

## Garden 111

Vol. 4 Chapter 3.2 - Lucid dream

“You’d better get some sleep. It’s going to be hectic starting tomorrow. Ray, Jester, Seth, Blaine, and Yohn and Ivide. I have to introduce you to everyone. It’s going to be crazy, so you better get some sleep.”

For the first time, Aeroc finally learnt them. The names of the gem-like children. He would introduce me to them?

The man who called himself a monster brushed a stray strand of hair off his forehead gently.

“I’ve had enough now.”

Kloff’s voice sounded a little tired. Had he thought of stopping before? If Aeroc hadn’t run away in despair that day, could the ending have been different? Aeroc held his breath as he imagined the impossible.

“Devils are best with monsters. I knew this would happen eventually. You win, Aeroc. It’s my loss.”

Despite his declaration of defeat, he seemed somehow amused, or maybe even happy. Glad the horrible ending was a dream, Kloff pulled Aeroc closer. I won’t let you go now. He repeated it over and over until he fell asleep.

Poor man. To imprint on something like me and end up falling in love.

Imprinting, the stuff of romanticised romance novels, was a remnant of an instinct that had almost disappeared. A hormonal disturbance developed by pregnant omegas to ensure their alpha's care. A few hundred years ago, when raising a child alone became possible, albeit with some difficulty, imprinting slowly disappeared, and love took its place as the bond between alpha and omega. Their instincts became blurred between reason and emotion.

It was usually those who had spent a long time with an Omega who became imprinted, so imprinted Alphas were mostly older people who had been with an Omega their entire lives. It was rare for someone to be imprinted at a relatively young age, but not unheard of. There were vague records of those with weak pure bloodlines who were unusually sensitive being imprinted in a fraction of the time. But at least for Klopp, he hadn't imprinted at first sight. He had definitely imprinted because he was in a relationship that left him with unhealed mental pain.

Like a person under a powerful hypnosis, the imprinted person became obsessed with a particular partner. If his needs weren't met, he was prone to serious violence, sometimes even self-inflicting. Therefore, he committed sins he didn't have to commit. By his own admission, he had become a monster. Aeroc's heart ached.

In the midst of Aeroc's sadness and pity, his joy slowly grew. It was selfish and cowardly of him. How many innocent people had he sacrificed, and yet he found himself rejoicing that he had finally won Kloff's love.

A devil unable to shed a tear, and unworthy of it.

That was who Aeroc Teiwind was.

\* \* \*

The hot sun hit him in the face.

He rubbed his sore eyes and pulled himself up. There was no strength in his limbs. Aeroc looked around and realised he wasn't in a room. He was alone on a bench in a marble gazebo in the middle of a garden filled with the dizzying scent of roses. Just a moment ago, that all-knowing man had been beside him.

Aeroc's legs were shaky. His mind was foggy. But he didn't want to be alone in this rose garden. This was a place that held too many memories. He had to get out before he was buried in them.

Aeroc stepped on stone after stone. The scent of the roses seemed to grab his ankles. He could barely keep up with the heavy steps. A nearby estate gleamed in the distance.

He stepped into the quiet entrance hall. He stood in the dark until his pupils dilated again. When his vision cleared, he took in a familiar sight. A large foyer and a staircase leading to the second floor. Intricate carvings and framed photographs of ages.

Despite having a red carpet, the estate was silent enough to hear footsteps. The passing sights echoed vaguely in his eyes. His mind told him it was a place he remembered. But nothing was familiar. It felt foreign. It was like a dream curtain had been drawn.

Who is that person here?

All-knowing?

Or unknowing?

Aeroc was in a large estate with the sound of air flowing loudly, and the only thing moving was himself. Maybe that person wasn't here, that would be the saddest thing imaginable.

Somehow Aeroc found himself in front of the study. He could have gone to his mother's room, he could have gone to his own room, but it was the anticipation that drove him here. If he opened the door, maybe one day he p would see the sturdy back of a man studying a painting like he had seen in his dreams. Hopefully, it wasn't his vain hope.

The door slid open without a sound and he could see into the study. Aeroc glanced at the paintings, The Four Seasons, hanging in front of him. As he expected, that person wasn't there.

The study felt strangely alive. Everything that had always been there, in its usual place, had a strange liveliness about it, as if it could come to life at any moment. It was strange. Aeroc looked around. The books were still left on the shelves, and the nibs of the pens on the desk still looked as if they had been glued together. Nothing had changed, so why?

He stepped onto the creeping carpet. He made his way to the other side of the desk, to the large couch with its back facing the door. His favourite tea set was on the table, its end barely visible over the couch. As he rounded the corner of the couch to check the tea set, Aeroc saw a sight he couldn't believe.

That person was there.

Dressed in a shirt and vest, Kloff was sleeping on a small cushion. He was so tall that he was cramped on a large sofa that could easily seat three people. His ridiculously cute cloud-patterned blanket was curled up in a bundle, barely covering his huge torso. Nevertheless, Kloff was fast asleep, unmoving and breathing regularly. His front hair was dishevelled on his flat forehead. His sleeves were haphazardly rolled up and his arms were crossed, and his face, which was usually quite serious, was slightly dishevelled. He must have fallen asleep while working, documents were scattered on the floor.

Aeroc had to get back to where he was before Kloff woke up. Or else he might get another terrible punishment, but his feet couldn't leave.

When else could Aeroc observe Kloff sleeping like this? All he could imagine was Kloff waking up and seeing him raging like a cruel judge. But that was not who he really was.

Kloff was a gentle man who kissed his beloved's fingers one by one.

The man who laughed softly and whispered his love.

A kind man who would stand by him more than anyone else.

Aeroc's greed for another's love broke Kloff, but Aeroc finally had him in his hand. It was the result of an obsession he couldn't let go of after living for a second time.

Aeroc reached out and touched his cheek. His head tilted naturally into his palm. Something hot flared in his chest.

“.....Uhm..... Le.....”\*

The mumbled words were clearly the first letters of someone else’s name. It was sad. How painful it must be to be around someone you don’t want when you’re still unconsciously missing him. I have to let him go. But I feel like I’ll burn to death if I let you go. Not for a second time..... Even if I can’t hear your confession even as a lie.

You can call me selfish, but as long as you’re here, I won’t waste my second chance.

Aeroc dropped to his knees. And then he stole the lips of a beautiful man in his sleep. So that the curse would never be broken. May they live forever together, just the two of them.

Naturally, Aeroc’s hand moved up to his chest, and just as he felt warm lips on his, something moved beneath his hand. Aeroc turned his gaze down, startled. A tiny thing moved, and a tiny hand emerged from the blanket.

“Awwwh.”

The fumbling hand pushed the blanket away. Something made a series of uncomfortable gasps. Aeroc pulled the blanket back.

Ah.

Unlike what Aeroc had imagined, a baby with dark chestnut hair lay on top of a large body. He had one hand in his mouth and was sucking on the other, but then he lifted his head and looked at Aeroc. He blinked for a moment, then smiled.

“Ma.”

A large spear plunged into his chest.