

SPELLCRAFT 28

Chapter 28

Strange faces, endless chatter, stifling air... such were the things that permeated the environment I found myself in.

To say I was shocked would be an understatement.

"T-this is..." I mumbled, not knowing how to address what was meant to be my party.

"Do you like it, Jared? I made sure to invite everyone from our territory, at least, those who could make it." Anabelle, my diabolical mother asked me.

I wanted to give her a crude face and question her decision, but upon meeting her excited gaze and innocent smile, I decided against it.

'This woman...' I gritted my teeth powerlessly.

"Of course, mom. I love it." A kind, cheerful voice leaked out of my lips.

Embarrassing as it was, I had to play the part. We had guests, after all.

The guests we had numbered hundreds, but our large hall was more than enough to accommodate them. It took the shape of a ball, or a standing party, where no chairs were in sight. Light meals such as cakes, sweets, and cookies were served.

The sweet scent of their milky flavor wafted in the air, coupled with the strong and bold whiff of wine. Yes, alcohol! Of course, there was no way I would be given any since I was a child, but the temptation remained in my eyes.

'How long has it been?!' I licked my lips as I enviously eyed the geezers who fully enjoyed themselves in the sweet goodness of booze.

I loved Magic, but... wine was also very close to my heart.

"Come now, Jared. We need to greet the guests." My mom dragged me along with her, moving toward some exquisitely dressed personalities.

'Haa, here we go!'

Moving from one place to another, without rest, my mother and I showed our courtesy to the very important guests at the event. Nobles from other families, important stakeholders in my family's business, merchants, and several others.

It was mentally exhausting to do the same thing over and over again.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Sir. Whatever your name is. I'm overjoyed that you could make it to this event."

My facial muscles were already tired of the false smiles and repetitive greetings I gave strangers whom I hardly knew.

“Are you tired, Jared?” My mother suddenly asked, snapping me out of my exhausted daze.

Of course, I couldn’t show weakness in front of her, so I stiffened up and gave her a warm smile, hurting my face even more.

“No way, I’m fine mo-”

“You don’t have to pretend when it’s just you and me, Jared.” She interrupted my words.

Her response stunned me.

“Want me to tell you a secret?” Anabelle asked.

Still stunned by her response, but curious about what she wanted to say, I nodded. She smiled, beckoning me to draw closer to her as she brought her face to my ears.

“To be honest, I’m tired too!”

Quickly retracting her face from my ears, I saw her wince and yawn, stretching her hands playfully. This made me burst into little snickers, turning into laughter in no time.

“Really? Mother too?”

“Yep, I’d rather be in my room reading or cuddling you in my arms.” She pinched my cheeks as she smiled.

“If this is so exhausting why do we do it, then?” I asked, still chuckling while rubbing my reddened cheeks.

“It’s unavoidable. Noble’s etiquette and whatnot. But if you ask me, it’s just an excuse for false interactions and building connections. I don’t even know half of the people here.” Anabelle told me.

“Ah, for real?!”

I was surprised by this. I was no noble in my past life, so I didn’t know anything much about their internal affairs. I had many noble acquaintances, but it wasn’t like I was really interested in politics or the kind of life they lived.

“Yeah. It’s all pretense, you know? Many of them are here to size us up, spy on us, or even try to curry our favor and build connections. It’s all hypocrisy.” She said, sighing.

‘Welp, this is news to me.’

However, for this custom to have been passed down for generations, even back when I was still alive, it meant that no Noble could avoid the shackles of pretense.

“Do you know why I’m telling you all this?” Anabelle asked with a warm smile.

If I had to guess, it would have had to do with the fact that I was a growing noble, and was soon going to go through something so exhausting in the future.

“It’s so that you won’t imitate your father and leave your wife all alone to handle things like this when you grow up!”

'E-eh...?'

I certainly wasn't expecting that.

Looking at Anabelle's face, she appeared to be pouting. Did she miss my father? Perhaps she was upset at him. No matter what case it happened to be, it was still so very cute.

"Ah, I need some air. I think I'll be off to take a break somewhere. You should do the same. Let's meet up here in five minutes to resume the greetings." Anabelle said, quickly rushing away.

I knew she was tired, but knowing how old and mature Anabelle was, she could put up with something like this for the entire night.

'She's most likely doing this in consideration of me. How sweet of her...' I mused.

I turned to the several high-standing tables and saw a couple of glasses of wine seated on them.

A grin formed on my face as I swiftly blended with my surroundings and stole myself a glass.

"Perfect!" I whispered.

With no adult supervision, I was free to do what I wanted for a while.

'It's time to leave this place for a while...'