

The Duke 481

Chapter 481 - Too Sensitive For Meaningless Friendships

While Sam and I headed inside, I told him what happened in the carriage on our way home. I sighed, recalling my son's harsh words towards Adam. Although I understood Law was simply concerned about Adam's welfare, his words still went too far.

"Don't worry, I'll talk to Law." Sam nodded reassuringly, but I shook my head sideways.

"I'll talk to him and you talk to Adam," I replied in a knowing tone, making my husband frown. I stopped when we were by the door, facing him squarely.

"Sam, Law is very upset and you two might end up arguing," I explained while squeezing his hand lightly. "It's not that I am saying you can't control your son. My point is, Law is still a child who needs coaxing, while Adam surely needs a little wisdom from you. Is that alright with you?"

My brows rose, waiting for his response. Fortunately, Sam didn't argue as he rocked his head lightly.

"Sure. I'll talk to Adam then." The side of my lips stretched into a smile, standing on my toes as I planted a kiss on his cheek.

"Thank you, my husband," I whispered and winked.

"Ah, my wife." Sam cupped my cheeks with both his hands as he let out a sigh. "Do you find these adjustments a little hard?"

"Honestly?"

"Honestly."

"Well." I took a deep breath while staring into his eyes. "It's hard. The tea party is boring, and it made me realize I'm too sensitive for meaningless relationships and friendships. I value those deeply."

Sam chuckled helplessly while I let out a deep exhale. It was true. That was the main reason I disliked taking part in the trivial tea parties and banquets. But with this change in our life, I wanted to do better. I knew it wasn't just me who was having a tough time adjusting, quenching my violent urges, and tolerating people.

"It makes me wonder how did you do it, Sam," I continued, along with a deep exhale. "Tolerating people is easy, but not when we have countless nerves in our body and someone gets on every single one of them."

"You did a good job coming home clean. I'm so proud of you." He chuckled heartily. Lady Talia was surely lucky that she was still alive after taunting me like that. She was fortunate I was trying to be a good, normal mother to my sons.

"Anyway..." I trailed off when I noticed a figure from the corner of my eyes. I turned my head in her direction on instinct and my eyes dilated in shock. The other person was also surprised as she gasped when our eyes met.

"Bey?!" I immediately brushed Sam's hand from me as I hurriedly went to Bey. When I stopped a step before her, I bobbed my face to scan her. She was wearing a maid uniform, and it seemed she was working on the estate.

"It's really you!"

Bey's eyes welled up, but she said nothing. Maybe she was too shocked to see me. I glanced at the maids with her and they all bowed slightly. I asked Sam about Bey in the past and he told me she was fine. He didn't tell me he hired her, though.

"La — Lady Sam?" I winced when Bey called me by the name I gave her. I instinctively glanced at the maid behind Bey, who slightly panicked, and then I looked back to Sam, who scrunched his nose up.

"Bey," whispered the maid, tugging Bey's sleeve lightly. "What are you saying? This is Madam Lilou. What you called her is the Master's name."

"What..." Bey paled as she gazed at the person behind me. Panic slowly dominated her face, but before she could ask for forgiveness, I held her shoulders and smiled.

"It's fine. It's my fault for giving a false name. My name is Lilou and Sam is my husband's name." I grinned awkwardly, squeezing her slim biceps. "I'm just so glad to see you here. How have you been?"

I looked at Bey and studied her up close. She looked better than back when we first met each other. The dark bags under her eyes also lightened, and she wasn't that gaunt anymore. I was glad that it seemed she was living a bit better now.

"Madam, I'm fine now since I started working here a month ago. I am so glad Madam is well. I thought..." Bey, the cry baby as she was, welled up. She tried to stop her tears, but it seemed seeing me made her feel so relieved. Did she think the Malum harmed me?

"Oh, Bey." I smiled subtly while wiping her tears with the back of my finger.

"My wife, as much as I hate it, I have to interrupt your reunion with your old friend." Sam's voice suddenly came from behind me. I looked back at him and he was already standing a step away from me. To my surprise, his arm circled around my lean waist, bending over on my shoulder, and smiled at Bey.

His shameless and proud, affectionate action caused Bey's face and the maids to flush. Even my eyes dilated as I turned my head to him and he pulled me closer to him. This felt like... Sam was jealous of Bey? Was it because I was wiping Bey's tears gently?

"We have sons to placate, right, wife?" Sam cast me a smile, but his eyes were glinting. "Right?"

I averted my eyes and answered. "Yes..."

"Then, let's go." Before I could react, Sam suddenly swept me off of my feet and carried me in his arms. I wrapped my limbs around his neck on instinct, wide-eyed. The corner of his lips curled up into a smirk as he walked away.

"Sam," I called under my breath, stretching my neck to look over his shoulder. The maids were squealing silently while Bey was staring at my husband's back. When our eyes met, a helpless smile resurfaced on her face.

"My husband, I don't know why are you suddenly jealous.. But I think I found a perfect person to help me in the noble lady's tea parties."

Chapter 482 - A Mother's Advice

After meeting Bey, I suddenly had this idea in my head. It was wrong for me to ask Fabian for socializing as he was too insensitive about other people's feelings. He probably thought I could do whatever I wanted if nobles offended me. He wasn't wrong, though. But I now had Law, and I didn't want to ruin our peaceful life because I couldn't let go of my violent tendencies.

Bey came from a fallen noble house. But that didn't mean she didn't have an idea on how to deal with the ladies in high society. Especially, the noble houses in the south. I would focus on that later, though. For now, we must deal with Law and Adam.

Sam and I agreed to talk to them. So, I went straight to Law's room before Sam could trap me with his affection. I let out a deep exhale and knocked on the door.

"Law?" I called, but there was no one who answered me from inside the room. Normally, I would hear my son's hurried footsteps the moment I call his name. But it was just silence now.

"I'm coming in, alright?"

I took another deep breath and pushed the door open. My eyes searched the room, catching Law sitting on the divan inside the room. He was holding a book, raising his head to me momentarily before resuming in reading. A sigh slipped past my lips as I marched towards him and plopped down beside him.

"My son," I spoke in a gentle tone, but he was ignoring me. "Can we talk?"

"Mother, I already know why you came here. I won't apologize to that coward," came out a grumpy murmur before he flipped the page in irritation.

"I come here to force you to apologize," I replied helplessly. I actually didn't know what to tell him, but I would hate it if his relationship with Adam would be strained because of one incident. The two of them were like actual brothers, and I loved them equally. It would be painful to watch if they grew distant.

"Can you spare your mother a moment of your time?"

Law didn't answer immediately before he closed the book and let it on his lap. He slowly turned his head to me and only then did I see the bitterness in his eyes.

"My baby, come here." Seeing the emotions in his eyes made me embrace him gently. "You must be very upset."

"Mother, why is Adam such a pushover? He is the Earl. Although I knew his circumstance, he should stand up for himself." My son complained in a muffled tone while I released him from my embrace. He bit her lower lip while gazing up at me.

"I am still young to protect him and if he doesn't protect himself, he might die before I grow up to protect him."

My heart ached seeing how my son held back his tears. Of course, his words were harsh, but he genuinely cared for Adam. I felt sorry that my son was too young, and he had to worry about these sorts of things.

"My baby... resorting to violence cannot resolve everything," I breathed out as I reached for his hands and patted them gently. "Having brute force is not bad, but that isn't the only indicator of strength. Adam didn't fight back because if he did, that only means he is stooping to their level. And stooping down to their level only means they won."

I paused and smiled subtly. "When people are below you, they wanted to drag you down."

"But they won't stop unless someone teaches them a lesson," Law argued back with a frown. "He will be just like Father. People will keep disrespecting them and speak nonsense. They only do that because they have nothing to fear and they know Adam and Father won't fight back. They see them as easy targets."

Another deep sigh escaped my mouth. The more I thought about it, the more I see Law inherited a part of my instinct and Sam's animal instinct.

"But even so, their words don't matter. Have you seen your father suffer because of it?" I asked in a gentle tone, raising my brows until he shook his head. "See? They can only talk behind your father's back, but none of them could say it to his face."

Law pressed his lips together, and his shoulders relaxed. I ruffled his hair, staring at him lovingly. I really love this boy and wanted to give him the world. I understood why Sam didn't want to expose him to violence and raise him in a kinder environment.

"Law, listen to mother, alright?" I looked at him in the eye squarely. "There was a point in my life I questioned your father why he always let things slide. You know what he told me back then?"

I paused, studying Law's expression. He looked at me, listening carefully, before I smiled and continued.

"He said, sometimes, trying to prove himself is an insult in itself." I chuckled, recalling that time years ago. "When you know your capabilities, your worth, you do not have to prove it all the time. Proving it is simply foolish and a waste of time. Do you understand?"

Law nodded weakly. "I'm sorry."

"You don't have to apologize to me, my baby. I know your intentions are good and I am proud of how you truly care for Adam, but you still hurt him." I smiled, closed-lipped. It was a relief that he had calmed down and listened to me. I also needed to thank Sam for imparting his wisdom in the past. Now, I could use them to educate our son.

"Adam didn't cry when those children teased him, but he did when you scolded him. Do you understand why?" I tilted my head to the side. "That's because their opinions didn't matter to him, but yours does. My son, words can be just as sharp as a knife and deadly if used carelessly."

"Does he hate me now that I told him I hate him?" Law inquired in worry, realizing how reckless his words were.

My smile remained as I shook my head lightly. "He is hurt, but I'm sure he doesn't hate you. Shall we see him and apologize?"

My son looked reluctant, but he still nodded.. So, I held his hand, and we walked out of the room to meet Adam and Sam.

Chapter 483 - You Are My Son, After All.

Meanwhile, Samael knocked on the door, which was Adam's room. Although Adam used to sleep in Law's room, Samael had prepared a separate room for him, so he didn't feel he was squatting on the estate.

"Adam, I'm coming in," he announced before pushing the door open. His face instantly distorted as soon as his eyes landed on Fabian. The latter raised his gaze at the door and stood straight after placing the tea on the small table.

"Fabian, please tell me you haven't imparted your wisdom to Adam."

Fabian smiled and explained. "My master, I am simply serving the Earl some snacks to make himself feel better."

"Is that so?" Samael narrowed his eyes suspiciously. It didn't seem Fabian was lying. Well, not that Fabian was the type to lie. He might leave out some details, but Fabian rarely lied. Or rather, Samael couldn't remember any time that Fabian lied.

"The young master refused to have snacks," Fabian added, placing his palm across his chest as he bowed at Adam. He then faced Samael and did the same before excusing himself.

Samael kept his mouth shut, glancing at Fabian nonchalantly before strutting towards Adam. The young Earl kept his head down, lifting it up when Samael sat down beside him.

"Sir Roux..."

"Father," Samael corrected, leaning his back against the armrest with his arms crossed. "I told you to call me Father."

Adam bit his lower lip while clutching his hand in his lap. "But Law hates me now and the other children said I will never be your son."

"So you don't want me to be your father now because they said all those unintelligent slurs?" Samael's brow quirked while tilting his head to the side.

"No. It's because Law... hates me now. He thinks I'm a pushover. You only let me in here because Law asked you. But now that he hates me, there's no reason..."

"So dumb," Samael muttered before Adam could finish his disappointing assumptions. The young Earl pressed his lips into a thin line, suppressing the tears from escaping his eyes.

"Adam, I want you to call me father because I want you to be my son. Law and Lilou had nothing to do with this. However, no matter what I do, I can't put you inside my wife's womb."

Adam felt conflicted about Samael's word of choice and his nonchalant demeanor. He had been in this estate, and he already figured that Samael was a little strange. Actually, there was something in Samael's air that felt different. If only Adam didn't know what this man was like with his wife and son, the young earl would be wary of him.

"What I'm saying is, even if my foolish son asks me to sever my ties with you, I won't. I already decided to make you my son. Although I cannot legally adopt you. That doesn't change my feelings regarding this."

"But... why? Is it because I am the earl of Minowa?"

"Haha! How cute." Samael burst out in laughter, and he tapped Adam's head lightly. "That is because... you remind me of someone."

Adam raised his brows while staring at Samael. He saw how this man's eyes softened briefly as a subtle smile resurfaced on his lips.

"Adam, my son sees your timid and kind personality as weakness, but that is because he is too young. In this world we live in, my son's instinct surely got it from my blood. But you are not weak. Law is too young to understand that." Samael ruffled the young Earl's hair lightly before he withdrew his hand. "You are stronger than what you think you are, son."

"Stronger than what I think...?"

Samael nodded, closed-lipped. "It takes a lot of courage to choose to be kind in this cruel world. The Malum did you wrong, but you never thought of getting back at them."

"But that is because... I am weak." Adam gazed down and frowned. Although revenge never crossed him, he was already convinced that it was futile to even think about it.

"No, Adam. The reason revenge never crossed you is that... that will only prove that you are not any different from those people." Samael batted his eyes ever so slowly, waiting for Adam to raise his head at him again. "You want to be different, right? To prove that you are not like them."

Adam pressed his lips and averted his eyes. "Is it foolish to think like that, Fa — Father?"

"Of course not." Samael shook his head lightly. "As I mentioned, Adam had his own strength and weaknesses. But surely, your attitude and personality is not a weakness."

A sigh slipped past his lips as Adam looked at him with teary eyes. This young one was so emotional; the complete opposite of Law. But that was the reason Adam and Law got along so well.

"My son always thinks putting people in their place through brute force is the only way to make people listen. He is not wrong, but there were other means," he continued in a kind tone while Adam listened to him. "I'm not saying you have to forget about taking up a sword. What I'm saying is, there were times you have to wield a sword."

"But... I don't want to hurt anyone. I don't want to be the caused of someone else's pain."

"Wielding a sword is not only for slashing people. It can also block attacks and save you in critical times." Samael smiled as he nodded encouragingly. "Adam, do you know why I want you to return to that damn estate despite knowing the pain it brought you?"

Adam shook his head, and Samael let out a chuckle. The young Earl already thought it was because it was his home and he should be there. Was there another reason?

"It is because there are many things to learn in the south, son. For example, compare to the north, the south had a stronger border that protected its people from all outside and inland attacks. The south wasn't really good in offense, but do you know where it was good at? Defense." The side of his lips curled up into a smirk, casting Adam with eyes full of excitement. "Even the previous emperor didn't touch the Earldom in the past, despite that your father refused to send troops. The southerners are annoying to deal with, after all."

Samael paused as he chuckled, bending down to his eye level. "The south had this impregnable defense line and attacking it is exhausting and a waste of time. I want you to learn all this and make the south greater than it already was."

"If you don't want to wield a sword to hurt others, wield it to protect the people you care about and your land," Samael added with a smile. "Do you understand?"

Adam didn't reply immediately but raised a question instead. "Can I really do it? Someone like me... can I really protect others?"

"You won't know that unless you try, right?" Samael grinned as he ruffled the boy's hair. "With a goal and reasons, I'm sure you can."

"Really...?"

Samael nodded as he shrugged. "Really. You are my son, after all." He watched Adam's eyes well up, making him chuckle.

Suddenly, a knock from the door was heard. Samael and Adam turned their heads to it, seeing Lilou, who was holding Law's hand, enter the room.

"Well," she spoke while the side of her lips curl up into a smile. "Did we come in at the perfect time?"

"Not as perfect as you, but yes," Samael smirked as he cocked his head, gesturing them to come in.

Chapter 484 - [Bonus]My God, Wife...

When we came in, Law and I sat across from Sam and Adam. My brows rose as I cast Sam a look, and he shrugged. I gazed down at Law, who sat beside me.

"Law?" I called, and he glanced at me. He then peeked at Adam, fidgeting with his fingers as he mustered his courage to apologize.

"I'm... so... sorry," came out a weak, muffled voice.

"My son, that is very sincere of you," Sam commented, only to zip his mouth when Law and I glared at him.

Law let his father's comment slide this time as he took a deep breath. He diverted his attention to Adam, who was staring at Law apologetically.

"I know what I said is harsh and I shouldn't have said that because I'm angry. But I don't hate you!" Law confessed, almost like shouting, as if he would have cold feet if he didn't. "I dislike that those snot-nosed kids have the audacity to talk you down like that, but... I realized you are just being the bigger person. Arguing with those brain deads is only a waste of time. They won't understand the word we say since their brain is smaller than crickets."

I covered my lips with my palm, on the verge of tears upon hearing my son's apology. I surely refrained from using such words, but it seemed his brain processor translated my words differently. Sam cast me this judgy look before a playful grin resurfaced on his lips.

'My husband! I'm innocent!' was what I wanted to yell, but this wasn't the time to defend myself.

"No. You're not wrong, Law. If I am more capable or even tried to be one, they wouldn't treat me like that. I'm sorry that you have to defend me all the time." Adam shook his head, smiling

helplessly. "And thank you for always siding with me even though you get ostracized by other children because of it."

"Of course! You are better than them!" Law exclaimed strongly, making Adam smile a bit brighter. "I don't like unintelligent and loud people. Those children's idiocy will drag my intelligence down and hanging out with them is degrading."

"My god, wife... just what kind of advice did you give our son?" Sam gasped dramatically with his palm on his chest. "I am... flabbergasted at what I am hearing."

"Tch." I glared at him and chose to ignore him. It was not like I taught Law these insults. Suddenly, my brow raised as I looked back at Sam.

'Excuse me? Who raised our son for the first five years of his life?' was what I wanted to ask him.

"Anyway, I'm really sorry. I will try to think before I talk from now on." Law offered Adam a meek smile. "I really don't hate you and you are the best brother I ever had. If only you can go inside Mother's womb so we can be blood-related..."

"My god, wife..."

"Sam, please." I widened my eyes at Sam, warning him to stop adding his unnecessary comments. Sam shrugged, zipping his mouth, but his eyes told me he would only shut up now.

"Law..." Adam pressed his lips as his eyes reddened with tears. "... I am also grateful to be your friend and for Madam and Sir Roux for treating me like a family. I'm so happy that I can have a place I can call home and... a family where I can call Madam Roux Mother without feeling guilty and Sir Roux Father. Being in this place for a month made me so happy and grateful for being born..."

"Adam..." My eyes softened at seeing the flow of emotion along with his tears. Adam cried without restraint until he was hiccuping, but he was more than honest than he had ever become.

I turned to Law and smiled. "Go on, son." I patted his shoulder, signaling him to console Adam. Law nodded as he hopped from his seat and marched towards Adam.

I watched the two of them console each other and was moved by their brotherhood. They weren't blood-related, but their bond was stronger than others. I really hoped they would have a good relationship forever. I was so immersed in watching them I didn't notice Sam already perched on the seat Law sat earlier.

He crawled his arm on the backrest, casting me a look. "Happy now?"

"Yes." I moved closer to him and rested my head on his shoulder. "I'm very happy and proud of our sons. I hope they maintain their relationship forever."

"Me too." I raised my head at Sam while he was staring at Law and Adam. "Once they grow older, they will have disagreements, just like today. They might fight too and use their fist to settle it, but I also wish they won't forget that they are still brothers."

"Mhmm." I squeezed his thigh and subtly smiled.

Sam and I didn't talk anymore while we kept our eyes on Adam and Law across from us. I loved our life. The adjustments Sam and I were doing in this peaceful and normal life were tough, but it was all worth it. I truly wished this would last forever as well.

"Law's birthday is coming soon. My letters to them must've arrived already." I broke the silence between us as I gazed up at Sam. "Do you think they will come?"

"My wife, even if I sent them a separate letter telling them to refuse your invitation, I'm sure they will tear it to many pieces." Sam cast me a knowing look. "If I were you, tell our people to prepare many rooms since our house will be filled with guests from across the empire."

I giggled, thrilled at hearing from those people. "I hope they can make it."

"Don't hope. They will make it and fill our storehouse with their gifts. It's not an exaggeration to consider that each of them will fill one storehouse." A chuckle slipped past my lips while Sam looked at me with a knowing countenance. "I'm not joking, though."

"Fine..."

After some time, Law and Adam recovered and joined us in our seats. We spend tea time together like a family and, as promised, I would sleep with the children. But Sam would never agree to sleep on his own. So, in the end, we all slept in the same bed tonight. Fortunately, Sam procured a larger bed for the two of us, since we played around too much every night.

"Good night, Sam," I whispered while lifting my head. Law was already sleeping beside me. Next to him was Adam and then Sam.

"Good night, my love."

I smiled as I relaxed on this side of the bed. I stared at Law's sleeping face and brushed his hair gently before closing my eyes to sleep.

"Thank you for this life, Sam," came out a whisper before falling into my slumber.

Chapter 485 - Receiving The Letters

[Dearest Lilou,

I am relieved and thrilled to hear from you after five years. Grimsbanne had been peaceful, and the weather had been very clear today. Although the sun blazes during the day, the abundance of trees cooled the midday breeze.

You said you procured books from Grimsbanne and I'm glad that you liked them. I hope you found them helpful in my nephew's education as well. I had prepared more books for you, knowing you love to read.

I have a lot of things to tell you and stories I want to share. However, I'm afraid I will end up writing an entire book about my misadventures. I'd rather tell them personally and see your reaction myself. So I will keep this letter short.

I missed you, Lilou. There isn't a single day that you never cross my mind and I am excited to see you once again.

I will arrive days after you receive this letter.

The brother who misses his sister every day,

Yulis]

"That is so corny."

I jumped when Sam's voice suddenly tickled my ear from behind my chair. I glared at him, securing the letter close to my chest.

"Sam! Don't you have work to do?! You keep appearing out of nowhere!" I lashed out while he straightened his back and shrug.

"You do know that I will be away a week after our son's birthday, right?"

"Yes, but this is too much, my love." I gasped while patting my chest. It had been a month since Law and Adam's minor dispute and after that, my husband got more clingy. He would keep appearing everywhere without making a sound and scare the living lights out of me!

"Tell me. You're enjoying giving me a scare, don't you?"

"My wife, how can that be? I even knocked before coming into our room, but you didn't answer. It turns out you are reading a letter from the Duke of Grimsbanne!" His eyes glazed over at the rest of the letters I carefully arrange to read. "That letter from the north is quite thick."

I looked at him before setting my eyes back on the desk. "Of course, since it's from Claude and Klaus."

"I doubt. I bet it's all from Claude."

"Why? Do you think Klaus will never reply to me?" I frowned as I reached for the letter from the north. "I don't think he is that heartless not to send me a reply after sending him a long one."

"That's not it, wife." Sam rested his arms on the backrest of my chair as he moved his face over my shoulder. "I bet he didn't get to read your letter. The letter he received is longer than what you sent to Claude, after all."

"Huh?" my brow rose while opening the letter. I knew Sam read my letters, so I wasn't surprised about that.

It was true that my letter to Klaus was longer than Claude's. Actually, it was the longest I wrote among all the letters I sent out. That was because Klaus used to be my chief knight. We had a lot of things to talk about and I reminiscence all those times while thinking about him.

"My wife, you realized that if Yulis and Silvia heard you wrote a three-page letter to Klaus, they would frown about it." Sam cast me a knowing look as he rested his chin on my shoulder. "I'm sure Claude isn't thrilled about that, so he will surely tear your letter to make himself feel better."

"Sam, Claude isn't that unreasonable." I shook my head lightly as I took out the parliaments inside the envelope. My brows furrowed when I saw a few pages. I opened one of them and I tilted my head to the side.

"W? That's strange. Why would Claude write a single letter on a paper?" I murmured, putting down that paper before checking the rest. The second paper was also the same; one huge letter I.

"Claude seemed to be he is still childish to waste so many parliaments."

Since I realized that the rest of the letters also had single letters in them, I arranged them on the table in order. I blinked twice as I read the message once all the papers were put together.

"Will you marry..." I shivered when Sam trailed off and felt the strong aura exuding from him.

"That rascal had truly grown bold, huh?"

"Sam." I chuckled while shaking my head. I knew Claude was joking, although it felt strange. Goodness. It was cute when he was a child, but he was already a young man.

A smile resurfaced on my face, wondering how dashing Claude looked now. He was so adorable back then, just like Law. So I was certain he grew into a handsome young man. Well, vampires had this requirement that they should all look good.

"I should tell him, ye --" I couldn't finish my sentence as my husband suddenly covered my lips with his palm.

"You, what?" he raised a brow while gazing at me. "What will you reply to this marriage proposal?"

How would I answer if he was covering my lips? I sighed and shook my head, rolling my eyes. I was joking goodness! Sam narrowed his eyes while he removed his hand carefully.

"Gosh..." I clicked my tongue as I collected the letters from the north and placed them to the side. "Claude didn't say he will attend, though."

"If you sent someone a marriage proposal, that only means they will have to show up to show his sincerity."

"Well, you are corre... ct." I gazed at Sam and caught the evil smirk that appeared on his lips momentarily. "Sam, Claude is your nephew. He is young and playful. I'm very sure he meant this as a joke."

"My wife, I thought I already told you about the north? Do you think the Earl's knightage are called savages just because of Klaus alone? Claude is the person who ordered to hang the people who tried to coax him to covet the throne."

"Then that means he is loyal to you."

"Right, but Claude is also known to get what he wants." Sam's tone was a little... sincere. Although there wasn't a trace that he was threatened, it sounded like he was truly describing Claude.

"So you think the Earl is foolish enough to covet the emperor's wife?"

"No. He is capable and the military power of the north can challenge mine." Sam shrugged. "But whatever. I can just crush his skull if he tries to..."

"You better not," I warned while pointing at him. "He is a distinguished guest of the Roux, not the La Crox."

Sam frowned but said nothing anymore. So, I continued to read the letters from Silvia and Rufus.

"So they will come as well, huh?" I smiled as my heart warmed up at Silvia's letter. "But I am worried about Rufus. It seems he looks forward to meeting Fabian more than Law."

I shook my head, as I could feel Rufus's excitement from his letter. He even apologized in advance and recommended people that could replace the head butler just in case.

"I'm somehow nervous about our son's birthday," I murmured while gazing at the letters from them. I glanced at Sam with a helpless expression.

"Did you also invite Noah and Marquess Cameron?"

"They said they will come." Sam leaned his head against mine. "I'm sure it'll be fun. Don't worry."

"Hopefully." I snapped my eyes at the other letters from the local nobles in the south.. "I hope it will be."

Chapter 486 - Welcoming The Guest

Days had passed in a blink of an eye since I received the letters. Every day had been a blessing to our family, even though our days were like recurring events of spending breakfast together, Sam and Law's fierce exchange of words, my husband surprising me for appearing out of nowhere, and spending as much time with our son. Law's favorite time of the day was our afternoon activity, where he would usually nap on my lap while I read a book under the tree in the garden.

About Adam, he had already returned to the Crowell estate about two weeks ago. I could still remember how I wept as if I wouldn't see him again. But Adam left our estate with a smile on his face. Whatever Sam told him, it gave our little fighter the courage to face his fears.

Adam would constantly send me a letter, telling me he was doing great. Our little Earl was studying to become a great Earl. He also told me that Jaime had been "kind" to him and the maids. He had changed a lot and I am so proud of him.

Aside from that, I had also been busy being friendly to other noble ladies. With the help of Bey, now my personal maid, I got in the good graces of some noble ladies, who were humble and naturally kind. They made me believe that not everyone in the high society was fake. There were a few who also needed genuine friendships.

Of course, despite having my small yet healthy circle of friends, I kept in touch with Lady Talia. I had too much to learn from her, after all.

I had a tough time adjusting to this new life, but I loved it. I never knew Sam and I could live a normal life, but we were now. I was beyond happy and thankful and content for this beautiful blessing. And I swore to protect this life.

I smiled at my entry for today's journal, putting back the quill to its holder. It had been three weeks since I started writing an everyday journal. The reason was that Sam was also writing his journal, but he would never let me read it.

Yes. I was writing mine just so I could refuse his request to read mine as well. It was childish and petty revenge, but writing a journal had now become a part of my daily life.

"Madam, the carriage of your brother will soon arrive on the estate." Bey's voice came from behind me, making me turn my head back. Although Bey had become my personal maid, I told her to not wear maid's clothes anymore. We were friends, and she usually assisted me to social gatherings.

"Yes." I nodded and returned my focus to my journal. "I heard Yul and Silvia are racing who arrives first. I wonder who will win."

I fanned my journal until the ink gets dry. Once it was, I placed it on the shelf inside my boudoir. This was my personal place, where the master of the house was forbidden to enter. I realized I needed a personal space since Sam kept appearing, which resulted in me having to rewrite some letters.

"Let's go?" I faced Bey with a smile while she bowed modestly. A subtle smile appeared on my lips, seeing how charming Bey was now that she was taken care of.

"Yes, Madam."

Bey led the way while I stared at her for a moment. I shook my head and followed her out of the room to welcome our guest. As we waltz through the hallway of the mansion, I passed by some maids who were still cleaning. We had been preparing for Law's birthday so everyone was busy — especially since those people would stay in our place. They needed room to stay in.

Some maids and Butlers were already outside, waiting for our guest. They turned their heads to me as I walked down the stairs. Sam wasn't here to welcome them, as he was a bit busy at the moment. He had been working day and night so he could free his schedule for the following days.

"Madam," Fabian greeted with a slight bow as soon as I stood in the front. Bey already stood on the side.

"Who do you think will arrive first, Fabi?" I asked, casting him a knowing look.

Fabian faced ahead — in the gate's direction — and hummed. "Do you want to make a bet with me, madam?"

"Well, Yul and Silvia are racing. It won't be polite if we didn't make bets, right?"

"Then, I will bet on the Marchioness."

The side of my lips stretched into a wide grin while staring at the gates. "Then, I will be betting on Yul."

"Mother!"

Suddenly, I turned around and caught Law running towards us. I squatted down to welcome him.

"My baby, why are you here?" I inquired when Law stood a step away from me. "Aren't you studying?"

"The young master finished his lessons quickly so he can welcome the guest with Madam." I looked up at the nobleman who was tutoring my son. He was one of the best scholars in the south and was very kind. Hiring him was impossible, even if one had wealth, but Sam managed to hire him. I was not curious about what method my husband used, though.

"Did you?" my voice softened as I looked at Law lovingly.

Law smiled brightly while I patted his head. "It's been a while since Uncle Ran and Auntie Ria visited. So, I also want to welcome them with Mother."

I chuckled at how my son addressed Yulis and Silvia. Apparently, Yulis and Silvia introduced themselves as Kieran and Ameria, their second names.

"I'm sure they will be pleased," I said, holding Law's hand as I stood up.

Soon, we saw two figures entering the gates of the mansion. My brows furrowed. It wasn't a carriage that was heading inside, but two galloping horses.

"Oh, my goodness..." I whispered in disbelief, not expecting that Yulis and Silvia would surely take this race seriously.

Chapter 487 - Hang-ups?

"Oh, my goodness..."

A sharp exhale escaped my mouth, seeing that those two were treating the driveway as a racetrack. With their speed, it wouldn't be surprising if their steed crash on us.

"Fabian, what are the odds that they won't hurt any of us?" I inquired while staring at the galloping horses.

"They had full control of their steed, Madam." I glanced at Fabian while he cast me a reassuring smile. I glanced back at the maids and butlers, noticing the slight panic in their eyes. When I checked Law, he didn't have a change of expression as he kept his eyes ahead.

"Please step aside to safety just in case," I ordered so the servants wouldn't be so scared.

"How about you, madam? How can we evacuate to safety when Madam is here to welcome the guest?" A middle-aged butler that would be in charge of the manor whenever Fabian was away, voiced out.

"I'll stay with Madam," Fabian answered as he faced the servants. "She is not asking you to leave. Just go to a safe distance just in case."

I smiled at Fabian for this help. Since the head butler had spoken, the other servants bowed and walked to a distance. With that being said, I turned my head to those two.

"Mother, I didn't know Auntie and Uncle were this excited to see you," Law voiced out while staring at those two. "I didn't even know they can ride well."

"Haha. They are fun people, my son."

I heard Silvia and Yul remained modest during their previous visit here. So, Law must be surprised seeing the fierce aura exuding from those two. Soon, they came close, but I couldn't see that they were slowing down.

"Fabian...?" I called in a slight panic voice while unconsciously squeezing Law's hand. "Goodness... they will crash into us, will they?"

I glanced at Fabian, and he simply smiled. "Of course not."

'It would be a shame to kill their steeds, Fabian,' I muttered internally, raising my brows when Yul suddenly prepped to hop out of his galloping horse.

"Hey, you cheater!" Silvia's loud yell reached my ear, making me smile.

Just like Fabian said, those two had full control of their steed. When Yul hopped out, his horse slowed down and gaited in a different direction while Silvia's horse drifted with a screech.

"You two..." I trailed off as Yul pounced on me.

"I missed you," he said in a relieved tone, embracing me tightly. "God..."

My eyes softened and patted his back lightly. "It's good to see you too, Yul."

"Hey, Yu — Kieran! How dare you play dirty?!" My gaze veered towards Silvia, who was storming her way towards us. I couldn't help but chuckle when she stood a meter away from us.

"Kieran! How dare you embrace her before I do?" her eyes glinted with murderous intent, but that killing intent changed when our eyes met. "Lilou, my dearest..."

Instead of berating Yulis, Silvia joined in for a hug. Now, these two sandwiched me that only made me chuckle.

"I really missed you," Silvia expressed in a relieved tone, but not letting me go.

"I missed her more." Yulis competed, making me sigh as Silvia threatened him under her breath.

"Excuse me." After some time, Law's voice caressed our ears. Once realization kicked in, Silvia and Yul finally let me go.

"It's good to see you, my nephew," Silvia greeted with a stiff smile. I gazed down at Law and caught the brief coldness in his eyes. But it vanished a second later as he gazed up at me. So, I brushed it off.

"My son, why don't you greet Auntie and Uncle?" I urged and Law offered me a kind smile.

"Welcome to our humble home, Auntie Ria and Uncle Ran."

The corner of my lips stretched wider at my son's humble greeting. But Yulis and Silvia's expressions were strange. They were probably exhausted, I thought.

"Why don't we head inside for a tea? I'm sure you're exhausted," I offered with a gentle smile, raising my brows, and gazed down at Law as the two were just staring at him. "Sivi? Yul?"

"Uh, yes. Sure." Silvia snapped her eyes back to me and smiled.

I pressed my lips and studied the two of them. They were acting strange, but I'd rather ask them later. So, I turned to Fabian and smiled. The servants also welcomed the two with a courteous bow while we headed inside.

"My carriage will soon arrive," Yul informed me as he walked behind us.

"The servants will handle it," I reassured, looking back at him.

Just when we were by to the sitting room, Sam summoned his son. With a heavy heart, Law had to follow the butler to see his father. I stared at the door as Law left the room, assuming Sam purposely summoned his son to give the three of us time to catch up. I smiled at the thought.

"Law surely took after Hell." I turned my head at Yul, who sat across from me when he spoke.

"How scary."

"It is wrong to let Hell and Fabian raise a child. How can he pull an aura at such a young age?" Silvia chimed in while patting her chest.

"You two are exaggerating. Law is considerate, has a heart of gold, and smart." I chuckled, shaking my head lightly. "Although I won't deny that he took a lot after his father."

"Lilou, you never changed." Yulis let out a series of tongue clicking while gazing at me in dismay.

"You fell for Hell even though he is literally a walking red flag. Is that your hang-ups?"

"Yul, really? Are you going to criticize my judgment to people after five years?" I rolled my eyes as the servants knocked on the door and served us tea. "Also, that is my husband and son you're dragging in the conversation."

"I'm just saying." Yul shrugged as he picked up his cup of tea.

"You should drop it, Yulis. Lilou is a person who believes what she wants to believe." Silvia humored while picking up her tea.

"You two... how can you tease me like this the second we meet after five years?" I sighed and frowned.. "So mean."

Chapter 488 - A Lazy Afternoon

Yulis and Silvia teased me and I felt like they came here just to bully me. Although I knew there was some truth in their advice about Law's scary side, I naturally defended him.

"What do you expect from my son? His father is a mad vampire while his mother used to be a vigilante who murder nobles out of boredom? Of course, he will inherit a few things from his crazy parents. Fabian is just an added ingredient." I rolled my eyes and clicked my tongue. "Even so, he is my son. Sam and I were doing our best so Law wouldn't walk the bloody path we all walked down in the past."

"Oh, Lilou. I'm just kidding. Don't be so upset." Silvia chuckled while my frown remained.

"We didn't mean that, but you are doing a good job. You and Hell are great parents to our nephew, surprisingly." Yul nodded as his tone grew solemn. "I'm sure the goodness in your heart and your unconditional love for your son will reign. Just like how Hell changed because of that love, I'm sure Law will want to be someone whom his mother can be proud of."

"Yul..." My eyes welled up as I extended my hand, which he clasped gently. "Thank you for saying that. It means a lot to me."

His thumb caressed the back of my hand, smiling subtly at me. "I'm really glad that you look very happy and content with your life now, Lilou."

Yul squeezed my hand lightly before releasing it from his grip. My eyes veered towards Silvia's beautiful smile.

"Sivi, I heard you've been the most sought lady in the empire." I changed the subject since we've been talking about our family. "My friends even look up to you."

"Oh, Lilou. You flatter me."

"That is true, though?" Yul leaned back as he cocked his head. "Didn't you brag about having a basket that fills up with marriage proposals daily?"

"Really?" I perked up, blinking while staring at Silvia.

"Well, I am a busy woman. Good men are scarce and finding one in this sea of fools will take too much time." Silvia defended nonchalantly. "Besides, I find men less amusing than a monkey."

"Pfft--!" I covered my lips with the back of my hand upon hearing Silvia's savage answer. I could imagine her crushing men's confidence and ego.

"That is very amusing, marchioness. I am also a man and I am utterly offended to be compared to a monkey." Yul voiced out his discontent, but Silvia chuckled.

"Oh, Yul. Don't worry. I, at least, compare you to a cat."

Yul raised a brow, narrowing his eyes suspiciously. The corner of her lips curled up devilishly, giving her beauty a fresh look.

"Yes, a cat. I find Yulis less affectionate than a cat."

"Well, I don't find that hurtful. Showing affection requires feelings." Yul took that surprisingly calm as he nodded in understanding. He then glanced at me and smiled.

"Actually, I do not mind pouring out all the affection left in me to my sister and to her children."

"That is the sweetest thing I heard, Yul." My heart warmed up, but it also worried me. Yul was so devoted to me he might not marry because of it.

"Yul," I called solemnly, taking a deep breath, closed-lipped. "Once you found the woman who you think you want to marry, I will support it."

"Well, that is an unnecessary blessing, but I will keep that in mind."

"Just not Beatrice."

As soon as I mentioned Beatrice's name, there was dead silence in the room. Yul's initial nonchalant expression completely died while Silvia held her laughter in. She even covered her lips with both her hands when Yulis glared at her.

"Yul." My voice was soft, waiting for him to look back at me. "I like Beatrice, but I don't approve of her as my sister-in-law. But if ever, just IF, you ended up liking her, I will still support your heart."

"Lilou, I know you mean well, but that sounds more like an insult than an encouragement. That will never happen and I hate I had to listen to this. That woman..." Yul massaged his neck in distress.

"She is a headache. I'd rather spend a millennium alone than marry that woman."

I chuckled, knowing Yulis meant that. "I'm intrigued, though. How come Beatrice has suddenly taken an interest in you?"

"I helped her one time and after that, she never stopped bothering me," Yul explained in a dead tone. His expression told me to drop this conversation before he do something crazy.

"Oh, Yul. She's been bothering you for a long time, but you haven't realized why she is after you?" Suddenly, Silvia smirked, catching our attention.

"Does it matter?" asked Yulis in disinterest.

"Of course! My god, Yulis. You are proclaimed as a genius Duke of Grimsbanne, but you don't know this? I am disappointed." Silvia teased, making Yulis's expression grow worse. "The princess from the Karo Kingdom is bored to death. The reason she stayed in the past is that our kingdom was full of lunatics. What I am saying is, she is having fun teasing you and her interest is heightened because she knows you will never like her."

Yulis furrowed his brows. "Are you saying... I should show interest?"

"Well, I'm just suggesting as a woman. But if the challenge is not there anymore, she will surely switch targets." She shrugged, casting Yulis a knowing look.

"Silvia, that is..." Yulis rocked his head before cocking it to the side. "... a piece of very unhelpful advice. Thank you for the concern, but no thanks. I'd rather kill that woman instead of giving her the slightest interest — not in this life."

"Suit yourself, then."

I remained quiet and listened to their conversation with a smile. Although I didn't like a shallow discussion from the tea parties I attended, I do not mind listening to this. It felt like we were back at those times where we would talk about anything.

"But Silvia, before you worry about my plight, haven't you talked to Rufus?" Yulis raised a question, causing the playful smile on Silvia to change slightly. "Oh? Did I mention something that I shouldn't? I guess you are also swimming in this sea of fools as well, huh?"

Chapter 489 - [Bonus]Stop Giving Me Mix Signals

"Oh? Did I mention something that I shouldn't? I guess you are also swimming in this sea of fools as well, huh?"

Silvia was clearly not pleased with Yul's remarks. The side of her lips stretch into a smile that didn't reach her eyes. Not good, I thought, but I kept silent and sipped tea. Silvia and Rufus and their complicated relationship also intrigued me.

"Is this how you repay me for giving you wonderful advice, Your Grace?" her brow quirked, tilting her head a little to the side.

"My lady, I didn't mean to offend you. I am simply concerned if the reason you refused all marriage proposals is because of your... hang-ups."

"You seemed quite interested in other people's hang-ups, Your Grace." Silvia chuckled, sending a chill down my spine. But her aura didn't faze him.

"Well, to be truthfully honest, I am waiting for a certain person's marriage proposal. I'm certain that if he sends me one, I will accept it in a heartbeat."

"My. I'm intrigued. Who is this lucky man?" Yul picked up the teacup while I held my breath.

'Sivi is already waiting for a certain man's marriage proposal?' I sipped the tea in anticipation, waiting for Silvia's answer.

She let out a shallow breath while staring at Yul. "Who else? There's only one person in this empire who is just as capable as me. And that is the Duke in the west."

As soon as I heard her remarks, I coughed and spilled some of my tea. Yul glanced at me and offered me a handkerchief in silence.

"Thank you," I accepted the handkerchief, wiping my lips.

Silvia chuckled while looking at me. "Lilou seemed surprised. Don't worry, Lilou. It seems my hang-ups are marrying my brothers."

"Sivi, don't joke like that." I chuckled awkwardly, only to cringe when Yulis spoke.

"How flattering, my lady," Yul smirked as he focused his attention on Silvia. "The most beautiful woman in the empire wants me. I might reconsider. We're not actually blood-related, after all."

"You shouldn't make a lady wait for too long, Your Grace."

"Then, expect an official marriage proposal from me."

"Haha!" I burst out in laughter while clapping. "You two... you're not serious, right?"

I darted my eyes from Yulis to Silvia, and my claps stopped. My eyes slowly dilated the more I realized they looked... serious about it! Although Silvia and Yulis weren't blood-related, and purebloods marrying each other was normal, they grew up as siblings!

Yulis and Silvia? I couldn't imagine! We've been together, so it was hard to see the two of them in a romantic relationship.

"Pfft --!"

Suddenly, Silvia burst out in laughter, and Yulis too. I looked at these two meanies with a frown.

"Oh, god, Lilou..." Silvia hunched in as she held her stomach. "How can you... fall for that...?"

My frown grew worse as I narrowed my eyes, glaring daggers at the two of them. How could they pull a prank like that?

"It wasn't funny, you two. I was really shocked!" I puffed my cheeks, unhappy at the joke. "You nearly gave me a heart attack."

"My. Don't you also approve of me as your sister-in-law?"

"Sivi, you are already my sister-in-law since your brother is my husband."

Silvia chuckled as she leaned back, glancing at Yulis. "Make sense. But I am not joking, though. If Yulis proposed marriage, I will accept it in a heartbeat. In that case, I will stop receiving marriage proposals and my people stop worrying about not having an heir."

"I agree. It's not that bad since some of my people had been increasingly annoying regarding this matter as well." Yul nodded in agreement, taking their own marriage as if a thorn that they wanted to get rid of. "I never thought about this before."

Yulis and Silvia looked at each other and smiled subtly. Watching them made me let out a sigh.

"So, in the end, you two seemed serious about this? For convenience?" I asked helplessly, thinking that it wouldn't be a surprise if I received a wedding invitation in the future.

"Don't you want us to be together?" Silvia inquired in a light tone. "If you don't approve of this, I'm very sure Yulis will not marry me."

"Even if Lilou approved, I still have to reconsider. If I marry you, I naturally need you to stop thinking about another man, which is quite impossible."

"Jealous already? But how can that be? The Princess from the Karo Kingdom had been hanging around you."

"You two... you hadn't talked about this in the past?" came out in a weak voice while sighing helplessly. "Am I supposed to listen to how my brother and my sister-in-law talk about the conditions of their marriage? It's not like I forbid you to do so, but it feels strange."

Yulis and Silvia smiled as they looked at me. I knew their intention was to get rid of annoying marriage proposals. I've been in their position when I was managing the duchy. Still, I wanted these two to be... happy as well.

"You might not share the same beliefs as I do about happy endings, but I really wish you to treat marriage with a bit more importance," I said weakly, casting them a soft look. "You're already adults — capable adults and had proven yourselves to everyone. But you two worry me."

"Goodness, Lilou." Her eyes softened, seeing the concern in my eyes. Yulis remained silent, but he was also staring at me.

KNOCK KNOCK!

I snapped my eyes towards the door, watching it open until it revealed Fabian. My brows furrowed and waited for him to state his purpose.

"Your Majesty, the carriage from the north had arrived," Fabian informed me, making my eyes dilate.

"What?"

"The Earl of Monarey is outside."

I sprung up from my seat in surprise. "They already arrived? That soon?!" Fabian answered with a slight nod.

"Wow..." I gasped, blinking twice before casting Silvia and Yulis a look. "I'll leave the two of you first. I'll come back, wait for me!"

When they nodded their heads, I didn't idle as I followed Fabian out of the room.

"I'll leave the two of you first. I'll come back, wait for me!"

Silvia and Yulis stared at the shut door as silence descended into the room. A sigh slipped past her lips as she cocked her head to him.

"Happy ending, huh?" she murmured, staring at Yulis's side profile until the latter set his eyes to her.

"Is there such a thing for us?" Yulis asked and her answer was a shrug.

"Shall we test it, Your Grace?" Silvia suggested, gazing at the dashing duke. "To see if there is a happy ending, I mean."

Yulis remained silent before he raised his hand, extending his arm to play with the tip of her ebony hair. "I was just joking, but I never think you'd take it so seriously."

"Well?"

"There's no need since it is strange and... as you've said, I am less affectionate than a cat." His playful smirked remained when she rolled her eyes.

"Then stop giving me mixed signals, Yul." Silvia frowned and brushed his hand away. "You've been playing too much when you know we can never return to what we are after that night."

"I'm not playing, my lady." He feigned innocence, making her click her tongue.

Silence enveloped the two of them, but their eyes held each other's gaze for a long time.

Chapter 490 - Slow Motion

I rushed outside the mansion and stopped by the entrance when I saw multiple carriages parked outside. The maids were already helping the Earl's people with the large presents he bought. My steps grew slower, controlling my face from distorting at the presents and the wagon of flowers from the north.

Suddenly, the door of the carriage opened. My eyes glistened with excitement until they changed to surprise. The expectation of seeing a child disappeared as the person who was hitching out the carriage was a... man.

"Claude," came out a whisper, smiling in disbelief as our eyes met. "Goodness."

Claude had grown for sure. He was no longer adorable. He had become a fine young man, and I felt like a proud mother seeing him in a suit. Time seemed to stop as I walked towards him and he strutted in my direction. I glanced at my surrounding, seeing the servants move in slow motion.

I would have believed this was just from shock if not from Klaus, who was walking at a normal pace. A chuckle slipped past my lips when Claude clicked his tongue and glared at his uncle.

"Uncle, can't you read the air? I am trying to impress Auntie Lilove with the slow-motion effect." Claude complained, making me stop in surprise. Even his voice grew deeper! My god.

"Please, that romance book you've been reading for a month is nonsense! Slow-motion, there's no such thing!" Klaus spat out in irritation before turning his head to me. The irritation on his face was immediately replaced with a grin.

"Lilou, my sister!" he greeted, spreading his arms wide open. But Claude slapped his chest with the back of his hand while glaring at him.

"Uncle, do you want us to get killed by Uncle?"

I could not help but chuckle seeing these two. Gosh... I never realized how much I missed everyone until now that I could see them again.

"Claude, be nice to your uncle. You know he is always the playful type." I smiled, catching their attention.

"Gosh. I really missed your voice, Lilou." Klaus took a step forward, bending over as he offered his hand to me. "May I greet you properly, Your Majesty?"

I glanced around and it seemed Claude's ability was still in effect. "It'll be my pleasure." I placed my hand on Klaus's hand, smiling back at him.

"It's been a while, Your Majesty. But, I am truly thankful to see you well and hear your voice again." Klaus smirked as he bent down, placing a peck on the back of my hand.

"It seemed you've become a gentleman, Your Highness." I humored as he released my hand. My eyes veered at Claude, who handed his hand to me. I chuckled as I clasped his hand using the other.

"I am honored to be with your presence, my empress." Claude kept his eye contact with me as he kissed the back of my hand.

"Claude, please tell me you haven't broken too many maiden's hearts," I humored as he looked like someone who would get anyone's heart with a wink.

"Of course not. How can I break any ladies' heart if Auntie Lilove is a lady?"

"Lilou, the Earl didn't break anyone's heart, but he had broken their legs and arms." Klaus murmured, making me laugh at this 'joke.' "Don't fall for his sweet words."

"Klaus, don't be like that." I scolded in a soft tone, raising my brows before I abruptly pulled my hand away from Claude and hopped back. I gazed down at the thin smoke and dust between us. When it subsided, it revealed an arrow that pierced the concrete.

"Sam." I sighed, turning my head back, and gazed up at the roof. Charlotte was waving at us with her bow as if she didn't just shoot us.

"I smell a jealous husband," Klaus commented as he picked up the arrow between us. The concrete around it left a hollow crack. If that arrow landed on a person, it was surely a kill.

"Sorry about that."

"It's fine, Lilove." Claude kept his playful smile as he glanced up at me.

"Auntie," I corrected while he shrugged. "Claude became mischievous now. Your uncle had been angry at the letter you sent me. You shouldn't joke like that."

"Lilou, please break this foolish young man's heart more. He wants us all to get killed." Klaus chimed in while gazing at the unaffected Claude in dismay.

"You too, Klaus. How can you not reply to my letter?" A pout resurfaced on my face, smacking my lips. "I wrote you a long letter, but I didn't hear from you."

"Lilou, blame this brat, alright? He tore the letter into millions of pieces and I had to spend three whole days putting the letter together!" Klaus scoffed as he gazed at Claude once again. As if recalling his hardship made him want to punish Claude.

"Really?" my brows rose, thinking what Sam told me days ago. "Claude? Did you really...?"

"It's an accident. Please believe me."

"Wow... the nerve!"

I darted my eyes from Claude to Klaus and sighed. The maids around us started moving at a normal pace, and we had been outside since they arrived.

"Why don't we all go in?" I suggested with a smile. "Yulis and Silvia already arrived. It will be fun to have a mini tea party!"

"Oh, they arrived already?" Klaus's lips formed an O shape as I led them inside.

I glanced back and nodded. "They raced here."

"So, who came first?" asked Claude while I stare ahead, pondering who came first.

"I think it's Yul."

"Nice." My brows furrowed at Claude's tone. I looked back at them, only to see Claude had his palms open at Klaus. The latter rolled his eyes while removing his brooch and surrendered it to him.

"You also had a bet?" I gasped, waiting for them to look at me.

Claude smiled and nodded. "Knowing the marchioness and the duke, we already predicted that from happening."

I didn't find it strange for Claude to address Silvia and Yul formally. Although he was their nephew, Claude was still an Earl, a lord in the north. Now, I felt bad for asking him to call me Auntie. But on the second thought, my husband was the emperor.

"Is that so?" I smiled, motioning my hand to follow me. "Come. Let's join Silvia and Yulis."

Meanwhile, in Samael's office, Law and Samael stared at each other. The young master was sitting across from his father, sporting a cold, deadly look.

"You summoned me here just to tell me you will leave days after my birthday?" asked Law in a low tone. There wasn't even a trace of sadness in his voice because he didn't really care.

"You have a lot of time to tell me, but you chose to tell it today. Father, drop the pretense. You just don't want me to join Mother in receiving the guest, right?"

"Correct!" Samael intoned nonchalantly. "Your mother has close bonds with them more than I do. Hence, we have to give her this day so she could enjoy with them."

"Would she not enjoy it if I'm with her?"

Samael's brow raised, peering at his son in dismay. "My son. When your Uncle Ran embraced your mother, didn't you hate him that instant?"

Law pressed his lips into a thin line, hiding the guilt on his face. He instantly disliked Yulis the second he acted chummy with his mother. He hated it. Not because Yulis embraced his mother, but because of them, Lilou almost forgot about him.

"My son, I know your pain." Samael smiled, making Law raise a brow when the smile on his father grew into a devilish smirk. "We'll only let them have her today. Tomorrow, your mother will be ours again."

Law studied his father's evil expression, keeping his stony countenance before he smirked. "Ours... no, Father.. Mother is mine."