

Chapter 158 - It seems to be a Night spent in the Small Shrine

It's said that no unnecessary grease will sully a blade and no blood will be allowed to pointlessly scatter into the vicinity, if you leave the handling of game to a skilled cook, but due to the fact that same can be said about a mad scientist, Renya harbors a feeling which he can't identify clearly as being either deeply impressed or somewhat shocked.

That's how splendid Emil's way of processing the wild rabbits was.

The wild rabbits, which were caught and then strangled in advance by Croire with as skill that woke the desire in Renya to ask her whether she's really an elf, were systematically dismantled and cut up into skin, meat, intestines and bones without causing almost no bleeding by Emil's knife which has an excessive sharpness.

Since there was even the additional share caught by Leopard and Kaede, it was a fairly big amount of game, but it took her almost no time to process all of it.

Emil's skill was at such a high level.

"What about the blood draining...?" (Renya)

"The meat of this kind of wild rabbit has a light taste, so allowing to keep the flavor in the meat without expressly draining the blood is the common way to cook them." (Emil)

'Even in my former world there was a duck that allowed for such way of eating, wasn't there?'

Renya recalls.

It's said that the taste improves by letting the blood circulate inside the meat if you strangle game in a state of blood congestion without bloodletting, but on the other hand it has the flaw that the meat will become darkish and specks will appear.

As for food cultures that regard the smell of blood and the taste of iron as delicious, it didn't approve overly much with Renya's palate, but it's also true that there's the expression, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' Once told that it's normal, Renya thought that it might be better to abide and decided to leave it to Emil.

Renya, who thought that he would just have to prepare his own preferred dishes in exchange, is about to make a soup stock out of the bones, but then notices that the mountain of bones, which had been put aside by Emil, is already gone.

Once he looks around searching for the bones, he finds Leopard, who had suddenly started a fire outside the cave where the sun has begun to go down, suitably placing the bones he carried in both arms around the open-air fire to grill them.

Thanks to Emil's superior dismantling technique, there's almost no meat left on the bones. At most one could find a few sinews and cartilages. In front of Renya, who wonders just what Leopard is planning to do with those, Leopard started to abruptly bring the bones to his mouth after the bones were grilled properly.

'You don't say!' Renya thought, but Leopard began to crunch those bones, seemingly enjoying their taste.

"Whoa...are those actually delicious?" (Renya)

Renya harbored the fairly rude impression, 'Don't tell me that the beastmen are even idiots in regards to their palate?' However, once he ponders about it for a bit, he recalls that there are also stories about the marrow inside the bones - even if it's different for the bones' exterior - being considerably tasty.

"It's great, you know? I can't recommend it for humans, though. In reality it's best with a tiny bit of meat remaining, but...these have been processed too skillfully." (Lepard)

Same as Lepard, Kaede bites the grilled bones with a feeling of munching them next to him. It was a sight that allowed one to actually experience once again the differences between the structures of the beastmen's bodies and those of the humans.

If a human did the same, they wouldn't be able to chew bones so easily in the first place. Even after crushing them, the bones would block their throat or something else. To begin with, it's difficult to imagine that the stomach is capable of completely digesting bones.

"It's probably still impossible for the lil' ones sticking to Kurz. Please share some meat with them." (Lepard)

"You two are going to eat the meat as well, aren't you?" (Renya)

"Just a bit, okay? Kaede and I will satisfy our hunger with these." (Lepard)

The spectacle of a woman with fox ears and a shrine maiden garb holding a wild rabbit's skull in both hands and biting into it has somewhat a touch of a horror movie, making Renya quietly avert his eyes from the two.

At the same time he gave up on making a soup as it was obvious to him that the bones would end up in the stomachs of these two.

The processed meat was further cut into a suitable size, and after sticking it on skewers, it was grilled over a fire in the vicinity apart from the open-air fire used to grill the bones by Lepard and Kaede.

Simply flavoring it with salt is often called as cutting corners and being bad, but it's a cooking that overflows with a wild taste.

Renya, who felt slightly cruel forcing the two elves to sate their hunger with nothing but meat, decided to provide bread, several fruits and fish from his inventory.

After watching Croire in the beginning he has obtained the information that even elves, who are bad with meat, can eat fish for some reason through various investigations.

Going back to the early days of Croire is owed to the fact that the current Croire is eating meat, fish and vegetables without being picky.

However, even with Croire having gotten used to eating such abundant variety of dishes, a change in her figure isn't visible at all.

'I wonder whether that's not already at the level of a curse?' Renya ponders.

Renya has decided to put various ingredients into his inventory.

'I can use what I have in some way or another, but things that I don't have, I naturally can't use either.

Fortunately it was possible to stack foodstuff, stuff it into a barrel and put it into his inventory after labeling it as "Barrel with Food."

Because the item's contents apparently has no influence on the capacity of the inventory, it has turned into an exceedingly helpful feature.

In the same way he carried several types of tableware in barrels called "Barrel with Tableware."

It's an act owed to Renya's fixation that food should be served on proper crockery, but if you speak from the viewpoint of the occupation called adventurer, it can't be called anything but extremely pointless.

However, it was mostly favorably accepted by the other members of Renya's party.

'It seems they are slowly growing up in this regards.

As it's not possible for him to bring a table along, no matter how you look at it, Renya properly clears away the hair from the wild rabbits' pelts, cuts them up in fitting sizes, and then creates an impromptu sheet by sewing them together with a needle.

If one only hears the name 'pelt sheet,' it sounds like being extremely wasteful, but even if the raw materials of wild rabbits are sold, they won't amount to a reasonable sum of money.

If one considers that it will be fine to discard it after usage even if it gets dirty, one can treat it quite carefreely.

With the meat and fish grilled and the various types of vegetables cooked or left in their raw form, they are dished up on plates. Thereupon the napping group - seemingly lured by the scent - begins to wake up with a restless stirring.

"Ah...sorry, Renya. I haven't even helped..." (Shion)

Shion was ashamed for having continued to sleep deeply, but Renya waved his hand, telling her to not mind it.

"It will be just fine if you work instead when the others become sleepy." (Renya)

"Excuse me for not having helped out either." (Kurz)

Kurz quickly lowers his head.

Renya caressed his head while smiling wryly.

"Children don't have to worry about such stuff, got it?" (Renya)

"But, if I had helped out, we might caught much bigger game." (Kurz)

Feeling somewhat bothered by the words mentioned by Kurz, whose head he's still caressing, Renya asks,

"...What specifically?" (Renya)

"A dragon or such." (Kurz)

"Okay, even if you find one, let's not hunt it in this place, okay? After all it will be scary in various ways." (Renya)

If they did something like hunting and eating dragons in an area ruled by dragonoids who consider dragons as sacred, it wouldn't be clear what that might happen.

At the very least there's no way that it would be anything good. Renya instructed Kurz while keeping his voice as gentle as possible.

'If I don't warn him properly here, it's very likely that hunted dragons are going to lay outside the cave if I wake up early in the morning.

"You don't have to mind it. So just eat the food." (Renya)

"But..." (Kurz)

"It's fine, just eat it. Even if you're going to hunt something for argument's sake, make sure to stay

away from dragons in this area." (Renya)

"...Yees~." (Kurz)

He had an expression that made it obvious that he still couldn't comprehend some parts, but Kurz began to eat the rabbit meat as told.

"Shion, Rona, make sure to diligently help with the tidying up." (Renya)

Shion and Rona, who began to secretly grab rabbit meat while hiding in the shadow of Kurz, choke after being reminded of that.

"Well, putting that aside, I'd like you to listen while eating." (Renya)

Renya, who secured his own share and decided to leave the rest to be consumed, addresses everyone as he watches the many dishes decreasing at an astounding rate. Upon his words, the other members stopped their hands for a moment or turned their eyes in his direction, but as they have been told by Renya that he will speak during their meal, they immediately focus on their food again.

"How obedient, hey...for starters I want to talk about our plans from now on as we kill time in here for today." (Renya)

"Plans?" (Rona)

It's Rona who asks back while bringing the sake cup, which had been prepared next to the dishes by Renya believing that drinks might be necessary as well, close to her mouth. Because Leopard and Kaede said that they will actually be fine with a little share of the meat, Renya prepared a somewhat strong sake in order to get them to drink it as appetizer alongside the scarce meat, but Rona seems to fully intend on keeping them company with the drinking. Rona continues to drain sake while keeping a fixed pace, but although her face becomes faintly red, her articulation remains steady.

"I think following plans are possible as options: Wait here until someone comes, head to a nearby city, or head for the Dragon's Den." (Renya)

"If it looks like no one is going to come after waiting for tonight, I think it'll be a poor move to wait here any longer." (Croire)

The one who stated her opinion as the foremost was Croire.

"If it's a situation where someone can come here, we should be able to meet them if we wait for that long."

"As we will spend the night here, it actually becomes two choices."

"I cast my vote for searching a city. That's, umm...if we head to the Dragon's Den without knowing anything..."

"It won't give you an overly good impression if we are with you is what you mean, right?" (Lepard)

Lepard says, following after Croire who seems to have slight troubles to voice the problem out.

"As for me, I really wanna see that Dragon's Den at least once though, you know?" (Lepard)

The face of Lepard seems to be really disappointed.

Normally there's no one who would try to deliberately approach an area swarming with dragons that cannot possibly be controlled, but as might be expected of a battle maniac, he appears to have a different standard for his thinking compared to the normal way of thinking.

"For our mischievous ancestors to have messed up things so badly after coming here...that's a bother for sure." (Kaede)

The cheeks of Kaede, who said so with a sigh while placing a hand on a cheek, have become quite crimson.

Seen from the side, her face is tinged by a mysterious seductiveness as it's illuminated by the campfire in the darkness. Coupled with the components beast ears and shrine maiden garb, it's a sight that would make people, who have such preferences, go all gung-ho if they were to see her right now, but there's almost no doubt that they would be beaten senseless by Lepard who's right next to her the moment they started anything.

Kaede's pace in drinking sake was much the same as Rona's, but it looks like she's a lot weaker against alcohol than Rona.

"I think I will cast my vote towards city, too. If we go to a place such as the Dragon's Den, it's not like we will be able to do anything, even if we leave you out of the loop there, Renya." (Shion)

Those are the words of Shion, who innocently chews rabbit meat.

Leaving vegetables and fish for the elves, she's solely focused on continuously eating nothing but meat. Refusing even the sake, she washes down the meat with plain water.

"I will follow Shion, so I have no personal opinion on this." (Rona)

Rona said as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

"Personally I'd really like to try going to the Dragon's Den. But, well I will obey master's decision." (Emil)

Without putting a hand on the meat, Emil only drinks the sake provided by Renya.

She's consuming the alcohol very, very slowly, and as such the symptoms of drinking sake aren't visible on her face at all.

'Should I regard Emil personally as being able to hold her liquor, or should I see it as the demons having a strong stomach?' Renya is puzzled by himself, but the only ones here, who know of Emil's true identity, are Croire and him. There's definitely no way that he can bring up that topic right now.

"It really looks like the opinion to search for a city is predominant, doesn't it?" (Renya)

"That makes sense after all. I mean, even if we won't be welcomed with this line-up, the ones who will still be able to enter without being exposed to danger are the two elves, Grün and Croire."

(Emil)

"At normal times, it might be possible to be even guided to the Dragon's Den as long as we have a proper talk in advance, but...right now we won't be of help in that regard." (Croire)

"Well then, today we will spend the night here, and then, once dawn breaks, search for a city while heading south. Any objections to this?" (Renya)

Upon Renya summarizing their discussion like that, no one raises an objection.

"In that case we will decide on the order for standing guard. We will have two people guard and watch the fire at each turn. Kurz, you and the two small priestesses will go to bed early." (Renya)

"I can stand watch as well, you know?" (Kurz)

Kurz unhappily complains while being assisted with the meal by the two priestesses on his sides. While thinking, 'Come to think of it, I didn't hear the names of the two priestesses until now,' Renya tells Kurz,

"No. Kurz and those two next to you...umm...?" (Renya)

"Tsubaki and Botan, Margrave-sama." (Kaede)

Kaede quietly throws a lifeline.

Renya is thankful for her timely assistance, but as Kaede is Kaede, her innermost thoughts were terrifying.

(That hag...err, queen completely forgot to introduce the priestesses that were attached to Kurz...)
(Kaede)

"If one is at the age of Kurz, Tsubaki and Botan, their job is to sleep during such time. There's no need for you to unreasonably stay up at night. I won't allow any objections." (Renya)

Kurz looked dissatisfied upon hearing Renya's clear and assertive words, but the priestesses on his sides start to smooth it over.

"Kurz-sama, you have to gratefully accept Margrave-sama's concern."

"Let's regard them as words taking your health into consideration, Kurz-sama."

"Uuh...got it. I will properly work during the day, okay?" (Kurz)

"Yeah, of course." (Renya)

Renya agreed, but what he thought inside his mind was something else.

'The two priestesses, who attend Kurz, are resembling each other so closely that it's easy to guess that they are twins.

'That leaves the question, which of them is Tsubaki and which is Botan,' Renya wonders.

Being taken along by the priestesses, they form one clew deep inside the cave, and choose when to

start sleeping at their own discretion. Kaede draws close to Renya and whispers,

"I will teach you how to tell them apart later." (Kaede)

"Please. Though I feel very awkward for this to happen after being together so long." (Renya)

"No, our side forgot about it as well." (Kaede)

Not knowing the names of the ones who are taking care of Kurz was extremely impolite in Renya's eyes.

Even if there were various other things he had to consider, that is.

'Once things calm down a bit, I should probably apologize for that impoliteness properly, and thank them for taking care of Kurz,' Renya decided. 'For that reason as well, we have to swiftly deal with the troubles taking place in this dragonoid country,' he judged.