

The Duke 211

Chapter 211 - The Whispers In The Dark

I gasped for air, waking up from a strange yet vague dream. My throat rasped as I broke out in sweats. I turned to my side, only to realize Sam wasn't beside me.

'Where did he go?' I wondered, closing my eyes as I calmed myself down. My head throbbed, but the pain was bearable; I'm already used to it. When would this dream stop?

It had been half a year since I became an official member of the Order. For half a year... my dreams and nightmares had been increasingly troublesome. It would leave me with a terrible headache I had to endure all night or day.

At first, I thought because of the constant change in my schedule, as I sometimes had to work at night and sometimes get assigned to work during the day. But the more I thought about it, I was fine until that night.

"Don't think about it again, Lilou," I whispered under my breath, shaking my head lightly. I had been trying to bury the memory of that night five months ago in the garden with Stefan, but was it just a coincidence that I had been having these recurring nightmares after that night?

I don't know if calling it nightmares was the proper term. They're more like dreams, but I always gasp for air when I wake up because I felt being trapped in a loop.

"What time is it?" I wondered, shifting my gaze in the window's direction. It seemed it was still pretty late in the night; I was assigned for morning duties for almost a month now, so I'm back to sleeping at night.

My throat felt parched. 'I should fetch some water,' I thought internally, flinging my legs out of the bed to fetch some water outside.

As I opened the door and peeked my head out, I furrowed my brows. There was no one around. Well, I told Sam not to ask anyone to guard the quarters since it was embarrassing to let others hear our moans. Also, it's not that we couldn't protect ourselves.

I headed towards the kitchen to fetch some water. Since the third prince's quarter was almost deserted, I didn't see anyone. Fabian and Rufus were probably busy, they've always been. When I reached the kitchen, I searched for water which I found easily, and hydrate myself.

I hissed in satisfaction. "I thought I'd get dehydrated," I mumbled and cleared my throat. I chugged another glassful of water and filled it up to take it with me back to the bedchamber.

On my way back, I noticed a figure from the corner of my eyes. I turned my head in its direction, narrowing my eyes as I noticed the silver tip of the man's hair.

"Sam?" I called in a low tone, cocking my head to the side. Since I had been used to working in the dark, my vision could easily adjust to the lack of light.

Where was he going? I thought, marching my way to follow him. From his stature and the color of his hair, I knew it was Sam. I couldn't also feel any malicious aura, so there's no harm to check.

I followed the way where I saw Sam headed, trailing the wall with my palm. Even though I couldn't feel danger, being cautious wouldn't harm me. My footsteps were light, as if I was barely touching the floor.

Working for half a year as a member of the Order had given me other skills to use. Even though we're working with the royal family to resolve the growing problems with the Undead, the Divine Order had its own skill set of rules different from the monarch.

If this was before, I would've called Sam's name once again, but not now. If I called him and that person wasn't Sam, it would give them time to prepare as I approach. I'd rather move quietly in the dark to see whether someone infiltrated the prince's quarter.

Soon, I reached a chamber that was rarely being used by Sam and me. The door was slightly opened, and I froze as my breath hitched when I heard a familiar voice of a woman.

Cassara.

"Hell, you haven't been drinking, have you?" she asked coquettishly. What was this woman doing in here? I clenched my teeth, not pleased that she was here in the middle of the night.

Sam chuckled in a low tone. "So, you came here to feed me?"

I felt my heart sink when I heard Sam's voice. My hand on the wall slowly curved into a ball. Just hearing them together without seeing what they were doing clenched my heart. My mind was running wild, thinking whether Sam was touching her or she's touching him.

Should I barge inside and throw a huge fit? I should berate Sam for leaving his wife to see another woman, right? There were myriads of reason and thoughts that rose in my head, but I couldn't do any of them.

I stood on the same spot like a fool, as if my feet were nailed on the floor, being forced to listen to their conversation.

"Your wife doesn't feed you. Does she even know how exhausted you've been?" Cassara complained, obviously putting me in a bad light. "I'm not saying she's neglecting you, but how can she not know that feeding you once a month is also neglecting your needs?"

"Does it bother you?" he asked, making me clench my teeth. Why did he sound so gentle?

I knew I didn't have enough time tending to my husband, but was it enough to justify seeking another woman's comfort? Jumping into conclusion immediately was a death sentence as a member of the Order, but I couldn't help but assume as the matter of the heart was involved.

"Of course, it bothers me. I kept silent and remained on the sidelines because I didn't want to burden you," Cassara sweetly cajoled. I could imagine her damn hands touching my husband.

"But, my worries will be far greater knowing you'd been deprived. So, just take a bite, Hell. I do not mind and I'll keep this a secret between us."

'You should leave.' My mind told me, and I nodded. 'I should just... leave. Right...'

Chapter 212 - Heartache And Woe

Cassara stood before him in her tight, revealing, silk nightdress, exposing her collarbones and upper chest that draped down to her legs.

"But, my worries will be far greater knowing you've been deprived. So, just take a bite, Hell. I do not mind and I'll keep this a secret between us." Cassara fluttered her eyelashes coquettishly, running her fingers across his shoulder.

She had longed for him for a long time. Cassara never wanted a man other than Samael. Even when she was a child, she had admired him and promised to stand beside him and be the source of his happiness.

It was a simple dream, an ambition she wanted in this life. Throne? Power? She didn't have the slightest interest in those. What she only wanted was for Samael to find her desirable. Was that too much to ask?

"Take a bite..." Samael repeated as his eyes narrowed, scanning her with disinterest.

Cassara stared at him straight in the eye, planting her hand on his chest. "Yes, don't you want to?" Her eyes sought for even the slightest affection in his eyes, but nothing.

"Is that an order, your royal highness?" Samael inquired, eyebrows raised.

"If I say it is, will you obey?"

Samael smiled, closed-lipped. "No."

Cassara let out a short scoff as she took three staggering steps back. She already predicted this would happen, but she still went in here, wearing almost nothing, and he didn't show the slightest interest.

"Why?" she whispered under her breath, "why won't you look at me?"

"Am I not looking at you right now, my dear, naughty sister?" Samael cocked his head, gazing at her from head to toe as if he was merely staring at a lump of meat instead of a beautiful woman.

"You've lost weight and grown taller. That's some improvement." He nodded approvingly.

"Hell!" Cassara yelled, grinding her teeth as she clenched her hand tightly.

"Why are you howling, sister? My wife is exhausted, I don't want to disturb her rest."

"Why?" she asked through her gritted teeth with her voice shaking in anger. "Am I not desirable? Am I not beautiful? Why won't you look at me the same way you look at her?" Cassara hastily approached him, clutching her hands on his chest. "I've lived this long, married Stefan just so I can stay, and prepared myself to be your wife, Hell. I've done everything, everything, just for you! You can't do this to me!"

His eyes glinted as he placed his hand on her shoulder, pushing her back as he took a step back. Samael thought he had warned her enough, but it seemed Cassara's 'infatuation' for him was stronger than he thought.

"Cassara," He said, staring at her dead in the eye. "Shall I end your misery?"

Cassara choked as a chill ran down her spine. Death was staring at her, waiting for her approval to embrace it. This couldn't be happening to her, she thought.

"I will do it quick, and I guarantee it'll be relatively painless, sister. Shall I save you?" he asked, pitying her for how she had fallen due to her ambitious desire. Just when he thought she got a hold of herself already.

"You are desirable and beautiful, sister. However, you're asking the wrong man for affection. Did you ask why I only look in her direction?" he smirked as he let out a quick chuckle. "That's because I can't take these fucking eyes off of her. Do you know how aggravating it is to see those gits flock around her? But I don't want to upset her. It's driving me mad."

Samael snapped to his senses when he heard a loud crack under his grip. He immediately released her shoulder, keeping his hands up.

"I broke your shoulders, forgive me." He apologized half-heartedly. Thinking of how a lot of people grew fond of Lilou and how they could spend so much time with her annoyed him, obviously. So much so he broke Cassara's shoulder as he momentarily got blinded with madness.

Cassara scoffed as her broken shoulder felt nothing compared to the pain in her heart. They were talking about her, and yet, his focus immediately shifted to Lilou.

"Is it because of her blood?" she muttered under her breath, looking helpless. "Is it because she's..." Cassara trailed off as the temperature dropped and Samael's gaze instantly grew colder.

"Hold your tongue, Cassara." He warned in a piercingly low tone. "I never asked you to do whatever you did for me. I've humored you enough. This will be the last time I'll let you disturb me just to listen to your words of lust. Have some self-respect, sister."

Samael turned to walk away after saying his piece. Cassara understood that what he meant by this being the last. The next time, he couldn't guarantee that she would only leave with a broken shoulder. He'd kill her... for sure.

'I will kill her, Hell,' Cassara whispered internally as she gazed down, being left alone with not just broken shoulders, but a wretched heart.

'You'll feel my pain... you will feel my pain, Hell.'

As Samael departed the room, his steps suddenly halted when his eyes landed on the figure leaning against the wall. He raised his brow, tilting his head to the side.

"You're here?" he asked, watching her as Lilou raise her gaze at him. Samael remained silent for a moment, recalling the conversation he had with Cassara.

"Did you hear everything?"

"From the time she asked if you've been drinking," Lilou answered, and he furrowed his brows. He was being lenient and just went with the flow in the beginning, which could be easily misunderstood. Why did she stay?

"Why did you stay, then?" he asked instead of trying to figure out the answer himself.

Lilou pursed her lips. "Because I don't want to misunderstand?" she replied as she clutched her chest. "If I walked away when my mind told me I shouldn't listen anymore, I know I will never trust you again." She looked at him, resolve glinting across her eyes. "I don't want to doubt you or your love or our vows, my husband." and she was glad she stayed and listened more.

The corner of his lips curled upward as he trudged towards her. "My sweet wife," he whispered huskily, his eyes glinting, stroking her jaw with the back of his hand. "You are so precious."

Chapter 213 - Stay Within Hell's Reach

"You are so precious," he said, bending over for a kiss, but I turned my head away, instinctively. Even without looking at his expression, puzzlement resurfaced on his face as he drew his head away.

I cleared my throat as I faced him squarely. "Let's go back first," I said with a faint exhale. "I didn't misunderstand, but you're not pardoned for leaving me in the middle of the night to see another woman."

"Oh," He intoned. "Then, let's go back."

Sam grabbed my hand and dragged me towards our chamber. I hastened my pace to keep up with him, glancing at his shoulders. It surprised me how he agreed so easily, but why was he so in a rush?

"Wait, my water!" I exclaimed, shifting my eyes to the water spilling out of the glass. Sam only glanced at me and said nothing, but he surprisingly decreased his speed until we reached our destination.

As we headed in, Sam finally let my hand go before he trudged across the room. I observed him while I placed the glass down on the bedside. Sam had been like this for the past half a year; our relationship was stagnant, although there were times he could be surprisingly considerate and lenient just like a moment ago.

When I perched on the edge of the bed, I glanced at him, only to see him pouring himself a glass of wine. Sam had been drinking a lot lately, be it day or night, he'd always finish a bottle. Although he never got to where he'd be drunk, wasted, he was never sober as well.

"Sam," I called out softly, and he cocked his head back in my direction. "Do you need my blood?" I asked, recalling that it had been around five months since he stopped drinking my blood and I only realized it now.

Sam fluttered his eyes ever so slowly before he walked towards the chair. He dragged it near the bed, plopping down languidly with his leg over the other.

"Don't mind what Cassara just said," He uttered with disinterest. "They're all nonsense."

"But you haven't had my blood for over five months!"

"I had nothing for centuries, my wife." He argued back almost immediately, and I frowned. "You already quench my hunger. Are you saying you want to quench my thirst as well?" Sam tilted his head to the side, batting his eyelashes with misplaced bafflement.

"Of course! I'm your wife, am I not?" wasn't that my duty? We were already busy enough with the increasing numbers of the undead and unsettling atmosphere across the land. We couldn't, no, I couldn't afford to let his guard down and lose him.

Both of us had been treading on thin ice because once everything was over, the truce would be over. A power strife was bound to occur. Even if Stefan and Sam didn't want it, the people who were eying the throne would surely do something underhanded. Working as a member of the Order made me open my eyes and see these sick earnest endeavors.

"You're my wife, so you understand the reason I am doing this." He answered in the same stern tone, rendering me with no arguments. "Five months, my wife, and I still can't understand what were you thinking."

"You mean you still can't understand yourself?" I corrected, irked by his previous argument. Of course, I knew that. He had told me clearly about his detoxification. But, was avoiding drinking blood the only method for him to retrieve his emotions?

Sam chortled briefly. "I understand myself clearly, without a shadow of a doubt."

"And what does it say?"

Silence befell us as we stared at each other briefly. Now that I thought about it, our argument had also become more frequent. Although I couldn't call it an argument, we tend to disagree on more and more things and squabble just like right now.

"Never mind." I sighed and shook my head, waving my hand as I lifted my legs up on the bed and under the quilts. "I'll rest more since I was tasked to scout Hallund tomorrow." I pulled the quilt up to my shoulder as I laid on my side, eyes closed. This conversation would lead to just more disappointments and prolonged arguments.

I felt like every time this happened, Sam and I just grew farther away from each other. With duties and responsibilities, not to mention our life at stake, I couldn't really focus on placating his whims.

I'm not sure the reason, but was it because I was not what I used to be? Before, all I wanted was to become a wife who would tend to my husband's needs. A happy marriage bearing his children, whom we would raise together. But now, everything was different.

Although I still wanted that kind of life and peace, I wanted to stand and stay by his side with my head held high. I wanted to protect him just as much as he wanted to protect me. Be someone he could lean on and trust in a world full of deceit and greed.

However, I felt like the more I try, the more that there was going beyond my reach. It felt saddening. Maybe that's why I could not help but argue with him sometimes.

The bed moved a little as I immediately sensed his presence beside me. Normally, he'd continue on drinking in silence until I fall asleep. This was the first time he had laid beside me after an argument, but I expected nothing more.

'A little coaxing is fine,' I thought, frowning as I knew that wouldn't happen. I kept my eyes shut closed, but my mind kept wandering to the past half a year until my eyes snapped open. 'There's really nothing special happened in the past half a year besides our routine and Sam acting nonchalant about everything.'

Sam didn't move at all when he laid on the bed. Cassara did mention he was exhausted. Out of curiosity, I discreetly turned around to see if he was sleeping, but to my surprised, he wasn't!

He was lying on his side, his knuckles propped his temple, facing me. My mouth slightly fell open — wide-eyed. Sam raised his hand and reached for my cheek, cupping my jaw, his thumb caressing it.

"Don't wander too far..." he whispered, sounding strangely gentle and sincere. "... just stay within Hell's reach."

Chapter 214 - Cold-blooded, Ferocious, And Wicked.

"Don't wander too far..." he whispered, sounding strangely gentle and sincere. "... just stay within Hell's reach."

I pursed my lips in a thin line. His words were simple to understand, but I always had this feeling I couldn't comprehend them entirely. Regardless, I could only think that this was his way of placating me. This was a huge step, considering the current mental state he was in.

"I never wandered anywhere beyond your reach," I mumbled under my breath, pouting. "You're being unfair..." and I just sounded like a child whining.

This was unfair! Just a little coaxing and I'm willing to sacrifice the entire world! I couldn't even express how disappointed I was for our stagnant relationship, as that disappointment left without traces left in my heart.

I exhaled. "I'd rather you say, 'stop whining or I'll break your bones', than placate me like this." I huffed. "What's got into you you're being like this now?" I asked out of curiosity, as this felt very new to me.

Sam said nothing as he played with my hair in silence. His quietness somehow made me feel suspicious. Come to think of it, I never probed about Sam's matter. First, because he was my superior at work, and because I knew he wouldn't tell me. I wondered what Sam and Fabian had been up to. Rufus was out of the question as he had been leading the Order temporarily.

"I haven't seen Mister Fabian lately. Did something happen to him?" I asked when I received another silent response from him. "I know I shouldn't pry, but it worries me you don't tell me anything."

"You never ask, though," He replied, and I nearly coughed as he had a point. I never asked, but that was because I didn't want to get disappointed by not getting answers! "Fabian is well, just like me... trying to make sense of why we shouldn't be killing everyone," Sam explained in simple words, but despite his light tone, I felt a chill ran down my spine.

Being a witness to Sam's indifference to matters regarding life and death and his thirst for violence and destruction, I could imagine Fabian's situation. Although I had never seen it myself, Fabian was a notorious name among the members of the Order.

Cold-blooded, ferocious, and wicked — that was what my colleague branded Fabian. I could still remember how the conversation went.

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Sometime around four months ago, Ramin, Charlotte, Kristina, and I were out in Libira, an outskirt of the capital to investigate and confirm the recent undead sighting. It wasn't a huge case, but it was important since Libira was near the Capital. If an undead was sighted around it, then that only spoke of how far we're left behind. Along with our investigation, Charlotte suddenly muttered.

"I heard Sir Rufus got into a duel last night." Charlotte placed her finger on her chin, looking up as if recalling something. "I didn't get to see it. It would be nice to witness how Sir Captain Knight fight!" Her eyes twinkled as if the entire galaxy suddenly appeared during broad daylight. "I wonder who is the brave opponent, though." And then her mood suddenly pummeled.

I blinked as I gazed beside me at where Charlotte was. We're on the way towards the location of the incident, currently walking through the almost deserted street of Libira.

Sir Rufus did? I never heard of such information. Although Sir Rufus was only leading the third squadron temporarily, or rather, the entire third squadron was just temporary because of the undead, the Bearers of the Divine Order had high respect towards Rufus.

Since the Bearers of the Divine Order don't take direct orders from the royal family, our goal was to eliminate any threat imposed on the kingdom. For them, Sir Rufus was like a role model for a wise king. It was a complex ideal, but that's that.

"Tsk. Are your ears fine?" Ramin chimed in, annoyed, as always. Charlotte and I looked back, setting our eyes on Ramin, strutting behind us with Kristina beside him.

"They are until I heard you screeching!" Charlotte complained through her gritted teeth.

Kristina chuckled, the back of her hand in front of her lips. "I heard it is not a challenge, but more like he didn't have a choice. They said he inflicted minor injuries."

My brows furrowed, curious who could possibly push Rufus in a situation. There were only a few vampires who could do that, and those few people wouldn't do something so out of place. Suddenly, the thought of Sam crossed my mind. If it was Sam, my meaning of out of place didn't really matter.

"What?" Surprised, Charlotte halted as she turned around, facing the two with her hands on her hips. "Are you saying my Captain Knight was easily left with no option?! Are you underestimating my Captain Knight's skills?!" she huffed, pointing at Ramin.

"Calm down, Charlie. No one will dare underestimate the strongest knight of the kingdom and also human." Kristina explained in a light tone, smiling and waving.

"This girl just knows how to speak nonsense and just see what she wants to see!" Ramin grumbled while I stayed silent, used at their squabbling. "You should listen more and stay silent like Lilou over there!" I flinched when he suddenly pointed at me.

Charlotte glared daggers at him before she huffed and turned around. "Let's go, Lilou. Listening to this blockhead makes me feel like I'm an idiot!" I glanced at Charlotte and then to Ramin, sighing as I shook my head and resumed my steps.

"They said a wild beast went out of control and ran amok, so Captain stepped forward to subdue him," Kristina recalled as they followed us from behind.

"But still got injured?" I muttered, a little curious about what happened.

"Yes!" Kristina affirmed. "Lilou, aren't you the duchess of Grimsbanne?" she asked out of nowhere, making me look back as I walked.

"Yes?"

"Then, what can you say about what's his name...?" She trailed off momentarily before she snapped her fingers and exclaimed, "Fabian! Yes, I think that's the name!"

"Mister Fabian?" My brows furrowed as I tilted my head to the side, before facing the road ahead. "Well, he is kind and smart. He is also very gentle and understanding." I nodded in agreement and turned around, only to see the dismay on Kristina's and Ramin's faces.

"What?" I wondered, shifting my eyes towards Charlotte, who also looked at me in horror.

Was I wrong? But, I wasn't lying though.

Chapter 215 - Stuck In A Loop

I chuckled, remembering how they looked so aghast and how I came to know the story of a very, very dangerous mad beast centuries ago.

Apparently, centuries ago, aside from vampires, there was a notorious man who brought nothing but fear for both races. They said he targeted not just vampires, but also humans, experiment on them, and scatter their remains across the kingdom.

It came to the point even vampires had to glance over their shoulders for fear they had caught the man's interest. How he picked his target remained unknown, but no one had caught him despite the bounty on his head. His series of murders continued on for years until a new king ascended the throne. Many believed that person died, or he became a follower of the new king.

Only those noble families who had close ties with the royal family knew the real reason. That mad man, Fabian, swore his loyalty to the third prince and became a butler in his manor.

"Aw!" I shrieked, pouting as I rubbed my forehead. "Why did you flick my forehead?" I complained, displeased at Sam's sudden action.

"You're lost in thought. I'm just bringing you back with me," He answered nonchalantly. "What are you thinking? Or who are you thinking when I'm right in front of you?"

What nonsense was he talking about? Would he kill the person if I told him who it was? The sudden thought that crossed my head suddenly gave me an idea. So I answered, "I was merely thinking of Mister Fabian. I heard a lot about him from the Order as they were also keeping an eye on him."

"My wife, if they are keeping an eye on him, are you sure you should be telling me about this?" Sam arched his brow, blinking languidly.

I let out a shallow breath. "Well, the Order's only purpose is to keep the kingdom from falling. They wouldn't make any movements if Mister Fabian behaved." I paused as I wiggled my body at him. "Also, before being a member of the Order, I am the Duchess of Grimsbanne and your wife. Your people are also my people, so, naturally, I want to protect them."

"My wife, you are playing a very dangerous game." Sam's eyes darkened as he twirled my hair around his finger. "The Divine Order had different principles than the monarch. Right now, this alliance is only possible because of the undead, however, everything will change once it is over. We might become enemies."

"I know that." I frowned as the Order didn't receive orders from the king, nor did the king ever touch the Order. He invited them over, or rather, gathered them in here just for the sake to resolve the undead.

"If you know, you better choose between being the duchess and being a member of the Order," He said, setting his eyes on me as his eyelashes fluttered ever so slowly.

His expression was hard to read, and it only tickled my curiosity even more. "Husband, can't I be both? I mean, as long as you don't destroy the kingdom..." I trailed off when Sam suddenly muttered, "I will tear this kingdom apart."

"Sam!" I exclaimed and slapped his chest. "Can you not say that?" How could he say that as if he was merely stating what he had for lunch?

Sam had been obedient and barely caused trouble for the past half a year. The reason the Order could relax a bit was it had been strangely peaceful.

"Why not?" His brows furrowed. "Did you think Stefan will not act the next second this matter is resolved? Don't underestimate the king's obsession, my wife." His words rendered me speechless, as I could only stare at him. "That's why you worry me," He added as he planted his finger on my forehead.

"What did I do to worry you?" I frowned. "Is it because you still see me weak? I can fend off for myself."

"I know, but Stefan always had his eyes on you."

My frown grew sullen. "He already knew he can't use me against you even if he used the power of sire..." I would rather kill myself before I harm you, was the rest of my sentence that was thrust back into my throat.

Sam remained silent and just stared at me. "Who says he will use you against me?" he inquired, and I knitted my brows in confusion. "You might not know Stefan, but he obsesses over things. If he wants me dead, he might forget the reason, but he will still do it no matter what. So, if he wants you, he'll do anything to get you."

"Sam, that makes no sense." I shook my head. That, indeed, didn't make sense. Why would Stefan want anything from me? It was not like I had something special in me and I'm not the only woman in this palace. Even though Silvia and Cassara didn't serve him as his wives, there were still noble ladies who would serve themselves on a silver platter to the king.

"You think?" he asked, sounding as if I was the one who didn't make sense.

"Of course! Why would he obsess over someone such as myself?"

Sam let out a sigh as he tapped his finger against my forehead. "Because you're my wife?"

My mouth fell open. If he put it that way, there's a reason for his obsession, indeed. But I still offered him a smile and reassured him. "Don't worry, I can protect myself."

He only smirked faintly and nodded his head.

"Just be careful since I'd be busy in the following days," He muttered, and I nodded. Sam fixed the quilt over my shoulder before pulling me into his embrace. "Rest for now. I'll wake you up later."

"Aren't you going to sleep?" I asked as I looked up. My eyes suddenly felt heavy with the comfort of his embrace.

"I will don't worry."

"Alright then." I nodded, closing my head as I immediately fell into my slumber.

When I closed my eyes and felt that I was falling into another deep slumber, I found myself in that same dream seven years ago.

"God..." I whispered in awe, staring at the towering man, whose face seemed a blur, but I knew he was beautiful.

The man clicked his tongue, pulling his cloak from my clutches, but I held on to it even tighter. A chill ran down my spine as he glared at me, but I was too mesmerized my mind malfunctioned.

"Let go or you'll lose your hands," He warned in a deep, manly voice, making me widen my eyes as his face grew clearer.

Stefan.

Chapter 216 - The Whispers Of The Wind

I stood frozen before his cold, red eyes, glinting menacingly. I knew at that point I should've let him go, but I held on out of fear. If only I knew this would be the start of a tragic story, I would have definitely let go. No, I wouldn't have chased after him just to express my gratitude... if only I knew that day seven years ago would twist our fate like this, I would've chosen to get run over by that carriage.

"Let go or you'll lose your hands," He warned, and my eyes slowly dilated, but I didn't let go. His brows furrowed, glancing at my dirty hands before shifting them back to my eyes.

He looked annoyed. "Your hand it is," He said, but before he could do anything, my words slipped past my lips, "Mister, will it hurt you if you listen to my gratitude?" I asked, and I slowly loosened my grip.

'He is a vampire! You have to run!' my mind panicked, but I didn't want it to show it on the surface. I need to be calm, I told myself as I held my trembling hands behind me, sporting a faint smile as I looked at him straight in the eye.

"Fool," He replied coldly as he placed his hood back over his head. I watched him in silence as he glanced back at me once again before he left.

When he was out of sight, all the fear I squashed down came rushing back to me until my knees couldn't keep up, and I collapsed on the concrete ground. I nearly died just because of gratitude. My mind found it hard to believe how many times I cheated death today.

"Am I supposed to really die today?" I mumbled under my breath, clutching my chest just to feel how my heart pounded loudly.

I didn't know how I got up from that spot, but what I knew was that I stayed there for a very long time. When I had enough energy, I went straight home. On the way, I raised my head and set my eyes towards the pale tint of orange filling the sky.

"What am I even doing with my life?" I mumbled under my breath, sighing heavily as I trek back to my shack situated at the top of the hill. "I nearly died, and I won't be surprised if I died tonight as well." I kicked a pebble in annoyance.

Once the sun sets, vampires prowled in the dark. To think there would be a day I wouldn't be afraid of that tonight after knocking on death's door several times today. How can I be so unlucky? I thought, clicking my tongue as I reached my home.

From a distance, I stared at the flimsy shack which I called home. I let out a deep sigh as I marched my way towards it. When I was by the door, I announced, "I'm home," and frowned as I took a step back.

"Not yet," I murmured, closing the door as I turned around. "I don't care anymore." I walked around the shack, heading towards the back lot to where my father rest.

When I reached the back of the shack, my eyes immediately landed on the burial mound. My eyes softened as I pursed my lips, trudging towards it and perched beside it, my hand over it.

"Father," I called softly. "Will you be happy if I join you soon?" My voice cracked as my eyes welled up. "Today, I nearly got run over by a carriage and met a vampire. I... I was... scared." My breath hitched and tears rolled down my eyes.

"I was so scared..." I repeated in between my sobs, recalling how terrible my day was. "Why did you say I need to survive no matter what? Do you know how hard it is to live?" I asked, bending over as I rested my arms over the curved of the barrow, crying my heart out.

I had no one in this world. Even though the people in the field were all kind and treated me like their family, I always felt alone. Maybe that was the reason I couldn't move when the horses were galloping in my way. I was anticipating it.

I cried and cried, blaming my father for telling me to survive and wait for something good to happen. I remembered him telling me to survive until things would return to their rightful place. How could I do that, though?

How could I survive if the pieces of my heart kept falling day by day? In this world of dystopia... how could I remain hopeful? I only live once, and if I just am a bit more reckless, everything would be over. Right...

I dragged my upper body and sit upright, staring at the burial mound of my father. "I'm tired, Father," I whispered, wiping my tears with my arm as I took a deep breath. "Give me a sign why I shouldn't follow you," I demanded, determined to just end my sufferings.

"See?" I scoffed in ridicule. "You can't do anything since you're not here anymore. You abandoned me by dying first and..." I trailed off as a soft gust of wind blew past me. I raise my gaze and bit my lower lip. That wind felt as though it meant to comfort me.

Without realizing it, my eyes landed on the Duke's mansion from where the direction of the wind came from. "Is that your answer, Father?" I asked under my breath as tears rolled down my cheek.

"Am I really not alone?" I whispered, fixing my eyes on the Duke's mansion for reasons unknown. And then again, another soft blow of the wind blew past me. Ironic how the sun was about to set and yet, the wind felt warm as if someone was embracing me.

"Alright, I'll stay strong for you then," I promised, covering my eyes with my fist as I attempted to stop my tears from falling. "I'll wait for you and..." I choked, hiccuping, as I didn't know to whom these words were.

"Make sure to welcome me home with apples and stew and meat! I don't want to come home with no one welcoming me, and you will not leave me again." I demanded, believing that Father would someday return, even though I knew it was a stupid wish that a dead would return to do all that. Still, I kept whining and demanding the things I wanted in life.

"If you leave, you have to take me with you even if it's hell, alright?! I don't care, I just don't want to be alone..."

"Give me a sign why I shouldn't follow you," she demanded, almost pleading with her tone.

"That's a tough request, little girl." Samael's consciousness replied, but obviously, she couldn't hear him as he was in his slumber and only had a small part of his consciousness active.

He had never heard her say such words before. To him, she truly sounded desperate and lonely, and he felt sorry that she had to endure all these years alone. Samael could relate, as he couldn't wake himself up for now.

"See? You can't do anything..."

"Hush now," He whispered, trying to break the seal that put him in slumber. By doing so, a large aura enough to cause a wind to reach her exploded from the underground basement of the duke's mansion.

It hurt his soul, obviously, as touching the seal within him was powerful enough to force him to sleep. But, when he heard her ask, "Am I really not alone?" touching the seal within him once again to give her a reply felt worth it.

"I'll stay strong for you then... and don't leave me even if it's hell..." Lilou started demanding and went on and on until she stopped crying.

"Don't blame me if I take you to hell then..." he replied as he felt this strange relief, listening to her voice regain its liveliness the more she demanded.

Chapter 217 - Once Daylight Dies

Ever since then, I continued on to talk to my father's grave and speak about my day. The more I did this, the more I felt I wasn't talking to Father, but to someone else who was listening to me. It was strange to put it in words, but there was just this strange aura I always felt ever since that day.

Until one day...

"Lilou, why don't you stay for the night?" Old Olly asked, staring at me worriedly. I glanced at the sky and it would be soon nightfall. I shifted my gaze back to Old Olly when she added, "There had been recent attacks in the neighboring towns. So, it'll be safer for you if you stay here tonight." She offered kindly.

My lips curled up into a smile. "Thank you, Old Olly, but I'll be fine." I nodded reassuringly.

The reason she had been worriedly asking me to stay was because of the horrifying attacks in the neighboring towns. I've lived for seventeen years, but those bloodthirsty vampires rarely attack Grimsbanne or rather, the very land where the Duke rest. Even if someone dared, Lord Rufus would deal with them immediately. Besides, I felt safer in my shack.

"Lilou," Old Olly cajoled, attempting to convince me, but I shook my head.

I reached for her hand, squeezing it lightly as I smiled.? "I'll be fine," I said. "Don't worry too much. I will run away if I sense danger." Seeing that she wasn't convinced, I added in a light tone. "Even if

I encounter a vampire, they will run away from my odor first before they think of drinking my blood."

"Lilou."

"I'm joking!" I chuckled to liven up the mood, but I knew it was a bad joke. "Old Olly, I will be fine, alright? I can take care of myself, hmm?"

Old Olly just let out a sigh as she realized it would only get late and I wouldn't change my mind, so she reluctantly let me go and I started my trek back to my shack.

Night fell when I was halfway home. The night always brought this sense of dread creeping up my spine, but I ignored it. I looked ahead, treading carefully until my eyes adjusted to the dying daylight.

The crisp sound of grass under my foot sounded strangely loud in my ear as the air howling past me grew colder. Tonight felt especially eerie, maybe because of the recent incidents that had been the talk of the town, or it was just what the dark does to human minds.

I shook my head, gritting my teeth as I hastened my pace, but a chill wave suddenly ran down my spine. I paused, my knees trembling as I forced myself to continue walking. 'It's nothing,' I told myself, taking another forced step forward.

'It's just the dark...' I convinced myself. "Yes, that's it," I murmured, nodding as I marched my way toward my home. The more I denied that someone in the dark was watching, observing me, the more this growing fear within me intensified.

'Someone is watching you,' my mind whispered in my head, and I'm already aware of that. Someone in the dark was watching me. I jumped when the stifling silence was abruptly broken by the sound of birds flying away.

"Good riddance." I patted my chest as I exhaled in relief. "Since when did I become a coward?" I asked myself, shaking my head as I resumed my steps. "This is the closest area of the duke's mansion. Vampires won't dare feed in here," I muttered, purposely aloud to reduce the growing fear creeping up to my heart and seeping deep into my bones.

When I didn't know what to say anymore, I hummed a lullaby in a low tone. Not long after, my humming volume down as my steps slowly came to a halt upon seeing a figure ahead of me.

I held my breath, seeing his shadow stretched towards me as the moonlight shone brightly behind him. 'Run!' my mind cautioned, and I took a careful step back. Even though I couldn't see him properly, I knew he was staring at me, at his prey.

The sound of crickets filled the air along with the faint howl of the wind. That person... he came to hunt, and he had his eyes on me. From this distance, I saw his pair of deep crimson eyes glint brightly, almost making my heart stop pulsating.

'Run, Lilou. Run!' My mind yelled repeatedly, but I moved stealthily as I took three deep breaths. On the fourth exhale, I witnessed the glint of his fang as he grinned. The sound of a gong rang in my head as I turned around and ran as fast as I could.

This couldn't be my end! I had to run and hide. I knew this area as if it was written on the back of my hand. I need to survive. I had to! I gritted my teeth as adrenaline rush came over me.

There was nothing in my head but the thought of surviving. I knew I could never outrun a vampire, but that didn't matter right now. I ran and stumbled down a few times, but I got right back up, only wincing in pain as I continued.

Hope shrouded my heart when I was almost out of the steep slope, but that hope was instantly taken away when a sudden figure appeared in front of me.

Panting, I immediately stopped my feet as I hastily took several steps back. I gaze up at the towering figure before me, fear enveloping my heart as I knew I'm totally screwed.

I'll die... no! I clenched my hand tightly as I looked at those pair of murderous red eyes. His fangs were glinting brightly.

'I won't die here,' I told myself as I turned around, planning to run once again. However, a hand suddenly grabbed my wrist and pulled me back.

"Ahh!" I shrieked and froze when his ragged breath touched my nape. I stared mindlessly in the dark as my mind short-circuited.

"Blood... give me... blood..." was all I heard before I felt the sharp tip of his fang against my neck.

Chapter 218 - Your Life, Your Rules.

My eyes snapped open as I gasped for air. Again, that nightmare, I thought, as I dragged myself up to sit. I unconsciously touched my shoulder, stretching my neck in a circular motion with my eyes closed.

"Ugh... that felt real," I whispered as I slowly opened my eyes.

I subconsciously glanced at the window and it was already the crack of dawn. I thought I overslept, since the dream continued on a bit longer. The more I had these nightmares, the more I felt exhausted whenever I woke up. It was as though I was reliving those times in my life... those times I never recalled happening in my life.

"What a bother," I murmured as my eyes shifted to the man lying beside me. The corner of my lips immediately curled up subtly as I reached for Sam's cheek.

"Did he just sleep?" I wondered as it seemed that was the case. My thumb caressed his cheek and only after several strokes, I felt relieved.

"This is reality," I told myself, nodding approvingly. Those nightmares I had been having every time I closed my eyes were just nightmares. Although some events followed the memories I had, I don't recall most events like meeting that bloodthirsty vampire on the way home or that...

My mind suddenly buzzed as I winced in pain. My head hurts as I tried to recall the face of the man who saved me from that carriage. I had this feeling I knew him; it was just his face was blurred.

"Mhmm." I snapped back to the current lapse when Sam moved and let out a brief grunt. His one eye slowly opened, instantly locking gaze with me.

"Good morning, husband," I greeted as I lazily slipped beside him, using his arm as my head cushion. Sam said nothing as he cradled me in his embrace.

He felt especially warm today than in the past half a year months. It almost felt like the same warmth Sam had before. I wanted to think he was slowly regaining his emotions, but it didn't matter. His embrace would always give me this familiar sense of security.

I opened my eyes slowly. "Familiar sense of security..." I whispered as it reminded me of the same feeling back then.

Now that I thought about it, Sam had been listening to me all my life. I wonder if he had anything to do when I tried to take my own life out of fear and sadness.

I almost forgot about it. No, I barely recalled anything about those details in my past. I'm not even sure if I actually tried to kill myself that day seven years ago, or it was because they were in my recurring nightmare.

Either way, the fact remained. I wasn't alone all those times. Sam was with me, although not physically. He was always with me, and my love for him deepened.

"Did you have a dream?" he asked. His voice was coarse as his fingers stroked my back gently.

I pursed my lips and moved my head closely. "Mhm. I dreamed about the time I was at my father's grave. In the dream, I felt as if someone kept sending a wave of wind to remind me I'm not alone. I'm just wondering if you have anything to do with it."

But that was impossible, right? Sam could only hear me back then, and he was deep in his slumber. It was just probably my wish, as it sounded a little... romantic if that was the case.

"Mhm," He hummed, making me furrow my brows, and I drew my head back.

My eyes fixed on his sleeping visage. "Do you have anything to do with it?" I asked, curious what his humming meant.

"Mhm." Sam slowly opened his eyes and immediately caught my gaze. "How can you forget?" he complained, leaning down as he rubbed the apex of his nose against mine.

I blinked, surprised, as I instinctively pushed his chest. "You..." I trailed off I tried to wrap this information around my head. "How?" I gasped in disbelief.

He frowned when I pushed him, but he didn't fight back. "My seal. I just had to touch it subconsciously, and it explodes like a real explosive. The effect is the strong wind." He explained, keeping it short. "It hurts like hell. I might think of revenge now that you reminded me."

I was rendered speechless momentarily. To be honest, until now, I considered those recurring dreams and nightmares as just dreams and nightmares. Although there were events that showed some actual events I could remember, the rest felt like new.

To put it simply, even that idea about the warm breeze came from that dream. I thought my mind was merely creating a false memory to warm up my heart. But if Sam recalled it, did that mean those were not just dreams? Did those events really happen? But, if they did, I'm sure I wouldn't forget about them.

My mouth fell opened and only came back from my trance when he placed his palm on the back of my head and guided it against his chest.

"Sam?" I called out softly, feeling his slender and gentle fingers stroke my hair. His sudden gentleness somehow felt suspicious as he had been being gentle recently.

"Back then, you demanded apples, food, and all sorts of things. If I had a quill that time, I could've written an entire book with just the request you have spoken of."

I bit my lower lip, as it was exactly the same as what I saw in my dreams. I knew I had a habit of prattling about my day and announcing my home. But after that incident, I always spoke as if I was talking to someone.

"Wife," he called, his voice rasped as he rested his chin on top of my head. "Dreams could induce memory reconsolidation." Sam's tone was strangely low, with a mix of restraint.

"Huh?" My brows furrowed, appalled by his words.

"Whatever is in the past shall remain in the past. Those who dwell in it would bring nothing but destructive obsession," Sam muttered, confusing me even more, as I didn't expect him to impart his wisdom early in the morning.

"Your life, your rules. Don't let fate or others dictates how you live."

"Sam." I wiggled my body as I moved back. "Why are you saying all this?" I frowned, as I didn't like how he sounded. It felt ominous.

He shrugged nonchalantly. "Just because." My frown grew sullen, but I didn't press on the matter anymore since I wouldn't get a clear answer, anyway. Instead, I stayed in his embrace until it was time to prepare to go to work.

Chapter 219 - I Only Came To Visit My Wife

Just like the past half a year, Sam and I had to carry out our own duties, growing separately but also growing as one. I hope he also sees it that way.

"You died." I snapped my eyes, realizing I was currently sparring with Kristina. She retrieved her wooden sword from my throat as she stepped back, swinging that same wooden sword to her shoulder.

"You'd been looking so exhausted, Lil," Kristina said, cocking her head to the side with her eyes still on me. "You even get lost in thoughts in the middle of our spar now."

"That's because you're so boring!" Ramin yelled from the side. He was tapping the back side of the wooden sword against his shoulder, his other hand on his hip. He hunched in pain when Charlotte, who was standing next to him, elbowed him in the gut.

"When will you stop spouting nonsense, huh?" Charlotte gnashed her teeth before setting her eyes on us. "Why don't you two rest so that I can beat — I mean, Ramin and I can spar?"

"All yours." Kristina waved and shot me a look. "Let's go, dear." She cocked her head to the side, and I followed her while Charlotte dragged Ramin to the middle of the training grounds.

The two of them immediately engaged in an intense fight... or rather, Charlotte immediately beat Ramin without giving him time to prepare. Meanwhile, Kristina and I stood on the side, before I shifted my gaze on her when she asked;

"Is there something wrong?"

I pursed my lips, shaking my head. "No."

Kristina frowned. "Are we not friends? You can always tell me if there's something wrong." She was a perceptive woman and always observed the people around her. That's why she was always the first to notice when one of us was acting strange.

"Aren't you getting enough rest?" she asked, once again receiving no response from me.

"No, that's not it." I shook my head lightly, moving my gaze towards on the one-sided fight between Charlotte and Ramin. "It's just that, I've been having... dreams."

"And?"

"My dreams are more like memories. In those memories or dreams, whatever they were, there were certain events that happened." I recalled thinking about Sam's words this morning. "It's as if I'm reliving those days and wakes up feeling exhausted. They felt very vivid."

My head often hurts whenever I tried to recall too much. It was as if something in my head was telling me not to remember. I could barely concentrate on other things and often get lost in thoughts just like moments ago.

"Lilou," Kristina called, and I turned my head to her. "You know vampires can erase a person's memory, right?"

My mouth fell open as I forgot about that information. Sam did it once to me back in Whistlebird. Did that mean... my breath hitched as my heart suddenly pounded against my chest. Was it possible that a vampire seven years ago erased my memories? But why?

"Vampires can erase a person's memory. However, there's a certain limit to it. It depends on how strong or weak he or she is." Kristina explained, peeling her eyes away from me as she watched the two. "Most vampires can only erase a recent memory that just occurred, and it still takes a lot of energy to do so. That's why vampires would rather silence someone since it is easier to do that."

"I know..." I whispered as that immediately crossed my mind. Why would anyone bother to erase a person's memory if they could just end their lives?

"The stronger a vampire was, the more they can rob your memories; they can even erase their entire existence to a person if they really wanted to." Kristina paused as she let out a shallow breath. "In this kingdom, there were a few individuals who can rob people's memories. One of them is her royal highness, Silvia, but she's a special case since she was already born with that ability."

"Right..." I nodded, as I recently found out about Silvia's abilities. Silvia could rob people's memories and rewrite them into something different.

That was the reason the House of Thornhart didn't raise flags after the devastating turn of events that night of the banquet. Everyone present in that banquet believed an unknown force suddenly attacked the banquet. Hence the casualties.

"Her Royal Highness' ability to not just rob memories, but also rewrite them is terrifying. But, it can't be used repeatedly on the same person, people, since it would have less effect." Kristina explained, trying to soothe my worries. "Aside from her, the royal family had the same power to rob memories."

"Are you saying one of them knew me from seven years ago?" I asked, as that was what it sounded to me. Kristina just narrowed down the people who could be held responsible for these odd memories I've been dreaming about.

Kristina raised her shoulder, thrusting her lower lip forward. "I'm still unsure if that is the case. But if you're really retrieving some lost memories, it's not impossible. The royal family never lost their interest in Grimsbanne, after all."

"Even so, why would any of them erase my memories instead of killing me?" and that question rendered us both speechless. As she mentioned, vampires would rather kill than exert some effort in robbing another person's memory. I was a peasant, so my life would mean nothing to them.

"Why don't you ask his grace? Your husband?"

I sighed and gazed down. "He was in his slumber, remember?" Sam just told me not to live in the past, and... my brows suddenly furrowed as I narrowed my eyes. Did Sam know anything about it? He wouldn't say something ambiguous if he didn't.

"Oh, speaking of the devil," Kristina murmured, and I raised my gaze to where she jerked her chin up. My eyes instantly landed on Sam. What a surprise, as this was the first time Sam visited the third squadron.

"What was he doing... here?" I trailed off as Ramin suddenly appeared on Sam's side, attacking him out of nowhere. I never saw Ramin bare his fangs, but right now, he was seething, while Sam held on his wrist.

I gazed to my side and noticed Kristina's cheek twitching as her hand massaged her nape. "I salute Lil for not feeling the anger of your weapon." Her tone was full of restraint.

"Yaaah!" I recoiled when an arrow suddenly flashed before my eyes, which Sam managed to stop by clipping it in between his fingers. Two attacks from two different bearers, and Sam stopped them all, looking nonchalant.

"I only came to visit my wife," Sam said in a low tone, glancing at Ramin and then cocked his head to see Charlotte. "I don't remember my wife being as bulky as you, and as plain as her."

Chapter 220 - Hell's Disappointment

"My apologies, your grace. My labyrinth just gets too excited with your presence." Ramin hissed, and I heard his bone cracking under Sam's grip. Sam also broke the arrow in between his fingers, and I watched it burned into nothingness before it hit the ground.

"It's alright. I understand." Sam smiled and snapped Ramin's wrist that made the latter gnash his teeth. "Did that make you feel better?" His tone was light as he let Ramin go before cocking his eyes towards Charlotte.

I didn't know how did Rufus got there, but he restrained Charlotte by wielding a sword on her throat. I recoiled slightly when Sam clapped and exclaimed, "My wife's colleagues are fascinating. No wonder she likes it here!"

Sam faced our direction while Ramin stepped aside, holding his wrist carefully.

"Although it amused me," he said, shifting his eyes towards Kristina. "How the hell did you do it? I mean, fight your weapon's thirst?" Sam tilted his head to the side, his eyes glinting with bafflement.

"My will is my weapons will, your grace." Kristina's chest moved heavily in and out, struggling with her breathing. "Not the other way around," she added under her breath.

"Kristina..." I whispered. Although her tone sounded almost muffled, I felt her resolve in her voice. It was as if there was pain she wasn't talking about.

"Interesting." Sam nodded, making me furrow my brows as he briefly exchanged gazes with Rufus. "So, you lot are training?" he changed the subject, raising his brows as he gazed at everyone.

I ignored Sam as I turned to Kristina, holding her arms as she seemed vulnerable. "Kristina, are you alright?" she was breaking out in sweats, slowly growing pale as she weakly locked her gaze with me.

"I am, it's just..." she trailed off as she gulped down. "I need to take a rest early." Kristina squeezed my arm and offered a weak smile.

"Let me help..." I couldn't finish my offer when she shook her head lightly.

"I'm alright," Kristina reassured. "It just happens when I don't follow Mace's instincts," she explained with a smile. Mace was her divine weapon's name. As a fellow bearer of the Divine Order, I'm aware that our weapons had their own soul and desires. Wielding them also means coming to terms with our weapons.

I stared at her worriedly until Rufus suddenly came to our side and offered, "Kristina, let me escort you back." Kristina glanced at Rufus and nodded. I failed to notice the glint that flickered across Rufus' eyes.

"Take a rest," I said under my breath and watched the two leave. Rufus didn't hold Kristina as they walked side by side, although he at least walked slower than usual.? What did I expect from him?

A sigh slipped past my lips before I turned my head around at Charlotte's sudden yelling. My eyes instantly caught her assaulting Sam, which he easily dodged.

"Girl, is that the best you can do?" Sam clicked his tongue in disappointment, purposely taunting Charlotte as she bolted towards him with a wooden sword.

"Oh, my goodness!" he yelled, grabbing the wooden sword's body, which instantly broke under his grip. "This is fucking disappointing!" I cringed when I heard his last remarks. He added, "I was in denial that you lot are weak! But the more I see it, the more I'm terrified for my wife's safety!"

His snide remarks not only angered Charlotte and Ramin, but it annoyed me as well. Did he come here because he had enough insulting everyone in the inner palace? Was he trying to find a new target he could insult?

I shook my head, kicking the wooden sword on the ground, and it flew up a little. I hooked it by the back of my boots, kicking it up, and caught it midair. Sam continued on rambling how pathetic we were in the background, while I traced the wooden sword by my fingers.

'This is enough,' I thought, as it was still in a good shape. My eyes landed on Sam, his back was facing me while he lectured the two in a ridiculing tone.

"Who said..." I took a deep breath, holding the sword back, "I need protection?" I shot it straight at Sam's head. The wooden sword flew at an amazing speed. I watched it, unblinking as it made me wonder if it would hit my husband.

As expected, Sam stopped speaking as he docked his head when the sword came closed. The wooden sword hit the closest tree, shattering into many pieces due to force.

"That was close." Sam turned around, facing me squarely, grinning. "My wife, I didn't realize you've improved this much! Don't let Fabian see you or he will snatch you away from me!" For someone who had a butler that could snatch away his wife, Sam surely sounded enthusiastic about it.

My eyes instinctively moved at Ramin, then to Charlotte. They looked surprised. Well, I threw that sword with an intention to kill Sam... so it was stronger than my usual strength. Of course, they figured that out, that's why they were shocked. Not that I really wanted to kill Sam, I just knew that wouldn't kill him.

"Husband, your grace, please stop teasing my colleagues. We're still in the truce," I said with a deep sigh, walking towards Sam and stopped several steps away from him. "Why are you here?" I asked, not beating around the bush.

"To check on you!" he answered, but I frowned, all my emotions in my eyes fading away.

"Alright!" he rolled his eyes as he clicked his tongue. "I'm here for an inspection and an announcement since I'm your boss' boss."

I remained silent as I waited for whatever he would say. As I did, I dodge the arrows coming in our direction as Charlotte kept shooting at Sam, until I had enough and hopped back, leaving Sam dodging the arrows all by himself. I was not surprised that Ramin behaved himself with that injury on his wrist.

"Sir, what is your announcement?" I asked when I couldn't wait anymore.

Sam only cast me a look before he turned in Ramin's direction, still dodging Charlotte's continuous attacks. "I figured out the Undead's base. We will launch a counterattack soon."

The arrows stopped from coming as Charlotte, Ramin, and I stared at him in shock. He... found out the base of the undead? My heart suddenly raced anxiously.

He added, "The inspection is to check if you children qualify for the future plans, but you disappoint me, greatly." A sigh slipped past his lips, shaking his head. "Fret not! Your Grace Samael is here to help you resolve your problem!"

Did he really have to sound like he was promoting a business?

"You and you," Sam pointed at Ramin and Charlotte and then turned to me and said, "You as well, will train under me. Goodness, I'm so kind to teach the people who will hamper my plans from tearing this kingdom apart." His confidence made my brows twitched.