

Shota 401

Chapter 401 Who do you think you are? (2)

It was just too bad that things wouldn't go the way that this young man wanted.

After a moment of silence, there was a voice that cut through the silence.

This was a voice that was filled with majesty and prestige.

"Who do you think you are?"

The moment that the young man heard this, he couldn't help knitting his brows slightly.

He couldn't help feeling that this voice was familiar, but he couldn't tell where he had heard it before.

Still, he didn't feel like he would lose, so he said, "Who am I? Who do you think you are?"

After saying this, he turned around while still pointing that sword forward and saying, "I am the son of Marquis Heiman, Timothy Heiman. I'm someone that is far more noble than you."

But the moment that he turned around, he couldn't help being shocked.

After all, even if he didn't recognize the person, there was no missing the crown on this person's head.

Standing behind him was the king.

The king was the one that had just spoken.

When the king saw this, he couldn't help revealing a smile. It was just that this smile never reached his eyes.

After a moment of shock, Timothy immediately brought his sword down as he couldn't help feeling a chill run down his spine.

Even if he was an idiot, he still recognized what he had just done...

Pointing a sword at the king, was this any different from treason?

His only hope now was to explain the situation before it got worse or else he might really get executed...

So Timothy quickly put away his sword and said, "Your majesty, this cretin..."

Before he could say anything else, the king suddenly raised his hand.

Timothy's mouth froze as if there was some kind of that had been cast and he wasn't able to say a single thing no matter how hard he tried.

Though it wasn't that the king had used.

He was just suppressing Timothy with his natural prestige and majesty as a king.

The king narrowed his eyes to look at Timothy before saying, "Where did this fool come from?"

The moment that everyone heard this, they all couldn't help trembling and looking away. Not a single one of them dared to look at Timothy, as if they were afraid of being associated with him.

Even Marquis Heiman who had just come over tried to avoid looking at his own son as he regretted his decision.

He knew that his son was an idiot, but he never thought that his son would be this much of an idiot.

After all, the person that he had chosen to pick on was...

Seeing that no one said a thing, the king gave a snort and said, "Then is everyone blaming us for hosting this banquet that invited this fool?"

The moment that he said this, everyone trembled again before quickly bowing down in fear.

Not a single person dared to look up, but they all glared at Marquis Heiman.

The looks in their eyes were blaming him for not stepping out to take blame for his son, causing all of them to be caught in the crossfire as well. If he didn't go forward to take the blame soon, who knew what the king would do.

So there were many people that even started threatening Marquis Heiman with their gazes.

Seeing that he had no choice, he came out and said, "Your majesty, please forgive my foolish son. I will make sure that he will be severely punished when we return home."

The king just seemed to ignore him as he stroked his chin.

Everyone waited anxiously for the king to say something, but they all felt that this wouldn't be something good...

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Finally, the king said, "Punishment? If I recall, the punishment for treason is execution."

The moment that his voice fell, it was like the two of them had suddenly fallen into a casket of ice.

Both of them started shaking out of fear as neither of them really knew what to say in response to this.

But when desperation set in...people could do anything.

That was the case with Timothy.

When he heard that he was to be executed, he broke free of the shackles of his fear and pointed at me to say, "He's the one that caused all of this, your majesty. This wretch was the one that was harassing the miss ambassador and I was just standing up for her. The one that should be executed is him!"

After he said this, everyone looked at him with looks of pity while shaking their heads.

This kid...was too stupid.

He had come to this banquet and he didn't even recognize the person that this banquet was held for, as well as blaming it all on him.

They could only look at Marquis Heiman with looks of pity.

Elsa seemed like she wanted to say something, but before she could, I grabbed her arm. When she looked at me, I just shook my head for her to stay calm.

This was a matter between humans and she shouldn't get involved in this matter or it would get more complicated.

The king narrowed his eyes as he said in a curious voice, "So you're saying that he is the one that was causing trouble with the ambassador?"

Timothy immediately nodded along to this with a look of hope in his eyes.

If the king was able to understand this, then there was still hope of surviving.

"That's right, your majesty. He was the one that came onto the miss ambassador first and I was just..."

Before he could finish, the king suddenly said, "But he's our ambassador as well. Doesn't it make sense that he talks to the ambassador from the Dwarven Kingdom?"

The moment that his voice fell, Timothy had a look like he was dying on his face.

He slowly turned back to look at me with a look of disbelief on his face.

He never would have thought that this person who he thought was a lowly commoner was actually someone this important...

Timothy opened his mouth and made some more noise like he wanted to make more excuses, but the king didn't have any of that. The king just simply raised his hand and said, "Take them away and lock them up. The punishment for the crime of treason is death and no one can escape that."

He then turned to Marquis Heiman and said, "You will be stripped of your title and your lands will be reclaimed. Your entire family will also be executed along with you to pay for this crime."

Marquis Heiman's last bit of hope collapsed when he heard this.

At worst, he had been planning to sacrifice his son...but he never thought that the king would be so ruthless and decisive.

Both he and Timothy wanted to make more excuses, but the king wouldn't have any of it.

The king just waved his hand and said, "Take them away and lock them up in the dungeon. Don't let them ruin this joyous occasion anymore."

The guards quickly came forward and took both Marquis Heiman and his son Timothy away.

While they were being dragged away, they were both still making excuses and pleading for mercy.

Chapter 402 Real villain

Once the father and son pair had been taken away, the king's eyes swept across the room before he turned back to Elsa.

With a smile, he said, "I'm sorry for ruining the mood. It seems that a few of my subjects had a few too many drinks and acted rudely. I hope that Miss Elsa will not mind this."

Elsa gave a slow shake of her head before saying, "No, no, it's not a problem at all. I understand that these things happen."

Of course, even if she wanted to say something, it wasn't as if she could say it here with everyone watching.

So the mood quickly returned to normal with that.

I couldn't help thinking that the king really was sly, making this kind of move here.

It was like killing two birds with one stone with the way that he handled this.

First, he was able to show a good side to the dwarves, allowing them to become more friendly.

Second, he was able to show how important I was to the entire court.

After all, the other side was a marquis while I was only a count, but the king didn't hesitate to strip that person of his title and throw him in the dungeon waiting to be executed for me.

This was more than enough to convince everyone of how important I was to the king.

In the future, there would be few people that would dare to mess with me.

After all, messing with me meant the possibility of offending the king and no one dared to take that risk.

So that meant that after the king left to attend to other things, we were pretty much left alone since no one dared to take this risk.

That was except for the true villain.

Since this was a banquet that was hosted by the king, naturally the princes were also invited.

The other princes all went for the other dwarves, it was only the fourth prince who came over to see me and Elsa.

With a smile on his face, he said, "Count Zwein, will you introduce me to your friend here?"

When I saw the fourth prince come over with that smile on his face, there was only one thing on my mind.

Here was the true villain.

He was much better than Timothy, that halfwit villain.

He had been biding and waiting for his chance to strike and now he had found that chance.

He came over and put his arm around me before I could even react.

Even if I wanted to throw it off, I couldn't do so in the end.

Not to mention, I had already said that I would become the fourth prince's friend. If I were to back down on this promise now, there was no knowing what he would do.

While others didn't know how terrifying the fourth prince was, I was well aware.

So I had no choice but to say with a smile, "Elsa, this is my friend Noah, the fourth prince of this kingdom."

The fourth prince reached a hand forward and said, "A friend of my friend is also my friend."

Elsa looked at this hand for a bit before slowly reaching out to take it.

The fourth prince didn't do anything rude and just simply gave her a handshake before letting go.

I had no idea what the fourth prince wanted, but there was no way that it was just as simple as being introduced to Elsa.

He definitely had something that he wanted from me or her...

But during our conversation, it didn't seem like he wanted anything from either of us.

All we talked about were some simple things that didn't seem to matter.

And then the fourth prince prepared to leave as if he had other matters to take care of.

During all of this, he didn't make a single comment that showed his true intention.

That was until he was walking away.

I had been in the middle of letting out a secret sigh of relief when the fourth prince suddenly turned around and said, "Oh right, Sir Zwein. If possible, can you make some time for me tomorrow. There's something that I want to discuss with you in private."

I couldn't help revealing a surprised look when I heard this.

I had been completely caught off guard since I had thought that he was already leaving, so my mind wasn't turning fast enough to think of a proper excuse.

This was the act of a true villain, he was always two steps ahead of his opponent so that they wouldn't be able to do a single thing.

It was no wonder the fourth prince was able to gather all that power in the game...

Seeing that I wasn't saying anything, the fourth prince said with a smile, "There's no need for you to worry about anything, I will send a messenger to you tomorrow to pick you up. I just hope that you will not reject my request."

As he said this, the smile on his face remained, but the smile in his eyes disappeared.

It was almost as if he was implying something...

So I had no choice but to say with a smile, "It would be an honour, your highness. I will make sure that I have the time for you tomorrow."

The fourth prince gave a nod before saying, "Very good, I will see you then."

With that, he walked off without turning back once.

As I watched him walk away, all I could do was reveal a bitter smile.

A true villain was always different from a two bit villain.

His plans were much deeper and much harder to resist.

After he was gone, Elsa couldn't help saying, "That man isn't simple. Are you sure that you want to be his friend?"

I shook my head with a bitter smile before giving a shrug and saying, "What other choice do I have? You've seen how he acts if you don't give him what he wants."

Elsa turned back in the direction that the fourth prince left in before slowly giving a nod.

Chapter 403 Picking Herbs

The banquet didn't last long after that.

After all, no one dared to approach the main guests after what had just happened.

If they made a mistake, there was no doubt that they would end up as the next Marquis...no, former Marquis Heiman.

So we were allowed to go back to the residence that was prepared for us.

I was living in the same residence as the dwarves since I was officially named the ambassador, which was a relief since I didn't have a residence in the capital in the first place.

If I were to go back to the same inn as before...I would just receive the same treatment as last time.

No, it would have been even worse than last time since everyone now wanted even more from me.

There would have been even more people and maybe even people with bad intentions...

So it was better for me to be here where guards from the kingdom were guarding.

The king had made sure to put a full security team around the residence just in case anything happened.

But if one thought about it from a different perspective, it could also be said that they were here to monitor the dwarves just in case they wanted to do anything. If the dwarves did anything, they would be immediately surrounded by these knights of the kingdom.

But for the sake of friendship between the two kingdoms, people chose to ignore this fact.

When morning came, I found that the dwarves were up bright and early.

The other dwarves that I had lived with were the same.

Even though they had drunk so much that it would have knocked out an elephant, they were still perfectly fine the next morning.

This was just their tolerance and their work ethic.

But since they were here in the human kingdom, it wasn't as if there was anything for them to do.

There were no forges for them and if they were to go out, they would immediately be swarmed by nobles. Until the treaty between their two countries and the trade agreements were signed, there wasn't anything for them to do.

So the dwarves were all bored out of their mind and tried to swarm me since they had all come to chase me in the first place.

But I had something else that I needed to do.

"I am here on behalf of his fourth highness to invite Count Zwein. He is eagerly waiting for your presence." A well dressed butler was the one that said this.

This well dressed butler had been waiting outside the residence early in the morning and had invited me the moment that he saw me.

It seemed like the fourth prince hadn't forgotten about what had happened yesterday.

On the contrary, it seemed like he placed quite the importance on this matter which wasn't a good sign.

Just what did the fourth prince want from me?

Elsa looked at me with a concerned look and said, "Can you not go?"

I just slowly shook my head without saying anything.

She said with a sigh, "Be careful and take care of yourself."

I gave a slow nod before turning to the butler. I think you should take a look at lightsnovel.com

Seeing me look at him, the butler said with a bow, "Count Zwein, shall we?"

Once again, I gave a slow nod before following the butler to a carriage that was parked on the side.

This carriage soon headed off in the direction of the fourth prince's manor.

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"I want you to go out into the forest around the capital and find a few herbs for me. These are herbs that are very important for me to find, so I needed a friend that I could trust to help me find them." The fourth prince said with a faint smile on his face.

But my chin had dropped the moment that I heard this.

Gathering herbs?

Gathering herbs?

Was it really just gathering herbs that the fourth prince had summoned me here?

While I was sitting there with a shocked look on my face, the fourth prince just casually took a piece of paper from the butler on the side. He put this piece of paper on the table and casually slid it towards me.

I looked down at that piece of paper before slowly reaching for it and picking it up.

When I read what was written on it, I couldn't help being even more shocked.

This piece of paper was a list, but it wasn't just any list.

It was a list of herbs.

Most likely the herbs that the fourth prince wanted me to pick from the forest around the capital.

But if that was the case, this was even more confusing.

After all, these were common herbs that anyone could have found for him. There was no need to specifically call me here to get these herbs for him.

In fact, these herbs were so common that picking them was considered a F Rank quest at the Adventurer's Guild. This was something that every rookie adventurer had to do to climb up the ranks.

Was he looking down on me or was there a deeper meaning to this?

Was there something else that he wanted me to do or was he just playing with me?

As I looked back up at the fourth prince, I couldn't help feeling more and more confused.

After a long silence, I slowly asked, "Is this all that you want me to find?"

The fourth prince just gave a nod with a faint smile before saying, "That's right. I just need you to find the herbs on this list for me."

As he said this, I couldn't help narrowing my eyes.

I couldn't see anything from the fourth prince's expression.

It didn't seem like he was looking down on me and it didn't seem like he was playing around.

Then did he seriously want me to pick these herbs for him?

While I still had that confused look in my eyes, the fourth prince suddenly said, "Oh, that's right. I'll also be sending one of my confidants with you. I hope that you will not mind."

Chapter 404 Familiar figure

I couldn't help knitting my brows the moment that I heard this.

A 'confidant'?

Slowly, this was starting to make sense...

He was sending me out alone with his 'confidant' into the middle of the forest. It would be strange if this 'confidant' didn't do anything.

But I hadn't done anything that would offend or threaten the fourth prince, so why would he do something like this?

I just couldn't understand at all.

"Can I refuse?" I slowly said with a wry smile on my face.

The fourth prince just shook his head and said one word, "No."

All I could do was give a sigh and wait to see who would be waiting for me.

But in the end, it wasn't what I expected.

The one that came out wasn't a terrifying killer or a sharp assassin like I thought, it was a small figure that was wrapped up in a cloak.

Judging by the stature of this cloaked figure, it seemed like she was a young girl...

But when I looked closely, I couldn't help feeling that there was something familiar about this figure.

It was like I had seen this person before, but I just couldn't remember where.

After this person came in, she gave a curtsy like she was a proper lady before stopping herself midway. It was as if she had suddenly realized something and stopped herself before she could finish this.

Then she just gave a slight nod to me as if she was greeting me.

I couldn't help narrowing my eyes when I saw this.

That was because that feeling that she was familiar became even stronger when I saw her give this half curtsy.

The fourth prince just put his head in his hand and gave a sigh before saying, "Count Zwein, this is my confidant who will follow you into the forest."

Then after a pause, he added, "This confidant of mine is only skilled at picking herbs, so please make sure to protect her while you two are out." He narrowed his eyes and started pressuring me as he said, "Please make sure that nothing happens to her."

I couldn't help being taken aback when I felt this pressure on me.

Why would the fourth prince be so cautious about this?

Also, shouldn't it be the other way around?

If you already had someone that was good at picking herbs, why would you need me?

It's not as if I was somebody that was famous for being strong, so it wouldn't make sense just to call me here to guard this confidant of his.

After all, it would be more likely that I would need to be protected when the time came...

But then I saw something that was even more shocking.

The cloaked figure suddenly came forward and hit the fourth prince on the shoulder.

It wasn't a strong hit, but it was without a doubt a hit to the shoulder.

I couldn't help wincing as I waited for the fourth prince to fly in a rage at this, but to my surprise...nothing happened.

Instead of flying into a rage like I had expected and like I had seen many times in the game, he just revealed a faint smile and turned to lean in to whisper something to the cloaked figure.

The cloaked figure just punched him in the shoulder again.

It was clear that there was some kind of close relationship between the two of them, but were they really close enough to be acting like this?

The way that they acted, it almost seemed like they were brother and sister...

But the fourth prince I knew wouldn't act this way with his subordinates.

Just who was this cloaked figure?

I couldn't help narrowing my eyes to look at that cloaked figure, but that cloaked figure suddenly turned away when she saw me looking at her.

Huh?

Wasn't this almost like a shy girl turning away when she felt embarrassed?

But why?

The more that I interacted with this person, the more confused I felt.

The fourth prince just gave another sigh before saying, "You should head out, it'll be noon soon."

Then he turned to me and said, "Be sure to bring her back before the sun sets or else we'll all be in trouble."

"Trouble?" I couldn't help repeating in a confused voice.

The fourth prince gave a nod without elaborating further.

The cloaked figure also didn't say anything as she came forward to my side and waited for me to move.

I looked at the two of them, going back and forth...but I still stood up in the end to come to the cloaked figure's side.

When I walked over, I couldn't help being surprised again.

That was because there was this nice faint fragrance that was coming from the cloaked figure.

I didn't know what that fragrance was, but it was very pleasing to the nose.

It was the smell of a beautiful young girl.

Even if I couldn't see what she looked like, I could guess that she was a beauty under that cloak.

That just made me even more curious as to who she was.

Seeing that I just stood there, the cloaked figure softly asked, "Is something wrong?"

lightsNovel I jolted after hearing this before coming back to my senses, realizing the mistake that I had made.

I gave a cough to calm myself down before saying, "No, nothing's wrong. Let's go."

Then I started walking forward without hesitation.

The cloaked figure just gave a nod before following after me.

But it was at that moment that I saw the final clue that put it all together.

When she nodded, there was this strand of blonde hair that came out of her hood for me to see.

When I saw this, I finally put it all together.

That familiar figure, the way the fourth prince treated her, and this blonde hair...

It was no wonder they acted like brother and sister...

That was because they actually were brother and sister!

The one that I was escorting was the princess!

Chapter 405 Escort (1)

The moment that I realized this, I couldn't help stopping for a second.

The princess noticed that I had stopped and she also stopped to ask, "Sir Zwein, is there something wrong?"

I looked at her with a stunned look for a few seconds before coming back to my senses.

I gave a cough and turned around before saying, "No, nothing's wrong."

Then without waiting for a response, I started walking again.

The princess paused for a second before following me.

But behind, the fourth prince had narrowed his eyes as he whispered to himself, "So he realized? But how?"

After we left the room, the fourth prince waved his hand and there was someone else that appeared in this room.

This was a figure cloaked in black that knelt down on the ground the moment that they appeared as they said, "Your highness, your order?"

The fourth prince was silent for a few seconds before saying, "Help me check him out. See if there were any other times where he met with the princess."

The figure in black gave another bow of the head before disappearing just as suddenly as they had appeared.

When they were gone, the fourth prince just sat there with knitted brows on his face.

But he didn't say anything in the end.

...

As the two of us walked out of the fourth prince's manor, I couldn't help peeking back at the princess following behind me.

She didn't seem to have a problem following my pace at all.

It was almost as if she was already used to moving around quickly.

But from what I knew about her, I wasn't that surprised since I knew that she was a tomboy princess.

This was true in the game and this was true in this world.

After all, my first meeting with her was when she snuck into my carriage to sneak into the city.

When we came out, there was a carriage waiting for us with the same butler as before.

He was waiting for us to help us into the carriage, but I made the first move.

I reached out for the princess and said, "Let me help you."

She couldn't help jolting when she saw this before slowly reaching a hand out.

Was she really that scared of me?

I guess it made sense since I wasn't someone that was close to her, but why would the fourth prince make me escort her out of the city if that was the case?

None of this made sense...

It was clear that the real mission was to escort and protect the princess as she went out of the city for her own fun.

So that meant that I had to do everything that I could to ensure that she had fun and was safe.

If even a single hair went missing on her head...then my head would go missing next.

Just what was the fourth prince's game here?

After taking my hand, I made sure to help her into the carriage before getting up myself.

The butler saw this and then took his position in the driver's seat of this carriage.

With a crack of the reins, we started moving.

The direction that we moved in was the northern gate of the city since that was the closest gate.

As we sat there in the carriage, there really wasn't much for us to talk about.

The princess didn't say a thing and I didn't dare say anything since I was scared of offending her.

This was the princess of this kingdom...a single wrong word would mean losing my head.

Especially since I knew how much the king cherished her.

Others might not know, but there were plenty of events in the game that told me this.

It really was a hard road getting that royal ending because of the king's love for his daughter.

But the silence put pressure on the two of us until we finally couldn't take it anymore.

The princess suddenly broke the ice by saying, "It's lovely weather outside today, isn't it?"

I looked up at the sky and I couldn't help revealing a bit of a bitter smile.

That was because...the sky was overcast with clouds.

No matter how I tried, it was impossible for me to agree that this was good weather...

But for the sake of the princess, I just gave a nod and said, "Un."

Then there was silence that filled the carriage again.

lightsnovel After a bit of silence, the princess once again said, "It seems like it's about to rain."

I just gave a nod and said, "Un."

I couldn't help feeling strange after hearing the princess ask this.

By my memory, she shouldn't be this bad at conversing...there were plenty of CGs where I was able to see the princess speaking in quite the eloquent manner.

So why was she acting so strange now?

What he would never know was...that the princess had been kicking herself the entire time.

She didn't know what was happening, but she wasn't able to say the things that she normally would have been able to say.

When she tried to say anything, it was as if her mind had gone completely blank and she couldn't think of what she wanted to say.

So all she could do was say these dumb questions out loud like she was crazy.

When in truth, the princess was actually quite eloquent.

But then again, she was a princess, so this was something that she had to be skilled in.

There was this strange feeling inside of her chest that just made her unable to act the way that she wanted, so that caused an awkward feeling to fill the carriage.

The only real sound that rang out were the wheels rolling across the road.

It was a long time before the carriage finally stopped and the butler opened the door to say, "Sir Zwein, young miss, we have arrived at our destination. You can come out now."

Chapter 406 Escort (2)

When the butler called out, it saved us from the awkward atmosphere in the carriage.

I went over to the door and opened it before getting out first.

Then I stood by the door and waited for the princess to come out. When she came over, I reached out for her hand and helped her down from the carriage.

We were currently in the middle of the forest, but still by the road.

This road was the main road that led to the capital, so it wasn't a small road by any means.

It was wide enough to fit at least four of these carriages side and by side and this carriage was already wider than most carriages.

The butler stood on the side during all of this, waiting for the two of us to come out.

When we were standing on the side of the road by the forest, the butler said, "Young miss, Count Zwein, I will remain here and watch over the carriage. Please head into the forest and fulfil his highness' request."

I couldn't help looking at the butler with a shocked look.

lightsNovel Was he really just sending me and the princess alone into the forest like this?

Wasn't this just too irresponsible?

Or was I supposed to protect her?

Before I could react, the princess had grabbed my hand and was already pulling me into the forest.

The butler just watched this with a faint smile on his face.

When we had disappeared into the forest, the butler suddenly gave a snap and there was a cloaked figure that appeared beside him.

The butler wasn't surprised at all by this cloaked figure and said, "Clear the area and make sure that nothing disturbs her highness."

The cloaked figure gave a nod before disappearing.

At the same time, there were several branches in the trees around them that shook slightly.

It was like someone had stepped off them.

...

After we had gone some way, the princess finally stopped and turned around to look at me, but she didn't say anything in the end. It was almost like she was about to say something, but then she swallowed her words at the last second.

It was as if there was something that she couldn't say.

So I was the one that broke the silence in the end.

"Shall we go around looking for the herbs that his highness requested?" I said in a slow and careful voice.

The princess looked at me, but I couldn't tell what kind of expression she had because of her hood.

But in the end, she gave a slow nod.

So with that, I moved away from the princess and started looking around the area for these herbs.

I was planning on finding these herbs as soon as possible so that we could return as soon as possible.

Luckily, these herbs were very common, so they weren't hard to find at all.

Just casually searching around was enough for me to find several of these herbs.

Now the only thing that I had to do was pick them and we could get ready to head back.lightsnovel

But before I could actually pick them, the princess suddenly came over to where I was and reached down to grab these herbs.

I thought that she wanted to harvest these herbs herself, but instead she just grabbed them in a rough manner and pulled them out without any delicacy. When she pulled them out, they were crushed in her hands and there was no saving these herbs anymore.

After she pulled them out like this, all she could say was, "Oops, I'm sorry."

But she was the princess...so I could only say, "It's fine, there's still plenty of other herbs around that we can harvest."

I quickly turned and moved over to another herb, but before I could pick it...she had already moved over as well to grab it.

She pulled it just as roughly as the first herb and it was crushed to pieces before letting those pieces drop to the ground. Then she just simply said once more, "Oops."

My expression couldn't help turning ugly when I saw this...

Once was an accident, but twice couldn't be a coincidence.

It was clear that she was doing this on purpose...

As for why she was doing this, it was most likely to avoid going back to the castle.

This was her rare free moment away from the castle, so she wouldn't want to go back that soon.

But I was different from her.

I wanted to go back as soon as possible so I wouldn't have to be responsible for this.

The longer that I spent here, the more likely that an accident would happen.

The moment that an accident happened involving this princess, it was certain that I would lose my head.

I liked where my head currently was, so I didn't want to change that.

However, it wasn't as if I could just lose my temper with the princess...

So the only thing that I could do was...

Taking a deep breath, I stood up and walked over to where another patch of herbs was growing.

But before I could pick them, the princess suddenly ran over and picked them roughly like before. She almost seemed like she was pulling out potatoes from the ground rather than picking fine herbs.

My face turned very ugly at this point.

Was the princess really that determined not to go back?

But I couldn't have that.

I didn't hesitate to go to another patch of herbs, but the princess followed me again.

During this time, the princess revealed an unhappy look under her cloak.

"Is he really that unwilling to spend some time with me?" She thought to herself which made her feel even more unhappy.

So just like this, the two of us continued our dance of going around looking for herbs.

I would try to pick the herbs while she did all that she could to destroy them.

We didn't make any progress at all.

Chapter 407 Escort (3)

Around and around we went.

It didn't seem like the princess was planning on giving up at all as she kept crushing all the herbs that I tried to pick.

It took no time at all for us to exhaust all of the herbs that were in this area.

And at the same time, both of us were panting with exhaustion since we had been running around competing for these herbs in the first place.

The strangest thing was...there was a faint smile on our lips.

Halfway through this, I couldn't help feeling that this was almost fun.

The way that I tried to pick the herbs and the way that she tried to sabotage me, it was almost like a game.

Even if it was frustrating, it strangely gave me a sense of enjoyment that I didn't understand.

When we had cleared out all the herbs in this area, there wasn't anything else for us to compete over.

The two of us sat there on the ground trying to catch our breaths.

It was also at this time that the butler came over with a basket in hand and a piece of cloth under his arm.

He came over with a smile and said, "It's time for lunch. Shall I set things up for the two of you?"

I couldn't help revealing a bitter smile when I saw this, but my stomach was more honest. When I smelled the scent of the food coming from the basket, my stomach couldn't help growling.

I also heard the sound of another stomach growling and when I turned in that direction, I saw the cloaked figure of the princess holding her stomach.

If I had been able to see her face, I was certain that I would have seen the blush on her face.

When he heard this, the butler didn't seem to react at all to the sounds of our stomachs growling.

He just came forward to find a clear area before setting down the piece of cloth under his arm.

Once he put down that piece of cloth, the butler spread it out on the ground and put the basket down. He opened the basket and slowly started taking food items out before spreading them out on the blanket.

It didn't take him long to finish spreading out the picnic.

When he was done, the butler turned back to us and said, "Young miss, Count Zwein, if you please. I'll prepare the food for you now."

The two of us looked at each other before slowly sitting down on the blanket.

The princess sat down first and then I sat down on the opposite side of the blanket from her.

I didn't see what expression she had, but it almost seemed like she was unhappy seeing me act this way.

In fact, she even stood up and moved closer to me to sit down.

I felt uncomfortable like this, but I couldn't just stand up and move away. That would be considered an insult to the princess, so I had no choice but to sit there with her close to me.

The butler didn't seem to notice any of this as he prepared some food for us.

Even though this was a picnic, the spread that the butler had brought definitely wasn't small.

This was a spread that even included roasted chicken and many different kinds of roasted meat. It was definitely not a spread that a commoner would be able to get that easily.lightsnovel

Yet the butler had brought it out into the forest with us.

That was just how the rich and powerful acted, they would have things that commoners would never have.

Still, there was no reason for me to hold back.

Since I had been forced to come on this escort mission, I should at least enjoy the perks that came with it.

But to my surprise...the princess suddenly took the plate that the butler had prepared for me.

I thought that she was angry at me and didn't want me to eat, but that didn't seem to be the case.

Instead, she used her fork to pick a piece of the chicken and she brought it up to my mouth as if she wanted to feed me.

My chin couldn't help dropping when I saw her do this.

What was her plan here?

What did she mean by this?

Was she doing this as a sign that this would be my last meal for annoying her?

Or was she just harassing me for no reason?

I really couldn't understand what she was trying to do here...

But of course I couldn't let her actually go through with it.

If the fourth prince found out...or even if the king found out.

I could see that the fourth prince was the same as the king, where they both doted on her. If I did anything that could be considered taking advantage of the princess, there was no doubt that they would execute me.

So no matter what I couldn't let her feed me like this.

Instead of taking a bite of the chicken that she offered me, I reached my hand out towards the plate and the fork she was holding. As I reached out for them, I said, "It's not a problem, I can eat it myself."

But to my surprise, I found that she wouldn't let me take them at all.

The moment that I tried to take them, she immediately pulled her hands away to prevent me from taking the plate and fork.

Then she said, "All you have to do is eat. You don't need to worry about anything else."

I couldn't help feeling a bad feeling when I heard this.

It wasn't as if it was an ominous feeling, it was just like something bad was about to happen.

I really didn't know what this feeling was, but I knew that I couldn't go along with it.

So I tried taking the plate and fork from her again.

In the end, the princess put them both down and crossed her arms as if she was angry with me.

But what had I done?

Chapter 408 Escort (4)

Before I could say anything, the princess suddenly said, "Do you really hate me so much that you won't accept this favour from me?"

The moment that she said this, a bitter smile appeared on my face.

As soon as she said this, my fate had already been sealed and there wasn't anything else for me to do.

If I kept rejecting her like this, it would only get much worse.

After all, an angry princess was much worse than an angry brother or father.

An angry princess would cause me much more trouble than the king or the fourth prince since they would be restrained because of my use to the kingdom.

The princess wouldn't care about such a thing and would incite the king and the fourth prince constantly, making things worse and worse.

So between the two, I knew which one I preferred...

So I had no choice but to say, "Of course not. Please do it again, I'll eat it this time."

The cloaked figure looked at me and although I couldn't see her face, I could tell that she was surprised.

However, she still took the plate and the fork before bringing the same bite up to my mouth and saying, "Alright, here you go."

This time, I had no choice but to take that bite of chicken into my mouth.

As I chewed it, I could only reveal a bitter smile.

I was so focused on trying to balance the consequences of this matter that I didn't even taste the chicken.

But I could tell that the princess was happy since she was no longer as tense as before.

The princess was indeed happy, but there was a part of her that was suspicious of this. After all, he had changed his mind a bit too quickly that she couldn't help feeling that it was suspicious.

But in the end, she chose not to think too much about it since she was just happy that he had chosen to accept it.

I was about to reach for the plate and fork again when I saw that she didn't move, but then she started getting more food and bringing it to my mouth.

So I had no choice but to sit there and let her feed me the entire time.

As the princess brought food to my mouth, I could only open it and let her put it in.

When I chewed, there was a bitter smile on my face.

As she fed me, she also asked, "Does it taste good?"

I gave a nod so that she wouldn't be angry, but in truth, I wasn't able to taste a single thing.

If one looked at us from afar, they might think that we were a happy couple enjoying a picnic, but...

The only thing that I felt during all of this was tense.

There was nothing else that I could feel as I had no idea what was happening and what the consequences of this would be.

The butler was just on the side preparing more food for us...or rather for the princess to feed me.

It didn't seem like they would stop, so I had no choice but to say, "Um, I'm already full and I can't eat anymore."

The princess had been in the middle of bringing more food to my mouth when she heard this.

She looked at me with a bit of a tilt to her head before bringing the fork back down and putting the plate to the side.

She then turned to the butler who had already prepared another plate for her.

This was completely different from the plate that he had prepared for me.

This was a balanced dish that had a mix of vegetables and meat.

The plate that had been prepared for me was a plate that had been filled with all kinds of meat without any vegetables at all.

It was a plate that had been covered in oily meats, which had given me heartburn from eating so much.

It seemed that they had really misunderstood what kind of things I liked to eat.

But where did this misunderstanding come from?

Or was it just what she thought I liked to eat?

I didn't think that I gave off that kind of image, so why did she think that I was into these things?

No, I quickly stopped myself from thinking about these things.

lightsnovel After all, that wasn't what was important right now.

I had to figure out a way to collect the herbs as soon as possible so that we could go back as soon as possible.

So taking a moment to digest the food that I just ate, I stood up and started to walk away from the picnic blanket.

I wanted to seize this chance while the princess was eating to go and pick the herbs before she could mess it up for me again.

But before I could take more than two steps, there was a dark clothed figure that appeared in front of me.

This dark clothed figure was taller than me and had a mask covering up their face, so I couldn't see what they looked like. However, that didn't matter as they just stood there in front of me, stopping me from going any further.

It was as if they had suddenly appeared to stop me from going anywhere.

This dark clothed figure looked down at me before pointing at the picnic where the princess was still eating.

It was as if they were telling me to go back or else...

The look in the eyes of this dark clothed figure made it clear that they weren't playing around...

I just stood there in silence looking at this dark clothed figure for a bit before slowly turning around and heading back to the picnic.

As I sat down, I couldn't help falling into deep thought.

It was clear that this dark clothed figure was one of the princess' hidden guards.

If that was the case, why was I here?

Chapter 409 Escort (5)

The princess had been oblivious to everything that had happened as she slowly enjoyed her meal.

When she was finally done, she stood up and asked the butler, "Is there anything fun nearby?"

The butler gave a bow and said, "There was a pond found not far from here. I'm sure that will be the perfect place for an after meal rest."

The princess gave a nod and then turned to me to say, "Count Zwein, shall we go and walk around the pond?"

I shook my head as I said, "Young miss, shouldn't we finish his highness' request? If we keep wasting time like this, I'm afraid that it'll be dark soon."

The princess just casually said with a smile, "There's no need to rush for this matter. Fourth...His highness will understand if there is some delay."

The tone that she said this with made it clear that she was absolutely certain of this.

Of course, she was qualified to say that since she was the princess.

If there was anyone that could say that about the king and the fourth prince, it was her.

But of course this wasn't what I wanted...

I was about to say something, but before I could say anything, the butler suddenly turned to look at me.

He was positioned behind the princess so that she wasn't able to see him.

The way that he was looking at me...was just like the way that the black clothed figure had looked at me before.

It was as if he was threatening me to go along with this...

If I had to guess, it was most likely this butler who had called that blacked clothed person just now to stop me from going to search for the herbs.

It was clear that the princess was well guarded, so why did she need me as an escort?

The more that I learned about this, the more confused I became.

But it also wasn't the time to be thinking about that.

The butler was still looking at me, waiting for my response.

I could feel the sense of danger coming from this butler, showing that he wasn't a normal person.

If I had to guess...he was most likely some kind of secret assassin that had been trained by the fourth prince.

That was usually what the secret identities of butlers like this in novels were.

And he had been trusted to guard the princess, so there was no doubt that he was capable.

Since he was threatening me...there was nothing that I could do.

I gave a sigh and said, "Young miss, how about we go and check out that pond?"

The princess suddenly looked up at me and said, "Really? You really want to go?"

I gave a bitter laugh deep down.

Even if I said that I didn't want to go, was there such a choice for me?

With the way that the butler was looking at me, there was only one real answer for me.lightsnovel

I just gave a slow nod without saying anything.

There was a moment of hesitation as the princess seemed to doubt something. She also turned around to look at the butler, but he had already turned away and was taking care of his own business.

It was only when she turned away that he turned back to glare at me once more to put pressure on me.

The princess gave a happy clap and said, "Let's go then."

She stood up and grabbed my hand, pulling me up with her before running forward.

Then she suddenly came to a stop as she realized something.

Judging by the way that she looked around, it was most likely that she didn't know which direction the pond was.

She turned back to look at the butler and he just calmly pointed in a direction.

With that, she ran off into the forest.

It took us five minutes of walking to reach the pond and it really was as the butler said, this really was a beautiful place for an after meal walk.

When the princess saw the pond, her eyes immediately lit up and she didn't hesitate to run forward to the edge of it.

She lifted up the bottom of her cloak and revealed her fair legs. Then she took off her fancy shoes to reveal her fair white feet as well.

As she pranced around in the pond, it really was a beautiful sight even if I wasn't able to see her face.

The way that she kicked the water around as she pranced in the pond, it really was like watching a fairy play in the water.

Then the princess suddenly turned around and came to the edge of the pond to pull me in as well.

I could only reveal a bitter smile as I stopped her so that I could take off my shoes as well.

But I still went into the pond with her after taking off my shoes.

It really was a pleasant feeling standing in the cool water. This was definitely the highlight of this long and chaotic day.

Then all of a sudden, I was splashed with some water.

I turned to see that it was the princess who had splashed me with this water.

If I could see her face, I was sure that there would have been a smile on her face.

Since it had already come this far, then I wouldn't hold back anymore.

I did the same thing as her and splashed her with the water.

She dodged out of the way and then started splashing me even more.

I could also hear a giggle that was like a beautiful bell ringing as she splashed me.

The two of us just let go of everything and had a small water fight like this.

When it was over, I found that the butler was waiting there on the shore with towels in his hand for us.

It was as if he was already prepared for everything...

Chapter 410 Escort (6)

We took the towel and dried ourselves off the best that we could, but our clothes were still a bit wet since it was the middle of autumn.

If we stayed like this, there was no doubt that we would catch a cold.

I couldn't help feeling regret over following the princess in.

If I had stopped her, perhaps none of this would have happened.

If the princess was to catch a cold, then there was no doubt that I would be the one blamed for this and the prince and the king would retaliate on me...

I should think of a way to dry us off while we still could.

But before I could do anything, the butler led us to the side where he had already set up a shelter with a roaring fire inside of it. As long as we stayed by the fire, it would warm us up and it would dry off our clothes.

As long as we stayed here, then there was no doubt that we would be able to dry off and keep warm.

It was just...how did the butler know to prepare this?

Still, there wasn't any time to think about that now since the princess was certainly cold.

I could even see that she was shivering a little bit when the cool autumn breeze blew across us.

So I escorted her into the shelter prepared and the two of us sat down in front of the fire.

As we felt the warmth coming from it, I couldn't help rubbing my hands together and putting them in front of the fire.

Across from this fire, I could see that the princess was doing the same thing.

As we looked at each other doing the exact same thing, I couldn't help revealing a smile.

I was sure that if I was able to see her face, she would be doing the same thing as well.

It was then that the butler came back.

He had left to do something and I had no idea what he was doing, but I understood what he went off to do when he came back.

He had come back with two mugs in his hand that had steam coming from them.

There was also a faint scent of chocolate in the air when he came over.

He handed one to the princess before coming over to hand me the other one as he said, "Count Zwein, please drink this to warm yourself up."

I looked down to see that it was a fresh cup of hot chocolate that had been prepared.

There was even what seemed to be a bit of milk foam that was on top of the hot chocolate.

I couldn't help looking at the butler with a strange look.

How did he prepare everything that he was even able to bring out two cups of hot chocolate like this?

It was almost as if he had already expected all of this to happen.

Not to mention, why would he bring hot chocolate in the first place?

The picnic was one thing, but would people normally bring hot chocolate out to pick herbs?lightsnovel

This was a very strange thing to do, right?

In the end, I couldn't ask the questions that were in my heart.

Partly because I didn't know how to ask them and partly because I knew that I wouldn't get an answer from the butler.

The butler had even gone as far as threatening me to go along with the princess, I was sure that he wouldn't give me an answer if I asked.

So all I could do was take the hot chocolate and enjoy warming up by the fire.

The two of us remained here for a bit.

Eventually, the sun even started to go down.

It wasn't dark yet, but it was clearly getting late.

This would have been fine if we were here to have fun, but we were here to do a job.

The herbs still hadn't been picked yet...

So I couldn't help saying, "Shouldn't we go and pick the herbs before it gets too dark? Our clothes are close to dry, so we should go now."

The princess didn't seem willing to move as she just sat there by the fire, looking in my direction.

I couldn't help feeling awkward seeing her look at me like this, but I didn't turn away as I waited for an answer.

But it was the butler who gave me one.

"Count Zwein, there's no need to worry about this."

After he said this, the butler raised a sack that he had brought over from the side before continuing, "The herbs have already been gathered, so there's no need for you to do anything."

I couldn't help being shocked when I heard this before reaching out for the sack.

The butler just gave it to me without a single word.

I opened the sack and looked inside to find that these were indeed the herbs that we needed. There wasn't a single one of them missing and there was even more than we needed gathered.

After seeing this, I couldn't help looking at the butler with a very strange look.

If he had already gathered everything, why didn't he tell us already?

If he had already gathered everything, we could have already gone back to the city instead of wasting our time here.

But the butler didn't care about the way that I looked at him.

Instead, he went over to the princess and said, "Young miss, shall we spend some more time here? There's still some time before sunset, so we can stay here a bit longer before heading back. We shouldn't have a problem making it back to the city before the gates closed."

The princess just gave a casual nod in response to this.

There was a bitter smile that appeared on my face when I heard this, but there wasn't anything that I could say.

After all, it was the princess that said this...