

Party Preparations

Wixx

With Halloween only a few days away, I was running late with my preparations this year. Usually by now the windows would all have skulls lanterns in them. The columns of the front porch would have spider webs draping down. Eerie lights would be shining onto the high stone walls. Not to mention the fact that the ballroom is still a shambles from my Labor Day bash.

The ballroom was always fixed up right for Halloween. Black candles on silver pedestals would be placed all around, replacing those god-awful brass candelabras that my Uncle thinks are so beautiful. The chandeliers would be lifted, and pewter gargoyle heads filled with lamp oil would suspend from the ceiling. Black and orange decorative paper should cover all of the brass and gold-plated fixtures. Oh dear, and the bar. I will have to get right to work on all of the special drinks for the celebration. No need for mai tais or fruity mixers at this party. And look at the dust on the counter. It is way too neat for the annual fall get together.

We have been having guests over every October thirty-first for so long, that I do not remember when we started. It has always been my duty to prepare the castle for the party. Seeing as how this is the last standing Castle in the East side of the city, I figure it is the only intelligent choice for the location of the most important night of the year. I have a lot of work to do, but at least a few of the jobs have already been done.

The yard, for example, has already been trimmed exquisitely by yours truly. I cut closely around all of the ominous trees and cauldrons in the courtyard. The catapult in the back yard sits on a perfect bed of grass and stone. Why, I even weeded the stack of pitch shot next to it. It never fails that at least one guest, who has had a bit too many bloody marys, will want to go outside and launch a few fireballs into the night sky. The yard is trimmed neatly; even the demon shaped bushes are in pristine order.

I did not stop at using the mower and the trimmers either. Thanks to my skill with the blower, there is not a clipped blade of grass left on the premises. This year I paid specific attention to cleaning the stones and markers in the graveyard as well. I don't want to be the butt of all the gardening jokes for another year. The patio furniture has all been washed, so that the guests can enjoy the fresh autumn breezes as well. I will need to pound a few stakes into the ground and all of the outdoor activities will be taken care of.

The indoor preparations will be underway soon. I ordered some coffins and ritual tables, to be used as props. Bats will fill the upper rooms to add to the creepy atmosphere. The conference hall will be set up as a game room. The butler is going to assist me by placing a few smaller tables in there, to be used for card games, board games, and puzzles. The electricity will be cut off in the guest's quarters to force visitors and overnight partiers to use candles.

Speaking of candles, as soon as I am finished here in the ballroom, I am going to take some nice black candles and silver candlesticks up to the master suite. There is usually a nice group of people in there engaged in the more physical games. The girls from the local parochial school spend most of their time there, enjoying our guests. I will put in a few pictures in that room, so the voyeurs can peek in unnoticed.

Oh yes, I almost forgot, chairs will need to be installed on the balcony so the voyeurs can look down over the drunken dancers below. While I am up there on the balcony, I will hang a few streamers and lights over the ledge, to create a panoramic swirl of shadows on the dance floor. I can picture it now, as I look up to the balcony. The first of the guests will be arriving later this evening.

I would like to have their money. To be able to spend a whole week at a Halloween party, without a care in the world would be a dream come true. I suppose that I do get to party all week, but I cannot get quite as wild and crazy as those folks do. Mr. Stephens is usually the first to show up. He always comments on the fantastic work that I do in preparation to this event. His wife is not into the swinging lifestyle, so he has to sneak into the master suite for an hour here and there. His daughters are very nice girls. The eldest spends most of the week in the rear foyer, greeting the new arrivals, while the youngest gives out dancing lessons. She moves in just the right way, and her form is incredible. I suppose she dances well, too, but I have never seen her do so. This is going to be the best year yet.

I have taken the liberty to order extra food and wine. Also there will be twice as many séances in the courtyard. All of the local covens are sending representatives for the first time ever. I have booked four magicians to provide entertainment. It is hard to get more than one or two to come here, because with this crowd, the performers usually learned some tricks and most complain that our guests know all of the tricks. The older Stephens girl will love what I am doing for the rear foyer.

For the last few years, the younger crowd hangs out there and meets new people and old friends. I have replaced the tired old props there with a brand new pipe organ. I

am sure that it will be adored far more than the same three caskets and that ugly shrunken head collection. But the best thing I am doing this year, just for Lady Stephens, is using ten more gallons of blood to splatter over the room. She will just die for it, I am sure.

‘Igor?’ Called a deep voice from down the hall.

‘Yes Master.’ I yelled back.

‘Come help me decide which robe I should wear please.’ The booming voice echoed, throughout the as of yet empty castle.

‘Coming Master.’ I answered. ‘The Stephens’ should be arriving soon.’

‘Yes indeed, they usually arrive at dusk.’ He replied.

I entered his chambers to find him in the wall-in closet. He was looking over a few of his floor-length robes. He turned to me with a black robe that had red trimming in his left hand, and a solid black robe in his right.

‘Which of these should I wear this evening?’ He asked, trusting my sense of style.

‘The all black will go better tomorrow night, so I would recommend the other tonight.’ I bowed as I delivered my opinion.

I should be tending to the decorating of the spiral staircases, but I do not mind assisting him with his wardrobe. Last year I received so many compliments on the bodies that I hung from the ceiling in both the front and rear staircase. I allowed a few nooses to hang empty, and draped two or three from the spindles on each level.

‘Thank you. I hope that this year is as enjoyable as the rest have been.’ He said. ‘I am sure that with your decorative genius, it will be as splendid as always. Do you need anything to assist you in the preparations?’

‘I will need some money for decorations. You need to order the cake and desserts. I am going to start decorating.’ I advised.

‘Why don’t you go down to the dungeon and check on our food reserves?’ He inquired. ‘I need to know if we have enough, or if I should go get a few more.’

With a nod and a bow, I left his chambers and headed for the main stairs. Halfway down the stairs, I opened the secret panel and stepped inside. After checking the food storage, I walked back to tell the master.

‘Did you invite some people from that little village to the East.’ He inquired and then walked down the stairs.

‘Yes I did, Sire.’ I replied.

I will have to spread out the knife collection in the game room later, because I am giving the servants their final instructions now. I thought about how I would like to arrange them as advised the cooks on when to serve dinner tonight. Our knife collection was known far and wide. We had some sacrificial daggers that we displayed, which had been used in hundreds of rituals. Some of those blades were made right here in this castle. A few thousand years ago Master was a world-renowned blacksmith. He has not made a weapon in centuries. All he does now is party and sleep. I instructed the doormen not to admit anyone who did not have an invitation.

The invitations were gold cards that we sent out to single men and women who lived alone. They said that the recipient of the card has been chosen to come to a Halloween party at the Haunted Castle. Do not bring guests, because we invite only as many people as we have prepared to accommodate. It is clearly stated on the card that if you bring a guest, you will be turned away at the door. Also clearly stated is to please not

tell anyone that you have been invited, because we don't want any party crashers to show up. On the back of the golden ticket are directions to the Castle and information that the party lasts the whole weekend. Please bring costumes and clothes for two days, but come to the castle in formalwear.

They were instructed to show up dressed for a nice dinner. The guests are informed that rooms are available at no charge for sleeping and storing their weekend supplies. The dinner is scheduled for tonight at Nine O'clock. After filling out the cards, I gave them to the servants, who immediately went to hand deliver them to those chosen from the village.

After finishing with the instructions, I went back to work. Black sheet were set out on the tables in the main dining hall. The secondary dining area was set up in a more formal manner. Red wine filled the glasses that were made of fine crystal. The gold plates and dinnerware were perfectly placed on the table. The guests with the golden tickets had already been escorted into this dining hall. The guests were very pleased and thanked me for having them over.

They finished their meals and were waiting for dessert. A few of them had been waiting for quite some time now. They were getting a little upset at the wait, but for fear of offending those who had invited them to such a wonderful party, they remained quiet.

By this time the first twenty of our other guests were preparing for dinner in the main hall. They had empty chalices in front of them. This hall had swords hanging from the ceiling and gargoyle head lamps lighting the room. The guests here had pewter handled dinnerware with demons engraved on them. The plates were silver here, and there

were no napkins on the tables. The hungry patrons in this room waited patiently as the servants and I escorted the villagers from the secondary hall into this main dining room.

The villagers looked at the different arrangements that had been made in this room, and looked over the guests as well. While they were instructed to wear formal clothes, these other guests were wearing gothic robes and examining knives and daggers on the tables before them.

‘What is the main course being served in here?’ One of the villagers inquired of me as I walked by.

‘You.’ I smiled and continued walking.

As I left the room, the screams of the villagers and the growls of the guests echoed throughout the castle. Although the this first serving was one of the best parts of the party, I did not get to eat, because I still had some preparations to take care before the rest of the guests arrive through the night and tomorrow.