

# The Duke 581

Chapter 581 - The Promised Story That Will Moved Even The Most Callous Heart

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"History said the day the Empress died, the night didn't make a sound. There was a long procession of silence as the Emperor carried her remains in his arm, marching back to their home. When the victims of the war saw the emperor and the empress in his arm, none were able to make a sound." The woman scanned the faces of the young ladies, mostly noble teens, who were listening to the story she was narrating under the tree. "It was the most devastating day for the empire; more devastating than the disastrous result of the war, for this empire lost its mother forever."

"Did the emperor take in another wife?" asked one young lady curiously.

The woman shook her head with closed-lip. "The Emperor only loved the Empress. He poured all his love into her, and even after her death, he married her multiple times. He also created a statue of her and proclaimed a week that is only meant to remember her."

"That... is so sweet." One young lady sighed as she patted her chest. "Also, so tragic."

"I thought that they will be together after the challenges."

"But they lived in reality, girls." The narrator smiled kindly as she closed the book.

"I want to have an emperor who will only love me and make me a statue."

"I want someone like the empress who will sacrifice his life for me." One lady chimed in with a pout.

The story they listened to left this bitter taste in their mouth. They all rooted for a happy ending since the Empress and the Emperor had faced a lot of challenges together, having doubts in each other in between, but still chose to trust each other, regardless. But in the end, the Empress still died protecting the Emperor.

The story for them left this void in their heart. It was just unacceptable for them to let it be like it was, but that was the end of the story. And as their instructor said, the Empress and the Emperor lived in reality.

The woman chuckled as she watched the disappointment plastered on their faces. She took a deep breath and cleared her throat.

"And that... is the story that can move even the most callous heart," she said as the side of her lips stretched even wider. "Don't worry, girls. The book may have ended like that, but who knows? There might be a different ending that we know nothing about."

"After all... they lived in reality," she added with the same smile as the ladies looked at her with mixed emotions.

"Lady Bey, can you tell us more?!"

"Yes, what do you mean by an ending we didn't know about?"

The excited young ladies who were listening to Bey, the most sought instructor for noble ladies, demanded her conclusion of a different ending. Bey smiled as she sighed in defeat.

"Well..." Bey looked away, gazing up at the clear blue sky with a smile. "... who knows? Maybe, somewhere, under the same sky, His and Her Majesty still got the happy ending they both wished that is not recorded in history."

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[ It's been three years since the disastrous night that plagued Minowa. That night almost ruined the south; many people lost their lives, houses, and their source of living were ruined. In other words, Minowa was on the brink of its downfall.

Thanks to the efforts of the young earl and the help of the Emperor and its vassals from the East and West, it rose again — much stronger than ever in the span of a year. After that night, Jaime also surrendered and faced consequences.

But since Jaime had helped and risked his life to fight for its people, his punishment was significantly reduced. Instead of death that could appease the

angry masses, he was stripped off of his title and the wealth of the Malum was used to help recover Minowa.

One would think the punishment was too light, but after the young Earl Crowell's speech, about forgiveness and avoiding the usual cruel ways that plagued the lives of the southerners. It somehow convinced the majority of this new vision of their lord.

It wasn't easy. To change the ways that many people were already used to, but the south was hanging on. With the consistent effort of the earl and his people, Minowa would surely adjust to the new ways implemented.

Omar and I, Glory, are assisting his lordship to the best of our abilities. That night was life-changing. Those who witnessed how you fight ignited many people's eagerness to aspire to be an honorable knight that can protect Minowa if a similar incident occurs in the future.

Although we do not wish for it to happen again.

It was a tragic part of history that changed the lives of many people, including me. But I am glad to be a part of such a history.

I wish you have great health and a speedy recovery, madam.

Your loyal and faithful knight,

Glory. ]

I smiled while reading the letter I received from Glory, placing down to cover my lips as my eyes landed on Sam. My head was resting on his lap, having this perfect view of him. We were currently spending a lazy afternoon under a tree, his back against the trunk.

He raised a brow as he looked down at me. "You seem pleased. Did Glory profess his love for you?"

"What if he did?" I giggled, hiding the playful grin under the parliament.

"Damn that Glory. When he started learning how to write, he kept sending letters to everyone he knew," Sam grumbled with a frown. "How dare he?"

I giggled, seeing that Sam was quite displeased that I was using this time to read the letters that arrived for me instead of rolling on the grass with him. I

didn't feel bad, though. We had all the time in the world, so sparing some time to read the letters from my friends wouldn't hurt.

"Next letter, please," I said, folding the letter from Glory to put to my side. I glanced at Sam and saw him click his tongue, but he still handed me the next letter. The side of my lips stretched as he was complaining, but still letting me read the rest of this basket.

"Thank you very much."

Sam rolled his eyes as he rested the back of his head against the trunk. "If you read all these letters, it will be nighttime before you realize it and the kids will snatch you away from me. Don't you feel bad about your husband?"

I raised a brow as I looked at him, stopping to open the letter that had a seal of the Earl in Monarey. I pressed my lips together, studying my grumpy husband.

*'Should I continue this tomorrow?'* I wondered, seeing that Sam was especially needy today. "Well..."

Just as I was about to speak, Sam's expression grew grim as a voice from the distance reached our ear.

"Mother!" I turned my head to where I heard the voice, smiling gently as soon as I caught Law carrying his two-year-old sister, Sunny. I sprung up on instinct, eyes sparkling as Law approached us under the tree.

"Good God... here are the little devils." I heard Sam grumble unhappily while I ignored him, carrying Sunny in my arms as Law passed her to me.

"I knew it when I saw Sunny with Mister Fabian." Law narrowed his eyes at his father. "Father, how can you abduct Mother from Sunny? She was crying. Right, Sunny?"

"Oh? We're you crying, Sunny?" I chuckled while our intelligent little girl just looked at me with an adorable smile.

"My dear wife, we should work hard even more." I turned my attention to Sam as his voice grew solemn, seeing him dart his eyes from Law to Sunny. "We need another child that looks likes you. I can't stop here."

I burst out in laughter while Law frowned. Even Sunny, who was merely a two-year-old toddler, gazed at his father. Why would Sam say that? Well, his genes were so strong that Law looked like his carbon copy and only got the color of my eyes. Our little girl was also the same. She looked like the girl's version of Sam with only the difference that hazel streaks highlighted her baby silver hair.

"Father, aren't you worried that mother will be in pain if you have more children?" asked Law in dismay.

"Then, let's make sextuplets next, love." Sam set his eyes on me, batting his eyes coquettishly. "So you'll be in pain in one go."

"Sam..." I clicked my tongue as I widened my eyes. "The children are here. Please, watch what you say."

I cradled Sunny on my lap and played with her little arms before I added, "Sunny, don't listen to Papa, alright? He is in his rebellious state, just like your big brother."

"Mother, I'm sure I'm not that big brother you're talking about."

"Oh, love, come on!"

"Tea for a pleasant afternoon and unlimited energy to argue?"

I raised my head, and I saw Fabian walking in our direction with a picnic basket in his hand. A wide smile turned up on my lips as my eyes veered on the woman walking behind him, Tilly. The person who saved my life.

"Yes, please!" I nodded, gazing at Law, who smiled back at me. And then to Sam, who had this subtle smile as he cast me a quick look.

Three years ago, our lives were uncertain. We all had entered the darkest days of our lives, but three years later, we could now look back at those days with a smile.

"Hey! You are all having a picnic without inviting me?!"

"Oh, Uncle Ran, right..." Law smiled awkwardly as I followed his gaze, only to see the grumpy Yul storming in our direction.

*Right...* unexpected things happened after that night three years ago.. For example, our family migrated to the mainland and settled down in Tilly's mansion

with Fabian, who was mending his inner peace, and Yul, who was trying to extend his life.

## Chapter 582 - What Wasn't Written In History

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Three years ago, when Lilou took the hit for Samael, she died. Yes, she died. It was a fatal attack that would kill a powerful, pureblooded vampire. Hence, the slash across her back was a wound that wouldn't heal, losing too much blood.

Samael didn't speak a word after that and carried his beloved wife in his arms and walked back to their house. Even the cries of the people who fought alongside her didn't stop him — those brave citizens who took up their weapons even dropped to their knees at the sight of the emperor with the empress in his arms.

Her blood left a trail on her husband's path.

That night... everyone had believed Her Majesty's death also ended the seemingly endless night of terror. Everyone could only watch the emperor's back as he headed inside the estate, carrying Lilou in their bedroom to rest.

Thanks to Heliot and Rufus, who forced themselves to carry on, cleaned up the matters in the south. With the emperor's absence, because Samael didn't leave the room for days, the two joined hands along with Samael's other vassals to resolve the matters of the almost ruined fief.

Unity never happened on the continent as schemes and opposition often take place. But the south proved that unity was possible. Those nobles who held power and influence across the south lent their knowledge and cooperated with the young earl to recover their losses.

One week has passed, and Minowa was slowly recovering. But alas, not a single word was heard from Samael. Even Law, who woke up a week later, could only stand in front of his parent's door, staring at it with eyes full of worry. He heard everything, but he didn't want to believe a single word.

But Law couldn't muster the courage to enter this room. He didn't have the courage to see what he would see inside. He didn't have the heart, nor was he prepared to see her mother lying on the bed once again.

"Mother..." came out a tiny voice, planting his palm on the door that separated him from his parents. "Father..."

Meanwhile, inside the room, Samael was sitting on the armchair beside the bed. There lies Lilou, his beloved wife. His eyes were blank, staring at her, barely blinking. After he carried Lilou back to their room, he cleaned her up. The water in the tub even turned red as he cleaned her, even the dirt stuck on her fingernails.

Days later, she still hadn't woken up, and he just sat there for days. Samael knew she would never wake up again, but he was still waiting for the impossible miracle. He held onto that tiny hope she would fight death itself — even though it was ridiculous.

"Law is outside," came out a dead voice, breaking the suffocating silence inside the room. "Our son... is outside waiting for you to play with him."

Lilou didn't answer... just like how she didn't answer his cries on the first night. Samael hung his head low, gazing at his trembling hands as his elbows rested on his legs.

He could still feel her. His hands could still feel the weight of her body and how the warmth of her body slowly slipped away from her. He could still remember how she slowly grew cold under his grip, forcing him to stop touching her with the fear of feeling her stiff body.

"It's my fault," he whispered, burying his face with his palms. "She can't... die."

Another night had passed with Samael grieving and blaming himself, thinking of ways to resurrect her. He even thought of finding witches to bring the dead alive, but he couldn't think of any witch he knew as he killed everyone he had met in his long life.

Samael racked his brain day and night, losing count of how many days that passed. Sometimes, he would feel his people's presence outside the door, but no one aside from Rufus and Ramin had enough courage to speak from outside the door. Whatever they reported to him, nothing registered in Samael's head.

He treated all the reports as noises he would constantly hear.

Until one night, Heliot finally visited him with Fabian. Heliot didn't stay outside, but knocked on the door and asked permission to enter. Although he didn't receive any permission to enter, he still did. As soon as he stepped foot inside, his eyes landed on Samael's distraught figure and the dead lying cold on the bed.

Unlike when they put Lilou to slumber, she looked pretty much dead. She was just as white as the sheet without a sign of life in her. One could tell she was already dead — although a pleasant scent of flowers mixed along with the scent of the dry blood.

"Your Majesty," Heliot spoke to gain Samael's slightest attention. "I knew Rufus and Ramin had been reporting to you about the matters of the south, but I came here because... Her Majesty needs a proper funeral."

No answer.

Heliot glanced at Fabian, who was staring at Samael's back in silence. A shallow breath slipped past his lips before setting his eyes back on Samael.

"If you keep her here, she will soon rot," he added in a solemn tone, knowing this could trigger Samael. "She deserves to lie in peace. Give her people a chance to grieve for the death of the mother of the nation."

Samael batted his eyes every so tenderly. "Heliot, one more word, and the people of the Karo Kingdom will grieve for you." His voice was dead and empty, but one knew it wasn't just an empty threat. It was Samael's leniency for giving him a heads up. Heliot knew next time, Samael wouldn't just speak, but take action.

But that wasn't enough to stop him. Samael was the emperor, and they had reached this far. Therefore, they couldn't stop.

"Her death..." Heliot trailed off as a hand suddenly grabbed his neck, lifting him up with one hand like he was nothing.

"I guess you didn't want your head attached to your shoulders anymore, Heliot." Samael's eyes, which bore absolutely nothing, gazed at him. Life or death meant



nothing to him anymore.. Power? Duty? The only reason Samael took up the job of the emperor was that he wanted to protect his beloved wife.

## Chapter 583 - What Wasn't Written In History II

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"I guess you didn't want your head attached to your shoulders anymore, Heliot." Samael's eyes that bore absolutely nothing, gazed at him. Life or death meant nothing to him anymore.

Power?

Duty?

The only reason Samael took up the position of the emperor was that he wanted to protect his beloved wife.

But now that he had lost her... Samael couldn't see any reason why he shouldn't burn this damn land.

"Your..." Heliot gripped Samael's sleeve, but to no avail. Samael was stronger than him, especially in his current state.

"Your Majesty, please listen to --" Fabian couldn't even finish his sentence as a sudden force slammed him against the wall.

"Fabian, you dared show your face to me. Does that mean you no longer value your life? Then I do not mind taking two as a warm-up." Samael gazed at where Fabian crashed, chuckling weakly. "This Great Heart Empire... and all the people in it... will have to die."

Samael paused as he gazed at Heliot, gripping his neck tighter. "This land had taken the life of my wife. They robbed the life that I value the most in this world, so I will rob this world of its life."

Just as Samael dropped those words, his eyes narrowed while clutching Heliot's neck even tighter. He would kill Heliot and then Fabian, and then everyone that would come in his way. Samael was set to destroy this world altogether — just like how it destroyed him.

Heliot gasped for air, watching the birth of a monster that had the purpose of destroying the world. He couldn't die without letting Samael hear his proposition. But... with Samael set to kill him with dead eyes, Heliot was losing his options to stop him.

"Father..." Suddenly, Law's voice reached Heliot's ear as he watched Samael's eyes veer behind him.

Law darted his eyes from Heliot in his father's grip and then to Fabian. His eyes then caught the figure on the bed, making him ball his hands before setting his eyes back to Samael. Without a word, Law approached his father and held on the hem of his father's shirt.

"Father..." His eyes sweltered as he looked up at Samael's cold front. "Mother will not be pleased if she hears about this."

Samael dropped Heliot while staring into his son. The space between his brows wrinkled, swallowing down the tension in his throat. There was still a reason for him to fight, he thought. This little thing here, the fruit of their love, was still here.

"Father," Law called in a muffled voice as his father squatted down in front of him. "Please don't leave me as well."

For the first time, Law had shown something he hadn't shown his father in the past. That was becoming a child in front of him as he leaped forward, wrapping his arms around Samael's neck while bawling his eyes.

As Law bawled his eyes, Samael's countenance broke. He carefully put his hand on his son's little back, burying his face in his little shoulder, and wept.

*'You... saved me once again, my son,'*

he thought, thinking back that Law also saved him when Samael couldn't see the light in this endless darkness he was trapped into long ago.

"What... am I going to do, Law?" he inquired through his gritted teeth, voice shaking. "It's my fault... I cannot protect your mother."

Law chewed his lower lip as he, too, didn't know what to do. Before, the two of them could only wait for Lilou to wake up, no matter how long it would take them.

But now... they couldn't do that anymore because there was no one to wait. Lilou wouldn't wake up anymore. That was killing the two of them as well.

How... would the two of them accept it? Especially, Law who only got to spend time with Lilou for a very short time. Should they let her go? They couldn't do that. Even if they wanted to, they couldn't. They didn't have the heart to do that — it would destroy not just Samael, but Law as well.

Heliot coughed as he massaged his neck, watching Samael break down while embracing his son. If Law didn't come, Heliot was certain he would've died and Fabian too.

He took a deep breath, wanting to take advantage of this opportunity before it was too late. "Your Majesty, as I was saying, Her Majesty needs a proper burial as soon as possible. She needs to die... at least, in the knowledge of the people."

Heliot studied Samael's trembling back as he didn't receive a reply. So, he took this opportunity to explain.

"Our plan is for you to pass the crown smoothly, with enough reasons that can make the people accept the next monarch. Her Majesty's death will give more reasons for the people to respect this. After all, everyone loved Her Majesty and they would understand the emperor's heart," he continued in the same tone, watching Samael raise his head to him.

"Heliot, just because my son is here, doesn't mean I will not harm you," Samael warned as he set his eyes back to him.

Heliot retained his firm expression without looking away from him. "I am saying these things for Her Majesty's sake. If you want her back, we should proceed with our plan. The sooner the better, because you... need to hasten and bring her remains to the mainland. That is, if you want Lilou back."

This time, Law also raised his head and gazed at Heliot, not far away from them. He hiccuped, staring at Heliot as if he was his only hope. Samael also had his brows furrowed as he narrowed his eyes.

"The Grimsbanne are original purebloods who practiced ancient witchcraft. There is still one pure Grimsbanne who stays in the mainland." Heliot glanced at Fabian. "I'm sure the butler knew who I am talking about."

Fabian took a deep breath as he nodded. "Mathilda Grimsbanne."

"I'm sure she will be of help, Your Majesty." Heliot set his eyes back to Samael solemnly. "Time is running, Your Majesty. I... cherished my friend's life as well and I do not want to see her end here."

That conversation was what led them to the current time on the mainland.. The conversation that wasn't recorded in history.

#### Chapter 584 - The Grimsbanne

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The journey to the mainland wasn't easy as it sounded. But Samael promised he would do everything and not give up on Lilou. So, even though he was caught as soon as he landed on the said land of vampires and nearly got executed, he didn't falter.

Fortunately, Tilly was always watching. So when she arrived, she managed to save Samael and his family and entered the mainland as Tilly's guest. Who would go against Mathilda Grimsbanne? No one on the mainland wanted that woman to make a move. So, her guests, who were also her kin, were welcomed — although there were still prejudiced against these outsiders at first.

Samael cocked his head to the side, accompanying his auntie to the library after their afternoon picnic. Tilly picked up the cup of tea with her eyes on the book she was reading.

"Tilly, I know I owe you my life for bringing my wife back from the dead. But how can you live in such a secluded place for years? Didn't you want to explore the world?" he asked, watching Tilly from across the small table between them. What Tilly performed on Lilou required a huge sacrifice. Thus, Samael sacrificed a lot of things just to get his wife back.

However, what intrigued him was Tilly. When they first came into this place, it wasn't an exaggeration to call it some haunted mansion. Fabian and Samael,

together with Law, joined forces to clean their new home while waiting for Lilou to wake up.

If they didn't clean the house until it would look like one, Tilly would never do it. Also, that ringing bell tied around her hair was a bit annoying, but they couldn't complain since she was the master of this house.

"I do." Tilly raised her gaze over the book and blinked.

"If you want to roam the world, why didn't you do it?"

Tilly didn't speak for a minute, pondering whether she should entertain his questions or continue reading. She still chose the former, since Samael might stop writing stories she liked.

"I get tired easily," she answered in the same weak tone.

"Ah..." Samael rocked his head, already used at Tilly's simple reasoning for caging herself in this mansion.

"Also, I am waiting for Soran."

"Soran is dead."

"I know."

"If you know, why are you still waiting for him?"

"Because it gives me a reason to stay inside." Her answer was quick as if she had all the answers in the world — just throw her a question and her answer was prepared. "Also, he returned... his kin did. He even brought my sister's son and his wife and son. Now you have a daughter. Tilly is happy."

Samael let out a faint chuckle as he shook his head. Tilly said she was happy, but her expression remained the same. At this point, though, he knew she meant it.

He leaned back, resting his leg over the other. "I'm already working on the last volume of that book."

"Really?"

"Really. Did you like it?" he asked and Tilly nodded. Actually, Samael just rewrote the books he already wrote and left in the Heart's Empire. He did it to kill time after they diligently cleaned the entire mansion. He needed to do anything because Lilou might or might not wake up during that time, since there was also the risk of calling a different soul.

Fortunately, the person who woke up eight months later was his wife, Lilou. Still, Samael continued writing and painting as this had become his source of living on this mainland. He had to do something unless they wanted to eat eggs for the rest of their lives.

How he managed to adjust, even though he was considered an outsider at first, wasn't easy. Samael was just motivated to feed his family and strong enough to protect himself outside the forbidden forest. With his persistence in selling arts and books on the street, his talent was soon recognized.

Now, three years later, he was a renowned writer and painter. He didn't need to sell on the street as his books were already sold out even before he produced a few copies, and nobles sought him to do their portraits. One of the biggest works he did in this land was to paint a portrait of the king a year ago.

"You adjusted well in here." She pointed out, peeling her eyes away from him to the open book on her lap. "You're just like Amara. You two are talented in arts. She used to write poems and songs too before she snuck out with the other children her age to find Soran."

Samael quirked a brow as this was the first time Tilly mentioned his mother. The side of his lips curled up as he rocked his head.

"She's the one who told me to pursue what I love," he shared with the same gentle smile. "I'm glad I listened to her. Having my passion as my main source of living isn't as tiring as being a duke and a king. Simple, as people call it, but if I get to choose between being the emperor, duke, or an artist. I will keep choosing the third option for many lifetimes."

"Good. Write twenty books in a year."

A chuckle slipped past his lips as Tilly was someone he could talk to, but also someone he couldn't. It was interesting in a way for him. Even though most of her reply was short or out of topic, he would still talk to her.

"I will try. After all, the house still needs lots of repairs." Samael nodded as he pressed his lips into a thin line, raising a brow as he recalled a question he often forgot to ask her. "By the way, I saw this family portrait in one of the rooms when I was cleaning. I wonder why it is kept there."

This time, Tilly paused as she gazed back at him. She blinked twice before her lips parted.

"You saw it?" she asked with both her brows elevated.

"Mhm. Am I not allowed to see it?" he asked while tilting his head to the side. The space between his brows wrinkled at Tilly's next words.

"I want to see it."

Chapter 585 - The Grimsbanne II

"I want to see it."

Samael raised a brow at her request. Tilly put down the book and stared at him squarely. He felt a bit strange that she looked determined to see the portrait as if she was curious.

"Well, alright..?"

With that being said, Samael led the way while Tilly followed him from behind. The bell tied around her silver long hair rang at each step, resonating across the hallway to one of the study rooms at the end of the west wing. When they reached their destination, Samael turned his head to her.

"It's in here," he said, pointing at the door. Tilly nodded lightly, his cue to open the door.

The study room wasn't used, as it was far away from everything. So, the furniture and mostly everything were left covered with a white sheet. When Samael first reached this place, there were more dusk and cobwebs. But now, it was clean.

The two of them stood in front of the portrait hanging behind the desk. Samael shoved his hands inside his pocket, cocking his head to Tilly, who stood beside him. She was staring at the family portrait of six. Their mother and father had the same color of hair and eyes, but with pointy ears.

Their children, Tilly, who looked like around ten, sat between her parents while staring ahead expressionlessly. Amara, Samael's mother, who appeared to be around fifteen, stood behind the chair. Beside her was a young man who also shared similarities in appearance. And then, a toddler on their mother's lap.

It was a family portrait that lacked in smiles. Just one look and anyone could tell it wasn't just a simple, happy family. They all looked intimidating.

"That's me." Tilly pointed at herself, making Samael glance at her. "And that's your mother." Her finger veered at the fifteen-year-old Amara, the only one who had this smile on her face.

"Mhm. I know my mother's face so well. So, even though she looked young and healthy, I can tell." Samael studied the portrait he stared at for a long time when he stumbled upon it for the first time. "But Mother didn't tell me she has more siblings — actually, she didn't mention anything about the Grimsbanne."

"Because there's nothing to mention," Tilly replied in a weak voice, still staring at the faces on the portrait. "Just like Amara, my little sister also eloped with a man a year later after this portrait was drawn."

"Huh?" Samael quirked a brow as he gazed at the toddler, who seemed to be around two. "Eloped? Or did you mean she was kidnapped?"

Tilly's lips parted, then closed, to reconsider her words. "No. She ran away from home."

"That child?" Samael pointed at the toddler, just to be sure. He saw Tilly nod without taking her eyes off of the portrait.

"Tilly, there's a limit to a person's bluffs. How can that child run away from home? I bet she can't even eat on her own without making a mess."



"Don't cross her in this lifetime." His brows knitted at her warning uttered in the same distant tone. "That little child, I mean. She's dangerous. Don't meet her in this lifetime."

"It's not like I am planning to."

"I mean, don't cross the same street as her," she added as her white eyelashes fluttered ever so tenderly. "Don't ever show your face to her. She likes handsome men."

Samael chuckled as he found her words ridiculous, setting his eyes back to the portrait. "You sound like she's really dangerous. That child."

"Because she is." Tilly let out a shallow breath while staring into that harmless-looking child. "If Amara is the kindest among us, one will question if she was truly a Grimsbanne. That child is the complete opposite. Even I will not stand a chance against her."

This time, Samael's interest was piqued. He studied Tilly's side profile curiously.

"She's that dangerous, huh? Does that mean running away from home is a good thing in this land?" he asked out of plain curiosity.

"I don't know what other people's opinion, but it's better that she's not here. I will have to leave if she stayed behind. She's the only person I cannot stand."

"Tilly, were you, perhaps, jealous that your parents' affection shifted to the new child?"

"Mother and Father weren't the most affectionate. What you and Lilou show to your children is something a Grimsbanne will never do. Well, if it's Amara, I guess it is possible." This time, Tilly peeled her eyes away from the portrait to look at Samael for a moment. "You have to promise me to never meet that child and that brother of mine."

"Uh... alright?"

"If you hear their name, turn around and change your route. They're not on the mainland, but just in case you have to go somewhere else, remember my warning."

Samael frowned as he exchanged gazes with her until she looked back at the painting. If she was this persistent in warning him, that only meant these other two were more dangerous than he thought. She might not show it obviously, but this was the first time Tilly sounded a bit concerned than usual.

"I see." He breathed out as looked up, staring at the child and then at the young man beside Amara. "So, what's their name? I need to know their names so I can avoid meeting them in this lifetime."

Tilly pointed at the young man with sharp red eyes. "That's Abel," she said while staring at his face. "He left home because he admired Soran and was fascinated with humans. Whether or not that fascination is a good thing is something I am not sure."

"Abel." Samael rocked his head as she etched the man's face deep in his mind. The more he looked at Abel, the more Samael thought he didn't seem like a good person. If anything, he seemed to be a very complicated one.

His eyes then shifted to the child. "And that child? What's her name?"

Tilly also looked at the child and took a deep breath. "Marsella," she answered in a quiet voice. "Remember their name. They're original vampires who can also do what I can — perhaps even better than that."

"I see." He nodded while darting his eyes at the faces of the portrait. "Abel and Marsella... Amara and Mathilda."

"Also, it seemed the house likes you." He snapped his eyes at Tilly's remarks. "This family portrait is something one will not see. Only I can see them... the portraits in this house, I mean."

"Huh?"

Tilly just cast him a quick look as she spoke. "They're blank. Ask others aside from your son and daughter, who had the blood of Grimsbanne running through their veins.. You'll understand what I mean."

After our afternoon picnic, I put Law and Sunny to sleep for an afternoon nap. I smiled as I let out a deep exhale, brushing a few stray hairs away from my son's face. Sunny was already fast asleep in her bassinet. This had become the sibling's little bonding, as Law would always sleep in the same room as Sunny to protect her, just in case.

My eyes softened before I withdrew my hand away from Law, shifting my gaze on the bassinet close to the bed. We had been in this place for three years; thanks to Tilly, who accepted us in this place with open arms, this place felt like home. We don't think about any schemes anymore, nor do we concern ourselves with matters other than what was good to eat.

The mainland was a place for vampires only. So, the blood hierarchy was important. It was said that the Grimsbanne clan was one of the original vampires that first existed. The reason everyone listened to Tilly was that she was the last pureblooded Grimsbanne in this land and a powerful one at that.

*'I should join Tilly in reading a book before Sam upsets her again,'* I thought, pushing myself up from the bed. I looked back at Law and then at Sunny with a subtle smile.

After heaving a sigh of relief at seeing my children sleep in peace, I departed the children's room to look for Tilly. Usually, Sam would accompany her in the library or Tilly would stay in his office while reading a book. My husband and Tilly's relationship was a little weird since they could stand spending hours together without talking — Tilly wasn't much of a talker.

There were also times that Tilly would stay with me and the children. She would just stay with us, watching from the sidelines. Sometimes, Law would talk to her, but she was usually not on the same page as Law. Funny enough, though, my son liked her. Well, we all liked Tilly, even though she was a bit strange.

Soon, I reached my husband's office in the mansion. I knocked once before opening the door, peeking my head in, and looked around. My husband wasn't here. I frowned and was about to leave when I paused, looking back inside Sam's office.

*'What's that?'* I wondered, noticing an open book in the middle of the desk.

Out of curiosity, I entered my husband's office. Unlike the one he had at home in Minowa, Sam's office here was simpler. Instead of stacks of documents, Sam only had a few on the desk. What filled his rooms were canvasses and papers with sketches, books he was working on, and books he was reading about the mainland.

It was an interesting place, but not as interesting as his workshop. I was so proud of him, honestly.

I approached the desk and tilted my head, standing on the side to check the open book on top of it.

"It seems he is writing something," I murmured, stretching my neck only to realize it was his journal. "Huh? Why did he leave it here?"

I glanced at the door with raised brows. I was a bit confused why Sam would leave his daily journal out in the open since he often kept it hidden, afraid I would sneak in and read it. As if I would do that — I was not him who was always curious in my daily journal.

"Right. How dare he think I will want to read his daily journal?" I quirked a brow as I gazed at the open journal. The side of my lips curled up, clearing my throat as I dragged my feet on the chair.

"Well, he always read mine. It's his fault for leaving this thing out in here," I mumbled with a mischievous smile — maybe I wasn't very different from Sam as I found the pleasure to read what my husband had been writing that he was so afraid to show me.

As I gazed down and skimmed through the pages that Sam was writing, my brows raised. This was mostly how our day turned out yesterday, and some details that I wasn't aware of happened. The side of my lips curled up while reading Sam's perspective about yesterday.

"Gosh, my husband. Why are you so stressed about seeing that your children look like you and not me?" I chuckled, shaking my head as it seemed my husband's only wish was to have all his children look like me. "It's funny how he adds this 'I still cherish my children, but why do they all look like me?'"

I read and read, flipping the pages, and simply skimmed through it. This journal was still new, recording the current year. I frowned as I set my eyes on the shelves. I wanted to read more, as this wasn't enough.

"I wonder where he was keeping them?" I felt like a thief for invading my husband's privacy, but that wasn't a hindrance to even graze my nonexistent conscience. "I'll just take a peek."

I nodded before checking his drawers first. Sam wouldn't simply put those old journals out in the open where I could check them. So, I thought he would keep them in one of the drawers in here, but to no avail. Aside from the book where his schedule was inked, the one I was looking for wasn't here.

"Are they, perhaps, on the shelves?" I murmured with a frown, seeing it strange for Sam to not hide something as important as that. To fulfill my curiosity, I approached the shelves and skimmed through the books. I stumbled upon some poems, history books, and all those sorts.

"Are they really... here?" I arched my brow as I gaze at the book placed at the bottom that suddenly slipped out of the shelf with no one doing it. This mansion was a strange place, and I was already used to things going missing on their own, so this was normal.

I bent down to pick it up and return it back to where it was. But before I could, I caught a glimpse of what was written inside.

[Today, I told my wife about my first son. It was quite interesting to see her look at me blankly, trying to absorb the news I broke to her regarding our first son.]

I scrunched my nose, recalling this particular day that left me distraught for a moment.. It was the day my husband told me that Law wasn't our first legal son on the papers.

Chapter 587 - Back To Grimsbanne II

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Over two years ago...

It had been a month since I woke up from yet another short slumber. This time, I was only dead for eight months. Yes. Dead. My existence was surely a

blasphemy that broke the natural law of order in this world. But alas... I didn't care about that anymore. What mattered to me was I had more chances to spend time with my family.

"So, that's what happened." I nodded as Sam was explaining what happened to the empire bit by bit. A week after I woke up, Sam explained to me what happened to us, where we were, and who was my savior. Since I was a bit weak, he didn't want to bombard me with new information. So, we were taking it slow and steady. One information at a time.

I glanced at Sam, who was sitting on the chair beside my bed. "After I died, Heliot proposed to meet Tilly?" I asked for confirmation, seeing him nod as a response.

"Sam, if you rushed in the mainland, how about the empire?" I asked in worry, even though I knew this could put him off in a way. "Without an emperor, how about your people?" Sam raised a brow, making me press my lips into a thin line.

"I'm just a bit worried. This is not like in Minowa, where you can live a double life. We're not in the Empire anymore," I explained, just in case.

Sam let out a deep sigh. "I didn't want to make your head hurt with more information, but don't worry about that. We proceeded with our plan."

"What plan?" I tilted my head to the side, blinking curiously.

"My plan when you were in your five-year slumber, love. Didn't I tell you the reason Law didn't need to know about being a royalty?" he asked in a knowing tone.

"You did say *'because there's no need for him to live the life within the palace rules*

."

"Exactly." Sam nodded, leaning back against his chair comfortably. "Law didn't need to since I already had an heir."

His words somehow made my brain freeze. "What?"

"I didn't tell you because it's too early to give you a shock, but we have another son, you know?" Sam averted his eyes as he shrugged.

"We... what?" the space between my brows wrinkled as I tried to make sense of the words he uttered. Sam already had an heir? That was why he kept Law in the dark? Wait. What? He said, "we" had another son. I gasped while gazing at him in dismay, hand across my chest.

"We have another son I didn't know about?"

Sam stared at me for a moment before he sighed. "It's not like you didn't know him..."

"Sam." I scoffed, having all these ridiculous ideas hovering over my head. "Don't tell me we had a twin? And you simply chose to keep one and let the other carry the burden of the throne? Oh, my goodness, Sam!"

Before I get too emotional about the silly conclusion my brain was coming up with, Sam's lips parted that stopped my brain from working altogether.

"Rufus," he said, along with a deep breath. "I adopted Rufus and registered him as the emperor and empress's first son."

"...."

"We simply improvised your first plan before your slumber. Vampires wouldn't easily bow down to anyone, especially to a human. That is why, while I was the emperor, Rufus had to make his name known. I made sure all his victories would be heard across the continent; that people would see him as a hero while enemies would fear his name," Sam explained in one breath, pausing to take a swallow. "But despite Rufus' merits in the first five years, it wasn't enough to convince everyone that he is suited for the position as the emperor."

"But the battle in Minowa gave Rufus more reasons why he should lead, taking the last step towards the crown," he continued solemnly while I gazed at him wide-eyed. "A good story with evidence is something no one can discredit. Rufus challenged Zero, losing his eye during the intense battle, but still stood victorious. With Rufus winning against a powerful pureblood, the noble vampires

could doubt and challenge him all they want. But after that fight, I'm two hundred percent certain Rufus was stronger than before."

All I could do was listen to Sam's explanation, but I couldn't voice out my thoughts. Actually, even if I had the voice to speak, this rendered me speechless. He was saying, from the beginning, Sam and Rufus already planned to transfer the power to him?

And all this time, I was Rufus's mother in our family registry?

"Heliot finally acknowledged Rufus as well. So, it was easier to appoint Rufus as the crown prince," Sam continued to explain what he did until Rufus eventually became the emperor as Rufus La Crox, the first son of Samael Vaughnn Caecilius La Crox, and the late Empress Lilou Bloodfang.

In simple words, with the death of the empress, the emperor, who couldn't accept this, decided to enter an eternal slumber. The previous emperor, Samael, retired early and passed his authority to the crown prince, Rufus. No one heard about Law and those selected individuals who knew about Law promised to never speak a word.

That was the story about how Sam and I ended with a lot of people in the Great Heart's Kingdom. A wonderful story that ended with tragedy for Sam and I lived in the harsh and cruel reality. But not known to many, Sam and I and our growing family settled down in a place where we're not important people with duties.

The kind of life just like... what we had in Grimsbanne.

A subtle smile resurfaced on my face as I looked at Sam. "It's funny," I muttered, watching his brows elevate in confusion. "That the two of us returned to the beginning."

"Hah... the beginning?" he chuckled while cocking his head.

I nodded, taking a deep breath as I peeled my eyes away from him and set them on the window. "From the beginning, Sam. We're back to Grimsbanne. Not the same Grimsbanne, but in the end, we're back to Grimsbanne."

I heard him chuckle and his gaze on my side. "I know, right? Maybe Grimsbanne was already a premonition that we will end up living in the Grimsbanne Territory."



"Anyway, if I see Ruru again, does that mean I am his mother?" I looked back at him and sighed helplessly. "Our first son is even older than me, love. Did Law know this now?"

"He was excited. You'll be surprised how he loved calling Rufus his big brother. I am on the verge of regretting adopting him, honestly." Sam frowned as he recalled an unpleasant memory.

I chuckled, as I could imagine.. "Well, all decisions had their own consequences."

#### Chapter 588 - [Bonus ]The Meaning Behind Law's Name

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I let out a shallow breath as I recalled that conversation with Sam regarding our first son, Rufus. That made me recall I received a letter from Rufus, but because we had a picnic, I didn't get the chance to read it. Well, I could read them later and reply.

I continued to skim through Sam's journal and found some interesting articles regarding Sam's experience on the mainland. I chuckled as I didn't know my husband's mind was this silly. No wonder he didn't want me to read them, as it would expose how dirty his mind was.

"Is it normal to write an entire page of insult?" I murmured, shaking my head as Sam wrote an entire page of insult about someone and called it a list of why he needed to choose peace over violence. The person he just insulted was already "*this pathetic*" as what was written, and ending that unfortunate life was disheartening and a waste of energy and time.

There wasn't much aside from the frequent sentiments every once in a while regarding me. But when I reached the part before I awoke, my eyes softened. Before I awoke from my eight-month slumber, there were only a few entries in the journal during that time. Meaning, Sam didn't have the leisure to write about his daily struggles.

Writing a journal would make one recall about the day and during my coma, Sam needed something else to do. The ones that were written here were just simple information about cleaning, his first meeting with Tilly, Sam's opinion

about her, and his promise to wait for me while doing his best to give his family a good life.

I smiled softly, caressing his beautiful handwriting. "A life they deserve even if I had to grovel at someone's feet," I read under my breath, feeling a bit teary at my husband's resolution and how he took responsibility for his decision to start over.

"It wasn't easy, but he managed. He provides for us and gave us a life where we can enjoy a leisure afternoon without worry," I muttered, appreciating my husband even more. "I am one lucky woman."

I leaned my side against the shelf, flipping the pages, and just skimmed through it. After that book, I search for other books that were older than the ones I read. I didn't even think of hiding as I would accept any punishment from him — well, my husband's punishment was the things the both of us enjoyed as a married couple.

Soon, I stumbled at the year when I was in my five-year slumber. This time, I sat on the floor, back on the shelf, knees bent, with a book in my hands.

"This is before I woke up," I muttered, starting on the first page this time instead of starting in the middle. "I'm always curious how Sam raised Law. Hehe."

A smug grin appeared on my lips as I giggled mischievously. I cleared my throat and focused on Sam's handwriting, reading the date on the first page.

[ All my life, I never wanted a child. In this world and time, I always wonder why the damn hell people are reproducing? Was their libido stronger than their brains that they couldn't help create a child? It was... baffling. Humans and vampires alike were appalling creatures.

I never knew the day would come when I would also be baffled at myself.

In this cruel world and time, a life my wife and I created was growing within her, making her belly so big; I thought she just swallowed an entire watermelon. Although she's a bit crazy on the days she's conscious, she's still my wife. I needed longer patience.

Of course, I wanted a child with her. I can imagine little Lilous' running around, calling me affectionately with a bright smile on their cute little faces. I wished all our children will look just like her, for she was the most beautiful woman my eyes gazed upon. No amount of paint and hours of work could justify the beauty of my wife.

God... I'm one lucky man. She's the only person who made me want to see my future in a different light.

In the past, all I see was darkness, blood, and countless deaths. But with her, I started imagining a simple life where we spend a lazy afternoon under the shade of a tree while making out. I started dreaming of starting a family with her whom we will love sincerely. Things that never crossed my head kept filling my mind until they subconsciously became my motivation to move forward.

Lilou is the love of my life. The only woman I will marry in all lifetimes.

But... I honestly dislike her situation. For a child, for our child, she was putting her life at risk. Between her and that life growing within her, I will choose my wife in a heartbeat. That was what I wanted to tell her — something I was determined to do.

And yet, I always lose my voice every time I wanted to utter those words. At first, I was bewildered. I was determined to kill our child to save her, but I couldn't bring myself to. Was it because I didn't want her to hate me? Or she would get hurt if she knew I killed our child? Was it as simple as I didn't want to become someone like my father who could murder his children?

Those questions filled my head for months as my wife's belly grew bigger. I only got my answers when I heard our son's first cry. When I saw his dirty little hands, which were still covered with a bit of blood and mucus, everything made sense.

I loved him even before I met him as well. I already loved him and I was shamelessly in denial due to our circumstances.

Everything... including those vicious thoughts I had for months, was answered when I first laid my eyes on that child. And when I held that little life in my arms

for the first time? I was on my knees, shedding too many tears I didn't know I had in store.

That second, I hated myself for even considering taking our son's life before he was born. I would forever atone for that.

Because this little thing in my embrace, crying unintelligently, and not knowing a single damn thing in the world, saved a pitiful man such as myself.

I didn't deserve it, but our son... saved me from falling deeper into the abyss. His existence was brighter than the sun, devouring all the darkness that shrouded my life.

That is why... I wanted to give him a life that wouldn't follow the tradition his father and uncles had taken, and get caught up with the pressure of his father's name. Neither did I plan for him to live the cruel life his mother lead until we met. Strange, I know, but I want to give him a life where he could smile without worry, follow his heart and passion, and become his own law.

Law.

That is what I will name him. A person who lives according to his own terms.

Law.

I should scratch the other names I thought for him. ]

"Gosh, Sam." I giggled as I wiped the tears from the corner of her eyes, gazing at the name he scratched. "Lolo? Lilibeth? Lilouesam? Liloussion? Lilou loves Sam forever? Goodness, Sam.. I'm very glad you didn't name our son with that last one."

Chapter 589 - His Perspective

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### **Year 1830**

The air was chilly and brought with it the faint but distinct scent of blood. The lanterns from a long procession of carriages cast the only light in the cloudy darkness as the troupe slowly made its way towards my mansion. I glanced at the carriages clumsily amble up the dirt road on the side of the mountain before setting my eyes on the woman standing below my vantage point.

"Why bother when the Lord has been asleep for hundreds of years?" she murmured before she resumed her quick trek back to this shack next to me.

"She's right." I nodded, closed-lipped. "Rufus had always this grand way of doing things. Did he really think those fools he was inviting over were enough to distract me if I somehow woke up?"

I clicked my tongue continuously, a bit disappointed at Rufus, my trusted vassal. Although I already got a gist of the reason behind this annual celebration in my mansion.

"They're so damn loud. Those damn rude people," I cursed, turning around to look at this shack. Good god... she lived here? This was the place that sheltered her? This shack was barely called a home. I would rather live in a cave than in this place; the cave would give more security than this shack. One strong wind and this would get blown away.

"Good lord," I muttered as I entered the shack, making me frown even more. This place was too small. Although it wasn't disorganized, no matter what cleaning she would do, this place wouldn't make it appealing in my eyes.

"How should I greet her?" I wondered while pacing around this small space filled with darkness. I raised a brow when I noticed the small chair near the table.

"Hah," came out a short chuckle, strutting towards the chair and perched on it. I lifted my legs up on the table, rubbing my chin as I pondered on how to greet that child.

That child kept on talking to herself while I listened. She was daft, I could tell after listening to her for years. But the lack of intelligence didn't make me change my mind to show her appreciation for accompanying me for over two decades.

I looked up at the roof of the shack. "I'll start by giving her a good place to live. This place is a disaster. It's already a miracle she survives this long while living alone in this rathole."

I just woke up from a very long slumber and walked around the street of Grimsbanne before coming in here. My only purpose was to give back to that

child's... services. Whether or not I would like to admit it, but her silly mumblings were what kept me sane.

Moreover, it made me realize I wasn't as pitiful as her, and also, she made it clear to me I was actually gifted — a genius. I meant, how could she think children grow out of trees? Even an old vampire such as myself who indulged in the pleasure of blood and death had more idea of how human pleasure works.

"I guess dumb people are blessed with infinite luck since she lived this long," I mumbled and shook my head, sitting in this darkness in silence. It didn't take long when I felt her presence outside this shack, making me gaze at the shut door with disinterest.

"I'm... I'm home," she announced in a quiet voice with a touch of bitterness. To her, she would announce her arrival to no one, as this was her habit. But to me, every time she would say she was home, all my senses naturally focused on her voice to listen to whatever silliness that would come out of it.

I watched the door open, revealing a lean figure of a woman. Even in this darkness, she was very clear to me.

*'Oh... my goodness,'* I thought as my jaw fell slightly open, my eyes following her figure and listening to her count her steps. *'Good lord. She is not a child anymore. She's... stunning.'*

This little girl, this woman, was covered with dirt and sweat. Her hair was a bit disheveled, with short dead hair straying away from the large portion of her hazel hair. She looked like a young witch, but she was beautiful. Like a raw diamond still covered with mud, but still shining.

"One, two, three..." she counted and along with it, I also heard my heartbeat for the first time.

I gazed up, counting in my head with her while listening to the beat of my heart until I lost count. She groped the table between us. Although I was right in front of her, she didn't notice me. Somehow, not being noticed by her irked me.

How dare she?

I raised a brow and picked up the matches beside the lamp she first found. She whispered an irritated, "what?" but I smirked when she looked a bit scared.

"It could have been the wind from the open door when I left this morning," she convinced herself.

My mouth opened and closed before I bit my tongue, suppressing my laughter. *Gracious.* I wanted to tease her. She was funny. I stretched my neck when she knelt on the ground and groped around to search for the matches in my hand.

"Fine," she huffed, "I'll just go without light tonight."

I snapped my eyes instantly and returned the matches to where she could find them easily. How could she just give up? If she wouldn't light this thing up, she would never see me! That's not good.

When she stood up once again, I raised my brows in anticipation. She should be happy now that she found the matches. But to my dismay, her entire face froze, and she didn't move momentarily, as if she just saw a ghost.

*Why?* I wondered. Why did she look scared if she found what she was looking for? She should be happy now, right?

*'Fine. It seems you'll be happier if I do this,'* I told myself, picking up the lantern away. As soon as I did, she held on to the matches as if she didn't want to lose them before her hand groped the table for the lantern. I smirked when she panicked.

"It was just here!" she hollered, absolutely terrified now.

*'Oh my goodness. This is so fun,'* I snickered inwardly.

"I haven't eaten much lately, and the malnutrition is affecting my brain. That must be it. Short-term memory loss is a real thing. It must be here somewhere. I just forgot exactly where!" I was amused at how she calmed herself down with such ridiculous reasoning.

I shook my head lightly, sighing faintly. *'I want to tell her her brain is already damaged long ago, but whatever. Just stop yelling. Here's your lamp.'* I put back the lamp close to me.

Determined this time, she spread her arms across this table and stood on her toes. The side of my lips curled up as her face was only two palms away from me, letting me look at her up close.

I bit my lip when my eyes fell on hers. Hers were dry, asking me to give them some moisture. I was aroused, surprisingly.

*'She is no child,'* I whispered to myself, leaning forward to greet her with a kiss and mark her mine. But alas, she suddenly drew back with the lamp in her grip and the matches. I frowned and rolled my eyes, a bit frustrated that the fun ended too soon.

I watched her lit the match, each spark gave me enough chances to see her with light. She was already beautiful in this darkness, but she was even more beautiful as soon as the faint light danced on her face.

My eyes glinted. *'I want her,'* was the first thing that came into my mind while staring at her.. *'It seems I found myself a wife.'*

Chapter 590 - The Duke's Passion -- END

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*'It seems I found myself a wife.'*

The side of my lips stretched even broader when she froze, turning her head in my direction. The light from the match died, but she didn't speak a word. She didn't need to, as the horror on her face already told me many things. Well, that didn't matter. I already decided, so whether or not she liked it, I'll be her husband.

"Aren't you going to light that? I've seen them use it at home, it's quite interesting how they work." I broke my long silence to bring her back from wherever her mind was drifting to. She said nothing, but she still lit up the match and the lamp.

"What an interesting invention!" I exclaimed to cheer her up, but she just looked at me, wide-eyed. So I asked her, "you looked frightened. Why?"

She was still staring as her lower lip trembled as they parted. "If you're going to kill me, just get it over with already."

"Hmm?" — *what the hell was this woman thinking right now?* I felt more terrified at her thoughts at the moment since I wouldn't be able to defend myself if she



just let that head of hers work on its own. It would go into overdrive and her brain would die! She couldn't die like that!

"Aren't you here to kill me?" she asked in a shaking voice.

"What gave you that impression?" I leaned forward, resting my arms on the edge of the table. "I came here because it's peaceful. My house is rather bustling and I prefer quiet places."

Lies. I came here to award her for accompanying me, but I changed my mind. I would reward her with my body. I mean, marrying me would also give her a luxurious life and she would gain the title of the duchess. Gaining a husband wasn't a bad idea as well. She wouldn't refuse that, would she?

"I... I see."

A sigh slipped past my lips while staring at her. Well, I guessed I had to tell her I planned to change her life, so she stopped shaking in fear and replaced it with happiness. She would surely embrace me while thanking me repeatedly. I laughed at the thought.

"Of course, I came here for a reason." I chuckled as I prepared myself to confess. But just as I did, this woman suddenly sprinted away. Good lord! Did she think she could outrun a vampire? Come on... I could already imagine her being on the last page while I was simply on the first. Why won't she listen to me first?

I rolled my eyes as I dragged myself up. *Fine*. If she didn't want to listen, I would also cut the formalities and just do the goddamn hell I wanted. Goodness... this little lamb. What a piece of work. I picked up the lamp she dropped as it would cause a fire. Rufus and Fabian would kill me if they assume I started it.

In a blink, I bolted towards her figure and caught her wrist, spinning her around to face me. The side of my lips curled up, sizing her up close. God damn it. I want to undress her right here and now and take her right away.

I was drawn to her the first time I laid my eyes on her. The more I looked at her, the more this feeling grew in me. An atrocious desire I never felt before. It had been a while when I desired something and I never fancied someone, so I didn't know what to do with it. But what I was certain of was, if I let this woman go tonight, this kingdom would pay a huge price.

I already knew this woman's effect on me was dangerous. I already knew she would hold a power that would make me go down on my knees. But I still wanted her. This dark desire was growing by the second every time her pulse on her wrist pulsate.

*I wanted her;* I repeated in my head. Nothing but this woman. And that... was when this dark desire mutated, as I also thought I would make her want me to the point she wouldn't mind my rotting body lying next to her.

"Why are you running, silly? Will you marry me?"

*'You are mine, Lilou.'* — were the words I meant by that proposal.

But what I didn't know was she was more than the dangers she carried. Lilou would be someone I would trade my life for, the woman who I will love in this long life and all other lifetimes, and the person who would love me just as intensely — just as passionately.

What I didn't know while writing this entry years ago was... Lilou would become the passion my heart would follow and pursue.

The Duke's Passion.

The Emperor's only empress.

The mother of my children.

And Samael's dearest wife.

God... I love her. And I will admit, again and again, I am one lucky man to love and get loved back by this woman.

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My eyes softened as I read the additions he wrote years later. My hand brushed the title he gave me, *'Samael's dearest wife.'* All noble titles I carried: the duchess of Grimsbanne, a member of the Divine Order, the bearer of Lakresha, the empire's only moon, paled compared to this one.

"That is my favorite title, Sam," I whispered gently. "Samael's dearest wife."

"Love?" I turned my head in the door's direction, catching Sam standing by the door with a confused expression plastered across his face. When his eyes fell on the book on my lap, they dilated as he hastily approached me.

"Love!" he gasped, squatting down in front of me while darting his eyes from the book to my face. "How can you --"

He didn't finish his sentence as I suddenly wrapped my limbs around his neck. "I love you, Sam," I whispered with a smile, feeling his back freeze for a moment.

"Will you marry me?" I proposed with the same tone. "In case you don't know what I mean by that, that means... you are mine, Samael."

"Goodness..." Sam carefully planted his palm on my back as he rested his forehead on top of my head. "Yes..." he breathed out, pulling my body closer to him.

"I will marry you, as many times as you want, at any time of the day, and at any place you want."

"Mhm." My eyes softened as I leaned the side of my head against him. "Then, that's settled."

We embraced each other like that; me slumping on the floor with Sam crouching. But I never felt so comfortable.

This man was my home. The calm I needed.

He was the Duke, a peasant adored.

The emperor, a housewife, was thankful for.

The father of my wonderful children.

And Lilou's beloved husband.

We had a long, chaotic story, but I was glad that in the end, we were still together. I loved him more than a second ago, and I knew he would beat that, as he loved me more than a millisecond ago.

"God, I'm lucky," I whispered in his ears. "Thank you for loving me, Sam. I look forward to many millennia with you."

"Don't get tired of me."

"Never."

Sam drew back and narrowed his eyes. "Sure?" his lips curled evilly, and I knew what he suddenly wanted.

"Uhh... hey!" I squealed a second later because Sam suddenly lifted me up and swiftly carried me in his arms. I clutched his chest on instinct, looking up at him, wide-eyed.

Sam gazed down at me with a smug grin. "We should do our best, so Sunny and Law will have more playmates." He chuckled evilly, carrying me out of the office while I slapped his chest, telling him it was too early for that. But he didn't stop. Instead, he bent his head over and claimed my lips, shutting me up.

I glared at him before and bit his lower lip, circling my arms around his neck and indulging in the scalding heat of his love.

It was a long journey full of twists and turns, heartaches and laughter, good and bad memories, discoveries, and unanswered questions. Even so, it was worth it.

The hell we went through, I would go through that again just to be with him. Because... Sam, my husband, my friend, my ally, my partner in crime, the father of my children, my one and only love, was worth it.

He was worth fighting for. Sam was worth dying for. And I don't have regrets about loving him.

"Ah... bloody hell..." I flinched when I heard Yul's voice before us. Sam and I looked ahead, seeing Yulis standing in the same hallway. Staring at us with a dead expression.

"This is too early for that!" He clicked his tongue and stormed away grumpily. "God, my eyes!"

I gazed at Sam, and he looked back at me with the same expression I bore. After a second, we both laughed and resumed kissing each other, resigning to our room early today.

"I somehow feel bad for him," he whispered into my mouth and I giggled against his lips.

"Your fault. You can't wait."

"Well, whatever." Sam grinned, brushing his nose against mine. "We're married forever."

"Oh, Sam...!"

Sam continued to carry me back to our room, kissing me in between while I kissed him back.

We may face many challenges in the future, but as long as we were alive, we would face them together head-on. And, like usual, we would come out of those problems as stronger individuals with a stronger love for each other.

Until then... this would be our little happy ending for now.