

Garden 74

Vol. 3 Chapter 10.6 - The bitter with the sweet

He groaned reflexively and grabbed his wrist with his other hand. The butler, who witnessed the scene, quickly grabbed the glass on the tray held by a startled maid and poured cold water over it. Then, he soaked a napkin that had been draped over his arm into another glass of cold water and wrapped it around Kloff's scalded hand.

"I cooled it down immediately so you wouldn't get a severe burn."

The butler cleared his throat in surprise, and so did Kloff. So did Aeroc, who stood frozen beside them, breathing raggedly. He stood there flustered, pale as a sheet, unsure of what to do.

"Are you alright, Master?"

"Ah, yes."

Kloff's moist eyes glanced at him. He didn't know why Aeroc did this, but he thought that his habit of running away at every little thing definitely needed to be fixed. If he let this one slide, it would happen again in the future, and each time, Kloff would either suffer in pain from being stabbed by an invisible knife or be overwhelmed by anger stronger than the burning pain in his flesh right now.

"Follow me."

Without saying a word to the stunned butler and maid, Kloff firmly held Aeroc's wrist and took the lead. Every time Aeroc tried to pull his hand away, Kloff gripped it tightly, making bruises form. Albeit those small sounds of pain pierced his throbbing heart, Kloff held it down firmly.

Not caring about the cloth that fell off his burned hand, Kloff grabbed the doorknob and pulled it open. He forcefully dragged Aeroc, who was still resisting, into the room and dropped him onto the bed. Unfazed, Aylock stood up again and attempted to flee again, but Kloff quickly rushed over after locking the door. He used his strength to pin Aeroc down.

Despite the heavy weight pressing on him, Aeroc tried to get up again and again, like a possessed man. He attempted to escape at the slightest sign of an opening. Looking at the lifeless, doll-like pale face, Kloff felt the air he breathed turn into poison, burning his lungs.

"What's with you?!"

He finally snapped.

"I told you that you could never escape from me! Now that I imprinted on you and confessed my love, do you think that you've played enough with me?! I will say this again. You're my omega, and you're pregnant with my child. I can't forgive you if you run away on your own!"

Aeroc remained unresponsive to his shouted pleas, as if paralyzed. Kloff felt overwhelmed with despair. He truly wanted to break Aeroc's two legs. If Aeroc couldn't use his legs, he wouldn't be able to run away on his own.

An uncontrollable rage surged within him. It was a vastly different whirlpool of emotions, unlike when Aeroc escaped from his office. At that time, he hadn't been aware of the imprint, so even though his heart ached, he had been able to bury it. But it was different now.

When Aeroc disappeared around the corner, and until Kloff saw his back again, for the few moments that he blinked his eyes, Kloff felt like he had fallen into an abyss, before getting revived again. The sturdy marble corridor beneath his feet turned into scorching lava, sinking his legs and melting his peripheral nerves. When he took a breath, he felt agony as he felt his lungs burning. He didn't want to experience that again.

By the time his vision became blurred by the black smoke burning his flesh and the red smoke simmering inside him, he finally spotted Aeroc enveloped in a transparent light on his back. He barely regained his sense of reality, and his paralyzed nerves started to function. The pain in his hand was nothing. He grabbed Aeroc, who was trying to fly away, and forcefully shoved him back into the nest. Yet he tried to escape again.

Should he just break his legs? If he breaks just one...

Kloff unconsciously tightened his grip on Aeroc's delicate ankle.

It would snap outward easier than he thought. Just like back then... Just like back then?

With his large and strong hands tightly gripping the ankle, Aeroc flapped his leg, like a butterfly caught and twisted by the wings. But even that was futile. Kloff, who had been pressing him down, collapsed on top of him, exerting no strength.

Back then? When was it? When was he referring to? Aeroc's ankle had never been broken before. If it had, it would have happened when he was young, maybe when he had horseback riding lessons, at least before Kloff knew him. But he couldn't understand why he had a vivid feeling of witnessing that scene. It was an illusion. Definitely. The omega he had imprinted on, Aeroc, was exhibiting behavior that he couldn't understand, which clearly affected him and caused hallucinations. He did not want to recall such a cruel scene. Absolutely not.

Kloff breathed a little raggedly as he pushed away the memories the imprint had distorted, 'memories that shouldn't exist'. At the same time, he let go of the person squirming beneath him and stroked his ankle, which was now covered in red grip marks. His fingers trembled, and his sense of touch was not functioning properly, but he tried his best to caress it lovingly. He felt an overwhelming disgust in himself for having the intention to cruelly destroy something so beautiful.

As if trapped in a panic state, Aeroc couldn't speak properly or even meet Kloff's gaze. Although Kloff let go of his ankle, it seemed like something serious had occurred before that. Seeing him mutter unintelligible words and flail about like an idiot, Kloff became increasingly afraid.

"Aeroc? What's wrong? Why are you like this?"

No matter how many times Kloff called out to him, there was no response. Aeroc continued to stare off into the distance while kicking around. Kloff cupped his face and locked eyes with him, then shouted, "Aeroc!" Startled, Aeroc finally fixed his scattered gaze on him. He recoiled in horror as if he had seen a ghost. What was he afraid of? Watching him freeze and turn white like someone who had wandered through pitch darkness and encountered a monster, Kloff was at a loss for words.

Sometimes, when Aeroc gazed at him like that, Kloff really felt like he was going to die. Aeroc was surely hiding something, but he never revealed what it was. Sometimes he acted like a person who had lost everything, his silhouette so light, like a bubble that would dissipate if touched. That far-off gaze that looked down on him, just like when Aeroc pushed him away the first time Kloff made a move on him, as he fled from the estate.

He wanted to cry. He wanted to cry like a child, screaming at the top of his lungs, asking why it hurt so much, why he couldn't speak, while clinging to Aeroc. He felt terrified. Even though he was right by Aeroc's side, the fact that he couldn't be of any help became a sharp blade stabbing him in the back.

But he couldn't cry in front of the shocked omega. It was bad enough that he startled him to the point that he cried earlier. He managed to suppress the lump in his throat. The foul smell of blood rose to his nostrils, but Kloff forced a smile with all his might. Then, in a very gentle voice, he whispered.

"It's okay. I'm here. Don't be afraid. No one can hurt you."

He whispered such sweet lies despite just having the intention to break his legs moments ago. Yes, it was a lie. He knew very well. As an alpha, Kloff had never been able to provide Aeroc with endless protection. He couldn't make sure to bring him only happiness. Even now, without understanding why he had to hurt, Kloff repetitively provided empty comfort, meaningless action that anyone could do.

However, Aeroc hung on, gasping for breath, like someone trapped in deep despair. Finally, he managed to utter a few words.

"...I don't want to fall asleep like this forever. I can't sleep."

Once again, Kloff felt despair at his incomprehensible words, but he was thankful to the gods as Aeroc managed to convey something in some way. Kloff let out a trembling sigh.

“Why can’t you sleep? I’ll protect you. Don’t worry.”

Even when Kloff spoke gently, Aeroc sobbed and whimpered, whispering softly barely audible for Kloff’s ear to hear.

“I woke up from the deep darkness to find myself inside this beautiful dream. So I can’t fall asleep. If I fall asleep in the dream, then I’ll wake up in a cruel reality again. I have to be alone in that cold cabin, on that hard bed until I get tired of the reality that I would close my eyes and return here again. It hurts too much for me to bear. That’s why.”

Kloff couldn’t understand what Aeroc was saying at all, but his face was contorted tearlessly, as if his breath could stop at any moment. His blue and moist eyes which had a lot of tears became red, but not a single drop fell. Not knowing what to say, Kloff had no choice but to tightly embrace him as if their bodies became one. Otherwise, Aeroc would crumble into pieces, like a poorly mended porcelain doll, and disappear through the cracks like grains of sand.

“This isn’t a dream, Aeroc.”

“...That’s a lie.”

“Why don’t you believe me?”

“That’s because you don’t love me.”

Aeroc let out a desolate laugh. It would have been better if he cried instead. Kloff had to taste a bitter sense of despair as Aeroc remained unconvinced by his sincere heart.

No matter how many times Kloff told him that he loved him, that he had imprinted on him, that he couldn't live without him, that he loved him more than anything in the world, Aeroc only laughed hollowly. And soon, Aeroc closed his eyes in exhaustion. Just as he had said that he didn't want to sleep, he rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand, even hitting his face painfully, but his tired eyes couldn't resist closing. Aeroc gave him a pained, distorted smile. With his blinking eyes, he silently pleaded with Kloff.

"You're as sweet as a lie in my dreams. So please, give me a stimulant. I don't want to fall asleep."

The words he weakly whispered were so pitiful that Kloff wished he could bring him a cup of tea strong enough to fully wake him up right now. But he couldn't do that.

Aeroc was undoubtedly confused at the moment. He had suddenly become an omega, and then became pregnant without being ready for it. He was either delusional or had been hallucinating due to anxiety. Just like Kloff was, in a state of mindless lust due to his heat, Aeroc was confusing dream and reality.

"Even if you fall asleep, when you open your eyes again, you'll be by my side. Don't worry."

After his heat and their long love-making, and now that the fertilized egg was safely transferred to his uterus, Aeroc would have felt a great sense of fatigue, so he would be sleeping for a long time. It was rightfully so.

As an alpha who had bonded with the restless omega, so that he could rest comfortably and not be scared, Kloff tenderly calmed him, putting aside his own dizzy head and torn chest. Aeroc kept resisting his drowsiness and barely managed to speak his last words in an audible voice.

“...Even if it’s a lie, please... Please keep telling me you love me until I fall asleep.”

Tilting his head up so Aeroc couldn’t see the tears that were welling up, Kloff adjusted his hot neck and whispered.

“I love you. I love you, Aeroc. I love you... I love you...”

As Aeroc drifted into sleep, his eyes already closed, whispering “I’m in love with you”, he smiled faintly and shed a single tear between his trembling eyelashes. It felt like a parting message left in a moment of eternal farewell, and Kloff couldn’t say anything as tears blurred his vision.

Kloff was seized with an intense fear that he would never see those blue eyes again, even though Aeroc was breathing clearly and regularly and his heart was beating soundly. So, he held his exhausted body tightly and kissed him repeatedly throughout the night. Even in the cold and tough darkness, Kloff whispered continuously into Aeroc’s ear to ensure he wouldn’t get hurt.

For many times, he said he loved him. That Kloff was in love with Aeroc too.