

## **Shota 481**

### Chapter 481 The duke's visit (22)

When I came over, I found that it was Moon who had called out for us.

She was standing over the corpses of one of the elves, the one that had been chosen as the representative by the others.

In her hand, there was this strange thing that looked like some kind of seal.

As for the expression on her face, she had a very deep frown.

Seeing that I came over, she raised the thing in her hand for me to see and had a look on her face as if she expected me to know what this was.

However, I really didn't know what it was, which was strange.

After all, I did have intensive knowledge about this world because of how much I had played the game that this world was based on. If there was anyone that should have recognized these things, it would have been me.

Seeing the look on my face, Moon explained, "This is a mind control seal."

I looked at her with a shocked look when I heard this before looking at her with a look of disbelief. The way that I looked at her, it was almost as if I was trying to tell if she was being serious or not.

But Moon's expression didn't change at all after saying this.

It seemed that she wasn't kidding about this, but I still didn't really understand what this thing was.

Based on the name, it should be something that was used to control the mind of whoever it was used on. However, that didn't really explain how much control they had and to what extent they would be able to control them.

Moon once again saw the look on my face and said, "It was used to control the Goblin General, that was why those monsters came right at us."

This time, I deeply knitted my brows when I heard this.

I had already figured that the monsters charging at us was part of their plan, but I never expected the elves to be able to do something like this.

Mind control, this was something that wasn't as explored in the game as one might think.

Even though it was a H-game, it was too difficult to implement mind control because of how much freedom there was in the game. Mind control would affect too many different variables, so the company had decided to avoid adding it to the game.

Though that didn't mean that mind control didn't exist.

In the flavour text of the game, there were mentions of mind control items that could be used.

Though there had never been a mind control item that was made available to the player.

The elves with their importance on freedom used something like this that would take away the freedom of others, it really seemed contradictory.

But the more important thing was that if they had this, didn't that mean that they would also have things that would be able to control the minds of others?

If this was the case, then wasn't the village and elves back in the village in trouble?

As soon as I realized this, I looked at Moon who was looking at me, as if she was waiting for my opinion.

I looked at her for a moment and then with a deep breath, I said, "Go if you feel you need to go."

Moon bit her lip when she heard this, but in the end, she said, "I'll leave a few of them with you to guide you back to town."

I gave a nod before walking over to take her hand and pat the back of it.

I didn't know what to say to make it better and I knew that there wasn't much that I could even say in the first place that would make her feel better.

So all I could do was show that I supported her no matter what.

After a moment of silence, Moon looked up at me and said, "Thank you."

Then without any hesitation, she gathered the elves together and they split into two groups.

One that would head back to the village with her and the other that would lead us back to town.

As they walked off, I couldn't help staring in the direction that Moon's group headed off in.

I didn't know when we would be able to meet again, but I knew that this definitely wasn't over yet.

With a sigh, I went back to the carriage with the duke and his family before heading back to town.

As we were sitting in the carriage, there was a silence that hung in the air.

It was clear that all of us had different thoughts and no one was saying a thing, so we just remained silent until we reached the town.

When we arrived back, it didn't take long before Rose and Haley came to meet us.

I had people call them over as soon as possible.

When they saw the state that we were in, they quickly arranged everything and we met in a secret room in the manor.

The only ones that were in this room were me, Rose, Haley, Cecilia, and Shaka.

Though Shaka could be considered part outsider, he had become a part of the town that we couldn't do without and had no choice but to involve him in this meeting.

Once we sat down, I looked at Rose and Haley and told them about what happened.

After they heard the story, they both had worried looks on their faces.

After all, they could understand what this story meant for us.

Cooperation with the elves was one of the things that we relied on since we had many parts of our town that relied on elven . It wasn't like this before, but living with elves for some time had changed our town like this.

I didn't even know about it since I had left everything to Rose and Haley.

When it was over, Rose asked me, "What do we do now?"

I shook my head and said, "There's nothing that we can do other than wait."

We just had to wait and see what Moon had for us.

## Chapter 482 The Duke's Visit (23)

Moon came back the very next day to everyone's surprise.

When she came back, we once again gathered in the secret room to hear her report.

But we were surprised by the report that she made.

"They left?" I couldn't help asking in a shocked voice.

Moon just gave a simple nod in response to this.

But that just shocked us even more.

After all, no one would have expected them to leave just like this.

We had all been certain that the elves from the capital would do something after their comrades had been wiped out like this. However, they didn't do a single thing as they just left the elven village as if they didn't even know about their comrades being wiped out like this.

I looked at her with a confused look and asked, "Why?"

But all that I received in return was a confused look just like mine as Moon shook her head to show that she didn't know either.

After they had left, Moon had told the green haired elder about everything and she had sent people to watch over them as they left.

They found that the elves from the capital didn't create any fuss at all and just left their forest. Then after following them for a bit, it seemed like they were heading back to the capital without doing anything.

Even now, the green haired elder was still receiving reports from the scouts that she sent after them that they were leaving this kingdom.

This didn't seem like something that those arrogant elves would have done.

After her answer, a silence fell over the room.

None of us knew what was happening, so it wasn't as if we would be able to force out an answer even if we wanted to.

I thought about asking Shaka to move Shadow Garden forces for this matter, but then I thought better of it.

The moment that the Shadow Garden was involved, this would no longer be a matter between us and those elves, but a matter between a human kingdom and the elven kingdom.

If that were to start a war, that would be the worst case scenario.

So I couldn't bring Shadow Garden in no matter what.

After a long period of silence, I finally said with a sigh, "Then let's drop this matter."

Everyone looked at me with strange looks and there was a bit of hesitation in their eyes, but they agreed with me in the end.

They knew that there was indeed nothing else that we would be able to do without causing too much of a mess, so we had no choice but to give up on this matter.

Once that was decided, the meeting was over.

Moon still looked anxious, like she wanted to do something, but she didn't know what she could do.

However, what she seemed like the most was regretful that elves like her had caused this mess. It made her feel that she was related to this in some indirect way...though it could be considered that since she was the one that was related to Apollo.

I wanted to say something to Moon, but Rose cut me off and said, "Let me handle it. You can handle the other problem."

I revealed a bitter smile when I heard this, but she was already gone.

The other problem that she mentioned was the duke...

After all, we had gotten him caught up in this dangerous situation, so we had to give an explanation to him.

So I went to go meet with the duke.

When I arrived at their residence, I found that they were already packing up and I couldn't help panicking.

If the duke was leaving in a hurry like this...did that mean that he was offended because we had gotten him caught up in all of this?

If the duke was offended and we lost his backing...it would be bad for us.

So I quickly asked one of the servants where the duke was and went to find him.

When I found the duke, I saw that he was in the parlour just having some tea with Veronica and the duchess.

The duke waved his hand at me with a smile on his face, as if he was telling me to come over.

When I came into the room, the first thing that I did was bow my head and say, "I'm sorry about everything that happened."

There was a silence that hung in the air which made me feel awkward.

So I slowly and tentatively looked up at the duke.

I found that he along with Veronica and the duchess were looking at me with strange expressions on their faces.

After a while, the duke finally said, "What are you doing?"

I quickly said, "I got you involved in that dangerous matter, it was all my fault. I hope that you'll..."

Before I could apologize again, the duke suddenly gave a sigh and said, "Oh, it's that. It's not a problem at all."

I was caught off guard when I heard this before quickly saying, "But you're already packing up to leave. If I offended you in some way..."

Once again, the duke cut me off by saying, "It's not that at all. We know that you didn't mean for that to happen and you're the victim in this matter. So we're just getting out of your hair so you can properly deal with this situation. You don't have to worry, we're not offended at all."

I couldn't help being taken aback again when I heard this.



I slowly raised my head and looked at the duke's expression. I could tell that he wasn't lying about this, it seemed that he really did understand this and he wasn't angry about this.

But that didn't make any sense at all.

I was about to apologize again, but the duke saw this and cut me off once more, "I know that things like this happen, it comes with working with any large group. The elves aren't represented by only the ones that we met in this town, so there must be others with differing opinions among the elves. It's inevitable that something like this happens."

This time, it was my turn to look at the duke with a strange look.

Perhaps it was because I had gotten used to seeing how he acted around Veronica that I had the wrong perception of him. But the duke was one of the most important people in this kingdom, so it wasn't strange that he had this grand mentality.

Perhaps it was only someone like him that could understand something like this so easily.

Being too persistent was also annoying...so I just said, "Thank you for understanding."

The duke gave a nod with a smile on his face before saying, "Don't worry about it. I'm still expecting great things from our cooperation."

I also revealed a relieved smile when I heard this as I said, "Yes, I'm looking forward to working with you."

It seemed that the duke wasn't planning on terminating our relationship which was the best thing for me.

But the duke then added, "I'll also count on you to look after Veronica for me."

I couldn't help revealing a secret bitter smile when I heard this.

It seemed like I still couldn't get rid of this willful young miss...

#### Chapter 483 Returning To The Church

After the duke left, it was business as usual.

This time, I didn't plan on going anywhere since I had been away for a long time already.

I wanted to actually help Rose in managing my territory, but...she didn't have anything for me to do.

In fact, the way that she said it almost made it seem like she thought I was a nuisance instead of being helpful...

It really stung, but I couldn't argue with her.

There weren't many things that I could do to help when it came to managing the territory.

All I could do was some of the menial stuff and there were plenty of people that were available for that.

So other than showing my face for important events, there really wasn't much for me to do.

So I was allowed to do what I wanted even though I wanted to help, as long as I didn't get in the way. But whenever I tried doing anything, I would be in the way and they would let me know.

Rose had really trained her subordinates well that they didn't even fear me as their lord. They just gave me their brutal and honest opinions.

That was what I wanted to see since it was much more effective, but that didn't mean that it didn't hurt.

The next place that I tried was Haley's place and...it was the same.

Perhaps if I didn't go anywhere and learned how to help with her business, I might have been able to help her. However, they were just far too busy with the new businesses that I brought that they didn't have the time to teach me.

Just like with Rose's subordinates, Haley's subordinates had also been well trained and didn't hesitate to tell me the brutal truth, sending me on my way.

So in the end, there wasn't anything for me to do to help even though I wanted to help.

With the free time on my hands, I decided to do something that I wanted to do.

There was something that had been bugging me since the capital, so I went to a place where I thought that I would be able to get an answer for the questions in my heart.

I came to the church.

This church was the one that had been in the town all along and it was run by the priest who had helped us during the beast wave.

But after that incident, he had been keeping to himself in the church.

We never bothered him and he never bothered us, both of our sides just did what we wanted to do.

Though I did hear from Rose that the priest had wanted to meet me.

After all, I had something that he was very interested in.

When I arrived at the church, I found that there were quite a few people that were here.

It seemed that the people of my territory were quite religious and came to pray when they had the time.

When they saw me, there were many of them that waved and greeted me.

These were old residents of my territory who had been with us since the beginning.

They were already used to the casual manner that I had and greeted me whenever they saw me. They knew that I wasn't like the other nobles, who couldn't be approached that easily.

With the commotion that we were creating, it didn't take long before the priest's attention was drawn.

When he saw that it was me, he immediately came over with a wide smile and said, "My lord, is there anything that I can help you with today?"

I told the others that I had some business with the priest and once we were alone, I said, "I have something that I wanted to talk to you about, alone."

The priest was surprised to hear this, but he didn't mind as he said with a nod, "Alright, let's go talk in my office."

I gave a nod and followed the priest into the back of the church.

Once we entered his office, I couldn't help looking at the cross inside.

I was waiting to see if there was anything that was going to happen with it.

However, not a single thing happened.

We sat down at the coffee table and he made some tea before sitting down to ask me, "My lord, what is it that you wanted to talk about?"

I brought my hand up and placed it on the table before saying, "It's this."

The priest's eyes immediately lit up when he heard this since this was what he had been hoping would happen.

He had wanted to examine this Mark of God the entire time, but since I had been gone, he never got the chance.

And of course, it wasn't as if he could just summon me to come to the church to let him examine it.

So he had no choice but to send letters with requests and wait for me to come.

Now that he had this chance, he naturally wouldn't let it go.

With that wide smile on his face, the priest leaned over the table and brought his face right up towards the Mark of God.

The look on his face really made me want to pull my hand away, but I kept it there in the end as I let him examine it.

After looking at it for a while, the priest finally said, "Is there something particular you want to discuss about this Mark of God?"

I gave a nod before using my other hand to pull out something from my Spatial Ring.

As soon as this thing was pulled out, the priest deeply knitted his brows as he pulled his eyes away from the Mark of God on my hand and turned to look at the thing in my other hand.

I just brought this thing onto the table and said, "It's this that I want to discuss."

The priest knitted his brows even more as he said, "My lord, what is the meaning of this? How could you bring this item into a sacred place like this?"

Chapter 484 Purification

The thing that I had pulled out was Durand.

The moment that it was pulled out, the priest immediately realized what it was since he could feel the evil energy that was coming from it.

But I didn't put it away as I said, "There's something strange that happened with this cursed sword and I need your help to figure out what happened."

The priest looked at me with a strange look when he heard this, but after a moment to gather his thoughts, he calmed down and said, "Alright, tell me what happened."

I gave a nod before telling him the story of how I obtained Durand and what happened when I grabbed hold of it.

"So in the end, the light disappeared and I have no idea what happened. However, when I used the sword, it didn't seem to curse me at all, so I can tell that something must have changed with the sword."

The priest knitted his brows when he heard this before standing up and saying, "Move back and let me take a look."

I stood up as well and gave the priest space to look at Durand on the table.

Before he started looking over Durand, the priest pulled out a cross from inside of his chest pocket and raised it up with one hand. He pointed this cross at Durand and started muttering something, as if he was trying to purify it.

There was a faint white light that appeared around the cross, but it quickly disappeared.

When it did, the priest couldn't help revealing a strange look.

Taking another moment to gather himself, the priest moved closer to Durand and started walking around the coffee table it was on. The way that he circled it made it seem like he was investigating it from every angle.

It was as if he was trying to find something about this sword.

But in the end, he gave a sigh like he wasn't able to see anything and sat back down.

When he sat down, I couldn't help asking, "Is something wrong?"

The priest didn't say anything at first as he kept looking at Durand on the table, but then he slowly said, "It isn't as if there's something wrong, it's just that...it's a very strange reaction."

I was even more confused when I heard the priest say this.

The priest knew that what he had said was confusing, so he added, "The feeling of this sword is completely different. There is still dark energy contained within this cursed sword, but it feels like there's something...that's suppressing it. This thing suppressing it almost feels holy."

Slowly the expression on my face changed as I realized something.

"Then you're saying that this sword is..."

The priest didn't say anything, but he did give a slow nod as if confirming what I was thinking.

I looked back down at Durand with a strange look.

After a long period of silence, I finally asked, "But how does something like this happen?"

The priest finally looked up after hearing this question, but he didn't look at me. Instead, his eyes went to the Mark of God that was on my hand.

I looked down at the Mark of God as well when I saw him looking at it.

After a bit of silence, the priest said, "It can only be considered the work of god."

This didn't really explain anything, but at the same time...this could be considered an answer.

After all, it was the power of the Mark of God that had changed Durand like this.

It seemed that somehow the Mark of God had purified the dark energy of Durand, suppressing the curse that came with it. That was why I didn't feel the pain of using Durand when I cut down that elf.

But would the Mark of God have this kind of power?

And what other powers would it have?

I couldn't help looking at the priest with a strange look, but he just shook his head.

After all, this was the first time that he was seeing it in real life.

Even if he had heard about the Mark of God before, it had rarely ever appeared in this world and was something that was considered a myth.



So seeing it for the first time really was something else.

The priest really didn't know how to react to this other than with awe and excitement.

Seeing this look on the priest's face, I could guess most of this...but I did want to know more about this thing.

Since it could do this, I was very curious about what else I could do with this Mark of God in the future.

After all, the more that I could do with it, the better it was for me.

The more trump cards that I had, the safer I would be.

So I said, "Is there any way to figure out what kind of powers this Mark of God has?"

The priest's eyes suddenly lit up as if he was already expecting this.

It even seemed like he had been waiting for me to say this.

He immediately stood up and leaned over the table to grab my shoulders before saying, "My lord, if you wish to learn more about this, then I will do all that I can to support you."

I revealed a bitter smile as I could guess what he wanted to do, but I also had some conditions.

"I want to learn a bit more about your religion, so can you teach me?"

The priest's eyes lit up even more when he heard this.

He had only been planning on examining the Mark of God with the count, but he never thought that he would also be asked to teach.

The privilege of being able to teach one that had the Mark of God, that was something that no one else had ever been given.

So of course he immediately nodded in agreement.

Seeing this, I also nodded before saying, "Then let's do our best."

Chapter 485 Visiting Nobles (1)

Over the next two weeks, I spent most of my time in the church.

I still did a few things for Rose and Haley, such as showing my face for important occasions.

But most of my time was spent in the church learning about the religion and gods of this world.

To understand the power of the Mark of God, I should learn about the ones that gave me this Mark of God.

So I started learning about the religion, the gods, and what kind of power they had.

The priest was happy to teach me all of this, but...he was quite the hard teacher. He went on for hours and hours giving me lectures about the gods and their roles in this world.

He was one of those that thought that giving as much information as possible was best.

He didn't even bother giving me time to process this as he kept on with his lecture.

So it was hard having to keep up with this.

However, I did slowly learn what I wanted to learn and had a good understanding of religion in this world.

This was one of the things that I didn't have as much knowledge on from just playing the game. After all, religion was a very boring thing and it was hard to incorporate into the plot, other than for a few certain scenes involving gods.

So there wasn't much lore about religion in the game in the first place.

I would have continued my lesson with the priest, but there was something that called me away.

It was a request from Rose.

This was the first time that she was asking me to do something and it turned out that it was something that only I could do.

It wasn't because I was the only one that possessed the skills for this task, but rather...because I was the count and nothing else. It was all because I had my title that I was required to go with her.

As for where we were going...

It was the territory of one of the neighbouring nobles.

It was to the territory of Viscount Teomold that I met in the capital.

Back then, I had promised to visit him and discuss cooperating with him in terms of selling him ore.

Now that Haley and Rose had finished setting things up in our town to receive the ore, it was time for us to start finding customers to sell this ore to.

So the first one that we chose was Viscount Teomold that I had already established contact with.

But when we set off, it seemed more like a happy trip that we were taking instead of going to meet another noble.

Rose rarely got the opportunity to head out since she was so busy managing the territory, but she had to go this time as my wife since this was a formal visit to one of the neighbouring nobles.

She had been working hard these past two weeks to set up everything so that they could run the territory while we were both gone...though it mattered more that Rose was gone than it did that I was gone.

The one that took over for her was Nicole who had gone with me to Bright Water City before.

She was taken under Rose's wings after coming up and she had become a skilled aide to Rose that was able to run things in her place.

Though if we were gone for too long, it wouldn't take much for her to crumble.

No one would be able to replace Rose after all.

So as we left, Nicole had a tearful look on her face as she said, "Have fun on your trip and come back soon."

The part that she emphasized was the second part, but Rose just ignored it as she happily took my arm and sat beside me in the carriage.

Like this, we headed off to Viscount Teomold's territory.

Since it was a neighbouring territory, it should have only taken us two days of traveling to reach it. But it actually took us double that time, a total of four days to arrive in his territory.

That was because along the way, Rose kept finding new places to stop in.

She completely ignored Nicole's request and just went at her own pace.

We stopped in many different towns and took our time enjoying ourselves.

As for me...I really couldn't go against her.

First, there wasn't even the need to mention if I was able to go against her since that was a definitive no.

Second, I didn't want to go against her since I didn't want to deny her this chance to cut loose.

I had left all my problems in managing the town to her, so I could only make it up to her like this.

If Rose wanted to enjoy herself, then I would do my best to accommodate.

I could only apologize to Nicole and the rest of her subordinates who were stuck with this in my heart.

I would think of a way to make it up to them once we got back.

When we arrived in Viscount Teomold's territory, we were greeted with a warm welcome.

But the look on Rose and Haley's faces had completely changed.

While we had been on the road enjoying ourselves, they had relaxed smiles on their faces.

But now, they had calm and serious smiles on their faces that were befitting of a noble.

It would be a lie to say that there wasn't a part of me that wasn't turned on when I saw them like this...

Still, I gathered myself and revealed a look that I felt was similar to their looks on my face.

When we arrived in the town, the gates were opened for us and we saw that there was a crowd that all cheered as we arrived.

At the center of the crowd, as if he was waiting for us, was Viscount Teomold with his family and a few of his subordinates around him.

Chapter 486 Visiting Nobles (2)

As we entered this town, I could see that there were a few things off about the citizens.

It was clear that unlike our town, these citizens were not here on their own will.

They had most likely been gathered by the soldiers of the viscount and were forced to take part in this welcome.

In fact, most of them even looked fearful...

However, that wasn't strange since offending a noble was an easy way to get the death sentence. That was just how it was in this world where nobles ruled over commoners.

It was our town that was strange where the commoners were able to talk to a count like me without having to care about proper courtesy.

It was just that I wasn't used to this.

So it could be considered a personal trait of our town.

But when the duke had come, they had made sure to be polite to him since they knew that he wouldn't act the same way as me.

In the end, it was just that I didn't have the demeanor of a noble that I couldn't act that way.

I had been a commoner in my past life and I had never been raised as a noble, so it wasn't as if I could just suddenly act as a noble.

But it was a good thing that I had someone to teach me that and to help me follow up.

Or else I might have embarrassed myself in front of other nobles.

Rose had been raised in a count's family, so she had been taught everything that a noble needed to know.

It really helped me when I met Viscount Teomold again.

Back in the capital, it had been a short encounter and we had only discussed business, so I was able to fool him.

But now that we were here to pay a social visit, I definitely wouldn't be able to fool him with the quick teachings that Rose gave me.

So I needed Rose to follow up for me.

Viscount Teomold came forward with his wife and children, giving a slight bow to me before introducing himself and them to me.

When he came to his children, he had the two of them come forward to present themselves to me.

With the way that he did this, it was clear what he was trying to do.

Unfortunately, his children...couldn't be considered beautiful.

Viscount Teomold wasn't the most handsome man and his wife was just average.

The children that came from the two of them...were also considered average.

They couldn't be considered ugly, but they definitely weren't considered beauties.

So it wasn't as if I felt anything when I saw the two of them.

I just calmly said, "Viscount Teomold, our party has been traveling for a while now. How about we go and rest somewhere?"

Viscount Teomold was surprised to hear this, but he quickly nodded in agreement.

He had actually prepared a few more things for the commoners to do to appease me, but he couldn't say no if I didn't want to go along with it. So we quickly went back in our carriages and headed to his manor.

When we left, I peeked back and saw that there were relieved looks on the faces of the commoners who had been dragged out to welcome us.

I was sure that this was a stressful situation for them, so it was only natural that they were relieved when we left.

All of this gave me a bad impression of Viscount Teomold.

It didn't take much thought to realize that he was nothing more than the typical noble who only cared about his own self gains and didn't care about his people.



As long as they were able to pay their taxes, he didn't care what happened to them.

Even the ore trade was most likely just to arm his own forces for his own gains.

This kind of person was without a doubt a bad person to work with, but it was already too late to change.

It was just a good thing that I never planned on giving him anything important.

The only plan that I had for him was as a puppet to control the others in the area.

So I would still work with him.

Once we arrived at the manor, Viscount Teomold didn't let us rest up and instead brought us to the living room.

He clearly hadn't given up on his idea of trying to use his daughters to appeal to me.

After all, they were sitting on both my sides so that they could reach me at any moment.

They definitely weren't shy about this, but Rose's glare was enough to scare them off.

I was very glad that I had brought Rose with me or else it might have been much worse.

After we had settled, I looked at Viscount Teomold and said, "Let's talk business."

Viscount Teomold was once again surprised to hear this, but he revealed a serious look and gave a nod.

I looked at Haley and she stood up to bring out a piece of paper that she placed on the table in front of us. She then slid it forward towards Viscount Teomold sitting on the other side.

Viscount Teomold looked down at this piece of paper with one brow raised before picking it up to read.

As he looked at this piece of paper, his expression couldn't help changing.

The further down he went, the more that his brows knit.

Finally, when he had finished reading it, he placed the piece of paper back down on the table. However, this time it was on the side with writing on it so that his wife and daughter could also see it.

It seemed to be some kind of list.

Viscount Teomold ignored Haley who had brought out the list and looked right at me with narrowed eyes before saying, "Count Zwein, are you serious? Is this really the only thing that you have for me?"

Chapter 487 Visiting Nobles (3)

I didn't say anything as I gave a simple nod in return.

He might have been able to say something if I had said something, but being silent like this put pressure on Viscount Teomold.

He just sat there with a displeased look on his face, but he found it hard to say anything.

After all, the truth of the matter was that he didn't have any cards in his hand in the first place.

He was the one that wanted ores from Count Zwein, so it wasn't as if he had anything that he could threaten him with.

The other side had a higher title and he had already heard the reports of how powerful his soldiers were, so if there was ever a territory struggle, it wasn't as if he could win against him.

Especially now that Count Zwein had those minerals from the Dwarven Kingdom in his hand.

So Viscount Teomold didn't know what to do.

After a long and hard silence, Viscount Teomold revealed a friendly smile and said, "Your lordship, are you sure that there's nothing that you can do? We're all friends here, I'm sure that you can give me a discount, right?"

I looked at Viscount Teomold in silence, which made him awkwardly look to the side.

When I saw this, I couldn't help revealing a faint smile.

But Viscount Teomold mistook that as a good sign and was about to say something.

I just simply cut him off by saying, "You said that you were going to introduce me to a few other buyers in the area. How has that been going?"

Viscount Teomold's mouth froze when he heard this as he looked at me with a surprised and confused look.

It was clear that he didn't expect me to suddenly ask this.

After looking at me with this same look for a bit, he revealed a cautious look as he said, "I've already contacted a few people that I know. It seems that they are interested and they are looking forward to meeting you to discuss this."

I gave a simple nod before saying, "Then let's wait until we're all gathered together to discuss this."

Viscount Teomold revealed an even more surprised look before his expression turned ugly.

Still, he was able to keep himself composed as that ugly expression disappeared from his face and he said with a friendly smile, "Count Zwein, is there really a need to wait to discuss this? I'm sure that someone as great as your lordship can settle this matter easily."

I looked right into his eyes with a smile of my own and calmly said, "Didn't you want a discount? Then if you wait until we discuss this with everyone, I'll be sure to give you all a group discount for introducing me to everyone."

Viscount Teomold knitted his brows when he heard this.

A discount was indeed what he was looking for, but the cost of this was just too great.

The one issue that he had with this, which was a big issue for him, was that he didn't want to wait until everyone gathered.

Sure he was planning on bringing his own people in, so that wouldn't be a problem...but if he cut a deal with everyone else, then that would be shooting himself in the foot. After all, he had put in the effort of building this relationship with Count Zwein.

If he were to make a deal when everyone else did, it would put him at the same level as them.

In the future, he would just be at the same level as everyone else when it came to their relationship with Count Zwein.

It would be hard to imagine just how much he would be losing out if this were to actually happen...

So Viscount Teomold couldn't let that happen.

After another long silence, Viscount Teomold gave a gulp and said, "Count Zwein, I'm sure that we can work out a deal today. This is a simple matter, I'm willing to back down a bit since we're such close friends."

I looked at him with a smile on my face and said, "Oh, didn't you say that you wanted a discount? There's no better discount than a group discount, it's the bulk discount that comes with buying a lot together."

Viscount Teomold revealed an ugly look once more.

He was no fool since he was someone that was able to become a viscount and keep that title.

He knew exactly what I was doing.

So with a sigh, Viscount Teomold said, "How much is your bottom line?"

I didn't beat around the bush either since he had already given up.

I gave a nod to Haley who brought out another piece of paper for Viscount Teomold.

He didn't let her put it on the table and directly reached out for the piece of paper.

Haley didn't mind and handed it over for Viscount Teomold to take.

He looked down at the piece of paper and slightly knitted his brows.

Viscount Teomold just continued staring at this piece of paper as if he was debating something, but in the end...he gave a sigh and put it down on the table. He looked back at me and said, "Is there really nothing lower?"

I narrowed my eyes to look at him before suddenly standing up.

Viscount Teomold began to panic when he saw this and quickly said, "Wait, wait, your lordship. I accept, I accept."

I looked back at him and said, "The original price."

Viscount Teomold revealed a shocked look when he heard this before he couldn't help revealing a bitter smile.

If he hadn't tried to push his luck, he might have gotten away with this bottom line that had been presented.

The bottom line...was actually quite reasonable and affordable for him.

But he was a greedy noble and wanted more.

Still, he knew when to pull back since he could see the look in Count Zwein's eyes.

If he were to say anything other than yes...this deal might be over.

So all Viscount Teomold could do was give a nod while giving a sigh.

I gave a nod as well and reached my hand out to him with a smile as I said, "To a happy cooperation."

Viscount Teomold revealed a bitter smile as he took my hand and said, "To a happy cooperation."

Chapter 488 Visiting Nobles (4)

With that set, there was nothing else to discuss.

Even if there was, Viscount Teomold didn't seem like he was in any mood to discuss it.

It looked like he had aged by several years just over the course of this meeting and it very much seemed like he needed to rest.

There was still the contract that needed to be signed, but that wasn't something that needed to be rushed.

After all, even if it was signed, there was nothing that we could do right now.

We still hadn't moved enough ore from the Dwarven Kingdom for this trade yet.

The ore that had been brought back in the first batch was only used for our personal use and to pay the share that we owed the king and the duke. So there wasn't any extra that we could sell right now even if we wanted to.

We would need to wait at least another week for the next batch of ores to arrive.

Surprisingly, there had been no problems with transferring the ore.

It seemed like the other countries still hadn't figured out that we were making this trade with the Dwarven Kingdom, so they didn't know to intercept it yet. It would be different in the future, so we should get as much out of it while we still could.

Since Viscount Teomold wanted to rest, we were allowed to go back to our rooms and rest up as well.

However, that wasn't what I wanted to do.

I wanted to go around this town and see what Viscount Teomold was like.

I wanted to get a good grasp of his personality and style of work, so the best way to do that was to look at his territory.

The servants that were assigned to watch over us couldn't stop us at all.

After all, Viscount Teomold wasn't in any mood to stop us since he was exhausted after that meeting with me. Not to mention, I had a title of count which was even greater than that of their lord.

So they were actually afraid of even talking back to me, let alone trying to stop me.

I was able to easily make my way out of the room with Rose and Haley.

Of course, we didn't go in our normal clothes.

Since we were nobles, we naturally dressed as nobles or others would look down on us.

But if we were to go to the town dressed as nobles, that would have the opposite effect of what we were trying to achieve.

We were trying to sneak into town to observe, but that would be hard if we drew attention in our noble clothes.

So we quickly changed into the commoner clothes that the servants had prepared for us.

At the same time, we made sure to put on some makeup to make ourselves seem more normal.

The two things that attracted attention the most were fancy clothes and beautiful people, so we had to make sure that we didn't have either of those.

Once we were in our disguises, we left the manor in a discrete carriage and headed into town.



That carriage went to one of the alleys and I helped Rose and Haley down before heading into the town.

The three of us acted like we were just here on a date having fun, but the ones that were secretly following us were tense.

These were the guards that Viscount Teomold had sent to watch over us.

But what they didn't know was that there was someone else that was watching over them as well.

Someone that was much better at hiding herself than they were.

So they had no idea that this person was hiding in the shadows.

As we walked around the town, we could see that the standard of living wasn't that good.

There was a market, but the amount of goods being sold was lacking.

Not only that, the prices that they were being sold at were much higher than the normal...or at least that was what Haley told me.

I didn't know what the normal prices were other than for a few of the common items.

Only someone with as much skill and talent as Haley would be able to remember the average price for all of these items. Especially some of the more obscure items that most people wouldn't know about.

Just based on this, it was clear that Viscount Teomold was not a good ruler.

He was one of those normal nobles that taxed his citizens heavily without caring about making their lives better.

The only life that he cared about bettering was his own...

This was clearly not a good sign for someone to cooperate with to have.

So it was clear that we shouldn't work with Viscount Teomold since it was clear that something bad was going to happen working with him.

Both Haley and Rose showed concern after seeing the state that the commoners of Viscount Teomold's territory.

But I just shook my head and gave them a look as if I was saying, "Don't worry."

Both of them still had the same concerned looks, but they didn't say anything in the end as they chose to trust me.

What they didn't know was that I was relying on Viscount Teomold to be someone like this.

I wanted him to run his territory into the ground and lose everything.

That would be easier for me in the long run.

In a sense, destruction was needed to rebuild.

So before I did anything with this territory, I would destroy the current system in place and turn it into a blank slate before I made my mark on this place.

After observing for a bit, it seemed like we had seen all that we could see.

So we were planning on heading back before Viscount Teomold completely freaked out over our disappearance.

But before we could...

"This pretty little lady, how about having some fun with me?"

Chapter 489 Visiting Nobles (5)

At first we thought that it was about us, but it turned out that this wasn't the case.

When we looked in the direction of that voice, we found that it was a group of men who had surrounded one of the town's girls.

She wasn't considered beautiful compared to beauties like Rose or Haley, she was just prettier than the other girls.

But for a commoner, she was considered more beautiful than the rest.

It wasn't strange to see her being hit on like this.

It was just too bad that she wasn't currently being hit on.

It was better to say that she was surrounded rather than being hit on.

Still, we decided to watch instead of intervening for now.

But what surprised us was that most of the other people were doing the same. This was a crowded street, but most of the other people seemed like they recognized these three men and were afraid of them.

The three of them were dressed up like rogues from any RPG, but not the kind that hung around in town in a gang. They were more like the adventurer kind of rogue.

The three of them surrounded this pretty woman and the leader of the group said, "How about coming with us for a drink?"

The woman clearly didn't want to, but when she was surrounded like this, it wasn't as if she had a choice.

She could only look around for people that would help her. However, it didn't seem like the people around her even saw her with the way they walked by with turned heads.

She was being surrounded in the middle of the road and they were just walking right by her.

This really seemed like a lack of public security for this town.

Was Viscount Teomold's territory that bad?

Or was there something else going on behind the scene?

Instead, it almost seemed like the people were afraid of looking at the three rogues more than anything else.

The three of them saw that she wasn't willing, but they didn't care at all.

The leader of this group came forward to grab the woman's hand as if he was about to pull her away.

But it was at this time that a group of guards suddenly came over as if they were on patrol.

I let out a secret sigh of relief when I saw these guards, but...

The guards also just walked right past them and didn't try to intervene at all.

When the woman saw them, she also didn't even try to ask for their help. It was as if she already recognized that it would be useless to ask for help from them.

The guards were supposed to represent the safety of a town, but the citizens didn't even look to them for protection...

That meant that there was something fundamentally wrong with this place.

I couldn't keep watching this anymore and was turning to leave.

However, I saw the looks on the faces of the two women with me.

They looked at that woman with concern and sympathy.

That was because they had once been in a similar situation as this woman before.

So they could understand how she was feeling right now.

Seeing this, I gave a sigh before walking forward towards them.

The two of them were surprised by this, but they didn't try to stop me.

I walked right over to the three rogues and said, "Excuse me, I have some business with her, so can you move out of the way?"

As soon as I said this, everyone around us revealed shocked looks.

Even the guards that had almost walked past couldn't help turning to look at me with surprised looks.

This just went to show just how bad this place was.

The three rogues were also surprised, but they looked at me with narrowed eyes before the leader said, "And if we don't?"

I just casually raised my hand and pulled out Durand.

When this cursed sword came out, the three rogues immediately took a step back.

Even if they couldn't sense the energy coming from Durand, it was a naturally terrifying looking sword. So anyone that saw Durand wouldn't be able to stop themselves from taking a step back.

But even then, the guards still didn't act.

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

By guards, I meant the secret guards that Viscount Teomold had sent to watch over me.

It seemed like they were hesitating over something.

The rogue leader could see that the situation was bad, so he said, "We're not looking for trouble here. Just..."

Before he could finish, I had already raised Durand above me, as if I was going to swing it down.

At this, the rogues had no choice but to pull out their weapons as well.

Once things escalated this far, the guards had no choice but to act.

Before anyone could do anything, there were guards that suddenly appeared around the rogue with swords pointed at them.

The rogues were completely caught off guard and didn't understand what was happening.

But when the guard patrol saw this, they immediately rushed over as well with their weapons drawn.

Other people might not recognize these guards that appeared, but it was impossible for them not to recognize them.

They all worked for Viscount Teomold, so they immediately recognized each other.

They knew that these were the elite guards under Viscount Teomold, the strongest guards that this town had. Yet for them to act in a place like this, it was clear that something big was happening.

When the rogues were surrounded by the guards like this, they didn't seem to panic.

The rogue leader looked at the leader of the guard squad as if he was asking what was happening and the leader of the guard squad just gave him a look like he was saying that he didn't know.

I just ignored them since I knew that it was impossible for me to do anything about this.

I put away Durand and walked over to the woman before saying, "Go, before anyone can react to what's happening."

I didn't try to take her away, I just let her run off on her own since I knew that taking her away would just cause even more trouble for her.

She looked at me with a grateful look and then ran off into the crowd before disappearing.

Then I looked back at the guards that surrounded the rogues and said, "Well? Take them away."

The guards were surprised to hear this.

The leader of the guard squad looked at the one that he recognized as the leader of these elite guards.

After a moment of hesitation, the leader of these elite guards gave a nod and said, "Take them away."

The leader of the guard squad was surprised, but since the order had been given, he had no other choice.

The rogues looked like they were displeased with this, but they still followed the guards.

But as they walked off, the leader of these rogues turned to look at me with a glare.

Since he glared at me, it seemed like I couldn't let him off or I would just be causing trouble for myself.

Chapter 490 Visiting Nobles (6)

Since we had been exposed, there was no walking around secretly anymore.

We went back to the carriage and drove back to Viscount Teomold's manor.

After arriving, it took no time at all for Viscount Teomold to come find us and we gathered in the same living room as before.

Before we even sat down, Viscount Teomold quickly bowed his head and said, "Count Zwein, I must apologize for what happened in my territory."



I was surprised to see that he would apologize so easily, but then again, this was someone who was shameless and spineless...It shouldn't be strange that he would apologize as soon as he saw me.

In fact, it would be strange if he didn't.

I just gave a nod before asking, "What happened afterwards."

Viscount Teomold couldn't help jolting when he heard this.

He knew that I wasn't accepting his apology yet.

The fact that I was asking about this made it clear that I wanted to see how he would handle this. Only after seeing what he said would there be a chance that I would accept this.

So he took a deep breath and said, "We have already captured the ones that threatened your lordship and will ensure that this never happens again. As for the woman that was bothered, we have already made the proper arrangements for her."

I slightly knitted my brows when I heard this.

After all, not in a single word did I hear his intentions to punish the rogues that had caused this mess.

It was clear that he was planning on letting this matter go, sweeping it under the rug in a manner of speaking.

However, I didn't have the same idea.

I might have agreed if the leader of the rogues hadn't looked at me that way, but since he was hostile towards me, I would be a fool to let him go.

Viscount Teomold saw that I wasn't saying anything, so he slowly and cautiously looked at my face, as if he was trying to gauge my reaction.

But I suddenly said, "What about their punishment?"

He couldn't help being taken aback when he heard this.

It was clear that he never expected me to suddenly ask this.

Slowly, Viscount Teomold said, "Is there a need for a punishment? This was nothing more than a minor incident and I feel like we can probably just drop..."

Before he could finish, I suddenly looked at him with a cold glare that made Viscount Teomold's words peter out.

He just looked back at me with his mouth slightly agape as I said, "So threatening the life of a noble is only a small matter to you?"

Viscount Teomold immediately revealed an ugly expression when he heard this.

He opened and closed his mouth a few times as if he wanted to say something, but it didn't seem like he was able to find the words he wanted to say. In the end, he slowly said, "Your lordship, I don't think...that this was the case."

I gave a snort before saying, "Then I guess that your eyes aren't as good as it seems." Without even giving him time to say anything else, I said, "I expect them to be executed for this crime and nothing less."

Viscount Teomold's chin couldn't help dropping when he heard this.

He looked at me in disbelief, as if he couldn't believe that I would be this forceful regarding this matter.

After a long silence, Viscount Teomold said, "Your lordship, is there really a need for this? These three...are members of the Adventurer Guild. If I were to execute them..."

He didn't try to hide it or beat around the bush this time, he directly stated why he was unwilling to execute them.

But this didn't matter to me at all as I said, "And what does that have to do with me? They threatened my life, so they deserve death. That is that."

Viscount Teomold's expression turned even uglier when he heard this.

After all, he really never expected me to be this forceful.

Seeing that he was hesitating, I said, "If this is your sincerity, then I guess there's no need for us to talk about cooperating."

As soon as my voice fell, I made to stand up and leave.

There had been a shocked look on Viscount Teomold's face, but he didn't have time to be shocked when he saw me leave.

He quickly came forward and said, "Your lordship, there's no need to act this way. I'll make sure that they are punished for their crimes. I'll make sure that they are executed."

I stopped moving and looked right at Viscount Teomold.

When he saw my gaze looking right at him, he couldn't help shaking a bit and turning his gaze away slightly as if he was afraid to match my gaze.

After looking at him like this for a bit, I suddenly said, "I expect them to be executed before I leave in two days. If they aren't, then there's no need to discuss our cooperation anymore."

Viscount Teomold once again looked at me in shock and disbelief, as if he couldn't believe that I would be this decisive with my words.

He opened and closed his mouth several times like he wanted to say something, but he just couldn't say what he wanted to say when he saw the look in my eyes.

The look I gave him was firm and cold, as if I would broker no argument.

The expression on his face changed several times during all of this before he finally said with a defeated look, "I will make sure that it happens."

I suddenly revealed a smile when I heard this and said, "It seems that you do have your sincerity. Then I look forward to working with you."

Viscount Teomold looked like he was exhausted, but he forced a smile out onto his face when he heard this.

In a tired voice he said, "Of course, I look forward to working with you as well, Count Zwein."