

The Duke 291

Chapter 291 - Power. Control. Dominance.

"Currently, the undead were still wreaking havoc in the west wing. The royal knights were resisting them from advancing to the inner palace."

"And Hell?"

The man who was reporting the current situation to Stefan gazed down. "He had entered the inner palace. The tenth prince had confronted him, but the fifth prince appeared."

"Oh, Klaus?" Stefan leaned back, his back against the throne as he propped his jaw on his knuckles. His leg resting over the other.

"Yes. Shall we add Prince Klaus to our list?"

Stefan's eyes fell on Luther, a middle-aged vampire whose hair had a streak of white and black strands. "Klaus... I don't think he knew anything about this. If he did, everyone would know about it since he has a big mouth."

"Then, what shall we do to the fifth prince, Your Majesty?"

Stefan didn't speak momentarily, with his eyes narrowing into slits. He tapped his fingers against the armrest, pondering what could have happened in a battle between Klaus and Hanz.

"I'm certain Klaus will kill Hanzel; this is an opportunity for him to avenge his beloved Lucia," he uttered calmly, aware of the hidden grudge Klaus had against Hanz and his other brothers. "But Hanz had been honing his skills. Even if Klaus stands victorious, it'll be a losing victory. So, let him be, for now. Klaus still has his uses."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"About Claude...?" Stefan deliberately paused as he cast Luther a look.

"The young prince is in the cold palace tower. He hadn't left since," Luther reported, having eyes around the palace.

Stefan nodded in understanding. "Keep him safe. It'll be hard to tame Klaus if that child dies."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"What else?" asked Stefan, and Luther knew what kind of report his king wanted to know.

"The Duchess and Fabian the Butler are heading east. We have yet to confirm if east is their original destination or just what they want us to believe. Nevertheless, it seemed their plan is to run away." Luther immediately relayed the information without leaving a single detail out. "We had deployed elite knights to follow their tracks and drag her back, Your Majesty."

"Running away...?" Stefan smirked evilly, followed by a low chuckle. "Tell the knights who are following them to retreat."

"Your Majesty?"

"We need more men in here to deal with the undead."

"But, Your Majesty, the duchess..."

"She will come back on her own." His pair of crimson eyes glinted, licking his fang as he tapped his fingers against the armrest once again. "She tends to doubt if things are going smoothly and... she is a stubborn one. I'm certain she would rather lose an arm or a leg than run away while Hell is in here."

"Your Majesty... you're not saying this because you pity the duchess?"

"Pity? Haha. You're hilarious, Luther."

"Please forgive me if I overstepped, Your Majesty."

"Forgiven. I understand your concern, but this is our decision." Stefan explained, leaving no trace of remorse at what he had planned. "Despair, darkness, and woe... that is what we all chose, Luther."

Luther's eyes glinted with worry, but bit his tongue to hold his words back. He merely hung his head low, keeping his thoughts to himself.

"Still, we can't be complacent. Keep an eye on the princess of the Cross Kingdom and His Majesty of the Spade. If they showed any resistance against me or any signs that they sided with Hell..." Stefan smiled as his eyelids drooped menacingly, turning his head back to the person who was standing in the dark.

"I will have their heads," said the man, making Stefan's lips curl up.

"Alistair, don't be like that. Although I don't think they are foolish enough to do anything bold, knowing they are in someone else's territory." Stefan chuckled, shaking his head as everything so far amused him. "By the way, I'm certain you had an arduous journey."

"The north had been unbearably cold, so the heat in the palace is enough to warm me up."

"Well, what do you expect in hell?" Another shadow, clad with a cloak, appeared on the other side of the throne hall. "I bet the flames in here are quite refreshing for you, Alistair."

Stefan's eyes lingered on the man in a cloak, seeing the sinister smirk on his lips. He rocked his head, pleased that regardless of everything, they still had everything under control.

"Indeed, Alphonse." Alistair, who still stood in the dark, revealed his fangs that glinted. "The palace is like a giant bonfire. My people from the north enjoy the heat."

"Should you thank Hell for that?"

"I, thank you, second brother." Alistair was quick to respond in an amused tone. "I'm certain this situation wouldn't be this huge if you didn't let it happen."

"Haha! It's not me, brother. It's His Majesty's plans."

Alistair stared at Alphonse, hiding his emotions in the dark. "Anyway, I shall rest first," Alistair excused calmly. "I need a bit of rest so I can witness Hell's death."

When Stefan nodded in approval, Alistair vanished in the dark, just like that. His eyes then shifted on Alphonse.

"Hell will be here soon, Your Majesty." Alphonse voice out, using his same cunning tone. "I wish you luck."

"Luck is not what I need." Stefan's hair gradually turned blanch as the side of his lips stretched wider. He had sacrificed everything and already reached this point of no return.

If Lilou had accepted his heart for the second time, or Samael gave her up to him, he could've changed his mind. But alas, they made a choice, painting the last piece of his heart black. Hence, Stefan could only embrace what was already there and live up to what he had lived for.

Power.

Control.

Dominance.

"No mercy for Hell." Stefan dawdled as he set his pair of crimson eyes on the door ahead, waiting for Samael to barge in and settle the score with him. "His death... will mark the beginning of my reign as an emperor."

Alphonse chuckled and bowed before turning around to walk away. As he trudged away, a cunning smirk appeared on his lips as his eyes flickered with mischief.

"Hell's death, my king, will be the birth of the monster born from hatred, ambition, and greed for destruction," he murmured, suppressing his excitement at what was to come. "And you had taken part in nurturing that monster.... if you know what I mean."

Chapter 292 - The Kings' Swords

We only encountered a few knights, which Fabian got rid of easily. I was almost in awe of his skills, but the situation didn't allow me to.

"It's been a while, Your Grace. Our people had made a route for you." Noah uttered as soon as we met with him at the gates of the east wing.

"It has been, Noah. What a surprise that you're also part of this." I pursed my lips, recalling the time I spent in Whistlebird in the past. Although I barely saw him from afar, I was acquainted with his father, Anton, and brother, Arthur — they're dead now. Good for them.

"How is the situation inside?" asked Noah to Fabian, and the latter cast me a glance.

"His Grace will meet us at the border." Fabian kept his answer short. "About the situation outside?"

"Apparently, the awakening had begun as well. It will be more troublesome if you don't reach the border until its completion. The king can just send them to you to bring Her Grace back as their first mission."

"I see." Fabian nodded as if this information didn't surprise him at all. He turned and faced me, his expression solemn.

"We should hasten, my lady," he said, gesturing me to ride on the steed Noah prepared for us.

I stared at him momentarily before looking back at the palace. There was fire and thick smoke ascended the dark sky, making me more worried about my husband.

"I don't want to go..." I whispered through my gritted teeth, feeling more reluctant to go knowing my husband was still out there, fighting. "... why do you have to do this to me?"

My voice shook as I kept the rage in my heart at bay. I already agreed, but it was just hard to proceed with all these worries in my heart. Not to mention, we got out so easily — as if Stefan purposely wanted me to go.

"Your Grace, please trust us in this." Fabian stayed adamant and looked at me straight in the eye.

"I already did, Fabian, that's why I am here. However, my husband... is out there fighting. Even if he is strong, how can he fight his enemies alone?"

"Rufus will assist him out of this."

A shallow scoff slipped past my lips, finding it hilarious how powerless my words were. I could fight my way back and be stubborn, but part of me wanted to trust them. That, I should put all my trust in them and ignore my gut feeling.

"My lady." Fabian took a deep breath, holding the steed's reins, and guided it to my standpoint. He reached for my hand to hold on to the rein.

"His Grace doesn't gamble if he knows he will lose." He asserted, squeezing my hand to grip the reins. "Stake your bets on us, please."

There was a touch of desperation in Fabian's words, making me waver once again. I hate to do this, but I had to trust them. That's right. I knew Sam very well and he wouldn't do something this big if he wasn't prepared.

"I will throw all your gardening equipments once this is over, Fabian." I pulled the reins from him, walking towards the horse, and mounted it.

"Thank you, my lady." Fabian smiled and heaved a sigh of relief. He then jogged to the other steed, and we galloped our way to the east.

"Captain, what should we do?" asked Ramin, dropping a severed arm of the undead who attacked him. "It seems there's no end to..." he trailed off when an undead whom he assumed dead lurched at him, but was shot down by an arrow in his head.

"Nice cover, Charlie!" Ramin gazed in a certain direction, raising a hand for a salute.

Rufus remained silent, standing mightily with his eyes scanning the waves of undead marching their way. This was one of the reasons he opposed this idea. The undead attacked just about everyone.

"The palace is the last place we want to protect." Rufus set his eyes towards Ramin, expression grim. "The awakening had begun. Those turned-ones will surely find something to fill their thirst as soon as their fangs grow. Take Charlotte with you and help the Remingtons and Kristina to evacuate the humans."

"How about you, Captain?"

Rufus took a deep breath as he turned his back against them. "I will stay here."

Ramin frowned as he fixed his eyes on Rufus' broad back. Although his captain's back looked so reliable, he could not help but hesitate.

"This is our duty, Ramin. To protect this land and its people — not the king or the La Crox. Regardless of our personal feelings, we are knights born to fight and die for this kingdom." Rufus uttered without looking back, gripping his sword.

"Protect as many people, be it vampires or humans. Those newly turned ones will act as abnormals unless they quench their thirst. So, seize them for now." Rufus continued as he looked at Ramin. "And as much as possible, avoid any confrontation with any of the La Crox or any people of the king... they had the third squadron on their list."

"Yes, sir!" Ramin clenched his teeth, his fist across his chest as he bowed. "I accept the captain's order."

Rufus nodded before he looked ahead, eyes glinting with killing intent. "Go."

As soon as Rufus ordered that, Ramin gestured in Charlotte's direction before leaping away from Rufus. Ramin gazed back at his captain, only to see another person appearing across from Rufus.

'Did he send us away because of that guy?' Ramin wondered but shook his head as he stared ahead, eyes glinting with resolve. 'Regardless if that is the reason, this is the duty of the Divine Orders. Protect the people of this land.'

A wind blew past Rufus as his shoulder relaxed. His eyes remained on the person who just appeared out of nowhere.

"Your highness, the seventh prince," Rufus greeted coldly. "You didn't come here to help me clean up these undeads?"

Dominique chuckled as he gazed at the remains scattered around the ground. "You had caused this mess, so why would I?"

"I see." Rufus sighed while nodding in understanding. "I guess talking is unnecessary at this point."

"Indeed," Dominique smirked, watching as Rufus lift his sword while he just spread his fingers, highlighting his long, sharp, claw-like nails.

They stared at each other and the air around thickened. After a beat, both of them bolted forward, adding a loud explosion of aura as the swords of the kings clashed.

Chapter 293 - Schemes After Schemes, Secret Alliances Behind Alliances

Meanwhile, on another side of the palace where the delegation of the princess of the Cross Kingdom stayed, Zarros gazed up. His eyes glinting with murderous intent as soon as he laid his eyes on the person approaching him.

"Zarros," greeted Zero with a smirk, walking languidly without a care in the world.

"Your Highness." Zarros hung his head low, keeping his emotions in check. "You came... just as what her highness said."

"Oh? Beatrice is expecting me?"

"Yes."

The side of Zero's lips stretched wide as he rocked his head approvingly. "The princess never ceased to amaze me. Then I shall head inside to humor her. I'm pretty sure she is dying of boredom."

Zarros spoke nothing as he stepped to the side, teeth clenched. His obedience made Zero arch a brow, stopping in front of him.

"It's funny how you, a war hero, is willing to set aside your emotions for the princess." Zero let out a low chuckle, patting Zarros' shoulder lightly. "Even though she indulges in debauchery to get what she wants, she is still your God. If this is not what they call love, I don't know what is."

Zero grinned mischievously, followed by a chuckle, leaving Zarros in a terrible mood. Meanwhile, Zarros only balled his hand into a fist but said nothing — afraid he would cause a problem with whatever Beatrice was planning.

'You will have your time, Quentin.' Zarros glanced at the shut door, eyes glinting with killing intent. 'I will surely bash your head in... one of these days. I hadn't forgotten what you did to the princess.'

"You've really come to meet me in private." Beatrice turned her head towards the door, setting her eyes on Zero. "You've become bolder and bolder the older you get, Your Majesty."

"Don't make me sound like an old man, princess."

"I didn't mean it like that. My apologies." A soft chuckle escape her mouth while Zero perched comfortably on the seat across from her.

"Would you like some tea? Should I prepare you one myself?" asked Beatrice with a polite smile.

"You brew tea now?"

"I practiced knowing I will see you one day."

Her response made him chortle. "My, princess. You truly know how to touch my heart!"

"So? Would you like some?" she smirked, raising a brow and tilted her head to the side.

He smiled until his eyes squinted into slits. "I appreciate the thought, but I only drink tea prepared by yours truly."

"Too bad, my frail heart is hurt."

"Oh, Beatrice... you are so precious." Zero looked at her in amusement, enjoying her company as usual.

Upon his remarks, a weak smirk appeared on Beatrice's lips. "But not as precious as the last descendant of the Bloodfang."

"Oh? Is this jealousy I am hearing?" His brow raised, grinning even wider as he narrowed his eyes.

"Jealousy?" Beatrice could not help but laugh at this ridiculous joke.

"Of course, it's not." Before she could answer, Zero answered for her with the same smile plastered on his face. "You are, after all, who everyone wants, but no one gets."

"And that is until the man who gets everything he wants by means or foul walks into my life."

"Oh, Beatrice." Zero shook his head, chuckling. "Don't make it sound like that man is someone special."

"But he is, Your Majesty." Her eyes glinted despite the smile on her face and her calm demeanor. "Don't tell me you don't see yourself as someone special?"

"Special? No, apparently."

"Right... someone who wants to be God will not accept the term special." The smile on her face slowly faded as she fixed her eyes on Zero.

Zero didn't deny nor did he confirm her last remark. However, it was certain her brief humoring pleased him.

"I think you know the reason I am here, Beatrice," Zero said, changing the subject as they already set the tone between them. "Someone... no, many of the La Crox will die tonight."

Beatrice remained silent, aware of that outcome. "The death of the few La Crox mattered not to me."

"Oh? Does this mean you placed your bets on neither Samael and Stefan?"

"Why would I bet on someone who doesn't share the same ideals as mine?" she raised a brow, giving him a knowing look. "After all, those two are not the only rulers in this place at the moment."

Her last remarks caused his grin to stretch even wider. Surely, Beatrice was someone wise enough to see the bigger picture.

"I see that you want an alliance, princess. Alas, what can your small kingdom offer? I already planned to wipe your country." Zero leaned forward, eyes narrowed with a smirk of the devil.

"Give me a reason on why I shouldn't do it?" his tone lowered as the temperature of the room gradually dropped.

The crackle of the wood in the fireplace sang in their ear. They stared at each other for a long time, sharing a moment of silence.

"Werewolves." After a moment of silence, Beatrice uttered, and that caught his attention. "You had the undead, Stefan had the turned vampires, Hell has... demons, I guess, and we have werewolves on our side."

"Werewolves... hahaha!" Zero laughed out loud, clapping in amusement as he didn't expect such cards from showing up.

Beatrice smiled, confident that the card she had drawn had changed the flow of the game.

"Surprise?"

"Shocked. Did you offer yourself once again to some random leader of a pack to gain such an advantage?"

"It's funny how you always assume my body is the only thing I can offer, but alright." Beatrice, although not pleased by his remarks, set aside her personal feelings for a better cause. "So? What can you say?"

Zero leaned back comfortably while studying the woman across from him. "Werewolves, huh?"

"Considering all the people you had angered, you will need as many allies as possible, don't you think? Having the duchess' blood will help, but it won't be enough."

"Oh, dear. You make it sound like I am simply using my fiancée!" Zero exclaimed shamelessly but didn't even try to sound believable. "My feelings for my fiancée are true love. I am a sincere man."

"Hearing those words from you makes me want to believe nothing is impossible in this world."

"Haha, very well, it was a pleasant chat." Zero placed his palm on the armrest, assisting himself up. "I am looking forward to spending more time with you."

Beatrice exchanged gazes with him and watched him leave as he hummed a tune. The second the door shut closed behind him, a cunning smirk appeared on her lips as she peeled her eyes away.

'It is true that Hell and Stefan are not the only rulers in this land... you're also not the only one, Quentin.'

"Well, you seem to be in a good mood, Beatrice." She raised a brow as a voice suddenly reached her ear out of the blue. It didn't take long when someone stood behind her chair, bending over as he traced her neck with the apex of his nose.

She turned her head back, smirking. "Have you been here, Alphonse?"

"Surprised?" Alphonse suddenly tugged her hair back, his fangs growing.. "You know I'm always watching, Beatrice," he whispered before his lips parted, sinking his fangs right into her neck.

Chapter 294 - Not As Crazy As You

Zero chuckled, shaking his head while walking through the hallway. Werewolves? Beatrice's cards never ceased to amaze him.

'A title of a Queen befits her talent and wits,' He thought as a smirk appeared on his lips. 'Too bad, she is barren.'

"Your Majesty." Suddenly, Tristan's voice intruded inside Zero's head, making the latter raise a brow. "Alistair had put a shadow on you and the princess."

'Is that so?' Zero's reaction was neither pleased nor displeased, it was nonchalance. 'It's to be expected, don't worry.'

"Those people in the seance want to take this opportunity to..."

'Tristan, tell them to sit back and relax.' Zero cut him off as he looked ahead, eyes glinting dangerously. 'If we make any bold movements right now, it will spoil all our preparations. All they have to do is watch quietly and enjoy everything unfolds.'

"Yes, Your Majesty. I will stop them from doing something foolish."

'Good.' He stopped in his steps momentarily before he asked, 'and about the thing I asked you?'

"The gift is heading to the person who will wrap it."

Upon hearing that, a sinister smile resurfaced on Zero's face as he resumed in his tracks. Whatever he was thinking, one could tell it wouldn't do anyone a favor but himself.

"I should prepare flowers and tea to comfort my dear fiancée," he whispered in high spirits, excited to see whose schemes would win in the end.

Stefan raised his gaze, hands over his sword's handle. His eyes immediately caught the figure who kicked the doors open.

"Hell," He called coldly. "You sure took your precious time. I nearly fell asleep."

"Forgive my tardiness, Your Majesty." Samael lifted his Catharsis to his shoulder. "This humble me lost his way in here."

"Haha, is that so? Then, forgiven." Stefan pushed himself up, standing upright while gazing down at Samael.

"You are quite merciful, Your Majesty."

"That is the last mercy I will ever give to anyone, Your Grace."

Then silence... The two of them stared at each other as if gravitating each other's strength with Stefan, revealing he had reached the peak as well.

"Surprised?" Stefan inquired, noticing that Samael's eyes lingered longer in his hair.

Samael peeled his eyes away and shrugged. "Unexpected, but not surprising. I had tested your strength recently, after all."

"Test... you mean, back on your wedding night?" Stefan sneered. "I don't think you are foolish enough to think that is all I can do. Just as I believed that you still held back that night."

"You think too highly of me, I'm flattered." Samael frowned as he let out a sigh. "I shouldn't fall for this sweet talk. You want me dead, after all."

"A battle between pureblood wouldn't end unless one of us perish, especially a battle between who had reached the peak." Stefan's voice grew solemn as his grip around his sword's handle tightened.

"So, yes. I want you dead, Hell."

"Dying in your hands is not a bad idea."

"You are accepting your death so easily, which makes me wonder what plans you had to send her away." Stefan cocked his head to the side, sizing him up with narrowed eyes. "You know I can always drag her back in here."

"Well, let's just say I'm making you happy by thinking you can kill me." Samael smiled brightly, tapping the back of his sword against his shoulder. "After all, even when I say I will die a thousand times, the outcomes always differed."

"Make sense."

"Also, we had stayed here for far too long. I don't want to delay our schedule to leave."

This time, Stefan couldn't hold back his laughter. "Is that so? You sent her away first because you don't want to postpone your schedule?" he paused, marching down the stairs ever so slowly.

"Or is it because you don't want her changing her mind midway?"

"Well, think whatever you like, Your Majesty. I am the villain and villains always make surprises." Samael shrugged nonchalantly. "We just don't die, you know? At least, not the first or second try."

Red and dark mist started floating out of nowhere, filling up the entire throne hall that suspended the air. As their eyes locked with each other, the aura they exuded grew stronger and darker. One must have enough strength to enter their vicinity.

"Well then, I guess you will be the first villain who will die the first time," Stefan affirmed in a calm tone, raising his other hand as a small red ball grew under his palm. "Honestly, I don't want to kill you. If I have a choice, I would rather seize you and let you watch how I take everything from you."

"Everything... you mean, you want me to watch how you will take Lilou from me?" she was his everything, after all. "Aren't you a little sick in the head?"

Samael pointed to his temple, his finger doing a short circular motion. "You underestimate Lilou so much, even after you personally nurtured the monster within her. I don't know if you just lack common sense or you're not as smart as I think you are. Either way, I just think you are crazy!"

"Not as crazy as you."

"Haha! That's right." Samael laughed and then, in a snap, his face lost any emotion. "I am... the craziest."

His fangs slowly grew, licking them as he stretched his neck in a circular motion. "Catharsis, go back. I don't need you." And his sword slowly turned into an earring dangling from his ear.

"You won't use Catharsis? Your arrogance will be the death of you." Stefan pointed out but was not surprised by Samael's actions.

"It won't be fun if I slay you with a sword, Your Majesty. I want to feel how I will tear you apart with my bare hands." Samael grinned, staring menacingly into Stefan's eyes.

As silence befell them, they both disappeared from their standpoint in a blink of an eye. However, instead of the two of them clashing, two figures appeared in between them, blocking their attacks in a nick of time.

Samael snapped his eyes, tilting his head, baffled. "Yul, it is nice to see you. But you see, His Majesty and I are in the middle of important business."

"Silvia, step aside before Lancelot mistake you as his meal.." Stefan cautioned while staring at Silvia, who was blocking his attack.

Chapter 295 - Darkfield

"Silvia, step aside before Lancelot mistake you as his meal."

Yul's eyes glinted with malice, his sword trembling under Samael's clutches. "Stop this madness, Hell."

"Have you lost your mind, Stefan? Hell?" Silvia's voice thundered while blocking Stefan's sword, her eyes flickering with rage as she stared at the king.

"It should be me who should ask that, Silvia." Stefan's voice was low. "Have you two lost your minds? Do you want to die?"

"How can you not behave yourself with all those guests... enemies lurking around and waiting for the right time to bare their fangs?!"

"Oh, come on, Via! Don't act as if this is for the goodness of the country!" Samael rolled his eyes. "Just say you don't want me dead because if I did, Rufus will die as well."

"Hell!" This time, Yul's voice pitched as he ground his teeth. "Have you lost your mind? Have you forgotten about your wife?"

Yul had promised Lilou he would bring him to her. He had searched for him, but the more he had searched, Yul had noticed a thing or two. Those hints had led him to a strong conclusion that Samael didn't want to run away.

"No, of course not." Samael snapped his tongue in irritation, grinding his teeth as he leaned in, pupils constricting. "But I will appreciate it if you and Silvia step aside right now."

"What happened to the truce you both claimed?" Silvia's voice shook, fighting off Stefan's sword that felt heavier against her saber every passing second.

"Isn't it obvious, Silvia?" Stefan's seethed, as he didn't appreciate this intrusion. With no signs of remorse, his sword's blade grate against her blade, forcing it to the side. He then immediately grabbed her neck with his other hand, lifting her up.

"The truce is called off." His eyes glinted as his grip around her neck tightened. "The next time you will overstep, I will snap your neck, Silvia."

Stefan mercilessly tossed her to the side like a doll. His force was too much, as she crashed against the wall, leaving cracks in it.

"Oh, ho! What a heartless husband!" Samael gasped, wide-eyed. "I didn't know my sister is a battered wife! No wonder she doesn't love you."

"Silvia..." Yul gnashed his teeth, casting her figure a look as she crawled while coughing.

"The problem with people like you is you push your luck too far," said Stefan, and Yul froze for a second, sensing Lancelot's tip coming at his back.

Just as fast as Stefan, Samael pulled down Yul's sword and hopped over him, stepping on Lancelot's tip to the floor. Stefan gazed at Samael's foot, then slowly raised it to meet the latter's ridiculing gaze.

"You still have soft spots for your siblings, huh?" he mocked, amused that he didn't expect him to save Yul. "When you protect something or someone... they will become your weakness, Hell."

"Are you speaking from experience?" Samael cocked his head to the side, arms crossed.

A thick silence followed his question. Yes, Stefan was speaking from experience. Foolish, he thought, that even now, Lilou was still his weakness. He hated her, but not enough for her to die... just enough for him to wish she suffered just as much as he suffered.

"Yul," Samael glanced back at Yul. "You see this guy over here? This piece of shit will follow my wife even to hell. Running and living in constant fear from this lunatic is not the life I want for her and for our children."

"Children?" That word was akin to a scissor, cutting the last straw of Stefan as his eyes darkened. "Don't worry, Hell. I will make sure she will never bear your children."

"Tch. Fuck." Samael spat to the side before cracking his neck. "You know what makes me so annoyed, Stefan?"

Yul staggered back while Stefan hopped back, sensing danger from the devil. Samael brushed his hair back with both his hands, taking deep breaths as something in his head tingled.

"It is not the fact that you have a history with Lilou or the fact that you fantasized about my wife." Samael sucked air through his gritted teeth before disappearing from his spot, and then suddenly appearing in front of Stefan.

"What pisses me off is people seeing her as nothing more than a womb to bear their fucking seed." His eyes glinted as blood oozed from his palm, grabbing Lancelot's body. "That they see her as nothing more than just the last descendant of those Bloodfangs... it pisses me off as well."

Samael slid his grip up, smearing his blood as Stefan's sword sliced through his palm. But that didn't faze him. Instead, the more he bled, the more the force around them grew stronger, creating an impregnable bloodfield around the two of them.

"My wife!" He asserted as the mist formed into sharp needles. "Is more than that. Don't you ever dishonor wife like this, Stefan."

"Hell!" Yul shouted, but an explosion of force nearly tossed him away. He raised an arm protectively, peeking through squinted eyes, only to see a dark bloodfield. He couldn't see what was going on inside.

"No, no, no! Hell!" his voice shook as his heart pounded against his chest. "That darkfield... what the hell is he thinking? Why would you use the same darkfield that forced you into slumber before?"

My grip on the reins tightened, steeling my heart and avoided from looking back. The farther we were from the capital, the heavier my heart was.

"My lady, just continue on the path Lord Noah told us about." Suddenly, Fabian's steed galloped to my side, informing me to go on my own.

"Fabian...!" I grumbled, gritting my teeth as I cast him a glare. "Just how many people should I leave behind?!"

"My lady, please, trust us. Once you reach our destination, you will meet five dwarfs. They will lead you the way."

"Ughh!!!" I kept it in, looking ahead, teeth clenched.

"Never look back, Your Grace." Were Fabian's last words as I galloped ahead while he slowed down.

'Don't ever look back, Lilou. Don't look back. They have a plan for this... they surely have a plan.' I repeated those words in my head like a broken record as I sped away. 'Keep going. Keep going...'

I was nearly successful in listening to myself, but then, there was this powerful explosion of aura from where we came from. My heart skipped a beat and my mind buzzed.

"Sam..." I murmured, gritting my teeth as I pulled the reins abruptly. The steed nearly tossed me out, but I held on. When it stopped, I looked back and from this point, I could still see the palace.

Never look back was what Fabian and I told myself repeatedly, but I did. And now that I did, all the efforts I had exerted until now came crumbling down into nothingness.

"What the hell?" A shallow scoff slipped past my lips. "My husband needs me."

Fabian stood on his steed and jumped off while the horse slowed down on its own. Landing perfectly on the concrete, Fabian raised his head and set his eyes on the people who had followed them.

"Bearers of the Order... or shall I say, bearers of the king?" He sported a smile, but his aura grew sinister.. "Either way, I am pleased to meet you."

Chapter 296 - The Rest Of The Bearers Of The Divine Order

"Either way, I am pleased to meet you."

Three figures stood in front of Fabian, sizing him up and his strength. Even when he just stood, they could feel that the aura he exuded was no joke, making their weapons trembled.

"Fabian the Butler," said a woman with short dark brown hair. "We, the Bearers of the Divine Order, asked you to surrender and come with us."

"How formal." Fabian smiled, followed by a low chuckle. "If you are this nice, then I will."

His immediate agreement made their brows furrow as they gazed at him suspiciously. Fabian grinned, raising both his hands as he marched towards them.

"Hmm? Why are you in doubt?" Fabian inquired, tilting his head to the side upon noticing they were not moving. "I like the formality, so I don't see the reason for unnecessary bloodshed."

"Seize him," the woman glanced at the other man and cocked her head.

"Maxine, do you really believe he will just surrender just like that?" the other man with a large physique asked, glaring at Fabian with doubt in his eye.

"Choosing a more peaceful resolution is our first choice." Maxine, who had a short brown hair, fixed her sharp eyes towards Fabian. "If he tries something funny, then you know what to do, George."

The three of them exchange gazes and then nodded. "I'll follow the duchess, then."

"Oh, no." Fabian chimed, shaking his head lightly. "I'll come with you peacefully, however..." he deliberately paused as he opened his usually squinted eyes.

"Following Her Grace is a different case."

"You have no say in this, Fabian the Butler." Maxine's eyes darkened, as her tone was solemn. "The Duke of Grimsbanne had started all this. Hence, everyone who is involved with him must be investigated and receive punishment accordingly; that includes the duchess."

"Benedict, go." She ordered to the other man with a lean and towering figure, without taking her eyes off of Fabian.

Benedict glanced at Maxine and nodded. Just as he crouch and bolted, he stopped before passing through Fabian's standpoint. He froze as he was certain he was fast, but Fabian suddenly appeared in front of him with Fabian's palm on his chest.

"Benedict, is it?" as soon as Fabian's voice caressed his ear, Benedict simply acted on instinct as he hopped several meters back. His eyes dilated, placing his hand over his chest, and noticed that his clothes were ripped slightly.

'If I didn't act immediately, he would've taken my heart with his bare hand.' Benedict thought as he had felt the killing intent behind Fabian's smirk. "I see that the rumors about you are not just rumors."

"You are quite fast, Benedict." Fabian nodded in satisfaction, not surprised that this member of the Order could react on time. He took a deep breath, rubbing the back of his ring with his thumb, and it immediately shifted to a dark spear.

Using his dark spear, Maleficent, Fabian raised it up and swung it, drawing a line before him. The three bearers who worked under the king gazed down and then raised their eyes back up to him.

"If you ask me to go with you, I will, without a problem. However, if you choose to cross this line, then... that's where we will have a problem."

"Fabian, as we had said, we are here to ensue orders." Maxine's tone dropped. "No matter how strong you are, never underestimate a bearer."

Her last remarks caused Fabian to chortle aloud, hunching in as he held his stomach. There was no sign of him being bothered, even in the slightest.

"Numbers are never a problem, child." Fabian wiped the corner of his eyes, shaking his head. "The new generation of the Divine Order are all foolish. I feel bad to the previous owners of your weapons."

"Even if you stand before us, we will execute what is right and a butler such as yourself can only struggle to the bitter end." George, the man who had a large physique, roared. The vein in his temple and the back of his hand protruded, holding his large ax before bolting towards Fabian.

"George, wait!" Benedict suddenly acted out of instinct to stop his comrade from attacking. Not that he was siding with Fabian, he just knew they couldn't just attack this man thoughtlessly.

"Benedict!" Maxine yelled, taking a step before freezing abruptly. Her eyes slowly went wide as Fabian suddenly appeared behind Benedict.

George, who stopped upon Benedict's sudden appearance, gazed down. His eyes fell into Benedict's eyes and then crept down to the sharp spear that went through from his back to his chest.

"Oops..." the corner of Fabian's lips curled up as he gazed up at George. "... wrong person."

Without the slightest remorse, Fabian pulled Maleficent from Benedict's back and casually hopped back. He gazed at his dark spear, touching the blood, before withdrawing his fingers to his lips, licking it for a taste.

"Bitter." He commented, rubbing his fingers against each other.

"Benedict!" George snapped, holding Benedict's shoulder while blood trickled down from his wound. "Why did you —"

Benedict panted for air, clutching his chest as blood oozed from the gaps of his fingers. The rumors were truly accurate. Fabian... would kill without batting an eye. He would slay anyone in a snap of a finger as if he was more afraid of wasting time than taking a person's life.

"George, take Benedict back. I will handle him." Maxine's eyes glinted with killing intent, her eyes fixed on Fabian's nonchalant expression.

"No, Maxine. I will —" George abruptly stopped as soon as Maxine cast him a look.

"He purposely missed a vital point by an inch. Take Benedict with you and get him treated before it's too late." This time, Maxine's tone was devoid of emotion as she shifted her eyes back to Fabian. "I will kill this man."

"I will come back." George gritted his teeth, cradling Benedict in his robust arms before hopping away. However, just as he did, Fabian also dashed up, appearing right in front of him in mid-air.

"And who told you that you can go?" asked Fabian., swinging his spear towards him.

"Shit!" George's eyes widened, as he could only take this blow with Benedict in his arms.

"I did." Suddenly, Maxine also appeared in front of them, blocking Fabian's attack with her sword. "George, go. I will hold him back."

"Oh... you are quite interesting," Fabian mused as both he and Maxine hopped back and landed on some random roof. "Maxine, is it?"

"Yes. Maxine." She nodded, holding her sword as she bent her knees. "Remember that because..."

Maxine suddenly flashed towards him while he blocked her attack, fighting mid-air and landing on every roof they could land. "That is the name who will take your life."

His grin stretched wider, clashing weapons against her.. "Then, be my guest, Maxine."

Chapter 297 - Not A Chance, Little Girl.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the heart of the Capital, Kristina looked back upon hearing Ramin's voice.

"Kristina, how is the situation?" asked Ramin as soon as he reached her, gazing at the people they were escorting to one of the Remingtons' estates.

Right now, this area was being filled with darkness as the turned vampires were wreaking havoc; they're no different from those undeads. They encountered a few; some died while some were just knocked unconscious.

"We had evacuated the people in the area, but we don't know if the situation will escalate to worst," Kristina briefed him, sighing as she gazed around. "The problem is, most of the noble houses won't open their doors to commoners."

"Only the Remington opened their doors?"

Kristina nodded. "The Monroe and the Souton also opened theirs, but alas..." it wasn't enough. Ramin understood her point, even though she didn't finish her sentence.

"It was only fortunate that the Remington's are wealthy and their estates are huge." She added, shifting her eyes towards the people heading inside, escorted by the knights so as to keep them all disciplined.

"Kristina, did you know about their plan?" Ramin inquired solemnly, staring at Kristina. "Did you have any idea that it will be this big and chaotic?"

"Ramin." Kristina took a step forward, grabbing his shoulder as she gazed up at him. "Even if I do or don't, we can't stop this from happening."

Ramin's eyes darkened as he balled his hand into a fist. He knew a thing or two about the plan and he had already foreseen something like this. However, he was tired of just reading the situation and wanted a clearer answer.

"The vampires prowling in the streets of the Capital are His Majesty's people. This is bound to happen even if His Grace doesn't do all this." Her eyes remained on him, nodding reassuringly. "It just happened that they pushed their awakening forward, but it is better than getting surprised later."

"Kristina." Ramin's eyes glinted with brows creased. "Vampires are not the only ones who walk the street of the capital."

Her forehead wrinkled. "What do you mean?"

"We encountered a few undeads on the way here."

"How many?"

"Four, but I'm certain there are more." Ramin asserted as their journey in here wasn't as smooth as it seemed. If Ramin and Charlotte didn't train like crazy with all Samael's advice, those monsters had held them down.

"What..." Suddenly, Charlotte, who was surveying the area, gazed up. Her hand over her forehead, seeing something fly in their direction. As soon as she recognized it was someone, she turned to Kristina and Ramin's standpoint.

"Watch out!" yelled Charlotte, and by instinct, Ramin and Kristina leaped away.

As soon as they did, something crashed down to the gates of the estate. The impact was so strong that a part of the gate broke. Everyone, even the evacuees, shifted their eyes to it, seeing thick dust and smoke hide whatever flew in that direction.

"What the..." Kristina murmured, narrowing her eyes as she saw a man's figure sat down, arm on his knee.

Ramin snapped his eyes as he turned his head back, sensing another person's presence. At first, he thought they were under attack. But it seemed that wasn't the case.

"Maxine," He called as soon as he laid his eyes on Maxine's figure. "What are you doing?"

Maxine glanced at him, her eyes cold, and then shifted it to the people. She remained silent as she saw nothing wrong with what these other members of the Order were doing.

"Maxine! What the hell?! Can't you see we're doing all this work?! How dare you break the gates, huh? Will you repair it yourself?" Charlotte, who was too honest for her own good, harrumphed.

"Just suck up to His Majesty like you always do, but don't give us —"

Charlotte abruptly paused as Maxine cast her a glare. But, at the same time, Kristina suddenly appeared on Maxine's side, pointing a dagger at her neck.

"We are both bearers of the Order, Max." Kristina seethed, as Maxine almost assaulted Charlotte if she didn't stop her. "I don't care if you are taking orders from His Majesty, but I won't stand still if you hurt other members of the Order just because Charlotte stated a fact."

"Kristina." Maxine shifted her eyes to her as the side of her lips curled upward. "Stay out."

"Maxine..." this time, Ramin grumbled through his gritted teeth as his fingers cracked, clutching it in a fist. "Have you forgotten our oath and duty? While these people are in peril, what were you doing?"

"Duty."

"Duty?" Ramin sneered. "And your duty is to follow the King's orders?"

"My duty is to eliminate threats to this kingdom." Maxine cast Ramin a brief look and then looked ahead. "And that person is a threat not just to this kingdom, but its people."

As soon as Maxine dropped those words, Kristina and Maxine leaped away as a sudden spear flew in their direction. Kristina and everyone slowly shifted their gaze, wide-eyed.

"Mister Fabian?" Kristina nearly gasped as Fabian sauntered in their direction. He raised a hand, and his spear that flew towards Maxine returned in his hand.

Fabian quirked a brow, noticing Kristina, and then scanned the area to see more people. "Oh. Did we disturb your evacuation?"

"Mister Fabian, what are you..." Kristina walked towards him as soon as he was out, exiting from the broken gate. "... you and Maxine."

"Don't worry about us." Fabian offered his usual polite smile. "I merely asked her to send me flying for once, and she did!"

His light tone and attitude brought a frown to Kristina's lips. Her eyes scanned the blood dripping from his head, a bit surprised that Maxine could damage him like this.

"Don't worry, Miss Monroe." Fabian placed his hand on her shoulder, patting her lightly. "The more I bleed, the happier I get."

"Then, I'll let you bleed until you can no longer bleed." Maxine's cold voice reached his ear, making him turn his head to her.

"Miss, the third squadron, are quite busy doing their duties. Shall we continue this somewhere else?" Fabian offered politely, facing her. "As you know, my brother is their captain. He will be infuriated if I interfere with their heroic duties, you know."

"Heroic..." Maxine smirked, as she suddenly had an idea in mind. "... that is a good idea."

She held her sword to one side. Fabian narrowed his eyes as ice crawled from her hand up to the tip of her sword.

"Oh, my..." a low chuckle escaped his lips, and then in a blink of an eye, he appeared in front of Maxine. "Are you planning to frame me by butchering everyone in here? Not a chance, little girl."

Without short notice, Fabian raised his hand, grabbing her face, and bolted forward, slamming her against a random house. His movements were faster than before, taking Maxine off-guard and everyone who had witnessed it.

"I... I guess, he is alright." Kristina stammered, watching how Fabian didn't stop, sending Maxine flying from house to house.

"At this rate, the turned vampires and undeads are the least of our concerns.. If they continued fighting like this, the Capital will just be rubble," Ramin murmured, seeing some houses crumble down as Fabian changed the location of their fight.

Chapter 298 - One Lost An Arm, While The Other Lost His Life.

Gnash teeth, eyes ahead, galloping my way back to the palace. Yes. In the end, I didn't listen and returned to where we came from. I might see Fabian on the way back, but I would never listen to him ever again.

'Even if it means fighting him...' I swallowed down a mouthful of saliva as the wind grew harsh with my speed. "Get out of the way!" came out a yell as I took a route to where there were people.

Screams and curses reached my ear as the people jumped to make way, but that didn't faze me. Killing one or two people didn't matter. That wasn't what important to me right now. It may sound selfish and heartless, but my gut feeling was screaming at me, telling me something bad would happen to Sam.

'I shouldn't have listened in the first place.' I told myself, gripping the reins tightly. 'I should've fought beside him no matter what he said.'

But more than regret, my heart was being filled with anger. This fury building up inside just kept increasing while my patience was getting shorter.

"Out of my —" My eyes narrowed as there were two people who turned up in the middle of the road. I caught some house from the direction they came from, shaking as if it would crumble down.

Fabian? I gnashed my teeth as soon as I recognized him fighting someone. My eyes fell onto the other person, and immediately recognized her. Maxine.

Maxine was a member of the Divine Order. However, Maxine and some members were receiving direct orders from Stefan. So, I wasn't particularly close with them, nor did I care about all the people under Stefan.

'Whatever.' I thought, speeding up without a care if I run over them or not.

As I approached, both of them turned their head in my direction. I saw Fabian's eyes dilate, seeing that I didn't listen to him.

"Out of my way!" I roared as a warning, speeding up even more, as I would truly run over them if they don't make way.

In no time, I got past them as both of them realized I wouldn't stop. I heard Fabian called, "My lady!" but I didn't stop and continued.

"I'm sorry, Fabian. I really can't just do what you want me to do," I whispered as I continued.

"My lady!!" Fabian hollered, watching Lilou gallop her way back to the palace. "No...!"

Just when he was about to follow Lilou, Fabian crouched to dodge the sword coming at him. He kept dodging, hopping by his feet, then hands to create distance.

"It seems we didn't need to drag her back." Maxine smirk, stretching her stiff neck as Fabian was no gentleman. "So I guess I can finally focus on you, Mister Butler."

This time, the smile on Fabian's face disappeared. His eyes opened; they were sharper than ever as if they could pierce even metals.

"Little girl, I'm done playing with you." Fabian raised his dark spear and Maleficent sucked the air around them. "I feel sorry for you, so I won't kill you. However... I don't leave a fight empty-handed."

Maxine smirked, spitting blood that clot inside her mouth. She had known the difference between her and Fabian; she knew that he was just playing since the beginning. However, she had taken an oath to her king, and nothing could stop her, even this demon in front of her.

"Bring it o..."

She couldn't even finish her sentence as Fabian suddenly disappeared in front of her. There was a second delay in her mind before pain struck her eyes as they bled.

"The next time you stand in my way, I guarantee your death," Fabian uttered as he landed behind her, gazing down at Maxine.

On the concrete ground, she writhed in pain, holding her eyes as they bled.

"I knew someone... who had blinded himself, saying he doesn't need eyes to see." His tone was cold, tugging his sleeve as he gazed at where Lilou went off. "But you, Maxine, your sight is useless since you can't even see the actual face of the king you worship."

Fabian was unsure if she could hear him as she was screaming her lungs out. The pain was understandable. Maleficent had sucked a part of her, after all.

"Until then..." upon saying so, Fabian bolted, following Lilou's tracks. "My lady, why did you come back? You would've understood..."

A battle between Fabian and Maxine... ended in a landslide victory. Fabian won, as expected.

Meanwhile, in the outer palace, Dominique whisked away, stopping himself from flying away by putting all his weight on his feet and digging his fingers into the ground.

"What a monster," he scorned, finally stopping, and he gazed up to see Rufus saunter toward him. "He doesn't have many people under him, but they're all monsters."

Dominique clenched his teeth as Rufus was akin to a thick wall. No matter what Dominique did, nothing would move him. Despite the wound that Rufus inflicted, that didn't decrease his strength.

"Your Highness, please don't stay on the ground for too long. I can't keep looking down on you." Rufus' tone was cold, in contrast with his ridiculing remarks.

"It's such a shame that you're wasting your talent under some unfitting king." Dominique scoffed, shaking his head as he slowly stood on his feet after grabbing a handful of soil. "We could've been friends, you know."

"Friends..." Rufus chuckled at the term used. "... there is only one person I see as a friend, and that is someone who reached his hand out when the entire world turn its back on me."

"Aren't you romantic?"

"And aren't you ungrateful?" Rufus slid his other feet back, a stance before he could launch an attack. "My friend... he had loved you all, but you turn your back on him."

His eyes flickered with killing intent, rocketing forth towards Dominique. But the latter threw the soil in his hand, then used the other and thrust it forward.

Rufus squinted his eyes at Dominique's distraction tactic, but that wasn't enough to stop him. Even with his eyes closed, he could feel Dominique's movements. So, when he felt the latter's hand, he unhesitatingly swung his sword down. However, just as Rufus was about to make another move, he halted at the sound of a faint whistle.

Within the frame of seconds, an entire arm flew somewhere as blood spurting everywhere. The dust that had been surrounding them as they duel slowly subsided.

"Shit..." Dominique cursed, gazing down at his severed arm while blood oozed from his torso. His knees wobbled and soon gave way as he dropped to his knees.

He then slowly shifted his eyes towards Rufus, who stood in front of him. "It was a nice fight, Sir Knight. You have my respect."

As soon as those whispers slipped past Dominique's lips, Rufus slowly collapsed onto his back. Dominique then shifted his eyes towards his other hand, staring at the beating heart.

"Whoever helped me... I'll kill him, Rufus," He murmured, knowing that someone interfered just before Rufus could slay Dominique.

A battle between the kings' swords: One lost an arm, while the other lost his life.. Dominique won a pathetic victory.

Chapter 299 - I Am... Always Proud Of You, Brother.

While Fabian dashed to catch up to Lilou, he paused as his heart clenched. He clutched his chest, eyes slowly dilating.

"Ru..." came out a whisper as he gazed at the palace's direction from his standpoint. "You..."

Fabian could not move for a few minutes, he couldn't even blink. There was just tightness in his chest while his lungs constricted.

"Hah..." The veins on the back of his hand protruded as he tightened his grip around his dark spear until it trembled. He always had this little connection with Rufus, but now, that was broken, and that only means... death.

"Who did it?" the side of his lips slowly hooked up into a sinister smirk. Fabian closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. When he opened them, his eyes were devoid of emotions. There was neither rage nor sorrow, just nonchalance.

"Maleficent," Fabian called, and Maleficent's size doubled. He lifted it up, pulling his arm back, and narrowed his eyes to see which direction he would throw his dark spear. The roof under his feet cracked as a violent gust of wind blew past him.

"No one will get away from this," a whisper slipped past his lips and then threw Maleficent in a certain direction. His dark spear traveled just as fast as a sound, creating dark lighting around it, and then Fabian disappeared from his vantage point.

"Whoever helped me... I'll kill him, Rufus."

Dominique stayed on his knees for as long as he could remember. His victory didn't give him satisfaction, knowing he wouldn't attain it without anyone's help. He just simply couldn't stop his attack at that moment.

"That humming..." his ear twitched as he looked up before he leaped away out of instinct. Something crash-landed on the spot he was kneeling earlier, causing thick clouds of dust to stream up. He narrowed his eyes as the smoke cleared up, seeing a dark spear surrounded by dark lightning as it crackle.

His eyes then shifted to the person who arrived a minute later. "Another monster appeared... damn it."

Dominique clutched his bleeding torso with his eyes on Fabian, who was staring down at him from a distance. When Fabian took a step, the ground under his feet cracked, leaving shallow holes as dark shrouds enveloped him.

"Your Highness," called Fabian under his breath, but his tone instantly sent a shiver down Dominique's spine. He shifted his eyes to Rufus, who was lying on the ground.

"Ru." Fabian approached his brother's body, squatting down, and scrutinized him. He placed his palm on the hole in his chest, brows wrinkling.

There was a long moment of silence as Fabian didn't talk, nor did he move. Dominique knew he had to flee; he couldn't fight Fabian in this state. However, he couldn't move. All Dominique could do was stare at Fabian in silence.

"Your death will not be in vain." His other hand reached for Rufus' eyes, closing them to rest. "You had done your purpose. May you rest now, brother. I am... always proud of you."

As Fabian mourned for his brother's death, Noah, who had rushed into this place, stopped in his spot. His eyes scanned the area; it first landed on Dominique and then he slowly shifted them to Fabian and the man on the ground. Noah's eyes dilated as he immediately grasped the situation.

"Sir knight..." Noah's breath hitched, taking another step, but halted once again. He gazed up, feeling this deadly aura around the three of them. Not good, he thought. Fabian... they had touched that maniac's bottom line, and Samael wasn't here to calm him down.

'Mister Fabian... this is not the plan. Where is Her Grace?' Noah asked in his head, unable to utter them with the tension in his throat. 'How can this happen and Sir Knight...'

At that moment, Noah knew something changed in their plan. It just made an enormous turn... for the worst.

"Noah." Noah jumped when he heard Fabian's low but clear voice. "Take my brother with you. I will arrange a proper burial for him."

Fabian cast Noah a look, bearing no emotions in his eyes. The latter swallowed down a mouthful of saliva before he nodded, teeth clenched as he entered the thick atmosphere surrounding Fabian.

While Noah scurried towards Rufus' figure, Fabian slowly stood on his feet, hand inside his pocket and eyes on Dominique. His eyes scanned the man, noticing his severed arm and complexion.

"Your Highness..." Fabian sauntered towards Dominique while the latter could only watch him approach. He squatted down in front of him, staring at him in pity.

"You don't look happy in plucking out one of the thorns in your king's throat," uttered Fabian in a deep tone.

"It's not an honorable victory." Dominique swallowed the little saliva in his mouth, smirking bitterly, as he had figured this would be as far as he goes. Without Rufus, no one could keep this demon down.

"Honor, humility, dignity, valor, justice, mercy... I never understood those, your highness. For me, if I win even if it's by means or foul, it's a win, regardless." Fabian explained, raising his hand and reached for Dominique's hand, that was clutching his torso. Dominique gnashed his teeth when Fabian clasped his hand and put pressure on his wound.

"But this victory... it not that it's dishonorable." Fabian paused, smiling at the sight of him. "It's just simply not a victory, at least, not yours."

"Urgh...!" Dominique ground his teeth as he attempted to struggle away from him, but Fabian didn't budge.

Fabian squeezed his torso tightly before letting him go. "Who killed him, your highness?"

His question was a little confusing, but Dominique immediately knew that Fabian's question was about the person who interrupted their fight. How did Fabian know that? Dominique was unsure, but that didn't matter.

"I... don't know."

"You don't?" Fabian cocked his head to the side, snapping his eyes as he heard a faint humming. He studied Dominique's slight change in expression and that told Fabian that was who he was looking for.

Dominique gazed up when Fabian suddenly stood on his feet. "Aren't you going to kill me?"

"Why would I?" Fabian cast him a nonchalant look briefly. "I want you alive, your highness. Death... will be the only wish you will desperately seek but... for as long as I live, you will never have it."

Fabian's remarks sent a chill down Dominique's spine and, within a snap of an eye, Fabian disappeared.. The only trace Fabian left was the enormous crack on where he had stepped on.

Chapter 300 - I Need You, Captain.

Kristina looked in the palace's direction as her heart suddenly raced anxiously. Back there was unlike the 'slight' peacefulness in this estate. Even from this distance, she could feel the powerful

auras colliding in that place, making her vividly imagine the pile of corpses and blood painting the entire palace.

"Captain..." she whispered, taking a deep breath. She couldn't point what exactly this anxiousness in her heart, but it made her feel restless.

"Kristina." She snapped her eyes towards Ramin as the man jogged towards her.

"Ramin, what is it?" Kristina asked as soon as Ramin stopped in front of her. "Is there something wrong?"

"Aside from the turned ones looming around the estate and the ones we had seized, everything is alright... I guess."

"Then what do you want?" she inquired with a furrowed brow. "Where's Charlie?"

Ramin pointed his finger up, making her gaze up at the roof. "She's keeping watch. Anyway, you can go."

"Huh?"

"You're worried about the captain, right? You've been staring in the same direction throughout the night."

A weak smile resurfaced on Kristina's lips as she appreciate his thoughts. "It's fine. I'm in charge here. How can I leave my duty because of personal feelings?"

"Kristina, look at me." Ramin's expression grew solemn, planting his hand on both her shoulders. "This is not just your personal feelings. Both you and I are worried about the captain... Charlie probably feels the same."

Once again, Kristina looked up to where Charlotte was at. The latter was just staring in the palace's direction. Even from this distance, Kristina noticed how serious Charlotte's expression was — which was quite rare.

"The Remingtons are wealthy and their knight brigade doesn't lack in numbers. Having you here surely helps a lot, but His Grace and Captain... they're the only ones fighting inside the palace. They may be powerful and competent individuals. I'm confident in their capabilities. However, we can't be complacent... just look around."

Ramin and Kristina looked around. The people, mostly commoners, had set up their little tents in the open area of the estate. There were just too many evacuees that no matter how enormous the Remington's estate was, it was not enough.

"If I didn't know, I will think His Grace caused this. However, the undeads that His Grace unleashed were all inside the palace." Ramin paused, swallowing down the tension in his throat as he tightened his jaw.

"The person who put all these people in this situation... is the king himself. I'm certain he will push all the blame to the Duke of Grimsbanne once this is all over."

His hand balled into a fist, as that was just the logical way to drag Samael's already soiled reputation to the gutter. No one would question it, and it would surprise no one if they framed Samael as the mastermind of this night.

Ramin turned his attention to Kristina once again. "His Grace and Captain, we owe them for opening our eyes to see the rotten face of this land. We can't let them die, Kristina."

"Ramin..."

"I don't know why my divine weapon never sensed the evilness in the palace, nor am I even curious why Maxine and the rest of the members of the divine order follow the king like a god." Ramin's eyes glistened, placing a hand on Kristina's shoulder.

"The answer to these questions is unnecessary right now. But what I'm certain of is... the Bearers... the Order is no more, Kristina. Right now, we can't rely on our weapon's senses; our weapons rely on our senses, and we must act to what we see and feel right as bearers." Resolved filled his eyes as observing the situation opened doors to some strong conclusion.

"And that was to protect the person who gave us the opportunity to see the truth."

Ramin was grateful that Samael trained him to observe things on his own before acting out. If Samael didn't, Ramin and Charlotte were one of the people who would blindly side with Stefan.

"You're the closest with them, Kristina, so make sure to assist them." He stared at her straight in the eye, rocking his head encouragingly. "They may brand us as traitors after this, but we can't let them die, Kristina."

*

"We can't let them die, Kristina."

Ramin's words lingered in Kristina's head throughout her journey back to the palace. He had given her coordinates on which wing Rufus could be engaging in a fight with Dominique, the seventh prince, and Stefan's sword.

"Captain, Your Grace," she murmured, dashing inside the palace gates as no one was guarding it. Or rather, the people who were guarding it were all dead — as if someone forced their way inside.

"We can't let them die... we can't let them... no, they shouldn't..." Kristina's steps slowly came to a halt as her eyes caught Noah's figure from the corner of her eyes. She slowly turned her head in his direction, and her heart sank.

Her eyes fell on the other person with Noah. His arms were placed across Noah's shoulder, head hanging low, and his footwear dragged on the ground. In that instant, one could tell that person was either dead or just unconscious.

"Captain," she called under her breath, recognizing him immediately. "Lord Remington!"

In a beat, Kristina dashed in their direction while Noah stopped. He raised his head to Kristina, his jaw tightened the second he locked eyes with her.

"Miss Monroe."

"What happened to Captain?" asked Kristina without beating around the bush, eyes on Rufus. "Let me help you. I can give him first aid!"

She reached her hand to Rufus but stopped midway upon seeing Noah shake his head. The grim expression on Noah's face was akin to a tight slap in the face.

"Miss Monroe, Sir Knight Rufus..." Noah's voice cracked as he held Rufus tightly. "He put up a good fight until the end."

Until the end... these words were akin to a bucket of ice splashed down on her.

Kristina couldn't move for a second as her eyes stung, staring at Rufus and his current state. She gazed down, only to see the blood dripping down on them, and then the trail of blood behind.

"No." She shook her head, shifting her eyes back to Noah. "Don't joke like that, Lord Remington. Captain won't die like this, not easily, at least."

Noah didn't argue with her anymore as it was honestly a shock to him as well. Instead, he carefully put Rufus down for her to see the hole in his chest and his missing heart.

"Captain..." Her eyes hovered over the hole in his chest, before she dropped to her knees, eyes welling up. "... no."

Memories of today's conversation, his smile, his words, his noble character... everything suddenly replayed in her mind while staring at his face. Just earlier, he was talking to her about duties, but now...

"Captain, wake up!" Kristina ground her teeth as he held his shoulder, shaking him awake. She didn't care about the hole in his chest. She wanted to believe that wasn't enough to kill him.

"His Grace needs you, his fight isn't done yet! Mister Fabian will turn this world upside down if he knows about this! Your brother needs you — no, this place needs you from your brother!" She yelled at the top of her lungs, tears rolling down her cheek as she had lost her composure for the first time. "Mister Fabian will wreak havoc if you keep this up!"

"How about Lilou?! She needs you! We must keep her alive — that's what you said! The third squadron?! They need you! The people in this land? You want to protect them, so get up!" She hiccuped, chewing her lower lip as she gripped Rufus's lifeless shoulder tightly.

"Captain... how about me? I need you... no, how about her? She needs you, right? You don't have to do it for me... just get up for the sake of everyone else... please."

Noah placed a hand on her shoulder, suppressing his personal emotions for this loss. "Kristina, this is a war. Casualties are inevitable, you know that better than anyone as a member of the Divine Order."

"Bullshit!" Kristina's eyes were bloodshot, glaring daggers at Noah.

"Kristina."

A ridiculing laugh escaped her mouth. "Casualty? This casualty... is a loss for this entire kingdom, Your Grace. My captain is the only person here who genuinely fights with the people in his mind, not the king or His Grace."

Kristina shot her eyes towards Rufus, cupping his cheek, and felt how his little warmth fade under her touch. "And as one of his people.... I will avenge him."