

## **Chapter 267 - Bal's Evolution?**

T/N: Musical recommendation for this chapter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEvM-OUbaKs>

"Well then, let's go back to the main building." I invited Viine who had shown me her womanly obstinacy.

"Okay."

"——Nyaa."

Rollo climbed on my shoulder.

Alray and Hueremy were resting atop Popobumu. Balmint's nose was stuck to Popobumu's foot as he was frantically sniffing some kind of smell. I don't get the ecology of animals, no, dragons.

When I returned to the living room while bringing Rollo with me, "Your Excellency, welcome back."

Helme was meditating in her usual spot. She was floating with her lower body half liquefied.

"Aye. You okay with half your body being a liquid?"

"I'm fine. Rather than that, it looks like I can develop a fog like yours, Your Excellency!"

I sensed no lie from her words that were filled with confidence. A part of her lower body half, that had been a liquid, really was foggy...

She might have gotten influenced after repeatedly training and drinking tea with me atop the front gate.

"...Ooohh, that's truly amazing! But, aren't you forcing yourself?"

Helme was furrowing her eyebrows. Since she was pulling such a complicated face, I got slightly worried.

"Don't worry, I will stop now."

"Gotcha."

Helme released her fog state, returning to her usual, humanoid shape.

As I watched her, Rollo meowed, "Nya."

After that quiet meow, she jumped on top of the table, and briskly walked over with small steps to the place with a cushion. She placed her forepaws on the central part of the cushion, and moved them up and down, as if digging in the ground, until she had created a depression in the cushion. That's no sandbox, you know...?

Once she also positioned her hind paws in the finished depression, bringing her body on top of the

cushion, she next started to chase her own tail, turning around on the spot. Then she settled down after curling up into a ball. In the end she hit the table with her extended tail once, and aligned it beneath her snout. Given that she has closed her eyes, she seems to sleep.

How cute...I wanna force open those small eyes of hers.

While harboring such a mischievous idea, I took out black sweet water from my item box. Right at that moment, the servant Mimi thought ahead and prepared several goblets.

"Oh, thanks."

"No, please let me pour the drinks."

Obediently I let her pour the black sweet water into the goblet she had prepared for me. Mimi also filled the goblets of Helme and Viine.

Or rather, only Helme's container is big and deep... Helme, it looks like you're gathering believers at a good pace. I guess the day, where people will ask for holy water from her boobs, is close at hand. In the future there might occur a big factional dispute among the Butt Faith and the Boob Faith, or something like that...

It might turn into quite the disaster. Since Helme had mentioned previously that she wants to violate the world's butts, the Butt Faith's faction might win.

As I pondered about such retarded stuff, I drank from my goblet while continuing a relaxed conversation with everyone. Gradually, the topics that also included idle gossip shifted towards a talk about Balmint.

"Balmint has become quite big."

"Yes, it's wonderful that he's growing up, but if he continues at this rate, it might result in him spending his time as a dragon without having learned how to hunt and fly."

"Right..."

I had thought that he might pick up those things naturally, seeing that he's a high ancient dragon, but...

"Viine's point is very reasonable. Accordingly, I have a suggestion. How about showing Balmint to the Witch of the Saldia Wasteland, a high ancient dragon, whom you had mentioned some time ago, Your Excellency?" Helme asked me while placing a finger on her chin.

"I have been considering that for a while."

"That old dragon lady might be dangerous. You said that she possesses an uncertain character of attacking people and countries to eat, or something like that, didn't you? ...She sounds quite whimsical, doesn't she? Balmint might end up in her stomach." Viine said with a worried look.

"If we're talking about whimsical, I'm not inferior to her either."

"No kidding."

Viine-san, that's a rather cold look there.

How nostalgic. She had the same atmosphere around her when we first met.

"Sorry. But, I don't think that she's cannibalistic. Although Balmint originates from another continent, he's still a high ancient dragon. I think the probability of the Witch of the Saldia Wasteland attacking her own kin is low. That's why I believe it's possible to get her to educate Balmint, just as Helme said."

There should be some merit in at least trying to bring it up with her.

"Yes, dragons should have their own way of life. I think that it might be good for Balmint's future, after all."

"I see. It will be lonesome for the number of voices that kick up a fuss on the courtyard to decrease, but..."

I can fully understand Viine's feelings. I'll also feel lonely. However, I believe that it's essential for the sake of Balmint's further growth, just as Helme has pointed out. Then we continued discussing the future outlooks.

"Your Excellency, won't you sublimate Mel, who's the vice-guildmaster of 【Remains of the Moon】, into a chosen bloodkin, a <Head Servant Leader>, like Veronica?"

"There's a point to Spirit-sama's idea. It might be important to upgrade our combat forces for battles against dark guilds."

Turning Mel into a bloodkin, huh? Previously I had considered it together with Benett, but in the case of those girls...Veronica might turn them into her own bloodkin.

"...I think Mel and Benett will be directly turned into bloodkin by Veronica. I don't know since I haven't heard any details about it, but Veronica mentioned that she already had people she wanted to turn into her bloodkin."

"Oh, is that so? I had heard about her blood mana, but I didn't hear anything about bloodkin."

"Come to think of it...she's the only of your bloodkin who has acquired the third gateway, <Blood Path - Open Third Gate>, isn't she?" Helme said while releasing a spray of water from below her eyes.

Yer quite da crafty one...

"...That's true. She's my vampire senpai to begin with. I was just able to turn her into my bloodkin after returning her into a human through an item I obtained by chance."

"The person, who originally possessed the item box which carried the item in question, was called Kuna, if I remember correctly. I have heard that she was a demon, but going by the range of what I have heard, she possessed personal connections that make it unlikely for her to have been a mere demon. And Your Excellency, sometimes when that name comes up, you will show an expression similar to frowning..."

That's...

"Listen and don't be surprised...that name caused something called 'The world's Kuna Shock!'"

"...I don't get what you're saying."

"Master was deceived and got dumped by a beautiful woman? Something like that?"

Viine-san, that's way too accurate...

She's becoming like Eva. Has she possibly acquired <Blood Path - Open Second Gate> without telling me? Maybe she's awoken to an ability allowing her to read minds or something...

"...Viine-san, it's a sudden question, but have you actually acquired the Second Gateway?"

After blinking several times as if replying 『I wonder?』 to my question, "No, Master. Not yet, but...what has happened for you suddenly having changed your tone towards me?"

"No, please don't mind it. I'm just at that age."

"Your Excellency, I don't get what you're saying."

"Don't mind it! It's green after all!"

Without any meaning, I pointed a finger at the color of the tablecloth's edge. It's definitely not amber. [efn\_note]The raw says, "It's definitely not beer." But I don't get the reference here, so I assume it's a color reference.[/efn\_note]

"...Spirit-sama, I'm pretty sure it's because you brought the name Kuna into play. Even Master, Suzerain-sama might have emotional traumas he can't talk about."

"...You're right. Let's ban the name for a while."

"Yes."

The two beauties nodded at each other.

...It's not really related to Kuna, is what I want to believe...

In order to gloss it over, I looked at Krychiwa who was standing nearby. Her ears were those of a fox. Sometimes I have her allow me to touch those soft ears. The sensation is fluffy and pleasant. When my eyes met with her, she smiled pleasantly at me. Yep, a business smile, but that's also nice.

"...Your Excellency, I also have a proposal in regards to the maids and combat slaves." Helme spoke up with the air of a strategist hanging around her.

She had apparently seen me look at the beautiful maid.

"What is it?"

"Autumn is almost half over. The date of the underground auction is slowly drawing close. That's why, just for caution's sake, wouldn't it be a good idea to consider turning those girls into bloodkin as well while at the same time fortifying the mansion's defenses...?"

A development towards a Holy Lucival Empire?

"Spirit-sama, the idea of turning everyone into bloodkin and moreover swiftly quickening the reinforcement is correct, but..." After glancing at me, she pondered, and pressed a finger against one cheek as if to create a dimple, while saying this.

Even while considering her hand and fingers to be pretty, I naturally revealed what I had been thinking about for a long time now.

"...I might offer becoming a bloodkin to the combat slaves and the three head maids."

"That's unusual for you, master...I had expected that you wouldn't turn them into bloodkin, considering their lives, philosophies, and spiritual natures."

"You see, I always think about it, whether it'd be fine to get them involved in my eternal spiral. For this reason I hadn't turned them into my bloodkin so far."

There are also cases like Amelie. Thereupon Helme gazed at me with an unconcerned face.

"You're kind...but, Your Excellency, you're a great man who will sooner or later lead huge military forces. Usurping Oseberia from the shadows, stealing the territory of the eastern Leften or Zamalia, or the western Radford Empire, or possibly founding a country in an unknown land; in any event, you will build a Great Holy Lucival Empire."

Helme's sickness has surfaced again.

"Great Holy Lucival Empire...that sounds magnificent, Spirit-sama!"

Oh shit, Viine has gotten infected.

"Say, there's no point in building something like that, is there? Though, if it comes to building a paradise where I can live with beauties, I'd be slightly interested."

"Your Excellency...that's wonderful. A Paradise of Blood Empire; so you had the readiness to build a country of chosen bloodkin, didn't you? Viine and I will be in charge of the butt training that will be carried out in that Great Lucival Paradise Empire." Helme recited with a smile, half in jest.

The part about the butts might be serious, though.

"I will leave the butts to you as an expert, Spirit-sama, but there's no need to worry, Master, since I will officially support you."

"I will leave the official part to you then, Viine. And it's connected to our previous conversation, but you should usher Mel into the Lucival House as chief of staff. Kaldo, who combines military arts and blood, will be there as well, but it sounds like he will depart to lay the groundwork for you and establish his own dark guild, Your Excellency."

I'm sorry for the two girls who have a maximal loyalty towards me, but... I have no intention to

fulfill that ideal of theirs.

"...You girls are free to think what you like. But, just as I said before, I plan to go on a journey while heading to the spirit world after the underground auction. Hence I won't create any countries at the current point in time." I stated while putting some force into my eyes.

"I have understood. I'm your water, Your Excellency, so I plan to accompany you."

"...I have various desires as well, but from the start, my wish to become Master's blood and bones hasn't changed."

I didn't know whether they understood me, but the topic shifted to the treasure chests we obtained in the labyrinth. I recalled the square crystal body, Sky Emperor Phyffindo's Heart which was stored in its own exclusive, round box, and the thin steel sheet which the classy shopkeeper of Suloza had described as something of an ancient era.

The crystal has an enormous amount of mana. Is it a key for something? I can't imagine what kind of item it could be.

Phyffindo's heart is...maybe it's a heart that has to be offered to the black frame that's decorated by eerie organs and hearts on the other side of the 17th mirror. However, as for going there to offer it, what if time is really stopped in the room on the other side of the mirror...?

I mean, it's possible that I'd become unable to move as well if time has stopped.

Or, it could just look like it's stopped... The 17th mirror might only show a normal item safe that's completely unrelated...

Anyway, I guess I'll try examining the thin steel plate for now.

"...Spirit-sama, are there no items in the treasure chest you want?"

"I don't really need any. It's not that I can't use them, though. The Burning Knights don't wish for anything of it either, do they?"

While Viine and Helme were talking with each other, I tampered with my item box, and retrieved the square crystal and the steel plate.

"Now that you mention it, that's true..." Viine noticed that I took out the items, and looked at them.

"...Master, those are the items that had been in the treasure chest just like the slate, right?"

"Correct. I was kinda wondering whether I would be able to activate these by sending mana into them, like the gravestone in the courtyard." While replying, I tried to send mana into the crystal that contained a huge amount of mana.

However, there was no response.

Does this require different components? Other parts? I don't have a clue, but I'll let it rest inside my item box for the time being then.

I also sent mana into the thin steel plate...but, it didn't give even the slightest response. No activation.

The characters at the lock are a mystery as well. A miss, huh?

I had expected the steel plate to be a device like an iPad, however...

"...Neither activated. Maybe they're decorations? They could maybe be placed on the table or

shelves in the living room."

"What bad luck. Even though the gravestone had reacted previously."

"Well, such things happen. No point in crying over it."

I stood up after storing the crystal into the item box. While carrying the plate which hadn't shown any response, I headed to a simple shelf with a vase placed on it. I put down the steel plate at the edge on the shelf as one of the decorations, as if leaning it against the back wall.

...Now then, it's a good time for a light lunch, I suppose.

I sat down on my chair in the living room, and turned my face towards Viine, "It's just past after noon, want to eat something?"

"Yes, sure."

"Roger. Isabell, please prepare lunch." I asked the head maid standing at the edge of the living room.

"As you wish, master."

"Nyaa."

"Ah, Rollo's share as well, please."

"Okay."

After waiting for a short while, the dishes were served.

Cold soup and fillet meat, plates filled with plenty of veggies, small breads, and goblets filled with wine were lined up on the table.

It was a nice preparation...and wonderful dishes.

Grilled fish was also served at Rollo's exclusive seat. She continued eating the white fish with munching sounds.

"...Garururu."

Seemingly being her favorite fish, she released a growl as typical of beasts even though no one tried to take it away from her.

Anyway, I'll eat as well then. I think I'll first start with this meat that's piled up like mille-feuille.

Going by its appearance it looks like a fillet as well.

...When I thrust my chopsticks through the meat, it easily split apart. It's crazily soft.

I pinched the piece of meat with the edge of my chopsticks, and put it into my mouth.

Oooh...the initial texture is super tender! I knew that it'd be soft, but this goes beyond my imagination. And, it's savory. The spices that have seeped deep into the meat...are irresistible. Are those culook seeds? There's also an aroma of something pepperish. I felt like that aroma boosted the taste by one level.

So as to enjoy the great meat, I continued to chew it repeatedly...oh no! Don't melt! It's mortifying, but awesomely delicious!

The meat kept vanishing as if melting away while leaving behind a faint sweetness in its wake.

My cheeks slackened, and I reflexively looked at Viine. As expected, even a former dark elf like her...is satisfied with the taste and texture of this meat. It's obvious from her expression as she's smiling broadly. Red spots kept appearing on her cheeks.

"...The meat is delicious, isn't it?"

"Yes, I think it's magnificent."

We nodded at each other, and continued with our lunch that was similar to a lunch course at a fancy restaurant. Since those were dishes prepared by Isabell, I praised her excessively. And afterwards I had a peaceful chat with everyone.

I also learned the identity of the meat from Isabell. It seems like they used the guniguni I had entrusted to them, and the meat of a deer-type monster called kasebu inhabiting the great prairies around Pelneet as headliner, while using certain spices as well as a mana rod, and sprinkling it with a special salt...it looks like they used unique cooking methods or something.

According to her, they raised their cooking skills while gathering the fifty secret recipes necessary to enter the kingdom's gourmet society. I've never heard of that name, but good job, kitchen staff. We finished eating at such a tune, and basked in a chilled ambiance then.

"...Master, please excuse me for a moment."

"Sure."

Viine walked over to the corridor, apparently heading for the toilet. Her way of walking vividly reminded me of a pit babe...

"Nyaa."

Rollo climbed on my shoulder and licked my cheek and chin with her small tongue as if to retort at my lewd look.

"Rollo, that tickles."

It's exactly the same as the other day! [efn\_note]Censoring cat porn[/efn\_note]

In the end she started to tamper with the necklace I received from Master by using her nails. Those nails caused scratching sounds as they grazed the metal.

Immediately following, two, small bean sprout-like tentacles extended from her neck to my cheek. She transmitted her feelings to me.

『Love』 『Play』 『Sky』 『Sky』 『Love』 『Let's play』

It looks like Rollo wants to fly through the sky. I guess I will go on a sky stroll with her once I get back from the wastelands.

As I thought that, Rollo returned on my shoulder.

"...Helme, I plan to go ahead with the matters about Balmint we talked about before."

"Okay, Your Excellency, shall I enter your eye again?"

"No, it's okay."

"Then I will take Millennium-chan with me, and go visit the Plant Festival Market which the maids and servants mentioned to sell garden shrubs, flowers, and unknown plants! I shall increase the butt love and the number of his new siblings!"

Millennium-chan, eh? She especially emphasized the last part of her statement...

The other day she had buried him in the ground, and it looks like they've become fairly close.

Which reminds me, before loving butts, Helme always loved watering and admiring plants. That had faded into the background because her fixation on butt impressions became too strong, though. But, that plant festival, I wonder whether they're selling such potted Millennium plants that talk and have a connection with Evil God Steertop over there...

No, I suppose it's possible in this world. The evil god had mentioned something along that line, too. ...Right now the Millennium Plant is rather a broken, eccentric singer than a rapper, but since it actually exists, they might be selling other interesting plants as well.

I'd like to have a potted plant that'll allow me to hear a classy background music as it's played in cafes.

"...Well then, let me hand you over some money just in case." Taking out a large amount of gold and platinum coins from my item box, I placed them on the table. "I think you'll be able to buy plenty of the plants you like with this. Also, make sure to refrain from doing something weird on the market, tempted by the Millennium Plant."

"Okay, thank you."

Now then...I don't know whether that dragon granny Sazihali will be in, but I guess I'll take Balmint along and activate the fourth facet of the 24-faceted orb.

I headed out on the courtyard.

"Balmint~"

"Nn, gaooo."

Balmint, who had been laying in front of the stables, got up and came running over with brisk, small steps.

Has Balmint's response become kinda similar to that of Rollo? He's making his nose and the perfectly round eyes twitch. How cute.

"Nn, nyao." Rollo looked down from my shoulder at Balmint, and meowed at him in greeting. She ran down along my arm while skilfully using her four legs.

"——Ouch!"

On that occasion the claws of Rollo's hind paws cut into my arm's skin. A great amount of blood trickled down from the cuts.

"Nyao~" After getting down on the ground, Rollo meowed at me as if to apologize.

"Don't mind it. It'll heal in an instant. It's the usual anyway." I forced a smile while saying the usual.

I mean, it's Hal'Konk's sleeveless version, so it can't be helped.

The instant I pondered whether I should recover my blood by focusing on <Blood Path - Open First Gate>, Balmint energetically jumped into my bosom with a "——Gaon! Ga!"

And then Bal greedily and wholeheartedly licked my blood as it trickled down. At that moment the dragon crest's nail art on my right thumbnail's nail responded. The proof of my contract with Balmint lit up. Simultaneously Balmint's small dragon body drastically grew up by one size while having a tinge of a bloody red color.

A new carapace with a beautiful red-black contrast grew out at his spine. The hues at the tip and root of the carapace also changed. It was a pretty mana transformation.

Did my blood stimulate Bal's evolution?

"...Bal, was my blood delicious?"

"Gaoon!"

Oh, his face has become slightly more awe-inspiring. Truly befitting for a high ancient dragon. Was his affinity with Lucivals high exactly because he was born after receiving my and Rollo's mana? ...Once he grows up, he might turn into the strongest dragon, inheriting light and darkness.

"...I see, I see."

"N, nyanyao." Rollo meowed happily.

Several tentacles extended from her collar, no, from her whole body, heading towards Balmint. Just like that she used her tentacle to lift Balmint, who evolved a bit, as if throwing him into the air in joy...

She kept massaging his entire body.

"Gaun, gaa-auu~, gaaoo~"

He spread his four small wings and raised his voice as if saying 『Massage this place as well~』. Balmint evolved a bit after taking in my blood, but...at this rate, let alone becoming the strongest, he'll end up growing into a slacker dragon.

However, how is Sazihali going to react once she sees the obedient Balmint...?

I took out my 24-faceted orb while harboring expectations and anxieties.

"...Bal, I'll let you meet a dragon of the same species. Maybe she will become your teacher, Bal."

"Gao?"

While explaining that, I activated the gate by tracing the fourth symbol. The scenery on the other side of the gate hasn't changed from before. A light brown rock face, and jewelry as well remaining scraps of armors scattered on the ground.

That jewelry...looks valuable.

"...I don't see Sazihali, but Rollo, Balmint, let's go."

"Nyao."

"Gao!"

"Pubopubooooon."

A sad trumpeting resounded from Popobumu who had been watching all this. However, Popobumu will stay home.

Alray and Hueremy had left Popobumu, and were doing their jobs as gatekeepers like guardian lion-dogs protecting a temple.

As they were in their porcelain state, they didn't show any responses. That's saddening in itself. However, while thinking that they were acting admirably, I passed through the shining gate with Rollo and Balmint.