

The Male Lead's Adopted Daughter

Chapter 1

“..... Aaaaaah!”

Terror sealed her throat. Soon enough, the pretty girl with the red ribbon found tears welling up in her eyes, then the girl burst into tears and cried uncontrollably.

It was as if she had seen a ghost right before her eyes.

Annoyed by the loud disturbance, Duke Borreoti gestured with a frown on his face.

After anxiously looking from behind the doors, the orphanage director hurried out and took the crying girl outside.

Just as the crying sound got farther away, Pelio asked, “How long do I have to do this?”

The short sigh swayed the black fringes, making them brush against his forehead.

His calm black eyes were filled with boredom. With that raw boredom, Pelio momentarily gazed at where the child was just now. Soon, the gaze headed somewhere else.

A bottle of whiskey stood on the orphanage director’s desk. Standing right behind Pelio, his secretary, Loupe asked.

“Is this not what you had asked for?” Without waiting for an answer, Loupe continued, “Well, this is actually a new record,”

“What is?” asked Pelio.

“Every child upon seeing your face has cried in fear.”

This orphanage was the fifth orphanage that Pelio had visited.

“They get so frightened when they see your face...”

“What are you trying to say, Loupe? You do realize that my sword has not been used to its purpose for a while, right?”

“... rude, aren’t they? These children don’t know anything. They don’t know that they are speaking to the Great Duke himself.” Loupe quickly switched his words. He was also worn out from having to visit every orphanage in every province when they were in a hurry to get back to the Borreoti province.

With dim eyes, Loupe gazed upon Pelio sitting right in front of him.

The Borreoti province in the northern land was notoriously known to be dangerous and rough. As the head of that land, Duke Pelio Borreoti was known for his extraordinariness in two ways. One was his extraordinary looks and another was monstrosity.

The deep black that his hair and eyes carried. Bearing a light color, the lip was nice and thick. The sharp nose and jawline. The final touch to his beauty was his stocky neckline.

Shaped by long and continuous training, his exceptional physique was hard to be covered up even with his thick garment.

On top of that, he came from one of the two ducal families in the empire. That made him the most desirable bachelor in the empire.

Even though the Duke had so many attractive qualities, he was famous for his monstrosity which overshadowed his attractive looks.

He was born to fit the title of 'Black Lion of the North,' and the living definition of the saying, 'Looks could kill'.

Loupe had been around Pelio for a long time, but even he felt frightened from time to time. Thus, the terrified children's reactions were not surprising.

'Why is he looking to adopt a child all of a sudden...'

Then Loupe flashed back to the day when everything all began.

'I am going to adopt a child.'

After coming back from his visit to the palace, Pelio nonchalantly blurted out this troubling idea while handing his jacket to his butler.

From then on, he really started to visit every orphanage on his way back to the northern province, making nearly all the children cry.

'Why doesn't he just get married?'

If he were to just marry, he would definitely have a child of his own blood even though it might take a few years. Loupe could not fathom what was going on inside Pelio's head.

Though he was terrifying, it was an undeniable truth that he was the number one bachelor in the empire.

The list of families or women wanting to marry Pelio was endless.

Then Loupe thought back to last winter. With just the slightest rumor about how Duke Borreoti was thinking of marriage, noble families with a daughter of marriageable age sent them letters. Thanks to those letters, Loupe spent a warm winter.

“Was that the last child?” asked Pelio.

Breaking away from the memory of inextinguishable fire due to the never-ending firewood, Loupe quickly came to his senses.

“Including that child, we have met all eighteen kids from this orphanage.” Loupe gave a subtle glance to the knight. The knight read the signal and headed outside, telling others to get ready to leave.

When the enormous and bulky carriage in front of the orphanage got ready to leave, Pelio and Loupe showed up.

“Are you leaving already?” The orphanage director asked as she hurriedly followed Pelio outside. Despite the freezing temperature from winter just coming up around the corner, her red face was full of oil and sweat.

“I apologize for not being able to properly serve you.”

Her mouth apologized but her face showed her too-eased mind as she hinted at her materialistic greed at the same time.

“These are wonderful and kind children. They used up all their luck to meet you, Your Grace. By the way, I’m not quite sure if they will be able to survive this winter with the cold weather and all...”

Well, Loupe was skeptical of the place.

The other orphanages were also not in their best financial situation. However, those children were given warm clothes for the winter and seemed to have been taken care of by the orphanage workers.

This place was different.

The rides installed in the playground broke down long ago. The hidden window behind the unnecessarily big plant pot was shattered, and the walls were bearing long cracks.

It showed how much the director did not care about the management of the orphanage or the children.

The children from the other orphanages looked for their caretakers after they got terrified by meeting the duke. The children in this orphanage flinched whenever the workers or caretakers approached to lead them.

While looking for a child to adopt, Pelio had been visiting orphanages with the excuse of providing financial aid.

Therefore, this place was going to get financial help from the Borreotis.

To think all the funding would go straight to that snob's filthy pocket, Loupe felt like the Borreotis' asset was going to be wasted for the first time.

'Although it is nothing compared to the wealth the Borreotis possesses.'

At that moment, he heard someone yell furiously.

"Nia!"

Everyone turned around to see who would dare to act in such an impolite manner during a farewell to the great duke.

With a baffled face, an orphanage caretaker was scolding a little child that he caught in his hand.

"Let go of me!" She yelled, and then bit down on her captor's hand as hard as she could.

"Awk!"

The man let her go as he screamed. The child did not miss her chance and ran toward the duke in a jiffy.

The duke was the only person who didn't turn around scanned the bold little girl who was stretching her short arms and legs as far as she could to stop him.

The first thing he could notice was her greasy hair and extremely worn-out clothes.

The children that he had just met were properly washed at least.

The girl was clearly not washed, and they didn't bring her to Pelio.

Her clothes seemed dirtier than the mop used by the maids in the northern mansion. Still, her eyes shone like alluvial gold in the mud.

"Mister!" yelled the little girl.

Loupe and the others stood in shock by the girl's brash behavior.

To call the Duke of Borreoti by mister, it was an absurd remark that one could not excuse oneself even at the cost of their head.

Some knights' faces turned blue as if they were the ones getting beheaded.

"...Oh my." Loupe was astonished by the little girl's fearlessness, after finishing processing what was happening with difficulty,

She was the first child to not cry after seeing Pelio, but that was not the only surprising thing.

'Her hair and eyes...!'

She had the same black hair that Pelio had.

"I-, I'm sorry! Hurry and get that thing out of..."

Pelio raised his hand and stopped the director.

The director was just about to drag the child away, but she flinched and came to a halt.

It was for a brief moment, but the duke's black eyes, which were staring at her, had scared her so much that her limbs tremble in fear.

"Loupe."

At Pelio's call, Loupe quickly recalled the personal details of the children on the adoption list.

"This child was not on the list."

The director quickly started to make excuses.

"She, that-, that child is bad-mannered and troublesome..."

"That is why you dared to not uphold His Grace's word? I made it very clear that he wanted to see every child at this orphanage."

"I-, I'm so terribly sorry! Please forgive me for my foolishness...!"

As she put her head down in angst at Loupe's stern comment, the director quickly got down on her knees. The other orphanage workers did the same shortly after.

The child stared blankly as the adults trembled in fear.

"So." Pelio's deep voice broke the silence and shifted his gaze to glance over the child.

"What is your name?"

“I don’t have one.”

“You must have a name even if you are from the orphanage.”

“People call me ‘Nia’, but I don’t like that name.”

People normally called the little girl ‘you’, but they would call her ‘Nia’ when they are physically abusing her.

On top of that, the girl got her name from a prostitute in an erotica the orphanage director had read. After she found that out, it truly terrified her.

Pelio gazed at the girl’s sparkling eyes.

“Some guts you have.” Pelio’s thinned black eyes lighted up with scarlet bloody-mindedness. Something indescribable instantly choked the air around the orphanage.

The girl’s shoulder hunched. However, she never avoided him or put her arms and legs away.

“Do you have any idea whose way you have decided to get in?” When Pelio scared her with a little more sincerity, the little girl’s arms started to shake in the end.

The bold little girl started to look scared for the first time and even her black eyes began to tear up.

“I can behead you for this right now.” Pelio took a step forward and she trembled even more.

Despite all that, she kept her stance. She gritted her teeth and endured through.

“...” Pelio stopped walking toward her.

The duke gazed into the child’s black eyes which resembled his. The child’s eyes sparkled for a moment as if they were sprinkled with alluvial gold.

“... Lion cub,” murmured Pelio. His thoughts flowed out in a low voice without realizing it.

A lion cub. As if he liked what he said, Pelio stroked his chin and observed the child who was shorter than his legs

Her fearlessness and bravery. No, how she didn’t stand down even after she got scared caught his interest.

“That name really doesn’t suit you.”

The name was too mild and soft for the wild and fearless lion cub. The blackish-red eyes subsided and turned into their original black-color. Pelio gifted the child with a name that suited her more.

“Leonie Borreoti.”

The little girl gaped a little. “...But that’s too long.”

“Leonie is your first name, stupid.”

“Hey, I’m not stupid!”

“The first thing we will do when we get to the mansion is to hire a private tutor.” As he murmured about all the things Leonie needed to be taught, he picked her up with ease and put her into the carriage which almost looked like throwing. After being thrown on the soft seat of the carriage, Leonie complained loudly.

Loupe and the other knights stood with blank faces like fools.

“Yo...Your Grace!”

Loupe yelled in confusion as he held onto the carriage door.

“Wait a minute! What is happening...!”

A more startling sight was revealed in front of Loupe’s baffled eyes.

The Black Lion, Pelio was sneering while he fended off small, fragile Leonie’s forehead with only a finger.

“You mister...!!!” Leonie fumed and glared at Pelio as she was becoming more annoyed.

“Is it funny to mess with a child?”

“Yeah, more than I thought it’d be.”

“Ugh, you must be a perv!”

“Watch your words.”

‘This must be why old people always sigh when they talk about their children,’ thought Pelio.

Leonie growled as she glared. She behaved just like a lion cub.

“Leonie,” said Pelio.

Pelio called his daughter’s name once again.

The black lion was roaring in the Ducal family of Borreoti’s emblem, the emblem engraved on the carriage they were riding in right now.

A roaring (Pelio) lion (Leonie).

There was no better name for the lady of Borreoti.