

The Duke 111

Chapter 111 - Sam Is The Villain All Along

"Now, now. You're making my bride so flustered."

A sigh of relief escaped my lips upon hearing Sam's chuckle. He smirked dangerously.

My hand trembled, struggling to go forth. Sam stopped my attack with a mere finger. The blade was against the nail of his forefinger.

Just how sturdy was his nail that grew an inch longer? But that's not important. My hand was acting on its own.

I couldn't understand this feeling circling around my heart. But this murderous intent between us had shaken my core.

"Sam..." Just as I voiced out his name into a whisper, I withdrew lakresha and hopped backward.

I wanted to spar with him. However, the way the side of his lips twisted into a smirk tangled my emotions.

This wouldn't end as a simple sparring.

"My lady, withdraw lakresha now! This is not good!" Rufus yelled in urgency.

But just as he yelled, I swung lakresha towards Sam. I knew I'd been training for the past three months. However, I was not this agile or powerful.

It was as if this very weapon was slowly taking over me. Even though I didn't want to attack Sam, I couldn't help but merge with the thirst of Lakresha.

"Sam! Dodge!" I yelled as I attacked him continuously.

"My, my, Lilove." In contrast to my worries, Sam chuckled.

He kept dodging my attacks effortlessly. As if he was merely dancing into the rhythm. His hands on his back, hopping back as he chuckled.

While here I am, getting pale whenever the blades were approaching him. Stop...

I felt like I let another person to use me again. Was it you, Lara? Why would you give me such a dangerous weapon if I'll end up attacking Sam?

Sam... the reason I've been training for the past three months.

Why?

Why won't I stop? Why...? Lakresha.

After my incessant attack, I finally cornered Sam. He stood still, his back against me, the tip of the scythe on his jugular.

My hand trembled, clenching my teeth, until I felt my jaw locking. Sam slowly raised both his hands, conceding.

"Lakresha..." I whispered through my gritted teeth. My grip trembled.

Sam cocked his head back. His eyes fixed on me.

"You stopped it?" He muttered, catching my attention.

Despite the danger before him, despite having a scythe pointed in his throat, Sam remained calm. But my inner thoughts were in turmoil.

"I lost. You can drop lakresha now." He ordered calmly as he slowly faced me.

How could I do that...?

"You gain a bit of control. Can't you see?" Sam raised his finger and pushed away the blade a little.

Now that I looked at him, my attacks stopped. I thought he had stopped it like the first time.

However, he raised both his hands. That means...

"See, Rufus? My bride can subdue lakresha. Although it's temporary, it's better than I thought! Hahaha!" Sam boasted proudly, despite having a blade looming around his neck.

Wasn't he afraid? My eyes fixed on his neck and the blade around it.

Even from this distance, I knew how sharp the blades were. One wrong move and I'd hurt him.

Suddenly, an image of Sam's head rolling to my feet flashed before me. I gasped in panic and let go of lakresha.

My entire body shuddered at the foreboding thought that crossed my head. I gaped my mouth open, but no words came out.

Red mist streamed up around lakresha upon dropping it. It was as if the weapon was evaporating into thin air. Red particles made its way back to me.

Back to the necklace around my neck. And then it was gone.

It was as if it wasn't there in the first place. It was as if it didn't exist, and I didn't use it to harm Sam.

I gazed at my hand. It's trembling. Slowly, I curled my fingers and clasped my hands into a tight fist.

What was that all about? That feeling back when I was holding lakresha. The intent to kill Sam, the rage that I've bottled up ever since that night.

Holding lakresha had heightened just that anger within me. Mentally, I was scared to hurt Sam. But deep down, I knew I'd hurt him even against my will.

Vampires... just how twisted was their world?

"Come on. Don't sulk." Amidst my deep thoughts, Sam hooked his arms over my shoulder.

"This is not the time to sulk! See? You can wield lakresha faster than Rufus thought!"

Sam laughed out loud proudly. Slowly, I raised my head to him. Even without seeing myself, the coldness that seeped deep into my bones made me look pale.

How could he be so calm despite what I just did?

I knew... no; I felt it. Sam knew I intended to harm him. That's why he gave me that smirk of not backing down.

It was as if that fleeting moment, I glimpsed upon the side of him which he had been hiding. Not the sweet or unreasonable side of him. Not the terrifying or

brutally honest side, either.

It was the twisted side of him who found the situation amusing. A situation where his life was in danger. He liked the thrill.

"Haha! Look at Rufus! He had gone pale!" Sam continued in jest.

All I could do was to stare at his side profile. Taking notice of my intense gaze, Sam turned to me with brows raised.

"Your head... it nearly roll to the ground." I muttered mindlessly.

His lips stretched from ear to ear. He leaned in and whispered in my ear.

"You felt it, did you?"

A shudder immediately ran down my spine. His tone was low, but he made it sound so dangerous. Just with his voice, I could tell how his eyes glinted.

But before I could react, Sam slowly drew his head away. I was right. His crimson eyes gazed differently than usual.

The sight of it made me gulp.

"What I am all along." He smirked, pulling a finger in front of his lips.

My lower lips trembled, staring at him, realizing I haven't truly known him. Until now, I've only seen what I wanted to see and hear what I wanted to hear.

Sam... he was the villain all along. No. I blinked my eyes, shaking my other thoughts away.

After clearing my thoughts, I raised both my hands and squeezed his cheek. A sharp exhaled escaped my nostrils, shutting my eyes as I tiptoed.

I drew away after leaving a light peck on his lips. It stunned Sam, as his eyes went wide.

When our gaze met, I bit my lower lip.

"So, what?"

Chapter 112 - Klaus La Crox

Wielding lakresha... It not only heightened my dominant negative emotions. Wielding it made me realize it aimed to kill evilness.

Sam reeked of blood and death. Lakresha told me Sam shouldn't have existed. That it was only right to kill him now, before it was too late.

That it had justified the hostility from his brothers a long time ago?

But how could I do that?

How could I let this damn lakresha tell which was right, and what's wrong? How dare this weapon order me around?

I hated it.

They knew nothing. Be it the royal family or lakresha. They knew nothing.

I might not know him completely. But my heart does.

"So what?" I asked, almost pouting. "Who cares if you're the worst? Who cares if everyone thinks you shouldn't have existed? Does their opinion matters more than mine?"

His lips gaped, but no words came out. The sound of morning breeze whistled softly in my ear.

As the sun slowly rise, his surprised expression came clear. He looked adorable when he's flustered.

"I told you, I'll decide for myself. My decision is to stick with you like a leech. You drag me into this, take responsibility. Unless you don't want to marry me anymore."

My remarks sounded more like a demand and complain. But, I didn't think twice and let my heart spoke.

For me, Sam planned nothing else but that. He knew a part of his dark side would slip out if I wield lakresha. Has he been thinking about that whenever he watched me from the window while I jog every morning?

Had he been wondering what would happen if I used Lakresha? Was he thinking at the enlightenment once I held it?

I'm no saint. He wouldn't let me go even if I somehow became an angel and spoke nonsense, righteous deed.

I'm very clear that his feelings weren't shallow. Even by means or foul, Sam would keep me by his side. Even if I hated him or loved him, he had been clear about this.

Who was in their sane mind not to get alarmed by hearing they're trapped with them? Who was in their sane mind who wouldn't notice how he worded that I'm like a bird in an enormous cage? I am that insane person.

I've known all along. I just ignored it.

Why? Because it didn't matter to me. If he was in the same cage, I'd be happy to spend the rest of my life locked with him.

I'd willingly walk in the fuming land of damnation if that's where he resides. Because we were all slave for something.

As for me, I'm a slave to him.

Sam's eyes softened as the side of his lips curled up subtly. I thought I'm seeing things, but his eyes welled up, moved by my resolve.

Seeing him like this made me smile. He may be the villain to others, a curse existence.

But not for me.

Sam was a blessing in my life. The moon that shine in the darkness.

Ahh... what a sight to behold.

"I told you, didn't I?" I uttered with a smile. "If they hate you, I'll love you harder. If you murder someone, I'll help you bury the body. Mister Fabian taught me how."

"Lilou..."

"Your Grace!" Suddenly, Cameron's voice reached our ear.

Sam trailed off as the light atmosphere between us cracked. Instinctively, we turned our heads in Cameron's direction.

Cameron was panting for air. He was on his knees, his palms on the ground. When he raised his head, his complexion pale.

"I rushed here when I sensed lakresha's aura!" He exclaimed in between his gasp.

How could a vampire gasp for air as if they had run around the entire kingdom?

"Al — also..." He swallowed down as he gazed at me. "Your blood had caused a turmoil, your grace."

"Ah," I nodded. "My bloo —! What?"

"Oh." Sam nodded in understanding. "But it's healed now."

Ah? What were they talking about?

I gazed at Sam. He pointed at my finger, which he pricked previously.

"Oh..." I raised my finger. It healed,.

Now that I think about it, when Sam sank his fangs into me for the first time, it also healed when he licked it. Although, this one was only a small wound, which would heal immediately on its own.

Again, I raised my gaze back to Cameron. Was sensing my blood made him look so exhausted? Why, though?

"Don't worry about it." Sam patted my head, taking notice of my puzzlement.

"It's only normal since you're now their master. The Crawfords are strangely linked to your life, whether or not you like it. That's why they're making a fuss when they got a whiff of you blood."

Sam explained more patiently. I blinked my eyes many times. He was exceptionally gentle and kind.

Normally, he would glare daggers at Cameron for 'leering' at me. Now, he's like a magnanimous individual.

I find this more strange and scary.

"They will calm down —"

"How are we supposed to calm down if we just felt that my lady is in danger, your highness?! How are we supposed to calm down if Cunningham is in danger?" Before Sam could finish his sentence, Cameron exclaimed.

Cameron was gritting his teeth. His fangs slowly making themselves known.

"They'd do it again, wouldn't they?"

Silence dawned upon us. Hehe... this strange atmosphere again. The tension brewing upon Cameron's accusation.

"Honestly, it was I who almost killed Sam." I awkwardly intervened, raising my hands and darting my eyes from Sam to Cameron.

"Lord Cameron, please refrain yourself from speaking another word or it'll be the last you can ever speak." Rufus chimed in, threatening Cameron.

"Rufus, don't." Sam raised his hand. His brows furrowed as he squinted his eyes.

Huh? Did I miss something in this abrupt conversation?

"Cameron, who is it this time?" Sam's voice was cold and low.

Cameron's breath hitched. His hands on the ground balled into a fist. Exchanging strange eye contact with Sam.

After swallowing down, Cameron spoke. "We've sighted a royal carriage entering Cunningham. It's the carriage used by the fifth prin..."

Just before Cameron could finish his news, my back stiffened. A light thud resonated from my back as an intimidating aura stood behind me and Sam.

"It's been a long time, brother."

"Klaus." Sam whispered without turning around.

Chapter 113 - Klaus La Crox II

"Klaus."

I gazed up at Sam. Huh? Blinking my eyes to see if I saw it correctly.

I did.

The side of Sam's lips curled into a smile — a twisted smile. Suddenly, I jolted back as a figure appeared before us.

But before I could step back further, a hand grabbed my hand. His grip was not too tight, but enough to keep me still.

Slowly, I gazed down. A man was kneeling before me, holding my hand. A pair of bright crimson eyes met mine without shying away.

His features were all in contrast. He had a slender face with a firm jaw. Sharp tufts of deep black hair that looked soft as silk.

"Allow me to introduce myself, my future sister-in-law. My name is Klaus Norrix La Crox. It's a pleasure to meet you, my sister-in-law." The corner of his lips hooked into a smile.

Klaus leaned in, trying to leave a kiss on the back of my hand as a greeting. However, before he could do so, he halted.

Am I seeing it correctly? I blinked my eyes as many as possible.

Until now, all I could focus on was the color of his hair. Did they say he was the fifth prince? Sam's brother?

Now that I thought about it, the Remingtons had bright red hairs that were as bright as flames. The Crawfords had...

I discreetly glanced at Cameron, who was dumbfounded at the sight of Klaus. I didn't notice it for the past three months as I was busy training. But Cameron, no, the entire Crawford clan didn't have dark hairs.

Instead, the color of their hairs was the darkest shade of green. It was barely noticeable, unless the sun shone upon their hairs directly.

So, if the Remington had red hairs, and the Crawfords had dark lush. Why was Sam's brother had dark hair? Not silver?

I tilted my head to the side, confused.

"I see you are the jealous type, brother. Since it is your first time to fancy a woman, I'd save my formal greetings later." Klaus uttered as he drew away, letting go of my hand.

Slowly, Klaus rose back to his feet. His powerful gaze immediately landed on me, peering at me from head to toe.

"Klaus, my brother!" Sam clapped once. "I appreciate this unannounced visit. However, this is not the right time to see my bride. As you can see, she's drenched with sweat and I can see her figure perfectly, I can barely hold it in."

"My brother, how can you turn such a fine lady into a man? I don't think her beautiful hands should hold weapons!" Klaus was smiling back.

Yet, despite the gleeful smiles plastered on their faces, the tension thickened. I pursed my lips, darting my eyes from Sam to Klaus. And then to Cameron, who just snapped out of it, then to Rufus's blank expression.

As expected of my instructor. Nothing could move him.

"Oh! Is that it? I thought I was seeing things when my brother tried to kiss my bride's hand! So, I saw it right? How amusing!" Again, Sam clasped his hands together as he took a step forward.

Instinctively, I stepped back. I had tons of questions in my mind; first in my list was the difference in their hair color.

But that wasn't important right now, right? I felt like I had to run back to the castle and have breakfast first.

"I merely want to greet my sister, brother!" Klaus' eyes squinted into a thin line.

"Oh, is that it?" Sam took another step forward, still bearing that bright smile of his.

"Still, it's only been how many centuries, and yet, my brother still didn't know my feelings whenever others touch what's mine." This time, the smile on Sam's lips slowly faded.

As the two closed their distance, the smile on Klaus' lips also vanished. The latter raised his chin, sneering.

"Forgive me, brother. Your little brother got a bit excited, meeting the lady that had been the talk amongst nobles in the capital."

"And I see you also forgot that a word, forgiveness, didn't exist to me."

Would there be a fight between brothers? As soon as they met? The tension between them continued to build up.

However, I felt strangely calm about it. Therefore, I discreetly took a step back.

Stealthily so they wouldn't notice. I had a lot of surprises just before the sun rose. I didn't want to get involved.

"Brother." Klaus muttered without a trace of emotions.

This was it. I already got a whiff of a sparking, fierce battle.

I took another step back, slowly, carefully, and sneakily.

"Aren't you scaring your bride, brother?" Just as I thought I already distanced myself from them, I froze upon sensing Klaus' gaze.

"Not really." Sam shrugged as he also turned his head in my direction. "She told me if I kill, she'd help me bury the body. Isn't she romantic?"

"Is she?"

He he he... wouldn't they fight? Why were they looking at me like this?

I stared at Sam. His eyes scanning me from head to toe, his finger grazing his bottom lip. The side of his lips then curled charmingly.

"She is... romantic."

For some reason, I felt my ears burning. Pursing my lips, feeling a little flustered at Sam's remarks. There's nothing to be flustered about, really. But there's just something in his eyes and smile that made my heart pound against my chest.

"My." Klaus chuckled. "Brother, you're really smitten with her — it's a sight to behold! Taking this trip is really worth it!"

"Your — your highness." Suddenly, Cameron finally found his courage to speak. "What — I mean, the sixth prince had already visited Cunningham three months ago. I didn't hear that you..."

"Cameron, this is the reason the Crawfords were a family of losers! A disgrace to all pure-bloods. You're sheltering Hell who was invited by the king! Why would I be in this filthy place of cults if not for that?"

It was amusing how Klaus said all those remarks so easily. Sam was just as blunt as him, but Sam had his ways to impart his wisdom in his sarcasm. But Klaus... he just purely insulted the entire Cunningham and the Crawfords with a smile.

"Ah. Forgive my ineptness, Your Highness." Yet Cameron hung his head low and replied calmly.

My brows furrowed seeing Cameron concede. Not that I didn't understand his disposition, but it was still frustrating to watch and hear.

Instinctively, I glanced at Sam. As soon as I did, I caught him staring at me. Once our eyes met, he sent me a wink and a smile.

"Since it's been so long since we've chatted, why don't you stay in this place for a bit longer, brother?" Sam clapped his hand as he approached Klaus.

He then hooked his arms over Klaus' shoulders, smiling. "I'm sure you'll find your brief stay here entertaining since Fabian had been helping out a lot!"

As soon as Fabian's name was mentioned, the arrogant smile on Klaus' face instantly died down.

Huh?

Chapter 114 - Bad Blood

After that, Sam dragged his brother along with Cameron. They headed back to the manor while Rufus and I remained in the training grounds.

"Did I see it correctly?" I muttered, staring mindlessly at where the three left off.

"You didn't, my lady." Rufus answered as he picked up a wooden sword from the ground.

"The Duke might have held back since he knew his head butler, Fabian, is here."

I faced Rufus' direction. My brows almost reaching each other. I'm confused.

"What do you mean by that, Sir Knight? Was there a bad blood between Mister Fabian and the Fifth prince?"

A subtle smirk resurfaced on his lips. From my perspective, it was more of a proud smile from a brother to his big brother.

Right. Rufus was younger than Fabian. But Fabian preferred to be a butler because of personal reasons. Also, Fabian told me he was weak — I doubt it, though.

"Bad blood? More like a one-sided hate. The fifth prince detests Sir Fabian." Rufus explained.

Still, it made little sense. I tilted my head, staring at Rufus. Waiting for more explanation.

When he glanced up at me, a sigh slipped past his lips. "It was something in the past."

"Aren't you worried about Mister Fabian?" I wondered. They're brothers, after all.

Although I knew Fabian was a reliable butler, I'm not sure about fighting. I asked about it in the past out of curiosity.

Who wouldn't? Rufus was a knight, while Fabian became a butler. But all Fabian said was that fighting was not for him. He'd rather stay clean and tend the household of the duke.

It made sense, though. Fabian loved cleanliness. He's even more neat and well-groomed than Sam.

"Worry?" Rufus cast me a conflicted look. "Why would I?"

"Because it's the fifth prince. Even Marquess Cameron had to swallow his pride despite his snide remarks."

"My lady, ease your worry. I should be more worried about the fifth prince. My brother had a temper." Rufus reassured solemnly.

Fabian had a temper? I looked up and imagined. Yet, no matter how much I expand my imagination, all I could see was Fabian's smiling front.

I couldn't imagine it. Fabian was the kindest and had the longest patience. If not, he'd have lashed out on me during my early days in the duke's manor.

"Really, my lady. You shouldn't worry about Mister Fabian." Rufus sighed, shaking his head lightly before tossing me the wooden sword.

"It's still early. I think you would set off sooner than expected. Therefore, we'll have to train harder."

"Yes!" I nodded enthusiastically, shrugging off the thoughts about the uninvited guest of Cunningham.

If Sam were here, I wouldn't have to worry about Fabian. He wouldn't let anyone hurt Fabian.

Meanwhile, inside the Crawford's castle.

Cameron had led the way. Behind him were Samael and Klaus, walking side by side through the long hallway.

Silence enveloped the three as the sound of their footsteps bounced across every corner of the hall. Cameron glanced over his shoulders, sensing the intimidating aura that only the La Crox naturally bore.

"Where's Fabian?" Klaus inquired, looking ahead.

"Oh, ho! Don't get too excited, brother. There's something more important we need to discuss, right?" Unfazed, Sam chuckled gleefully as he glanced at Klaus's side profile.

Slowly, Klaus raised his hand, his fingers cracking as they curled. A sneer turned up on his lips.

"Ahh..."

Seeing the murderous sneer on Klaus' lips made Samael smirk in ridicule. Yet, he said nothing as they kept following Cameron.

"This castle is uselessly huge. How long until we reach the meeting room?" Klaus clicked his tongue after minutes of walking.

"Apologies, Your Highness." Cameron beckoned a slight bow. "We're almost there."

Just as what Cameron said, they soon reached a huge door. Cameron faced them politely, moving his arm, and made a gesture.

"Please, come in."

"Tsk. Useless." Klaus snapped his tongue once again, casting Cameron a glance as he trudged in.

Cameron secretly gritted his teeth and remained silent. As the two walked in, Samael suddenly placed his hand on Cameron's shoulder.

Out of instinct, Cameron raised his head. Samael said nothing, but he winked at him and grinned.

This slight gesture somehow calmed Cameron down. They had mocked Samael the worst. But he's more bearable to be with, unlike his other brothers.

When Samael and Klaus entered the spacious meeting room, Cameron followed in. But when he went in, Klaus stood on the entrance motionlessly.

Cameron followed Klaus' murderous gaze. His eyes landed on the figure inside, dusting off the spiderwebs from the windows with a feather duster. His jaw fell off as he had sensed danger exuding from Klaus.

Yet, Fabian looked too peaceful doing his chore!

"What a nasty sight to behold." Klaus remarked with a sneer, gazing at Fabian's back.

Slowly, Fabian turned around and bowed politely. It didn't seem he cared, meeting Klaus after a long time.

"Lord Cameron, I had heard you had some guests. That's why I personally cleaned this room."

"Ah..." Cameron darted his eyes from Fabian to Klaus awkwardly.

"I had removed all insects lingering in this room. However, only now I realized I probably made a wrong assumption. It seemed the insects here were part of your collections since you brought an exotic insect with you. My apologies."

Cameron nearly choked on his own saliva. Did he hear what he just heard?

Insect? Cameron discreetly shifted his gaze to Klaus. The Crawford had been at the mercy of the La Crox. But, how dare a butler drop an obvious snide remark — with a straight face — in front of the fifth prince?

Even if the rebellious prince Samael was here, it was just too wrong. At least for Cameron, who was too afraid to stand up against the La Crox for his own benefit.

"Fabian, bring us wine. Marquess seem a bit flustered about the fifth prince's sudden visit." Unlike Cameron, Samael remained calm as he trudged towards the settee.

Samael plopped down leisurely, resting his elbow on the armrest. His eyes, though. They remained at Klaus' visage, as the latter had his eyes fixed on Fabian.

"Yes, my lord." Without a care to anyone, Fabian faced Sam, placing his palm across his chest, bowing.

When Fabian strode towards the door where Klaus stood, Cameron took a step to the side. Cameron couldn't sit if Klaus remained standing as a sign of respect to the latter.

"An insect?" Klaus muttered under his breath. "It's been centuries, yet, you still haven't changed, Fabian."

Fabian paused as Klaus blocked his way. He smiled politely.

"I say the same to you, Your Highness. You haven't changed as well."

"Hah..." Klaus' eyes glinted as his fangs revealed themselves.

"I see your fangs had grown back, Your Highness." The smile on Fabian's face slowly faded away. "Shall I extract them again for you?"

Chapter 115 - Stored Innocence

I trained almost the whole day. I didn't see Sam after what happened in the morning. But I didn't dwell on it too much since I sparred with Rufus.

The results? I never stood a chance.

I plopped down on the nearby tree as I watched Rufus placed the wooden swords back. He's too strong.

A sigh escaped my mouth. Shaking my head in disappointment.

If the fifth prince came here to escort us, that only meant we'd really have to set off. He had planned to delay our wedding for a year.

Fortunately, Sam was very understanding and supportive. I actually thought he'd be very displeased about it. It only took a kiss to placate him.

The thought of it unconsciously made me giggle. He's so adorable... but sometimes he's very frightening. But that didn't matter.

"Fifth prince, huh?" I muttered as the image of Klaus crossed my mind.

Slowly, I raised my hand. Staring at my palm hands that held lakresha this morning.

I could still feel its icy surface on my hand. This hand... I nearly harmed Sam with this same hand. I should refrain from using Lakresha unless necessary.

Although that weapon lent me some strange strength, I didn't want it. If it intended to harm Sam, I'd rather not use it.

"I wonder if lakresha reacts the same way to his family?" I mumbled, without realizing Rufus had approached me already.

"It will, my lady. Lakresha wouldn't only react like that towards the duke. It will react the same way if you faced someone who's..."

I raised my gaze, blinking. "Who's evil?"

Rufus cleared his throat as he looked away. He didn't plan to finish his sentence, so I finished it for him.

"Don't worry. Even if Sam is the worst, he's still be the best for me." I muttered as I leaned my back against the tree.

He stood not far away or too close to me. I could not help but glanced at Rufus and then at the golden rays coloring the sky.

"Sir Knight, why do the duke's brothers hate him?" I asked.

I had asked this before. I heard Fabian and Sam's explanation. But, I'm a little curious about Rufus' version.

"Because he's strong." He answered without even thinking twice.

"I see..." I nodded, exhausted to even complain or throw a little sarcasm at his effortless response. Silence enveloped us. Until Rufus called my name and I raised my gaze.

"My lady, are you sure about going to the capital?"

"Mhm. Isn't it much better to stay close to him?" I replied in a knowing tone.

To my surprise, Rufus walked in my direction. He plopped down to my side, keeping a safe distance between us.

"You have met the fifth prince. He is usually arrogant and thinks everyone is below him. But, he actually has capabilities to back up his arrogance, no matter how detestable his character is. It's not just him, but the royal family is full of cruel individuals like him."

"I see..." I nodded in understanding, hugging my knees closer to my chest. I gaze at the beautiful scenery.

"The duke is incomparable, indeed. But, if they all conspire behind him, he'd have a hard time all on his own. I know I'm stepping out of my bounds, but you have to reconsider. After what happened three months ago, things like that — or even worse, will occur."

Rufus added. It was the first time Rufus said a lot to me. He had spoken more words than the three months we're training together. It only showed his concern towards Sam.

I understood that point.

"You, being a mortal... that's like stepping voluntarily to a lion's den. I'm confident in my master's capabilities, but —"

"But because of me, I might hold him back? And put him in a tight predicament?" Before he could finish his sentence, I abruptly cut him off by finishing it myself.

"No, my lady."

"Then what is, Sir Knight?" I turned my head to him.

Rufus was staring at me, rocking his head back and forth lightly. When he broke his gaze away, he sighed.

He didn't reply. He couldn't think of an alternative suggestion.

"The Duke had accepted an invitation from the king despite normally rejecting it. He asked me to come with him despite the dangers, so I came with him. When that incident happened, I planned not to be a hindrance by becoming strong and he supported it wholeheartedly."

I paused as I set my eyes ahead.

"Before you said it, I had already told myself a hundred of times. This training was a mere futile attempt. Three months is not enough; even a lifetime is not enough. But, if he trusts me so much, how can I doubt myself? How can I doubt him even the slightest? It may be futile for their kind, but I'm doing my best."

That's right. After that incident, I planned just to do my best. We're just asking for a blessing in marriage and yet, it felt like I'd be joining the front line of the war.

If the palace was a battlefield, I should at least have some weapon. It may be blunt, but I'd bid myself time.

"My lady."

"I know you mean well, Sir Knight." I faced Rufus and offered a subtle smile. "But, I don't need it. I won't change my mind. I will stay beside him despite the dangers ahead. If I can't do at least that, what else can I do?"

"Have you considered..." He trailed off, tilting his head back, his back against the tree trunk.

"Do you remember your words back then, my lady? You said; you may be a peasant, but you conduct yourself within humane morals."

I raised a brow as I recalled that memory. It was my first conversation with Rufus; the time I just exploded out of distress.

I didn't know he'd remember that. I pursed my lips out of guilt. I'm certain I said more harsh words to him.

"I'm afraid once you step foot in the Capital, living within human morals is impossible. Even if you returned, you'd never be the same." Rufus faced me.

His expression solemn. His eyes flickered with worry, which caught me off guard.

"There's only a few who are as pure and as innocent as you, my lady."

Why did everyone think I'm still that pure Lilou? They couldn't even understand the bottled rage within me.

Still, I offered him a meek smile. Rufus might be a strict instructor, but he's loyal to Sam. Also, I know these words were just a reminder for me.

"Thank you, Sir Knight. But..." I looked away, smiling at the scenery as the sky was about to welcome the darkness. "... I already stored that innocence solely for him. I might change in front of others, but I don't think I'd ever stop being myself in front of the Duke."

Chapter 116 - My King

When the sun went down, Rufus and I headed back to the castle. Strange it was, indeed. Normally, Sam and Fabian — sometimes Cameron — would go to the training grounds to walk me back.

Not that I needed them to. I could walk back by myself. However, after three months of having that routine, I wondered what happened.

The fifth prince was present, after all. I wondered if something bad happened.

I glanced back at Rufus, who was walking behind me. "If something happened, you would know, right?"

"Certainly, my lady."

Rufus spoke and was acting like usual. Despite our conversation previously, it surprised me how he adjusted as if we didn't talk about anything.

Well, that's for the better, I thought. In this case, it wouldn't be difficult for us. Although I'm unsure why I was concerned if ever I've felt uncomfortable around him.

As we walked back, I noticed a figure in the open garden. I stopped momentarily. Squinting my eyes to see who it was.

"Isn't that Mister Fabian?" I wondered, furrowing my brows.

"It is him."

I watched Fabian for a brief time. It seemed to me he was digging a hole in the middle of the garden. But the sun just set. Why would he do gardening now?

Since I found it peculiar, I approached him. When I came close, I saw the hole was rather longer.

The corner of my lips twitched. Why did it look more like a grave pit?

"Mister Fabian?" I called out, hesitant.

Fabian turned, wiping the sweats on his forehead by his sleeve. He smiled as soon as he set his eyes on me.

"My lady. Are you heading back inside?"

"Yes. What are you doing here?" I leaned to my side, peeking at the grave pit. "Did Sam ask you to dig your own grave?"

Fabian chuckled, shaking his head lightly. "No, my lady. It is for someone else."

"Oh..." I nodded, instinctively glancing at Rufus, who showed no emotion.

Obviously, this had been normal to them. But this had been the first time I've seen it. I've heard it many times, but I've seen no one in the Duke's Mansion digging a grave pit.

Still, I asked out of curiosity. "Did something happen, Mister Fabian?"

I looked around, searching for a corpse. But there's none.

"Nothing happened yet, my lady. However, just in case I ended up bashing someone's head in, I'm prepared."

I felt my entire face distort. An icy chill ran down my spine. How could Fabian say that with his politely smiling face?

I'm used to Sam using such words. However, it felt utterly eerie when Fabian uttered those words. I suddenly felt the night breeze growing colder.

"Ah — I see. Hehe." I said, nodding awkwardly. "Well, I shall head in first?"

"Yes, my lady. You'll catch a cold if you stay outside longer." Fabian placed his palm across his chest, beckoning a neck bow.

Alright. I'll just let him be, I guess.

I turned around, sighing. Even Fabian had his eerie side. Just thinking about how he smiled while saying, bashing someone's head, made my shoulders shudder.

"Oh!" As I walked away, I was reminded of something. Hence, I turned around.

"Where is Sam?"

"I believed he is with the fifth prince, my lady." As soon as Fabian mentioned the fifth prince's, a smug, murderous grin turned up on his lips.

Goodness gracious! I didn't know this butler!

"Be careful on your way, my lady." I heard Fabian reminded me as I walked away.

Although Rufus told me about Fabian having a temper, I couldn't imagine it. But now that I've seen it, I could say Fabian was an amazing man. I would never get on his nasty side — ever!

"Don't worry about Fabian, my lady. He's just like that." Rufus uttered from behind me, taking notice at my reaction.

"Mhmm." Yet I could only answer a low hum as we headed in.

Rufus escorted me directly towards the dining hall. Every night, this would be our first destination. But as soon as we arrived, Sam was not there. Neither Cameron nor the fifth prince.

"Huh? Where are they?" I wondered under my breath.

I only thought of Sam and Cameron. I didn't care about the fifth prince. Strange, I thought. Not only they were not present, but there were only a few servants as well.

Usually, the entire dining hall was occupied with servants. We dine as they stood on the side, taking notice of what we needed in time.

"Sir Knight? What could have...?" I trailed off as soon as I laid my eyes upon Rufus.

His eyes glinted, his jaw fell open. He broke buckets of sweat, panting.

"Sir Knight?" I called out once again, furrowing my brows.

Moments ago, Rufus was perfectly fine. But now he seemed... worn out and aroused.

"My lady," Suddenly, Rufus looked down. His cheek beet red, ruffling his usually brushed hair.

"Sir... knight?" I took a step back, alarmed.

Taking notice of my vigilance, Rufus suddenly covered his nose with his firm arm.

"It reeks..." He muttered, almost muffled. "He's in the east wing. What was the duke thinking?"

Rufus pointed his finger in a direction. Despite not seeing the lower half of his face, I knew he was gritting his teeth.

"Sir Knight, what —" Before I could ask, Rufus couldn't stand it any longer as he dragged his feet away.

"My lady! The duke is in the east wing. Tend to his wound if he didn't want the entire townsfolk rushing here!" As Rufus rush outside, he exclaimed, leaving me alone.

Even the servants present deserted their post in a blink of an eye. Just what was... going on?

"East wing... tend to his wound..." My eyes went wide as I snapped.

Was it possible that...? Before I could think twice, I sprinted towards the east wing. What happened to Sam? For everyone to react this way?

"Ugh...! Sam!" Through my gritted teeth, I rushed to where he could be as fast as I could.

Meanwhile, in the east wing meeting room.

Blood dripped down from Samael's finger tips, landing directly on the floor. Each dropped sounded so eerily loud in this dreading silence.

"Brother..." Klaus called out desperately, kneeling, looking up at Samael.

The latter perched on the settee nonchalantly. Staring down at him, his arm on the armrest, as his face was devoid of emotions.

"How pathetic, brother." Samael sneered. "You're so pathetic I feel like weeping."

Samael shook his head, sighing. Slowly, Samael then stood up and trudged towards the door.

"My king!" Klaus called out, stopping Samael from his tracks. "Your Majesty, please..."

"Klaus." Samael only called his name without looking back. But Klaus trembled in fear as he hung his head low.

"My apologies." Klaus muttered under his breath.

Chapter 117 - Deja Vu

As I went closer to the east wing, the halls had become bleak. The further I went, the lesser the scone that usually gave the hallway's light. Hence, the pathways grew darker as I moved forward.

But that didn't stop me from running. Even when my hurried footsteps echoed in my ear, I didn't stop.

The image of Rufus as he hurriedly walked away told me something was very wrong. What could have happened to Sam? Did he have a confrontation with the fifth prince?

Cold sweats broke out from my back as my lungs constricted. I'd been running laps, but with this worry in my heart, I felt restive. My breathing ragged as my throat felt parched.

Why was this castle so uselessly huge? I gritted my teeth, annoyed that even with my speed, it took me awhile.

As I turned into a corridor, I gradually halted. There's only a single candelabra that was lightened up. If not for the moon radiating through the large windows, I wouldn't be able to see.

'I can move with this dim light.' I nodded encouragingly.

I refrained myself from sprinting through the hallway. I could barely see and I might bump into something and end up injuring myself.

Therefore, with that thought in mind, I went forth cautiously. My speed was neither too slow nor too fast.

Still, under this smothering silence, I could hear each of my steps. Every step felt heavy and intense in my ears. Even my breathing sounded so loud.

Goodness...

My heart pounded against my chest. Surprisingly enough, it wasn't racing. But it was beating with great impact, it was affecting my breathing.

'Ominous...' I whispered internally.

This reminded me of that dreading night; the night Sam intruded on my shack. It felt terrifyingly similar.

The only difference was that I'm a bit more daring now. Instead of running away from trouble, I focused on passing through this seemingly endless hallway.

I never noticed how huge this castle was. Only now, while walking in this darkness, filled with sinister, disturbing air, I realized how frustratingly huge this manor.

'It's alright, Lil. It's alright.' I chanted inwardly, stabilizing my breathing.

However, just as I was in the middle of the hallway, I carefully halted. When I took another step, I heard another footstep going forward.

As soon as I recognized I was not alone, I breathed out through my mouth. My hand slowly curled into a tight fist as I took another step forward.

Just as I did, I heard another footstep coming from behind me. Hence, without thinking twice, I turned around.

Alas... there's no one.

"Did I imagine that?" I mumbled, as I bit my lower lip. 'Maybe I'm being too cautious?'

A sigh of relief slipped past my lips. I then turned around and continued to stride forth.

Again, as I walked, I could hear someone else footsteps. I tried to ignore it at first, blaming my imagination.

But that wasn't the case. I'm not the only one walking through this hallway.

Slowly, I paused in my tracks, in front of the closed window. The footstep also stopped.

I glanced at the window. My shoulders instantly stiffened as a chill ran down my spine. My heart that was beating loudly dropped to my stomach.

Someone... was behind me. I could see its reflection from the window.

My lips parted, but no words came out. My lower lip trembling in fear. What an horrifying situation.

I closed my eyes, taking a deep breath. If this person behind me wanted to kill me, he had done it already. But he didn't. I'm certain he needed something first.

"Who..." I instantly turned around and trailed off. Where did he go?

My brows furrowed, bewildered. I'm certain I saw the reflection from the window. I glanced at the window and to my surprised; he was behind me again.

He was toying with me.

He's agile. How could he go behind me without being noticed? He didn't even make a sound, as if his steps were as light as a feather.

"What do you..." Again, I turned around, and he's gone. I gritted my teeth in frustration.

But before I could check if he was behind me again, through the mirror, I jolted.

"Boo!"

Immediately, I jolted away, tripping over as I plopped down on the carpet.

"Ah!" Fortunately, I used my palm so to lessen the impact on my buttocks.

"Sam!" As soon as I got a hold of myself, I raised my glaring eyes and shot him a look.

Sam chuckled as he squatted down in front of me. "What are you doing, silly?"

He nearly gave me a heart attack. And yet, he was smiling from ear to ear. Still, I heaved a sigh of relief at seeing he was fine, though.

"You nearly gave me a heart attack! Why would you do that?" I complained, almost barking at him.

"Haha! I'm sorry it's just so fun to tease you." He giggled, slapping the floor lightly. "I thought you'd run away, but you'd actually confront me. Ahh...! That's worth it."

Goodness. I shook my head lightly. He really enjoyed that stunt, huh?

I clicked my tongue as I watched him have a merry laugh.

"It's not funny. I was worried for you." I looked away, biting my inner lip.

Who wouldn't get frustrated? I rushed in here, thinking he was in danger. Yet, he pulled a prank on me.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry~!" He apologized in between his light chuckles, waving at me. His order hand wiping the tears from the corner of his eyes.

However, I immediately caught something in his hand. Without thinking twice, I grabbed his hand in the air.

Blood.

His hand was drenched with fresh blood, as if he had dipped it in a tub of blood. My eyes went wide as I met his gaze.

"Oh!" Taking notice of the worry in my eyes, Sam grinned. "Don't worry. It's not someone else's blood."

He reassured. Was he thinking I was thinking it was the fifth prince's blood?

I didn't speak, but gazed at his sleeve. His sleeves weren't ripped or did it show any signs he came out from a confrontation.

To make sure of my conclusion, I pulled his sleeve up to his elbow. Even with just the faint light from the moon filtering through the window, I could see his mangled arm.

As soon as I laid my eyes on it, I raised my eyes. They're glinting as I ground my teeth.

"It's not someone else's blood, but yours? Did you think that will make me less worried? Are you out of your mind?" Before I knew it, I was already yelling at him.

Chapter 118 - Will You Drink Mine, Then?

After that, Sam and I headed back to our bedchambers. I readied all first aid kits and water to clean his mangled arms. Since I'd often get a slight scratch from my training, I didn't need anyone's help to find what I needed.

Also, no one was available. Everyone seemed to desert the entire castle.

"Are you still angry?" Sam inquired as soon as I plopped down on the wooden chair across from him.

"Give me your arm. I'll clean it." Without answering his question, I gave him a sharp look.

Sam pouted, reluctantly giving his arm. With better lights now, his sleeve was drenched with his blood.

Carefully, I cut his sleeve with a knife. As soon as I did, I clenched my teeth at the sight of it.

His arm looked worse than I thought. I could see his flesh and even bits of his bones.

I could not help but shudder. My hands that were cleaning his arm with water uncontrollably trembled.

Even though it was not my injury, my heart clenched. I couldn't even bring myself to ask what happened, afraid I'd just sob.

How could he be so reckless?

"This is nothing, really." Unlike me, who was bottling up my emotions, Sam reassured calmly.

I kept silent, giving him cold shoulders.

"It's just that, my brother, the fifth prince, wants to have a drink. So I let him have some out of the goodness of my heart. He just lost control, so I had to pull him from the back myself. His fangs tore up my flesh while I do so, though. Such a bothersome brother." He sighed, summarizing how he got injured to this extent.

I glanced at him, and he shook his head lightly. I opened my mouth, but pressed them together again.

Nevermind.

"I'll recover soon. It's not that it actually hurts. I —" Before he could blab his nonsense, I glared cold daggers at him.

Sam immediately pursed his lips. For a meanwhile, we didn't speak. When I cleaned all the blood on his arm, I ground my teeth.

His explanation matched with his injuries. Two long and deep marks sliced across his forearm. If Sam pulled the fifth prince from the back while his fangs drilled into him, the mark made sense.

Still, for a mortal like me, this wound would be lethal. It was not an everyday sight to see, nor it looked normal.

"I'll wrapped it up. Stay still." I informed him coldly as I reached for the cloth.

Red drenched every cloth and even the water; that's how much he had bled. Fortunately, I took out all cloth I could. These were the last ones.

Sam remained silent. I could feel his gaze on me. It never left me even a second.

"It would be better if you wince or just say it hurts." I muttered under my breath, wrapping his injury with cloth.

"Because if it didn't hurt, you wouldn't mind inflicting the same injuries again. And this wouldn't be the last time I'm doing this."

I barely got the courage to relay my thoughts. Not that it did not relieve me. He seemed fine with it. However, this just added to my worries.

If this severe injury didn't rattle him, nothing would. And that just broke my heart, slowly and painfully.

My hands that were tending to his wounds slowed down. I'm losing my grip as my vision blurred. Before I knew it, tears landed on the back of his hand.

I bit my lower lip, almost chewing it. It was frustrating. That he was so careless. Did he think even though he's strong, I wouldn't get worried?

For me, this sight felt more painful just to look at. It might just be my selfishness, but I wanted him to take care of himself as well.

Suddenly, his cold palm cupped my cheek. Ironic how I felt, my heart in flames despite his cold temperature.

He slowly guided my head up. A subtle smile turned up on his lips as soon as our eyes met.

"Don't cry." He whispered, wiping the tears rolling down my cheek.

"How can I not? Would you not shed tears for me if we're in the opposite situation?"

"I'm used to it, so I'm fine." He chuckled, which made me feel even worse.

I shook my head and brushed his hand away. "I'm here crying and you're laughing. I don't like it."

I said, as I continued to wrap his arm. Out of frustration, I tied it tighter than I should.

Despite doing that, the corner of his lips stretched from ear to ear. His other hand propping his chin, staring at me, smiling brightly.

"What's so funny?" I inquired, out of frustration. I never thought I had the urge to rip that smile away from him. It was better if he showed more than just smiling.

I'd accept it if he was vexed or in pain. Anything but smiling. This was not a laughing matter.

"How can I not smile when you're so adorable?" Again, he chuckled as he pinched my cheek.

His action just made me frown. If not for the severity of his injuries, I would have beaten him to a pulp.

"Thank you." As he pinched my cheek, Sam searched for my gaze. "It feels good having someone who cares."

I would be lying if I said I didn't feel his sincerity. Thus, my heart calmed down as my shoulders eased.

"Goodness... how can he do this to his brother?" I changed the subject. Looking away as I cleared my throat. Then, I grabbed the cloth I used to clean his wound so I could wash them later.

"Do your brothers always do this to you? How can you get used to it?"

Before I could think of my words, they already escaped my lips. When I realized it, I pursed my lips. Slowly, I raised my gaze to him.

Sam sported a smile and said nothing.

"They do this to you? All the time?" This time, it wasn't just a slip of the tongue.

"Well..." Sam scratched his jaw with his forefinger. "Not really. My father didn't really like me. So, they used to break my bones and gang up on me when we're kids. But now, they have to ask nicely."

"..." In other words, his brothers used to abuse him? I bit my lower lip, repressing my rage at hearing this.

I slammed my palm against the surface of the table. Sam jolted slightly along with the abrupt clattering noises of the small barrel and cloths.

"Sam, promise me!" Looking at him in the eye, a determined glint flickered across my eyes. "Don't let them take advantage of you again! Even if it means killing them, I don't care. Don't let drink your blood or never shed a drop of blood for them! They don't deserve it."

"Haha!" Sam chuckled, tapping the surface of the table lightly. "Well, will you drink mine then?"

Chapter 119 - How To Turn Humans To Vampires

"Haha!" Sam chuckled, tapping the surface of the table lightly. "Well, will you drink mine then?"

He then leaned forward, propping his jaw on his palm, flashing me a mischievous smirk.

"Ah?"

"*sigh* The only person I want to drink my blood never even consider having a sip." Sam smiled brightly. "It never even crosses you, did it?"

I pursed my lips into a thin line. Well, why would I drink a vampire's blood? I'm a mortal.

"Do I have to drink your blood? But isn't that dangerous?" I asked, out of pure curiosity.

"It is dangerous. But I think you won't die now that you have lakresha. You'll just get sired to me once you turned into a vampire. Isn't that romantic?"

"I don't need to get sired to do everything you want, though." I let out a heavy sigh, taking this discussion rather lightly.

"Also, I don't want to become a vampire."

For reasons unknown, I hung my head low. Was it too selfish for me to say those words?

"Why do you look so dejected, silly? I don't plan on turning you into one unless you beg me." Sam chuckled, reacting as the complete opposite of what I expected.

I lifted my head and let out another sigh. Sam and I never discussed about it. He never even proposed of turning me into a vampire or how this love between a human and vampire would last.

"Say, Sam." I leaned my arms on the edge of the table. "I'm asking out of pure curiosity. But, how will you turn me into a vampire? I know drinking your blood is an act of intimacy and has effects like getting sired. Will I turn into one if I drink your blood?"

I queried in one go. I had been thinking about this long ago and only now I asked.

"Oh? Curious, I see." Sam raised a brow, nodding. "Let's see."

He then rubbed his chin, ruminating on his explanation. When our gaze met, Sam snapped his finger.

"To turn you into a vampire, you have to die. I mean, you have to be at the death's door. Although it sounds simple, the process is utterly excruciating since a vampire's blood will eat all your human blood. Also, only few can actually survive that. That's why there are only a few cases of successful turned vampires." Sam explained in a knowing tone.

"What happens if it's a failure?"

"You will be an abnormal. Although, it's guarantee you'll become strong, you won't control your thirst. You'll end up just like a mindless, blood sucking monster with a brief span of life."

"Short span of time?" I tilted my head to the side.

"Most abnormal have one hour or half a day to live. The only successful turned vampires are products of pure-blooded vampires. Most abnormal are products of nobles; the abnormal produced by the purebloods have longer life span, though. They can live for at least a week or a month without ever seeing sunlight."

"That sounds... complicated." I murmured, knitting my brows as I parsed his explanation.

"To put it simply, pureblooded vampires such as the royal family have a high probability to turn human into a vampire. But that didn't mean they were successful all the time. Noble vampires can only produce failures. It's actually better to have turned vampires as servants, since no one can bend their loyalty. They will kill themselves if you order them to." Sam nodded, agreeing with his own last remarks.

"If its so convenient, why didn't the royal family turned everyone a vampire?" I asked with a frown.

The side of his lips curled into a smile. "Because there's always a hitch, Lilove."

"Huh?"

"You see, turning a human into a vampire is not as easy as breathing. If you turned someone into a vampire, it takes up a lot of energy and life span. If I turn you into a vampire, I'll have to give you at least a hundred years of my life. In other words, I have to sacrifice something to gain something. Do you think my arrogant brothers will just generously sacrifice something for mortals?"

"It sounds more complicated than I thought..." I nodded, still a little confused. But somehow, I grasped the idea. "How about blood pact, then? It sounds less complicated."

"Of course, Lilove. However, the bond between a pact and turning human to vampire is different. A pact is less complicated, but they're less effective. A person bound by a blood pact has a free will to disobey their master and betray them. As for the turned vampires, they're practically sired, slaves, and see their master as a god."

Sam shrugged nonchalantly. And then added;

"Who is in their sane mind to do a pact if a human who can betray them in the end?"

I pursed my lips, staring at him. Sam was shaking his head, sighing.

Who was in their sane mind to agree into a pact if the other part could betray them? Well, I'm staring into one.

I shook my head and let out a faint sigh. My sarcasm didn't matter now, right?

"I see." Instead, I just nodded as he answered my questions.

"If I don't love you, I'll let you drink my blood. If so, my Lilove will swoon at me day and night~!" Sam giggled, as he seemed to enjoy the thought.

"Will you prefer a substantial affection than actual love?"

"Hehe. Does it seem it matters to me?" A smug grin turned up on his lips. "But, the latter is better, obviously. I don't think it'll be as fun as this if it's the former."

"Don't tell me to drink your blood then." I looked away. The tip of my ears burning.

"Yes, yes, ma'am. I won't mention it." Sam chuckled as he watched me picked up the cloths on the table.

Just as I picked up the last piece of cloth, I halted and faced him.

"Sam?"

"Hmm?"

"That night... three months ago, where did you go that night?" I asked out of impulse. Even I didn't know why I asked such a question.

No, that's not what's strange. What was even stranger was, why did I never ask him?

"Oh?" Sam tilted his head innocently. "I picked flowers for you since I didn't think we will stay here this long. I thought I should give you flowers that only bloom in Cunningham. They were in the season."

Huh? What's this?

"I helped the townsfolk set up your sacred place. I made a sketch of you so they could worship your beauty... properly."

Those words suddenly hovered inside my head, being uttered by the same voice and same lip. I stretched my neck slightly, having this discomfort sensation out of nowhere.

"It's not because you made a sketch of me so others can 'worship' me properly?" I asked, shrugging my tangled thoughts away.

"What nonsenses is that? If you allow me, I'd pluck out everyone's eyes who had laid their eye on my precious bride!" Sam's face scrunched, expressing his resolve.

"Why would I make a sketch of you for everyone to see? I'd rather have you all for myself!"

"Oh..." I nodded as it made sense, considering his character. Sam overly proud about me, but his possessiveness far exceeded one's imagination. If I let him be, everyone around us had gone blind already!

"Wait. Did you...?"

"Well, I think I remembered something like that. Don't worry. You'll be the first person to know if I recovered all my memories." I sported a reassuring smile.

I gathered all the cloth and hugged them, carrying them to wash them. Before I left, I turned my head back to him.

"You should rest first, Sam. I will be back."

Sam just nodded mindlessly and waved. I smiled at his heedless reaction and went off.

Chapter 120 - Why Did You Stop, Silly?

I acted as if I was fine when I left Sam. However, now that I'm washing all this blood off of these cloths, I'm not.

It's been a while since I used these hands doing chore. Not that I mind, really.

However, knowing that these blood that diluting in the waters were Sam's. It hurts.

"How can he be so careless?" I murmured, clenching my teeth tightly.

As I washed each cloth, my hands felt a burning sensation. But that didn't even hurt. This couldn't even compare to the stabbing pain in my chest.

These tears falling from my eyes until I sniffed. I wondered how absurd and painful his childhood was.

I only focused on myself recently. No, not just recently. I've been too complacent because of his carefree attitude. Not knowing that to smile like that, he probably went through situations I couldn't even imagine.

To think he was already numb despite how mangled his arm was, Sam must've gone through worse.

"Get yourself together, Lil." I shook my head, wiping the tears I held back earlier with my arm.

"I shouldn't cry. I'll protect him no matter what."

I added with conviction. The matter of how I should protect him didn't cross my mind. I just wanted to stay with him and give him nothing but happiness.

Biting my lower lip, I took a deep breath and exhaled it sharply. Gritting my teeth as I solidified my resolve.

"I will stand up for him even if its against St..." I trailed off as I bit my tongue. For a moment, I thought I was going to mention someone's name.

It was just for a moment. But I was sure I was about to mention someone's name.

"Goodness. My memory had been a mess." I sighed in frustration.

Without thinking anymore, I vent all my frustration on the cloths. I furiously washed them until they're all white and disposed of the water I used.

*

Meanwhile, as Lilou was beating the poor cloths, Samael breathed in the night breeze. Standing in front of the window, his arms on the windowsill, a smile plastered across his lips.

Slowly, he gazed down on his wounded arm. His eyes immediately glinted with satisfaction.

"How can she wrap it so tightly? I'd actually think she'd break my arm instead." He chuckled huskily.

Samael carefully traced the knot of the cloth around his arm. Lilou bandaged his arm hastily. However, his eyes softened just staring at the knot.

The tip of his finger played with the knot carefully. It looked adorable in his eyes.

"It feels nice." He whispered with a subtle smile. "I feel bad for worrying her, but inflicting injuries now and then didn't seem bad."

Fortunately, Lilou was not there to hear him. Or else, Samael was already done for.

Still, for him, who never really received genuine love and affection from his family, Lilou was his salvation. Not just Samael's salvation, but the entire kingdom's salvation.

Samael slowly shifted his gaze outside. He closed his eyes, breathing in and out.

The soft night breeze kissed his cheek. Even from this distance, he could hear the noises from outside.

The townsfolk searching for the scent of his blood. Rufus' agitated voice seizing the Crawfords from going wild, Fabian filling up the grave pit. Even the soft rustle of the leaves and howling of the wolves reached his ear.

"What a lively town." Samael whispered as he opened his eyes. "They all want my blood, yet she doesn't. I still don't know if I will feel bitter or glad about it."

Samael enjoyed the faint noises that reached his ear. His finger caressing the bandaged Lilou did for him.

"She's driving me insane, really." A brief chuckle slipped past his lips while he shook his head lightly.

"Ah... I should just kill everyone so it's just the two of us."

*

By the time I finished hanging the cloths I laundered, I went back to bathe myself, and returned to where I left him. A smile immediately turned up on my lips as my gaze landed on him.

Sam was already lying on the bed. His eyes closed, sleeping peacefully. It seemed he had truly adjusted to this routine as well.

I tiptoed my way towards him, afraid I'd wake him up. Instead of going to the other side of the bed, I went to his side of the bed.

Fortunately, there was a small space on the edge of the mattress. I carefully plopped down on to it.

My eyes etching his breathtaking beauty in my mind. He's too gorgeous for a man.

But this man was mine. This vampire... he's mine.

A subtle smile resurfaced on my lips. After venting my frustration, I also had gathered my resolve.

I lifted my hand, discreetly brushing a few stray argent hairs on his forehead. Now that I'm staring at him, it had been three months since I looked at him this long.

The training kept me busy. Hence, I barely have time for him. Normally, I would be snoring at this time. But I didn't think I could sleep tonight.

Suddenly, my gaze settled on his lips. It's been a while since I kissed him as well. For reasons unknown, I avoided getting too intimate with him.

It reminded me of that night three months ago. I knew it was not his fault. Still, depriving him was unintentional.

'Thank you for being patient with me, Sam.' I expressed internally, thinking I might wake him up if I said it aloud.

Before I knew it, the tip of my fingers graze his lip. My ears instantly burned as my breath hitched.

His lips were too soft, I thought. I glanced at his eyes and heaved a sigh of relief for not waking him up.

Perhaps, if I kissed him, he wouldn't wake up, right? Just a peck to test if I could handle the traumatizing feeling that had been consuming me.

'Just a peck.' I whispered in my head, convincing myself I'm not harassing him. All to overcome my unknown fear.

With that thought in mind, I leaned in ever so slowly. I held on to my hair to keep it from flowing down.

Slowly and discreetly, until I got a whiff of his consistently hot breaths. I halted. My throat instantly felt parched as my heart drummed against my chest.

Was this really alright? Kissing someone who was deep in their slumber?

"Why did you stop, silly? I'm looking forward to it." Suddenly, Sam spoke huskily. My eyes instantly went wide.