

The Duke 41

Chapter 41 - I've Been Falling And Only Realized It Now

"Teach me."

There was a long and tensed silence between us. Sam didn't speak a word, neither did I.

I'm absolute if I could be a help to him, I would willingly learn how. If that need was something I could fulfill, I would do it.

Why was he so reluctant? Should I ask Fabian to teach me how to look at him with lust? I wonder if Fabian would help me with something so complicated.

"Goodness..." Samael muttered along his breath.

Suddenly, Samael held the reins and whipped it along with his hand. As a result, the horse broke into a furious gallop.

I shrieked at the sudden tremor, holding on to his chest, eyes closed, squeezing myself to him. I could feel the harsh wind brush past us, tightening my grip on to him.

At the back of my head, I would fall over if I didn't hold tightly. Hence, I held onto him as if I was holding on to dear life.

It was frightening.

I was uncertain if who's more furious, Sam or the horse? But why, though?

When our pace grew steady and my body adjusted to its rapid rhythm, I carefully opened my one eye. Then the other eye followed.

I turned my gaze ahead, still clinging to him.

"Sam..." I whispered, feeling this inexplicable rush streaming through my heart.

We were galloping along the sand. Too fast my breathing could barely catch up!

Despite that, a tremor of excitement course through my blood. And my fright at the beginning eventually subsided; just like how I warmed up to him after a time period.

"My — my —" I stammered. And Sam suddenly covered my lip with his palm.

"You'll bite your tongue." He yelled and slowly removed his hand.

I pursed my lips, nodding as I glanced up at him. The strong wind swept away my previous worries.

The corner of my lips slowly curled upward. I never thought I could ride a horse as fast as this.

This was just a dream for a peasant... especially for a woman. But now... it was a wish granted once again.

My heart raced at the horse's speed. Drumming every time the horse's hoof touch the ground.

I held my breath as I gulped. Hearing the sound of chains that shackled my heart slowly let loose.

The shackles that bound me for time unknown; the shackles of which I've called the natural order of the world.

I felt... free. No. I'm free.

"Woah! Woah!" Soon, when we were close to the field, Sam yelled as he pulled the reins.

I held on to him as he controlled the horse to a smooth gait. Not long after, the horse calmed down and halted.

And by that time, I was panting and looked at him. I saw the reflection of my bright eyes in his eyes when he gazed down.

"It's fun, right?" He grinned.

Still panting, I nodded. My throat parched as I bit my stiff lip to life.

I saw him glanced at my lip briefly. His brow arching.

"Gracious..." He muttered as he clicked his tongue.

"My lord?"

Sam raised his eyes back to mine. "Nothing. I'm simply craving."

"Craving?" I asked and tilted my head a little to the side.

"Are you hungry, my lord?"

"Always." He replied, throwing me to a pool of confusion. But before I could think, he beckoned.

"Let's go. We will walk from here."

Without letting me process his words, Sam held my hands on his chest and guided them down. Afterwards, he hopped out of the horse's back effortlessly.

When he stood on the rear, he lent me his hand.

"Come, I'll help you."

Momentarily, I glanced at his hand and to him.

"Thank you, my lord." I expressed before reaching for his hand.

With enough trust, I gritted my teeth as I jumped. However, as clumsy as I was, my foot landed unsafely.

Fortunately, Sam caught me by my waist as my hand unconsciously held onto his shoulders.

"Careful, silly."

And that second, I didn't know why; but my heart suddenly thumped sharply in my ear. It felt like the air blew rather slowly, as I saw his silver hair waved languidly.

Stunning.

His looks were charmingly dazzling; it sent me into a daze. I always knew Sam's beauty was breathtaking. But, it only made me realize it now.

"Come. I'll help you." He breathed.

And I only nodded, distraught at this newfound odd attraction.

"Ah!" When I stood, I winced as my foot snapped me awake with a striking pain.

"You sprained it?" He asked. I glanced at him, pressing my lips together.

"Can I?" He asked once again, giving me a brief glance before he slightly lifted my dress.

Curious, I also glanced at my ankle. It swelled from the inside too fast!

"Goodness. I shouldn't have let you jump." Worry laced his tone.

I watched as he squatted down, leaning closer to check my ankle. I could not help but bit my inner lip, my eyes solely focused on him.

"It's fine," I reassured. "I think."

"It's not fine. Such an unlucky foot to get injured twice?"

Yet Sam let out a heavy sigh as he looked up. His elbows on his knees, still squatting.

"I'll carry you in my back, alright? We'll be there in no time."

"Uh..." I don't think carrying me at the moment was a good idea.

"Don't fret. I may have tons of thoughts going on in my head, but I'm still sane." He reassured flatly.

That's not what I was fretting about, was what I wanted to say. However, words clogged in my throat, I didn't answer.

Instead, I nodded without a word.

"Alright." He nodded as well.

Sam then turned his back. As I stared at his broad back, my heart drummed against my chest — louder and faster.

"Come. Else, we would be late." He cocked his head back, arching his brow as I was taking my precious time.

"Ye — yes," I stammered, oddly confused at the pace of my heart.

Cautiously, I bent my knees, lowering my body. My arms went over his shoulder as his arms hooked on the back of my knees.

"Ah!" I let out a shriek when he stood, making my arms wrap tighter around him.

"Heh. Hold tight, my lady. We don't want you falling..." He smirked, giving me side eye.

"Unless, it's falling in love. I'll catch you if you do. So, don't fret."

He added, before taking a step.

"You better do... that." I mumbled, and looked away.

I think... I had been falling from that cliff and only now I realized it now I'm about to land.

I wonder.... Would I land on the concrete? Or would I be lucky enough to land in an ocean?

Chapter 42 - 1090

Sam had carried me without saying a word. Our pace was slow but steady.

"My lord?" After the long silence between us, I called out.

"Hmm?" Without casting me a glance, Sam hummed a low and soft tune.

"Didn't you say you're faster than the horse's fastest gait?" I asked, curiously.

Since I needed something to divert my attention from noticing every little detail between us, I had to speak. It was only a matter of time until my heart pound against his back.

Sam would probably think it was bizarre to have such a strange heartbeat.

"I did." Without pausing in his pace, he nodded.

I knitted my brows as the corner of my lips curled down slightly.

"Then, why are you so walking slowly?"

Sam was walking the same pace as an elder. It was as if he was just walking through the garden, nonchalant and free.

"Hmm... because I'm carrying you."

"Huh?" I blinked. "Are you worried I'd get hurt?"

"No? That's the last time you'll get hurt under my watch." This time, Sam gave me a quick glance before shifting his eyes back ahead.

I bit my lip. Should I stop prying unnecessary questions?

Yet, before I could decide, my words slipped past my lips without my consent.

"Then, why?"

He didn't answer me immediately. Instead, Sam treaded carefully. I heard the crisped sound of the dry leaf when he stepped over it.

"Because if I do, we'll reach there in a blink of an eye." He said, puzzling me.

I don't see the problem if we reach the field sooner. Wasn't that the plan?

"Reaching it means you'll get off of me." He added solemnly.

My lips pressed together as I felt my cheek heat up.

"I like how your arms are wrapped around me; secure but not tight. I like the warmth and comfort it gave me. And, I enjoy feeling the frantic beat of your heart." Sam explained in the same tone.

He should stop. But deep down, I felt my heart melting into a liquid of shame.

"I want to treasure it for a bit longer. Don't you feel the same?"

This time, he cast me another side eye and smirked. His brief gaze made me shrink down a little.

Obviously, I didn't mind being piggy-backed. In fact, I... liked it.

I liked how he used his arms to hold my leg. I couldn't feel any malicious intent, as if he was afraid I'd feel uncomfortable if he used his hands.

Unlike his usual boldness, his mien and gestures contradicted the duke I've known. The reason I often thought I haven't fully known him.

There were more surprises he could offer.

"Also, it makes me feel... human."

"My lord?" I called softly, and he answered with a low hum.

"Do you want to become a human?"

I asked carefully. Sam had been vocal about his admiration for humans.

Although I never sensed he despised being a strong vampire, I still wonder.

"Was there a way?" He arched his brow, looking over his shoulder — over me.

"If there is, will you become one?" I asked, biting my lip lightly.

"Hmm," Sam pondered for a moment. "Maybe. But well, I don't want to become a prey with this beauty I hold."

He added with a humorous chuckle. Meanwhile, I frowned at the lack of clarity in his answer.

"You see, if I'm not a vampire, how would I meet you who is one thousand and nine decades younger than me?"

"What? You're that old?!" I blurted out with a gasp.

The next second, I realized how silly my questions were. Obviously, he slept for hundreds of years.

How am I even surprised? Still... it was truly surprising to hear he was much older than I assumed.

"I never felt so ashamed of my age." Upon my exclaim, Sam clicked his tongue as he cast me a quick glance of dismay.

"Don't make it sound like I'm that old! I'm still in my prime! You humans won't understand."

I bit my lip again. Well, surely, we would never understand because our lifespans were short.

"I'm sorry..." I muttered, thinking I had offended him in some ways.

"If you're really sorry, I wouldn't mind a kiss." As usual, Sam never failed to insert his unnecessary request.

But... I looked away, biting my lip. Was it fine to do that? I wondered as I looked around to see if there were prying eyes on us.

There's none.

Then, should I...?

Just when I was pondering whether to fulfill his request, Sam spoke. His words snapped me back to reality, diverting my ridiculous thoughts away.

"I'm kidding." Sam chuckled. His eyes ahead as I glimpsed upon his wide smile.

"I'm old, but the longer a vampire lived, the stronger he becomes. Still, numbers wouldn't matter if a vampire can't prove he is worthy to get the other nobles' respect."

"Proved?"

"Hmm! Even a vampire had lived a long life, younger ones can be stronger. That's why every hundred of years, vampires fight each other to test who's the strongest." Samael explained.

However, it only confused me. I never heard vampires fighting with each other. If anything, vampires had a far stronger unity than humans.

"Humans didn't know the tradition. But I'm certain the King had defended his beloved throne by the blood of those who had challenged him."

There was a such tradition? I thought the king held the absolute power and no one would dare challenge him?

I remained silent, trying to understand this additional information.

As if Sam sensed my confusion, he chuckled.

"You'll know soon. I can challenge him and usurp the throne if you want to be the Queen." He humored, and I gasped in disbelief.

"My lord! Are you planning to..."

"Haha! I'm kidding! I don't have such plans but that's what the rumors say!" Sam continued on chuckling while I drew away a bit.

"Rumors?" I asked in disbelief. My heart pounding anxiously.

How could such vile rumors exist? If these rumors would reach the king's ears, what would happen to him?

"Don't fret. Usurping the throne is a bloody path. We wouldn't like to put you in harm, would we?" Sam cocked his head toward me.

Huh?

I bit my lower lip. This time, I bit it as hard as I could. There was this disappointment, dissatisfaction, and utter frustration building up inside me; it formed into one potent emotion..

Without thinking twice, I ground my teeth before biting into his shoulder.

"Ah!" Surprised as my teeth dug into him, Sam shrieked as he jolted.

Chapter 43 - Jealous?

"Ahh! What are you — ah!" Sam yelled, scuffling as he took quick leaps. But I didn't let go.

Instead, I bit harder.

"Ouch! Ah! Ah! Ah — hahaha!" After a few shrieked of pain, it eventually grew into waves of laughter.

I knew a simple bite wouldn't hurt him. Thus, I withdrew my teeth slowly, letting his shoulder go.

"Goodness, Silly! Don't seduce this fragile man! Since when have you been into playing vampires?" Along with his waves of chuckles, Sam inquired.

I frowned, biting my inner lip lightly.

"It's not funny, my lord." I muttered as I gulped down the building up air in my throat.

"Huh?"

"That rumor... how can you take it so lightly?" My hand clasped on his shoulders tightly. "How can you think about my well-being if you don't worry about yours? Whether it is true or just a rumor, once it reached the king, isn't that the same?"

I shrunk down, hiding my lower face behind his shoulder. Sam glanced over his shoulder as I looked down.

I don't worry about myself. I had embraced death multiple times. However, I'm more anxious thinking that Sam's peace would be robbed from him because of a silly rumor.

Even when I think I don't completely know him, I'm certain Sam wasn't that kind of man. Even if he had the capabilities, he wouldn't do such an absurd thing as

to usurp the throne.

I've lived long enough to understand that this world reigned by vampires was frightening enough. Vampires could kill, devour, and do everything they pleased to humans.

Even if we fight back, vampires were just too powerful for us. But, to think that two vampires wage war... what would happen to us?

Again, we would just be another casualty among the many.

"What a foolish lord..." I blurted out, along with my sigh.

Even when I realized what slipped out of my tongue, I only pursed my lips together. Sam was, indeed, foolish.

But I'm the bigger fool, am I?

"Are you worried about me dying?" He asked, and I remained silent.

"I'm strong, though." He added.

I don't care if you're the strongest. I replied in my head. But I ought I should keep my thoughts in my head.

"Heh, what a silly girl." Sam muttered.

But he was right. I'm, indeed, silly. For worrying for a vampire like him, for wishing him nothing but happiness, for wanting to keep what we had...

And for being afraid I might lose something — someone who held a far greater importance than my life.

"Don't worry." He said, cocking his head as he poked my head with his. "That rumor had existed for hundreds of years. Yet, I'm still here."

He reassured. His tone light as ever.

Slowly, I raised my gaze. It already existed that long?

"You are the key to kill that rumor."

"I am?" I asked, furrowing my brows as Sam finally resumed in his tracks.

"How, my lord?"

"Well..." Sam trailed as he produced a long hum. "Obviously, because you're a human? Marrying a noble vampire or just one of my sisters is like fanning the flames."

He explained in a knowing tone. However, my mind focused on his latter remarks.

"Marry your sister?" I gasped, blinking my eyes as if it would help me aid my hearing.

"Uh, yes?" Sam once again glanced back at me. His brow arched, his expression telling me it was a normal occurrence.

"My mother and father were siblings. The current king had married two of my sisters before I entered my slumber. My eldest brother married my eldest sister; though he was the rightful heir, those two eloped to a faraway land."

"Sisters marrying their brothers...?" I trailed under my breath.

My eyes gradually grew wider, blinking in disbelief. I heard nothing about that. Well, I barely heard stories about the royal family.

"Some of them just played around, sneaking behind with my other brothers' or sisters' back. Sometimes, with our cousins. Our family never failed to entertain me — they're comical!" Sam chuckled. His tone laced with ridicule.

Momentarily, I listened to him, slacked-jaw. I couldn't articulate my thoughts properly, trying to make sense of his claims.

"It's normal for pure-blooded vampires to keep our bloodline pure, obviously." He explained.

I snapped back in time to sputter, "Have you..." yet my breath suddenly hitched.

"Have I slept with my sisters?" Sam continued my question, which I failed to ask.

I pursed my lips as I bit my tongue. When I heard him say, "Well, in the past, I..." a sudden urge of panic swelled up inside me.

Without thinking twice, I covered his lips with my palm.

"Hmm?" He hummed as he cocked his head back at me.

"My — my lord, I — I think I can wa — walk." I stuttered in great difficulty.

I don't want to hear it. If I do, I would have to think about it. I wouldn't stop myself from imagining Sam with his sister.

I... It was better to leave it to someone else's imagination. This way, I could trick my mind that he hadn't touched and kissed another woman.

This way, I could keep my thoughts pure. But... could I, really?

"No can do, my lady." He refused with a teasing tone.

Sam shook his head lightly to remove my hand away from him.

"Goodness. I want to tease you because Lilou being jealous makes me feel good. Haha!" He exclaimed.

"I'm not —!" I choked. Was it that obvious?

"But your blood flow tells me otherwise. See? I feel your arms suddenly burning." He chuckled, exposing me with unknown facts for his kind.

"I'm just... just..." I trailed, racking my brain from thinking of believable reasons I could think of at the moment.

"Just...?"

"Just..." I took a deep breath and gulped. "I had drank a wine before going out!"

I blurted out as I looked away haughtily. Just what had gotten into me? Resorting to make a lie? An unbelievable at that!

Well done, Lilou. Well done!

"Pfft—!" Upon hearing my obvious lie, Sam burst out in laughter. His peels of laughters made me want to evaporate.

Chapter 44 - Free Education System

"Pfft—!" Upon hearing my obvious lie, Sam burst out in laughter. His peels of laughters made me want to evaporate.

He shook his head as he laughed. When he recovered, he spoke.

"I slept with them — no, I put them to sleep, reading them stories, just like how a good big brother does."

Sam explained, the corner of his lips stretched into a broader grin.

"Apparently, I don't lust for my sisters or cousins. It just feels strange after watching them grow up."

He added. I bit my lip once again as I gripped his shoulder.

"So, you haven't...? But... you watched me grow up as well."

I took longer to speak about my query. Hesitating to expose myself than I already am.

"Correction. I'm merely listening. Goodness. I didn't even know how you look like until I woke up. How tall were you? What is the color of your hair? Your eyes? All I know is your voice and presence."

Right. He might be hearing me since my first cry. But, still...

"Do I have to repeat what I said before?" Sam inquired without looking back.

"Initially, I just wanted to repay you for everything. Although marriage as a repayment never crossed me until I laid my eyes on you."

My jaw tightened. Obviously, I recalled his reason at the back of my head. Although it still made little sense to me, it was still buried at the back of my head.

"Heh. Wearing ragged clothes, your hair worse than a bed head, almost skin and bones — I actually thought you were a walking corpse!"

Hearing him describe me in the past brought this slight embarrassment within me. Especially how he chuckled with fascination.

What else could I do? I only had a two pairs of dress to wear for years. Unlike now, I get to change every day and night; I didn't have such luxury in the past.

I could barely eat. His remarks made me bit my inner lip once again.

"Yet, you stood out like an undiscovered gem, still covered with mud. I like you the first time I saw you and still like you even more now. I'm never disappointed deciding to marry someone I'm attracted to."

Sam said in a knowing tone. It was not solemn or teasing, but... joyous kind of tone? There was not a bit of hesitation in his voice, which caught my heart off guard.

Before I knew it, I hiccuped.

"*hic*"

"Huh? Do you need blood — I mean, water?" Upon hearing my sudden hiccup, he inquired.

As an answer, I shook my head sideways. And again, I hiccuped. I could feel my cheek heating up, which compelled me to look away.

"Are you sure?"

"Ye — yes! We should hurry, my lord! We didn't go here for no reason, did we?" Panic-stricken, I diverted the subject away from me and my hiccups.

Sam glanced back again. His brow raised as the space between his brows creased together.

"I don't need water." I reassured with an awkward smile. "My lord."

"But you look thirsty."

"Ye — no. Please don't mind me." I urged helplessly.

"Heh. I mean thirsty for something else, silly." He humored as the side of his lips tilted into a smirk.

Huh? Thirsty for what?

"Hold tight, gorgeous." Sam said, discontinuing our previous topic.

As he did, he lifted me up, as his arms held me more securely.

"If I were you, close your eyes because we'll be flying."

Sam cocked his head to me. The side of his head grazing mine. Subconsciously, I tightened my arm around him, as I felt I should hold on to him tightly.

However, as I did, my heart started racing once again. Uh... I hope it stops beating — I mean, stop its crazy pace and not completely stop beating.

Fortunately, I did what I was told because the next second, my heart nearly left my chest. Why?

Sam took small and quick leaps, saying, "Don't ever let go, alright?"

Instinctively, I nodded. Without another word said, my arms locked around him more tightly as he leapt forward.

Just one leap. Sam was already standing on a tree branch! I gasped as my blood level lowered.

He continued on leaping, from one branch to another. And each time he leapt, he would land every five branches or so.

Even though we weren't flying, I felt like flying at our speed. He was, indeed, faster than the horse! Now that I think about it, if we traveled like this, we would have reached the field much sooner!

"My — my —"

"Just hold tight. We will be there." He reminded without casting a glance and without decreasing his speed.

As instructed, I squeezed myself without thinking twice. I couldn't think of something else other than to secure my life.

But, as if he didn't want to fill my heart with fear. Sam lowered his head, and I felt a sudden softness in my arms.

His action completely caused my brain to enter a blank state. Before I knew it, my grip around him loosened. Fortunately, Sam's reflexes were quick.

With both my legs hooked by his one arm, while his other hand locked my arms together. I couldn't think of how he could manage, but I'm just too mind-boggled to think.

Surely, my heart wasn't filled with fear. It was filled with the sensation that words wouldn't justify or explain it.

"I just kissed your arm. Why are you punishing me?" He muttered under his breath.

I couldn't see his expression, but I bet he was frowning. That snapped me awake as I clung to him again and closed my eyes.

Don't think about it, Lil. Just close your eyes! I told myself which I followed like a good girl.

In silence, we continued with our pace, and Sam soon halted. Slowly, I peeked through from my one eye and the other opened as well.

That second, I realized Sam was standing on a thick branch. He was looking ahead, and so my gaze followed.

As soon as I laid my eyes on the direction he was looking at, it rendered me speechless. We weren't on the field. But rather, somewhere far from it, but near where I used to live.

Yes, from our standpoint, I could see the hill I used to live not far away. Unlike how it used to be, my shack was not that flimsy shack anymore.

It was more like a small bungalow. Outside in the open space, the children, along with the farmers from the fields, were sitting in an odd arrangement.

There were a few middle-classes individuals mixed with them. They were sitting on the lush grass, facing the board in front of them, with someone standing before them.

My eyes narrowed as I scrutinized what was written on the board. My lower lip trembled upon figuring that the words written on the board were lessons Fabian mentioned.

In retrospect, there was a time Fabian brought his lesson plan on how to teach me to read and write. I remembered asking him about it because we didn't need it anymore. But Fabian only told me the duke found a way not to waste Fabian's efforts.

"Was this..." I trailed in silence. Were they granted education?

Chapter 45 - News For Lilou

"Was this..." I trailed in silence. Were they granted education?

" I remembered Fabian complaining about not telling him you know how to read and write. To appease my dear little butler, I borrowed his lesson plans and gave

a free basic education for everyone! No waste, and he didn't nag me anymore. Hehe."

Sam explained in high-spirits. By the sound of it, he was merely trying to appease Fabian. However, the outcome was far greater and beneficial than his actual reasons.

I see... this was what Fabian told me about.

"By the way, I made your previous home a temporary school. I hope you didn't mind. Also...."

Sam's words faded in the background as I watched everyone from the distance. My heart softened, watching everyone listen intently. Even from a distance, I could feel everyone's eagerness to learn.

It made me happy.

Back then, I only shared what my father taught me. My knowledge was limited and teaching the kids had little effect on them.

Meanwhile, the adults didn't have time for such a break. All year round, we work on the farm so we wouldn't starve during winter.

But now, not only children but also the adults — I even recognized Old Olly — studying. Not just that, but the middle-class individuals, especially women, were with them.

Even though I didn't know everything yet, I grasped the entire idea. I could see that everyone was comfortable with each other. It was as if for the first time, I couldn't see the huge border separating and classifying us by classes.

Slowly, I closed my eyes as I took a deep breath. When I opened my eyes, I subtly smiled.

"Shall we join them?" Sam suddenly asked.

I didn't move my gaze away from the people near my shack.

"No." I answered with a slight shake of my head.

"Huh? Why? Don't you want to say your greetings to them?"

Upon his question, I slowly shifted my gaze to him.

"Because I realized it now, I can't lie to them. I'll end up telling them about everything: about me, about you... about us."

I answered in a low tune. Yet, I made sure it would not displease me. I'm already glad they were doing well.

I'm satisfied to know and see it for myself that the duke had kept his words. Not that I didn't trust him. But seeing it with my own eyes just brought a different, satisfactory feeling.

"Uh... I'm sorry if you had to keep that information private for now." As he looked at me, he sported an apologetic look.

Again, I shook my head lightly. "You don't have to, my lord."

Then I moved my gaze back to the shack. My heart warmed up as everyone raised their hands. As the man teaching them picked one and a girl stood.

I couldn't hear them. But with their action, it seemed they were all eager to answer the question from the teacher.

"There's nothing to apologize for. I'm just glad to see them well. If the adults had time to spare for education, I could tell they didn't have to worry about the harvest or selling their goods."

I explained, scanning everyone's back. I could feel their ease with studying without worrying about the field.

The only reason we had to work more than anyone was because the price of our crops was too cheap. I don't know the details, but I could tell that our problem had been resolved.

Not just in this area. But only now I noticed that the air in Grimsbanne felt a bit different. The gloomy atmosphere that polluted the air was gone. Instead, it felt like a place where everyone could take a walk to have a breather.

Before, everyone stayed home, especially once dusk approached. Now, even when the sun was about to set, everyone on that hill near my house, weren't rushing home.

"Here, sit here." Sam snapped me back from my thoughts.

He slowly got down, helping me sit properly so to avoid of falling down. My back against the trunk. Unlike me, who had to hold and watch my movements, Sam perched without worry.

His feet dangled down, swinging back and forth. The side of his lips curled into a subtle smile.

He was looking in the hill's direction. Meanwhile, I darted my eyes from everyone who was now standing to Sam's side.

"Thank you, my lord." I expressed after a long, light silence.

Sam turned his head on me. "For?"

"For fulfilling your promise." I clarified in a soft tone.

"Well," Sam scratched his jaw with his forefinger. "It's not really my intention. I just didn't want Fabian to hold a grudge against me."

Sam murmured, as if he believed he didn't deserve my gratitude.

"I haven't boasted about how I exterminate a few nobles and beheaded them publicly. You should thank me for that, I think?"

"Huh?" I furrowed my brows, not hearing his mumbling clearly.

"Nothing. I mean, it just feels strange being thanked for doing my obligation." He shrugged. And I could never think of a better argument.

Sam... he was truly a strange man.

I never heard someone state such claims. If a knight helped a peasant, that peasant would die for him.

Deep down, I had always wondered why we do that? Knights were supposed to help the weak — that's their obligation to the people.

Yet, I realized the knights, the nobles, the monarchy... they were not here for their people. All of them believed the people were for them; to help or abuse, to devour or grant mercy.

"Does it matter, my lord?" I asked, still bearing that subtle smile on my lips.

"I'm certain everyone who was oppressed for a long time would thank you if they have the chance. But you won't like that, would you?"

"Well, I'm already too popular. I don't want people making a statue for me." Sam's face distorted as if he imagined his situation if he got to face his people.

His reaction made me chuckle. I might not know him completely. But the man I've known so far... I like him. Even if the people would tell me otherwise, I wouldn't believe them unless I see it for myself.

"Anyway," Sam snapped, shaking his outrageous thoughts away.

"Since I think I created a great atmosphere. I think it's time to tell you something... shocking."

I furrowed my brows as I watched him glanced at me. Something shocking?

"You and I..." He trailed off, keeping the suspense.

"You and I?"

After a beat, Sam cleared his throat.

"We're being summoned to the capital by the King."

Chapter 46 - Lilou, Can I Kiss You?

"We're being summoned to the capital by the King."

As soon as those words slipped past his lips, a soft wind blew past us. I blinked my eyes, trying to grasp what he just said.

"What?" I asked. Did I hear him correctly?

"I sent a message to the King several weeks ago requesting for our marriage. I received his response, and the king wants to see us." Sam explained.

This time, my tongue rolled back as the life on my face faded. The king... wanted us to seek his audience?

"Well, it's normal, since we need to seek his blessing for our marriage. I'm still a duke who had obligation to follow traditions."

"You and I?"

"Hmm. Normally, I would refuse and force them to go to Grimsbanne instead. But, I think being arrogant now is not the best method if I want a peaceful marriage." Sam shrugged as he clicked his tongue.

Meanwhile, I remained silent. Not by my choice. I just couldn't articulate my thoughts. It was indeed shocking news.

The thought of it... my heart drummed loudly. I've never been out of Grimsbanne. I only heard about the prosperous major cities.

Who wouldn't be surprised that a peasant like me would go to the capital? Not just go there, but to seek the king's blessing for my marriage?

I watched as Sam settled his eyes on me. His brows furrowed as a clear frown resurfaced on his lips.

"I can go alone if you don't want to go." He suggested followed by a deep sigh.

I have an option not to? Really?

"I've already planned to go alone, initially. But, because I know I'll miss you, I still tried to hear your opinion about it." Sam added with a frown.

"But — but if I go, they would know I am a..." I trailed off as I anxiously raised my brows and bit my tongue.

"They would know you're a human?" He asked. I nodded with my lips pressed together.

"So?" Sam arched his brow, and I furrowed mine as well.

"They wouldn't think it's quite absurd?" I inquired hesitatingly. "If your brothers and sisters married each other to keep the bloodline pure, then... how could the King accept me as your wife?"

"Were you actually listening to everything I've said?" Yet, instead of answering, Sam threw a question. His tone annoyed.

"Huh?"

"Did you think the king wouldn't find out I'm marrying a human?"

I remained silent as I lowered my gaze.

"Well, I thought he wouldn't unless he sees me."

"Haha! Aren't you na?ve, my silly girl?" I raised my gaze back to him again when he chuckled.

Sam seemed he wasn't that nervous, unlike me. Still, we're talking about his family. I never felt this kind of anxiousness creeping into my heart.

Meeting his kin... not to mention a family of royal and pure-blooded vampires. What a nerve-racking ordeal.

"You don't know the king's obsession he holds towards me. The moment he received that letter from me, I'm certain he had sent someone to dig for information about everything."

In a knowing tone, Sam chuckled as he explained. I furrowed my already knitted brows, tilting my head as I listened to him.

"Hence, I won't be surprised if he already knows I fancy a human lady." He added.

The king already knew? And Sam already knew the king had sent eyes to watch his every movement? Why I haven't heard about this?

Right... it was because I didn't need to know? I don't want to jump to a conclusion just yet. Sam probably had his own strong reasons.

"Still, if the king knew, and we headed to the capital — to the royal castle... isn't that a vampire's turf that was beyond your jurisdiction?" I asked.

Sam's eyes immediately fastened with fascination upon my inquiry. Why? I'm telling the truth. He might hold the absolute power over Grimsbane, but the capital was under the king's power.

"Are you afraid they will hurt you?" He asked.

I pursed my lips. Am I afraid? I don't know. I couldn't understand this reluctance in me, but I'm certain I was afraid of something else.

"You might be a human, but you're special." He chuckled, his finger lifting my chin as he held my gaze.

"Do you know why?"

I remained silent, pondering for the reason.

"Because I'm your reserved meal?" I blurted out, with brows raised.

"Hahaha!" Upon hearing my reply, Sam laughed. He looked charming when the tangerine ray of sunset shone on him.

"What are you saying, silly? Do you still think like that?"

In between his chuckles, he shook his head. I bit my tongue. No, I don't even think I'm still a reserved meal. It just escaped my mouth before I knew it.

"The reason is that I chose you. You are my human." He stressed, his eyes as dangerous as ever. But, the way he looked at me straight in the eye felt very reassuring.

"And since you're mine, no one can touch even the tip of your hair. Because if they do, I don't mind burning the entire kingdom to smithereens."

He added. I gulped as I felt the sincerity in his claims. It felt as if he wasn't just saying it to comfort me. Instead, I felt he would actually do it without a second hesitation.

"Do you understand?" He asked, his thumb gently caressing my chin.

"Then..." I paused, mustering the courage to speak. "I'll come with you."

In a low and meek tone, I decided.

If Sam was with me, I shouldn't be afraid, right? I might not know what awaits us in that place. Staying close to him would not just reassure me, but would save me the trouble of waiting and worrying for his return.

However, Sam didn't respond. His eyes slowly traveled down to my lips. Again, I gulped as I pursed my lips lightly.

"My — my lord? Are you... listening?"

"I am." He blankly replied and his eyes slowly raised to meet my gaze.

"Then, shall we..." My voice faded away upon hearing his abrupt question.

"Lilou, can I kiss you?"

Chapter 47 - The Answer.

"Lilou, can I kiss you?"

The second I heard his question, my breath hitched. That was too sudden — I was not ready for it.

"I was thinking of kissing you, but I wanted to ask first." His eyes blazing with desire. His tone laced with too much air, making his voice husky.

What...

My heart pounded against my chest. I could feel the heat coursing to the ends of my ears as my throat suddenly dried up.

Why would he suddenly shifts our conversation like that? Just how did it escalate to this point?

I could not recall. We were just talking about being summoned to the capital. Are we truly on the same page? How come he would flip to the end of the book?

We haven't had that magical connection like what I read on the books. Or just that perfect moment that would make us both think kissing was proper!

"Nevermind. I'll think of something else."

After a long, tensed silence, Sam sighed. Slowly, he withdrew his thumb away from my chin. He then placed his hand on the branch, looking at the empty open space of my previous home.

However, that second he did, I perked up.

"Wait—"

"Hmm?" Sam turned his head to me, arching his brow.

"Uh," My own words clogged in my throat, choking me. I couldn't speak.

Wait. What did I want to say, initially? I didn't know. All I remember was this sudden urge to speak.

"Don't worry. I know that was a bit aggressive of me knowing I have to mark my territory before we set off." He sighed.

"Huh?"

Sam cocked his head, casting me a look of disinterest.

"I'm saying, if we're going to the capital, I had to cover you with my presence. That place is mostly filled with vampires — that's why human nobles had moved to other places. The Capital is a far more dangerous place for humans." He explained in a knowing tone.

"Obviously, I'd prefer making out with you as my first option. The rest were just... no fun." He added.

What?

"What are the other options?" I blurted out before I knew it.

"I'll give you a bloodstain cloth you can hide anywhere in your body. Agree with a blood pact with me, perhaps? Or..." He paused as he licked his lower lip.

"Or, I'll turn you into a vampire. But that's dangerous. They're no fun, as well. Making out is still the best to build some connection."

Samael shook his head dejectedly. Obviously, the first one was the easiest way to cover me with his presence.

But...

Slowly, I moved my gaze towards my previous home. Everyone had already left.

"My lord, can you take me there?" I asked without moving my eyes away from the small house.

"To your place before?" He asked. I saw him glanced at me through my peripheral vision.

"Yes," I nodded.

"Hmm. Alright. I asked them to keep your other things you left. We can take them back home."

When Sam agreed, he helped me up. But this time, instead of carrying me on his back, Sam carried me in his arms.

Just like how he leapt from one tree to another, we soon arrived at the open space on top of the hill. The second his feet landed on the ground, I had this sensed of familiarity about the place.

"My lord, can I walk?" I moved up my gaze, watching him gaze down.

"Can you?" With a raised brow, he asked back.

I nodded without a word. He stared at me for a moment before helping me to stand on my feet.

I could feel everyone's presence in here. Everyone from the field. I could still feel their lingering presence.

The corner of my lips subtly smiled as I traveled my gaze. I closed my eyes, feeling the soft whistle of the wind kissing my cheek.

I missed this place. My shack may not be the most comfortable home, but this place had witnessed my parent's love and witnessed me grow up.

Yet, when Sam spoke about taking my stuff back home, it just felt natural as well. This was probably my home, the shelter that protected me, until Sam came into my life.

I set my eyes on the small sturdy house before me. It used to be old that could break once the nature scream.

"When you left to my mansion, the shack suddenly fell apart as if it had served its purpose. So, I built something — a better version to keep the learning books safe." Sam explained as he stood beside me.

My eyes softened. My shack... it had perished. It endured all the seasons to shelter me. Did it know I would be in a better place?

"Old Olly and everyone used to tell me I should leave my shack, as it is dangerous. But, it didn't break no matter how strong the winds are, and no matter how heavy the pouring rain." I spoke, recalling the past.

Even though I knew everyone mean well, I couldn't just leave this place behind. I'm glad it was now being used to help others broaden their knowledge.

"I'm certain my shack is at peace."

"Heh. Aren't you strange to think a thing had its feelings?"

"But it's my family. It may not have a body, but before you..." Slowly, I moved my head and looked at where Sam stood.

With a subtle smile on my lips, I added. "My shack is the only thing I have."

I watched as Sam's lips tilted into a proud smirk.

"Well, I held a proper burial for it. It's buried behind."

"You... what?"

"Well, I know you've grown attached to it. Knowing you who hold a burial for an ant, you'd do the same. So I did." He said, shrugging his shoulders nonchalantly.

Sam, you... My heart melted, knowing he remembered all the smallest details about me.

"Anyway, we can go pay it some respect after getting your things inside."

"Yes." I nodded.

Sam helped me as I limped my way in. Since the door was locked, Sam had to use a bit of force to open it. But the force he used was not enough to break the entire door.

"I'll look for it. Stay there." When we were by the door, Sam trudged inside while I stood motionless.

The house was small and obscure. The only source of light was coming from the window and from this opened door. I scanned my eyes around. There was a table where some books piled up. There were other things around, some pencil, logs, shelves, and many more that related to education.

Sam was still searching for my things. Scratching the back of his head as he resisted the urge to throw things around.

I bit my lower lip, limping my way in. As I did, I slowly closed the door behind, leaning my back and palms against it.

As it creaked closed, the room fell into a much dimmer place. But not too dark not to see him.

I saw him turned his head in my direction. He looked confused as he frowned.

But before he could ask, I took a deep breath and spoke first.

"Yes."

"Huh?"

"Yes," I repeated, my eyes on him. "You can... kiss me."

Chapter 48 - *I Know, I Know.

[WARNING; THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS MATURE CONTENT. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.]

"Yes," I repeated, my eyes on him. "You can... kiss me."

The air was dead. Only silence filled us.

Our eyes locked with each other. Mine were determined. While his... they slowly grew darker as it glinted with a menacing glint of red.

Slowly, Sam stood properly, facing me. His short canine grew longer; they were frightening.

"What did you say?" He asked in a low growl and with narrowed eyes.

My breath hitched, my chest moving a heavy in and out motion.

"I give you consent," I paused, swallowing down the fright encasing my heart.

"Sam."

As fast as the blink of an eye, Sam suddenly appeared and stood before me. His palm slammed against the door, settling on my side.

Looking up at him, the intense emotion in his eyes shook me to the core. My heart tingled when I got a whiff of his fiery breaths. It was intoxicating.

"Lilou..." Under his breath, he rested his forehead with mine, the apex of his nose brushing mine, which made me hold my breath.

Sam would occasionally call me by my name. But this time, my knees felt weak at the sound of my name slipping past his lip.

Goodness... what was this foreign, intense heat coursing through me? It was neither fright nor confidence.

I'm burning... and right now, at the back of my head, my instincts told me he was the water that to extinguish the fire within me. Throwing out the remaining rational thoughts out of the window, I withdrew my hands from my back and snaked around his neck.

I felt him freeze as he slightly drew his head back. His crimson orbs glinting wide in surprised.

"I think..." I breathed, not shying away from his fiery gaze. "I think... I like you."

Upon dropping my confession, Sam ground his teeth, sucking air through them sharply. I could not help but take notice of his sharp fangs.

"Goodness..." He breathed heavily, tilting his head from one side to the other while the tip of his nose traced my jaw.

Sam's other hand wrapped around the side of my neck. His long fingers reaching my jaw as his thumb caressed my cheek.

His touches... I was wrong. He was not the water I needed. We were both... fire.

The heat from his fingers touching my skin had set my body ablaze. Like the oil in the lamp to keep the fire burning.

We have done nothing, but I'm already panting. Inhaling each other's breaths, waiting for who would close this tiny gap between our lips first.

One beat...

Two...

Three...

It only took three beats of my heart before I stood on the tip of my toes. But I wasn't the only one who took notice of the intense air between us. Taking notice, Sam also leaned down.

And within a snap of a finger, our lips came into contact. As fast as our lips encounter, the faster we both parted away.

Both our eyes went wide in surprised. Staring at each other, our eyes informing each other, we both felt it.

We both felt the slight bolt from that kiss. It felt good, to the point it was shocking.

"Gracious... Lilou." He heaved another deep breath. His hand on the door suddenly wrapped around my waist, lifting me up as he pinned my back against the door.

This time, Sam captured my lips, and I welcomed his breaths wholeheartedly.

His lips moved. I could feel his fangs grazing my lips. His kiss was demanding, yet patient. His luscious and soft lips guided my lips patiently until I picked up its pace.

Slowly, I felt his tongue parting my lips. And I did, instinctively. I couldn't think. I felt light-headed and intoxicated.

I've never had a taste of wine before. But I knew I'm getting drunk — intoxicated with the taste of his lips.

And this taste... it suddenly became my obsession. No, he had become my addiction. A bad habit I would never quit.

"Uh..." I moaned in his mouth, making his arm around my waist pull me closer.

Yes, closer...

Even with the lack of space between us, it still felt distant. I never felt my clothes were thick enough. But right now, they're a hindrance. I wanted him closer, and I knew he wanted to same.

I'm losing my mind.

"Lil..."

His lips parted away, trailing down as he left soft kisses on my jaw. Instinctively, I stretched my neck as he journeyed down to my neck.

My hand behind him clasped his clothes tightly. With every touch of his lips, I held my breath and panted.

Closing my eyes to feel his every touch and I loved it every time.

Simultaneously, he let his hand go from my nape and then traced my outline carefully. If not for my clothes, I'd lose it.

Not long after, I felt my skirt being lifted. His hands tracing my leg up to my thigh.

"Sam..."

Goodness...

Subconsciously, this was not the kiss I had thought it would be. We were heading somewhere deeper than a kiss.

But I couldn't stop it. I wouldn't stop it.

The taste of his lips had showed me a primal desire — a need I never thought I needed. A missing part of me that needed to be fulfilled immediately.

"Sam..." Again, I called out under my breath, panting, as I rested my forehead on his.

Slowly, Sam licked my collarbone. His breaths heavy, penetrating my flaring skin.

"I know," He breathed. "I know."

He repeated. His lips nibbled on my skin as if it was his. His lips and tongue alternating in a rhythm as it traveled down to my upper chest.

"I know..." Again, he whispered.

I held my breath, feeling the slight rough yet arousing pain whenever he suck. My hand on his back clasped tighter as I breathe through the gap of my mouth.

More...

His hand on my thigh outlined its way up my under garments. The longer I wait for this foreign desire to be fulfilled, the more it intensified.

"Sa—"

Just as I was going to moan his name; just before I could demand more from him, the voices outside snapped me from my ecstasy.

Chapter 49 - The Duke Had A Woman!

"Sa—"

Just as I was going to moan his name; just before I could demand more from him, the voices outside snapped me back from my ecstasy.

"Haha! I'm sorry, professor! I didn't notice I also left the take home activity!" It was Old Olly chuckling, talking to someone.

"It's alright, Old Olly. It's good that I'm still in the field." Another man's voice reached my ear.

"Sam!" I whispered in panic. However, he only let out an annoyed click of his tongue.

Parting away from my upper chest, he perked up as he suddenly captured my lips.

"Mhm!" Even when he kept my mouth preoccupied, I hurriedly patted his shoulder in protest for him to stop.

I heard some keys jangling as Old Olly and the professor's voices came close.

"Huh? It's broken?" The Professor muttered, and I felt the door rattle behind me.

Yet, they couldn't open it. Sam's hand had left my thigh, blocking the door behind me. He was biting my lower lip lightly as his flaming eyes met mine.

He pulled my lips with his teeth, slow and steady. Not enough to hurt me, but enough to make my throat dry up. Goodness, why are they interrupting us?

"Please..." I panted.

I'm also reluctant to let go. We were almost there. But I didn't want to see Old Olly in such a state with a man.

"No." He whispered. His eyes were dead serious!

"Later," I urged, nodding reassuringly. "We continue this later?"

I repeated. However, his eyes were unwavering. Grinding my teeth as I felt the door rattle slightly again.

"Did someone sneak inside?" I heard the man wondered as he tried to push the door open once again.

Without thinking twice, I clasped on Sam's shoulder, tiptoeing as I left a quick peck on his lips.

"Later, alright?" I inquired, hoping he would listen to me. Seeing him unwavering, I kissed him again.

"Alright?"

Sam frowned before he reluctantly nodded. "Hide somewhere."

"How about you?"

"I'll snap their neck real quick." He said flatly.

My eyes immediately went wide. In a state of panic, I kissed him again and whispered.

"Please, don't."

"You're such a quick-learner to find a way to make me your 'yes man'." Still frowning, he said in a deadpan tone.

I suppressed the urge to chuckle as I bit my lip.

"Behave."

I warned, before scurrying away to find somewhere to hide myself. I opened the old cabinet, but it was filled with books.

Hence, I hid somewhere else. Squeezing my small frame between the small space between the cabinet and the wall.

I could still hear Old Olly and the Professor's confused voices. They were probably trying to open the door. Sam was truly strong to hold the door with just one hand.

Samael watched as Lilou find herself a safe hiding place. He arched his brow upon seeing her, squeezing herself on a small space on the side of the cabinet.

Sure, Lilou fitted in. Samael smirked as his eyes traveled down. Lilou would fit in if she were naked. However, her long skirt was peeking out.

"Whoever is inside, this is a private property of the duke! Stealing or vandalizing the property of the duke is punishable by death! Open the door!" The professor yelled, banging the door with his fist.

"Good gracious! Who would steal from this place? It was just nothing but books!" Old Olly panicked, holding her hand together nervously.

Nothing like this happened ever since this place was established.

Samael let out a heavy sigh. With enough force, he opened the door, making sure not to let the door go so they could open it as wide as they please.

He left an inch gap, peeking his one eye through the gap.

"Give me one reason I should let you disturb me?" Sam demanded in a deadpan tone. His eyes scrutinized the young noble instructor, and then to Old Olly.

"Hah! This is the duke's property. If you needed a home to stay, you could talk to..." Infuriated by trespassing this place, the instructor fumed.

However, he trailed off as his eyes glimpsed upon the shade of Samael's hair. Despite the inch gap, he had noticed the dark crimson orbs and the remarkably argent hair that was akin to the moon's glow.

Those features that described the duke they had never seen personally. It was said one would instantly recognize the duke by his bright, argent hair.

"Professor?" Old Olly called out, glancing at the professor's aghast side profile.

She furrowed her brows in confusion. Unaware that the professor had recognized the person inside, despite not seeing him completely.

Not too long after, the professor's action and words would enlighten her.

"My lord!" the young professor exclaimed.

Along with his exclaimed, he immediately went down on his knees. "Forgive this brazen one. I thought there's a thief who wants to sabotage your lordship's good plan for his people!"

When Old Olly heard that, she snapped as she immediately knelt on the ground. Her old fragile heart trembled, and so was her entire body. She couldn't speak, knowing the duke was inside.

The duke who had changed everything in Grimsbanne. The Duke who could be a merciful and just ruler; but also the same duke who would annihilate an entire family if proven guilty of a crime.

Deep down, the two could not help but wonder. What was the duke doing inside?

Samael gazed at their back through the tiny gap. If not for Lilou, he would have punished them.

Their presence not only made him stop from his rhythm but also the momentum with her. Goodness... they were almost there. Just a bit more and Lilou was surely be underneath him, moaning his name.

"Tch," Recalling their crime, Samael snapped his tongue.

But that faint click of his tongue made the two on the ground shiver. They didn't dare speak another word, as they had already said enough.

Slowly, Samael opened the door while the two remained bowing.

"Forget this had ever happened. Forget I was ever here. Keep your forehead on the ground, if you peek, I'll gouge your eyes out."

He warned, staring at their backs coldly before he resumed.

"If you speak about this, I'll cut your tongues. Not only yours, but everyone in your family would share the same fate — and all ten generations after."

Upon hearing the duke's cruel warning, the professor and Old Olly trembled in fear. They shut their mouth, keeping their eyes on the ground.

The Duke could be merciful and cruel. It was their option if they want his mercy or his wrath. Obviously, they would choose the former.

As instructed, the two didn't dare to raise their head or secretly peek. No matter how intrigued they were on how he looked like, their lives and their kin's lives mattered more.

Pleased, Samael turned his head to where Lilou hid.

"Silly, come. We will go home."

The second they heard the duke, the two widened their eyes at seeing the two shadows before them. Yet they resisted the urge to raise their head.

All they saw was the duke's heel, and a woman's long dress that reached the ground. Not long after, the presence of the duke and his companion vanished

into thin air.

Old Olly and the professor waited a little longer to make sure they left. When they were certain they left, the professor slowly raised his head. Old Olly followed.

All they saw was the door wide open, swinging lightly by the soft blow of the wind. After a snap, the two looked at each other in shock.

"The — the duke had a woman?!" They gasped in unison.

Chapter 50 - Nothing But You

When I hid, I assumed Sam would hide as well. However, he didn't! The next thing I know, he was talking to them!

"Give me one reason I should let you disturb me?" Sam asked.

I gasped, immediately covering my mouth with my both my palms.

Did he show himself? Would he let them in? What would he say when they asked what he was doing here, alone? Old Olly wouldn't believe him if he came up with a lame excuse! Would he tell them he was the duke? Would they even believe him?

Myriads of panic-stricken question hovered over my head. I listened to them talk and heaved a sigh of relief when the professor recognized Sam.

I didn't hear Old Olly, but I'm certain she was baffled and kneeling. Before a noble, especially a man in power, peasants like us automatically kneel until our forehead touching the ground.

I listened as the Professor explained and Sam's cruel reply. I held my breath. Sam wouldn't really do that, would he?

The next moment, I heard Sam once again. This time, not talking to them, but to me.

"Silly, come. We will go home."

Peeking my head out to check, Samael was looking in my direction. The door wide opened, I could see two shadows on his feet.

"I —" Just before I could speak, Sam placed his finger in front of his smirking lips.

I pursed my lips.

Sam extended his hand, and I cautiously slinked out from where I hid. Clasping the rear of my dress, I limped my way to him.

As I did so, I glimpsed at the two kneeling. They didn't raise their head as I walked over to Sam's side.

When I stood by his side, Sam leaned closer and whispered, "They won't see you. Let's go back and continue where we left off, shall we?"

I gulped and nodded. I heard him smirk before he swept me off of my feet.

With me being carried in his arms, I nearly shriek. Fortunately, I covered my lips with both of my palms.

Raising my gaze to see him gazing down at me with a smirk. After a wink, Sam leapt, and we left the hill.

*

Unlike how we traveled down from the duke's mansion, Sam didn't bother going back to fetch the horse. Instead, he continued with his speed, heading directly back home.

Cautiously, I clasped on his chest as I discreetly looked up. His expression solemn.

I bit my lower lip lightly. His expression right now differed when we were...

The thought of what happened between us made me feel utterly flustered. My eyes gazed at his lips. I could still feel them on mine and on parts of my body he had conquered.

His hands holding me, I could vividly remember his sensual touches. Those fiery touches that set my body blazing with anticipation.

Once we return home... we would... I pursed my lips at the sudden thoughts that flashed inside my head.

I don't know what exactly we would do. But I already had a vague idea of how it felt.

I'm... I'm looking forward to it.

Unconsciously, my hands on his chest slapped my flustered cheek lightly. How could a kiss corrupt my mind so easily?

But this was normal, right? I never kissed anyone before. Thus, I believed our kiss was the purest form of first kiss since we both enjoyed it?

I just followed the flow, which made me feel good. He tastes good — I mean, his lips. I wanted to taste them again and I would...

I felt like a kid looking forward to a meal. The thought of tasting something so sweet and so addicting. I'm obsessed.

I'm losing my mind.

"Goodness..." Suddenly, Sam sighed, which snapped me back from my stupor.

"Huh?" I blinked my eyes at him.

My mind was too occupied with the thought of him, I didn't notice his fangs. They were showing sharper than ever.

"How am I so slow?" He frowned. Yet, his speed didn't decrease.

Slow? I looked around. No? He was thrice faster than a horse's gallop. How could it be slow?

"My lord, you shouldn't hurry. We will —"

"I should, so we can continue. I hate interruptions." Sam gazed down, holding my gaze instantly.

"But, there won't be interruptions once we're home. So..." I trailed off, carefully pondering on my next words.

"So, shouldn't you take your time?"

I raised both my brows innocently. I blinked my eyes. We could kiss all night — forever, even. I won't stop him. I liked it. Hence, he didn't need to hurry.

However, he seemed to perceive my 'good' intentions in another way.

"How can I not hurry when you've been so welcoming?" He breathed, suddenly stopping in his tracks.

We had been traveling through the woods; a shortcut back to the mansion, he said previously. Stopping in the middle of the woods, as the sun already set, was quite... frightening.

But with him, I felt less terrified.

"I want to take you right here and now." He said, and my eyes instantly went wide.

"Huh?"

Sam didn't reply anymore. Instead, his eyes, burning in crimson red, stared into my eyes as if he could see my soul yearning for him.

"Lilou, what I want now is not just a mere kiss."

"Then, what is?" I asked out of pure curiosity.

"You." Without looking away, the intensity of his gaze heightened.

"Nothing but you."

I gulped as I clenched on his chest. My heart pounding, drumming its way out of my ribs.

It was fascinating how my throat quickly dry up upon his words. And my breathing gradually felt heavy, reminding me how our locked lips barely gave us air.

Out of habit, I bit my lower lip.

"Every time you bite your lips, it drives me crazy. Stop it." He muttered as his eyes peered at my lips.

"I would take you right here and now, if not because sprained ankle." He added after a heavy sigh.

"Would it worsen it?" I blurted out.

His eyes darkened. "What do you think?"

"I — I don't know?"

"It would. Imagine yourself laying down on this very ground, naked. It's not very pleasing for a first time." He uttered as he looked ahead.

Before I could reply, he sprinted ahead. This time, much faster and before I knew it, we're back to the Duke's Mansion.

From the front door of the mansion, Fabian welcomed us with a bow.

"Welcome back, My Lord, My —"

However, before Fabian could finish his greetings, Sam cut him off. Sam didn't stop as he trudged inside the mansion, carrying me in his arms.

"Don't disturb us unless you've prepared your own grave." Said Sam as he hurried me back to our bedchambers.