

# The Duke 231

## Chapter 231 - Always Be By Your Side

That night, I didn't know why I apologized to him, but it felt that I had too many things to apologize for. Sam had never shown me his vulnerability, so it took me aback. He felt more like Sam, or rather, an equal mix of Sam's fear and Hell's anger. I barely remember what happened after that as we kissed passionately and made love all night, and the rest was history.

"Lost in thoughts again?" Kristina cocked her head to me, snapping me out of my thoughts from that night one week ago. I faced her and smiled, closed-lipped.

"His Grace told you to observe. Why are you always so distracted?" she asked as she tilted her head a little.

"It's just... there are too many things I notice and try to figure out the reasons things happened that way."

Kristina nodded as she peeled her eyes away from me and set them back to Ramin and Charlotte who were sparring. Sam hadn't arrived yet, so those two were warming up and were on fire than ever because Ramin had fully recovered from his injury.

"By the way, how was your mission?" I broke the ice between Kristina and me as I cast her a brief look. "You've been rather busy these past weeks. Are. Are you alright?"

The corner of Kristina's lips hooked up into a subtle smile and only nodded. "I guess."

"You guess?"

Kristina just gazed at me for a second and let out a shallow breath. It seemed she had a lot to say, but couldn't.

"Is your mission that Sir Knight Rufus asked you to do is dangerous?" I queried, trying to understand her situation. Although Kristina was reliable and strong, her expression worried me.

"Dangerous...?" Kristina chuckled, and I sensed a trace of ridicule in her tone. "... it's more than just dangerous, but I'm alright."

My lips pressed into a thin line. I wanted to pry more about it, but if she couldn't tell me, it would only burden her. So, I took a deep breath and decided not to pry but cheer her on.

"I know you can do it," I said with a weak smile. "I believe in you, so don't die on any mission and come back to the Order in one piece."

Kristina gazed at me and let out a low chuckle before turning her attention back to the two. "Of course, I had to do well and come back to you guys."

The air between us suddenly felt refreshingly light as we observed the two. Ramin and Charlotte seemed very excited as their battle entered an intense exchange of blows. Well, Sam had tickled their eagerness to learn, so I guessed that was great.

My eyes snapped when Kristina suddenly uttered, "I won't bring you down, Lil."

"Huh?" I furrowed my brows and glanced at her. Kristina cast me a side-eye and smiled.

"I mean, you don't have to worry about me or Ramin and Charlotte. From what I see, Charlotte and Ramin's fighting style had changed a little, and although their moves seemed reckless, they were surprisingly calculated and knew what to do. So you don't have to worry about us."

I was aware of her words as I noticed that Ramin and Charlotte weren't just throwing attacks thoughtlessly. However, I was not worried about them as I knew they were strong and excellent fighters, so her words were quite baffling.

Kristina noticed my puzzlement and chuckled while shaking her head slightly. "Don't think too much about it. Just know that the third squadron will always be by your side."

Her words puzzled me, but at the same time, they sounded very reassuring. My heart warmed up and my eyes softened.

"Hmm!" I nodded, as it surprisingly gave me courage. "I'm glad to have reliable friends."

I felt Kristina gazed at me once again but said nothing. Instead, the two of us observed the fierce fight that seemed it wouldn't end as Charlotte and Ramin were giving it their all. Charlotte and Ramin hopped back, and they landed on either side of the ring.

"Not bad!" Charlotte exclaimed, grinning maniacally as her eyes glinted.

Ramin smirk and shrugged his shoulder nonchalantly. "Just so you know, Charlie, careful not to enter the labyrinth garden."

The two of them read the air between them and the ground underneath them cracked, preparing for another exchange of blows. Just then, I narrowed my eyes as I notice a small figure from across the training grounds.

Claude.

"Auntie Lilove!" Claude raised his hand up, waving it excitedly before jogging towards me. However, instead of walking around the safe zones of the training ground, Claude took the straight path, entering the center of the training ground at the same time Charlotte and Ramin bolted forward like bolts of lightning.

"Claude!" I shouted and didn't think twice, bolting towards the training ground to stop the two before they could harm the child that suddenly entered their vicinity.

**\*CLANG!\***

A wave of a deafening clash of metals rang in my ear and echoed across the training ground. Ramin blinked his eyes, surprised, as I held his wrist up with one hand.

"What...?" Ramin murmured, blinking his eyes as he realized our sudden interference.

My heart was racing fast as I let out a deep sigh before shifting my eyes to the other person next to me, Kristina. She had reacted just as fast as I did and managed to stop Charlotte with her weapon.

"Goodness, you two," Kristina uttered as if she was utterly relieved that we stopped them by the skin of our teeth. "Did you plan to plunge your weapons into this child? Do you have a death wish?"

We unconsciously gazed down at Claude in the middle. Claude was gazing up at us cluelessly.

"Oh, sorry." Ramin awkwardly withdrew his hand, and I let him go. Charlotte also did the same.

"Claude," I called out under my breath and squatted down. "Do you know how dangerous that was?!"

"Oh... I'm sorry, Auntie." Claude pursed his lips and glanced at Ramin standing behind me before scanning the other two.

I let out another sigh as I patted my chest to calm my anxious, beating heart. "Next time, wait for Auntie Lilou to come to you instead, alright? I thought I was going to die in worry! What will you do if I'm not here and Kristina?" I didn't mean to nag, but that was close... really close.

"I'm sorry, Auntie." Claude frowned as his tiny hands reached for my forehead, wiping my cold sweats away. "I was just too excited to be with Auntie, so I was reckless."

Seeing him this adorable while admitting his wrongs poked my soft spots for him. All I could do was let out another sigh and nod.

"Charlotte and Ramin were still training. Let's go over there, alright?" Claude nodded with my proposal, so I got up and he immediately held my hand. My eyes darted from Charlotte to Ramin, and then to Kristina.

"I'm sorry about that." I expressed.

Kristina offered a weak smile and said, "It's alright. You two go first. I need to talk to these two."

"Alright. I'm sorry again," I expressed and went away after the three reassured me it was nothing. What I didn't notice was the glint that flickered across Claude's eyes as he glanced back at them.

#### Chapter 232 - Additional Member Of The Third Squadron

As Lilou and Claude walked away and were at a safe distance, Ramin furrowed his brows and cocked his head to the side.

"Is Lilou stupid?" asked Charlotte as she retracted her gaze away from Lilou and Claude and set them to Kristina. "That child can definitely stop us if he wanted to."

"Are you saying Kristina is stupid as well?" Ramin's voice was filled with disdain, gazing at Charlotte from head to toe with dismay glinting in his eyes. "His Grace told you to fight and follow your instinct, but that doesn't mean you will completely not use your head."

"Wow..." Charlotte scoffed with her hand on her chest. "You think you're so smart now?"

"I'm just saying we should be thankful to Kristina and Lilou. Even if we noticed His highness, we won't be able to stop." Ramin clicked his tongue as he felt Claude's aura for a brief moment before Lilou and Kristina appeared.

"Ramin is right, Charlie." Kristina chimed in with a sigh. "If we didn't intervene, you two will be in trouble."

Kristina shook her head as she faced the two. She studied Charlotte's dejected expression, while Ramin kept his calm demeanor.

"His highness is the bearer of Auron and a pure-blooded La Crox. You have heard stories about him joining the front line in the previous war, so he is not to be underestimated just because he looks like a child." Kristina's expression grew solemn. "Don't cross him."

"Well, as long as he won't cross me," Charlotte murmured with a pout. "He's a two-face. Did you see how he looks at us as if we're inferior? But act cute in front of my best friend Lilou?"

"Charlotte." Kristina's voice sounded firmer as she stared at Charlotte intensely. "Your carefree attitude is starting to worry me. Even if His highness wouldn't take action against you, there were lots of people that would if you harm him."

"Right." Charlotte rolled her eyes, as Kristina's overprotectiveness to Claude did not please her.

"Don't worry about her, Kristina. I'll look after this fool." Ramin reassured with a smile and Kristina cast him a look. "We're on the same side, after all."

Kristina pursed her lips in a thin line as she understood the other meaning behind Ramin's remark. They were, indeed, on the same side... a side they voluntarily picked after seeing unbelievable things behind the peacefulness the Capital and the Palace showed.

"What, what is this?" Charlotte snapped the two back to the current lapse as Kristina and Ramin were just staring at each other for a good minute. "Are you two keeping a secret from me? Or did the two of you develop romantic feelings for each other?"

"So what if we did?" Kristina snapped her eyes before cocking her head to her nonchalantly.

Her response caused Charlotte's eyes to dilate as her mouth fell open. "What...?"

"Jealous?" Kristina smirked, raising a brow, sneaking a glance at Ramin while he cleared his throat and looked away. She chuckled when she noticed how his ears burned in red.

"Of course, I am!" Charlotte puffed her cheeks and huffed, glaring daggers at Ramin. "How dare this guy stole you from me!"

Ramin flinched as he shot Charlotte a look of disdain. "Do you like girls?!"

"So what if I do?"

Kristina chuckled and covered her lips with the back of her hand while the two bantered like usual. Charlotte was too dense not to notice the way Ramin looked at her, although she couldn't blame Charlotte since Ramin had his strange way of showing his feelings.

"Are you really testing me..." Charlotte suddenly trailed off as the three of them turned their head to a figure who turned up an arm's length away from them.

"The third squadron is filled with energetic people, I see." Yul nodded as he studied the three and witnessed how their eyes grew wide. "A bunch of loud people... and I had to work with them." He mumbled to himself, but they clearly heard him.

"Your... your highness, the ninth prince, what are you doing here?" Kristina stammered, but deep down, she sort of guessed the answer.

"From today onwards, the ninth prince will be an addition to the third squadron together with his highness Claude." Rufus' voice suddenly reached the three as he walked from behind Yul and stopped several steps away from them. "He will be with you at all times, so I hope you drop any prejudices and treat them as one of you."

"Sir Knight, Captain, there's no problem with us if his highness, the ninth prince, joins the third squadron. However, don't you think those words are supposed to be addressed to His highness

instead of us?" Charlotte voiced out sarcastically, as Yul didn't even conceal his displeasure in joining the squad.

"This is an order from His Grace." Rufus ignored Charlotte as he was aware of that, but they didn't have many options. So Rufus diverted the subject into a more important one.

"Also, call for the bearer of Lakresha and Auron as I need to brief you about your next fieldwork."

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Meanwhile, on the outskirts of the Capital, blood washed down the slum area of the little town of Libira.

"Set it on fire," Fabian commanded to the few men clad in black standing in the shade of the run-down house. "Make sure no evidence will be left if you want to live."

The men in black just bowed without a word, and they disappeared after a blink. There were no traces of them as if they weren't there in the first place.

Fabian slowly turned around and his eyes immediately caught the five children shivering, sitting on the corner of the narrow street.

"What are we going to do to them, my lord?" asked Fabian as he shifted his eyes towards Samael, who was inspecting one among the piles of corpses scattered on the same narrow street.

"Who?" Samael inquired without casting Fabian a glance.

"These children." Fabian shot the children a look, and they instantly shuddered in fear. "They've seen and heard everything."

Samael slowly raised his head, and his eyes fell on the five children. He pondered for a moment before springing his feet up and trudged towards the five survivors of today's incident. When he was a few steps away from them, Samael squatted down.

"Hmmm," Samael hummed as he scanned the five children. "Little crumbs, what are your names?"

The children were obviously terrified by the presence of the man and all they could do was shudder under his gaze... expect one brave child who plucked up the courage to answer Samael's question.

"Ni — Nitri, my name is Nitri, milord," said the child bravely, and the four children gazed up at her.

Chapter 233 - Five Little Children

"Ni — Nitri, milord," said the child bravely, and the four children gazed up at her. Nitri's courage brought out this strong spirit for the children as they answered one after another.

"Yasmeen." The other girl answered in a tiny voice, squeezing herself to the other child's shoulder like an adorable kitten.

A willful voice from another child followed Yasmeen's introduction. "My name is Dao ZD, and this is my twin Dao CC." Pointing at the other child next to her named Dao CC.

"What a strange name," Samael commented as he darted his eyes on the twins and immediately noticed the difference in their demeanor. "Admit it. You just made that up, huh?"

Dao ZD pursed her lips in a thin line as she raised her little arm as if protecting her timid twin. Samael clicked his tongue before shifting his eyes to the last child who was lending Yasmeeen her shoulder.

"And you?" he asked, raising a brow. "What's your name?"

"Rhe — Rhea."

"I see." Samael nodded after getting their name. His eyes scanned the children once again. The emotions in their eyes somehow reminded him of Lilou's innocence and braveness in the past.

Fabian gazed at the children and when Dao CC instinctively raised her head and met his eyes, he smiled. But the child's expression instantly grew pale.

"My lord, let's kill that child." Fabian requested as his expression died. "She is already pale, let's not prolonged her sufferings."

"Don't scare the children, Fabian." Samael chuckled in a low tone. "These children survived until now for a reason. However, they are not safe since their blood is not pure anymore."

"We can just toss them inside that house before our people set it on fire."

Samael clicked his tongue as he shook his head. "Fabian, my dear confidante, my wife will set me on fire if she hears about it, also, Lilou likes children."

"Dead people tell no tales. Her Grace wouldn't know about it if no one will tell her."

"But there's no secret that time does not reveal," Samael argued calmly. "Also, these children might help me in something."

The corner of Samael's lips stretched broader as he grinned at the innocent children. He just thought of something that he would need their help in the future.

"For now, let's take them to Lord Remington's estate so they can look after these children. Also, send a word to Marquess Crawford that some pitiful children will be suffering from an incomplete blood transfusion. I need him to soothe them so they won't die."

Fabian let out a sigh. Not particularly happy about the hassle of saving the children's lives. However, deep down, he understood Samael's reason for saving these children on top of the reason Lilou had soft spot children. It was mercy.

"Understood."

Pleased, Samael offered the little children a smile and offered his hand that was covered with blood. "Let's go to your new home, little crumbs."

The children stared at him with doubt in their eyes. Just a moment ago, they witnessed how Samael ravage the people experimenting on them mercilessly.

"My hands are dirty and no amount of water can clean them," Samael spoke, noticing their reluctance to believe him, which he understood. "You kids had seen hell yourselves. Even if you refuse to take my hand, you will die either way."

The children pursed their lips in a thin line, backing away even though Samael's tone was gentle, his eyes were glinting sharply. Still, they listened to him until the end.

"If you're going to die, don't you think choosing your own end, your own hell, is better than being forced to be experimented on and being disposed of once it failed?" Samael cocked his head to the side, scanning the five children who were staring back at him with the little innocence left in them.

"I won't force you to come with me and I will let you go if that's what you wish." He let out a shallow breath. "But, if you take my hand, I won't guarantee that you won't face danger anymore, but I can guarantee your safety. Of course, I don't give free meals so you need to work for me."

'I should've secretly cut their tongues so they had a valid reason for being mute.' Fabian thought, staring coldly at the children who weren't answering Samael.

The children stared at Samael. His words weren't sugar-coated with too good to be true promises, nor his expression showed kindness. However, the irony of it was that they felt his sincerity in his frankness.

"What... what do you need us for?" Nitri inquired, her voice almost muffled.

Samael smiled until his eyes squinted. "I need you to do something dangerous. So whatever decision you will make now, do it with the consideration of the possibility that I am tricking you."

He handed his hand once again, waiting for any of them to take it. To him, these children weren't dumb because they survived that hellish experiment until they ambushed their hideout.

To everyone's surprise, Dao CC was the first to reach her hand out, that pleased Samael. So the latter took her in his arms and carried her as he stood up. He gazed down when Yasmeen immediately held onto his other hand.

"Take the other children with you Fabian," Samael ordered before marching away with Dao CC in his arms while Yasmeen holding his other hand. Yasmeen held her hand towards Rhea and the latter took it, following Samael's lead.

Meanwhile, Fabian gazed at the other two children — Dao ZD and Nitri — who were looking up at him. He noticed the blood in his hand and was a little reluctant to offer his hand. However, before he could speak, the two children took his hands without a second hesitation.

Their action startled him a little, but his expression remained cold. "Let's go, children," Fabian said, holding their little hands before walking away; away from the dreadful sight of the massacre that happened in the slums of Libira... away from the children's nightmare.

#### Chapter 234 - Flames Of Eternal Damnation

Samael and the children rode the carriage back to one of Remington's estates near Libira, and when they arrived, the servants took care of the children. Noah Remington also arrived almost the same time and caught Samael and Fabian still outside the mansion.

"You're quick, Noah," Samael clapped, watching Noah dismounted his steed. "Fabian is about to send you a word!"

"Greetings, Your Grace. I came here because Sir Rufus send a word," Noah explained as he placed his fist across his chest and bowed at Samael.

"You don't have to bow your head every time we see each other." Samael clicked his tongue while Noah raised his head. "You're a Duke now. So, there's no need to do that."

"Will you blame me, Your Grace? I swore in my blood that I will serve you, and only you."

Samael only glanced at him but held back on saying anything, as it was pointless. He held his hand behind him and walked away. Fabian and Noah followed a few steps behind him.

"Sir Rufus must've foreseen what will happen, so he sent me a word to assist you." Noah broke the ice, sounding grateful to Rufus because what the latter said in the letter was accurate.

Rufus was surely a reliable fellow. Noah couldn't rely on Fabian as the only thing he was reliable about was house chores or if they needed someone dead.

Receiving no response from Samael, Noah inquired. "Did we guess it right, your grace? Does the current king plans to bring ruin to this country?"

"Ruin is not the word, Noah." Samael thrust his lower lip forward as he looked around at the scenery of the vast estate of the House Remington.

"That god damned fool wants is change." Fabian chimed in, casting Noah a side-eye coldly.

"A change?" Noah furrowed his brows and momentarily stopped in his tracks. "What..."

He trailed off when Fabian uttered. "Apparently, these experiments had been going on for centuries. If his grace hadn't woke up, that person will soon become an emperor."

"What?!" Noah snapped as he hastened his steps to catch up with them.

"A kingdom of just vampires or half-bloods," Samael muttered without looking back at them. "The undead are one thing, but the more we dig deeper, the more rotting truths we uncover."

This small yet understandable information slightly took Noah aback, as it was easy to put the pieces together. He didn't know what to do with it if this had been going on for centuries.

"My lord," called Noah as sweats broke out from his forehead and back. "Did you think my father had some involvement with it?"

"Who knows? The dead tell no tales."

Again, Noah went silent as the three of them continued their idle walk. Noah's Father, Anton, and his big brother Arthur were long dead. A week after Samael's visit in Whistlebird, Anton and Arthur, who were locked up in the dungeon prison of the Remington estate, were found dead. They thought it was suicide, but the more Noah thought more about it, that might not be the case.

"What we are certain is that the king entrusts the case of the undead to his grace for him to know this information," Fabian concluded because Stefan wasn't the reckless type. Recklessness and lack of planning might suit Samael's style, but not Stefan.

"Does that mean the king has some sort of involvement with the Undead as well?" Noah inquired. This would be a lot more to handle if Stefan had already built an army, centuries prior to the present.

Noah's question was left unanswered as Samael didn't speak anymore with his hands behind his head. In Noah's eyes, Samael was too relaxed, as if this matter didn't concern him.

"My lord, what are your thoughts about it?" asked Noah while his eyes fixed on Samael's back.

"My thoughts? Hmm..." Samael hummed, pressing his lips into a thin line as he pondered for a moment. "Honestly, I don't care. I'm thinking of traveling the world with my wife."



"My lord!" Noah yelled, disgruntled by Samael's careless remarks. "Do you plan on abandoning your people? How about Grimsbanne?"

"Grimsbanne is a place I had fun building with the Barrett's. Rufus can take care of it since Stefan would see him as an asset in building an empire." Samael explained nonchalantly, as there was nothing that can overvalue a peaceful life with Lilou. "Fabian can come with us if he wants since I'm sure he'll just end up dead if I left him behind."

"My lord, please don't jest like that," Noah uttered in a shaking voice. The lack of interest from Samael and knowing Fabian's only interest in sticking his lord was disheartening.

"Lord Remington, don't you think this kingdom will benefit more if it becomes an empire?" Fabian inquired while casting Noah a quick glance. "If the king's plans started taking action, the House of Remington will benefit as well if you pledge your loyalty to the monarchy."

Noah let out a soft scoffed as these two were speaking as if they didn't plan on opposing the idea. Turning this kingdom into an empire wasn't a bad idea. However, a place where all humans were turned into vampires was never the will of the founding families of the country or the original purpose of this country.

"Will you really just let the king do as he please?" Noah gazed down, clenching his hand into a tight fist. "Will you really just run away?"

"I only care about Lilou and I don't care whatever happens in this world." Samael halted and slowly turned around. "Don't look so sad, Lord Remington. You look like you're about to cry!"

"Your Grace, will you really just drop everything and flee?" His eyes glinting, facing Samael squarely.

The side of Samael's lips slowly curled into a smile. "I plan to, since I absolutely don't care, nor do I want anything from this country. However, my sweet brother wants something from me and will follow me even to the pits of hell to get it."

"He wants Catharsis?"

Samael just smiled, but Noah immediately caught the sly glint that flickered across his eyes. He turned to Fabian when the latter said, "You're a little slow, Lord Remington. My respect towards you pummeled down and hit the flames of the eternal damnation."

"Mister Fabian, please don't forget our difference in status."

"Even if I engrave the difference between our social status in my brain, I will still say the same." Fabian raised his shoulder nonchalantly. "If you're this slow, I advised you to do some gardening. It will help you think faster."

"Haha!" Samael chuckled, turning around and resuming his steps. "Stop teasing Lord Remington, Fabian."

"I'm not teasing him, Your Grace. I'm stating my personal opinion and trying to help him improve where he lacks."

"Mister Fabian, did I do something to you to gain your hate?" Noah scrunched his nose up as he was never insulted right in front of his face, aside from Samael.

"If I do, you will be breathing your last breath six feet under," Fabian answered in a matter-of-fact tone. "How can you conclude that fool wants Catharsis when His Grace's weapon had been in the black market for a long time?"

"Then, what does the king want from his grace?"

"My wife," Samael spoke after whistling softly. "He is obsessed with my wife, and we all know how annoying he is when he is obsessed with something."

His answer rendered Noah speechless. Stefan was obsessed with Lilou? Why? What did Samael and Stefan see in Lilou? Sure, she was quite pretty and kind — also a bearer of Lakresha — but it was not that Lilou was the only female bearer nor her beauty was unrivaled.

"It was a long history between them, back when I was in my slumber." Samael clarified, after sensing Noah's confusion. "But she is mine now, and I don't like sharing."

Silence dawned on them as they walked. It was only broken when Samael spoke once again.

"Stefan entrusts me with this situation with the undead to humor me." He paused as the corner of his lips curled into a smirk. "Don't you think it's only polite to humor him back?"

"My lord?"

Samael turned around and faced them with a smile. "The festival will take place in a month. Fabian will brief you about the plan."

Noah blinked in disbelief seeing the wicked smile plastered on Samael's face. He instinctively glanced at Fabian, and the latter was also smiling.

"Your Grace, Mister Fabian, does Sir Rufus know about any of your plans?" And when the two didn't respond, Noah immediately knew Rufus was kept in the dark.

#### Chapter 235 - A Visit In Avolire Palace

In a month, the entire kingdom would celebrate the foundation of the country that would last a week. For that, the knights and the Bearers of the Order would be scattered around the Capital to secure its safety while the celebration was going. Stefan would also make a public appearance and hold many banquets in the palace.

"I don't remember Grimsbanne celebrating such an event," I murmured on my way back to my quarters.

"Because Grimsbanne is an isolated land." I glanced to my side and caught Kristina's gaze. She was walking by my side. "Even though His Grace was in his slumber, the people under him were not to be underestimated."

"That's right." I nodded and shot my eyes ahead, walking through the hallway going to the third prince's palace.

Kristina took a deep breath. "There's only a limited influence the king holds in Grimsbanne, so there's that."

"Have you been to Grimsbanne before?" I snuck a glance at her and saw her shook her head.

"I don't think any of the bearers or just anyone in the Capital had the audacity to walk around the land where His Grace rests. If you're asking me for the reason, it is simply because the chances of leaving Grimsbanne were low."

My brows furrowed before I stopped in my steps. "What do you mean?" I faced her as she halted.

Kristina cocked her head to me. "Because His Grace's people will know if someone who can pose a threat entered their territory. We, the Bearers of the Order, had a certain scent, vampires, as well. Unless someone can conceal it."

"We do?" I tilted my head to the side, confused.

"Can't you smell Mace?"

"I'm a human, so my sense of smell isn't as sharp as yours," I answered honestly. "Also, this information is new to me."

Kristina stared at me for a moment and only spoke after she was satisfied inspecting me. "Lilou, how was your training in observing just everything?"

Her sudden inquiry confused me, but I still answered. "Good? After doing it continuously, I unknowingly observe things and notice details I wouldn't normally notice."

"I see."

"Why did you ask, though?" I inquired, out of plain curiosity.

Her lips pressed into a thin line before the side of her lips curled up weakly. "Just... curious."

"I feel like you've been keeping a secret from me," I murmured, pouting as Kristina had been more secretive recently. She flinched when I suddenly placed my hand on her shoulder, staring at her straight in the eye.

"Lilou?" she called, confused.

My eyes narrowed as I studied her surprised visage. "Say, did Sam tell you anything?"

"Pardon?"

"My husband, did he threaten you or something? You've been saying weird things as if we will part soon." I studied every little movement her face did to get the answer I needed, just in case she shrugs my question off.

Kristina's brow slightly quirked as her pupils dilated a little. She smacked her lips once before clearing her throat and chuckled softly.

"I'm saying things because our line of duty is dangerous." Kristina shook her head lightly. "I heard about what happened to the knights who had lost their lives because they were careless. We don't know what the future holds, so I'd rather say things to my friends while I'm alive."

"I thought I'm already negative, but you are as well." I withdrew my hands from her shoulder, pouting while she chuckled. "I told you many times, come back to our third squadron, always."

"Is that an order, your grace?" she teased with a playful smirk, making me sigh as we continued our steps.

"Do I have the right to order a bearer now?" I joked as I walked, leaving her behind. "Just be careful, Kristina. Whatever you're doing, I trust your judgment."

Kristina didn't catch up to me, as I could feel her gaze on my spine. Thanks to Sam's orders for me to just observe, I caught her half-baked excuse. Although I knew there was some truth in her explanation, the expression in her eyes told me something she couldn't tell me.

In the end, Kristina and I parted ways as I headed to Avolire Palace to visit Silvia, while Kristina headed to the main palace. I originally planned to rest, but I remembered Yul telling me to come in here to have some tea.

On my way to Avolire Garden, where I usually enjoy a cup of tea with Silvia and Yul, I stopped as my eyes caught the figure ahead of me. Cassara stopped in her tracks as she turned her head to me. Once our eyes met, I performed a knight bow while she marched towards me.

"Greetings, your royal highness," I greeted politely when I sensed her presence near me before seeing the hem of her dress.

"Raise your head." She ordered, which I did, facing her undeniably gorgeous face. "It's rare to see you in Avolire Palace. Did you come to see Silvia?"

"Yes, Your Royal Highness."

Cassara nodded in understanding, making me notice her change in demeanor. She would usually have this ridicule in her eyes whenever she looked at me, but I couldn't see it in her eyes now. What happened to her that night she tried to seduce my husband?

"Silvia was called to the main palace, so it will take some time before she returns," Cassara informed me, and I nodded in understanding.

"Thank you for telling me, your royal highness. I will take my leave then." I bowed politely and bid her my farewell. I would wait for them to return, but with Cassara around, I'd rather come back next time.

"Why don't you stay for a moment and accompany me for a walk?" she proposed. I winced internally but kept my expression the same.

Cassara took a shallow breath as her eyes scanned me from head to toe, before meeting my gaze once again. "You seem reluctant."

"Of course, not, your royal highness." I forced a smile onto my face. "I merely thought I might be bothering you."

"You don't."

My jaw clenched, but I still kept my polite attitude. "It's my pleasure to accompany you, your royal highness."

And so, the two of us headed to Avolire Garden while she ordered her servants to give us a moment to talk.

Chapter 236 - A Visit In Avolire Palace II

I kept a safe distance from Cassara while we walked in silence. The air around us grew more awkward as neither of us talked. I don't know what she was trying to do, but whatever it was, I'm prepared.

My shoulders flinched when Cassara suddenly broke the silence. "I heard Yul joined the third squadron."

"Ah, yes," I responded awkwardly, clearing my throat as I recomposed myself.

"You must be surprised." Cassara stopped treading as she faced the section full of red roses. Her hand reached for one rose, caressing the petals that made her look like a goddess in the garden. She was really pretty; I didn't know which was prettier between her and the red rose.

I snapped my eyes and replied, "Not really."

"Why, so?" she asked, playing a finger over the petals of the rose.

"Because anything can happen in the palace."

Cassara nodded her head before she slowly shifted her eyes to me. "That's right. Anything can happen in the palace, for example, you going missing so suddenly."

My back instantly stiffened, a little surprised but not frightened. I didn't dare move my gaze away from her as we stared at each other in silence for a moment.

"Just like what happened in Cunningham. Although, I doubt that will happen without you putting up a fight now." She added with a soft chuckle, moving her eyes back to the rose. "I still don't like you."

"Your royal highness, I know —"

"Cassara." She cast me a quick look. "I never like that title since it reminds me I am someone's wife now. So, call me Cassara."

"How dare I call you that?" I said awkwardly. Unlike my relationship with Silvia and Yul, I didn't have the same close relationship with her. So calling her so casually was quite a burden, whatever her reasons were.

Cassara raised a brow, tilting her head to the side. "That's an order."

What a bother. I thought. "Yes, your royal — Cassara." I pursed my lips in a thin line as I gaze down.

"Good." she intoned, nodding before shifting her attention back to the roses. "You're not slow enough not to know about my feelings to Hell."

'I'm the wife, but why did she sound like the legal wife talking to her husband's mistress?' I thought, sneaking a glance at her side. Cassara traced the rose down to its thorny stems.

"But that is not the reason I asked you to accompany me here," she said, pricking her finger accidentally when she glanced at me. Cassara's expression didn't change, despite the blood dripping from her fingertip.

"Then, what is the purpose of your invitation, your royal highness?" I asked, not beating around the bush. "I believe you won't ask me to accompany you for a walk for idle talk."

Cassara raised her finger, staring at her own blood. "You're right. I want you to know that I am aware of your feelings for my husband."

"I don't have any other specific feelings for His Majesty aside from respect, your royal highness," I corrected. "I'm sired to him and we're both aware how the power of sire works."

I didn't like how she sounded with her remarks. She couldn't be saying what I thought she was trying to say, right? There's no way, even if she didn't have romantic feelings for Stefan, she wouldn't tell me she wanted to trade husband. That was just... sick.

"Are you sure?" Cassara faced me and I replied, "Yes!" with full of conviction.

"You," she raised her hand, offering it to me, which made my brows knit. "Do you want to know if what you said is real?"

"What..."

"I'll show you, Lilou." Cassara tilted her head to the side. "The reason I oppose your marriage with Hell, and the lost memories you'd been slowly uncovering in your sleep."

My eyes fell to her palm and then I gazed up at her. Reluctance flickered across my eyes as there's no way I would hold her hand. Who knows what trick she would use on me?

"My abilities are unlike Silvia, who can be useful in many things, nor it is like Yul's and Hanz. However, mine comes in handy because mind-control never works on me." Cassara explained, catching my attention as she held my gaze. "If Stefan can have a glimpse of the future, I can see a person's past and undo any mind-control they had on you."

"Then, can you undo the sire?"

"If I want to die for you, I can, but there's only one person I am willing to give my life to, and that's not you." Cassara bluntly responded with no other pretense. "If I can harm you with my abilities, I would've done it even at the cost of my life, don't you think?"

"Even so..." I trailed off as she cut me off.

"Why? Are you afraid that once you regain your lost memories, you will have a change of heart?" Cassara cocked her head once again, eyebrow raised.

"Even if you provoke me, I won't be trapped in any vampire's abilities again." I expressed honestly. "Apologies, Cassara. But, the past shall remain in the past and I shall live in the present where I will create my future with my husband."

Cassara slowly retrieved her hand as she let out a shallow scoff. I sighed as I had made my mind and shrugged the tiniest curiosity in my head.

"If that's all, I will have to excuse myself." I bowed politely with my fist across my chest. But when I raised my head, I froze as Cassara appeared in front of me. She suddenly held both sides of my head, leaning in with her eyes locked on me.

"Cassa —"

"See for yourself," she said, and I felt like sprout roots grew underneath my boots, stilling me on the ground. All I could do was stare into her eyes, and I felt like I was being drawn in it before memories of the past flashed in my head.

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The memories of the past half a year rolled back in my head, and then my time in Cunningham, Whistlebird, and then Grimsbanne. It went back to the time I first met Sam, and what my life looked like before him. My life before Sam was dull, hard, and meaningless... until I reached the memories from five, six, seven years ago.

"Lexx!" I called out to the person resting under the shade of a tree. The person I called slowly moved his head in my direction, a smile appeared on his face.

How I met him and every memory of him surged in my head. Unlike in the dreams where his face was blurred, Stefan's face was clear and all our memories together slowly filled the gaps in my head.

### Chapter 237 - Putting Back The Missing Piece

After Lilou mistaken Stefan as someone who had been there for her all this time, he came to check what happened to the vampire he let loose. The only traces left were bloods that trailed in a certain direction, which he followed until the traces stopped.

Stefan squatted down, brushing the slightly elevated ground, and soon saw the clothes of the corpse. The corner of his lips curled into a smirk because this was no doubt the abnormal he let loose.

"What an interesting girl," He muttered approvingly, thinking about the girl who clung to him as if they knew each other. "Considering her petite body, not only did she manage to escape, she killed an abnormal and buried it."

A soft wave of a chuckle escaped his mouth thinking about it. "Grimsbanne is surely an interesting place to..." Stefan trailed off upon sensing the presence behind him.

He turned his head back ever so slowly. His eyes caught her petite figure standing not far away from him.

Lilou.

"What are you doing here?" asked Lilou in a weak and tiny voice, shifting her eyes towards the spot where she buried the vampire. "I told you don't leave it's dangerous."

"I came out for a walk," Stefan explained as he stood up and faced her. He studied her lifeless expression and the dullness in her eyes as if life itself barely mattered.

Lilou remained silent for a moment before she asked. "Did you see it?"

The eerie air that exuded from her made Stefan smile. In his mind, this human girl was pushed to the brink of madness after her encounter with the abnormal. Still, it was commendable that she hadn't snapped completely.

"See what?" Stefan asked, feigning ignorance. "Is there something you're hiding?"

"Nothing." Lilou shook her head, lying without batting an eye before turning around. "Let's go back."

Stefan smirked as his eyes glinted in amusement. He watched her walk away, noticing her gaze over her shoulder before continuing.

"Should I bring out her full potential?" he muttered while the corner of his lips stretched broader. If Lilou could exude such aura despite being weak, what else could she do if she was skilled?

Since Lilou was a peasant and a human born in Grimsbanne, using her for his own benefit wasn't a terrible idea. Moreover, who would suspect someone like her?

"I wonder if she will be useful or end up being useless?" Stefan let out a low chuckle before he followed her tracks and they returned to her shack.

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Ever since that night, the complicated relationship between Lilou and Stefan started. She still came to the field during the day and return to her shack at night. No one noticed Lilou's change as she still managed to keep her smile in front of them, nor they knew the monster that was being nourished inside her vulnerable mind, and the person who was taking advantage of it.

"Lexx!" Lilou called out at Stefan, who was resting under the shade of a tree.

Stefan drawled his head in her direction. A smile appeared on his face. It had been half a year since they met, and their relationship... Lilou still relied on him while he favored her greatly.

Lilou dashed to his side and happily smiled. "You returned?"

"Did you miss me?" he asked, raising his hand and placed it on her head.

"How can I not? You've been away for two months!" Lilou complained as she brushed his hand away.

"I've brought you chocolates on the way. So, don't be mad." Stefan chuckled as he shoved his hand inside his cloak and tossed her a bar of chocolate. Lilou caught it excitedly and unwrapped it to eat.

For the past half a year, Lilou had surprised him in many areas as she was a quick learner and she could adapt to any situation. But the longer he associated with her, there was this fear that had been growing in his heart, especially seeing her smile so brightly.

That was, Lilou was a naturally born monster, and that fateful night... there was no doubt something in her head snapped.

"This is unfair, Lexx!" she frowned as she munched the chocolate bar. "You can't just bribe me with chocolates just so you can get away from leaving me!"

"I told you I need to do something important."

Her eyes glinted as she caught his gaze. "More important than me?"

Catching the glint that flickered across her eyes and the air that exuded from her sent a chill down his spine. The monster he had nourished out of curiosity had started to pose a threat to him. If not for the fact that Lilou emotionally depended on him, Stefan was certain Lilou would be a troublesome fellow to deal with.

"Lilou, on my way here, I heard some incident that had been going on in the neighboring towns." Stefan's tone grew solemn as he stared at her straight in the eye. "The previous culprits about those incidents were all dead now. So, why are you continuing their crimes?"



"Continuing their crimes?" Lilou tilted her head to the side, a misplaced innocence flashing across her eyes. "I had my own pattern, so that sounds like an insult. Also, how is it called a crime when I'm merely trying to uproot evilness?"

Stefan let out a shallow breath. "What are you going to do if you are caught? Your victims are noblemen and they'd been searching for the culprit."

"They can search all they want, but they won't find out." Lilou smiled sweetly as she offered him a chocolate bar. "Don't worry about it. It's your fault for leaving me, so I need to kill some time. Here, have a bite!"

Her remorseless response that was justifying her actions and nonchalant attitude made him narrow his eyes. Stefan thought if he stayed far away from her for a little while, it would calm her urge for violence, but it seemed it only heightened her desire for destruction.

"Lexx," Lilou called, receiving no response from him. "Are you not happy? I thought if I worked diligently, you will be happy once you hear the news. Why are you looking at me as if I'm some sort of monster?"

"It's not that I'm not happy, and I don't see you as a monster. I'm just... worried."

"I told you, you don't have to." She frowned as she dropped her hand and her eyes fell on it.

Stefan sighed heavily, as coaxing her was his top priority. Making Lilou his enemy now would only cause him more trouble, as he had been dealing with a lot of stuff.

"There, there." He patted her head gently, making her raise his head. "I'm worried, not because I doubt your abilities. No matter how strong you are, I will always be worried."

Lies. Her mind whispered, but Lilou still smiled brightly. "Is that so?"

"Mhm." A faint sigh slipped past his lips as he stared at her. There was also one reason he didn't want to kill her despite that she knew too much and she had been posing a threat to him.

That was, Lilou only had Stefan in her eyes. No one around him had looked at Stefan the way she looked at him.

"I'm really happy to see you back, Lexx." Lilou expressed happily, making his eyes soften.

"Me too."

Both of them smiled and the air around them grew light. However, none knew that behind her sweet smile, something wicked was hovering in her head.

## Chapter 238 - Putting Back The Missing Piece II

Another year had passed since then. Stefan would usually leave Grimsbanne for a while and Lilou had grown accustomed to his months of absence. There wasn't much of anything new to her life as she would still constantly go out at night and 'take a walk'.

"Goodness, did you hear what happened in Sangrey? They said a nobleman is killed and his remains are scattered around the town!" Old Olly exclaimed in horror. "That's so close to our town! Just what is going on? I thought they caught already the culprit?"

"If the perpetrator can do this to nobles, just what are the chances he won't touch us, commoners?"

"Why would that person pay attention to us? I heard the fortune he pillaged from those noblemen were given to those who needed it!"

"That's right! Rumor has it that he only targets those vicious nobles! If anything, we should be thankful to him for helping the less fortunate!" Another farmer chimed in. "Nobles don't care about us and see us like animals! They deserved this!"

"Unbelievable! Have you men lost your minds? How can you sound like he is some hero? He is a vicious monster who commits heinous crimes! To have money from doing such a thing..."

"Then will you not accept it if a bag of gold is lying right in front of your doorstep?!"

Lilou paid no attention to the quarrel between the farmers about the recent incident. The news about a vigilante who only targeted noblemen, robbing them and killing them, had been going around, and the public opinion was split in half. Some of them supported this unknown vigilante while others chastise and feared him.

Little did they know, it was not a He. The person these farmers were quarreling about was just right beside them.

"Lilou," called Old Olly, and Lilou raised her head to her. "Are you alright? You seem a little down these days."

Lilou sported her weak smile. "Yes, I'm just worried that the peace in Grimsbanne will not come anytime soon."

"You're right. I'm also worried about you since you've been living alone. Why don't you stay with us tonight?" Old Olly offered, as usual, worried about Lilou, as these attacks had been more active.

"You're always worried about me, Old Olly." Lilou kept her weak smile as she faced her. "The attacker was only targeting the noblemen that were involved in slavery and such, so I don't think he will pay attention to a peasant like me."

"We can never tell, Lilou. His methods are cruel and wicked. We don't know what kind of thoughts that are going on inside those kinds of people."

Lilou stared at her for a moment. "Between the vigilante and his victims, I don't think his victims are not less evil than the vigilante."

"Why are you saying such a thing, Lilou?"

"I'm just saying." Lilou shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly as she continued harvesting the crops. "I'm neither saying his ways are right or wrong, I'm just saying those nobles fell in the hands of a person more evil than them."

Old Olly stared at Lilou worriedly, as she was the only one who had noticed Lilou's slight change. Although it was normal for Lilou to shrug the rumors and gossips, there was just something different in her that Old Olly couldn't pinpoint.

"Just be careful, Lilou." She let out a sigh, shaking her head lightly. "You're always welcome to our humble home. It's not much, but you won't at least be alone."

Lilou glanced back at her and nodded with a smile. "Thank you, Old Olly. I'll keep that in mind."

Old Olly smiled back and resumed her work while Lilou fixed her eyes on her for a moment. One of the reasons Lilou hadn't lost hope in people was the people around in here. But after that night, she couldn't return to what she used to be.

'If only I listened to Old Olly and took her offer that night...' Lilou slowly peeled her eyes away from Old Olly and a glint flickered across her eyes. '... however, there's no point in regretting that now, because I can do things I can never do if I didn't meet that vampire... Lexx let loose.'

Stefan was unaware of it, but Lilou wasn't as clueless as he thought she was. There were just many reasons Lilou pretended not to know.

'At first, I was pretending not to know because even if I do, it doesn't matter.' Lilou thought as she paused and stared at the crops. 'But he keeps going away and he might not come back again.'

Her eyes glinted with murderous intent as she let out a deep breath. This feeling and obsession... there was only one thing that crossed her head whenever she thought about it. That was... kill him before he could hurt her or before he could stand in her way.

"If he didn't return today, I might make my decision," she murmured, tilting her head back and stared at the sky. "I hope he returns though. I'll be sad if he didn't."

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In the end, Lilou still went home despite Old Olly's insisting she stay for the night, like always. Unlike before, the night didn't scare her anymore as she trekked back to her home without fear.

"If he is still not there, I might say goodbye to Lexx," Lilou murmured and sighed once again, walking slower as she hoped Stefan would be there. "What is our relationship, anyway?"

Lilou knew she would be sad if Stefan died, as she already got used to his presence as much as she was used to his absence. However, right now, someone like her was incapable of having a deeper feeling.

'Maybe, if he can pretend to love me, I can do it, too. Going out for walks at night is starting to bore me, anyway.' She thought as she smacked her lips and skipped her steps back home. 'I hope he's back so we can play.'

### Chapter 239 - Putting Back The Missing Piece III

Lilou happily skipped her way back to her shack. As soon as the shack came to her sight, she frowned, as there was no sight of Stefan.

"How annoying," she murmured, kicking a pebble in irritation. For reasons unknown, she walked towards the shack but went around to her father's burial mound after months of not going there.

On her way, a strange warm breeze on this chilly night blew past her, freezing her on the spot. This breeze that had the faint yet familiar aura caused her heart to pound loudly against her chest, bringing out a nostalgic feeling in her heart.

"You..." she whispered as she stared ahead. She had already noticed that Stefan didn't give off the same aura, but Lilou ignored it. "... did I really mistake Lexx as that someone..." she muttered as she dashed towards her father's grave.

Lilou stopped as her eyes softened, seeing that Stefan was standing in the same spot she first saw him there. And once again, this coincidence made her believe she didn't mistake him.

"Lexx!" she called softly, catching his attention as he turned around. Lilou ran towards him and threw herself at him.

"Welcome back!" she greeted sweetly, embracing him in relief.

Stefan froze as his back stiffened, surprised at her sudden gentleness, considering how nonchalant she was when he told her he would have to leave again. He awkwardly patted her back.

'Did I worry about nothing?' he wondered in his head as he already thought Lilou's interest in him had decreased and she might do something. But to think she would act relieved and happy made him think he had underestimated her obsession towards him.

"Did something happen?" Stefan inquired when Lilou drew back from him.

Lilou looked up, shaking her head before showing him a bright smile. "I just missed you, that's all!"

"Really?" he raised a brow, studying her expression, but to his surprise, it seemed she really meant it.

Although Lilou would always smile brightly at him, there was this aura she gave off that made him wary. So, seeing her smiling candidly and expressing herself pleased him.

"I also missed you," He replied but quirked a brow when Lilou bluntly exposed him.

"You don't mean that." Lilou cleared her throat as she stared at him straight in the eyes. "Lexx, did you know I plan to kill you if you didn't return?"

"And why are you telling me this?" his voice was deep and menacing while he narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

"Because I think if you drop the pretense, I might be able to understand," she answered in a knowing tone, taking him by surprise. "You know my feelings to you, so if the feeling is mutual, don't you think it'll be a win-win situation for the both of us?"

"And why is that?"

"If I try to kill you, I might fail, but you'll deal with casualties. I think it's only smart to make me your ally than an enemy, don't you think?"

Her explanation rendered him speechless momentarily. Lilou was never this honest with him, and to think she knew he was merely keeping her because she still had her uses amused him. Not to mention, she was also aware that she could be troublesome to deal with, but not overestimating herself as to think she was invincible.

The corner of his lips curled up into a smirk as he stroke her hair. "Just what happened while I was away?"

"Nothing." Lilou giggled as she was saying the truth. "I just want you to treat me honestly from now on and take me with you."

"Take you with me...?" Stefan cocked his head to the side while tucking her hair behind her ear.

"You are exceptional, sweetheart. However, by wanting my trust, isn't it only polite if you also trust me?"

"Trust can naturally come in the process, don't you think?"

He nodded ever so slowly. "You're correct, but humans are fickle, sweetheart. Aren't you afraid that by wanting to stay by my side, you are entering a cage?"

"I can break the cage anytime. What do you mean?"

"Pfft—!" Stefan chuckled at her blunt yet innocent reply. "Oh, sweetheart, you never cease to amaze me."

Lilou puffed her cheek while he shook his head lightly, before she clasped his hand with both her hands. Her eyes gazed at their hands and then looked up.

"Lexx, you're the only one I have and I think you, coming in here is not a mere coincidence," she expressed sincerely. "I hate vampires. Even now, my blood boils and wants to kill every single one of your kind."

His brows arched before he narrowed his eyes. He was aware of Lilou's growing hatred of vampires, the reason the trust between them was never strong.

"But if it's fate, I will accept it." Lilou continued, puzzling him.

"Accept, what?"

She stared at him straight in the eye as she felt that familiar aura once again. "You. I hate vampires, but I can make an exception. I also know you hate humans, but can you also make an exception?"

"Sweetheart, I don't believe in fate nor do I bind myself with things you are seeking." Stefan let out a low chuckle as he withdrew his hands from her grasp. "I am not as simple as you think I am, sweetheart."

"Is this a rejection?" Lilou frowned, placing her hand over her chest, but surprised as she didn't feel the slightest pain.

"If it is, we will not be talking here." Stefan chuckled once again before he placed his hand over her head, bending over with a smile. "So, no, it's not a rejection, but a heads up."

"Huh?"

"For expecting anything from me, that's what I meant," He explained, ruffling her hair as he slowly drew away and turned around. "If you want to take this path, I won't stop you. However, I'm warning you, sweetheart. I will rather hate you than love you."

Lilou stared at his back as a subtle smile resurfaced on her lips. She took a step forward, sliding her fingers in between his, making him turn his head to their hands and then to her eyes.

"Just don't abandon me." She smiled brightly, squeezing his hand. "That's all I'm asking."

The side of his lips slowly curled into a faint smile, wrapping his fingers around her hand. "A cold-blooded person like you... I'm surprised you have such warm hands."

"Don't let go of these warm hands or you'll be cold forever." Lilou humored while giggling mischievously.

Little did the two know, someone who was trapped in his own mind was grumbling in protest.

'Who the fuck is that, Lexx? It's not that fucking Stefan, right? Did he figure out that girl's origin?!' Samael grumbled. If he could throw a huge fit, he had done it already.

'I really need to wake up... that little girl is being seduced by that lunatic.' But no matter how he tried to break the seal, Samael didn't wake up until seven years later.

### Chapter 240 - Putting Back The Missing Piece III

Some time had passed, and the world continued to revolve. Things, whether expected or unplanned, happened.

"Lilou."

Lilou raised her head at the person entering the prison dungeon of an old estate in Whistlebird. She smiled brightly as soon as she met those pairs of crimson orbs.

"Lexx, you're back?" she asked happily, springing up to his feet and rushed towards him.

Stefan chuckled as he welcomed her warmly in his embrace. "I'm just away for a few days and yet, you're acting like I was away for a year."

"Can you blame me?" Lilou complained as she broke free from him, looking up while pouting. "Lord Anton and his son Arthur are annoying fellows. I was planning to smother them in their sleep."

"Calm down, sweetheart." He chuckled while patting her head.

"How can I calm down when they kept talking nonsense?" she clicked her tongue, annoyed after recalling all her encounters with the Duke of Whistlebird and Stefan's ally, Anton Remington.

Lilou walked back to the person chained inside the cell. His wrist, neck, and feet were shackled despite his already mangled condition.

"Those two spouted things like a mortal can't be with you and something like that," she murmured in annoyance, kicking the barely alive person who was held captive. "What do those dimwits know? They even brought up my origins."

"They said that?"

"Yes!" she turned around, furrowing her brows when she noticed Stefan's lack of emotion.

Stefan's eyes glinted as he remained quiet for a moment. "Sweetheart, do you love me?"

Her breath suddenly hitched, surprised by his abrupt question. She pursed her lips in a thin line before they parted, but no words came out.

"Why can't you answer?" he asked in a low tone as he tilted his head to the side.

Instead of answering, Lilou returned the question. "Do you?"

This time, Stefan was the one who couldn't answer her question. They've been together for almost two years now, but they never said those words even once. Of course, they value each other, but was it called love? It felt strange to think that their feelings were associated with love.

"Why are you asking me such a question when you can't even have your own answer, Lexx?" Lilou broke the silence with her indifferent tone.

"I have my answers."

"And that is?" she cocked her head to the side as her eyes never left his gaze, but he remained silent. A shallow breath slipped past her lips as she shook her head.

"Honestly, Lexx, I don't know what love is," Lilou muttered as she turned around, facing their prisoner before she squatted down. "But, what I am certain is that I will die for you and I want to stay by your side."

"Then, will you become one of us?" Stefan inquired after some time, which made her turn her head back at him. "If you want to stay with me forever, will you be one of us?"

Lilou pressed her lips together as she peeled her eyes away from him. She stared at the almost unrecognizable person who had gone through the experiments and was now being monitored.

"Sure," she answered after a long silence.

Stefan heaved a sigh of relief, but didn't seem happy about it. He had already guessed that she would agree, despite knowing the risk.

"You can become just like that one," He said coldly as he glanced at the half-failed half-successful subject. "You can lose your wits, cannot stand under the sun, and die after a while. Are you sure you want to be a turned vampire knowing all that risk?"

"Are you sure you want me to?" Lilou inquired back as she glanced over her shoulder. "Between the two of us, it seems that you're the one who is against the idea."

"Sweetheart." Stefan let out a sigh. He knew that they would have to discuss this matter one of these days. After all, he was still the king of the kingdom, and she was, although exceptional, still a human.

Lilou narrowed her eyes as the subject let out a low growl, and just like a maniac, he tried to assault her since she was near him. However, the chain around his neck stopped him a palm-length away from her. She didn't even budge or blink and just watched him struggle.

"Are you reluctant because you love me, Lexx?" she inquired, as she could be just this person she was looking at once the transitioning failed. "If so, then don't love me anymore."

Stefan remained silent and stared at her small yet brave looking back. He had hated humans for as long as he could remember, believing they were just annoying animals, no better than livestock. But all that changed in the past two years... and that was because of her.

"If it fails, I'll lose you forever," He muttered as he let out a deep sigh, clenching his hand into a fist. "I don't want that."

Silence enveloped the two of them again and only the growling of the abnormal tickled their ears. Lilou appreciated his genuine concern, but she had already decided to stay by his side, no matter what. She had nothing to go back to, after all.

"You sound like you already know it will fail, Lexx." Her eyes softened as she raised both her hands, cupping the abnormal's jaw without fear. "It's my decision, and my only wish, if it fails, is..."

Her teeth clenched as she snapped the subject's jaw before letting him go, and his head hung low. Lilou glanced at her tainted hands before slowly standing up to face him.

"That." She cocked her head towards the dead subject. "Finish me off quickly, just like that."

"Your — Sir," Lilou's eyes shifted at the person who suddenly appeared behind Stefan. "Miss Lilou," the woman greeted as soon as she met Lilou's eyes.

"I will come back lat... er."

"No need, Lena." Lilou cut her off as she glanced at Stefan. "You stay with him. I will go for a walk."

Lilou smacked her lips as she walked past him, but stopped when Stefan suddenly grabbed her wrist.

"Don't be upset," he said, tightening his grip around her wrist. "I just —"

Stefan abruptly paused as Lilou's future appeared in his head, showing her loud screams from the excruciating pain and sufferings, and then... the scene changed into Stefan standing in the palace hall, staring at the casket before him. He walked towards the casket only to see Lilou lying beautifully in it.