

Chapter 313 - Interlude Veronica 2

Several days after the festival of pleasure with Bene-ane and Mel, I've invited Bene-ane to my refuge. Magit is with us as well. Bene-ane and I sit down on chairs, which have a flair of 300 years Oseberia, in a part of my secret collection room while we're enjoying the taste of the blood, filling the goblets in our hands.

Magit looks up to my smile while eating her favorite dish, "Nya~"

"Is Magit eating that fish dish again?"

"Yeah."

"...The money we're earnin' through great efforts keeps disappearin' into Magit's belly."

Just as Bene-ane has mentioned, the kasojiue Magit is currently eating is a high-class dish. Moreover, with the fish having been sliced finely and grilled after getting carefully covered with olive oil and pesotto fruit, it's truly high-class. That dish has been served on Magit's exclusive, huge wine glass.

It's a setup that would make anyone ask: ...Is she some noble lady or what?

Moreover, several of those wine glasses are lined up next to each other. Magit truly lives in pure luxury. For a long time, she's opted to only eat high-class food to eat. Well, she's actually the wild god Magitora-sama, a white fox with multiple heads, so it's maybe understandable to some extent.

"...You're not wrong. Her food does cost quite a bit, but it's fine since she's our guardian cat."

"Well, I'll admit that she's played the role of bein' a trump card in various battles. And most recently some noble purveyor's started a caterin' service, I hear..."

"It's that service where an expert cook prepares high-class dishes for you, right? It's actually been around for a long time, you know?"

"Hee, an urban elf, who's grown up in Pelneet, didn't know about them. So you're sayin' it's been around for a long time, eh?"

"Oseberia's royalty has been cooperating with that ancient dragon of the crown prince over many, many generations, right? It apparently was a secret service related to that."

"A secret service of a kingdom possessin' a great amount of grain-producin' areas adjoined by the Heim River? If most of the citizens don't know about it, the food expenses musta go far beyond normal, I'm sure."

"In the first place, how much does a dragon actually eat? The young dragon, which guildmaster raised, was apparently eating various things..."

Bene-ane shifts her eyes to Magit. "Magit's belly is bloatin' up."

"She's eaten too many delicious things, so yeah."

"It's gonna have an effect on your combat readiness, guardian deity. A fat kitty has its charm as well, though."

Stopping to lick her belly, Magit looks our way. She's sitting in a Buddha pose. Well, guildmaster taught me the name of that sitting posture...

To Bene-ane and me it merely looks like the sitting posture of some old fart. Oops, Magit's glare is scary.

Still, I can understand as much that she's saying something along the line of 『Fat? That's inexcusable!』 after listening to us. Her ears are twitching.

"Nyago." She meows in a bad mood, and immediately starts to lick a forepaw.

But, that fish dish...looks great! I wanted to have a bite as well! Ah, she's started to eat again. She's eating in a formal posture like a doll, but green mana is spilling out of the necklace with the emerald sealing stone around her neck.

"She's a spoiled guardian deity."

"Nya~"

"Magit, hurry up and eat."

After growling throatily, Magit focuses on her food again.

At that moment, Bene-ane speaks up as if having suddenly remembered something, "...I wonder, is Mel at her father's place right now?"

"I'd say so. They've formed a proper bond now. I mean, even the reason for him to avoid her was something I can instinctively understand."

"Oh, I heard, I heard." Bene-ane nods her head several times, and then places her mouth at the rim of her goblet.

While watching her throat as she gulps down the blood...I think back upon what I've heard from Mel about her father, Demonoid Zarlp.

The wanted man, Zarlp. He caused a dispute at the Underworld Martial Arts Association, which has a connection to Demonoid Cueberas, and in the process killed a great number of underworld fighters who picked a fight with him. The Martial Arts Federation misunderstood the situation and sent Silkworm after him. Then he had a showdown concerning <Blood Layer> penetration techniques with Crimson Assashin who belongs to the dark guild 【Skull Ogre】 which forcibly turns normal humans into a goblin subspecies called High Newman to use them as puppets. Afterwards a part of his left chest and his left arm got injured during battles against Demonoid Cueberas's group, the Horror Siblings of 【Shadow Speed】, a leader of Dark Church Hades, the

divine domain's soldier Ru Jenga Buu, an apostle of Evil God Toriberahl, and the Barrier Master of the Twelve Woodlands. Later he hit off with the Dignified Heaven's Shrine Shiroc in a bar, resulting in him cooperating with the party led by Incarnation of Iron Briant from the shadows in their battle against Soltinban, an avatar of a cursed god. What followed was a battle over the treasure "Beast Noble" owned by Demonoid Cueberas, one of the 【Black Prophets】. Afterwards he got dragged into a fight over the "Philosopher's Stone" with Wahsolna, a member of the Ninth Purple Cloister of Wisdom God Illias' 【Circle of Truth】 which uses 【Mislant Tower】, said to surpass Magic City Ernst in magical engineering ability, as its headquarter.

Demonoid Zarlp had a history full of all sorts of disputes...and while listening to Mel's recount, I could understand why he's been active in this labyrinth city.

After pondering about Mel's father, Bene-ane speaks up, "About the recent events...you see, maybe Zarlp didn't protect only Mel, but all of 【Remains of the Moon】."

"Hmm, maybe. Zarlp himself mentioned that he felt uneasy on the day of Dignified Heaven's incident."

"Yeah, it might also be related to him having had an acquaintance at the inn. Still, I think he was a father thinking of his daughter."

"Zarlp is a peculiar man who had a bounty placed on him, but...it sure looks like he didn't want to get his daughter involved in his problems out of fatherly love. I can sense his heart as man, or rather, father in this, but if only they could become a bit more flexible about all of this...Mel too..."

Bene-ane nods at my remark.

"Also, the reason why he had a bounty placed on him..."

"...It sounds like there's a profound reason. Mel is definitely being cherished."

Bene-ane nods.

Since there's a small break in our conversation with Bene-ane obviously brooding, I'll try to ask her something else.

"On another topic, what's your impression about being a <Head Servant>?"

"...Why do you ask all of a sudden?" Bene-ane stares at me in surprise.

"I just felt like it when looking at your face."

"My face?"

"No, nevermind."

Bene-ane looks doubtful, but soon grins at me, saying, "...Hmm, let's see. I've got no other vampires to compare, but messagin' with these bloodletters 's quite handy," and then creating some blood letters in the air.

"Bloodletters. As expected, that's the biggest boon, I'd say. As obvious from the Lucival crest tree, our race is outside Vampire God Lugnad's sphere of control, and thus we can't transform."

"Now that you mention it, Vero-cchi, I've never seen you turn into a crow."

"...I was a <Servant Leader>, but probably because I was a child, I wasn't able to transform at that time. Thinking back on it now, it was evidence for me being ridiculed as Taboo. In exchange, I was blessed with the skills <Blood Sword> and a light <Metamorphosis Ability> that included my clothes and allowed me to work as Iriel at the inn."

"I see. Borrowin' your words, it'd be let bygones be bygones."

"Fufu, I see you've remembered what I said the other day."

"Sure. By the way, now that I've become a <Head Servant>, will I also be able to have bloodkin in the future?"

"Yep, of course."

"My own bloodkin... Right now I'm only understandin' that my vampiric senses are improvin', but I don't know whether I'll be able to comprehend complicated stuff like some noble chic, you know?"

Looks like Bene-ane still lacks confidence in herself. Though it's the same with me who's chasing after Slot's back...

"...It should be alright since time will solve this issue."

"Nothing less of you, Vero-cchi. Profound words coming from years of experience." Bene-ane says this in a slightly playful way, but those are her true feelings nonetheless.

You can see from her temples how she strains the muscles in her face as she moves her hook nose a bit.

"We just need to leave the complicated stuff to Mel. That very Mel has been quite excited, repeatedly telling me something incomprehensible along the lines of 『Our strategic options and management abilities are rapidly growing. Every single matter becomes a plus for Remains of the Moon. Even if it's unreasonable to take on bigger alliances such as the Primiel Enterprise which rules the Nicharl Market, we should be able to surpass unions of medium-sized trade companies, if we use the connections of 【Assembly of Stars】 and 【Asura Religious Organization】』."

"Hahaha, that's so typical of Mel. As someone also holdin' lots of influence in Zeeta's Refined Gold Company, she got to know all kinds of people."

"Well, using the ship, we also made some good profits from the trade in Holkerbaum and Hekatrail."

"Mel's a shrewd woman, so it's pretty clear that she'll also master the ability to create bloodkin."

"Yep, for us it's fine to follow Mel's lead just as always."

After nodding repeatedly, Bene-ane says, "So, returnin' to the previous topic, I feel like the freedom in how I live my life has broadened. But you see, there's somethin' a lot more important."

More important than how you live your life? I wonder what it could be.

Leaning forward, I ask, "Something important?"

"Haven't you noticed after looking at my face?"

Bene-ane's face? Hmm, is it her hair style? She had short hair to begin with, but while it's still short, she's started to take better care of it after she got involved with guildmaster. Has she tampered with the ends a bit?

"Your hair style?"

"No..."

"Eh? What then...?"

Her hook nose, her squinting eyes, or her square chin...

"What, so you haven't realized?"

"I must admit, no."

"...I kinda feel like my chin has become somewhat smaller."

Bah, calling that important... And here I had expected her to clearly something like 『I love you since we're now family』.

So Bene-ane has been worried about her chin. But, unfortunately it looks no different from usual to me... I should tell her the truth, I guess.

"...Your chin hasn't changed at all."

"Ugh, that's rude, Vero-cchi! I mean, look, I'm a woman as well, okay? There are times where I want to get praised, even if only in jest."

Bene-ane has started to dress stylishly after she received guildmaster's love. That's why I can understand her feelings.

"Fufu. But, an elf's appearance continues to change, even during their long life span, right?"

Hearing my words, Bene-ane brings the goblet up to her mouth. Tilting the goblet, she heartily gulps down the blood within.

"——It's as you say. Me havin' obtained the senses of a <Head Servant> has a major impact. This is

a truly wonderful power." Bene-ane excitedly announces, seemingly in a mood as if drinking alcohol. Then she turns her eyes towards the wine cellar-like shelves with my collection. "...Are all of these pretty magic bottles lined up over there filled with human blood?"

"There's also monster blood. It's something like a collection from my time as a normal vampire."

"Wow. I know you've done it to survive, but you've gathered a lot. Is your power as Lucival goin' to grow if you drink these?"

"No, it's not that easy. <Bloodsucking> is important, but so is the freshness of the blood. This collection only serves as a blood supply and as a nice opportunity to drink blood with somewhat different flavors."

"So that's how it is..."

"Bene-ane, it's okay for you to drink this collection from now on."

"Thanks, I'll take you up on that promise, my Empress."

Bene-ane... She's deliberately bowing courteously like the folks from the Valmask family.

"Empress, eh? Sure, I'm one of guildmaster's <Head Servant Leaders>, but being called so by you feels creepy..."

"Isn't it fine? I mean it's the truth anyway. With that said, what're you goin' to do about the remaining <Head Servant>?"

"Hmm, I wonder. I'd love for Magit to take that spot, but that's impossible."

"In other words, Kazun or Zeeta are no options?"

"I'm sorry, but...no. Besides, I don't need to hurry my decision either."

"True."

At that point, Bene-ane stares at the necklace hanging around my neck for like forever now.

"I've been curious about it for a good while now, but that necklace is quite stylish. I'd love to have such an accessory as well."

Yep, it's a cheap item box, but it's my favorite. And it's not just any item either. It's filled with many sad memories. I guess I'll tell Bene-ane now that she's become family.

"About this..."



In the past, at the time when I continued to flee with Magit, I think it was back when we walked from Zamalia's Moussaka along the Heim River in the vicinity of Lefhalgen

"Magit, you curious?"

"Nyan."

"It's fine. Go and have some fun."

"Nyaa——"

Magit happily raced off into the thickets at the bottom of the embankment. It looked like she wanted to catch some fish in the river. I chased after her, plowing my way through the grass which was as tall as I was.

Soon I reached a location near the shore where I could watch Magit leaping into the river. No boats were visible in this area of the river, but I was worried about the quick draft of the deep river. But, after a little while, Magit surfaced - in her mouth a big fish.

She continued swimming skilfully by paddling with her paws. As soon as she reached the shore, she put the fish on the ground, and shook herself like a dog, sending the water in her fur flying all over the place.

"Sheesh, it's cold, you know!? But still, that's a big fish you got there. Nicely done, Magit!"

"Nyaa~" Magit began to eat the fish after casting a triumphal look in my direction.

It was fun to watch her how she got totally absorbed in devouring the fish. I crouched down, putting my arms around my knees. As if eating the fish together with Magit...

"Garuru," Magit suddenly growled.

Silly cat, she obviously wanted to warn me that this was her fish. I couldn't have eaten it anyway! But, maybe it might have been delicious nonetheless.

We continued our journey south along the river in such a manner. And at some point, I suddenly heard the screams of a girl. The girl was about to drown in the river, carried away by the stream. She looked still alright since she was clinging to some wooden wreckage, but her hands were small, so it was just a matter of time until she'd drown.

"Magit, watch me! I'll rescue her!"

"Nya."

——I jumped into the river. The draft was strong, but not strong enough to give me a problem.

"Kyaaaaa."

After swimming up to the girl, I yelled, "Hold onto my hand——," and grabbed a part of her armor,

pulling her into my embrace while fully relying on my physical abilities as a vampire.

I swam through the river while carrying the girl, and gladly managed to reach the shore without a hitch. Of course, both of us were sopping wet.

The girl lifted her head, "T-Thanks. I...am bad at swimming..."

"No problem, but why were you in the river to begin with?"

"We tried to defeat a monster called Rhinodyle, but it rammed our small boat...and I got thrown off on that occasion."

That made sense. The girl was taller than me, but that didn't change the fact that she was a woman. Since her weapon was still sheathed in the sword belt at her waist, she was apparently thrown off the boat without even having the time to draw her sword.

"...Such a monster lives in the river?"

"You don't know about mermaid skin?"

"? The raw skin? No, not really."

"Rhinodyle have furs that are very water-repellent, so they're simply called mermaid skin."

I had heard about mermaids from Dad, but I never heard anything about rhinodyles.

"Hee, are they strong? Those rhinodyles, I mean."

"I'm a C-Rank adventurer, but a huge rhino is very powerful. Well, I can easily defeat their young after separating one from their flock, though."

"Hmm. Want me to help you then?"

"Nya, nya?"

Magit had been listening to our conversation at my feet. She showered my leg with cat punches as if wanting to tell me 『I haven't heard anything about that ~nya』.

I wondered whether it wouldn't be okay to occasionally forget about the Valmask family, and help out others. Also, I could use the opportunity to suck some blood when no one was watching.

As I harbored such an evil motive, the girl cheerfully answered, "Really? That'd be a huge help. Are we going to form a formal party at the guild?"

"No, it'd be too annoying to go back to a place with a guild. I'd like to check the spot where you can find those monsters."

The adventurer guild would be filled with plenty of vampire hunters. And I was afraid of them...

"Understood. This way then."

After a while, the girl and I arrived at a spot with many rhinodyles. They crowded the place in ridiculous numbers. The monster herd, similar to cows, was in the process of crossing the river in a line.

At some place, rhinodyles repeatedly bumped heads as if having a conflict between herds. They looked like water buffaloes, but their size was completely different. Then adventurers riding a small boat arrived, and started to fight against the raging rhinodyles.

Since the place was crowded, I looked for a spot among the gathered herds with less rhinodyles. And as soon as I found the perfect place, I decided to kill the monsters over there.

"Alright, time to go for it. Magit, you wait here."

"Nya."

Since a big blood sword would stand out, I planned to defeat the rhinodyles with two, ordinary blood swords. After manipulating my blood with <Blood Path - Open First Gate>, I created two swords with <Blood Sword>.

Then I gallantly dashed across the water surface with both my feet clad in blood, chopping up the rhinodyles with each swing of my swords. Since the dead rhinodyles would be carried away by the river, I swiftly grabbed their corpses, and tossed them on the shore one after the other while sucking out their blood.

Each time a bloodstained corpse flew through the air, cheers were audible in the vicinity, but I didn't pay them any heed. In no time I had finished hunting several dozen rhinodyles, allowing a feeling of accomplishment to bud in my heart.

"You can have these." I offered all the rhinodyles of various sizes to the girl.

"...Wow. So many in such a short time..."

"Fufu, feel free to praise me a lot more~"

"You're really awesome...please tell me your name by all means. Ah, I'm called Vivi."

"I'm Veronica. Nice to meet you, Vivi-chan."

Taking a closer look at her, I saw that she was a healthy girl who would likely have tasty blood.

"The pleasure is on my side, Veronica-san."

"No need for formality. You can talk to me casually."

"Sure, Veronica. Nice to meet you, too."

I was charmed by her wonderful smile.

"By the way, Vivi-chan, how are you going to carry those rhinodyles?"

"Don't worry, I got an item box with me." Vivi put the rhinodyles into a necklace-shaped item box.

"Whoa, that sure looks handy. How much can it hold?"

"This one is a cheap, simple item box, so it's about full now."

"Wow. So much and yet it's a cheap one? But, Vivi, aren't you also great for possessing an item box? I've heard that there's plenty of those in labyrinth cities. Do you come from one of those?"

"Thanks. My home isn't a labyrinth city. I bought this with the little amount of money I saved up from a trade caravan of beastmen...it also has the advantage of having a stylish shape."

I was fascinated by the necklace, wanting one for myself as well.

"Hee."

"Fufu, are you going to come back to Lefhalgen's guild with me to receive the reward? It's a bit of a travel, though."

"Sure."

"Nyaa."

"What cute kitty."

Magit bumped her head against Vivi's shin.

"Her name's Magit. She's my guardian cat."

"Guardian cat...is she some kind of familiar?"

"Nya, nya~ Nyano."

I thought Magit might have told me 『No, wrong ~nya~ It's Magitora-sama ~nya~』.

"Something similar. Don't mind it."

"Sure. Magit-chan, you got a cute necklace there. Let's go back to the city together, oki?"

"Nya."

This decided us going to Lefhalgen together. On the trip, she often laughed, and with my mood improved quite a bit by that, I cracked quite a few jokes. It was a very joyful, and very short time.

When we arrived at the adventurer's guild, Vivi handed in the raw materials, receiving the reward and pay. I didn't enter the guild, but waited outside.

Several minutes later, Vivi stormed out of the guild with a very delighted expression.

"We've made a killing...I'll give you your share..."

I was happy to hear that she had earned a big sum of money.

"No need."

"Eh? You don't need the money?"

"No, I was able to help you out a bit, allowing me to make some fun memories with you, although it was just over a short period of time."

"Nya."

"Auuh, then let me at least give you this." Vivi offered me her item box after taking it off her neck.

"EH? No, no, wait, that's important for your job as an adventurer, isn't it?"

"You're right, but it'll be alright since I'll be able to buy a better item box than this one with the money we earned this time."

I sure wanted the necklace, but I decided to turn her down since I felt like Vivi cherished the necklace.

"Hmm, still no, thanks. But instead, I'd like you to point me to a good inn."

"You're such a stubborn girl, Veronica. Though I've already realized as much during our journey..."

She deliberately intensified her stare.

"..."

"Haah...okay, okay, I lost. Then let me guide you to a nice and comfy little inn!" Vivi walked ahead with a charming, confident attitude.

Watching her back, a smile naturally formed on my lips. Until now I had only regarded Dad as a person close to me, but it might actually be okay to have a friend.

The inn we reached a little while later was a simple, old wood building. It was slightly run-down, but I could enjoy myself as the food was great, and because of the big variety of baths they offered their guests.

At night, when the big moon and the remains of the small moon brightly illuminated the sky, I sat down on a pedestal-like rock, situated in the small garden connected to my room. As I enjoyed the nightscape, Vivi drew closer while all smiles.

"Vivi, thanks for introducing me to such a wonderful inn." I honestly thanked her.

Vivi placed a hand on her chest, "No, it's me who is very happy to have met you, Veronica——"

Just when I thought that she looked beautiful under the night sky, dull footsteps suddenly became audible...and a bloody blade protruded out of Vivi's chest...

As the blade was pulled out of Vivi's chest with a raw sound, the hole in Vivi's chest...Vivi collapsed while coughing blood.

"Vivi——"

"Taboo, you sure you've got the time to scream around here——"

Leaving Vivi in the dust, the man, who held his blood blade with both hands, charged at me in a forward-bent posture. Was it an acceleration using <Blood Mana>? Either way, he was fast. He closed the distance to me in an instant.

Immediately following, he swung down his blade while releasing a spray of blood. In a hurry I created two blood swords, using them to block the blade coming down at me from the front. I also managed to offset the second upwards slash of his blade.

I wondered whether this guy was a pursuer of the Valmask family. I didn't notice him before...but Vivi was still alive. I'd be able to save her if I could apply a potion on her.

"Shaaah." Magit was pissed off as well.

With her whole body clad in green mana, she fired an emerald blade at the man in front of me. The man bisected that blade with a backhand swing of his own blade while retreating. I used that chance to get close to Vivi.

"Vivi! I'll apply a potion on you right now!"

"A-Aahh, Veronica...the wind is hot? My chest feels so hot."

I applied the potion I had carried with me in my waist pouch on the hole at Vivi's chest, but...the wound wouldn't close up.

"You're wasting your time. That girl's a human, right? This blade has a poison on it that would even slow down our recovery rate. It's a combination of the secret Rejugem serum, used against vampires, and the Crescent Mandyne poison which can't be countered with detoxification."

"That's..."

"Did you know? It's one outcome of our research using the blood bank. It's a nostrum not even allowing its victim to be turned into a bloodkin. And since it artificially slows down the blood that would gush out of a wound for humans, they need quite a while to die. In return, the poison spreads across their whole body, turning their time until death into a living hell of pain. Kukuku."

"Shut up."

My rage that had gone beyond agony turned into a torrent of blood blowing out of my body. I think it was a hoard of blood swords I had never created until then. Countless, bloody swords of various shapes and sizes. This was a unique skill I had obtained thanks to Dad's influence on me.

The crowd of swords spread out as if to block all moon light.

"Wh-!? What...is this amount of blood...!?"

"...How dare you hurt Vivi!!"

At the same time, I clad my entire body in <Blood Mana>, and had the hoard of blood swords assault the man while charging at him myself without even combining Magit's and my powers.

The hoard of swords, which went far beyond a few dozens, stabbed into the Valmask man. His masculine, greasy expression fell apart without leaving a visible shape behind. But I wasn't done yet. I didn't allow him to recover. I poured my anger, sadness and other incomprehensible emotions into my blood swords.

I created blood swords, blood swords, and even more blood swords, with such an intensity that my blood withered away, and released them at him. Once I came to my senses, the skewered Valmask pursuer had transformed into a lump of meat.

My opponent was at the level of a <Servant Leader>...even with his head crushed, his flesh still tried to regenerate. It woke the feeling in me that it'd be great to belong to the Light God's faith at times like these.

I created another flock of blood swords, using it to deliver the finishing blow against the lump of meat that used to be the detestable asshole who attacked Vivi. At the end, I bit him, activating <Bloodsucking>.

Once I had sucked up all his blood, the vampire completely stopped regenerating, drying up and withering away. I had finally killed him for good.

"Vivi!"

I hurried back to her.

"Veronica...where are you? I can't see you...everything is dark in front of my eyes..."

The light had already left Vivi's eyes. I applied the potions I had on me, but the wound wouldn't heal.

"I'm here. Right next to you."

"...Nyaa." Magit cried sadly.

"...It looks like...I'm...going to die."

"You won't, I won't let you die!"

"...Ugueehh...fufu."

Vivi vomited blood while shedding more from her eyes and nose. She also cried, her tears blending with the blood, but she still smiled. No blood gushed out of the hole at her chest.

"...It's okay. If you're an adventurer, you've got to resolve yourself to death."

"No, I don't wanna. I've made a friend at long last. I don't want to lose anyone else anymore! That's why you're not allowed to die on me!"

"S-Sorry, don't cry...it's a cheap item, but I'll give you this necklace as your friend, okay?"

Although Vivi should suffer excruciating pain across her whole body...

"Sure, I got it. Even if it's a cheap item, I'll cherish it dearly."

"I'm happy to hear that. Guuaaah. My body hurts...h-help..."

I couldn't watch Vivi's agony any longer.

"...I'll ease your pain, Vivi——"

At that moment, I put my arms around her waist, burying my face in her neck as I firmly hugged her. While taking in her scent, I used <Bloodsucking> on her. It was my first time to use such a heart-rending <Bloodsucking>. The poison gnawing away at Vivi's body tried to enter my body, but I didn't care.

"Huh? The pain is gone... Fufu, Veronica, you're squeezing me too tightly. But, you smell so nicely...having been able to meet with you at the end was..."

I couldn't hear the 『wonderful』 at the end. In my heart, I apologized to Vivi. Even though I was being chased, I had been careless. It was my fault. I regretted it deeply... I couldn't see anything in front of me because of the overflowing tears. Rain had started to fall, with thundering noise echoing across the garden.

I don't remember well what happened afterwards...



"...Vero-cchi."

"Sheesh, what's the point in you crying, Bene-ane?"

"...You say that, but even you——"

While crying, Bene-ane pulls me into her embrace, and gently strokes my head. It looks like I'm crying as well.

"Nyaa." Magit bumps her head against my shin.

I spent the rest of that day relaxing together with my dear family: Bene-ane.