

Chapter 2 - It seems to Be Events in the Bath

If you were to listen to the stories, it should be a facility that had been constructed at a ridiculously fast pace, but the bath house built in the outskirts of Klinge had been built so neatly that it surprised even Renya. Seen from outside, it merely looked like a warehouse or something like that, which had only bricks piled up on top of each other, at a first glance, but the interior was decent, and on top of having a proper separation into men and women sections at the entrance, the dressing rooms for men and women also possessed quite the substantial size. Baskets to put in the clothes, bathrobes apparently provided to cover the body after leaving the bath, clean towels, and many other accommodations had been prepared in considerable numbers.

No matter how you thought about it, it wasn't a facility to be used by one person, but because the facility itself was mostly in a state of being booked out with the archduchess currently occupying the women's bath, Renya was alone in the men's section.

Going through something like a sign curtain that had "Men's Bath" written on it, he passed an attendant's booth, which had been placed there for some reason, continuing to the dressing room. It was apparently a Trident custom for men to change into yukata after taking off their clothes at this place.

Incomprehensibly, such a custom didn't seem to exist for women, and Renya was told by Frau that this custom was limited to men. He had been fairly puzzled by the logic behind this, but as she insisted that it was a custom, he didn't have any room to object. Although it wasn't as though he didn't harbor any doubts about the existence of a bathing custom in a human country that shouldn't have the custom of entering baths often.

The yukata for men was something like simple short pants with a size that had quite a bit of leeway. Of course they were made out of a fabric that wouldn't become transparent even after getting wet.

The instant Renya saw it for the first time, he felt like he somehow understood the reason why women didn't put on the yukata. In case of men, it'd work out one way or another with wearing those short pants, but women would need to wear a yukata covering them from top to bottom if they planned to hide everything. If something like that were made out of a thick fabric that wouldn't become transparent even after getting wet, it'd probably be impossible for them to wash their bodies, in addition to the yukata becoming too heavy during the bathing.

Wearing his yukata while admiring that it actually followed some kind of logic, Renya passed through the door separating the dressing room and bathroom, and was taken aback by the sight spreading out in front of his eyes.

The bathtub that had been established there was something that didn't qualify to be called a bathtub when compared with Renya's common knowledge. If he were to go with a word that would describe his impression best, it would actually be pool.

The bathing area following after the washing place to clean the body was filled with somewhat white, cloudy, hot water, and endlessly big in length and width. It continued all the way to the wall very likely separating it from the women's bath. The distance was roughly 25 meters going by Renya's estimate. Moreover, the length and width of the bathing area seemed to mostly have the

same size.

Seemingly as countermeasure against peeping, there were no windows in the bathroom. Renya didn't know whether the lamps installed at the ceiling were some kind of sorcery tools or <Bright Light>, but considering the bathing area's size, he felt that the illumination was somewhat lacking as it was slightly dark in here.

It had such a huge size that it woke the urge in him to question just how many people would be able to fit into a huge bath of such an extent, but persuading himself that only this might already be proof of the abundance in hot spring water, Renya scooped up hot water with one of the provided buckets for starters.

Renya wasn't all that knowledgeable about the manners when entering a bath, but he at least knew that it was necessary to properly wash off the dirt from his body before getting into the bathtub. After he had poured plenty of hot water on his body, warming himself to some extent, he rubbed the provided soap across his entire body creating bubbles all over.

The foamy body of Renya was slender to such an extent that one wouldn't be able to imagine it being suited for combat. In the eyes of a third party, it didn't look like his body possessed overly many muscles. Based on that, many would look down on him by his appearance since the soldiers of this world looked muscular, but this was owed to Renya's body having experienced a different way of forging compared to the soldiers of this world.

Usually Renya didn't have a powerfully built body that would emphasize its muscularity. Only at times when it was necessary to use strength, tough muscles like twisted wires would stand out on his face.

".....*slurp*"

Feeling that he had heard a strange sound, Renya shifted his eyes towards the bathtub. The steam rising from the hot water had a considerable density. Coupled with the hugeness of the bath itself, the visibility wasn't really good.

However, leaving aside the women's bath, the only one using the men's bath was Renya. Thinking that he had misheard since there was no reason for anyone else to be here, Renya averted his eyes from the water, and focused on washing his body again.

Although it was called washing his body, Renya had at least a bathroom in his own mansion, and even his room in Baron Gordonal's mansion in the Gordonal Barony had been equipped with a proper bathroom. Something that was provided had to be effectively used, and since Renya kept his body always clean, no obvious dirt was washed off his body here.

However, given that sweat and similar should always stick to a body, Renya diligently cleaned himself with the soap, going even as far as cleaning the spaces beneath his nails, and then, after scooping up hot water with the bucket again, let the water stream down his body that was fully covered with foam.

The hot water that streamed down his body continued onwards, getting drained towards the wall on the opposite site of the bath as the ground had apparently been provided with a slight inclination,

and flowed into gutter-like holes in a corner of the washing place.

While being positively astonished by the well thought-out setup, Renya finally headed towards the bath. The edge of the bath was something like a stairway with the water depth gradually deepening as you advanced deeper inside. Furthermore, it also allowed you to enjoy the bathing by sitting down on the steps.

It was set up in such a way that the water level would reach up to his chest or slightly below once he descended the first stair step from the edge, and sat down with his feet placed on the next lower step. With half of his body being somewhat submerged in the hot water, Renya took a single, deep breath.

Going by Renya's standards, the water's temperature was at a point he'd describe as somewhat lukewarm, but it still gave him a fairly good feeling. And now that he thought about it, the cloudy, hot water was interesting as it had a slimy touch that felt somehow good on the skin.

Renya enjoyed the hot water in this state for a while, but thinking that a Japanese person should submerge in a hot spring up to the shoulders, Renya rose half to his feet, and tried to lower his feet on the next lower step. But in the next instant his body vanished within the hot water, as if he had fallen into a pitfall.

"Eh?"

'Even if I say so myself, I must admit that just now was a fairly dumb sound.' Without even the time to finish that thought, Renya ended up completely sinking in the bath. In other words, the stairway reached from the edge to the second step, but beyond that the water became deeper than Renya's height, seemingly having been designed like that.

He might have noticed it if the water had been clear, but it was impossible to see this layout in the cloudy water, and certainly not having expected that the water would become deep all of a sudden, Renya directly sunk down in the deep water. Given that it was all too abrupt, he didn't even have time to close his eyes. Probably because of the hot water's temperature, or maybe because of the hot spring water's quality, he became unable to keep his eyes open as his eyes were assailed by a dull pain.

Notwithstanding all that, Renya somehow managed to surface again by swimming in a standing position without panicking, but now, unable to secure visibility, his sense of direction had gone a bit haywire as he had struggled to some extent when sinking down, resulting in him not knowing in which direction he'd find the bath's edge.

If his body hadn't sunken in the hot water, the method of grasping the situation in the same way as he did when fighting against Emil's clone would have been available to him, but with his body being submerged in hot water, that wouldn't work well either.

There existed a difference in the reflection and transmission of sound between water and air. Someone accustomed to that might have been able to adjust, but in Renya's case it would ultimately be an auxiliary measure, and nothing that he was accustomed to.

Renya thought, 'Please spare me from having to call for help due to drowning in a bathroom,' but

around the time when he started to believe that it was inevitable as he still couldn't open his eyes due to the stinging pain and had no other option besides loudly shouting for help, someone gently grabbed Renya's hand even though it was a bath that should actually be empty except for Renya.

"Renya, are you okay? Come this way for the time being. If you don't wash out your eyes, you won't be able to open them because of the pain, you know?"

"...There's something I'd like to say first, but...well, okay."

Renya, who still couldn't even open his eyes, immediately grasped the voice's owner because of their characteristic way of speaking. However, the owner of that voice was a woman. No matter what, it was wrong for that person to be here right now. Even while wondering just what was going on, Renya moved through the bath while being led by her hand, and was finally able to sit down at the stairs part at the edge.

"Here, take this wet towel. This hot water is great for the skin, but I feel like its stimulus is slightly too strong."

Accepting the towel which was apparently held out by the presence, Renya first wiped his face with the towel that contained plenty of wetness before opening his mouth. Once he finished, the unpleasant stimulus, which had assailed his eyes, was cleaned away, and Renya became able to finally open his eyes again.

"It might have been slightly cold because it was soaked in water I created with sorcery, but since there would be no point in a towel soaked with the hot water here, I'd like you to put up with it."

"No, well, that part is fine, but..."

"We have to later inform Frau that it's necessary to prepare normal water in advance. Having said that, I wonder why the bath is so deep?"

"...Before that, why are you here, Croire?"

Once Renya turned his eyes to his side, he saw Croire's puzzled expression. Without even trying to hide her slender, naked body, she was bending herself outside the bath with her knees on a part of the first step. She didn't wear even a single towel, freely exposing her pure white, stainless skin. Even her smooth butt and her flat chest were on full display from where Renya was sitting.

'The part of her long, blond hair being wet while partly submerged in the hot water is a sight for sore eyes,' Renya thought, but originally this place was the men's bath, a place where Croire shouldn't be.

"If I hadn't been here, you might have drowned, no?"

"I'm grateful for your help. ...Were you also the source of that weird sound?"

The origin of that odd sound Renya had heard while washing his body was apparently Croire.

Having that pointed out, Croire said while gesturing as if waving it off, "I saw something beautiful."

"...I'm going to charge you money, you lil' peep."

"I can get a front row seat if I pay for it!?"

Not having imagined even in his wildest dreams that Croire would take a bite at it in such a way, Renya pushed the towel, he had used to wipe his face, into Croire's face, who had been hanging over the bath's edge all the time, and pushed her body back while holding his head with his other hand.

"From just where did you sneak in here? It won't be possible to let customers in if it's that easy to pass back and forth between the women's and men's bath."

"I think it will be alright. Normally it's impossible."

As Renya pondered whether he should have Frau revise the security protocol, Croire continued pointing at the wall dividing both baths at the end of the bathtub after winding up the towel that had been thrust into her face, and tossing it into a bucket that had been placed outside the bath.

"As a matter of fact, that wall has a gap at its bottom, connecting this place with the bath over there."

"Isn't that no good then!?"

"Creating separated water channels for drawing the hot water for the women's and men's bath would be a hassle right? Anyway, as long as hot water continues to enter from one side, it means that the baths on both sides will be filled."

"That's an invitation to peep as much as you want, isn't it!?"

Croire held Renya, who was panicked that there was a problem at the very root of the bath house's design, back while waving both hands.

"No, not at all. The depth of the water around there is around three meters. Although you might call it a gap, it's so narrow that I barely fit through it."

Being told that, Renya rudely stared at the naked body of Croire who was sitting next to him. Croire's figure was very elvish with her small shoulder width and her lacking proportions. As far as he could see of what was supposed to be her chest, it was at a level that could be positively described as modest, and negatively as her still being lucky that it wasn't sunken in.

Croire splashed the bath's hot water at Renya's eyes, who had assessed that there was likely nothing there to sway, while maintaining a smile. Having been careless, Renya was completely covered by the water, bending back while holding his face as a dull pain assailed his eyes again.

"Uuooooohhh!?"

"Just now you thought something reeeally rude, didn't you?"

While allowing her displeasure to seep into her voice without even trying to hide it, Croire took out the towel from the bucket, and passed it to Renya, who was still holding his face, after wringing it out lightly. Receiving it, Renya wiped his face again, and protested to Croire with his eyes slightly teary.

"If you don't want me to think about it, then just hide them."

Croire puffed up her cheeks at Renya who insinuated that he'd think about weird stuff because he could see her naked body.

"I don't see the point in hiding them with just you and me being here."

"I'm fine with you, if you're okay with it, though."

"I'm...fine, you say?"

Croire quickly narrowed her eyes, and drew her body slightly closer towards Renya. The words she had uttered in a subdued manner made Renya somehow feel a shiver travel up his spine. Due to her conduct and voice so charming that he wondered just what he had permitted with "being fine," Renya ended up even wavering whether the blood flowing through his body was actually flowing upwards or downwards.

Croire trying to lean in close to Renya, who had started to become so flustered that he felt such hallucinations, in order to apply even more pressure on him was forcefully interrupted by the appearance of a certain intruder.

"Okay~ That's the end of the indecent conduct~"

It was such a flat and lackluster voice that it immediately threw cold water at any overheating mind.

Once Renya turned his eyes into the direction where Croire was looking with a face teeming with bloodlust as if her charming expression until now had been a lie, his mouth dropped partly open as he couldn't believe his own eyes due to the figure standing over there imposingly.

"Enter the strongest power within the human realm~ the highest authority of the Trident Principality~ Archduchess Lydia Femme Fatale-chan~"

While introducing herself with quite dangerous titles and a slow voice lacking even a splinter of tension, the one entering through the men's bath's entrance with vigor while smiling all over her face and freely flashing her two hills that might very well be the highest peaks of humanity was a person, who definitely shouldn't be here, and someone equal to being Renya's boss at present, Archduchess Lydia Femme Fatale.

