

Shota 91

Chapter 91 Merchants (1)

Once we were escorted out of the manor, the guards completely ignored us.

Though they looked like they would stop us if we tried to enter the manor again.

But there was no point in entering the manor again since we had accomplished our goal. Even if it was a bit annoying how the count had treated us, at the very least he had given us permission to do what we wanted to do.

That was enough.

We just wanted to buy some food and supplies without stirring any trouble, so this was for the best. Even if it meant that I was disdained by the count and treated like that, it was all worth it.

But the girls that were with me...weren't as understanding.

After we had moved away from the count's manor, both of the girls started venting about how we had been treated.

"That fat pig is a count? This kingdom really is going to the dump if that kind of person can be a noble." Nicole said in a huffed voice.

"I really can't understand it either. They are supposed to be the ones that protect this kingdom and they're just gorging themselves like that. I really can't help fearing for the people like this." Jessica said in a similar huffed voice.

It had to be noted that even though they were complaining, they were speaking in soft voices. Not to mention, they were currently sitting in the carriage where no one was able to see them.

If they were outside, they definitely wouldn't have dared to say the same thing, even if they had spoken in soft voices.

After all, this was a kingdom where nobles reigned over the commoners and both of them were commoners.

If the count or any other noble heard this, they would have had them executed on the spot.

I was the one difference because I was the one that they were working for and they were speaking up for me.

Still, I knew that it would be dangerous to keep speaking like this, so I raised my hand to stop them before saying, "Alright, alright, let's not get worked up over this. We still have other things to take care of."

Hearing this, the two of them took a deep breath before calming down.

They knew how important this mission was for the town, so they knew that this was no time to play around.

After calming down, Nicole picked up a few pieces of paper that had been in the carriage with them. She had prepared these ahead of time and had been waiting to use them.

She spread them out in front of me and started presenting the information on them to me.

On each of these pieces of papers was a different merchant who was based in this Alandal City. The ones that had been chosen were all those that were considered large merchants in this city, they all ranked within the top companies of the city.

They could have gone to smaller merchants, but it would be riskier going through smaller merchants.

There were many crooks among those smaller merchants who would try to raise the price or provide subpar products for the money that they had been paid.

Of course, it wasn't as if every small merchant was a crook, but they really didn't have the time to sort out the crooks from the real merchants. It was much safer for them to go with one of the larger merchants since they had something to lose if they did something like this.

The larger merchants needed to care about their reputation, so they wouldn't do things like the smaller merchants would.

The problem with the big merchants was their price.

They would be much more expensive than the smaller merchants, but that was the price to pay for premium goods and premium service.

Still, one thing to consider was the reputation of these merchants.

Like with anything, there was a ranking among them depending on how big and successful they were. The ones that were bigger had more resources at their disposal and could provide the goods faster, but they also cost more.

So I had to decide which one it would be best to cooperate with.

After all, even if we did have money, it wouldn't be good to spend it all. There were things that could come up in the future that would require money, so I wanted to save money where I could.

As I listened to Nicole's description of these merchant companies, there were certain things that I was listening for.

For example, while others would care about things like how big the companies were, who their main clients were, and what their main products were, I cared about something else.

I knew that we wouldn't be a large customer, so we would be taken care of by the employees of the company instead of by anyone important.

In that case, I wanted to see how the company treated their employees through salary, benefits, and other treatment.

I knew that a company that took care of its employees would have employees who would be more diligent. They would be the ones that would take good care of us instead of just treating us like any normal customer.

These diligent employees would make sure that we received the best treatment that they could give us.

So I slowly went through the pieces of papers placed in front of me.

But no matter how I looked at it, I wasn't able to find all the information that I wanted from these pieces of paper. After all, there was only so much information that could be glanced from just reports.

Some things needed to be observed to make proper judgement of.

So I made my decision.

"Let's go to this one first." I picked up one of the pieces of papers that had been placed in front of me.

This was the report on the biggest company in Alandal City.

Both Nicole and Jessica were surprised by my sudden action, but since I was the baron, they had to go along with what I wanted.

Chapter 92 Merchants (2)

The carriage quickly moved through the city and it didn't take long for us to arrive at our destination.

But the destination that we arrived at was an alleyway.

When we came out, we also no longer wore the same clothes as before.

We had all changed into much simpler clothes, like what the commoners wore.

Even if one looked at us carefully, they would think that we were no more than normal commoners.

That was just how average we looked.

However, that was what we were aiming for in the first place. Or at least it was what I was aiming for in the first place.

Both Nicole and Jessica had misgivings about this plan for different reasons, but they still followed it since it was an order from me.

After we came out of the carriage wearing these normal clothes, we headed to the store of the biggest merchant company that wasn't far away.

After coming out of the alley, it took no effort at all for us to blend into the crowd that was out on the street. In fact, not a single person turned our way as we entered the crowd, almost as if we didn't exist at all.

But that wasn't strange since we had also covered up our faces.

If we didn't, maybe we would have turned a few heads with the beauty of these two girls.

We walked down the streets at a slow pace until we arrived at our destination, the store of the biggest company in the city.

I had us get out and change clothes so that we would blend in as commoners. I wanted to be able to observe the situation at the store in the most natural state and that was impossible as a noble.

Since this was the store of the biggest company, it was also the most popular store in the city. There were plenty of people that were here and it was so crowded that we had to line up for our turn to enter.

But the lines moved quickly and it didn't take long before we were able to get in.

While we were waiting, I had some time to have a proper talk with both of the girls.

Since we had to act like commoners, the barrier that had been between us was taken down and they were able to talk freely with me.

I was able to learn more about them and where they had come from.

Nicole came from a commoner family in the town, but since her parents owned an inn, they were considered better off than most people. With the extra income that they had, they had been able to send her to private tutoring, which was why she knew more than the average commoner and how she had gotten this position.

Jessica was also a commoner, but she had shown her talent for the sword at an early age and had been recruited as a soldier. With her talent, it didn't take long before she caught Cecilia's eyes and was taken on as her protegee.

One thing to note in this world was that there was no gender discrimination.

Anyone was free to do any jobs, even physically demanding jobs like becoming a knight.

It was funny how this simple design of the game world had become something that was so hard to be accomplished in the real world. At the same time, it made me think of all the different things from the game that had become real in this new world of mine.

When we walked into the store, there was no one there to greet us.

This store was like a marketplace instead of a normal store. There were many different counters set up with different products that were being sold.

Each one was manned by a different employee and they interacted with each of the customers that came on their own.

However, there was a manager that was walking in between the various counters, keeping an eye on things.

Currently, the manager was just sitting there on the side with a bored look on his face. It was as if he was about to fall asleep.

We followed the flow of customers and went from one counter to the next, looking at all the various items that were on sale. There were many different items, but other than the most simple ones, I didn't know anything about them.

But judging by the looks on the faces of Nicole and Jessica, I could tell that these things were not ordinary items.

It could even be said that they were extraordinary items based on how excited they were.

There was no need to doubt the professionalism of this store since they were able to provide this kind of goods.

Now the only thing left to confirm was...

As if on cue, there was a loud voice that rang out that said, "What kind of joke is this?"

As soon as this voice rang out, everyone turned to look in the direction that it came from.

There was a buff and large man who was currently leaning in over a counter, glaring at the woman who was behind it. One of his hands was pressing down on the counter as if he was trying to put pressure on her.

After he shouted this out, the woman behind the counter said, "Sir, that is the market price for an item of this quality. Moreover, you won't find another store that will have this item in stock right now."

The large man gave a nod before saying, "That is indeed true." Then after a pause he said, "Only if it was the real item."

The woman revealed a surprised look before looking down at the item on the table. Then she looked back up and said, "This is indeed the real item. Sir, if you plan on slandering our..."

Before she could finish though, the manager came over. The manager raised a hand to cut her off before saying, "Let me take a look."

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The woman had an unwilling look on her face when she heard this.

She had heard the rumours about this manager and had worked with him before after all.

But since they were in public and he was the manager on duty, she had no choice but to follow his orders.

She handed the item over and the manager took it in one hand. The manager raised the item up in front of his eyes and carefully looked at it without saying a thing.

After a long period of silence, the manager suddenly put the item down and then he turned...to look right at the woman behind the counter.

He narrowed his eyes and said, "This is indeed a fake item. What did you do with the real item?"

As soon as he said this, the large man revealed a smile, the crowd revealed surprise expressions, and the woman revealed a shocked look.

The woman opened her mouth and stammered, "I, I, I..." But in the end, she wasn't able to form a single complete sentence.

The manager gave a cold snort before ignoring the woman and saying to the large man, "This customer, I apologize for the inconvenience that you've suffered today. I hope that this mistake from one single employee will not ruin your impression of our business."

After saying this, he turned back to the woman and said, "You will return the real item and you will be punished for this mistake."

Before that woman could say a thing, the guards that had come over already moved to her side. The manager gave a nod to the guards and they took her away.

But at the same time, the guards also moved over to where the large man was.

The large man saw this and said, "What is this? What are you doing?"

The manager said with a smile, "I'm sorry for doing this, but since you have created a commotion in our store, I have no choice but to ask you to leave for today. You are free to come back another day and we will be happy to do business with you, but you need to leave today."

The large man wanted to break free, but the guards were just too strong for him.

So in the end, he had no choice but to leave the store being escorted by them.

As they were leaving, the manager followed closely behind them as if to make sure that the large man was properly escorted out.

Then once he was gone, the manager came back and gave another bow to everyone before saying, "I'd like to apologize for the commotion and I hope that everyone will forgive us. As an apology, I'd like to offer everyone here a 10% discount on your next purchase."

Hearing this, the crowd's expression relaxed. While no one said a thing in response to this, it was clear by their expression that they were very happy with the settlement that the manager had given them.

It didn't take long before everyone went back to their shopping.

Seeing this, the manager revealed a smile that no one could see through and then went back to where he had been sitting before.

Once he was gone, I couldn't help knitting my brows.

But I didn't let it show on my face for long since we had taken off our hoods when we came into the store. I didn't want anyone to see this, so I quickly changed my expression and revealed a calm look.

However, the two beside me both had excited looks because they had heard what the manager had said.

10% off!

While it was only 10%, for their order, it was not a small amount!

This was definitely better than anything that they would get if they negotiated with any other companies.

So both of them looked at me with excited looks, as if they were telling me that we should buy from this place.

However, I wasn't moved as easily as these two.

I shook my head and then signaled for them to follow me out.

When we finally reached the alley where the carriage was waiting and we got in the carriage, both of them asked, "Why didn't you take advantage of that? It was a full 10% off!"

I shook my head again and said, "We can buy from any place other than that place."

Both of them revealed confused looks at first, but it was Nicole who reacted first by saying, "I know that you feel bad about what happened, but we can't just not take advantage of this because of emotions. It was the clerk's fault in the first place, so we shouldn't not take advantage of this situation." After a pause, she added, "It was a good thing that I told the guards that we would be back as we left so they will remember to give us a 10% discount if we buy from them."

But I still shook my head before saying, "It wasn't the clerk's fault."

Nicole looked at me with a confused look before saying, "My lord, I know that..."

I raised my hand to cut her off before saying, "It was all an act put on by the manager."

"Huh?" Both of the girls replied with this confused expression.

I slowly explained, "The thug that accused the clerk was someone that was hired by the manager. When he was being dragged out by the guards, the manager slipped something into the thug's pockets which should be his payment. At the same time, the manager took the "fake" product for himself."

"Huh?" Both of the girls said this once again after hearing this.

But then Nicole couldn't help asking, "But that would mean a loss for the store though, so why would he do that? It would just get him in trouble."

I revealed a faint smile as I said, "That's because it would raise his reputation as the one who easily solved this problem. Even if the store suffers a loss, the reputation that he gains from it is more than enough to balance it out."

Chapter 94 Merchants (4)

Both of the girls once again revealed confused looks when they heard this.

But I wasn't in the mood to explain it to them, so I said, "In short, all you need to know is that this place has a corrupt manager."

Both of them still had looks of doubts, but they nodded in response to this.

I didn't think too much about it either, but Nicole still didn't give up as she said, "Even if it is one corrupt manager, that doesn't mean that we can't take advantage of this. It's a large discount that we shouldn't give up. They are a large company, they won't do anything that will ruin their reputation."

I once again shook my head after hearing this and said, "Let me tell you an idiom from my hometown. When you see one cockroach, you can be sure that there are thirty more hiding away."

Both of them once again revealed confused looks. They didn't seem to understand where I was going with this idiom.

I couldn't help revealing a smile when I saw the cute way that the two of them looked at me with confused looks before saying, "It means that if there's one bad apple, you can be sure that there are more in the bunch. If someone as high as the manager of this main store is corrupt, then you can be sure that there are other corrupt people in this company."

Seeing that Nicole was about to say something else, I cut her off and said, "Even if we are lucky enough to get someone who will act properly, there's plenty of corruption in this company. There's still the chance that we will be affected by this and we can't afford any delays right now."

The looks on their faces made it clear that they weren't fully convinced by what I said. They understood where I was coming from, but they still thought that it was worth taking this risk.

But I was the baron and since I had made my decision, there wasn't anything that they could do about it.

I also knew where they were coming from, but I had my experience with this kind of thing in my previous world.

So we moved on to the next destination.

Once again, we stopped in another alley.

When we came out of the alley, we blended into the crowd and made our way over to a building.

This building wasn't as big as the one that we were in before, but it certainly wasn't a small building either. This building was the storefront of the second largest company in the city.

It wasn't as crowded as the largest company and the layout was different.

One could really see the difference between the top and the second best company by the products that they offered.

While they still had plenty of products that were considered rare, they weren't as rare as the ones that were at the biggest company.

At the same time, they didn't have the same variety of goods as the biggest company, so they didn't have as many counters as they did.

With less counters though, it did give a sort of more intimate feel to this store.

But I was still able to find problems with this place quite quickly.

The problem with this place was the attitude that the staff had.

Even though they weren't the biggest company, they had an attitude like they were the biggest company. They didn't treat the customers with respect and when customers complained, they didn't take the complaints seriously.

It was clear that this place had the opposite problem of the biggest company.

Instead of the ones at the top being rampant, it was the ones at the bottom that were rampant.

If it wasn't for the resources that they had as the second largest company, it was very likely that their entire operation would have collapsed. They didn't have anything to fall back on other than the resources that they had already accumulated in previous generations.

In fact, from what I could hear from the mutters of the customers, I understood that this place wasn't always like this.

It had only started going downhill like this after the new owner took over.

After the previous owner, the father of the new owner died and the new owner took over, everything had changed.

There were many of the old staff that were replaced with these new staff members who were apparently friends of the new owner. But in reality, these were thugs that had been hired by the new owner since they were friends.

This place was being run by very under qualified staff.

This time, I didn't even need to say anything. Both Nicole and Jessica were displeased with the attitude that these staff members had and decided against doing business here.

That was fine with me since I had already made up my mind to leave.

But as we were leaving, I couldn't help feeling anxious.

We had gone to both the biggest and the second biggest companies and found problems with them. While there were still other big companies that we could cooperate with, there were only so many of them in this city.

With the precedent that these two have set, it was likely that the rest of the companies would also have problems like this.

But that couldn't be blamed on anyone since large organizations like this would always have oversight...

The problem was that if they were all like this, then I would have no choice but to choose from one that had a problem. If I had to choose from one that had a problem, it was very likely that we would face a delay when it came to the delivery of the food and supplies.

Even a short delay could mean the deaths of people.

This was not something that could be taken lightly and that was why I was worried.

But in the end, I shook these thoughts out of mind and decided to deal with them when they came.

For now, I would have hope that the other companies were better.

Chapter 95 Merchants (5)

The next store that we arrived at was the one owned by the third largest company.

This store was much smaller compared to the two larger companies.

However, that was because this third largest company wasn't based in this city in the first place.

This third largest company was just a branch of a larger company that did business all over the kingdom. Just the branch company of this larger company was already big enough to be known as the third largest company in the kingdom.

That just went to show how powerful the main company was.

However, this was also the reason why I had the most doubts about this company.

Since it was just a branch company, there were many different problems that this place could have.

It could be run by someone who only cared about making as much profit as possible to impress the main company, it could be run by people who didn't care about the customers since they thought it was beneath them, or there could be all kinds of different problems with this store.

That was why I was the most worried about this place and had already basically written it off from the candidates that we could cooperate with.

This was also the reason why I was very surprised when I walked into the store.

This store was completely different from what I had imagined.

Instead of looking like the other two stores, this place was much more simple.

In fact, it almost looked like a general store instead of a large business store.

When we came in, I saw that there weren't many people here in the first place. There were only a few customers that were wandering around the store and beside each of those customers, there was a store clerk that was helping them.

In fact, as we came in, there was a store clerk that came over with a smile on his face.

As soon as he came over, he said, "Welcome to our store, is there anything that I can help you with?"

I just looked at him without saying a thing and as I was looking at him, I didn't see a single trace of impatience. This was a sign that he had been trained well and was very skilled in dealing with customers.

I couldn't help feeling more and more curious about this place after seeing this.

I had wanted to quickly go through this place and leave, but now I wanted to know more about this place.

But at the same time, I wanted to test this store to see if they had what I wanted from them.

So I muttered in a soft voice, "Nothing much, I'm just looking around."

The way I said it sounded very non-committal, making it clear that I wouldn't be a good customer for them.

After I said this, I carefully observed the reaction of this store clerk.

There was no sign of impatience or annoyance that appeared, the store clerk just maintained the same friendly smile that he had on his face the entire time as he said, "No problem, sir. If there's anything that you need help with, please call at any time."

Then after saying this, he took two steps back so that he was still within earshot while also giving me space to do what I wanted.

I couldn't help feeling impressed when I saw this.

This was a style of service that was popular in my previous world, but it was rare to see in this medieval world. Of the shops that I had gone to before, they would just have a person behind the counter and there wouldn't be any personal service attendants like this.

At the same time, I could tell that the smile on his face wasn't forced since there were no minor adjustments with that smile. It was a sincere smile that came from the bottom of his heart which meant that he was happy with his job here.

The more I saw of this, the more my opinion of this store changed.

After browsing for a bit, I suddenly said, "Excuse me!"

The clerk that had greeted me came over immediately and said, "Sir, is there anything I can help you with?"

The speed at which he came over surprised me, but it also impressed me again.

I had spoken softly before, but this time, I spoke in a sharp and quick tone as I asked, "Do you know the background of this item? Also, can you tell me if it comes in..."

I picked up a random item and quickly made several demands of the clerk. With each of the demands becoming more and more irrational.

I had tested their patience before by pretending to be a window shopper, but now I wanted to see how they would hold up against a bad customer.

At first, the clerk did his best to answer the questions that I had. He did quite well even though I had been asking a bunch of questions that could be considered unreasonable.

But as time passed and he was bombarded with more and more questions, he finally couldn't keep up anymore and started faltering.

However, at no point did he show any trace of losing his temper or becoming impatient. He just calmly tried his best to answer my questions, even though he did start to falter near the end.

It wasn't my intention to make this young man have a mental breakdown and I had already seen enough to make a judgement, so I had planned on stopping the questioning.

But before I could, there was a soothing voice that said, "I'm sorry about this, how about I take over here?"

Hearing this voice, we all turned to look in the direction that it came from.

When I saw the owner of this voice, I couldn't help being surprised.

That was because there was beauty and then there was this level of dazzling that made one stunned.

That was what was placed in front of me.

Chapter 96 Merchants (6)

This was a beautiful face with stunning flowing orange hair, a pair of piercing orange eyes, finely drawn thin orange brows, a perfectly shaped nose, and a pair of soft pink cherry lips, all atop the fine white canvas that was her face.

And then there was her figure.

Even though she wore a dress that was somewhat loose so that she could move around easily, there was no hiding her perfect hourglass figure. Her chest wasn't as big as Cecilia, or even Baroness Rose's but her hips were something else.

They were so wide that one would even think that they could crush a man's pelvis under them.

As I stood there with a stunned look on my face, this beautiful orange haired woman walked over to the clerk that had been helping us. She went to his side and after having a few hushed words with him, she turned back to us with a smile and said, "If you still have any questions, you can direct them to me."

The clerk didn't move away, but just stood behind this orange haired woman.

After a moment's pause, I came back from my surprise and said, "Sure, I'd like to ask a few more questions about this item."

Since there was someone new who had come over to help, I wanted to test them as well.

So I started asking all kinds of questions about the same product as before, ones that were even more in depth compared to the ones that I asked previously. They were so in depth that the clerk on the side had a trace of relief in his eyes over the fact that he wasn't the one who had to answer them.

However, none of these questions even fazed the orange haired woman.

She just calmly and casually answered all of the questions that I had.

I didn't know if the answers that she gave me were correct since I wasn't an expert on this topic, but the confident way that she spoke made it feel like she was correct.

Finally, I couldn't think of any more questions to ask about this thing.

So I just said with a smile, "Thank you for your help. You really are a thorough and dutiful employee. I'm surprised that this store was able to hire someone as good as you."

Before the orange haired woman could say anything, the clerk who had been silently listening on the side suddenly came forward to say, "That's because there's no one more skilled than our boss lady, that's why she's our boss."

I couldn't help being surprised when I heard this before turning to look at the orange haired woman with a strange look. I asked in a doubtful voice, "You're the boss of this place?"

The orange haired woman just gave a simple nod in response to this before asking, "Is there something wrong with that?"

I shook my head and said, "No, nothing's wrong at all. I'm just surprised that such a beautiful young lady would be in charge of a company that can be considered the third biggest in this city. You must really be a talented person."

When she heard this compliment, the orange haired woman's expression couldn't help changing. It was an awkward look at first before she revealed an embarrassed look with a blush on her face.

I couldn't help being surprised by just how easily she was flustered by some simple compliments.

She hadn't been fazed at all when I gave her the third degree earlier over the product, but when it came to simple compliments, she had no resistance at all...

But she also quickly recovered as that blush disappeared. She then gave a cough and said, "Thank you for your compliment. Is there anything else that I can help you with today?"

I shook my head when I heard this and said, "Thank you, but we'll need to think over this and come back another day. Thank you for all your help today."

The orange haired woman wasn't bothered by this at all as she said with a friendly smile, "Thank you for coming today and we hope that you will come again soon."

With that, the three of us walked out of the store while being escorted by the two of them.

When we were back at the carriage, I suddenly revealed a smile and said, "It's decided, we're going with this store."

After hearing me say this, both of the girls sitting beside me looked at me with shocked looks. It didn't take long before those looks turned into looks of doubt and confusion.

It was clear that they didn't see the same thing that I did in that store and they didn't support my decision of buying from that store.

But I didn't bother explaining to them why it had to be this place.

After all, they wouldn't understand my point of view in the first place.

I had tried explaining to them twice, but each time, Nicole had gone against my opinion.

Still, I didn't mind that.

Other nobles might not want someone who would go against them this openly, but I actually didn't mind and welcomed it. I didn't want someone who was clearly a yes man and would just tell me what I wanted to hear, I wanted someone who would give me actual advice instead of just trying to please me.

It was clear that Baroness Rose thought the same, which was why Nicole was here in the first place.

She tried to convince me to go to the first two places, but in the end, she had no choice but to accept my decision.

After all, I was the baron and her employer. As her superior, my decision was the final say and all she could do was offer advice.

I was very happy about being able to find a supplier this quickly, even though we hadn't made a deal with them yet. So to celebrate, I suggested that we go out and have a nice meal together.

Both of them were surprised by this offer, but they also happily accepted since this would be their opportunity to make a move...

I just chose a random restaurant that we had passed earlier that had seemed decent, but I was surprised to find that both of them were very happy about going there. I learned from Nicole that this place was a store that only rich people would go to since the dishes were quite expensive.

I didn't know about that earlier, but since I had already said that we would be going there, it wasn't as if I could back out now.

At least I had some money since I was the baron, so it shouldn't be a problem for me to pay.

Seeing their happy smiles, I also decided that it would be considered a treat.

Every now and then, you needed to provide some kind of reward to your employees for their hard work, so it didn't matter to splurge a bit.

It wasn't because I was looking forward to eating the fancy food as Nicole had described it.

But as we passed by the restaurant, there was a voice that suddenly caught our attention.

"You stupid woman, can you be any more useless?"

Chapter 97 Domestic Issue

As I followed the source of that voice, I couldn't help being surprised to find that there was a familiar face there.

The familiar face wasn't the one who was yelling, but rather they were the one that was being yelled at.

This familiar face was the beautiful orange haired woman from the store this afternoon.

The one that was currently yelling at her, calling her useless and trash was a fine dressed man. He was standing there in the middle of the street, calling her out in front of everyone.

But because of his fine clothes and the manner that he carried himself, people didn't dare come forward to help the orange haired woman.

They were all afraid of offending someone that they shouldn't offend, so they just lowered their heads and walked by.

However, one look at the expression on the faces of these people, one could tell that they clearly didn't approve of this fine dressed man's actions. If they weren't afraid of the consequences, there would have been many people who would have come forward to defend the orange haired woman.

But in the end, everyone had to take care of themselves in this city and couldn't put themselves in danger just for someone they didn't know.

That was the same for me...

In the end, I tried to ignore them and continue on to the restaurant that we were planning to go to.

However, I wasn't able to ignore them when I saw something happening.

The fine dressed man suddenly stopped yelling at the orange haired woman and suddenly raised his hand. With the way his palm was flat and how he raised it high above him, aimed at the orange haired woman, one could see that he was about to slap her.

When I saw this, I didn't know what took over, but I could no longer just sit back and watch all of this happen.

Before I knew it, I had already opened the door and was dashing over in that direction.

I was able to make it just in time to grab the man's hand as it was about to fall, stopping him from landing that slap.

When this happened, everyone couldn't help but gasp.

When the crowd had seen that the man was about to slap the orange haired woman, they suddenly stopped walking past and ignoring it. They had all turned to watch the man as he prepared to slap her.

There were some that were tempted to make a move, but they remained still in the end.

So they were all surprised to see that someone had actually acted.

Though most of them also revealed looks of relief when they saw that there was someone who had stopped the fine dressed man from hitting the beautiful orange haired woman.

The finely dressed man was also caught off guard by someone suddenly grabbing his hand like this, but then he turned to glare at me.

As he glared at me, it was as if he forgot about the orange haired woman who he had been tormenting earlier and he focused all of his rage on me. As he glared at me, he said in a threatening low voice, "Who do you think you are?"

However, I wasn't scared at all when I saw him acting this way.

In fact, I had been able to get a closer look at this finely dressed man when I came closer to him.

Seeing him threaten me like this, it was almost like seeing a harmless puppy threaten me. Though compared to this man, a puppy would have been much cuter since this man was quite ugly.

This was a man who clearly had never faced a real life and death situation based on the aura he released as he threatened me.

For someone like me who had faced a Goblin General head on, this man just didn't pose any threat to me at all.

I just calmly narrowed my eyes to look back at him before saying, "What do you think you're doing?"

The finely dressed man couldn't help being taken aback again when he was faced with my aura. It was clear by the look on his face that he wasn't expecting this kind of pressure from me.

I had to admit that I did have a young and cute face, so it wasn't strange for people to assume that I wasn't as threatening as I could be. But that didn't mean that people should underestimate me.

After a moment's pause, the finely dressed man finally composed himself.

He gave a cough to calm himself down before saying, "Do you know who I am?"

I couldn't help revealing a smile when I saw him change tactics.

When he found that he couldn't threaten me with his aura, he chose to threaten me with his status.

But I easily dismantled that in one move.

"Does that matter?" I said in a calm and indifferent voice.

The finely dressed man's face twisted when he heard this. He wanted to shout out his status, but with everyone watching like this, he knew that he would just be embarrassing himself if he did this.

So he couldn't do anything as his rage swallowed him from the inside.

Finally, he completely lost his temper and decided to resort to violence.

This finely dressed man didn't believe that he would lose to a young boy like this in a fight. That was the kind of man he was, the kind that would bully those he thought were weaker than him without any hesitation.

But before he could, Jessica had already come over.

She was dressed up since they were going out to a restaurant, but she didn't forget her job as my bodyguard. So she pulled out a sword that she had brought along with her and stood beside me with it slightly unsheathed.

When the finely dressed man saw this, he couldn't help stalling. Then he quickly pulled his hand back as if he was afraid to keep going...

With none of his options available to him, the man finally chose to use his trump card, "What do you think you're doing? Getting in between the private affairs of husband and wife?"

I couldn't help being surprised when I heard this and I turned back to look at the orange haired woman behind me.

Seeing that I was looking at her for confirmation, the orange haired woman hesitated for a second before giving a nod of affirmation to show that this finely dressed man was indeed her husband.

I couldn't help being surprised even more when I heard this, but then I knitted my brows.

When the finely dressed man saw the orange haired woman nodding to confirm this, he revealed a smile like he was the victor as he said, "Do you see? Now do you understand that you're interfering in matters you shouldn't interfere in?"

I gave a snort when I heard this before saying, "That makes it even worse. What kind of a man would use violence against his own wife? He is the kind of man who isn't a man at all."

The finely dressed man's face twisted when he heard this, but he chose to ignore it as he said in a righteous voice, "This is a matter between husband and wife, you aren't qualified to interfere!"

I gave another snort before saying in a low and threatening voice, "Get out of here before I really lose my temper. Then I'll show you if I can interfere or not."

Chapter 98 What Is This? (1)

The finely dressed man's face twisted again when he heard this, but he also couldn't help feeling a chill run down his spine.

For some reason, he actually felt a trace of fear when he heard this threat from this young boy.

He didn't understand why he would feel fear from this clearly weak threat.

But at the same time, he started feeling shame from feeling fear because of this threat.

He wanted to say something else, but Jessica had already moved forward so that she was in between me and the finely dressed man. She had unsheathed her sword and it was being pointed at the finely dressed man.

So the finely dressed man had no choice but to back down.

He glared at us for a few more seconds before turning to storm off.

As he was leaving, he didn't forget to add, "You thugs won't get away with this! Wait until the count hears about this, then you'll regret it!"

Also before he left, he couldn't help saying to his wife, "You better not come home tonight or you'll really get it."

I knitted my brows when I heard this, but I reached out to stop Jessica from charging at that man. I could see that she was just as angry at that man for what he did to the orange haired woman, but I knew that we shouldn't cause a scene more than what we had already caused because of it.

Creating a commotion was one thing, but murder was on a completely different level. Even if it was assault, it wasn't an offense that was easily handled.

I also was a bit worried that this man had mentioned the count.

If he really was related to the count, then this wouldn't be a simple matter.

But for now, what was more important was making sure that the orange haired woman was alright.

Once I was sure that the finely dressed man was gone, I turned back to the orange haired woman and took off my coat for her. It was currently the middle of fall, so it was quite cold at night.

When she saw me raising the coat towards her, she didn't react at first.

But then she gave me a grateful look as she slowly took the coat and put it on.

The crowd that had gathered was now finally working up the courage to come and help, but I didn't let them. Since they were too scared to help earlier, then those that came now were only helping with ulterior motives.

It was better to ignore people like this.

So I asked the orange haired woman, "Would you like to join us for dinner?"

The orange haired woman looked at me with a confused look at first, but then seeing the sincere look that I had, she gave a nod in response.

So the four of us stood up and headed into my carriage.

Of course, since she was still shaken up about what had happened, I went out again and sat down beside the driver.

The driver looked at me with a smile and I just ignored it since I knew what he was implying.

We were already close to the restaurant, so it didn't take long for us to get there.

Since this was a place that was quite expensive, there were plenty of open seats since there were few people who could afford to dine here in the first place.

When the orange haired woman saw where we were, she couldn't help stopping and saying, "I should go. There's no need for you to treat me to a meal here."

I shook my head with a bitter smile before saying, "I was already planning on having a meal here, so it doesn't matter if there's one more person. Plus, I've already said that I would treat you, so please don't make me a liar."

Hearing this, the orange haired woman still said, "No, I was the one that caused trouble for you, so you don't need to treat me to anything. I should go..."

She turned to leave, but before she could, I grabbed her hand.

She looked at me with a look of surprise before a look of suspicion appeared in her eyes.

Seeing this, I said, "I don't want to do anything to you. I just wanted to ask if you even have a place to go."

After all, the other side was her husband, so it wasn't safe for her to go home. Not to mention, I didn't feel good about sending a woman out into the night alone like this.

The orange haired woman was taken aback by these words before slowly shaking her head.

She hadn't thought about what she would do next, she had just thought about getting out of this current situation.

I raised my hands to show that I meant no harm and tried to sound as innocent as I could as I said, "I really mean you no harm. I just want to make sure that you're safe. Is that alright?"

Both Nicole and Jessica were a bit annoyed that this orange haired woman was acting this way, but they still played along and showed that they meant no harm.

The orange haired woman looked at me for a bit before giving a sigh and saying, "I'm sorry for being so rude. It was..."

As her voice trailed off, her eyes also went distant.

I raised my hand to stop her as I said, "There's no need to explain, I understand."

When the orange haired woman heard this, she couldn't help revealing a bit of a blush. That was because...he looked quite handsome like this...

But she gave a cough to calm herself down before saying, "Thank you."

I gave a nod in response for gesturing with one hand and saying, "Shall we?"

The orange haired woman gave a nod and then we went into the restaurant together.

What I didn't know was how much this encounter would affect me in the future.

Chapter 99 What Is This? (2)

When we came in, the waiter couldn't help looking at us with a strange look.

That was because while the three of us were dressed well, the orange haired woman...was wearing quite simple clothes.

She was the only one that seemed out of place here.

But before the waiter could do anything, Nicole had already gone over to show him something.

After they were done, the waiter came forward with a friendly smile and said, "Welcome, may I show you to your table?"

I gave a nod in response to this.

As we were being shown to our table, the orange haired woman couldn't help looking at me with a strange look.

Now that she had calmed down, she was thinking much more clearly.

She knew that her clothes weren't suited for this place, so she had expected the waiter to say something. But when the waiter didn't say a thing and just led them to a table with a smile, she couldn't help feeling curious.

She was curious as to what the status of this handsome young man who had saved her was.

After all, it shouldn't be normal for the waiter of this well known fancy restaurant to treat him like this.

When we arrived at our table, the waiter brought out menus for us.

As we were looking through these menus, I couldn't help thinking to myself, "This is very...cheap!"

That was right, this was considered cheap for me.

With the amount of money that Baroness Rose had given me for my expenses, it barely made a dent if I ate at this place. In fact, I could come here for every meal and it still wouldn't make a dent.

So that was why I thought that it was very cheap.

But based on the looks that the girls had on their faces, it was clear that they didn't think the same thing as me. They clearly thought that this place was very expensive.

This was made explicitly clear by the pained looks Nicole and Jessica had on their faces.

It was almost as if their flesh was being torn from their bones when they saw these prices.

Even the orange haired woman's face was filled with pain right now.

She was the owner of the third largest company in the city, which was also the branch of a much larger company that had influence all over the kingdom.

She should be the one that was even richer than me.

Still, since I was the host, I did have responsibilities.

I said with what I considered a generous look, "You can just order whatever you want, it's all on me today."

But to my surprise, the three girls revealed awkward looks when they heard this.

In the end, Nicole and Jessica both only ordered a dish each while the orange haired woman didn't order a single thing.

I couldn't help revealing a bitter smile when I saw all of this.

So I took it upon myself to order for everyone.

I waved the waiter over and called out a few dishes that had caught my eyes. The food of a fantasy world really was different from the dishes that I was used to, so I might have gone a bit overboard with how many I ordered.

Still, I didn't mind since it meant that I could try out all of these delicious dishes.

They had to be delicious if they were this expensive and so many people were still eating it, right?

The waiter had a delighted look on his face, but the girls all revealed looks of disaster.

Nicole came over and said, "My lord, there's no need to order this much. We're just having a simple meal, we can just order a few dishes." Then she moved closer and said in a hushed voice, "We still have to buy food and supplies for the territory, so we can't just waste our money like this."

Jessica didn't say anything, but the look on her face seemed like she agreed with her.

But I just casually took out a small bag and placed it in front of them before saying, "It's fine, I'll pay for it out of my own pockets."

Nicole couldn't help curiously opening the bag and when the glimmer of gold came out of the bag, she was taken aback.

She looked at me with a surprised look before suddenly giving a sigh as she remembered who she was talking to.

Because I had ordered her to talk informally with me, she had gotten used to it and had forgotten that I was a baron. Nobles were different from commoners and that included the amount of wealth that they had.

So she just simply gave a nod and returned the bag to me.

This feeling of showing off with money like this was definitely a good feeling.

To the side, the orange haired woman just looked at me with an inquisitive look, as if she was trying to figure out just who I am.

After we had ordered the dishes, we settled down at the table waiting for them to come.

During this time, since there was nothing else to do, I turned to say to the orange haired woman, "You seem like someone with a story and we have some time now. If you don't mind, can you share that story with us?"

Both Nicole and Jessica looked at the orange haired woman with interested looks when they heard this.

They had seen and heard everything that had happened, so they were also curious why this woman let herself be treated like this by that man. They were also curious about why she bothered to stay with that man even though it was clear that he was an abusive b*stard.

The orange haired woman gave a long sigh when she heard this, but then she said, "It's a long story, are you fine with listening to it?"

I just said with a smile, "We have time."

Then the orange haired woman gave a nod before saying, "We're going to need some wine."

Chapter 100 What Is This? (3)

This restaurant was famous and expensive for a reason.

Not only was the food well known, there was also a fine selection of wines and there was excellent service.

It didn't take long before all of us had a glass of wine in front of us.

I wasn't really a wine guy, so I didn't know if this was good wine or not. However, the orange haired girl took one sniff before her eyes lit up and she started giving a detailed description of the wine.

I heard terms like "best pick of the crop, finely filtered with , and stirred with only the purest oak spoon", but I really couldn't understand most of what she said in the end.

This orange haired girl didn't keep talking about it for long as she realized that she was rambling.

After she caught herself, she couldn't help revealing an awkward smile before saying, "It's just one of the hazards of the occupation. When you get caught up in a good product, you just can't help yourself."

I nodded with a smile on my face.

I didn't dislike people like this.

These were people that worked hard to gain the knowledge that they had and they did it all to succeed. These were people that should be admired for their dedication and effort, so I would never look down on them.

While I didn't really know what good wine was based on taste, I could at least tell what was good wine with my palate.

When the wine touched my tongue, there was a nice fruity flavour that filled my mouth. It wasn't very strong, but it wasn't weak either.

It was a bold grape taste with a bit of sweetness and a bit of sourness, that also left a hint of bitterness in the end.

This was a nice bottle of wine, or at least in my mind.

But looking at the orange haired woman go, I could tell that she liked the wine quite a bit. Though I couldn't help being worried since she was just drinking wine without eating anything.

So I had to speak up in the end, which also alerted Nicole and Jessica who were trying to keep up with the orange haired woman.

All three of them calmed down and we were back in the mood to speak.

Before the orange haired woman told her story, I suddenly remembered something. I said with what I considered an elegant smile, "Right, I forgot to ask. My name is Zwein, what is your name?"

The orange haired woman also realized that she had also forgotten to introduce herself, so she said, "My name is Haley Montsoir."

All three of us couldn't help being surprised when we heard this.

After all, last names were very rare.

Those that had last names were normally those that had more...noble backgrounds. These were families that had lasted for a long time, which had given them the right to solidify these last names.

Seeing the looks that we had on our face, she revealed a bitter smile and said, "My family isn't as special as you think. We're just a family of merchants."

From this, I could hear that there was some kind of conflict between her and her family, but it wasn't time to ask about that now.

First, let's talk about her scumbag husband.

After calming down, Haley started telling them her story.

The story was one that was filled with quite the twist and turns, but the ending was actually quite predictable.

Plain and simple, she had married her current husband because of a debt that her father owed the father of her husband. At the same time, she had only married him since it was the only way that she was able to get away from her family to create this business of hers.

The store that was the third largest company in this city was completely owned by her.

It was financed through funds given to her by her family, but she had been the one that had built it up with her own hard work.

As for how she had obtained the funds, it was by marrying the son of the man that her father owed a debt to.

Then because her business was created with funds from her family, they became part owners of the business that was equal to her part. Adding in the part that she had to give her husband, that gave them full control of the business.

If they wanted to sell the business, she wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

So she had no choice but to stay with her husband and suffer through everything that he threw at her.

There were also other reasons why she stayed with him, but the main one was because of the threat of her family.

The moment that she tried to break up with him, her father had sent the threat of selling her business without hesitation. It was almost as if he wasn't her father, but rather the father of her husband.

But she knew the circumstances of the debt, so she didn't blame her father since she knew what kind of person her father was.

She knew that he was the kind that would always repay those that had shown him favour in the past, just like how her husband's father had done.

So she was in a situation where she was stuck.

After she finished telling her story, Haley said, "I can't do anything about it, I have to just suck it up and let him do whatever he wants."

Then as if remembering something, she suddenly asked me, "Are you alright though? Even if my husband doesn't have any abilities, he does have the connection that my father gave him."

She was worried that her husband would take revenge on her saviour, so if there was anything that she could do to help...

But I wasn't worried about that anymore since I had just heard about the background of her husband.

There really wasn't anything that could make me scared.

So I decided to reveal my identity.

"I don't look like it, but I'm actually a baron." I said with a confident smile.