

The Duke 511

Chapter 511 - Happy Birthday, Law! X

'I guess things are bad,' I thought, stopping when my husband reached us. When Sam stood at arm's length, the bloodlust in his eyes completely dissipated, replaced with a smile.

"My son, can I borrow your mother?" he asked, gazing at Law. "You already danced two consecutive songs with her. The third dance shall be mine, don't you think?"

Law gazed at his father, reluctance flickering across his eyes before looking back at me. He let out a shallow breath before nodding.

"Sure." I chortled at how he looked as though he actually didn't want to. I put him down, squatting in front of him while holding his little hand.

"You'll always be my number one," I comforted, squeezing his hand so he wouldn't think that Sam was snatching me away. It worked as Law smiled and nodded.

"Thank you, my son," Sam expressed as he stood next to me, smiling at my son.

"Just one dance." Law huffed before he turned around and walked away. Sam and I watched him as he returned to his seat, making me let out a helpless sigh.

"My wife, can I have this dance?" I snapped my eyes, shifting them to the palm in front of me, then slowly up to meet the pair of crimson eyes looking back at me.

My lips stretched into a smile, placing my hand on his. "How dare I refuse an invitation from my love?" He grinned at my reply, wrapping his fingers around my hand as he pulled me closer.

Sam carefully wrapped his arm around my waist, holding my other hand up to the side, eyes on me. As we slow dance to the music, I knew a sinister grin was hidden behind his smile. No matter how my husband concealed it, I knew him more than anyone.

"Sam, my love," I whispered, resting the side of my head on his firm chest. "Is it that bad?"

"Mhm. It's terrible."

My eyes softened, already knew it even before he could open his mouth. "Will you set off earlier than planned?"

"Mhm." Sam pulled my waist closer, resting his chin on top of my head. "I'm sorry, Lilou. It seems Quentin and Stefan joined hands and they were marching their way to the east and west. I had to go back to the Capital to make sure the people wouldn't panic."

For reasons unknown, this didn't surprise me anymore. I knew, deep down, something like this would happen, as the problem with those two wasn't dealt with in the past.

"Will you lead the war?" I asked.

"Rufus and Klaus will. I had to stay behind because I'm no longer a duke."

"I see... I understand," I whispered, and we stayed silent for a moment. "I will protect Law and the South. Just return to us in one piece just in case you had to fight them yourself."

"Mhm." Again, silence enveloped the two of us until Sam called my name gently.

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry," he apologized once again, but I shook my head lightly. "I will leave you and Fabian in charge of the south, Lilou..."

My brows furrowed as I drew my head back, looking up at him with confusion in my eyes. "What did you say?" I asked, referring to the inaudible whisper at the end of his sentence.

Sam smiled, cupping my jaw while stroking my cheek with his thumb. "I'm sorry."

"Sam..."

"Will you do it for me?" he asked, raising his brows while staring into my eyes. "Take care of the south while I was away."

I didn't reply immediately as the answer was already obvious. Still, I could not help but look at him and appreciate the trust he was giving me.

"Yes," I answered, holding his hand that was cupping my cheek. "I already told you. I will protect Law and the South with everything I can."

Sam and I stared at each other, exchanging a gentle smile. I wasn't thrilled, nor I was sad about this. If anything, I knew these things would happen eventually because... we had duties as the rulers of this land. We do not protect just ourselves, but also our people, the land we all call home, and the future this empire was trying to give the children.

"Thank you, my love."

Meanwhile, Law watched his mother and father dance. The way they smiled at each other slightly touched his heart, thankful that they were his parents. Although he was always annoyed at his father, Law didn't really abhor him. It was just his habit to go against him because... it was fun.

Surely, Law took after his father. He inherited Samael's crazy meaning of fun. But overall, he always found himself thankful for them. A child could never choose their parents, and he had seen a lot of children, who were pressured by their parent's standards and expectations.

Law didn't have to go through such things because Samael gave him the freedom to choose whatever path he wanted. And Lilou's presence and love made him want to be a better person once he grew up.

"Maybe I should give Father my mother's second dance since I am her number one already," he murmured, nodding approvingly, as he shouldn't be too greedy for his mother's affection. "Next time, then."

He peeled his eyes away from his parents, catching someone in the crowd who was walking away. Law furrowed his brows as that person somehow made him want to follow him. Before he knew it, he already hopped out of his seat and followed the person outside the banquet.

Law went to the garden, searching for the person who caught his eyes. He, too, didn't understand why he was following such a person. Shortly after walking into the garden, he reached the greenhouse.

He looked around.? It was dark, and the only source of light was the moonlight filtering through the glass roof.

"Hello there, child."

Suddenly, a voice from ahead caught his attention. Law slowly set his eyes on the man, watching him slink out of the shadows. Out of instinct, Law took a step back.

"Who are you?" he cautioned, scrutinizing the man and noticing his argent turfs. The man took a step forward, producing a soft sound until he stopped at the light.

"Forgive my lack of manners." The corner of his lips stretched broader, revealing his fangs as he gazed down at Law. "Let me introduce myself. I am your Uncle who cares about you a lot."

"Uncle?"

He nodded, closed-lipped.. "Uncle Stefan."

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"Uncle Stefan."

Law narrowed his eyes, etching the man's face in his head. The longer he stared at him, the more he distinguished some resemblance he had to his father. Not just by the color of their hair, he had some minor resemblance that could make one say he was connected to Samael.

"I never heard your name from my father," he said, clutching his hand as he had a bad feeling about this. "You are not invited to this party, so you should leave before I tell my father."

"Oh, no, my little nephew." Stefan clicked his tongue continuously, sighing while cocking his head to the side. "Don't be so heartless. I risked my life going here to meet and greet you a happy birthday. How can you chase me out like that?"

"I'm leaving." Law let out a sharp sigh as he attempted to turn around but stopped when Stefan crooked a finger.

"Come here, nephew. That is not how you greet your uncle."

The little boy stared at the crimson eyes glowing brightly, telling himself he should leave at once. However, he found himself approaching him and before he knew it, he was already standing in front of Stefan. The latter squatted down, tilting his head from one side to the other as he sized him up close.

"Aren't you a good boy?" The side of Stefan's lips stretched until his teeth were showing. "Unlike your wretched mother and that damn father of yours, their son is less... detestable."

"What have you done to me?" Despite sensing the danger and anomaly of his action, Law remained calm. He had to. This man was controlling his movements, so Law secured his mind on instinct.

"Nothing, boy. I did nothing. Why you came here is because you are... attracted to my scent," Stefan explained with a low chuckle, ruffling Law's hair lightly. "Or maybe you can blame it on your father for suppressing the monster in you."

"I see..." Law nodded in understanding as seeing this man up close made him understand one thing, hatred. "Did you come here to speak nonsense? Expecting to manipulate me with your empty words? You are a fool if that is so."

"Oh?"

"I may be weak and still a child, but your words don't matter to me. You can speak of anything — even insult my father right in front of me. But, I will do nothing now since I am weak and still a child." Law's voice lowered, staring into Stefan's menacing eyes bravely. "Even so, I will surely remember it and return the favor once I become stronger."

"Pfft —!" Stefan laughed loudly, hunching in with his arms on his stomach. This child was surely Lilou's and Samael for he was just as annoying as them.

Law just stared at him in silence, trying to move away, but couldn't. It was as if there was an invisible chain wrapped around his ankle, keeping him on his spot.

"So funny! Haha!" Stefan wiped the invisible tears on the corner of his eyes, chuffed at this boy's words. "You remind me of someone!"

"Uncle Stefan, are you planning to abduct me?"

Suddenly, Law inquired without beating around the bush. Right now, it was just the two of them. If Stefan's plan was to abduct him, then he would succeed if he did it now.

"Huh? Why would I abduct you, my nephew?"

"If that is not your plan, then why did you lure me here?" his follow-up question came quick, blinking languidly while keeping his cold front. "Well, I guess abducting me will give you a lot of trouble since my father is friends with the Chief Knight. If I go missing, they won't leave you alone."

Stefan's eyes drooped until they were just partially open. "That is right. If I abduct you, it will be troublesome. I told you, my nephew, the reason I am here is to greet you on this special day."

"It is not needed, but thank you."

"Hmm. What a child." A sigh slipped past Stefan's nose, cupping his jaw with his eyes on this little version of Samael. "I wonder... if I talk about Lilou, will that cold front break just like your father?"

The young boy's slight change in expression was enough for an answer to Stefan as he simpered. It seemed his nephew just loved his mother so much that he would lose his composure once she was the subject.

"Do you know, nephew? You shouldn't have been born. Lilou and I were together first, after all. We even planned to have children together — we're almost there, nephew. Almost. But alas, your father... that damn creature stole everything from me." Stefan sighed heavily, making Law furrow his brows as he watched his disheartened uncle. "First, he stole the love of my life and then took away my beloved brothers. Then, my power, position, my people."

The more Stefan added the list of what Samael stole from him, the more Law tried to tell his feet to move. The danger signs were hovering over his head, but he couldn't move a muscle anymore. All he could do was to witness the wicked man speaking hatred in front of him.

"My nephew, there were so many things that your father took away from me. And yet, here I am, talking to you instead of sending your head to him! Aren't I generous?" his grin grew sinister, leaning his face forward to see Law's pale complexion. "Just like your damn father, your life had stolen the life of my child. You shouldn't have been born, but my child — Lilou and mine."

"You're sick," Law spat out under his breath, unable to look away from his eyes. "I don't know why you hated my father so much, but never speak of my mother's name with such a disgusting look in your eyes."

"Hah! How silly...!" Stefan laughed but then held Law's head with both his hands. "You... my nephew, is just as detestable as your father and I can squash your head if I so pleased, but killing you is not enough to make him suffer."

"Ahh...!" Law clutched Stefan's wrist, feeling his head being crushed slowly and painfully. "Ah! It — hurts..."

"Haha... dumb child. My nephew, I told you I came here to greet you, right? It will be impolite if I don't give you a present!" Stefan leaned closer, forcing Law to look into his eyes. "Happy Birthday, Law! I hope you will treasure my present."

Law's eyes slowly dilated as the life in it dimmed.

Chapter 513 - [Bonus] Miss Me

That night of the banquet, Law went missing for a little while. Sam and I panicked when we realized our son was missing, only to find him with Glory in the garden, chatting. The relief that swelled up in my heart when we found him was something I never felt before — so was the panic when I thought he was abducted.

After that, the party proceeded and ended in peace. Sadly, that same night, the guests in our house had to leave. With the attacks on Grimsbanne and La Lona March, Silvia and Yulis had to rush back. Meanwhile, Claude and Klaus stayed behind as they had to do the planning with Sam and Rufus.

"Take care," I said, standing outside the mansion to send my husband, Klaus, Claude, and Rufus off. "We will wait for you."

Sam pressed his lips as its corners stretched into a smile, cupping my jaw. "I'll return as soon as possible," he said before gazing down at Law, who was standing beside me. Sam squatted down in front of our son, planting his palm on his head.

"Take care of your mother while I was away, alright?"

"Father, you sound like you're going to war when you're just going to settle your business in the capital." Law frowned while I sighed and smiled weakly. We hadn't told him everything, and I felt bad that we always kept him in the dark.

"My son, my business is like a war as well!" Sam gasped in dismay, puffing his cheeks. "Just take care of your mother while I'm away. If you need anything, just call my name and I will come instantly."

"Tch. I will take care of Mother." Obviously, Law was displeased with his father again, but he still nodded. "Don't worry about mother. All you need to do is... return here."

Law looked away while Sam smiled gently. My eyes softened at the two, watching Sam ruffle our son's hair lovingly.

"Don't miss me too much. Your father will return as soon as possible," Sam asserted, but Law only cast him a side-eye. "I'll leave you in charge."

Sam then slowly stood up and set his eyes back on me. He brushed my cheek with the back of his fingers before pinching it lightly.

"You too, don't sulk. But miss me, alright?" the side of his lips stretched teasingly, making me roll my eyes. "Take care while I'm away."

"You're the one who should take care," I replied helplessly. It wasn't me and Law who were going to war, but him. The thought of it made my eyes swelter.

"Come on, love." Sam cupped my face worriedly and lowered his head. A helpless smile resurfaced on his countenance as his eyes stared straight into my eyes. I didn't know how long he would be gone. It could be weeks, months, or years. Just when I awoke, my husband had to go away, and it was saddening.

"Please, don't cry. It'll be hard for me to go if you do."

I suppressed the tears that were tempting to escape my eyes, but a drop still leaked. "I will miss you."

"My wife..." he let out a deep exhale, pulling me into the safety of his embrace. "I will come back earlier than you expect, hmm? I promise I'll be back before you know it."

"Mhmm!" I closed my eyes, feeling the warmth of his embrace. I would miss this, I would miss him. "Don't worry about the south. I will take care of it."

"Mhm..."

We hugged each other before Law tugged his father's coat. We gazed down and chuckled. Sam carried him and Law didn't complain. The three of us embraced each other for as long as we could, cherishing this last moment of us until Sam returned to us.

"Sir Roux."

After some time, Ramin approached us and smiled at us. The three of us glanced at him, making us all sigh, as that only meant it was time for Sam to go.

"Father, why are you taking the stable boy with you?" asked Law as he gazed at Ramin before setting it back to Sam. "You always take him with you more than you take Mister Fabian."

Law pointed his thumb back to where Fabian stood. Sam and I chuckled as he shrugged, pinching Law's cheek lightly.

"I need someone who will take care of the horses. Fabian's patience is too short for that," he explained as he withdrew his hand before putting him down. Sam stayed squatted, just staring at Law for a very long time. He said nothing further as he stood up and smiled at me.

"I'll go now," he said, and I nodded, closed-lipped. My eyes veered to the other people not far away from us, waiting for Sam to enter his carriage.

"Take care, you three." I smiled at Claude, Klaus, and Rufus. They only smiled back and nodded. With that, I shifted my eyes back to Sam and nodded encouragingly.

Reluctance filled his eyes as he turned his head back, motioning his hand as a gesture they would set off. Claude and Klaus entered their carriage while Rufus rode on his steed, Bella. Ramin was sitting beside the coachman. Kristina and Charlotte weren't here, but I knew they were already waiting for the emperor's carriage outside Minowa.

I waved as Sam slid the curtain open as soon as he went inside the carriage. A forced smile on my face, gazing at Law, and saw him waving as well.

"Take care," I repeated, and he nodded. Shortly, the carriage ambled from us while Law and I stared at it in silence. As I stared at it going farther and farther, there was this slight emptiness in my heart.

"Mother." I gazed down when Law held my hand, smiling subtly. "It'll be fine. Don't be so sad, I am here."

"Mhm." I squeezed his hand lightly and smiled. My little boy was the sweetest, and I didn't regret staying behind with him. Surely, with Law's existence, Sam and I had to take a step back. It wasn't like before where the two of us schemed, but even so, my son was worth it.

"Let's go back inside now?" I beckoned and received a loud hum, making me chuckle as we headed inside the mansion while holding hands. Fabian followed behind us.

Little did I know, my perfect, peaceful life was about to shatter slowly and painfully.

Chapter 514 - [Bonus] First Lesson

Two weeks had passed since Sam set off to the Capital. It was a hell of a week since I had to manage the estate and deal with the letters from the local noble houses. After the success of my son's banquet, the invitations I received from the noble ladies for their tea party and banquet doubled.

I attended a few tea parties to socialize, and it shocked me. Unlike the usual tea parties where I had to deal with some snide, indirect remarks, everyone was asking for my advice. Yes, advice for which flowers to choose for the theme of the banquet and how I thought of the idea of adorning my letters with small flowers.

My first tea party after Sam left was... just as exhausting as before. They asked me a plethora of questions, advice, and even suggestions. Some ladies even requested I open a class on how to organize a banquet or how to make teas during tea parties.

That was how I ended up in this situation, by popular demand.

"Uh..." I looked around at the enthusiastic noble ladies sitting around the table in our estate's pavilion. There were six of us, including me. "Thank you all for coming."

"Oh, my! Madam Roux, we should be the one thanking you for choosing us in your first class!" Lady Howard, the pampered daughter of Baron Howard — Sam's business associate — covered her lips with her hand fan to hide her grin.

"Lady Howard is right, Madam Roux. Among all noble ladies who were eager to attend your class, you chose us. Hence, we're grateful. Thank you." The wife of Viscount Jordan, Lady Rosie, voiced out modestly. After her remarks, all other noble ladies chimed in to express their gratitude for being picked by me.

I smiled throughout, used by the long flatteries by now. Although there was only one lady who also just smiled throughout. She only spoke when everyone realized she was silent.

"I am also pleased that Madam Roux invited me to her class. I am looking forward to what I can learn from here and apply it to our house's banquet in two weeks." Lady Hazel Malum, the queen of tea parties in the south, smiled, which didn't reach her eyes. I smiled back, even though I knew she was displeased that I took away her spotlight.

"No, Lady Malum. I am honored that you accepted my invitation," I replied politely, gazing at the ladies around. "Since this is my first class, it would be better if someone who is far experienced than I am will be around to impart her wisdom as well."

My response made her brows raise as she nodded. "Madam Roux is indeed wise, just as what my father told me."

'Did she attend just because Jaime told him to?' Fortunately, I knew the Malum liked flattery as my previous remarks made her ease up.

"Thank you, Lady Malum." My polite smile remained, traveling my eyes around the ladies. "So, shall we begin?"

An excited smile dominated their faces as soon as I suggested. With all that being said, my first class began. Thanks to Fabian's help in creating a step-by-step on how to make a lesson plan, it helped me cover the things with the time we had.

I shared my thoughts whenever I was thinking about the event, considered the type of guests, the ambiance I wanted to give, and everything. The noble ladies listened attentively. After that, I shared some of my techniques for making tea. Fabian was my instructor as I got my interest in teas when he was making one. I wouldn't lie, though. Part of me already had an interest in tea because of Zero.

After showing them how I make my tea, we shared it to have a break. Obviously, I was pleased to see their reaction to the tea I made as I added mint and honey into it to fight the heat.

"Madam Roux, this is... refreshing! It's sweet and cool..." Lady Howard's eyes sparkled, looking at me as if I saved the world. Still, I smiled and explained to them what I added to the tea and its uses and benefits. As I did, I would secretly glance at Lady Hazel. She seemed pleased, nodding as she enjoyed the aroma of the tea.

'I'm glad everything is going smoothly,' I thought, smiling before sipping from the teacup. 'Still... I missed Sam. The south had been peaceful. I wonder if Yulis and Silvia were alright.'

"Right. Have you heard about Lady Fletcher?"

Suddenly, Lady Howard clasped her hands as she was reminded of something. My brows raised, setting my eyes to the lady sitting across from me. The ladies eyes immediately lit up as this was yet another gossip.

"I heard she had been keeping herself in her room!"

"Did you think she contracted a contagious disease?"

A lady gasped, covering her lips. "Is she dying?"

"Tsk tsks." The ladies' attention diverted to Lady Howard clicked her tongue in disappointment. "I think it has something to do with her business in the east."

"Huh?"

Lady Howard crooked her finger, and as if by instinct, we leaned forward. "As far as I know, the House Fletcher tried to set up a business in the east. But just as they were starting, rumors have it that the knights from the Spade Kingdom are marching to the east!" she gossiped, making the other ladies gasp. "I only heard about it last night. Apparently, a large scale war is about to break out in the east!"

"Oh my! A war?"

"Isn't that La Lona March ruled by the Marchioness? She just revived the March after a long drought and now, it will become a battlefield?"

The ladies' voices started to volume up, raising their concerns even though Minowa was too far from it. I knew Sam stopped this information in the first two weeks, but war as big as this wouldn't go unheard for long. Thus, I wasn't surprised that these ladies already got wind of it.

"Is it possible that because of this, some people will also attack Minowa?" Careless with her words, Lady Howard's theory brought silence in the pavilion. Fear instantly caused their complexion to go pale, already imagining dreadful things.

"Lady Howard, please watch your words. You are scaring everyone." Displeased, Lady Hazel Malum put down her teacup on the saucer with a firm tone. "Even if the enemy soldiers advanced and cross the borders of the March, they won't be able to reach the South unnoticed. The south had always had a strong defense system. So, they can try all they want but it will be futile."

"Apologies, Lady Hazel." Lady Howard lowered her head and frowned. "That's right. Minowa is the safest place in the empire."

"Also, do not underestimate the emperor of the Great Heart Empire. He won't suddenly fall," Lady Hazel added, scanning everyone's faces coldly. "If the emperor is that weak, then the Great Heart Empire would've fallen long ago."

The ladies tried to calm their hearts, holding on to Lady Hazel's reassurance. I remained silent, eyes on Lady Hazel. I appreciate her trust in the emperor. No wonder she was called the queen of the tea parties and banquets. Being grand was just the added bonus; she knew how to settle the conversation and divert it with class.

'Hazel Malum...' I mentally nodded, keeping my meek smile. '... I heard she is the best candidate to inherit the title of the Viscount, but because she was a woman, she couldn't.. Now I know Jaime Malum is just plain stupid and evil.'

Chapter 515 - [Bonus]I Do Not Mind Being Greedy

Our mini tea party continued until it was time for them to go. I sent them off with Fabian. But before Lady Hazel enter her carriage, she faced me.

"Today's tea party is informative. I didn't regret coming in here." I smiled at her modesty. "Madam Roux, my father's banquet will be held in two weeks. I hope you can also attend."

"That will be my honor, my lady."

She smiled, pleased while nodding. "Then I will send you an official invitation. I am looking forward to your reply."

"Yes, my lady."

We exchanged smiles before she hitched inside the carriage. I stood there for a while before turning around to face Fabian.

"Fabi, where is my son?" I asked, missing Law after a day of not being with him.

"He is with Glory in the training grounds."

"Oh? Until now?" my brow arched as I started walking inside, heading to the training grounds at the back part of the mansion.

Fabian smiled. "The young master plans to become stronger. That's why he had been working on it."

"Gosh... my son... he is just six. He will strain his body," I muttered with a sigh, hastening my speed to reach the training grounds faster.

After Sam left for the capital, studying and training had occupied Law. Although he was maintaining good feedback from his tutor, his prolonged training was starting to worry me. Shortly, I arrived at the training grounds. I stopped when my eyes landed on my son, sitting on the ground while Glory was squatting down in front of him.

Sam hired the latter after Law's birthday. That was his gift to Law — make this man his instructor. So far, Glory wasn't that bad as I thought. Well, he listens to Fabian for some reason.

"Look at him, Fabi." A deep sigh slipped past my lips, staring at my son. Dirt clung to his dampened blouse because of sweats and his hair disheveled. Yet, I could see the determination in his eyes.

"If only he can grow up overnight, he had done it already."

"The young master is just aware that Madam is sad about His Majesty's absence."? I pressed my lips into a thin line, keeping my eyes on Law. "I was trying not to make it obvious."

"The young master knows what lies behind the smile, Madam. Also, I am certain the young master also misses his father. This is the first time His Majesty went away. Back when the young master was still young, His Majesty will take the young master with him."

"Mhm. I heard." My smile remained. "Sam told me about it."

There was a moment of silence between us. I came here to tell Law it was time to rest and wash up, but it seemed he had some serious business with Glory. Honestly, until now, I hadn't figured out how my son's mind works. All he would show me was his child-like personality, but he was different from everybody else.

But that wasn't what worried me. I was more concerned about how he was too ambitious as a child. Like the other day, he was upset because he was too young. I had to coax him and he slept in my room. After that, Law had been sleeping in my room.

"Fabian, have you heard anything from the capital?" I asked after a brief silence, glancing at Fabian, who stood beside me. "Sam hadn't sent me a letter ever since he went to the capital. I'm certain by now, they already reached the Capital. I know he is surely busy, but I can't help but worry."

"I know Madam is worried, but everything will be fine," he reassured as he gazed at me. "Whether or not the Spade Kingdom attacks the Empire, it was only a matter of time before Rufus and his

troops will march to their land. His Majesty is not someone who would keep a threat for long, after all."

I stared at Fabian as he nodded slightly as if telling me this matter was already expected. Deep down, I was aware of that because Sam mentioned that he already stopped thinking of staying unbothered until he was provoked.

"The only reason His Majesty didn't order to burn that place is that he had a lot of things at hand. The king of spade probably knew this, so he made his move before the emperor's soldiers surround their land," he added, peeling his eyes away from me and back to Glory and Law.

"Will this ever end?" I wondered, setting my eyes towards Law. "At first, I found this new life... boring, honestly. But the more I live as Madam Roux, the more I appreciate the little things in life. I still find it boring — I know Sam, too. But I prefer this boring life compared to the life of a peasant or a royal or a Bloodfang."

I paused for a beat to breathe, pressing my lips while balling hands until I loosened my grip. "I may be asking for too much considering I wasn't doing the duty of the empress, but I think I can give up everything, Fabi. Status, wealth, everything, just to keep this family together and in peace."

"That is not too much, Your — Madam." I cast Fabian a look once again and smiled at his kind countenance. "It's rather... simple. A simple life, but alas, you weren't born to live life simply."

"Sadly, that is a fact." I rocked my head, already used to Fabian's straightforwardness. "I was born to either have it all or none at all. And yet, what I want is neither of those two."

Fabian chuckled in a low tone. "In the end, it seems Madam is, indeed, asking for too much."

I couldn't help but laugh at Fabian's last remarks. After reanalyzing my wants, he finally realized I was actually asking for too much.

"But if this called being greedy..." I whispered, smiling brightly when Law turned his head in my direction and a bright grin appeared on his face. Law immediately sprung up to his feet, sprinting towards me while I squatted down to welcome him.

"...Then I do not mind being the most greedy person in the world."

Chapter 516 - [Bonus]Good Night, Sweet Heart.

Days later, I received a letter from Lady Hazel. It was an official invitation to Jaime Malum's birthday. I knew the purpose of this banquet and of why it was this grand despite the news about the increasing tension in the east and west. It was to calm the people of the south.

It was smart of Jaime. Or shall I say, it was smart of Lady Hazel to use this chance to appease the worry of the masses.

"Mother?" I stopped writing the letter on my desk, turning my head to the door of my chambers. There, Law was standing by the door. A faint smile appeared on my face as soon as my eyes landed on him.

"Can I sleep here tonight?" he asked, and I nodded, close-lipped. This had become his little habit since his father left, but he still asked every night he comes.

"Of course," I said, watching him run towards the bed. "I'll just finish this letter and then join you."

"Yes, Mother!"

I laughed faintly, seeing that Law was already pulling up the sheet to his lap. Honestly, the bed didn't feel empty without Sam because Law sleep on his spot. With a son waiting for me on the bed, I wrote a quick letter I would send back to Lady Hazel.

Although I knew even if Lady Hazel wouldn't invite me, Jaime Malum would, out of courtesy. I didn't plan to come originally, but I sort of liked Lady Hazel. She might be a Malum, but she was a bit different. I didn't know her circumstance, but I wanted to get to know her more.

So, I wrote the letter and kept it short but polite. I put little decorations on the parliament out of habit before sealing it. Once done, I smiled and looked back, only to see Law sleeping soundly. His back was facing me, letting me see his one foot was out of the sheet.

"My son," came out a whisper, assisting myself up as I trudged towards the bed. I perched on the edge of the mattress, eyes on this precious bundle of joy. Watching my son sleep made me feel so thankful regardless of everything.

Even though I had already come to terms with everything and quenched my violent urges, this child's existence still felt surreal. Whenever I looked at him, my heart warmed up and I knew I would go against the world for him.

"Law," I whispered, brushing the stray strands away from his face. "Please grow up as a good person. Don't get sick and don't worry too much. Life is full of surprises, but I hope you will face them bravely. I know you will, but don't worry about your mother and father. Just live happily because that is just Mother wants for Law."

My weak smile remained, slipping under the sheet, and embraced my son. He was my source of strength and with him, I felt like everything would be alright.

"I love you, my son." I closed my eyes, breathing in and out as he was my calm. "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

When Lilou's breathing grew slower and her tensed body relaxed, Law's eyes slowly opened. His natural crimson eyes glowed in the dark, blinking with a dead expression. He slowly sat upright, making her hand drop to his lap. Lilou moaned and moved, but she didn't wake up.

Law turned his head to her and stared at her for a very long time. After a moment, he raised his hand to cup her cheek with his lips curling up into a smirk not fitting for a child.

"Mhm," he hummed in a low tone, poking the tip of her nose with his finger lightly. "I hate you."

His eyes fell on her neck, staring at the pulsating vein under her skin. Law licked his lips but raised his eyes back to her face. He moved closer, bending over for a closer look. Pressing his lips together, his brows elevated.

"I hate you..." he repeated under his breath, batting his eyes leisurely. "... but killing you will be too easy for you and for that damn husband of yours, sweetheart."

A smirk dominated Law's face as he drew his head back, setting his eyes towards her desk. He carefully flung his legs out of the bed, marching towards Lilou's desk. When he sat down on the chair, he stretched his neck up to see documents on the side and some opened letters.

He picked up one opened letter, skimming through them in disinterest before picking up another one. He read all the letters and documents, thinking he would see something... helpful. But alas, everything Lilou was working on was simply all the duties as the lady of the house.

"She really embraced this boring life." Law glanced back at the bed, staring at the back of her head. "Well, that's surprising for someone who hates it. I don't believe it, though."

He leaned his back against the chair, staring at the window in silence. "She just likes it now because she hadn't had a taste of fun again. The thing that will make her blood boil in excitement, the thrill of watching someone's eyes dim with life, and..."

Law trailed off as he arched his brow. He slowly turned his head towards the door, smirking with a low chuckle. Outside this door was someone who was sensing something was wrong on this estate. He was correct, but he wouldn't find out about it until he let this little secret out.

"I knew it," Law muttered, getting off the chair as he returned to the bed. He slipped under the sheet, facing Lilou with a bright smile.

"I should've dealt with that butler first before everyone else. He is the most troublesome among everyone." He uttered those words while bearing a smile, leaning forward to kiss Lilou on the lips. "Goodnight, sweetheart. I'll come to see you and give your husband's head. Next time, it will be his actual head.. For sure."

Chapter 517 - [Bonus]Maleficent Is Aroused

Jaime Malum's birthday finally came, and I still hadn't heard from Sam. The news about the war had been known to the public, so everyone in the south was distressed. The viscount's banquet came at the perfect time to calm the people down. Lady Hazel made the celebration open to the public so even commoners could attend. By doing this, everyone would feel reassured and the word would spread fast, not just in high society.

"Madam, are you sure you don't want me to accompany you?" Fabian inquired as he stood outside the carriage, staring at me through the window.

"Fabi, checking the fort will come first. Also, Bey and Glory are with us. Don't worry," I reassured with a smile. Apparently, there was a slight discrepancy in Sam's business. So I asked Fabian to check on it since I couldn't go because I promised Lady Hazel to come.

Fabian let out a shallow breath, nodding reluctantly. "Alright. Please take care. I will come if you ever needed my help, Madam."

"Thank you." I smiled, watching Fabian take a step back and tell the coachman to start moving. My eyes remained on him until the carriage set off, peeling my gaze away and setting them to Bey sitting across from me. Beside me was Law and Glory was outside with the coachman.

"Madam, are you alright?" asked Bey once we departed the mansion. "Lady Hazel will understand if you can't come. She is a reasonable lady — the only reasonable lady in the House Malum."

I shook my head lightly. "It's fine, Bey. I'm alright. I need to move and do something or else, I will just worry about my husband."

"Mother, Father will be fine." I gazed down when Law chimed in, forcing a smile. My heart relaxed as I patted his head lovingly.

"My baby, Mother is alright, really. I know your father will be fine, but I will still naturally worry since he is my husband."

I had been trying to reassure Law not to worry about me, as he had been trying to make me feel better. But he didn't need to do anything since seeing him made all bad things go away. Even so, I would naturally worry about Sam because he was my beloved husband.

Law pressed his lips while the corner of it turned up, nodding in understanding. A shallow breath slipped past my lips as I glanced at Bey on instinct. She smiled back at me before we traveled in silence. On our way to the House Malum banquet, I set my eyes towards the window.

Right now, the street of Minowa felt different from the last time we were here. Probably because of the news from the east and west. Although the reaction from the public was calmer than expected because they trusted the emperor's power, everyone was still worried.

'I had this bad gut feeling,' I thought, letting out a weak sigh. 'Maybe... I'm just thinking too much.'

This gut feeling was something I couldn't pinpoint. But what I knew was that it was something I would usually fear before a tragedy. Deep down, I wished it was nothing. I caressed my necklace, which I started wearing recently.

"Mother, that necklace is pretty, but it doesn't match your dress." I peeled my eyes away from the window to Law. "You've been wearing it and that earring too, although it's not noticeable since you cover it with your hair."

A light chuckle escaped my mouth. "They make me feel closer to your father," I explained, keeping it short and simple.

Honestly, I just wanted to be prepared just in case. I told Sam that I would protect Minowa and our son. Of course, I wished I wouldn't have to use Lakresha and Catharsis, but it was better to be prepared at all times. Some people were trying to shake the empire and anything could happen.

"Father gave them to you?" His nose scrunched up, glancing at my necklace. "Father surely had a bad eye for accessories."

"Haha. No, this necklace came from someone else... it's more like a family heirloom. While this earring was originally your father," I paused, caressing my necklace with my thumb. "He didn't give it to me. I just picked it up when he dropped it, then it became mine."

"Hmm?" Law tilted his head, but I just smiled and ruffled his hair once again. I didn't give him details because it would be a long story if I explained it to him. Moreover, that doesn't matter now. How I obtained these accessories... it didn't matter now.

Things were different and there was a high chance I didn't need to use them for their real purpose. I hoped... I wouldn't need to. From the bottom of my heart. Because if I wield Lakresha and Catharsis, that only meant Minowa was in danger.

'I don't want Law to see me wielding them... as much as possible, I wanted to keep him away from that.'

Meanwhile, in the fort of Minowa, Fabian had settled the minor problem that occurred. It was nothing serious, but there was this part of him that made him feel so restless. He stood in the middle of the fort, seeing that it was still as busy as ever.

'I can't shake this feeling away.' He stretched his neck in a circular motion, taking deep breaths as his eyes were sharp. This feeling... he disliked it. He had been cautious ever since Sam left the estate, and he didn't know why.

"I wonder what is happening now in the Capital?" he muttered, holding his hand behind him while watching the crowd of the busy fort. "The lack of letter is understandable since all eyes were on the emperor right now."

Fabian nodded, thinking that if Samael send a letter in the south, those who were watching his every movement would wonder who was the recipient. Since his trusted and capable people were surely preoccupied with the war, he wouldn't have anyone else to stand as a messenger.

"But..." Fabian's thoughts trailed off when he caught a blind person from the corner of his eyes. His eyes veered in its direction, but he saw nothing but the passing crowd.

He went silent, caressing the skull ring around his finger. "My maleficent is aroused.... not good."

Chapter 518 - [Bonus]An Uprising

Soon, we reached the largest estate in Minowa, the House Malum. Guests were also arriving one after another. The event would start before dusk, but everyone had arrived early. By now, I already knew that the people in Minowa were too punctual. This was to show that they were glad to be invited. Hence, they show their sincerity by showing up early.

It was an unwritten rule in the south. So, we also arrived half an hour before the said time. They were knights around to secure the safety of the guest. Although this was a public event, those important guests received an official letter so they could occupy seats prepared for them.

I handed the invitation to the butler outside the hall. He glanced at me and smiled, glancing at Bey and Glory behind me.

"Madam Roux?" he asked to confirm.

I nodded, closed-lipped. "I already informed the Viscount about bringing my company inside."

"Yes, I've been told." The butler politely bowed his head, motioning his arms towards the door with two guards standing on either side of it. "I hope Madam Roux will enjoy tonight's banquet."

"Thank you."

I didn't idle as I turned to Bey and Glory while holding my son's hand. Jaime Malum wouldn't say no to me, so I brought these two as my company. The reason they were wearing formal attires.

For reasons unknown, I felt more secure having them close at all times. Glory, although weak against Sam, he was strong. And he had grown fond of Law by now because of my son's determination to learn from him.

Meanwhile, Bey's purpose was to eavesdrop on other conversations. It was better to have an extra eye and ear in every banquet. That was what I learned from mingling in high society for months.

"Let's go?" I beckoned, and they nodded humbly. They followed behind me as the knights opened the door for us.

As expected, the banquet hall was packed. It had more people than Law's birthday party, but considering everyone was allowed to attend. Who would miss such an opportunity, right?

A lot of commoners attended, wearing the best dress and suits for gentlemen. Although it still paled in comparison with those lavish dresses of the noble ladies.

Now, looking at the split crowd as we entered, the difference was very obvious.

On one side were occupied by individuals whose bright dresses and fine formal suits were adorned with flowers and jewelry. The dismay in their eyes kept piercing to the other side of the crowd. My eyes veered to the other side of this hall, noticing the fading colors of their dresses, although they were clean. Still, it looked rather gloomy if not for the fact that they were enjoying themselves instead of concerning about the disgusting glares they received from the nobles.

'This banquet, although held in good purpose, it also shows the status and life difference,' I thought, peeling my eyes away and gazing ahead to where Lady Hazel was. 'The only similarities they had were... they were weak.'

The vampires in the south were surprisingly weak. I mentioned Sam about it, but he said I would think otherwise if I was born and raised in the south. The only reason I see them weak was that I was a pureblood, and had met powerful individuals that were of a different caliber.

"Madam Roux!"

I stopped a meter away from Lady Hazel, performing a curtsy before facing her with a smile.

"Greetings, Lady Malum."

"What can you say about the theme, Madam Roux?" she asked proudly, raising her brows as she traveled her eyes across.

"It was magnificent, my lady." My smile remained, glancing at the crowd. "On the way here, I heard some saying this was akin to a royal banquet."

"Oh, you flatter me." She waved while chuckling, flattered by the truth. The ambiance truly felt luxurious, making the commoners feel they were living the dream. Only those nobles who had a prejudice against commoners were killing the mood.

"Madam Roux! Law!"

I snapped my eyes in the direction of Adam's voice and smiled. He approached us with a butler behind him, smiling from ear to ear as he stopped at arm's length from us.

"Greetings, my lord," I curtsied, glancing at Law, and he bowed as well. "How have you been?"

"I am doing well, Madam Roux." His grin was still there, glancing at Lady Hazel. "I hope you are too! Law, I heard you've been training..."

Adam giddily approached Law as they chatted. I darted my eyes from these two young boys and then to Lady Hazel. I noticed how her eyes softened while staring at Adam as if she was relieved to

see him well. It wasn't surprising that Lady Hazel seemed she truly cared about Adam but did nothing when he was being maltreated.

Lady Hazel didn't have enough power to go against her father. Knowing Jaime, he would surely marry her off if she upset him. I pity them, but there was no reason to dwell in the past. Adam was better now with the emperor's backing and Jaime Malum wouldn't touch even the tip of this young boy's hair.

While Law and Adam chatted, Lady Hazel also shared her ideas after my lesson. She told me everything, and I listened and smiled all throughout. Not that I was forcing myself. I was intrigued since she said the tea I made inspired her. In the middle of our conversation, other noble ladies also approached us for a chat.

We were engaged in this topic about Lady Fletcher as she had been keeping herself locked up in Fletcher's estate when a loud bell rang to gather everyone's attention. I set my eyes to the person on the raised platform, catching Jaime Malum's figure. The merry chatterings in the banquet hall quieted down while Jaime cleared his throat.

"Greetings, everyone!" his lips stretched into a dignified smile, carrying himself with an air of integrity. What a great actor, I thought. If one didn't know him, I would think he was a righteous nobleman. But everyone knew how rotten this person was. The angst and sufferings this man caused throughout his time could even incite rebellion if they all unite.

'An uprising...' I whispered internally, watching Jaime continue his humble speech, especially thanking Adam and then everyone. '... I hope the people in the south can hang in there until Adam had grasped the full power of his position. It's a good thing Jaime was lying low...'

BAM!

My thoughts trailed off as the entrance suddenly slammed open, interrupting Jaime's speech. Everyone, including me, turned our heads to the entrance, seeing a wretched butler panting heavily. I narrowed my eyes out of instinct as my heart suddenly pounded against my chest.

"My lord!" the Butler called with a voice full of dread. "A rebellion arose in the fort! They had already seized the downtown and were on their way here!"

Silence.. Even a pin drop could be heard as everyone processed the news.

Chapter 519 - [Bonus]Are We Going To Die?

"A rebellion arose in the fort! They had already seized the downtown and were on their way here!"

Silence. I could hear even a pin drop as everyone processed the news in dead silence.

My hand balled into a fist, grinding my teeth. 'Jaime...!' my chest moved in and out heavily. Just when I thought about rebellion, it would suddenly come true. Were they kidding me?

After a beat, when everyone already processed the situation, panic ensued. Even Jaime didn't seem to reckon that a rebellion would arise or would go unnoticed and unheard. With the growing voices resonating across the banquet hall, Jaime finally grasp his situation.

"Silence!" his voice thundered, causing everyone to automatically shut their mouth and look at him in horror. He gnashed his teeth, eyes glinting in malice.

"They dared raise a rebellion?!" he scorned, letting his fangs known to everyone. "I see if they can even advance!"

Jaime paused as he looked around, and his eyes lingered on us. People would think he was staring at Adam or Hazel, but no. He was holding my death glare.

When he averted his eyes from me, he exhaled sharply. "All of you! Stay in here. The Earl's knightage will secure this place. If you want to die, go ahead and leave. But I cannot guarantee your safety!"

No one answered his remark while he scanned everyone. Although this person was a pushover, he knew how to intimidate people. This was enough. Everyone, although weren't calm, at least, they were abiding by his orders.

Satisfied that everyone stayed out of fear, Jaime nodded. "My people will escort you all to a safer place. Abide by their orders."

After he spewed those, Jaime jogged down from the raised platform and walked away to deal with it. Some high positioned noblemen also followed him while the knights soon came after.

"My lord, your presence is needed." A knight approached, bowing at Adam.

'No. I can't protect him if he isn't close to me.' My lips parted, about to reject the knight I noticed Adam gazing up at me. There was a reassuring smile on his face, holding my hand to squeeze it lightly.

"Don't worry, Mother. I will protect you and Law." Adam shifted his eyes to Law, nodding encouragingly. "Trust me."

"Adam..." my heart dropped, unable to shatter the determination of this child. Adam didn't idle as he followed the knight with his chin up. I stared at his back, feeling conflicted about letting him go.

'It'll be alright. The knights of the Earl will protect him and they will put down the rebellion.' I convinced myself that all the history of rebellion since Jaime took control was all squashed down instantly. 'He will be fine, Lilou. He will be.'

"Madam, let's follow the knights." Glory, who kept a safe distance from us, spoke from my side. I looked at him but said nothing. Bey was beside him and I could see her fear in a glance.

"This can't be happening..." Lady Hazel held her head, but I caught her shoulders before she falls.

"Lady Hazel, get yourself together." I shook her shoulder, searching for her eyes until I caught her gaze. "It will be fine. Let's trust the Viscount and the Earl."

"Madam Roux..."

"Don't worry," I reassured, assisting her to stand up properly. Once again, I scanned everyone. Glory already carried my son in his arms.

"Don't worry," I repeated, and forced a smile. "We will all be fine."

Bey nodded, although my words only affected her slightly. Glory remained calm while Law was sporting a brave face. I cast Lady Hazel a look, and she bit her lip, fear filling her eyes. I only nod at her but spoke nothing.

The south of Minowa wasn't my land, or this matter belonged to my jurisdiction. I could go out there and stop it myself, but I wanted to trust Adam. He may be a child, but he had worked hard to become a proper earl. Hence, I, together with my son and my company, followed the knights to this 'safe place.'

The House Malum was the largest estate in the south. Hence, staying inside instead of the banquet hall where the rebels were marching was safer. This was all for the safety measures.

"Mother..." my son called while I cradled him. "... don't be scared. I will protect you."

A subtle smile appeared on my face as I hummed. The situation obviously overwhelmed Law, but he was still thinking about me.

"Thank you. Mother is not scared now," came out a weak voice, stroking his hair gently before resting my chin on top of his head. I looked around the ladies inside this spacious room.

Currently, all the men were outside to protect this place while women and children stayed here. All of us were sitting on the floor, mostly cowering in fear while comforting each other.

"Are we all going to die..." A woman's voice trailed off when we heard muffled cries and yells outside the estate. "No, no, no! They're already here?!"

I closed my eyes as the frightened murmurings picked up their volume. I could sense that a fight was going outside the building and the shouts came from both parties. They manage to reach this place already? My jaw tightened. It had only been two hours since the news of the rebellion interrupted the banquet.

And now, some of them already snuck inside the estate.

"God..." I breathed out, opening my eyes as I looked at the ladies. Everyone was scared, while some ladies who could protect themselves stayed calm.

"Madam." Bey moved closer to me, staring at me worriedly. Her complexion was already pale as her eye shook.

"This is all the House Malum's fault." Someone voice out, silencing everyone as we turned to Lady Hazel on the corner. "If not for the Malum's viciousness and greediness, and if not for the young earl's naivety, this will not happen!"

"That's right! They were after the Malums! Lady Hazel, you should surrender!"

Their remarks that were clad with desperation and fear grew more vicious as they voiced out their opinion one after another. Lady Hazel could only hang her head low, clutching her skirt while everyone pushed all the blame onto her.

"Shut up," I said in a quiet voice, but it faded in the voices resonating in the four corners of the room. "I said, ENOUGH!"

Chapter 520 - [Bonus]Can You Even Carry A Weapon?

"ENOUGH!"

This time, my voice thundered after taking a deep breath. My eyes were on Lady Hazel as she raised her head to me, revealing her helpless countenance.

"Gosh..." I ran my fingers through my hair in distress, asking Law to sit on Bey's lap before standing up. As soon as I stood in front of them, my eyes traveled from their faces.

"This is not helping anyone. This... everything you all said was nonsense. And even if it's the truth, that can't change our situation right now." My voice was calm yet firm, making eye contact with everyone every passing second. "Right now, people are fighting and dying and your cowardice is nothing but a disgrace. It is only inciting more fear, anger, and everything we don't need in this situation."

Silence. That was their answer, but at least they finally regained their senses.

"Let's trust..." I trailed off as I felt this dangerous aura from a distance. Marching footsteps were growing louder and closer. Not good.

"All of you, remove all the first layers of your skirts. Accessories, purses, and anything that adds weight to you, remove them all," I ordered as I ripped the hem of my skirt. After that, I tore the tight sleeve from my shoulder, knowing it will only hinder my movements.

"Mother, what are you..." I stopped when Law's voice reached my ear. I glanced up, seeing their shock as I 'undressed' in front of everyone.

A sigh slipped past my lips. "We will flee this place. It's not safe. If you want to stay and wait for the rebels to get you, suit yourself. But if you want to live, follow as I say."

They didn't respond immediately, processing my words in silence. They only snapped back to reality when the ripping sound of fabric caressed everyone's ears. We slowly turned our heads to the source of the sound. There, Lady Hazel was taking off all her accessories.

"I don't know how we are all going to survive this, but I am with Madam Roux," she said in determination, staring at me straight in the eye. "I'd rather do something instead of waiting for my death in here.

After she spouted her remarks, the sound of fabrics being torn and accessories landing on the floor resounded. I nodded at her, and she only smiled weakly. We all busied ourselves taking off the extra weight in us, not even bothering with the valuables we would leave behind. Our life was far more valuable.

Once everyone was done, they all faced me. I studied them; some took everything off and stood in their chemise, while a few just took off some unnecessary decorations in them while keeping everything else. I didn't force them, but I wouldn't let them lag us all behind if the weight of their dress and jewelry slowed them down.

"Right now, it seems the rebels are more troublesome and large in numbers. Taking the Earl by surprise is a smart move, but I know his lordship will figure things out." I took a deep breath and exhaled it sharply, studying them all. "Until then, we will keep moving before they reach this place. My estate is far from here, but I'm sure they haven't reached that place just yet."

The looked in their eyes had a mix of doubt, worry, fear, but what reigned in them was their determination to live. I rocked my head, looking down at Law, who was clutching his hand close to his chest. I bent down to my knees, holding his bicep, and smiled subtly.

"My son, don't worry, alright? I know you want to protect Mother, but let me protect you this time, hmm?" my smile persisted, etching his face into my mind. "Will you listen to mother?"

Law pressed his lips into a thin line before he nodded. "I will listen to Mother."

"Good boy." I ruffled his hair gently, feeling sorry that he had to experience such a terrifying situation. After Sam's effort to raise him in a violence-free environment, this happened. I could feel a hand clenching my heart, but I had no choice.

I stood up slowly, setting my eyes to the terrified Bey. "Bey, protect my son, will you?"

"Madam..."

"I will entrust him to you. So please, I'm begging you to look after him and I will look after everyone." I planted my hand on Bey's tensed shoulder. Her eyes were sweltering, but she still nodded.

A weak smile appeared on my lips as I patted her shoulder, shifting my attention to everyone. I took a deep breath once again and released it slowly through my mouth.

"Carry the children so they won't get left behind. If you want to live, put your life in my hands. I know this sounds absurd, but please trust me," I humbled, albeit with conviction. "I will make sure you will all see the sunrise."

Reluctance filled their eyes, but none of them opposed me. Be it with the way I spoke or the sincerity I was showing, it didn't matter. As long as they all wanted to live, I would make sure these women and children would go unharmed. After some ladies carried the children, my lips parted.

"Then, we shall -- "

BAM!

The women in front of me jumped and squealed as someone intruded inside the room we were hiding in. My shadow stretched towards their feet before I slowly turned around to see a man standing by the door. My eyes fell on the bulky man on the ground.

"Madam Roux..." the ladies called in a shaking, horrified voice. I ignored them, keeping my gaze on the man, trying to stand up.

"Glory," I called and waited for him to raise his head. "Are you alright?"

"Madam... I — yes."

"Teehee~! Of course, he is alright since I only tossed him inside~!" the man, standing by the door, giggled excitedly while Glory sat up with difficulty. "Oh, my~! So many ladies~! No wonder I keep smelling fresh aroma coming from here~!"

The man chortled in anticipation, licking his lips to reveal his short fangs. I didn't feel this man's presence because I was too busy reassuring these ladies. Just one glance and I could tell he was enjoying the fear that was reigning among us.

As the fear behind me increased, my mouth gaped open.? "Ladies, stay where you are --"

"Madam, I will --"

"Glory." I glanced down at him emotionlessly. "If you can stand, stand up. You will come with us."

Glory and I stared at each other before he backed down. "Yes, Madam."

"Oh, my~! Teehehe~! Such a fierce woman, but alas! No one can pass this door~! Tehehe!" the intruder kept giggling, covering his lips that showed his claw-like black nails. "Don't worry~! I only need Lady Malum~! And you will all die a quick and relatively painless death~!"

Silence.

"Madam Roux." Lady Hazel's shaking voice came from my side, making me glance at her pale complexion. Her eyes were sweltering, imagining her fate that would come after.

Her brows furrowed when I smiled weakly and patted her shoulder.? I said nothing to her as I set my focus ahead. Glory managed to stand up, limping near us.

"I will not give you Lady Malum, nor I will let you stop us. You don't want to fight me," I said, taking slow steps forwards. I heard Law and the ladies call my name in a shaking voice as I approached him, but I didn't stop.

"Fight? You? HAHHAHA! Can you even carry a weapon and — ack !"

Before he could finish his sentence, I leaped a meter, making me look I disappeared and reappeared in front of him. Without a second hesitation, I grabbed his face, lifting him up, unleashing all the anger, frustration, all violent urges I had suppressed in my grip.

"Can I even carry a weapon?" My voice was low and cold, tilting my head to the side, barely blinking. "Why do I need to carry a weapon when I can crush your head with my bare hand? Tehee?"