

# The Duke 241

## Chapter 241 - Dead And Buried

If Stefan still saw Lilou as someone whom he could dispose of any time, that images of the future wouldn't bother him. However, she's the only person who had given him warmth, and her death would give him misery more terrifying than his own death.

"Lexx?" Lilou called out, snapping him out of his trance. "I will go out for a walk. Come to me once you're done with your business with Lena."

Her voice was soft with a touch of loneliness. How could he take a gamble with both their lives at stake?

"Alright." Stefan nodded, letting her hand go reluctantly before hiding his trembling hand behind him.

Lilou stared at him for a moment, pressing her lips together before turning around. Before she left, she glanced at Lena and smiled meekly. The latter smiled back and bowed slightly.

"Your Majesty, are you sure you want to turn Lilou into a vampire?" Lena inquired as soon as Lilou left the prison dungeon. She was aware of Lilou's importance to Stefan, and Lilou's resolve to stay with him, so making this decision required more time to think over as she could die because of it.

"Lena, what do you think of Lilou?" Stefan asked, startling Lena, his trusted aide, who had been working in the shadows for him. "Do you think we should go with her decision?"

He turned around, facing the subject that just died, and had met the end of his sufferings. What would Stefan do if Lilou would be in this same situation?

Lena stayed silent for a moment before her lips parted. "Your Majesty, am I require to answer such a question?"

"Tell me," He muttered with eyes drooping. "What do you think of Lilou?"

"Lilou is a remarkable human, just like the Barrett brothers. She shared the same compassion as Rufus and bloodthirst like Fabian. But if you're asking me what I think of her as a person, I will say she is a precious friend." Lena answered with all honesty while staring at Stefan's back. "I enjoyed my time with her, but this may sound insolent and presumptuous, but I think it is wrong to take her with you, Your Majesty."

"Why, so?"

Lena took a deep breath and sighed, hanging her head low as her eyes softened. "Because she changed you, Your Majesty."

Silence enveloped the two of them and only the sound of a drop of water dripping from the cracks on the wall slowly filled the underground dungeon. Stefan couldn't deny that, as he had changed because of Lilou. He told himself to only use her to his advantage, but he found himself craving for her warmth.

The thought of losing that warmth and holding her cold hands... he could feel the pieces of his heart falling.

"I saw her future, Lena." Stefan raised his hand and stared at his palm. "Lilou... I will hold her funeral and grieve for her."

His fingers slowly curled as he clenched his hand into a fist. His eyes glinting with bitterness and sorrow.

Lena clenched her teeth tightly. "Then, will you let her undergo the process just as she wished?"

"The only reason this world become bearable is because she's in it," He muttered, taking a deep breath as he turned around and faced Lena. "Ten out of hundreds survived the experiments and we have yet to find the secret of successfully turning humans into vampires."

"Then...?"

"Until we find the answer, erase everyone's memories about Lilou," Stefan ordered without faltering. "That includes the Remingtons and the people Lilou knew in Banse."

"Your Majesty, are you planning to isolate her?" Lena asked in disbelief as she misunderstood the vague orders.

"You misunderstood, Lena." He let out a deep sigh, grinding his teeth momentarily as he swallowed down the slightest hesitation he had. "I want you to erase her existence on our side, and alter the memories of the people in Banse. Make them believe Lilou had always been there... without meeting me, you, or everything that had happened in the past two years."

"Your Majesty..." she trailed off while slowly balling her hand into a fist. "Are you saying you want me to erase your existence to her?"

"Until we find the answer, she will be safer if she stayed in Grimsbanne." Stefan turned around as he couldn't hesitate right now. He couldn't keep Lilou by his side for now if he wanted to continue his plans and seek the answers.

"I had to find Alphonse since he might know a thing or two. Also, I saw a premonition of Hell waking up." He uttered firmly, steeling his heart, as he had to decide the best method to do everything whilst keeping Lilou safe.

"Your Majesty." Lena's eyes slowly widened upon hearing his last remarks.

"Before Hell went into his slumber, he said something about the throne and something having a right for it." Stefan's eyes glinted menacingly. "Although our investigation says that Hell didn't affiliate with the other founding clans aside from Lara and the Bloodfang, he wouldn't say such a thing for no reason."

"Is it possible that the third prince means he will take the throne for himself?"

Stefan shook his head lightly. "He could've fought for it if he wanted to, but knowing him, he might've had something in his sleeve to agitate everyone. If he gets the wind of my affair with a human, he will surely go extra mile to use Lilou for his own entertainment."

Again, silence befell on them as another problem arose with Samael's possible awakening in a few years. Although Stefan had been preparing for it, he couldn't underestimate Samael's wickedness and otherworldly strength.

"Make preparations. I will take Lilou back in Banse." Stefan turned around and faced Lena once again. "I entrust this to you, Lena. I want no mistake."

"Yes, Your Majesty." Lena bowed with her fist across her chest.

He nodded in understanding, taking another deep breath as he convinced himself that this was the best for the both of them. Stefan then strode forward, walking past Lena, who stepped aside to make way.

"Destroy all evidence in this place." Stefan ordered, and Lena responded with resolve, "Yes, Your Majesty," before he went out to find Lilou.

## Chapter 242 - Dead And Buried II

"Lexx, why would you want to have a vacation in this place when we can go somewhere decent?" Lilou inquired with a furrowed brow as she gazed outside the carriage that was passing the street of Banse.

"It's because this is where we first met," Stefan answered with a shrug, staring at her who was sitting across from him. "And your place is strangely peaceful, so it's a perfect vacation place."

Lilou glanced at him, narrowing her eyes suspiciously. "You're the one acting strange. I'm starting to doubt your reasons."

Her blunt response made him chuckle. It was still a miracle that she hadn't figured his plans yet, as she had always been perceptive.

"Lexx, you don't plan on leaving me, do you?" she asked without taking her eyes off of him.

Stefan sported a smile, shaking his head. "I will kill you if you leave me, so why would I do that?"

"Good." His reply made her smile, satisfied, as she nodded, before shifting her attention to the window. "It's been a while since I've been here. I'm not sure if my shack is still there."

"Even if it got blown away, we can just rebuild it together."

Lilou once again turned her head in his direction, eyebrows raised. "You?"

"Me and you." Stefan pointed to himself and then to Lilou. "Don't you think building our place together is much more fun than staying in an inn?"

"Ohh..."

"Our place..." He smiled as he slowly turned his eyes towards the window and murmured, "We will fill it with just our memories together."

She stared at his side profile, narrowing her eyes in suspicion, but said nothing. For the past two years, Stefan wasn't the type to say such things and barely showed his affection for her. So, right now, his words just heightened her doubts about his actual plans.

'Even if I know what he is thinking...' Lilou averted her gaze as the two of them shared a moment of silence. '... as long as he doesn't abandon me, I can forgive him.'

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Three weeks had passed ever since Lilou and Stefan arrived in Lilou's shack. As expected, the shack was barely standing on its own, with its roof missing. The two of them exerted an effort to build it, but alas...

"You know what? This won't do!" Lilou snapped her tongue, shaking her head as the two of them stood in front of the shack. "How the hell did you think we can rebuild this if you don't have experience or basic knowledge of how to do it?!"

Stefan chuckled as he found it ridiculous and hilarious. "But I think we did a good job, though?"

"Good job?!" she gasped in disbelief with her eyes dilating before pointing a finger towards her place. "You call that a good job? Can't you see the door is crooked?"

"Is it?" he arched a brow, rubbing his chin as he stared at the door.

"Lexx, you don't have to tilt your head to convince yourself it's not." Lilou let out a defeated sigh as Stefan just tilted his head while staring at the door. "This is not a vacation, it's forced labor."

For the past three weeks, Lilou and Stefan just camped outside during the night and work on it during the day. She couldn't deny that she had fun as she found out a few sides of him, but it was still frustrating that their best was not enough.

"Come here, sweetheart." Stefan chuckled as he sprawled his arms across her shoulder as they faced the shack. "Even if it's crooked and lacks in appeal, doesn't it remind you of us?"

He cocked his head to her, meeting her gaze when she gazed up at him. The corner of his lips curled into a smile while Lilou pouted.

"It does, but I don't understand why we're doing this," she murmured. "It's not like we will live here for a long time since you keep going into many places."

Stefan remained silent as he fixed his eyes on the shack. Although he had been tired and used his hands on something like this, the memories he made with her were all worth it.

"Are you doing this because I might die once you turn me into a vampire?" Lilou whisked his arm away as she faced him squarely, holding both his hands. "Do you really think I will die?"

He slowly faced her, staring straight in the eye, and smiled weakly. "I won't let that happen, sweetheart."

"Lexx, I have no one else but you. So, even if I die, don't blame yourself, alright?"

His expression slowly turned gloomy while seeing the determination in her eyes. How could he not blame himself if he would push her to her death despite seeing the future?

"Lexx, I think I lov..." Lilou trailed off as she gazed up, seeing the small white flakes falling down on them. "... it's been a while, and this is our second winter together."

"Mhm." Stefan stroked her hair gently, watching her marvel at the snow.

"I think we will test the shack if it can endure the winter," she whispered with a smile, feeling something heavy in her heart. Her gut feeling told her this winter would be much colder than the previous one.

"Lilou, will you wait for me?" Lilou snapped her eyes and shifted it to Stefan upon his query.

"Pardon?" she cocked her head to the side, waiting for him to clarify his words. Stefan tucked her hair behind her ear with his eyes full of sorrow.

"I don't want to lose you. So, I want to find out another method to turn you into one of us with no risk." Stefan explained before holding her gaze. "Will you wait for me until then?"

"What... are you saying you will leave me here while you do that?"

His jaw tightened as he nodded. "As long as you stay with me as a human, your life will be in constant danger."

"Even so, I can protect myself," Lilou argued with a low scoff.

"I had enemies, Lilou. A lot of more powerful enemies." Stefan cupped her cheek on both sides. "The people you had met so far were not even worth a glance, unlike the real enemies that had been on my back. Once they knew our relationship, they will use you against me."

"And you think I'd let that happen?" Lilou scoffed. "Aren't you underestimating me so much?"

"No, sweetheart." Stefan let out a defeated sigh as he rested his forehead against her. "I know you won't let that happen, and you'd rather die than let that happen. But I don't want you to die, and want you to stay by my side forever."

Lilou scoffed as she held his wrist, pushing him away while taking a step back. "If you really want to keep me by your side, why are you abandoning me? It doesn't make sense, Lexx."

"It's because..." Stefan raised his hand to reach her but stopped when Lilou took another step back.

"It's because, what?"

It's because of his disposition, but he couldn't say that now. "Lilou, love, I, listen —"

Lilou cut him off by raising her hand. "Lexx, I can forgive you for everything and I can believe all of your lies. But, you know my wish. My one and only request from you and that is to not leave me all alone again."

"It's just for a few years, Lilou." Stefan reached for her hand, squeezing it as he stared into her eyes, hoping she would listen to him just this once. "I will come and get you, I promise."

The two of them stared at each other, pain flickering across their eyes.

"Is this the best decision you can come up with, Lexx?" Lilou inquired in a ridiculing tone as she chuckled in disbelief. "I'm telling you, Lexx, once you leave me alone here, don't ever show your face to me."

Lilou pulled her hand away from him as she staggered back. More than the sadness of being alone once again, rage slowly filled her heart.

"I will kill you if I ever see your face again." She warned, nodding while taking several steps back. "And I will never forgive you for giving me heaven just to give me hell."

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The corner of my lips curled into a wicked grin, watching Cassara's pupil dilate. Before she could move, I placed my hand on either side of her head.

"Thank you for reminding me, your royal highness." I expressed, tightening my grip on her head. "You're right. Anything can happen in this palace... for example, someone finding your body with your head missing."

## Chapter 243 - Retrieving The Final Piece

"You're right. Anything can happen in this palace... for example, someone finding your body with your head missing."

My brow raised as I sensed another presence from a distance. Cassara was lucky, I thought.

I leaned over to her side and whispered in her ear. "I always wonder why you're always missing in every important gathering. It turns out you're hilariously weak."

Cassara shook under my grip and couldn't move from the shock. Did she think my memories with Stefan were all butterflies and rainbows?

"Your royal highness, can we keep this a secret between us?" I tilted my head back a little, giving her a side-eye while she shifted her shaking eyes to me.

"How dare you? Do you think I will listen to a mere human like you?" Her voice faltered, but still put up a brave front.

A sigh slipped past my lips as Cassara was indeed a character. Not only she was useless, but her pride also doesn't match her disposition.

"Do you have an option, my dear sister-in-law?" I embraced her tightly, smirking as my eyes glinted. "Do you think after pulling this skit, your safety is guaranteed? Lexx is the last person you should be concerned about, my sister. My husband will deliver you to hell... oh no, killing Sam will put you in more misery. Should we do that, instead?"

"Insolent human," Casarra spat in dismay. "Don't think so highly of yourself, human. Hell is not someone who you can kill so easily."

"You're right, but I am his wife and he is mostly defenseless around me."

My smirk stretched wider as soon as her back stiffened, so I stroke it with a hush to calm her down. Cassara loved my husband so much I wanted to snap her neck, but I fought the urge because she still had her uses.

"There, there, it'll be fine, sister." I cajoled, patting her back lightly while resting the side of my head against hers. "Just do what you do, but keep things between us first. Can I trust you with that?"

Cassara remained quiet while I hear her grinding her teeth. Honestly, she could sink her fangs into me right now and we could fight until one of us was dead. But Cassara might be a coward, but she was not that stupid. She knew her chances of winning, especially now that I had Lakresha.

"I will kill you, the last descendant of Bloodfang." She warned under her breath, but it wasn't worth listening to.

I slowly let her go, taking a step back while holding her shoulders. "You already did, my sister."

We stared at each other for a moment while I squeezed her shoulders lightly. Cassara had already killed Lilou the second she showed me all the missing pieces in my memories... she killed my heart, to be precise.

"I will visit you next time, sister," I uttered, before I heard Silvia's voice from behind us.

"Lilou?" called Silvia, followed by Yul.

"What are you... Cassara?"

Yul immediately stomped his way towards us, grabbing my arm and pulled me behind him.

"Cassara, what are you doing with Lilou?" he instigated, while standing protectively before me.

Cassara scoffed in dismay as she gazed up at Yul. "Brother, this sight of yours is funny; I could die."

"Cassara." Yul's voice was low and menacing as if he was talking to an enemy instead of his sister.

Well, I couldn't blame him. I glanced at his strong side profile before shifting my eyes to Cassara.

'Poor little thing,' I thought. 'She built her notorious reputation and now reaping what she sows.'

"Lilou, are you alright?" I flinched when Silvia stood on my side, staring at me worriedly.

The side of my lips curled into a smile. "Yes, Sivi."

I took a deep breath and tugged Yul's arm. These two had considered me as their family despite their initial motives and were genuinely concerned that I was left alone with Cassara.

"Yul, don't misunderstand. Cassara accompanied me while I was waiting for you and Sivi." Yul gazed down at me and I offered him a smile. "She means well."

"I don't need you to explain for me, impudent human," Cassara spat as she gazed at the three of us in ridicule. "You two don't know the demon you're sheltering, I pity you."

After spitting her piece, Cassara stared at me for a moment before she huffed and left. We remained silent for a while before the two of them faced me.

"Are you alright?" Yul asked, making me chuckle. "The king suddenly summoned us. If I know, I would've told you to wait for me so we can go together."

He let out a sigh full of regret while Silvia also voiced out her thoughts. "Don't listen to Cassara, my dear. Did she perhaps hurt you?"

I wanted to tell them it was me who nearly hurt her, but my tongue rolled back. Cassara wouldn't speak about what happened for now, so I had to keep acting like before. Not that I had to fake my affection for these two, as they were the only few people who truly cared for me in this hell.

"You think so badly of Cassara." I shook my head while chuckling, couldn't believe that Silvia would go against her own sister for me. "I'm just happy that you two are here now."

I reached for both their hands, staring at them before I squeezed them lightly. "I'm really glad to have you two with me."

"Lilou," Yul whispered, a bit taken aback by my sentiments.

Meanwhile, Silvia also chuckled as she held my hand and stroke my hair lovingly. "Just tell me if Cassara bullied you. I will put her in her place."

I giggled at Silvia's words, as she was truly like a big sister. It made me wonder if Silvia would change once she knew, that the 'Lakresha' they all met during my wedding night was actually just my old self with a little bit of Lakresha's help. I saw Yul's reaction, but Silvia... I'm not sure.

"Let's not just stand here. I'm exhausted, so I'm really looking forward to teatime!" I exclaimed and dragged the two of them to our special spot. They didn't notice a thing, or at least Silvia didn't, but I'm looking forward to meeting a certain person.

Fabian.

#### Chapter 244 - Three Candidates For The Throne

Fabian felt a chill ran down his spine, making his brows furrow. He raised his hand, staring at the skull ring on his finger as it gave him this sudden thrill.

"Fabian, you look thrilled." Samael noticed as he saw the sinister smirk on the corner of Fabian's lips. "You don't hate those kids so much for you to be this happy while they are sufferings, right?"

Fabian slowly peeled his eyes away from his ring and set them to Samael. "No, your Grace. I just had a gut feeling things will be interesting soon."

"You think?"

"I hope," Fabian corrected, shifting his eyes towards the shut door before them. Inside this room, were the children being treated as the repercussions from all the experiments had put the children in pain.

"I don't hear their screams anymore," Fabian uttered, staring at the door while scratching his chin. "Did Lord Noah kill them out of irritation?"

"Noah is not that type of person, Fabian," Samael commented while resting his back against the wall with his arms crossed.

Fabian nodded in agreement. "Lord Noah is surprisingly soft and stupid. It'll be more strange if he suddenly smothered those kids to death."

"I don't think he is the only one who is soft towards those kids, Fabian."

Samael watched Fabian turn his head towards him, chuckling as there was no expression on the latter's face. Well, what he said was true, because Fabian wouldn't stay and wait with him if he wasn't worried even the slightest.

"Your Grace, do you think the Remington was involved with the king's plans?" Fabian gazed at Samael's nonchalant visage as he didn't know about the details, unlike Samael.

"Hmm." Samael hummed a long tune as his mind drifted back to the time they were in Whistlebird. "You know Fabian, I think you should know about this, but don't you think what we did to the Remington's is a bit too much?"

Fabian remained silent for a moment. Of course, he had always wondered why Samael bothered to touch the Remington, knowing his history with the previous clan leader of the Remington, the late Alfie Remington.

"The retribution of the Davidsons and other noble clans in Grimsbanne, that I understand," Fabian answered in a low tone. "But, in all honesty, I don't think you will bother with the Remington at whatever they do in their land and their people. Even if your grace did it for her grace, it still baffles me."



Samael nodded as his mind drifted at the time they arrived in Whistlebird. "Back then, Arthur stared at Lilou for a long time, and said something as if he knew her."

Fabian's brows furrowed in confusion. He wasn't in the restaurant back then, that was why he didn't know about it. The only thing that Fabian remembered was Samael arriving with Arthur Remington's heart.

"Lilou also looked at him as if they were acquaintances, then my wife showed signs of pain in retrieving erased memories." Samael paused, recalling that time he had to erase Lilou's memories. "Out of curiosity, I peeked at Arthur's memories and I saw someone in it."

"Is it the king?"

"Stefan aside, Lilou was also there."

There was a moment of silence between the two of them as Fabian furrowed his brows. What did Samael mean by that? And why was he only saying that now?

"Her interactions with Arthur were quite... I'd say, they were like on equal footing. Lilou knew about Stefan's plans to some extent and..."

"My lord, are you saying her grace is involved with this?" Fabian finished Samael's words in a questioning tone. He watched the latter nod his head.

"That's why I erased everyone who was involved with her in the past. But alas, I get the feeling that Lilou will soon find out her origins," Samael paused as he gazed down, seeing how Lilou was back then. "And I'm worried what she will do after that."

"Don't you believe in her grace's trust in you?"

"I believed her, but once she hears the will of the Bloodfang, there will be three forces fighting for the throne."

Fabian quirked a brow. "Your Grace, what do you mean three? You don't mean you will..."

"I don't want the throne, Fabian. However, I can't let Lilou take it for herself." Samael raised his head when the door opened and revealed Noah.

Noah let out a heavy sigh, cocking his head from side to side. "The children will be fine for now, my lord," he said, but his tone wasn't at all relieved. "Marquess Cameron needs to be here as soon as possible. I barely soothed their pain, but we don't know how long it will last."

"I see," Samael nodded in understanding..

"Lord Noah, do you think those children will successfully turn into vampires?" Fabian inquired solemnly, exchanging gaze with Noah. "From what I see it, they are barely humans."

"If they are, then we should expect the worse." The air around them grew thicker as soon as Noah said those. "That only means that the king had already created his own militia, so he is now testing it to children."

"Send someone reliable to assist the Marquess, Noah," Samael ordered as he strode towards the room, but stopped when he was by the door and cocked his head back. "If Cameron is in danger, that means the Crawfords can hinder their plans."

"I can go myself, my lord." Fabian volunteered, as he was more capable of escorting Cameron to safety.

"No, Fabian. Stay in the Capital no matter what." As soon as Samael those words, he entered the room where the children were asleep on their individual beds.

The two who were left outside, stared at each other and bowed without saying a word before Noah left to execute the order. Samael hadn't briefed them about everything aside from the current plan, but what they were certain was it was only a matter of time before the mask that this kingdom wore called peace would be shredded to pieces.

"My blood trembles at what is about to come," Noah mumbled as he walked through the hallway with his eyes glinting in resolve.

#### Chapter 245 - Three Candidates For The Throne II

Samael stood on Dao CC's bedside and gazed at her. She was breaking out in sweats, clutching the sheet tightly.

"Sorry," He muttered as he wiped the child's forehead by the back of his hand. "Lilou will be heartbroken once she knows she is involved in all this."

His eyes softened, knowing Lilou's fondness for children. She might've not known, or rather, Lilou was too blind with her obsession towards Stefan and his manipulation, that she turned a blind eye about where all these experiments would lead.

"CC, is it?" Samael cocked his head to the side when Dao CC weakly opened her eyes and softly called, "milord?"

He offered a weak smile. "Cc, don't die." Samael pricked his fingertip and squeezed a drop on the child's lips.

Dao CC smacked her lips and winced at the iron taste that lingered in her mouth. It didn't take long when her heart thumped loudly against her chest as her entire body froze. She broke out in sweats almost instantly as a scorching heat coursed through her body.

Her intense screams, while she writhed in pain, made Fabian rush inside. Still, that didn't wake up the other children, as they were in deep slumber.

"Your grace!" Fabian called out in panic, wide-eyed seeing the child almost lose her mind while rolling on her bed, holding her head while quivering.

"Don't worry, Fabian," Samael uttered calmly while gazing down at the suffering child. His hand slowly balled into a fist as his jaw tightened. "I just gave her a year of my life because they will die before Cameron arrives here. My blood will quench the hunger of the vampire's blood that is slowly devouring them inside."

His eyes glinted menacingly as he scanned the other children. "That fucking Stefan and Alphonse... I will kill them, Fabian."

Fabian pressed his lips into a thin line before he bent down on his knees with his palm across his chest.

"Everyone is ready on our side, your grace," He affirmed. "For the kingdom, for the future of the children just like them... we're prepared for the war."

Samael nodded before the corner of his lips curled into a smirk. "We will all die, Fabian."

"Our deaths will mark the peace of the future generation."

"You said the same thing as those Bloodfangs." Samael chuckled before he took a deep breath.

"And they're all dead now... leaving behind more trouble for this so-called future generation."

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Meanwhile, in the king's room, Stefan watched the wine as he swirled it gently in his hands. He rested his other leg over the other, sitting comfortably in his seat near the window.

"Hell will start taking action soon," Stefan uttered in a low tone as he lifted his glass of wine to his lips. "How fascinating. Lena, how's my little Lilou?"

"Your Majesty, about Lilou..." Lena, who was kneeling not far away from him, raised her head with eyes full of worry. "She had been in distress about her night... dreams."

"Do you think she will lose her mind again?"

Lena gazed down at her hands that were on her knees. "I'm just worried about her, Your Majesty."

"What do you think will happen if I had chosen a different path, Lena?" Stefan tilted his head back while his eyes softened with bitterness. "The future I had seen years ago... it already happened."

That scene where Lilou was lying in the coffin he had seen years ago was the same scene when he welcomed Lilou in the Capital. He didn't realize it was for that purpose until he was already standing before the coffin.

"What an unreliable ability." He sneered in ridicule, as he couldn't believe that was what it meant. "I should've listened to her back then, Lena. If only I did, she wouldn't be someone else's wife... and her husband is Hell of all people. Fate surely had its sick humor, don't you think?"

"I think your decision back then is only best for everyone, Your Majesty. You wouldn't find Prince Alphonse if you remain within the country."

"Tsss." Stefan scoffed in disbelief, as he had always done what was in the best interest of the throne and for the La Crox family. However, after years of grief, longing, and sacrifices, he was getting tired of it.

"I never thought there will be a day I will question all my decisions," He murmured as he gazed down, bitterness flickering across his eyes. "I facilitated the wedding of the woman I yearned with the man I abhor the most and the reason I had to let her go back then. Isn't it silly?"

"Your Majesty..." She pursed her lips in a thin line as she stared at Stefan worriedly. "I'm sure if you explained it to Lilou, she will understand. I watched over her for years. I'm certain she will accept you once she recovers her memories."

Stefan chugged down the entire wine and hissed in satisfaction. "You believe that Lena?" a ridiculing chuckle slipped past his lips while shaking his head and poured himself another glass.

"Let me tell you, once Lilou recovers her memories, she'll be a problem and the power of sire will be gone."

Lena studied Stefan's expression and furrowed her brows upon seeing his expression. "If she will be a problem, you seemed pleased about it, Your Majesty."

"That's because she will not only be a problem to me, but to Hell as well." Stefan chuckled softly while picking up the glass of wine. "Neither I nor Hell will own her, and she will have people on her own because she has the right for the throne... those Bloodfangs are annoying in death, as they were in life."

"I highly doubt that will be our concern, for now, Your Majesty. We are prepared with the third prince's plans, so I don't think we have to concern ourselves with Lilou's situation for now."

"No, Lena." He shook his head and set his eyes on her. "You shouldn't be complacent. Keep an eye on her and make sure she doesn't awaken all the memories before the founding week. It'll be troublesome if she recovered her memories now, and starts gathering people. Even with a short time, we don't know who were the people who knew the Bloodfang's scheme and were just waiting for that day."

Although Lena still doubted that, she knew Stefan was quite meticulous. "Yes, Your Majesty."

"Good," He said, nodding before shifting his eyes towards the window. "Should I tease her today?" he murmured as the corner of his lips curled into a smirk before downing the glass of wine.

Chapter 246 - Three Candidates For The Throne III

"Lilou, you're strangely quiet today." Silvia snapped me out of my trance, making me look at her. "Did Hell upset you again?"

"Don't use the excuse of being tired from the training, that will be an insult to those two enthusiastic bearers." Yul chimed in, referring to Charlotte and Ramin, who never lost energy in sparring at their heart's content.

"Did Cassara say something strange?" Silvia placed down her cup of tea as she looked at me worriedly.

I could not help but chuckle at their concerns. "Do I look sick in your eyes? You two are the ones who are acting strange."

Silvia and Yul glanced at each other as if speaking through each other's eyes. I'm used to people keeping me in the dark, but this time, I also had my secret... me and my dearest Cassara's secret. Who would have thought keeping secrets was fascinating in its own way?

"Lilou." I flinched from my thoughts when Silvia suddenly reached for my hand, squeezing it lightly. "We are just really concern about you. Look at you, you've been losing weight and Hell told us about your nightmares."

The two of them stared at me as if they wanted me to say something. However, their words and concern eyes couldn't reach me.

'Cassara just pushed me off a cliff, Sivi, Yul... and I'm falling deeper in despair. So, no matter how you extend your hands, they wouldn't reach me.' Were the words I wanted to tell them at this moment, but I knew if I did, I would be embracing those facts and completely turn my back on them.

"Thank you... for coming to me." I gazed down and stared at my reflection in the cup of tea. If not for them, I would've killed Cassara. Maybe rush to the king's quarters and challenge Stefan to death afterward.

"Lilou," Silvia crooned, and I raise my eyes at her. "We will always be by your side, hmm? I'm always here for you."

"Thank you, Sivi." I offered a weak smile and noticed Yul just staring at us, but we said nothing. Our tea time continued on and discussed just about anything. Like usual, Silvia and I did all the talking while Yul just commented every now and then until the end.

"I'm going back to my quarters." I excused myself after noticing the time.

Silvia sighed and frowned. "Why don't you stay in Avolire Palace tonight? Hell won't be returning tonight, anyway."

"Next time, Sivi." I smiled, as it seemed Silvia needed some company. "Should I ask Sir Knight Rufus to accompany you?"

My teasing caught her off-guard as she seemed a bit flustered. "Lilou, how..."

"You're too obvious, Sivi. I want to hear it next time."

Silvia pursed her lips in a thin line before she let out a deep sigh and nodded. She hadn't shared it with me, but I would like to hear her story... if there would be another chance after this.

"I will escort her back, Silvia." Yul knocked on the table to catch her attention. Silvia nodded and watched us leave.

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Once we're out of Silvia's sight and near the exit of the Avolire premises, my eyes sharpened as they glinted. Yul remained silent as he walked beside me.

"What did Cassara do?" he asked, breaking the silence between us.

I stared ahead with no expression on my face. "Why are you asking if you already had your own conclusion, Yul?"

"So she showed you what happened on your wedding night?"

"Not just that... but I think you already have an idea of what kind of person I am." I shrugged my shoulders. "Now, I'm intrigued what's will you do Yul?"

Yul remained silent and only the clip-clop of our boots on the floor filled our ears. He was a perceptive man, and he surely had known that the person he had met back then wasn't just Lakresha, but my real face.

"Depends on your plans, sis," Yul muttered after his brief silence before he stopped in his steps, making me halt after taking several steps ahead of him. "You said we will start on the right foot. I think that's the right time for that, don't you think so too?"

I slowly turned around and faced him squarely. His eyes were glinting with resolve while the corner of my lips curled into a smirk.

"So that's what you really mean by that?" I nodded, pleased, as it seemed he had foreseen this happening. "Let me ask you, Yul. Didn't you say you will side with my husband?"

"I did, but I never officially took the oath to make him my king."

"Are you saying I should trust someone who can switch sides so easily?" I tilted my head to the side, batting my eye ever so slowly while crossing my arms.

"That night... you and I felt it, Lilou." His eyes glinted as he fixed his gaze full of determination on me. "Your blood called for me. Even if Fabian arrived, I don't think you are the type of person to let off your prey with a mere distraction."

We shared a moment of silence until I could no longer hold back my chuckles. I held my stomach, hunching in.

"You've lost your mind, sis," Yul let out a low chuckle. "A Bloodfang such as ourselves should stick together, don't you think?"

"You're right, my brother." I straightened my back, wiping the tears from the corner of my eyes. "Our clan are vicious for passing this burden to us."

I walked towards Yul and stood a step away from him, raising my hand as I cupped his jaw while staring at his pair of azure eyes. "However, the La Crox's are more wicked. You've suffered living as one of those who had pushed our clan to make such a decision, Yul."

"You don't have to feel sorry, sis. I'm just glad the time had finally come." Yul leaned his cheek closer to my palm as he held my hand. "We had been preparing for this time for many years."

Yul slowly took a step back and bent down on his knee while holding my hand. "I swear to lay my life to serve you, my Queen." He stated and guided my hand to his lips.

#### Chapter 247 - A Muffled Cry For Help

"I would like to meet those people who had been supporting our clan."

"Yes. I will arrange a meeting for that." Yul replied as we walked through the third prince's quarters. He stayed a few steps away from me while I kept my eyes ahead.

"Be careful around my personal maid," I warned, remembering the real identity of Lena.

"You mean that little girl?" His voice was filled with bafflement, but it wasn't surprising, as Lena's disguise was flawless. "I forgot her name."

"Lena," I informed him, glancing over my shoulder. "She's one of Lexx's shadow guards. Be careful around her."

I couldn't blame Yul for being surprised. This palace was filled with secrets, and that had always been the game we've been playing. Just like Yul's identity, the identity of the king's shadow guards wasn't known to others aside from Stefan. It was just a matter of which secret was more surprising.

"How did you know that?" he asked, out of plain curiosity.

My eyes glanced around, and I couldn't feel anyone's presence. "The king and I had a history and scores to settle."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That's all you need to know right now." My eyes glinted as my memories settled in their proper time table.

I felt that Yul wanted to know more, but he didn't probe. Hence, we walked in silence until I arrived in the not well-maintained garden of the third prince palace's garden.

"I need some time alone, Yul." I waved lightly, walking into the garden, and looked around. I heard Yul say, 'yes' before he left me alone.

As I stood in the middle of the garden, I gazed up at the sky. Thick clouds reigned the night sky tonight. It seemed it would pour tonight.

"Fucking Cassara..." I sighed deeply, closing my eyes to rest. "... I don't know if I should thank her for this."

All the memories in my head were slowly taking their rightful spot, and I felt my head throb painfully. I bent down, plopping my butt down on the untrimmed grass before collapsing on my back. Staring at the dark sky smothered by thick clouds was the perfect representation of my mental state right now: clouded, dark, and ominous.

"I don't know what to think, honestly. Finding out my hatred to Lexx and what he did to me, my husband's motives for approaching me, and the responsibility my clan passed on to my shoulder for me to carry," I murmured, spreading my arms wide. There were so many things to think about.

"Fuck. Let's see."

First off, not only Stefan erased my memories and made me a dumb fool, but he also sired me. The skit he pulled off in Cunningham was merely a show, as I had always been sired to him. It wasn't hard to guess the reasons behind his action. He just wanted a guarantee I would fucking accept his pathetic apology for abandoning me.

"If not for Lara's help, I don't think I can fight off the power of sire," I muttered, thinking that Cassara's foolish actions had given me a clear advantage.

I nodded at the thought, as keeping Cassara alive for now was not that terrible. She would come in handy in the future.

"About Yul and the Bloodfang clan..." I took a deep breath as I mulled about it. My hand reached for Lakresha, putting it on my forehead.

"Lakresha, can I meet Lara?" I asked, but nothing.

Sam told us while training us that the bearers and their weapons needed a mutual understanding to use it to its full potential. It made me wonder if I had understood Lakresha. Did Lara really share the same will as my clan? Did they really want me to exterminate the entire La Crox clan?

Fighting for the throne would cause bloodshed. If one wanted to unify the kingdom, those who could pose a threat to the monarch must die. The reason Stefan's position as the king was never stable was because he let a lot of people live.

It could be because of mercy, but I highly doubted that. Stefan probably didn't kill everyone because he was too weak before, and he had to take into consideration of other kingdoms that had been wanting to conquer this country.

"Come to think of it, Lexx told me before he had many enemies. Sam is probably one of them, but who are the others?" I stared at the dark sky, thinking of who could pose a threat to the king's forces.

All I could think of was another kingdom. If I was correct, it was probably one of the founding clans that left the Heart's Kingdom due to many reasons.

'I'd rather just be an obsessed former lover who wants revenge than be someone important.' I thought, clicking my tongue in annoyance. 'No wonder Sam tried to get rid of the responsibility that others had been forcing on him.'

My eyes softened as they narrowed as soon as I thought about my husband. I just figured out the answers he hadn't given me, and his reasons for approaching me. Honestly, I didn't know what to feel or think about it.

Should I feel betrayed? Cheated? Should I abhor him for taking away my uneventful life to save his own skin? Above all, should I blame him for everything? If Sam didn't come to me, I would be probably withering away in the fields, but I wouldn't be in this position, at least.

'Who am I kidding? Lexx would surely return once he got his odds and ends together.' I muttered in my head, closing my eyes. 'I should just sleep tonight, and think about it tomorrow.'

My mind came into a blank state momentarily before I unconsciously mulled over everything again. My heightened hate slowly subsided upon giving it a second thought.

About Stefan, although I didn't think I could forgive him, all I could feel about him was nothing. I was more apathetic than I thought.

About the Bloodfang, I would probably lose my mind for disobeying the entire clan's will they etched in my heart. So, I had to tread on thin ice, especially if a lot of people I didn't know about (just as Yul said), had put their stake on me.

As for my husband... I had to clear my mind and settle my heart. There's only one thing that came into my mind with the thought of him.

"I had to talk to him first," I whispered and slowly opened my eyes when a drop of water dripped down on me before it started pouring heavily. I remained on my spot, not moving an inch as I got drenched in water.

"Sam... help me."

## Chapter 248 - Tears Of Gold

"I hope sprout roots grow on me and still me in this spot... better yet, if I slowly just become a flower, that's better." I chuckled at my own remarks as I closed my eyes, feeling the pattering of rain on me.

'Was the sky crying in my stead?' I wondered as I felt like crying out of exhaustion, but couldn't.

Never in my life, I imagined myself caught up in this silent power strife. Or rather, if Stefan didn't erase my memories and just straight up left me, finding revenge would probably tire me out somehow and I would live in seclusion. Who knows? I might wander to other countries if that was what happened.

'But Lexx is selfish.' My jaw tightened as I gritted my teeth. 'And so were my husband and my clan.'

A shallow breath slipped past my lips as mulling about everything was frying every bit of my brain cells. I didn't even know which was the dominant emotion I had in my heart right now.



"Lakresha, do you understand your master?" I murmured with my eyes closed and my heart heavy. "Father... is this what you mean when you told me that things will go back to their rightful place?"

A light scoff escaped my lips as I whispered, "the throne is not my rightful place."

It was not my seat nor the Bloodfang's. But no matter how I complained, the problem remained, and my words merely drifted away along with the sound of the rain.

'I'm already tired just thinking about it.'

I remained in my position, not moving a muscle, and hoped that it would rain so much it would cause a flood in the palace. If heaven was so kind, please just drown everyone in this palace.

"Fuck..." I cursed under my breath, lifting my arm to shield my shut eyes. "Selfish fucking people."

The more I thought about it, the more I had to question myself if any of them had ever thought about my feelings about everything. It was frustrating so much so I didn't know what to feel it was numbing.

Just then, I sensed someone's presence approaching me. He didn't speak until he was beside me.

"What a beautiful mess you are." Sam clipped his fingers on my sleeve and lifted it away from my eyes. I slowly opened my eyes, only to see his pair of gentle crimson orbs hovering over me.

"Tell me who made my wife cry?" he asked with a subtle smile, cocking his head to the side.

"I'm not crying," I affirmed. Even if I wanted to, I just couldn't cry for reasons unknown and it was adding to my frustration.

Sam shook his head lightly, closed-lipped. "You're not, but inside, here." He tapped my chest lightly, shifting his gaze back at me. "Who made your heart cry?"

My breath hitched as the building frustration in my throat increased. How could he tell that?

I stared at him in silence while he looked back at me. I thought he would press on the matter, but Sam only raised his shoulders. The next second, he plopped his butt down beside me and collapsed on his back.

"It's tiring, isn't it?" Sam murmured as he stared at the sky and welcomed the rain dripping down on him.

I only watched his side profile, making my eyes soften. "Why are you here, husband? As a good husband, wouldn't you tell me to go inside or at least give me an umbrella? That would be romantic."

"Haha. Is it?" Sam turned his head to me, smirking playfully. "Too bad your husband is neither good nor bad."

"You're right." I let out a low chuckle, shifting my gaze back to the sky. "My husband is neither good nor bad, he is anything but those two."

"That sounds like an insult, wife," He complained, making me chuckle until I felt his gaze away from me. "But if our situation is switched, will you give me an umbrella and tell me to go inside?"

I pursed my lips into a thin line and kept silent for a moment. "I think I would, probably."

"Probably?"

"Imagining yourself in a situation and being in that situation, in reality, is a lot more different than we think. So, I'm not sure." I explained.

I felt him glance at me for a while before saying, "You're right."

The corner of my lips curled up into a subtle smile. Would I feel warm about his understanding? Or question if everything he had shown me until now was real?

"So, why are you getting soaked in here?" he asked.

I bat my eyes ever so slowly before I answered in a low tone. "Because I would like to enjoy the rain, feel the cry and screams of nature... as that reminded me that even nature had to scream sometimes."

"Is that so?"

"Mhmm. My time to ask, why are you here getting soaked in the rain with me?" I turned my head to him, seeing him cast me a quick look before closing his eyes while the corner of his lips curled up a little.

"Because I feel like this is the only thing I can do for you," Sam muttered in a low tone as his eyes slowly opened. "Instead of telling my wife to go in, or scold her for not thinking she might catch a cold, I'd rather get soaked in the rain and be that silent company she needed. A cold can be cured easily, but mending a broken heart takes time and patience."

Silence befell us as I averted my gaze, teeth clenched. I thought I couldn't cry no matter what, but just hearing his words, I felt my eyes sting. I covered my eyes with my arm once again, my hand clenched.

"Just stay there." A muffled request escaped my lips. "Just... stay there."

"You don't have to say it. Even if you push me away, I won't budge. The theme of this marriage is ride or die, wife." Sam replied under his breath, but his words were clearer than ever. "You're right when you said your husband is anything but good and bad. He is just selfish, I'm sorry."

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While Samael and Lilou remained on their spot in the middle of the garden, Stefan was staring at them from the distance. He couldn't hear what they were muttering about due to the pouring rain.

"Why am I even here?" he muttered, grinding his teeth with his hand balled into a fist. "This will be over soon."

Stefan punched the wall, leaving cracks on it before he turned around and left. His eyes glinted menacingly as he walked away.

"That's right... just a little longer and she will come back to me soon."

Chapter 249 - The Rose Had Bloomed

Once the rain stopped, Sam and I returned to our chambers, leaving trails of water on the way.

"Oh, my! Your highness!" Lena gasped and rushed to me as soon as she saw the two of us drenched in water. "How! I will get you a towel and some hot milk. Please stay inside."

Lena beckoned to assist me inside, completely ignoring my husband. I halted in front of the door as I looked back. Sam was just standing several steps away from us, running his fingers through his hair before setting his eyes on me.

"I will come back later," He said with his usual playful smirk. "Don't catch a cold."

Sam gave me a slight nod before waving, gesturing for me to go inside. I pursed my lips and took a deep breath.

"Sam," I called, making his brow arch. "I... nothing."

I wanted to tell him tons of things, but I couldn't.

"Blood never lies, love." His lips stretched wider until his eyes squinted.

Does blood never lie? Sam would always say that, but only now did I truly comprehend what it meant. So, I decided to not say anything and went inside with Lena's assistance. Lena had already prepared a warm bath, so I immediately bathe in the tub while Lena prepared hot milk and just about anything to warm me up.

"Blood never lies," I murmured, bending my knees closer to my chest with my chin over them. "Our blood really doesn't lie."

He only meant that whatever my plans were, he'd rather not hear it. After all, there were powerful vampires who could absorb someone else's memories by sinking their fangs into that person. If by chance, Sam fell into the enemy's plot, he wouldn't be able to reveal my plans. Although his reasons for not telling me his plans might be different, I knew he trusted my judgment.

"Until now, he still thinks of me." I closed my eyes and sighed, resting my forehead on my knees. "What should I do, Sam? Our blood never lies, and our blood's will is absolute."

I remained silent for as long as I could remember, taking deep breaths and just mulled over which move I had to take. After some time, I raised my head with my eyes glinting.

'I know what to do.' I thought before Lena arrived to scrub me and help me dress up.

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"Fuck you!" Klaus yelled at Fabian, who was gazing down at him while stepping on the former's back, holding his wrist back. "Have you really gone mad?! I just added my own seedling to that flower bed! What is wrong — ah!"

"I told you not to touch my garden," Fabian pulled Klaus' wrist while staring coldly at him. "How dare you plant sunflower when that's not the motif of the garden I'm planning to see?"

"Uncle said because he wants to eat the sunflower seed, Mister Fabian." Claude chimed in, staring at Klaus with no trace of pity in his eyes. "I think after getting buried many times, my uncle's brain shrunk in size from suffocation."

Kristina let out a sigh as she shook her head, watching Klaus get bullied by a butler. After spending some time with them, she slowly got used to this already.

"Mister Fabian, about Ramin..." she trailed off as Fabian suddenly cut her off.

"He'll be fine," Fabian reassured. "People had been diverting their eyes in this little meeting place. Are you sure you want to risk this, Lady Monroe?"

"I do not mind." Kristina immediately answered as she had already decided to side with Samael.  
"But Ramin, he's still a Remington. I'm afraid the Remingtons..."

"Don't worry about the Remington's," Fabian uttered while pulling Klaus's arms, making the latter wince in pain. "Just focused on the task given to you."

"Ahh! Stop! Are you trying to break my shoulder?!" Klaus complained through his gritted teeth.

"I'm trying to sever it," Fabian corrected, pulling it a bit more until he heard Klaus' shoulder cracking.

While Klaus writhed in pain under Fabian's sadistic punishments while the other two just watched from the sidelines, their attention shifted to the person approaching them. Fabian dropped Klaus's wrist as he faced the approaching Samael.

"My lord," greeted Fabian, gazing at him from head to toe. "Why are you here?"

"I poked all the eyes around." Samael lifted a finger, revealing some blood in it. "We have a problem."

Kristina, Klaus on the ground, Claude, and Fabian furrowed their brows. Until now, they had all possible problems under control. So, for Samael to personally come here in a rush, they could only expect the worst.

"That rose had bloomed." His vague announcement baffled Klaus while it made Claude and Kristina parse what it meant.

Meanwhile, Fabian's eyes darkened as they glinted. "Prematurely?"

"It's deadly. I advised you to keep your distance from it and stay vigilant about its thorns."

"Your Grace, I don't..." Again, Kristina paused as a chill ran down her spine upon meeting Samael's pair of menacing eyes.

"Figure it out yourself. You've been with us. This will be an easy riddle." Samael encouraged, before scanning everyone's faces before setting it to Fabian's smirk. "You know what to do Fabian."

"Yes, my lord." Fabian bowed with his palms across his chest. No one could see the thrill flickering across his eyes.

"As for you, Lady Monroe, we have some seedlings that need to grow somewhere in this west palace. Don't let them wither away while Fabian is away."

Kristina furrowed her brows for a moment before she bowed. "Yes, my lord." She was certain the details would be given to her later.

Samael nodded, pleased that Kristina immediately understood his orders about those children. He then shifted his eyes towards Claude.

"Little crumb."

"I know, Uncle," Claude answered, even though Samael hadn't said a word yet. "Leave it on Auron."

"Good." Pleased, Samael nodded as he took a deep breath, planting his hands on his hips. Although they had considered Lilou, recovering her memories in the past, no amount of preparation was enough.

"Brother, how about me?" Klaus scrunched his nose up as it seemed he was the only one who didn't have a special task.

Samael glanced at him nonchalantly. "Just stay cute, brother," he uttered, making Klaus gasped in disbelief. "We hadn't prepared for this as much as we could, but I trust you with this."

He turned his back on them and started walking away, hearing them (except Klaus) say in unison. "Yes, Your Grace."

"We've all experienced Hell, so everyone was prepared for him..." Samael murmured as a glint flashed across his eyes while his hand curved into a tight fist. "... but no one had met the she-devil this land nurtured."

In other words, Lilou, taking part in this party individually, would definitely change everything. Samael had seen how Lilou in the past. She was as sadistic as Fabian, as risky as Samael, and as scheming as Stefan.

"I wonder who were the other pieces the Bloodfang left..."

Chapter 250 - Seance

Just as Yul said, he had arranged a time and date for me to meet those allied forces of the Bloodfang. It took him two weeks and for those past two weeks, I kept acting, as usual, to avoid garnering unwanted attention.

"They're waiting," Yul said as he gazed back up at me, while I stared at the narrow stairs leading to an underground meeting place just right inside the gambling place.

My eyes narrowed, trying to see anything further than the lamp in Yul's hand could reach, but nothing. I shifted my gaze to him and nodded, following his lead. There would be no fun if I could guess how deep and far this dark path was.

"Had they always known about me?" I asked to break the deafening silence between us.

"I don't know, but since Hell brought a human with him, it was possible they had been watching you from the very beginning," Yul explained, hinting at how little interaction he had with these people I was about to meet. "Although I am an observer in the palace, reporting to them is not my duty."

"I see." I nodded in understanding.

What I had realized for the past two weeks, each piece the Bloodfang left in their little scheme acted individually. Each had their own roles to fulfill... including me.

"Even though we're on the same side, don't trust them so much, sis," Yul warned in a deep voice, almost like a whisper.

I gazed at his back but said nothing. Yul was a child from our clan who had taken the spot of the dead twin of Cassara. Thanks to the mentally unstable Carmilla, one among many mistresses of the late king, Cassara's mother, and the help of another Bloodfang member for Yul to resemble her, no one had questioned Yul's birthright.

"Do you abhor our clan for putting you in the enemy's den?" I asked after a prolonged silence.

Yul didn't answer immediately. "Unlike you, I'm a pawn. My survival or death in the palace will not make a huge impact on our clan's plans."

"If you see me as your master, you better stop thinking like that, Yul," I urged calmly. "You better value your life just as much you value mine because... you're the only one I have right now."

Silence enveloped the two of us as the path we're taking seemed to have no end. Still, I couldn't feel anyone's presence.

"About Hell," I snapped my eyes upon Yul's remarks. "What are your plans about him? It'll be more strange if he isn't scheming something and we might need to confront him."

"What do you think, Yul? You owe him for protecting you."

"If he doesn't harm you, I don't think I will fight him head-on," Yul answered, as honest as he could be. "However, my blood and I chose you, so whatever decision you will make, I will follow it. No questions asked."

His answer made the corner of my lips curled into a subtle smile. "Remember those words, Yul. And don't ever forget you are not just my pawn... you're my only family."

Yul glanced back at me, but all he had seen was the sharpness of my eyes as my smile vanished.

'You might question your decision, Yul. I hope you can trust me until the end... I hope Sam can too.' I whispered internally, and soon the door of hell came to our sight.

It didn't take us that long to stand in front of the unguarded door. This private underground meeting room was unguarded, which only means the people inside were filled with different and powerful types of vampires.

Yul looked back at me, and our eyes instantly met. "I only met a few of them, so I didn't know who else is inside."

"It doesn't matter whether or not you know them. Don't worry about me." I stared back at Yul for a moment before he nodded and knocked on the door once.

After Yul knocked on the door, he waited for a good ten seconds before pushing the door open. As soon as he did, we intruded into the brightly lit room, which was surprisingly cozy inside. The first thing I noticed was the bookshelves on the wall — they were tons of them.

"We've arrived," Yul announced in a low tone as he placed the lamp on the nearest stand. When Yul did, my eyes immediately landed on the people scattered inside; most, I mean, everyone was male and I'm the only female inside.

For a moment, they remained silent with their eyes fixed on me, studying me from head to toe. I did the same and scanned every face and etched them in my head.

"So, the ninth prince isn't lying when he said that the Duchess of Grimsbanne is the person who we had been eager to meet!" A nobleman approached me with a sly smirk on his lip. "I am Baron Mortas Martin. It's a pleasure to finally meet the last descendant of the Bloodfang."

Mortas Martin offered his hand as he bowed down a little, but I didn't give him my hand. Instead, I stared at him for a long time until he chuckled awkwardly and withdrew his hand.

"Baron Martin, I am not the only descendant of the Bloodfang. Yul is my blood brother, please don't forget that." My eyes glinted, and my tone was frigid. I noticed the slight irritation in his false smile as he nodded.

"My apologies." He beckoned a neck bow politely.

"Apology accepted... just this once." I smiled when Mortas' jaw tightened.

There was a moment of silence in the room as I gradually felt their change in impression on me. I already felt their disappointment from their gaze they set their eyes on me, so I had to indirectly tell them I wouldn't be their marionette.

"Alright, everyone. Since the Duchess had arrived, shall we start this... seance?" One man with a distinct platinum hair color clapped his hand, breaking the stifling silence, and caught our attention. He had this bright smile on his face as he gazed around before setting his pair of golden eyes on me.

'This man's aura... is no joke.' I smiled as I felt him pulling an aura on me, but pretended not to feel it.

"That would be better," I agreed with a nod, and my response seemed to please him as I noticed his eyes glinting in amusement.

"No wonder..." He murmured, but I couldn't hear the rest of his murmuring as everyone took a seat.