

## **Shota 231**

### Chapter 231 Dinner With The Duke (1)

After going back to the inn, we didn't do anything except lock ourselves in our room.

The rumours from the afternoon had spread and now everyone looked at us differently.

When we walked into the inn, it was almost as if we were a display in the zoo and everyone was staring at us.

This was a very uncomfortable thing, so we didn't hesitate to lock ourselves in our rooms and hide ourselves.

For now, there wasn't anything that we could really do.

Until the dinner with the duke was settled, we really couldn't be wandering around the city too much or it would draw too much attention from the duke. So once we lost the duke's attention, we would be able to start our investigation.

The next morning and afternoon were also spent inside of our rooms, avoiding the spectacle that was outside.

When it was finally time for the dinner date, the same messenger as before came to pick us up.

There were many different nobles that had been waiting in the main entrance of the inn during this time. It seemed that they had all gathered to take a peek at us.

When we came out with the messenger, many of them had their eyes light up as they looked in our direction.

It looked like they wanted to approach and talk to us, but it also seemed like they were afraid of something.

The direction that they were looking in was...the direction of the messenger.

The messenger was facing away from us since he was in front of us leading the way, so I couldn't see his face either. But I could guess what kind of expression was on his face that kept away all of these nobles.

When we came out of the inn, we found that there was a luxurious carriage that was waiting for us outside.

This carriage looked too fancy for a baron to use, it was even too fancy for a count to use.

This seemed very much like the personal carriage of a duke.

But why would it be here?

Why was it being used to pick up a lowly baron like me?

Based on the reaction of everyone around me, it seemed like they were all thinking the same thing. There were even some whispers that I could hear from the crowd.

"Isn't that the lord duke's personal carriage?"

"Who is this person that the lord duke is willing to send his personal carriage to pick him up?"

"Could it be that they are royalty?"

At this, everyone started looking at me with even more fervent looks which caused a bitter smile to appear on my face.

If only they knew the truth. If only they knew that I was nothing more than a simple baron from a remote region...

I really couldn't help wondering how they would react if they were to learn this truth...

But still, I couldn't embarrass the duke by saying anything or refusing to take this carriage.

So it was better to get this over as soon as possible.

I immediately entered the carriage with Shaka and sat down. The messenger came in and sat down in front of us, but he didn't say a thing as he looked at me with a polite smile.

It was almost as if he was just waiting to serve me if I had any kind of request.

It really was an awkward carriage ride, so I couldn't help asking, "This sir, I wonder what I should address you as?"

The first thing that I realized was that I didn't know this person's name even though I had met him quite a few times.

The messenger just gave a respectful bow and said, "This humble one's name is Tim."

I gave a nod to this before suddenly asking, "Why is the lord duke treating me with such respect?"

Tim peeked upwards to see the look of doubt on my face before saying, "Your lordship, the duke is just extending his honest hospitality towards you because he has long heard of your fame and has expressed his admiration towards you. It is nothing more than that."

I couldn't help knitting my brows when I heard this.

It seemed very simple on the surface, but it also seemed like there was a hidden message underneath.

It was as if they already knew something, something that was related to why we were really here.

So did that mean that they were acting this way because they were afraid that they would be discovered, or were they acting this way because they wanted to secretly support us?

Was this going to be a trap or was it something else?

These thoughts quickly passed through my mind, but Shaka tapped me on the shoulder for me to calm down.

When he did, I realized that there was no point stressing over this thing.

The more that I stressed and worried about this, the worse that it would get...

After all, showing signs of worry would be like showing signs of weakness that would make it easier for the enemy to manipulate us.

So all we could do now was face whatever was coming in the calmest manner possible so we could think through everything clearly.

That way, we will be able to handle anything that would be coming our way.

I gave a nod back to show Shaka that I was grateful for this before revealing a calm and collected look.

Then I said to Tim, "Thank you."

It was just a simple show of gratitude, but it was also a signal that this conversation was over.

Tim was surprised to hear this, but he didn't say anything else as he just sat there in silence with us.

Since this was the personal carriage of the duke, it took no time for us to reach the duke's manor since everyone cleared the path for this carriage.

Once we arrived, the guards quickly opened the door for us and we were brought to the entrance of the manor.

## Chapter 232 Dinner With The Duke (2)

The guards at the entrance opened the door for us and the main hall of the duke's manor was revealed.

To our surprise, we found that the duke was standing there.

With the way that he stood there, it was almost as if he had been waiting for us to arrive.

But in what world would this be normal where a duke would be waiting for a baron like this?

When I saw this, I couldn't help feeling more and more certain of my suspicions that the duke was being controlled by something and this was all a trap.

But for now, there was nowhere for us to run...

So I went forward to greet the duke.

As per customs, I was about to bow to the duke to greet him, but before I could go down, the duke suddenly grabbed my arm and stopped me.

He quickly said, "Sir Zwein, there's no need for you to do something like this. You can just act casual around me since we can be considered friends."

Could we be considered friends?

That was the first thing that I thought after hearing this.

After all, we had only met once before and we had only talked for a few minutes during that meeting, so how could we be considered friends?

But since it was the duke that said this, I didn't question him to his face.

Instead, I just humbly said, "Your grace, that is too much of an honour for me. How could someone as lowly as me be considered a friend of yours."

The duke waved his hand and said with a smile, "There's no need to consider your title or your position. I have to admit that I've long admired your work, so I hope that we can be friends."

I knitted my brows slightly at this, but I quickly relaxed them as I said, "The honour is all mine, your grace."

The duke just gave a simple nod before turning around to move to the stairs.

Once he had turned around, I couldn't help knitting my brows again.

But there was no time to act surprised since the duke suddenly made his next move.

With a clap of his hands, he said, "Come down and greet our guests."

After this, there were two sets of footsteps that came from the stairs.

When I looked up, I saw that there were two beautiful figures in dresses that were coming down these stairs. With how they came right after the duke had given a clap, it was as if they had been waiting for this signal the entire time to make this entrance.

The two figures were both beauties without a doubt, but one was clearly older than the other.

Based on her age, this should be the duchess.

However, even at her age, her beauty was not lost.

She was a middle aged beauty who looked like she was just as young as ever, but there were a few parts of her that were much more developed than a younger girl. She had her beautiful red hair and mature looks which made her even more enticing than a younger girl.

The one behind her was younger, but that didn't mean that her beauty wasn't there. I think you should take a look at

With her age, she should be the duke's daughter, but unlike her mother, she was more of a cool beauty.

With her blue hair and sharp eyes, she had a much cooler vibe than her mother did.

She was beautiful in her own right, but she did lose out to her mother since her figure wasn't as full as hers.

But when I saw her, I couldn't help narrowing my eyes slightly as I stared at the duke's daughter. That was because there was something that seemed familiar about this girl, almost as if I had met her somewhere before.

The duke didn't miss this and he secretly revealed a sly smile.

After they came down, they did the normal noble thing and gave curtsies to me before the duke introduced them.

"This is my lovely wife, the duchess Rebecca and that is our daughter, Veronica."

In response to this, I immediately gave a slight bow to both of them and said, "I am Baron Zwein, it is a pleasure to meet you."

At this, it was the daughter's turn to glare at me.

When she heard my name, she suddenly narrowed her eyes to look at me just like I had done before.

I had been peeking at her while I had been giving the bow and I saw the way that she looked at me.

It was as if she recognized me as well.

So did that mean that we had met somewhere before since I felt that she was familiar?

There was silence that followed after this until the duke suddenly broke it by asking, "Do you two know each other?"

Both of us were caught off guard by this.

The duke then asked, "You seem to be staring at each other, so could it be that you've met somewhere before?"

As he said this, there was something strange about the tone of his voice...almost as if he was looking forward to something...

Veronica was the one that responded first by shaking her head and saying, "We've never met before."

I nodded in response to this and said, "I was just lost in the beauty of this young miss and I've embarrassed myself by staring."

The duke to my surprise suddenly revealed a smile as he said, "You think that my daughter is beautiful? Well, luckily she's also single, so if you're interested..."



Before he could finish saying this, Veronica suddenly took a few steps forward to come to the duke's side. Then even though she was wearing a dress, she suddenly brought her knee up into the duke's stomach.

After kneeling her father in the stomach, she quickly took her position from before and said, "Father, it seems like you've said too much."

The duke was bent over with a bitter smile on his face and he was holding his stomach that had been kneed, but he quickly recovered and changed the topic by saying, "Shall we go and have a seat?"

I also had a bitter smile on my face after seeing this.

It seemed that the duke really suffered at the hands of his daughter.

#### Chapter 233 Dinner With The Duke (3)

After entering the dining room, the duke quickly arranged for our positions.

He took the seat at the head of the table since this was his manor, but to my surprise, I found that he put me at the other end of the table in the guest of honour seat.

Normally, a noble of my status would have been placed at one of the side seats even if I was the only guest that had been invited. After all, this was a matter of honour rather than courtesy.

The guest of honour seat was given to someone that would be at the same level as the duke, so it shouldn't be given to someone like me who was only a baron.

If a baron was put on the same level as a duke, then that would be inverting the noble hierarchy and looking down on the duke, so they shouldn't have done something like this.

But here we were...

At the same time, the duke's daughter Veronica was surprisingly seated right beside me.

Instead of sitting at the other end of the table with her family, she was seated to my right...

It was almost as if...

But I didn't let that terrifying thought remain in my head for long.

After all, they should know that I was already married. In fact, it was because I married someone with the baroness title that I was even a baron in the first place.

After sitting down, the courses were brought out by the servants.

Even if this entire ordeal had been stressful, I had to admit that the food served to me was amazing. These were even better than the dishes that Baroness Rose had prepared for me, so all I could say was as expected of the ducal family.

I didn't eat the food placed in front of me right away, I only started eating after seeing Shaka give me a secret nod to show that it was safe.

I didn't know what method Shaka used to test the food, but I didn't doubt his abilities since I had already seen all the shocking things that he had done before. Once I received Shaka's seal of approval, I started digging into the food.

As I had expected, the food was very delicious, even more so than what we ate back on our own territory.

With the title of duke came the wealth and power that a duke should have.

This allowed him to find the best cooks and get the best ingredients for himself, so I really couldn't compare to the duke when it came to this.

The meal itself wasn't that special since all we did was exchange a few words in small talk while enjoying our food.

The main event of the dinner came after the entree course and while we were waiting for dessert.

All of a sudden, the duke asked, "Baron Zwein, can you tell me for what reason you have come to my city?"

As he said this, he suddenly revealed a serious look and an aura that only someone of power would have. When I felt this aura hit me, I could feel the pressure that was coming from him. I think you should take a look at

All I could think was that this was what a duke should be.

But luckily, I had already come up with an answer for a question like this since I had expected the duke to ask this.

Albeit, I had expected him to ask this in our first meeting and not in this second meeting over dinner.

Still, I took a deep breath to calm myself before saying, "I have come to seek your grace's patronage."

The duke raised a brow when he heard this.

Seeing that look on his face, I continued by saying, "As you know, my territory is in a place where there are many other minor nobles that are looking to expand. As such, we are facing pressure from many different nobles around us. If we were to obtain the support of a..."

I didn't finish my words, but the way that I left it hanging made it very clear what I was implying.

The duke narrowed his eyes to look at me which was to be expected, but then to my surprise, the duke just gave a sudden clap and said with a smile, "Is that all?"

I couldn't help being taken aback when I heard this since this was not the reaction that I thought I would get.

After all, the duke must receive many different requests like this in a day, so why would he agree to this one so easily?

Then to my surprise again, the duke suddenly clapped his hands once more.

The butler on the side suddenly came over with what seemed to be an envelope on a tray, but the butler didn't walk over to where the duke was. Instead, the butler came over and put the tray down in front of me.

I looked at the envelope on the table and then looked up at the duke sitting in front of me.

The duke just sat there with a smile and a look on his face that seemed like he was waiting for me to open the envelope.

Since that was the case, I didn't hesitate to open the envelope and read what was inside.

As I read the report that was inside, I couldn't help slightly knitting my brows.

The more that I read this report, the more that I knitted my brows.

I had also wanted to let Shaka read this report as well, but it would be rude here, so I held back in the end.

After I finished reading it, I asked the duke, "Your grace, this is...?"

The duke said with the same smile, "Just as you have your problems, I have my own problems. This is one of the problems in my territory that I would like you to take care of. Consider it a favour to me and I'll take care of your problem as a favour to you."

#### Chapter 234 Dinner With The Duke (4)

I just looked at the duke with a look that was trying to judge if he was being serious or not.

But the look on the duke's face made it clear that he was serious about this.

It seemed that as long as I took care of this matter for him, he would take care of the matter that I presented to him.

But that matter was a cover in the first place.

Even if it was true, with the power of the Shadow Garden that I now possessed, it was easy for me to take care of those nobles if they wanted to do anything.

So I didn't really need the duke's help for this.

However, there was something that had caught my attention about this report that the duke had presented to me.

There was something about it that seemed suspicious...almost as if there was some kind of other force that was interfering in this matter.

In short, it seemed like this could be a clue as to the demon presence in this city.

But why would the duke give me this?

Unless he already knew that I was a part of Shadow Garden and had an idea of why I was here?

I looked at Shaka too, but he shook his head to show that he didn't know anything again.

After thinking about it, I said, "I will do what I can about this matter. I hope that your grace will not mind if I am unable to satisfy your expectations."

The duke just waved his hand and said, "It's just a small matter, so it doesn't really matter. I just hope that this will allow you to see my sincerity."

I slightly knitted my brows again, but I quickly relaxed my expression and said, "Thank you."

It was a perfunctory response, but it still had to be said.

Dessert was just as delicious as the meal itself, but I really wasn't in a mood to eat after everything that had happened. Right now, I just wanted to get away from this place as soon as possible so I could gather all the information that I had.

But it wasn't that simple.

Veronica, who had remained silent during the entire meal, suddenly said, "Baron Zwein, may I ask if you have any hobbies?"

I turned to look at her with a confused look before saying, "I don't have that many hobbies since I find myself too busy with my work."

Veronica raised a brow before saying, "Is that so? Well, you seem like someone that would enjoy their coffee, so I was going to ask if you've been to any good cafes lately."

This time, it was my turn to raise a brow.

I had thought that she had looked familiar, but now that I had taken some time to look at her carefully, I could see why I thought she looked familiar.

She looked very much like that Ronnie girl that I had met yesterday afternoon.

Ronnie and Veronica...it was similar.

After looking at her like this for a bit, I suddenly asked, "Your ladyship, this might be rude, but...have we met before?"

Veronica didn't seem to react at all when I asked this as she calmly shook her head before saying, "I don't think that I've had the honour of meeting your lordship before. Is this a new way of picking up girls?"

When I heard this, I couldn't help revealing an awkward smile since it did seem like I was hitting on her with the way that I had asked this...

But before I could apologize, the duke suddenly said, "Baron Zwein, are you interested in my daughter?"

I couldn't help revealing a look of shock that also had a bit of terror in it.

That was because I could tell from the duke's voice that he wasn't angry, but rather he was interested in this matter.

I quickly turned and bowed my head before saying, "Your grace, that was not my intention at all. I just felt that your daughter looked a bit familiar, which was why I asked that question." Then after a pause, I quickly added, "You should know that I am already married to my lovely wife, so I wouldn't dare do anything like this. Not to mention, rumours like this would surely hurt her ladyship's reputation, so please don't joke like this."

I added all of this in a panic because I could see the look in the duke's eyes...

But the duke didn't give up as he said, "You don't have to worry about all of that. With our power as dukes, would anyone say anything about us if we didn't want them to? Not to mention, our family has always followed the tradition of free love, which is why my precious daughter isn't engaged yet even though I would love to see her find a man that she loves. I would so very much like to hold my grandchildren in my hand, isn't that right, honey?"

The duchess leaned in close to the duke and agreed with him on this.

Based on the way that they acted, it was clear that they were a close couple, not a couple that had been forced together because of an arranged marriage. It seemed like what the duke had said about free love seemed to be true...

But that terrified me even more!

I clearly wouldn't be able to handle this, let alone how I would be able to explain this to Rose and the others.

So I quickly said, "Your grace, it is getting late. I think it is best if we leave now."

The duke was about to say something, but then he saw the glare that was coming from his daughter.

So in the end, he had no choice but to suck up his words and say, "Alright, let's end things here." Then he revealed a serious look as he said, "Baron Zwein, I look forward to hearing your good news."

I bowed my head and said, "I'll do my best to not disappoint."

The duke gave a nod before suddenly revealing a smile and saying, "Even if you aren't here to report, feel free to come and visit us. I've always wanted to find our precious daughter someone of the same age to talk to and you seem to fit the require..."

Before he could finish, he closed his mouth once again because there was someone glaring at him once more.



I just let out a bitter sigh before revealing a smile that had a hint of bitterness in it.

## Chapter 235 After Dinner

Once Zwein's group had left after dinner, the duke convened with his daughter in his study.

After sitting down and the maids left after putting down their drinks, the duke finally said, "It seems like your plan has worked."

Veronica gave a nod in response to this without saying a thing.

That was because there was a look of deep thought that was on her face, as if she was lost in her thoughts while considering something.

The duke didn't find this strange since that was just how his daughter was. She was someone who went at her own pace and if there was something that she found herself interested in, she would be completely lost in that thing.

While he could guess what she was currently thinking about, he didn't say anything and just waited for her to finish.

After a while, Veronica looked up at the duke and asked, "Is there anything else?"

The duke gave a nod and asked, "What should we do now?"

Veronica looked at him with a raised brow before saying with a sigh, "There's nothing we need to do now."

The duke revealed a confused look as he said, "Shouldn't we at least provide them with some form of assistance? We were the ones that asked them to take care of this investigation, so we should do something, right?"

Veronica shook her head with a smile before saying, "We're letting them take care of this investigation for us, so there's nothing that we need to do. They will take care of everything and that will be considered their favour to us in return for our support."

The duke gave a nod at first, but then he said, "But..."

Veronica quickly cut him off by saying, "Are you saying that you don't trust the power of the Shadow Garden? The same Shadow Garden that fills the heart of all us nobles with fear?"

At this, the duke revealed a complicated look.

That was right, Shadow Garden, that was a terrifying name for any noble of this kingdom.

That just went to show how much power and influence this organization had.

But in the end, he still said, "But what if they still can't take care of this matter with the power of Shadow Garden? What if it proves too much for them even with the terrifying Shadow Garden behind them."

Veronica just gave a sigh and said, "Then that's not a problem either."

The duke revealed a confused look when he heard this.

Veronica explained, "If they can't pull it off with the people that they've brought with them, they won't force it. They will go back to Shadow Garden headquarters and request more resources, which will bring more members of the Shadow Garden to our city."

The duke revealed a terrified look when he heard this and he immediately said, "Isn't this a bad thing! Why would we want more of those terrifying people here in our city!"

Veronica revealed a sly smile as she said, "We've already made contact with members of Shadow Garden, so it could be said that we have some relations. If more of them come, we can just rely on

Baron Zwein to introduce us. Once we have created some relations with Shadow Garden, would there be anything for us to fear?"

The duke looked at his daughter with a strange look, as he didn't know whether to admire or fear her boldness.

Shadow Garden, that was a shadow that hung over the hearts of all nobles and it was something that they would normally avoid touching even with a ten foot pole. But this daughter of his was actually trying to build relations with them...I think you should take a look at

He really didn't know how to feel about this.

But since the dice had already been cast, there was nothing that he could do.

The duke couldn't help letting out a sigh of admiration for the plan that his daughter had come up with.

Give the ones from Shadow Garden the information they were looking for and at the same time, put them in his debt by giving an arbitrary reason.

They would be able to take care of one of the problems that plagued the city while also getting a favour from someone that was with Shadow Garden.

This really was a great plan of killing two birds with one stone.

But then there was another thought that came to the duke's mind.

The way that his daughter had acted around Baron Zwein...

"Speaking of which, it seemed that there was something between you and Baron Zwein. Could it be that you and him have met before? If you have, then how about you and him..."

Before the duke could finish his words, he felt the cold gaze of his daughter falling onto him that instantly made him swallow everything that he had been about to say.

He had wanted to suggest that she get closer to Baron Zwein since it seemed like they already knew each other, but that idea was shut down before it could even be proposed.

Since there was nothing else, Veronica didn't bother with talking to her father anymore.

After she left, the duke couldn't help giving a sigh since he thought that it was a wasted opportunity.

After all, he had seen how she had stared at him while they had been at dinner.

It was a lie if she said that she wasn't interested in him.

In fact, as she walked out of the duke's office and headed up to her room, she couldn't help thinking about this.

She remembered when she first met Baron Zwein in the cafe.

At first, Veronica hadn't thought much of him and had thought that he was just a simple, handsome traveler.

But the more that she talked to him, the more interested she became in him until...

And then there was the final thing that he had said to her at the cafe.

"If we're fated to meet, huh?" Veronica muttered to herself.

Then she suddenly said with a smile, "I guess we'll be fated then!"

Chapter 236 Willful Young Miss (1)

After we left the duke's manor, both Shaka and I looked at each other before letting out sighs of relief.

We had no idea what to expect when we came to the duke's manor today, but this was definitely not what we had expected.

Once we were back at the inn, I handed Shaka the document that the duke had given me.

As he read it, he had the same reaction as me where he knitted his brows the more that he read it. Once he was done, he looked up at me with knitted brows as if he was asking me for my opinion on this matter.

I just shook my head to show that I didn't know what to say either, but in the end, I still said, "For now, we should go and check this out. It's the only clue that we've received so far, so it's better than nothing."

Shaka looked back at the piece of paper in his hand with knitted brows, but he still gave a nod in the end.

It was clear that both of us had misgivings about this matter, but we had no choice.

For now, the best idea was to get a good night's sleep,

...

The next morning, we woke up bright and early, but we didn't head out of the city yet.

This Bright Water City was a very large city, so there were always people that were awake.

Even early in the morning like this, there were still people that were awake doing business.

So we headed to this morning market to pick up a few things that we would need for our journey.

Since we had already become friends with the elves, after that adventure to the elven forest, I had picked up a nice souvenir.

Though the Storage Rings were special items that only the elves used, since I was someone who had the Mark of Life, they trusted me enough to make one for me.

Of course, it wasn't as big as the one that had been made for Moon, but it was more than big enough for me to use.

When no one was looking, I quickly put everything that we bought into my Storage Ring.

These things were important things that we would need if something happened in our investigations, so I made sure that they were kept safe and were easy to access.

With that, we headed out of the city.

We could have taken the carriage that the duke had provided us, but it attracted just too much attention. We had already attracted enough attention in our stay, so we wanted to avoid attracting anymore.

We had even put on disguises as we walked out of the inn this morning.

For someone like Shaka who specialized in this, it was easy for him to put on these disguises for us.

I was even envious of his makeup skills which certainly surprised me.

If the girls were here, they would definitely ask him for some lessons.

Once we reached the gate, it was easy for us to leave since we had the special pass given to us by the duke. This was something that he had slipped into the envelope that he had given me, which I was very grateful for.

With this pass, we would be able to enter and leave the city as we wanted without stirring too much of a fuss. I think you should take a look at

It wouldn't be like last time where everyone would stare at us because we had a gate closed just for us.

But when we slipped out of the city, there was someone surprising who was waiting for us.

Standing by the side of the road was a familiar figure who seemed to be waiting for someone.

When this figure saw our carriage, they suddenly waved at us which confused both me and Shaka.

However, this figure was drawing attention, so we had no choice but to stop.

When we approached, we found that it was Ronnie from the cafe we visited yesterday.

She came right up to the carriage and asked the two of us, "What are you two doing?"

But neither of us were able to respond...that was because we were both in disguise right now. Even if she had seen us, she shouldn't have been able to recognize us.

So how did she know that it was us?

Seeing the confused looks on our faces, Ronnie said with a smile, "Your eyes. You might be able to hide your appearances, but I recognized your eyes immediately."

Both Shaka and I looked at each other, specifically our eyes to see if there was anything different about them. However, we couldn't see anything special about our eyes like she had said.

In the end, we had no choice but to tell her what we were doing.

But of course, it was just an excuse.

"You're going out to search some ruins?" Ronnie said with an excited look.

I gave a nod before saying, "It's very dangerous, so that's why we're sneaking around to make sure that no one follows us."

But it was as if she didn't even hear this as Ronnie suddenly said, "I'm coming with you."

It wasn't even a question, it was a statement as if she had already made up her mind that she was going and she wouldn't broker any argument about it.

I quickly said, "I just said that it's very dangerous!"

Ronnie just waved her hand and said, "It'll be fine, it'll be fine."

I looked at Shaka and gave a nod.

At this, Shaka was about to whip the reins and make the horses go, but before he could, Ronnie had already gotten into our carriage.

It was as if she had already expected us to do this, so she jumped on before we could do anything.



We were both stunned seeing how bold she was, but at the same time, we were troubled since we couldn't just bring her along with us.

So I said, "Miss, do you really think it's a good idea to get into a carriage you can't escape from with two unknown men like this?"

Chapter 237 Willful Young Miss (2)

"You won't do anything." Ronnie said very simply without a single bit of hesitation in her voice.

Both of us were caught off guard when we heard this.

We looked at her with confused looks as I asked, "How are you so certain of this?"

Ronnie said with a bright smile, "Instinct."

We looked at each other with shocked looks before we both revealed bitter smiles.

We really couldn't do anything to this girl. Whether it was her instinct or her courage, there was no fault at all.

It seemed that no matter what we tried, we wouldn't be able to get rid of her.

So I considered...using force to push her off the carriage.

Shaka looked like he had the same idea as me, but before either of us could do a thing, there was a voice that called out, "Young miss, don't run so fast next time!"

We turned to look in the direction of this voice and we found that it was a gray haired man driving a carriage over towards us.

But even though this man had gray hair, he was anything but withered.

We could see the muscles that were bulging out all over his body and his face was covered in scars. It was clear that this was a man who had been in many battles before and was very strong.

As he came closer and closer in the carriage, we could feel the pressure that came from him.

Unless he had been through countless battles, it was impossible for this man to have this kind of aura.

I looked at Shaka and he shook his head.

It seemed like he wasn't confident in taking care of this gray haired man.

He was certain that he wouldn't lose, but he knew that it was impossible to take care of this gray haired man without creating a fuss. They wanted to draw as little attention to themselves as possible, so they couldn't do that.

So for now, they would see how this situation developed.

But it was clear that this gray haired man was a bodyguard that Ronnie's family had sent to take care of her.

Just who was Ronnie that she could have a bodyguard follow her like this?

Ronnie waved her hand at the gray haired man in the carriage and said, "Uncle Ron, that's your fault for taking so long! Do you know how long I was waiting for you to get here?"

The gray haired old man named Ron drove over and parked his carriage beside ours before saying, "Young miss, you know that you shouldn't run off like that. What if someone wanted to hurt you? How could this Ron repay the master if that ever happened?"

Ronnie just said with a smile, "Uncle Ron, you're being too serious! Nothing will happen here."

Ron had a worried look still, but then he noticed the two of us.

During this time, his eyes had been on Ronnie the entire time, so he actually hadn't noticed us even though we were standing right here.

When he noticed us, he immediately went over to Ronnie's side and pulled her behind him before saying, "Young miss, who are these people?"

Ronnie had an annoyed look at being treated like this, but she still said, "These are two friends that I met yesterday."

Ron narrowed his eyes to look at us, but then his eyes went to Shaka.

It was just like how Shaka had sized up Ron when he appeared, Ron was now sizing up Shaka.

As for why he ignored me...well, he had deemed that I wasn't a threat. Or at least I wasn't a threat compared to Shaka.

After judging Shaka for a bit, he pulled his hand back and drew Ronnie a bit further back, as if he was judging that Shaka was dangerous.

When Shaka saw this, he looked at me with a satisfied look, almost as if he was saying, "Do you see how powerful I am?"

I gave a secret bitter laugh, but I didn't say anything as I kept my expression calm.

After making sure that we weren't planning on doing anything dangerous to Ronnie, Ron relaxed a bit and said, "Young miss, we should get going. The roads will be blocked if we wait any longer and we won't be able to make it back in time if that happens."

Ronnie shook her head and said, "Uncle Ron, change of plans! We're going with them."

"Huh?" Ron said with a confused look before exclaiming, "Young miss, what are you saying?"

Ronnie said with a smile, "They said that they discovered some ruins, so we're going with them."

Ron immediately shut this down as soon as he heard this by saying, "Young miss! What are you saying! Exploring ruins with people that you just met is just too dangerous! How could I ever let you do something like this!"

When we saw Ron acting this way, both Shaka and I started cheering for him.

We didn't have a way to deal with Ronnie, but if Ron had a way to stop her, we were all for it.

So we waited to see how it would turn out.

But we were soon met with disappointment.

After hearing what Ron said, Ronnie immediately revealed a dissatisfied look before saying, "And I say that we're going with them, what are you going to do?"

Ron knitted his brows when he saw this because he knew what kind of personality this young miss of his had. If she decided on something, there was no way that he would be able to convince her otherwise...unless he used...

Ron gave a cough and said, "Young miss, if you keep acting willfully like this, you leave me with no choice. When we get back, I might need to have a talk with the master and madame."

Ronnie didn't reveal a scared look like one might think and instead, she said with a sly smile, "If you do that, I'll have a talk with papa about some love letters that I found."

## Chapter 238 Investigation (1)

As soon as she said this, Ron couldn't help looking aghast.

It was almost as if he had seen a ghost.

After opening and closing his mouth a few times, he finally stuttered, "Young miss, how, how do you, you know about that?"

Ronnie revealed a sly smile like a raccoon before saying, "Who knows? But Uncle Ron, you should really learn to hide your things better in the future."

Ron looked like he really wanted to say something else, but seeing that there were others here, he just gave a sigh. Then with a cough, he said, "Young miss, you should know that this is a very dangerous trip, so this Ron still asks you to reconsider."

Ronnie ignored this and said, "Alright, let's get going!"

Ron gave another sigh before turning to us to say, "Before we do, we should ask these gentlemen if we're imposing on them or not."

As he said this, he looked at us with a look that was asking for help.

Both of us were stunned when we saw this.

We had expected Ron to convince Ronnie, but it seemed that he was just as helpless as us when it came to this willful young miss.

It was unknown what he was expecting from us, but we were just as helpless when it came to dealing with Ronnie.

Still at the very least, there was an excuse for us to give a refusal now.

"Well, actually..." Before I could say anything else, I suddenly felt a chill run down my spine.

I saw that Ronnie was now glaring at me as I said this, almost as if she was saying, "If you dare..."

We had already seen what she had done to Ron, so even if she didn't know us that well, I was afraid of what she would do to us. If we were to reject her like this, it was hard to imagine what would happen, but we should expect something bad to happen.

So with a sigh, I said, "It's no bother at all..."

There was a defeated tone in my voice when I said this.

Ronnie revealed a happy smile when she heard this while Ron revealed a disappointed look, but he quickly made that look disappear when he saw the way that Ronnie turned back to look at him.

It seemed that if he did anything else, she might really reveal his secret...

So he had no choice but to accept this with a sigh.

As for me and Shaka, I secretly leaned in and said, "We'll just do some preliminary investigations today. We won't go too far since we have someone with us."

Shaka gave a nod in response without saying a thing.

But we both agreed that this wasn't the worst thing in the world.

After all, this would give us some kind of cover as we explored these ruins.

With Ronnie and Ron here, we could justify what we were doing here if someone passed by.

But in truth, that was just me trying to justify my weakness in letting her come with us.

While we were secretly talking, Ronnie also moved over to Ron and said in a low voice, "Uncle Ron, these two are the ones from last night."

When Ron heard this, he couldn't help looking back at Zwein and Shaka with narrowed eyes.

After a few seconds, he turned back and said, "Young miss, I understand that cloaked person, but are you sure that this handsome young man is also part of 'that'?"

When he said 'that', there was a tone of reverence in his voice.

Ronnie gave a nod in response to this and said, "In fact, it's the one that you're looking down on that's in charge. The one that you're afraid of is just his subordinate."

When Ron heard this, he revealed a shocked look.

No matter how he looked at it, he felt that Shaka was the one that was in charge and Zwein was just putting on a front. He was nothing more than the cover for Shaka who was really in charge.

But he never thought that it would actually be the way that it seemed where Zwein was in charge and Shaka was just the muscle.

After a moment of silence, Ron asked, "Young miss, how do you know all of this?"

Ronnie revealed a sly smile and gave a wink before saying, "It's a secret."

There were three black lines that appeared on Ron's head when he heard this, but he knew better than to ask.

When the young miss acted like this, no matter what anyone said, they wouldn't be able to change her mind.

Once she was in this mood, she just acted however she wanted without a care.

Perhaps this wouldn't work if she didn't have the status and power that she had, but she did have it so there was nothing that anyone could do to her.

Ronnie just ignored Ron after he revealed this expression and turned her eyes to look back at Zwein.

All of a sudden, I couldn't help feeling a chill run down my spine.

It was almost as if someone had locked onto me like a predator going after prey...

...

Back in Bright Water City, in the duke's manor.

"Where's Veronica today?" The duke suddenly asked the duchess who had visited him in his office.

The duchess gave a shrug to show that she didn't know anything before turning to the maid that came with her.

This maid was her trusted aide and did everything for her.

The maid gave a bow to both the duke and duchess before saying, "The young miss went out with knight captain Ron early in the morning, saying something about going out to have 'fun'."

When they heard this, both the duke and duchess revealed complicated and dark looks.



After all, they knew what kind of personality their daughter had.

When she said she was going out to have 'fun', it was better to say that she was going out to cause trouble...

They just hoped that she wouldn't get in too much trouble this time...

Chapter 239 Investigation (2)

Since they were in carriages, it didn't take long for them to reach the area where the reports came from.

However, they weren't able to find anything from a preliminary glance.

This place was a clearing that was by the side of the road that was surrounded by forest.

No matter how they looked at it, it didn't seem like this place would have what they were looking for.

After all, this place was filled with greenery and life.

The report had said that there were signs of rot on the plants in this area, but as far as I could see, it didn't seem like that was happening at all.

I had also been paying special attention to the system, waiting for a notification of a quest. After all, when it came to things like this, it would usually trigger side quests or even main quests.

But that didn't seem to be the case.

After a while, Ronnie suddenly asked, "You said that there was a ruin nearby? Why can't I find any traces of it?"

I revealed a bitter smile before saying, "We heard that there were traces of a ruin nearby, but we can't seem to find it either. This is why I was saying that there was nothing to gain from coming with us."

Ronnie narrowed her eyes to look at me, but then she suddenly said, "I'll go look around a bit longer."

Without even waiting for me to say anything, she ran off to the side of the clearing.

Ron quickly followed behind her without a word, with his hand at his sides as if he was prepared to pull out a weapon at any moment.

This little detail made it clear that he was a bodyguard that her family had sent out to protect her.

But for now, it didn't seem like there was any danger, so we didn't pay attention to the two of them.

Instead, I started searching around the area, looking for the clues that I wanted to find.

There was nothing in the clearing, so I started going further into the forest around the clearing. However, even then, I wasn't able to find a single thing.

That was until I heard Ronnie calling out, "There's a river over here!"

I turned in the direction that this voice came from and walked in that direction until I found the 'river' that she was talking about.

But to call it a river really was an exaggeration.

It was nothing more than a little creek that barely had any water flowing.

Still, that didn't stop her from happily splashing in the creek.

She hadn't even taken off her shoes and didn't seem to care about getting wet.

Ron just stood there on the side with a helpless look on his face.

However, I couldn't help being surprised when I saw her like this. With the glimmering sun and the splashing water, it really created a beautiful scene with her beautiful appearance. I think you should take a look at

I couldn't help being stunned as I watched her splash in the water like this.

That is until I realized that there was something else here.

It had blended into the grass that grew here, but I could see the traces of it through the grass because of the dark black colour.

I went over to the grass and looked down carefully at it to find that it was a fish, but it wasn't just any normal fish. This was a fish that was completely covered in what seemed to be a black mold that was rotting the fish from inside out.

This was clearly not a natural kind of disease and was caused by something.

But of course, I didn't move too close to it.

Instead, I started looking around the area and to my surprise, I found that there was much more of this black colour than I thought. Looking carefully, I could see that there were even more of these fishes scattered in the grass around the river than I thought.

I immediately turned and said, "Get out of the river now!"

Ronnie was immediately caught off guard by this, but she didn't question me when she saw the serious look on my face.

After coming out of the river, I didn't hesitate to pull us away from this place and back into the forest. Once I was certain that we were far enough away from that place, I immediately pulled out some water canteens and started pouring them over Ronnie.

She was shocked when she saw this and quickly dodged out of the way before saying, "What are you doing?"

During this, Ron had pulled out a sword from who knows where and was carefully watching me.

I said in a serious and deep voice, "Stay still."

When she heard this, she couldn't help being dazed as she froze.

Then I started pouring the water all over her, making sure to get every part that had touched the river. After making sure that not a single part was missed, I finally sat down on the grass and waited while watching Ronnie's body.

Our group just sat there in silence as no one had any idea what was happening.

After a few minutes and seeing that there were no changes with Ronnie's body, I let out a sigh of relief.

Seeing this, Ronnie finally asked, "What's going on?"

I pointed back at the river and said, "Did you not see the fish that was scattered around the edges of the river?"

Ronnie revealed a confused look before shaking her head.

With a sigh, I said, "Those fish were suffering from some kind of disease and it was most likely something that was transmitted through the water of the river."

When she heard this, Ronnie looked down at her hands and feet that had been splashing in the water.

Ron also immediately rushed over to Ronnie's side and started looking over her body, trying to find anything that was wrong with her.

But in the end, neither of them could find a thing.

#### Chapter 240 Investigation (3)

After looking at her limbs for a bit, she turned back to me to ask, "Is that why you splashed the water on me?"

I said with a nod, "I wanted to wash off any of the disease that was on you, but..." I couldn't help giving a sigh before saying, "It would have been better if we had some hot water."

Both Ron and Ronnie revealed confused looks when they heard this.

I quickly explained, "Hot water kills germs which causes diseases, so hot water would have helped us sterilize you."

Then after a pause, I said, "At the very least, we know that this isn't a fast acting disease. You might still be affected by it, but it might take a long time to act up..."

After hearing this, both Ron and Ronnie revealed worried looks once more.

Ron couldn't sit still anymore after hearing this, so he immediately stood up and said, "Young miss, let's go back. We will find a doctor to check your body to make sure that you aren't infected."

Ronnie knitted her brows, but she didn't say anything when hearing this.

Ron could see that she was lost in her own world again, so he was about to say something else.

But before he could, Ronnie suddenly said, "Do you know where the source of this infection is?"

I shook my head before saying, "While I don't know what the source of this disease is, I do know where it's coming from. So I plan on following the river back to its source and seeing what's causing this."

I saw that she wasn't saying anything, so I said, "You should really head back..."

Before I could finish, she suddenly cut me off by saying, "I'm coming with you."

We were all taken aback when she said this.

The one that reacted first was Ron who immediately said, "Young miss, that's enough! You cannot keep acting willfully like this! Your life is on the line!"

Ronnie shook her head as she said, "That's why I have to do this. If I go and find the source of this disease, then I'll be able to identify what it is. That will make it easier for me to find a cure for it."

Ron wanted to say something, but he realized that she was right.

Even if they were to find a doctor to look at her, the time wasted trying to figure out what kind of disease she had been affected with would without a doubt be long. Especially when there were delayed symptoms like this.

This might even affect her ability to recover from this.

So finding out what the disease was from the source and then finding the cure was much easier.

But to let her go was just too dangerous...

So Ron was very conflicted at this moment.

Then all of a sudden, Ron said, "Young miss, you should head back to the city and have the master consult a doctor for you. I will go and find out what this disease is with these gentlemen."

Ronnie shook her head and said, "No, I have to go personally."

Ron shook his head as soon as he heard this and said, "Young miss, no matter how willful you are, you can't act this way. There is no doubt that this will be very dangerous and this Ron can't put you in any more danger."

Still Ronnie wouldn't listen as she said, "I'm coming and that is final."

Ron looked at Ronnie like he still had many things to say, but Ronnie had already run off without them.

Seeing this, Ron had no choice but to abandon the carriage and chase after them.

All the while, we just had awkward looks on our faces as we had no idea what to say.

Still, since they had already headed off, we had no choice but to follow.

The four of us quickly made our way down the river, making sure to keep our distance from it to avoid being infected by whatever was in the river.

As we followed this river we found more and more traces of the disease as we saw the rot that had been reported.

It seemed that we had been in a downriver area of the area of rot, which was why we didn't see as much of it. However, it seemed that this rot was spreading very aggressively, even covering large patches of this area in the rot.

When Ron saw this, he couldn't help looking at Ronnie with a worried look.

While there hadn't been any symptoms yet, something that could cause rot at this level was clearly not something that was simple...

Finally, I called for us to stop so that we could move further away from the river.

I had been carefully looking at the area of the rot and I found that most of it was concentrated around this river.

It seemed that as we came closer to the source, the concentration of the germs in the river increased and the range of the rot increased as well.

Instead of following the reverse flow of the river, I started walking away from the bank of the river while looking carefully around myself. Eventually, I came to a stop when I saw that there were less blackened plants around me.

There were still some, but there was far less than the area around the river where it was almost pitch black.

The plants here might have been splashed by a few drops of water from the river, but nothing more.

Still the fact that they had turned black just from this showed how strong these germs were...

I also couldn't help looking at Ronnie with a worried look.

She saw this and said, "Stop wasting time and let's go."

Then she turned and headed in the same direction as before.

But when no one could see her face, she also revealed a worried look.

There was no one that wasn't afraid of invisible germs like this...



After all, there was nothing that they could do to defend against it.