Limits 135

Chapter 135

Jack was surprised to find out that this man, who looked so much like he was from an earlier generation, was actually Bella's father.

Forcing out a laugh, Jack quickly tried to save himself. "Of course! I knew that. Mr. Cole, you look so young! And your hairstyle is so unique and stylish. Clearly, you're a man of great taste and experience."

He cleared his throat, then added, "It's nice to meet you, Mr. Cole."

Phillip was a big-hearted man with a hearty laugh. He didn't seem to mind Jack's slip-up and gestured for him to sit down.

As they settled in, the conversation flowed effortlessly. From cigars to painting, from hobbies to life goals-the more they talked, the more comfortable they became.

At one point, Phillip pulled out a cigarette and asked, "Do you smoke?"

Jack wasn't a smoker, but seeing the rough calluses on Phillip's fingers-clearly, he had years of experience with tobacco-he knew what the right answer was.

"Once in a while," Jack said smoothly.

Phillip nodded approvingly and handed him a cigarette. "Here, try mine."

Jack respectfully took it. "Mr. Cole, I'm sure this is the good stuff."

Across the table, Bella rolled her eyes. She thought Jack was such a bootlicker.

The food arrived, and the conversation only got livelier.

Phillip and Jack went back and forth, toasting drinks, exchanging stories, and bonding over their shared interests.

Jack would raise his glass; Phillip would offer him another cigarette. Phillip would take a sip; Jack would light up another toast.

Before long, they were completely in sync, laughing like old friends.

By the time dinner was halfway through, they were practically brothers, arms slung around each other's shoulders, laughing and enjoying the moment.

As they chatted, the conversation shifted to painting. Phillip suggested he paint something on the spot. With a flourish, he painted a dragon and phoenix, then turned to Jack with a confident grin.

"So, what do you think, Jack? Pretty impressive, right? Doesn't it look so lively?"

Jack and Bella both stared at the paper. Their expressions were complicated, to say the least.

Jack's inner thoughts were screaming. Was that supposed to be a dragon and phoenix?

He had seen better drawing skills from kindergarteners. If Jack had just picked up

a pencil, his drawing would probably have been better than Phillip's.

But Phillip was sitting there with the proudest look on his face, clearly expecting praise.

Jack wiped the sweat off his forehead.

This was going to require serious bootlicking skills.

With a straight face, he lifted his thumb and declared, "Amazing! Truly amazing! The depth, the energy- your painting has a certain soul to it. Honestly, only some world-class artist would be able to match your skill!"

Phillip practically glowed at the compliment.

He laughed humbly, though his whole posture screamed smug satisfaction. "Oh, come now! Comparing me to some world-class artist? I wouldn't dare... though. Although they might only be slightly better than me."

Jack fought back a grimace. Phillip had no shame.

Just when he thought he was finally in the clear, Phillip grinned and handed him the brush.

"Alright, Jack. Let's see what you've got! Draw something for me, and I'll personally evaluate it."