

Garden 99

Vol. 4 Chapter 2.5 - My honorable defiance toward confronting the disrespectful illegal inhabitant

He was just reading a children's book in a cheerful voice, but then he shut up and looked down at me lying next to him. He didn't have his usual arrogant expression on his face, but he looked a little wistful, and I couldn't help but feel my heart sink. Is this the wrong question to ask, is this going to make me lose the demon's favour, is he going to hate me?

".....No, I don't have any."

Soon enough, he smiled. My sadness quickly faded, but my surprise did not. He surprised me! At least tell me the reason!

"But how do you know you'll be sad?"

"I don't really know. I don't know if I read it somewhere or heard it, but I know of an Alpha who lost a loved one through his own fault and spent long days in nothing but pain and regret, and I think I can understand a little of what he was feeling."

"That's terrible, losing someone you love through your own fault."

"Yes, it is a terrible thing."

His usually confident expression turned sad again.

I soon regretted asking the question. His stony expression never fully relaxed, and his reading voice grew weaker and weaker, pausing too long on commas. Waiting for the next sentence, I looked up and called out, "Father?" He smiled apologetically and closed the book.

"Let's stop at this today. I'll read you more next time."

Usually, I would have cried no, but I decided to hold it in today. Even demons have the right to be sad sometimes. He needed someone to be with him when he was sad, and it was clear that someone was Mother. Normally, I would never have forgiven him, but I decided to let him off the hook for today. If he went to do something terrible to Mother, I would have proof. The guilt of taking advantage of his grief lingered, but the responsibility of protecting the Count far outweighed it. Forgive me, demon. I will be cruel today.

In the bed next to mine, Eurea had already fallen asleep after listening to the story in the thin picture book before me. "Good night," he said, pulling Eurea's quilt back over her, then lifted the lantern and opened the door.

"By the way, don't wander around today and go to bed early. We'll be having an outing together tomorrow."

"Yes."

Something fishy was bothering me, so I deliberately feigned sleep and waited for the hours to pass. I decided to keep my eyes closed until the wee hours of the night, firm in my belief that I would get some proof today.

“Oppa, wake up! We’re going on a picnic today, and if you don’t wake up now, we’ll leave you!”

I rose up while writhing as the witch leaped onto my bed. My stomach that was stepped on was hurting so badly that tears were pooling in my eyes.

“Hey! Eurea Elheim, come here!”

Angrily, I immediately jumped out of bed and went to catch the witch. Dressed in her long pajama dress, she ran to her mother’s room, “Daddy! Mommy! Oppa is bullying me!” she cried.

Oh, right. Mother!

I had to catch Eurea, and I also had to know if my mother was safe through the night since I had unfortunately fallen asleep. We both burst into Mother’s room almost simultaneously, and as I ran frantically to the bed, that man looked up, put a long finger to his mouth, and said, “Shhh.”

My mother was still in his arms, not yet awake. He was unharmed except for his closed eyes being slightly red, but there was something strange. Neither of them were wearing nightwear, and their bare shoulders were exposed. Of course, I couldn’t see everything, as they were only bare above the shoulders and covered by sheets below, but I could tell from their pajamas lying by the bed.

“I’m sorry, but will you both come back in a moment? It’s still early and your mother is sleeping.”

“Yes, Daddy. I’m sorry for barging in so suddenly. Let’s go, Oppa.”

Eurea grabbed my stiff wrist and hauled me out the door. Glancing back several times, that man pulled my mother close and stroked his sheet-wrapped back. It seemed like he was whispering something, but the way he looked at Mother was softer than ever.

Picnics were always something to look forward to. We used to have them often, but rarely since Mother was pregnant with Jester. There were times when Eurea and I would play at the Wolflake house, but this would be the first time my mother and biological father would go with us.

“Is Sioux coming?”

“Of course, he’s coming. Sylas and Atlas will be there too.”

That’s what my mother said to Eurea, who was excitedly eating breakfast. At those words, Eurea and I let out a heavy sigh at the same time.

“What’s wrong?”

That man asked, looking up from the mashed potatoes he had just fed into Jester’s mouth with milk. Before I could open my mouth, Eurea spoke up.

“Those twins are too mischievous.”

“That’s because they like you.”

“I don’t. I’d rather go to Rapiel’s house.”

At Eurea’s words, my mother’s complexion changed slightly as he sipped his tea in silence. I poked Eurea on the side, and then she made eye contact with Mother, putting on a happy face.

“However, it’s okay because Sioux is coming! Sioux oppa is nice and cute. Unlike my oppa, so it’s good! I’m looking forward to it. Right, Oppa?”

She was being so obvious about it and I wanted to ask what she meant by Sioux not looking like her own oppa, but for my mother’s sake, I put on my best-excited face.

“Yeah, I’d like to meet Sioux, too. The twins are so busy and annoying, but they’re cute. Their eyes look like they’re going to pop out. I can’t wait to meet them.”

The two of us giggled and quickly spread jam and butter on the toasted bread. I handed it over to Eurea, who quickly popped it into her mouth and chewed, saying in a very loud voice, “Thanks, Oppa! You’re the best!”

“Do you want to see Rapiel?”

Mother asked in a soft voice, and we both shook our heads in anxiety.

“Not at all. I want to see Sioux, Sy and Aty way more. I don’t even remember Ray’s face anymore. Right?”

“Yeah. Father, you don’t remember Ray either, do you?”

I quickly pulled him into the conversation. I was desperate for help now. But cowardly, he said, “Well, I’m.....” and looked at my mother and said, “Maybe we can all meet together next time? We didn’t make plans early this time, so it couldn’t be helped.”

Aargh, you insensitive fellow, and yet you are my mother’s husband. My mother would get depressed all day long whenever he met Rapiel! Though I have no idea why.

You wouldn’t know because the day after our last meeting you didn’t return home for two days, two whole days, on the pretext of a business trip, and when you finally came back, my mother had greeted you with such enthusiasm! Eurea and I stared at each other like goldfish in a fishbowl and gaped at each other. Even Grandpa Hugo and Grandma Martha were too! And he wanted us to see him again!

‘You, how will you take responsibility?’

I glared fiercely at the culprit. 'I'll take care of it,' Eurea replied, realizing the error of her ways.

I really don't understand how this incarnation of Elk from the cold northern cedar forest managed to earn a title. He couldn't read the mood at all, but rather laughed, as if to mock Mother a little.

"You've always had a soft spot for Rapiel. Both Big Rapiel and little Rapiel."

"They're pretty and cute."

"I don't think that's all they are."

Elk laughed, the corners of his mouth lifting, and Mother narrowed his eyes.

"Hmph, you're talking about yourself."

"Don't forget that you were the one who made plans for today."

"It's because you keep asking us all to have a picnic together. I would have loved it too if it were just with our family."

"If it's just our family, the two of us won't have even the slightest time to be alone. Their family must have wanted this too for the same reason. Nothing else."

"Maybe you're just making an excuse."

"It seems like you haven't had enough confirmation from yesterday. I'll see you later alone, then."

That man stared at Mother, and he blushed a little. Giving him a small slap, Mother said, "Don't say that in front of the kids. You're such a jerk."

What? Confirmation from yesterday? Something must have happened for my mother to call him a jerk. Stupid me, why did I fall asleep? Moreover, I shuddered at the thought of this vicious man trying to harass my mother even when we were all on a picnic together. I will definitely not leave my mother's side today.

I eagerly devoured the bread, juice, and eggs offered to me. When I had finished the milk, I glared with all my might at the demon, who took his doppelgänger baby on his knee and fed him little by little with baby food.

"Lenoc, instead of glaring at me and urging me to be faster, I think you'd better go and get ready for the picnic. Besides, Jester and Eurea haven't finished eating yet."

"Oppa, go to Grandma Martha and ask her for my hat. I don't know where it is."

“Lenoc, please get Jester’s shoes, too.”

I left the table in a huff, having unwittingly run my mother’s errand too. As I walked briskly down the street in search of Martha, I had a sudden thought that something didn’t feel right, and I regretted it belatedly. Oh, no. I should have stayed with my mother!

What a terrifying demon. To get rid of me like this.