

The Duke 651

Chapter 651 - If You Can Reverse The Time, What Would You Do?

If you can reverse the time, what would you do?

That question had crossed Rufus's mind at least once in his long life. What would he do if he could go back in time? Would he change things? Correct the decisions he thought were the best at the moment?

When that question hovered over his head in the past, he thought the outcome was better. Hence, he didn't regret letting go of things, relationships, and love. Although, he regretted it at some point. Especially during the times, he was all alone in the night, looking up at the sky with no one on his side.

Or rather, there was a certain person who was willing to stand beside him. However, he couldn't completely let go of the woman his heart yearned.

Silvia came into his life and when she left, she didn't leave the door of his heart open for someone else to enter.

It was not that he blamed Silvia for that. How they ended was Rufus's fault. The reason, even when it hurts, he would smile whenever she would smile even when the reason was not him. The reason he would simply look away whenever she basked in another man's arms.

Her eyes, which were once soaked with affection, gradually shifted to someone else. Someone much more deserving of her love, her future, and her happiness.

Rufus knew Silvia was the happiest with her husband. She found the love that built her. That was the difference between him and Yulis. Rufus's love only brought the worst in her, but Yulis brought the best in her.

It might sound banal, but they were perfect together, Silvia and Yulis.

But what if she, Silvia, would look at him with longing once again? Those eyes that used to look at someone else with affection returned to him?

That never crossed him in the past until now that they were standing before each other. Rufus gazed at Silvia in a daze, standing in the middle of the hallway in the inner palace. They hadn't spoken a word, standing still as if frozen in time.

"Ru," she called with a soft voice, smiling wearily. Her eyes softened at the sight of him. "It's been a while."

His hand slowly balled into a fist as his jaw tightened upon clenching his teeth.

In this time, for Silvia, it had been years since she met Rufus. However, for Rufus, he just had seen her several weeks ago because she was his wife, Florence's lady-in-waiting.

"I didn't know you will visit the capital. What brings you here?" she asked soothingly, tilting her head to the side.

There was no doubt, he thought. She couldn't remember everything, just like Fabian. Rufus dropped by in Whistlebird and Cunningham on the way here. Noah and Cameron were the same. The former was still the rebellious nobleman while Cameron still worshipped Samael.

Everything... aside from Stefan and Rufus — those were the only people Rufus was certain who was aware of the reversal of time — everyone couldn't remember.

The Great Heart Empire, Lilou, Law, Tilly, Kristina, Ramin, Charlotte... the list goes on.

People couldn't remember them, nor they could remember their memories together. And yet, here he was, waning at the sight of the woman he yearned. Just because she couldn't remember Yulis and her love for her husband. He was wavering just because Silvia... his Silvia was staring at him with obvious affection.

"Would you join me for a cup of tea?" she inquired, breaking his train of thoughts as he snapped his eyes. "I would really appreciate it if you do, but... I will understand if you have important matters to attend to."

"Silvia," came out a stern voice, taking a deep breath. His eyes glinted with bitterness.

If he could be selfish for a day, can he love her for a day? Was he allowed to express his heart just for once?

"I appreciate your invitation, Your Royal Highness." — of course, he couldn't.
"But alas, I came here to see His Majesty. Forgive me for refusing you."

Rufus bowed slightly, steeling his heart before he took a step forward. He looked ahead, hands still balled into a fist, walking past her just like what he did in the past. Back then, doing this brought pain in his heart, but that devastated her. But now... he felt just as devastated, feeling his heart sink.

This reversal of time... was starting to feel tormenting for sure. Rufus had a conscience. Even if he loved Silvia, he couldn't cheat her or Yulis.

Right before Rufus could take a right turn, he halted. A figure came out from the direction he would take and he, too, stopped at Rufus's presence.

"Sir Barret, what a surprise to see you here," Yulis greeted with a calm air around him, batting his eyes ever so slowly.

'Really... annoying...' Rufus secretly ground his teeth, staring back at Yulis in silence. "It's good to see you, Your Highness. I hope you'll have a good day." With that being said, Rufus marched forth and walked past Yulis. The latter pressed his lips into a thin line, glancing back at Rufus before setting his eyes at Silvia, not far away. Even without asking her, he already guessed what had just happened.

Silvia frowned and rolled her eyes upon seeing the smirk on Yulis' lips. "Leave me alone."

"Your Royal Highness... were you rejected again?" Yulis teased as he jogged to follow her tracks.

"Scram!"

He chuckled, slowing down as he walked beside her. He cocked his head back, eyes on Silvia.

"Have you seen Cassara?" he asked.

"No, and I don't want to deal with her." Silvia's expression was aloof and sharp as ever, very unlike how she appeared in front of Rufus. "She's been acting very strange since days ago."

Yulis rocked his head as he slowed down in front of the window. There, in the garden, was Cassara taking a peaceful walk.

"It's like... she matured overnight," he murmured, arching a brow when Cassara suddenly raised her head and stare at him. Cassara smiled sweetly as soon as their eyes met, making Yulis shudder.

"Goodness... she's scary." He rubbed his shoulders, only to realize Silvia didn't wait for him.. "Silvia, wait for me."

Chapter 652 Things seemed to get worse by the second

Rufus stood in front of the throne hall he was too familiar with. He didn't know how much time had passed, but he just stood there motionless.

Rufus rushed to the capital with no concrete plan in mind. It was out of his character, but all he had in mind was to find Lilou. The reason he wasn't a bit surprised at not being able to meet Stefan.

At this time, Stefan was still the king of this kingdom. And he... was nothing but a knight who was currently in charge of Grimsbanne.

It was finally sinking in.

With the knight's uniform guarding the doors, the air in this place, the people, and everything. This reality was finally sinking in and it was crippling him bit by bit.

"You're still here?" Rufus snapped his eyes as he slowly turned to his right.

"You're quite persistent, huh?"

There, approaching him arrogantly, was Dominique. His eyes fell on Dominique's hand, making Rufus clench his hand into a tight fist. This man whom he fought to death in the past, and also the person who ended up being his most trusted confidante, was now staring at him mockingly.

They were back to square one, and his heart kept sinking deeper.

"Is this matter so important that you truly want to see His Majesty?" asked Dominique, snapping a finger to catch Rufus' attention. "You're zoning out, Sir Knight. It must be important for you to lose your composure."

Dominique took a step forward and bobbed his head to examine Rufus, arms crossed. "You seemed to have gotten older too. Just what happened to you, Sir Knight? You make me feel grateful for being a vampire and retain my good looks."

"I'll bring you back," came out a low voice, causing Dominique's brows to furrow. The latter frowned when Rufus planted his palms on his shoulders, staring at his eyes with confusion.

"I don't know how... but I promise." Rufus squeezed Dominique's shoulders lightly. "I'll definitely... do that."

"Sir Barrett... you're acting very strange." Dominique clicked his tongue as he brushed Rufus's hands from his shoulders. "Has your brother poisoning you or what? I never liked you, but man, stay away from your bother. You'll never know when he'd snap."

Rufus took a step back and ignored Dominique's comments. Instead, he stared at him in silence before turning around without saying another word.

"Had your brother influenced you?" asked Dominique, watching Rufus walk away silently. But the latter didn't even look back or spoke a word, causing Dominique to look at him with disdain.

"People in here are getting weirder by the day." He snapped his tongue once again while shaking his head. As he walked away in the opposite direction, he stretched his neck from one side to the other.

00:52

'There's no point,'

"What did His Majesty do for that man to rush in here?" he wondered, waltzing through the hallway before pausing to look back to where Rufus had left. Dominique tilted his head to the side, knitting his brows.

"That's strange," he mumbled as he peeled his eyes away to continue walking, scratching the back of his head. "I don't recall being close with him. Why would he look at me as if we fought life and death together?"

'There's no point,'

Rufus balled his hands into a fist as he stormed through the hallway of the inner palace. He didn't know what to do. He didn't have an ally or anyone who could

understand the situation. Samael was still deep in slumber and he couldn't force his way to meet Stefan.

He didn't even know if Stefan was in this place. They just told him he wasn't accepting an audience at the moment.

'Is forcing to meet him the only way?' he wondered as his eyes darkened. This felt like he was trapped in the corner.

Rufus slowly halted when he took a turn at the end of the hallway. His eyes landed on the woman leaning on the wall, sniffing the bouquet of flowers in her hand.

"Bad day?" she asked, raising her eyes up and smiling subtly.

"Greetings to Your Royal Highness." For formality, Rufus slightly bowed to greet Stefan's other wife and also his biological sister, Cassara.

"It was nice seeing you too, Sir Barrett."

When Rufus raised his head, his aloof countenance remained. He didn't idle for too long as he excused himself. However, just as he took a step, Rufus stopped once again and looked back at her, wide-eyed.

"How about a tea?" she asked with a kind smile. "Teas are good at making a bad day a little better. After all, you will not meet Stefan since he is busy playing house with Lilou."

"You..."

The corners of her lips stretched, eyes soaking with clarity. "You know the palace." She peeled her back from the wall, walking towards him until they were toe to toe.

"It's full of eyes and ears and virulent tongues. Catching up over tea is better, Sir Knight. You should calm down for now since... there's nothing you can do about it." Unlike the distressed Rufus, Cassara was oddly calm and mature. It was as though a different spirit was occupying her body, but Rufus knew it was because she wasn't the same Cassara anymore.

She brushed his chest, smirking playfully at him. "Will you indulge with me, Sir Barrett?" her eyelashes fluttered coquettishly whilst keeping eye contact with him.

"Stefan doesn't know that I remembered. Just you. It'll be nice to have a little chat with you." she stood on her toes, clipping his coat to pull him down. She whispered in his ears. "After all, we have found the same equilibrium we didn't have years later."

Cassara grinned as she let him go, biting her lips to suppress her stretching grin. Her eyes were filled with amusement at Rufus's blank eyes.

"Shall we?" she raised her brows, tilting her head to the side. "I've also been itching to tell my story. Who would believe it? I once died, but now, alive and just as beautiful. Come, I won't seduce you... although that is what it would look like."

She giggled as she reached for his hand, dragging him with her. Meanwhile, Rufus could only follow

her while he gazed at her back, listening to her jolly humming. He didn't know how the time was reversed, or how he retained his memories.

But one thing was for sure. It was possible that it was not just Stefan and Rufus who remembered things... and this just became an added worry in his heart.

Who else remembered? So far, it seemed only the bad guys do.

Chapter 653 There was nothing he could do

"You don't have any idea of how surprised I was when I open my eyes again." A subtle smile dominated Cassara's face as she personally served Rufus tea in her sitting room in Avolire Palace. "I mean... I was dead, correct? For someone who is dead, how come I am back in here? To the place I died? To the place that tormented me with longing and misery?"

1

She held the saucer with the cup of tea on it, sliding it in front of Rufus across from her. Her lips stretched into a sweet smile before she poured tea into her own cup.

"It took me an entire day to realize I was actually back in time. Honestly, though, I'm not sure if I am happy about it," she continued, unfazed by Rufus' silence.

"Everyone was doing the same thing, just like what they did in the past. They spoke the same words they had uttered and followed the pattern. I only know Stefan had the same situation as mine because he is the only one who didn't follow the original course of actions."

As soon as she stopped pouring tea, Cassara gazed up at him. "And then you, Sir Barrett. You never step foot in this place until Hell woke from his slumber. Your presence here is a giveaway we're in the same boat."

"I don't think we are, Your Royal Highness." His voice was aloof as ever, staring at her straight in the eye. "We might've kept our memories before this happened. But I don't think we share the same purpose."

"We don't?" the side of her lips stretched coyly. "And what is your purpose? Find Lilou? Kill Stefan? Wake up Hell?"

Cassara shook her head slightly as she laughed with her lips closed. Rufus was so predictable, even when he was aware of what would happen.

"This is the problem with overly righteous people, Sir Barrett. They are so predictable. Between saving the world or themselves, they would rather sacrifice themselves. I don't know if they were just kind or plain stupid." She picked up the teacup to her lips, eyes on the man across from her.

His eyes glinted coldly. "Call it stupidity, but I won't let Stefan have it his way."

"Oh, Sir Barrett. That sounds so much like you." she laughed as she put the teacup back on the saucer. "I died, Sir Barrett. My death was actually my escape, despite the fact that I died miserably. My point here is, I killed myself for a reason; it was too much for me. However, now that I was granted a second chance, do you think I would let myself live miserably? Again?"

2

Cassara paused, leaning back comfortably. "Same goes with Stefan. With the reversal of time, those who bore their memories from the future had their advantages. We can change our lives, Sir Barrett. We all had regrets before meeting our demise — tens of thousands of regret." She shrugged, propping her jaw with her knuckles.

"Stefan, for example, his regret was leaving Lilou. Do you even know their past together? They were almost perfect for each other — I know because I've seen it myself. However, in the past, Stefan had countless worries and one of them was Hell, the villain. Who would have thought that the man Stefan was trying to protect Lilou from would end up marrying her?"

"Then the more reason I had to find her."

"For? Are you sure Hell will remember her?"

"His Grace will, for sure."

"Alright. Let's say Hell remembers, but Lilou doesn't." Her brows rose, giving him that knowing look. "Do you... even know Lilou? And how she was like before Hell came into her life?"

This time, Rufus went silent. His eyes were fixed on the woman across from him, studying her calm demeanor.

"You've been the one in charge of Grimsbanne. In the past, a certain vigilante targeted noblemen and caused terror to most people in the duchy. You are capable and yet, you never caught that person. Even if we say you didn't truly search for this vigilante since she was doing the job for you in cleaning the duchy, have you ever wondered who it was?" she tilted her head to the side with a playful glint flickering across her eyes. "You are aware this vigilante is capable, right? It's not as gore as your brother's atrocities, but her methods were enough to send a chill down one's spine."

"Stefan created that monster."

"He did, but are you certain it was entirely his fault?" she arched a brow. "Lilou was born evil, Sir Barrett. She just needs that push to embrace that darkness within her. What I'm saying is, that woman simply waited for that slight push so she could have a reason and a person to blame."

She paused once again to breathe, expression growing solemn. "But what if Stefan doesn't plan to give that to her? My husband... sincerely loved her from the bottom of his heart. Just like you and I, even if you don't admit it, you want to change one or two things. Stefan is the same, Sir Barrett."

"I dislike Lilou from then and now, but I must admit that even if I tried to mess with her now, I will never win against her," she continued with an air of nonchalance. "I loved Hell, but at the same time, I hate him dearly. Between him and Stefan, I will obviously side with my husband. Not because I agree with Stefan, but because I can sympathize with him."

His eyes gradually grew icy while staring at her nonchalant visage. She had already taken her stance, and this conversation wasn't about to persuade Rufus to side with them. She was warning him.

"Sir Barrett, don't mess with my brother." This time, her tone held conviction, even though it was still soft. "If I were you, focus on fluttering coquettishly."

All she had said was nothing but facts. Every single one of them was doing what you had done in the past or maybe get your consolation by indulging with Silvia. I don't plan on messing with Lilou or anyone else. I simply wanted to live in peace, keeping this little secret to the grave."

Cassara's eyes glinted, staring straight into his eyes. "I won't forgive anyone who tries to take that peace away from me. Right now, Lilou is vulnerable. With Stefan by her side, she can be your enemy or your friend. You know her more than anyone, Sir Barrett. She will kill anyone who hurt Hell... but if Stefan had taken that spot? Are you certain meeting her will change anything? I don't think so." she smirked at his dead expression.

"We are sliding down a slippery slope now, Sir Barret. We cannot do anything about it anymore." She chuckled playfully, eyelashes fluttering coquettishly.

All she had said was nothing but facts. Every single one of them was already on a runaway train, which was no longer under the control of the driver. Unstoppable and uncontrollable. They could slow things down, but no one could stop it anymore.

Chapter 654 The tip of the iceberg

[Whistlebird]

1

Claude remained silent, sitting at the corner table in a restaurant. Wearing a thick cloak with a hood over his head, he glanced at the other corner, far away from his spot.

Silence enveloped the entire establishment, very unlike the usual scene one could see. And the reason for that was the presence of an arrogant noble vampire, throwing the food just because it wasn't appetizing enough in his eyes.

"This is what you call food?" Noah snorted, resting his feet up on the table like a rogue. "Surely, the Brown's thinks everyone here is just as cheap as them!"

The very few guests of the restaurant remained silent, avoiding catching the troublesome young master's attention. Claude had seen Noah a few times back when he was a child. So he wasn't surprised to see that Noah, who would become the Duke of Whistlebird, and also the person who would betray the current Duke Remington and his heir, was acting all high and mighty.

'Marquess Cameron is out of the list.' Claude mentally crossed Cameron's name in his list, investigating if he could garner some ally who could remember

everything before the reversal of time. So far, he had met no one who had their memories.

The thought of it caused his jaw to tighten. He visited the capital, but he didn't meet any of his uncles and aunties. But despite that, he was certain they were the same as everyone else.

Claude closed his eyes as he breathed out deeply, hanging his head low. What he did was unforgivable. He wouldn't be this alarmed if everyone didn't have memories, because he was certain everything would follow the original course of actions.

However, his existence... this adult version of him in this place alarmed him. If time was reversed, why was he still an adult? Also, there was this strong gut feeling that he needed to make sure everyone didn't have memories of the future.

'Lord Noah is out of the list,' He whispered in his head, opening his eyes ever so slowly. 'Grimsbanne is next. As long as Auntie Lilove is there and everything is following the right course of action, I will have to meet Tilly.'

Claude rocked his head. In his mind, he didn't want to touch anything or change anything. Just one wrong move and it could affect everyone. The reason, even when Noah was humiliating someone mercilessly, Claude wasn't stepping in.

If only he knew things weren't as good as he wanted them to be, he wouldn't have time to waste. Not that he wasted a second since fleeing from Monarey.

Samael and Lilou warned him about the blood of Grimsbanne running through his veins. He listened, but the drug in his system that was injected into him by the leader of the Nightwalkers persisted longer in him. Hence, his hallucinations grew worse.

But that didn't matter now. He needed to find a solution and the only person he had in mind was Tilly. He tried moving the time forward, but alas, he failed miserably. Tilly was the only person who could help him with this.

Claude gazed at Noah once again, who was holding someone by the collar. "He's scummier than Uncle Klaus," he mumbled, pushing himself up to leave the restaurant unnoticed.

He didn't even look back at the chaos caused by Noah Remington. The latter might be acting like scum, but that was a good sign for Claude. All he would have to do was check Grimsbanne.

Deep down, he prayed that everything was also the same in that place. But there was a part of him that felt... his next stop would change everything like a nightmare devouring a beautiful dream.

Meanwhile, a ship somewhere in the ocean. Law stood on the deck, letting the ocean breeze blow past him.

"Tilly, will Sunny be alright?" he inquired, turning his head to Tilly standing right beside him. "We should've taken her with us."

"Sunny is smart. If she sensed danger, I'm certain she knows what to do." Tilly cast him a quick side-eye. "For now, we should focus on Samael and Lilou."

"How can things turn back to the time I wasn't alive yet?" he asked along with a deep exhale, peeling his eyes away from her. "I don't understand, Tilly. How can I help? Claude awakened the blood of Grimsbanne in him. So, couldn't he revert everything back to normal?"

Tilly let out a shallow breath, keeping her eyes on the ocean. "Our blood is what makes us strong, Law. However, as I've said before, all powers had their laws and conditions. Our actions always had an understand, Tilly. How can I help? Claude awakened the blood of Grimsbanne in him. So, couldn't he revert everything back to normal?"

Tilly let out a shallow breath, keeping her eyes on the ocean. "Our blood is what makes us strong, Law. However, as I've said before, all powers had their laws and conditions. Our actions always had a reaction. Reversing the time for someone like Claude, who was gifted with the power of time, is easy. However, there is always an effect."

"So, is it something like a one-time thing?"

"No. If he mastered it, he can do it at will. The only catch is that the outcome of the future might be different. It can be good or worse." Tilly looked at Law once again, waiting for him to look back at her. "Now is our reality, Law. Whatever we did yesterday is something that might or might not happen ten years later. My point is, whatever actions, big or small, can affect the future."

In other words, even if Claude could change the time back to its rightful year, there was no certainty that they could return to their life before the reversal of time. There was no telling if Lilou and Samael would still end up together, or they would become enemies.

"That is why we need to find someone who can help us with this." Tilly continued, causing Law's brows to furrow.

"Someone who can help us?" he stared at her and watched her avert her eyes from him. Tilly didn't speak for quite some time, narrowing her eyes in a particular direction.

"My sister and brother," she answered after minutes of silence, listening to the soothing sound of waves. "You and Claude, together with Samael, might resolve this matter all alone. However, just to be sure... we will need their assistance for the best outcome."

A glint flickered across Tilly's soft eyes. "You will die, Law. The three of you will... without their help. That... will be the consequences and sacrifice you will have to make."

Tilly didn't know where exactly her siblings were right now. This was the first time she left the mainland. However, her gut feeling told her that the reversal of time was just the tip of the iceberg.

Someone... something was lurking in the shadows, ready to kill every last Grimsbanne who was known as the Originals.

Chapter 655 Fabian's gut feeling

Four months later...

1

Four months. That was how long it took for Law, Tilly, and Leo — a member of the La Crox clan on the mainland — to reach Grimsbanne. It took them that long because they barely knew about the Heart's Kingdom. Law only knew about the general details but was only familiar with Minowa.

Therefore, they first arrived in Minowa to Grimsbanne. They didn't idle, but without the proper knowledge of traveling, they still struggled. If Leo wasn't with them, Law was certain they would take longer. Tilly was terrible in directions and it was all thanks to Law and Leo they arrived in Samael's dwelling.

"Hello, Fabian."

Fabian tilted his head to the side, blinking cluelessly. Just now, these three landed in the middle of the garden of the Duke's mansion. That alone should be alarming, but Fabian remained civil as if they weren't intruders.

"And who might you be? Are you perhaps a victim's family?" he inquired, still holding the watering can on his left before planting his other hand across his chest. "My apologies. I'm a changed man now."

Law let out a shallow breath. Was that all Fabian had to say to all the people he victimized?

"Forgiven." Tilly nodded in understanding. "Where is Samael?"

Fabian furrowed his brows. "He is sleeping, my lady."

"Let me see him."

"Oh..." Fabian rocked his head, keeping a demure smile. "And may I know who you might be?"

"Tilly."

1

"Nice to meet you, Lady Tilly," he greeted casually, eyes landing on Law and then at the man with them. They looked like a family of three, although the child didn't look much like them. Tilly and Law's only similarities were the color of their hair, which was also the same as Samael.

"Mister Fabian, we need to see Father." Fabian's brows furrowed as the child spoke. "I know you don't remember us and it doesn't make sense, but... please believe us."

Law squeezed Tilly's hand lightly, eyes at the butler, who also raised him. But deep down, he didn't have much hope. No one recognized them in this land. Whatever they would say, even if it was the truth, would sound ridiculous to others.

Even if that was the case, Law and Tilly still wanted to try to do it in a peaceful way. If not, then... they had no option but to force their way in. They had already wasted four months. They couldn't prolong it further.

"Father?" Fabian raised a brow as he narrowed his eyes, studying Law from head to toe.

"Fabian." He snapped his eyes when Tilly spoke in her usual serene tone. "We all returned ten years prior to the original time. I need to wake up Samael earlier before it's too late."

"Oh... sure." Law furrowed his brows when Fabian nodded, watching the latter put down the watering can before standing in his stature. "Follow me. I'll lead the way to His Grace."

"Tilly..." Law gazed up at Tilly, waiting for her to look down at him. "Is this alright? Or was this a trap?"

Tilly smiled reassuringly. "Fabian doesn't trap people."

With that being said, Law, Tilly, and Leo followed Fabian inside the mansion. Law and Leo kept glancing at Tilly, as she was the only one who wasn't alarmed by Fabian's quick agreement. To Fabian, the three of them were strangers whom he couldn't trust. Much less show where Samael's body was lying.

They only sighed in relief when they reached the underground dungeon where a coffin was at. Law gazed up at Fabian, who was lighting up the torches on the wall.

"If you're wondering why I agreed, that is because... my gut feeling," Fabian spoke after his long silence, his attention on the scone before heading to light another one. "My gut feeling never failed me. Since the day Rufus woke up like a madman, I had always known something was wrong... very wrong."

"Mister Fabian..." Law called softly, staring at the butler's back.

Although Fabian doesn't reek of red flags like how he remembered him, he was still the same in making judgments. Fabian's instinct was the scariest about him, after all.

"You make me proud, Fabian." Tilly gazed at the closed coffin in front of her. "Be it ten years later or before, you're the same."

Fabian smiled. "Are we perhaps close?"

"You... believe her that easily?" Leo, who kept silent throughout, doubt about all this, right?

"Why not?" Fabian tilted his head to the side. "I don't dislike her or could not help but look at Fabian in dismay. He knew Fabian and was aware of his eccentric personality, but there should be a little doubt about all this, right?"

"Why not?" Fabian tilted his head to the side. "I don't dislike her or that child or you. If I did, you wouldn't step foot in the mansion."

"Don't make it sound like you own the house." Her eyes didn't leave the coffin, studying it.

"But I clean it. Hence, I'm sort of the co-owner."

"Mister Fabian, if I am not aware of the situation, I will think you're simply toying with us." Law sighed as believing Fabian was more challenging than believing their ridiculous claim about the reversal of time.

"In any case, it seems Rufus retained his memories. Where is he now?" Tilly inquired, walking towards the coffin and placing her palm to caress its rough edges.

"He went out. He will return later in the evening, like usual."

Tilly remained silent as she didn't dwell on the news about Rufus's for now. She held the edge of the lid covering the coffin, pushing it that produced a loud crashing noise of both concrete grazing against each other.

CREAK

Law held his breath as he caught the figure of his father inside the coffin. Even with Samael having his eyes closed, they felt his strong aura the second the coffin was slid open. Tilly pushed the lid to the side until Samael's upper body was exposed.

"Are you really going to wake up His Grace?" asked Fabian out of plain curiosity, but Tilly remained silent while staring at Samael.

After a moment of silence and studying Samael's body, Tilly raised a finger and slashed across her palm. She clutched her hand into a fist, letting drops of blood land on Samael's lips. After she was satisfied knowing that was enough to satisfy Samael's thirst, Tilly used the same hands and her nails grew sharper like claws.

"I won't kill him, Fabian," she uttered, sensing Fabian caressing Maleficent. "However, Samael is angry. I'll paralyze him for a few hours until he calms down."

As soon as those words left her lips, Tilly plunged her hand right into Samael's chest. At the same time, Fabian unleashed his spear, which he pointed at her neck. She didn't move, nor was she fazed by the spear pointing at the side of her neck.

"Samael," she whispered, moving her fingers inside his chest. "Wake up."

Silence descended upon them as everyone could not help but hold their breaths except Tilly. She calmly withdrew her hands from his chest, using the blood dripping from her fingertips that looked like string to close him up.

"Tilly," called Law in worry as Samael wasn't waking up. Meanwhile, Fabian narrowed his eyes as he studied Samael. He could still feel Samael's life force, but he wasn't opening his eyes.

"What did you..." Fabian trailed off when a chill ran down his spine upon hearing Samael's familiar voice.

"Tilly," Samael spoke calmly while opening his eyes ever so slowly. "Forget about Lilou. She's in good hands. We have a bigger problem. They're after us... the Grimsbanne."

Chapter 656 That's a turn off

"Forget about Lilou. She's in good hands. We have a bigger problem. They're after us... the Grimsbanne."

1

Samael fluttered his eyes, shifting to the side where Tilly was at. The latter didn't have much reaction upon hearing her nephew's first remarks.

"So it's part of the bigger scheme?" she inquired after a moment of silence. Samael peeled his eyes away from her to look at the dark concrete ceiling.

"Quentin. He... that damned man had worked with the people on the mainland, waiting for the perfect time to strike," he explained calmly, but one could tell he was simply containing himself. Thanks to Tilly, who paralyzed him from the inside, he couldn't spring out of this coffin and commit a massacre.

"Stefan had uncovered this, but since he had a blood agreement with Quentin and a vow of silence, he couldn't tell anyone directly," he continued, grinding his fangs with sharp eyes. "He left you a letter, did he?"

"Yes, he did."

"I didn't ask before because I respect your privacy. However, I need to know what he told you."

Tilly remained silent as she glanced at the confused Leo before shifting her eyes back to the man in the coffin. "It's a poem... with a warning behind it. A warning for the impending doom of the Grimsbanne Clan."

"Wait." Confused, Law jumped to Tilly's side, hands on the rims of the coffin.

"Father, what do you mean forget about mother? And what is it about the on the mainland? Aren't we living in peace there?"

"There are people, my son, who still believes the existence of our clan shouldn't exist. Just our mere existence already poses a threat to them," Samael explained, glad to see his son after months of nothing but darkness. "Not just us, but also, they would come after Lilou, since she's the result of the Bloodfang's forbidden sacrifice. Hence, Stefan took her to the Karo Kingdom."

1

Law took a minute to process his father's words before his eyes dilated as soon as realization kicked in. "Sunny!" he exclaimed in horror, turning his head at Tilly.

But Tilly's reaction didn't change. "Don't worry about Sunny. She will be fine."

"Sunny is just three!"

"Marsella ran from home while she was an infant. Sunny will be fine." Her eyelashes fluttered as she faced Law squarely. "Your sister is smart. Hence, I told her everything she needs to know and she will be fine."

"What..."

Samael watched Law's conflicted expression. "Do you really think your sister will agree to be left behind? You're just bossy, son, just like Yul. But Sunny takes after Fabian."

"Took after me?" Fabian pointed at himself with a smile. "Did I have a daughter?"

4

"No, Fabian. Sunny is my daughter and, for fuck's sake, how do we retrieve this man's memory? I don't need this version of Fabian."

5

"We can't. Unless there's a person whose expertise is to retrieve one's memory or counter a vampire's ability. The reversal of time is done by Claude. Hence, it still falls in that category." Tilly shrugged.

1

"Someone whose expertise is to retrieve one's memory...?" Samael narrowed his eyes as that ability sounded so familiar. But before he could speak, Tilly spoke once again.

"Rufus. It seemed he also kept his memories. For how Rufus did, I am as well appalled. But it is good that there were more people who can be an ally. More hands for us." Tilly raised both her hands and wiggled her fingers. "And Leo, don't worry about the mainland. I already warned the king before we left."

"You did?" Leo furrowed his brows, still processing the information in his head.

"Yes. He is friends with me, but he is not my friend."

"Sounds like a one-sided friendship," Fabian commented, liking Tilly's personality more and more.

"In any case, our enemy is more troublesome than ever. It's a good thing that Stefan, that damn bastard, is not the enemy. But I will still kill him." Samael interrupted before the conversation get strayed, knowing how random Fabian and Tilly were. "Do you think Heliot remembered?"

"Even if he didn't, Stefan will find a way."

"He might not be the enemy, but don't put too much trust in that person."

"He loves Lilou, Samael." Tilly pointed out, bearing her usual relaxed expression. "That emotion is complicated. But it forces people to do the impossible... even if it kills them."

There was a long silence after Tilly's remarks. If this was before meeting them, Tilly wouldn't even trust Stefan completely. But after getting exposed to people and their emotions, after witnessing it with her own eyes, she could tell just by Stefan's subtle actions.

The man in question left letters and warnings. If Stefan meant harm, why would he even bother? They wouldn't be this calm if things caught them off guard. But she already expected something bad would happen.

Tilly might not know the details, but she was certain something bad would happen. The real question was, 'how bad?' and this was the answer; this bad.

"That's a turnoff," Fabian commented, cringing at Tilly's remarks.

She simply glanced back at him and smiled. She found it pointless too, but she said it anyway.

"Fabian, do you remember we did courtship too?" she inquired, making Fabian tilt his head.

"We did?"

"Yes."

"How far did we go then?"

Tilly pondered about it as she hummed. "As far as killing dead animals together to sacrifice for the development of science."

"Why hadn't we gotten married?" Fabian frowned as he knew himself. He would've married her if they got along well — although not out of love.

As the two were still somehow getting close pretty fast, Samael just kept his gaze on the concrete ceiling.

"Law," he called, making Law peeked his head to see Samael. "Don't worry about your mother and Sunny. They're both scary species."

"Mhm." Law pressed his lips into a thin line and nodded his head. The information that his father mentioned was shocking, but it was relieving in a way. Because it seemed this time, Samael and Stefan... chose to be allies.

Chapter 657 Too calm

Rufus stood motionless by the door of the study, where Fabian told him a guest was waiting for him. He didn't know who, but when he did, he froze.

1

Inside the study was Samael lying on the settee, eating grapes leisurely. On the armchair was Law with a bowl of grapes on his lap, and Tilly on the other armchair with a bowl of grapes as well. Standing near the window while looking at him was Leo, whom Rufus was familiar with.

2

Leo attended Lilou and Samael's second wedding. He was also the person who brought Samael's cousin, who brawled against them before they partied until they dropped. It was safe to say he was one of the people who had witnessed the drunk Rufus and all the shameful deeds he did.

But that wasn't truly shocking to him. What was surprising was they... these people were too relaxed!

1

"Do you... have any idea what happened?" he inquired when he found his voice, thinking they probably had no idea what happened. Therefore, he didn't judge immediately.

"Oh? About what Claude did?" Samael intoned, chewing a piece of grape ever so slowly. "And that Stefan abducted Lilou?"

"Sir Knight, apparently, His Grace knew everything even before Lady Tilly forced him to wake up." Fabian stood on the side near Rufus like a proper butler. "They simply chose to calm down first, since acting out of anger always had bad outcomes."

"..."

Rufus glossed over their faces, trying hard to keep his expression intact. They simply chose to calm down first? But weren't they too calm and snugly?!

2

A deep exhale slipped past Rufus' lips, pinching the bridge of his nose. He shouldn't stress over that now. What was important was they were aware of the situation.

"Come on, Ru. Don't stress yourself and calm down first," Samael urged, holding the grapevine up, eating a grape leisurely. "Why don't you take a seat first, eh? Instead of looking at us with those judgemental eyes."

"That's right, big brother. Have some grape," Law added.

"Fabian's harvest is good." Tilly nodded, casting Fabian a look. "Give me more."

"Leo, how were you dragged in this?" Rufus inquired, dragging his feet to one of the empty chairs to join them. He was already drained in the past four months, so he didn't have the energy to criticize these people.

"Lady Tilly and my nephew need someone to navigate their journey," Leo explained. "If I didn't come with them, they might take a year since Lady Tilly is bad with directions."

1

"I see..." Rufus rocked his head, as that was what he thought initially as well. He leaned back, relaxing his tensed muscles. Once again, he glanced at everyone who was enjoying Fabian's harvest.

Another sigh slipped past his lips, but this time, it was a sigh of relief. It was hard that it was just him who knew about the reversal of time. His eyes lingered on Samael. There was just a sense of relief that enveloped his heart, knowing Samael was now awake.

"You look very tired, Ru." Rufus's brows rose when Samael spoke once again, setting his eyes back at Samael. "I'm sorry I needed Tilly's help to wake up. You did a good job holding up."

Samael flashed a smile. That... finally, Rufus could breathe.

"I'm sorry I was bad in direction and very tardy, Rufus," Tilly also apologized, knowing she was the main reason they took four months. Not only she was bad with directions, but she was also easily distracted by their journey.

"It's fine, Lady Tilly." Rufus massaged his temple. "What's important now is His Grace is awake."

"Sir Knight, I heard you became His Grace's adopted son years later. I was anticipating you call him father."

"Fabian, not today, please." Rufus sighed for the umpteenth time, casting Fabian a quick look.

1

"Alright." The latter raised both his hands, shrugging.

"Anyway, since you are here, do you know where Claude is?" asked Samael, pushing himself up to sit up.

Rufus nodded. "Yes. When I realized about the reversal of time, I went to find the Madam at her home in Banse. Unfortunately, she wasn't there anymore and Stefan has already gotten ahold of her. So, I went to find her in the capital..." he summarized his life after the reversal of time so everyone was aware.

"Fortunately, when I returned to Grimsbanne, the earl found an opportunity to meet me. Since then, we had been working together to track Stefan and the Madam. Thanks to him, we figured Stefan wasn't in the palace, just as everyone claimed."

He paused to take a deep breath. "So far, we were able to locate Alphonse. Claude told me he planned to go to the mainland to see Tilly, but we both knew Lady Tilly will surely come. And we were correct."

"No wonder you look so exhausted. You accomplished too much whilst avoiding doing any reckless changes." Samael nodded with a proud smile plastered on his face. "Send a letter to Claude and invite him over. You guys don't need to worry. Stefan told me he would take Lilou to the Karo Kingdom."

"What?" Rufus's brows furrowed in confusion.

"Fabian, explain."

Fabian smiled when Rufus raised his eyes at him. "To make the story short, His Majesty isn't the real enemy this time, Sir Knight. It was Quentin and some people from the mainland who want the demise after several seconds of silence. "But we have a problem. I don't think she will help us without using force because she... remembers of the Grimsbanne Clan, the last original clan of their kind."

"Hah..."

"Everyone also scoffed like that, except Lady Tilly when His Grace told them what His Majesty uttered during his slumber." Fabian pointed out, seeing the conflicted emotion filling Rufus' eyes. "In any case, is Her Royal Highness Cassara alive? I do not appreciate the fact that you all share the same memories while I don't. It's not fun."

"I agree. The Fabian I know is more fun." Tilly remarked, eyes on Rufus.

Rufus remained silent, seeing that every single one of them had their eyes on him. Did Fabian say Cassara? Well...

"Yes, Her Royal Highness, Cassara is very much alive," he answered after several seconds of silence. "But we have a problem. I don't think she will help us without using force because she... remembers everything, Your Grace."

Chapter 658 The present me

In the kingdom of Karo, a prosperous metropolis in the middle of the desert and was known as the land of gold.

1

Lilou was cupping her cheek on the small dining table. Despite the spacious kitchen of the mansion they had been staying in for the past four months, there wasn't a single soul inside other than the two of them.

"Lex... you will kill me," came out a lazy voice, pouting while watching that handsome specimen shoot every ingredient inside the pot. If she didn't help him in preparing the ingredients, she was certain he would just barely wash them and shoot them all in a boiling pot like a witch.

Stefan, who was holding a plate of peeled potatoes, glanced up. His eyes instantly caught her figure lazying on the table while waiting for the food.

"If you keep complaining, why don't you take over?" he asked sarcastically, arching a brow at her audacity. Lilou frowned and clicked her tongue in response.

"You're becoming too spoiled," he added in dismay, shaking his head mildly as he continued to pour the rest of the ingredients to make a stew.

"This is your first time cooking for me. I already helped you prepare," Lilou mumbled, pouting while watching him create poison for dinner. "I thought I will live a luxurious life if I come with you. Although I can now eat and don't have a problem with food, I'm starting to doubt if eloping with you is the correct choice!"

Stefan let her mumble things and closed the lid after pouring the last ingredient for his stew. He breathed out heavily, picking up a cloth and dried his hand, sauntering to the table where she was at.

"We didn't elope," he corrected, standing across the table, sporting a knowing look on his face. "We're in this kingdom because I need to see someone."

"You will assassinate someone?"

"See, as in meet Lulu," he stressed, watching her frown in dismay. Stefan sighed once again. Honestly, this wasn't what he expected things would turn out as well. Since he didn't lead Lilou to a monster just like he did in the first timeline, he didn't expect she was this enervating to talk to.

He had always known Lilou was smart. She was a Bloodfang. The reason he made her dumb was when he erased her memories with him. Dumb as in, even if someone used her, she would be useless. Lilou was lucky or unfortunate since the person who discovered her first was Samael.

"Lex!" he snapped his eyes when she clapped. "You keep zoning out."

"Uhhh..." Stefan smacked his lips as he placed the cloth on top of the empty table between them. "So you will watch me make dinner?" he smiled subtly, trying to change the subject, but Lilou stared at him in silence.

"Lex," she called just when his lips parted once again. "You said you came from the future. Let's say I believe you, then... why did you look for me? What can a peasant do to the Heart's Kingdom that will eventually become an empire?"

He blinked twice, a little taken aback at her sudden inquiry. He shouldn't be surprised since he already told her the vague details and it was expected she would pry one day. But he was still a bit surprised nevertheless.

"Mhm. Why are you asking?" he answered her question with a question, crossing his arms, propping his side against the edge of the table. "I told you only when you are prepared to hear the worse will I tell you everything."

Lilou pressed her lips and sighed. "It's just that... I know you like me and yet, why aren't you making any advances towards me? It feels like you're too close, but there is just something that feels... we weren't."

"I don't think I am still ready for the worse, but... what are we in the future?" she asked in a soft, curious voice, staring at him warmly.

There was a moment of silence between them as they looked at each other. Her opalescent eyes shimmered, seeking a clear answer from him. Lilou furrowed

her brows, catching that melancholy that flickered across his eyes for a split second.

'Not good?' she wondered with a deep sigh.

"Are you... ready for the worse?" he asked once again, hinting her the answer for it was part of the worse she needed to anticipate.

'I figured.' Lilou smacked her lips before pressing them, its corners hooking up. Her stunning olive eyes sparkled, reflecting the simple man standing across from her.

"Lex." She planted her palms on the table, eyes fixed on him. "I'm not and... I don't think it matters now. I don't know what sort of sorcery I did to become someone relevant in the empire, but that doesn't matter for now."

Lilou huffed as she perched on the edge of the table with an air of nonchalance. "I mean, I'm certain what you are doing has something to do with the future. But... I'm not the future Lilou. I am the present me. What I'm saying is, I like you and I think I will always do. My future... is not my worry right now. It's never been one."

That was right. Lilou lived the life of a peasant. She was used to the life of worrying just to survive for the day. It took years before she became a fully capable individual who could win against a powerful, pureblooded vampire. She wouldn't change drastically in just four months.

Stefan smiled, hiding the melancholy behind his smile. 'You said the same, Lu...' he whispered in his head, recalling his last conversation with Lilou in the first timeline.

'You love me, but not that kind of love. You will always like me... but never love me as hard as him.'

"If you really like me, then eat plenty tonight. I'm the one who is cooking." He smirked playfully, lips stretching wider, seeing that her face gradually turned pale. Stefan clicked his tongue continuously, reaching for the ladle to bonk her lightly.

"Ouch!" Lilou rubbed the top of her head with a deep frown.

"I'm not raising a pampered lady." He pointed the ladle at this whiny Lilou. "You used to eat rotten foods. Stop complaining now."

"That's my point! I used to eat rotten foods, but why would I eat rotten foods if I have an option?"

bonk

"Ah...!" Her argument warranted her another tough love from him. "This is abuse!"

"Goodness..." Stefan shook his head once again, unable to picture her as the same Lilou in the past, who enjoyed torturing nobles to kill time. "I'll start disciplining you from now onwards."

Lilou complained once again, but Stefan already decided. Their voices resonated across the empty mansion. She was nagging him and trying to make a point, while Stefan held onto his vow to choose peace first before violence.

2

Even so, the atmosphere between them was light and warm. Very different from how their relationship started in the first timeline, which made him wonder.

If Stefan chose this road in the first lifetime, was there a chance that... she would love him just as intense as her love for her husband?

He might not get his answers. However, Stefan gazed at Lilou, who was explaining her side with the face of someone ready to bite his head off.

"I will always like you too, Lulu," he expressed out of nowhere, making her stop blabbering to look back at him, wide-eyed. "Never forget that."

Chapter 659 Everything has a pattern

The Karo Kingdom was a liberated country. Although it mostly sheltered vampires, there were a few humans mixed. Unlike the dystopic world of the Heart's Kingdom, the air in this place was... freer.

Lilou smiled as she carried a bag of goods she bought in the market, now on the plaza of the capital in Karo, to roam for a bit before heading back. She could not help but remember the first time she stepped foot in this place.

"It's really different from there," came out a whisper, gazing at the neat stalls nearby. "I wonder if everyone was alright. Old Olly will surely get worried."

Her lips pressed into a tight slash, breathing out heavily. She shook her head to forget the mild longing that reached her eyes. It was useless now since Lilou was with Stefan; she was accompanying him because she was 'apparently' an important character.

"I should make Lexx something — ack!"

Just as she turned around, Lilou dropped the bag of goods she was 'securely' hugging when someone bumped into her, consequently losing her balance. All

she saw was a large hand reaching out to her, pulling her wrist back. But alas, he unintentionally used more force than intended, causing her to crash against his firm body.

"Ah --" she winced as if the fall was better than hitting her forehead against his study chest. Lilou unconsciously patted his chest, grinding her teeth as she glared at him.

"Can't you see there's a person in here?" bellowed Lilou through her gritted teeth. But what she saw was his eyes only, wearing a shawl around his head that covered most of his facial features except his eyes.

Even so, his thick and naturally long curled lashes on his hooded eyes were enough to captivate a maiden like her. His eyes seemed to pierce through her soul, making her hold her breath while holding his spellbinding gaze.

"Apologies," his voice was deep and monotonous, the complete opposite of his claim. "Are you alright?"

When he inquired about her, Lilou finally blinked back to the current lapse. Her frown resurfaced before her gaze fell on the goods on the ground.

"Good lord," she breathed out, clicking her tongue as she picked them up while wiping some apples with the bottom of her palm. 'Lexx will get angry again and will nag that I'm being too rotten... spoiled. Tsk!'

"Should I help you?" she paused when she heard the culprit behind her inquire something he shouldn't. She turned to look at him with a glare.

"What do you think?" she replied sarcastically.

"Goodness. Are the younger generation always asks others what they should do now?" Lilou grumbled in dismay.

Although the young lad with a fairly tanned complexion and a deep-set of deep blue eyes looked the same age as her. His towering stature and strong-looking arms told her he was young. But since she always plays with the children in the field and was surrounded by the elderly, Lilou felt extra young at heart, but older than her actual age.

'I can't believe I was distracted by his eyes moments ago,' she scolded herself internally, shaking her head before continuing to pick up the goods. 'Although his eyes were undoubtedly beautiful, don't forget the dread if Lexx heard about this! Oh, good lord! Is Lexx my father's incarnate?'

She froze at her silly thoughts. But then again, her face grew ashen as she held her breath, wide-eyed.

'Is that the truth Lexx was keeping all this time?' she gasped in horror, raising her eyes with her mouth still ajar when the man she bumped into squatted down in front of her. She watched him help her pick up her goods, putting them back in the cloth sack.

Noticing her gaze without moving a muscle, he glanced at her, only to see her looking at him with strange eyes. He cocked his head, studying her even more.

Lilou knew she was watching him and he was now staring back at her with genuine wonder in his eyes. However, her mind was too distracted by the 'theory' she came up with. It bothered her... very much.

"Put them inside," she snapped her eyes, and they fell on the cloth sack in front of her, moving them up at the stranger's inexpressive eyes.

"Those apples." He pointed with his chin.

"Ah, right?" Lilou shook her head and dunked the apples inside the cloth. When she raised his head once again, the anger on her face had already disappeared, replaced with a smile.

"Thank you," she expressed, grabbing the opening of the cloth sack so nothing would fall again. She paused when the stranger spoke.

"For?" he asked genuinely, unable to understand this shift of mood. Wasn't she peeved just now?

"I helped you because I was careless and bumped into you, causing your goods to fall on the ground. Therefore, helping you pick them up is a given to express my sincerity," he explained in one breath, his tone was still the same. "Forgiven was the word you must say, not gratitude."

Lilou blinked twice, trying to understand this abrupt argument. "Did I hit your head?" she inquired, reviewing whose forehead bumped into who? As far as she could remember, she should be the one demanding! Also, why was he making a big deal of her words of gratitude?

"I did not, but you did."

"Exactly!" she bobbed her head, doe eyes blinking almost innocently. "Why are you spewing all that nonsense? I thanked you because I feel like it and I'm not angry any more because I'm not. Do you want me to continue getting angry?"

"But that is quite a quick shift of mood."

"Life is short!" That was her only reply, shaking her head whilst sighing. Vampires, they wouldn't understand her words.

She gazed back at him once again when she stood, hugging the sack. Her mouth opened, but she ended up closing them. All she did was huff and shake her head, grumbling as she walked away.

"What a strange guy. He speaks as though everything has a pattern. Although I cannot fully disagree, life would be very boring if we keep dwelling on such things." Lilou continuously grumbled, hoping to use the stranger's odd complaints to get her 'theory' about her father incarnate out of her silly head.

As she did, the stranger fixed his eyes on the lady's back. She was mumbling, but with his keen hearing, he heard everything she was spewing. Even the worries about someone being her father incarnate.

She was correct. He had lived his life following a constant pattern. And he could argue for days to prove that everything in this world had a pattern.

"For some reason," he whispered, pulling down the shawl covering his head from his cheekbone. "She feels familiar."

As the shawl fluttered in his grip, the man's deep blue moonlight hair shone under the blazing afternoon sun. His tantalizing eyes that shared the same color as his hair fastened with fascination.

"How can such an odd girl survive this world until now?" he wondered, bothered by this riddle that seemed impossible or challenging to crack. "She must be very lucky and is blessed."

Chapter 660 Selling her off?

Lilou's jaw nearly dropped to the ground as she blinked her eyes countless times. Right in front of her, standing by the door and inside the sitting room, while she was outside about to go in, was someone who was very familiar in her eyes. The person standing in front of her also looked at her with almost the same reaction.

"Have you met each other?" Stefan's voice snapped her back to the current lapse as she set her round eyes at him. "What?"

"Lexx, you know this guy?" Lilou gasped, pointing at the person by the door, eyes at Stefan, who was walking his guest out. She wouldn't forget this figure, especially those eyes.

"You know me?" Heliot asked, warranting him a glare from her.

"Do I, what? Hey, didn't you just berate me earlier in the market today?" she scoffed in disbelief, scrunching her nose up before refocusing her attention to Stefan. "Is he the person you're meeting?"

"You didn't see my face, though." Heliot's brows rose when she glared at him once again. She didn't answer him other than a glare, making him step aside as she stormed in just to fuss around Stefan. He watched the two in bewilderment, tilting his head to the side.

Of course, Heliot was aware of who Stefan was. However, this woman... was not a vampire. He scanned her in silence and thought, 'not also human.'

"Tch. Don't you have any notion of what manners are?" Stefan nearly smacked her in the head as Lilou kept twittering and fussing around him. In the end, he could only click his tongue before gazing at Heliot.

"What do you think?" he asked, causing Lilou to abruptly stop.

Heliot didn't answer immediately as he glanced at the malfunctioning Lilou. "Do you think I will buy it?"

"Wait, what? Lexx?" Lilou gasped as her eyes dilated with criticism. "Are you selling me off, Lexx?"

A vein protruded in Stefan's temple as his face contorted, hooking his arm across her shoulder and around her neck. He flashed her a forced smile, praying to whoever was hearing his silent thoughts to give him longer patience.

"Stop with the wild imagination, will you?" he asked nicely — a tone before he use other means. "I'm not selling you, but I might." — Samael would buy her back, anyway.

If not for the fact that Lilou was crucial in this story, Stefan would've sold her for a day to teach her a lesson. Still, deep down, he knew he wouldn't do that to her.

Now, he completely disagreed with the person who said the phrase; "love is blind."

Love was not blind. It was more like love could blind people.

"Your Majesty, I appreciate your invitation. Although what you told me is... something that is hard to take, I believe you won't come in here all alone just to deceive me. I will need time to reconsider your... reality." Heliot broke his silence after observing Lilou and Stefan. The emperor of the Heart's Kingdom changed, no doubt.

Was it because of that girl? Stefan told him about this woman he was with and it seemed he was talking about this silly one. This person... was apparently the future empress of the said land.

"Your Majesty...?" Lilou tilted her head as she darted her puzzled eyes between the two. "Lexx, why is this man addressing you like that?"

"You're traveling with him and yet, you don't know the person you're traveling with?" Heliot blurted out, a little taken aback himself, knowing this was so out of character.

Lilou frowned as she glanced at Heliot and then at Stefan. The latter let out a deep exhale. He forgot to tell Heliot that Lilou didn't know yet. That he only told her he worked in the palace but didn't mention to her what position exactly.

A shallow breath slipped past Stefan's lips as he looked back at Heliot. But just as his lips parted, Heliot waved weakly.

"I appreciate it, but you do not have to walk me out, Your Majesty." He tilted his head down mildly. "It's the least I can do since it seems I spoke out of turn."

"Then I'll see you once you have decided."

Heliot's only response to Stefan's remarks was a meek smile that didn't reach his eyes. He then glanced at Lilou, who finally went silent, and was looking back at him. For some reason, the sense of familiarity and this urge to touch her hair crept up to his heart, which he ignored.

With that being said and done, Heliot excused himself and left the sitting room while Lilou and Stefan were left alone. Her lips were pressed in a tight slash, watching Stefan turn to face her squarely.

"Angry?" he asked first, but Lilou simply lowered her eyes. "Take a sit first. It'll be a long explanation."

"Will you be telling me everything?"

"Unless you want me to." He shrugged. "But I plan on telling you some important things."

Lilou bit her lips out of habit before sighing deeply. "Alright." She nodded and marched towards the divan while Stefan watched her back.

His eyes once again glistened with hesitation, knowing things would change between them. Although he planned on telling her more detailed general information, he thought he could delay it for a couple more days. But well, they were already at this point, and she already met Heliot.

It was just a matter of time before they start meeting more people... friends and enemies alike.

"Will you just stand there?" his eyelashes fluttered when she looked back at him from her spot.

"Right." He breathed out and marched towards the chair across from her.

Silence descended upon them as they sat across from each other. Her brows slowly raised, eager to hear any explanation from him. Not that she was angry; Lilou was just surprised. Or rather, it still hadn't sunk in yet and she was waiting for him to tell her she had misheard Heliot.

To her surprise, what she heard that came out of his mouth were words she never — even in her imagination — she expected.

"You... will become an empress."

Lilou held her breath as her eyes went round, gasping. "You're my husband?!"