being the case, I don't think I should be using these valuable magic tools that were rarely used in battles to prepare a bath.

If I go to the extent of using magic to prepare hot water, I would be able to take baths every day for ten years since it would barely consume any mana to do so.

It's an extravagant thing to do, but let's just accept this as the result of the life-risking battles I had as an adventurer up until now.

After that, I checked out the remaining bedroom, toilet, and the storage room. Everything was to my satisfaction, and my feelings were already set.

"By the way, how far is it from here to the field of flowers?"

"Within fifteen minutes"

Ergys-san replied with a smile to the question I asked as I looked back at him.

Oh, so it won't even take half an hour to get there and back. If it's like that, I can just easily go there when I have a little free time. That's perfect.

I think it might take the same amount of time to get to Ergys-san's house.

"I, want to live here"

Thus, my new home was decided.

Chapter 9

Cleaning, Done

Since it was already around noon after my new home was chosen, Ergys-san and I decided to eat our boxed lunches by the stream.

While sitting at a slightly sloped spot, we took off the cloths that were covering the baskets.

Then, there were the tightly packed sandwiches inside. Between the pieces of bread were fresh tomatoes, lettuce, and herb-fried chicken meat. It looked extremely delicious.

The smell of the fresh ingredients and wheat is irresistible.

My hunger surfaced with a growl from my stomach because of such a good smell.

“This looks delicious, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, why don’t we quickly dig in?”

To keep the conversation to a minimum, I bite into the sandwich immediately.

The texture of the soft bread with the crunchy lettuce brought a pleasant bite. And, because of the high level of moisture from the lettuce and tomatoes, it resulted in holding down the strong flavors of the dry, herb stir-fried chicken, making it taste just right. The very balance of flavors from the ingredients used was heavily considered. I can just feel how much thought Flora had put into making these sandwiches.

I kept on eating in a trance for a while, but when my stomach had somewhat calmed down, I started to notice my surroundings.

A comfortable breeze blew, as waves in the stream repeatedly formed and expanded.

When I looked at the stream before my eyes, I could see small freshwater fishes in the water swimming along following the river current.

“Do the fish in this river taste good?”

“Yes, they taste very good if you can prepare them properly, since the fishes here don’t have that much of a fishy smell”

I didn’t think much about this stream other than it being beautiful, but it looks like the fishes here are also delicious. Even though I do cook fish from time to time, I never had a good way to completely get rid of their fishy smell since the rivers they came from were always dirty.

“It’s been a while since I had some salt-grilled fish”

“Ohh, that sounds good. Do you want me to lend you some fishing rods or nets from my house?”

“Really? That would be a big help. Thank you”

“Sure, no problem. You can just share some of those fish with me in return. You’ve got me wanting to eat some too”

“Yes, of course. Well then, I shall catch lots at that time”

We annihilated our sandwiches while we had such an amicable conversation.

“Well then, it’s about time I take my leave since I know you have some cleaning to do for your house, Aldo-san”

Ergys-san stood up with both of our lunch baskets in his hands while I was relaxing and taking sips of water.

I was planning on having some more leisure conversations with him as it is, but I do have to clean the house or it won’t do. If I relax too much here there might be not enough time until the sun goes down.

“Yeah, thank you so much for introducing this nice house to me. Ah, by the way, is there anyone that makes furniture in this village?”

After I clean up the house, I will need to arrange daily necessities such as furniture and tableware.

I'd like to quickly get those necessities so I'll be able to live out my daily life.

"Ah. That's right. It's good for you to ask early since it takes time to make them. But yeah, there is. He's close by too"

With those words, Ergys-san pointed his finger in the direction of a private home that was mixed in among the forest from earlier.

"Over there is the home of Toack-san, a furniture craftsman. I'll let him know after this, so please go over there tomorrow morning and ask him about it"

I was surprised that we are living so close to each other. If we're this close to each other I can even go right now.

"Understood. It's Toack-san, right? Thank you very much!"

After my words of gratitude, Ergys-san lifted up the baskets with a look of content.

"Let me know when you're done with setting up your home. I'll introduce you to the hunter of the village next time"

"Got it!"

"Well then, I'ma get going"

After giving me a reply, Ergys-san turned around and started walking.

I watched a while to see him off, and then went back into my house.

Now it's time for a major cleaning.



I will get started immediately as I have plenty of strength and energy now from having my stomach filled.

Even though there was no one living here, the house isn't in horrible shape.

It seems like it's all thanks to the villagers of this area who were taking turns maintaining these empty houses in order to not let them deteriorate.

However, since it has been a long time since the last cleaning, the inside of the house was covered in dust.

Firstly, let's open up all the windows to let some air in.

From there, I will bring out the broom and sweep the place, then make it all shiny and clean with a dust cloth.

With that plan in my mind, I begin to open the window in the living room.

“*cough*, *cough*”

The moment I opened it, all the dust whirled up unexpectedly and made me cough.

It would have been better if I covered my mouth with a cloth first before doing that.

I take a small piece of cloth out of my hemp bag and wrap it around my face, covering both my nose and mouth with it.

I could not do anymore than this because a little bit of dust has gotten in my eyes.

Next, I will be opening all the remaining windows in the living room, bedroom, bath area, storage room, and the toilet.

By doing so, the airflow of the house is now all connected as the dust and air drifted together. I can see the dust clearly through the sunlight that's coming from the windows.

I think it's better if I get out of house for the moment, so I headed out in a hurry.

However, I don't want to be standing here and doing nothing in the meantime, so I went to look around my home to see if there were any cracks in the walls.

I observed the walls around the house, but there doesn't seem to be any damaged areas with cracks.

The house is in a pretty good shape.

There are weeds growing rampant around the outside of the house, with some even growing along the walls, but removing them won't be a problem.

I'm thankful to the ones who took up the maintenance while there was no one living here. I have to thank them in person when I get to meet them.

I put on a pair of gloves and started pulling out the weeds that were sticking to the walls.

For the weeds that were too hard to be plucked by hands, I removed them with a knife.

I continued doing so until all the weeds around the walls were removed, then I walked back into the house to see what the situation is.

Okay. The air is now clear for the most part. This seems to be alright.

I grabbed the broom that was lent to me from Ergys-san and dusted the floor.

I've borrowed all the necessary cleaning tools I'll need for this from his place so this is perfect.

The dust that was piled up on the floor flew up again, but I was fine this time thanks to the cloth covering my mouth and nose.

After sweeping the storage room, the bath area, and the bedroom, I cleared out all the dust that gathered in the dustpan.

Next, I went into the large living room and swept that with a broom also.

As I confirmed that most of the dust was gone, including the dust from the kitchen, I headed to the stream outside with a bucket to draw some water.

It's okay even if I don't use the water from the wells to mop with. The stream's water is plenty clean enough.

I soak the rag with the bucket of water, and start to wipe down the kitchen first. If I suddenly started with the floor, the rag would have gotten all soggy with dirt.

Then, I wipe the walls of the living room and the kitchen, rinse out the dirt with water and repeat.

Next were the walls in the back of the room. When that was done, it was the floor.

I went back and forth many times to the stream to change the dirty water, and squeezed the rag many times.

As soon as I noticed a pain coming from my lower back while I was wiping the floor, I knew that I have strained it unintentionally.

I reached for my back to loosen the tight muscle.

“Uuu...”

I really have to give it to the housewives here who do this. In addition to the cleaning, they also handle chores like cooking, laundry, and child care. Then, they also help on the fields...

Since I'm desperately doing what I can like this, I feel like I can now understand the feelings of housewives who complain about their husbands not praising them for their hard work.

While admiring the greatness of housewives, I focused on the wiping and managed to finish the cleaning before sunset.

“Ohh, it looks pretty nice. I can hardly recognize this place from before”

I let out a voice of admiration by simply looking at the clean room.

The dusty walls and floor were polished beautifully, thus regaining their original color.

Their vibrant colors look much nicer than what I first saw.

The feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction from making my own home look all nice spread throughout my chest. I feel refreshed.

I sat on the cleaned floor and muttered as I looked at the living room.

“Is this what is called the joy of a housewife?”

This feels completely different from the feeling of accomplishment I get when I complete a quest. Is it because the quest this time was in this house that I'm living in?

I found this somewhat funny to myself and let out a laugh.

As I took off of the cloth that was covering my mouth, I noticed it was fully covered in dirt.

Oh no, the cloth got this dirty. My hair and clothes must have gotten dirty as well. Wouldn't I get the floor dirty again if I sit here?

Having thought of that, I ran outside of the house quickly to knock the dust off myself.

Dust flew up every time I hit my clothes with slaps.

When I noticed that my body was still dirty, I had an urge to take a bath as I was struck by discomfort.

I will pay a visit to Toack-san's house tomorrow to order some furniture, so I better make myself look proper.

As I told myself that, I went to prepare the bath.

I took out two bracelets from my hemp bag, and headed to the bath area after I've put them on.

I've made the big, prided bathtub of this house all shiny and clean to answer the feelings that were left behind by the previous owner.

I extended out my hand that I've equipped with a bracelet with a light blue spell formation engraved on it and chanted,

"Water"

Light blue magic circles appeared on my palm from the short chant. Then from there, water flew out vigorously.

If the spell I was casting was "Water lance" or "Water bolt", it would have shot out water shaped like spears or balls, but the consumption of mana would have also increased greatly.

But, if it was just "Water", the consumption of mana would be small and I would be able to use this for a long time.

When the bathtub was filled with enough water, I closed my palms.

From doing that, the magic circle disappears, and the spell is stopped. It's convenient to use.

Next is heating up the water.

This time I take out my left hand that was equipped with the bracelet that had a red magic formation engraved on it, and chanted,

“Fire”

Then, a red magic circle appeared on the palm of my hand, from which a flame the size of a fist shot out.

Due to the high temperature flame I shot in the water, the water in the tub started making bubbling sounds and started popping.

It looked a lot more scary than I thought it would, so I went to take cover in the change room area.

“Woah, scary. I thought this wouldn't be such a big deal since Kurune always made it look so safe...”

After the sound coming from the water had settled down, I went back into the bath area to take a look.

There were hot and steamy clouds coming from the water in the bathtub.

I guess if it was the wizard, Kurune, she would have been able to precisely adjust the temperature. Unfortunately, a spell from a magic tool can't really be adjusted that much so it may have went over the appropriate temperature for the hot water in a bath.

For now, I'll open the window and wait a while before I put my hand in the water to test the temperature of this horrifying bath.

Yeah, it's still a bit too hot. Good thing I waited a bit instead of putting my hand in there suddenly.

After waiting even a bit longer, it was at a nice temperature so I started to undress in the change room.

Just like yesterday, I rinsed my body with hot water to clean off the dirt first.

It's too bad that I don't have soap yet, so I can only wash my body with a towel and hot water.

With my head and body thoroughly washed, I went into the bathtub to get rid of today's fatigue.

As I got back up from the bath, I head to the living room to get a change of clothes because I had forgotten to bring a set into the change room.

Since I was warmed up by the bath, it was still comfortable walking around the house naked. I could get into the habit of doing this. I was living at someone else's home yesterday so I couldn't have acted like this.

While I was feeling exhilarated, I start to get the clothes out of my hemp bag. At that moment, I heard someone knocking on the door.

"Coming"

I gave a very natural reply.

-Oh, shit. It was already too late when I realized it.

"Sorry for intruding, Aldo-san. Um, I thought that I'd bring you dinner cause you're probably busy cleaning the hous——"

It was Flora who let herself in after opening the door, and my naked body was right in front of her eyes.

How come I want to scream like a girl right now?

"" ""

I can feel Flora's eyes slowly scanning down from my face. As she got lower and lower, her face started to get red.

"U, Um"

I stuttered unintentionally since I have no idea what to say at times like this, but then

Flora picked it up from there.

“I’M S, SORRY!! PLEASE EXCUSE ME!!”

She yelled as she dashed out.

Ah, now I’ve done it. I made her run away again this time.

Just when I thought that we had gotten a little closer.

Chapter 10

Furniture Craftsman Toack

I slowly opened my eyes as I felt the warm sunlight on me.

In my vision, there is a roof above me. As I look around, there are cream colored walls.

And not only is the floor not in the form of soil, but it looks like I am currently lying on this wooden floor with a cloth over me as a blanket.

I could hear the sounds of birds chirping coming from outside.

Suddenly, I came back to my senses and remembered everything.

“...That’s right, I have my own house now”

I muttered to myself while rubbing my sleepy eyes with the back of my hand as I raised my upper body.

In order to stretch the tightened muscles in my back, I extended both my arms up.

Then, I slowly exhaled as I let my arms back down. From there, I twisted my waist slightly and a satisfying popping noise came out.

Sleeping on the wooden floor with a blanket was better than camping on the ground outdoors, but the burden it had on my body was still heavy. There was an uncomfortable feeling in my back.

As I thought, it was the correct choice to ask for the name of the furniture craftsman.

I want to get a bed soon so that I can get some quality sleep. Of course, that would include getting a futon as well.

Even though I got my hands on a new house, there were still lots of things missing.

“It was still refreshing to sleep at my own house even with a lack of furniture! Yee!

Let's give it my best today too—" Oh how I wish I could think positively like that.

"Sigh... What should I do...?"

Last night, I fucked up by showing myself naked in front of a shy girl who isn't good with strangers.

I had planned on meeting with Ergys-san again, and there was also that promise to share some fish with him.

Flora, who is his daughter, will be there when I pay a visit to him. It will be very awkward.

Ahhh. Even though she was finally warming up to me, I guess now she will run from me again.

If it was just any random person then I wouldn't have minded at all, but it hurts a little to be avoided by such a good girl like her.

I would like to apologize to her since I didn't get to yesterday, but if the man who flashed her suddenly showed up at her door, she might be a bit disturbed. So let's apologize after giving it some time.

After telling myself so, I decided to put my feelings elsewhere for now.

As I washed my face with the cold water from the well, it refreshed both my body and mind.

What's done is done. Let's get through the day doing what I have to do without being such a worrying wuss.



After fixing my clothes up a bit, I headed towards Toack-san's house to order some furniture.

I rubbed my belly as I walked in this slightly cold morning.

My stomach had been complaining since I did not have any breakfast or anything before I slept last night.

I should have worried about my meals before worrying about furniture.

Also, I should have bought some food from Ergys-san.

But if I go to Ergy-san's place, I might run into Flora. Maybe I can just buy some food off Toack-san after I meet him.

Since I didn't understand the ecological state of the animals living here, I thought that I shouldn't put my hands on them yet.

Even though I'm going to be introduced to a local hunter tomorrow, it's still a big deal to have an empty stomach for a day.

While I was lost in such thoughts, I was already in front of Toack-san's house in no time.

I stood still silently in front of his house inside the forest.

The house is built rather differently from mine. It's a one-story building that was built from stacking up wooden logs. It seems to be fairly roomy inside, and the stairs, fences, chairs and tables around the house all look to be hand-made from wood.

The furniture seems to be made from different materials from the house, perhaps they were all made by Toack-san, the furniture craftsman. If that's the case, he would be quite skilled.

I took a seat at the table. Surprisingly, it was a good fit for my body and it felt very comfortable.

"This is nice. I want a chair like this too..."

"...Are you Aldo? The one that the chief told me about?"

When I was ascertaining the feel of this chair, a voice suddenly came up.

There was a man with blonde-colored hair looking at me from the window when I turned around to the direction where the voice came from.

His hair is short, and his blue eyes are squinted, displaying a mean look. His face shape is slightly long and some freckles can be seen.

He is about the same height as I am, or maybe just a little bit taller. Lean muscles are visible from his short sleeve, white colored top.

“Um... Are you Toack-san?”

“Oh, yeah. That’s me. When I woke up this morning, I was surprised to find a stranger excitedly sitting in a chair inside my yard”

Toack-san answered with a sour face when I asked timidly.

I mean, since there was such a nice chair there, I unintentionally entered and sat down in his property.

I feel awkward now because I have been rude from the very start. I wonder if he’s mad at me.

“I’m sorry about that”

“It’s not like I’m mad. I was born with this mean looking face. The chair thing surprised me, but I was happy that I was complimented for the chair I made”

To my apology, Toack-san shrugged his shoulders and replied while smiling awkwardly. It seems that he was trying his best to form a genuine smile, but it looked more like a sarcastic one instead.

“...I’m not good at smiling”

“Haha, so it seems”

I replied to Toack-san’s words with a bitter smile while scratching my cheeks.

Well, he doesn’t look like a bad person, and his age looks to be close to mine. It feels like we might be able to get along well with each other.

“Well, why are we still talking like this? Hurry and come inside”



Toack-san’s home is big, and the walls of its interior were all made from logs. There were also his handmade tables and chairs, couches, and something like a cupboard.

There is a strong homey vibe.

As I took a deep breath, I felt calm from the smell of lumber.

“I’d like to eat something first, but what about you? Rather, have you eaten yet?”

“I haven’t eaten yet! Please, thank you!”

Toack-san’s suggestion was just what I wanted to hear, so I replied immediately.

“Why are you so shamelessly happy? Well... anyway, I’ll go heat up the pan so please wait a bit at the table”

Toack went in the kitchen while making it sound like a hassle.

I took a seat while filled with anticipation.

My stomach was already rumbling since I did not eat anything last night. I want to eat something soon.

As I thought about that with my arm resting on the table, I felt the smooth sensation that is a distinct characteristic of woodcrafts.

Ohh, this table has quite a nice feel to it. It’s better than all the tables in the inns of the royal capital.

I spontaneously put my face on the table and felt it with my cheek.

If I am ordering some tables, this smooth texture of material would be also what I want.

While I was feeling the skillfully-made table, a smell like vegetable soup started to drift in the room before long.

“Here, vegetable soup and bread”

As Toack brought out vegetable soup and bread on a wooden tray, I got my face off the desk in a hurry.

“Ohhh, thank you so much. My stomach was rumbling like crazy”

Toack put the tray on the table and placed the dishes.

In the soup there are potatoes, carrots, broccoli, onions, and small pieces of ham. It looks very delicious.

“Okay, shall we dig in?”

When Toack got everything ready, I immediately put a spoonful of vegetable soup into my mouth.

The sweetness of vegetables filled my mouth. The taste was plain yet it was very tasty. As I drank the soup, it warmed me up from the inside, and it felt as if energy was spreading throughout my body.

“...Ahh, so good”

The potatoes were melting into one with the soup, and the onions were also stewed.

I see, so that is the secret to this delicious taste.

Toack ate while dipping the bread in the soup, so I imitated him and tried dipping my bread in my soup as well.

The bread that was softened up by the soup was also very delicious.

Its sweetness from the dough combined with the soup was truly exquisite.

Going back and forth between the bread and soup like that, I finished it in no time.

“Pheww, thank you. That was delicious”

“...You ate without catching a breath. Did you not eat dinner yesterday or something?”

“Well, I was cleaning my new house yesterday so I was swamped...”

The last part where Flora saw my naked body was hard to say out loud.

“Well, I knew you were busy before you came, but you coulda at least ate some breakfast, couldn’t you?”

“You’re right, but I haven’t bought any ingredients yet...”

“You coulda bought some off the chief?... Don’t tell me it was because of money?”

Toack started giving me a stink eye as he took such a guess.

To start a new life, a certain degree of funds is needed.

A man who suddenly tries that while being penniless is disgustingly stupid.

However, I was the kingdom’s A-ranked adventurer. I wouldn’t brag about having a fortune but money isn’t something that I have to worry about.

“No, I wouldn’t have moved here if I didn’t have any money. It’s just that I missed my chance to buy any from Ergys-san, who is my only connection here”

Toack showed a look of relief after hearing that I have money.

“If that’s the case, isn’t it good to buy some this morning?”

“No, I can’t do that either due to a reason I can’t say”

It’s just as Toack says, but I can’t do it because of the thing with Flora.

“What? A reason you can’t say?”

I seem to have piqued his curiosity as he looked at my face that was full of hesitation.

“No, it’s just... kinda...”

“What is it? I gave you a meal, didn’t I? Depending on how fun the story is, I might just sell you some food ingredients, you know?”

Perhaps Toack had become irritated after seeing my indecisiveness, as he tempted me with a devil’s whisper with a grin.

Ugh, I’m weak to the topic of food right now. And, Toack’s suggestion will make everything work out. However, I feel like I’m getting worn out from this.

Even so, this guy has the qualities of a bully. As soon he realized that I was hiding

something, his face lit up with interest.

Kuu, what should I do?

As I worried, Toack said as he poked more fun at me,

“Don’t tell me, that you had something going on with the chief’s wife, Fiona-san?”

“No, that’s not it! It was just her daughter, Flora, who saw me naked!”

I accidentally spilled the truth as I was accused by an unjust suspicion with a person I am indebted to.

Toack’s mouth was wide open from what I just said.

“Huh? Naked? More so, it was not you who saw Flora naked, but it was her that saw you naked? That’s the best thing I’ve heard yet!”

He broke out laughing while holding his stomach.

“Oi. Don’t laugh at this. I’m new here and my connection with the villagers is thin, I’m in quite the trouble, you know?”

“Hahahahaha! That shy Flora saw you naked”

He seemed to find it very funny since he has lived here since long ago and knew of Flora.

This man, who always has a cranky face on, had his face distorted completely from laughing just now.

“Oi oi, this isn’t something to laugh about. If I go to Ergys-san’s house, it will be bad if I run into Flora there. What will I do if they ask what happened between us?”

It was inevitable that my tone with Toack had gone rather informal.

Despite my words of desperation, he seemed to have found it even funnier and laughed again.

What a cruel person he is, to laugh when the others are having a struggle.

“...*Hahh*, I was finally able to have a conversation with her, yet she might run away from me again now...”

“Ohh? It’s unusual for that Flora to talk to guys in the first place”

said Toack, with a look of surprise to my sighing and ranting.

“She’s quite a shy person, that’s why. However, she would be able to easily have a conversation with the males from this village, right??”

“No, not at all. I’ve been here the whole time since she was born, yet she just runs away when I try to get closer to her. The only time I had been able to barely talk with her was like during a village event or something”

Toack denied my words with a serious look.

Hmm? What did you do to her for that to happen? Well, she ran away from me at the beginning as well.

“...Is that not because of your scary looking face?”

This is a man with a mean mug on him at all times. It wouldn’t be unreasonable to say that Flora is scared of him.

“That’s not why. Do you want me to not sell you any food?”

Toack replied. His face twitched from me pointing that out.

“Oioi, weren’t you laughing at me just now? I told you about my embarrassing story and you didn’t even give a crap?!”

Chapter 11

A Comfortable Home

I somehow managed to get him to agree on selling me the food I wanted just like that, then I entered the workshop in the back to finish my main business here.

Inside, there were many tables lined up. What was on them were many woodcrafts that were in processing, and tools for cutting purposes such as saws.

Maybe it's because of all the wood cutting that had been done in here, that there is a dense smell of wood inside this workshop.

Walls in every direction had logs of wood that were long enough to reach the ceiling. Perhaps those were cut out from various different types of trees, as they all had different shades of colors from light to dark and some were even in a curvy shape.

I can't say that I didn't worry about the logs of wood collapsing, but it seems like the safety side had already been considered, as they were locked tightly at the bottom with iron locks.

"Now then, it's about time we get down to business"

Toack entered and moved aside the wood scraps and wood that was on the floor.

"So you will properly sell me some food after, right?"

"Yea, yeah, don't worry"

When I wanted to make sure that he'll be selling me food after, Toack replied like I was being a hassle.

Was he implying that he didn't want to sell food to me or was he just not caring about it?

Meh, I got him to give his word already so let's stop minding about it.

“Okay, so what are you missing in your home?”

Toack asked as he tapped on the table after he finished tidying up the workshop.

That gesture signaled the shift in his state of mind.

“No matter how you want me to put it, I don’t even have the minimal daily necessities required. So, a chair, table, bed, sofa, and some tableware and a drawer”

That was all I could think of on the fly. As the days go on, I’ll probably notice that there are more things missing.

“Oh, ohh. That will keep me busy for a while. But, if it’s tables and chairs, there are some left over here. Also, there are some drawers and cupboards in the warehouse as well. They are all newly made, so do you want to go take a look?”

“I want some custom-made though...”

I have the money if it’s about that, so I want him to make a chair that would be the most comfortable for me to use. And, I also want a bed that would be so comfortable that it’ll make me want to stay in it after I wake up.

I will be living in this house all the time from here on. Therefore, I would like to get my hands on some good furniture.

As I suggested my wild idea for the ideal house, Toack knitted his brows as he scratched his head.

“Erm... If you wanted everything custom-made, it will take quite some time, you know? I also have some orders other than yours as well. Are you going to be okay to live without any furniture for the time being?”

“Uuu... that would be a problem...”

I replied with a natural frown after hearing what Toack said.

It was hard enough to get through yesterday with no furniture. I do want a custom-made bed, but at the current situation I’d rather get a chair and a table as soon as possible.

Let's first start by getting the minimum amount of things that I'll need to get through the days, and then get the custom-made things.

"Well, generally only beds need to be custom-made to be the most suited for the ones that will be sleeping on them"

"Ohh, hurry and make me a bed. I don't want to sleep on the floor with a cloth as a blanket anymore"

When I got up this morning I felt a violent pain in my back. Even now I can feel an uncomfortable pain there. I would like to wake up nicely in the morning.

"If you don't like it then buy a sofa. It should be able to act as a substitute bed for a while"

"You're right!"

If I get my hands on a sofa, I will be able to laze around for the most part and I won't have to sit idly on the floor.

I was convinced from Toack's words, so I took a look at the chairs and tables in the corner of the workshop.

But, other than looking at them, I want to touch to see how they feel as well, so I asked Toack while pointing to them.

It's just in case because he might get angry if I touch them without his permission.

Even the blacksmiths in weapon shops get mad if you touch their swords without given the permission to.

"These are the finished products, right? They wouldn't break if I tried sitting on them, right?"

"They are finished. As to if they will break... this one is in the middle of breaking down, one leg is already broken"

Toack knitted his brow as he threw one of the chairs aside.

"Oi, oi, is that okay? I'll hit my head from losing my balance if I sat on that"

“It’s all good. It was just one mixed in. I checked the rest of them”

I give Toack a suspicious look.

Is he sure? I was a little worried.

Well, I’ll believe him after I check them myself right now. If there’s something weird mixed in there again I can use it to get more food from him.

I start by checking the chairs. It looks like they’re made from a normal type of wood which is light in color and the curved backrest and handles are very beautifully made. The texture is very smooth and it feels pleasant.

I sit down with those thoughts in mind. The backrest to feet position was just right and there was no sign of my feet wobbling.

“I guess if it’s you, Toack... You can make a fine chair even if you don’t show it on the outside”

“It doesn’t matter how I am on the outside. It has no relation to how good one is at making furniture”

Toack replied with a sour look to the mutters I let out as I sat on the chair.

Is that so? As someone who makes furniture for others to use, you cannot make something without thinking of them. There are people who like to angle their back a little more to get the most comfortable fit when they sit.

It’s also necessary to make adjustments according to people’s age and height, so I think it would be impossible for someone to make good furniture without thinking of the people who will be using it.

“...What? Why are you like all grinning or something”

said Toack, as he turned away uncomfortably after I looked at him with warm eyes.

“That’s a chair you specially made for me, isn’t it? It’s a perfect fit for me since we’re about the same height, huh? Well actually, I guess generally adults are of the same size”

“Yup. It looks like a good fit. Maybe you should put this in the living room”

Since Toack and I have a similar body size, let's do what he suggests.

"Now then, there is another one of the same type in the warehouse so I'll bring it over. That way, we won't need to make brand new ones this time"

Toack said as he stood up when I had just decided that I want this one chair.

"Eh? I don't need a whole set of four for these since I live by myself"

"Oi oi, what happens when you have visitors? Since you were under the care of the chief, it would be nice if you would be able to invite him over for a meal to thank him after you've settled down"

"Ah. That's right"

I've never thought of that happening because I've always lived in an inn.

Just like how Flora came to visit me yesterday, it would be terrible if Ergys-san comes and I couldn't even invite him to sit down for tea.

It seems like I haven't lost my manners from living in the inn.

I'd like to tell Toack to come hang out in my house as well from now on.

So, I would like my home to be comfortable not only for me, but my guests as well.



Shortly after that, Toack brought out the same type of chairs from the warehouse and a table that looks to be made from the same materials as the table in the living room.

The height of the chairs fits perfectly with the table as well, so I think I will put this whole set together in the living room.

After that, we went in the warehouse and picked out some drawers and a cupboard that matched the theme of my house.

I think Toack will help me move these things to my house later.

"Now what's left is the lack of tableware"

I muttered on the chair that I decided to buy after I came back into the workshop.

If this chair will be living with me together from now on, I will start growing attached to it.

“If it’s wooden tableware that you want, there are some in my house”

“Even though you are a furniture maker?”

I was surprised from what Toack said.

“I live in a village this small, you know? I can’t really go through my daily life if I can’t make such necessary items. Well, making tableware is also enjoyable, and it serves as good practice for the basics”

“I see. Can I see them then?”

“Ok, follow me”

I got off the chair immediately and followed Toack.

When he opened a drawer in the workshop, there were plenty of wood made spoons and forks. And, when he opened the one next to it, there were plates that he used for breakfast stacked up inside. On top of that, there were all kinds of plates. Large and flat plates, plates that are deep , cups, and even some drinking glasses that seem to be skillfully reproduced.

“Hehh... This is amazing”

I opened my eyes wide at the sight of this.

“Erm, it really isn’t that big of a deal”

Toack said as he scratched his cheeks looking slightly embarrassed.

I knew this already, but he really isn’t a guy who likes to show how he really is.

I turned my face to the other side of the drawers and secretly laughed.

All the tableware made by Toack was all smooth and soft to touch. When I held some

in my hand, it was a very comfortable grip.

Even so, I shouldn't waver as to which to choose. All of this is so well made that it makes me want to buy all of it.

It's the same feeling I felt back when I made enough money to change my weapon for the first time.

"Ohh, this looks like a good plate to put soup in. It's good that it's deep... and this one here... it would also be nice if the bottom of this one is a bit lower"

"...You look like you're having lots of fun"

Toack said as I was troubled with choosing the various types of tableware in my hands"

"Well, yeah. I'm choosing the ones that I'll be using every day, right? Just thinking about that makes it plenty of fun. Your tableware is all nice to hold after all"

"...I see"

Toack gave a short answer and turned toward the window.

From the corner of my eyes, I can see his slightly happy face.

He's not very honest, after all. Well, I guess that's how he is and I wouldn't be able to imagine him as a straight forward person.

I turned back towards the drawers and picked out the tableware.

"Oi, you dumbass. Don't take all the spoons of the same size; you will need different sizes of spoons to have an easier time eating different things"

Chapter 12

A Relaxing Day

“Here?”

“Ah. Yeah, that’s good. Let it down slowly”

We slowly lowered the cupboard while matching each other’s movements.

I let out a breath after we properly put the cupboard by the wall near the kitchen.

“Wait a min! Why am I moving the furniture to your home?”

Toack said as he raised his voice while sitting down on the sofa in the living room, looking completely exhausted.

“Since we’re going to check out the layout of my room for the custom bed, it’s fine to just bring the furniture in at the same time, isn’t it? Our houses are near each other anyway”

“Well, I guess it’s still better than asking the grannies of this village to help you even though they are used to carrying heavy things”

Toack said as he looked up at the ceiling with his head rested on the sofa.

In the end, he’s the one who helped me move, so I hurried and got him some water with the cup I bought from him.

“Here, got you some water, my home’s first guest”

“Wasn’t Flora, who saw you naked, your first guest?”

Toack replied with a grin after I handed him the water.

“.....”

To my sudden silent reaction with a sullen face, Toack let out a laugh as he found it amusing and then drank his water.

To roast me like that after I gave him water out of kindness... What a man child.

Perhaps he went ahead and helped me because he didn't want to trouble the grannies in the village.

While looking at it like that, I filled my own cup and moistened my throat.

"As I thought, with some furniture now, it finally feels like a home"

I muttered as I took a look at living room from the kitchen.

I didn't have anything in this house yesterday, but now it's filled with chairs and a stylish table, and even got a cupboard installed.

With this, I will finally be able to live in a civilized manner.

I am glad at the thought of not having to sit and sleep on the floors anymore.

"The furniture matches with this house's ambiance, I guess it's a pass. But, since there aren't any small items around, there is a lonely feeling to it when you look at the room as a whole"

Toack remarked as he sat loosely on the sofa. But, it seems that the furniture he chose did match the atmosphere of this room. He does take his job seriously, after all.

"Well, the small items around the house are almost all made in this village. The villagers will help you make some if you ask them. You can buy something like a carpet that you can put under the table to make it look nicer, and also so that the table won't scratch up the floor"

Even though he's being a little too into it, I will still keep his words in mind.

"Yeah, I want some clothes, carpets and a futon"

Originally, I didn't really care about clothes, but I don't have enough right now. The clothes that I've bought during my journey here are all worn out, so it's about time that I should buy some new ones.

Just like Toack said, I would like to get a carpet and a futon before he finishes making my bed.

“That field of expertise is what the grannies are most proud of. They can make you anything as long as they have the materials needed”

“Oh, now that you mention it, the clothes that the villagers here wear are pretty fashionable. The clothes of villagers from other villages are much more plain. Are the clothes of the people here all handmade?”

That’s right; the clothes that the villagers here wear are very fashionable.

Aside from the colors matching, the clothes themselves were all finely sewn as well.

There were flower embroideries sewn on the wrist part of the sleeve and the collar.

They are not clothes that you would think came from a countryside village. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that you would need to line up to get them from a high class clothing store.

Toack turned his body on the sofa and shrugged his shoulder, then he replied to my question.

“Look, you know how there are gorgeous flowers everywhere in this village, right? It’s like the grannies say, you’d kill the atmosphere here if you live here while wearing shabby clothes”

“Ah... That is something to think about. Actually, the clothes they wear do fit the flowery atmosphere”

You could say that the flowers bloom all year long here; it’s an aesthetically pleasing scene that is unique to this village.

And not only the flowers, but the people that live here are also gorgeous.

The villagers here all love their village and see the village as their pride.

“Well, it makes me happy as a man when girls walk around in such beautiful clothes. But, it would be bad if I got involved with girls who are obsessed with nice clothes”

He muttered as he looked into the distance.

it seems that whether it's in the kingdom's capital or not, men will all react this way if they were to get involved with a woman who has a strong interest in nice clothing.



“*Hahh*, That’ll be all for the measuring”

said Toack as he stretched after he finished confirming the measurements of my bedroom and such.

I also had my height measured already for the bed. So with this, his work in my house should be over

“Ahh, thank you”

While Toack was measuring my room, I had taken the cutlery that I bought from him and stored them in the cupboard.

As I finished putting the last plate in the cupboard, I spoke out to thank him for his hard work.

Toack stretched and let out a yawn while looking comfortable. Then, he spoke as he shifted his sight,

“...Hey, while I was looking around in your house, I saw an amazing bathtub”

Ah, I know where he’s going with this from the way he’s talking.

“Ah, that. It’s nice, don’t you think? It’s quite roomy and comfortable, you know? Why don’t you have a bath here later?”

“Oh, for real?! Then, please let me get in it tonight. It’s a big hassle to prepare a bath by myself so I hardly ever get to take one”

Toack looked very happy from the suggestion that I made.

Well, since I have the power of magic tools, getting the bath ready won’t really take much.

Considering how he let me buy food from him, gave me advice on furniture, and told me how to get clothes and a futon, letting him use the bath would be a cheap price to pay.

“It’s almost lunch time, shall we eat something? Rather, I know nothing about the food here, so it would be nice if you can teach me some ways to cook with these ingredients”

“...Well, I guess I have no choice. I’ll eat here while we’re at it”

Maybe that reply was the after-effect from agreeing to let him use the bath here tonight, as Toack came in the kitchen looking like he’s in a good mood.

Then, I took out the food ingredients that I bought from him out of the hemp bag, and placed them on the kitchen table.

There were bread, eggs, bacon, broccoli, carrots, onions, potatoes, cranberries, blueberries, cheese and wine, spices, and some vegetables. There was also a fruit that I don’t know about.

“What is this small green fruit thingy?”

I put the small fruit with round corners in my palm and showed them to Toack.

“Oh- that is called a Goji berry^[i]. They grow around my house. They taste a little sour but have a refreshing taste”

I peeled the slippery skin off one and smelled it. There wasn’t a particularly strong smell to it.

“Do you eat this with the skin?”

“That should be okay”

Since he said it was alright to do so, I threw one in my mouth.

I bit through the semi-hard skin and started chewing, as the sour juice overflowed from inside. Depending on the person eating this, they can definitely have a sour face on them right now from this level of sourness, but it’s true that it does have a nice, refreshing taste to it.

“It really is sour, but it left a refreshing taste in my mouth. This might be good to snack on when you’re tired or trying to remove a bad taste in your mouth or something”

Sometimes I feel like eating sour things when I’m tired. Kiel had often made pickled lemon as well.

“I know, right? It might even go well together with salted fishes, you know?”

“That sounds good. Let’s go fishing for some next time”

“Ah, now I want to eat some too after talking about it”

While we had leisurely talks like that, he told me about different ways to cook and eat the vegetables which I previously had no idea about.

“Now then, I guess I should start cooking soon. It’s already past lunch time, and it’s just a simple meal”

“That’s right. Other than your order of furniture, I still have to work on the ones for my other customers, so it’d be nice if it were just simple meal”

Therefore, in the mean time, I will try to make a simple dish with ingredients like eggs, bacon, and vegetables that lose their freshness quickly every day.

“Then, let’s make some bacon and eggs”

“Oh, that’s a simple dish, but still delicious”

Actually, I wanted to make a vegetable soup like the one he made, but it would be the evening by the time it’s ready, so let’s just make a light lunch for now.

I have cooked for myself during my adventurer days so this much is something I can handle.

Everyone in my party took a part in preparing meals.

I start by making a fire with flint and firewood, and start warming up the frying pan.

While I was heating up the pan, Toack was chopping up the cabbage with a kitchen knife.

The chopping sound from the knife echoed across the living room.

“It’s a bit early to be cutting the cabbages already...”

“Ah. I’m too used to it from cooking by myself”

As I looked in blank amazement at the piled up cabbage, Toack answered me while his eyes were still locked onto the cabbage.

It’s too bad the one cooking next to me right now is a man. I’d like to cook with a cute wife in the same way one day.

After the frying pan was heated up, I put a bit of oil in and then threw in the slices of bacon.

The scent of cooking bacon started to drift, and an aromatic smell filled the house.

Other than the sizzling sound that is coming from the bacon cooking, I also heard a mutter coming from next to me.

“That smells good...”

Then, I broke some eggs on top of the bacon, and lightly seasoned them with salt.

Next, I added just a tiny bit of water into the pan, and covered it with a lid.

This was just a simple dish you make by cutting up ingredients and frying them, but soon it will turn into something delicious.

While I waited for the egg and bacon to melt together, I took out the wooden plates that I bought from inside the cupboard.

This time the dish is to be plated is fried eggs with vegetables and some kind of fruit, so a shallow plate fits this well.

Choosing the right type of plate that I had just bought for the food makes me all excited.

I now understand what Kiel meant when he said a dish starts from the presentation.

I guess he did carefully choose the plates to put different types of food in, but the old me would have never taken notice to that sort of thing.

While I was staring at the plates strongly, I started hearing popping noises coming from the bacon and eggs in the frying pan.

“Oi, how long are you going to stare at the plates for?”

Toack’s reproaching words came flying at me while he was still cutting some vegetables.

“Oh crap, the eggs are going to be burnt”

I rushed up to the frying pan and took off the lid, then steam rose out.

“...Is it alright?”

“They are not burnt”

As I felt at ease from the bacon and eggs not getting burnt, I started to pour the food onto the round wooden plates.

Served together on the side with them is thinly sliced cabbage, tomatoes, cranberries and cheese, with bread as the main dish.

“Okay! All done!”

We immediately put the dishes on the table and took our seats.

Oh, how nice it is to have furniture in the house.

It finally feels like I am living in my own home.

Getting my hands on this house yesterday was good, but I did not do anything other than take a bath.

“Now then, let’s dig in?”

“Ok”

After enjoying the meal with Toack and seeing him off after, I spent the rest of the day by relaxing on the sofa and taking naps.

Chapter 13

The Two Smiling

The next day.

Thanks to the furniture that was set up in the living room, it was possible for me to meet a barely satisfactory standard of living.

Even though I'm still missing my custom-ordered beds and chairs, I did not wake up with back pain this morning because Toack had lent me a sofa to sleep on.

I got up from the sofa and groomed myself, and then I ate the leftover vegetable soup that I made for yesterday's dinner after I warmed it up.

I felt full of energy after eating the vegetable soup that was filled with umami.

I could feel the soup warming me up from inside.

However, something was still lacking in that soup compared to the one I had at Toack's house. Since the vegetables that I used in my soup were the same as his, was it because of the difference in time spent boiling? Or was it the seasoning?

Let's try asking him the next time I see him.

I have finished my breakfast, so I start wondering what I should be doing now.

The necessary furniture I needed was already here, and the custom made stuff will still take some time to complete.

I definitely wanted the clothes and futon, but there's no rush for that. Toack promised me that he would introduce the people who could make them to me. It would be fine to order them when he informs me that my bed is nearly done.

According to him, there are enough futon and clothes there that there won't be a need to order them ahead of time.

Since I took a nice break yesterday and got some good rest, maybe I should have Ergys-san introduce me to a hunter and take them both to the mountains.

It's about time I do some work in return to pay everyone back.

I might be a bit afraid to meet Flora, but I can't stay like that forever. She should have calmed down after a whole day anyways, right?

As far as I'm concerned, I will be going to the mountains and searching for food there.

Right when I was planning that out, Toack showed up with a bag of fishes and a bottle of Nordende's wine.

『this wine was made at Aisha-chan's place』

I remembered these words that Ergys-san had once said to me.

Oh yeah, even though Aisha was the one who made it possible for me to live here since she was the one who helped me with first introductions, I haven't even thanked her properly yet after I've settled down.

That is a very big blunder. How rude of me.

I should have thanked her on the day my house was decided, or even yesterday.

Well, I don't think that she is the type who would mind, but I should go and thank her in person nevertheless.

Therefore, I decided to go thank her this morning.

"Hmm? Aisha's house?"

Ah. I had no idea where she lives so I'm asking Toack, since he came here.

I'm guessing he just woke up cause his hair was all messy as he replied from the window. He was squinting his eyes twice as hard as usual and he seemed to be in a bad mood.

“Yeah, her house. I want to go pay her a visit and thank her since I haven’t done that properly even when I’m indebted to her”

“Ah. You have to head to the border of the village and go through that vineyard to get there. But I don’t think that girl is someone who would care about that at all”

Toack replied as he scratched his head, but he had the same idea as me about Aisha.

However, there was still a chance where she would bluntly say something like, “Hey, since I was the one who helped you here first, shouldn’t I be the first person you should pay a visit to?”. That’s why I shouldn’t ignore this.

“Aisha should be in the vineyard already, so it’s probably better if you take the one path that leads to the vineyard rather than going straight to her house. But, if you want to go to her house anyway, head south from here. Her house is surrounded by vineyards, right by the warehouses that manage the grapes and wines. You’ll know when you’re there”

“Oh, got it. Thank you!”

After Toack taught me how to get there, I turned around and got going.



I headed to the vineyard as Toack instructed, and just as he said, Aisha was there with her work clothes on.

Seeing her figure sitting by the fence along the road, it looks like she’s taking a break at the moment.

I felt relieved from being able to find her and started walking closer to her. As I close in, I noticed that Flora was behind her.

Wha! What the... Why is Flora here?! I shouted that out in my mind, but then I remembered the words of Fiona-san. Those two have always hung around each other since they were young.

They have been best friends from a young age. I guess it’s normal that she would come here even if she had no business to be here.

At least I can wait a bit here until she left, as I was still a bit unprepared to meet her yet.

Ah, but after thinking about it, maybe it would be better if I confront her here and solve the problem when Ergys-san and Fiona-san aren't around.

I have not done anything that I should feel guilty of so far... No, actually, showing my naked body to her made me feel pretty guilty, but now might be a chance for me to fix this.

I continued to move forward with the power of my will even as my steps kept on getting heavier.

When I got close enough, Aisha took notice of me.

Flora poked her head out to see who it was, then she turned around while making a strange face.

Her response was just what I had expected. After she saw me, her face went red with a *poof* and then she tried to escape. But, since Aisha grabbed her arms, she was struggling violently as she tried to get loose.

Then, Flora calmed down and stopped flapping her arms after Aisha whispered something in her ear.

Looking at the situation, it seems like Aisha knew what happened between us.

I'm thankful for her follow-up, but I'm a bit ashamed that she knows about it as well.

While smiling bitterly, I stopped by them.

"Hey there"

"Hi"

"..."

I said hi to them but Flora hid behind Aisha and did not say a word back.

I knew it; I was being avoided after all.

As I put on another bitter smile, Aisha tapped Flora with her elbows lightly.

Flora then protested to Aisha silently with watery eyes. It felt like she was saying “Noo, I really can’t do this”.

However, Aisha moved behind her and then returned a silent glare at her.

Before long, Flora moved up as she trembled.

I did not understand what happened in the second half of that, but it seems like they somehow sent each other messages.

It was a communication method that works only among close friends.

“Um, ummm... hi”

Flora greeted me with a soft voice. Her white cheeks were as red as an apple.

Her gaze is wandering as if she’s still thinking of the embarrassing thing that happened on the day before yesterday, so it can’t be helped that she’s not really giving me eye contact. But, even so, I’m happy that she did not run away and is giving me this chance to apologize to her.

“Hello”

““ ”“
...”

I also greeted her again with a smile, then there was a silence.

Flora has started twiddling her thumbs, and I also felt awkward and had no idea how to break the ice.

That is because I know that I was also at fault. Should I just lower my head and apologize as it is? As I thought about that, I sensed a sharp gaze coming from Aisha, who is behind Flora.

Her mouth moved slightly. I think she was trying to tell me to apologize already.

I decided to respond with a light nod, and I lowered my head.

Then, Flora looked to be surprised from it as she kept looking around, seemingly at a loss.

“Um, I’m sorry about what happened the day before yesterday. I came out even when I wasn’t done changing”

“No, no, I’m sorry as well... I completely entered your home without even waiting for your consent. I’m sorry”

She lowered her head as she responded.

What the? Not only that she did not blame me, but she followed it with an apology of her own. What a kind person she is.

I raised my face after hearing her words, and we both looked at each other and laughed.

It wasn’t that we made up since we weren’t really fighting, but the awkward atmosphere that we had between us until now was gone.

I’m so glad.

“Ahem”

After we laughed for a while, Aisha, who was still behind Flora, made a coughing sound.

Flora and I were surprised by it and turned to look at her right away.

“It’s about time I go back to work, so why don’t you two start heading back?”

Aisha said as she started to put her gloves back on.

She probably went out of her way to help me. I’m indebted to her once again.

However, I still had to thank her for showing me around on the first day I got here.

“Aisha-san, thank you for taking care of me the first day I got here! I now live near the

furniture craftsman Toack's house"

"Ah. Yeah, yeah. So you live near Toack, huh? Alright then, next time I'll be coming to bother you"

Aisha replied as she walked beyond and disappeared into the vineyards.

"Should we head back then? I have some business with Ergys-san also"

"Ah, yes. I will go home as well"

From the one road where we came from, we headed back to Ergys-san's house.

By the time Aisha comes to visits me, I hope that I will be able to catch some game from the mountains and treat her to a feast.

Chapter 14

To The Mountains with The Hunters

“Um... er, Aldo-san? What business do you have with my father today?”

Flora, who was next to me, modestly asked me while we were on the way to her house from the road we took to the vineyard.

“Ah, I just thought that since I’ve more or less settled down, I’d like to meet the hunters of this village”

“It’s still only been four days since you’ve arrived, no? You had to do all the moving and cleaning, right? You want to start working already?”

Flora opened her eyes wide in awe.

Certainly, it’s just as she said; getting a home, cleaning it, arranging furniture and preparing for meals... Starting a new life was very hard work.

Even though I was confident in my physical abilities, it’s not like it didn’t cross my mind to take about two more days off to relax and watch the field of flowers.

“I was helped out by all kinds of people since I’ve arrived. That’s why I want to give something back to everyone in this village as well”

That is how I strongly feel about it at the moment. Ergys-san, Fiona-san, Aisha, Flora, and Toack; I was indebted to five people in only four days. The truth is that they are people who would take care of people who don’t even know anything, and people like me will be bothering them even more with the futon and clothes that I still need.

It’s because they all have been supporting me that I want to support them back.

“...I see. Then, put lots of meat on people’s tables from now on, okay?”

Flora said with a carefree smile.

Even when I haven't hunted here before, she smiled at me as if she was sure that I would succeed.

"...I can't guarantee anything, but I'll try"

"Please do"

I answered her vaguely while being pressured by her strange confidence in me, and she responded, seemingly in a good mood.

Why does she have so much confidence in me? No... maybe that's just what she hopes for. Or is she trying to put some pressure on me? Nah, I don't think Flora is someone like that...

As Flora walked away with jaunty steps, I thought to myself that I will need to work hard so I don't betray her expectations.



"Ohh? Welcome back Flora. You came back with Aldo-san with you, too, huh?"

Fiona-san, who was working in the backyard, said to us when we entered Ergys-san's home.

I guess she's pulling out the weeds since I see her bending over with gloves on.

"Oh hello, Ergys-san"

As Flora and I approached the backyard, Ergys-san stood up while patting his back.

"Hello, how's your home looking?"

"I finished cleaning the house, and thanks to the furniture I bought from Toack, I'm now able to live a normal life"

"I see"

After hearing my report, Ergys-san smiled. However, his eyes were opened wide in shock a moment later.

“Speaking of which, I forgot all about your meals. Are you eating okay? I’ll give you some if you’re starving...”

“Ah, I’m eating fine. Toack had let me buy some food off him”

“I see. I’m glad to hear that. I remembered about your furniture but I had completely forgotten about your meals. I was panicking just now”

Ergys-san put his hand on his chest, looking relieved after he heard me.

He is human, after all. Sometimes I forget about that.

“No, no, even I forgot about it myself”

It was thanks to the leftovers from my journey that I did not have to starve the day before yesterday.

It’s bad for anyone to forget about their own meals. If there was someone at fault, it wouldn’t be Ergys-san.

To end this topic, I will talk to him about what I’m here for today.

“Ergys-san, I think I want to start working today, so can I trouble you with what we’ve talked about before? About introducing me to a hunter of this village?”

“You already want to work even though you just moved in? It’s okay to take some more days off, you know?”

Since he was worried about the same thing as Flora, Flora and I both cracked a smile unintentionally.

Ergys-san was confused as to what we were smiling at since he had no idea about that.

“No, it’s fine. I want to start working soon, so by all means”

“...Alright. It’s a good thing to be increasing our number of hunters sooner anyway. I’ll hurry and introduce you to them. Flora, can I leave the fields to you?”

“Yes”



Ergys-san left to call the hunter, Loren-san, to meet me at the town center. So, I went back home to change into my hunting clothes.

I took off my white, short sleeved village clothes and changed into a green long-sleeved shirt, leather gloves, long trousers and leather boots. I equipped a chest protector on top, and a knife in my belt holster.

“...As I thought, it doesn’t feel the same as my long sword”

I muttered as I picked up my favourite sword that was wrapped in cloth.

Whoops. Just now, I had picked up my long sword out of habit. After all, I had used this sword for three years. It was this sword that stood with me as I confronted the dragon. It can be said that it was a partner who went through both the rough days and the happy days with me.

Even though we might encounter some monsters, this sword still stands out a little too much.

My sword was crafted by someone who could be called the kingdom’s best blacksmith.

It was made from expensive ores such as mithril and orichalcum, with materials mixed in from high ranking monsters. For people who are unfamiliar with weapons, it might look like a sword that’s made to look all fancy, but people that know will know from just one look that it’s not just any sword.

If I pulled this sword out in this village, there would be weird rumors going around. Therefore, I have to seal this sword away.

The long sword that’s wrapped in cloth will be left in the back of the closet, and instead, I will use the dagger on my waist as protection.

Then I took out a bow and checked its bowstring.

“Yeah, this looks fine... However, there’s not enough of the essential part of the weapon... the arrows”

The bow wasn’t damaged from the hunts during the journey, but since there was no

way to resupply arrows, there were only eight left.

I had completely forgotten. I should have cut some trees yesterday and made some myself in this case.

“Nothing I can do, I guess. Maybe I can trouble them to do me a small favor...”

I muttered as I equipped the bow on my back and a quiver to my waist.

Finally, I finished the preparations by packing some emergency food in a small hemp bag.

I double checked the spot I was going to go, then I jumped out of my house and headed to the town square.

When I reached the town center, there were ladies chatting happily while they did trades with their food today as well.

As I looked around, I thought back to Toack’s words from yesterday. All the women in this village were wearing clothes that were no less beautiful than the vivid field of flowers, as there was nothing they wore that would ruin the atmosphere.

If it’s said that this village is beautiful, then the women here are also beautiful enough to not lose to the village.

When I was enjoying the view of the women in such gorgeous clothes, I noticed that there was a big man with brown hair that was all slicked back, and a young boy with blonde hair standing next to him.

If there was a man with bulging muscles standing in the center where flowers bloomed, of course he would stand out.

Since he was carrying a bow on his back just like me, perhaps he is the hunter Loren-san?

While I was having doubts about it, he started waving his hands from over there as if he took notice of my equipment.

“I’m Loren, the hunter of this village. Are you Aldo, who the chief was talking about?”

“Yes, that’s me. Sorry to meet you so suddenly without a proper introduction. I hope we’ll get along from now on!”

I lightly lowered my head to Loren-san, and he nodded quickly in return.

“You have good manners, unlike someone else that I know”

“Please don’t bring up the stories of the past”

When Loren nudged the boy with his elbow, the boy answered him with a frown.

From their conversation alone I understood that they were close.

“Oh, yeah. This is my disciple, Kyle. Just to be clear, this cute looking kid is not my son, okay?”

“No, I’m sorry as well. I’m Kyle, twelve years old. Nice to meet you”

Kyle quickly bowed his head and introduced himself after Loren-san introduced him.

Although I’m aware they aren’t father and son from their appearance and tones, I could still tell that they were really close.

“Today I’ll be teaching you about the mountains here, but I want to make sure Kyle here knows his stuff as well. So, do you mind if we bring Kyle along?”

It’s only natural for a hunter to take his pupil along in order to nurture him, so I gave him my yes.

“Ohh, good. I’ve also heard that Aldo was good at hunting from the chief, so how long have you been a hunter for?”

“I’m not a hunter, but when I used to travel, I’ve hunted along the way. I have also hunted in mountains before”

Since I’ve only used a bow for hunting and some special quests, I’m not completely confident with it. So, I told him exactly how it is.

“I see! There won’t be any problems then. Judging from your equipment, you don’t seem to be an amateur either so it’ll be a pleasure to work with you!”

While looking at my equipment, Loren-san let out a hearty laugh as he lightly patted my back. Then, we headed out.

Chapter 15

The Results Of The Hunt

The mountain Loren-san and I headed to was a little north of where the fields of flowers were.

In the woods filled with vegetation, Loren-san, Kyle, and I were walking in a line in that order.

“There are edible fruits and nuts growing around this area, so the villagers often come to gather them here. That’s why this area here is relatively easy to walk in”

Kyle filled me in with his knowledge of the mountains.

He spoke in a monotone voice, but his explanation was fairly easy to understand because he got his points out well. Loren-san seemed to have taught him well.

“What are the fruits and nuts that we can take from here?”

“Let’s see if you can name me no less than five”

When I wanted to ask Kyle about which fruits and nuts are edible around here, Loren-san had cut me off and asked him first.

It was a quiz for his disciple.

“Pico, erue, aria, merie, goji, and zuri”

“That’s correct”

Loren-san nodded his head as he listened to Kyle’s smooth words that were said with no hesitation.

“The things that he just listed can also be found near the village. Did you know that Aldo?”

“No, other than the goji berries, I haven’t tried any of them”

“Well then, why don’t we gather some and have a try?”

“Sure”

Therefore, we went off the road and deeper into the woods. Soon, we found round red nuts that grew around the grass.

When Loren-san saw them, he picked up some and handed them to me.

“This is a pico. Its special characteristic is its redness and its round shape, with a taste that is similar to an apple. You can try eating it just like that”

I was inspired by Loren-san’s words so I tried it out.

When I chewed the grain-sized nut, my mouth was gradually filled by a sweet umami.

“You’re right, it certainly tastes like an apple”

It had a completely different taste from goji berries.

“Well, it’s a popular snack among children. Since it grows on the ground, it’s easy for children to pick them out themselves. Also, it’s safe because there are no poisonous fruits growing nearby. I used to eat this when I was a child, too”

Loren threw some pico nuts into his mouth as he laughed and let out a “gahahah” laugh.

Oh, when I was a child, I would eat whatever fruits and nuts that I could get my hands on, too. I challenged everything that I found and tried to eat them.

There wasn’t even once or twice where my stomach felt weird.

Now that I think back, I’m glad that I never ate anything poisonous.

I guess it was thanks to luck that I was able to live until now.

“And over here we have the fruit, erue”

While I was deeply impressed by the pico nut, Loren-san was beckoning me over from the top of a tree.

When I approached Loren-san, I saw several blue-colored fruits on the tree that Kyle had climbed up.

Unlike the pico, this fruit, erue, is the size of Kyle's fist.

Loren-san stretched his hand out and reached for the fruit, then hopped back down onto the ground.

"So, this here is an erue. The outside is hard, but if you cut it open and eat the inside, it's delicious. Just to warn you, it gets more bitter the closer you get to the skin"

I see. It's the type of fruit where you just eat the middle with a spoon. Such fruits are easy to understand because they are common.

While I was looking at this fruit in admiration, Loren-san, who was next to me, laughed.

"Hahaha, Kyle, you're still a child. The bitter taste near the skin is not really a problem"

"No, it's weird that adults don't mind that taste"

I couldn't stand bitter-tasting food when I was a child either, but after I was a little over sixteen years old, I did not mind anymore. I think that like most people, their taste in food would change slightly when they become an adult.

As I tried out the fruits, we continued walking in the woods while they taught me the types of vegetables and herbs that could be taken from this forest.

"Footsteps of a deer. It just passed by here a little while ago"

Loren-san said as he squatted down on the soil where a deer's footprints remained.

The footprints that were carved into the ground do look like they were brand new, so the deer should not have gotten far just like Loren-san said.

"Shall we try looking around here with the three of us?"

“Yeah, we might get a great deal of meat for tonight’s dinner if this goes well”

Loren replied to Kyle with a smile showing his white teeth.

Imagining that I might be able to bring back lots of meat, a smile had also slipped out of me.

Perhaps I could meet Flora’s expectations and pay back Aisha very soon.

“I think you already know, but, beware of monsters. While they rarely come out, there are vicious monsters like Red bears and Gillfangos in the north. Keep your eyes wide so you don’t tunnel vision on the prey”

The Red bears and Gillfangos... they are both extremely violent monsters.

Red bears are bear type monsters that are clad in tough, red fur. They attack anyone who steps into their territory.

Gillfangos have bodies that are much larger than wild boars. They are monsters with long fangs that seem like they could penetrate the sky.

They are not aggressive monsters, but you won’t get off scot-free if they charged at you when they can mow down trees.

There’s always a possibility of encountering such monsters, so we have to always be aware of danger. If we focused too hard on the prey that we are chasing, then even if we had infinite lives, it wouldn’t be enough when a monster pops up around the corner.

Even for me, someone who is a professional in slaying monsters, I still have a fragile human body.

I could still die in a hit if I took on a monster’s attack directly; that’s why I cannot afford to be careless at any time when I’m in the mountains and woods.

We followed the clues in the vicinity with serious-looking faces.

When I got rid of the unnecessary thoughts in my head and drove the sound of my

heartbeats away from my consciousness, I felt a sudden cold chill as I sharpened my senses.

I walked while making as little sound as possible, as I relied on the things that I was seeing with my eyes and the sounds I was hearing with my ears. Loren-san was doing the same as he moved from behind.

When I took a quick glance at Loren-san, he was looking a little surprised.

I have no idea why he was surprised, but today I came so that he could teach me about the mountains here. Therefore, it's important for him to be able to confirm what I'm capable of, as that information will be essential for him in order for him to come to a decision whether or not I can be of any use as a hunter.

Having understood that, I moved to the east while not minding Loren-san, who followed from behind.

I pushed out the long grass without making noises and slowly peeked out. There, I saw a deer just about fifty meters ahead.

We've found it.

"...What are you going to do now? Are you gonna go for it?"

Loren-san whispered in a calm tone as he quietly came up from behind.

Kyle had also caught up with us a little later.

The joy you feel when you find your prey could turn into signs that could be easily detected by animals, so you must keep calm during a hunt.

"Yeah. I'm going for it"

I answered him briefly, then I pulled out an arrow from the remaining small amount of arrows that I carried by my waist.

I often hunted in my past journeys, but I haven't done this lately.

It felt a bit uneasy since Loren-san is watching me, but at this distance, I would still be able to hit the target even if I'm rusty.

If it was Kiel, he could hit this level of shot while picking his nose.

I fit the arrow onto the bowstring and took aim at the deer as I drew the bow.

The prey was still not aware of the situation as it was just leisurely eating the grass on the ground.

I adjusted my aim a little and released the arrow.

shoom, the arrow ripped through the air as it flew toward the deer in a straight line.

The deer moved its head when it noticed the airy sound, but it was already too late. The arrow had gone into the side of its head.

It was suddenly killed from the fatal blow it received from the side.

Well, this much should be natural for shooting from this distance. However, I couldn't point that out as I felt somewhat nervous because Loren-san was watching me.

I'm glad that I was able to kill with a single shot.

With this I can meet Flora's expectations and thank Aisha.

"...You're good... Much better than my disciple"

I felt relieved inside as Loren-san told me after tapping on my shoulder lightly.

"Noo, that's not true"

Kiel will be angry if I was bragging from this level of archery. Rather, I was too slow from loading up to shooting. If it was a little back then, I would have been able to shoot in a shorter time without the deer even noticing.

I'll need to practice when I get home.

"No,no,no... it's weird to even compare me to that level. Before anything else, Aldo-san, your ability to find the prey was really something else. You tracked it all the way here as if you knew it was here. That was even better than my teacher"

Is that so? My judgement was rather slow compared to how fast it normally is since it

was my first time at this mountain.

Since tracking is more about getting familiar with different environments from experiences, it takes some time.

“...I’m a little concerned to hear that from my stupid disciple. You want to get disowned?”

“I’ll be depending on you when that happens, Aldo-san. If anything, having someone like you as my teacher would make me happy”

“What’d you say?!?! How ungrateful!!”

The two of them joked around since we have taken down the prey and confirmed that there was no danger around.

Loren-san caught Kyle and nudged his head with his fist.

They aren’t father and son but they have a good relationship. You couldn’t really have a conversation like that unless you were close enough with each other.

“At any rate, if we have Aldo-san’s skills, the villagers are going to be able to eat meat forever! Take good care of us from now on!”

“Yes!”



As soon as we finished the processing work of the prey such as draining the blood out, we headed off the mountain.

Today, I was taught about the food ingredients that could be gathered from the mountain, and then we gathered a lot of nuts, fruits, and herbs.

It was because we had our hands all full from getting the deer down along with our baggage that we did not have much time to chat on our way down.

Loren-san and I carried the deer down by tying it to a long piece of wood with ropes.

“Oii, we brought back some game-”

Loren-san spoke to the villagers who were working on the fields.

“Ohh! It’s true! That’s huge!”

“You guys did it. We might have meat for dinner tonight”

The villagers who saw the deer came to us with their faces shining bright.

“Are we going to have plenty of meat for today’s dinner?”

“Yeah, for sure”

“Yay-!!”

An innocent, small girl said in joy as her mother patted her head.

It makes me happy as well when I see them this happy.

I think this was a little helpful to the villagers.

“Did Loren-san take this down?”

“No, Aldo here, who is new to this village, is the one who took it down. This guy is skilled, so from now on you will be able to eat a lot of meat”

Loren-san replied to a woman as he pointed at me.

The eyes of the villagers gathered on me along with his words.

When I glanced at Loren-san, I saw his full smile showing his white teeth for the second time.

Apparently, he has made this an opportunity to introduce me to the villagers here. I’m thankful for that.

I sent words of gratitude to Loren-san with my eyes, and then I looked at the villagers.

“I’m new to this village as I just moved in, name’s Aldo. Nice to meet you all!”

When I lightly lowered my head after I introduced myself, the gathered villagers

applauded with smiles on their faces.

“Ohh! Nice to meet you, too! We welcome you here!”

“If there’s anything you need help with come ask me any time”

I carved those welcoming words happily in my heart. I’m full of happiness ever since I’ve come to Nordende.

“Kyle, work hard and get us meat too!”

“Yes, today I did my best and only gathered some nuts. Please forgive me”

Kyle gave a little girl the pico nut as he said so.

“Nn! The pico nut is also delicious so I forgive you!”

Everyone laughed gently from the words of the little girl.



When we returned to the village, we began to dismantle the deer immediately. We pulled out the internal organs, peeled off the skin, and cut it up into different parts.

There were almost no parts that we threw away; even the spine and hipbone of the deer were used as dog food.

I was surprised at the unique knowledge that the villagers had on how to utilize every part of the deer. When I think back, it was also thanks to not wasting anything that I’ve managed to live until today.

After we finished cutting up the meat, we took the portion that we needed ourselves and the rest was immediately distributed to the villagers. Of course, we as hunters were able to get larger shares, so we won’t have to worry about having meat for now.

As expected, one deer was not enough to be shared by all the villagers, but since we aren’t the only hunters in this village, there is no problem.

The village chief and the villagers decided the proportions and the order of distribution, so it was done smoothly. By the way, the hunters themselves are also

given the freedom of distribution since they trade in the meat in exchange for other things. Therefore, I can choose to give a portion to whomever I want without worries. For trading the meat, we receive other types of food ingredients in exchange. It's a two way relationship.

If distribution goes wrong and it loses the balance, the relationship collapses without saying.

I got a large amount of deer meat on my hands, and I decided to head to Ergys-san's house quickly.

Ergys-san also got a portion of the meat, but it was not that much. If I bring him this share he will be able to eat lots.

I arrived at Ergys-san's house and knocked on the door.

"...I have been waiting for you"

It was Flora who answered the door.

She welcomed me with a shy smile.

"I managed to meet your expectations, somehow. With this, there will be lots of meat on the dinner table tonight"

With that said, I passed Flora a piece of meat that was wrapped in a type of leaf that was said to be good to use for preservation.

"Thank you"

"Ah, well then... I'll be on my way"

"Please wait a second"

Flora stopped me as I was about to leave.

When I intentionally looked back at her, Flora's feet were fidgeting as if she was embarrassed.

"...Um, please stay for dinner before you go"

“Um... Is that alright?”

“Yeah, let’s eat together”

I went into the house as Flora urged me to go inside with a bright smile on her face as she opened the door.

Chapter 16

Sharing With The Neighbors

On the day after I finished my first hunt with Loren-san and Kyle.

I wanted to hunt today as well, but unfortunately their bodies needed rest today, so we can't go.

My basic hunting abilities have been acknowledged, but my knowledge of the mountains here was still not sufficient since I was not familiar with them yet. Therefore, I've decided that I should not hunt alone for the time being.

Even if I have some skills, it's very important to factor in the natural environment. Since I don't want to end up helpless in front of monsters, it's very important to have a complete understanding of the environment in the hunting grounds.

It was the same thing back in my adventurer days. We had to go back and forth to scout out the areas to collect information before heading off to the monster hunting quests and the quests to collect expensive materials.

There were also desperate times of crisis where we had to head to the quest locations without any time to scout ahead, but since I'm just a villager now, there's no need to take such risks.

We will go hunting tomorrow in the mountains as three people again, so today I think I'll bring some meat to Toack's house.

With that said, I headed to his house with the meat after I finished breakfast at my house.

I crossed the bridge over the stream and walked on the grass until his home came into my sight.

Even for being neighbours, we really live close to each other.

As I tossed a fruit that I found growing around his home into my mouth, the sour taste

spread inside my mouth and it was refreshing. Eating goji berries in the morning had made all my sleepiness fly away.

“Since I’m going to eat with him anyways, maybe I should pick some more of these out”

I picked out some more goji berries, then I knocked on his door.

“Oii, Toack. I brought some meat over”

“Ohh! Aldo? You can come inside”

Shortly after hearing Toack’s reply, I entered his home without hesitation.

“Good morning”

That was not a greeting from Toack that I heard as I entered. Instead, it was Aisha, who was dressed in her work clothes.

“Oh, morning. Why are you here, Aisha?”

“...The workbench broke down”

Being asked from someone she did not expect, Aisha lifted up the workbench and showed me the front leg that was broken.

It was a wooden workbench that I could tell from first glance was made by Toack based on its edges and shape. On top of that, it seems like it’s quite past its useful life as most of the wood was blackened deeply, with the broken leg being the most eroded part.

“Oh, so you came here to get a new workbench”

“Yup, that’s how it is. Araa, you got some goji berries. Let me eat some too, please”

Aisha asked for the berries in my hand, and then she threw them in her mouth after I handed her some.

“Nnn~ this sourness is nice”

I thought this type of taste would not be liked by ladies, but strangely, Aisha likes it.

“Oi, Aldo, give me some too”

I tossed Toack some berries since he wanted some too, just as I expected. Then, he caught them nicely and ate them.

“Even so, I could have gotten hurt really badly from using this piece of inferior product”

Aisha said as she turned around to face Toack, who was deeper inside the house. On her butt, there was some brown dirt attached. From that, I understood it was because she tried sitting on the broken workbench.

The reason why her words were sharper than usual was probably because of that.

“Nono, you have been using this for three years now, right? It’s only natural for it to break down”

“...When I first bought this, you told me that this can be used for five years”

Aisha was still not backing off. Is she doing this because her ass was in pain from that, or is she trying to negotiate a discount for her next purchase?

It’s amazing that she could remember the words from three years ago.

Toack then sighed and replied:

“You have been leaving the workbench outdoors ’cause it’s too much of a hassle to clean up after work, right? Leaving it in the rain makes it corrode faster, so it would break down sooner than I said, you know?”

Oh, that’s no good. It’s Aisha’s loss. Toack had precisely explained why the useful life of his product did not match what he said, and it was because of Aisha’s management of the item.

“...Chi”

“And so there won’t be any discounts, but go to the warehouse with a trolley and get something that suits you”

Even when Aisha glared at him as she clicked her tongue in annoyance, Toack brushed it off lightly and sent her away in order to avoid trouble.

She walked to the warehouse as if the place was her own while looking somewhat displeased still.

“That’s why the women in this village are dangerous. They have an insane memory that can recall words from years ago, and when something’s a bit off, they try to get a discount”

“Maa, how should I put it. Women are no joke no matter where...”

The housewives who lived in the shopping districts of the capital and female adventurers all had crazy bargaining power. They can talk about this and that and lower the prices like magic.

“Even though I was partly at fault there, Aisha is the only person who can nigger at someone with a straight face...”

Toack said as he put his fingers on his temple.

I’ve heard that men are said to be creatures who like to forget things when it’s convenient to, but I think that women who pretend that they don’t remember when they do is not good either.

“Well, I don’t really care about something like this. You went hunting yesterday and got some meat, right?”

He changed from looking like he had a headache to a happy look.

Being able to eat fresh meat can make even someone like Toack happy.

Normally it’s difficult to tell how he’s feeling behind his poker face, but this time his emotions were really showing on his face.

“Ah, that’s right. Thanks for taking care of me as well, Toack. So, here’s some meat for you as my thanks”

When I passed him the meat that was wrapped in leaves, Toack quickly unwrapped the meat.

As he moved the green leaves aside, a lump of red meat could be seen.

“Ohh! It’s a nice red color!! This would be delicious if I grill it with a little salt and pepper”

Listening to the mouthwatering words of Toack, I nodded in agreement without thinking.

The venison dishes that Flora and Fiona-san made yesterday were the best.

Above all, the grilled meat was the best I’ve had in half my lifetime. Venison would get all dried up if it was grilled for too long.

“You can also stir fry it with some vegetables and sweet sauce. Even deep frying it, or stew it with tomatoes”

“Oi, that sounds good”

“...Since it’s meat, it would go really well with wine”

When I was talking to Toack about ways to cook the venison, Aisha, who came back unnoticed, made a suggestion as she stared at the meat.

“What is it? Have you already chosen a new workbench?”

Toack asked in surprise.

“Just make one that’s around the same height as the last one. Besides that, do you have a share of that meat for me, too? You still haven’t repaid me for acting as your guide and helping you with Flora”

“I was planning on giving some to you as well, though? Remember? I told you to come by just the other day, and I’ll give you your share at that time”

“Oh. Then, let’s eat the venison for lunch at Aldo’s place”

“Haa?”

From the sudden suggestion of Aisha, Toack let out a dumbfounded voice.

“Even if I let my family cook it, it’s not as delicious as when you and Flora make it”

That’s a feeling that I know well. Flora and Toack are both really good at cooking.

It’s just, I feel like I’m leaving everything to them while being too unreserved.

“...Oi, Aldo. Is what Aisha saying okay? Don’t you have to go hunting today?”

“No, today’s a day off so there’s no problem with me. What about you two?”

“Well, I’m in a profession where it’s easy to make time. My apologies for making you wait for your bed though”

Perhaps he was feeling a strong sense of responsibility from a client’s order, so he apologized to me.

“There’s no problem since you lent me a sofa. It’s not a big deal if it’s a little late. I borrowed some fishing tools from Ergys-san yesterday, so how about we go fishing like we said?”

“That sounds good. We can have a luxurious course of venison at noon and river fishes at night”

It doesn’t sound bad to eat like that with everyone. Just from thinking about it brings me joy.

“What about you, Aisha?”

I thought there won’t be a problem with her since she was the one who brought it up, but I will ask just in case.

“There’s no problem, I’ll just push my job to my little sister. She will be happy and willing if she was going to come home to some of Toack and Flora’s cooking”

“You’re going to use your little sister like that?”

“It’s fine, it’s my special privilege as an older sister since I’m always working. After that, we’ll get Flora to join us”

I’m a little curious as to what type of person Aisha’s little sister is. Perhaps, she would

be the same open-hearted type of girl as Aisha, or a seriously shy type of girl who is her complete opposite.

Brother and sisters are either really similar in personalities or the complete opposite.

“...Hey, you’re going to tell that famously shy girl Flora to come? Even with me here?”

“It’s going to be okay. I have Aldo here. I don’t know if she’ll talk to you, though”

Chapter 17

A Visit From An Unfamiliar Woman

Since we've decided to eat the venison at my place, we dispersed from Toack's home.

Toack will come after he finishes the work he has in the morning, and Aisha will come after she pushes her work onto her younger sister.

Speaking of which, I'm heading to Ergys-san's house right now because the role of inviting Flora was given to me.

When I got to his house, Fiona-san was there working in the field behind the house.

"Hello there"

When she heard my voice, Fiona-san stood up and turned around.

As usual, each and every one of her movements was beautiful. From the way she stood up from a crouching position, to the way she turned around; it was full of elegance.

The reason why all of Flora's movements carry elegance as well is probably because she grew up watching Fiona-san.

"Ara, hello Aldo-san. Thank you for that delicious meat yesterday"

"No no, I've been in your care. Thank you for letting me have dinner with you yesterday as well, it was delicious"

"Since you really looked like you enjoyed it, Flora and I both found it worthwhile"

Fiona laughed gracefully with her hand placed near her mouth.

Just looking at that gentle smile makes me feel healed.

I wonder what this is- This feeling that envelops me. I wonder if this is what having a mother feels like.

It feels like I can understand what Kiel meant now when he used to say that older women have the nice warmth and affection of a mother in them.

“By the way, what brings you here today?”

I came back to my senses from Fiona-san’s question.

That’s right. Fiona-san has crop work to do. I might turn into a bother if I use too much of her time.

“Umm, I’m here for Flora. Since Aisha and Toack want to have lunch at my place today, I’m here to invite Flora to join us”

“Ara, that sounds nice. Flora will definitely be happy to, but that girl is out trading right now”

“So does that mean it won’t be possible ‘cause she’s busy today?”

Was my invitation too sudden? Basically villagers are busy every day with some kind of work. If a person is absent from work, their work will either be passed on to their family members or get postponed and cause inconvenience for others.

Toack and I are the only ones around who have a flexible schedule. Therefore, I have to be considerate of others in this regard.

Of course, on the days when I have to head to the mountains I pretty much can’t do anything else for the whole day either. And for Toack as well, even when he has no orders, it doesn’t mean that he can just go around and play.

“...No, since she should be coming back before lunch, I think she can go with you afterwards”

Fiona answered with a smile after she thought for a few seconds.

Perhaps with that moment of time, she thought of Flora’s schedule and what needed to be done today, then remade her schedule in her mind when she thought of nothing urgent for Flora to do.

I feel somewhat bad for this invitation.

“Sorry for inviting her all of a sudden”

“It’s fine. Aisha-chan always does the same. We’re used to it”

I responded with a bitter smile to Fiona-san’s words.

From what she just said, it’s possible that Aisha-chan still does this after they grew up.



Since Fiona-san is getting Flora for me, I’ve decided to clean my house a bit for my incoming visitors.

It hasn’t been long since the day of the big cleaning, but dust and sand have already started to slightly accumulate.

I took out the broom and swept the dust and the dirt off the living room floor.

At that time, I realized that I don’t have slippers for my guests to wear inside the house.

It’s normal to wear slippers inside the house in order to prevent the floor from getting all dirty from people’s shoes. However, I only have a pair for my own use.

It would dirty their socks if they just walked in socks instead, and the floor is cold as well...

What should I do about this?

“...I guess I have no choice but to borrow some from Toack”

There were a lot of slippers in Toack’s place.

It’s strange to have a visitor prepare their own inner footwear, but there’s no need to feel reserved with Toack.

With that in mind, I quickly stopped thinking about it and moved on to clean the kitchen.

Toack and Flora will be cooking in this kitchen, so I have to make it all shiny. It's a place where they will be handling food ingredients, so the area has to be kept clean.

I disposed of the trash inside of the wooden box container in the scullery, and washed it out quickly.

Then, I wiped the kitchen with a damp cloth, and wiped away the remaining water with a dry cloth.

After that, I washed the cloths and moved on to the chairs and tables in the living room. Lastly, I finished up by doing the windows at the end.

Yup. It's satisfying being the one cleaning my own house, after all.

I could not have felt such a feeling of satisfaction until now. Since the equipment such as weapons and armor that I had to clean and maintain back then had a direct impact on people's lives, the task carried great feelings of responsibility and obligation.

If just cleaning can feel this refreshing, it wouldn't be bad to do this more often.

"Now then, I guess I'll clean up these tools and go borrow some slippers from Toack..."

After looking at the kitchen and the living room again, I started hearing hard knocks at the door just as I lifted up my bucket.

Who is it? Did Flora come back from trading sooner than expected so she's here early?... No, Flora wouldn't knock on the door this hard. Judging by that, it's probably Toack or Aisha.

"I'm coming"

From experiencing my previous failure, I have come to realize that I am someone who would go get the door no matter what I was in the middle of doing.

And that carelessness is what led to me letting someone in while I was naked.

Once I put the bucket aside and opened the door, there was a young lady with red, long hair standing there, dressed in a red one piece.

It was a woman with a good figure; she had slim waist and a curvy back. Her slender arms and legs also had a healthful beauty to them.

She was a woman with a type of beauty different from Flora and Fiona-san.

But, who is this woman? I don't think I would have forgotten about her if I saw this girl in the village before...

Is she a villager from a nearby village who came here to greet us? She had a basket hanging from her arm, so surely she was not someone who came just to greet me from a nearby village.

"Can I help you?"

"...Are you asleep? It's me"

"Huh?... This voice... Aisha?"

Nono, this can't... be?

When I kept staring at her in surprise, she scratched her neck and opened her mouth to reply as if it was a hassle. Oh, that is somewhat Aisha-like.

"Even I am not in my work clothes every day, you know? Well, the main reason is that if my little sister is working, she would keep making a fuss because there wouldn't be enough work clothes"

"..."

I'm sorry. It was just like you said. I was convinced that she wore her work clothes even in private at home, with her hair wrapped up with a barrette at all times.

Even so, I was not really conscious of it, but Aisha is a very beautiful girl, even if she does not have a feminine personality.

Her hair was usually messy and cluttered up, and her figure was wasted in her work clothes. Well, there's no need to look good while working in the fields, but wouldn't it be fine to at least let her hair down? When the older sister is a fashionable-type, the younger sister would no doubt be a serious-type. Since she is a rough older sister who takes everything as a hassle, the younger sister would then be the type that is mindful

of others and does everything right. These thoughts of these contrasting sibling personality combinations were surfacing in my mind.

“Hold on, I know this is a rare sight but stop staring so much”

Aisha told me with upturned eyes to stop staring at her. She seems a bit embarrassed showing what she looks like outside of work, as her eyes are not as sharp as they usually are.

“Ah, sorry about that”

“Hora, take this wine, jam and raisins. I will give you these first”

When I apologized in a hurry, Aisha handed over the basket that was hanging from her arm.

“Well then, I’m coming in”

“Ah, sorry. I’m going to borrow some slippers from Toack right now so please wait a bit”

Aisha sighed the moment she heard what I said. Even if her look changed, it seems like her gestures did not.

Chapter 18

Our Circle

“Hahahaha! So that’s why you were asking who she was! Oh that’s a good one!”

Toack laughed as he clapped his hands while we sat in the living room.

“...Settle down already”

Aisha said as she suddenly got her head off the table and glared at Toack.

I can’t even laugh at this since I was the one who had no idea who she was.

I felt Aisha’s sharp gaze suddenly stabbing at me, as if she was telling me that this was all my fault.

Was Toack not surprised seeing how Aisha looked? I thought there was a chance that he would have thought that a stranger had come if I asked him about it. That was how surprising it was for me because of how different she looked.

“I bet she was dressed up by her younger sister Ena, right? She was probably like “Don’t go to eat lunch with people in your work clothes. Here, wear this and go””

With a smile on his face, Toack teased Aisha as he touched the sleeve of her dress.

“.....”

He seemed to have hit the mark, so Aisha could not refute what he was saying and only brushed away his hand. I feel like I could almost see wrinkles forming on Aisha’s pretty looking face cause of how she’s knitting her brows at him.

“I have no idea which one’s the older sister and which one’s the younger one-”

Is it because of Aisha’s bargaining attempt from a while ago? Toack is taking this opportunity to get Aisha back while she’s weak.

If he bullies her this much she's going to retaliate later. Is he going to be okay?

I stood up as I started to feel somewhat uneasy from imagining that happening and went to prepare some food that I picked out.

It's good that Aisha brought raisins. Aside from the raisins from Aisha that we can snack on, we can also eat the pico and erue that I harvested when I was with Loren-san.

"Oi, hold on a sec, Aisha. Stand up and spin for me so I can take a look"

"...I'm not doing that. That kind of embarrassing thing"

While I was getting the utensils and a plate to put the fruits and nuts on, the two continued their conversation like that. They get along pretty well despite their age difference.

It's probably because they grew up in the same village and knew each other from a young age. I can't imagine what they were like when they were younger, but I would have liked to have seen it.

"Here, I brought us some light snacks"

When I took out the plate, Aisha got up happily and escaped from Toack's bantering.

On the other hand, Toack seems to be a bit sad that I came back so soon. His disappointment was showing all over his face.

"Ara, I thought it was only going to be raisins. I'm so tired of eating raisins."

Aisha said with a happy face when she saw what was on the plate. As I thought, she was tired of eating raisins since she grows them at her place.

She was happy that she's going to get to eat something other than raisins.

"That isn't something that a grape farmer would say"

"Try eating raisins every morning. You'll be tired of it in three days"

I'm jealous that she gets to have raisins every day, but there's no doubt that anyone

would get tired of them if they eat them every day.

I got lots of raisins from Aisha, but I don't want end up in that state.

"What kind of food can you make with raisins?"

"You can mix them with anything, you know? You can mix them in to bake bread, make salads, cook things combining them with apples, and even with chicken"

Aisha answered my question while she scraped the erue fruit with her spoon.

She answered smoothly as someone who appreciates food well.

Everything she said sounded tasty. It would be a waste to just eat the raisins by themselves here, so I think I'll try cooking something with them.

"I see. Teach me a simple way to cook with them after"

"Sure"

For a while after that, we picked up our spoons and silently dug at the body of the erues.



After snacking on the fruits, Aisha said she wanted a full tour around my house so I decided to show her around.

However, since I have just moved in recently, there's not really any furniture or accessories in my house, so I don't think there's much to see.

"Hehhh, that's a big bath"

Aisha's said with an impressed voice in the bathroom.

"The people who lived here before seemed to really liked bathing. They designed this room's layout in such a way that narrows down the size of the changing room for a bigger bath"

"So that's why the changing room is this small. But, isn't it hard to fill up a bath this

big by yourself?”

“I’m confident in my physical abilities, and I love bathing as well”

The truth is I rely on the power of the magic tools, but it wouldn’t do much good if too many people know about it. Magic tools are valuable items that usually only nobles use, so it would start some weird misunderstandings.

We walked through the changing room one behind the other, as there wasn’t enough space for a grown man and woman to go through together side-by-side.

“What is this empty room here for?”

Aisha asked as she got out into the hallway and saw the next room.

“This is the bedroom. The bed isn’t finished yet though”

“...Toack, hurry up and finish the bed for him”

“I’m here because you said you wanted to have lunch together all of a sudden”

When Aisha muttered from down the hallway, Toack’s voice of protest flew out from the living room as he was relaxing there.

Aisha then walked back as if she couldn’t hear him.

Well, this is an average villager’s house so it was pretty loud and clear.

We continued as I showed a bitter smile.

“You sure you want to keep going? All that’s left is the storage room”

I moved the magic tools and swords that I had from the living room in there, so it would be a little troubling if she stared around in that room like the bathhouse.

There are also some high grade materials that I put in there which could be exchanged for money in the case of an emergency. I don’t invite people over often, but since I don’t know what will happen from now on, I should make a secret place to store those items above the ceiling or under the floor.

“...Oh? Never mind then”

Aisha said as she took a glance at me before turning back.

I was a bit worried since she said that she wanted a full house tour, but now I’m a little relieved.

Since I just moved in and I should have had nothing to store in a storage room, I should not have said that I have a storage room at all.

When I was walking back with Aisha from the hallway to the living room, I heard knocking noises coming from the door.

From the gentle knocking noises, I knew that it was Flora.

“That’s probably Flora”

The knocks would be loud if it was Aisha.

When I was thinking that, I heard Toack calling out “Someone’s here-” from the living room.

“Yeah yeah, you don’t have to get it because you have never really talked to her”

“I know that”

Aisha and I headed for the door in small steps. Certainly, it would suddenly surprise Flora if Toack went to get the door since she is shy.

“Welcome”

“H, Hello”

When I opened the door, Flora was there in a white blouse and a blue one piece dress.

The blouse was a little different from the one that she usually wore, as the neck area had a fine rose embroidery and there was a blue ribbon on the chest area. Furthermore, her dress that was swaying in the wind was not just dark blue, but also mixed with a refreshing blue that was a slightly brighter shade.

It's clothes like these that highlight Flora's pure and neat style of look. Her long hair that is usually straightened out is braided carefully today and she has a mature feel to her.

"U,umm"

"Hurry up and invite her in"

Just when Flora was shying away from me looking at her in silence, Aisha, who was next to me, tapped my shoulder and told me to invite her in.

Clothes and hairstyles can really change how a woman looks, so it's not strange for them to look so different.

"Ah, right. Please come on in"

"O, Okay, ojamashimasu"

Flora changed into slippers and came in after I invited her inside.

"Sorry for suddenly calling you here"

"No, it's alright. Today's afternoon work wasn't that important. And Aisha had always invited me out randomly since we were kids"

She said "Aisha had always invited her out randomly" like it was trouble. If Toack or I were the ones who said that, Aisha would be looking at us with cold eyes.

However, Aisha was silent and did not care. She has nerves of steel right now compared to her usual self.

"This is Aldo-san's new house, huh. This is my first time here..."

Flora said as she looked around curiously, then her face turned red as if she was reminded of what happened the last time she was here.

We're the only ones here who know of that scene.

Aisha showed a bitter smile, and Toack was looking over here grinning.

“Okay okay, let’s start cooking since Flora’s here now. My stomach is already growling”

“Y, yeah”

Aisha changed the topic with a bright tone. With that, Flora seems to have stopped thinking about it as well.

Just when we were going to move our crowd into the kitchen, Toack spoke up.

“Oi, is it okay for me to introduce myself?”

“I want to say that you can... but Flora will get nervous if there’s someone here she’s not familiar with”

“Y, yes. Please, go ahead”

Flora answered stiffly since Toack came out.

“I’m Toack, someone who lives around here. I make furniture for a living”

Although Toack was trying to speak in a tone as gently as possible, to other people he still looked like he was a man with an angry look on his face.

“His personality is peevish and he’s not very straight forward though”

“He always looks angry but he’s not really angry”

“What are you guys saying?!”

Aisha and I added on to Toack’s too formal of an introduction, and he replied in an upset tone.

“Ufufufu... Ah, s, sorry about that. The conversation between you three was funny”

As Flora’s stiff expression softened up, Toack also quieted down as if he was surprised by that.

Then, Flora somehow made eye contact with Toack’s scary-looking face and said,

“I’m the village chief’s daughter, Flora. Nice to meet you”

“Ah, nice to meet you”

I was worried, but the introduction between those two seemed to have worked out pretty well.

Flora has relaxed, and it's nice that our circle will be getting bigger from here on.

Chapter 19

Cooking by The Four of us

Since Flora's here as well now, we moved the whole gang into the kitchen.

"I, I'm not really that good at cooking. Maybe I should go back out?"

"Why'd you say that? You can help even if it's just a little. Like cutting up the vegetables or making the sauce"

Toack caught Aisha who was about to go back in the living room.

"Aisha, try cooking once in a while. It would surely be fun cooking with everyone"

"I know"

I also wanted to leave it to Flora and Toack since I know how good they are, but it sounds like fun to make a meal together with everyone this time. Also, I'll be eating the deer that I hunt from now on, so it would good for me to learn some good ways to cook them from these two.

While everyone was washing their hands, I prepared the things that we'll most likely need.

Salt and pepper, wine, olive oil, frying pans, kitchen knives and cutting boards. And lastly, the venison.

As I brought these out, Flora also took out a small wooden lunch box from her bag which contained the venison that she had prepared beforehand.

"Ah. This is what I was working on yesterday. These ones were coated with salt, pepper, and olive oil. And this here was marinated with red wine and an herb called marjoram"

“Ohh! You came well prepared. You can make a nice sautéed dish with that”

“As expected from Flora, it won’t take long until we can eat”

“Thank you”

We all praised Flora on the nice preparation that she did.

She brought out such valuable food ingredients from her house. I’m so happy that tears almost came out. She must have done the marinade when she cooked for her family.

Looks like I’ll have to sort out a big cut for them again if I manage to catch game in my next hunt.

“Well then, what are we going to make?”

“Steak and stew!”

Aisha responded instantly to Toack’s question as she raised her hand.

“Ah, it takes some time to make a stew so let’s not”

“Ehhhh, is stew no good?”

“It’s not that we can’t, but even if we start making it right away, it’ll be way past lunch time by the time it’s done”

Flora seemed to have the same opinion as Toack since she wasn’t recommending it too much either.

If we start making the stew now it’d be evening by the time we can eat.

“Frying it would be no problem though”

“Roasting it or sautéing it would be plenty delicious. If we want some soup, we can also make a vegetable soup. We’d get tired of eating only meat”

“Ohh, that sounds good. I can’t get the flavours of Toack’s soup even if I try to imitate it”

“Haha, you won’t be able to do it that fast. You can’t do it just by cutting the vegetables up normally and throwing them in”

After talking for a while between the four of us, we have decided on a menu of grilled venison steak, sautéed venison, stir fry venison with red wine, pot roast venison and a vegetable soup.

Although this menu sounds like a lot, we have Flora’s marinated venison. The cooking methods were also unexpectedly easy, so we’re gonna get started right away.

Aisha and I were in charge of the simple cooking such as grilling and pot roasting. Flora was in charge of the stir-frying with wine and sautéing. Toack was in charge of the vegetable soup and supervising Aisha.

Flora, me, Aisha and Toack were working in the kitchen next to each other in that order.

This is a pretty roomy kitchen, but it still felt quite cramped with the four of us adults lined up.

Flora brought out a hand-made apron and put it on.

Aisha seemed to be reluctant to join in because of the clothes her little sister had picked out for her. It didn’t come across my mind before, so I have decided to let her use my apron. It would be a waste if she got that beautiful dress dirty.

Flora stared at Aisha. It did look somewhat loose on her because of our height difference.

“It’s a bit too big for her after all, huh”

“...You’re right, but that’s not it”

“What’s not it?”

“I, It’s nothing Aldo-san! Let’s start cooking!”

Flora’s strange words piqued my interest, but since she told me to start cooking I will

move on from it.

I cut the venison into large chunks and seasoned them with salt and pepper. Then, with a little bit of oil in the frying pan, I threw in the sliced up pieces of garlic into the pan to get its flavour out.

The fragrant smell of garlic drifted as they turned into a golden brown color.

“That smells really good”

“Yeah yeah, hurry up and cut up the meat. I can’t do it ’cause we only have two knives”

I heard the voices coming from the two next to me.

We have three cutting boards, but only two knives. The place where we can make the fire can also fit two frying pans maximum, but it would just waste more time unless we take our turns efficiently.

When I first moved in here I would have never imagined that the four of us would be cooking like this.

Somehow this got me feeling nostalgic, reminding me of the times that I was cooking with my party back in “Black Silver”.

“...Aldo-san, you’re having fun aren’t you?”

Maybe because I couldn’t hold my smile in, Flora said to me as she smiled at me.

“I was just reminded a bit of my past. I had also cooked like this with my friends”

“Oh, speaking of which, what did you used to do before? You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to, though”

Toack hesitantly asked me from hearing my mutters.

A twenty-seven-year old man who suddenly moved into the village. Anyone would wonder what he was doing before that.

“Nah, it’s not something that I can’t say out loud. I was an adventurer a while ago and I came here since I made some money”

At the same time I answered like that, I confirmed that the flavor of the golden-browned garlic had been transferred to the pan before I took out the garlic.

Then, I added a bit more oil and waited until the frying pan was heated up to the point that the oil begins to smoke.

“Heeehh! So you were doing something like that! Does that mean you have taken out vicious monsters like goblins and orcs before?”

“Well, yeah I guess so”

I even took out a dragon at the end, but I will keep quiet and not say needless things.

“If we have a hunter here who has experience dealing with monsters, we could feel safe even if anything happens”

“We’ll be relying on you”

“I have already retired, so please don’t work me too hard”

When small fry monsters such as goblins come out, it’s normal for hunters and villagers to deal with them. But if it’s a monster that they can’t handle, then they will hold out until the knights and adventurers are dispatched. It will make the people feel safer if the first people who will deal with them are hunters who are former adventurers.

If such monsters do come to this village, I will take the lead to fight for everyone’s lives, but I’d rather not deal with that type of work if possible.

Since the frying pan was heated enough for the oil to smoke, I put the venison in.

I guess they have also finished seasoning the meat from the loud cutting noises I hear coming from near us, and Aisha started throwing the meat into the frying pan.

As the sizzling sounds came from the fat of the meat, the fragrant smell of meat filled the kitchen.

“I’m hungry”

“Same”

we said as we watched the meat juices from the venison flying everywhere.

The smell of meat cooking works very well with empty stomachs. You'll realize just how hungry you are once you smell enough of that fragrant smell.

Behind us, Toack and Flora were chopping up the vegetables on their cutting boards with rapid chopping sounds.

Both of them were very fast with their knives.

As I live my single life here from now on, it would be important to get accustomed to kitchen knives rather than swords.

I seared the meat for one minute on one side, then turned it over for another minute on the other side. The surface of the venison was roasted to a brown color. The middle part was still somewhat red but I don't mind since I'm going to be pot roasting it.

I lowered the fire a bit, then I put a lid on the frying pan and left it covered for a while.

"Oi, Aisha. Don't be grilling it on such a high heat. Cook it carefully on medium heat and watch for the roughness of the meat"

"Even I know that much"

As I listened to their words, I picked out plates and utensils from the kitchen cupboard.

Since my dish was a pot roast, a shallow, round dish is good. Aisha should be done grilling soon too. Should I bring her a plate as well?

It feels like it's as fun to pick out plates as cooking the dishes themselves lately.

Then, after confirming that the remaining heat had cooked the meat thoroughly, I sliced the venison into thin pieces.

The outer layer of the meat was well done, and the inside is a beautiful pink. The middle was roasted to a degree between rare to medium rare. That's the level I'm satisfied with.

I plated the dish with its juicy meat juices still dripping out.

Aisha also looked like she was done; she also served it on the round dish that I placed beside her.

After roasting the meat, I started to make a gravy from wine, honey, and the meat juices from the meat. I put out the fire as the gravy thickened and gave off a fragrant smell.

After I finish plating the food, I noticed that the portions that I roasted looked a bit small.

Suddenly, I paused as I saw Aisha's skin glowing.

"Ah..."

Aisha, you were secretly eating, weren't you? Just when I was about to call her out, something warm entered my mouth.

The taste of well-seasoned meat juice spread all at once. This is the grilled venison.

In no way was this venison overcooked from the texture of the meat. The more I chewed, the more delicious this meat tasted.

While I continued chewing, Aisha put her index finger on her lips.

This girl... she made me an accomplice. Forcibly putting the food like that in my mouth.

Well, it's fine if the two behind us don't notice.

I think that it's necessary to taste the food when you cook.

To encourage others to cook without tasting their food would be rude.

That's why cooking this way isn't really a problem. Yup, this was not us stealing a bite or anything like that. It's to make sure that it was cooked to just the right level.

"Oh, something wrong Aldo?"

"No, nothing at all"

As I tried to reach for more, Toack asked in a curious voice as he looked back. I pulled

back the hand that I had extended out.

Aisha, who was in the same boat as me, had a natural expression on as if nothing was wrong. Aisha is good at kidding herself.

“...There’s something suspicious here”

Toack narrowed his eyes and looked at me sharply.

“We’re done here so you can use the frying pan”

I handed my frying pan over to Flora without feeling guilty.

“O, oh. Thanks”

Flora received the frying pan with a smile on her face.

When I looked at her carefree smile, I thought that Toack must be thinking that it was suspicious.

“Ah, Aldo-san. You know you got some sauce on your mouth?”

“Ehh? Really?”

I wiped my mouth in a panic from what Flora had just pointed out.

“...Baka”

At that moment, I realized my mistake as I heard Aisha’s mutter.

...I fell into Flora’s trap.

“Ah, you stole a bite didn’t you?”

As I looked blankly at Flora, who had just caught me in the act, she smiled at me and went back to cooking.

Her smile was beautiful and gentle as usual, but for some reason it sent shivers down my spine.

Have I done something that has somehow angered her...?

Chapter 20

Various different smiles

“It’s ready!”

The vegetable soup seems to be finished as Toack brings a steaming hot pot to the table.

I was already seated with Aisha and Flora with our dishes and utensils set. With this, we were finally able to start our feast.

“It took so long even though it was just a vegetable soup”

“Shaddap. It’s all good if it’s delicious”

“Yah, you’ll understand after you try some, Aisha”

With all these delicious looking meat dishes laid out in front of us, I don’t know why Aisha would have any complaints even though it did take a while.

“By that, you mean like she’ll understand if she stole a bite of it like you guys did?”

“It was just a taste test!!”

Aisha’s words overlapped with Toack and Flora’s voices.

“Since we were just “testing the taste”, I think it’s okay to give us a bit more steak and pot roast than this”

Yup, Aisha and I had our number of pot-roast and steak reduced as our punishment of stealing a bite.

Even though we did have a “taste test”, isn’t this punishment a little too harsh?

“Yup, yup”

Aisha nodded as she agreed with what I said.

She seems to have eaten three pieces of steak and one piece of the pot roast though, so I don't think she'll get this penalty reduction.

There aren't even three pieces of steak left on her plate.

Even though she wasn't even in a position where she could bring food back for her family, she already has... eaten four pieces secretly.

"Nope. That was way past the point of a taste test while cooking"

Flora refused with a smile as she sat in front of us.

Her smile was gentle, yet different from the usual after we stole a bite. It feels like she is a little mad about something.

Her tone of voice was polite, but her words had thorns.

Was stealing a bite really something that unforgivable in Flora's eyes?

Even though Aisha did have four pieces, I don't think Flora is such a short tempered girl that she would be angry over something so little like that...

"*Gulp*...! Flora, I apologize for what happened a little while ago!... Me and your nine year—"

"F-f-f, fine! There's just nothing I can do about you, Aisha. I'll give you some since I also had some of this last night"

Flora stood up vigorously in the middle of Aisha's sentence and quickly started to give her some of her steaks.

It's rare for Flora to raise her voice like that.

I wonder what Aisha was trying to say, but I won't ask since it won't go well if I try to pry into a girl's conversation.

While Flora is carefully giving Aisha some steaks, Toack started to pour the vegetable soup into round bowls.

Aisha stared at Toack without blinking and said:

“...Toack. You look cooler than usual today”

“Hehe, thank you. Here, your vegetable soup”

“...Hold on. Why’s there so little in my bowl even when I complimented you?”

“Because there were no feelings in your words. Hora, Aldo, pass me your bowl”

I see, you can get a bigger bowl if you praise him if you put your heart into it.

“...Toack. Today you are even more manly than–”

“Stop it. You’re creeping me out”

I tried to praise him with all my heart, but Toack was creeped out by me.

Certainly, that was not something that should be said from a man to another man. I’ll stop that.

When I received my bowl of soup from Toack, he served the soup in Flora’s bowl next in the same way.

I feel like my serving was the largest, but I’m not going to say anything.

Now all the main dishes are served on the table. We have the pot roasted venison by me, venison steak by Aisha, Flora’s sautéed venison, stir fried venison with wine, and Toack’s vegetable soup.

Four different types of venison; they truly are masterpieces served on round plates. I don’t even know if I should put my hands on these.

Only hunters in this village can eat a feast of meat like this.

As for side dishes, we have Aisha’s bread and red wine, vegetable salad, plus the pico and wolfberries from the mountains.

Our meal preparation was now finished, and everyone all had their eyes gathered on me.

I guess this is where I should give a few words as the one who invited them in.

“Now then, let’s eat, shall we? Make sure you eat lots since you all have been helping me so much. I’ll be in your care from now on too!”

“...Ahh”

“Keep the big hunts coming, ok?”

“I’ll be in your care as well”

As we spoke humble words to each other, we picked up our forks.

Since I already had a taste of the pot roast, I had my eyes on Flora’s sautéed venison that I looked the most forward to.

I stabbed my fork into the meat and it went in smoothly. I could see how tender this meat is just from that alone. Venison would be tough if it was overcooked.

While I admired that in my mind, I brought the meat into my mouth.

As I bit into it, the taste of salt, pepper, and herbs spread in my mouth all at once.

The meat was tender and yet it had a fair elasticity of toughness. The original sweet taste of the meat was brought out further as I chewed. She had marinated the meat overnight so there was no bad smell to it at all.

“Ahh, so good”

“T, Thank you”

Flora answered with a shy smile to my murmurs.

I was relieved because that wasn’t a smile on just the outside like the previous time, but a genuine smile that came from her heart.

That shy smile she showed when I complimented her on her cooking was very cute.

I still have no idea why she was mad, but Flora with a happy face on is the best after all.

As I smiled back at her, she brought a bite of the pot roast to her small mouth.

I've confirmed the taste of the dish myself, but I can't help but feel a bit nervous when it's being eaten by people who are good at cooking like Flora.

"Ohh, this is tender. It was grilled just right"

She leaked out such comments with her hand over her mouth just when I was feeling such needless anxiety.

I felt relieved from her words.

Then, I stole a glance at the others.

"It'sssh good"

"The meat isn't tough, and it was seasoned well"

Aisha was talking with the meat stuffed in her mouth, and Toack said while he chewed.

Toack didn't show much of an expression on the outside, but I can tell that he was liking it quite a bit.

It feels good to have people enjoy the food that you make yourself.

My chest feels all warm just from seeing them happily eating the food I made.

"Oi, Aisha. The steak you made is a bit tough? You overcooked it, didn't you?"

"Did I? I like it chewy like this though"

Listening to the words of those two, I also bring the steak Aisha made to my mouth.

Meat juices spread in my mouth as I chewed. The meat was a little tough, but there are certainly people who may like it a bit chewy like this.

It's seasoned simply with salt and pepper, but I feel like I could eat an infinite amount of this.

"I also like it a bit tough like this"

“See”

Aisha stuck her chest out proudly after hearing my words.

“I prefer meat that’s tender”

“Okay okay, I will pay attention to that if there is a next time”

Other people would think that was a conversation between an old married couple.

I finished the steak and got my hands on the other dish that Flora made- The stir-fry with wine.

The red wine sauce was not only thick and creamy, but also smelled really sweet.

I stuffed the meat along with the sauce in my mouth.

The juicy meat combined with the smooth Nordende wine sauce was delicious.

“The red wine stir fry has a bit of a strong taste to it, so it’s good to have it together with bread and salad”

Following Flora’s recommendation, I found out that it does go really well together when you eat it with bread and salad.

“It’s true, it tastes just right”

The strong, sweet taste of the wine sauce was softened up by the moisture of the lettuce and cabbage.

So she made her dish with the side dishes that had a plainer taste in mind.

Suddenly, I noticed that Aisha was ravenously eating her share with bread and Toack was eating his with vegetables.

Even though we both cooked the same venison, Flora’s was on another level after all. Her dishes are impeccably delicious.

Toack was eating her dish with no words of complaints, even being the eccentric man that he is. That is also proof of how good Flora’s dish is.

“This soup is delicious too, even if it took some time to make”

“...Of course”

“I also tried to make this at home, but I couldn’t get this same taste. Teach me if there’s a trick to this”

“Dumbass. It’s better if you experiment with it yourself”

When I asked, Toack crossed his arms and lightly snorted.

I understand the joy of experimenting and exploring by myself, but then that means I won’t be able to taste this soup for the time being.

“Are you not telling him because it’d be too easy if you taught him?”

“S, so it’s something like that”

“Then, isn’t it fine if you just teach me”

“Nope”

Just when I was a bit disappointed from not being able to get Toack to teach me, Flora whispered to me in a small voice,

“...Aldo-san”

When I looked at her, she pointed to the vegetable soup and she put two pico in it.

That’s when I realized it. The subtle taste of the pico was what was missing from the vegetable soups that I made. Certainly, a little acidity and sweetness from the pico would be just what I needed.

The secret to the soup was this close to me.

I’m looking forward to the next time when I can make a vegetable soup for Toack. Surely he’ll be surprised.

I moved my mouth silently to thank Flora. She showed a little mischievous smile in return.

While that smile made my heart skip a beat, it also made me think that playful look of hers resembled Fiona-san a little.

Chapter 21

Keeping Cool At The Stream

After we enjoyed the venison cuisine, we were relaxing in the living room drinking some apple mint tea with the satisfied feeling of having full stomachs.

Flora brewed the tea with the apple mints grown by Fiona-san.

“Ah, the tea brewed by Flora is so good”

“Hehe, thank you”

It's as Aisha said, the tea brewed by Flora was very fragrant. Although I've tried to make it myself after hearing the tricks to it, it was never quite right.

It seems like there was quite the depth to this, such as the time spent brewing, the temperature of the water used to brew with, and accounting for the temperature of the day and so on. I wonder how many cups of tea I would need to brew to get to her level.

It was nothing like the previous time with the soup where it was just about finding out the hidden ingredient, the pico.

I enjoyed the fragrant scent of the apple mint, and then I took a sip.

The sweet, refreshing taste of the green apple gradually filled my mouth. I really like this type of tea that calms you down once you drink it.

“Hey, how do I look? Do I look like a noble lady?”

Aisha said as she tried to imitate the graceful behaviour of a noble with a composed expression. Then, she tried to slowly place her cup of tea back down on the table...

Pon , the sound of glass hitting the table echoed.

“Haha, is there a noble lady who is this clumsy? You're sitting with your legs open too”

“Shaddap. Even though I put the cup down carefully on your table, it still made a sound like that. It’s your table that has something wrong”

“There’s no way that’s true”

Toack was being a party pooper to Aisha as she drank her tea while extending her elbow out.

The nerve-wracking etiquettes mandatory for nobles is not for the lazy Aisha. It’s because there’s a lot of things you have to be mindful of.

“Aldo looks way more elegant compared to Aisha”

“Yeah. There were no sounds coming from him just now when he drank the tea. Classy”

Toack and Flora spoke words of admiration as they looked my way.

“R-really?”

To become an A-ranked adventurer you would have to rely on a noble’s nomination. Therefore, it was necessary to learn proper noble etiquette in order to not appear rude before them when you try to get such a request.

I guess I’ve subconsciously gotten used to drinking tea this way.

Well, it looks like drinking tea in a slightly elegant manner like this would be a bit strange.

I practiced with the guild master until my mouth turned sour, so it’s hard to break the habit now.

For the next little while, we talked with each other as we hung out sipping on tea.

“Okay, Aldo. Let’s go fishing. I want to have some salted fishes for dinner”

Toack said to me with fishing tools in his hands.

Since his usual poker face has softened up a little, I know that he was looking forward

to this moment.

“Yeah, let’s go. We can do that at the stream nearby. But, what are you guys going to do, Flora and Aisha?”

“Hmm. It doesn’t sound too bad to relax outside once in a while. We’ll come along”

“Yes, I’ll come too”

I was worried that they wouldn’t be able to since Aisha just pushed her workload onto her family, and Flora was called out by us suddenly. However, it doesn’t look like there will be any problems there.

“Okay. Everyone, let’s go!”



In no more than two minutes, we’ve reached the stream walking from my house.

The weather is nice today, the whole sky is blue and there are no clouds in the sky.

The warm sun of spring felt nice.

The wind brushed my cheeks gently, as the flowers that grew around the stream swayed.

It made me feel cool and comfortable just from listening to the sound of the water flowing down the stream.

While enjoying this natural sensation, we walked along the stream and looked for our targeted fishes.

“After getting so full, it makes me want to take a nap here”

“Ohh, I know what you mean”

Flora and Aisha had friendly chats as they walked behind me and Toack.

I feel like falling asleep here too after having my stomach filled. I wonder if it’s going to be alright. Am I going to fall asleep while we’re fishing?

I let out yawns unintentionally as we're bathed in the nice and warm sunlight.

When I looked next to me, I saw Toack doing the same thing. He did not let out his voice like me, but there were tears at the corner of his eye showing that he was a bit sleepy.

"Maybe we should wash our faces with the stream water to freshen up?"

Washing our faces with cold water would blow the sleepiness away.

It would be a bit hard to catch fishes right now in the state we're in.

"Ah, Yes. It would feel good to dip our feet into the water since it's so warm today"

"Yeah, that does sound nice"

Flora and Aisha replied happily to my suggestion.

Oh, it would be very refreshing to dip our feet into the water.

"...Yeah. At this rate, we'll fall asleep while we're fishing"

Toack looked as if he wanted to start fishing right away, but he came to an understanding since he could not beat his sleepiness either.

"Hora, it looks like there's a good spot over there with the rocks. Let's go, Flora!"

"Eh, hold on a sec! You're going too fast, Aisha!"

Aisha took Flora by her arm as she started to run toward where she was pointing at.

Flora was surprised by Aisha who suddenly started dashing out; it felt like she was struggling because she wasn't good with exercises.

We also started to run after them as their long red and blonde hair swayed in the wind.

The place where they ran to was the place where the stream expanded in width.

Over there were four rocks that broke out on the surface of the water. If it's that spot, we would be able to settle down and relax there.

“...*haa, haa*, Aisha, you were going too fast”

When Toack and I caught up with them, we saw Flora taking a little time to catch her breath.

Although it wasn't even a thirty meter run, it was hard for Flora to keep up with since she did not deal with intense exercises normally.

“Your physical strength will go down if you don't run once in a while, you know? You won't be able to run in times of emergencies”

Certainly, it would be bad if you can't run when you're attacked by monsters.

But of course, in order to prevent something like that from happening, Loren-san, Kyle and I will thin out any monsters that we come across since we're the hunters. However, nobody knows what will happen in the future.

What Aisha said was right.

“Aisha has the physical strength cause she works in the vineyard”

“Yup”

“There's that, but it's also because she runs from her sister for various reasons”

Toack spilled out the truth just when Aisha was nodding in agreement.

“...Yeah, that too... When times called for it...”

I stared at Aisha after hearing what Toack said, and Aisha answered as she started to take off her shoes to move on from the subject.

Please return the feeling of admiration I felt toward you just now.

As I felt scammed, Toack and I took off our shoes as well, along with Flora who had recovered.

Before putting our feet in the stream, Toack and I washed our faces first since we were especially sleepy.

It felt good as I splashed water on my face.

The cold water took away the heat on my face, and all the sleepiness I felt was being blown away at once.

“Ahhh~ so refreshing”

“Ohh, not bad”

Toack said after he dipped his face in and out of the stream.

That looked like it felt good, so I imitated him and did the same thing.

The feeling of having my whole head soaked in the cool water felt very comfortable. It was especially refreshing when I swung my head back up. The drops of water dripping down my neck was also somewhat pleasant.

All my sleepiness was gone.

I drained my hair that was soaked in water and brushed it back.

“Hahaha, your hair turns straight right away after it gets wet, Toack. Even though it’s normally messy and spiky”

Toack’s blonde hair that is usually spiky is now all straight down.

Now that he has front bangs, I couldn’t help but laugh at how that made him look younger than he usually looks.

“Shaddap, it’ll be back to normal once I’m dry”

Toack replied with a displeased look, but I find it amusing that he looked like a child who’s sulking right now.

He noticed my teasing smile and walked into the stream with a displeased look.

Aisha and Flora were just chilling, looking comfortably as they sat next to each other.

I also put my feet into the water following Toack.

It feels nice to have the cold water wrapped around my feet.

I quite liked the water calmly flowing down. Since the water level was around ten centimeters below the knee, it wouldn't reach the knees even at the deepest center part of the stream.

As I breathed in and out to this nice feeling, we walked back to where the rocks are while the water splashed.

"Pfff, hahahaha"

Aisha burst out laughing as she saw Toack when we got close.

Flora also shifted her eyes to Toack's direction.

"Ah, that's Toack-san... right? He looks a little cuter with his hair down, doesn't he?"

"Ughh..."

Toack squatted down with a distorted expression on his face after hearing Flora's words that only had pure intentions behind it.

"U-ummm, Sorry. Did I upset you?"

"..."

Flora apologized to Toack as she saw his reaction even though there was nothing for her to apologize for. For sure, this is a spot where he would want to be left alone instead.

"U-Ummmm..."

Flora became more lost at what to do seeing Toack knitting his brows.

It's because Toack's expression is awkward even for "Toack". It's a craftsman's temperament.

I can somehow understand this because I've dealt with many people with this kind of temperament in my adventurer days.

The mood between those two was getting heavy, but it was all blown away by Aisha's laughter.

"Ha! hahaha! I know you meant no harm, Flora, but don't bully the poor Toack so much! Hahahahah—Fuuu?!"

Water was splashed on Aisha's face, who was pointing at Toack, laughing.

"HEY, WHAT'S UP WITH YOU?!"

"I was just shutting your noisy mouth up"

Toack said with a refreshed expression as he watched Aisha desperately wipe off the water on her face.

Seeing his face, veins formed on Aisha's forehead and then she splashed water at Toack.

"Gouuhhh!?"

Toack let out a startled voice since he was hit on the face down to his neck.

"Hahaha, you sound funny"

"You b****, you're gonna get it!"

Ahhh... This is where the water fight begins...

Chapter 22

All Woken Up

“HEY! You! Can you stop aiming for my eyes?!”

“What’s wrong with aiming at your weak points?”

I sat on the left side of the rocks to distance myself as far as possible from Toack and Aisha, who were having an intense water fight.

I wouldn’t have minded to join in to have some fun, but I will refrain from doing so when it got to such a serious level. They were seriously aiming at each other’s eyes, nose, and ears.

I will chill out in peace with Flora without participating in a fight like that.

“Eii~”

“Woah?!”

Just as I was thinking that, I made a surprised sound as cold water splashed on my stomach.

When I looked in a hurry at the direction the water came flying from, I saw Flora there with a smile on her face like a naughty child.

I did not expect her to be the one splashing water at me.

Remembering the time with the pico as well, her real personality might be a bit of a naughty little girl.

“Now you’ve done it”

Even though I’m happy that I got to see another side of her, I’m still going to fight back.

“Kyaaa! Eii! Eii!”

Flora let out a short scream as she got hit by the cold water. Then, water came flying back as she returned fire with her slender arms.

While I used one arm to block the water, I also splashed back undauntedly.

Was this something that could always be played like this?

When I was a child, I was desperate to live every day so I never thought of having fun.

Even as an adventurer, I have never played around like this.

Although we camped near water many times, we couldn't do that since there was a chance that monsters would come out from the noise. All I did was train every day.

Dignified behaviours were also required as we got more famous as the kingdom's A-ranked party. We could have never done something like this.

However, I am not the adventurer Aldred right now, but Aldo, a hunter living in Nordende.

Of course there is still a standard and a limit, but I can live without having to care about how others see me.

It's just I'm very happy with the freedom I have now.

“Take this!”

“Kyaa! I'm going to get you back!”

“Same here!... Ah”

I was having a fun water fight with Flora, but then I suddenly noticed.

A large amount of water had gone on her shirt. The color of her skin could be seen

through the blouse she wore over her chest.

The water had made the blouse stick to her skin, and the puffs on her chest were emphasized by the creases.

I knew she was decently sized there, but it was far bigger than what I expected. She might be the type that looks smaller in clothing.

Her skin that I could see through the white fabric was making me excited from the immoral feeling of seeing something that I shouldn't.

Seeing her curves that were showing from her clothes tightly sticking to her skin was even more arousing than if I had seen her naked.

“Eeh?”

Did Flora notice from seeing me staring at her in awe? She took a look at her own body as she said that.

“Kyaaa”

After realizing the situation, she turned her back to me as she shrieked out in shame.

I knew that I should be averting my eyes, but it's the sad nature of a man that was making me look unintentionally even when trying not to.

Flora was frozen there hugging herself with her back faced to me.

Is she going to run away again soon?

“I-I'm okay. I-I'm a little embarrassed but it's not going to be a problem once my clothes dries...”

Flora said to me with a smile on her face while I was having such thoughts.

In order to not turn out like last time, she was earnestly enduring the embarrassment. That made me a little concerned for her.

Seeing her put up a brave front like that, it made me able to take my eyes off her easily as well.

“Take this!”

“Wah?!”

Diverting my eyes from what I was looking at earlier, I had just witnessed Toack mercilessly throwing Aisha over his shoulder.

...The battle that’s going on over there is a bit too extreme.



“...Damn that Aisha... getting me all worked up like that...”

Toack said as he stood by the stream squeezing the water out of his clothes.

“It was a splendid shoulder throw, but your opponent was pretty strong too”

I tossed him a towel that was taken from my house as the water dripped down from his clothes.

“Thanks”

With a short thanks, he used the towel and started to wipe his body.

Even though it’s spring time, our body temperature would still drop from the wind blowing into wet clothes. It’ll be bad to catch a cold like that.

Toack managed to throw Aisha into the stream with a splendid shoulder throw, but Aisha did not try to do the same. Instead, she quickly swept his legs when she was down and made Toack fall down from losing his balance.

It’s not easy to counterattack when you just got hit by an attack, so I was pretty impressed about Aisha’s athletic ability and judgement.

I think a bold person like her is quite suited to be an adventurer.

It’s a pity that she was just living a life in a grape farmer family.

And this daughter of a grape farmer family is now sitting on the stone and splashing water with her feet.

“...*haaa*, I feel so refreshed”

Aisha muttered in satisfaction as she brushed her hair up above her ears with her hands.

“Do you not feel embarrassed, Aisha? With all your clothes wet and sticking to your body like that?”

Flora asked cautiously as she sat next to her in the same situation as her.

Just as she said, the red one piece that Aisha was wearing was all wet and it stuck close to her body.

She was not wearing a white blouse like Flora, so her skin could not be seen under it. But, the plumpness of her chest and the outline of her butt were emphasized and it was quite sensational.

Her appearance of water droplets on her skin combined with her glossy, red hair and healthy light-brown skin color was very charming.

“I don’t particularly mind since my clothes didn’t turn see-through like the blouse you’re wearing”

“O-Oh, right...”

You might not mind it but it’s hard to say that for us guys.

Honestly, it couldn’t be helped that I have no idea where to look. Let’s hurry and give them some towels so they can quickly wipe their bodies down.

With that plan in my head, I got closer to them to hand them the towels.

“...Even so, your legs are so white and pretty, Flora”

My eyes naturally shifted toward Flora’s legs from Aisha’s casual words.

“T-that’s not true! Your legs are prettier and healthier!”

Feeling my eyes on them, Flora was rubbing her legs together as she replied to Aisha. I think she was doing that to try to dodge my gaze , but the way she was moving her

silky smooth legs was a bit provocative and it had unintentionally caught my eyes more instead.

Oh no, it won't do. It's rude to keep staring at a female's legs.

"...Here, a towel"

"Ara, thank you"

"T-thank you"

When I got rid of my naughty thoughts and handed them their towels, Aisha received it with a bright smile while Flora shyly held it against her chest.

The conversation just now was probably started on purpose by Aisha, judging from her smile.

I don't know what she was trying to do, but I wish you would mess around with Toack instead 'cause it's bad for my heart.

"Oii, Aldo. It's about time we start fishing so let's get a move on"

Toack interrupted my train of thought with his voice as he seemed to be done drying himself.

No fish could be seen at where we're at right now. And even if there were, they would have been scared off already from all the noise we were making in the water earlier.

"Okay! We'll move to a new spot to fish but what about you two?"

I asked Flora and Aisha at the same time I replied to Toack.

"Hm. We'll find you guys after we cool off a little more here"

Flora also smiled to agree with what Aisha said.

"But, are you going to be okay, Aisha? You're completely drenched"

“I’m happy that you’re worried about me. But, I’m not going to catch a cold in this warm weather. I’ve taken care of the grape farm so many times in heavy rainfall and I have never caught a cold. My body is quite strong”

Aisha waved her hands as she replied to indicate that there won’t be any problems.

I was surprised at the troubles that grape farmers have to go through; it made me think that she was as tough as a man. It might be due to her always eating nutritious grapes that she ended up with such a tough body.

“Okay. Well then, we’ll try to catch lots before you two get there”

“We’ll be looking forward to it”

“Catch lots and share them with us~”

I picked up the fishing rods and buckets from the ground as I listened to their voices and joined up with Toack.

“So, where can we find lots of fishes?”

“Let’s see. There should be lots of fishes at this time downstream feeding on insects and water weeds. We’re sure to find lots there even if we don’t want to. There’ll be loads of them swimming on the surface and we’ll be able to catch them easily every time”

Toack pointed to the spot where he happened to know where the fishes gathered, and we headed downstream.

Chapter 23

Catching fish

“Ohh! Another one!”

“Woah! How many is that now?”

“Six!”

“Damn, I only got three!”

The stream’s current flowed gently downstream. Several fish could be seen swimming around through the clear surface of the water, possibly because there are moss-covered rocks or some water plants that they like.

Thanks to that, they often took the bait on our fishing hooks.

Although Toack had grasped the spot where the fish gathered, I still think it was lucky for us to encounter that many of them.

I can’t miss this chance to catch lots since it’s going to be my dinner and I also have to get some for Ergys-san as well.

“Ohhh, it’s an Ayu! *[i]*”

When I took a look at the fish that took the bait, it was an ayu.

This fish is very delicious if you grill it with salt. It’s a fish that I’ve eaten many times and frankly, I can say that his white-meat type of fish tastes the best when salt-grilled. It’s my favourite kind of fresh-water fish.

When I thought of the taste of that in my mind, saliva overflowed in my mouth.

I pulled the fishing rod back to me and put the ayu into a bucket with water.

“So that means the school of fish over there are all ayus. Let’s try that spot”

I put some bait on the hook again and swung it down at a place slightly further away from the previous spot.

Then, the hook sunk into the water with a splash and approached the school of ayu that were going with the flow of the current.

I took it easy and waited for prey as I moved my fishing rod to make it look like the bait was alive.

The calming sound of water flowing relaxed my body. When I took a deep breath, I could smell the moss, grass, water and all the various scents of nature.

Being able to land catches when fishing is the real joy of fishing, but I think that it's also enjoyable when you relax and try leaving yourself to nature and get a taste of something like nature's unity.

I closed my eyes as I started to become one with nature. But, just when I was getting fully immersed in it, I was woken up by movements coming from my fishing rod.

The shaking of the rod meant that a fish had bit on the bait. But, the fishing rod that was in my hand still felt light.

Not yet. It isn't time to pull up yet.

I waited with that judgement, and stayed ready to pull it in one go.

—-Now!

In that moment, I put strength into my hands and pulled.

I pulled as I felt the rod getting heavier from the fish biting on the hook. Water was splashing everywhere on the surface from the fish.

“Already?! That fast?!”

I kept pulling the rod closer to me to not let the fish escape as I listened to Toack's surprised voice. Was it a coincidence? The fish turned its head towards the rocks' direction and tried to escape at the same time. However, I kept pulling and did not let

go.

Then, when the movement of the fish became dull, I pulled it up with one go.

What came out from the surface of the water was an ayu with the same greenish grey color like the ones before.

“Ohhh! That thing’s huge!”

It was far bigger than the common 15 cm size, but smaller than 20 cm.

However, for an ayu, it would be considered a fairly large one that would be quite filling.

I slowly brought the ayu that was hanging in the air to my hand. It would suck if it escaped right now.

While I was a bit afraid of the ayu that was squirming about, I still somehow managed to put it in the bucket.

“Whew...”

I felt a sense of accomplishment from catching something big.

I compared it with the ayus that I caught earlier, and it definitely was bigger, after all.

Today, I’ve called Flora out all of a sudden and even these fishing rods were Ergys-san’s.

So, let’s share this one with Ergys-san’s family.

“Toack! How’s it going over there?”

“I can’t catch shit after the third one!”

When I asked Toack, who was on the other side, he replied in a cranky voice.

“Isn’t that because of your grumpy face?”

“What does that have anything to do with it?”

Surely the fish were able to sense his aura and were avoiding him 'cause of it.

Toack swung the fishing rod in the stream again as he knitted his brows.

Maybe the bait was eaten by a fish or simply floated away, so he pulled his rod back and put more bait on it.

I caught two more ayu in the meantime.

Somehow I started to feel bad that I was the only one doing well. However, I won't hold back because competition for the most catches is one of the fun parts about fishing too.

"How's it going? Did you guys catch a lot?"

Just when I was applying new fishing bait onto the hook, Flora and Aisha approached with their hair waving in the wind.

Their long red and blonde hair was very beautiful.

"Well? How's it going?"

Flora came next to me and asked, as she held her hair down.

Her blouse was no longer see-through since it had dried. It's too bad but I'll keep this feeling to myself.

"I've caught quite a bit. Got nine already"

"Nine in such a short time? That's amazing! And, this one here is huge..."

Flora said with an innocent smile as she looked into the bucket.

If you praise me so much it's going to make me want to try harder.

Did I also feel something like this when the pretty guild receptionist praised me back then?

I didn't care at that time, but if Flora was the pretty guild receptionist, maybe I would have gladly jumped into trouble because of it. The adventurer's guild was quite a place

for show offs.

“...I know how he’s doing over there from just looking at his face”

Aisha laughed as she pointed at Toack.

Toack must have understood what Aisha was doing and knitted his eyebrows harder. His fishing rod was not shaking from a fish taking the bite, but from his anger.

However, thanks to the shaking from such anger, a fish had taken the bait.

“Ohhh! Here it comes!”

His grumpy look changed in an instant, and he pulled his rod with a lively look.

It looks like it finally has come through for him.

“Looks like a fish has taken the bait over on Toack’s side”

“...Maybe he got some shoes or a piece of wood?”

“Looks like a fish to me”

It would be too sad if it was a piece of wood.

Toack kept pulling tenaciously as the fish raged on the water’s surface.

I couldn’t see well from this far away, but for a moment I caught a glimpse of a large white-colored body. That is quite a big catch. How Toack is struggling to control his rod was also proof of that.

It’s even bigger than the ayu that I caught.

Toack slowly pulled it toward himself with a serious look on his face.

We watched as the water rippled... And then,

“Hora!”

Toack swiftly raised his fishing pole. The fish emerged from the surface of the water

and floated in the air.

It was a white-colored fish with long body called the *Sillago Japonica*^[ii].

It's a fish that squirms around like a snake with its slimy looking body. It's very meaty and delicious when fried.

"Ohh! You did it, Toack!"

"Congrats!"

"EHehe, thank you!"

When Flora and I praised him with admiration, Toack replied as he laughed shyly.

Then, he carefully removed the fish that he caught from the hook and put it into his bucket.

When Aisha saw Toack doing that, words slipped out of her mouth.

"...The fish didn't slip out of your hand and jump back into the river in the end. How boring"

"...You're definitely not going to make that happen, got it?!"

Chapter 24

Salt-Grilled Ayu

“Well then, let’s all eat together!”

“I thought you were going to say that so I brought some salt with me!”

Toack answered to my suggestion as he took out a bottle of salt and some wooden skewers from his pockets.

I was wondering what kind of things he brought out from his house, but it seems like he had it well thought out.

“...Yeah, I’m hungry. Let’s cook them quickly and eat”

“You don’t get a share in this”

“That’s fine. I wasn’t going to ask you anyway since I feel sorry for you that you only caught five. I’ll ask Aldo since he caught way more”

“...This B*****”

Aisha provoked Toack to the point that he was grinding his teeth in anger.

Was she holding a grudge from the water fight? Her words to him were still full of thorns.

While I was having such thoughts, I started to clean the fish that we caught and killed, using the water from the stream.

Then, Flora approached me timidly.

“Umm, if it’s okay with you, can you treat me and Aisha to a meal?”

“Oh, that’s fine. I can’t eat all of this by myself. Besides, I wanted to share this with everyone in the first place anyway”

“Thank you so much. I’ll help out as well”

I feel even more healed than usual from Flora’s kind words and blooming smile since the other two were just going at each other.

After we finished washing the five ayus that I caught and the three from Toack, everyone helped to put them on skewers and seasoned them with salt.

“We’re not eating the whiting^[i]?”

“That will be eaten by me alone at home”

Toack answered Aisha’s question bluntly as he set up a round stone fire pit and started the fire with a flint stone.

Well, it would certainly be too much work to cook the whiting here; just the ayus here would be enough.

The fire got bigger as Toack blew on it.

With the fire ready, we stabbed the skewers of ayus into the ground facing the fire.

There, I added some small finishing touches to the ayus.

“Oi, Aldo, what are you doing?”

“Oh, if you grill them with their mouth open, it’ll make it easier for the moisture to come out through the head. And then, if you scrape out the gall bladder that’s located near their gills, you can tone down the unnecessary bitter taste”

“Oh, is that how it works?”

“...I didn’t know that. I don’t really like it when it’s too bitter, so knowing that really helps, thanks!”

“I had no idea”

All three of them seemed to have no idea about that. I was starting to get a little embarrassed from them praising me.

“Well, it’s something that I learned in the past from a fellow adventurer”

It was something that Kiel had taught me. That guy really knows something about everything.

Ever since I started to live alone, I was finally able to see how attentive to detail Kiel was and how amazing the stuff he knew was.

I was supposed to know that already, but I couldn’t see it thoroughly back then.

If I meet him again, I would like to ask him lots more on cooking, everyday knowledge, tools and such.

He said that he might come visit me here in Nordende. I look forward to seeing him again...

As the stacked branches went *pak* *pak* as they burned, we waited for our ayus to cook.

Once the ayu’s moisture started to go, their bodies started to turn brown as their aroma started to waft through the air.

This fragrant smell of saltiness is irresistible.

““”“

“...Can’t it cook any faster?”

Aisha said what was in everyone’s mind.

“...J-just a bit longer”

Flora was trying to calm her down, but her eyes too were glued onto the ayus.

“Ah! There you are, onee-chan!”

I heard a voice of a young girl coming from behind me as I endured the aroma and waited for the fish to finish cooking.

When I looked behind me, there was a young girl with red hair styled in a side tail. She was wearing the same work clothes that Aisha wore for work.

“Ah, that’s Ena-chan, right?”

Flora muttered as she looked at the young girl.

Ena is a name that had come up several times before.

She said onee-chan and that red hair with those work clothes...

“*chiit*... You’re here already, huh?”

The “onee-chan” bluntly clicked her tongue.

“You’re saying that when you told me to give you until noon? When you just suddenly pushed all the work onto me and went to play?!”

Ena walked over to us in quick strides.

Until noon she said... well, even the afternoon is already half over. Aisha is slacking off by a wide margin.

“Your onee-chan is busy right now. Please come back later”

“Don’t treat me like a kid! Hora, we have to take care of the grapes so go back! It’s hard to do everything by myself when the field’s so big!”

Somehow it seems that the family of the one who came up with the idea of this get together were the people who got screwed over the most.

“Ah, sorry for suddenly disturbing you guys. I’m Aisha’s little sister, Ena”

Perhaps she noticed us looking at her with bitter smiles, so she straightened her posture and gave us a formal greeting.

She is nothing like her older sister. She’s the serious little sister type just like I thought.

“Hello, Ena-chan”

“Hi!”

Maybe Flora and Toack were already acquainted with her; they returned her greetings comfortably.

However, Ena looked at me, who was an unfamiliar face to her, with a look of curiosity.

“Nice to meet you, I’m Aldo. I moved into this village recently. I’m currently working as a hunter. Let’s get along”

“Yes, nice to meet you, Aldo-san!”

When I lowered my head, she also lowered her head in a hurry with a smile.

...She really is nothing like her older sister.

“It’s like she says, Aisha. You should go home. You have work to do, right?”

Toack took this chance and said that to Aisha with a smirk. He did that not because he was thinking of Aisha’s family, but probabaly to get a bigger share of the salt-grilled ayu to bring home.

“Yeah! Thanks, Toack-san! Hora, let’s go home, onee-chan”

Ena was deeply touched by Toack’s words, as she tried again to get her older sister to go home.

“Hold on! I don’t want to go yet! At least let me eat this first!”

“What do you mean by “this”...? Ohh! Salt-grilled ayu!”

Ena said in a happy voice when she took a look at what Aisha was looking at.

Her tone completely changed from the one that she had up until now. This voice is one that better suited her age.

There’s no doubt that she is a fan of salt-grilled ayu. I guess for that part she takes after her sister.

“Hehehe”

“Ah...”

Flora giggled, and Ena blushed in response.

“I’m indebted to Aisha, and there are still a lot of fish left, so it’s okay for you to join in too”

“...Ummm. Okay then... itadakimasuu”

Ena replied to my suggestion and then she silently took a seat next to Aisha.

“Hora, it’s ready”

“Finally!”

Everyone’s faces lit up as they heard Toack’s voice.

The ayu that had been thoroughly cooked were golden brown in color and looked very delicious.

I can’t wait anymore so I took a bite right away.

The cooked, crunchy skin had a salty taste to it, but the white meat inside did not have a heavy taste at all. It was so good that it almost moved me to tears as I chewed. The combination of salt and the ayu’s mild flavor was a perfect match for each other.

“...Delicious. Salt-grilled ayu are the best, after all”

I muttered with a sigh of relief from it being too tasty.

“It’s really good, isn’t it?”

“...Ah, yeah it’s so good”

Flora was eating in small bites, while Toack was chomping it down.

And the remaining Aisha and Ena were silently eating as they sat next to each other.

They looked like copies of each other.

Looking at the sight of those two, we unintentionally cracked a smile.

Then, we also continued to eat as if we didn't want to get left behind.

I could taste small hints of the unique bitter taste that belonged to the internal organs of the ayu, but it wasn't bad since it was very mild.

"...Hmm? It's not really bitter like it usually is"

Ena muttered as she finally took notice of that since she was fully absorbed in eating.

"Oh, that's because I scraped out the gallbladder before we cooked it. The bitterness comes from the fluid that comes out of there, so you can tone the bitterness down if you take that part out"

"Heeeh~ I see. I like it like this!"

Ena said with a smile, and then she went back to eating the ayu.

Aisha, who was next to her, silently gave me a thumbs up. I also raised my thumbs in return. You can tell me properly with words, you know?

"Aldo, try using this"

Toack handed me some goji berries as he said that.

"Ohh, this sour taste is good with the ayu"

"Yup. What about you, Flora?"

"Ah, thanks"

I squeezed the goji berries Toack gave me, and applied the sour fruit juice onto the ayu.

Then, I took a bite immediately.

The sweetness that came from the fatty portion of the body intertwined with the sourness as it weakened the saltiness from the fish. With this, I feel like I could go on forever and eat non-stop.

Flora also tried the same thing with the goji berries and then she took small bites of it.

She chewed with squinted eyes, as if it tasted like heaven.

“Heyy, what about me?”

“Yes yes, here you go. Hora, you too, Ena”

“Thank you!”

Toack handed some goji berries to Aisha and Ena.

It seems like eating the delicious ayu put him in a good mood. If you’re eating such yummy food, you would forget about the trivial things.

After that, we dispersed after finishing our ayu meal peacefully. And then, I went to share the big Ayu with Ergys-san.

Today was a fun-packed day. I would like to get together again with them sometime and have a chill day like this.

Chapter 25

At The Royal Castle of Abalonia

“I know that the party “Black Silver” disbanded, but what happened to their leader, Aldred?”

In the kingdom of Abalonia, far west of Nordende where Aldo was currently residing, the king of Abalonia asked in a loud and dignified voice inside a luxurious audience room which displayed the kingdom’s solemnity.

“...About that... We have no idea on his whereabouts”

The man who could hardly present that answer to the king as he was drenched in cold sweat- The guild master.

His name was Barok, the one who held the highest authority in the kingdom’s adventurer’s guild.

Although he wore a graceful top with long pants and a cloak, his brawny muscles were still hard to hide. It could be said that he looked out of place in the luxurious audience room that they were in.

He looked more like an adventurer who was fully equipped for a monster subjugation party.

The king opened his mouth again with his brows knitted from hearing Barok’s answer.

“Elliot married into the Elfiore house, Kurune is teaching at the magic academy, and I heard that Kiel was still in the kingdom. So, how come we have no idea where Aldred is?”

When he heard the king’s words of contempt, Barok looked bitter, but somehow he managed to hold it in still.

What came to his mind was the time Kiel came to declare retirement with a smile on his face.

“I want to rest for a while after that intense battle with the dragon”

A sudden retirement of the A-ranked party that slayed a dragon.

After he calmed down from the fuss, he listened to the story of Kiel and the others, and did not pay much attention to the part where Aldred needed time to recuperate.

Aldred gave an impression to others that he was somewhat disheartened after slaying a dragon, so Barok thought that he would be simply recovering at his home.

“Certainly, Aldred seemed a bit lost after slaying the dragon. I know that healing the mind takes a while, but isn’t it strange that we don’t even know where he is? That goes against the plan”

Barok knew what the king wanted to say.

A dragon is the strongest type of monster. A proud monster of colossal size and steel-hard scales that dances in the sky, and it was slayed by our kingdom’s A-ranked party.

It attacked people and animals from the sky on a whim, feared by the people.

Despair was felt by all because no one knows when it would attack.

If you tried to hit it with a sword, you would not get past its hard scales and you could get fried by its hot breath.

It’s a being that caused outrageous disasters with its overwhelming strength.

Aldred and the others who have slayed that dragon were the symbol of hope for the people. They were heroes to them.

He could have even been crowned the king of a country.

He should have married into royalty with a princess or have had a fated marriage with a noble’s daughter.

If he were here, it would mean the kingdom is safe, and the citizens would be living

happier lives.

Also, at the times when strong monsters and dragons appear in other countries, the kingdom would have an advantage in terms of diplomacy when they could dispatch Aldred to help.

However, the leader of this dragon slaying party was nowhere to be found.

Even though he was from the king's own country.

"Is there no one else who knows where he went?"

"...If no one said that they have seen him, I'm afraid he probably has already left this country"

The king snorted unpleasantly to Barok's reply.

It's me who should be angry. Kiel was the one who gave me the long explanation to why their party disbanded. If you're the one who made the promise to meet me, Aldred, don't urgently change the date.

Then, Barok heard that Aldred was in the middle of recuperation. When he went to check on him after a while, no one was there anymore.

It was obvious at that point that he was no longer in the kingdom. His friends who knew where he went would not tell us either.

Barok went after Kiel, who gave him false information as a diversion, but Kiel had already disappeared as if he saw it coming.

"Aldred has not done his due share for this country yet. Get more information from his friends on his whereabouts and bring him back here. You are allowed to use my soldiers if the situation calls for it"

"Yes, certainly"

Barok bowed deeply and kept his head down as if he did not want the king to see the sour expression on his face.

He thought that nothing good could happen from getting in the way of their new lives that they chose.

“Now then, get out”

Chapter 26

An Ordinary Day Of Hunting

It's been a month since I became a hunter.

We're now reaching the end of the sixth month of the year and the weather was still getting hotter.

Our clothes were soaked with sweat as Kyle and I walked along the mountain roads of Nordende.

Incidentally, Loren-san wasn't with us today since he went hunting at a different location.

"We got a wild boar and two rabbits today, should we head back down soon?"

"Yeah. It's past lunch time already, so let's call it a day... Oh, wait. Hold on"

Just when I agreed with Kyle's suggestion, I felt the presence of prey overhead and I prepared my bow.

Then, I listened to the sound of the wind with my ears and shot an arrow over our heads.

Right when I thought that I had shot an arrow at the blue sky for no reason, it hit a bird that flew out from the trees, as its large shadow became visible.

The bird that had its stomach suddenly pierced from below fell to the ground after a moment of struggle.

Good, it was just as I expected.

I've been using the hunter's bow recently, so I wonder if I have improved a little at it.

"...How did you shoot down a flying bird?"

I was doing a victory pose in my mind behind Kyle's voice of astonishment.

"Hm, I felt its presence and predicted where it was going?"

No matter how a normal bird flies in the air, it's doable if it's in the shooting range of my arrows.

If it was a high-ranked intelligent bird type monster, it would be calling down its subordinates to go all-out to kill us. Needless to say, it won't be just flying in a straight line. It would suddenly go up or down, use feints, rotate, turn, and other various types of freestyle flying.

It was much simpler to just shoot down birds that are less cautious.

"Isn't it hard to sense its presence in the first place? And to predict where it's going... It's flying in the sky, you know?"

"Yeah, that's why you have to listen to the sounds of the wind"

From my straight forward answer, Kyle showed an expression as if he was having difficulty understanding.

"...I can't do something like that"

Right, it's because of all my life-risking experiences that I was able to develop the ability to sense the presence of other living things.

Even if I left Kyle alone in a mountain full of monsters to train him, he won't last long enough for me to teach him that. In my case, I was only able to develop those senses in order to survive in an environment that I would die in had I not.

"Yeah, I can only say that it's my intuition plus experience"

I don't know what kind of advice this is, but it's the only way I can word it.

"Well, whatever. Let's go get that fallen prey"

I showed a bitter smile as Kyle sighed and we walked towards the fallen bird.

We processed the bird that was shot down, then we tied it down with a rope as we carried it down the mountain.

“Ah, it’s a pico”

I found some red, round, grain-sized picos on the way, so I picked them up and threw them into my hemp pouch.

Pico is something that I also like, and the children of the village are happy when I give some to them. So, I try to bring some back every time I go to the mountains.

Maybe Kyle was also asked by the children to bring some back, since he was silently picking them up too.

While I was picking up the picos and the goji berries, I also picked up some kiruku grass on the side that the village ladies asked for.

The kiruku grass is a medicinal herb that grows on these mountains. When you grind it down and apply it to wounds, it can treat small cuts and scratches.

The demand for it is high since minor injuries often happen among the children, so there are lots of requests for medicinal herbs and food when I’m heading to the mountains.

I owed it to them for making me things like my clothes and futon, so this much was nothing to me.

This connection I feel with them when we help each other out is a good feeling.

Humans cannot survive alone.

“Oh, kiruku grass. You were asked by the aunties from the village, huh?”

After he finished picking up the picos, Kyle said that to me while I was collecting the grass.

It seems he will be climbing up the eru trees for erus next. He was told by Loren-san to pick some up.

“Oh, yeah. That’s right”

“It must be tough for you, isn’t it?”

“Is it?”

It’s just gathering things when I’m in the mountains. It’s not like I had to go out of the way and make a big effort.

Kyle looked at me in wonder after he easily climbed up an eru tree.

“The aunties that’ve been asking you for favors every time all have daughters of marriageable age, right?”

“Ah, so that’s what you mean”

Yeah, when you deliver them the things they’ve asked you to get, they will ask you to take a break inside their homes or stay for dinner.

I thought that they were just watching out for me at first, since I was new to the village. But, I found out later that they were trying to hook me up with their daughters because I’m single.

“It’s because good hunters are popular. They are reliable in case of an emergency and they can put lots of meat on the dinner table”

Kyle said with a bitter smile as he gathered the erus.

Well, how should I put it? It makes me happy that I’m popular but it makes me a bit uncomfortable when their parents suddenly try to hook me up with their daughters right in front of them.

I wonder if I will be offered dinner or a hook up today as well.

“Isn’t it fine if you don’t make the delivery yourself every single time? You can just hand it to their family members like their kids, brothers, or neighbours. Gathering the things might not be a hassle but making the delivery yourself every time is very time consuming”

True. I don’t have to go to so many different houses to make the delivery. It’s very

common to find people's family members helping out on the fields in this surprisingly small village.

I would only have to hand the stuff to their family members together along with the picos.



After we finished picking up the kiruku grass, we gathered some erus and headed back to the village with the game on our backs.

As we headed down the mountain back to the village, the children who were helping out in the fields also came to take a look at us today.

Even though they were in the middle of work, the adults around them were still smiling as if they were saying "Oh well, it can't be helped".

"Did you come back with prey today too?"

"Oh, we did. We got a boar, two rabbits, and a bird"

""Yay!! Meat!!""

The children were overjoyed when we showed them what we caught.

If they are genuinely happy about this thus far, it makes me happy as well.

"Kyle-ani, which one was the one you killed?"

A little boy who was very interested in the hunted animals asked Kyle as he pulled on his sleeves.

"...The rabbit"

"What, a rabbit? You suck!"

Kyle smiled after he answered bitterly.

Kyle looks mature for his age, but strangely enough, he still gets picked on often by other kids.

“But you know, it’s quite hard to catch rabbits because they are quite agile”

“...I don’t need a follow up from someone who shot down a flying bird out of the sky”

He said something to me that was not cute at all even though I was covering for him.

Perhaps we were able to become closer thanks to hunting in the mountains together, and he can send fun jabs at me now.

...Lately, I’ve come to understand more on how Loren-san feels when he makes fun of him.

“Wow! Aldo nii-chan, you shot down a bird in the sky!? I used a bow before too, but I don’t think I can hit a bird that’s flying so fast in the sky though!”

“Is it that amazing?”

The boy who had used a bow before seemed to understand it but the girl who had never used one before had no clue. But, that is not unreasonable.

As I saw the children becoming deeply interested, we told them our hunting stories. They gradually started shaking with excitement.

“Did you bring back the same thing as always?”

“Pico!!”

“I have some too”

When Kyle and I brought out a small hemp bag, the children happily gathered around us with their hands out.

They ate the picos with joy as we handed picos to them one by one.

“Ehehe, delicious”

Their happy expressions were very cute. Children are nice.

It's my first time realizing that since I came to live in this village.

The children I've met up until now were all strong children from the slums. They were all cheeky kids who aspired to become adventurers. Interacting with normal kids like these is refreshing.

It's not like I don't like people who make desperate efforts to live, it's just that something did not sit right with me when I saw my past self in them.

While I was in such deep thoughts, I called out to a little girl who I recognized.

"Ah, Colette-chan"

"~What is it~?"

"Here. I was asked by your mother to get her this, so can you give this to her?"

"Un. Okay!"

When I gave her the kiruku grass, she answered with a bright smile.

Good. With that, I can avoid having her older sister, Colene, pushed on to me.

No, well, it's not like I dislike Colene-san, you know? It's just that I have never thought of this kind of thing before I came to this village, so I have no idea what to do.

However, I couldn't imagine the two of us living together at my house.

"See you later Aldo-nii, and Kyle-ani!"

The children waved their hands and ran back to their work at the same time after they were done eating the picos.

Kyle and I also waved our hands back with smiles on our faces.

"Aldo-san, you're fitting in quite well with this village, huh?"

"...It's thanks to everyone here"

Chapter 27

I want to try farming

I awoke from being bathed in the morning's sunlight.

With a big yawn, I slowly sat up in the bed and rubbed my blurry eyes as I stretched.

The empty room that I called the bedroom now has a fine bed that Toack made in there. I obtained the mattress and blanket from the ladies that he had introduced me to, and the bedroom was completed around two weeks ago.

Thanks to that, I was able to sleep comfortably today as well, waking up with no back or hip pain whatsoever.

My bed is large enough to fit two adults and the mattress's cushioning is so good that there would be no need to be afraid even if you jump right in it. It had cost me a fair bit of money, but I don't regret it at all since I'll be using this bed every day.

In addition to the bed; the drawers, carpets, bookshelves, the chair and the small round table all gave off a lived-in feel.

I couldn't help but feel a kind of excitement that isn't suited for my age now that I finally have a comfy place to live in; it's like I went back to being a kid.

After I thoroughly enjoyed the feel of the bed, I got off it and opened the window.

The refreshing morning air brushed my cheeks.

When I took a deep breath, I could feel the fresh air entering my body and it felt very relaxing.

I enjoyed the feel of the fresh air for a little while before I left to draw water from the well to wash my face.

“Good morning, Aldo-san”

“Morning, Ergys-san”

I returned a greeting to a fellow villager who came to wash his face like I did.

It was just a casual one word greeting, but it still made me feel elevated.

It's been a month since I became a hunter. My life has been stabilized for the most part and I've become familiar with the village.

At first it was only Ergys-san, Fiona-san, Flora, Toack, and Aisha who I could talk to, but now my circle has expanded to Loren-san, Kyle, the village's aunties, uncles and their kids.

Now whenever I walk into the village I hear “How'd your hunt go today?”, “Morning~”, “How've you been?”. I never thought that being greeted and cared for was such a joy.

I drew water out of the well to wash my face while I had such thoughts.

The cold water robbed away the heat, and all my sleepiness disappeared at once.

I had completely woken up physically and mentally from the cold water and fresh air, so I quickly headed home to start making breakfast.

Today's menu is the leftover vegetable soup that I made from yesterday, stir-fried boar meat with mushrooms, and bread with raisins.

The vegetable soup was of course, Toack's secret recipe. With Flora's teaching on adding pico as the secret ingredient, it was easy to reproduce the vegetable soup after carefully chopping up the vegetables to the right sizes.

The face Toack made when I had him try the soup I reproduced was an amusing one.

He made light of me thinking that surely I won't be able to recreate his soup, so his eyes widened so much from the shock when he tried it.

As I recalled the funny scene of that time, I put the mushrooms along with some edible herbs into the frying pan. Then, I cut the boar meat from the boar we caught yesterday into bite-size pieces and put them onto the pan to be stir-fried.

Next, I put in a touch of salt and pepper and let it cook a bit. Then, when I could smell the sweet aroma coming from the fat of the meat, I start to mix everything together.

The sizzling sound that was coming out of the pan was very pleasing to the ears. The mushrooms and herbs were cooking nicely and turning into a really nice color.

The pot of vegetable soup placed on the fire next to it was also producing a warm smell, as if it was signaling that it's near ready.

By sniffing in the sweet, luxurious smell of meat and vegetables, my stomach rumbled. Both of those smells were assertively strong.

I poured out a bowl of the vegetable soup, plated the stir-fry and carried them to the table.

Of course, I also brought the whole pot of soup to the table as I will be getting refills for sure.

I prepared the pre-made bread with the raisins from Aisha and quickly got started on the soup.

“Ahhh... it tastes so good”

With the original flavors of the vegetables concentrated, the soup was very delicious.

The onion that was boiled until it was kind of mushy was the best. Each of these softened up vegetables were soaking in their own flavors.

It's also nice to dip the bread into the soup before eating. I can taste the wheat along with the flavors of the vegetables that it soaked up.

You can eat the bread that turned hard from yesterday if you have soup to go with it.

After eating the bread and soup a bit, I moved on to the stir-fried boar meat with mushrooms next.

When I took a bite of the boar meat, the condensed flavor of the meat overflowed in my mouth. Unlike the venison which had a mild taste, I could fully taste the flavor coming out from the center part of the meat.

It was only seasoned simply with salt and pepper, but that brought out the ingredient's flavor.

I continued to eat like that and the plates were emptied in no time.

Right now, I'm savoring the last sip of the vegetable soup like I was tasting wine.

As I saw the floating pieces of vegetables in the bowl, something came to mind.

My life has more or less settled down now, so maybe it's about time to try to do some farming that I've always wanted to try.

I had purchased the missing daily necessities from merchants and obtained the furniture I wanted for my house. I've gotten used to the mountains of Nordende so hunting is not a problem either. Recently, I've started to wonder what I should do in my free time more and more.

Since I don't need to hunt every day, I wonder if I can do a little farming.

Eating the meat I hunt and the vegetables that I grow. That's the life I wanted to try living.

Ergys-san told me that he'll teach me about farming, so let's pay him a visit today.

With that in mind, I stood up after I gulped down the rest of the vegetable soup.



I exited my house and walked on the road that led to the village square for about ten minutes.

When I headed towards Ergys-san's house, I saw Flora working in the fields behind Ergys-san's house.

"Hello"

"Hi there"

When I got close and greeted her, she stood up and greeted me back with a smile.

There was some kind of leafy vegetable in her hand.

It looks like she wasn't working on getting rid of the weeds today. Instead, she appears to be harvesting the same type of vegetable she has in her hand since I can see more of them in the basket by her feet.

Since I wanted to start doing some farming, I can't help but ask her about it.

"What kind of vegetable is that?"

"Oh, this? This is a radish. It was planted a while ago and now it's gotten big enough"

Flora replied as she showed me the vegetable with a red bulb.

"It looks like a turnip, but the color's not white and the size is different, huh..."

"Hmm? You've never eaten this before?"

"Although I've had turnips before, I've never had one that's like this small"

As I replied so, Flora cleared off the soil that was attached to the radish and started to wash it with the water from a bucket.

"Here, please take this one and try eating it"

I received the radish from Flora then I immediately sunk my teeth into the part with the red bulb.

As I munched on it, I noticed it had a nice texture to it and it was very juicy. And as I chewed more after that, there was a tangy spicy taste. There may be people out there who are not fond of this spiciness, but I liked this quite a bit.

"How is it?"

"Hm. It's quite fresh. It has a good chewing texture, and I like this tangy-spicy taste"

Yup. It's really delicious also thanks to the fact that it was freshly harvested. This taste of freshness would not be possible unless it was picked out on the spot. It's really a

privilege that I got to taste this without being the one who grew it.

While I was immersed in eating this, I noticed Flora looking at me with a gentle smile.

“I’m glad that you were interested in this. This vegetable can be harvested in just twenty or so days after it’s planted. We still have lots of these so please take some if you want”

“After just twenty days?! That’s so fast!”

I was shocked at the short number of days it takes before it can be harvested as I stuffed my face with the radish.

It’s okay to eat it like this, but I think it might also be good to make a salad with this and eat it together with some dressing. I’m sure it would bring a nice twist of tangy spiciness to a salad. And since it resembles a turnip, slicing it to pieces and boiling it doesn’t sound like a bad idea either.

“Oh, by the way, what brings you here today?”

Flora asked me while I was thinking of different ways of cooking the radish.

Oh, right. I came here to ask Ergys-san to teach me about farming.

I almost left with the radish to immerse myself in cooking it.

“Since I’ve more or less settled down here, I thought that I’d try a little farming”

“That sounds like a good idea!”

“But since I’m starting out for the first time, I thought that I’d ask Ergys-san to teach me the ropes”

“I-is that so...?”

Hm? She was so happy just a second ago, so why does she look down all of a sudden?

I’m a bit confused, and Flora is fidgeting while she keeps glancing this way.

I know she wants to say something, but I have no idea what she wants to say.

I tilted my head as I waited, then Flora gripped onto my hands tightly.

“U-um!! About that farming teaching thing... Can I do it?”

“Ehh? Well, if you’re willing then by all means... but aren’t you busy, Flora?”

I noticed since I started living here that Flora took parts in doing laundries, cooking, harvesting vegetables, gathering flowers and field work.

If she were to give me farming lessons, we would have to make a few trips to my house. I thought that would be tough for Flora who was already physically weak.

“It’ll be fine! I’ll go tell my father!”

The person in question happily went in her house.

I rarely see Flora so hyped.

She always worked so hard on the fields, so I guess I’m glad to have her as the one who’ll teach me about crops.

Chapter 28

Soil Prep

After getting permission from Ergys-san, Flora and I went back to my house with tools such as hoes and sickles.

“It looks like there’s no problem here”

Flora muttered as she touched the soil around the house.

Apparently, the soil here is plenty good enough to grow vegetables and crops in.

My house doesn’t have trees growing around it like Toack’s house does but the sun exposure here is good. There’s grass and a few weeds growing here instead but it won’t be a problem if we just pull them out.

Flora nodded with satisfaction and stood up after she ascertained the level of sunlight exposure, the feel of the soil, and the water drainage of the area.

“Let’s start off by planting vegetables that can be grown and harvested easily first”

“So in other words, like the radish from before?”

“Yes, exactly. But on top of that, there are some other vegetables I’d recommend for starters such as carrots, string beans, and a type of leaf vegetable named shail”

Although they don’t grow as fast as a radish, those crops also don’t take long until they can be harvested, and it seems like they don’t require that much care either.

It would be perfect for me since I’m a beginner and I’ll be able to grasp the overall flow of the crop-growing process in a short time.

I think that being able to quickly see the results of growing my own crops would be the most wonderful thing.

I don’t feel like I want to suddenly grow something that takes a long period of time

and requires fine care. I hear that produce and vegetables are often attacked by insects and pests or they will often die due to the temperature, humidity, and soil.

“Since there is no problem with the soil here, let’s go with those four types of crops I mentioned just now”

“Sure, let’s do that please, sensei”

Flora chuckled when I lowered my head and said that.

“Yup, let’s have some fun growing vegetables and enjoy the harvest”

Since we decided right away on what we’re going to plant, we will start cultivating the soil of the area by first clearing out the weeds.

I put on a pair of gloves and started to cut the tall weeds with a sickle that I had borrowed from Flora.

I placed the blade at the bottom of the weeds and pulled. Then, after a clear sound made from the plant fiber being cut, the smell of greenery drifted in the air.

It was a nostalgic smell. When I used to do quests in the forests and followed trails of beasts, this smell was often in the air when I chopped down the tall grass and branches that were in the way with a sword or knife. Speaking of which, many of those paths had gotten bigger thanks to all the adventurers passing through them so many times.

Also, back when I was a child and could not afford the money to buy weapons, I’ve used something like this sickle against a monster before. But I don’t really want to recall ’cause those times were full of the smell of blood.

I continued to work my hands silently as I chased those thoughts out of my head.

If the plant fibers of the weeds were thin, it was easily cut. But for the ones that were thicker, it took me an extra cut to get rid of it.

When I caught a glimpse of Flora by accident, I saw her mowing down the weeds easily with her sickle while she was cutely humming a song.

Even though she was cutting weeds that had the same thickness as the ones I was cutting... Hm, was there some kind of trick to this?

I took a look at her hand movements and I noticed that she seems to be using her entire arm. She was using her whole arm instead of just her hand... Ah, crap, my sickle is tangled in the weeds.

I want to cut this with the mithril sword that I cut the dragon with. If I can do that, this whole fields of weeds would disappear with a single swing. No no, what am I going to do after if I did something like that?

It's fine to do it with a normal sickle like this, not a problem.

I stopped thinking about it and observed Flora again. It turns out to my surprise that she was cutting the weeds at the roots and not the stem.

...Hm, so I should be sliding the tip of my blade to the root on a curve, and pull the weed diagonally up?

After I tried imitating her, the weeds were cut without the need to put much strength into it.

There was also no heavy feeling of the blade getting caught in the plant fibers either. This seems to be the way to mow the weeds down one after another.

I cut down all the weeds in front of me as I enjoyed this smooth sensation of cutting with a sickle.

"Aldo-san, you're good at using a sickle"

"Is that so?"

"You got used to using one during hunting or in your adventurer days, right?"

Nope, I have absolutely never used one. At most I've only cut the obstructive branches and weeds with a sword or something. There's no need to use a sickle to cut down the weeds by their roots to open up a path.

"Well, something like that"

I would look so lame if I just told her that I was copying what she was doing while I peeked at her, so I gave her a vague answer.

But actually, to become an adventurer, you have to know a bit about all the edged tools, so I wasn't really lying since I knew how to use one from having taken a little look at a sample before.

"So what did you do in your adventurer days? Was it monster subjugation, after all?"

Did she want to chat while working because we were too quiet? Flora asked me without stopping her hands.

"Monster subjugation, delivering items, cleaning the streets, escorting people and many other things"

"Being an adventurer did give me the image of someone who kills monsters... but wow, even delivering items and cleaning the streets...?"

Flora replied in a surprised voice.

It's no surprise that she's shocked since there is no branch office of the adventurer's guild nor any big cities around Nordende. The adventurers who occasionally showed up here from a call to exterminate monsters would all have an image of being strong people who hunted monsters and acted as escorts for important people.

However, adventurers would really do anything though. Being in a kingdom filled with many people means that there would be all kinds of jobs for them to do.

"What kind of monsters have you taken down before, Aldo-san?"

"Uh, a dra- I mean a dregl, goblins, red bears, and I often took care of monsters that attacked villages"

Phew. I almost said a dragon. Nah, she probably wouldn't even believe me if I told her that and said I didn't want people to know about it. She might even think that I'm crazy.

By the way, a dregl is a monster with long nails that resembles a badger. Crops often suffer from them because they are omnivorous monsters that would eat anything.

"...Red bears"

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

I heard Flora mumbling something, but I couldn’t make out what she said.

“No, never mind! That’s amazing. I’d just flee in horror if I saw a monster”

Flora waved her hands at me as she said never mind and then she went back to working on the weeds while she continued talking.

We have cleared out the weeds for an area about 10 meters long and wide. What’s left of the area now are some remaining roots and the brown colored soil. It’s said that the weeds we pulled out can be used as livestock feed, so we have gathered them in one spot and we’ll be carrying them out later.

Since all the obstructing weeds are gone now, the next step is to bring out the hoes.

“If you make the ridges run east and west, the crops will receive a longer period of sunlight during the day. So, plow in horizontal lines”

Ah, it’s because making the ridges in the direction the sun moves at will let the crops receive sunlight for a longer period of time.

I switched my sickle to a hoe and stood at the spot Flora told me to.

By using the weight of the hoe, I gouged the tip of it into the soil. The feeling of it going in the soil with a swish was a pleasant one. But since I don’t know the best way to use a hoe, I will try to plow without swinging it up too high.

I started by removing the bigger pebbles and the remaining roots in the soil and progressed little by little.

Raise the hoe, and swing it down. *Zak* *zak*, the sound of Flora and I plowing the soil can be heard. It’s a simple movement, but when you keep doing this for a while, you’d understand that it’s hard work.

Since the temperature was still rising as we approached summer, we gradually started to sweat.

This uses quite a bit of muscle. You’ll run out of gas in no time if you waste your stamina, especially in the summer due to the summer heat.

I was worrying about Flora, who was a bit weak physically, but she was working ahead of me with a rhythm in her movements.

She wasn't wasting any of her stamina because she knows her own body well.

While her slender body shook as she plowed, she looked to be quite at home.

I didn't want to lose to her, but since I'm aware that I can't beat an experienced opponent in a race, I will do it slowly and carefully. First, let's do what I can.

With that in mind, I pulled out the hoe that was stabbed into the soil. The soil that was stuck to the bottom of the hoe was pattering down. Then, I took a step forward and slammed the hoe back down.

I knew how much power I needed to put in as I swung it down and removed the pebbles and roots. Following my intuition, I shook off the soil that was attached to the hoe and lifted the soil.

As I repeated that process, I seemed to have arrived at the edge of the field before realizing it. The soil was dug up nicely for the rows that I was put in charge of.

The field without any weeds or grass is starting to look like a farm.

I looked at this impressive change that surprised even me.

"Thanks for your hard work, Aldo-san"

I started to get thirsty after looking for a while. And at that moment, Flora handed me a canteen of water as if she read my mind.

The timing surprised me, but Flora probably went to prepare this since she finished ahead of me. I appreciate that.

The cold water was very delicious since my throat was dry and I had sweat a lot.

"Thank you"

"No, it's nothing"

I thanked her after I wet my throat. She replied with a happy smile.

I guess she was also sweating quite a bit, since her silky, blonde hair was sticking to her skin.

“The last part towards the end was done nicely. Since that was the case, it looks like you didn’t waste your strength and get tired out”

“It’s thanks to your good teachings, sensei”

“No, no”

We laughed together as we had this kind of conversation.

I could not have talked in such a familiar way with Flora like this when I first came here. This probably means that she had forgiven me for what happened. That thought makes me kind of happy.

Laughing like this together... perhaps living a life with the support of a sweet girl next to me like this wouldn’t be such a bad idea...

Chapter 29

The Farming Life

From that point on, I was living the life of a hunter while also spending my days on field work.

I was plowing the soil, spreading fertilizer, planting seeds and watering them. At first, it was very busy.

“Ohh, they sprouted!”

When I exited my house in the morning to check up on the field, I spotted some small, green spots.

I rushed over in a hurry, and there I saw small seedlings that suddenly popped up from the soil.

I did not mind getting soil on my knees as I kneeled down to take a closer look at the seedlings that were poking out. There were just small buds a few centimeters long, but they were definitely there.

It meant so much to me to see the sprouts of life that I created myself. They really were growing up.

They were just the sprouts of plain radishes growing out of the soil, but they were strangely adorable.

I was a bit skeptical when I heard that it only takes around twenty or so days before they can be harvested, but if it only took two days for them to sprout, then it sounds about right. They will surely grow big very quickly at this rate.

I had nothing special to do outside that day, but I still came out of my house many times to take a look at the sprouts of the radishes.

Then, three days later, the sprouts of the radishes got even bigger.

“Let’s start thinning^[i] them out”

I started to feel sad after hearing Flora say that I have to start thinning them out.

If we don’t do that, the radishes won’t grow well.

I understand the concept, but to put an end to the sprouts that I grew myself for the first time... It’s hard for me to get rid of them so early.

Flora seemed to understand what I’m feeling because she’s been there before. She lightly patted my back with a *pon* *pon* after three minutes and said to me with a smile, “Now then, go on”.

Her smile looked like a demon’s for a second, but it’s understandable since she’s been doing field work for so long she would have already thinned them out.

There was nothing much I could do since the other sprouts will have no hope if I don’t pull these ones out. I pulled them out as I told myself that.

I endured as I pulled out the sprouts that I dearly loved. It was the first time my heart got split in half even though it was just a plant that I pulled out.

After I cleared the area to a certain extent, the number of radish sprouts were reduced quite a bit.

Flora told me that the sprouts can be eaten, so that day we ate them together as a salad along with some grilled meat.

A week after we planted the seeds, the other vegetables’ sprouts all quickly appeared.

I took care of the field before I left for the mountains, and took care of the field again after I came back from the mountains. I was fine when there were only radishes, but now the workload has quadrupled and things have gotten quite busy around here.

Needless to say, their growth speed, classification, and things to watch for are all different so I have to be careful with each and every one of them. It’s quite a big deal.

Even though I think that Aisha and Ena are amazing people for being able to manage

that big vineyard, they only grow one type of crop there. I don't even understand why Aisha thinks that it's such a hassle.

They aren't going to the extent of taking care of the grapes one by one, so it shouldn't be that tough.

I looked after the germinating vegetables while cutting the weeds and getting rid of the pests as the radishes grew up rapidly.

During that period of time, Flora often made time to come here. I was very happy for that because even though I got used to looking after the radishes, I still had no idea how to take care of the other vegetables such as the carrots, the green beans and the shails.

Of course, she was busy with a lot of things that she had to take care of herself, but she still showed up here almost every day.

Every time she showed up, she asked me, "Are the vegetables growing okay?" I bet she has also grown attached to the vegetables that we brought up together.

She had also become more of a talker than usual when it came to vegetables, and her expressions were richer.

I think I will eat the first wave of radishes that I will harvest together with Flora with just the two of us.

I'm looking forward to that time.



"Hi, Aldo-san"

On a rest day without hunting, Flora came from behind me while I was looking after the vegetables.

"Hello, Flora"

When I stood up and returned a greeting as usual, I saw Flora standing there with a happy look on her face.

She was wearing a white blouse and a deep-blue colored skirt. It was not much different compared to what she usually wore, except she had a basket in her hand and a straw hat on. Maybe it's because the sun was getting stronger.

It became a natural thing for us to greet each other this way.

Perhaps she was doing that since I also called out to her from afar like this every time I paid a visit to Ergys-san's place.

I noticed from before that she was sulking quite a bit when I just got up close to her and suddenly started talking. Apparently, you should call out to the other side who's working on the field first regardless if they notice you or not, since they might not be aware of their surroundings.

I can sense someone coming by their footsteps even from a considerable distance, so I always felt a bit itchy and nervous when I waited for them to get closer. So, by doing so, it makes Flora happy and it makes me feel better as well.

It's an exchange that I wasn't familiar with, but it has become something that I also like to do now.

We met each other with a smile, then Flora came closer to me as usual.

"How are the vegetables doing?"

"All good. The roots of the radishes have gotten bigger, so it's almost time for harvesting soon, right?"

When I squatted down and pointed at the big leaf of a radish by my feet, Flora also squatted down next to me to take a look.

Right as she did that, her sweet and soft fragrance drifted to me and made me a little flustered.

I also use the same soap that they use at Ergys-san's house when I clean myself, but I don't smell like this. Is this a fragrance exclusive to females?

"Oh, you're right! At this rate, we can harvest this in two or three days"

Flora told me with an innocent smile while I was having those thoughts.

“That’s good to hear-”

I let out a smile after I was told that we could harvest this in two to three days.

There doesn’t seem to be any problems with the radishes, so we can just harvest them later even if we just leave them alone.

“...We can really harvest them after twenty days, huh”

It’s been twenty-two days after we planted the seeds. Even if we harvest them three days later, it’s just twenty-five days. It’s shocking to be able to harvest them in such a short time.

We planted the seeds according to Flora’s advice of planting them one week apart, so we can be harvesting next week as well. If we kept on doing it like this for a while, we will be able to eat as many radishes as we want.

“It depends on the season and the weather, but there are times when it would take even longer if there was a lack of care. It’s because you have been taking good care of them so they were able to grow into such healthy radishes in this short period of time”

“I see. Certainly, if there was continuous rainfall, attacks by pests, or if you were late in earthing up ^[ii]the crops, they would not be able to grow up well”

“It’s all thanks to you carefully teaching the inexperienced me, Flora. Thank you”

If she didn’t come here often to check up on me and teach me precisely what could happen, it would not have been possible for them to grow up safely to this point.

“N-no, it’s nothing much”

When I thanked her with a smile, Flora’s white cheeks turned red as she became flustered.

She wasn’t being shy towards me anymore, but it seems that her shy personality still remained inside.

“Ah, by the way, I’ve brought a lunch box today... H-how about... we have lunch together?”

As I looked at Flora being all shy with a smile on my face, she stuck a basket out and glanced up at me.

True, the sun was in the middle of the sky, indicating it was noon. I guess she prepared the lunchbox for me as she knew that I would be taking care of the vegetables. I was just starting to get hungry.

“Sure, that would be great. What do you want to do? Eat this nice lunch box you prepared out here?”

It’s a nicely made lunch box. It won’t be any fun to enjoy this inside the house, that’d be a waste.

When I asked her that, she replied to me with a smile,

“Let’s go to the fields of flowers!”

[i] Thinning simply means removing some of the plants that are growing too close together, thinning seedlings is a common method that’s used to ensure the proper spacing of plants in your garden.

[ii] Earthing/Hilling is just pulling up some soil to cover the exposed root. If you don’t cover up the radish root you end up with green shoulders, a bitter taste and a vegetable that really isn’t as good as it could be. Or... you end up with no radish because it never really got seated in the soil properly.

Chapter 30

The Changing Colors of Flowers

Flora and I walked west from my house for about ten minutes, then we arrived at the field of flowers.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. It’s beautiful no matter how many times I see this”

After we passed through the path surrounded by trees, we stopped suddenly when we saw the scene of blooming flowers.

In front of our eyes was a vivid-colored carpet of flowers that spread as far our eyes could see.

When the wind blew, the flowers shook with a sound as if they were welcoming the breeze with their stems and petals. A sweet and refreshing fragrance mixed together with the scent of greenery tickled my nostrils.

With her eyes slightly open, Flora seemed to be enjoying the breeze while she held her straw hat down with one hand. Her golden-colored hair was swaying in the wind.

As I enjoyed the scent of the field of flowers, I noticed that some changes had occurred in the fields when I looked around.

“There are fewer red flowers and more blue ones, huh?”

Although the change was really subtle, it was still noticeable when I looked at the field as a whole. There was less red and more green and blue. It was not the same as the last few times I dropped by here after hunting and in my spare time.

Perhaps, the color changes were something that happened just recently. I didn’t notice since I have been busy with my farm lately and could not come here.

“Yup, it’s because the season had already started changing from spring to summer. The

color of the flowers here changes according to the seasons. Spring is when flowers of red, orange, yellow- those type of warm-colored flowers bloom. And winter is when cool-colored flowers like blue, light blue, dark blue, and purple bloom. So, since we're heading into summer right now, the red ones are decreasing as the blue ones start to come out around this time"

As we stood next to each other, Flora explained to me with a proud look on her face.

"I've heard that some flowers' colors will change depending on the season, but I didn't know that much about them. It almost feels like I'm looking at a rainbow"

I feel like the rainbows that you sometimes see after a rainy day would be something like this. The outer layers would have warm colors like red and orange, while towards the inner layers should be cool colors like blue and purple.

"Ehehe, that's right. Some people call this the rainbow field"

"However, the colors aren't lined up like a regular rainbow, and there are colors in there that aren't in a rainbow, so calling this a rainbow might not be the most accurate"

The color migration of the field was like a rainbow's, but to call this whole field a rainbow would not be the most accurate. The colors did not line up like one nor were they in the same colors of a regular rainbow. Next to the orange was blue, and there was a color that was in-between red and orange in full bloom.

I can't describe that as too rainbow like.

We stopped for a short while to gaze at the flowers, then we started to walk deeper in after that.

The best place to have lunch at would be under the trees that were located deeper into the fields. We could sit down and relax there, and it's cool in the shade there too.

We kept on walking as we enjoyed the view of flowers that had a different color than they did in springtime.

In the direction where I was looking, I noticed the tulips that were red until quite recently have become orange. The roses next to them that I remembered from before have become green, and some were even yellow.

It appears that the orange-colored flowers weren't new flowers that bloomed, but their colors had simply changed.

It was a strange sight to see the flowers you know being in a different color.

When I was admiring that as I kept on walking, Flora bent down next to me and picked out a flower.

"What's up?"

Was there an especially beautiful flower there?

"Ah, did you know? Some flowers can be eaten, and some can become herbal medicines"

"...Ohh, is that so?"

So it's the same as wild plants and nuts. Although I did not think that it was impossible for flowers to be used as medicines, I had no clue since I have never tried it or see anyone do that.

"Yup. And of course, there are a lot that you can't eat while there's also quite a few that you can. This flower here called munnika is one that is good for your skin when consumed"

Flora turned around and showed me the flower that was in her hand with a bright smile on her face.

It was a small, pink colored flower. I see, so this is a munnika.

"...Does this taste good?"

After I asked her about the flower in her hand, she discarded a few parts of it and rinsed it with water from her water canteen before putting it in her mouth.

I was a bit surprised to see her eating the flower.

Without any distorted expression on her face, she chewed it and gulped it down without any problem.

Ohhh, she ate it.

It didn't look poisonous, and she doesn't look sick from eating it either- But rather, she picked out more of the beautiful flowers and rinsed them with water after she discarded the same parts.

When I took a sniff of one before deciding if I want to put it in my mouth, I smelled a sweet, flowery scent. It was the smell of common flowers.

After I finished staring at her, I stopped thinking and tried it as well.

The scent of the flower filled my nostrils when I took a bite. There was no grassy odor and its texture was like lettuce. The sweet nectar of the flower came out with a little bit of bitterness along with it.

Yup, it wouldn't be strange to think that it was a vegetable that I was eating. It didn't taste bad and it felt like it was good for the body.

"Yup, it smelled nice and didn't taste bad, right? Didn't the texture make you feel like you were eating a vegetable or something?"

Flora asked me with a chuckle. Was I showing a funny-looking face while I was eating it?

"Yeah. I wouldn't be able to tell the difference if I ate this in a salad or together with meat. Also, not only would the flower nectar would make the tea and soups tastier, it would make them look nicer as well"

Oh, that actually sounded like a good idea. Let's try mixing these in a salad or brew some tea with these sometime.

"By the way, in the language of flowers, the munnika symbolizes "innocence", "pureness", and "genuineness""

"Ohhh, I see. Then, what about this one?"

"That's a konron. The flower symbolizes "reminiscence", "kindliness", and "bonds""

When I pointed at an orange flower that I did not know, Flora answered me like so.

“And that one with the long petals?”

“That is a shinjo. It symbolizes “yearning”, “friendship”, “companionship” and “elegance””

Amazing. Do all the flowers here have meanings to them? She can remember their meanings so well even when just one flower has that many meanings to it.

It could cause a misunderstanding if you were to get their meanings wrong.

Speaking of which, I’ve heard stories From Kurone^[i] in the past about daughters of nobles receiving flowers from their fiancé that ended in tragedies because they had mistaken the meaning of the flowers they gave them.

That girl was surprisingly a fan of tragic love stories and sad things.

After that, we kept on walking as I pointed to flowers I did not know and asked Flora about their meanings. She would proudly answer me and teach me all about them. Her expression was cute like a little kid’s, as if it were saying “I would never get it wrong”.

“...I feel like I was taught by someone like this nine years ago too...”

I started to remember the scenes faintly.

—The flowers there also changed their colors every time the season changed...!

I remember that time I was also taught by that person as we walked through the field of flowers.

That person back then wasn’t someone who was as calm as Flora, and I feel like that person would be a bit younger than she is right now.

We kept on walking as I faintly recalled those distant memories. Then, I heard something falling down from behind.

“Hm?”

“Ah, I’m sorry!”

When I looked back, Flora seemed to have dropped her basket and was trying to pick it back up in a hurry. Luckily, the lid was solid and nothing spilled out.

My heart was a little relieved from that. However, there were no signs of her picking the basket back up at all. She was only looking downwards.

“...What’s wrong?”

“...N-no, it’s nothing. A bit of dirt got in my eyes”

Just when I was starting to get worried because she wasn’t standing back up, she rubbed her eyes and stood back up without a problem.

There was a bit of dirt near her eyes. Today is pretty windy, and she most likely touched the soil when she was picking up the munnikas. The dirt probably got in her eyes when the wind blew.

“Sorry, please give me a second”

“*Hau* ...! (* \geq \forall \leq *)”

I took away her hand that she was using to rub her eyes with and I wiped the dirt from her eyes with a handkerchief I took out from my pocket.

She let out a small shriek out of surprise. Then, she closed her eyes as her face turned red.

I know it’s a little embarrassing, but please hold on ’cause I think this is better than rubbing your eyes with your hands.

““ ””

For the next little while, I was carefully getting the dirt out of her eyes. Then, I started to feel embarrassed as I took notice of her fine facial features from up close.

It was like the tense situation of an inexperienced couple who were about to kiss at close range.

I tried to not think of unnecessary things as much as possible and continued to get the dirt out of her eyes.

“It should be fine now”

“Ah... okay. Thank you”

When I finished and pulled back a little, she lowered her head with her ears red.

My face was probably a little red as well.

““ ””

A silent awkwardness filled the air.

“...U-um, I...”

“...*guuu*”

Just when she was about to say something, my stomach rumbled to complain about hunger. Flora stopped and held back on what she was going to say from that.

“Ah... haha, sorry. My stomach is making noises”

I said with a bitter smile on my face. Then, she looked at me and burst out laughing.

“...Ahaha. It is, isn't it? We can see the trees now, so let's go have lunch”

Flora then ran under the trees with her hair swaying in the wind. I also started to run after her to follow her.

The awkwardness was gone from having a conversation about my stomach. She looked like she had something to say but I don't feel like breaking this good mood by dwelling on it.

^[i] She was the mage in his party that was mentioned in the beginning of the story and has yet to make her reappearance

Chapter 31

The Flower of Union

Aisha's POV

“So? Did you end up not saying it today?”

“...Y-yeah”

While I stared at her with my eyes half closed and my elbows rested on the table, Flora answered me as she slouched.

In the evening after I finished my field work, my best friend, Flora, came to the vineyard for some consultation.

The topic she wanted to discuss with me was, of course, the person she had a crush on— Aldo.

If you like him then just tell him you like him and get it over with, but this is my best friend who just couldn't do that. She tends to get embarrassed when she sees him, and when it's crunch time she would nervously run away.

She's such a hopeless girl, but she has a lot of strong points that can't be ignored.

She's gentle, considerate of others, pure and she is an unnecessarily honest person. And on top of all that, she's as cute as a doll. She would make any man want to protect her if she shyly looked up at them with her big round eyes.

She looks slender in clothing, but in reality what she has under her clothes is also quite good. Any man would fall for her if they took notice of it.

She was a girl with all that, yet she is so shy that she couldn't tell the one she likes her feelings.

What the heck is she doing?

“...You’ve been in love with him since nine years ago, no?”

When I muttered so, Flora’s shoulders trembled as she sat on her chair and nodded with a red face.

I don’t know the full details of what went on nine years ago, but apparently she and Aldo met at that time. Flora seemed to have been in love with him ever since. She was a nine-year-old little girl at the time. And Aldo, who was eighteen years old, left without much of a thought.

They reunited about three months ago. It was as if they were tied together with a string of fate.

“Does Aldo even remember you in the first place?”

That’s the big question. If he doesn’t even remember about her and she just goes and tells him “I’ve liked you since nine years ago!”, it would take some time for Aldo to take it in.

And coupled with the thought of not knowing what to do if he wasn’t drawn to her, Flora wasn’t quite able to come out with it.

Well, adventurers travel everywhere, so I don’t think he’ll remember a little girl from a rural village like her.

When I sighed with those thoughts in my mind, I saw Flora fidgeting with a somewhat happy look on her face.

It was a sign that she wants to say something but she was hesitant because she is a little embarrassed.

“Well?”

“...Um, Aldo-san seems to faintly remember... about nine years ago...”

“Really?!”

I jumped up and asked her after I heard what she said. Then, she lightly nodded with

a smile.

“Yes. Today he muttered something about the field of flowers from nine years ago”

“That’s good, isn’t it? So? What was the situation like?”

When I asked her about what the situation was like, what was the mood like, and what they talked about, she happily filled me in on what happened during their date earlier today.

However, what she told me about was stuff about Aldo and his farm that had nothing to do with what I was asking her. She went on about how kind and cute he was, but I kept on listening silently.

“So then? What did you do after he blurted out that he was taught by someone the same way nine years ago!?”

After the long story about what they did today, I couldn’t help but feel pumped as we’re finally getting to the climax.

“...Um... well, I got so happy that I accidently cried a little since he remembered about it”

R-right. Well, she did have a crush on him for nine years. I guess it can’t be helped if she cried from being overjoyed when her crush remembered.

Surely, Aldo should have been worried when he saw her crying.

If she used her crying face as a weapon and went with the flow to tell him about the past and confess...

“So then, that was where you told him?”

I swallowed my saliva and asked her. Then, she averted her gaze and said,

“...Umm, I couldn’t think of what to say from being overjoyed... so I tricked him even though I didn’t mean to... I put some dirt near my eyes, and it got in my eyes when the wind blew”

“Mouu, this girl...”

I leaned back on my chair as I unintentionally groaned.

Speaking of which, I also was not able to confess my feelings to my first love either. I wonder what I was expecting from her.

“I-I’m sorry! My mind went blank!”

Flora lowered her head as she apologized many times.

Her mind was blank and yet she somehow came up with such a good move to explain her tears? I doubt Aldo is any ordinary man but he’s dense, so he must have really believed her on it.

“Ah, but he paid attention to me and helped me get the dirt out of my eyes with his handkerchief! Mou~ he was so close and my heart was beating like crazy!”

Her confession didn’t go well and yet she told me that with a loose expression on her face.

When I stared at her with my eyes half closed to remind her of her failure, she sunk into her chair as she became self aware again.

“Mou... that was such a good chance to talk to him about nine years ago. Why did you run away?”

“Uuu, even I knew that so I tried to tell him right after that, you know?! But... his stomach growled and flushed the mood away...”

Flora replied in defense when I asked her with a fed up tone.

“...Well, I guess you really couldn’t say it there like that”

Even I am a woman who understands a little on how girls think. I don’t think I would confess to someone in that atmosphere either.

“But things became like that because you tricked him at first”

“...Yeah”

When I resumed the conversation again, Flora looked down as she looked dejected.

“But hey, it’ll be okay even without you confessing if you can make the other side do it, you know? Have you been properly showing him your charming points?”

“Uuuu... I did show him my charming points as they are... but...”

Flora answered me as she frowned. I’m very concerned as to what she thinks her charming points are.

“...For example?”

“Working together, making him lunch and eating together and taking strolls at the field of flowers!”

“...Anything else other than that...?”

When I asked her again further prodding with my question, she started getting fidgety and embarrassed.

“Umm? Ah, ummm... our hands casually touched when we were working together...”

“Are you a child?!”

“Ehhhh! That won’t do?!”

Flora replied with a surprised voice when I hit the table with a loud bang.

Isn’t that how the kids in the village would express their love? But I do think it’s good that she’s going through the trouble to prepare him lunch though, since it makes Aldo visit her home frequently to exchange food ingredients. She could be making her move in one of the times they are exchanging the ingredients.

“No, you did good considering that you’re a late bloomer when it comes to love, but what if it doesn’t get through the other person’s dense head?”

“Ehhhh?! But, what else should I do?”

Hmm? Even if you’re asking me... it’s not even something that I have done, but I have no choice but to teach you how my other female friends taught me on how to tempt a man.

“...Something like this... Press your breasts against him when you’re close to him, make body contact with him, and then tell him directly and say what you want to say”

Yup. All of my friends in the village would have done something like that.

“Eehh!? I can’t do something that embarrassing!”

When I pointed at her abundant chest and told her what to do, she replied with a red face as she hugged herself.

She had lumps there that did not match her timid personality. Mou, it would have been over already if you just pressed that onto Aldo with full force.

“I don’t think he’ll be motivated to confess unless you do that much though”

Especially when he’s so dense...

“N-no way...”

Flora still looked to be somewhat hesitating so I decided to give her a little push.

“If you don’t hurry, Aldo will get taken away by another girl, you know?”

“Eh?”

Flora leaked out in a dumbfounded voice after she heard my words.

Apparently she had never thought of that before.

“He’s someone who can be relied on in times of emergencies since he is a former adventurer and he’s good at hunting. His looks and personality aren’t bad either, so there are other female villagers aiming for him since something feels different about him, you know?”

“You’re kidding, right?!”

Flora stood up and said in a panicked voice.

When I saw that, I sighed and said,

“It’s true. I saw Colette-san inviting Aldo to a dinner at her house just the other day”

“B-but that is!? She can’t do that!”

“Then hurry up and confess to him”

When I bluntly told her that, Flora’s eyes were wandering about.

“...That is... um... embarrassing... I don’t know what to say... And on top of that, what if it doesn’t go well and the relationship we have between us now gets destroyed...”

It’s still the problem of it being too embarrassing, huh. She was definitely shaken and was on the verge of making a move after hearing what I just told her.

I wish there was something that would let her express her feelings naturally...

Since I wanted to help my best friend out, I went into deep thought for a while.

Triggers for a confession... Situations and things that would let her confess naturally...

One thing came to mind as I thought about things that they commonly shared.

“Hmm, if it’s difficult for you to say it out loud, then why don’t you just express it with flowers? Look, your father also confessed to Fiona-san with a flower that had the meaning of connecting with the one you love”

“Ohhh! That was the flower of union!”

Flora clapped her hands together with an ecstatic expression.

Yes, that. There’s a flower out there that villagers used to confess their love. It’s said that if you give that flower to the opposite sex, the two people would surely be connected. Flora’s father had also used that to confess to Fiona-san under a tree. It’s a flower that Flora would feel a special attachment to as well.

Well, it doesn’t work for sure, but I’m not going to say that now.

“Since Aldo also likes flowers, you can teach him the meaning of that flower and confess naturally at the same time, right?”

The flower of union is the perfect flower for her to express her feelings with. It's a good omen and it works as long as it achieves the purpose.

"...Y-you're right"

Flora slowly nodded, but she still has not come out completely with her feelings.

"At this rate, you'll have him snatched away by someone else"

When I continued to push her with my words, she straightened her back and her facial expression changed.

Then, she bit her small lip as she looked right at me and said,

"...I- I get it! I'm going to get the flower of union tomorrow!"

"And after that?"

"I... I, will confess..."

I became uneasy when I saw her face turn red as she delivered that weak ending.

Chapter 32

A Quiet Forest

I was walking with Kyle in the forest that was quieter than usual.

We were out here hunting as always, but for some reason the forest today was abnormally quiet. I could not hear the sounds of insects nor the birds chirping at all.

A somewhat eerie feeling filled the air, and the mood gave me tingles.

I knew it, there was something strange about the forest today...

We kept on walking through the forest as I harboured such thoughts in my mind. Then, I started to pick up some faint sounds of movement on the ground.

“...Again, more prey are coming”

I readied my bow as I picked up signs of something moving inside the forest.

“...They are coming from the west again...”

I aimed my bow to the west. Although a bit late, Kyle had also started to take notice of the incoming presences. I held my bow at the ready as I notched an arrow to the bowstring with smooth movements.

“I’ll take the right one. I’ll be counting on you for the left, Kyle”

“Understood”

After he gave me a short reply, the brushes around us shook as two deer dashed straight out from there.

We released our arrows with no hesitation as we saw the deer looking startled for a second, possibly because they did not expect that they would run into humans here.

A sharp sound of the air being cut was heard as our arrows headed straight for their foreheads when they came running.

thunk, the arrows pierced their mark as the deer's bodies fell to the ground.

When we confirmed that there were no other living creatures around us, we slowly put the bows back on our backs. From there, we will start to work on draining their blood.

"With all things considered, there sure are lots of prey today"

"Yeah. This is already the fourth one even though it hasn't been long since we got here. We will have to make a trip back down to the village again"

Kyle said as he sighed. Maybe he was thinking about the effort it'll take to get these down to the village.

"I'm happy that we're catching so much, but they are coming here as if they were fleeing from the west..."

We've already caught four deer, three rabbits, two wild boars and two birds today. This is a lot considering that it's only been a few hours since we got here.

If these animals all ran here because they were scared of something in the west, then there is only one thing that comes to mind.

A vicious monster has appeared over there.

It's common for vicious, carnivorous monsters to be moving their hunting grounds as they chase for food. Herbivorous animals and weak monsters would naturally run away in order to escape from them. It's something that I had seen happen many times during my adventurer days.

At times like this, it'd be best to not carelessly move around too much. The best thing to do is to send out some scouts to collect more information on the situation before taking action.

Loren-san was with us until a little while ago, but he felt curious about why the animals were running here from the west and went to check it out. At that time, it felt like he wanted us to wait here without going near the west.

Even though we are getting as much prey as we pleased, any more was not possible since we could not bring them back with us.

As we drained the deer's blood while staying alert, I started to hear footsteps coming from the west.

Then, out of the left corner of my eye I saw a big shadow appear.

"...Oh what the heck, it's just teacher. I thought it was a bear"

"You dumbass. Have you seen such a handsome bear before?"

Loren-san came over here while he joked around like he usually does.

Kyle was right though, his shadow did look like a bear's when he suddenly jumped out of the trees like that.

Loren-san had a sarcastic smile on, but his expression turned serious in the very next moment as he looked right at us.

"Well, but what Kyle was thinking wasn't completely off"

"You mean..."

Words leaked out of my mouth without thinking.

Maybe Kyle has also noticed something from Loren-san's words, as he looked up at him with a look of surprise.

Then, Loren-san nodded.

"Ah, I've found what looks like a red bear's fur and I saw something like claw marks on the trees in the west. I don't know if it's looking for food there but I'm guessing it came down from the north"

And then, he showed us a batch of red fur.

There's no mistake about it; that batch of red, long hair belonged to a red bear. I'm sure of it because I've seen it many times in the past.

It's no wonder that the animals ran here in terror.

"...A-are we going to group up with other hunters and go hunt it down?"

Kyle asked with a stiffer expression than usual. There was cold sweat on his forehead and his voice was shaky.

No matter how grown up he acts, he is still a 12-year-old child. Although he hunts in the mountains, the monsters that he would run into during a hunt would only be small, low-threat monsters like goblins at the most.

Of course he would be scared of a big monster like a red bear.

A red bear isn't a low level monster like goblins and horned rabbits that villagers can handle.

Even if you go hunt it with a large number of hunters, there will still be casualties. Normally, you would have to rely on adventurers to subjugate it or you'd have to ask the feudal lord for soldiers to kill it.

However, since we're in Nordende, it would take some time to reach an adventurer's guild or the mansion of the feudal lord in a time of emergency.

But that was also the reason why I chose to live here...

"We might have to if push comes to shove, but right now we should make it our priority to evacuate the villagers. It might not get to that point but if it keeps heading that way it might reach the field of flowers in the worst case scenario"

Kyle looked relieved after hearing Loren-san's words that were spoken in a heavier tone than usual.

When Loren-san and I see such a child-like side of Kyle, we couldn't help but grin.

Even if there was a need to take action, it would be the role of the adults to take the initiative.

We were not that far from the field of flowers from here. At the worst case scenario, the villagers who went there without knowing anything might get attacked by the red bear. I don't want something like that to happen.

Flora often goes in and out of there, and it's also a place that I like a lot. I don't want that place to be destroyed by monsters.

A red bear would go back up north once its stomach was filled, but if something were to happen, I would have no choice but to consider getting my sword and taking it down...

"With that said, today's hunt is over and we're going back to the village. We're going to warn everyone about this"

"Right!"

We nodded to Loren-san's voice. Then, we hurried and finished processing the animals that we caught. I actually wanted to find a place and cool off with some water and do the processing slowly, but since we do not have time this time, we'll go back down with just the blood draining done.

"I'll head to the town square and inform the village chief of this. Kyle, you take the south route down. Aldo, head west as fast as you can. There might be some people at the field of flowers"

"Got it!"

As we headed down the mountain, Loren-san and Kyle went their separate ways to report the information we have.

I was the most suited to head west as fast as I can since it was the most dangerous. Therefore, Loren-san had taken the deer and is taking that back to the village for me. Anyhow, I left at once without delay after I saw this nice guy off.

There are very few villagers from the east who would come to the west, so it was decided that we'll be able to deal with the situation if we start spreading the news from the center.

This is a village where the people are close to each other, so the transmission speed of important news would be fast. Right now, what was important was for each of us to spread that news.

"Welcome back, Aldo-san! Hm? Where are your catches for the day?"

“Sorry, I don’t have time right now”

When I ran west down the mountain, several kids came running to me as usual, but I couldn’t entertain them today since I didn’t have time to do that.

“Ehhh? That’s no fun”

The kids looked unsatisfied and went back to the field when they understood that I could not entertain them right now.

In the midst of that, I found and called out to an adult that I saw.

“Ah, excuse me, Doyle-san!”

“What’s going on, Aldo?”

Doyle-san came over to me with a curious look on his face and a hoe on his shoulder.

“There was a monster that came down from the mountains in the north and it was headed to the west of here. Perhaps it may even reach the field of flowers. So, can I please ask you to warn everyone of this and tell them to not go close to the field of flowers for the next little while?”

“...Seriously?! What kind of monster is it?”

Doyle-san asked in a panicked voice after he heard my words.

“We suspect that it’s a red bear from the red fur and the scratch marks that were spotted”

“...I-I-I got it. I’ll go tell everyone who’s working on the fields here!”

When Doyle-san heard that it was a red bear, he quickly started running.

I’ve heard from Loren-san that he used to live in the hinterlands in the north. The villagers from there would know exactly how to deal with things like this. Normally people wouldn’t believe something like this if you just went up and told them that. It’s because Loren-san had always told the villagers here regularly that they have to take the threat of monsters seriously. That’s Loren-san for you.

“Oiii! Everyone, gather around for a bit!”

Looking back, I saw that Doyle-san had gathered the villagers with a loud voice.

“A monster?”

“It’s a scary one that would attack us...”

It seems like it would be fine here. With that in mind, I ran to the field of flowers where it was the most dangerous.

Chapter 33

When I take up my sword again

“So with that said, please stay away from the field of flowers”

“Understood. We’ll let the others know as well”

“Did you see anyone else in there?”

“No, I didn’t see anyone there other than us”

“I see. Thanks”

“Thank you as well”

After I arrived at the field of flowers, I explained the situation to a parent and child before I told them to return to their home.

I’ve been in this village for three months now. Maybe it was due to the fact that I have been working here as a hunter, people seemed to have heard of me so they believed in my words without a doubt and cooperated with me.

It goes to show how important the day-to-day interactions were, since it would not be going this well if I had no credibility.

I was told by the parent that there wasn’t anyone else inside the field of flowers, but just to make sure of that, I ran to check under the trees as well.

There could be some small children hiding somewhere who were missed.

“Is anyone here-? Answer me if you hear me!”

I yelled as I walked here and there, but I did not hear a voice.

The multi-colored flowers here today were also in full bloom, accompanied by the gentle breeze.

I stopped moving to focus on the sounds, smells, and the flow of air around me. But even with my heightened senses, I could not sense the presence of any living beings nearby.

...There's no one here anymore, huh.

Since I judged that to be the case, I turned my back on the big trees and left the field of flowers.

After that, I informed the people I ran into in the west of the news as I made my way towards the village chief's, Ergys-san's house. Right now we might be too disorganized in the way we transmit our messages to each other, but we can work out a guideline for things like this in the future.

I will pay a visit to the houses near the field just in case before I go back to the village square.

The people living in places relatively close to the field also seem to have heard the news of the monster and have settled somewhere else calmly.

Not only has the red bear not been sighted yet, but no one has fallen victim to it either. That made me feel relieved.

Before long, I found myself near Toack's place and I decided to drop by.

I did not stop by because I thought he was unaware of what was happening, but because he was an important friend and neighbour.

When I walked up to his house that was surrounded by trees, I saw him in his yard with a bow equipped.

I was relieved to see him safe, so I called out to him with a carefree voice.

"Oi, Toack. Did you know that a red bear has come down to the western area?"

"*chi* ... You're the fourth person who came to tell me that. I already know"

"I see. All good then"

There were three villagers who came here other than me. It looks like he is quite loved by the people as well.

“By the way, what are you doing with that bow?”

I asked as I pointed to the bow he had in his hands.

A red bear did appear nearby, so I wonder if he pulled that out to prepare for an emergency. To defend his own life with his own hands or something like that, huh? That’s quite a good attitude to have.

“It’s a simple bow that even I know how to make, but I’m not good at hitting things with it though”

He replied as he notched an arrow to the bowstring. Then, he looked at the round, wooden signboard that he made and hung on a tree beforehand with a sharp gaze.

The bowstring made scrapping sounds while he pulled on it, and he carefully took aim.

His stance did not look bad. Rather, it looked quite good. He said he was not good at using it but he kind of looked the part.

While I was impressed watching him, his eyes suddenly opened wide and he unleashed the arrow at once.

However, the arrow did not fly straight. Instead, it went into the tree about three meters to the right.

It seems that even though he did a good job making it, he was not as good at using it.

“...Ohh, it’s closer to the mark than the last time”

...SERIOUSLY?

“Do not use a bow if anything happens, okay?”

“Are you telling me to die instead?”

I’d feel nothing but fear if this guy was trying to hit something with his bow from behind me. He sucks so bad that he might be more of a threat than a red bear.

That thought ran through my mind as I watched him check the bowstring with a sour look on his face.

Since I have confirmed Toack's safety, I passed by my own house next as I headed to the village square.

"Aldo-san!"

And then, I saw Ergys-san running to me from the one path that led to the village square.

I wonder what's happening. Loren-san should have delivered the news already about the red bear. Was he just worried about me since I was closest to the field of flowers?

"What's wrong, Ergys-san? I thought the red bear hasn't been sighted yet"

"T-that's not it"

Did he run here from his house? He replied as he tried to catch his breath.

I waited for him to catch his breath as I wondered what he wanted to tell me.

Then, after he settled down after ten seconds or so, he raised his face as he grabbed onto my shoulders.

"I haven't seen Flora since around noon. Did you see her in the field of flowers?!"

I was shocked at what Ergys-san just said with a look of desperation.

"Eh? Flora wasn't there?"

In such a dangerous situation? I thought for sure she would be staying inside Ergys-san's house...

"Nope. She was with me until noon, but she went somewhere afterwards without telling Fiona where she was going! I thought the places she would be at would be

either your place or the field of flowers...”

Right, it’s natural for him to worry if his beloved daughter was out somewhere during such a crucial time.

Ergys-san, who always wore a gentle smile on his face, was reasonably getting impatient.

“I was at the field of flowers just now but there wasn’t anyone else other than a parent and child. I’m sure that Flora was worried about Aisha and went to see her in the vineyards, no?”

“I-I hope so”

I said that to Ergys-san to calm him down, but I was not all that calm inside.

Flora had no idea about the red bear. When I think about how she’s nowhere to be seen, it hurts as I feel my chest tighten. Truthfully, I really want to run around to look for her right away, but I must remain calm at times like this.

It’s because of all the experience I have of overcoming life and death situations many times during my adventurer days that I’m barely able to keep calm.

Stay calm. Someone who is impatient will not be able to see things clearly.

“...I hope it doesn’t turn out like what happened nine years ago again...”

I tilted my head a little as I wondered about the words Ergys-san anxiously muttered.

Nine years ago?

“Aldo!! Ergys-san!!”

That question was blown away by the scream of a third party.

When I looked back in the direction the loud voice came from, I saw Aisha running over with tears in her eyes.

Her crying face and voice full of desperation was something that I’ve never seen or heard from her before.

And above all, Flora was not next to her.

While I was starting to feel impatient because of that, I hugged Aisha as she came running in, diving into my arms.

“What’s going on? Aisha?!”

“Flora isn’t together with you?”

When we asked Aisha those questions, her shoulders were shaking in my arms.

“...Uuuu... Flora is... Flora is...”

“What happened?”

As a bad feeling started to brood up inside of me, Aisha opened her mouth as large drops of tears fell from her eyes.

“Flora went deep into the field of flowers to look for the flower of union! Where the red bear might be at!”

As soon as I heard that, my body almost dashed out instantly to look for her. However, I barely held on because I had no idea on where exactly Flora went to get this flower of union.

I should go after I get more information on this.

Shit, even though I went there once already. I should have investigated deeper inside even though I had to think of the danger.

“N-No... That can’t be! That’s northwest of the field where the red bear was precisely predicted to be at?!”

The fright was now clearly showing on Ergys-san’s face as he heard that his daughter might be in the exact place the red bear could be.

“Why would she go get something like that...?”

“I’m sorry Ergys-san. It’s because I’ve told her something unnecessary...”

When Ergys-san muttered while stunned, Aisha answered him as she cried.

Then Ergys-san looked at me and sighed as if he had come to the realization of something.

“...As I thought... I see”

I don't know what he meant by that, but the reason for her going to get that flower right now was irrelevant to me.

The place Flora is supposed to be at is located northwest in the back of the field of flowers. That information alone was enough for me.

There is no longer a reason for me to endure and stay any longer.

“...Give me some time, I will bring Flora back”

I've made my decision, so I will leave Aisha to Ergys-san and return to my house.

“H-hold on a min?! Aldo!?”

“Aldo-san?!”

I heard them screaming from behind but I ignored them this time.

Even unlocking the door of my house was annoying.

I opened the door violently and ran inside without taking my shoes off.

Then, I went into the drawers inside the storage room located in the back of my house and grabbed the mithril sword that was wrapped in cloth without giving it another thought.

I carefully tore off the cloth around the sword and checked the blade as it radiated a silvery glow.

...I thought that I would never be using this anymore. But with a red bear as my opponent, it would be hopeless to fight it with just a bow and arrow while also not having any armor. I'm going to use this for the sake of helping someone who is important to me.

I sheathed the sword that was emitting magical power back into its scabbard and I dashed out of the house without closing the door.

Needless to say, I headed for the back of the field of flowers to the northwest.

Chapter 34

The Dragon-slaying sword

With my beloved sword in my right hand, I dashed out of my house and ran down the one path that led to the field of flowers.

I kept on running forward as I powerfully kicked off the ground. I continued to advance as the scenery around me changed along with the faces of villagers who were taken aback when they saw me.

My body felt a bit unnatural although I could move even faster than this back in my adventurer days. Was it because of this being my first time running with full power since I moved into this village? Right now, my feet felt heavier than usual, as if there was lead attached to them.

I did run around the mountains when I was hunting, but that would only count as a warm up compared to the special training that I did when I was an adventurer. My body had become quite dull.

Since time is of the essence right now, this dullness was very frustrating.

I continued to run while I felt irritated from my feet not moving the way I wanted them to. Eventually, I arrived at the path that was surrounded by trees. The surrounding scenery has now become somewhat of a dense forest.

At this time, my body had gotten looser and my legs had become a little lighter. As I regained those feelings of the past, I dashed through the path surrounded by trees in one go.

Then, I reached the vast field of flowers where colorful flowers bloomed.

It had the same usual beautiful scenery that would capture my gaze and heart, but I kept on running this time without batting an eye.

I did not have time to be careful to not trample the flowers that I like as I ran. After every step I smelled a sweet scent as the colorful flower petals flew up.

Thanks to me not caring where I was plunging my feet into, I've got leaves and ivy tangled around them. However, I pulled my feet out by force and tore the ivy off as I kept on going.

I couldn't help but frown when I heard the clicking sounds of flowers being broken as I moved.

Despite feeling the guilt from trampling the flowers, Flora's life was not something that can be replaced.

Gah, at least I was not running over the flowers mindlessly without a care. I engraved the glittering colors that appeared in the corner of my eyes into my mind.

The way the petals danced around me was very beautiful.

I don't want to fight the monster if possible. I came here because I wanted to leave the bloody smell from killing monsters behind. But no matter where you live, there are threats of monsters in this world and there is no escape from the fight.

The old me wanted to live, wanted to eat good food, and wanted to get stronger to not live a miserable life. I fought my battles following those basic human instincts and desires.

And so, after I got the power and the fame I wanted, I lost my reason for fighting.

My motivation and purpose were taken from me when I was convinced that it was no longer possible to fight a monster that was stronger than what I've already fought.

I left the battlefield for that reason and came to live in Nordende, but now I've taken up the sword again with the same kind of firm resolve that I had in the past.

Was it because I wanted wealth like before? Or good food to eat? Or was it strength?

—No. This warm feeling that I'm feeling in my heart right now is something completely different from all of that.

It was because I wanted to protect these places and friends who are irreplaceable—No, that isn't it. It's because I wanted to protect Flora, the girl I like.

With that thought in my mind, it became clear to me what the fuzzy feeling in my heart

was as I placed my hand on my chest.

She had stolen my heart the moment we met under that tree.

Her words, her gentle smile, her kind soul, and her cooking. From the time I met her, my empty heart was filled with vibrant colors.

It's okay if I don't understand these feelings. I just want to protect her smile that wrapped me in her warmth.

Just the thought of that alone gave me plenty of motivation to fight monsters with.

I'm in a situation where my body has dulled, with no friends near me to depend on. However, I feel like I could even take down a dragon by myself right now.

Yup, if she were by my side...

Eventually, I passed the tree where I first met Flora and I kept on running north.

After I passed the tree, the field of flowers came to a stop and the surroundings became a forest full of lush greenery.

I stopped for a moment in front of the forest that I've never entered before, but if I run into any dangerous monsters in there, I'd just have to cut them down.

And so, I stepped into the forest without hesitation. Then, I advanced in the direction where Flora should be at as I paid attention to my surroundings. Any small changes to the trees, any grass that was stepped on, and the possible trails on the ground; I will not let any of those signs go unnoticed.

However, it seemed that Flora had taken a different path since I could not find any traces of her trail.

I was frustrated, but I kept on reminding myself to remain calm.

If I was not able to rely on the information I can see just like when I'm hunting, I will pay attention to the flow of the air and sounds.

I stopped moving and listened carefully to what was around me.

I listened for any faint sounds in the air. I did not let even the vibrations in the air escape my ears as I focused my nerves. Soon, my head was cleared of any noises, as even the sounds of my own heartbeat felt far away from me.

I could hear... the sound of leaves moving on trees from the gentle wind and the sound of birds.

Then, I felt a strong air vibration coming from the far west.

I immediately acted on my instinct and ran towards that direction as I weaved my way through the cluttered trees.

“GOAARRRRHHH!”

Before long, the sound of an earth-shaking roar shook the air...

At the same time, I heard a faint scream right when I was convinced that roar just now was from the red bear.

“Kyaaaaaaaaa!!?”

“FLORA!!”

The scream just now was from Flora! I yelled out her name as I ran to the direction her scream came from.

When I jumped over the branches and bushes that were blocking my vision, I saw Flora there, holding a flower that was glowing pink by her chest.

Behind her was a red bear with burning, red fur that was walking towards her on all fours.

“Kyahhh?!”

I started to run at her right as I saw her trip and fall just a few steps away while she held on to the flower by her chest.

The red bear raised its body and roared excitedly as it saw its prey showing signs of weakness.

“KYAAAAAHH!”

Flora screamed in terror with her back against the floor as the red bear slowly closed in on her with its sharp claws coming out of its paws.

Then, as it swung its huge claw down at Flora, I slipped my body in between her and the red bear.

“Guroarrrr?!”

The red bear growled in astonishment and took a step back when its claws clashed with my mithril sword.

“Flora, are you alright?”

“EEh...? Aldo-san?”

When I called out to Flora, who I saw cowering on the ground with a glance, she opened her eyes fearfully and muttered my name while stunned.

Thank goodness. She seems to have some cuts on her, but it doesn’t seem like there are any serious injuries.

I felt relieved from the bottom of my heart as I was able to confirm that nothing serious happened to her after observing her from above.

She looked right back up at me with watery eyes. Then, my memories from nine years ago resurfaced.

It was the same scene of me saving a little girl who had golden colored hair and jade colored eyes from a red bear.

—Thanks for saving me!

The girl loved flowers, and she proudly taught me about them in the field when I had no interest in them.

–The colors of the flowers here change depending on the seasons! Isn’t that amazing?!

The image of the little girl’s face from nine years ago overlapped with Flora’s.

...No way... the girl from nine years ago was... her?

“Look out!”

Flora’s sharp voice brought me back to reality as my sword shook.

Sparks scattered as the red bear’s black claws clashed with my sword.

“Run, Flora!”

“B-But!!”

“You should know from nine years ago that I won’t lose to a red bear”

After I said that to Flora, who was hesitating to run, she wiped the tears around her eyes and moved back some distance.

When I confirmed that she was far away, I skillfully parried the red bear’s claws and dodged its attack.

The bear snorted before it closed in on me again. I dashed back a few steps to dodge its fangs.

And then, I swung my sword down at last.

“Guroarrrrr!!”

The red bear roared as if it was frustrated from having to deal with an intruder that barged in right before it was about to claim its prey.

Whether it was nine years ago or right now, Flora and I still have something like a deep tie to red bears.

I laughed at this strange tie we have with the monster as I taunted it with my sword.

Before long, the red bear roared in anger and charged right at me.

Since red bears are extremely ferocious territorial monsters, it is very easy to get them to charge at you by provoking them.

Without a moment of delay, I sidestepped to dodge his charge as my blade shook its stout arms. I attacked its left and right sides with my sword while dodging its attacks with minimal movements as it continued to chase me.

Each time I dodged, parried, or counter attacked, more of my battle senses came back to me.

My movements became smoother as my opponent's movements became easier to read.

I would be trying to extend this battle for as long as I could if it was the old me who got drunk on battles, but now, I'm different. I'm not an adventurer anymore and Flora was worrying about me as she watched.

I don't want to make her worry about me any more than this.

"...It's about time I put an end to this"

My mana flowed through from the sword's handle that I was holding. Before long, the blade was enveloped by a faint blue glow as it started to emit light.

The red bear was surprised for a second by the sudden light that was emitting from magic on the blade, but it decided to not care and kept on attacking with its big paws. It probably thought that it could defeat whatever it is by overwhelming me with brute force.

I slashed at the red bear with my glowing blade at the same time it came at me with a vigorous attack from its brutal claw.

Sparks flew out again as my blade clashed with its claws– But no, this time, the red bear's claw was slashed off.

"Garrrrrarrrr?!!"

The red bear let out a roar as if it was embarrassed that its claw had been cut off since it was not able to withstand the clash with my sword like the previous time.

I did not let this opening escape and dealt a blow to its defenseless stomach. Its muscles that were as hard as tree trunks were easily cut through, and the red bear fell to the ground as its body split into two.

When I saw the unmoving corpse of the red bear, I stopped feeding mana to my sword.

The glowing light from the blade gradually disappeared before long.

That is the true power of my sword that could cut through a dragon's hard scales.

This sword was crafted with mithril of high purity and its sharpness multiplies if you feed mana into it. Even though I don't really have that much mana, I could still make this sword considerably sharp.

It's possible to stretch the length of the blade as well if you have enough mana to soak the sword with. It would be possible to extend the blade to about thirty meters in length.

No matter how skilled you are or what tactics you use, you cannot beat an opponent when your blade cannot reach. This sword was made to defeat opponents like that.

Of course, a sword like this is expensive. It is estimated to be worth as much as a country. To be honest, I wanted to return this to the country. But since I killed the dragon that was a big threat to them, I decided to keep this as a reward.

Instead, I have donated lots of money to them through Kiel, so I hope that they'll forgive me.

"Aldo-san! Are you alright?!"

When I sheathed my bloody sword back into its scabbard, Flora ran up and hugged me.

"I'm okay. What about you, Flora? Are you hurt?"

"No. I have some cuts on me but I'm okay... Once again... you've come to save me"

When I hugged her and asked her how she was doing in return, Flora replied to me as she shyly smiled.

While my heart was beating fast from seeing her smile and feeling her warmth from her being so close to me, I opened my mouth,

"...Shall we go home?"

“...Yeah”

Chapter 35

The Two Together

Flora and I were on our way back together after the red bear was defeated.

We stayed mindful of our surroundings because there could be monsters other than the red bear nearby.

While I walked slower to match Flora's pace, I noticed that she was holding the flower of union close to her chest as if it was something that was really important to her.

““”“

We've been walking for quite a while now, but we haven't spoken a word to each other.

If anything, it was because we were both aware about what happened nine years ago now and we had no idea what to say to each other.

When I came to Nordende nine years ago, I had saved a little girl. And, that little girl was Flora.

Now that I think about how she has been acting around me, it was obvious that she remembered me.

Although I had helped many people back in my adventurer days, I did not think that there would be someone who would still remember me after nine years.

It wasn't anything like killing a dragon or saving a village from the threat of a strong monster; I had merely saved a little girl. And yet, the person who was nine years old at the time still remembered me.

Moreover, I've reunited with her again in the same fashion...

Knowing that she was the girl I helped from nine years ago... I have no idea what I

should say to her.

I've treated her as an important friend all this time but now I've realized that I'm in love with her. My mind has become crowded with thoughts.

As I pondered about how to talk to her in the future, we've exited the forest and returned to the field of flowers.

Before our eyes was a single tree that stood alone in the field.

Its lushly thick leaves swayed in the wind with a *zzaaaa* sound.

It was here where I reunited with Flora three months ago when I first came here.

She came out like a fairy of this field of flowers.

I wonder if she had already remembered about me at that time.

"I was shocked when I first saw you at that time. To have the person who saved me nine years ago suddenly show up before me..."

Flora said in a quiet voice as she suddenly stopped and looked at the tree.

I turned around to my surprise from her words that broke the silence.

"...About that... I'm sorry. I did not remember about you until now"

"No, it's fine. You were an adventurer at that time. You wouldn't remember a little nine-year-old girl from some village. So please, don't mind it"

Flora grasped my hands in a hurry and said to me with a bitter smile on her face as I apologized to her.

However, her smile looked extremely lonely.

I felt sad when I thought of how shameful I am to have made Flora feel that way.

The past me really didn't care about anything else, since all I did was think about

myself.

“Of course, I also felt sad when you did not remember me. It was like, what will I do if you weren’t going to remember about me at all? What would I do if I had completely disappeared from your life?”

“...Flora”

I could only let out a husky voice after hearing her innermost thoughts.

“But, I was happy when I found out that I did exist inside your memories. And with that, I am able to say what I wanted to say”

Then, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

When I looked at her closely, I understood that she was feeling nervous since her hands and feet were trembling.

Next, she opened her jade colored eyes with a gentle smile on her face as she handed me the flower that she held by her chest.

“Thank you for saving me nine years ago. I’ve been in love with you ever since”

When I heard those words, the entire world went silent.

The leaves and flowers all seemed to have gotten brighter as I felt like I was on cloud nine.

Ehhh? Flora... she likes me? And she had liked me for the last nine years?

I was sure that she wanted to thank me for saving her, but I did not think that she held such feelings inside of her.

“...Are you serious?”

I asked her with a shaking voice from being overjoyed. Then, she answered me with a red face,

“Yeah, I’ve liked you since nine years ago”

My chest felt hot and tears almost came out of my eyes as she said those words to me along with that smile of hers.

I managed to hold back my tears somehow, but I couldn't help but smile.

"I like you too, Flora. Your gentle smile, your kindness. You make me feel warm just by being by my side"

"...R-really? I'm so happy"

Then, I received the flower from Flora. I guess that this is a flower that is used to confess.

"This is the flower of union. It's a flower that's said to surely connect you with the person you give it to. In the language of flowers, it means "a secret crush""

"...The flower of union, huh"

I muttered as I embraced her slender shoulders with both my arms while she was shedding tears of happiness.

Her soft body, warm body temperature, and her sweet smell were all transmitted to me directly.

I was filled with a feeling of extreme euphoria inside.

After a long hug, we looked at each other and overlapped our lips.



"Ohh! Isn't that Flora and Aldo?!"

"Ohhh, they're both safe!"

"Flora!"

After we came out of the field of flowers, we went back on the single path that I went through earlier which leads to the village center. And there, we saw villagers there

including Loren-san and Ergys-san”

Ergys-san ran at us as he led the pack, but there was a woman who ran at us at a higher speed than him.

“FLORA!!”

“Waa, Aisha. Kyaaa?!”

Aisha rushed over to Flora and hugged her.

Flora couldn’t stop that momentum so she fell over with Aisha on top of her.

“FLORA!! Are you hurt?!”

Aisha looked up at her suddenly and asked her that as she hugged her.

“Um, yeah. I’m kinda hurting right now because of you”

It was exactly like she said.

When Flora said that with a bitter smile, Aisha got off her in a hurry and pulled Flora up by her hands.

Even though I was not surprised from Aisha’s usual thoughtless actions, this panicking side of her was very rare. I couldn’t help but grin at this since we have plenty of room to relax now.

While this was all happening, Ergys-san and the crowd of villagers caught up to us.

From within the crowd, Ergys-san then walked out to me and Flora.

“FLORA! You aren’t hurt anywhere, are you?”

“Y-yeah”

“Thank goodness... seriously”

When Flora nodded as she replied to Ergys-san, he muttered as he hugged her while overjoyed.

She also returned the hug with her hands on his back with a smile on her face.

The people around us were also smiling at this daughter and father reunion.

When Ergys-san stopped hugging her, next was Fiona-san's turn, who then came out and slowly embraced her.

Parents and children who have such a strong bond are so nice...

"Aldo, you went to the dangerous area where the red bear was for Flora's sake, didn't you?"

As the touching mood in the air dispersed, Loren-san spoke to me.

"Yeah. He did do something like that, didn't he?"

"Truly a respectable man"

I accepted their praise as the villagers patted my body.

This somehow felt like the adventurer's guild.

"Well, it's good that you're alright"

"Thanks, Toack"

He said that as he hit my shoulder while holding his bow. He seemed to have been worrying about me and Flora.

I'm scared of you when you're holding a bow, so I wish you'd just hurry and go home.

"I'm so sorry, Flora! Because of all the unnecessary things I've said to you... I thought I had gotten you attacked by the red bear..."

"Ah, no, I did get attacked"

""Ehhhh?"""

Everyone was shocked silent when Flora bluntly replied to Aisha when she was apologizing to her while shedding tears.

Apparently, everyone here thought that we got back here without being attacked by the red bear.

“...Attacked, what do you mean by that?”

Ergys-san timidly asked the question that was in everyone’s mind.

Flora also smiled bitterly when she realized that everyone had a misunderstanding about what happened.

“Ummm, Aldo-san saved me from the red bear when it was attacking me”

“Ehhh?! So, you mean you guys managed to escape while the red bear was attacking you?!”

Aisha drew closer to Flora as she asked in a loud and surprised voice.

“Oi, hold on a minute. Does that mean it’s on its way here chasing after you guys...?”

“No, it’s alright because Aldo-san had defeated it”

Flora cut in with a reply to answer Loren-san’s worries.

After hearing her, everyone looked at me with a different expression of surprise.

“I took down the red bear. I used to be an adventurer after all”

“You... Are you kidding?”

In the midst of a dumbfounded atmosphere, my good friend Toack said out loud the hardest thing everyone wanted to say.

In order to prove it to them, I took the red bear’s claws, teeth, and a patch of its fur out of a hemp bag and showed Loren-san.

Everyone can have an ease of heart if they hear it from Loren-san after he sees the red bear’s remains.

“...The red bear’s teeth, claws, and a patch of its fur. They’re real”

When Loren-san answered in a serious tone, the villagers all raised a surprised voice.

“I know that Aldo was an adventurer before, but isn’t a red bear considered a pretty strong monster? I heard that it’d take a party to defeat one”

“For Aldo, who usually seems so out of it, to defeat a monster like that...”

Aisha and Toack were really surprised since they know how I act in my daily life here.

Well, since there were a lot of things that I had to rely on the others for in my new life here, of course they would think like that.

“Aldo-san really defeated the red bear! He did it like this, like with a slash!”

Aisha and Toack looked at Flora with weird looks as she tried to reproduce the movements of my sword as well as she could.

“R-right. That’s unexpected”

Flora’s imitation of my movements was cute and funny, but she seems to have gotten her point across that she was serious, so the other two were convinced as they nodded.

“Well, seeing how you usually hunt, I do believe that you could easily defeat a red bear. Rather, I thought it was strange that you can use a sword and a bow so well”

“Ah, that’s right. With Aldo around, I can feel safe even if something like today happens again!”

From Kyle and Loren-san’s words, the other villagers all looked to be feeling relieved.

“Alright, we hunters will go back and retrieve the rest of the red bear”

I figured from his words that I’d also be going with them. However, I was stopped by Loren-san.

“You’ve already defeated it, right? You should take a rest. We’ll go handle the rest, so just stay next to Flora today”

With those words of his, I turned my face back to Flora, who I see had a lonely look on her face.

She was just attacked by a red bear not too long ago. Truthfully, there might still be fear left in her heart.

“I understand. I marked the direction of the bear on a tree at the entrance of the forest located in the back of the field of flowers”

“Ohh! That’d really help. Let’s go, Kyle”

“O-kay”

I did not hold back on taking a rest for the rest of the day. Loren-san and the other hunters started to walk towards the field of flowers. As for the other villagers, they also returned home after talking some more with us and Ergys-san.

Ergys-san seemed to have asked many families to help in the search for Flora, since he was bowing his head down to thank many of them.

I also joined in to thank them. After all, I was able to go there with no hesitation thanks to the information that they had provided me.

The people who remained afterwards were Flora, Ergys-san, Fiona-san, Toack and Aisha, the usual gang.

“Well then, shall we head back too?”

“Yeah. A lot has happened today”

“It’s been a while since you’ve cried and showed that kind of miserable expression”

“...Shaddap”

Aisha said with a chagrined face since she could not make a comeback to any of Toack’s teasing.

It was just her crying. But, she would probably be made fun of by Toack for a while for that.

While still having that expression on her face, Aisha came up in front of us to say her goodbyes.

“I’m really sorry about today, Flora”

“No, really, don’t worry about it. I am not hurt anywhere”

“..Un”

Although it didn’t turn out bad, she had still put her best friend in danger.

Of course, she would not be able to forgive herself so easily.

Aisha had a face of uncertainty, while Flora showed her a flustered smile.

“If you didn’t tell me all of that, I would not have been able to make a step forward”

“So that means, you have succeeded?”

From hearing Flora’s words, Aisha looked over at me with a smile.

My face went red as a bit of shyness and embarrassment mixed together.

Flora’s face was as red as usual as well.

“Tell me in detail next time”

“Yeah. Let’s do it over a drink”

After saying that as she laughed, Aisha went back together with Toack after she gave us a small nudge.

...It’s embarrassing so please don’t pry further into this.

“Well then, shall we go back as well?”

“Yeah, Fiona”

With Fiona-san and Ergys-sans words, the time for me and Flora to part has come as well.

We’re in the same village so we can meet again any time, but I feel like I want to be with her on the day our feelings have reached each other.

Flora was looking somewhat lonely, but she was just attacked by a red bear today. It would be better for her to be around her family since she should feel safe being around them.

“Well then, Aldo-san. Take care of my daughter”

““Ehh?””

Just when I was about to say goodbye to Flora, unexpected words had flown out of Fiona-san’s mouth.

“Your confession was successful and you two are together now, right?”

“Y-yeah, but...”

Flora was fidgeting from the embarrassment she felt from being told by her own mother again as she answered.

Then, Fiona-san nodded with satisfaction.

“In that case, why don’t you stay over at Aldo-san’s place tonight?”

“Ehhhhhhhhh?! Hold on, mother?!”

When Flora screamed out in surprise, I turned my face towards Ergys-san to ask him.

“Ergys-san, what is this about...?”

Ergys-san slowly looked up in the sky as he answered,

“This is a somewhat complicated feeling... My little girl has turned into an adult so quickly and is about to be married off...”

He muttered with deep emotions.

It looks like my relationship with Flora has been approved already by her parents.

Their hearts might be ready for this, but our hearts might be not quite there yet...

“You may call me father-in-law, okay?”

“Ara, then you can also call me your mother-in-law”

“Hold on a second, Father! Mother?!”

Flora was protesting with reddened ears, but the two did not mind her as they laughed.

I am feeling the frightening part of her parents now.

Rather, is Flora really going to stay at my place tonight?

There is only one bed in my room... Does that mean... It’s going to be like that?

My eyes matched Flora’s for a second, then we quickly looked away from each other.

She probably thought of the same thing as me just now. It’s so embarrassing that we couldn’t look at each other in the eyes.

“Well then, I’ll be depending on you to take care of Flora”

“Auuu”

While Flora was looking down in embarrassment, Fiona-san gave her a push from behind. It made Flora lose her balance and she fell nicely into my arms.

She looked up at me while she was at a loss of what to do.

I was also feeling the same thing. Mou, I have no idea where to go from here.

Fiona-san and Ergys-san looked at us and nodded in satisfaction and then they headed on home.

The two of us, who were left behind, were just hugging in the middle of the road.

“...For the time being, shall we go home?”

“...Yeah”

Chapter 36

Our Home

“Thanks for having me over”

“C-come on in”

I nervously invited Flora into my home.

When I handed her some slippers, she put her feet in them timidly and walked a few steps into the living room.

I was also putting my slippers on, but I accidentally kicked one away when I tried to put them on due to being too nervous. It was embarrassing because I've gone in my house many times after putting slippers on without stumbling.

However, that wasn't something that could be helped.

Flora is going to stay over at my place tonight by Ergys-san and Fiona's san arrangement. Since after becoming a couple, it was natural for us to spend the night together...

I had never taken interest in this type of thing, so I became nervous at the thought of how I'll be doing something like that with the woman I love.

If I knew it'd be like this, I should have gone to the red-light district with Kiel back then when he invited me. It's embarrassing to still be a virgin at this age.

Perhaps Flora was a bit shook as well; her eyes were wandering around while she avoided looking me in the eye, even though this wasn't the first time that she's been in my house. She could go sit on the comfy sofa or a chair, but instead, she was just standing there without doing either.

I regained my calmness when I realized that I was not the only one who was nervous.

I'm a man and this is my house. I should take the lead and be the one to lead her around

here.

“Flora, this will be your home as well from now on, so it’s fine to act like you’re at home”

After she heard my words, her expression relaxed and she replied,

“Y-yeah, you’re right. We’ll be living together in this house...”

With a happy look on her face, she began to walk around the living room freely.

She touched the set of table and chairs, the sofa and the wall with love.

I was the one who said it, but I thought that this would be where we’ll be living together since the furniture, the walls, the bed and everything else here was all new and shiny.

Flora will be welcoming me home when I come back from now on. She’ll be next to me when I eat and when I have tea. She’ll be right here at this place.

I felt happy at the thought of that and I unintentionally cracked a smile.

When Flora saw the grin on my face while she happily walked around the kitchen, she came to me and asked,

“Oh hey, do you want some tea?”

“...Sure. Please make some for me”

For a second there I was going to tell her that I’ll go make it, but when I remembered that she was much better at it, I decided to let her do it.

“Okay!”

Then, Flora went to prepare the tea with a bright smile on her face.

She moved around the house like it was hers since she had been here many times already from the time we ate the venison together and the many other times she came to visit me when she taught me how to farm.

There was no delay in her actions since she knew where the tea cups and the other utensils she needed to brew the tea were already.

I went on ahead and took a seat by the table as I looked at her brewing the tea while she was humming a song.

I was getting a fuzzy feeling in my chest just by watching her happily brew this tea.

She was surprised for a second when she noticed that I was watching her, then she smiled at me.

...Well, I wouldn't even mind if I died today. I'm just too happy right now.

"The tea's ready"

Flora said as she brought over a tray with the teacups on it.

Of course, the tea leaves used were the apple mint, which were cultivated at her place. A sweet and fruity scent drifted in the air inside the living room.

"Thank you"

After I thanked her, I took a cup and enjoyed the smell of the tea.

The sweet scent of green apple filled my nostrils.

I slowly drank it as I enjoyed the calming smell.

The refreshing sweetness of apple mint spread in my mouth. Then, the taste of mint overtook that sweetness a moment after.

"*Haaah*..."

I let out a sound as I was lavished in the comfortable taste.

Whether it was due to the scent of the tea or the ingredients used in it, the nervousness I felt earlier had completely disappeared.

Flora looks to be in the same boat since her expressions were much more relaxed.

A lot has happened today... I went hunting, then I found out that Flora was in danger, then I realized my feelings and battled with a monster before we confessed to each other and became a couple...

In just one day, things have moved very quickly and our relationship has changed.

When I was recollecting what went down today, I realized the inside of my cup had become empty.

“Would you like some more?”

Flora asked with the teapot in her hand as she saw my cup.

“Please”

“Okay”

Flora went to make more tea after hearing my response.

I felt warm from just having a conversation like that.

This was probably the feeling of having the person you love right next to you. I can now relate to those who always talked about how it feels to be married. And because of that, I'd totally recommend people to get married.

Maybe I'll tell Kiel to get married the next time I see him. That guy will surely be shocked if I said something like that to him.

“What's the matter?”

After she finished making the tea, she sat next to me and asked.

As she leaned on my shoulder and asked me while looking up at me, I answered,

“I'm so happy right now...”

“...Me too”



After that, we cooked and enjoyed a harmonious meal together.

The sun had already gone down by that time, and the time for “that” drew near.

We were also having cozy talks until now, but we’ve gotten quieter as the night went on.

It was because we both knew what was coming next.

While we sat quietly facing each other in the living room, I made up my mind.

“...Flora”

“Ye-Yes!”

Was it because I suddenly got up and called her name? Her face turned red as she replied in a funny voice.

“Let’s go take a bath together”

“G-Got it! Let’s go to the bedroo—huh? A bath?”

Flora replied while she was looking down, then she had a blank expression for a second and tilted her head in confusion.

“...Yeah, a bath”

For a moment, I wanted to change what I said to bedroom, but I managed to resist that thought.

“Um, I ran around a lot today, after all. So, you know, I would like to clean myself...”

I had been sweating since the hunt in the morning, then in the few rounds of battle in the afternoon. I can’t be in a state that could be called clean right now.

Before doing “that”, I want to clean my body.

“R-right! In that case, I’d like to take one after as well!”

Did she completely forget about the need to take a bath first? She replied in a panic as she stood up from the chair.

“Nah, let’s go in together”

Flora’s cheeks were dyed red from my straightforward words.

“Waa?! That, umm... that’s embarrassing”

We’re going to do something even more embarrassing after... Isn’t that natural?

“It’s going to take time for us to take turns using it as well... Do you hate the idea of taking a bath together, Flora?”

“...It’s not that I hate it”

I asked in a bit of a cowardly way in order to reduce the shame that she was feeling by a little. She replied with a voice that was fading out as she nodded.

There’s no problem as long as she says so herself.

With a reddened face, I took her hand and we walked to the bathroom together.

Since she confessed to me first, I wonder if I’ll be able to take a bit of the lead here. I thought that I wouldn’t want to act like less of a man here.



“That’s amazing, that bracelet just now. Water and flame came out and the hot water bath was made in no time”

“Yup. Thanks to that, you can enjoy having a bath ready quickly even when you’re by yourself”

“Magic tools are expensive, right? Is it okay to be using them like this?”

“No problem no problem. These tools would last for like ten years if we’re just using them to ready the bath”

“I see. In that case, I’ll be happy to take an easy bath every day”

““ ”“
...”

“...Um, Flora? I know the water is hot, but won't you come closer?”

“I-it's still too embarrassing after all!”

I cleaned the bathtub and readied the bath with magic tools, but she was still embarrassed and not coming near.

Since there was only the moonlight that was coming through from the window, she probably thought that if she stayed far from the bathtub her skin wouldn't be exposed.

So, she was there hiding her whole body under a towel at the darkest, farthest corner from the window.

However, I can actually see a lot of her white skin still, but I won't point that out to her since she'll run away.

I knew that she was originally a shy girl, and yet she was ready to go to the bedroom but is too embarrassed to enter a bath together?

I guess it wasn't that she hated to get in together, but she was just too embarrassed to show her skin.

Which means if I can get her through this first step, there won't be a problem after that.

“Come on, you'll catch a cold if you keep on staying there”

“...Ahh!”

I lightly grabbed her by her arm and pulled her to me while she was spacing out, and her light body came under the moonlight.

Because of that, the towel that she wrapped around her body rolled off and fell on the ground.

Her white skin and her pair of large breasts, that were the opposite of her shy personality, were exposed under the moonlight, along with two small pink buds.

Her thin waist and her round hips gave her stunning curves and she was surprisingly THICCC.

It looked like Aisha was right that Flora's clothes did made her look slimmer than she really was.

I was fascinated by seeing her body that was the embodiment of a female's beauty.

"...Flora, your body is very beautiful"

"...Yours too, Aldo-san. You have a really manly body. You unexpectedly have a lot of muscles"

She noticed when she I pulled her close to me, huh? Her face was red as she traced her fingers on my abs.

I am quite confident about my body since I've been an adventurer for a long time. Recently, I've been slacking a bit on training my muscles, but I was still far from having flab on my body.

"Wow... Aldo-san, you're hard(body)"

When Flora kept on touching me with her supple fingers, I felt a little ticklish.

And on top of that, the way she said that was a bit dirty.

I could feel the thing in my crotch area starting to get bigger, but it was still okay.

"You're tickling me, Flora"

"Oh, sorry. But, let me touch you for just a bit longer"

She was pressing her hand and feeling up my pecs and my arms. I thought that it was okay to let her keep going if this was going to get rid the embarrassment a bit.

"Now then, shall we wash our bodies before getting into the bath?"

"Right. I will wash your back first, Aldo-san"

Flora said with somewhat of a cheerful voice. Perhaps, she wanted to touch more of the muscles on my body by doing that.

“Okay then, you can help me rinse my body first”

Flora went to draw hot water from the bath with a washbowl as I sat on a little bath stool.

“*Haaah... *”

I let out an exhilarated voice as the hot water ran down my back.

Flora smiled while she poured more hot water over my body as I made that low voice from the pleasant feeling.

All the sweat, soil, and dust that I got on me today were all washed away.

When she was done rinsing me with hot water, she took the soap from near the bath and lathered the towel with it.

“I’ll start washing your back now”

“Oh, I’ll leave it to you”

I knew that she was going to gently wash my back with the towel, but the next moment, I felt an unexpectedly soft feeling.

“?!”

It was Flora’s heavy breasts.

Was it because she was slouching forward to wash my back? Her huge breasts were touching my back so naturally.

However, she did not seem to notice that herself since she was busy rubbing my back with the towel. Every time she rubbed with the towel, her breasts were shaking and they were pressed against me.

Their shapes changed every time they touched my back and it gave me this soft feeling.

From that, I could feel blood quickly gathering in my crotch.

“Does it feel good?”

“Yeah, it feels good”

...I won't say that I was talking about her breasts.

With that answer, Flora smiled as she continued to happily rub my back.

During this time, I enjoyed the soft feeling of her chest as my back was washed with a towel in silence. The impact of her chest was so strong that I could hardly enjoy the feeling of having my back washed with a towel.

“-Hyaa?!”

While I was having such thoughts, she suddenly screamed out and stopped moving.

“Flora?”

“Hyaa?! I didn't see anything at all”

When I looked at her face, she looked away to try to dodge my gaze.

I noticed that she was obviously looking at my crotch area. Then, she looked away again, before fearfully sneaking peeks at it again.

And then I understood. There was a tent on the towel that was wrapped around my waist.

“Ah, s-sorry about that. It got like that when your soft body touched me...”

“...N-no, it's alright. I heard from my mother that a man would get like that”

Flora replied in a small voice as she rinsed my back with hot water again.

“...Ummm, Aldo-san. C-can I touch it?”

“Huhh?”

I let out a dumbfounded voice from hearing her unexpected request.

“I heard that it’s painful if it can’t come out... and I can relieve it if I give it a r-rub...”

Was she feeling the embarrassment as she spoke? Her voice was fading out at the end of her sentence.

But her shameful look was very cute, and my cock became harder and bigger when I imagined the act of her doing that.

I actually want to replace the back washing with that now since it had gotten very stiff and it was honestly getting tough to hold on. If she kept on washing my back like this, I would end up pushing her down.

“...Then, I’ll be asking you for this favor”

“...O-okay”

Chapter 37

In the Bath

Flora slowly unraveled the towel that was wrapped around my waist.

Then, what appeared there was my completely erect cock.

“Wow!”

She said in a flustered voice after she saw my cock that had become big.

Although she has heard about them, it was still her first time seeing one. She was taking a long, hard look as it stood in front of her face.

If she looks at it so much she'll become nervous. Somehow, I feel like I've shown Flora something that I shouldn't have yet.

When my cock twitched with a light excitement, Flora looked at it again with a surprised expression on her face.

“...It has a weird shape. And on top of that... it's big”

“D-does it?”

Since she was talking so close to my cock, it was reacting sensitively to her breathing. It has become a light stimulus to my cock and was making it twitch.

“There are veins popping out and it's twitching. Is it going to be okay?”

“Yeah, it's not like there's any pain”

As I answered, Flora started touching it timidly.

Her timid and soft touches were giving me a pleasant feeling.

“...It's hard but it feels tender. Also, it's warm”

Flora said as she caressed my cock with her fingers to confirm how it felt to touch it. Her moist fingers started from the tip and ran down the shaft until she reached the end of my rod.

“...*kuu!*”

Every time my cock reacted sensitively to her touch, it made my body tremble involuntarily. It felt completely different from the feel of my own hands.

“Ehh? Did I hurt you?”

Flora said as she glanced at me from below.

“No, that’s not it. Your fingers feel good...”

“R-really?”

“Grip it harder and try rubbing it up and down”

“O-okay”

Flora gripped my cock and started to rub it up and down after she heard my words. Although her movements were clumsy, for someone like me who had absolutely no experience in this, it was still bringing me such intense pleasure that transparent liquid had started to leak out from the tip of my swollen cock.

The stroking sounds created from her moist hands echoed inside the bathroom.

“A gooey liquid has been leaking out since a little while ago”

Flora said as she stopped moving her hands and wiped off the liquid that has been leaking out with her index finger. Then, she pulled the string of liquid off by using her index finger and thumb together. I think she was doing that with pure curiosity in mind, but it was quite an erotic scene.

“That was pre-cum. It leaks out when a man is feeling good”

“I see. I’m glad to hear that”

It seems like she was surprised at the pre-cum but when she heard what I said, she

happily continued to rub my cock. The pre-cum continued to leak out as it mixed together with her moist fingers. Then, it acted as a lubricant and sped up the stroking.

Oh no. This feels too good. This feeling of excitement that I can't give to myself was making me restless.

Her fingers ran up the veins on the shaft of my cock and rubbed back the tip she held in her palm. Then, her hands went down again and repeated the same movements... My desire to cum was quickly rising with Flora's dirty hand movements.

When I looked at her desperately stroking my cock in front of me, I thought,

—I want to put it in her mouth.

I want to cum in there.

"Flora, can you give me a blow job?"

"L-like this?"

When I told her to do something that I thought she might hate to, she hesitated for a moment before she boldly put the tip in her mouth.

"Y-yeah. Like that. Lick it just like that"

I unexpectedly let out some moans as I felt the warmth of flesh inside her mouth.

Her warm, slimy tongue was wrapping around the tip of my cock. The gentle touch of her tongue also had a slightly rougher feel to it. It felt completely different than a hand job.

"I wonder if you can move back and forth as you suck on it?"

"Fffo-ffokay"

When I said that, Flora started to slowly move back and forth as she sucked.

"Hnnnnn... kuchuu... grgrgg... Nnnn... *haaa*"

Her slightly rough tongue and the insides of her mouth were being pushed away. Even

the minor feeling of her hard teeth was stimulating to me.

Every time I felt that, it turned my expression to a sloppy one.

It was also nice that she was glancing at me from below to peep at my reactions. The inside of my cock started to boil from the visual excitement I was feeling from stuffing a beautiful girl's mouth full of my cock.

Saliva completely covered my tip and rod as her rough, spit-covered tongue rubbed my cock.

"...It feels good, Flora"

"Hnnn... n... frrrrrgr... frgr"

When I said reassuring words to her as I stroked her hair, she happily smiled and continued sucking right away.

The inside of her mouth suddenly narrowed, and my cock was being squeezed by her soft tongue and the flesh of her mouth. She moved her head back and forth like that as the slurp sounds echoed.

My desire to cum suddenly increased from her movements; it was as if she was trying to suck the semen out of my cock.

"Oh shit, Flora. If you do it like that, I-I'll...!"

"Mmuuuuuu?!"

As my semen spurted out inside of her mouth, her eyes opened wide from the surprise. My cock was pulsating as it quickly sent out a wave of semen. But even so, she continued to hold my cock inside her mouth and accepted it.

"...Ahh... that felt really good"

I let out a sigh of relief as I felt a feeling so good that it was dizzying. It was a wonderful feeling of satisfaction from releasing everything that I had pent up inside me. Moreover, the fact that she accepted it in her mouth wrapped me in happiness.

"Mmmnnn!... Nnn!"

I was drunk on the pleasure of that feeling of happiness, but I came back to reality as I noticed the sound of Flora suffering while she still held my cock inside her mouth.

“Ahh, my bad! You don’t have to hold it in your mouth anymore”

When I said that, Flora slowly opened her mouth and let go of my cock. Then, she swallowed the semen.

“*cough, cough*. It tastes a little bitter and it gets caught in my throat”

“Eehh?! You don’t have to drink it”

I was surprised by what she was saying as she coughed.

Shortly after, Flora wiped the semen that was on the edge of her mouth and said,

“Umm, I heard that men are pleased when the girl drinks their semen...”

Well... umm... It is true that her drinking it made me happy. Yeah.

I felt that by accepting my semen and drinking it was like her accepting everything of me.

“Thank you for doing that for me, Flora”

When I thanked her as I blushed, she happily smiled and said,

“Did it feel good?”

“Y-yeah”

To the question she asked with a gentle smile, I nodded and answered with a reddened face like a child.

“Then, it’s your turn to wash my back next”

While my heart started to beat fast from her smile that was somehow strangely erotic, I started to wash her back.

Chapter 38

Caress

After we thoroughly washed each other's hair and bodies, we soaked in the bath for a bit before we returned to the bedroom.

Actually, what really happened was that since it would have taken some time to clean every nook and cranny of our bodies, I reluctantly got out since I couldn't hold it in anymore.

But after I did that, she told me "Please wash your body properly", so I did that without touching her.

However, whether or not I had properly washed my body was not important right now.

Flora and I were embracing each other as we kissed in the moonlight that was shining through the window and the small candle light that lit up the room.

It was similar to the kiss we shared in the field of flowers. Our lips touched and parted then we looked at each other before they overlapped again. When I pushed my tongue into her mouth, her shoulders trembled as our tongues intertwined.

"Nnnn... Nnnn..."

We were both drunk on these kisses.

The feeling of her warm tongue stirring around in my mouth felt amazing. I wish we could stay like this forever.

"Nnnn... mmuuu... *slurp*"

We sucked on each other's tongue until she reached her limit, and our lips separated from each other's in order for her to take a breath. Then, she pulled the string of saliva that was hanging from our mouths-*how lewd*.

When I took a look at her face, her white cheeks were dyed really red.

I noticed that she seemed to be wanting more, so we started to kiss again.

I inserted my tongue in her mouth and our tongues intertwined once again. The texture of her tongue, the warmth of her mouth, her pink lips and her sweet saliva; I thoroughly tasted them all.

The way she was trying so desperately to get my lips and tongue was so cute and unbearable.

As our kiss gradually intensified, I started to gently rub her soft, abundant breasts. Her breasts were fluffy and soft, but still firm.

The shape of her breasts changed as I put some strength into my fingers as I groped them.

Amazing, so this is what a woman's breasts feel like. They're so soft.

"Nnnn... *haah... *haah*... Nnnn!"

Her breathing was becoming heavier as I caressed her breasts while we kissed. Her voice was further stirring up my arousal, so my cock got big in no time.

"Wow... Aldo-san, your... thing has gotten big again"

Flora muttered as she started to stroke my cock after our lips separated from each other. The way she stroked the tip felt really good.

I was certain that I would cum again if she kept on touching me like this, so I decided to go on the offensive this time.

I turned her body around and continued to grope her breasts from behind.

Then, I pinched the slightly hard point in the center of her breast with my index finger and thumb as I took notice of it.

"Hyannn!"

She moaned in a flirtatious voice as her shoulders shook.

"...Your nipples are hard, Flora"

“I-it’s because your hands are being nasty!”

She replied in a sulky tone with her ears red when I muttered those words to her.

I laughed at her child-like gestures and kissed her white neck; it was an action to show her that she’s mine.

“...*haaa*... *haaa*... Aldo-san, my lips too...”

Flora turned around and said to me with a dreamy expression on her face when I was kissing her neck.

It seems that she likes kissing quite a lot. I feel excitement and love from seeing this side of her that wants to be fawned over, which was different than how she usually acts.

And of course, I also liked kissing her a lot so I aligned my lips to hers and put my tongue in her mouth again.

From there, I also gently played around with her nipples that were standing out.

“Nn, nhmnnnn!... *haah*, *haah...”

Each time I squeezed them she let out a muffled voice as her body trembled.

Then, our lips parted and my right hand made its way down to her lower abdomen area as my left hand kept on massaging her breast. While I was enjoying the touch of her smooth skin, I felt up her thighs and her butt before I put my finger in her private area.

“Hyannn!?”

Whether it was because the feeling of my finger entering her private area was strong or she simply had pleasure accumulating, it looked like her knees gave way.

“Are you alright?”

“I-I’m sorry. My knees felt weak for a second...”

When I supported her in a hurry, she laughed out as she leaned on me.

It looks like she won't be able to get back up herself, so I picked her up with both my hands.

"Ah, a princess carry... It's just like nine years ago"

Flora said as she smiled happily in my arms.

"Now that you mention it, we did walk around in the field of flowers while I carried you like this in my arms-"

Yup, when I helped Flora nine years ago, we walked around there together while I carried her like this.

"Ehehe, it makes me happy that you remembered"

"There's no way I would forget that, when the girl at that time was someone this beautiful"

And to think that I would meet with the same girl again and become a couple with her. You really never know what's going to happen next in life.

As I had such deep thoughts, I raised her up and laid her on the bed.

Like this, there wouldn't be any problems even if she couldn't move. I picked up from where I left off earlier, as I approached her from the front while stroking her thighs.

"Hyaaa, you're tickling me"

Flora's body was twisting around as if she was trying to escape, but I kept on moving my hands as normal after catching her leg.

Then, I aimed for the moment when she relaxed a bit and spread her legs open in an "M" shape.

There, a thin row of golden hair appeared.

Her pussy lips looked as if they were swelling up. And above that, her clitoris was under two flower petals and honey was leaking out from the slit.

To simply put it, Flora was soaking wet there.

“Hiyaaaaa!?! It’s embarrassing!”

“It’s alright. It’s very beautiful”

She tried to close her legs in embarrassment, but she couldn’t do it due to my arms holding her legs.

Certainly, I heard that it would hurt for the woman if their vagina isn’t wet. It would be good to carefully caress this place to make sure she’s wet enough.

“Please tell me if I’m hurting you”

After I said that, I started to touch her private place.

I slowly moved my hands from the base of her thighs to her vagina. I pressed my fingers there using too much force.

“Ahnnn! Hnnnnn! Hyaaann!?”

Each time my fingers moved, she cried out in embarrassment in a lovely voice and with teary eyes. While I felt relieved to hear that she was feeling good, it made me want to go on the attack even more.

From there, I moved my fingers little by little. I rubbed them on her outer vaginal walls and lightly pushed them to incite stimulation. Then, I gently stroked her clitoris before I pushed my fingers inside.

“Ah... aaaa?! That’s no good!”

She moaned out loudly from the sudden strong pleasure that made her body twist. The feeling of her soft thighs sandwiching me was really comfortable.

She said it like she didn’t want it, but I did not hesitate to keep on rubbing her clitoris and massaging inside the slit of her vagina.

Since the inside of her vagina was already wet, the sounds of fluids being stirred were echoing in the bedroom.

“Ahhhh... Ahhh... It feels so good!”

I shoved my fingers inside, bending them and scraping against the topside of her vaginal wall. I paid attention to her reactions as I attacked.

It seemed like I have found her weak spot. I understood that from the way she was moaning intensively as I stirred there.

Love juices were leaking out from deep inside as I attacked her weak point.

Then, I pulled out my fingers from there and used my tongue next.

“N-Not that! It’s dirty there!”

“That’s not true. I’m paying you back for the favor earlier”

With that said, I stimulated her soft pussy lips with a suck. Then, I licked her overflowing love juice as I spread her pussy open with my fingers.

“Ahh!Nooo! It’s embarrassing!”

Flora was trying to push me off with both her hands on my head, but there was no power in her arms at all. It was more like she was telling me to keep on going.

Although she was in agonizing shame when she asked me to stop, she was still really cute.

The appearance of a normally pure girl being pressed by lust was making my cock really excited.

When I put my fingers back in and licked her clitoris, her back slightly arched.

“Ahhh, Kyaaa... Nooo! Aldo-san, I-I’m going to cum!!”

Flora moaned loudly as her vagina tightened on my fingers.

It seemed like she is near her climax.

I just wanted to make her wet, but it makes me happy to know that she’s cumming as well.

I moved my tongue in desperation in order to get her to climax. Each time I licked her,

she moaned loudly while looking dishevelled.

“It’s okay to cum, Flora”

“Ahhhhhhhh! I can’t hold it anymore!!”

And then, Flora climaxed as her ass jumped. Her body was convulsing and she could not keep the same posture.

She was slowly taking heavy breaths.

“*haahh*... *haaaah*... Aldo-san”

Flora reached her hand out to me, so I replied to her with a kiss.

“Did it feel good?”

“Y-yeah”

She replied with a reddened face as she nodded.

It feels strange to be in the reversed roles of how we were in the bath.

“Mouu, please don’t laugh at me! You were embarrassed like this just a little while ago too!”

“I’m sorry, my bad”

I hugged her as she got angry like a child. Then, she made a satisfied expression on her face.

“...Say, Flora. Can I put it in?”

When I whispered that in her ear, her face went red and then she nodded in response.

Chapter 39

The One I love is right here

“Alright, I’m going to put it in, okay?”

“Y-yeah”

Flora nodded as she responded nervously to what I said to her while I stared into her eyes.

It was not surprising that she’d be nervous since this is her first time. I heard that it’s very painful for the girl when they have their hymen penetrated for the first time. Since I can’t do anything about that, I can only try to relax her with kisses.

“...It’ll be alright”

I gave her a gentle kiss that was a bit longer than usual, and it softened up her tense expression.

Then, I moved in closer between her M-shaped opened legs and guided my cock with one hand. The tip of my cock went in slightly.

While I was surprised from the warm feeling that was sucking me in, I slowly put my body weight on it.

“NNnnn... *haahh*... Ahhh”

Flora’s vagina was very tight, and it was tightening up as if it was refusing my cock. I felt an intense pressure on my cock.

“Ugh...! I’m inside you, Flora. It’s tight”

I made a sound when I felt the soft and warm flesh inside her vagina. Then, I continued to go in deeper until I reached a ragged membrane.

Ah, this is her hymen. I stopped moving as I thought of that.

Then, when I took a good look at Flora's face, there were tears piling up in her jade colored eyes.

"I'm going to move"

"...O-okay"

After she replied as she nodded, I put my hands on her waist and I started to thrust vigorously.

Then, the membrane of her vagina was broken as the tip of my cock entered her wet and slimy vagina.

"—O?!Ow! It-It hurts!"

Flora said in a voice of anguish as she held on tight to the bedsheet. It looked like she's in pain from having her cherry popped.

I could have instinctively started to thrust harder from feeling the pleasure of her vagina wrapped around my cock, but I managed to calm down when I saw her painful expression.

I suppressed my desire to move and waited for her to settle down.

"*haaa*... *haaah**... Aldo-san"

While she was breathing heavily, Flora called out to me as she held out her hand. It was as if she was asking for my help.

To respond to her request, I kissed her slowly as I hugged her.

She closed her eyes as she received my kiss. We gently kissed as our lips moved and overlapped. We were making out as if she had forgotten about the pain of being deflowered.

Her puffy lips felt really good when I pecked at them with kisses.

Then, Flora did the same thing in return as she got into it as well. The way she sucked on my lips to ask for more wasn't bad at all.

For the next little while, I kissed her the way she liked it and we exchanged our sweet saliva with each other.

Our tongues entangled as she wrapped her arms around my neck.

“Nnn... chu, *slurp*, *slurp*, chuuu”

Flora was indulging in these kisses with a melting expression on her face. I gradually moved my hand to gently fondle her breasts as we hugged. I enjoyed the kisses with her while I played with her cute pink nipples.

“Nnn! Hmnnn! Nnnnnn!”

Flora was trembling with excitement as she moved her lips. At the same time, I was getting more turned on from Flora’s tight vagina.

“Ughh!”

I moaned to the unexpected pleasure of flesh that was enveloping my cock.

Perhaps she had noticed how good I was feeling, so she took her lips off mine and whispered in my ear,

“...Aldo-san, you can start moving”

I started to gently thrust in and out as her sexy voice kept on turning me on.

The insides of her vagina still felt tight, and the pressure was building on my slimy, wet cock.

So the inside of a woman’s vagina is this warm, and it can make me feel this happy when it wraps so tightly around my cock? I kept on thrusting as I had such thoughts in my head.

When the tip of my cock goes back near the entrance, I could see the red blood-like liquid from her cherry popping on it, along with a smell like iron.

Although it looked painful, I was still excited from having my cock inside a woman’s vagina.

I kept on shoving my hard cock in and out as I repeated that movement.

Her vagina felt tighter every time I thrust, as if her lumpy inside was trying to resist my cock.

Each time that happened, it brought happiness to my cock that I could not get tired of.

Oh no, I'm starting to feel weak.

"Ahhh... Nnnn... Nnnn.Nnn"

As I moved my hips, Flora's big tits were shaking and changing shapes like jelly.

I grabbed on to those soft looking tits and gently fondled them.

Her skin was steaming hot and sweaty, and that made her sweet scent even stronger in the air.

"*haah*... *haaah*... Nnnn. Aldo-san, you're inside me. Ahh, Ahhhhh"

When I moved to hit all the spots inside her vagina, I noticed that her moaning voice was getting softer. It seemed that her pain from having her cherry popped had settled down a little as her vagina began to relax with my cock inside.

In this case, it might be okay if I start to go faster a bit earlier.

With that thought in mind, I started to thrust my hips with an even stronger momentum.

"Ahhh, Hyaaa, Ahhhhnn!"

The bed creaked as our sweat scattered around.

Flora's sexy voice and the strong stimulation from her vagina was making my excitement grow.

I pinched and pulled on her nipples that were standing up as I thrust.

"Yaann! Don't pull on my nipples~!"

Her vagina tightened every time I pulled on them.

My cock was getting bigger and harder as I repeated these movements. My desire to ejaculate was quickly rising. I could feel the inside of my cock getting hotter.

The feeling of her pussy sucking me back in when my cock is pulling out felt so good. I want to feel more of this warm and tight feeling.

“Ahhh!! I can feel your thing getting even bigger and harder, Aldo-san”

Flora said as she felt the change of my cock while it was inside her vagina. Even those words of hers were reverberating in her pussy.

“...Ughhh, I’m almost there”

“It’s fine, Aldo-san! Please let me have it!”

Flora screamed out as her vagina tightened on me as I continued to thrust while I groaned.

I endured the feeling to cum as well as I could, but her words and the tightness of her vagina brought me to my limits.

“Uuugh!! Flora!! I’m cumming!”

With a groan as my last resistance, I pushed my dick as deep into her as I could.

jizz *jizz* *jizz* *jizz*

I felt my semen shoot out of my cock and into Flora’s uterus.

“Ahhh?! It’s hot!”

Flora’s body flinched as she said that. I guess the force of me cumming gave her a light shock.

My head was dominated by the waves of pleasure as white liquid came out from my cock.

It was a pleasure that made my entire body weak. I fully felt it as her vagina squeezed

my semen out. Thus, all the semen was sucked out and it started to drip out of her pussy. My cock was repeatedly twitching as it happened.

Flora's body also shook every time semen was shot out.

When I confirmed that I was done cumming, I pulled my cock back out as I felt the same sensation of her pussy sucking me in.

“*hahhh*...”

When I removed my cock from her vagina, a pink mucus mixed of semen and the blood from being deflowered came out of the slit of her vagina. It was not an elegant sight, but I still watched this obscene scene.

Flora closed her eyes in exhaustion. Her white skin turned slightly pink as she was drenched in sweat.

“*haah*... *haahh*... *haaah***”

I patted her head while she took deep breaths. Then, she slowly opened her eyes after her expression changed back to a more relaxed one.

After that, we both smiled to each other and I kissed her from above.

It was a gentle kiss with just our lips touching.

She was smiling since neither of us wanted to part our lips.

I was healed by her smile that she enveloped me with. Her being next to me made me feel warm and comfortable, and colors were given to my everyday life.

I wondered how I'm so lucky to have someone like her thinking about me for the past nine years.

“...Flora”

“...Yah?”

I called out to her while I had such thoughts. I engraved it in my heart as I called out to her that I would not forget about her for a second time.

“I love you”

“...Me too, Aldo-san. I love you”

Flora replied to me with a smile that looked happier than any other smile I’ve seen on her.

There’s someone who loves me dearly here. That’s what I thought when I saw that smile. I could feel a warm feeling filling up my heart.

My gaping, empty heart had already been completely filled with her.

Epilogue

Our new life from here on

On an ordinary morning, I woke up to the warm sunlight that was coming through the window.

When I slowly opened my eyes and stared at the ceiling, I realized that there was a little weight and a feel of softness on my right arm.

A gentle and sweet scent tickled my nostrils when I took a slow breath.

“...Zzz... Zzzz...”

Then, I slowly turned to my right and saw a pretty girl lying there like a sleeping fairy.

I was surprised that there was a beautiful woman on my own bed. Moreover, she was sleeping right next to me.

“...Nmmm, Nnnnn...”

However, this beautiful woman was making seductive noises while she clung onto my arm.

There was only a bed sheet covering her body; she looked almost like a newborn baby.

Her smooth, silky blonde hair was shining in the sunlight.

Along with her neatly shaped features, she leaves an expression of a somewhat innocent girl. I know that under those long eyelashes was a pair of beautiful jade-colored, emerald like eyes.

Yup, this girl’s name is Flora, who had become a couple with me since yesterday. When that came back to my mind, my shock settled down.

Perhaps it was due to her moving during her sleep, the bed sheet that should have been covering her up to her shoulders moved below her chest, exposing her soft

breasts.

She was just there breathing normally, but my thing down there was becoming lively as a normal physiological phenomenon.

Although my mind was calm, my lower body was getting restless.

It'd be unsightly to have a boner first thing in the morning, so I covered her up with the bedsheet up to her shoulders without looking at her breasts as much as I could.

Even though we're near summer, the morning was still chilly.

I gazed out the window for a while and spaced out while I calmed myself down.

Then, I snapped back out of it from feeling some movements from below and I took a look at Flora's sleeping face as she slept next to me.

She was a girl who is nine years younger than me, but it doesn't look like that when I see her sleeping figure. I thought about that as I looked at her sleeping face.

Her sleeping face is so cute and defenseless... It makes me proud knowing that I'm the one by her side who gets to see this side of her.

I stroked her head with my left hand that was free.

Her hair was still as beautiful as ever.

I moved my fingers in a way that her hair would not get tangled on them. Her hair smoothly went through my fingers each time I brushed her hair.

Her smooth and dry hair felt nice to the touch and it made me want to keep touching it forever.

"...Zzzzz... Nmmnn... Zzzzz..."

Even though she was supposed to be sleeping, her normal sleep breathing changed for a moment when I played with her hair.

I thought that it was only a coincidence, but I noticed that her eyebrows flinched like she was surprised for a moment.

Also, I felt a weight shift on my right arm where she was leaning her head on.

“...”

...Flora had woken up.

“...Zzzzzz..... Zzzz...”

For a little while, there were no signs of her waking up while I played with her hair.

I thought that I was wrong for a moment, but when I was stroking her head and playing with her hair, her expression looked like it was becoming softer. Moreover, her cheeks looked like they were faintly dyed pink.

She definitely had woken up.

It may be nice to keep stroking her head like this, but as I watched her pretending to be asleep, my urge to play a trick on her grew.

I moved my left hand that I was using to stroke her head to her soft cheek.

“...Zzzzzz..... Nnn!... Zzzz...”

Then, her body flinched all of a sudden.

I unintentionally let out a smirk from her easy to understand reaction of having sensitive skin.

And so, I got to see an adorable side of her that I haven't seen until now.

Her cheeks were soft, springy and smooth.

When you gently touch it, it's like it sucks your finger in.

When I poke at it with my finger, it's elastic and it bounces my finger back.

It was fun to poke at her cheeks like this, but if I do it too much she might get upset.

Then, I ran my fingers down her cheeks to her neck.

She's ticklish after all, so her body was moving since she couldn't endure being tickled.

Then, I finally moved my face close to hers...

"Kyaaunnn!"

I nibbled on her earlobe.

Flora squeaked cutely from that.

"Hahaha, so you were awake after all"

"Mouu! You're a jerk"

Flora opened her eyes and protested when I laughed out loud.

Her child-like expression was so amusing that it made me laugh even louder.

Then, her expression looked more and more cranky.

"I'm really mad!" I'm really angry, okay?! It was as if she had those words written on her face.

"Aldo-san!"

"Yeah yeah, I know"

Since I understood why she was angry, I replied as I obediently aligned my lips with hers.

Her cranky expression softened up as soon as I did that while her voice leaked out.

The feeling of her soft and moist lips was directly transmitted to me.

Although it had been only a few hours since we kissed last night, it still felt like I was satisfying a long craving.

Our lips kept on overlapping while we listened to the birds chirping in the peaceful morning.

Then, we slowly parted from each other's face and opened our eyes.

I can see that she was embarrassed from her red cheeks.

At the same time, my face also felt hot. It was probably red as well. I can guess that without having a mirror to check.

"Ehehe. Good morning, Aldo-san"

Flora laughed shyly and said good morning to me.

"Good morning, Flora"

I replied with a smile. I said it in such a soft voice that I surprised myself.

When I get up in the morning like this, there was the girl I love greeting me.

From now on, her bright smile will be greeting me when I wake up at home. Just that alone would be enough to blow away all my sleepiness and make my morning a good one.

Although I stopped being an adventurer and came to this village, I have never dreamed of living under the same roof with such a lovely girl together.

"...It makes me so happy to have the person I love greeting me in the morning"

When I looked at her and muttered that out, she smiled after looking surprised for a second.

"From now on, it'll be not only the greeting, but cooking, cleaning, seeing each other off, welcoming each other home, and at night time... We'll be doing everything together"

"Yeah. We'll always be together from now on"

I'll be able to live with the person I love the most. Just by thinking that, I could feel joy that's two or three times-no, ten times more than anything else I do in my daily life.

I can eat her delicious cooking in the morning, do chores together, eat sweets together, talk about things together, and she will welcome me home with a smile when I come

home from a hunt...

It puts a smile on my face just thinking about what life will be like with her.

“Well, let’s go make some breakfast. Today is the day of harvest for the radishes, so let’s make a dish with them”

“Yeah! Let’s harvest the radishes that you’ve planted for the first time and make something with them!”

When I suggested that to her as I was getting out of bed, she also replied with excitement while she got up as well.

As a result, the bed sheets fell off our shoulders at the same time and our naked bodies were revealed.

My upper body and her beautiful breasts and body were exposed.

“...Ah”

“Kyaa!”

Even though we shared the bed for a night, she was still embarrassed about showing her body naked? She quickly brought the sheets back to cover herself up.

She was embarrassed, but she was really adorable when she turned her back to me with a red face and red ears.

It looks like the fact that my lover was a shy person did not change.



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