

The Mans Decree Chapter 461

Chapter 461 Good Wine

Jared smiled good-naturedly. "This place wouldn't have what I want."

Dog scowled. "What do you mean? This is the biggest restaurant in Avenport! They even have the rarest Sauvignon Blanc if you so desire! What is it that you want?"

"I'm not fond of white wine," Jared said with a contemptuous glance at the wine list. "I only drink Romanée-Conti or nothing at all."

Dog frowned. "What the hell is that?"

In spite of herself, Josephine laughed at Dog's expression. Jared, on the other hand, remained silent with an enigmatic smile as he awaited Dog's response.

Still frowning, Dog turned to the waiter beside him. "What was that wine he mentioned? Do you have any on hand?"

The waiter shook his head. "We don't carry red wine here."

"So it's a bottle of red, is it? What kind of person would drink that kind of swill?" Dog scorned in disdain before turning once more to the waiter. "Get out there and find some. Buy several bottles."

As he spoke, Dog extracted a wad of cash from his wallet and let it fall onto the table with a smack.

The waiter merely stared at the stack and waited expectantly.

"Did you not hear me?" Dog fumed. "I told you to get out and buy us some wine!"

"It's not enough, Dog," the waiter whispered.

"How much could a bottle of red cost?" Dog asked scornfully. "Here is another five thousand!"

As he spoke, Dog slammed another wad of cash onto the table.

The waiter remained still as a statue. Dog lost his temper and aimed a vicious kick at the waiter's shins.

"It really isn't enough, Dog!" the waiter whimpered in pain.

"Do you think I was born yesterday?" Dog bellowed as he rose to his feet. "You're going to pocket some for yourself, aren't you?"

"Enough." Jared felt the need to intervene. "This wine isn't available in Avenport. And the waiter's right. A single bottle of Romanée-Conti costs three-hundred thousand."

"What! Three-hundred thousand?" Dog roared, thunderstruck. "You, drinking a bottle of wine that costs that much? With what money? Everybody knows that you just got out of prison. Do you think that renting a Mercedes and hiring an escort makes you look rich? If you weren't Ingrid's cousin, I would have kicked you out of Avenport."

Josephine's expression grew cold at the mention of the word "escort".

"Calm yourself, Jared." Sarah stood up and faced him. "Nobody is making you feel bad about being an ex-convict. We're all family here, there's no need to act tough in front of us. You need to be more realistic and settle down with an honest job instead of boasting about drinking expensive wine. What nonsense are you talking about, anyway? There is no wine in the world worth that much. Don't be ridiculous."

"That's enough, Jared. Your aunt is right," Hannah said sharply at the sight of her sister's displeasure.

"You need to keep an eye on Jared, Hannah," Sarah sighed. "I've helped raise my nephew. I know him and there's nothing he can hide from me. This isn't him. Prison has made him lose his way. Now that he's finally out, I'd say we try to keep him from going back. Since the development of our city is currently booming, the mass demolition on the way would

definitely need good, strong men like him. Talk some sense into Jared. Help him find an honest job to marry a wife and raise a son. It's not too late to lead an honest life."

"We'll talk about it later," Hannah said curtly, getting tired of the conversation. "Everybody knows what they want? Let's summon the waiter."

Not long after that, the table creaked from bearing the combined weight of the dishes and several bottles of white wine. Dog behaved ostentatiously as he waited for the others to raise their glasses to him, pretending to be pleasantly surprised each time he received a toast.

"By the way, Dog," said Sarah suddenly. "Who is this Mr. Charleston?"

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Chapter 462 Rental Girlfriend

"Oh, he's a big shot," described Dog airily. "Nothing happens in Avenport without his approval. Even property valuations depend on his signature. He is the one who has been providing me with contracts."

Sarah was still concerned about Jared's employment status. "He sounds like an important man. Can you see if Mr. Charleston can find Jared a job? He's going to be your cousin-in-law, after all."

Dog gazed scathingly at Jared. "I would refuse to lift a finger to help him for his attitude tonight. For Ingrid's sake, I will put in a word with Mr. Charleston."

Turning away with disgust, he picked up his glass of wine. "I'm going over to toast to Mr. Charleston's good health. Help yourselves!"

Jared's family and Ingrid's family were the only ones remaining in the suite after Dog disappeared.

"I mean well despite the harshness of my words, Jared," Sarah continued, sighing softly as she did so. "As your parents are no longer employed, you are now the man of the house. If you're not going to buck up, who will your parents rely upon? What's the point of coming back with a rental car and girlfriend? Are appearances really that important to you? Everybody in the village knows that you're fresh out of prison. They'll disrespect you even more when they see through your little charade!"

"Aunt Sarah, I-"

"What the hell are you talking about, Mom?" Ingrid snapped indignantly. "Josephine is Jared's girlfriend. A rental! Listen to yourself. You've been buying into Dog's rubbish."

I am certain that Josephine is not rented by Jared for appearance's sake. No escort would dress up in luxury brands and gift me a priceless pair of earrings. Dog is the one who is in denial!

"Josephine really is Jared's girlfriend, Sarah," Hannah reminded her sister. "We all know that as a fact."

Surrounded by overwhelming convictions, Sarah became at a loss for words. All she could do was grin sheepishly at Josephine who returned the smile without a trace of offense taken. Jared's aunt only wants the best for him. I'm sure she didn't mean to direct her malice at me.

"I hope that landing such an excellent girl will encourage you to work harder, Jared," began Sarah again, changing tact at light speed. "I'd heard from your mother that you've remained unemployed this entire time. If Doug manages to secure a job for you, promise me that you'll give it your best shot. I know this isn't Horington, but you'll still have an opportunity to rise. This town isn't going to stop expanding in a hurry."

"I am well aware of all that, Aunt Sarah," said Jared gently. "Now's not the time to be discussing me. There's something about Ingrid you should know."

It's time to tell them.

"What about Ingrid?" Sarah leaned in curiously.

"Stop, Jared!" Ingrid turned pale with fright.

Jared ignored her. Instead, he looked straight into his aunt's eyes. "Ingrid is only nineteen, Aunt Sarah. She's too young to marry."

"Don't even remind me about it," Sarah sighed. "The silly girl is the one who wanted to drop out. What else is she good for aside from marriage? The fate of women is the same everywhere. Village or city, it makes no difference! Get an education, or get married."

"That's not true." Jared took a deep breath. "Dog had been causing trouble at the school and forced the principal to expel Ingrid. What's more, he used you, Ingrid's parents, as leverage to force her to agree to marry him. Shouldn't you already know by now the type of person he is?"

All of them were taken aback by Jared's shocking proclamation. Even his own stared at Ingrid, horror-struck.

"Is that true, Ingrid?" Sarah asked in a quavering voice.

"Stay out of it, Mom!" cried Ingrid helplessly. "By this point, it doesn't matter whether or not it's true."

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Chapter 463 The Weak Get Devoured

The table sighed as one, expressing their unspoken condolences for Ingrid's fate.

The date of the wedding is already set. What else can we do, go back on our word? Dog will kill us!

"Aunt Sarah," Jared declared, "I've decided to help Ingrid get out of the engagement and then send her over to Horington for further studies."

“Are you joking?” Sarah exclaimed. “Breaking a promise made with Dog is to ask for death!”

“Don’t act foolishly, Jared,” Hannah added sharply. “You have no idea what kind of a man Dog is. Your actions will only bring harm upon your aunt’s family!”

Even the usually reticent Gary spoke up. “Dog isn’t as simple as you think he is, son. I know you think you can go against Dog just because you have a few friends in Horington, but I’m telling you that you have no idea what you’re up against.”

Gary was aware of his son’s connections. In addition to the wealth of Josephine’s family, the reach that the resources at his fingertips were capable of providing was undoubtedly vast and deep. However, Jared’s powerful friends had no jurisdiction over Avenport.

“I’ve already made up my mind,” proclaimed Jared. “Stay out of it, everybody!”

If I can’t even deal with a small-time gangster like him, I’ll truly be a laughing stock.

Being familiar with her fiancé’s temper, Ingrid was visibly upset at her cousin’s resolution. “I know you want the best for me, Jared, but I don’t wish to see you place yourself in harm’s way. Please drop this, will you?”

“You’re only nineteen, Ingrid. How can you resign yourself to your fate? This is something you’re going to live with for the rest of your life. Do you want to throw it all away by giving your life to Dog? You should be in university and finding a man deserving of you instead of settling for your circumstances. Don’t give up! I’ll help you through this.”

Ingrid fell silent along with the rest of the table. Jared is right. I have my whole life ahead of me. I shouldn’t have to squander it all away for Dog!

Sarah sighed heavily before swallowing the entire glass of white wine to everybody’s surprise.

I worry for my child, as all parents do. It’s just an unfortunate circumstance that we are placed in. Well, I guess it’s something we have to accept. There is no justice in the world, only hierarchy. The strong get stronger, the weak get devoured. That’s the law of nature.

At that moment, Ingrid's phone rang. After several brief exchanges, Ingrid hung up and looked positively pale.

"What is it, Ingrid?" Sarah asked with concern.

"Dog wants me to drink with them," she said with a fearful look on her face. "I'm a little scared."

Sarah whimpered helplessly. What else could I say? If I don't allow my daughter to go over, it will only incense Dog!

"I'll come with you, Ingrid," declared Jared as he got to his feet. "Don't you worry."

Josephine got to her feet as well. "I'll come too! There's no need to be scared."

"Don't lash out under any circumstances, Jared," reminded Sarah anxiously. "We'll discuss this at length after we deal with this crisis."

"Don't worry, Aunt Sarah. I know what to do."

After a final nod at the elders, Jared led the way over to the bigger suite while Josephine whispered words of encouragement to Ingrid whose tremble became more violent with every step they took.

A bout of raucous laughter followed by the clinking of glasses greeted their ears as soon as the party arrived at the doors of Larold's suite.

Jared shoved the door open.

Five men sat around a table with drinks in their hands. In the middle was a middle-aged man with a massive bald patch on his head. Dog sat beside him with an unctuous smile as he was refilling the latter's glass repeatedly.

Looks like the bald man is the famous Larold Charleston!

The occupants of the large suite were momentarily taken aback at the suddenness of Jared's intrusion. Dog glanced at Jared and then at the women behind him as he hastened to introduce them to Larold. "Mr. Charleston, this is the cousin of my fiancée. He must have known that you were dining here tonight and have come to toast to your good health!"

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Chapter 464 Let Me Refill Your Glass

Dog then turned to gaze at Ingrid impatiently. "Come over here and pour Mr. Charleston a glass, Ingrid."

Ingrid shook like a leaf as she clung to Josephine, who squeezed the younger woman's hand reassuringly.

"Ingrid's young and inexperienced. Let me do it."

Josephine stood up and grabbed the bottle of white wine before approaching Larold at the other end of the table.

Dog smirked at the sight, confident in his assessment that Josephine's initiative to pour the wine was indicative of her actual identity as an escort.

Larold considered Josephine's offer as he allowed his eyes to wander up and down her body before holding out his glass.

"Dog," he called appreciatively. "Who is this lovely lady?"

"She's the girlfriend of my fiancée's cousin," Dog said at once, aware that important men like Larold did not enjoy the company of women for hire.

"Where do you work, Mr. Charleston?" Josephine asked sweetly as she poured the wine.

"Mr. Charleston is an executive of Sullivan Group," boasted Dog before Larold could speak. "They are running the helm of development in Horington!"

Josephine smiled triumphantly, her suspicions regarding the involvement of her family's company confirmed. So this fool is under Dad's employ!

"What is your name, my dear?" Larold asked as he gazed at her, the lust in his eyes no longer concealed.

"My name is Josephine Sullivan," she answered with a smile.

"Josephine Sullivan?" Larold's forehead creased ever so slightly before smoothing out again. "What a lovely name. In fact, the daughter of our boss is called Josephine Sullivan too."

"People are getting really lazy with coming up with original names, aren't they?" Dog chimed in with a laugh. "Too bad that some Josephines are born into better families than others."

Larold drained the glass poured by Josephine in one flourish before holding it up again. "Wine poured by a beautiful girl like you tastes exceptionally sweet, Josephine. Come, pour me another glass."

This time, Josephine's features hardened before throwing the contents of the glass at Larold's face.

Larold exclaimed in shock as he jumped to his feet. Dog hastily helped wipe Larold's clothes and glowered at Josephine. "What's wrong with you? How dare you disrespect Mr. Charleston in this manner?"

"Are you asking to be punished, young lady?" Larold growled as he stared at her ferociously.

"I think you are the one who needs to be punished. You were tasked with overseeing the development and taking care of the company affairs. Instead, you abuse your power for personal gain. I think your time in Sullivan Group is up."

As she spoke, Josephine pulled out her phone to give her father a call.

Larold was taken aback. "What do you mean?"

"I meant exactly what I said. You took my family's money and acted dishonestly, didn't you? I'll have my father sack you."

"Are you Ms. Sullivan?" Larold's eyes were wide with terror.

Dog was taken aback as well, though he regained his own composure sufficiently to console Larold. "Don't worry, Mr. Charleston. She couldn't be your boss's daughter. Jared here is an ex-convict who had just gotten out of prison. If she really was Ms. Sullivan, why would she be fraternizing with an ex-con? She's using what you told her about sharing her name with a rich and powerful person to frighten you."

Larold heaved a sigh of relief at those words before turning coldly to Josephine. "Make that call if you dare," he sneered. "If I still have my job by the end of the day, you're going to have to keep my company for the next couple of nights."

"Don't worry, Mr. Charleston," said Dog eagerly. "I've made some arrangements to ensure that she isn't going to be going back out of her promise tonight."

Ingrid was frightened. Though she was aware of Josephine's identity, she felt that Dog made sense. Why would the rich and powerful Ms. Sullivan ever stoop to the likes of Jared?

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Chapter 465 Deal With Him

"Jared?" Ingrid asked tentatively as she grasped his elbow.

He merely smiled comfortingly. "Don't worry. She really is William Sullivan's daughter."

Before Ingrid could register her shock, Josephine was already dialing her father's number. "Dad," she said the moment the call went through, "did you arrange for a Mr. Charleston to oversee the development over at Avenport?"

"I don't know, it was handled by Leonard. Why do you ask?"

William had not been particularly active in company affairs of late as he was more concerned with rehabilitating his health. If it weren't for Jared, he would have lost his life.

"That's all right, Dad. I'll give Uncle Lenny a call!" Without giving her father the chance to interrogate her further, Josephine ended the call.

At that moment, Larold grew pale as his superior was indeed Leonard Lopez.

Dog hastened to reassure Larold again. "Don't worry, Mr. Charleston. She's just a good actress."

Larold no longer paid any attention to Dog. Instead, he gazed fearfully at Josephine as beads of perspiration began to appear on his forehead.

Josephine dialed another number. Several moments later, a cheery voice sounded from the other end. "Josephine, to what do I owe the pleasure?"

Leonard Lopez had been a loyal lieutenant to William ever since the latter had founded the company. William also trusted him enough to entrust the company to Leonard's care when he was hospitalized.

Recognizing Leonard's voice from the phone, Larold's knees buckled.

"Mr. Charleston!" exclaimed Dog as he leaped forward to hold him up, still unaware of what was happening. "Are you ill?"

By that point, Larold was trembling so hard that his speech became incoherent.

"Uncle Lenny," asked Josephine. "Did you entrust the overseeing of the development of Avenport to a Mr. Charleston?"

"That's right, why do you ask?"

"You need to fire him," Josephine complained angrily. "He made me serve him wine and offered to sleep with me!"

"What?" Leonard shouted. "How dare he! Don't worry, Josephine. I'll deal with him right away."

After ending the call with Josephine, Leonard called Larold.

Larold's eyes widened with horror at the ringing of his phone. His hands were shaking so badly that he was unable to even pick up the phone.

Dog seemed to have finally noticed that something was amiss. He turned to Josephine with a gaze of disbelief.

Steeling himself, Larold answered the phone after letting the first time go to voicemail.

"Charleston!" Came Leonard's deafening voice from the other end. "How dare you make Ms. Sullivan serve you and make unsavory propositions toward her?"

"Mr. Lopez, I..." stammered Larold, near tears. "I didn't know who she was!"

"Enough!" bellowed Leonard. "You're fired. I will send your replacement over first thing tomorrow. I'll be expecting you back here to receive your punishment. If you try to run, I'll have your legs broken."

At the ominous threat, Leonard hung up.

"Mr. Lopez?" cried Larold hysterically. "Are you still there, Mr. Lopez?"

"Would you still like the pleasure of my company?" Josephine sneered.

With a heavy thud, Larold fell to his knees before her. "I'm sorry, Ms. Sullivan," he wept. "Please forgive me!"

"You're beyond redemption," said Josephine severely.

Larold flinched as if her words had physically hurt him. His face was a delicate shade of ashen grey as his body heaved with dry sobs.

His companions, who had been stunned into silence earlier, took flight at the humiliation of their host. Even Dog was suddenly keenly interested in placing as much distance as he could between him and the writhing figure on the ground by skulking against the corner of the suite.

Josephine turned and marched out before pausing in front of Ingrid and offering a wry smile. "Come, Ingrid," Josephine said merrily as though nothing had happened. "Let's get out of here!"