

The Duke 401

Chapter 401 - [Bonus]The Girl That I Knew

"... A lot."

"It is." the clan leader nodded, wiping his hand with a cloth without showing any emotion. "The Bloodfang is full of corrupted people. It's saddening."

"You don't sound like it, though."

He quirked a brow, putting down the white cloth on the side of his plate. "Should I weep to prove my emotions?"

"No, sir." I shook my head profusely.

"Haha! Leader, isn't this child cute?" a man whose smile never left his face finally broke his silence. Unlike the clan leader, this person had a lighter aura that would make anyone feel carefree.

"So there's only five of us who truly adhere to the late Queen's wishes." Another one spoke as he let out a deep sigh. "No wonder this child went through all that."

"The Moriarty's surely played us. How sad that I can't go there to rip them all apart with my bare hands."

"What the Moriarty did is not their fault, it's mine for falling for this cheap trick." The clan leader uttered solemnly, spreading his hand on the edge of the table as he gazed at the four of us. His eyes then settled on me.

"Child, forgive me that you had to go through that pain because of my mistake." He bowed his head, humbling himself, which made me feel more disconcerted. "Now that only us remained, you do not have to worry about the voices anymore."

"We're not chatterbox and we like being in peace," the carefree man chimed in. I doubt he wasn't a chatterbox.

"Is this good news?" I asked, knowing how stupid it may sound, but I need confirmation.

The clan leader nodded. "You can now wake up and be with that infuriating beast." His aura suddenly felt stronger, irked by something I didn't know about.

"Hehe! Clan leader, who would have thought that he will be your family?"

"Shut it."

"Hahaha! The twist in life never ceased to amaze me!"

I watched the other members of the clan teased the clan leader, while the latter kept his stoic face. A subtle smile showed up on my lips. They didn't look like bad people.

"Thank you, Leader," I expressed in a soft voice. My sudden sentiments made them stop and look at me.

"Thank you for saving me."

The clan leader didn't have a change of emotion, but he nodded. Meanwhile, the playful man grinned from ear to ear. I wanted to ask them if Leader was my father, but I couldn't. I was also certain he wouldn't answer me, as he was a prideful person.

"My niece, do you plan on waking up now?" the carefree man who seemed he didn't have worry in the world perked up to me. I nodded as an answer, as I didn't have any reason to stay.

"Hmm..." he glanced at the clan leader before looking back at me. "You should drop by somewhere."

"Pardon?"

"Somewhere!" he said, and my brows knitted even more. "Didn't you store someone inside you? Don't you want to see her? I think you need to have a clear head before waking up."

"Someone inside me..." I mumbled, tilting my head to the side. The man who called me niece just smiled warmly.

"Go see her." He waved before resting his jaw on his knuckles.

Honestly, I didn't know who he was talking about as they slowly faded from my sight. I called out and reached my hand to stop them from leaving, but they didn't listen.

And once again, I was trapped in darkness all alone.

"I didn't even know how to wake up," I mumbled while clicking my tongue. This time, I didn't stay in one spot as I wandered in the dark. I didn't have a destination, but I continued,

When I blinked, I was already standing on the top of the hill where I used to live. "Huh?"

"You came?!"

Suddenly, a familiar voice came from my side, and I instinctively turned my head to her. My eyes widened as soon as I laid my gaze upon her bright smile.

"Lilou..." it was the younger version of myself — the girl from two years ago.

Ignorance was bliss. Whoever said that he was correct. I remembered the time I was ignorant. My problems at that time were what to eat for the day and not becoming someone else's food.

The more I looked back on my life back then to now, I missed her.

The young maiden who was blissful with little blessings in life. The girl whose eyes would light up upon the sight of meat in her stew, and how carefree she ran through the fields with the children. She didn't mind getting dirt on her worn-out clothes, nor was she ever bothered getting her hair all tangled up.

Not that those things bothered her in the present. But she was not that person anymore.

Her eyes now would remain unmoved the second she opened her eyes in the morning. She doesn't look forward to playing with the children, nor does she thoughtlessly complain about her sore body. She doesn't just smile at the silly things, she now smiles even in front of the people she abhorred.

She used to cry when she was sad, but now, no matter how devastated she was, not a single tear would fall.

I thought it was because she had become stronger, but I was wrong. She was simply... scared, and she didn't have a choice.

She was scared of a lot of things. But what terrified her the most was happiness.

Happiness frightened her because she had known for a long time that it could get taken away from her easily. She had to protect her heart, be cautious of all time, and embrace herself for whatever bad news that would come her way.

So, she changed. A change that she couldn't even recognize herself.

I felt sorry for her.

But, at the same time, I root for her.

Why?

Because she didn't regret a thing.

From the point, Samael came into her life asking for her hand, to the time he had knelt down in front of her bearing the sincerity she had never seen in a person's eyes, and until how those eyes teared up for hurting her.

He may not be perfect. He may be selfish, unreasonable, and sometimes too annoying. But he was worth fighting, dying for.

The sacrifices she had made just to be with him were nothing to compare to the sacrifices he made to be with her.

Right? Lilou?

I turned to my right, smiling at my younger self, who was sitting beside me at the top of the hill where I used to live. She was smiling back at me until her eyes squinted. The soft blow of the wind and the golden ray of the sunset that shone upon her made her radiate.

She was lovely, and only now I appreciate her simplicity.

"You don't regret it, do you?" I inquired as I gazed at the Duke's mansion. "You don't regret taking his hand that night which you're holding on to until now, right?"

Chapter 402 - [Bonus]Something Never Change

"You don't regret it, do you?" I inquired as I gazed at the Duke's mansion. "You don't regret taking his hand that night which you're holding on to until now, right?"

"No." Her answer was quick and light as if she didn't have to think about that answer.

"Why?" I asked, casting her a side-eye.

The young Lilou pressed her lips together as she took a deep breath. "Because I like him."

"That's too simple of an answer." A chuckle escaped my lips, wondering why Sam liked this simpleton back then.

"If the answer is simple, why do I need to complicate it?" she inquired, tilting her head to the side. "I like him and learned to love him. So, I want to keep loving him even if it means dealing with Mister Fabian's scary lesson, and Sir Knight's death glare."

I opened my mouth, but no words came out. All I could do was look at her in awe.

"Also, the duke gives me many foods. I don't have to starve to death. Clothes too! Although, I hate it when they cinched my waist." She continued with a pout, sighing that made her shoulder lower.

"You... how can you be bribed by those things?" I asked under my breath, in disbelief at my foolish younger self. "Do you know what comes after by staying at his side?"

She frowned and looked at me in disappointment. "How could I know? I'm not a fortune teller."

"Exactly, Lilou! Have some common sense. A man in power like him is bound with complicated situations. He is a royalty, after all." I breathed out in distress, shaking my head lightly while scolding her. She didn't seem pleased, but this was for her own good.

"So, what?" she asked, to my dismay.

"Goodness. Don't you understand what I'm saying? Are you daft?"

"Gosh... my older self is such a disappointment!" she mumbled and hearing that from her irked me at a certain level. I couldn't retaliate at her as her next words silenced me.

"It's not like I didn't have an idea what I am stepping into. I know it's not my place to love a royalty — even dreaming of being with one is taboo. Not to mention, he is a vampire and I'm nothing but a peasant girl." The younger Lilou bent her knees, resting her arms over it and her chin on her arms. "But it's not like I can dictate my heart. He loved me, and I loved him. What comes along is just a test of that love. It's as simple as that."

"You..."

"Also, I'm already aware of how cruel this world can be. Choosing my happiness knowing I can get hurt in the future doesn't matter." Her eyes that were gazing at the landscape softened as the corner of her lips curled up into a smile. "I live in the present. I may die today or an hour later, so I don't want to die thinking I should've done this and that."

She turned her head to me, bearing her light and carefree smile. "It's free to dream, you know? This world is already tough, so why would you be hard on yourself?"

This... was what I missed about her. This simplicity and how she had viewed the world.

She wasn't that deep of a thinker, but her depth of character was what I admired about her.

I reached my hand out to her, patting her back gently. "You did a good job, Lilou."

A giggle slipped past her lips as she faced me. Her cheek was blushing in pink as her eyes glowed with the answers to the world.

"I'm proud of you," she said and carelessly ruffled my hair.

How could she say that she was proud of what I had become? Although she had a point, I could never be like her. I couldn't stay ignorant, nor I could clean these soiled hands.

"Thank you," she suddenly uttered, making my brows raise. "For not forgetting about me."

I wanted to tell her I forgot about her and I came here by accident, but my tongue kept rolling back. She looked too happy to get disappointed once again.

"Lilou." She perked up at me while I drew my head back in surprise. "Do you regret it?"

"Pardon?"

"Loving Sam! Do you regret being with him?"

My lips parted, but no immediate answer came out of me. Did I ever regret loving Sam? Her question momentarily made me recall everything Sam and I went through.

It took me quite a moment before the corner of my lips curled up. I shook my head lightly.

"Not even a second," I replied which made her grin from ear to ear. "I love him, so why would I?"

"See? It's simple, right?"

I bit my lower lip and chuckled, gazing back at the duke's mansion. "It's not that simple."

"Come on!" she hollered, but that made me giggle even more.

The Lilou two years back and the current Lilou might've changed. But something never changed.

I gazed at her and saw her complaining, while I simply smiled subtly. "We still view Love the same, Lilove."

"I know, right?" she smiled warmly.

I didn't know how long I stayed with my younger self in that dream. But what I could tell was, I found my peace with her. It may sound strange, but I feel reconnected.

"Li... love."

I weakly opened my eyes, hearing Sam's weak voice calling for my name. He sounded so helpless and scared. I felt his hand squeeze mine lightly.

"Love, when will you wake up?" he inquired. His hands that were holding mine trembled.

'Sam, why do you sound so scared?' I wondered as I blinked to recover my sight.

"Please, come back to me. I missed you."

When I could see the unfamiliar high ceiling clearly, I moved my gaze to my left. There, Sam was sitting on a chair beside the bed. He was holding my hand with both his hands while resting his forehead on it.

"S --"

I tried calling him, but the scratching pain in my throat made it hard to even swallow. It was not the same pain when someone didn't have a drink for a long time. The pain was similar to when someone screamed their lungs out.

I didn't linger on that thought longer, though. Instead, I tried to move my body, but nothing. It was as if I was paralyzed from the neck down.

'What is going on?' I wondered, staring at Sam in hopes he would look at me. Sadly, he didn't.

'Love, look here,' I requested internally, but Sam just called my name and told me to come back. 'I'm back, love... why won't you look at me?'

"S --" My second attempt to call him failed once again.

So, I stopped trying and just gazed at the ceiling. I could hear all his words of apology, his prayers for me to come back, and just everything.

'Was I unconscious for a long time?' I wondered, blinking my heavy eyes. 'He sounds like it's been a decade since my confrontation with Alphonse.'

Wait... it hadn't been a decade, right? I didn't go into slumber like how Sam slept for centuries, right? My eyes dilated at the thought of sleeping for a decade.

'I need to move!' I gasped mentally, but all I could do was blink. Why can't I move? Am I paralyzed? Did Alphonse do something funny when he pierced my chest?

'No, no, no! Did he really...?'

I was horrified at all the silly thoughts hovering over my head. I had the urge to smack my weeping husband, as he sounded like I was dead! Just look in here! My brows creased as I only realized now that Sam wasn't speaking anymore.

I moved my eyes to him, blinking. He was looking back at me, wide-eyed. He had finally noticed that he wasn't widowed yet.

Strangely enough, Sam started staring at me with sadness in his eyes.

"Right. Story time." He cleared his throat, standing from his seat as he walked towards the shelf.

Question marks hovered over my head. Didn't he see me? How could he ignore that his wife was finally awake? I was beyond confused until someone knocked on the door.

"Your Grace, the young master request an audience with Your Grace." Someone from the outside announced. He didn't sound like Fabian or Rufus.

"Oh," Sam didn't speak for a long time. "He can come in."

My initial thought of Sam's visitor was Claude since he was the only young master in here. But when the sound of the door opening and closing reached my ear, what I heard next rendered me shocked.

"Father."

- END OF VOLUME 5 PART I -

Chapter 403 - I Will Run Away

"Father."

The young master's voice was soft, with a touch of determination in his tone. I was mind-boggled by how he addressed my husband. Myriads of questions flew in my head, but all I could do at the moment was to listen to the long silence in the room.

"I will run away," said the child, making me mentally raise my brows. Who in the world would announce they would run away from home?

"Oh?" Sam's reply was also not good. "Is that all?"

Silence descended into the room once again. What kind of conversation was I hearing? No, that wasn't important. My husband had a child?! Does that mean I slept for a long time? The young master sounded like he was around four or five. Did Sam remarry during my sleep?

My heart sank into my back while I stared at the ceiling. I wouldn't blame him for seeking a companion while waiting for me, but... it hurt. I wasn't dead yet. No matter how long I slept, he should have waited for me. I know I was being selfish, but he promised.

My vision blurred as tears pooled behind my eyes. What a way to wake up. First, my husband ignored me, and now this young master. Can I just sleep for a thousand more years?

After a prolonged silence in the room, the child spoke once again. "I will take Mother with me."

"Say that again."

"I will take Mother with me!"

"Do you want to die?" Sam's tone dropped as if winter suddenly came in the middle of summer. The temperature in the room was enough to know it was around that time of the year.

"I will take Mother and run away from here." The child repeated, and I frowned. Even though Sam was his father, if he wanted to run away, just do it. I guessed he took after his father.

No... did he say mother? Who was his mother?

The sudden thought crossed my head, thinking of ladies who captured my husband's heart. I couldn't think of anyone, though. Wait. Sam didn't indulge in debauchery and had a child with just anyone, right? It wasn't impossible, as his tone with his son was distant.

"Go. If you wanted to run away, you don't have to tell me about it. Just do it." Sam advised, and I nodded mentally.

That would be my plan. I would run away from this place and curse Sam all my life. How dare he?

"The last time I ran away, you brought me back in here. So, I'm asking for your permission so you won't chase after me."

"Sure."

"Thank you, Father."

I heard the sound of light footsteps, followed by the creak of the door as the young master left. What a strange conversation to listen to. It messed with my feelings, and I couldn't even go full-blown sentimental.

"I don't know what to do with him," Sam murmured from the distance. I could imagine him sighing and shaking his head lightly.

"He is so stubborn. I can't even count how many times he runs away only to return or get brought back in here. Just who did he take after?"

My goodness... my husband. I mean, I didn't even know if I should call him that, since I was unsure if he got remarried or what. The younger Lilou's silliness must have rubbed on me with all these silly thoughts hovering over my head. My mind was just jumbled, just like my emotions.

"I wonder what he plans to do next. I can't even let my guard down for a second since he plans to take away my wife."

Sam's voice sounded closer as he returned to the side of the bed. When he said 'wife', a surge of emotion swelled up in my chest. He got remarried, huh? And it sounded like he truly care about his wife now.

I didn't know whether to get mad about this or just cry. But I ignored him and just stared at the ceiling. This was unfair.

"Lilou," he called, but I continued to ignore him. His thumb wiped the tears that rolled down my temple.

"Were you sad about that?" he inquired in a melancholic tone. "It'll be alright. He is just like that."

That wasn't the reason I was sad, but never mind. I couldn't even make a sound, much less tell him to leave me alone. This was frustrating, and it was steadily increasing with his gentle action. Sam was acting like a devoted husband, but he now had a child and a new wife.

Sam let out a deep sigh. "I don't even know how to make you feel better."

'Just leave!' was what I wanted to tell him. I needed some time and space to organize my thoughts, but I couldn't with all these overwhelming surprises the moment I regain consciousness.

"Goodness," he murmured and drew away before reading the book he got from the shelves. Sam read the story as if he had read it a hundred times.

The story sounded familiar as I guessed some parts. I didn't know how long he was reading, but he covered the story from beginning to end. After finishing the story, he tucked me in and placed his palm over my eyes to close them.

"!!!!!"

"Good night, love," he whispered as he bent over, planting a kiss on my forehead. "I will bathe and come back."

I kept my eyes closed on instinct, and all I heard next was the door opening and closing before silence followed. When I knew Sam left, I slowly opened my eyes.

'Did he just close my eyes and decide for me to sleep?' I wondered, recalling his actions. It was already strange that he ignored the fact that I had my eyes open, but him, closing them, was even stranger.

'Oh, my goodness... I need to move or at least try to.. I couldn't be in this state for a long time.'

Chapter 404 - Sneaking Out

My teeth clenched as I tried to move my body once again. It was like a giant rock was placed on me as I felt heavy, but I managed to lift two fingers! This was progress, I thought. Although lifting a finger felt like lifting an entire castle.

I continued to exercise to make more progress until I got used to the heaviness and was able to lift my arms. While doing so, I constantly cleared my throat to make sounds. Although the scratching pain in my throat hurt initially, I also got used to it.

Sam didn't return for a long time. It made me think he got drowned in the tub.

'Good for him,' I thought, before mentally shaking my head. "That's not good for him!"

A helpless sigh slipped past my lips, but his long absence gave me more time. For what felt like an eternity, I was able to move my lower half and my shoulders. It was only hard at first as my joints were like rusting metals, but with constant movements, I was now sitting upright.

"I think Sam wouldn't return," I murmured, wincing at my parched throat. He probably said that to make his bedridden wife happy.

My hand balled into a fist, but I couldn't grip it tightly. Can I stand? I wondered, dragging my legs out of the bed. It was not like I could move as freely as I wanted to, but I needed to force myself.

Once my foot felt the carpet, I gazed down and clasped the edge of the mattress. There was this lingering fear that I would fall if I pushed my luck too far. But I had to try.

'You can do it, Lilou.' I took a deep breath and mustered my courage to stand.

I pushed myself up. My knees wobbled uncontrollably with the sudden pressure on it, but I managed to stand on my own two feet. A smile resurfaced on my face, followed by a brief chuckle.

"I did it." I panted, with my chest moving in and out heavily. The heaviness on my body made me sweat a bucket, but I was gradually getting used to it. It made me recall the time my body felt this sore during my first day of training under Rufus.

Just how long has it been?

I dragged my feet towards the balcony where the night breeze was blowing the silk curtains. It took me forever to reach it, but the more I walked, the more it felt natural.

Soon, the soft blows of wind directly kissed my face as I stood on the balcony. I placed my hand over the railings, looking around at the dark landscape. My brows furrowed at the unfamiliarity of the estate.

"Where is this place?" I muttered while tilting my stiff neck slightly. This wasn't the Duke's mansion, nor it was the palace. It was my first time seeing this place.

I glanced back at my room and frowned. Now that I thought about it, the room I was in wasn't the third prince's quarters nor it was the duke's chambers in Grimsbanne.

"Ugh..." I placed my hand across my shoulder while moving it in a circular motion. There was a voice in the back of my head that told me to take a walk to feed my curiosity.

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I knew I shouldn't be listening to this voice, but well, I was intrigued. Waking up being ignored by my husband, and the surprise that he had a child, and then this unfamiliar place. How could I sit still when I could move now?

'I will just take I look,' I did some stretching until my entire body felt warm instead of hot. Soon enough, this body felt like it was my own once again. Aside from my parched throat, my body felt lighter than before. Or it could be I just got used to the heaviness.

I looked out of the railing, checking the height of the balcony and the ground. It wasn't that high. I nodded approvingly and looked back in my room for the last time.

'He wouldn't know, right?' I hesitated at my idea of sneaking out before I frowned. "He is probably with his wife, talking about what to do with their child."

The abrupt gloominess in my heart pushed me to do what I wanted. I gripped the railings and made slow jumps to verify I wasn't jumping to my death instead. Only then did I realize I recovered pretty quickly but didn't dwell on it.

"You can do it, Lilou," I cheered myself just for moral support. "You used to jump from roof to roof in the past, remember?"

After encouraging myself for a minute while digging a hole in the ground with my gaze, I jumped. The sensation of the harsh wind and the thought of falling made me strengthen my resolve. I instinctively put my weight on my feet to secure my landing.

THUD!

I landed on my two feet with my knees bent. Wow. My body could still remember my old habits. The corner of my lips stretched from ear to ear, feeling this excitement and satisfaction bubbling in my heart.

"Hehe..." A giggle slipped from my lips as I turned my head to the garden I landed on. The estate wasn't large, as I could see the empty driveway from my vantage point. But I wouldn't take that path as they could sight me sneaking out.

My experience of sneaking out in the palace and the Duke's mansion gave me this instinct to find another way. I dragged my feet stealthily towards the garden, planning of just hopping over of the walls of the estate. The more I moved, the lighter and faster I got.

I encountered a few servants and hide in the bushes. They were talking about 'the young master' packing up his luggage.

"The young master had packed his luggage and bidding his farewell to everyone." One servant lady sighed while shaking her head.

"His mood is slowly matching with Master. It's scary." Another one murmured, sounding in distress about her work here. They kept talking until I could faintly hear them.

I was about to move away, but froze when I heard a servant's remarks.

"Only the Madam can calm them..." the rest of their words faded in the background as my heart sank.

"So he really got..." I bit my lower lip, not finishing my murmuring. Even when I couldn't hear the servants anymore, I remained in my hiding spot for a moment.

"How unfair..." I wiped the tears with my arms while steeling my heart.

There was a little part of me that hoped I was just hopping into a silly conclusion, and everything was just one fat misunderstanding. But there was also this dominant part of me telling me Sam was simply taking care of his previous wife because he felt responsible.

'It's alright, Lilou. It's alright.' I took a deep breath and exhaled it sharply, raising my head, and nodded. "I should survey the place and then come back."

Right now, my plan was to survey the place we were in. So, once I returned, I would thank Sam for thanking care of me and leave the estate. I wouldn't stay in a place where his wife and son stayed. Also, I didn't want to bring discomfort to his new marriage. I was certain his wife was already jealous since her husband's attention was split with his first wife.

"It will be alright.." I patted my chest before I proceeded with my plan.

Chapter 405 - [Bonus]Father And Son

The more I moved, the more flexible I got. It was as if my difficulty in lifting a finger was just a fragment of my illusion. I hopped over the west wall of the estate and landed without a problem.

"That foolish man," I muttered while jogging away from the mansion. "How can he do that to his wife?"

I could imagine his wife's anger and son's confusion that Sam was taking care of another woman. Sam looked at me with the same affection in the past and talked soothingly. His new wife must be a good person for letting this strange set up because I wouldn't approve of it.

"Over my dead body," I whispered, putting myself in his wife's shoes. I sounded selfish, but I was selfish.

I shook my head profusely to get them out of my head. My focus should be on surveying this town. I jogged aimlessly through the empty street, taking shortcuts from alley to alley. The estate was situated far from civilization. I mean, it was quite a distance from the lights my eyes could reach.

I followed the light and only after a while, I realized that my speed was faster before I entered my slumber. Did I have enough stock energy after a long rest? It must be the case. I didn't dwell in it and soon reached the heart of the town.

From the narrow alley, I stood and gazed at the bustling city. The place didn't look as advanced as the Imperial Capital, or it appeared like the new Grimsbanne. It was the combination of old and new like Cunningham.

"Where the hell is this place?" I murmured while looking around and caught the people flocking at the center of the plaza.

"Oh, hello there." Suddenly, a man came from my side. I moved my gaze up, noticing the glint in his eyes as he licked his lips. He raised his arm against the concrete, eyes on me.

"You seemed lost." He looked down at me and smirked. "And still in your nightdress. Do you need help?"

I gazed down and realized I was in my chemise! Goodness...

"I can help you if you need anything."

I blinked twice, studying his long coat. His clothes were too huge for me to wear, so that coat was enough for a cover.

"Yes. I drifted far from the inn I stayed at." I smiled brightly, and he smiled back, not knowing he'd soon walk bare.

Meanwhile, at the entrance of the estate, Samael leaned his side against the jamb. He was only in his robe, arms-crossed while gazing down at his son. The butler of the manor and a few maidservants stood at the entrance, darting their eyes on the father-son duo.

"Take care, son," he waved at his son, who was gazing up at his laid-back father.

The young boy had the same eye color as his mother's; green as the forest during summertime, matched with silky silver hair that was as warm as the moonlight. A plumped pink cheeks and small lips made him look adorable and harmless.

"Thank you for letting me stay, Father." The young master tilted his head down before turning to his right where his small luggage at. "I will sneak in sometimes to get mother."

"Don't even try." Samael shook his head, closed-lipped. "Anyway, there is a good inn just from across the town. You should stay there tonight."

"Alright. I will check and judge it."

"I'm sure you'll love it there."

Their conversation was strange but didn't surprise the servants anymore. They already got used to the complicated relationship between the master of the house and his son. Also, it was not the first time the young master was 'running away.' Although, this was the first time Samael sent him off.

"Won't you wait for Fabian to return?" Samael inquired when his son lifted his small luggage. "He will be heartbroken if you ran away without bidding your farewell to him."

His son shook his head, carrying his luggage with both his hands. "Mister Fabian will find me if he wants to. Please tell him to bring his tools, so I can order him to clean the estate I will be buying."

"Oh! Sure."

"Thank you, Father." The boy expressed once again before he turned around to walk away.

Samael just watched his son's small back and sighed. His son just do whatever he wanted, and he didn't want to restrict him from doing so. It was hard to raise a child to be someone his mother would be proud of.

"Do you want me to lend you a hand?" asked Samael when his son took around ten steps away. "You seem to need someone to carry that luggage."

"I don't want a servant with me." The child looked back with a cold frown.

"I'll do it, then. I will help you run away." His father proposed, which made the child's frown turn gloomier.

The servants couldn't help but look at each other with a conflicted look on their faces. Wasn't the reason the young master was running away was to leave his father? Just what was their master thinking about proposing to come along? This conversation between father and son just grew even weirder by the minute. And it would only grow stranger a second later.

"Alright. It will save me some money." The child nodded after a minute of contemplation.

"Go back in. I will go change." Samael cocked his head towards the door and pulled himself away from the jamb. He glanced at the puzzled servants, but his sharp gaze made them look down.

"Help my son and prepare a carriage. I will..." his brow quirked when a servant came rushing to the mansion's entrance yelling, 'master!'. "What is so urgent for you to be barking late at night?"

The young boy had already reached the entrance and stood beside his father. He frowned when the servant suddenly went to her knees.

"Master, I — please forgive me! I didn't — it just — when I --"

"Can you speak properly?" Samael frowned, gazing down at the maid's back. "I can't understand a word you say."

The servant shivered at the coldness of his voice. She gulped a mouthful of saliva, looking up to reveal her pale complexion. Her lower lip trembled as they parted.

"The... madam," she stuttered, and the sudden glint in Samael's eyes was like death was staring back at her.

"What about my wife?" Samael's tone was low and menacing, making everyone gulp. Even his son looked up at him, as he had never felt this alarming aura coming out of his 'coward' of a father.

"The madam... she... she is.... gone."

Chapter 406 - Earldom

"Ahh!"

The man grunted on the ground of the narrow alley, naked. I was correct when I thought he had an evil plan in mind. He posed as someone who would help me, only to lead me in this deserted alley, and attempted to take advantage of me.

Sadly, he was more naive and weak than I thought. It only took me a few moves to incapacitate him, since I didn't have a rope to tie him.

"Don't worry. I will call for help." I glanced down at him and then continued to go through his wallet. "You have a lot of money."

Although the only thing I needed from him was his coat, I still ripped his clothes off of him. His wallet came bouncing to my feet, so I picked it up. I didn't know he was loaded, despite that the materials of his clothes already told me was an aristocrat.

"You... wench!" he cursed through his gritted teeth, but I ignored him. "Do you know who I am?"

"I don't." A sigh slipped past my lips as I squatted down. "Anyway, even if you are the king, you will still end up like that. How dare you trick young ladies who trusted you to help them?"

I held his wallet in between my thumb and my index, slapping it lightly against his cheek. "This will be the compensation for the emotional trauma you've inflicted upon my frail heart."

"You shameless thief...!" He seethed, revealing his fangs and his dark eyes changing into a deep red. I already knew he was a vampire, that was why I deepened the injuries I inflicted on him so it won't heal immediately.

"I guess calling for help is unnecessary," I muttered while I pushed myself up. "Stop doing this, You. You're lucky I'm not in the mood to skin someone alive."

I teased him as I walked away, waving. This reminded me of my vigilante days, but the only difference was I didn't kill him. Well, I wasn't that person anymore.

I slipped his wallet inside the coat's pocket before covering myself with it. With a smile, I exited the alley and went back to the heart of the city. The people flocking around the plaza were still there, so to feed my curiosity, I went to see what was going on. I could hear indistinct murmurings and someone yelling in the middle.

"Coming through," came out a weak announcement from me, squeezing myself through the crowd. Thankfully, I lost a lot of weight, so it was easy to reach the front.

My brows raised as I tilted my head to the side. I blinked twice at the man announcing the infidelity of his wife. My eyes fell on the woman on the ground. She was weeping and kneeling, not caring about her disheveled hair and dress.

"I have given everything to my wife and yet, this is what she did to me!" the man, drowned with rage, exclaimed until his spit flew out of his mouth. His fury only increased by the second as he grabbed the woman's hair, causing her to shriek.

'Wow... was he trying to ask the people what he should do to his wife? This is embarrassing.' I thought, hearing the man preach how good of a husband he was while dragging his wife by the hair. I pity neither of them. I only sympathized with the child standing from across me, bawling her eyes out.

The woman who was being dragged kept looking in that child's direction, so it was obvious she was the mother. Can't they settle this inside their home? Why does this man have to cause a scene and make them the laughingstock?

'Ahh...' I nodded in understanding. 'He knew he will be a laughingstock since his wife cheated, so he'd rather drag her with him? How pathetic.'

I shook my head and glanced to my left and then to my right. The people were simply looking at him in pity, but no one tried to help. Not that I planned to, since this wasn't my problem to deal with.

'What a waste of time,' I thought as I turned around to walk away. However, just as I did, a loud gasp resonated in my ear. Out of instinct, I looked back to see that the man had finally reached his limit and executed his wife publicly.

My eyes dilated as the woman's body collapsed to the ground with blood spurting out of her throat. The slit wasn't deep enough to kill her instantly as she pressed her palm on it but to no avail. The life in her eyes slowly slipped away and her hand on her throat fell.

She died.

"Cruel," I whispered thoughtlessly, staring into the woman's blank eyes. How could he claim he love her but then go and kill her?

"He is cruel."

I turned to my right to see a lady looking back at me. She offered me a weak smile before gazing at the center.

"You're not from here, are you?" she inquired, and I only looked at her curiously. "This type of occurrence had been happening after the death of the Earl. People are taking advantage of the instability of the Earldom, so they just do what they want."

A deep sigh escaped her lips. I studied her from head to toe, figuring out she was a commoner. Well, what would a noble lady do in this place?

"Why would the Earldom reach this point? Was there no heir?" I asked casually without taking my eyes off of her. I noticed how her eyes softened with bitterness and glanced at me.

"There is a new lord, but he is just a young boy. What can a young boy do when all these responsibilities are put on his shoulders overnight?"

"Is that so?" I nodded and peeled my eyes away from her. The man who publicly executed his wife in a moment of rage was now weeping while cradling her lifeless body. What a fool.

'Earldom...' I thought, wondering which side of the country we were in.

"You seem you don't know a lot about this place and alone. Do you want me to accompany you for a while?" the woman suddenly proposed. I looked at her and assessed her. There wasn't any malice in her eyes, so I nodded. I also needed information.

"I would love to."

Chapter 407 - Bey

The lady I met in the plaza toured me in this place called Minowa in the South. It was still part of the Heart Kingdom, albeit it was very far from Grimsbanne and the Capital. I had met the late earl of Minowa in the past, Earl Crowell, back in the Capital. Our interaction was brief and was simply an exchange of pleasantries, but I remembered him because he reminded me of Heliot.

A man who seemed dissociated from the state of affairs in the capital.

"Thank you, Bey." I smiled at the lady — her name was Bey — who was kind enough to accompany me to a boutique that was still open at this hour and tattling everything I needed to know.

"It's really nothing." She smiled back, walking beside me as we exited the boutique. "So, which inn are you staying at? I can't believe you suffer from sleepwalking. It's fortunate that no one approached you with malicious intent."

My smile remained as I gazed ahead. I told her I slept walk that was why I was in my chemise. Thanks to this good samaritan, he offered me his coat, but couldn't help me all the way since 'he was busy'. Bey believed everything I said, thankfully.

"The inn I stayed at..." I paused as my stomach grumbled aloud.

Bey chuckled lightly, covering her lips with the back of her hand. "Do you want to eat? There is a nearby diner in here."

"Goodness. This is embarrassing." I sported an awkward grin while scratching my jaw. My stomach saved me.

"There's nothing to be embarrassed about, my lady. Being famished is not something to be embarrassed about."

"My lady?" my brow raised as I cast her a look. I already gave her a fake name, Sam, and I didn't tell her about my status.

Bey just kept her subtle smile and took a deep breath. "You look like a noble lady from somewhere. Anyone can tell just by looking."

My brows furrowed, pressing my lips into a thin line. Was that the truth? Earlier in the shop, I didn't even look in the mirror and just changed. I slept for a long time, so I assumed I would look gaunt.

"I won't pry, though. I'm just... a bit relieved that I met a noble who is kind." The corner of her lips stretched broader while looking ahead at the street of Minowa.

I gazed at her side momentarily, making me smile subtly. Bey was like me in the past. The remark she uttered were words the old Lilou would say. Now that I looked at her thoroughly, Bey was rather thin, almost skin and bones. She said she was twenty-six years old, but she looked older than her age.

"Bey?" I called softly, and she hummed while gazing back at me. She blinked innocently, waiting for me to say the reason I called her.

"Nothing. I just want to thank you."

Her smile stretched broader as her cheek blushed. "It's nothing, Lady Sam."

I didn't respond any more as we headed to this restaurant she was talking about. We constantly talked about random things about the Earldom until we reached our destination. The moment we came, Bey and I found a spot in the corner of the restaurant, where they served politely.

"They have a lot on their menus," I said, gazing at the table d'hote. There were meals for humans and for vampires. How considerate.

"I want this, this, and this." I pointed at the list that made my mouth water just by reading its name. The waiter who stood by the side of our table nodded, bearing his polite smile.

Pleased, I turned my attention to Bey, who sat from across me.

"How about you, Bey?" I asked, but she just smiled and shook her head.

"I'm alright, my lady," she replied while shaking her hands sideways. Bey was reluctant to come in earlier, telling me she would wait outside. But after I insisted on needing her help, she agreed.

"Alright." I nodded, not planning on forcing her. Instead, I returned my attention to the person taking my orders.

"Add this and this too. Thank you."

"Yes, my lady." The waiter listed another two servings for Bey before leaving us alone. I watched him walk away before peeling my eyes away from him, then back to Bey.

"Lady Bey," I called and to my surprise, her shoulder tensed up. I wanted to tease her since she was addressing me formally even when I told her to call me Sam. But her reaction instantly piqued my interest.

"Are you a noblewoman?" I inquired without beating around the bush. Bey forced a smile, keeping her hand under the table. Her nervousness was clear, so I sported a kind smile.

"You don't have to tell me. But I will really appreciate it if you call me Sam instead."

"Yes. It's just a habit."

A shallow sigh slipped past my lips while looking at her. Now that I could see her clearly with all the lights, Bey wasn't just too thin, there were light scars on her neck and arms.

"Give me your hand." I laid both my hands over the table, flipping it to show my palms. Bey looked at me with her brows raised, but I nodded encouragingly.

"But --"

"It's alright." I clicked my tongue. A glint of reluctance flickered across her eyes, but still carefully placed her hand on my palm.

My fingers carefully wrapped around her hand, gazing down at them. Scarred, rough, and dirt was stuck on her fingernails and in between her fingers. All this indicated she do hard labor; her worn-out dress was enough proof that she wasn't well off, though.

"Your hands are so soft, my lady." Her face flushed while her fingers curled as if she was trying to hide them.

"I don't think so?" I shrugged as I knew my hands were not soft. I kept looking at her hand, flipping them constantly. There were also deep scars on her hand, making me wonder if this was from her work or from something else.

"This scar..."

I paused as she suddenly clutched her hand closed and retrieved them quickly. A frown immediately turned up on my lips as I raised my gaze at her. My brow raised as Bey looked away as if she was hiding from something... or someone.

It was an instinct while noticing how her shoulder suddenly trembled. I looked around and my eyes landed on the entrance, where a group of three young noblemen entered the premises. I narrowed my eyes and followed the three noblemen being escorted by the attendant.

"My lady," whispered Bey, making me look back at her. "I... I will wait for you at the back entrance. Don't worry, I won't --"

She was already standing up while excusing herself. So I grabbed her wrist, shaking my head lightly.

"I don't know why you got so scared when those three entered, but you don't have to worry. They won't notice us in here." I smiled reassuringly while staring at her straight in the eye.

Fortunately, Bey calmed down and once again put her trust in me. She sat down again, calming herself. I wanted to tell her I was lying. If those noblemen scan the premises properly, they would notice us, obviously.

'But even if they did, I won't let them harm my savior.' A brief glint flickered across my eyes as it sharpened.

Chapter 408 - [Bonus]

The waiter served the food, filling our table with different sorts of dishes. My mouth watered just by looking at them, and my stomach grumbled when I got a whiff of its aroma.

"Thank you," I expressed, and he smiled back politely.

'I'm famished.' I licked my lips, looking at the food while thinking about which one I wanted to eat first. I went for the lovely roasted chicken, moaning as my eyes rolled back while chewing it.

It was good. Bey didn't lie when she said the food in here was heavenly.

While I chew this tender chicken meat, I raised a brow while gazing at Bey. She wasn't eating but biting her lower lip with her body facing the right side.

Once the meat went down my throat, my lips parted. "Bey, how did you know the food here is great?"

"Pardon?"

"You said earlier, you know a place that serves good food. This place isn't just a place where anyone can afford to dine in. I didn't mean to pry, but I might just do that if you keep trembling in fear while I'm eating." My tone was laid back, but my bluntness seemed to embarrass her. "I didn't mean to make you feel embarrassed. What I'm saying is, you should eat since it'll be a good thing for you and for me."

Bey gazed at me without saying a word. She still looked frightened and puzzled, as if she didn't understand a word I said.

"Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I eat a lot. It helps. Also, it's not like I can eat everything I ordered." I explained with a kind smile. Although I was fully honest with her, I cared about her a bit. No harm would inflict on her while she was with me.

"Yes, my lad... Sam." her eyes softened.

I cocked my head slightly, gesturing for her to serve herself. "Let's have a feast."

Bey was my savior, but the food was her savior. At first, Bey was reluctant to eat, but after that first bite, her eyes popped open and sparkled.

How cute.

Her first bite was followed by another and then another one until she no longer hesitated to eat. I kept putting food on her plate since she only took a small portion. We ate to our heart's content and I could see that her fear subsided. This was the reason I eat a lot back in the palace.

"It's good, right?" I smiled, cupping my jaw while staring at her. Bey only came to her senses as she looked at the empty plates, then back at me.

"My lady..."

"Li -- Sam."

"Lady Sam, I..."

I shook my head with my eyelashes fluttering ever so slowly. "It's nothing. I had my fill and you had yours. It's my little thanks for helping me out."

"Lady Sam... thank you." She replied in a muffled voice. Her eyes watered, but not enough to cry.

"You're welcome." I smiled brightly, glad that she had finally relaxed. "Let's stay here for a while and rest."

"Yes, Lady Sam." Bey looked at me with genuine wonder in her eyes. So I asked her why she was looking, and she hesitated to answer, but she still did, anyway.

"Lady Sam, are you from the Imperial Capital?" she queried, with eyes glimmering, as if once I answered, yes, it would twinkle even brighter.

"No? What made you think I came from the capital?"

"It's just... your aura is different. You look like a noble lady from the upper echelon, that ladies from the countryside like Minowa will look up to." Bey smiled subtly at the thought.

"Why would the noble ladies of Minowa look up at the ladies in the Capital?" I tilted my head to the side, blinking curiously. There was nothing to be admired about the ladies in the Capital. No, actually, there was nothing good in the capital as the people in there only knew was to scheme.

I couldn't blame her, though. I could still remember that I was also one of those who thought that the imperial capital was something special. What I didn't know was it was a special kind of hell.

"Well, they are graceful and wonderful and fearless. It's been almost six years since the new emperor ascended the throne, and ever since then, ladies were given rights. Even the emperor's right hand is said to be a woman." Bey explained with enthusiasm, clasping her hands together.

"Although that rule doesn't apply to other lands like Minowa since women still have no rights to choose or there were opportunities for us."

The twinkle in her eyes diminished as the reality in here shattered her fantasy. I felt sorry for her, but that was just how it was. The lord in this land was a child, and I'm certain he was being used as a mere figurehead by the adults who were greedy for power.

My brows suddenly furrowed as I traced her last remarks. "Almost six years...?" I didn't ask what year it was previously, even though she mentioned the 'new emperor' in passing. It wouldn't match my lies and excuses if I asked such obvious questions.

"Yes. It had been over five years since the emperor rose to the throne."

"Can I ask the name of the emperor?"

Bey looked at me with puzzlement, tilting her head to the side. Her reaction snapped me back to my sense.

"How can I speak of His Majesty's name so thoughtlessly, Lady Sam?" she frowned. It seemed she didn't pick up on my cluelessness yet.

"Right. Apologies. I had lost my senses for a moment." An awkward laugh escaped my mouth, and she just chuckled softly. "It's just... you know? It kept slipping through my mind that it's been over five years since the new emperor rose to the throne."

"Yes. It was a huge incident and very chaotic in the first two years of His Majesty's reign, but the empire is better than before."

"Yes. His Majesty Barrett is an outstanding leader." My eyes softened, relieved that Rufus was doing a good job. However, Bey looked at me strangely, as if I said something wrong.

Was I not allowed to mention the Barretts?

"My lady, are you alright?" she asked worriedly. "It seems you are still confused. Sir knight Barrett is a military general."

'What?'

"His Majesty is a kin of the previous emperor."

Chapter 409 - It's Me

Bey was a chatterbox. After telling me that Rufus wasn't the emperor, my mind buzzed. Our plan was for Rufus to take the throne, as it was theirs in the first place. There were only two possibilities on why our plan changed its course. First, Rufus refused to take the job, and second, was a huge problem arose.

She didn't mention who the king was, and I didn't press about the name. Still, my mind had listed down the La Crox, who could be the current emperor. Sam was automatically out of my list; he'd rather die than carry that responsibility. Moreover, the fact that we were in Minowa was proof that he wasn't the emperor.

Who could it be? Klaus? Yul? Jayden? Dominique? Who else was there? Was it Claude?

I looked at Bey while biting my tongue. I wanted to ask more, but I figured she wouldn't know. It was better to return to Sam's house and ask him directly.

"Bey, I think we should..." I trailed off when I sensed some people approaching us.

"Well, isn't this Lady Bey of the fallen House of Wright?" I turned my head to the man's voice, catching three noblemen stop five steps away from our table.

In my peripheral vision, I caught Bey frozen on the spot. Her complexion turned pale even before she turned her head to this uninvited company.

"Lady Bey, are you scamming people again?" asked the man with a wicked grin plastered on his lips, arms crossed. "Don't you have a conscience that another young maiden will fall for your false kindness?"

A frown instantly surfaced on my face as I gazed up. What was he saying? Bey wasn't tricking me.

"Miss, you are in luck that we noticed that criminal." The man's wicked grin slowly grew kind as he set his eyes on me. "This notorious woman tricks tourists and pretends to be kind, only to rob them."

My brows furrowed as I turned to Bey. She avoided my gaze. These men were telling the truth, but why was she so scared when she turned out to be the bad guy?

"Bey the thief, it seemed you've run out of luck." another man took large steps and before I knew it, he had already grabbed Bey's arms and pulled her up aggressively. A loud shriek came out from her along with the sudden clattering of the cutleries on our table.

"What do you think you're doing? I didn't do anything!" Bey screamed her lungs out, catching everyone's attention.

What was going on so suddenly?

"Miss, if you need help, we can help you." The man who had spoken earlier walked closer to the table with a polite smile plastered on his face. "I know this is a shock to you, but Miss Bey's pattern is to help those easy targets and rob them once she got their trust."

I blinked twice while looking into his eyes. My gaze veered at Bey, who was being dragged out of the premises. The other man who was with them apologized to the other guest inside the establishment for the inconvenience. From one look, it seemed they were simply ensuring justice, but it felt otherwise.

"But she had done nothing to me," I argued, making the man let out a sigh.

"It is unbelievable because that woman is good at getting people's trust. But she is more vicious than you thought, Miss. Until now, we are unable to catch her."

My mouth opened and closed. "Can I talk to her before you take her?"

There must be something more in this situation. The man stared at me for a moment before he sighed once again.

"Alright." He nodded reluctantly. "I am only allowing this because it seems you doubt our claims. I don't blame you, though."

I pursed my lips into a thin line. The man beckoned me to follow her, but before we left, the restaurant attendant asked me to pay the bill, which I did.

Bey and the other two men who took her were already outside the establishment. I didn't know which to believe, because these noblemen were somewhat convincing. However, I could tell that Bey's fear earlier upon seeing these three was different. It wasn't a fear of being caught, but something else.

"No! No! Let me go!"

As soon as we departed the premises, Bey was still screaming whilst struggling to break free. She couldn't overpower a man, and she was simply gathering more unwanted attention.

"Bey," I called softly, and she stopped, looking back at me. She shook her head profusely. Desperation and fear filled her eyes.

"Lady Sam, it's not what you think it is," she explained desperately. "I didn't plan on doing anything to you. I swear I am not — ah!"

The man restraining her tightened his grip on her wrist that he held behind her. It looked painful, especially for Bey, who was nothing but skin and bones.

"Are you going to say you have changed? Then tell us how the second son of House Malum was robbed off of his clothes and money and was left incapacitated in an alley in the 1st district?!" the man restraining her scowled while I furrowed my brows. "You really did it today, you witch! Do you think you will get away by assaulting a noble?"

"I didn't do that! What are you saying?!"

"Drop the act, Miss Wright." The man standing beside me coldly voiced out. His eyes darkened, which made Bey froze in fear.

"We had been lenient with you, but you had pushed your luck. Beg the House Malum for mercy."

"Wait. Are you talking about the man in that alley?" I asked in a soft voice, catching their attention as they turned his head to me. The man beside me furrowed his brows, and a frown resurfaced on his lips. I looked at Bey's pale complexion and sighed.

"It's not her who did that," I said, raising the wallet clipped in between my thumb and index. "She is innocent.. It was me."

Chapter 410 - Malums

I wouldn't let Bey take the fall for me. Not all bad deeds were out of evil nature. Sometimes, people resorted to vicious actions and throw their morality to survive in this world. That was what I see in Bey, and I understood her because I was once in her shoes.

But, well, my act of heroism didn't save her. Now, both of us were being transported by a wagon to face the music.

"I'm sorry, Bey. I didn't mean to drag you into this," I expressed while checking the little holes on the walls of the closed wagon. The three men were outside, riding their steed and treating us as real criminals. Well, not that we weren't.

"Lady Sam... did you really do that to the second son of the House Malum?" Bey inquired with a shaking voice. I peeled my eyes away from the little hole and then to her. She was sitting down from across me.

"Why would you do that?" she asked while gripping her worn-out skirt. "Why would you take the fall if you already know the one you assaulted is a member of the aristocrat faction?"

"What?" I frowned as this wasn't what I expected from her.

"They already assumed it was my doing. So why... will you... for me..." Her sniffed started to grow louder. Even though it was dark, my eyes adjusted to it so I could see her river of tears.

"Then, are you saying I should have just let you take the fall to save myself?"

Bey didn't respond immediately, trying to find her voice in between her hiccups. Was it strange to admit it was my fault and not hers?

"Why did they even take you?" I queried but then realized this wasn't just her crime. I might still get a lighter sentence than her.

"Bey, will they kill us?" I asked once again when she didn't reply to my first inquiry.

"Killing us is far better," she whispered that barely reached my ears. "I don't want to go back there."

The constant shaking of the wagon couldn't hide her trembling. Whatever she had gone through must be very traumatic.

"Bey, can you tell me what will happen to us?" I dragged myself beside her. I clasped her hand, and that made her turn her head to me.

"I need to know so I can prepare myself."

Bey shook her head. "They probably won't harm you since you're not from here. The authorities here are more lenient and cautious with outsiders. Also, since you are a noblewoman, your offense will be settled."

"What about you?"

"I..." Her hand trembled uncontrollably, so I squeezed them to soothe her.

"What will they do to you, Bey?"

Bey sniffed while biting her lower lips as hard as she could. "They... they will punish me."

"What kind of punishment?" I knew I shouldn't probe further, but for her to shake like this heightened my curiosity. I wouldn't be able to help if I knew nothing.

"The last time they caught me... I served in the knights' quarters where they... took turns and --"

"No more." I intervened, pulling her shoulders to me. Bey bawled her eyes, and I felt guilty for forcing her to tell me about her traumatic experience. I embraced her, stroking the back of her head while letting her release her emotions.

"I'm sorry, Bey. That is very insensitive of me," I muttered regretfully. "Don't worry, I won't let that happen."

She kept hiccuping and crying for a long time. I consoled her until she finally calmed down. She broke away while wiping her tears.

"Thank you, my lady. You are the first person who showed me kindness even though you knew I used to be a thief." Her voice was coarse, still tearing up as she spoke. "After our house fell because my father got framed, they had ostracized us in the high society."

Bey continued to tell her story to me willingly. She came from a noble family, who had been loyal and a strong supporter of the late Earl Crowell. Sadly, when the Earl had fallen ill, a series of unfortunate events struck the Wright Family. In the end, the head of the Wright family, Bey's father, was framed for corruption and misuse of authority.

The Wright family's honor, properties, and status disappeared overnight. That wasn't everything because Bey had to support her family, so she worked in a noble house as a maid. It didn't end up good for her because she ran away from the constant abuse in the house.

She had been on the run since then, so she resorted to stealing. But just two years ago, these men caught her where they held her captive. They gave her an offer that they would let her go if she served them properly. Bey became their sex slave for a year until they let her go like an old toy.

That experience was a constant reminder of her that she had to avoid committing crimes. I couldn't say the punishment she received wasn't effective, as it taught her a lesson. But considering her history, Bey wouldn't be in this situation if her father wasn't framed.

It was as clear as the day why the House of Wright had fallen. Their enemies were greedy and wanted to control the young Lord who inherited the title of the Earl. The battle of power had always been bloody, and if one wasn't careful enough, they would step into their enemy's trap. I knew that much since I was a participant in the battle of the crown.

"Bey, we will be fine." I squeezed her hand lightly to reassure her. "This time, you did nothing wrong."

"Lady Sam..."

I only smiled at her, and the wagon soon came to a halt. The shut door suddenly opened, revealing the knight in a civilian suit.

"Come out," He ordered.

Bey looked at me with fear, but I kept my smile and nodded reassuringly. She hesitated, but nodded back and came out of the wagon. Honestly, I was planning to escape before we reach this place. But I was curious about the House Malum, where they said they would take us.

"My lady," called the man. Unlike his disgusting treatment towards Bey, he was still polite to me. What Bey said was true. My case would probably end in the settlement since they think I had money.

He offered me a hand as I hitched out of the wagon, but I ignored it. I glanced at him coldly, before I heard Bey's panicking voice.

"Why... why are we in the Earl's estate?" she asked, but the other knight dragged her away. She tried to struggle, but that only made the man pull her harshly.

"Bey!" I called and shook my head when she raised her eyes to me. "It's alright."

"My lady..." she wept through her gritted teeth before she let the man drag her.

I gazed up at the estate coldly. It wasn't out of the ordinary to have a trial in the Lord on this land for a huge crime. But, the thing was, I offended the House of Malum. It was only logical if we were dealt in their territory first.

"My lady, I will not restrain you since you seem you are reasonable, unlike that woman." The man's voice snapped me out of my thought. "Please follow me."

I glanced at him and nodded. He didn't restrain me, but he was cautious enough to see if I wanted to flee. He didn't need to. I would get Bey out of here.

'Earl Crowell... it seems you had lost your authority to the Malum, completely.'

My situation made me forget that I just planned to sneak out for a short while.