

Shota 461

Chapter 461 The Duke's Visit (2)

The duke continued to say, "Thank you for taking care of her during this time. If it wasn't for you, who knows what kind of places she would have run off to."

Both Rose and I couldn't help looking at each other with confused looks before turning back to look at the duke.

Slowly, I said, "Duke Beauchamp, of course we would take care of her for you since she came here as your envoy. But are you sure that you're alright with all the things that she's been doing?"

The duke raised a brow before asking, "Why wouldn't I be alright with it?"

Both Rose and I couldn't help being surprised again when we heard this.

Why wouldn't he be alright?

Well, she had followed me to another kingdom and had even followed me to the capital to get involved in the succession war. If I was her father, I wouldn't be happy that my daughter was involved in all of this.

But it didn't seem like he was lying.

It seemed like he really was alright with what Veronica had been getting up to.

It was just that this was strange...

The duke saw the way that we looked at him and after a moment of silence, he said, "While it is hard to imagine interacting with the elves, I'm sure that she's doing fine. She is my daughter after all."

After saying this, he couldn't help raising his head as if he was showing pride in Veronica.

But when we heard this, we finally figured out what was going on.

He didn't know.

It was very simple, he didn't know about all the things that Veronica has been getting up to, which was why he didn't say anything about them.

It seemed that even though she had been sending her letters back, there were a few things that she had left out in those letters. Things that she didn't want her parents knowing since they would certainly disapprove of.

I could see that Rose also realized this and as we exchanged looks, we immediately came to an understanding.

Since Veronica didn't tell her parents about this, it wasn't up to us to tell them.

We would leave that to her when she met them again.

For now, we will just go to the next topic.

I gave a cough to adjust myself before changing my tone to say, "Duke Beauchamp, shall we move on and discuss some business?"

The duke was surprised by how sudden I had changed the topic, but he gave a nod and revealed a serious look as well.

The moment that he did, the aura around him completely changed.

It went from the friendly person that he had been acting just now to the aura that a duke should have.

This was a change that I hadn't seen since our time in Bright Water City.

It was during the undead crisis that I had seen this side of the duke.

It was without a doubt daunting facing the duke like this, but this just went to prove how powerful of a person he was. That made me even more assured in having him as our trade partner.

I nodded to Rose and she stood up to move to the side.

When she came back, she had a piece of paper in her hand that she placed on the coffee table in front of us. She made sure to place it on the side that the duke was sitting on, so that he would be able to take it.

The duke raised a brow when he saw this, but he still took that piece of paper.

Rose just sat down by my side again and we silently waited for the duke to read what was written.

After reading for a bit, the duke started to knit his brows.

It was clear that he had some thoughts about what was written on this piece of paper.

lightsNovel As for what that was, it was the list of ores that we had set aside to be sold to him and the price that we were selling it at.

The look on his face was quite ambiguous, so it was hard to judge what he was thinking.

But in this situation, when one revealed a look like this, it most likely meant that they were...unhappy with what they had been presented.

Still, we silently waited for the duke to finish reading and to respond.

After a long silence, the duke put the piece of paper down and looked up at us with that same look on his face. He just calmly looked at us, as if he was trying to gauge us.

After another long silence, he finally said, "Is everything written on this paper true?"

We couldn't help revealing frowns when we heard this, but I calmed myself down and gave a nod in response before saying, "Yes."

The duke just looked at me with narrowed eyes for a bit before suddenly giving a nod and saying, "Alright, I accept these terms."

I was completely taken aback when I heard this.

After all, none of us expected the duke to agree to this first offer.

Rose, Haley, and I had all expected the duke to make some kind of counter offer, so we had already prepared a bottom line that we would be willing to accept.

This offer that we made was just the negotiable first offer.

Yet the duke had accepted it so easily.

It was the same with the king...

They all accepted these things so easily, as if they weren't concerned by the numbers at all.

But that didn't make sense.

This was clearly not the best offer that they could get, so why would they accept so easily?

The duke just ignored the surprised look that I had and said, "Where's the contract for me to sign?"

I was even more taken aback when I heard this, but Rose reacted right away and pulled out a contract that had been written up. After filling in the details, she presented it to the duke to sign with some pen and ink.

The duke didn't hesitate to pick up the pen and sign the contract, sealing our deal as this.

I couldn't help feeling very strange at how smoothly everything had gone, but the duke had a look on his face like he thought that he had gotten a very good deal.

Chapter 462 The duke's visit (3)

Also for some reason, Moon and Elsa had also chosen to join us which the duke was very happy to see.

There were also Cecilia and Haley who joined since they were technically my concubines and it was required for them to come to dinner with the duke, my esteemed guest.

When we all sat down, the waiters didn't hesitate to bring the dishes out.

The smell immediately filled the room and we were all looking forward to it.

The duke's eyes especially lit up when he saw the portion size that he had been given.

This was the one thing that I had insisted on when we were planning this. I knew that the normal idea was to have smaller portion sizes to make it seem fancy, but I insisted on having large portion sizes.

I had seen the way that the duke had looked during the dinner I had with him, so I knew that he wasn't a fan of this.

The meal went by very harmoniously, we were able to talk to the duke about many different topics since there were so many of us here. So we were able to swap out with each other and talk about things that we were enthusiastic about.

There was only a twist that happened at the end when dessert was being served.

It was when Veronica who had managed to stay silent the whole time suddenly shot herself in the foot.

She had let her guard down seeing this harmonious mood, thinking that her lie had been exposed and she had successfully put the blame on Rose and me.

So when we were on the topic of the Dwarven Kingdom, she suddenly pitched in with, "The Dwarven Kingdom really was something else. The buildings were all completely different from our kingdom and there were all kinds of different...sights..."

Her voice slowly trailed off when she saw the way that her parents looked at her.

They had confused looks on their faces as if they couldn't understand what she was saying.

When she looked at us, she found that Rose and I also had the same confused look on our faces. However, it was different from the look of the duke and duchess, the confused looks on our faces didn't go all the way to our eyes.

It was at that moment that she realized that she had messed up.

The duke was about to say something, but before he could, the duchess raised a hand to put on his arm to stop him. She turned to look at Veronica and slowly said, "When did you go to the Dwarven Kingdom? How do you know so much about this?"

Veronica revealed a look of panic for the first time.

It was one thing if her father scolded her, but when her mother scolded her...she knew that it was serious.

After all, her mother wouldn't say anything unless it was very serious.

The duchess didn't wait for an answer from Veronica as she turned to me and asked, "Count Zwein, do you know anything about this?"

I shook my head before saying, "We recently went on a trip to the Dwarven Kingdom, I'm sure that you already knew this."

The duke and duchess both nodded when they heard this.

They of course knew about this since they had specifically made this trip because of this.

But as far as they knew, it had only been Zwein and his group that went to the Dwarven Kingdom. There had been no mention of their daughter going along with him.

After seeing this, I continued by saying, "When we set off, your daughter told us that she was coming along as your representative, which was why we had allowed her to come with us." After a deliberate pause, I asked, "Did she not mention this to you in her letters? I've heard that she has been sending many letters back to you both."

After hearing this, both the duke and duchess immediately turned to look at Veronica with narrowed eyes as if they were demanding an explanation from her.

Veronica immediately looked down when she felt these gazes fall onto her.

She couldn't help cursing in her mind, wondering how her plan had fallen apart.

It had been the perfect plan to put all the blame on Zwein, so where did it go wrong?

Seeing that she wasn't saying anything, the duchess cleared her throat before saying in a serious voice, "Veronica Grace Beauchamp, explain yourself."

Veronica couldn't help trembling when she heard this.

As for the rest of us, we knew that she was in trouble.

After all, when a parent said a child's full name, it was never a good thing.

It was usually only done when that child was in serious trouble, like Veronica currently was.

She had run off to another country without even informing her parents first.

If I was a parent, I would definitely be angry about this.

So there was no doubt that she was in danger.

Seeing that Veronica didn't say anything, the duchess suddenly turned to me and said, "Count Zwein, is there a place for my daughter and I to talk in private? We have some things that we need to discuss."

Even I couldn't help being terrified when I heard this.

I quickly looked at Rose and she said with a smile, "Duchess Beauchamp, let me get someone to prepare a room for you."

The duchess gave a grateful nod before turning back to glare at Veronica.

During this, she had turned to look at me for help, but I quickly turned away.

Between her being angry at me or her mother being angry at me, I preferred having her angry at me. I could tell that the duchess definitely was not someone to be messed with, so I didn't dare get involved in this matter.

Not to mention, she had tried to throw me under the bus in the first place.

I wasn't that naive that I would forget about that so soon.

Plus, I knew from the way that the duke looked away from his own wife that it would be dangerous to get involved. So no matter what, I would ignore that look asking for help coming from Veronica.

It didn't take long for the servants to prepare a room and soon the duchess was leading Veronica off.

The duke didn't seem like he wanted to go as he remained seated at the table, but then the duchess said, "Honey."

It was said in a very calm tone, but the duke trembled when he heard this.

With a bitter smile on his face, he stood up and said, "If you'll excuse us."

We all nodded with understanding smiles on our faces and we let out sighs of relief once they were gone.

It was clear who held the power in their family...

As for me, my smile was more bitter than everyone else's.

It was quite clear that women were powerful in this world and I shouldn't get on their bad side.

Chapter 463 The duke's visit (4)

The next morning, we could see the exhausted look that was on Veronica's face.

It was clear that she had been scolded late into the night by her mother.

When she saw us, she looked at us with a resentful look. But that wasn't strange since we had basically abandoned her last night to her fate.

However, I didn't feel guilty at all when she looked at me like this.

After all, she had set up a trap for me in the first place and had wanted to throw me under the bus.

Since that was the case, it was only right that I turned this back on her.

In the end, she just got what she deserved.

The ducal couple looked much more rested than Veronica.

It was most likely because she had received some kind of punishment last night after they had gone to sleep.

This morning, we were heading on a tour of my territory with the ducal couple.

But when they came, we received a large surprise.

It wasn't a surprise from them, but rather a surprise from Veronica.

She was dressed normally during breakfast, but when she came out to the carriage...she looked completely different.

Gone were the simple clothes and hair, she was now in a magnificent dress that matched her mother's. At the same time, her face was completely different since she now had fine makeup on.

She had gone from a normal village girl to a fine noble lady.

When she saw us staring at her, she immediately glared and said, "Not a single word."

Unfortunately for her, her mother was nearby and heard this. She turned to look at Veronica and said, "Sweetie, that's not proper language for a young lady."

Though it sounded sweet, there was a clear dark tone underneath that almost seemed threatening.

Veronica immediately trembled when she heard this before becoming much more suppressed.

It was clear that her punishment wasn't over yet.

Still, there was no need for us to make fun of her, so we just set out from the manor to show them the town.

The first place that we went to was Haley's store since it was the main attraction of our town now. It was where all the commerce was based, so our economy relied heavily on it.

Sometimes I even wondered if it relied on it a bit too much...But since it was Haley's store, I stopped those thoughts.

It was fine to just be happy that her store was doing well.

The duke and duchess walked around like they were shopping and enjoying themselves. From time to time, Veronica was also dragged over to try out a few things that the duchess wanted her to try.

They really seemed like a happy family enjoying a day off, instead of being a ducal family visiting another noble's territory.

For some reason, I was also called along when Veronica tried these various outfits.

Was it because I was the only other man here so they were asking for my opinion?

But I could have sworn that there was a different kind of look in the eyes of the duke and duchess when they asked me to help judge it.

Even Veronica seemed to be acting weird when she showed me these dresses.

Of course, I acted as professional as I could and just gave my honest opinion.

When I went back to the others, they looked at me with strange looks that I didn't understand.

It was almost as if they were amazed by me, but I didn't feel like I had done anything special.

I had just acted like a proper gentleman.

But to them, it seemed like it was the wrong thing to do.

After shopping for a bit, Haley had all of the things that the ducal couple bought sent to our manor where they were staying. As for the payment, they insisted on paying even though we had said that we would consider it a gift to them.

However, to our surprise, the duke seemed to refuse to accept this gift.

His words were, "A cooperation is done between two sides who are on equal standings. If we accept gifts like this, it will corrupt that balance and taint our future cooperation."

The way that he said it almost seemed like he would give up on cooperating with us if we insisted on giving this gift, so we had no choice but to take it back.

After that, the next place that we headed to was the forge since the ducal couple wanted to meet the dwarves.

The forge was a place that had already existed in our town, but after the dwarves arrived, Haley and Rose had been working on expanding it. At the same time, they had recruited many different blacksmiths to work there to learn from the dwarves.

The only problem was that the dwarves had to go to the capital with me during this time, so it was just the blacksmiths running it up to now.

But now that the dwarves were back, they had taken over and it was in full swing.

When we arrived, there was the loud sound of hammers striking metal and many different furnaces running, along with many blacksmiths running about. It seemed like a very busy time for them, but they all had happy looks on their faces.

I was about to suggest going to another place, but the ducal couple immediately went forward to observe the blacksmiths and dwarves.

It seemed that they were fascinated even though they didn't understand what was happening.

It was just like Veronica when she had gone to the Dwarven Kingdom with me.

It seemed that this curiosity ran through the family.

They just kept watching the dwarves forge for a few hours before they finally moved away.

They had basically stayed during the entire forging process, watching the dwarves forge a sword from beginning to end.

By the time that it was finished, it was already getting dark.

But there wasn't a single moment that they had been bored.

Chapter 464 The Duke's Visit (5)

All throughout the night, they kept talking about the forging process that they had seen.

Veronica happily talked with her parents about this.

With the way that they talked to each other, it was almost as if they had forgotten about the fact that Veronica had lied to them.

The apple really didn't fall far from the tree.

This ducal family was very similar to each other.

Once they found something that they were interested in, they completely lost control of themselves.

That was demonstrated even better by what the duke asked me at breakfast the next morning.

"Can we go see the elven village?"

As soon as I heard this, the spoon in my hand dropped onto the table.

I looked at the duke as if I was trying to figure out if he was being serious or not, but the duke just looked at me with a smile on his face like the question that he had asked wasn't a big deal.

However, this was the elven village!

This was a village that didn't allow human visitors and he was asking to be shown the elven village.

This wasn't something that could be done easily even if I had built a relationship with that village.

So I had to think about it...

In the end, I just decided that I would bring them there and see if the elves would be willing to allow them in. If not, then we would just head back since it wasn't my fault that the duke couldn't enter the village.

Now it was all about whether the duke would agree to this or not.

To my surprise, the duke was perfectly fine with this since he understood that this wasn't something that I could control.

lightsNovel I had expected a much more different result since he was a noble, but it didn't seem like he cared too much about that.

But then there was another surprise thrown at me.

The duke didn't just want to go alone, he wanted to bring the duchess along as well. It was as if they were going on a fun trip together instead of going to a dangerous place.

Then when Veronica wanted to join in, they brought her along as well.

This ducal family...they really were just like each other.

There was no hesitation from any of them in going to this dangerous place just because they found it interesting...

Since we were heading to the elven village, naturally there would be an escort required just in case anything happened.

So Moon and Cecilia were called to come along with us while Rose and Haley were left behind in the town.

Haley had been to the elven village before to discuss the trade deals with them, but since there was no need for her to go this time, she chose to stay.

As for Rose...I wouldn't let her go there with this group since it was dangerous.

If it was just the two of us, then it would be fine.

But she was too busy to ever do that.

After gathering everyone, we headed off into the forest.

In front of us were a bunch of elves that followed Moon while behind us were a bunch of knights that were led by Cecilia.

If the elves didn't already know us, they might have thought that we were coming on an expedition to suppress them.

So it was a good thing that they did know us.

But to our surprise, there weren't any elves that were patrolling in the forest when we arrived.

Normally, we would have been greeted by some elves before we even entered the forest.

When Moon saw this, she couldn't help slightly knitting her brows, but she didn't say anything in the end.

When we reached the pond that would lead us to the elven village and still no one came to greet us, that was when Moon finally decided that there was something wrong.

She raised a hand to stop us before waving at me to come over.

After I came out of the carriage and came over, she leaned in and said, "There's something wrong."

I was surprised to hear this, but I slowly gave a nod since I figured that something was wrong when we didn't meet any elves at all.

After a pause, Moon said, "Let me go and see what's wrong. If I don't come back in ten minutes, you should leave this place."

I was once again surprised to hear this, but I slowly gave another nod.

Moon didn't say anything else as she revealed a serious look and turned to the pond.

Then raising her hand, there was a portal that appeared.

When the ones in the carriage saw this portal, they thought that it was time to go, so they were about to come out. But before they could, I raised my hand to stop them and shook my head to show that it wasn't the time for that.

The duke and his family were surprised, but they went back into the carriage after seeing this.

Moon went right up to the portal and took one last look at us.

With a determined look, she gave a nod before walking through the portal.

We didn't do anything but wait after that.

Around eight minutes passed and we were starting to get worried, but there was still no response from the portal.

As nine minutes passed, we were thinking about leaving...

Right as it was about to reach ten minutes, the portal finally reacted and there were two figures that came out.

One of them was Moon and the other was the green haired elder who was her grandmother.

When she came out, she had a troubled look on her face as she looked at us.

She walked over to where I was with Moon beside her and looked right at me before shaking her head and giving a sigh.

I couldn't help being confused when I saw this.

"You shouldn't have come here, it's a bad time right now." The green haired elder suddenly said this.

Chapter 465 The Duke's Visit (6)

I revealed a surprised look when I heard this, but I still asked, "What do you mean by that?"

The green haired elder gave a sigh without really explaining anything.

It was almost as if there was something bothering her that she couldn't really talk about.

But in the end, she still said, "There are some visitors right now and it's best if you don't meet them. They are...not as friendly towards humans, so it would be bad if you..."

Before she could finish her words, the portal behind her lit up once more.

The green haired elder turned back with an ugly look on her face before waving her hand at me to move back.

I knitted my brows slightly when I saw this, but I followed her instructions and moved away from the portal.

There were two other green haired elves that suddenly came out of the portal.

When they came out, they looked around for a bit until their eyes fell onto the green haired elder.

The one on the left said, "Elder Lia, we have been looking for you. You suddenly left during the middle of our discussion, so we were wondering what kind of important things you had to take care of."

The one on the right suddenly looked at me and said, "It seems that there are human intruders in your forest. Shall we take care of them for you?"

As soon as their voices fell, they immediately pulled out bows that they pointed at me.

These elves didn't seem like they were playing around at all. They really seemed like they were planning to kill me.

But the green haired elder raised her hand and said, "Wait, these are guests, not intruders."

As soon as the two green haired elves heard this, they immediately knitted their brows.

Both of them looked at Elder Lia with serious looks before the one on the left asked, "Are you serious?"

The one on the right then added, "You should know what the consequences of such a lie is."

The green haired elder gave a sigh before saying, "They are indeed guests." She pointed at me and said, "This one is a friend of my daughter."

As soon as these two elves heard this, they immediately knitted their brows even more before turning to look at me.

This time, they were actually looking at me instead of just looking at me like I was a piece of trash in their minds. They seemed like they were sizing me up, seeing what I was capable of, that I could be considered a friend of the elder's daughter, the High Elf Aisha Bellthorn.

After a long silence, the one on the left said, "How are you certain of this?"

The one on the right added, "That's right, anyone can say that they are related to someone, but how can they prove it?"

The green haired elder looked at me as if she was waiting for me to do my thing.

I gave a sigh before giving them the proof that they needed.

As they watched me, the two of them revealed very strange looks.

However, neither of them looked like they approved of me.

It was clear that they weren't happy that I was a human that got along with elves.

After a long silence, the one on the left said, "Alright, we accept that this human is a guest."

The one on the right then said, "But, that doesn't explain why he is bringing other humans with him."

The hostile tone in their voice made it very clear what they were implying.

The green haired elder came forward and said, "We have a trade agreement with the humans, which is why they are here."

The two elves knitted their brows once again before saying, "Alright, since they are here to trade, let's see what they have for trade."

The green haired elder nodded in agreement to this.

I was the only one with an awkward look on my face since I didn't expect it to go this way.

We definitely were not here to trade, we were here to be rejected entry into the elven village...but now we had to go into the village trade...

We didn't have anything to trade at all!

My mind quickly turned, but there was no denying this anymore.

After all, I could see how the green haired elder were treating these two elves.

It was clear that these two elves had a special status among the elves...

The two of them narrowed their eyes to look at us again before turning around to head back through the portal.

Once they were gone, the green haired elder gave a sigh before saying, "Sorry for getting you caught up in this mess. But at the very least, you'll be able to come into the village."

I revealed an awkward look before saying, "I wasn't planning on coming today, so I didn't actually bring anything. I was hoping that you would have turned me away..."

The green haired elder's chin dropped as she looked at me before she revealed a bitter smile and said, "Then you better think of something, or else we'll both be in trouble."

I gave a slow nod in response before turning to look back at the portal.

After a pause, I asked, "Who are those two?"

The green haired elder gave a sigh before saying, "Well, that's a complicated story."

I looked at her with a faint smile as I said, "Then give me the short version."

The green haired elder shook her head and gave another sigh before saying, "I'm sure that you can already tell based on how they look and act."

I couldn't help slightly knitting my brows when I heard this since I did indeed have an idea, but I was hoping that it was wrong.

The green haired elder paused before saying, "They're from the capital, they're here on behalf of the Elven Kingdom."

As expected, it really was troublesome.

Chapter 466 The Duke's Visit (7)

After a moment of silence, I couldn't help asking, "What did they come here for, or did they not tell you?"

The green haired elder looked very hesitant this time.

It was as if she was debating on whether to tell me or not, but that wasn't strange since this was most likely a private matter for the elves.

Seeing this, I said, "If it's not something that you can tell me, then..."

She shook her head when she heard this before saying, "It's not that I can't tell you. It's just that I'm worried that you'll want to get yourself involved in this matter when you do hear the reason."

I couldn't help revealing a confused look when I heard this, but I didn't say anything as I waited for her to explain.

The green haired elder gave another sigh before saying, "They're here looking for Apollo. They were sent by his father."

I deeply knitted his brows when I heard this.

This was definitely the one answer that I didn't expect to hear.

It had even been a long time since I had heard that name.

After taking a moment to gather my thoughts, I couldn't help giving a secret bitter laugh.

Even in death, he was still causing troubles for me.

But then I realized something else.

Why would the green haired elder be worried that I would want to get involved in this matter?

Did she know something?

As far as she knew, I wasn't involved in this matter at all since I had no connection to Apollo's disappearance. Even if I butted heads with him when he was here, that didn't mean that I would get involved in this matter.

When she saw the way that I looked at her, the green haired elder also couldn't help revealing a confused look.

She looked at Moon and back at me before saying, "Are you two not..."

Before she could finish, Moon suddenly came forward to stop her by covering her mouth.

I couldn't help revealing an even more confused look since I had no idea what she had even wanted to say. However, it seemed like it did concern me, so I was curious what it would be.

The green haired elder looked at Moon and revealed a look of understanding.

She reached up to move Moon's hand from her mouth and then she said, "It seems that I was wrong. It seems that I had nothing to worry about...yet."

I looked at her with an even more confused look, but the green haired elder didn't seem like she was about to explain.

Instead, she looked at me and said, "Alright, let's go into the village. If we stay here for too long, they'll get suspicious."

Without even waiting for a response from me, she walked through the portal.

Moon looked at me with a strange look before going into the portal with her.

We were left there standing all on our own.

I looked around myself with a helpless look before heading back to the carriage.

I gave some instructions to the driver before sitting down in the carriage.

Seeing that I was back, the duke asked, "Is something wrong?"

I looked at him for a bit before shaking my head and saying, "It's just a small problem that the elves are facing, it isn't our concern. But they did give us permission to go into the village."

The eyes of the duke and his family all lit up when they heard this.

I felt a bad feeling when I saw these looks, so I quickly said, "When we get into the village, you'll need to stay silent and follow along. I know that you're excited, but there's no knowing what will offend the elves, so you need to keep calm and not do anything. Do you understand?"

The duke and his family were surprised to hear the serious tone that I had, but since I was the expert on the elves that had built the relationship with them, they just agreed to remain silent.

I still felt the same bad feeling even though they had agreed, but there was nothing else that I could say right now.

If I really pushed this matter, then there was the chance of offending the duke and that was the last thing that I wanted.

So I could only make a mental note to watch over them.

If I really need to, I could always have Cecilia watch them to make sure that they did nothing wrong.

Since we had been given permission, our group headed right through the portal and we came out in the elven village.

When we arrived, I could tell that something was off about the village.

There seemed to be more elves that were here, but these elves were very stern looking instead of being free like elves were supposed to be.

The elves that I had seen before in the village were all hiding inside of their homes, as if they were afraid of these elves.

These should be the elves that had been sent from the capital.

When they saw us coming through the portal, they all glared at us. They made no signs of hiding their hostility towards us, but at the very least, they didn't do anything to us.

It seemed that they had already received the order to let us by, so they just watched as we passed.

When they saw this, the duke and his family knew that something was off about this village. Even if I hadn't told them anything, they could tell just from the tone that hung over this village that something had changed.

They looked at me with gazes as if they were asking what was happening, but I just ignored them as I focused on what was in front of us.

Waiting in the square in the center of the village was the green haired elder, Moon, and the two green haired elves from before.

Chapter 467 The Duke's Visit (8)

When they saw us come over, the two green haired elves gave a nod to the green haired elder before turning around to leave.

The green haired elder came over with Moon before waving her hand at me.

I turned around and looked at the duke and his family.

When they saw me looking at them, they looked back at me with understanding looks before settling in the carriage.

While they did want to go around the village, they could tell that there was something off about it. So they knew that the best thing for them was to settle in the carriage and wait for Zwein to tell them what was happening.

I let out a secret sigh of relief when I saw this.

The one thing that I was worried about was the duke and his family running off, but it seemed that they did understand the seriousness of this situation.

I came out of the carriage and was pulled away by the green haired elder.

We were heading to the same tree house that we had gone to when I had first come to the tribe.

This was the tree house that the elders gathered in for their meeting.

When we came up, I found that all of the elders were already gathered and at the head of them all were the two green haired elves. They just sat there naturally as if they deserved to be at the head of it all.

The green haired elder just stood by my side as we walked up in front of them all.

Once I was standing there, the two green haired elves looked at me.

The one on the left said, "So, you are a human merchant?"

The one on the right said, "What kind of things do you have to sell to us?"

The green haired elder couldn't help revealing a slight trace of worry in her eyes as she turned to look at me.

However, I wasn't worried at all since I had already found something while we were coming over.

After what had happened in the capital, I had received quite a few rewards.

When I arrived back at my territory, I had found a cache of treasures that the fourth prince had sent. These were treasures that had been confiscated after the second prince was taken care of.

I knew because these were items that I had found in the game before.

I never expected the fourth prince to give up these items since they were considered quite precious.

These were things that were considered special drops in the game, so they were very rare to find. They couldn't be found even if one had the money to buy it because it all depended on luck to be able to find these things.

Yet the fourth prince was willing to hand them to me...

Just what was he thinking?

For now, I didn't know and there was nothing to gain from thinking about it.

So I just focused on the situation that I was currently facing.

With a wave of my hand, I pulled out three items that I placed on the floor in front of me. I sat down in front of these items and then introduced them one by one.

The moment that these three items appeared, all of the elves revealed shocked looks.

These items were all items, so elves that were sensitive to naturally could sense the fluctuations coming from them. At the same time, since they were sensitive to , they could tell that these items were anything but normal.

"The first thing that I have to show is..."

Before I could finish speaking, the one on the left suddenly cut me off by saying, "I know what this thing is. What are you looking for in return for it?"

I couldn't help being caught off guard by how forward this elf was.

I looked over at the one on the right and I found that he didn't have any expressions on his face.

It seemed that he agreed with the elf on the left.

But then again, it wasn't strange that they were this excited about this thing.

This was a fruit, it was called the Mana Peach.

It was a fruit that contained a large amount of mana and those that ate it would experience a large growth in their energy stores.

But the real important effect was its hidden effect.

It had a special effect for women which was that it could help their skin become much smoother.

For women that cared about their appearance, this was something that they would even kill to obtain.

I just never expected this elf to care this much...

I gave a cough to calm down before saying, "It's a very special item that's very hard to come by. For something like this..."

The elf on the left once again cut me off by saying, "Human, I don't want to play your boring games." She raised her hand and pulled out a crystal that she held up before saying, "Is this enough? Just say yes or no."

I couldn't help being surprised by how forward she was again, but what shocked me more was the item that she was holding.

This was an item that I had recognized with a single glance since this was an item that was considered a special item in the game as well.

This crystal was called a Life Crystal, it was a crystal that had the very essence of life in it. This wasn't the essence of life stolen from another living creature, but the essence of life that came from pure natural life energy gathered for thousands of years.

These crystals would only be found in places of high concentration of mana, so they were very rare.

For the elves that worshipped the Goddess of Life, it was easier for them to find these things. But they had never been willing to trade these with the other races.

Only when one took the elf quest line would they be able to find some.

This Life Crystal had many uses, so it was definitely something valuable and could be considered equal to the Peach.

After a moment to come back to my senses, I slowly gave a nod.

The elf on the left didn't even bother saying anything as she threw the crystal at me while using her to bring the Peach over to her.

There was a layer of wind that appeared under the Peach and it lifted it over to where the elf on the left was sitting.

I had to quickly move forward to catch the Life Crystal, but I wasn't able to reach it in time and it dropped to the floor.

Luckily, this was a very strong thing, so it didn't crack when it hit the floor.

I reached down to pick it up, but I could feel a strange sensation from the way the two green haired elves were looking at me.

It was as if they were looking down on me as I picked up the Life Crystal.

It almost seemed like that was her goal in the first place.

Putting this lowly human in his place.

Chapter 468 The Duke's Visit (9)

The green haired elder knitted her brows and looked at me with a worried look.

But I looked at her with my head down and showed her a smile that everything was fine.

These two elves...they were very easy to deal with.

Just from this, I knew what kind of people they were.

They were those that believed that elves were superior to the other races and they looked down on anyone that wasn't an elf.

For people with this kind of pride, it was easy to manipulate them.

As long as you went along with it and let them feel good, then they wouldn't bother you in the future. They might even slip up and give you some information without them realizing it.

So I didn't mind that they were making a fool of me.

Though for some reason, I could see that there was some anger on Moon's face.

Was she getting angry on my behalf because we were friends?

I couldn't help feeling a bit touched.

We had known each other for a while now, but there always felt like there was this kind of disconnect between us. However, seeing her act this way, it seemed like our relationship was still better than I thought.

That was good since the relationship with the elves was an important thing.

I knew that it was impossible to be friends with all the elves since there were elves like these two that existed among the elves.

So I just aimed to be friends with the elves that I could be friends with like Moon and the elves of this village.

After picking it up, I went back over to the two items that I had left on the ground and continued to introduce them with a smile.

These other two items also piqued the interest of the two green haired elves.

This time, it piqued the interest of the one on the right.

The other two items that I had brought out were also items, but they weren't beauty items like that Peach.

One of them was a special piece of wood called Dead Man's Wood.

This was a branch that looked like a withered piece of wood, but it gave off very powerful fluctuations. This was a piece of wood that grew in a decayed land that absorbed all of the death energy of that place, creating this decayed piece of wood.

That was why it was called the Dead Man's Wood.

But life and death were two sides of the same coin.

From life came death and from death came life.

So this Dead Man's Wood when purified was a very powerful receptor for life energy, which was why the elves wanted this thing to make a staff with. Staves that were made from this wood were very powerful and could enhance the spells that elves used.

In fact, staves made from this wood were used in worship ceremonies for the Goddess of Life they worshipped, so it was something that they wanted as much as they could get.

I knew this because of my knowledge of the elves from the game, so I knew that this piece of Dead Man's Wood would sell well to these elves.

The price that they paid was a few leaves.

These leaves were anything but normal since they were surrounded by thick life energy.

These were leaves from the Tree of Life that the elves protected, so these were leaves that could be considered the most powerful elixirs in the world.

Just a single leaf would be enough to save a person from death if it was used on them.

The final item that I introduced was a book.

This was a simple looking book that didn't seem like it had anything special about it other than the fluctuations coming from it. However, this book was a grimoire that contained a special .

This was that was very enticing to the elves since it was the attribute that they had.

This was a grimoire filled with wind .

It was the Wind God's Tome.

This was a grimoire that was filled with high level wind spells that if one could decode could allow their wind to reach a whole new level.

Of course, I knew that it was impossible for them to actually decode it since there was something else that was needed to use this item. It was something that I knew that the elves didn't have since it was being guarded in a certain place.

It was a special orb that was filled with wind energy called the Wind God's Orb.

It was guarded by the Wind God Religion in their most important church and wasn't something that could be easily obtained by the elves.

But then again, both of these items had the name Wind God in them...

Could it be that they were related to an actual god?

There was Solista and Vivrum, so it could be possible that there was an actual Wind God...

The item that I obtained in return for this Wind God's Tome was a bow.

This was a bow that was enhanced with wind that would generate gusts around the arrows that were shot from it. This would give the arrow greater force and spin, making it much more powerful.

This was definitely a powerful weapon that I was surprised that the elves would be willing to trade.

But it seemed that their honest personalities didn't allow them to cheat me.

Once all three items were traded, the two green haired elves had satisfied looks on their faces.

It was as if they had obtained something very good and they were very satisfied with the price that they paid.

Of course, they didn't know how much trouble those items caused me.

It wasn't the first item that caused me trouble, but rather the last two since they were hard for me to keep.

The Dead Man's Wood released a death energy that hurt everything around it while the Wind God's Tome was useless to me.

So I was happy to get rid of these two items.

But they would never know about this.

Chapter 469 The Duke's Visit (10)

After the two green haired elves enjoyed themselves for a bit, they turned their attention back to me.

They looked at me with those smug looks on their faces.

It was completely different from before where they had acted indifferent.

Now, they acted like they were much better than me as they looked down at me sitting on the ground.

Now, they acted like they were far above me and could command me however they wanted.

That was the image that I had put on while I had been selling these items.

After all, each time that they paid, they always dropped the item on the ground for me to pick up.

It was as if they were saying that I was only fit for picking up their scraps.

Still this was what I wanted to see.

After all, it was only like this that I was able to get them to let their guard down and give me the information that I wanted.

The next words that they said immediately did that.

The one on the left said, "I've heard that you were here when Sir Apollo left."

The one on the right said, "We also heard that you two didn't get along..."

His voice trailed off as if he was implying something.

As I had expected, they had come here to find out what had happened to Apollo.

When he didn't return, his father must have gotten worried and sent these people to check on him. Or...his father might even know that he was dead, so he was trying to find the culprits who killed his son to take revenge.

Regardless, it was clear that they were targeting me.

Whether it was because I was a human and it seemed likely that a human would do something like this, or if they were just using me as a scapegoat, it was clear that they were targeting me.

At the same time, I learned something else from their words.

It seemed that these two already knew some things about me.

As for how they learned these things...it was clear that there were some people that were involved in this matter.

The people who were sitting around the room with us.

The elders of this elven village.

But I didn't blame them since I'm sure that they had no choice but to tell these two. These two elves were from the capital, so I'm sure that this held quite a bit of pressure for the elders.

I calmly looked at them and said, "We did have some difficulties between us, but that was just normal since we didn't have matching personalities. It's just a difference of opinion, nothing more."

The two of them narrowed their eyes to look at me, as if they didn't seem to believe me.

But I just kept looking at them with that calm look on my face.

For some reason, the two elves couldn't help feeling strange since this was different from how he had acted before. For some reason, now that he was looking right at them, it was almost as if he was standing up to them.

This wasn't something that they felt good about since their egos had become inflated.

So the one on the left said, "Difference in opinion?"

The one on the right said, "Is that all it was?"

I didn't say anything as I looked back at them with that same calm look.

It was clear that there was something that they were implying, but I didn't fall for their bait and just waited for them to say what they wanted to say.

Seeing that I wasn't going to say anything, the one on the left said, "Do you know that Sir Apollo has gone missing?"

The one on the right added, "It's not even certain that he's still alive."

Right after they said this, they looked at my face carefully as if they were waiting to see what reaction I would have to this.

However, all they got was a stone cold look on my face that showed that I didn't know anything about this.

They just deeply knitted their brows when they saw this.

After a long moment of silence, the one on the left said, "Are you saying that you have nothing to do with this?"

The one on the right said, "Be aware that whatever you say now can and will be used against you when the time comes."

I just calmly looked at them and said, "I really have no idea what happened to him. After I left, I've had many other things that I've had to deal with, so I have no idea what happened here."

The two elves looked at Moon as if they were trying to get her to testify against me, but all she did was nod in agreement to this.

Moon had been following me the entire time, so she knew all the business that I had been taking care of.

She was the perfect alibi for me.

When the two elves saw this, they deeply knitted their brows.

After all, they had expected this to go much differently, but now they were the ones that looked like fools.

After a long moment of silence, the two of them looked back at me and said, "Alright, then we hope that you will remember what you have said here today."

I looked at them with a smile and said, "I think that we haven't been introduced yet. I am Zwein, a count of this kingdom."

As soon as they heard this, the two elves revealed ugly expressions.

Even if they disliked humans, they knew what it meant to be a count.

They had thought that the other side was a lowly human that they could easily deal with, but now it turned out that he was a noble of this kingdom.

While the Elven Kingdom wasn't afraid of this kingdom, it wasn't as if they would willingly cause trouble for the humans.

After all, the humans far outnumbered them and if they worked together, it would be easy for them to take care of the elves. It was just that the humans were too busy fighting each other that they hadn't done anything to the elves yet.

So they wouldn't provoke the humans for no reason.

The two of them knew that the title of count wasn't a lowly title. It was considered quite high among the humans, so this person wasn't an easy person to deal with.

Seeing the look on their faces, I revealed a faint satisfied smile.

This was the result that I had wanted to see and this was the result that made me the most assured.

It was clear that they wouldn't do anything now that they knew that I was a count. Unless they wanted to start a war with the humans, these elves would give up the idea of making me scapegoat.

Or...they would have other ideas...

I would take preparations against these other ideas, but I hoped that they wouldn't actually go through with it since it would be troublesome to deal with.

At the very least, I knew that they wouldn't do anything to me right now.

Chapter 470 The Duke's Visit (11)

After they dropped this matter, we were allowed to leave.

The green haired elder came out with me and Moon.

When we did, the elves that had been standing around were clearly surprised, but they didn't do anything in the end.

But judging by the way that they were just standing around like this, it seemed that they had been planning to arrest me or execute me on the spot. It was clear that they were all in on this plan, so they were surprised to see that it was suddenly called off.

A few of them couldn't help heading into the tree house as if they were going off to verify if they really should let me go just like this.

However, when they came back, they had strange looks on their faces.

The other elves looked at them and they shook their heads.

In the end, the elves scattered and left this area, but there was no hiding the disappointed looks on their faces.

Once they were gone, I made my way back to the carriage where my group was waiting.

As soon as I went over, Cecilia immediately came over to bring me back into the carriage.

She had been in the back when I had been called over, so she couldn't make it over in time to object. But now that I was back, she made sure to check every part of me to see if I had been hurt anywhere.

To my surprise, Veronica helped her with this.

I looked at the duke with an awkward smile, but I found that the duke and the duchess were looking at us with a warm smile on their faces.

It was as if they approved of this.

When they were finished, I turned to the duke and duchess and said, "Duke Beauchamp, it seems that we have arrived at a bad time for the elves. I hope you won't mind if we head back now instead of walking around the village?"

There was a trace of disappointment that appeared in the duke's eyes when he heard this, but he gave a nod of agreement in the end.

He was a sharp man, this was a given since he was able to head an entire ducal family.

So he had been able to spot that there was something wrong with this elven village.

It almost seemed like they were under some kind of suppression from an unknown force.

While he did want to go around the elven village to sate his curiosity, he knew that it was more important for them to leave since it was a matter of safety.

Zwein might have said it lightly, but he could see the worry that was in his eyes.

In this situation, naturally he would prioritize the safety of his family rather than fulfilling his own wishes.

Since I had received the agreement of the duke, I went back out to where the green haired elder was and told her that we were leaving.

When she heard this, she gave a nod of approval.

She too didn't want us staying too long as long as these envoys from the capital were still here. So she didn't hesitate to bring us back to the portal to the village.

But when we arrived, we found that the elves from the capital were already there.

They completely surrounded the portal and it seemed like they were doing something to it.

The green haired elder immediately knitted her brows and went forward to say, "What are you doing? Get away from there immediately?"

The elves from the capital revealed frowns when they heard this, but when they turned around to see that it was the green haired elder who was saying this, they backed down after a moment of hesitation.

The green haired elder quickly made her way over to the portal and when she saw what shape it was in, she couldn't help knitting her brows.

She turned around to look at the elves from the capital and said, "What is the meaning of this? What did you do to the portal?"

The elves from the capital seemed a bit annoyed at being accused like this, but before they could say anything...

The elders of this village quickly came over and said, "Elder Lia, it isn't what you think. There was something wrong with the portal and they just came here to take a look at it."

"Something wrong?" The green haired elder repeated before saying, "I think that there's something wrong with your heads. It's clear what happened based on the evidence and you're here defending them?"

A few of the villagers also came forward to say, "Elder, it's true."

When she was faced with all of these people telling her that it was true, the green haired elder really couldn't keep up the fierce tone that she had. With so many people providing evidence, she had no choice but to start accepting this.

But the real problem was that the portal was out.

She gave up on scolding the elders and the elves from the capital to look at the portal.

I made my way out of the carriage and walked over to her side before asking, "How long will it take to fix?"

The green haired elder deeply knitted her brows as she looked at the portal before shaking her head and saying, "I don't know. I've never seen the portal like this before...I have no idea how long it will take."

This time, it was my turn to knit my brows.

As we were considering what to do, the two green haired elves walked over.

The one on the left said, "Is there a problem?"

The one on the right said, "Do you need some help?"

The way that they said this, it was clear that they had some kind of connection to this.

But the green haired elder refused to take this bait, so she said, "There's no problem at all."

There was a tense silence that filled the air after she said this.