

# The Duke 431

Chapter 431 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor IV

"Get ou -- "

Samael momentarily paused and winced when he tried to move. He gazed at the multiple stab wounds on my body where Lilou injured him, specifically on important vital points.

"Goodness! I want to get out of here quietly! Why does he have to raise his voice?" she complained in irritation as her eyes fell on Yulis, sitting down on the wall he crashed into outside their room. "How annoying!"

Yulis raised his head, shocked at what happened. The impact hurt him slightly, but the shock of who did it was what paralyzed him. Just like Samael, the pain was bearable, but his mind went blank when she stabbed him without hesitation.

Lilou ran her fingers through her tousled hazel hair and let out a sharp exhale. She cast Samael a look and then Yulis, clicking her tongue, not knowing what to do with them.

"Nevermind," she muttered and stomped her way out without looking back at her husband. Lilou glanced at Yulis emotionlessly and just passed by him.

Although there was a strong urge inside her to silence them, she didn't. The dominant part of her to let them go reigned, so she did.

"I don't even know them," she murmured while waltzing through the hallway of the third prince's quarters. "A family, huh? What a joke!"

As she walked away without a particular destination in mind, Samael's face and the sincerity in his eyes flashed across her mind. Her steps grew slower as her heart clenched for reasons she couldn't understand. He looked like he had loved her sincerely, but she couldn't remember him.

Lilou just went in with the flow so he wouldn't find out that she didn't know a thing. But there was this faint connection with Samael that made her rethink the strong urges within her.

"What is his name again?" she wondered before finding herself in the open space of the third prince's palace. She looked around and took a deep breath while closing her eyes.

'Never mind,' she thought and slowly opened her eyes.

A glint flickered across her drooping eyes as the side of her lips curled up into a smirk. She couldn't recognize the place or the people in it, but something in her just wanted it to burn down under her feet.

"All I need to do is bring this place to ruin, correct?" she inquired, and the loud and vicious voices in her head were all she could hear once again.

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Samael only snapped out of his trance when Rufus arrived and shook his shoulder. He blinked, setting his shaking eyes to Rufus, who was looking back at him, wide-eyed.

"Your Grace, what happened here?" asked Rufus in panic, gazing down at the blood covering Samael's clothes. "How... who did this?"

Rufus' initial assumption was an enemy appeared and caught them off guard. Seeing that Lilou was missing and Yulis outside was in greater shock as Samael, his heart raced nervously. For Samael to be in such a state, he could only expect how powerful the enemy could be.

"Lilou... we have to find her," Samael whispered in distraught. "Rufus, send everyone to look for her."

"My lord..." Rufus called in worry, as he had never seen the duke in such a pitiful state.

Meanwhile, Ramin squatted down beside Yulis with his palm on the ninth prince's shoulder. He scrutinized him for a brief time, furrowing his brows as it seemed Yulis was truly shaken.

"Ninth prince," he called, shaking Yulis's shoulder until the latter returned to the current lapse. When Yulis turned his head to Ramin, he inquired.

"Who did this to you?" Ramin's eyes gazed down at him and then back to his eyes. "And who took the duchess?"

Yulis's lower lips trembled as they parted, but no words came out. This slightly frustrated Ramin but also alarmed him. Yulis wasn't weak, especially Samael. For them to be this shaken, he could only assume another destructive opponent had appeared during the most crucial time for them.

Ramin ground his teeth as he squeezed Yulis's shoulder, eyes glinting menacingly. "Who took the duchess?"

"No... no one," came out a whisper, making Ramin's brows furrow. "Lilou... is different."

If Yulis had barged into the room sooner and had a conversation with Lilou, he would have immediately detected what was wrong. He knew his kin very well, after all. Just like how Lilou found out about the impostor who pretended to be Yulis a month ago. Yulis wouldn't pretend like there was nothing wrong like Samael, but everything had already taken place.

"Lilou?" Ramin repeated in a questioning tone. "Her Grace is the one who did this?"

Yulis pressed his lips together before raising his head when Rufus came out of the room. Samael followed, but he didn't stop as he continued to storm away without casting them a look.

"It must be true," Ramin whispered as soon as he caught the expression on Rufus's and Samael. "This doesn't look good."

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Rufus gave out an order to search for Lilou, not just in the palace, but also in the capital. The kingdom was still unstable, with people protesting and living in fear without a ruler protecting them. So the knights led by Klaus and Silvia, who were tasked with searching the capital, had to be discreet.

Only after Rufus searched in the palace did he realize Lilou didn't go out of the place. Why? Because of the piles of bodies lying in the hallway.

He checked one knight to verify if he was dead. Fortunately, he was alive, albeit injured. He checked the others; some were knocked unconscious, while others were about to bleed to death. It was as though Lilou planned to kill them, but changed her mind midway.

"This is really troublesome," he whispered, gazing at the knights while deciding whether to help them first or stop Lilou's madness.

In the end, Rufus couldn't turn back to these people as they had been losing too many of them. At this rate, this empire would have no knights if everyone just died during their guarding duties.

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Yulis, along with the third squadron, was tasked to search Lilou in the palace. Alas, the only traces she left were the bodies in the hallway. Just like Rufus, they faced the same crisis and made the same decision, just like their captain. Only Yulis didn't help and entrusted this to Ramin and Kristina.

He couldn't care less about other people when he knew Lilou was being "controlled." He wasn't sure about this, but that was what he thought as he remembered how Lilou chased him away because she knew she would hurt him against her will.

"Lilou..." Yulis whispered before finding himself standing in front of the throne room. He didn't know why his feet led him to this place, but his gut feeling told him she would be inside.

Planting his palm on the door, he took a deep breath and opened it. As soon as his eyes caught sight of the throne hall, he saw three figures inside.

Lilou, Samael, and Heliot.

"What the hell is going on here?" he murmured, trying to grasp the situation the three of them were in.. But before he could process everything, he heard a loud command, and he dropped to his knees against his will.

#### Chapter 432 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor V

Samael knew where to find her; he was connected to her, after all. Despite that, he asked Rufus to send out people to search the capital. He did so just because he knew some people wouldn't need to see this state of her.

As soon as he reached the throne hall without batting an eye at the scattered injured knights in the hallway, he gazed up at Lilou. She simply stood in front of the throne, not sitting but just staring at it curiously.

"Lilou," he called in a low tone, but the silence in the throne hall still made his voice faintly echo.

"I don't understand," Lilou voiced out without taking her eyes off the throne, tilting her head to one side, then slowly to the other. "What is so special in this seat aside that it is crested with real jewelry and clad in gold?"

"Nothing." His answer was quick while studying her back. "There's nothing important in it."

"Then why do they like it so much?"

Samael took one step forward and shrugged. "I don't know?"

"One can be powerful even without it," she said, bending over to caress the throne. "Fascinating, isn't it? It is a mere stool, but I feel like doing anything to claim it."

"Anything?"

Lilou slowly turned around and sat her butt down, nodding at him. "Anything."

They looked at each other, and he could feel the unfamiliarity in her eyes. Lilou had never looked at her so coldly as if he meant nothing to her.

"Will you fight me for it, darling?" asked Lilou with her brow arching. "You are strong enough to stop me."

"Does that scare you?" he inquired under his breath. His voice was laced with concern and bitterness.

"Scare me? Hah... apparently, it doesn't scare me at all. I am threatened, though."

"Because you feel threatened, what will you do to me?"

Lilou pressed her lips together and narrowed her eyes while scrutinizing him. She was rather amused by his calmness in this situation.

"Who knows?" she smirked with her head tilted, eyes squinting evilly. "I am honestly intrigued by how strong you are."

She smacked her lips as she pushed her hand against the armrest to stand up.

"Actually, I am a little... how do I explain this?" she murmured while taking the steps down, stopping a meter away from him. "I feel a little tingly, as I can't seem to understand how the sight of you stirs my emotions."

Lilou raised her hand as a dark shroud enveloped her shoulder down and condense under her palm. The mist soon formed into a large scythe which she swung, producing a large swoosh noise.

"It seems you are important to me... so I think I should eliminate everything that compromises my feelings." As soon as she spouted those words, Lilou charged towards him.

Samael didn't move a muscle, watching her charge at him. He didn't even try to block her attack when Lakresha's tip came close to him. He knew she wouldn't miraculously stop after staring deep into her eyes for a long time. So, he slowly closed his eyes and waited for the pain.

A powerful gust of wind blew past Samael, but the pain didn't come.

"Heliot, how dare you intervene?" he asked in a dangerous tone even before he opened his eyes.

Meanwhile, Lilou frowned as she turned her head to her side. Her eyes immediately landed on Heliot's towering figure. She glanced at the glaive while its tip pressed against the side of her neck, making it bleed slightly.

"Your Grace, I should be the one asking that," Heliot spoke with his eyes locked with Lilou. "How can you accept your death so easily? You are more disappointing than I thought."

Suddenly, the door creaked open, revealing Yulis. With Yulis' presence, Lilou raised a brow and whispered.

"Down."

As soon as she left those words, Yulis suddenly dropped to his knees. But alas, Samael and Heliot remained standing. The former furrowed his brows, and Heliot let out a chuckle.

"Unfair..." she whispered, realizing these two opponents were stronger. But the two ignored her.

"Heliot," Samael breathed out heavily, shifting his sharp eyes towards Heliot. "How dare you intervene?"

Heliot raised a brow and gave him a side-eye. "I am not doing this for you, Your Grace. I am doing this for my good friend here."

"You don't point your glaive at your good friend, my dearest," Lilou chimed in, not a bit affected by the point on her neck. Just one thrust from Heliot and she was certain it would slice through her flesh, but she didn't care.

"Her Grace and I had a deal. I already fulfilled the end of my bargain, and it is time for her to fulfill hers." Heliot smiled politely before shifting his eyes back to Samael. "You don't mind, do you?"

"I had already taken her life, Heliot," Samael answered while staring at Lilou. "She's not there anymore... I can't feel her anymore."

It was not like he had given up on Lilou, but Samael knew that the Lilou he had loved wasn't there anymore. If he could trace the slightest of her aura, he wouldn't give in this easily. But no, he couldn't. This wasn't as simple as when he switched to Hell.

"This... she's dead, right?" came out a deep exhale while staring at the woman, who looked back at him without the slightest affection. She was still wearing the same face, same body, and the same voice — but she was already a different person.

And he could only blame himself for what she had become. So, if the throne was what she wanted, he didn't plan on blocking her way. If his life threatened her, then he would let his life be taken by her.

That was how he would atone for not keeping all his promises.

"I'm not dead," Lilou whispered and let out a chuckle while glancing at Heliot. "This guy wants to die and I am here to fulfill such wishes. For how long will you keep pointing that toy at me?"

Heliot narrowed his eyes at Lilou. "How tragic." He then withdrew his sword away and took a step back.

"I wasted my time in here."

Lilou shrugged as she faced Samael. The corner of her lips curled up into a smirk.

"You people are so easy to talk with," she mused approvingly before raising her hand that was holding Lakresha. "You sure you don't plan to stop me?"

Samael shook his head, closed-lipped. She looked at him a second more before she indifferently swung her scythe down. This time, however, she stopped even without some intervention from them. Heliot and Samael blinked in silence before their brows furrowed.

"Sam...."

Chapter 433 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor VI

"Sam...." she whispered while staring at him and then yelled, staggering back as she dropped Lakresha to cover her ears. "No! Shut up! Sam! I said — my husband! Get out — can you hear me?!"

Samael and Heliot watched Lilou scream as if there were two people speaking at the same time. The former took a step forward without thinking but stopped when Lilou glared back at him.

"Don't come!" she snarled before screaming once again until she was on her knees. Her screaming resounded across the silent throne hall as if she was losing her mind.

"Lilou," Samael called as a sliver of hope peeked through his heart. His breath hitched when the screaming stopped and Lilou remained curled up on the floor. Her back was shivering while murmuring.

"Lilou." This time, Samael rushed to her without care of his own safety. He squatted down to her side, hesitant to touch her just in case he would hurt her.

"Sam..." came out a muffled call from her, making him freeze while she weakly looked up. Her other eye bore malice, but the other was shedding tears.

"My husband, I'm here... can you hear me...?"

"Lilou." He choked as he held her shoulder. His grip trembled as his eyes burned.

"Husband..." Lilou clutched his chest as if she was running out of time. "Take care... of me and our child..."

His eyes were fixed on her and just now, without a shadow of the doubt, he could tell it was her. Although it was just from one eye, he knew she was still there.

"I can't — I will kill — wake up right now..." the life from her tearful eyes slowly dimmed and was replaced with bloodlust. Without a word, Lilou immediately attempted to claw him, but this time, Samael held her wrist.

"That's enough," he said while staring at this version of herself again. "No more, love."

Samael shook his head before swiftly knocking the bottom of his palm against her nape to knock her out. He used a bit of force because he knew she wouldn't lose consciousness if he was a bit gentler. He caught her in his embrace and heaved a deep sigh, a bit shaken by what he just witnessed now.

"What should I do?" he whispered while cradling her lightly.

Heliot pressed his lips together as he observed her carefully. A sigh slipped past his lips before his lips parted to speak.

"Once she wakes up, she will be the same," he affirmed, and Samael raised his gaze at him. "Your Grace, I am quite familiar with the ritual the Bloodfang used as I was interested in it. What we had seen now only proved my theory: they are taking over her body, or they had a proper hold on her consciousness."

"What?"

Heliot nodded as he explained. "Only those two can be possible in this case. Although I am more leaning on the latter. Her Grace is born with a wicked core as her twin, after all."

Samael and Heliot stared at each other before the former carried her in bridal style. He asked Heliot to explain everything to him as he carried Lilou back to their quarters. On the way, Heliot suggested it was better if they brought Lilou to a dungeon first to prove his theory.

Of course, the duke was hesitant, but he also needed confirmation. He couldn't let Lilou do more damages against her will, after all. So in the end, he carried Lilou to a dungeon where they could keep her temporarily while they wait for her to wake up.

"So you're saying, my wife right now can be just a body without a soul, or this alter ego is occupying her consciousness?" Samael inquired, leaning against the metal bars of the cell. He was inside the cell with Lilou in his arms, keeping her in between his legs to stand as her cushion in this place.

Heliot stayed outside, back against the metal bar. "Yes. Quentin told me himself that the Bloodfang was the Moriartys' brothers. I don't know if the clan head knows about this, but it seemed the clan members had betrayed him in the end."

"Alexander..." Samael whispered while stroking his wife's hair. "He will never call the Moriarty his brothers. That aggravating stubborn fool is too prideful to let the Moriarty dictate him."

"It is out of his character for sure." Heliot nodded in agreement as he had met that person they were talking about a long time ago. "He will not use his kins' life to do such an atrocious act for personal gain. How tragic to die alongside traitors."

There was a moment of silence between them before Samael spoke once again.

"So, if she wakes up as someone else again?" he inquired, gazing down at his unconscious wife. "Should I knock her unconscious repeatedly?"

"No. We have to keep her unresponsive, my lord."

"You mean, you want to seal her consciousness and force her into slumber?" Samael frowned, displeased by this suggestion.

"It is not like how the seal that forced you into slumber." Heliot turned around and gazed down at Lilou, who was in the duke's embrace. "This may sound risky, but it is better and more effective than knocking her unconscious every time."

"Heliot, the reason we call it forced slumber is that we sleep for a long time. What the hell are you talking about?"

"I am talking about forcing her into a brief slumber where she wakes up every month to release her pent-up urges." Heliot's eyes remained on Lilou's face, but his eyes glinted solemnly. "If her alter ego stayed conscious for too long, the wife you knew will slowly fade away."

"What the..." A scoff escaped Samael's mouth, as he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "How about the child, then? Will it even survive?"

"With your blood, your child and wife will make it... hopefully."

"Then do it."

"No." Heliot's quick refusal made Samael frown. "Sealing her will take away my lifespan, Your Grace. If she stayed unconscious for a decade, I will lose a decade of my life. Not to mention, it will strain my body. Why would I make such a tremendous sacrifice?"

Samael's frown remained before letting out a deep sigh. "What do you want in return, Prince Heliot?"

"Take the throne," Heliot answered without a second hesitation. "If you want to keep her and your child safe, being the emperor is the only position you must aim for. Especially now with her current plight, you won't like people going up against your madness."

"Why are you and Beatrice so obsessed with making me the fucking king?"

"I don't know about the Princess, but aside from that, our Karo Kingdom is under the Great Heart Empire and the duchess is a friend of mine." Heliot's eyes darkened as he held on to the metal bar. "Being the emperor is more than leading the land you rule, but also, you have the power to protect those important to you. You are strong, Your Grace, but having the power of mobilizing an entire country and not just Fabian and Rufus is a different case."

Heliot paused as he squatted down to look at him at eye level. "If the duchess and your unborn child are so important to you, then you should use everything at your disposal to protect them."

"And if I don't?"

"Then that would be a shame." Heliot shrugged indifferently. "If you can't protect her, I will take her away from you, Your Grace. This is not a challenge nor a threat. It is a promise and I never break my promises."

Samael stared at Heliot's eyes as he let out a ridiculing scoff. "Heliot, why are you doing this?"

"Why am I doing this?" Heliot pressed his lips together before pushing himself up. He turned around and started walking away before he answered.

"Because I kept a promise to my friend that we will always share the common goal... and that goal is for this empire to prosper with balanced of fear and peace. Also, I don't want to bow down to Sir Knight when I am confident he can't kill me."

"Tch." Samael clicked his tongue as he listened to Heliot's footsteps.. "Bastard."

Chapter 434 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor VII

Just like what Heliot said, Lilou woke up not long after. She weakly opened her eyes, grunting as she pushed herself away from Samael's embrace. Meanwhile, Samael released her and watched her sit up while massaging her nape.

"Does it hurt?" he asked, and she turned her head to her with an arched brow. "I'm sorry. I had to do that."

Lilou blinked twice and glanced up, immediately getting a grasp they were inside a dungeon cell. "Husband, what's with that look? Does the guilt eats you up?"

"Yes." He nodded without a second hesitation, yet his voice was calm and collected. "Why you became like this is my fault and there's no one else I can blame but myself."

"Hah... why I turned like this?" Lilou chortled in ridicule while shaking her head. "Dear, do you hate this version of your wife so much?"

"No."

"You don't sound convinced."



"I will never hate you, Lilou. What I hate is me." Samael breathed out, staring at the distant look in his wife's eyes. He knew this wasn't Lilou anymore, but she was still there, or maybe he was wrong in the beginning. Perhaps this was still Lilou... that this person was a part of her she hid because she couldn't accept it.

"I promised you before that I won't let them harm you, but... I failed you. I shouldn't have let you return to this place all alone. It was dumb," he whispered in distress, resting his arm on his bent knees while leaning back against the metal bar lazily.

"You know it's dumb... why did you let me do what I want, then?" she raised a brow, closed-lipped. Samael cast her a look. "I wonder... was it because I want my wife to have freedom? Was it because I want her to learn so she can spread her wings freely? Or did I overestimate her capabilities? I don't fucking know."

Silence descended upon them as Lilou stared at his calm figure. She couldn't do much in this cramped space and even if she did, Samael would stop her.

"Either way, you failed her," she stressed, breaking the brief silence between them. For her, if she couldn't get out of here, she might as well antagonize him.

"You should've let her go when you realized it is hard to keep someone like her in the world you're trapped in all your life," Lilou continued without taking her eyes away from him. "Poor Lilou, for she had loved someone who is shallow and had no actual goal."

Samael pressed his lips into a thin line. What this Lilou said wasn't all lies. He actually had no goal from the very beginning. Sure, Samael was strong, but he didn't put it into good use because he was indecisive. Compared to Stefan, Zero, Heliot, Alphonse and Alistair, Beatrice, and Lilou, Samael didn't have a proper goal from the very beginning.

He was just here... all for the fun. While the rest had laid all their lives in what they were fighting for.

"Now you're paying for the price, don't you think?" a wicked smirk resurfaced on her lips as her eyes glinted. She turned and crawled towards him like a cat, stopping when her face was a palm length away from him.

"What are you going to do, darling? Continue circling in a carousel of agony? Break free from this dark eternity? Or nothing at all, like always? My darling, even if you trap me in here or speak all words of love like a spell, her heart will never know. It is a waste of time because everything will fade to black."

Samael stared at the vicious expression plastered on her face, feeling his heart numb from the paralyzing agony. Maybe, he thought, these were the words she had never told him.

"You're pregnant," he whispered, and she quirked a brow. "A child... our child... is there."

His eyes veered down, although all he had seen was the top of her bosom. He then lifted his gaze, raising his hand to cup her cheek.

"You are right, Lilou. Everything you said is right." Samael smiled bitterly while caressing her lean cheek with his thumb. "I am trapped in this predicament for a long time and even if I try to break free, I always find myself coming back in here. Now, even you are in this same mess."

"Are you regretting dragging me in here?" she pressed her cheek against his palm like a cat. "You can be honest. She will never know, darling."

Samael fluttered his long eyelashes and shook his head lightly. "No." His answer made her raise her brows, waiting for an explanation.

"I never regret dragging you to hell with me. What I regret the most is... not having Hell wrap under my palm," he paused as he retracted his back from the metal back, making her back away to create a little distance between them. "Since I don't think I can ever break free from this dark eternity, the least I can do is own it."

"Oh?"

A subtle smile appeared on his lips as he reached for her hand, gazing at it briefly while squeezing them. "You don't have to worry anymore, Lilou. I will take care of you and our child."

This time, Lilou just went silent, darting her eyes down to their hands and right back up at him. Samael managed his breathing before raising his head and sported a reassuring smile.

"This time for sure," he said while pulling her into his embrace. He didn't pull with force, but his arms wrapped around her before she could even react.

"I will protect you and our child. Even if I had to sell my soul and get devoured underground, I will turn hell into your safe haven, Lilou." His hands crawled up her spine up to the back of her head while lowering his head to her shoulder. "There is something I hadn't told you about me. Lilou, I may have many abilities... but they were all stolen."

Her eyes dilated as his hot breaths caressed her neck. She wiggled out of instinct, but his arms stilled her.

"What are you trying to do?" she asked in a panic, but he didn't budge a muscle. Samael's eyes dropped, embracing her even tighter, with eyes full of bitterness.

"My real ability is... I steal or give things to people." He opened his mouth, revealing his long fangs. Samael hesitated in sinking his fangs into her, but her curses fortified his resolve and bit her shoulders.

A deafening shriek from her resounded across the entire dungeon, writhing in pain under his grip, but he held her down until her screams died down. Samael pulled his fangs away from her carefully as blood dripped down from the corner of his lips.

He gazed down at Lilou in his embrace, sighing while stroking her back. "Your heart will never know, right?" he stayed silent and cradled her as he rested his back against the metal bar, closing his eyes slowly.

"I'm glad to hear you again, Alexander," came out a whisper along with his deep breath. "And fuck you too, Jin.. Welcome to the mind of the monster."

#### Chapter 435 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor VIII

Most vampires were blessed with one ability that they would hone to perfection. Samael was no different. But his ability was the most misunderstood of all. Everyone knew he was simply blessed with many abilities, but that wasn't the case.

Those abilities he was using were all stolen.

Only a few knew his actual ability: the late king, the late crown prince Dyrroth, Lara, and Alexander Bloodfang. And all of them were dead. Not that he was the person who took their life, but the dead tell no tales. Hence, not a single living being knew his actual ability anymore... or maybe there was, Heliot.

Of course, just like everyone else, there were repercussions for using these abilities. For example, Samael couldn't just absorb anyone's ability or too many people if he wanted to stay sane or keep his consciousness. Abusing this ability could make him forget who he was and let these voices of those he had absorbed take over his body.

"Welcome to the mind of the monster."

Samael greeted lazily, hearing the distinct voices of familiar people in his head. This made him realize how tough it was for Lilou to have an entire clan inside her head. They weren't just whispering; they were much louder than that.

"I had always thought of absorbing the core, but I was afraid I would absorb her as well," he murmured, attempting to shut off the curses he was hearing inside his head. "I don't even know if the core can be absorbed too. I might just end up killing her for nothing."

A sigh of relief slipped past his lips as he felt exhausted, an effect after stealing something from someone. The more powerful it was, the weaker he would become for a short time.

"But Alex, why is there only... a few of you?" he whispered while stroking the unconscious Lilou. "Where are the rest? I plan to say my greetings to all my in-laws."

'Dead,' a cold and authoritative voice rang in his head. 'They all schemed with the Moriarty. My daughter managed to detect what's rotting underneath the core.'

"She did, huh? And you killed all of them?" the voice named Alexander didn't respond again, but Samael still let out a deep exhale. "You should've killed Jin too... for fun."

'Fucking bastard. I can't believe you will end up seducing my niece! If we only know, we won't let our descendants stay in your fucking fief! Now she is with a child! Where the fuck did you leave your fucking brain? I mean, do you even have one?'

"Sorry, Uncle Jin," Samael chuckled as he thought having them inside his head wasn't that bad. They would talk in his head for quite some time until he could get used to them and find them a nice place in the back of his mind.

He slowly opened his eyes once again, and a glint flickered across his eyes. "But don't you think doing business with me instead of briefing my wife from scratch better?"

Finally, there was a brief silence in his head. What he said was correct, after all. Pushing Lilou to do the sole purpose of their sacrifice was tough, but Samael would understand better since he had been there from the very beginning.

'Can we even trust this fickle-hearted fool who never has any motivation to do important things?' Jin, who had a very light and carefree voice despite cursing, inquired with a voice full of doubt. Surely, he didn't trust Samael, even though the man was more than capable.

Alexander, the head of the Bloodfang clan, stayed silent momentarily. 'He wouldn't want us inside his head if he didn't have enough drive for this.'

"Just so you know," Samael cleared his throat while he carried Lilou in a bridal style as he stood up. "I'm taking the throne for myself."

As soon as he dropped those words, he kicked the thick metal bars, and it entirely broke away as if it was as brittle as glass. A deafening bang echoed across the dungeon as soon as the metal landed on the rough concrete, creating thin smoke which ascended from it.

Samael didn't idle for long as he started walking away with his wife in his arms. His expression was sharp, licking the blood on the corner of his lips.

"You better tell me everything from start to finish. I don't enjoy playing guessing games anymore, Alexander."

The voices in his head stayed quiet for a while before Alexander's solemn voice was heard again. "You better not miss a single detail, Hell. We will kill you from the inside if you fail this time."

"Sure." Samael's answer was quick, prepared to die if he failed Lilou again. "I give you permission to do as you please if you see my actions unsatisfactory."

Upon sensing the determination in his voice, the consciousness in his head detailed their plan from start to finish. They even included the Moriartys meddling, the reason Lilou had been losing her mind, and Lilou's actual abilities. Everything they had explained made more sense about why Zero was so eager to have her by his side.

Samael paused in his tracks in the middle of the hallway towards the third prince's palace. "What did you say?"

'Even if you absorbed the core, this version of her will stay within her.' Alexander repeated in a solemn tone. 'She had carried the core for too long. Samael, with all the details I had given you, you now understand what kind of host the core was looking for.'

It wasn't just strength and compatibility. The core that was corrupted by the Moriarty was searching for the very opposite of what the Bloodfang wanted. Someone who was pure and untainted as a blank canvass, so the core had slowly painted it black.

'That child... what you've seen is already a part of her, Samael. I knew she was kind the first time I laid my eyes on her, but people who were the kindest, the most loving, and the shines the brightest... their dark side is just as extreme. She is not trapped with you, Hell. You are trapped with her forever... and I will make sure you have no option to back down.'

Samael took a deep breath as he resumed in his tracks. "I don't need another option." His eyes flickered menacingly.

"Also, you are wrong.." — for he had planned to cage Lilou in this enormous place called an empire.

#### Chapter 436 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor IX

Lilou didn't regain consciousness, even when Samael had stolen the core from her. According to Alexander Bloodfang, it was more likely an unconscious decision she made. Also, with her pregnancy on the table, it was better for Lilou to stay unresponsive, as it would be painful because of being human with a vampire in her womb. Turning her to a vampire now would mean killing the child.

It was just what Heliot said.

After the search, the causality Lilou left wasn't as devastating as what happened a month ago. She injured a few while others bled out. One could say she didn't mean to kill them, but one could also argue she simply wanted to give them a slow death. Thanks to Rufus and the third squadron, many knights had survived. Even so, their view towards Lilou and the royal family grew more hostile.

Either way, this occurrence remained a secret from outside the palace. Now Klaus, Yul, Silvia, Kristina, and Ramin were gathered outside the third prince's palace. They had already heard what happened and what Samael planned to do with Lilou.

"They will force her to a slumber we never heard before...?" Yul murmured while gazing at the door, curving his hand into a tight fist. "Not knowing when she will wake up?"

"They said she will wake up every month," Silvia chimed in with the same despondent and worried tone. She was displeased about this, of course, but thinking that she would suffer more if they forced her to regain consciousness was worse. Lilou chose to stay unconscious, after all.

"She will wake up? Or do you mean that person?" Klaus queried sarcastically while clenching his hand. He gazed down when Claude suddenly held his fist, looking up at him innocently.

Ramin stayed silent while leaning on the wall not far away from them, who was standing in front of the chambers. He was worried about Lilou, but he trusted Samael's judgment. Meanwhile, Kristina, who was standing on his side, remained quiet. She used to antagonize the La Crox at every turn she got, but she kept her mouth shut this time.

"I guess you can't hate them forever if you agree with them in one thing for once," he muttered, glancing at her, who was staring down at the floor.

"I will dislike them forever, but I can't deny that they are genuinely worried about Her Grace," she whispered as her eyes softened with worry. "Will we ever see her again?"

Ramin swallowed down the sudden tension in his throat, sporting a firm expression. "Of course. Her Grace isn't weak."

"Ramin... have you ever thought that we were wrong all along?" she inquired after the brief silence between them. "If we just barge into this place and raised a rebellion just like the original plan — if we concerned ourselves less about Alphonse, do you think this will happen? Have it ever crossed you how dumb this plan turned out to be?"

His mouth opened and closed, losing his voice momentarily. "No." His answer made her gaze at his side, revealing her eyes, which were on the verge of tears.

"Whatever planned we push through will have their own risks. Barging in here while raising a rebellion is easier to be dealt with instead of making them believe Her Grace is trying to fulfill the end of her bargain. They will have to tread on eggshells just like we do — giving us the fairground. It's just we failed to consider her problems with her own clan and it's no one's fault.

Alphonse is dead, and so is Alistair. About the previous king Stefan, we might not know what happened to him, but we still reached the goal. We seized the palace, and the empire is now under our control. We just needed a king to rule it."

Ramin nodded at her reassuringly, as he believed this was already the best outcome they could ever get. Although it pained him to think like this, considering what happened to Lilou, it was the truth. Fighting their enemy head-on was what just the enemy wanted.

"I... don't know." Kristina let out a deep exhale as she shook her head. "Captain doesn't even consider himself in ruling the empire."

"That's because the captain could see far ahead than we do," Ramin replied, making her gaze at him once again while he set his eyes on the three La Crox.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Kristina with genuine wonder in her voice. "Do you think Captain shouldn't be the emperor?"

Ramin stayed silent for a while, diverting his attention back to her. "The captain is the emperor we all want, but I'm sure he knew he is not the one this place needs, Kristina."

"What are you..."

"After this incident, no, after that occurrence a month ago, I'm pretty sure Captain had known that. The Great Heart Empire, those kingdoms under the empire, nobles, schemes after schemes, having him as the emperor will only fuel the fire of those people, Kristina," Ramin explained from a point of view of a Bearer, a knight, and a nobleman. "Captain is what the people who will want, for he is compassionate and put his people first, but this world doesn't work that way."

"Do you think those people in the Karo and Cross Kingdom would stay still if Captain became emperor?" he added while arching a brow, speaking in a knowing tone. "You and I know that vampires won't easily bow down to anyone, Kristina. The one this empire need is someone who will put all those people in their places, and I think we both knew who I am talking about."

Kristina let out a sharp exhale as she gazed at the door in distress. "So, you're saying this empire needs if His Grace?"

"The true face of peace is not about just being in peace." Ramin also turned his head in the door's direction. The three La Crox were still there, waiting for the people inside the room to go out.

"Peace can only be achieved if there is an underlying fear no one will ever dare to touch."

Chapter 437 - How He Became Emperor X

Meanwhile, inside the third prince's chambers, stood Beatrice from the end of the bed, Heliot on the side, Samael on the other end, across from Heliot with Rufus. On the bed lay Lilou with her hands on her stomach and her eyes closed, sleeping peacefully.

The atmosphere inside wasn't any less suffocating than outside, as none of them talked. Beatrice pursed her lips, darting her eyes from Heliot to Samael, who was staring down at his wife.

Samael reached for Lilou's hand and squeezed it lightly. "I will wait for you."

Silence once again dawned in the room after his remarks. They wanted to respect Samael's time before forcing Lilou into a slumber.

When Samael took a deep breath and withdrew his hand away from her, he looked up at Heliot. He nodded, signaling for him to start.

"Are you sure you want to be here?" Heliot inquired as his brows rose.

"That is an idiotic question, Prince."

Heliot shrugged, as he simply wanted to make sure. He then gazed at Beatrice and then at Rufus, taking a deep breath.

"She will be in pain temporarily." He paused while extending his arm and planting his palm on Lilou's stomach. His eyes glinted as he sucked air through his gritted teeth. Heliot gazed at her face and a subtle smile appeared on his lips before he raised a finger from his free hand.

His fingertip sharpened until it looked like a claw. Heliot slowly pressed it on Lilou's forehead. Blood soon appeared on her forehead as he drew a circle on her skin with his nail.

Lilou's eyes suddenly popped open while gasping for air, followed by a deafening scream. However, she couldn't move her body and could only scream in pain with his palm on her.

"May you find your peace in your brief rest..." Heliot murmured without stopping his chanting.

While he do so, Beatrice raised her arm. With a small knife in her other hand, she sliced through her palm. She then clasped it and let the blood drip to her curling toes.

"May the blood of Von Stein lead you back to us, Lil."

Samael gazed at Rufus as the latter would seal Lilou with his blood instead of him. Using his blood will put her in an eternal slumber, after all. Rufus gazed back at him and nodded reassuringly. Just like Beatrice, Rufus sliced his palm and let his blood drip down to her arm.

"May the blood of Barrett wake you up, Your Grace."

The sealing of Lilou took a minute before her screams faded as she closed her eyes once again. Samael's jaw tightened while his fist trembled, nails digging into his palm.

Heliot slowly withdrew his hand from her, panting for air as he had placed his energy on her to keep her alive even without solid food intake.

"You still have to feed her your blood for the child, Your Grace," Heliot informed when he stabilized his breathing. "She will wake up every thirtieth day. Be sure to keep her in a dungeon to avoid her from causing havoc."

Samael didn't reply as he kept silent. He just stared at her for a very long time without moving a muscle.

"We will move away from her," he muttered after his long silence, making Heliot frown. "Once I was sure she would wake up, we will leave the capital."

"Are you trying to break our deal, Your Grace?" asked Heliot in a cold yet calm tone, watching Samael raise his gaze at him.

"No. I will still take the throne, but I don't want my wife and my child to be restricted and be exposed to the palace rules." Samael uttered adamantly. His tone already told them he wouldn't change his mind.

"A palace without an emperor?"

"Is the king in the royal palace of Karo a king, Prince?" Samael tilted his head without taking his sharp eyes away from Heliot. "I am aware that our circumstances are different, but I can be the emperor even though I am not in this damn place."

"That is only possible if --"

"It's possible if I say it's possible, Prince Heliot." Samael's tone lowered and the temperature dropped as well. "I will stay in this place for another month or two and leave right after succeeding the throne."

Heliot stared into his eyes before he shrugged indifferently. "Suit yourself. You will come back anyway if it didn't work for you."

"Rufus." Samael nodded before shifting his eyes to Rufus, the first person he had told about his plan on being the emperor.

"Yes, Your Majesty?"

"Gather everyone in the meeting hall. Bring Dominique and Jayden as well." Samael's orders made their brows furrow, but Rufus still bowed and accepted the order. After that, Samael darted his eyes from Beatrice to Heliot once again. Before he could speak, Beatrice already waved.

"I'll follow Sir Knight," she said and glanced at Heliot. "Take a rest first, my prince. You are a little pale."

With that being said, Heliot and Beatrice left first. Rufus accompanied Samael for a while, placing his hand on the latter's shoulder before leaving. When the room fell into silence once again, Samael stayed in his spot without moving.

"I missed you already, wife," he whispered as he slowly perched on the edge of the mattress.

"Mildred will come and change your clothes later. I will be a little busy once I walk out this door, but I will try to visit you as much as I can."

Samael took a deep breath and sported a forced smile, reaching to her forehead as the drawing Heliot did slowly faded. He stroked it with his thumb as if to soothe the pain of the seal.

"I love you, Lilou. Without you, my life means nothing." He muttered with a heavy heart, letting out a sharp exhale. "I will wait for you, I promise."

He bent over, leaning forward, and planted a soft peck on her chapped lips. Samael then rested his forehead against hers, inhaling her faint breaths as if to fuel his drive on what he was fighting for.

"Rest well, my love." After whispering those words, Samael pushed himself away from her and stood on the side of the bed. He stared at her for another minute before pivoting on his heel.

As he walked towards the door, the bitterness and angst in his eyes faded, replaced by murderous intent befitting for a... tyrant. No one but Samael knew that the person who walked out that door was someone who was bound to put fear and peace into one place.

By means or foul, nothing had stopped Samael from then on, putting terror that would haunt those who opposed him even during their sleep.

## Chapter 438 - How He Became Emperor XI

Samael gathered everyone in the meeting room. Standing at the end of the table, he scanned all the faces gathered around it. From his right was Heliot, Beatrice, Klaus, Claude, Silvia, Yulis, Ramin, Kristina, Noah who came after receiving a royal invitation, Cameron, Dominique and Jayden fresh from their cells, and then Rufus.



"You must have heard it already," he spoke, breaking the thick silence that reigned the meeting room. "I planned on taking the throne. If you have any objection, speak now."

His tone was low and calm, but one couldn't tell what he would do if anyone object. Not that any of them planned to — even Dominique and Jayden remained silent.

Samael nodded in satisfaction before he continued. "I want to succeed the throne as soon as possible. I know the empire is still unstable and many people — especially the aristocrats — are protesting and giving everyone a hard time. Invite them all in here. Everyone who wants an audience with the person in charge, I will deal with them all at once."

Silence followed his remarks, as they could only stare at him. Despite his placid tone and demeanor, a sense of dread crept into their heart.

"What happened to Stefan?"

Suddenly, Dominique finally regained his voice. He didn't care much about Samael's plans, but he was more concerned about his king.

"Who knows? You're with him all the time, Dominique," Samael answered nonchalantly, casting him a distant look. "How come you aren't included with the previous emperor's plans?"

Dominique pressed his lips while his shoulder trembled in anger. He glared at Samael but held his frustration at the former's insinuation.

"Instead of inquiring about things we have no answer, aren't you curious why you are here?"

"Why?" this time, Jayden raised a query. "What are you thinking of letting us join here without restraints?"

A brief chuckle slipped past Samael's lips as he darted his eyes between Dominique and Jayden. They weren't restrained and they could freely do what they pleased if they dared.

"I will reinstate you titles and bring you back to duty," Samael explained, keeping it short and simple. This time, not just Jayden and Dominique were surprised, but everyone as well — except Heliot.

"You will reinstate them?" asked Klaus in disbelief, casting his other brothers a conflicted look. "These fuckers are loyal dogs of Stefan."

"Hell, I don't want to question your decision, but please reconsider." Silvia voiced out with worry in her voice.

Each and everyone raised their concerns and Samael listened to them in silence. Once they were done, he scanned them once again, planting his palm on the edge of the table.

"I understand all your concerns, and I am fully aware that Dominique and Jayden will never swear their loyalty to me," Samael remarked while glancing at the two men he mentioned. "But I will still reinstate them."

Samael paused, pushing himself away from the table. "As you all know, we are short of hands and we need more people, so this palace and the capital can recover quickly. I don't want to send my people out on missions where they can die during these tough times."

As soon as his last remark registered in their head, their frown was replaced with surprise. Even Dominique and Jayden couldn't help but scoff. But Samael only took a momentary pause as he faced his two brothers.

"If you want to know where in hell is Stefan, hear his reasons, and so on, I advised you to accept my sincerity." A weak smile resurfaced on his face, but the other two simply chuckled in ridicule.

"And if we refused?" asked Jayden with eyes bearing with malice.

"Then, that's a shame. You will die not knowing a thing." Samael shrugged nonchalantly, peeling his eyes away from them. "Moving on, since you're already in here, there are things I want you to know."

"First is, I will only stay in the palace for a month or two to settle everything in the palace and the capital. I don't plan on staying here with my wife and raise my child inside this damn hellhole." Samael continued, and this raised concerns from Cameron.

"Your Grace, how can the emperor leave his palace —" Cameron was cut off as Samael raised a hand. He immediately pressed his lips and lowered his head.

"I know it's a little crazy for the king to leave his throne empty, but I will not change my mind. I will deal with all important documents and state of affairs in my dwelling outside this place. Once I'm gone, I will leave Rufus in charge of this place," Samael explained and glanced at Rufus, who had his brows furrowed.

"But... how about when you needed to accept an audience? Will you travel back and forth from Grimsbanne to the Capital? Why don't you just move the Capital to Grimsbanne, if that is the case?" this time, it was Yul who raised a question. "Grimsbanne is set to be the new capital, after all."

"You didn't understand, Yulis. When I said I don't want to raise my son inside this damn hellhole, what I mean is I don't want to expose my son to the palace rules or being a royalty." Samael's tone grew adamant and moved on from the topic when no one argued with him about this. "Also, I will assure you no one will request a private audience with me, and if it's very important, Rufus will hear it in my stead."

"Second, not many of you will stay in this place as well," Samael added, causing them to look at him in confusion. This time, even Heliot raised a brow as he stared at Samael's rear.

"As you are all aware, the seat of the Earl in Monarey of the North is empty and Grimsbanne as well.." His eyes slid towards Klaus and then to Claude, who was sitting beside his uncle. "Claude, will you accept the title of being the new Earl of Monarey?"

Chapter 439 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor XII

"Claude, will you accept the title of being the new Earl of Monarey?"

There was a long silence in the meeting room, with their eyes slowly dilating. Heliot smirked in amusement upon hearing Samael's straight question. He had already known Samael was capable, and he just needed enough motivation and drive to embrace this role of the emperor.

"You are sending this child to the damn north?" Klaus was the first to break the ice, slamming his hand on the table as he abruptly stood up. "Hell, what the hell are you thinking?!"

"Klaus, you're not the person I am talking to."

"How can you -- "

"I will accept it." Klaus halted as he gazed down at Claude in disbelief. Claude didn't look up at him. Instead, he stared at Samael solemnly.

"Your Majesty, I will accept the title and fulfill my duties to the best of my abilities in one condition." He negotiated directly, without a second hesitation.

"Tell me."

Claude took a deep breath and glanced at Klaus. "I want Uncle Klaus to assist me."

"Granted." Samael nodded just as quickly as Claude's request. He had already planned to send Klaus with Claude, to begin with.

"Klaus, Claude may be a child, but he had proven his capabilities repeatedly. It will be an insult if you keep treating him as a child instead of a man." He glanced at Claude and then set his eyes back to Klaus. "You will assist the new Earl of Monarey. Everything the new Earl needs, the empire will assist him, I can assure you with that."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." Claude smiled subtly before reaching for Klaus' hand. "Uncle, I want this job."

Klaus studied Claude's expression to see if he was simply accepting this because of fear. Alas, the fire behind the youth's eyes blazed as if he truly wanted this job. So, he could only let out a sigh and take a seat.

"Then, I guess I have to pack a lot of clothes to fight the cold," he murmured helplessly, making Claude giggle.

"About Grimsbanne..." Pleased that Claude and Klaus had accepted this offer, Samael raised his gaze to the others. It was obvious that Samael's conversation with Claude surprised them.

"Yul," he called and Yul flinched. "You will be in charge of Grimsbanne."

"What? Me?" Yul gasped in shock, gazing back at him with disbelief in his eyes.

"You've assisted Lilou. I'm certain you are very familiar with Grimsbanne's state of affairs. So, I want you to inherit the title of the Duke."

"Wait --!"

"This time, I won't take no as an answer, Yul."

Yul's breath hitched as Samael's eyes glinted menacingly. Unlike his lenient attitude towards Claude, Samael wouldn't take no for an answer.

"Hell... why would you... entrust me with your fief?" came out a muffled inquiry while staring at Samael blankly.

Samael cleared his throat and glanced at Rufus. "Because we can't entrust our beloved Grimsbanne just to anyone. What do you think, Rufus?"

"I think the ninth prince is the best person to handle Grimsbanne." Rufus voiced out sternly, nodding in agreement.

"You..."

"Now that the north and west are settled..." Samael then continued, even though Yulis hadn't wrapped this news around his head.

"I haven't even accepted yet..." Yulis murmured in disbelief, unconsciously listening to Samael's voice, only for his eyes to dilate a second later.

"... Silvia, you will guard the east." Samael's eyes were on Silvia again. "The east had been plagued with a long drought and food shortage. I want you to resolve this problem."

"What...?" she scoffed in disbelief. "You want me to resolve the drought that had plagued the east for 50 years?"

Samael nodded slowly. "You are smart, Silvia. Stefan had caged you in this palace for a long time."

"Hell, how can I..." her breath hitched, gazing down as her task was far more challenging than Yul's and dealing with the freezing north. "I've never been to the east."

"I trust in you, sister." She gazed up upon hearing Samael's gentle voice. The latter offered an encouraging smile.

"I won't task the east to you if I know you can't do it. Believe in yourself, for the emperor also believed in you." Samael uttered with conviction, making her bite her lip before nodding. "I will prepare your lounging and everything you need in the east."

"Th — thank you, Your Majesty." Silvia stammered, having mixed emotions for this acknowledgment she never received in the past. All she had done so far was to be pretty and erase and alter people's memories. For her to do something so important made her feel thrilled and anxious at the same time.

"Now that is settled..."

"How about the south, Your Majesty?" Noah raised his hand, as it seemed the discussion would come to an end.

Samael pressed his lips and hummed a long tune. "I will stay there. I planned on staying in Minowa in the south."

"In Minowa?" Cameron questioned while everyone creased their brows. "Isn't that a bit? No, it was too far from the capital? Minowa is the end of the south, Your Grace — I mean, Your Majesty. It is so far that it barely looks like it is under the Empire."

"That's why I am staying there, Marquess Cameron. Minowa is the farthest land from the Capital. I'd like my child and wife to be as far away as possible from the capital." Samael answered as a matter-of-fact. "Moreover, since the south is so far, the previous king paid little attention to it. I'm curious and I want to see it for myself what shocking truth is rotting in that desolate Earldom."

Silence dawned upon them as they grasped the conclusion of this meeting. With their new titles and duties to fulfill, it gave them mixed emotions. Not to mention, the emperor's chosen place to dwell, Minowa in the South.

"That's all. Send out invitations to those people who want an audience with me and hasten the succession of the throne." Samael clapped, snapping them all back to the current lapse. "I expect you to be prepared until then."

He didn't wait for them to react as Samael gazed at Rufus, and then at Dominique and Jayden.  
"Follow me."

And with that, the meeting ended with everyone's head buzzing from everything.

But that was only the beginning.

None of them knew at this time that planting them into those places would only make the Great Heart Empire impregnable than ever.

Chapter 440 - [Bonus ]How He Became Emperor -- End.

Another day passed by in the palace. Everyone who had been protesting and requesting an audience with the person who was currently in charge of the palace was all invited in. Mostly consisted of the aristocrat faction, some representative of commoners, nobles with titles, and a bunch of people who were concerned about the rising or falling empire.

"Hmph! I had heard that they are planning to sit a human as emperor. What is the royal family thinking? Announcing to make the Heart Kingdom as an empire — and then, this... so suddenly."

"You better hold your tongue. No matter how you feel so disappointed, you are still inside the palace, Count."

"Even so, no human king will make me bow down even if it is the strongest knight."

"There is no official announcement yet."

"They kept us all in here and..." One nobleman scrunched his nose up while bobbing his face on the few commoners inside the hall with them. "... with such filthy turned vampires."

The commoners, who were turned vampires, representing the commoners in each district, glared at the nobleman. The nobleman didn't even conceal the dismay in his eyes.

"What is taking them so long? We've been waiting for a long time. Do they plan us to kill each other here first?" someone voiced out as the murmurings and the tension in the air grew thicker. If the person they wanted to meet wouldn't come any time sooner, it was possible that a fight would break out with the heated argument going on.

Not long after, they heard a distinct sound of footsteps coming inside the throne hall. Some still continued to argue and only stopped when they realized most of them ceased. They turned their head to the person walking from the side, following his figure with their gaze as he walked towards the step up and stood on the elaborate pomp.

Samael slowly turned to face them, his eyes scanning everyone's face. Some who recognized him looked at him, wide-eyed. Some who only heard about the tales of the man with silver hair with eyes who could make one bow voluntarily swallowed hard.

His aura was no joke, they all thought in unison. Finally agreeing on something for once. More than his aura, one thing that everyone noticed was the royal mantle draped over his shoulder and the black and red uniform underneath. Close to the throne stood Rufus, holding his hand behind, with no emotions on his face.

"I won't go around in a circle since the empire cannot waste a second considering the current state of affairs," Samael spoke and his voice echoed. "State only important matters at hand. If I deem it unnecessary and a waste of time... I will kill you."

A subtle smile appeared on his face, pleased to witness how most of them turned pale. He slowly planted his palms on the throne's armrest and plopped his butt down, finding his comfort on this seat.

Samael quirked a brow when a minute had passed and no one dared speak. It was just pure silence, and they heard only the tapping of his nail against the armrest.

"Well?" he cocked his head to the side, smirking wickedly. "I clearly stated that I do not want anyone wasting my time, but alas, you just wasted a minute. How will you bring that minute back to me?"

"I — there's — your highness, are you planning to succeed the throne?" someone raised a hand out of panic, forgetting the initial concerns why he was in there in the first place.

"Yes." Samael nodded and then followed by another wave of silence once again. A sigh escaped his mouth as he was only pulling an aura on them, but they already gave in.

"Is that all you want to know?" he inquired with genuine wonder in his voice.

"What happened to the previous king?" asked someone in a low tone, but the silence still highlighted his query.

"Dead. What else?"

"Uhh... what do you plan on doing for the empire?"

"To make it great?" he raised a brow as he answered in a knowing tone. "Is that all? This is why you all came in here? To interview me?"

Again, the silence was the answer he received. They had already forgotten the insults and logical argument they had all in-store. Who would want to berate someone who clearly threatened to kill them with a smile? Not to mention, Samael had a notorious reputation, and seeing him on the flesh was enough proof that he lived up to his name.

Hell.

"Does anyone object about my succession of the throne?" asked Samael with his eyes traveling from coast to coast. "I will give you the liberty to speak your displeasure and respect your time to voice your argument."

He nodded reassuringly, making everyone look at each other. Those who were too cowardly had their tongues rollback, while some — mostly those from higher nobles — found courage in this offer. If Samael said so himself, they trusted that he would keep his word.

"I object!" A nobleman, who was in a heated argument with a turned vampire previously, raised a hand. He looked at Samael bravely while the latter raised a brow.

"State your reasons." Samael calmly motioned his hand for the nobleman to stand in the front row. When the nobleman stood in the front, he looked up courageously.

"Your Grace, I understand that you are most qualified to be the emperor in terms of strength. However, someone who usurps the throne by brute force will only bring disaster to the empire. I think Your Highness will only bring fear if you lead the Great Heart Empire. The House Berdthand will never bow down to such a vicious person."

Those who had heard this man's statements could not help but applaud him in their hearts. To speak such blatant remarks right in front of Samael was commendable.

"Fear... what is your name?" Samael asked as he gazed at the nobleman in amusement.

"I am Count Berdthand of House Berdthand, Your Grace."

"That is very commendable of you, Count." He nodded in acknowledgment before setting his eyes back on the count. "However, who said I do not want to instill fear in every living being in this empire?"

Count Berdthand slowly widened his eyes as his complexion grew pale at the sinister smirk that appeared on the duke's face. Samael pushed himself up and strutted toward him. The man staggered back, but the closer Samael approached, his aura was far too overwhelming that could paralyze a person.

Everyone close to the count lurched back, creating distance until Samael stood a step away from the count. They gulped and even held their breaths, staring at the man claiming the throne blankly.

"You said, 'you and the House Berdthand will never bow down to such a vicious person?'" Samael repeated while gazing down at the terrified Count. "Then you don't have to, Count. I still have manners in respecting someone's decision."

"Your... Grace... didn't you say you will give us the liberty to speak our... protests?" came out a stuttering voice as he couldn't look away at those pair of maniacal eyes.

"I did give you, didn't I, Count? I listened to you, now you will hear my response." The corner of Samael's lips stretched broader as he suddenly grabbed his neck. Before the Count could react, his feet had already left the floor while clinging to Samael's sleeve on instinct.

"As I've said, I don't want to force people to honor my words and acknowledge me as their emperor." His grip slowly tightened, watching how the Count's face turned red as if it would explode. "I am a busy man and forcing someone to bow down to me is quite a hassle, silly. I'd rather maim their head since I do not have the energy to placate your whims."

Crack...

Samael's grip tightened even more as blood soon tainted his hand. When his entire hand closed, only flesh and a piece of bone remained inside his grip. The head rolled over while the body dropped, causing terror to everyone who witnessed how he beheaded the count with a mere hand.

"How sad," he whispered, gazing down at the blood spreading on the floor. "Anyone else who had objections?"

He raised his head, looking around while wiping his hand with a handkerchief. "I will honor everyone's opinion and listen to their argument sincerely."

A tyrant.

At that second, everyone had realized what kind of emperor would sit on the throne. Even so, this didn't fuel the lingering justice that was left in their heart. Instead, the sight of Samael killed their spirit.

Thud.

Samael raised a brow as someone suddenly dropped to his knees. When the people realized this, everyone bent down to their knees, one after another.

"Long live His Majesty, the Emperor! All glory to the Great Heart Empire!" They chanted in unison, but their voices were filled with nothing but dread.