

## **Chapter 9 - Search for the Mysterious Gigantic Life-Form**

"Good morning!"

"Good morning, Ron-chan. You really flourished in yesterday's martial arts tournament, didn't you?"

"I only lasted up to the fourth match, didn't I?"

"Isn't it great to have gone this far? I also entered that contest ten years ago, but I lost in the third match."

"You did, Candy-dono?"

"Well, ten years ago I wasn't as strong as I'm nowadays."

Yesterday I abhorred to my family's circumstances, or rather fulfilled my duty by entering the martial arts tournament. I'm a noble, and moreover the second son of the Armstrong family, an authority among the military-oriented nobles, so not participating was no option, and thus I joined the tournament after being permitted to have a day off.

Because nobles and noble youths have to enter the sword section, I participated with a sword, which doesn't fit my usual fighting style, and somehow managed to advance to the fourth match.

"I watched the matches. Warren-kun ended up winning the sword section at the young age of twelve. What a cute and strong boy he was."

"Haah..."

The noteworthy contestant this time might have been the young Warren who defeated all the veteran participants in his tournament debut and won the championship. Since he's a noble youth, it's deemed that he'll be scouted by His Highness the Crown Prince.

I've also seen his bouts, but if you watch such a prodigy, feelings of frustrations and similar don't even well up within you.

"Ron-chan, introduce him to me next time."

"I'm not acquainted with him."

Given that there's many nobles around, it's not like I know each and every single one.

"Aww, what a bummer. Okay, let's talk about the next job then."

Once we head to 『Mistletoe of Night』 where we always gather, everyone except for Candy-dono and me is already waiting for us.

"Klimt, you made an appearance in yesterday's tournament, didn't you?"

"You watched it as well, Bruno? It was my duty as a noble."

Otherwise, I wouldn't have participated. And, I won't ever participate again either.

"Now then, about our next job. We are to catch a 『Pasto』."

"Pasto?"

It's the name of a monster I've heard for the first time.

"Do you know that monster, Bruno?"

"I've heard about it for the first time as well..."

Unfortunately, Bruno has no clue about Pasto either.

"They're called pasto because they live in the 『Pastour Lake』 located slightly south from the capital. Currently it's unknown whether they're animals or monsters. They're quite big, and have been sighted regularly, I hear."

Pasto because they live in the Pastour Lake; what an uncreative way of naming them.

"We're going to catch those unidentified life-forms? Not kill them?"

"It sounds like they want them alive if possible, but at worst, it's fine as long as there's still a corpse left? It's a request that has been put up for more than 30 years now. I wonder whether it's going to be difficult to accomplish this time around as well."

"They want us to secure the corpses?"

"The Pastour Lake isn't famous by any means, but so far as it goes, it's a tourist attraction. I'm told they want to stuff and then exhibit the corpses, if we obtain any."

Are tourists going to show up to look at a stuffed version of something like that?

"Klimt, you know this lake?"

"No, not at all."

There exist several lakes and rivers famous for their summer resorts where noble and rich people visit, but I hear about a Pastour Lake for the first time. It must be a rather tiny summer resort.

"How about not accepting such a request? Right, Dalton?"

"...\*nod\*"

Boltor-dono complains to Candy-dono who's accepted a request that doesn't seem achievable, no matter how you look at it. Dalton-dono nods, seemingly sharing Boltor-dono's opinion.

"Well, it's got the goal to create a debt with the adventurer's guild, and since there's a monster domain nearby, our primary objective will be to hunt over there."

"A debt?"

"It's a request no one has completed for more than 30 years, right? The client seems to hurry the adventurer guild every year. The Pastour Lake lies in the territory of a certain Viscount, and since the client is a noble, they can't turn him down completely. The idea here is to appeal that we're doing our best finishing the request by regularly accepting it."

"Now that's quite blunt."

"Also, if we take on that request, it'll be fine for us to not pay any taxes for the loot we got in the nearby monster domain. It's just going to be the fee for the adventurer's guild. Isn't that a wonderful bargain?"

"If it has such a benefit, I suppose it's alright. Right, Dalton?"

"...\*nod\*"

I see, accepting the request for the pasto search is a trick to evade taxes. Candy-dono is a shrewd man.

"Well, if there wasn't at least that much of a catch, I wouldn't have accepted a request like that one. Oh, right. Since the work at the Pastour Lake is kinda like playing around anyway, how about you invite your little sister, Bruno-chan? She's usually taking care of you guys, isn't she?"

"Yes..."

"Ron-chan, you as well, okay? You've left home, but you should meet your family every once in a while."

He's right. We're certainly indebted to Liese-jou for regularly cooking, cleaning, and doing the laundry for us. It's not a bad idea to invite her to Pastour Lake for a summer trip as a little thanks. I haven't seen Nina for more than a year now either, so it's a fact that I must have made her feel lonely.

"Is that okay, Candy-san?"

"In other words, I'm telling you that it's a job where it's fine for your little sisters to show up."

"Okay, I understand."

It'd be strange for huge monsters to come out at a lake that's not a monster domain, and because they haven't been spotted in more than 30 years, it's actually odd instead. The pasto might have been mistaken for big driftwoods.

"Bruno-chan, Ron-chan, it's also fine for you to invite your girlfriends over. Even acquaintances and friends work."

"I'll keep it in mind."

"I will consider it."

I don't have any women among my acquaintances...except for Nina and Liese-jou...

This was how we left for Pastour Lake for a combination of work and summer trip.

\* \* \*

"Master, it went well."

"You're right, Gettol. We finally succeeded in inviting that famous adventurer party 『Twilight of Dawn』 to the Pastour Lake. The son of the Armstrong house is also part of that party. This time it should work out as planned, for sure."

"Yes, this time for sure. Everything is being prepared as we speak."

"I see. We'll make it succeed at any cost. For the sake of realizing our ambition which has been passed on for two generations of our Viscount Bart House."

"Indeed. The late predecessor had been very worried about this as well, even on his deathbed."

"We'll get it done this time!"

"Yes!"

We have to finish all the preparations until the Twilight of Dawn arrives here. And then our Bart Viscount House will finally fulfill its ambition!

\* \* \*

"Thanks for always taking care of my big brother. My name is Lieselotte."

"You have my deepest gratitude for the invitation on this fine occasion. How has...Klimt-onii-sama...been faring so far?"

"It's all fine since he's basically an excellent adventurer. It sure becomes shiny and florid if you add three women to the mix."

"Three?"

"Liese-chan, Nina-chan, and me. Boltor, do you have some problem with your eyes?"

"Sorry to say, but great eyesight is my only redeeming feature. I'm using a bow after all."



After we finished the work in the monster domain which is located in the same Bart Viscounty as the Pastour Lake, we tried to head over to the lake for the sake of having some fun under the pretext of work.

Following Candy-dono's advice, Bruno invited his sister over, and I did the same with Nina since I don't know any other women that I could invite. As for Nina, I honestly just planned to give it a try since I didn't have anything to lose anyway, but unexpectedly she accepted readily, and came to the inn near the lake for the sake of joining up with us.

Given that Nina qualifies as a noble daughter, her guard protocol was an issue, but I can currently see a man in a butler attire standing behind her. He looks to be around 30 and seems quite capable.

"Klimt, is that very-butler-like person a retainer of the Armstrong house?"

"No, I have never seen him before."

"Excuse me for the late introduction. I'm a butler of the Viscount Hohenheim House. My name is Sebastian. After hearing that Nina-sama would be heading out to a summer resort with Klimt-sama, it was hurriedly decided that I would be accompanying her on this. It is my greatest pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"You're a person from the Viscount Hohenheim house?"

"Yes. Nina-sama is scheduled to marry into the Viscount Hohenheim House in the future. Accordingly I have been selected to take care of her needs."

I guess he came here to serve as Nina's caretaker and observer. Since a noble's unmarried daughter has gone out on a summer trip, it's his task to make sure that no evil bugs cling to her.

"I am delighted to see that someone of her age is present here as well."

Sebastian seems relieved after spotting Liese-jou. Bruno's family registers as a fairly big merchant family. If she were to be a girl of too low standing, it'd have been his duty to prevent Nina from getting in contact with her...this is one of the parts I really hate about nobles, and also one of the reasons why I wanted to leave home.

"How old are you, Lieselotte-san?"

"I'm 13."

"I'm as old as you are, so let's get along."

"Gladly, Nina-san. Please call me Liese."

"Okay, Liese-san."

Nina and Liese-jou apparently became friends right away without caring about the opinion of the butler and the Hohenheim house behind him.

"Great, let's go to the lake then."

Our party, which has now grown to eight people in total, left the inn, taking the few steps to the lake.



The Pastour Lake has an extremely high level of transparency and lies in the crater of a slightly elevated mountain. I hear that many, many years have passed since the volcano stopped erupting.

Plants are thickly overgrowing the crater around the lake.

"It is a very beautiful lake, Klimt-onii-sama."

"It is very transparent, yes."

"But, there's rather few people around, right brother?"

"It's because of its low popularity-"

"Why do visitors stay away if it's such a great lake? Is it because of the pasto?"

"Certainly not."

Candy-dono denies Boltor-dono's theory with a laugh.

"I mean, we didn't even know about the Pastour Lake and the pasto until we were told about them by the guild. It's not that people don't come here because the mysterious life-forms are scary, but rather, they don't visit because the area here is unknown to begin with."

"Since no guests come around, they can not proceed with the maintenance of the surrounding streets and lodging facilities, which makes it impossible to advertise the area. As far as I have heard, the pasto seem to stay inside the lake. If such huge creatures truly existed, nobles who like unusual things would group up and visit."

"It's just as Sebastian says. The request to catch them has been around for more than 30 years now, so you can't clearly declare that they don't exist, but not one of the parties looking for them was ever able to find anything, and there must have been many of them over all this time."

The probability of us not finding anything even if we start searching is high, and therefore it was no problem to bring Nina and Liese-jou along, I guess.

"We'll at least pretend to stand watch."

"In other words, it's truly nothing more than a vacation."

"Isn't that fine every once in a while? We've earned quite a bit of cash earlier."

The nearby monster domain is actually crowded with prey, allowing us to hunt a lot. It's great that we don't have to pay any taxes for hunted and collected materials as thanks for having accepted the lake request.

"We'll stand watch for around three days. It's an easy job, but this will also bring some money in."

"Umm...Candy-san."

"What is it, Liese-chan?"

"Is it okay for us to play around despite this being work for you?"

"Don't worry. It's just standing watch anyway. Feel free to swim and play in the meanwhile, okay? Everyone, put on your swim-wear so that you can deal with the pasto if they should actually show up. I've prepared a set for everyone."

Being told so by Candy-dono, we all changed into the swimsuits prepared by him.



"Whoaa, this swimsuit sure has nice colors."

"Since the design is set anyway, I thought I should at least pretty up the colors a bit. It suits you superbly, Nina-chan."

"It's a wonderful swimsuit. Did you buy it somewhere?"

"I sewed it myself. Liese-chan, it's cute, isn't it?"

"Candy-san, you're amazing. It just looks like something you'd buy at a store."

Nina and Liese-jou have put on their swimsuits. Swimsuits have basically the same design, whether worn by women or men, and it's a standard to keep the colors and patterns plain, but the swimsuits worn by those two have flashy colors with red and orange.

Just when I thought that Candy-dono must have bought them somewhere, I learn that he's made them himself. That's quite laudable. It looks to me like he could survive with cooking and sewing

even if he were to quit being an adventurer.

"Sebastian, you're not going to put on a swimsuit?"

"Candy-dono, I feel honored by your consideration. But, I am currently working."

"How regrettable."

Mr. Sebastian, who's accompanied us as Nina's caretaker, is the only one still wearing his previous clothes. I feel like he's quite devoted to his job.

"It's not hot?"

"No, this place is situated in a slightly higher altitude, so it is cool. Besides, I am a butler."

Do you become resistant against heat if you become a butler?

He answers Boltor-dono's question with a refreshed look, lacking even a single drop of sweat.

"Then it's fine. Even so, they're completely focused on playing around."

Nina and Liese-jou are playing around in the shallow part of the lake, where only their feet get wet. Bruno and Dalton-dono are keeping them company. As always, Dalton-dono is taciturn, but it's strange that he can, for some reason, communicate with the two girls properly even after meeting them today for the first time.

"What about your family, Dalton-san? Do you have a wife?"

"...\*nod\*"

"Do you have children? A son?"

"...\*nod\*"

"One or two?"

"...\*nod\*"

"Eehh!? You were married, Dalton-san!?"

It's only reasonable for Bruno to be shocked. Bruno and I are hearing about this for the first time now.

I wonder, just how is he talking with his wife and children?

"Boltor-sama, I have heard that this will be treated as work at the waterside, so I have prepared some cold mate tea. Would you like to have some?"

"Ah, thanks, Sebastian-dono."

"No, do not mind it. I am a butler after all."

Boltor-dono watches Pastour Lake while sitting on a chair. It's just for caution's sake, so that he's ready even if the pasto might show up.

Sebastian serves cold mate tea to Boltor-dono. That man really never forgets his heart as a butler. He's the role model of a perfect butler.

"Ron-chan, you're not going to play in the water?" Candy-dono steps up to me as I'm watching Nina and the others.

"I will join them soon."

"I see. It's fine for you to not stand watching so seriously."

"Is that so?"

Even so, I feel like it's necessary to at least pretend that we're looking for the pasto.

"Somehow it's kinda weird, you see...?"

"What is?"

What does Candy-dono consider as weird?

"Look, the client is the Viscount Bart house, but we were only greeted by a retainer person at the beginning, and he left us alone after telling us to take care of it. They aren't even watching us to make sure that we aren't playing hooky."

"Isn't that because nothing has been found in more than 30 years?"

Maybe the people of the Bart house might have unexpectedly given up on the capture of pasto as well.

"Then they wouldn't put up a request anymore, I think. The money paid to adventurers doesn't grow on trees either."

"You mean they are following another objective with this?"

"Maybe, but...for now, we'll focus on our current situation."

"Is something wrong with our current situation?"

"The sun is shining too strongly in the current season, damaging the skin, so please apply this special cream on me."

"Me?"

Just when I thought that Candy-dono had come to have a serious talk with me; for him to have checked for someone to apply sunscreen on his skin... Even if his swimsuit might hide everything except for his face, arms, legs, I can't stand the idea of smearing cream on his skin.

"Huuurry."

There must be a means to get away...oh, right!

"Bruno!"

"What's up?"

I call out to Bruno who's playing in the water with the girls. Not knowing anything about the circumstances, he comes over in a carefree manner. I feel sorry for him, but this is for the sake of my own mind's sanity.

With that decided, I retrieve a coin from my magic bag.

"Bruno, head or tails?"

"What's it all of a sudden? Are we playing some game?"

"I'll let you choose first."

"Head then."

"That means I get tails!"

With our sides set, I toss the coin into the air. And then the coin lands on the back of my hand. Once I remove the hand covering the coin, the coin shows tails.

"It is my win."

"Aww, shucks. So, what kind of contest was it?"

"A chore for Candy-dono."

"A chore, huh? Can't be helped now that I've lost. Candy-san, what am I supposed to do?"

Bruno, I'm truly sorry, but I can't smear cream on Candy-dono's skin. Besides, a job like that is better suited to the sensitive Bruno than a rough and clumsy person like me.

Well then, I'm going to play at the beach as well.

"Klimt-onii-sama, what about Bruno-san?"

"He needs to take care of an important job."

"He was called over by Candy-san, right?"

"Correct. I am going to play with you in his stead."

In the end, we didn't feel the slightest presence of pasto today, and thus we enjoyed playing in the water until evening.

