

## Chapter 25 - Death by First Night

"Easy now, Solene, are you trying to drunk yourself?" Henri asked when he noticed Solene downing her third flute of wine in less than two hours.

They were in the couple's table located in the central area of the customized stage inside the grand hall of the Rantzen mansion. Behind them was a wall of white tulips supported by massive Greek-inspired pillars. In their front were the guests, comfortably sitting on their seats while a popular Spanish band played their lively tunes.

The reception party was in full swing. Spectacular introductions of the Mr. and Mrs. were done earlier by Joyce's team and well wishes by Solene's family and Henri's siblings were done along with the cake cutting, first dance, and the toast.

Solene was all smiles during these moments while Henri remained pleased with her reactions. He couldn't keep his eyes off his beautiful wife then, more so now when she was clearly enjoying the alcoholic drink.

"No, I...I just find the wine super delicious," Solene answered as she met his inquiring gaze. Her face and neck were clearly flushed and Henri could no doubt owe it all to the liquor.

"Hm," he tipped his own flute containing the same liquid and softly chuckled, "I can't blame you, crates of these were imported from France for this occasion alone."

Solene tossed him a cool look and bit her bottom lip. "Let me guess, our five-tier wedding cake was created by some famous chef in New York."

He nodded and replied with his mouth curled upward, "Yes, sort of."

"And this band..." She pointed her finger to another stage on her left and continued, "I didn't know they would perform in a wedding reception."

It was a six-people band. Two were vocalists, a male and female, while the rest played the instruments. Solene wasn't adept with Spain's entertainment industry, but she was pretty much aware of this band's popularity all over the world for their lively and soulful music.

"At the right price, they would," Henri confessed, "It's all for you and our guests' entertainment."

Solene held back from twisting her lips, but sank in her seat she did,

allowing herself to relish on the wonderful feel of the satin fabric against her skin.

"You are oppressively perfect, Henri," she then muttered after taking note of everything she experienced thus far in their wedding. Her involvement aside, he was really making it sure they had the grandest wedding ever.

"I'll take that as praise from your mouth, my wife," Henri answered as he observed his bride. "I'm doing this all for you."

"I know and I appreciate it," Solene replied whilst lowering her eyes on her plate of pastries and fresh-cut watermelon, "However, I couldn't shake off the feeling that you're compensating on something."

"Shoot me your guess, Solene. I'm all ears," Henri urged. He turned fully towards her and waited for her to reply.

Solene saw this and was encouraged. They were husband and wife now, so it was only proper they establish proper communication. Or at least that was the goal.

"Everything about our wedding seems only a facade, a distraction from the grimness of your family's business," she voiced out.

Henri hummed low before catching a glimpse of their guests enjoying the food, wine, and music.

"No, that's not true, Solene. I never settle for anything less especially if you're concerned," he answered whilst looking gravely at her. "However, if it eases you, I'll tell you this: my people needed some time off to unwind. All they see is death and suffering. It's only fair they get to relax during my wedding."

Solene broke into a smile hearing this. "Yeah, you have a point."

"Are you sure I'm not trying to distract you though?" Henri then commented with a growing grin on his face.

"Distract me?" she raised a brow. "On what?"

"On our first night tonight as married couple," he answered.

With his words, Solene's face blushed even further. Heat, not from the liquor but from something else, rose and warmed up her body even more. She redirected her eyes away from his and cleared her throat. Thinking about it, the idea of their wedding night never came to mind as she was

too preoccupied with all the happenings around her, but now that her husband pointed this out, the possibilities in her head started flowing.

Him on top her...

Him trailing kisses down her neck...

His mouth on her breasts...

His length inside her...

Oh boy...

Just like how she daydreamed of escaping from the marriage arrangement, that wild and carefree side of hers also daydreamed erotic fantasies with her betrothed. Kinky ones. Passionate ones. Even hardcore ones.

However, she could never confess that to him. Oh no. Never.

Henri, seeing her uneasiness, only chuckled.

"Relax, Solene. I'm merely teasing you. I won't touch you if you're not ready. Take my word for it."

"Yet you did so the last time we were alone in my room," she quickly remarked, her heart pounding heavily against her rib cage.

Henri returned to his laid-back position and eyed the bubbling liquid inside his wine. He remembered their short tryst like it was yesterday and it was damn agonizing him to the fullest.

"I apologize for it, Solene. I simply couldn't...contain myself that time."

His left hand under the table clenched so much so that his knuckles turned white.

"Seeing you half-naked in front of me and with my symbols drawn on your skin snapped my patience," he continued, answering it as honestly as he could. He cherished that memory of them together and wanted more of those come soon but he also wanted to respect her decision. He could wait months more just like how he waited for her all his life.

"You...you don't need to apologize, Henri," Solene calmly said, still refusing to meet his intense gaze. Consummating their marriage was an inevitable truth and it was bound to happen soon. Yes, she had prepared herself for it all her life. Plus, he already ignited a heat within her that he alone could douse.

"I...didn't dislike it," her honest words spilled forth from her mouth.

This confession alone grabbed Henri's attention. They were subtle words, yes, but they were enough to inform him of her decision.

"Excuse me, Master Henri," Armand interrupted just in time and cut Solene and Henri's attention to half. "Some parting words for your guests is due."

This told Henri it was time to wrap up the party, and that was good. That was very, very good.

He threw a desirous look at Solene first before standing up and taking the microphone from the podium. Solene on the other hand took a deep breath. One thing was certain with that kind of look from her husband and it was a promise of an interesting night tonight.

"Thank you all for attending this momentous occasion. This will be the start of a powerful union between the Rantzen and St. Fair Family, but as for me, there is no greater gift than to have Solene as my wife. Now, she and I will retire first but the night is still young, you may wish to stay and party some more. A pleasant evening to all."

The audience clapped and nodded their heads. The band played again, pulling their attention back to the party.

Henri, after putting the mic down on the table, spread a hand in front of Solene and asked, "Can you still stand?"

She blinked many times, wondering of all the questions he had to ask, it was that, but she realized, of course, she had drunk too much of the wine. Though she wasn't tipsy or lightheaded, it was understandable he'd be cautious of her present state.

"Yes," she nodded and shifted on her seat, "I am still able, Henri."

"Perfect," he answered, but decided to assist her anyway in standing.

His hand swept down to the small of her naked back and instant chills climbed up to her spine in response.

"What wonderful feeling," she thought and she definitely craved more of it.

"Brother?" Lloyd, the poor, clueless boy, emerged out of the blue from Henri's back and slowly tugged the hem of his tuxedo. He was rubbing his eyes and making a sobbing sound. "I want to sleep," he expressed.

Solene's expression lightened at the sight of such cuteness. It made her

remember AC, but she knew already her mother had tucked him in an hour earlier.

Henri lowered himself to the boy's level and patted his head. "Lloyd, you should start acting like a big boy now. I can't accompany you in anymore."

"But I want you to!" cried Lloyd.

Henri and Solene exchanged glances. She gave him a soft smile and a nod, before straightening herself up. "Go ahead," she encouraged.

"I'll have Patricia accompany you," Henri informed.

And that was what happened. Henri left with Lloyd, his restraint tested even further, while Solene walked to her chamber with Patricia, her heartbeat quickening its pace.

"Uhm, aren't you supposed to go inside Master Henri's chamber, Mistress Solene?" the maid asked as she noticed their unusual path.

Solene fluttered her eyelids and blankly stared at Patricia. "Well, um, my things are still in my room, right?" she tried to clarify.

The latter quickly shook her head. "No, Mistress. They are inside the Master's room. It was Master Henri's standing order from the moment you arrived here."

The arrangement didn't surprise Solene at all, but still, this gave her one heck of another round of heart thudding.

"Uh, well, thank you, Patricia," she stated. Taking a turn going to the opposite hallway, she awkwardly led their walk.

The maid was silent during their short journey and when Solene arrived in front of the Master's double doors, she thoughtfully inquired: "Do you need help in donning off your gown, Mistress?"

"Call me as per the usual please," Solene stated, disliking the formal title for her. "And no, I prefer to take care of myself. Thank you Patricia. You can leave now."

The diligent maid simply bowed her head and greeted her a good night.

Now alone, Solene took a deep, cleansing breath. She entered Henri's chamber as cautiously as she could and went directly to his bedroom. Inside, the room was as usual, already lit with dim lights. She neared a full-length mirror bolted against the wall and stared at her reflection

again.

"Like a virgin ready to be offered to a king," she teasingly commented to herself.

Aware that the owner was still preoccupied with his younger brother, Solene was confident she'd get the entire bedroom to herself, so she decided to change into her night clothes.

As she was busy unhooking the first two hooks of her gown located near her nape, the temperature of the changing room became cool. The yellow lights flickered and the air around her turned heavy.

Suddenly, she felt large, confident hands touch her waist. This alerted her senses then. Gasping, she immediately looked up, tried to turn around, but then this same hand secured her on the spot.

"Allow me to undress you, Solene," Henri's voice traveled through her ear. His mouth was so close to her neck she could feel his warm breath fan her cheek.

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