

Intermission - It seems to be a Nightly Matter

The Gordonal Barony within the Trident Principality, an area that would generally be referred to as countryside. The Trident Principality, which was adjoining to the Miasma Forest which was infested by many monsters and similar to begin with, was a country that seemed to be considered rural amongst the human territories, but the Gordonal Barony, which was especially close to the forest within the principality, was a territory deemed as especially rural even among the rural areas.

One of the territories famous for being in the same situation was the Kunugi Margraviate, but that one had an abnormal lord, abnormal people who were close to him like retainers, and a genuinely abnormal maid. Thanks to all those abnormalities, that territory, and especially its provincial capital, had achieved a reputation that it might be on the forefront of cutting-edge technology, and thus be much easier to live in than any other city in any other country, not to even mention the principality's capital. As such that margraviate didn't fulfill the conditions to be called rural.

Leaving that aside, it was pretty much obvious to anyone that the Gordonal Barony was the countryside, but it had just one component that was considered valuable in this world - the ocean.

Although it might simply be referred to as the ocean, it was an ominous place that would trigger a disaster if handled wrongly due to the existence of the katurul, a being ruling over almost all of the ocean's area. The ocean's blessings were thus scarce.

However, precisely because of that scarcity, it caused the effect that its rarity value was boosted instead. In the eyes of those possessing territories facing the sea, that fact was ironic. But then again, there were rumors going around that the margrave, who had the established reputation of being abnormal as mentioned above, had apparently initiated communication with the katurul, although it wasn't clear how he managed to do so. In reality, the Gordonal Barony was estimated to develop from now on because the seafood procured in the barony had started to circulate on the market, albeit only slowly, but at present the barony couldn't see any change in its evaluation as countryside.



Shion Femme Fatale, who held the title of first princess of the Trident Principality and was currently staying in that very barony, didn't know what to do with all her free time. Because of certain circumstances, was working on repairing the things she had broken, but that work could only be carried out while the sun was out.

In addition to the work not being something requiring urgent attention, it also wasn't anything that could be done in a place that had become dark because of the missing sunlight. It wasn't a job that she had to continue no matter what, going even as far as preparing illumination for the night, but that was also the reason why she had nothing to do during the evenings.

The Gordonal Barony was the sticks.

Even the town, where the baron had his seat, was no exception to that. Most of the stores closed as

soon as the sun went down, and even the stores that wouldn't be included in that majority shut their doors as the evening got late. If this had been Klinge, Renya's address, you'd be able to find several stores running all night long, regardless of whether they were the healthy or unhealthy types of stores. Something at the level of slipping out of the room for a bit to alleviate the boredom in the evening would be possible without any difficulty, but the Gordonal Barony was completely wrapped up by the night's darkness with not a single soul out on the streets once a certain hour had passed.

With a situation like this, the only option was to spend the evening and night inside, but Baron Gordonal himself was the very definition of a martial artist, and probably because he had a somewhat advanced age, the people around him also went to bed rather quickly at night.

If this were Renya's castle, the Head Maid and local silky, Frau, would prepare a light meal, offer various entertainments, which she stole out of Renya's knowledge according to her own words, or stand available as conversation partner, and thus there would be plenty ways to waste some time. With Frau being far away now, Shion couldn't fall back on this method either.

Shion had been staring at the ceiling without getting a wink of sleep while laying on the bed in the room assigned to her. She would probably be able to fall asleep if only she were to be assailed by sleepiness, but sleepiness was something that would be elusive only at times like now.

Suddenly she remembered that Renya had mentioned that he would just count numbers at times when he couldn't sleep, and thus she started to count, but for some reason Shion became even more wakeful instead. Giving up on that method, she sat up her upper body.

"Seeing how it's impossible to force sleep, there's no point to stay in bed either, right?" Shion muttered to herself.

Shion believed that she would sooner or later get sleepy if she gave up on sleeping at such times and did something else instead, but the reason why she tried to fall asleep was exactly because she had too much time on her hand out of lack to do anything else. Noticing that her thinking started to go around in circles, Shion smiled wryly, and pondered that she might as well intrude upon Renya in his room.

'It's not like I'm going to sneak into his bedroom to make love.

Shion had once failed at doing that in the past, and at present she had absolutely no confidence that she would be able to succeed with it when trying it once more. She wasn't that much of an idiot that she wouldn't realize that there was the high danger of Renya losing all sympathy for her if she failed at it a second time. Although she believed that she would go for it once more at some point, Shion decided to limit that second attempt to a time when she was convinced of her success or when it was likely for Renya to forgive her even if she failed.

'Well then, if he asks me why I'm visiting, I will tell him that I'd like to chat with him until I become sleepy,' she planned.

It's not that Shion hadn't considered the option of asking Rona, but it was lacking the touch of novelty since she was always chatting with Rona. On that point, Shion felt that she would be able to hear many, very interesting stories if she earnestly asked Renya to tell her, seeing how he was a

Lost who possessed knowledge of a different world.

'While at it, it might as well increase our intimacy through the fact of me visiting the room of a young man without any vigilance at night', she thought, but she fully understood that it was a two-edged sword as it bore the high risk of her simply being regarded as slutty woman, if she carried out her plan unskillfully.

In regards to the topics to talk about, Shion merely believed that anything would do as long as it was interesting.

"Now then, what should I wear, assuming I go ahead with this."

Right now Shion's body was covered by her night wear which had a thin fabric, but she believed that it would likely be a very bad idea to show up at Renya's room in such an outfit.

'I think it's necessary to show here that I'm properly covering what should be covered by wearing a somewhat thicker gown or something like that,' Shion, who was about to open the drawer with her clothes, suddenly felt the presence of someone else stopping outside in front of her room's door.



'Previously I wasn't so sensitive to presences', Shion thought. However, since she had started to act together with Renya, she felt like her perception to sense such things had become sharper, albeit only little-by-little.

If she focused her senses now, she could perceive that it was two people outside her door, and even that both of them were women. Given that it was two women, Shion believed that it might be Emil and Kilie who had come for a visit, but these two visiting her room, and moreover late at night, didn't really click with her. Considering that it were women, the possibility of Rona being present existed as well, but Shion had excluded her from the possibilities from the very start because she believed that she would be definitely able to sense Rona, an old friend of hers, even through a door.

While pondering about such things, Shion pondered how she should act in this situation, but before she could take any action from her side, there were several light, quiet knocks against her room's door.

"Who is it?"

"We're terribly sorry for visiting you this late at night. We're maids serving our lord, the baron."

Hearing the reply after asking for their identity, Shion slightly raised an eyebrow at the true identity of the voice's owner. Just as there were those among the maids serving nobles who would commute, there were also some who would live at the noble's mansion, so it wasn't overly strange for maids to be present in the dead of the night.

However, those maids weren't any acquaintances of Shion. Moreover, so far as it goes, Shion was in name the first princess of the Trident Principality, even if she had readily rescinded that position,

and thus knocking at Shion's door wasn't anything maids would do without any particular reason.

Shion thought that there possibly was some kind of emergency, but as she couldn't hear any sounds around her, she couldn't quite believe that something like that was going on right now.

'In that case I have no other option but to ask the person who has introduced herself as a maid, I suppose', Shion retrieved a dagger for self-defense out of the luggage that had been leaning against her bed, and opened the door a crack with her right hand while holding the scabbard in her left hand behind her back.

"What kind of business do you have with me?"

Without hiding in her voice that she was wary of them, she peeked outside the room through the little gap of the opened door, seeing two girls in maid clothes, who were both a lot smaller than herself, holding small lamps while cowering with apologetic expressions.

Shion almost ended up lowering her guard down against her better judgment, but once she widened the crack a bit while making sure to not let go of the knob, she quickly checked the back and sides of the two girls.

"We're very sorry for disturbing your rest, Shion-sama. But, while being fully aware that it's rude, there's no one besides you whom we could consult." The girl with long, silver hair, who was the slightly taller of the two, said while turning an imploring look at Shion who remained wary.

The other girl, who had short, red hair, stood stock still while casting her eyes down, apparently unable to look at Shion who emitted a somewhat threatening aura.

"Only me? What about Baron Gordonal-dono?"

If it came to a person to consult with, it would be logical to bring it up with the head maid who took care of them as maids, the retainers of the baron family who were above the head maid, or the baron himself as the one standing above all of them. You could say that consulting with Shion, who was an outsider and furthermore the first princess, was barking up the wrong tree.

"Lady Head Maid and all of the honorable retainers are not present as they have gone back home. Given that Baron-sama is at an advanced age as you know, we hesitated to bring up this topic with him so late at night..."

"I see, I think that makes sense, but still, isn't it slightly odd to come to me with this? Even if you leave the matter of social standing aside, I'm no one belonging to this territory."

The instant Shion took the term 'social standing' into her mouth, the faces of both maids visibly cramped up.

'It looks like both have completely forgotten that I'm the principality's first princess', Shion sighed slightly.

Although she was somewhat astounded by the fact that the maids were kind of slow on the uptake despite serving at a noble's mansion, Shion decided to let this matter go as she believed that they

might be so much at their wits' end that this thought hadn't even registered with them, if she interpreted their carelessness in their favor.

"You went out of your way to pick me as consultation partner, so try telling me what it's about. I don't know whether I'll be able to help you, but I can at least listen to you for starters."

Unable to turn them away just like that, Shion urged them to explain the situation while believing that there was probably no meaning in her wielding her social position at this point in time. In response, the one with the red hair frankly explained what she wanted to consult Shion about.

"As a matter of fact, we'd like to consult you about Margrave Kunugi-sama..."

The look in Shion's eyes changed when Renya's name came up. That sudden change reflexively woke the urge in the two maids to turn around and run away, but without giving them a chance to do so, Shion threw open the door widely, and dragged the two petrified girls into her room right away.

"Tell me the details."

The two maids were baffled by her reaction that betrayed her wariness until now as if it had been a lie. While dragging the two into the room, the dagger Shion had held in her left hand dropped to the ground, but that caused the maids' faces to cramp up even further.

However, Shion didn't have the composure to pay any attention to that. It's because her heart couldn't remain calm after she had been told that the consultation topic revolved around Renya, but in the eyes of the maids, Shion's behavior only frightened them as they wondered whether they might have done anything that could have upset Shion in some way.

While looking at the two of them, Shion pondered, 'Even if I won't get an idea what's it about unless I listen to the details, it might be about something others shouldn't hear about, considering the time they've come to me for consultation. It might be the kind of story that'll lead to a disastrous situation if it's not dealt with at once. Considering it like that, I must draw the information out of the girls in front of me as quickly as possible.'

"For the time being, spit it out."

"S-Shion-sama!? Umm, what?"

"Quickly spit out what you wanted to consult me about."

Due to Shion bringing her face very close and threatening them, the maids became teary while telling Shion about the details in panic.



According to them, several of the girls doing their best as maids had started to sneak out of their waiting rooms and bedrooms with unsteady gaits as if being summoned by something once it

became late at night, starting with three days ago. Feeling curious about that behavior, the two of them tried to tail the girls to find out just where they were going, but what they identified as the destination was unexpectedly the vicinity of the room where Margrave Kunugi was staying.

"Because we lost sight of them along the way, we can't say with certainty that they entered Margrave Kunugi's room, but there was no other place that would come to mind in that area."

Shion brooded. 'For nobles you can't call the act of summoning maids at night that much of an issue. Maids that became mistresses of nobles exist not only in the Trident Principality, but in any country. It's nothing condemnable you'd scold nobles for.

There even existed nobles who gathered beautiful girls for that very reason, but as it also bore the problem of how to deal with them as maids after such a treatment, there even existed nobles who employed maids only for the sake of that purpose. Even Margrave Kunugi was a young man. It wouldn't be surprising at all even if he had such a side to him.

But, as far as Shion knew Renya, he didn't really have that much interest in such areas, or rather, he seemed to be a man without sex-drive.

'Otherwise there's no way that he would have turned down Rona's and mine nightly sneak visits. At the very least, he shouldn't have had any issues with Rona, even if the position as princess might be in the way in my case. So, if he were enthusiastic about that kind of activity, it would be weird if he didn't have some fun by now. However, in reality Rona and I have failed at our nightly sneak visit. And while we're at it, there's no rumors about Renya having made a move on the maids working at his castle either.

"The girls, who continued to slip out, somehow became stranger by the day...they keep saying that they want the white stuff, that sticky, syrupy white stuff."

"That's...no, but...okay?"

By just hearing that much, Shion could feel how the situation was escalating into a quite dangerous direction. In the worst case those words suggested that even dangerous drugs bemusing a human's mind might be in play here, but for Shion, who knew Renya, a line connecting to Renya in regards to such things was completely out of the question.

"We don't want to think that Margrave-sama is doing something outrageous, but we're still worried when seeing the girls in that weird state...thus we believed that we could only discuss such a matter with you, Shion-sama."

"Today as well, several of them left dizzily. Unable to stay silent about this any longer, we intruded upon you while being fully aware of the impoliteness."

Going by the frantic appeals of the two, Shion judged that there were no signs of them telling any lies.

"Got it. Let's go and have a look at the situation then. If something like this is really taking place, I can't avert my eyes from it either."

"Thank you very much, Shion-sama."

Shion waved off the two maids, who deeply bowed their heads, telling them to not mind it, quickly threw off her night clothes, and put on her usual attire while also attaching a sword at her waist.

The maids stared in wonder at Shion who had gone as far as arming herself, but since this was a case concerning Renya, Shion believed that she couldn't be careful enough.

"Okay, lead the way to the place where those maids have gone to."

Prompted by Shion who had finished her preparations, the maids began guiding Shion while going in front of her. As they were continuing to move through the wide building, the red-haired girl spoke up while turning around to Shion after some time.

"We lost sight of them around this area."

The place where they had stopped was a hallway. In her mind, Shion reconstructed the route they had walked from her own room, comparing it with the building plan she had acquired in advance. She confirmed that there were definitely only several empty rooms and the room allotted to Renya in this area.

While believing that the girls' destination would be very likely Emil's room if it had been around here, Shion perceived a strange sensation when she tried to head further down the hallway where the two maids had halted. A deep-rooted feeling of somehow not wanting to go any further from where she was suddenly welled up.

"This is Renya's doing?"

It wasn't totally clear to Shion, but being somewhat able to perceive that it was the effect of some kind of spell, she tightly clenched her teeth to resist that effect. Once she put strength into the area around her stomach, she felt how that strange sensation that had surfaced in her mind gradually faded away.

"Shion-sama...?"

"Some kind of magic is at work here. Wait here. I will go ahead myself. If I don't return until dawn, contact Rona."

With those words Shion left the maids behind, and advanced further down the hallway. As there was no illumination, she had to proceed while relying on the dim light flooding into the hallway through the windows. Shion subdued her footsteps as far as she could, and went ahead while paying attention to her surroundings. Before long she arrived in front of Renya's room.

Being reminded of her previous thoughts for an instant, Shion hesitated to touch the door. Being caught in a trap wasn't that much of an issue, but being mistaken and scolded for making a sneaky night visit once again was something Shion wanted to avoid no matter what.

However, if she didn't try to enter the room, she wouldn't even be able to give an explanation to the maids she had asked to wait back there. Shion resolved herself, placed her hand on the door's knob,

lightly knocked on the door with her other hand, and called out to the inside through the door.

"Renya, it's me. I'm coming in."

No reply came back. After waiting for a short moment, Shion turned the knob, and opened the door while being surprised over the door not being locked. However, the room was empty.

While only thrusting her head into the dark room, Shion wondered just where Renya had summoned the maids if not in this place. Suddenly she noticed a faint light leaking through the door of the next room. She slowly drew close, and once she brought her ear close to the gap of the slightly opened door, she could hear people talking inside the room.

"Aah...Margrave-sama. Please give us more of this white, sticky stuff."

"I can't get enough. This hot, sticky stuff is..."

"More, please give us moar. I can't survive without this."

"Margrave-samaaaa...mooaar."

Shion's brain spontaneously froze due to the manifold, very coquettish voices by several girls. Even though she had believed that it probably wouldn't be something like that, she couldn't reliably say that Renya wouldn't do anything like it, now that she had actually heard all that.

Mysteriously no feeling of having been betrayed burst out of her, but she felt something similar to disappointment towards herself for having made a mistake. As if seeing no meaning in hiding any longer, Shion powerfully slammed the door open, and forcibly charged into the room.

"Renya! What the hell is the idea here!? No matter how much you may hold the position of margrave, gathering the maids of another fami...ly?"

She was about to hurl a shitstorm at Renya, but what Shion saw as she stepped inside the room wasn't the perverted scene she had imagined.

A single pot with steam rising from it stood on a table placed in the middle of the room. Four girls in maid attires sat around it. Each of them had a soup bowl placed in front of her, and they were right in the middle of scooping up the contents in those bowls with their spoons while donning loose and enchanted expressions.

A simple kitchen area had been installed on the other side of the door. Renya, who had a troubled expression, looked in Shion's direction, who had suddenly barged into the room, while heating up a stockpot with fire.

"Renya? Umm? Just what's going on here?"

"Before answering that, just what were you thinking when you suddenly broke the door while barging in and shouting? On top of being a bother when you consider the day time, you intend to increase the burden on my wallet even further?"

Once she was told all this while being glared at, Shion couldn't do anything but apologize while cowering. Seeing two maids, who had come to check the situation, becoming speechless after secretly peeping inside the room from behind Shion, Renya managed to somehow grasp the situation.



"You were just cooking?"

Shion, who had asked Renya to explain the circumstances while making sure to not look at the array of maids greedily devouring the contents of the pot in a trance while showing slovenly expressions, was surprised by his answer.

"Well, yeah. Various things happened, but I was able to get my hand on marine products of good quality. It's just human nature to feel the desire to cook and eat those, right?"

"I-I wonder?"

"However, because I felt bad about borrowing the baron's kitchen to cook my own food, I tried to secretly build a kitchen range in the adjacent, vacant room."

'Isn't that far worse than borrowing a kitchen?' Shion and the maids wondered, but they decided to swallow those words.

The kitchen, which had been constructed while using building stones he had snatched from somewhere - although Shion believed that those were very likely the ones she used for repairing the plaza - was genuine enough to have had even a chimney added so that the smoke could escape, but as he naturally had to drill a hole through the wall to connect the smokestack with the outside, the doubt whether it was fine to go this far in the house of someone else didn't want to vanish from the hearts of Shion and the maids.

"It's not an installation I'm fully satisfied with, but thinking that it couldn't be helped anyway, I suitably cooked the seafood I obtained, just to be spotted by the maids over here."

Renya cast a fleeting glance at the maids swarming the pot and pouring its contents into their own bowls, and continued his explanation after sighing lightly.

"I fed them since they told me to give them a share of food at all costs, but...you can see the result of that over there."

"What about strange drugs or indecent acts...?"

"Putting drugs into the food; you want me to get killed? And, what's that about indecent acts?"

When Renya turned a scary look at the silver-haired maid, who had asked him shyly, both maids turned pale at once, and started to tremble while embracing each other. While thinking that there was no reason for them to get so frightened, Shion suddenly had her curiosity piqued about the dish

cooked by Renya, which the other maids fought over.

"Say Renya, is it OK for me to get a little bit of that as well?"

"Cut it out. If you take that away from them, they will kick up a fuss and start crying for real."

Going by his tone, Renya had probably tried it himself already. He put some of the stockpot's contents, which he had been stirring moments ago, into a new bowl, and held it out to Shion.

"The seasoning is a bit different, but it's mostly the same as what they have. If you're so curious, have a try."

Accepting the bowl held out to her, Shion picked up the spoon that Renya had stuck into the bowl, and slowly scooped up the soup which was sticky and cloudy. Once she put it into her mouth, she was lost for words.

The seashore scent wafting into her nose was so faint that it was a tease. The sticky soup first transmitted its rich umami coupled with its heat to her tongue's, mouth's, and then throat's mucous membranes before dropping into her stomach. Once she chewed on something tangible similar to fish or shellfish, which Shion couldn't quite identify, used as an ingredient, a flavor with an even stronger richness burst forth in her mouth alongside its definite chewy consistency, not stopping no matter how long she bit on it.

While Shion trembled due to the deliciousness that she had never experienced so far, she could hear Renya's muttering that felt like grunting.

"I just cut them into suitable chunks and cooked them in salt water, but...since it's seafood that's almost never eaten by the inhabitants of this world, they are weak to its flavor, I suppose."

Shion thought that this was dangerous while being on the verge of falling into ecstasy.

'For even me, who has only been eating ridiculously tasty food in Klinge going by the standards of this world, to have my consciousness almost sent flying to such an extent; there's no way that an ordinary person, who's been eating normal food, would be able to withstand this dish. There's absolutely nothing illegal about this. Having said that, as for being addictive, it goes beyond any illegal drug.' Shion easily reached that conviction.

"Renya...this dish is taboo. At the very least...for the moment."

"It's regrettable, but it looks like you're right. It's not like I want to produce addicts through seafood either."

For a change, Renya shared the opinion of Shion, who barely managed to squeeze out those words.



In the future Shion was told that it was decided to treat this matter as secret by both houses, the

Baron Gordonal House and the Margrave Kunugi House. The affected maids were somehow able to detach themselves from the influence of Renya's food, allowing them to return to their normal lives, after being forced to endlessly eat rather disgusting food at a medical facility in the name of rehabilitation.

At the same time it was decided by the Baron Gordonal House to seal the recipe for Renya's soup for a while as a fearsome recipe that would corrupt humans, although it didn't even register as a recipe for Renya. The baron said that it would remain like this until his house would judge it to be no problem to publish the recipe after the people had eventually grown accustomed to seafood, but Shion had absolutely no clue whether the day for this to be officially announced would ever come.

However, speaking of one thing that was certain:

"I guess it's no lie that too delicious food is no different from poison."

"Renya, I believe that you should try harder to understand the meaning of the word 'prudence.'"

"By the way, seeing that stew has been prohibited, I was thinking about trying dried and smoked fish next, but what do you think?"

"Won't those things produce addicts again...?"

"How about flame-broiled fish then?"

Given that Renya was no one she could stop by telling him to do so, Shion quickly gave up after reaching the conclusion that she couldn't do anything about it anyway.

As for the victims affected by Renya's actions, Shion had no need to worry as it would be fine to have Renya take responsibility. However, there was one thing that caused Shion a headache. It was something related to Renya's cooking.

"Renya, if your dishes are too delicious...I will get fat, you know?"

Although she hadn't become as addicted to the soup as the maids, Shion had still emptied a whole pot by herself with ease.



'I plan to sweat those calories off by working, but what if my weight increases so much that it becomes obvious from my looks?' Shion shuddered in absolute horror about the possibility of this turning into reality if she wasn't careful.