



Summer Pockets Short Story [Inari]

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Summer



Pockets

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Amidst the Summer Brilliance

Chapter Inari
Small Body, Big Memories

"Later, Inari! Thank you again for your help tonight."

"Pon!"

As the sun was rising, Ao-chan and Hairi-san were walking down the mountain path after finishing this evening's duties. I saw them off until both of their backs weren't visible anymore.

I wonder how long it has been since I became able to understand human words. I don't really remember it that well. Now that I think about it, the first human I ever met actually doubted if I was a fox or not after hearing me say "Pon!". It seems like they associated me with a tanuki based on my cry.

I feel like asking them: "Have you ever seen a tanuki that goes "pon"?"

So rude of them...

Also, one more thing I want to make clear: I'm a female fox. I may fancy stuff such as lewd books and girl's underwear, but I am a maiden. I even prefer human females over those of my same species.

"Pokyū..."

Oh no, it seems like my drowsiness is reaching its limit too. I guess I'll sleep for now.

"Ku~... ku~"

Lately I've tended to curl around my magnificent tail and use it as a pillow. I go to a nesting hole deep in the mountains to rest, as it's a natural instinct to sleep in a safe place that keeps one out of sight from predators. However, even with such sound reasoning, Ao-chan threw away her instincts. Even if she's still inside the town, her sleeping is too defenseless, but with me by my her side, the danger is almost zero.

Now that I think about it, I wonder what Ao-chan is to me... A friend? A big sister? My master? Ah... The idea of having her as my master gives me the chills. For the meantime let's go with that, my master.

"Po... kyu..."

I saw a dream where I was doing tricks in front of Ao-chan and then she praised me.

What a happy dream it was.

But soon the alarm rings————.....

Thud, thud, thud, thud.

"Pokyu..."

After I felt a light sound, my tail started to shake spontaneously, my head did the same and it was then that I woke up.

"Pon~"

The moment I exited the nest, I stretched. I inhaled the rich and fresh green aroma of the mountain until my chest was full.

"Bokyuffu!"

I even choked.

Pursuing the noise as if invited by it, I head through the bushes. As my field of vision expands, I see a worn out cabin. I enter through a crack in the wall, there I see a person hitting a small ball with something that looked like a rice spoon. I'm sure that's one of Ao-chan's delightful servants.

"Pon!"

"Hmm? Oh, it's you, have you come to help me with my special training?"

"Ponpo~n!"

"Hmph... Alright, I'll play along with you. Let's go!"

This male human acts all high and mighty for some reason.

"Secret technique! Bukeshobaddo!"

"Po — — — n!"

The ball approached me at great speed but I calmly returned it with one sweep of my tail.

"Gahhaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

The ball hit his forehead and then flew off. The same as usual.

"Wh... Why....! Why can't I win against this fox! Tenzen! Is this your limit!?"

The male human shouted while hitting the ground with his fist.

"Inari! One more match! I'll get serious this time!"

I always hear him say this. I wonder how far his seriousness goes.

"Tenzeeeeeeeeeeen! Fight! Fight! Fight!!!"

"Poooooooooon!"

But, no matter what, the result is the same.

"Ugh... hic... Uuuuuugh... Why can't I... win... !!" He cried, lying on the ground. He seems to cry without restraints when no one's around.

It hurts the pride of a person in such a state to give them too many words of encouragement.

"Pon."

So I just told him to focus on his training, and then I left.

Everything up until now only happened during the morning.

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The secret of a healthy life is doing light exercises before breakfast. So I took a stroll down the mountain road and made it to the place where humans live. In the past, my animal instincts told me to not get close to them, I was even told so by my mother, whose face I've forgotten by now. But at some point I started to frequent the place where humans live, because I didn't think of them as scary.

Maybe it was because I'm always with Ao-chan?

Maybe it was because I learned to understand their language?

The only thing I know is that this island is full of kind people. If anything, I don't have to worry about food. With that said, it's time to dash through the island for breakfast. Yesterday I got a cream-filled toll from a place called "restaurant". The day before yesterday, I got some shaved ice from the place where Ao-chan works (which didn't fill my stomach at all). Well then, where should I go today?

"Pon?"

I detected a pleasant aroma, a sweet and oily fragrance. I started following the smell.

It was then that I stumbled upon another human male that I knew from before. He looked like he was in a hurry and was wearing something hard looking on top of his head.

"I-I'm going out for a bit!"

He got on top of something that looked like a small iron horse and left at a great speed.

"I'm going out to play!"

Right after him, a small human girl appeared.

"Good lord."

With a frightened look on her face, she turned repeatedly toward the house she had come out of and then trotted away.

The nice fragrance is coming out of that house. I wonder what it is.

"Pon?"

I inclined my head and approached the house. There was something tasty in there.

"Those two, skipping breakfast just to go out to play, how impatient."

The human known as Kyouko came out of the house. I've met her many times in the past. The sweet smell was coming out of her hand.

"Pon pon."

"Huh? Are you the fox who's always with Ao-chan?"

"Pon!"

"Just in time. Foxes like aburaage right?"

"Pooooon!"

"Fufu, well then come inside. There's tons left since Hairi-kun and Umi-chan left without eating them."

Seems like I was able to obtain breakfast. A victory for animal instinct.

In the past, there have been times where I got trapped in nets by being lured with sweet smells. That's how I learned there's no need to pick food you find lying on the floor. After all, I can simply get food by using my looks alone!

"Pon!"

I'm not proud of it, but I have the self confidence to say that I'm in a pretty good position as a pet animal. I won't lose to the cats and dogs of this island: If it's so vexing for you, why don't you try to understand human language as well? Don't react just to sounds and your environment, try to understand what people say.

"My my, I have the feeling you're getting a bit boastful for some reason?"

"Pon pon."

I wag my tail to deceive her. This human seems to be more perceptive, at least a bit.

"Here, inarizushi for you"

The breakfast was like shining gold placed on top of the plate. My nose, sharper than those of humans, was filled with a rich and sweet fragrance. Just by sniffing it, my mouth was filled with a sweetness. It was the first time I saw such wonderful inarizushi. And yet... I wonder why my body wouldn't move.

Even though my appetite was growing in front of this meal, my mind wasn't allowing my body to move. My animal instinct was telling me this was dangerous.

"Huh? The last time you ate so happily, what is it now?"



"Pon!?"

The last time!? I don't remember that. Maybe my body isn't moving not out of instinct, but because of a past experience? Something that made me lose my memories, yet my body remembers...

"Po... pon..."

I can't eat this. Surely if I do, I'll forget about it later just like before.

"Nomnom, hmmm, today's is a bit sweeter."

Why can this human eat it, though?

"Oh, that's right. Since there's so much left, I'll share some with Ao-chan's family too."

"Pon!"

I sink my teeth into the inarizushi.

Sweet. So sweet... my body and mind were about to melt. And that's not a figure of speech. I let my guard down, and my consciousness went on a trip.

"I'm so happy you liked it"

Why can this female human eat the inarizushi with such a calmed expression...? Is it the same as to why poisonous snakes won't die from their own poison?

"Po... pon!"

I finish my plate. But, she said there was enough to share with Ao-chan so... I tap my plate.

"You want seconds?"

"Pon Poon!"

I have to eat every last one here. Otherwise, Ao-chan would be in danger. I can't allow that. I shall protect Ao-chan!

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"Pon!?"

I woke up at the beach alongside the burning heat of the sand and the smell of the sea water on the wind. I wonder how I got here? I don't really remember at all. My stomach feels full, so at least I have the feeling I accomplished something important. Well, if it's something important, I'll remember eventually. That's about as far as I can go in terms of forgetting things.

"Haa... Haa..."

"Pon?"

There was a male human at the entrance of the beach, it was the other delightful servant of Ao-chan. He often sheds his skin. Even today he was shedding his skin... and he was doing something else at the entrance of the beach.

"Pon!"

"Hmm? Ah, Inari, I'm sorry, but I don't have time to hang out with you."

He seemed nervous about his surroundings and had a vigilant look.

"... Gulp."

He put one foot on the beach. That instant, he throws himself to the ground and starts rolling. A laser-like beam of water went flying past the place where the human male was and opened a hole the size of a (human) fist in the sand. That won't deceive my animal eyes, I could feel a deadly aura emanating from an iron tower far away from here. I'm pretty sure that was a friend of Ao-chan, a girl called Nomiki. It seems like she was hunting the male human with a extremely strong weapon that shoots out water.

"The exhibitionist there! You can only take off your clothes in the designated swimming area. Anywhere else, you have to wear clothes properly!"

"I'm telling you, my clothes flew off in the wiiind!!"

"I don't care. Say your prayers."

"Don't be so unreasonable! Bring me new clothes yourself then!"

"I refuse. You'll run away as soon as I get down from here."

"Tsk... She knew."

Ao-chan's servant seems like a very unpredictable man.

"... Shit, I just wanted to go back home, I have to get back as soon as possible..."

It seems like there's a good reason for that.

"Or I'll miss this episode of "Discovering the Mysteries of the World" featuring naked tribes!!"

It wasn't a good reason at all.

"... Hmm?"

"Pon?"

Our eyes met.

"Inari... You're a fox, right?"

"Pon."

"Humans used to employ vegetation to hide their bodies. But that doesn't last much and looks pretty indecent..."

The servant started saying some hard to understand things while he approached me.

"Throughout history, we've developed different kinds of clothing. If I get my hands on one, I'll be able to get out of here"

"Po... pon...?"

His eyes were dangerous. I could feel danger running through my body.

"Give me your fuuuuuur!!!"

"Po, pooooon! Poooooooooooooooooon!!"

I tried to run, but I got too excited, my feet got stuck on the sand and I fell over. The clumsy hands of the human male grabbed my body.

"I got you, Inari!"

"Poooon! Pon Poooon!"

"Instaaaaaalling!"

The servant fastened a cord he pulled out of somewhere to my chest. It was really tight and firm.

"Po... pokyu..."

What kind of humiliation was this? Why am I stuck with this human male while being called "clothing"?

"Heh heh... The tying technique I read in that erotic magazine proved useful."

What kind of tying technique was it???? Could it be that the only way to get out of this is by throwing away my own life??

The servant points his finger proudly to the electric pole.

"Nomiki! With this, there's no problem anymore right!? I'm wearing some first class fur here!"

This one is a complete idiot.

"Gghh, I'll accept it."

She's an idiot too!

The servant leaves the beach triumphantly. I don't want to believe he plans to go through the whole residential area like this. Is this how the rumored public executions go? I close my eyes hopelessly. Help me... Ao-chan...

"Heeeeeey! The hell are you doooooing!?"

I reopen my eyes as I hear a familiar voice, and my body stiffens. I was freed from the cord that was tying me to the servant. I was then held by two soft lumps, nothing compared to the stiff wall of meat the human male was.

"Inari, are you alright!?"

"Pooooon! Pooooon!"

Ao-chan came to the rescue!

"The exhibitionist there, it is prohibited to undress in any place but the designated swimming area. Prepare to die."

"Bu... but! Guhaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The servant is shot with Nomiki's water gun.

"Gyah! Hii! W-Wait... I'll go back! Gya! Buh!"

He was shot until he couldn't move. Serves him right.

"Geez, if Nomiki hadn't told me, things could have gotten worse."

Ao-chan hugged me and patted my head gently.

"You were scared, weren't you Inari? You can't get close to this idiot anymore, okay?"

"Pon... Poon~"

I obediently indulge in Ao-chan's chest. Is so soft. This is bliss.

"Very well, given the occasion, let's go to my work, Inari."

"Pon!"

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"Thank you very much!"

Ao-chan works a part-time job in a place called the Sweets Shop. It seems like she's a poster girl, or something like that. It seems like a part-time job is something you do in exchange for food.

Ao-chan was carrying a thing called "otsukemono" that made vegetables taste sour.

"Very well, then..."

She looked a bit nervous while fixing her hair by looking at her own reflection on the window. She fixed her skirt and and her shirt as well. Then she went to the back of the store and took several deep breaths. I knew why she was doing all of that.

"Excuse meeee."

Because of the male human called Hairi. When this human comes, Ao-chan... to put it frankly, gets extremely excited. Such a detail can't escape a wild animal like me.

"Huh? You came again? You really have a lot of free time."

"Can't you be a bit more cordial with your customers, please?"

"It's not like I'm happy you came."

That's a lie. Ao-chan is super duper happy right now.

"Well I'm happy, at least."

"Eh...!? Are you really happy to see me??"

Now, without a doubt, she's even more excited than before.

"No, I mean, I'm happy a place like this exists where all of us can gather."

"Ah... aaah, you mean that! Right, places like this are always great to make nice memories with everyone..."

Ao-chan always gives back an answer that completely exposes her. I'm so used to this situation by now. But I get a joyous feeling every time it happens, because Ao-chan also looks really happy. I get that Hairi-kun is making her happy in ways I'm not able to. Not much time has passed, but I feel so by looking at him closely.

He stays by Ao-chan's side when she falls asleep, and takes care of her. I can relax when he's around. And I think Ao-chan feels the same way. That's why...

"Yaaaaaawn..."

"Pokyaaaa...."

The two of us let out a huge yawn.

"Ao, you're a girl, please try to at least cover your mouth... Also, Inari's yawn feels kinda odd..."

"Hmmm~.... Can I ask you to take care of the store for a bit?"

"Alright, if something comes that I can't handle, I'll wake you up"

"Sure..."

I see Ao-chan falling asleep and I close my eyes too.

"Inari, you're falling asleep too? And in the middle of all the sunlight?"

My sleepy body is picked up by Hairi-san. He places me in a place with a fresh shadow. How nice of him. This sensation of floating in the air while being rocked by the wind as someone carries me. I remember it from the past.

That's right, it happened about 3 summers ago, when I still couldn't understand human words. There was a human walking through the mountain, holding a hanging lantern. It was a female human child. She was walking awkwardly, and clearly scared. We wild animals wouldn't get close to her because she was being accompanied by something very dangerous: the shining butterflies that sometimes appear in the mountains. Most humans can't see them, but it's easy for us wild creatures. And we instinctively know we cannot touch them at all. That's why I have never touched one. But that female child was touching one carelessly.

I couldn't understand her motives, but I was interested nonetheless, because whenever she touched the butterflies, she would stand still for a moment and then continue walking. Maybe those butterflies aren't as dangerous as my instincts tell me? I became even more curious. I started looking for the butterflies myself. Then I found one, really tiny and with a weak light.

I thought to myself. "I can do this". My instincts were completely off, however.

"Pooooooooon!"

As a result, an outside consciousness started to invade my head. An endless stream of information. Memories, knowledge and feelings a fox like me couldn't comprehend... I learned with my own body why I shouldn't touch these butterflies. My instincts warned me I was on the brink of death. But...

As I was losing my own consciousness, I saw a mysterious white field of flowers. I didn't know there was such a place on this mountain. Was this "the afterlife"? There's lots of shiny butterflies flying around. I feel a sensation as if I was gently floating in warm water, and I can hear a human voice while my field of vision fades away.

(—————doesn't get better, then I won't either.)

I had no idea who it was.

(—————doesn't smile, then I won't either.)

I wonder if I won't be able to smile anymore either...

(The mountain path during the night————... I have to do my best.)

Can anything good come out of... doing one's best?

(I am ———'s big sister after all.)

I am... big sister? Whose?

(———chan, please wait a bit more.)

Who am I making wait...?

A voice constantly worried about someone. I was engulfed by those feelings. They continued pouring inside my head, restlessly, until I lost my own consciousness completely.

"... Are you alright? Hey, are you alive?"

I heard the voice of a human girl. For some reason, her voice felt very nostalgic. I open my eyes and see the human girl that was carrying the hanging lantern looking at me with a worried expression. The white flower field is not here. It seems like I fainted in the middle of the mountain.

"Po... pon...?"

"What a relief~ You weren't moving, so I was worried."

"So I was worried"——She was... worried?



At that moment, I heard a human's "words". The human voice, which until then I heard only as a sound containing some sort of emotion, now had a "meaning" I could understand. I wonder how it happened, but I became able to understand human language. The stream of information that filled my head disappeared for the most part, but I retained the knowledge to talk to humans, it seems.

"Huh? Hmmm... You're a fox, aren't you?"

"Pon?"

"For some reason... I feel nostalgic looking at you..."

Ao-chan tilts her head.

"Pon..."

I do so as well. Why did I call this human girl "Ao-chan" in my head?

With my head inclined, I look at "Ao-chan". An unknown feeling whirls in my mind. Happiness, sadness, joy, regret, love, and a sense of duty... I had a strong feeling I had to look for that shiny butterfly, all for the sake of "Ao-chan". What happened to me?

"In any case, I have to keep going with my duty."

Ao-chan looks at the dark mountain path.

"Pon, pon."

I stand in front of Ao-chan and wave my tail.

"Eh? What is it?"

"Pon!"

Looking back many times, I walk ahead of Ao-chan.

"Are you telling me to follow you?"

"Pon!"

As a wild animal, I knew very well where the shining butterflies were. They were in a place I instinctively knew was dangerous. So I could guide Ao-chan and keep her away from danger, as I wanted. I let Ao-chan know we can find the butterflies easily.

"Ah! The iridescent shade! Well done, mister fox!"

Ao-chan praised me. I felt really, really happy at that moment.

"Pokyū..."

The fragrance on the wind changed and I woke up. It seems like it was evening already. I had a great sleep and a nostalgic dream. I get up with my hind legs and stretch my body. Very well then, where's Ao-chan...

"Zzzz.... Zzzz..."

She was sleeping on top of Hairi-san's lap. And it seems like Hairi-san was sleeping as well. Both must be really tired after the night duty. Nothing can be done about it, I'll take care of the shop for now. Once the night comes these two will force themselves to the limit again anyways.

The summer sun is really strong. Even as it hides, it keeps illuminating the sky. Though when winter comes, it gets dark in the blink of an eye. It seems like the sun is making sure Ao-chan can rest for just a bit longer. I try to hold the sun with my forefeet, but despite all my efforts, the night still came.

The mountain at night is by no means a quiet place. Tons of bugs come out and make noise, even so, it's relaxing. Listening to the chorus of these nocturnal insects, I sit in front of the mountain road all by myself.

"Huh? Ao hasn't come yet?"

"Pon."

Hairi-san arrived first tonight.

"There's no way she overslept, right?"

I'm pretty sure that wouldn't happen. Fox's senses of smell are a million times better than that of humans, and I could already feel Ao-chan's smell approaching us. I think she's actually running towards here. Ah, she stopped to catch her breath. After a while, Ao-chan's figure appears.

"I'm a bit late, did I make you wait?"

"If you think that, then try to hurry and apologize for being late."

"If I hurry more, my shrine maiden attire will get messy. Man up and at least say you just got here!"

"I don't want to hear that from the girl that just made it here by running!"

Ao-chan is not being honest. Although it's true she was late, she came running because she wanted to meet Hairi-san. But I'm fine being the only one who knows this, that's part of Ao-chan's charm.

"In any case, I'll do my best tonight as well."

"Sure, just be careful."

"You should be the one being more careful. DO NOT touch the iridescent shades, you hear me?"

"I'm telling you to pay attention."

"Huh? What's with that reply? Could you mean it's not the iridescent shades you're thinking of touching, but me!?"

"No, if there's a chance, I'll try touching the butterflies."

"I told you, DO NOT touch them! Touch me instead!"

"Huh!? Can I!?"

"If... if you feel like... may... maybe I can let you for a little bit..."

The usual Ao-chan. But it's thanks to this kind of exchange that she can get so cheerful. So this is fine.

"Alright, let's go."

"Make sure you don't touch the butterflies."

"Sure, sure."

"Give me a serious answer!"

The two of them start to go up the mountain. Looking at them again, it's such a curious sight. I couldn't imagine the day would come where Ao-chan would walk alongside someone else.

This summer's night duty. To accompany Ao-chan so that she would make it back home safely. I thought that was my role. I took pride on it. I even regulated how many butterflies Ao-chan had contact with. That was what I could do... what my limit was, as a fox. Sadly, I couldn't do much more for her. But this summer, she made a new friend. I'm sure this human will be able to help her with everything I'm not able to do.

I'm not going to lie, I'm a bit sad and I feel a bit lonely. But when I think about Ao-chan and how this is all to support her, I feel happy again. After all...

Ao-chan now smiles more often.

Ao-chan has become even cuter.

Ao-chan talks to herself more often.

Ao-chan says embarrassing things from time to time.

Ao-chan talks a lot about Hairi-san.

And all of that makes me happy.

"Inari? What happened?"

"Hurry and keep showing us the road, we're hopeless without you!"

"Pon!"

I love Ao-chan!

