

The Duke 181

Chapter 181 - Who She Will Be

On our way, I've seen a few knights rushing towards the direction we were heading. Just what was going on? Sam only said he'd spar with Fabian! Did they end up trying to kill each other? But that made little sense.

If Sam and Fabian were the ones who were sparring, the royal knights wouldn't be disconcerted. A feud between Sam and his people would be the least of their concerns. Unless Sam finally lost his mind and started wreaking havoc!

'Really... while I was daydreaming!' I ground my teeth, as Sam had truly gone mad. 'Worst-case scenario, Sam and a royalty, maybe Hanz, had a confrontation.'

I felt a sudden tightness in my chest as we ran through the hallway. Suddenly, someone appeared before me, holding both my arms, and forced me to the side.

I snapped back to my trance as I gazed up, meeting a pair of glinting azure eyes. "Yul?"

"Where are you going?" He asked in a deeper tone, as his eyes glinted menacingly.

"Yul, what's going on?" I unhesitatingly grabbed his collar. "Where is my husband?"

"Go back."

"Yul!" I snarled, grinding my teeth as I stared at him straight in the eye. "You can't stop me, unless one of us dies, then so be it."

I shoved him forcefully, scoffing as I peered at him from head to toe. For Yul to stop me only means something terrible happened.

"Stop deciding for me. Don't forget, I'm the bearer of Lakresha." My ragged breaths rasped in my throat as I clenched my hand tightly. "Get out of my way."

I froze the second I stepped forward as Yul spoke. "It's the king."

My eyes slowly turned to him as my heart pounded against my chest.

"What did you say?" I asked and Yul met my gaze squarely.

"Hell and His Majesty were having a... spar." He remarked with his eyes glinting. "If you go out there, who knows if you'll get caught up in the crossfire again. Don't forget about your situation."

I heard my heart dropped to my stomach as my knees trembled. My situation... I'm sired to the king and he could use me against Sam.

My head throbbed as my breathing grew short, taking three tottering steps back as my back hit against the wall. What should I do?

"Sis, I'm saying this not because Hell is my king." Yul held my shoulders as he searched for my eyes. "I'm saying this because of you. Hell will rather accept your death instead of you getting in his way."

"Yul..."

I've never seen Yul bore such sincerity and intense worry in his eyes. And his voice sought to be heard, making it harder for me to argue.

"Please, go back. They're just... sparring. We will stop them if things get serious." Yul nodded in encouragement. "Trust us, will you?"

I kept silent as I stared at him, unblinking. "Yul, have you ever trust me? Completely?" My question caught him off-guard as he couldn't answer for a moment.

"I appreciate your concern until now, and I know your intentions are pure." I took a deep breath as I brushed his hands off of my shoulders. "However, you and I, we never truly trust each other, not even for a second. So, how can you ask me to trust you when you never trust me?"

Yul staggered back as he rocked his head. Our relationship may not be that bad, but I couldn't take his words right now.

"If this is another situation, I will listen and trust you, completely, Yul. But this is my husband's affairs, and as his wife, you can't ask me not to meddle with his life," I said sincerely, feeling a bit bad for telling him all this, but it was a fact. This was not something I could let go of.

I trudged away and let out a sigh. However, I stopped once again as I felt the intimidating aura behind me.

"You said, 'unless one of us dies,' correct?" Yul muttered in a low tone, and I took a deep breath. "Were those empty words?"

No, they're not, Yul. I'm prepared to commit treason if Sam got hurt. I promised myself that I won't tend to Sam's wound again because I'd protect him. It was a silly promise, but I meant it even if my life's at stake.

"Yul," I called out, holding my necklace, Lakresha, as I turned around and faced him. "I might kill you."

"I won't."

I tightened my grip around Lakresha until its sharp edges pierced my palm. "Lakresha."

"Bloodfield."

Dark red mist immediately appeared in the air, spreading across the entire palace as two equally powerful bloodfield's being unleashed at the same time.

"You've gone mad, Stefan," Samael crowed as his grin grew more sinister. "Have you lost your mind? For losing your composure over someone else's woman?"

"Hell, you won't see that memory if you didn't seek it from her blood." Stefan seethed as his eyes glinted with bloodlust. "Did you purposely lured her into your traps and wrapped her around your fingers because you've known all along? How?"

Samael chuckled, but it was cold. "And why would I tell you?"

"Because if you don't, that means my conclusion is correct," Stefan smirked, and he cocked his head to the side. "I always wondered why you sealed off Grimsbanne before your slumber, Hell."

Stefan's last remarks made Samael's smirk grow into a smile. The latter nodded, shaking his head while chuckling.

"Why did he seal off Grimsbanne? What's secret lies in Grimsbanne?" Stefan quipped. "Those questions crossed my head for centuries, only to come up with a few weak conclusions. I never realized I was asking the wrong questions. It should be who, am I right?"

"Shouldn't you thank me for keeping you busy during my absence, Your Majesty?"

"It's never proven, but it's not impossible," Stefan muttered as he let out a deep exhale through his gritted teeth. "Were you listening to her, Hell? That's why you looked into that memory to confirm?"

Samael pressed his lips, thrusting his lower lips forward as he hummed. He spoke after he smacked his lips.

"I didn't know you have some romantic side of you, Stefan. However, you missed your chance and you let her go because of who she was." Samael lifted his finger as his eyes drooped.

"I wouldn't even touch her if you didn't make such a foolish decision — I'd even give you my blessings — but you did. So, you don't deserve her now that you know of who she will be."

Chapter 182 - Mince Him Alive

"Maleficent!" Fabian called out his dark spear as slashed the deadly blood needles coming from all direction.

Samael and Stefan just unleashed their bloodfield, but with two of them being unleashed, needle-like blood was flying in a random direction.

"Good riddance, Maleficent is trembling..." Fabian gritted his teeth as he chuckled. "... in excitement."

His eyes never went wide ever until now. A complete 180 degree changed. Before Fabian could act on instinct, Rufus placed his blade at his neck.

"Brother, I hadn't had a wink of sleep and those two had totally lost it," Rufus muttered under his breath, obviously not pleased, and was tempted to join the party out of frustration. "You and I need to get a grip. The duchess is the bearer of Lakresha, she'd probably heading this way as we speak. Get her out of here."

Fabian took a deep breath, frowning at the orders given to him. "But Maleficent is hungry."

"Don't spoil it and continue its diet." Rufus patted Fabian's shoulder before he squeezed it and gazed at his brother. "The duchess."

"Fine," Fabian answered as he flung his dark spear, repelling the needle-like blood coming in their direction at a speed of light. "Good luck in the mist."

Fabian cast Rufus an indifferent glance as he took a step away. However, just as he did, he froze as he turned his head back to Rufus. Upon laying his eyes on his brother's alarmed expression, Maleficent's dark shroud covered Fabian's arm.

"Now!" Rufus growled, and Fabian immediately disappeared from his spot. "My lady...!"

Rufus slowly set his eyes towards the two vague figures fighting inside the mist. His expression seethed in rage, as this was truly not the time for this.

"Your Grace!" Rufus growled as he trudged inside the wild mist, bleeding as the needle-like blood grazed him. "My lord! The duchess is bleeding!"

But Samael and Stefan were caught in the heat of their battle. They would have smelled it if not for this red mist.

"My lo —" Rufus abruptly halted as he lifted his sword, blocking an incoming saber from his side with the flat side of his sword.

"Silvia," He hissed as he shot her a deadly glare. "I'm in no mood to play with you."

"It's your royal highness, Sir Barret, Silvia corrected with a scoff. "What does a mere knight like you trying to do?"

"I hadn't had a wink of sleep for days, your royal highness. So, I hope you forgive me." Rufus apologized, but couldn't even conceal his insincerity. "However, this is an important matter. We can't let His Majesty dying now, don't you think?"

"Which king are you talking about, Sir Barret?"

Rufus didn't reply immediately as he raised his gaze behind Silvia, before swinging his sword up. His hand unhesitatingly grabbed her wrist, pulling her behind him as deflected the incoming needle-like blood — which was much larger — away.

"Your royal highness, I don't know what you're planning. However, we should put the people of the kingdom first before our greed." He shot Silvia a glare. "Wait until the truce is over. Blood will surely wash over the Capital just as you wished."

Silvia clenched her teeth before she reluctantly drew her saber back. "The bearers of the Divine Order and my brothers will stop Stefan, you handle Hell yourself."

"No one else can handle him, anyway."

Silvia merely sneered as she cast him a look of disbelief. But she couldn't deny it, because if any of them other than Fabian or Rufus approached Hell, the man would kill them, no doubt.

"You're still as arrogant as ever, Darling," she murmured before disappearing from her spot and returned to where she came from.

Rufus tossed his sword lightly, holding it with its point facing down. "What a trouble..." he trailed off as he narrowed his eyes, pulling his sword back, standing in a throwing stance before he threw the sword towards the two figure's direction.

With the presence of an incoming sword, Samael and Stefan parted as they hopped back. Rufus' sword immediately pierced the ground between them.

"What a superhuman strength," Stefan commented as he gazed at the sword's handle that was the only part of the sword that didn't go through the ground.

Samael nodded, proud at his knight. "That's Rufus for..." He trailed off as he took a deep breath.

"My lord!" Rufus came jogging in his direction. "The duchess!"

As soon as Samael heard Lilou's name and distinguished whose faint blood he was smelling, he snapped and disappeared to follow where the scent was. Stefan furrowed his brows as he closed his eyes briefly before they snapped open, with panic washing over his face.

"Lilou!"

Meanwhile...

"Sis, what's up?" Yul smirked arrogantly at me. "I never thought your blood had such a sweet aroma."

"Yu," I called through my gritted teeth. "Stop... I can't hold it for too long."

I winced as Lakresha's blade cut deeper in my palm as I tried to stop it from killing Yul. Things happened so fast and I successfully ended up cornering Yul, but I couldn't kill him.

The only reason I pushed Yul to this terrible state was that he didn't fight me with an intention to kill. I fought with Lakresha intending to kill him.

"You are ready to kill me just moments ago, sis," Yul recalled as that was true, but I changed my mind. I couldn't kill him, but Lakresha wouldn't let go.

"Yul, I feel like I'll lose my mind as well," I panted as I've been having these strange, dangerous thoughts of how I'd minced Yul alive. "I don't want to kill you. So, please... if you want us to start over, don't die in my hand."

My eyes flickered with pain and desperation as my hand trembled, blood dripping sounded so overly loud in my ears while I ground my teeth.

"I don't think I need..." Yul trailed off as I flung Lakresha behind me, clashing blades against Fabian's dark spear.

I watched as Fabian's eyes slowly widened as he whispered, "My lady, your eye..."

I grimaced. "Mister Fabian, help Yul..." my words came out meek, aware and confused at how my left eye changed from olive to a deep crimson hue.

Chapter 183 - Take Out The Root

"Mister Fabian, please help Yul..." I trailed off as a wave of laughter came out of my mouth as if this entire ordeal was utterly hilarious.

"My lady, let go of Lakresha now," Fabian instructed, but his tone sounded as if he didn't expect me to listen.

Ah, Lakresha, I thought, gazing down at my grip around it. I think I'm losing my mind as this cruelty I've never known I had felt just so natural. The corner of my lips curled up into a smirk as I raised my gaze and met Fabian's gaze.

"Maleficent?" I tilted my head to the side, grinning as Fabian shoved me back and hopped a meter away. "It wants Lakresha."

"My Lady, please forgive me." A sigh slipped past his lips as he chanted, "I will have to fight you."

Fight me? I would've cowered in fear in the past. No, it wouldn't even cross my mind. However, there was this manic excitement bubbling inside me, making my entire body tremble with the sheer thought of it.

I watched how Fabian's dark spear transformed into a sword. My head bobbed as I gazed at it in awe.

From a spear to a sword... "Lakresha, can you do that too?"

Fabian narrowed his eyes as he frowned upon seeing Lakresha copying Maleficent. I felt like a child, excited at this discovery.

"Your highness, the ninth prince," Fabian seethed without taking his eyes off of me. "What the hell did you... do?"

He barely finished his remark as he blocked my attack while keeping his eyes on me. Those dangerous eyes of him... we were restraining his desire for a good fight. I could understand what those eyes spoke, as I felt the same.

"Mister Fabian, I want to see it," I whispered as I leaned closer, as our blades rattled against each other.

"My lady, this brings excitement to me, but have you forgotten it's your wedding night?"

"Sam," I murmured and took a few steps back. Just the thought of Sam snapped my senses awake.

"That's right. I'm on my way to Sam." I nodded as I recalled the reason Yul and I fought. How could I forget?

Sam was in danger, was what my heart knew about. I had to...

"My lady, drop Lakresha now!" Fabian yelled, catching my attention as I gaze at him who stood across from me.

I nodded. "I wil..." My grip trembled as a voice whispered in my ear.

"He's dead." It was Lakresha. I didn't know how I could tell who it was, but I just knew it was my weapon.

"Dead... that's impossible," I mumbled as I shook my head, unaware I was talking aloud.

"Why did you think the ninth prince stopped you? Why is Fabian here? Did you think His Majesty will let go of such a golden opportunity? Did you think Hanz will just let things go? How about Dominique, he seemed capable, I'm sure he'll join too! The bearers of the Divine Order also want his life, did they not?"

I covered my ears, desperate to shut Lakresha's voice despite knowing its voice was in my head. Don't listen to her, Lilou.

"Stop..." I pleaded through my gritted teeth as tears pooled in the corner of my eyes. "... no more... please."

My knees felt weak as I pitifully collapsed on the floor, covering my ears, screaming at the top of my lungs. I knew Lakresha was trying to manipulate me, but a part of me agreed with her.

Even with the truce, there was no telling they wouldn't kill Sam if he ever lowered his guard. What if Sam lowered his guard because we finally got married? Did they take the opportunity? In this place, there were always multiple truths. What if the other truth about this marriage was for him to lower his guard so they could slay him?

Was this the plan? That's why the king agreed to it so easily? I couldn't think straight as Lakresha's voice along with the unanswered questions hovered over my head.

It was as if my thoughts were tangled hairs that couldn't be straightened that easily. No, I think even with my jumbled thoughts, I already knew what to do. Follow my instincts.

"That's right, Owner, let's kill them all. The La Crox and take back what's rightfully yours." Lakresha voiced excitedly as I stopped whimpering.

I nodded ever so slowly as I gazed up at Fabian whose face was as pale as a sheet.

"You're right, Lakresha," I muttered lifelessly. "Let's just take out the roots, shall we?"

"Yes, master."

And all I could remember was Fabian dashing towards me, yelling, "My lady!"

Fabian froze before he could come close to her as the shroud around her felt suffocating.

"My lady, what the..." He murmured as he gulped, watching Lilou back on her feet, smirking straight at him.

It was no secret that a bearer of a divine weapon held extraordinary traits. However, the bearers of the Divine Order's absolute will were to protect this kingdom from ruins.

'So, why did it feel she wants destruction, instead?' Fabian wondered as he blocked an attack out of instinct. 'I know, my Lady. I know this aura because I was like you before.'

Fabian gritted his teeth as Lilou's incoming attack never gave him the opportunity to rest. She's faster. Every attack felt heavy, and the desire for bloodshed exuding from both her and Lakresha crept up on his spine.

"Get out of my way, Fabian!" Lilou seethed as she clashes her sword with him. "I'll kill them all."

Her eyes glinted with nothing but killing intent as if that's all she wanted right now: death. The more reason Fabian couldn't let her have her way.

"My lady, please punish me accordingly once you're back on your senses," Fabian requested as he finally realized he needed to see Lilou as an enemy if he needed to get her under control.

But, it was a bitter pill to swallow, and he hesitated for a second. In a battle of life and death, Fabian hesitated for once, which gave her the upper hand. That's why before Fabian could unleash everything, Lilou suddenly grabbed Maleficent's blade.

She stood on her tiptoe, gazing at him closely before a smile resurfaced on her face.

"Let's spar again some time~!" She said before landing a knee strike on his gut before she fled at the speed of light.

Chapter 184 - The Grudge From Three Months Ago

Fabian gritted his teeth, holding his stomach as that knee strike actually hurt. If only he didn't hesitate, or he just went crazy like in the past, Lilou wouldn't go anywhere since she couldn't control Lakresha yet. However, he hesitated because his opponent was Lilou, and... that's that.

"She's still conscious," Fabian muttered as he cracked his neck from side to side. "I'll just deal with the consequences later. You!"

He turned to Yul, who never moved from his spot on the side of the hallway, his back against the wall while sitting down. Yul raised his gaze from his hand to Fabian.

"What?" Yul asked, not planning on moving from his spot as he wanted to ponder about something.

"Go to Sir Rufus and report everything to him," Fabian ordered as he unbuttoned the first three buttons of his suit. "Tell him to chase me down."

Yulis stared at Fabian before his eyes fell on the infamous dark spear he had heard about.

"Alright." Yul agreed, making Fabian raised a brow as the latter glanced at him.

"You're much wiser than that fifth prince."

"Please, don't insult me like that, Mister Fabian." The expression on Yul's face was somber as he took it as an offense. "I respect people based on their capabilities and not on the type of blood that's running through their veins nor the empty titles they hold."

"That's noble of you, Your Highness." Fabian beckoned a neck bow before he faced the direction Lilou dashed off to.

Yulis got up from his feet and said, "Before I go, I'll tell you something important as a vampire." Yulis paused while dusting his trousers. "You don't know this, but my sister, she..."

Fabian's eyes slowly went wide as he shot Yulis a look.

"You better go after her before anyone... else." Yulis couldn't even finish as Fabian suddenly bolted away after telling Maleficent to take charge. He looked in the direction where Fabian left and sigh.

"I know. I was surprised as well." Yulis let out a low scowl before going to where he could sense Rufus' aura. "What in the world is Hell thinking?"

Lilou's humming echoed across the hallway, along with the piercing noise of Lakresha's point being dragged on the floor, leaving tracks of her. Dead bodies loitered on the way she passed by, and blood vandalized the walls. And yet, the smile every time the light from the sconce hit her face looked delighted.

"Where is it again?" She quizzed, looking for her way to her destination.

A smile resurfaced on her face when she recalled the right direction and sauntered her way towards the throne room. Her white nightgown had dyed in red from all the victims who had fallen in her hands.

She encountered a few knights on her way and they all ended up adding to the number of casualties tonight.

Her eyes gazed up at the door before her. Using the scythe's head, Lilou pushed the door open as it creaked. She strutted in and stopped as her gaze moved towards the person lying on the floor.

The blood pooling underneath his lifeless body barely made the color of his argent hair evident.

"Sam," Lilou whispered as she walked towards it and sat down. "My husband."

The tone of her voice was soft as she cradled him in her embrace, whispering, "Sam..." while rocking him lightly.

"It's alright now," she whispered, stroking his hair while leaning the side of her head on his head. "I'm here now."

Despite her soft and weak voice, the expression of her eyes and the smirk on her lips were nowhere near grieving. "It's alright now." Her last remark was cold, chilled to the bone.

Lilou stayed in that position with her eyes closed until she sensed several figures around her vicinity.

"Hanz, did you have fun watching a grieving wife on her wedding night?" Lilou asked as she slowly opened her eyes, caressing the hair of the dead knight who was used as Samael's proxy.

Hanz chortled wickedly. "It was a sight indeed, but it'll be much better if you acted more naturally." He directed, clapping his hands and added, "Still, I wonder why of all places, you've gone in the throne room."

"Hanz, I told you I will settle this on my own." Another voice chimed in as he gazed at Lilou's unmoving figure. "She's not... conscious."

"I am conscious, your Highness, the twelfth prince." She intoned as she put down the body carefully before cocking her head to the side.

The twelfth prince's shoulder stiffened upon meeting the pair of eyes that had different colors: one was deep crimson while the other was olive. His eyes darkened as his fangs grew longer.

This was dangerous. She was dangerous.

Alarmed, the twelfth prince cautioned, "Hanz, we need to retreat." Taking a step back as his gut feeling was telling him it was the best course of action.

Lilou... she came here for a reason and that was...

"Retreat?" Hanz growled. "Me? Against this damn thing, Hell dragged in this place?" His eyes glinted as he raised his fist with a brass knuckle with sharp points.

The twelfth prince said nothing as he watched Lilou slowly dragged herself up to stand.

"Knife," she said, and Lakresha shifted into a small dagger in her hand.

"I will —"

A clash of metals clapped in Hanz's ears, making his eyes widen as Lilou suddenly appeared before him, about to stab the side of his neck and a sword's flat surface, blocking it. She was fast, and he didn't even notice it.

No, even if he noticed it, he wouldn't make it in time. Hanz may be strong, but he's not as agile as everyone.

"Hanz," Stefan growled through his gritted teeth before he ordered, "Get the hell out of here." without looking away from Lilou's eyes.

Stefan came here after peeking at the future. What he had seen was Lilou, sitting on the throne, caressing Hanz's hair with his severed head on her lap.

"Lilou," Stefan called out, as he knew this was not Lilou. "I mean, Lakresha."

"Sweetheart," Lilou smirked as she leaned to tease him. "Didn't you always call me that? Lexx?" and his eyes slowly widened upon hearing the name she used to call him.

Chapter 185 - Found You

"Don't speak my name using her lips," Stefan warned as he shoved her back and she hopped a meter, still smiling at him. "Lakresha."

Lilou smiled brightly, aggravating Stefan even more. Lilou would never smile so brightly that gave off such a menacing aura. She's not like that, at least not from his memory.

"Apologies, Your Majesty. Please, forgive me this time." Her tone was light, gesturing a bow as she apologized. "I didn't mean to look through the missing years of her life."

She glanced to the side to see new figures appearing, one after another. "Silvia."

"Lilou," Silvia called under her breath, scrutinizing her from head to toe, confirming there's absolutely wrong with Lilou.

Dominique, who was also gazing at Lilou, slowly balled his hands into a fist. "Lakresha, what think you're doing?"

"Hehe!" Lilou giggled almost gleefully as she linked her hands behind her, skipping her steps to the stairs, and plopped down on the throne.

"Insolence!" Hanz exclaimed when he snapped to his senses. "How dare you sit on the throne?"

"You're so silly, Hanz. You can just turn around if you don't want the sight of me sitting here." Lilou shook her head, playing with the knife with its point on the armrest and her finger on its butt.

"My legs hurt, so I want to sit since you all came to talk to me."

Her eyes glossed over the faces of the royalty standing below her, causing the corner of her lips to curl. What a sight to behold, she thought. No wonder everyone would fight to death for a stool.

"Lakresha, aren't you a bit too bold?" Dominique scowled as he disliked their situation, but none of them even tried to stop her on her way to the throne. They all just stood there, watching how she skipped her steps until she sat down.

Silvia glanced at her siblings before shifting it back at Lilou. "Your Majesty, you don't know this, do you?"

"I just confirmed it," Stefan replied after his long silence.

During his spar with Samael, he had finally put the piece together. Samael's reaction and replies just confirmed them, but it was already too late.

"Lakresha," Dominique called out solemnly. "Why the hell does the scent of her blood smell like those people?"

Lilou chuckled coldly as she rested her leg over the other. "Your Highness, don't you have a better question?"

"Why!" Dominique's voice thundered as his eyes glinted. "Why do I smell the blood of the Bloodfang clan from her?"

Silence dawned upon them as Dominique's voice echoed. Not a single soul spoke as the royalties stared at Lilou, who was also staring back at them with nonchalance.

After some time, the end of silence finally came with a disappointing answer, shrouded with indifference.

"Do I?" Lilou tilted her head to the side. "For the inferior purebloods to bide their time, for their blood to continue, they had sacrificed their lives for fresh and purer blood. How disappointing it is to know you found out immediately."

"Is this the reason Lara sacrificed her life? So that Lilou can wield you, Lakresha, once Hell wakes up from his slumber?" Dominique seethed in rage at the thought of Lara, the previous owner of Lakresha, the late clan leader of the La Crox, and also the woman he admired, dying because she opposed Stefan that much.

He couldn't think of anything other than that. Those Bloodfangs strongly opposed Stefan's succession to the throne and revolted. Since the Crawfords and the Bloodfang had a long history together and in good terms, it was possible they're together in this.

After all, those two clans would rather support someone who was as revolting as Samael instead of Stefan. This conclusion made sense, but why did Samael agree to it?

'But to think Lilou is born in Grimsbanne, where the Bloodfangs took shelter and died... how did we not see that Hell is not just marrying a mere human?' Dominique panted.

"Your Highness," Lilou muttered as her eyes fell on Dominique. "When you look at her eyes, doesn't she remind you of someone?" Pointing at her olive eye that was on a lighter shade of someone he was very familiar with.

Lara.

Their silence and grim expression made Lilou nod in satisfaction. Good, that they're finally catching on.

"Of course! Why would my master sacrifice her life just to anyone?" Lilou clapped to snap them back from their trance. "So, even if it's rude of me to borrow my master's body, I had to."

Lilou gazed at every single one of them once again before she warned, "Touch her, and I will kill you." stressing each word so they'd understand.

Her eyes fell on Hanz who Lilou bore a grudge with three months ago. He's lucky to still live, but Lakresha, who was now controlling Lilou, would kill him if he ever tried to harm her again. Because right now, Lilou was still weak. Lakresha only had to put on a show — even if it strained Lilou's body a little — because of Samael's unstable state.

"By now..." Lilou trailed off as tilted her head, looking up at the person who threw the sword at her and grazed her cheek.

"The cursed man, Fabian."

Half of Fabian's face was covered with a black shadow that even his right sclera turned dark. Like a demon who crawled his way out from the pits of hell.

"Really... Hell's people just do whatever they want," Hanz scoffed in ridicule as they watched the other spawn of hell entering the throne room.

"Lakresha, Maleficent says hello," Fabian smirked menacingly, ignoring the royalty as he kept his eyes on Lilou. His earlier restraint was gone as he smiled, anticipating a good spar with her with life at stake.

"Shall we —" Fabian halted abruptly as a hand held his head. "Rufus, just when I was about to greet a long-time friend." He complained as Rufus' would crush his skull if he clenched his hand a little more.

"Do you think I'll go easy on you again?" Rufus reminded him before raising his gaze towards the throne and glance at the royal family. "We're late because of you, Fabian. But someone seems he had run late as well."

Just as Rufus dropped those words, a loud crash from the ceiling deafened their ears. Rumbles and dust immediately smoked up and when it subsided, all they've seen was Samael's back.

His foot on either side of the armrest of the throne, his hand holding the chair's high back, crouching down as he faced Lilou.

"Found you."

Chapter 186 - A Right For The Throne

Lilou's eye softened as it started to return to its original color upon meeting those deadly pairs of glinting crimson orbs.

"Sam," she whispered before her eyes closed and her head hangs low, resting on his chest.

Samael snickered as he ground his teeth in annoyance. The reason he ran late was that he knew this would happen, eventually. Hence, he came to check on something first.

"Hell, have you lost your mind?" Dominique seethed, as everything had finally registered in his head. "Is she really Lara's daughter?"

Everyone was shocked into silence because none of them expected this. A daughter of Lara and someone in the Bloodfang clan?

"You've all gone mad, did you?" Dominique scoffed in disbelief as he glanced at his brothers. "To think the Bloodfang Clan started a revolt and sacrifice their lives as a mere facade to birth an existence, whose blood falls into the highest level in the blood hierarchy."

The expression on their faces darkened as blood for them held more value than official titles and lands. In simple terms, every single one of them knew where Lilou stood.

The reason they only watched her sit on the throne doing nothing was that the blood running in them recognized royalty. Someone who suddenly had the rights for the throne.

"That woman... Hell, did you agree to the Bloodfang so you can use a scapegoat to sit on the throne?" Stefan quizzed under his breath. "Did you think if someone who can have a right in the throne appears, you'll get all those annoying bastards off your back?"

There was no other reason for Samael to agree to this plan, if not for that. Samael had been being forced to fight for the throne, and he had massacred a lot of them. However, vampires were much more loyal and persistent as their blood's will was absolute.

"Bastard...!" Hanz barked, claspng his hands tightly with his eyes glinting with killing intent.

Silvia clenched her teeth as her shoulders trembled. "If she fights for the throne, do you think we will all live?! Do you even know the will of her blood? She will massacre the La Crox Clan, Hell! What were you thinking?!"

The heat and thickness in the air continued to build up, but Samael remained silent while gazing down at Lilou. Everything his siblings said was all true. He couldn't deny that — there's no point even if he did.

It had been Samael's plan, that's why he agreed to it. To get rid of those nobles off his back, divert the attention of the La Crox and leave him alone, and that none of them would live if Lilou would ascend the throne. Everything was true.

Samael raised his hand and placed it on the back of Lilou's head.

He had known about this even before he met Lilou. He was completely aware of the reason he could hear her in his slumber. It was because the perfect vessel for the core was finally born after centuries.

'I knew all that and yet...' He trailed off as he rested his chin on her head. '... I fell in love with her the second I laid my eyes on her.' and all his plans suddenly felt wrong one way or the other.

"Come here, wife. It must be so exhausting for you," Samael muttered as he cradled Lilou's tiny body in his arms and carried her in his arm, heading back towards their quarters.

Samael glanced at Dominique when the latter jeered. "You won't talk?" He said nothing in return, but the shroud behind Samael had reached his dear brother.

"No one knew about this aside from all of us," Samael spoke as he trudged slowly towards the exit. "I'll keep our deal, Your Majesty. I'll lead the case about the Undead." He stopped when he was by the door and turned around. His eyes immediately fell on Stefan.

"Be it now or then, I refuse the crown. However, if anything happens to my wife because of this, this entire kingdom will cease to exist."

His expression bore determination as his eyes never left Stefan, tightening his grip around her as Samael pulled her closer before he resumed his stride. The La Crox, although full of bloodthirsty vampires, they were wise in this matter.

"Considered yourselves warned," He cautioned and walked away completely.

If a word went out about Lilou, not only she'd be the center of attention, Stefan's unstable position as the king because of Samael's existence would shake even more. If that happened, power strife was the least of their concern.

Samael would just destroy the entire system. He had done it once, he wouldn't mind doing it again or even worse, once provoked.

'This is the only thing I can do for her.' Samael thought internally as his eyes glistened in determination.

"Damn it!" Hanz fumed in frustration and he ground his teeth. "What else did he plot in the past before his slumber?"

It was not a secret that Samael was cunning and evil. A true villain who just wouldn't die, even if Samael would attempt to kill himself, he wouldn't die. That's just how persistent he was. But this turned out to be something truly unexpected.

"He doesn't even have so many people with him and yet." Dominique paused as he watched Rufus and Fabian follow behind Samael. "The ones who are, are already troublesome to deal with, now this."

Stefan remained silent, as Samael had given him a clear warning not to touch his wife.

"Dominique, silence everyone who witnessed everything tonight. Silvia, erase and change the memories of the important witnesses, and Hanz, help Hell's butler to bury the bodies since that devil needs something to do to get a hold of himself."

"Your Majesty," Hanz called out as Stefan was about to leave after giving them his orders. But said nothing after meeting the fiery pair of crimson eyes.

"You're lucky, Hanz. You could've died if I was a second later."

Hanz gazed down while gritting his teeth. If Stefan said such words, that only meant it was legit.

"Don't touch her again," Stefan cautioned. "I'll end you myself before Hell does."

Chapter 187 - Happy Thoughts Only!

As I opened my eyes, a groan slipped past my lips as all the muscles in my body ached even with the slightest movement.

'Did I fall asleep last night while waiting for Sam?' I wondered internally as I open and closed my eyes until my vision grew clearer.

Instinctively, I looked at where Sam would always lie down. A smile turned up on my lips upon meeting the pair of deep crimson eyes looking back at me.

"Good morning," I greeted, pulling up the quilt over my shoulder. "It seems I fell asleep last night."

Sam didn't respond as he blinked his eyes ever so slowly, propping his jaw against his knuckles as he reached his hand towards me. He brushed my hair back wordless.

'Ah, it feels so nice,' I thoughts as I felt like sleeping again as if my body felt so exhausted. So I closed my eyes to sleep more, but snapped them open once again as a conclusion crossed my head.

"Sam?!" He remained silent and only quirked a brow, alarming me. "Did you..."

I trailed off, wide-eyed. If my body felt like I was tossed around while asleep, did that mean... I gasped at the thought. Sam wouldn't do something like that, would he?

My brain immediately reviewed Sam's character, and I went pale immediately. Yes, he would do it if he does so pleased.

"Ack!" My wild thoughts abruptly stopped as I frowned and rubbed my forehead after he flicked me.

Samael only cast me a look before lying on his back, using his arm as a cushion for his head.

"How amazing that my wife wakes up just to daydream."

"It's just that, my body..." I pouted, sighing heavily. "My body aches all over, so I thought..."

"You thought I took advantage of you while you're sleeping?" Sam raised a brow as his gaze caught mine. Just by the glint that flickered across his eyes told me that didn't please him.

I bit my lower lips and shook my head. "I didn't mean it like that," I cajoled as I lifted the quilt to cover half of my lower face. "It feels unfair if I can't remember our first night together as husband and wife. That's all."

The corner of his lips hooked into a brief smile as it seemed my answer saved my life. Although I wasn't lying, I'm glad he listened and chose not to misunderstand.

"It baffles me how you can think like that, wife." Sam rolled to his side, propping his temple on his knuckles. "Did you really believe that I'd let you forget it?"

The playful expression on his face made me feel a little flustered. I couldn't deny that, as I remembered every detail of our love-making from start to end. It would be a lie if I said I never thought about experimenting with some things to see if they would work or not.

I pursed my lips and studied his expression. "Why are you so quiet?" I said, as I couldn't ignore the unusual air around him and divert the subject.

"Hmm?" Sam bat his eyes indifferently as his finger traced my nose from the bridge to its tip. While he did so, he uttered, "Why wouldn't I? Do you expect me to shout while you're sleeping?"

Didn't he realize what my question really meant? "Is something wrong?" I asked just in case he didn't understand, I thought I would need to ask clearly.

My brows raised, receiving no response from him. He was just looking at me. I couldn't really guess what he was thinking, as there's nothing in his eyes.

"You remember nothing last night?" I furrowed my brows upon hearing his inquiry. Last night?

My mind traced what transpired last night. I was in here, waiting for Sam's return while I tried to keep my mind with happy thoughts only. And then... I froze upon remembering the sudden tightness in my chest.

After that, I rushed outside to check on Sam as the sense of dread of losing him crept up in my heart. Yul was also there and we... Yul and I had a confrontation. I nearly killed him because Lakresha wouldn't listen to me.

"Fortunately, Mister Fabian came to help me before I collapsed — probably due to fatigue?" I murmured as I spoke about what I remembered last night aloud. "That's how I remembered it. Why? Did something more happen?"

I studied Sam's unchanging, indifferent expression as that didn't bulge him.

"Sam?"

"Don't do that again." He said. "You've barely tamed Lakresha, but you still can't keep it under control."

I frowned but didn't argue. Sam had a point as I nearly killed Yul despite asking Lakresha not to. I raised my hand wrapped in a bandage, looking at my palm as I ended up hurting myself as well.

"We'll get you tame Lakresha slowly. Don't worry."

A smile turned up on my lips as Sam sounded so reassuring. "You're not angry?" I asked, hoping he'd stay warm like this one.

I regretted asking that question as his eyes glinted upon catching my gaze. He narrowed his eyes, thinking deeply before his lips parted.

"I'm barely controlling my anger, wife." His tone was low and chilly. I felt a sudden blizzard appearing in our room. "Just thinking that you'll toss me aside makes me wonder if I should just kill you to keep you mine forever."

My shoulders stiffened, as such romantic words were surely uplifting. Did he have to rub that he'd go that far in my face? Early in the morning?

"Is that the only way?" I asked.

"That's the only way." He answered with no difference in his flat tone. "So, will you toss me aside?"

What was he saying? Why would he think like that? There's something in his question or just in his tone that displeased me, as I answered with an offended, "Of course not!"

Sam scrutinized me as if he could see through my soul before he nodded in understanding.

"Don't forget your words, because if you do, I'll kill your lover in every possible and in every painful way I can think of... and you'd be there to witness and hear his screams."

I gulped as a chill ran down my spine. My expression gradually turned glum, and I slapped his shoulder, which snapped him out of his violent fantasies.

"Happy thoughts only!" I exclaimed, launching a series of slaps on his shoulder until his eyes dilated in disbelief. "Happy thoughts, alright?!"

Chapter 188 - My Calm

"Happy thoughts!" I huffed, blowing air to the few strands of hair falling on my face while I sat upright. Sam set his dilated eyes to me. If his eyes could speak, it'd be saying, 'how dare you, a peasant, lay your dirty hands on me?!'.

Good thing I could just feign ignorant about it and move on. That's the plan.

"Wife, you've been growing violent the longer you stay here." Sam clicked his tongue and shook his head in disbelief.

Did he mean the longer I stay with him? Not that it was a bad thing, but well, it was because I sometimes felt like becoming a villainess. His influence was no joke.

"Stop saying such ominous things!" I frowned, raising my hand, only to stop in the air after seeing him raise his arm to block it. "Husband, are you afraid of being hit?"

I'm certain I didn't use too much force while slapping his shoulder. He wouldn't get hurt, but I would, that's why. I blinked my eyes as he awkwardly put his arms down, surprised at his own action.

"Why would I get scared of being hit?" He intoned, sporting his usual indifferent expression.

Really? Was it just my imagination? I tilted my head and bit my lip before slamming my hand down.

"Ah!" Sam shrieked as he rolled on his tummy, making me panic as my palm landed on his back. Why would he roll the second I decided to test him?

Fingers trembling, I asked him. "Are you alright, husband?" He was just exaggerating, right? There was no way Sam would be in pain after being hit by me, but he's not someone who would fake something like this, either.

"Husband?" I called worriedly and rubbed his back. "Are you alright? I didn't mean it. I'm sorry..."

I trailed off as he suddenly pulled my wrist before I knew it; I'm locked in his embrace. His grip tightened as he pulled me closer, closing his eyes.

"Sam?" I looked up, but he kept his eyes shut. Now that he's like this, there's definitely a problem.

"I'm tired, let me rest first."

"Did you not sleep last night?" I frowned and sighed.

Sam let out a low hum. "My wife, are you forgetting I'm nocturnal?"

"Oh..." I forgot about that as everyone in the ducal residence adjusted to meet my schedule. In here, the palace was much livelier (if that was even the right word), during nighttime.

Those who directly served under me were the only ones who adjusted their schedules to meet mine. But I wouldn't mind being alone, honestly.

"I will rest a little." His voice really sounded exhausted. I never heard him sigh this much or even pant. That's why I stayed still and monitored his breathing.

My eyes softened, as I could even feel his fatigue. "Did you have a lot to think about last night?" I blurted out and felt relieved when it didn't seem he'd wake up.

"What should I do?" I murmured under my breath as I stared at his sleeping face. "To lessen your burden? You should have more happy thoughts, husband. This place is depressing enough."

Another helpless sigh slipped past my lips as I could not help but feel down about this. I wanted to help him a little, because Sam was already struggling enough to keep his wild thoughts under control. On top of the current state of affairs.

I jolted when Sam suddenly requested, "Keep talking. It calms me."

"Huh?"

"Your voice, it calms me. So keep talking." He said, embracing me tighter, as if he was afraid I'd just disappear if he didn't hold me properly.

My heart warmed up as I smacked my lips, thinking of what to say until I was reminded of my happy thoughts last night.

"Sam, do you remember? Back in Grimsbanne..." and I talked nonstop, just remembering our time together in Grimsbanne and how peaceful it was. Sam didn't respond or answer, but the thought that he'd at least have some peace was good enough for me.

After an hour of nonstop talking, the maids came in and helped us do our morning routine. As usual, Sam just watched us on the divan before we headed to the dining hall. To my surprised, the normal and decent meal I considered in this place seemed to have been taken away from me as well.

My heart sank as I gaze at the people around the long dining table. It's just breakfast, so why were everyone present?

'You should've stuffed yourself more last night!' My subconscious mind foreshadowed.

I should've. Breakfast was the only time I enjoyed food, but that seemed impossible now. How are they all awake? Not to mention, what's with the intense death stare?

My eyes shifted at Sam, who was also unusually quiet, but he still faced me squarely when he noticed my stare. His eyes bore complete puzzlement, asking me what did I want.

"Don't mind us, Lilou. We're following our family tradition since you're now a part of our family." I flinched and instinctively moved my eyes towards Stefan, who immediately caught my gaze.

'Does that mean you'll only join me now?' I wondered as my eyes sparkled with hope. Please spare me one peaceful meal without being tortured by your auras!

PANG!

I jumped as a sudden loud noise startled me back to my senses. My eyes fell on the knife Sam suddenly stabbed on the surface of the table, causing the plates on the table to bounce.

"Oh, sorry," Sam apologized half-heartedly as he pulled out the knife and gazed at Hanz across from him.

Panic crawled up to my heart as I felt anxious the second Sam and Hanz eyes met, making me reached for his hand, squeezing it. "Husband," I said and Sam looked back at me.

"Yes, wife?"

"Let's eat?" I chuckled awkwardly as I forced a smile onto my face. Sam batted his eyes lazily, nodding as he picked up a roll and put butter on it.

"Here," He said, warming up my heart.

"Thank you," I smiled as I am melting whenever my husband acts especially kind to me. However... I couldn't enjoy that feeling for too long, as everyone's eyes never left me.

'What is wrong with them?!' I wept internally while keeping my exterior unfazed.

Chapter 189 - Chocolate Galore

'Hot chocolate!' My eyes marveled. It was literally sparkling as I held my breath, seeing it being served to me.

"I heard you like hot chocolates." Stefan's voice startled me back to my senses as I turned to him. "I hope it is to your liking."

What was that smile he was sporting? It made me wonder if he poisoned it. 'Or maybe he is trying to make your blood sweet by feeding you sweet things!' My subconscious mind commented, and I froze.

"Thank you, Your Majesty." I expressed in horror, gazing at Sam, who was staring back at Stefan intensely. His expression told me he had killed Stefan a hundred times in his head.

Was he mad that I'm the only one who had chocolate?

"Husband," I whispered, leaning close to him. He blinked before shifting his eyes on me.

"Do you want hot choco? I can share."

Sam furrowed his brows and tilted his head. "The only sweet thing I like is you. But, alright."

What did that even mean? "Alright, then..." I trailed off when Stefan suddenly spoke.

"Sweet? What a surprise to hear that since chocolates are bitter for us."

I gazed around and noticed I'm the only one who was served with hot chocolate. I'm not even surprised to realize that we didn't share the same taste buds.

"Your Majesty, I was thinking of quarreling with you, but then it occurred to me it's a waste of time." Sam shrugged nonchalantly as he sported a smile.

For a moment, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Sam? My husband? Not giving out threats like usual? Or indulging in 'humoring' his brother?

"You're right, it's a waste of time to banter early in the morning since our sister hates it." The expression on Stefan didn't change before shifting it back to me. "Right?"

"Your sister, but she's my wife," Sam added, stressing his words as if wanting them to remember it.

The air in the dining hall thickened than it already was. Honestly, even though they didn't quarrel for the entire meal, the pressure in their silence was more unsettling.

I tried to ignore it, but just a few words from Sam and the King made me realize the silence didn't mean peace. This silence... was just another way of fighting each other with their auras.

'I better just enjoy this hot choco. Who knows if it's my first and last?' I muttered internally before my brows furrowed. First and last? Right. I don't remember having hot chocolate in my life.

However, it felt as though I had drunk one at least once in my life. Was it in the ducal residence? But I couldn't recall a time I requested it since I didn't want to be demanding. Also, Sam had helped me a lot, so I'm embarrassed to ask for more.

'So, why did the king say he heard it from someone?' I wondered, and snuck a glance at Stefan. I jolted when I met his gaze, and he smiled brightly.

What... what's wrong with him?

"No hot choco for you," Sam uttered and snatched my hot chocolate before chugging it all down in one go. My mouth fell open, hearing his every gulp before he slammed the mug down with a bang.

"It tastes like crap." He clicked his tongue while wiping the corner of his lips with the back of his hand.

I stared at the empty mug, biting my lip before raising my betrayed gaze at my husband. That's my hot choco... why did he have to drink it if he won't even appreciate it?

'I told you to drink it as it may be your first and last.' My subconscious mind remarked in pity.

I turned my head towards Stefan when he said, "You don't worry. There's more,"

"I'll drink every single one of them," Sam asserted, breaking my heart as I frowned.

Why was he so obsessed with taking away my chance of drinking one? I knew Sam was different, but wasn't he being too greedy?

Not hopeful anymore, something small and solid landed on my plate. I furrowed my brows and raised my gaze just to see Yul's usual stoic face.

"It's not hot, but that's still chocolate." There wasn't much change in his tone, but I felt moved.

"Thank —" I wasn't even done expressing my gratitude when my eyes widened as a knife landed near my plate.

Silvia's voice then followed. "Don't even think about it, Hell. Let Lilou enjoy what she can."

What? I darted my eyes from Sam to Silvia, who was giving each other a death glare. I see... so Sam planned to snatch this small chocolate bar too?

"If that's the case, here sister." Dominique chimed in and tossed a hand size chocolate bar on my plate. My eyes grew wider as it nearly broke the plate in half when it landed.

"I also prepared some chocolates just in case." Someone also announced, and I saw all of them taking out some small presents which I assumed were chocolates.

'Are they so desperate to make my blood that sweet?' I wondered in horror at the chocolates galore! How did they know I liked it? Was this another tradition because I'm now a member of the family?

Myriads of questions arose in my head as I've noticed their action changed. I ignored it earlier, thinking it was part of the tradition. But now that I thought about it, even Hanz avoided my gaze. Nor was he spewing snide remarks.

Why? What were they plotting? I should think like them, so, from a lunatic's perspective, it should be...

"Whatever," I snapped back from my trance when Sam clicked his tongue. "I realized I don't care."

My eyes fell on Sam's side profile. He seemed truly displeased.

'He said it tastes bitter...' I thought as I picked up the chocolate that Yul tossed on my plate and raised it to my lips. My mind ignored the unwanted attention, as I only bit half of the chocolate before offering the other half to Sam.

Sam quirked a brow as he shifted his eyes on me. I said, "I took a bite, it should be sweet now." Shoving it inside his mouth before he could even argue.

I appreciate their effort for whatever ulterior motives they had, but it makes me sad seeing Sam like this. Hence, even though I knew he didn't like chocolate, we should at least share.

My action seemed to alleviate his mood as he nodded while chewing, his gaze then raised to Stefan.

"Victory." A smug smile appeared on Sam's lips.

Chapter 190 - A Husband, Not An Owner.

The breakfast ended after that as Stefan excused himself and walked away with dignity. When the king left, the other princes and princesses also excused themselves until there was only Sam, Silvia, Yul, Dominique, and me.

"Are you done?" Sam asked. "We should head back."

"Ye..." I trailed off and raised my gaze when Dominique suddenly spoke. "Sister, what are your plans now?"

My plans? "I have nothing on my schedule today," I answered after recalling that Sam cleared my schedule today.

"I don't mean that." Dominique cocked his head to the side. He didn't mean that? Then what was he talking about? "I heard you and Yul had a spar last night."

"Dominique," Yul muttered as he faced Dominique squarely.

"Yes, it's my fault," I said before the two fight. "I overstepped and nearly did something unforgivable."

"Nearly?" Dominique laughed out loud, as if he heard the funniest joke in his life. "Nearly, huh?" He repeated as his sharp gaze fell on me.

I gulped and clutched my skirt tightly. Dominique seemed angry.

"My wife." I moved my gaze to Sam as he picked up a bread knife. "Don't you remember nearly killing Hanz?"

What? My mind buzzed momentarily and blurted out, "I did?" I hung my head low when I realized how pleased I sounded.

"Yes. With a knife a bit smaller with this size." Sam waved the knife bread and smirked. "You have funny humor."

"It'll be funnier if the weapon that will kill him is only an inch long," Yul commented, shaking his head in disappointment as he gazed at the bread knife.

"Why use an inch size blade?" Silvia chimed in. "A needle will suffice."

My face twitched hearing their casual comments as if they were merely talking about what's for lunch. Did I really try to dispose of Hanz?

'That be nice...' I secretly thought as I cleared my throat. My memory last night ended when Fabian came to stop me from harming Yul.

"Killing him right now is not important," Sam said as he glanced at me. "Since watching him tread on thin ice is fun to watch."

The smirk on Sam's lips sent a shiver down my spine. I'm aware that these people, although called siblings, putting each other in despair was normal. And now, I'm also part of this family.

'A family...' I whispered internally as the thought of having a family didn't feel as fulfilling as thought it'd be.

They discussed for a moment while my thoughts drifted elsewhere until we finally retire back to our quarters.

On our way back, Sam invited me to take a stroll in the garden to get the food down, to which I agreed without hesitation. But we didn't head towards Avolire garden, but somewhere else.

"Why is Mister Fabian turning over the garden?" I inquired and glanced at Sam, who stood beside me. There was just this unsettling feeling whenever I see Fabian working in the garden.

The garden was larger than the Avolire garden, but it seemed it was under tilling. I gaze around, only to realize Fabian was the only one working.

"Yes, he needs to clear his thoughts."

"Was this some kind of punishment?" I asked with a frown.

Sam furrowed his brows as he cocked his head to me. "No. Hanz helped him redecorate last night, but it didn't work out."

Fabian and Hanz? "What do you mean it didn't work??"

"They didn't get along, that's all." He shrugged as he set his eyes on Fabian's figure.

Sam had been acting strange since this morning. Even during breakfast, his action might be a little frustrating, but it was milder than usual.

"Sam, are you alright?" My question made him face me squarely. "You've been acting rather strange. Is there something wrong?"

He didn't speak for a long time and just stared at me. His stare unconsciously made me bit my lip, raising my brows while waiting for his response.

When his lips parted, words I didn't expect caressed my ears. "I'm pondering whether the anger I'm containing is jealousy or simply my desire for destruction."

"It's probably the latter!" I exclaimed and patted his chest continuously. "You're doing great in behaving yourself."

I'm proud of him. There's no reason for him to get jealous unless his jealousy means he disliked how others had a chance to kill me aside from him.

"You're the only one who can kill... me." I trailed off and raised my gaze when he grabbed my wrist to stop me from patting his chest. "Sam?"

"Your negativity is quite amusing, wife." His smile didn't reach his ear. "But I believed it's the former."

"Your jealousy..." I gulped, wanting to clarify the meaning of jealousy in his head. "You don't mean you're jealous because others want to kill me, right?"

Sam bent down, bobbing his face. "I mean the thought of you, having a lover before me, infuriates me, wife."

Huh? I blinked as I parsed his words. Me? Having a lover before him? I frowned at the thought.

"That's nonsense... ah." I winced as he suddenly tightened his grip around my wrist. "You'll break... my wrist."

"Oh." Sam loosened his grip, realizing it, but didn't let go. "Since we're married now, remember, you're my wife and mine only. And if you..."

Before he could spout more nonsense, I grabbed his collar and pulled it down so our eyes were leveled.

"Did you marry me so you can possess me?" I fumed as I snapped my tongue in annoyance. "I'm your wife, not an object or a pet. If you keep acting like this..."

My breath suddenly hitched as my breath build up in my throat. He's been acting strange and spouting nonsense. It was hard to ignore it. I felt like marrying him didn't put us closer, but just built another thick wall between us.

"I don't know why you're spewing all that nonsense, but this jealousy will just drain you and me. Whether I had a man before you or don't, it doesn't matter because I'm your wife now." I paused and took a deep breath.

"I will do my duties as your wife because I love you. But to do that, you have to be my husband first, not my owner."