Beatrice and Rem's Cleaning is Very Serious

1

"Gah, I suppose."

The moment the door was opened without a knock, the girl was greeted with that sort of voice by the room's owner.

The girl had a face with soft, lovely features, and light blue eyes that made one think of the calm surface of a lake. Her hair, the same color as her eyes, was trimmed short, and her body was wrapped in a maid outfit that had been altered to provide more exposure. Her round eyes held both faint surprise and relief, and surprise won out for the moment.

Her gaze was directed towards the middle of the room, where someone was seated on a stepladder in the center of the forbidden library.

"Beatrice-sama, please forgive me for bothering you so late at night."

The maid, Rem, was late in bowing her head because of her surprise - the room's owner let out a long sigh at her.

The room's owner was a little girl who appeared far more childlike than Rem. However, her sigh carried a curious sense of age, and was terribly mismatched with her doll-like outward appearance, which was well-suited to her gorgeous dress.

It goes without saying that judging her by human standards might itself be a mistake.

"Truly, to be visiting someone this late, you haven't learned your manners, you know."

"Yes, I have nothing to say for myself. But……"

"You shouldn't say 'But' right after saying 'I have nothing to say for myself', I suppose!"

Going red in the face, and shaking her unmistakable curled hair, the little girl, Beatrice, raised her voice. While once again lowering her head at this reaction, Rem nevertheless spoke her thoughts.

"Beatrice-sama, it seems that you are more irritable than usual this evening."

".....Well, listen to you, you know. What would you know about Betty?"

"This is only Rem's intuition, but perhaps it's related to a bucket?"

"...!?Wh, wha, what evidence do you have to go and say something like that, I suppose!?"

“It’s because you’re cradling that bucket so carefully, Beatrice-sama.”

“Drat, you know…!”

In a single moment, the chill in the air was dispersed by Rem’s pointed question. All that was left was Rem’s victorious look after laying hands on the truth, and Beatrice, wide-eyed after being found out.

And in Beatrice’s arms, just as Rem had pointed out, a bucket was cradled....For the last few days, there had been an important connection between the Roswaal manor and buckets.

“Rem was surprised as well. To think that you were concerned about being tone-deaf, Beatrice-sama.”

Letting out a sigh composed of surprise and admiration in equal parts, Rem nodded several times.

Beginning from the stay of the minstrel Liliana, Emilia’s tone-deafness came to light, and she began training to correct it. After that, it seems that the situation expanded further, and Beatrice’s tone-deafness came to light as collateral damage...

“Rem, too, has heard that buckets are useful for correcting tone-deafness. Honestly, when she first heard that from Subaru-kun, she was skeptical, but Emilia-sama’s ‘Sword Demon’s Love Song’ has improved markedly…...Rem wishes you good luck!”

“You should really do something about the habit you have of occasionally rubbing salt in people’s wounds without realizing it, I suppose!”

“...?”

Being reprimanded after trying to offer support, Rem tilted her head to the side with a questioning look on her face. At Rem’s response, Beatrice held up the bucket while looking even more weary.

“Setting that aside! Setting that aside, it would be troubling if you were to misunderstand! It’s not like Betty is being moved to action over a meaningless measurement of this and that about singing, I suppose. I would never agree to let someone make me wear a bucket, and saying that I’m tone-deaf, well, calling that a bold-faced lie would be generous.”

“Well then, may I request a verse from ‘Sword Demon’s Love Song’?”

“Even if you request it, I won’t sing, I suppose!”

“It’s fine. As a result of Emilia-sama’s state of affairs, Rem has recently been carrying earplugs with her.”

As Rem took white earplugs from a pocket, Beatrice scowled at her. However, not wanting to get caught up in the flow of things, she firmly shook her head.

“A, anyways, Betty being tone-deaf is nothing but a lie spread by that man, I suppose. He’s trying to ensnare Betty with evil rumors, you know. You shouldn’t be deceived, I suppose.”

“.....In that case, Beatrice-sama, why are you holding a bucket?”

“If you think about how a bucket is used, you’ll understand that right away, you know.”

“Besides wearing it?”

“Would you stop talking about wearing it, I suppose!”

A use for buckets besides wearing them; when she was asked that, Rem was immediately lost in thought.

Was there actually a use for them besides wearing? Recently, anyone around Rem who had been speaking of buckets was either wearing one, or trying to get someone to wear one.

“Goodness, I can’t think of anything besides the usual, using it for cleaning up…...”

“That’s! Correct! You know! What other way to use it would there be, I suppose?!”

“I see, you really outwitted me. Nicely done, Beatrice-sama.”

“I wasn’t, I wasn’t trying to outwit you, you know……”

As Rem showed her admiration with a curtsey, Beatrice let her shoulders sag with an exhausted expression. The little girl atop the stepladder cradled the bucket to her chest, and let out the biggest sigh yet.

“I didn’t think of you as the sort of girl who would say such outlandish things, I suppose……”

“Beatrice-sama, too, has never spoken like this with Rem in the past.”

“.....and you never spoke so impertinently, either, you know. As well,”

Glaring reproachfully, Beatrice stared at Rem. And then, she finally drew her attention to what had been at Rem’s feet, ever since she entered the forbidden library.

For her midnight visit to the forbidden library, Rem had not come empty-handed. Around her feet where several different cleaning tools, and amongst them was, of course, a bucket...

“...I’ll at least ask what you’ve come here to do, I suppose.”

“That would be to allow the bucket you are holding to be used for its original role, Beatrice-sama.”

If one wasn’t wearing it, then the original role of a bucket was none other than being a cleaning tool.

As Beatrice narrowed her eyes at that reply, Rem smiled faintly and announced:

“...I thought we could begin a simple top-to-bottom cleaning of the forbidden library.”

2

“Simple, and yet a top-to-bottom cleaning, I have some doubts…...you know.”

Remaining seated on the stepladder and looking nonplussed, Beatrice mumbled quietly to herself. Paying no mind to what she heard, Rem used a feather duster to delicately brush the bookshelves that filled the forbidden library.

It was a vast, grand forbidden library. The Roswaal manor was a fairly large-scale building, but even then, fitting in a library of this size was no simple matter.

Unrestrained by real space, it was a monumental feat only made possible by mastery of shadow magic, the superspell that connected another dimension with this one, Beatrice’s “Door Crossing”.

In the forbidden library that was completely cut off from the influence of the outside world, it was said that even the passage of time could go unnoticed. Whether that was true or not, even the books in the forbidden library that were clearly ancient showed no sign of deterioration. For that very reason, the precious tomes remained in their original condition.

Unfortunately, Rem wasn’t equipped with the sort of discerning eyes that would allow her to see their value at a glance.

“Damaging or ruining the books will not be permitted, I suppose. Be extremely careful, you know.”

“Yes, I understand. It’s only a matter of brushing off the dust, and wiping them clean.”

Without stopping her cleaning, Rem quietly responded to the cautionary words that Beatrice tossed to her.

The important point of cleaning a library was, as you’d expect, taking care not to damage the books. Paper absorbs water and oil easily. It seemed unlikely that mold would grow in the forbidden library, but if dust could accumulate then perhaps mold could grow as well. Using as little water as possible, Rem focused on using the duster.

“.....”

For a short time, silence reigned in the forbidden library, broken only by the swish-swish of Rem wielding her duster. As that went on, Beatrice’s eyes were lowered to the book she had been reading, but she turned the pages slowly. Repeatedly turned back to the same page, she eventually muttered “Oh, enough” and raised her head.

“Isn’t there something you want to say to Betty, I suppose?!”

“Something from Rem to Beatrice-sama? Ah, you are adorable as always this evening, Beatrice-sama. Please be at ease. Sadly, you’re no match for nee-sama, but……”

“Why is Betty being belittled over an unrelated matter, you know?! Never mind that; don’t you think there’s anything strange about the situation where you’re being made to do the cleaning all alone?”

As Beatrice swung her legs while seated on the stepladder, Rem tilted her head with a ‘Hmm’.

Rem hadn’t the faintest idea what Beatrice was trying to say. Originally, it was the events of the bet a few days ago between Subaru and Beatrice that led her to decide on cleaning the forbidden library.

Giving Beatrice a sense of belonging in the mansion....While scratching her head at the meaning of the plan Subaru had hatched, Rem gained a chance to enter the forbidden library for the first time in a long while. At that time, there was something inappropriate to the serene space - put plainly, the air smelled of a lack of sufficient cleaning.

Since then, she’d been walking about in the mansion night after night, cautiously looking for an opportunity....

“Rem is doing just as she had wished to do, so she doesn’t feel any problem in particular……”

“It looks like the servant mentality has seeped into your very bones, you know. The fact that Betty is holding a bucket is because she planned to use it…..not wear it, I suppose.”

“If you weren’t planning to wear it, then you, too, were going to clean the library, Beatrice-sama?”

“Lately, someone’s been entering and leaving the forbidden library without permission, and so the influence of the outside world has been streaming in frequently. Normally, feather-dusting is unnecessary here… that’s how it should be, but despite that, well, as the librarian of the forbidden library, this is a serious state of affairs.”

“.....”

Mumbling and going red in the face, Beatrice spoke quickly as she strung together various reasons. Looking straight at the face of the girl who wasn’t looking her way, Rem came to a sudden, strange realization.

It was unclear what sort of whim it was, but it seemed that Beatrice wanted to help with the library’s cleaning. However, she was sensitive about it, and couldn’t bring up the idea herself. Rem, too, was familiar with being unable to openly talk about one’s own desires....In the past, she’d caused trouble for her older sister Ram time after time because of it.

Rem, who was timid and lacked courage, was saved many times by her sister’s consideration and kindness. The days of trying to be a replacement for her sister were something she’d put behind her, but...

“I won’t hesitate to imitate nee-sama’s good points.”

Even if she couldn’t become her replacement, there were hundreds and hundreds of things about Ram that were worth imitating. Thinking about this moment as one of those times, Rem was able to gracefully extend her hand.

As Rem offered the hand opposite the one holding the duster, Beatrice looked down at it.

“What’s this?”

“Normally, it would be very rude to ask Beatrice-sama to help out with the cleaning, but…… I do understand your sense of responsibility as the librarian. So, just this once.”

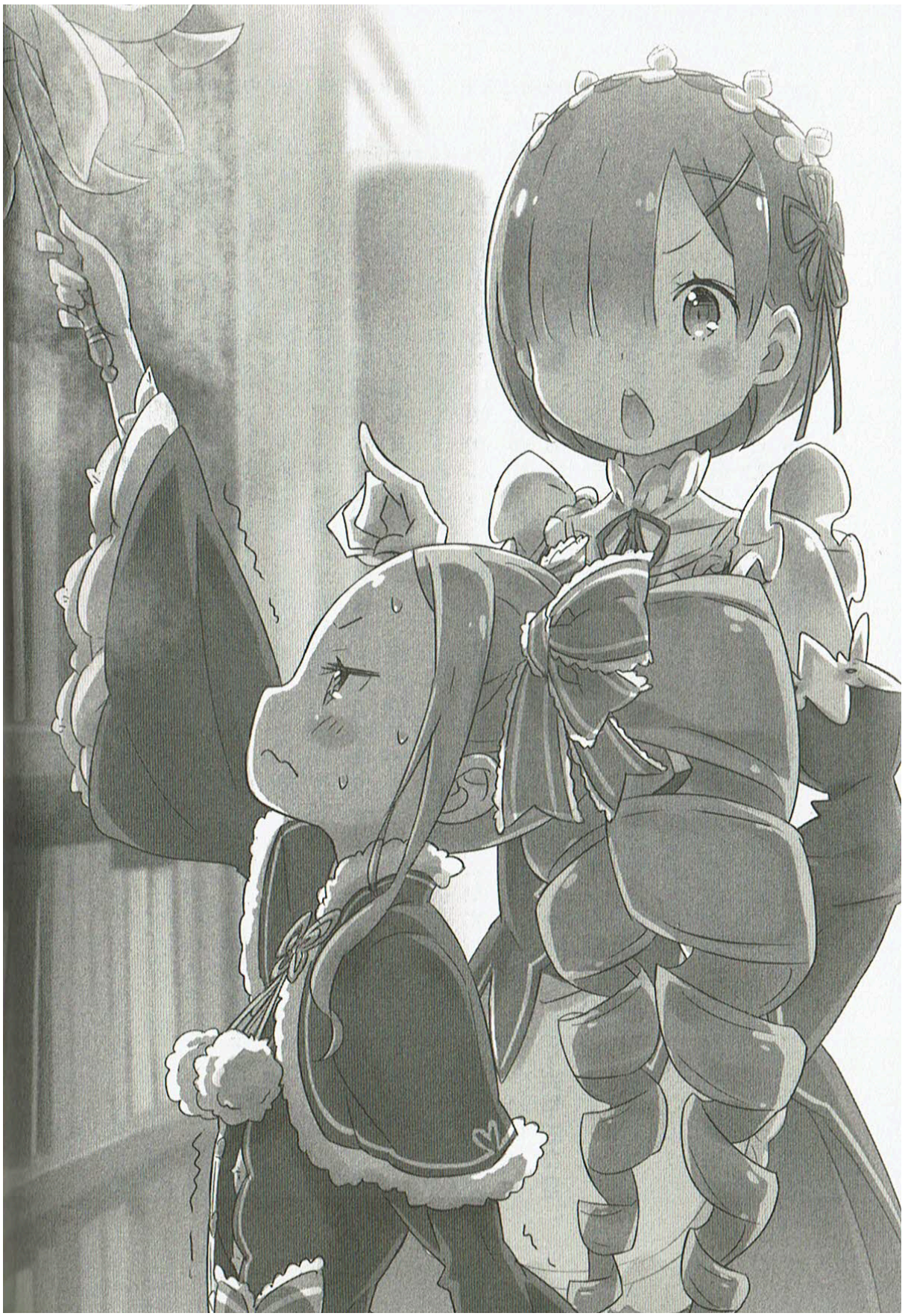
Imitating Subaru and Roswaal, Rem winked at Beatrice.

Glancing sideways at that expression, Beatrice took Rem’s hand with a resigned attitude.The young girl stepped down from the stepladder, and lightly brushed the hem of her skirt.

“In that case, I’ll take you up on that offer, you know. As a special exception, I suppose.It’s not like I ran my mouth off about having the bucket for cleaning, and after that you actually started cleaning so I had no choice but to go along with it, you know. Don’t get the wrong idea, I suppose.”

“At this moment, Rem understands the circumstances of the situation better than anyone else in the world, so there’s no need to worry.”

As Rem nodded in response to the absurd excuse, Beatrice sniffed and took the duster from her. Holding it as she turned slowly towards a bookshelf, she began dusting violently. Rem rushed to speak up in response to the rather majestic use of the duster.



“Th, that won’t do, Beatrice-sama.If you use it that roughly……”

“...? But, to get the dust to come off, you have to use about this much strength, you know.”

“Even so, the books will be damaged! When the dust has hardened…you can remove it with an old toothbrush, like this. Ah! Please don’t move a book around holding onto just the cover……!”

“Such a fussy girl, I suppose. Really, the books of the forbidden library aren’t like the flimsy books outside it. They’re nothing but good solid books, so something like this won’t damage or break them…...ah.”

Grasping the cover of a thick book, Beatrice had been shaking it violently. A fairly dramatic sound occurred near her hand, and the contents of the book fell completely out, leaving the cover behind.The dislodged pages scattered on the floor.

An unpleasant silence settled over that scene, and Beatrice cleared her throat.

“Well, this sort of thing happens now and then, you know.”

“Where did the sense of responsibility of the forbidden library’s librarian go…...No, thinking back calmly about it, it does seem like Beatrice-sama has always been throwing and stepping on her books……”

As she thought back on it, Rem didn’t have that many memories of interacting with Beatrice. However, even with her scarce experiences with setting foot inside the forbidden library, between the numerous books piled on the floor, and the books that had been thrown at Subaru over these last few weeks, she’s seen poor treatment of the books fairly frequently.

“Beatrice-sama, this isn’t good. With this, the great spirit will be upset with you as well.”

“Thi...this has nothing to do with Bubby, I suppose! On top of that, if Betty isn’t good enough, then what about that foolish girl? Bubby never scolds her, I suppose.”

“That’s because Emilia-sama’s way of doing things is simply a bit masculine; she can still manage most things.”

The topic of Emilia’s life skills came up, but Rem’s evaluation of her was exactly as she said. Further, Emilia made no excuses for her limitations. Rem envied her in that.

Setting that aside…

“While it may be presumptuous, it seems there’s no choice but for Rem to give Beatrice-sama some guidance.”

“There’s not really any need to get so serious about it……”

“It simply won’t do. Once you’ve decided to do it, do it properly. Rem, too, wouldn’t want to do something halfway. Let’s get cracking!”

While Beatrice suddenly began to have second thoughts, Rem approached with a serious look on her face, and announced that. A sense of responsibility filled her chest, and Subaru’s voice echoed in the back of her mind. Studying letters, doing odd jobs around the mansion; when Rem stood in for Ram as the one in charge of guiding him, he would call her this.

“Tonight, Rem is Beatrice-sama’s ‘Spartan demon instructor’.”

“I don’t think you understand what that means, you know!”

“It appears that Subaru-kun is fond of demons, so it probably means something very good. Now I’m blushing. But blushing aside, let’s Sparta.”

“nga~h! What a turn of events, I suppose!”

With her pale blue eyes burning brightly, Rem caught Beatrice as she attempted to flee. Then, turning up the sleeves on the little girl’s dress, she gave her a duster and a dry cloth.

“Firstly, cleaning must be done from the top. It’s far more than can be done in a single day, so even when Rem isn’t here, please do your best and keep working at it, Beatrice-sama.”

“A~h, why did it turn out like this? ...This, that, and all of it, it’s all his fault, you know.”

Pushing Beatrice onward as she pouted, Rem instructed the little girl in everything she needed to know about “Library Cleaning”.

Under that demon instructor’s Sparta, the librarian who had served for so long was rebuked time after time - each time, she ended up cursing the black-haired young man.

The End.