

Chapter 256 - Pears of Love

"...Your Excellency, their conversation is interesting. I've heard about it before, but I'm very curious about that Plant Festival or whatever it's called."

"You plan to look for plants similar to the Millennium Plant?"

"Yep, Millennium-chan. Oh, right now he seems to spend his time quietly. Shall I bring him over?"

"No, don't bother."

The songstress Shana is here, so there's no need for any unnecessary musical performances, I think.

"I see. However, Your Excellency's butt friends sure have increased in number...the time when we came to this city for the first time is now a nostalgic memory."

I observed Helme's beautiful eyes that combined bluish black and blue colors in a pretty manner. Viine heading towards the flowerbed blooming at the edge of the courtyard was reflected in the long slits of Helme's eyes...

Rebecca who was peeking this way while staying hidden...

Kaldo, who was talking with a servant, and Yui and Mysty, who were chatting with servants while drinking ten-ten-dutea that had apparently been prepared by Viine...

Next, Amelie and her father, Eva and her family, Zaga & Bon & Rubia, our neighbors, and the members of the dark guild were mingling with each other chaotically while drinking and eating, and chatting about various topics albeit not knowing each other.

"...We met various people. My bloodkin and friends have increased, and so did my acquaintances."

"Yes, the increase in bloodkin and friends is an auspicious matter. And a party like this one, it's the first party of my life. A serene lake surface is nice as well, but such a lively atmosphere has its charm, too."

After looking at her surroundings, Helme shifted her look towards the campfire. Originally she had been a water spring spirit for just one day, right? I guess this is her very first party.

"Helme..."

"Fufu, the fire spirits are rejoicing as well."

"How about you?"

"Me? I have fun. I can enjoy everything with you being present, Your Excellency."

...That's a lovely thing to say.

I put my arms around Helme's waist, and pulled her into an embrace.

"Ah, Your Excellency..."

"I'm also happy to have you by my side, Helme. I still remember the shock when we met for the first time."

"Fufu, Your Excellency, Bon-kun is looking while pointing a finger."

"I don't give a damn..."

Just as Helme pointed out, Bon was pointing a finger at us while speaking his Enchanto language and eating meat. He urged Zaga and Rubia to look this way. Exactly as I said, I kissed Helme's cheek and then placed my lips on hers.

"Okay! That's the limit~" Rebecca swiftly retorted.

"Just so you know, I felt your magic source response——"

I removed my hands from Helme's waist, and grabbed Rebecca's hand instead, forcibly hugging her.

"Auu."

She cried out with a strange voice, apparently not having expected to be hugged by me. A gentle aroma of citrus hung around her. I felt like this often applied to elven women.

"Did I startle you?"

"Yep, but, I think it's still better than you tickling my sides."

Not half bad, Rebecca.

"Oh? Does that mean you're asking me to tickle you?"

"No, I'm not! Still, enjoying a party with everyone like this is really great."

"Yeah, they might be able to get to know each other on this occasion. Sometimes a party like this is a good idea, too."

"Yep, there's many people I don't know, but when I talked with the people of the Martial Arts District a little while ago, the conversation got unexpectedly lively as there are actually many customers, who like Betty-san's teas, among them."

"Isn't it because of the cute salesgirl selling the teas?"

"...Jeez, don't say that from so close with a serious look. It startles me, y'know?"

Rebecca, who averted her eyes, was cute.

Obviously pulling herself together, she put on a tense expression, and said while looking at my lips, "...I didn't interact with the people of the Martial Arts District when working as shop assistant, so I ended up slightly surprised. I actually experienced just how unexpectedly popular Betty-san's black tea is around here. Zaga-san mentioned that he had heard about it from his customers as well. And

yet Betty-san didn't tell me anything!"

Rebecca told me with a smile. The sensation of her soft body, which I could sense from the arm I had put around her small waist, was nice.

"So, did you eat your fill of meat?"

"You sure ask weird stuff. Of course I did. Although I ate plenty of evil domain steak in the labyrinth, I can't get enough of it. I ate lots of Guniguni meat and veggies. Oh, there's the sweets I bought earlier. I still haven't eaten any of those. Well, it's fine, I'll just eat them with Eva later."

Rebecca is a glutton.

"I see. There, there."

I lightly hugged Rebecca with that as impetus.

As I gently stroked her back as if enveloping her small figure, "Oh my, aren't you giving us quite the show here?"

It was the voice of an old lady.

"Ah, Betty-san."

Rebecca seemed to be embarrassed. She quickly separated from me, smoothing it over.

"Don't mind me. You're young, so stick to him more."

"No, it's okay. I'm going to bring wine and snack for you, Betty-san——"

Rebecca apparently took Betty-san into consideration after seeing her empty hands. She quickly ran over to the servants.

"Fufu, you were called Shuuya-san, right? It looks like Rebecca is trusting you quite a bit."

"Ah, yes. I'm indebted to her."

Betty-san looked at Rebecca, who was eagerly preparing snacks and wine for her, like a mother... She smiled with her eyes partly closed. It was a smile full of happiness that seemed to decrease the number of wrinkles carved into her face.

As I was looking at Betty-san's face, I recalled the pear I had bought at the Free Market. It's definitely not like Betty-san's face reminds me of a pear.

Betty-san seems to not have eaten anything yet, so let's give her that pear.

I took it out of my item box. ...A pear that looks delicious with mana drifting around it. It has a charm that slightly wakes the urge in me to bite into it.

"...Betty-san, please accept this. I won't mind if you don't want it and throw it away."

"Are you giving this pear to me?"

Betty-san smiled with the laugh lines lifting up as she raised the corners of her mouth. She's a granny, but she got a charming smile.
She took the pear from me.

"Yep."

Betty-san was delighted, but midway, her look suddenly took on a sharp glare.

"Good grief, you sure are an airheaded guy, aren't you...?"

"Pardon? Airheaded?"

"You see, this pear has red specks on its underside, right?"

Betty-san pointed at the specks located on the pear's lower part with her finger which was similar to a withered branch.

Certainly, I see them. Do these have some kind of meaning or something?

"...Oh, yes."

"This is a pear you won't get to see often nowadays."

"Is it because you can feel mana from it?"

"Mana? I know nothing of that. For a long time, these pears with red specks have been considered to be of a very fine quality with an exquisite tastiness. Their alias is Pears of Love. They also bear the meaning to go out with each other when a man gives them as a gift to a woman, or during a proposal alongside words of love. On such occasions, you'd use the Pears of Love."

What was that...!? I proposed to Betty-san just now!?
Dream on!

"I-I didn't know."

"Don't worry. But, keep this a secret from that girl, okay?"

Betty-san winked at me by blinking one eye while smiling, and ate the pear.

"Fuyafuyafuyafuya..."

Oh shit, is Betty-san messing around? She's eating it while laughing strangely. Let's get away from here.

"T-Then I'm going to excuse myself. Please enjoy yourself."

"Yeah, sure."

As I walked around the fire, where Bon was dancing, quickly leaving Betty-san behind, "I'm happy

that I was invited to this wonderful event, Shuuya-dono."

The owner of the dojo across the street, Tomas-san, called out to me. Given that Kaldo was next to him, they had apparently talked about something. Kaldo went over to the members of the dark guild, and chatted with Mel.

"...Oh, hello, Tomas-san. Well, we're neighbors after all."

"Thanks. It looks like the members of the Martial Arts Benefit Society, who I brought along, are enjoying themselves as well."

Tomas-san was a member of that society, huh?

"I'm glad to hear that."

"Today I have also brought my wife, Naomi, along." Tomas-san introduced the wife standing next to him.

She's his wife, huh?

"...Shuuya-sama, it's nice to meet you. I'm Tomas' wife, Naomi."

Oooh, a beauty. Naomi-san bowed with polite conduct. Not bad, Mr. Tomas. Although your bald head and unshaven face stand out, I guess it's no wonder for a handsome macho.

"...The pleasure is all mine, Naomi-san. Nice to meet you. I'm Shuuya Kagari."

"I have been allowed to work as acting chairwoman of the benefit society. Thank you very much for having invited us today."

Naomi-san is slender, but she might be a female martial artist. It's not just the points of her speech. She also possesses the aura of a fighter.

"...The activity called benefit society is truly magnificent. Since I plan to help out next time when I've got some time, feel free to drop by here without any reservation." I said while putting my emotions behind it, and bowed like a true gentleman.

Even before her being a beauty, what she's doing is wonderful.

"It is I who should say so. My husband is often out because of his work, so I look forward to it."

And then I continued to chat with the orthodox beauty Naomi-san. In the middle of it, I was introduced by the muscular Tomas, who stood next to her, to a man, who seemed to be a human of a swordsmanship family and also a society member, a tiger beastman (Razel) lancer, a male human lancer, and a female karamnian (Scaled People) fighter.

Meanwhile Amelie, who had been nearby, and Naomi-san started to chat. Amelie's father was deeply immersed in a conversation about the management of the Refined Gold Company's magic stones with Mysty and the servants. Moreover, Zaga joined as well, livening up the conversation with stories about smithing and refined gold.

Bon had begun to skip around the fire, and Rubia was trying to imitate him while laughing. I was curious about the talk between Amelie and Naomi-san, and thus I nonchalantly perked up my ears. My ears might have even twitched there.

"Good evening. I'm Amelie."

"Oh my, you're...participating in the society's activities in the harsh slums?"

Naomi-san appeared to know about Amelie.

"Yes."

"I heard about it. That a blind person was helping in the activities to help the poor with no relatives."

Naomi-san looked at Amelie with eyes full of admiration.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, indeed. This evening I was able to meet many wonderful people...I'm also active for the benefit society in this Martial Arts District. My name is Naomi."

"Naomi-sama, I see. I completely agree with you."

Amelie is a really good girl. Why have the gods stricken such a wonderful girl with such shackles... However, it looks like their meeting might turn into a golden opportunity. It's great that I invited Amelie.

"Let's work for the benefit societies by cooperating from now on."

"Gladly!"

They said to each other, and then they spoke about various topics such as Amelie having become blind after committing a divine sin, how she peddled medical plants for her father who was laying in bed due to an illness, and how her father was saved by Helme and me. As I was watching them with a smile, I saw Rubia drawing close.