

Chapter 8 - Klimt's Love

"Bruno! Over there!"

"On it."

"Klimt, you too."

"Leave this one to me."

Two month have passed ever since I entered Twilight of Dawn. At first our activities were focused on the area around the capital which also served as rookie training, but as Bruno and I have mostly familiarized ourselves with party adventuring, we've started to hunt in a monster domain around 200 kilometers away from the capital since yesterday.

This monster domain seems to be not known by many, and furthermore, because it's under the direct control of the Kingdom, despite being a detached territory, it appears to be less troublesome than a monster domain within a noble's territory. That makes sense since the loot from monster domains in noble territories generate tax income for the respective nobles.

As a result, working in a monster domain under the Kingdom's control brings you more benefit while braving the same dangers. For this reason, and also because the monster domains around the capital are fairly crowded, we've come all the way out here.

"Wonderful. This wraps up work for today."

Candy is strict and serious during work, but as soon as the job's done for the day, he always reverts to his usual, playful character.

I wonder, is it alright to describe a person like him as good at changing gears?

"We're going back to Heckiss. Tell us Boltor, where are we going to stay today? You're in charge of the reservation today." Candy-dono asks the sub-leader of our party, Boltor-dono, what inn we're going to use today.

"I decided to go with a new place. It sounds like it's also got a good evaluation."

"New inns are great. I mean they're all clean and sparkly. Alsooo, I feel like I'm going to encounter a new love with a nice man in the unknown inn."

"Whatever."

Since that's the usual routine with Candy-dono and Boltor-dono's conversations, Bruno, I, and the chronically silent Dalton-dono happily listen in on them.

Moreover, Heckiss is the only town among those in the Kingdom's administrative areas that's

situated almost next to a monster domain.

After entering the town, Boltor-dono leads us to the inn where we're going to stay the night, but the town's main street is filled with many adventurers. In other words, adventurers, who felt fed up with the congestion at the monster domains near the capital, have come here. However, since the monsters are strong in the domain over here, only those confident in their skills visit this place. Though I hear that occasionally some adventurers overestimate their abilities and die in the monster domain.

"We've arrived. It's the 『Morning Sun and Adventures』."

"It's a truly fitting name, and the inn itself appears to be fairly decent, too."

"After all there's a naggy guy with us who'd give me no break if I chose a weird inn."

"That's only natural. An inn's quality affects our condition on the next day and thereafter."

While chatting like that, Candy-dono and Boltor-dono enter the inn first, and we follow. As soon as we step inside the 『Morning Sun and Adventures』, which probably has been newly built, the scent of freshly planed wood tickles our noses.

"It's truly brand-new, huh?"

"Excuse me. We're Twilight of Dawn. We've booked two rooms here for tonight." Boltor-dono rings the bell at the unmanned counter, leading to a young man appearing from deeper inside.

Since he doesn't look like the owner, I suppose he's an employee.

"Welcome to 『Morning Sun and Adventures』. We have received your reservation. Allow me to guide you to your rooms at once."

Guided by the young man, we head to the guest rooms on the second floor. The first floor has no guest rooms. You can find the reception there, and a dining room, which also serves as a bar. It looks like we're going to take our meals down there.

The employee gives us a run-down of all that heading to our rooms.

"The owner will come greet you during dinner."

"Understood. Hm——m, sharing a room with young men is dreamy!"

"" ... ""

Of the two rooms, Boltor-dono and Dalton-dono share one room. The other room will be occupied by Candy-dono, Bruno and me.

Such times make me hate the status of being a rookie. I'm pretty sure Bruno is with me on this.

"He mentioned that dinner will be served in the dining room on the first floor, didn't he?"

"That's what he said. Let's go downstairs."



"We've reserved a table."

Once we get down to the first floor, Boltor-dono and Dalton-dono have already grabbed a table for six. As soon as the three of us sit down, a female employee visits our table to take our orders. Since she looks like she's around forty years old, she doesn't really fit the image of a waitress.

The dishes are served ten minutes after ordering. The strong flavoring and the amount is catered towards adventurers, so all of us devour the food delightfully. Since the body counts as an adventurer's capital, all of us make sure to get plenty of nutrients.

Bruno also eats a hearty amount, despite having a slender build.

"Thank you very much for booking rooms at our place today." The landlady comes over to greet us as we're having our meal.

Once I lift my face after stopping eating...

"Uuh!"

"Dear customer, is there anything wrong?"

"It's nothing."

The instant I saw the landlady's face, my heart started to throb! I wonder, what's this throbbing in my chest about?

The landlady looks like she's still around twenty. It's amazing for her to run this inn at such an early age.

She's bundled up her long, black hair which spills down alongside the right side of her chest. Her face is very beautiful, and every single action of hers looks erotic. It's not like she's wearing overly revealing clothes, but my heart feels like it's thumping as soon as I look at her.

"Umm..."

Anyway, I'd love to hear her name as soon as possible!

"Is something the matter, customer?"

"Landlady, could you please tell me your name, if you don't mind? I'm Bruno."

"I'm called Lyra, young magician."

"Oh, so you can tell that I'm a magician?"

"Of course."

Bruno! Even though I was just about to ask for her name myself! Besides, what's with that 『Oh, so you can tell』? Even a child could tell that you and I are magicians, seeing how we're both wearing robes.

Now then, I guess you've also fallen in love with her, Bruno. Anyway, I've got to give her a good first impression by greeting her while emphasizing the part about me being a magician, who are popular among women!

It looks...like I've fallen for Lyra-san as well, huh? Come to think of it...how many times has this happened?

I decided at an age of five to marry a maid in the mansion, who was my first love. The second one was my brother's etiquette teacher, but I gave up on her since she was a wife with children.

...I don't remember how often it has happened, but since I'm an adult, I'll make sure to make this love come true, this time for sure!



"She's quite the beauty, that Lyra-san."

"Indeed."

After dinner we've returned to our room, but since I've clearly identified Bruno as being in love with Lyra-san just like I am, I've started to somehow feel wary towards him. Though, it looks like the same can be said about his side, too.

"Ron-chan, Bruno-chan, did you know? Pretty flowers have thorns. Like me."

""Haah...""

I know about that metaphor, but I can't believe this to be true for Lyra-san. Also, I don't feel that judging whether Candy-dono is beautiful is something I should mention at the moment, but...it definitely doesn't mean that I'm putting that decision on hold!

"You see, some time ago I heard a story from the young receptionist."

"Is that so...?"

Bruno seems to think that Candy-dono must have gone to the young man to ask about the landlady while trying to flirt with him.

"She's married."

"Really!?"

"Obviously. You think some unmarried lass would be able to run an inn like this? Right now her seventy years old husband seems to be ailing from illness, but I hear he's resting in the house next to this inn. A wife who's fifty years younger; she must really love him."

It sounds like Lyra-san is twenty years old. A difference of five years with me...it's no problem since I've left home!

The same applies to Bruno as well, though.

"Her husband owns the plot on which this inn stands, and has paid for the construction. Likewise, he owns other property and land in this town. It seems like he's a fairly rich guy."

Candy-dono is quite good to have found out all of this.

"A couple with quite the difference in age, I gotta say," says Boltor-dono after having entered the room, coming from next door.

Did he get interested?

"Boltor-san, what about Dalton-san?"

"That guy's silently servicing his ax, as usual. I mean, he's a taciturn fellow, so yeah."

He's right, neither Bruno nor I can remember having heard his voice before...

"But, let's not talk about Dalton. So, how many wives does that old geezer have besides her?"

"I don't know the details, but it looks like he's got plenty of mistresses. I hear that he's got two official wives."

The true owner of this inn apparently moved from one mistress to the other after losing his first wife in young years.

"His only son comes from his first wife, so I doubt that there will be any succession conflicts."

I see. No matter how much that old man fancies women, if another wife gives birth to his child, he might become unwilling to pass the inheritance to his oldest son. I guess that's why he's been only messing around with mistresses.

"What about that young landlady then?"

"It's something you often get to hear."

Lyra-san's late father had borrowed a big amount of money from that old man, and as he couldn't pay it back, she became the old man's mistress as collateral. However, on top of making Lyra-san

his favorite legal wife, he built this inn for her, and let her run it.

"I hear the old man fell ill immediately after the inn opened. The landlady is managing the inn while nursing her husband."

"Hm——m, and, what about the eldest son?"

"His mother-in-law is younger than his son. And they apparently argued over the establishment of the inn. As it turned into a huge fight, he was forbidden to enter his parent's home. Rich families sure are a pain."

"Personally I've got to raise my hat to you for having found out so much in such a short time, Candy."

"Somehow, you see, I heard about all this when I tried to somehow seduce the receptionist."

I think it's pretty obvious that he's kept bringing up all those stories to defend himself from Candy-dono's approaches.

"Lyra-san seems to be a pitiable person."

"Indeed! What a terrible geezer!"

Forcing Lyra-san to be his wife as security for a loan; what a disgrace of a man!

"How nice it must be to still be as young as you two. If that old man dies, she'll be able to receive a large amount of money, land, and the inn since she had been nursing him. If the eldest son doesn't fork over at least this much, it'll heavily damage his reputation."

"Because he hasn't looked after his sick father, huh?"

Seeing how he's going to inherit his father's legacy as successor, it's actually the rule that the eldest son looks after his father, should he fall sick. Since he's leaving all of that to Lyra-san, it's common sense for him to at least pay her properly later.

"Did you understand the circumstances, you two? Now matter how much of a beauty she might be, don't make a move on a married woman."

"Yep, we can earn some cash here, and I'd like to stay here for a month since we've come all the way out here. Thus, it's okay for you guys to go for other unmarried girls, but that woman is off-limits."

"We'd be driven out of this inn, if you did. And it'd make the search for the next inn difficult, too."

Bruno and I get warned by Candy-dono and Boltor-dono.

Lyra-san is a married woman...how regrettable.

Bruno also looks disappointed.

"Go sleep early in preparation for tomorrow."

"If you can't give up on her, I can take her place, if you want."

"I'm going to sleep!"

"Time to sleep!"

Bruno and I quickly jump under the blanket. We do have respect for Candy-dono as an adventurer, but he's very creepy as an object of romantic interest.



"Welcome back, Klimt-san, Bruno-san."

"We have returned."

"We are back."

"How did the adventuring turn out today?"

"Average, I'd say."

"Yep, average describes it well."

"I am glad to hear that. The preparations for dinner are done."

It's been one week since we've started staying at Lyra-san's inn. When we come back from today's hunt, Lyra-san welcomes us as usual.

Still, all things considered, she's truly a beauty. Her appreciative words and the gentleness of her voice are irresistible. Just how happy would I be if she was single.

As I ponder about that, the young male employee rushes into the entrance hall, completely out of breath.

"Landlady! Your husband!"

"What's the matter with my husband?"

"The maid at your home said that he has apparently passed away!"

"Oh no!!"

Probably because the old man's health had taken a drastic turn while being treated in the house next to this inn, Lyra-san hurries over.

Dinner is properly served by the other employees, but in the end, the male employee, whom Candy-dono has set his eyes on, comes to inform us that the old man died after his health suddenly deteriorated.

"Oh my, that's a big problem. Should we change inns?"

"It will not be any problem for you to stay. Because we plan to refuse any new guests for a while, you will become our only guests starting with tomorrow."

"Wouldn't it be better for us to leave as well then? Won't you be busy with the funeral?"

"Umm...please keep this a secret, but..."

Currently the relationship between Lyra-san and the heir of the dead old man isn't just bad, but the worst. It sounds like she actually intends to return this inn to its normal business operation as fast as possible after the funeral.

"Well, it's also a matter of making a living for her. Very well, we'll take you up on your kindness then."

"Thank you very much."

In the end we've become the only guests of this inn, but for some reason I couldn't hide the happiness welling up within me. After all, I'm sure that my opportunities to chat with Lyra-san are going to increase from now on.

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Two days after the old man's death, the funeral service was set to take place tomorrow. In front of the old man, who's entombed in a coffin for the sake of being carried off to the church tomorrow, his heir has been yelling around.

"You evil wench! As expected, this must have been your work! You bitch have murdered my father!"

Once we enter the place as he was shouting around very loudly, a roughly fifty-years old man is being held back by the young male employee and another guy, both looking to be around twenty years old, from trying to hit Lyra-san. And next to them stands a middle-aged guard looking unsure what to do about all this.

"What's wrong for the guards to get involved in this?"

"Just for caution's sake, we've lightly investigated the cause of Mr. Baldor's death, and then..."

"You're saying it wasn't an illness?"

"Yep, poison was found in his body through 『Detection』."

Then there's no mistake. It's a spell I can't use myself though...

"The wench over there is at fault!"

I see. I suppose that's the reason why the heir of that old man, err, Mr. Baldor is kicking up such a huge fuss.

"So? What's the real story here?"

"There are no suspicious actions pointing at Lyra-san. Someone over at the church is well-informed about things like these. I got them to cooperate with us, and learned that the poison was administered around one hour before Mr. Baldor's death. It took the poison around that long to kill him. At the time of the suspected poisoning Lyra-san had just made Mr. Baldor drink his usual herbal tea, but a maid was nearby, and she couldn't confirm Lyra-san having put anything into the tea."

"It's plain as day that she spiked the tea with poison!" Mr. Baldor's heir seems to be dead set on Lyra-san being the murderer.

He's an unpleasant guy. Bruno is also looking at him with accusatory eyes.

"As for that poison: None of it has been found in the cup with the herbal tea."

"Obviously because the maid washed it!"

"It's a poison that should still trigger a faint reaction even after the cup got washed once. Such a low amount wouldn't have much of an effect on a human either. Either way, a church priest probed for that faint reaction with magic. It'd be impossible for him to miss it."

If you use 『Detection』 very precisely, you can find even the faintest traces of poison. In other words, Lyra-san is innocent.

I'm relieved about this, but I'm not overly happy with Bruno also looking relieved.

"This bitch poisoned my father through some kind of method!"

"You say so, Walm-dono, but you were hated by Mr. Baldor, weren't you? You're just as much of a suspect as she is."

"I...haven't done anything like that!"

He keeps suspecting Lyra-san, and yet for him to be a suspect as well... Is this guy trying to blame his own crime on Lyra-san? Also, it looks like Mr. Baldor's heir is called Walm.

"The church has investigated the cause of Mr. Baldor's death because he entrusted his will to them while still alive. There's no way that the church, as holder of the testament, would hand over the inheritance to the successor if he was proven to be the murderer, no matter what might be written in

there."

Rich people naturally exist among commoners as well. There are many cases of disputes over their inheritance after those people die. If no will exists, the eldest son inherits everything. Well, just like with nobles, it's the norm to hand over a sizable sum to cover the costs of preparations and arrangements to a second son and those younger.

However, if the patriarch of a powerful family writes a will and entrusts it to the church, I hear it quite often happens that the will is carried out with the church being treated as witness. Sometimes the patriarch and the heir are on bad terms, or it's assumed for the official heir to definitely waste the fortunes as he's an outrageously profligate son.

Commoners don't receive an annuity, nor do they have tax income from territories like nobles. They won't be able to maintain their fortune unless they earn money through the family business. That means commoners are much harsher towards profligate sons than nobles.

However, I can't really make out Walm to be someone like that.

"According to the testament entrusted to the church, half of the inheritance is to be given to Lyra-san, and the other half to Frick-dono."

"Frick, you say!? I've been skipped!?"

"Me?"

Frick seems to be one of the guys who has stopped Walm from hitting Lyra-san earlier. It looks like he's Walm's eldest son, and Mr. Baldor's grandson.

"Walm-dono, weren't you not aware of the testament's content? Isn't that the reason why you poisoned Mr. Baldor, and tried to lay the blame on Lyra-san?"

"I see. In that case Frick-san would succeed the full inheritance. Walm-san wouldn't be able to get any of it, but since he's his son, you could think that it'd be the same anyway."

Hmm, that train of thought...wait, Bruno! For him to casually vouch for Lyra-san's innocence...don't tell me, he's aiming for her now that she lost her husband...

Nuoo——oh! I cannot afford to lose here!

"It's the other way around! This wench is trying to lay the blame on me!"

"Dad, Lyra-san has no reason to do anything like that."

"But she does! She's obviously targeting our family's fortune! Frick! Don't get deceived by this bitch!"

Unlike his father, Frick-dono seems to hold no reservations towards Lyra-san.

"The father Walm-san was ordered to be banished from the family after having a huge fight over

Lyra-san with Mr. Baldor, but it looks like it doesn't apply to his son Frick-san. I hear Frick-san has often visited this house, eaten together with Mr. Baldor several times a week, and handed over souvenirs."

"You're quite well-informed, aren't you Candy-san?"

"I excel at obtaining such information after all."

It's got to be that employee... I pity him from the bottom of my heart.

"Souvenirs?"

"I've been regularly peddling to the neighboring villages while managing the buildings and land owned by my grandfather in this town."

"Oh, what an admirable boy."

Without stupidly playing around while managing the inheritance from his grandfather, he's been earning money by running his very own business. He's definitely a diligent youth.

Candy-dono seems to look at him passionately, but I wonder, would such a love really come true one day?

"Frick-san has often brought souvenirs he bought at the villages he visited as a peddler for my husband. It pleased my husband, too. He often said, 『What a great difference compared to Walm who's resting on his laurels with the prospect of obtaining our current assets』."

Lyra-san seems to also harbor a good impression of Frick-dono who regularly showed up at his grandfather's bedside while earnestly working himself.

"At this point in time, there are three suspects. Lyra-san, Walm-dono, and Frick-dono."

"Lyra-san is innocent!"

Even if he might be a guard, I think he's way too rude towards Lyra-san!

"Sorry, but I think the maid, who took care of Mr. Baldor while Lyra-san was doing her job at the inn, is also a suspect, so far as it goes. We ought to carry out an impartial investigation to look for the criminal without being bogged down by prejudices."

"You're right. Having weird prejudices might lead to the wrong conclusions."

With the investigation decided to be continued just like that, the guards resume their work. As Mr. Baldor's funeral has been postponed until the criminal is caught, it's been decided to leave the coffin with the church. I hear the church has asked a magician to use ice magic so as to not allow the corpse to rot.

"It's clear that you are the criminal! They'll definitely catch you venomous snake by the tail!"

While seeing off Walm as he leaves after insulting Lyra-san, I rack my brain what I should do to prove Lyra-san's innocence. If Lyra-san's innocence is proven and Mr. Baldor's mourning can be held...while only focusing on that, I keep pondering how I should move tomorrow.

* * *

"The poison has definitely entered his body through the mouth. If it wasn't Lyra-san's herbal tea, it raises the question of what else he ate or drank. The church investigated the contents of Mr. Baldor's stomach, and found out that he apparently ate lunch around one hour before drinking the tea. Same was confirmed through the maid's testimony."

"Okay, so you're basically saying it's also possible that the poison was contained in the lunch."

"But, in that case the poison's effect hit too late. By the way, Lyra-san wasn't present during lunchtime. Since the inn also has guests eating lunch over there, she was busy with the preparations. This was also confirmed by her employees."

"Did Mr. Baldor eat lunch by himself then?"

"No, yesterday Frick-dono visited as well. He apparently prepared lunch with an ingredient he brought over as a souvenir. We've heard about the menu from the maid. It matches with what the church found out through the stomach inspection."

"However, seeing how lunch and tea were both inside his stomach, they couldn't find out which of either was poisoned, right?"

"Yep, that's the problem."

"..."



We had a day off on the following day, though it didn't stem from this incident having taken place. Using that opportunity, Bruno and I started to move in order to prove Lyra-san's innocence. Beforehand we had received permission from Candy-dono to do as we like.

Still, I must admit, Bruno is quite the smart guy. He's discussing difficult issues with the elderly guard investigator we met the other day.

Nothing less of the magician class' runner-up. In my case...it'd be faster to start counting from the bottom. Still!

If I allow Bruno to only get all the good parts, the plan for me to prove Lyra-san's innocence, earn brownie points with her, and get together with her after the mourning period ends...will fall apart. I mustn't allow Bruno to steal a march on me!

"By the way, what about the tableware, cookware, and remaining ingredients of that lunch?"

"Those didn't show any poison response. Just for caution's sake, we also investigated the inn's cookware, tableware, and ingredients as well as the palms of Lyra-san and her employees, but all of them showed no poison reaction. We're at a complete dead-end right now."

Mr. Baldor was poisoned to death, but they don't know how he got poisoned. Since the old guard in charge of the investigation had his priest friend search all over with magic, you can say there's no doubt about the validity.

"Two hours before Mr. Baldor's death, Frick-san ate lunch with him, staying for around one hour. Almost passing each other, Lyra-san, who had finished her busy lunch time at the inn, came over to make Mr. Baldor drink the herbal tea."

"What kind of herbal tea is it?"

"It's a local product sold in the far, western Holmia Margraviate. Since it's being sold after a long transport, it's an expensive tea. I haven't drunk it yet, but a priest at the church knew about it. Apparently a priest originating from the Holmia Margraviate. He says the elderly are often drinking it back home since it's good for their health."

"So it's truly just normal herb tea. That means Lyra-san has indeed let her husband drink it for health reasons."

"I heard this from the maid, but it looks like Mr. Baldor hated mate tea for its faint sweetness. Since the tea in question lacks sweetness, he liked it. It seems like he heard about this tea from Lyra-san before becoming bedridden, and started drinking it regularly since then."

In short, it'd be difficult to spike that herb tea. It'd be too easy to expose it by taste. It's also proof that Lyra-san hasn't poisoned Mr. Baldor.

"It's a difficult case."

"Indeed."

"If it's not the tea, the next candidate would be the lunch, right?"

"But, he ate lunch a full hour before drinking the tea. With the effect of the detected poison, Mr. Baldor would have been dead by the time Lyra-san made the tea for him."

A time difference of one hour...speaking of poisoning, that's a rather aristocratic way of killing. According to my father, it fairly often happens that the nobles, who were considered by society to have died from sickness, were actually killed by poison, and I also hear that many among nobles excel in knowledge about poisons.

I feel like I heard such a story from a noble relative in my childhood...or maybe I'm mistaken? I've got to recall some useful knowledge!

"Oh, right! I have heard that there are medicines which can lengthen the time until a poison shows its effect!"

For example, poisoned nobles would try to find out the nature of a poison. In order to not allow a tracking of the culprit by calculating backwards from the time when the poison showed its effect after getting in contact with it, the poisoner would adjust the effect's manifestation time by having the target take another component alongside the poison. It's possible to speed up or slow down the time for a poison to show its effect, but I heard it's difficult to calculate the precise quantity and to properly neutralize the effect of those poisons that can be taken alongside the neutralizer.

But, the poison used here is one of those very types. And as long as you properly check it in advance, the chance to fail is rather low.

"You mean changing the time for the poison to affect the target with the "Addition Medicine"? I've heard of its existence, but there's few precedents of it being used."

It might be just natural for the guard members of this town to have little experience with it since they have few cases involving wealthy merchants and nobles like it happens at the capital.

Father told me that the Addition Medicine is a special drug which isn't easily obtainable.

"And, in that case it'd be problematic to put it into a drink like herbal tea."

Since it's already difficult to just blend in the poison, depending on the type, it'd easily get spotted if another type of medicine gets added. If pushed to say, I think it'd be easier to add them to food.

"What if something capable of extending the time for the poison to show its effect had been added to an ingredient?"

"You're saying Frick-san is suspicious? But, you see, he's also..." Bruno seems to not consider Frick-dono to be the culprit.

He's been taking care of his sick grandfather while tackling his own work as a diligent, excellent man. He's also kind to Lyra-san. There's no way that a person like him has killed his grandfather who was actually dotting on him.

I also agree with Bruno.

"But, Frick-dono does have a motive, too. If he can put the blame for the murder of his grandfather on Lyra-san, all of the fortune will become his."

"Once you start suspecting people, there's no end to it."

"That's what my job entails. As soon as people think you're slightly suited for this, you get immediately transferred over. Anyway, it's definitely easier as work requiring physical strength and stamina decreases in proportion."

The guards assign the right person to the right place as in having those who are young and durable handle the arrest of thieves and hoodlums, while leaving the investigation of cases like our current

one to people with a good discernment like the elderly guard in front of us.

"When I thought that it might be a smart move to listen to the stories of the surrounding people who are related to this, now that it had reached this point, I was told something very interesting by a certain person."

"Something very interesting?"

"Frick-dono has a village he often frequents as a peddler. This place seems to be a production area for various kinds of medicinal plants."

It sounds like there's a person who testified that Frick-dono would often stock things, saying that he could turn it into money later.

"Who told you that?"

"The young, male employee at the inn's reception. A person called Maxel."

I suppose he's talking about that young, handsome guy who's unhappy over having drawn Candy-dono's affection to himself. Right now I've heard his name for the first time.

"How come he knows about this?"

"He said that Mr. Baldor and Frick-dono were talking about the medicinal plants of that village at one time when he went over to call Lyra-san. It was a talk about whether Frick-dono should buy up the plants more aggressively during the harvest season. Some of those plants can also be turned into poison, but Mr. Baldor told Frick-dono to not do that since it'd just earn him distrust from the authorities."

All of this sounds to me like a grandfather giving his cute grandchild advice.

"However, it's a fact that the village, where Frick-dono procures his medicinal plants, also has the plants needed to extract the poison that killed Mr. Baldor in the end."

In other words, circumstantial evidence exists.

"This would make Frick-dono a suspect, but since the poison in question has been detected on him, it's ultimately just a deduction, right?"

"Certainly you're right there...how did it go?" At this point the subordinate of this guard shows up, and whispers something into his ear. "It sounds like one soup plate has vanished from the kitchen in this house. I actually asked my men to check back with the maid."

"You're saying the plate was taken out so as to not allow the poison to spotted on it with 『Detect』?"

"That's what it looks like."

Moreover, yet another young guard arrives, and whispers something into the ear of the elderly

guard.

"Just now my men found the soup plate in question buried beneath a tree in the garden when searching the house where Walm-dono and Frick-dono live. It seems that the plate also gave a poison reaction to 『Detect』. I think this settles it."

"The appearances of others can sometimes be deceiving."

"So true."

For the grandson, who worked earnestly to gain his grandfather's trust, to be the criminal that poisoned that grandfather...was he possibly truly unhappy with receiving only half of the fortune he should have usually received in full?

I've often heard that the greed of humans knows no bounds, but this is a case that makes me really feel the truth behind that saying.



Thus the case was safely resolved in one day. The culprit is Frick, the grandson of Mr. Baldor.

When he ate lunch with his grandfather, he added the poison he had obtained through peddling to the soup bowl. Later he secretly carried the plate out of the house to not let it fall in the hands of the investigating guards. It was also possible for Frick, who's been procuring medicinal plants, to get his hand on the Addition Medicine to delay the poison effect.

Since Mr. Baldor's stomach contents have been secured as proof according to the elderly guard, we'd clearly know the truth as soon as they finish the analysis.

"I'm the criminal? I buried the plate, which carried the poison that killed grandfather, in the garden to hide it away? I haven't done any of that!"

"But, you see, the evidence matches this conclusion."

"That's absurd! My son would never do something like that!"

"Mr. Walm, you're suspected of being an accomplice, so I'd like you to cooperate with us in the investigation."

"I don't care what you want! My son and I are not guilty!"

"(I can't imagine it from Frick's personality, but it kinda feels quite possible if you consider who gave birth to him)."

"(No kidding)."

The inheritance dispute is a case that makes me wonder how the hearts of people can get so dark.

"It's unthinkable for Frick-san to do something like that! He isn't a person who would do something like that..."

"But, Lyra-san."

All things considered, Lyra-san is a gentle person. She pleads for Frick even though she's been suspected as well. She's truly just like a goddess!

"Everyone, you shouldn't let others trick you so easily."

"Candy-san?"

"Candy-dono!"

All of a sudden Candy-dono, who should have left us to our own devices once we decided to selfishly assist in the investigation, barges in at this point.

"What do you mean by that, Candy-dono?" Bruno asks Candy-dono about his intention.

"It means that Frick-san isn't the criminal. I mean, Frick-san has never obtained any poison. Right?"

"Yes. On that day the medicinal plants in that village still hadn't grown up, so I bought grandfather's beloved namasa, and came back. It should have been used for the herb fry containing several types of herbs."

Asking the villagers should make it immediately clear whether Frick procured medicinal plants that can be used to make the poison in question. Candy-dono explained that the guards could simply check up on that later.

"Yep. I have analyzed the contents of Baldor-dono, and discovered namasa and other herbs in there."

No way...for Candy-dono to have done something like that while we didn't see him...

"But, the poison has actually come from the soup plate that was hidden away, you know? I can't really imagine that anyone but Frick could have applied the poison on the plate."

"Is that really so? The effect of the poison was delayed by an hour because of the Addition Medicine. That's the explanation here, but some types of Addition Medicine can't be found with 『Detect』 either. In reality, I couldn't spot it in the stomach contents."

"Because it was digested by the stomach, right?"

"You could also consider that the Addition Medicine wasn't included there from the very start. This kind of medicine is troublesome to obtain."

"But, how was the poison effect delayed by an hour then?" Bruno speaks up fervently since Lyra-san would immediately become the prime suspect if he were to lose the verbal argument with

Candy-dono here.

I don't believe Lyra-san to be the culprit either. I get my mental preparations ready to argue Candy-dono down when push comes to shove.

Going by the circumstances, Frick is definitely the criminal here.

"It's a theory based on the idea that the time until the poison became effective wasn't altered."

"What do you mean?"

"It's simple. The poison was inside, or rather got produced inside his stomach one hour before Mr. Baldor passed away."

"I don't understand what you mean."

How's poison being produced inside a stomach all of a sudden?

"The easy explanation is that the poison that killed Mr. Baldor can often be found in nature. You can get it from several plants, insects, fish, and worms. Those creatures produce that poison to protect themselves from their natural enemies.

Candy-dono talks just like a scholar.

"In addition to extracting the poison from those creatures, there's also a case where combining components contained in two rare plants result in the poison."

"In other words, if you eat those two plants at the same time, the specific components combine inside the stomach, turning into poison?"

"Oh my, you're a smart boy, Ron-chan. You're quite quick witted when it counts."

Even I can come up with this much.

"Two means, the herbal tea Lyra-san had Mr. Baldor drink every day, and a plant that was included in the lunch one hour before the teatime...in this case, a herb that was used for the namasa herb fry?"

"You're perceptive, Bruno-chan."

It's only logical since Bruno is smarter than me.

"In that case, the culprit would be Frick-san after all, no?"

"I haven't done anything! The ingredients for that lunch were only everyday ingredients you can find anywhere!" Frick continues to loudly assert his own innocence.

"Lyra-san had Mr. Baldor drink the herbal tea every day for around two years. Mr. Baldor drank it regularly because he actually liked it himself. There's nothing unusual about that. On the other

hand, Frick-san knew about the composition of the tea which Mr. Baldor drank every day. It's only natural since he's been procuring medicinal plants. He should be easily capable of preparing a herb that would produce the poison if you combine it with the components in the tea." The elderly guardsman has apparently zeroed in on Frick.

"True, the herbal tea had been ordered for two years. It was impossible for Lyra-san what kind of lunch Frick-san had with Mr. Baldor."

As Bruno says, Lyra-san was busy preparing lunch for the inn's guests around that time. She didn't have the spare time to go back home. The guard investigators also confirmed that the inn's guest had testified for her having worked in the dining room on the first floor all the time.

As expected, Lyra-san is innocent.

"Once I examined the stomach contents, it became apparent. Though it's a somewhat special herb. It seems like you can only harvest small amounts of it in this area, and its main habitat is the village where Frick-san often procures medicinal plants. Apparently they can't get enough of it to sell it, and thus the villagers use it to remove the smell when grilling fish. As someone regularly frequenting that village, Frick-san should know all that."

"I don't know anything about this! Various types of herbs and fragrant grasses as well as such rarer ones exist in that village, but it's my first time to hear anything about one of those turning into poison after being combined with a component in the herbal tea!"

"But, Lyra-san should know even less about that."

She's the landlady of an inn, and not some researcher.

"What about the herbal tea? That's a special product of the Kingdom's western part!"

"It's rare around here, but it's not like you can't get your hands on it. In fact, some stores in the town also sell it. Also, a part of the herbs that we don't know quite well either remained undigested in Mr. Baldor's stomach, but once I tried to mix them with the herbal tea after extracting the component, it turned into poison. No amateur would know about such a reaction."

The only one having such an expertise is Frick as someone dealing with medicinal plants.

"When we investigated the ingredients remaining in the kitchen, we also found the leftovers of the mix of various types of herbs, which was used for the namasa herb fry, and the herb in question was also among them. I can only think that Frick-san has prepared this herb to be used as an ingredient of the lunch's fry." The elderly guardsman seems mostly convinced of Frick being the culprit.

"If Lyra-san were to be arrested as the criminal, Frick would receive all of Mr. Baldor's inheritance!"

"Indeed. He has plenty of reasons to do this."

"I'd say it's decided with this."

Once the elderly guardsman makes a signal, the young guards seize Frick and Walm.

"I haven't done anything!"

"My son and I are innocent!"

"We will listen to your stories at the guard station. Take them away."

"I'm not guilty!"

"That evil wench is obviously the culprit here——e!"

While watching father and son being restrained and taken away to the guard station, I rejoice from the bottom of my heart over Lyra-san having been proven innocent.

"Bruno, you too, huh?"

"Klimt, you too, huh?"

However, our fight over Lyra-san hasn't finished yet.



With Frick, and Walm who's considered to be his accomplice, having been arrested, the case has finally started to head towards its conclusion. Currently we're the only guests of the inn.

When we're having our dinner in the dining room on the first floor, Lyra-san comes over to greet us while wearing an apologetic expression.

"We have caused you a great amount of trouble."

"It's nothing you need to worry about."

"Indeed! Lyra-san, you haven't done anything wrong!"

"That Frick is a truly vulgar man to try laying the blame of his crime on someone else!"

What a modest woman she is, despite being a victim herself. No matter how many years are going to pass, I'm sure I'll make her happy.

I won't lose to Bruno!

"The funeral service for Mr. Baldor is still not over yet, so things are going to be hectic from now on, right?"

"Yes. It looks like it has been decided for me to serve as the chief mourner."

Seeing how the son and grandson of the deceased were arrested as his murderers, it's only reasonable for Lyra-san, his wife, to be the chief mourner.

"Are you going to be alright?"

"Maxel and the others will help me." Lyra-san explains to Candy-dono.

Since they're Lyra-san's allies, I can feel relieved.

"Well, your relatives are all in such a messy state."

"Indeed..."

Immediately after Walm and Frick were taken away by the guards, their relatives found out that Lyra-san would apparently receive all of Mr. Baldor's inheritance, and immediately started to launch cruel slander against her. Even though they wouldn't get any of the inheritance even if Walm and his son were innocent anyway. What a bunch of good-for-nothings.

As I thought, Lyra-san needs a strong man to protect her!

"Still, Maxel-chan, eh...?" Once again Candy sends a passionate look towards the employee who's currently working in the dining room.

That man seems to be as troubled by Candy-dono's advances as ever.

"Maxel-chan looks like a reliable guy."

"After all, he is in a position where he manages the other employees."

I guess that essentially makes him the number two.

"I see. Was he employed in another inn before coming to this one?"

"No, before that he peddled between towns and villages as a merchant."

"Was he an acquaintance of yours back then?"

"We were born in the same village. It is not like we were that close back when we both still lived in the village, though. Once I learned about his origin at the time of his employment, I felt a certain level of familiarity with him."

"Such things also happen among adventurers."

I suppose he's talking about getting close after talking and finding out about coming from the same place, and then becoming good friends with just the old stories being enough to bridge the distance. Unfortunately it's nothing I have ever experienced, however.

"Have you decided when you're going to hold the funeral service?" Candy-dono asks Lyra-san.

"In three days. There's a lot to prepare. Fortunately the church is taking care of the corpse."

Since a lot has happened, it's inevitable for the funeral to get delayed.

"If it's in three days, it'd allow us to participate as well. I wonder if this is also some kind of fate at work here."

"Thank you very much. I am sure my husband will be delighted over this in the other world." Lyra-san bows at us.

As always, she's a woman with a fine conduct.

"Are all of you okay with this as well?"

"Of course."

"I'll gladly take part in it."

"Sure."

"...(nod)."

All members of Twilight of Dawn agree to participate in the funeral service, and then we decide to take off for the remaining three days until then.

* * *

"Shall we go to the church then?"

"That's fine and all, but Candy, what have you been up to in the last two days?"

"It's a maiden's secret."

"Dude, that's what you always say!"

Three days later, on the day of the funeral, we leave the inn and head over to the church where the funeral service is going to be held. On the way Boltor-dono asks Candy-dono about the reason why we didn't do any work in the last two days.

But, Candy-dono dodges the question with his usual excuse of "maiden's secret."

"Now, now, Boltor-san. I'm sure Candy-san must believe that we've become a bit of a combat asset now."

"Bruno-chan, you've definitely become a combat asset after you entered our party, but you didn't

become experienced as an adventurer. For now it's alright, so I also took a little time off for my "maiden's secret." Same applies to you as well, Ron-chan."

"So it was a testing of abilities for the two rookies, eh?"

"Look, in this world you never know what tomorrow might bring. It's a training to see whether they can properly cope with any situation even if one of them should die in an unforeseen accident. They've passed this."

"Even so, you could have at least told me about it in advance!"

"If I had done so, you'd have focused on it, right Boltor?"

Once we arrived at the church while having such a conversation, the venue was still rather deserted, probably because there was still some time left until the funeral service would begin.

"Thank you very much for attending today." Lyra-san greets us once she notices our arrival.

"(Lyra-san sure looks pretty in her mourning dress.)"

I also agree with that, but Bruno is ogling her way too much.

"(Ron-chan, you're staring too much like a pervert.)"

Have I been ogling her so much that it'd warrant a warning by another person?

As I'm wondering about that, someone unexpected enters the church. It's the elderly guard who has been investigating the murder case.

He should be busy interrogating Walm and Frick. So, why has he come here despite of that? Did those two possibly admit their crimes?

"Thank you for freeing up some of your busy schedule to attend." Lyra-san greets him as well, though looking somewhat surprised to see him here.

"My condolences for your loss. Though it's been only few days since we saw each other last." The guard greets back while looking at Mr. Baldor's coffin which has been laid on a pedestal in front of us. "It must have been hard to have been suddenly appointed as chief mourner."

"Yes, I barely managed to cope with it thanks to the help of my employees."

"I see. Your most trusted employee Maxel-san as well, huh?"

"Yes..."

Lyra-san looks puzzled as to why he's suddenly brought up Maxel's name here.

Maybe he's suspecting the relationship between her and Maxel-dono as part of his occupational disease? If that's the case, it'd be really low!

Lyra-san had explained that she wasn't that close to Maxel-dono.

"Oh, that makes sense. I've heard that you told Candy-dono that you two weren't all that close despite coming from the same village, but in reality you've promised to marry each other, haven't you? I've been told that you two would have been able to marry normally, if not for Mr. Baldor. What's your take on that? Are you going to get angry at me, saying that it's all lies?"

"..."

Lyra-san remains silent towards the guard's questioning. But, now way! For Lyra-san and Maxel-dono to have had such a relationship...

"I heard from Candy-dono that he found some parts in your stories a bit suspicious, and since he thought that you might have told him lies, he actually went to investigate at the village. There he learned about this from villagers knowing you two well. They mentioned that you two swore to spend the future together. However, Lyra-san, your home was burdened with a huge debt which resulted in you being given to Mr. Baldor, your creditor."

"..."

"Maxel-dono, your real name is Izuruk, right? Having your lover stolen from you, you left your birthplace and became a peddler to earn money. But, shouldering Lyra-san's debt with what you could earn yourself as a peddler would be impossible. Unable to give up on her, he falsified your name, and began to work at Mr. Baldor's place. Or am I wrong?"

"..."

Maxel-dono also remained silent towards the guard's questioning.

"I don't think it's really necessary what you two, unable to give up on each other, schemed. The birthplace of those two isn't that much of a village that Frick-san would go visit it to procure medicinal plants, but medicinal plants and herbs still grow over there in the wild. Maxel-san, no, Izuruk-san, you took days off and secretly collected wild grasses in the valleys around your home village, didn't you? There were witnesses among the villagers. Once I had Candy-dono search the area, he found the same herb as the one used to kill Mr. Baldor. What do you think about this fact?"

"..."

Maxel-dono, err, Izuruk stays silent. Still, for Candy-dono to have used his holiday to do something like this...

"Indeed, Lyra-san's alibi is perfect. She worked all noon at the inn. Instead of her, Izuruk-san, you secretly took the herb, which you had picked up at the village and dried, to the kitchen of Mr. Baldor's mansion. As a trusted employee, you occasionally showed up in the house for the sake of calling Lyra-san, and thus the maid didn't seem to suspect anything about you being in the mansion. As a matter of fact, a maid saw you inside the house on that day. You told her, 『We've suddenly run out of seasonings at the inn, so Lyra-san told me to come get some from here』, didn't you? Frick-san had left his original blend of dried herbs and medicinal plants in the kitchen for it to be

regularly used for the cooking. Izuruk-san, you added the herb in question to that, and this blend was then used in the namasa herb fry. By itself it'd just be a common herb, but if you mixed it with the herbal tea prepared by Lyra-san, it'd turn into poison. Which reminds me, Izuruk-san, I heard you got hired by Mr. Baldor two years ago, after his health deteriorated. It sounds like you also dealt with the herbal tea in question as peddler. Also, when it turned into a huge uproar after Mr. Baldor's death, did you inform Walm-san's family as the number two of the inn? If you consider the bad relationship between Lyra-san and Walm-san, it wasn't all that strange, but did you possibly carry the soup bowl, which was buried in Walm-san's garden, with you at that time? Taking advantage of the uproar, it'd be trifle to steal a plate from the kitchen, right? Now then, do you have objections to any of that?"

In short, he's saying Lyra-san and Izuruk poisoned Mr. Baldor? For the sake of Lyra-san freeing herself from Mr. Baldor to get together with Izuruk. Moreover, for them having prepared this crime over a period of two years...

"However, if it's just the evidence and testimonies you've got now, it's very likely that the murder will be deemed to be an act of madness by Izuruk himself."

"You're right! I don't know anything about all of this! Certainly I'll admit that I had such a relationship with him in the past. But, that's a matter of the past. I hired him at the inn while allowing him to falsify his name because he was in distress with his peddling not going well at all. He threatened to tell my husband about the past if I didn't hire him..."

"You're a terrible man!"

Bruno sure is a smart guy to notice the fact that Izuruk had poisoned Mr. Baldor in an act of desperation after he threatened Lyra-san into employing him under a false name.

"Izuruk-san, who has worked as a peddler, naturally possesses knowledge about medicinal plants. On the other hand, Lyra-san doesn't possess such knowledge. It must have been Izuruk who recommended the herbal tea to her two years ago. Given that it's no more than a regular tea by itself which is often drunk in the west, it's highly unlikely for Lyra-san to have had any second thoughts about it either."

Certainly, the herb that turns the tea into a dangerous combination can't be found growing in the wild that often. Izuruk knew that it's growing naturally close to his village, and since it's a herb growing at the village, where Frick-san procures his medicinal plants, he would be suspected...I guess that's the kind of setup it was.

"If you could lay the blame on Frick-san, who was supposed to receive half of Mr. Baldor's inheritance, Lyra-san would get everything. You thought that you'd be able to get back together after things had calmed down. You're a truly despicable man!"

"Shame on you as a man!"

Bruno and I severely criticize Izuruk for his wrongdoing.

"I only followed Lyra's instructions!"

"I know nothing of this."

See, I told you! For him to make Lyra-san cry...a woman's tears are pretty, but one must avoid making them cry as much as possible.

"You do not know when to give up!"

"You should confess your crime. It'd be better to not think that you can get away with me, a magician, being present."

Bruno! Once again you're showing off in front of Lyra-san!

"Okay, oka——ay, Ron-chan, Bruno-chan, calm down. Since you're still young, you want to believe in the pretty young lady you love. Buuut, I'm also a maiden, so I know. A woman's tears are scary."

"Indeed. Today I came here to arrest Lyra-san and Izuruk-san."

"Me!?"

"You're still going to feign innocence? Very well. I guess we'll have another person join the conversation. Frick-san."

Once the guard speaks up, Frick and Walm, who were supposed to be restrained, enter the venue of the funeral.

"Lyra! It cannot be! I haven't heard anything about your relationship with Maxel! You said that you'd live together with me once the situation calmed down!"

""""""""""What??"""""""""""

Everyone's eyes turn into dots because of Frick's sudden statement.

Lyra-san and Frick had promised each other to spend their life together?

"You dumb son! You got totally tricked by that evil wench!" Walm angrily roars at Frick for some reason.

"I mean, look, I wondered whether a young man such as Frick-san would really visit a sick, old man that frequently, but if this could serve as an excuse to have a clandestine meeting with Lyra-san, I could agree with him happily visiting as often as possible."

"Lyra! I didn't hear anything about this! Did you intend to shove the entire crime on me for the sake of monopolizing the entire fortune of that geezer with his grandson!? Curse you for making me alone play the role of the bad guy here!"

"Lyra, you don't love only me?"

"Lyra! You're also an accomplice to the crime, aren't you!? You wanted to somehow kill the old

geezer two years ago! You told me that we'd be able to marry if we got rid of the old crook!"

"..."

Being showered with heated words by Frick and Izuruk, Lyra-san remains silent. I'm sure she must be frightened after getting hounded like this by two men.

"Now listen, Ron-chan, it's bad for you to get deceived by only looking at a woman's appearance, and outer conduct. You too, Bruno-chan,"

"Okay..."

"Yes..."

Izuruk presses onto Lyra-san, thinking that she's trying to escape responsibility by laying the blame on someone else. Frick-dono couldn't explain himself well at the time of his arrest as he actually had such a relationship with Lyra-san going.

This case has truly followed the standard script of crime stories. The young wife of a rich, old man carefully planned the crime over a period of two years while involving her former lover in it. Before the funeral started, Lyra-san and Izuruk were arrested by the guards, resulting in Bruno's and my love ending in a very disappointing way.



The day after Mr. Baldor's funeral we revel in our feelings of self-pity in the dining hall on the inn's first floor.

"...This world is so vain."

"Women are scary..."

"It's good that we took a break today. You two would have been of absolutely no use."

"It can't be helped. Both of them are still young. Oh, right. I can comfort them in a special way."

"Please at least spare them from that. Right, Dalton?"

"...(*nod*)."

It seems like Lyra-san and Izuruk are being harshly interrogated by the guards. It's almost settled that the two have killed Mr. Baldor together, and thus Walm and Frick were released.

In the end, all of Mr. Baldor's assets will be inherited by his grandson. It's also been decided that he'll run this inn from now on. He doesn't appear to have any experience with managing an inn, but it looks like the remaining employees are going to do their best while lending him their strength.

He had a secret relationship with his step-grandmother, hiding it from his grandfather who loved her, and made a promise with her to get together if his grandfather died. Given the details of the secret, Frick couldn't quite argue for his own case, and got arrested first because of that. Right now he must feel like crawling under a rock.

We, who condemned Frick while running our mouths in total trust of her innocence, were quite hilarious as well. We apologized to him after the funeral, but he forgave us with a laugh. It's probably because Bruno and I fell for Lyra-san's seductive charm just like him.

"I don't feel like doing anything."

"Women are frightening!"

While gazing at the cup with half the juice drunk, I heal my emotional scars together with Bruno.

"Is Liz going to become like that as well?"

"I don't think that Liz-jou would do anything like that."

Bruno's little sister, Liz-jou, is a very good girl. I've been watching her gallantly tackling the troublesome tasks of cleaning our house, doing the laundry, and preparing food every now and then.

"Sooner or later you two are going to find a nice woman as well. Just like me."

Come to think of it, Boltor-dono is married. I wonder what kind of wife he's got?

"It's just as Boltor says. If you like, I can give you my special consolation, you know?"

"No, thanks."

I feel like refraining from that, and I'm sure so does Bruno.

While thinking that, I drain down the rest of my juice.

"How about a refill of juice, customer?"

"Ooohh! Gladly!"

"Certainly."

It's a waitress I see here for the first time! What a lovely girl she is!

"I'll also take a refill? Are you new here?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"I'm called Sandy. It looks like you are going to stay here for a bit, dear customers, so please take

care of me."

"Nice to meet you. I'm called Bruno. I'm the magician of Twilight of Dawn."

"A magician? How amazing."

"You're exaggerating."

Bruno! You have already recovered and are trying to steal a march on the woman I considered to be a nice girl!

"I'm likewise a magician of Twilight of Dawn. Klimt is my name."

"Two magicians? That's dreamy."

"You are exaggerating."

Bruno! I'm going to win the heart of that girl!

"They've really recovered in like no time, haven't they?"

"Right? That's youth for you."

In the end, we remained in this area for another month, but Sandy-jou has a fiancée, resulting in Bruno and me getting shot down once again.