

## Chapter 48 Just Let Me Be

As Peter led Roxanne into her room, she turned to him and smiled weakly.

"Honestly, Peter. I cannot thank you enough for everything." It was visible from the look on her face that she was tired, and he understood why.

A genuine smile crept up to his face as she bowed in courtesy.

"The pleasure was all mine Miss Harvey. Do make sure you get some rest."

"Hmmm." She nodded.

With that, Roxanne walked further into her room and Peter closed the door behind her. He turned his back towards her door and pulled his phone from his pocket. He clicked the home button to check the time.

It was already 9:00pm. He made a mental note to check up on Lancelot before retiring for the night.

Lancelot was clearly not in his Chambers, so there were only two places he could be in at this time; the king's study, or the salon. And with Reuben's presence, Peter was very sure it was the latter.

So, he tucked his phone safely into his pocket again as he began his walk to the salon.

The smell of booze and expensive wine hit his nose first as he walked in. Followed by the faint scent of cigars. Peter eyes scanned the room and

found Lord Richard smoking a pipe, seated in a round table with the other men of the house. They were gathered around a chess board, while Reuben stood in front of the table, throwing darts. Peter continued to look around the room until he found Lancelot seated across the bar counter.

There was a small bottle of Vodka in front of him. Next to it, was a bottle of Hennessy. Peter's eyes narrowed as he walked in. Three years of being by Lancelot's side had taught him two things.

The first was that Lancelot only drank so much when he was stressed, bothered or feeling empty. And he wasn't sure whether it was one of these, or all of the three.

Secondly, Lancelot Dankworth's body system was not very receptive to alcohol. Meaning that three shots of vodka could send him over the edge. Peter sighed as he moved to stand by a distal corner, his eyes fixed on Lancelot. He would have to keep his eyes on his boss for the rest of the night.

Lancelot sat quietly, pouring the content of the glass in front of him down his throat. This was the third glass of the mix of Vodka and Hennessy he was drinking, and there would still be more to come. He looked over to where Reuben stood, holding a dart pin in his hand as he laughed.

Lancelot had zoned out of their conversation earlier. He hated to sit next to Reuben. The man reminded him so much about his brother. And Lancelot had tried all these years to forget about him. Just when he thought he was making progress, Reuben shows up and can't seem to shut up about him.

As Lancelot continued to stare at him with dark eyes, Reuben turned to look at him and their eyes met. Reuben was puzzled by the way Lancelot glared at him. When he smiled, Lancelot tore his eyes away from him and focused it on the bottle in front of him.

"Hey, Lance," Reuben called out. Lancelot's teeth clenched together. Why wouldn't Reuben just leave him alone? His presence here alone was torture, he did not need Reuben talking to him, or trying to bring up fun memories of Bran. But, that was exactly what Reuben did next.

"Remember that time during your dad's birthday ceremony, when Bran stuffed all boxes with cake and ruined all our clothes?"

On hearing this, everyone in the room laughed.

"No way! Did he really do that?" Madeline called out, amidst her laughter.

Reuben turned away from Lancelot and looked at his aunty.

"Of course he did! We made sure we got rid of the clothes ourselves so it never got to your ears." His eyes continued to sparkle with laughter.

"I cannot believe the servants did not say anything about it!" Edward spoke up, laughing as he put his right arm over his wife's shoulders. Sizzling with joy and relief to be talking about her son, Madeline sighed as she rested her head on Edward's body.

"Lancelot bribed our cleaner with a five pounds note to keep her from talking. He has always been the politician..." Reuben spoke up again, turning to Lancelot. "Right, Lance?"

On mention of his name, Lancelot slightly cocked his head, so he was staring at Reuben with dead eyes. If the man didn't want to take the hint and leave him out of the conversation, Lancelot would just have to tell him off by himself. "Just let me be," he spoke, a hiccup escaped his throat. Lancelot held the bottle of Hennessy by the neck and brought it up to his lips, before taking his eyes away from Reuben.

Lancelot's reply darkened the mood. Madeline was not pleased to see him brush off Reuben in such a way, and Edward was worried about him. Richard and Bailey stared at him with pitiful eyes. Only Lady Marion and

Eloise, who were seated close to the window, admiring the night sky, did not partake of the sudden glumness.

Reuben sensed the change of mood and chuckled lightly.

"Would you look at that? Still the grumpy baby boy we all know." As he laughed, Madeline smiled as well.

The effect of his contagious laugh spread across the room in less than thirty seconds. Everyone had their eyes glistening with happiness once again.

"Aunty, please do remind me to give you what I got for Bran's grave," Reuben spoke, turning to the dart board and throwing the pin forward.

When the pin touched the bull's eye, Richard cheered with excitement.

"You've gotten better at this game boy," Bailey spoke up, seemingly impressed by his nephew's dart skills.

Reuben turned to him and bowed.

"Why, thank you Uncle. I was raised by the master of darts himself. I owe it to him to be splendid."

Anger began to boil at the pit of Lancelot's stomach. Why did Reuben have to relate every sentence that came out of his mouth to Bran? And everyone was so comfortable talking about him. Years had passed since Bran left, and not once had they gathered to share memories of him, not once had any of them tried to be there for each other. They were a family, yet they grieved separately and in secret, as though they were enemies.

And him? His mother had not even given him the breathing space to mourn Bran!

And yet, here she was, leaning on her husband for emotional and physical support as Reuben recollected all his fun memories with his brother. Lancelot knew that Bran and Reuben were best friends. Hell! They were even born on the same day. And were inseparable until Bran left.

And Reuben left too. For all those years, leaving the family to handle the loss by themselves.

Still, he had the audacity to stand here and talk about him as though he had been with them all this while.

And when Madeline mentioned Bran's name again, Lancelot felt as though he should send the bottle of Hennessy to Reuben's face for ever bringing up Bran's name.

"Bran was..." Madeline paused, heaving a heavy sigh.

"He was an extra ordinary boy. My first pup." Her eyes became teary, but she dabbed it with the back of her fingers. They weren't tears of pain, they were tears of joy. The joy she got from freely talking about him and how much she loved him. "He was a blessing to us. It's a shame that he didn't..."

The sound of Lancelot banging his fist on the wooden counter interrupted Edward's statement, and stole everyone's attention as well.

Peter's once sleepy eyes opened immediately. He caught sight of Lancelot, almost drunk out of his mind and boiling in anger. He knew he had to do something, before Lancelot made a mistake that he could not fix.

Madeline's eyes widened in shock as she stared at Lancelot's raging eyes. She had seen him angry before, but this time was different. His eyes were hollow. Bitterness, rage and what seemed like fear, danced around his blue orbs. Sitting here and talking about Bran as though he was on a vacation to return soon was a trigger for Lancelot.

As Lancelot staggered up from his seat, Peter rushed to him. He held Lancelot right arm and bowed to the rest of the royal family. Lancelot had to be stolen from this room before he did whatever it was he was standing up to do. Which-Peter knew would only result to a disaster.

"My apologies, your majesties. But His Grace must return to his Chambers now. He is obviously..." Peter took one look at Lancelot's eyes, glaring at him. He ignored the look and turned back to them.

"...tired."

Reuben looked over Lancelot's frame, before turning back to the dart board. Edward nodded, giving Peter the permission he needed.

With that, Peter held Lancelot carefully and led him out of the room.

As they walked back to his Chambers, Lancelot growled. Peter rolled his eyes and looked up at the taller man's face.

Lancelot's chiseled jaw was still hard, he had not yet calmed down from his fury.

"Sir..."

"Get someone to give me my cinnamon tea," Lancelot ordered. He stole his arm from Peter and struggled to stand up straight. When he found his footing, he returned his eyes to his personal assistant. "I can walk by myself."

Peter sighed and nodded.

"Of course."

His eyes followed Lancelot to the door of his room. Peter followed Lancelot behind, until he walked into the room.

"I'll send your cinnamon tea to you sir."

Lancelot said nothing, only walked to his bed and fell into it. Peter took it as a sign to dismiss himself. He turned on his heels and walked away from Lancelot.

He walked out of the room, leaving the door slightly open. So that whoever was going to give him the tea would not bother with knocking, because Lancelot would not answer.

As he walked away from the room door, into the corridor, a thought crossed Peter's mind.

A smile crept up to his cheeks. He pulled out his phone from his pocket and looked at it.

Fine, Lancelot needed his tea, but also someone to be with him. And Peter knew exactly who he needed.