

## The Duke 661

Chapter 661 Why?

"You're my husband?!"

Stefan took a deep breath and released it through his mouth. "Shut up first, alright? And so what if I am? Any problems with that?"

"No, I mean..." Lilou scratched the backside of her head as she smiled awkwardly. "I thought you're my father incarnate."

"What?"

"Hehe. You nag like him is what I mean."

His expression died while watching her scratch her cheek, smiling awkwardly as if she already concluded and believed it all on her own. Another sigh slipped past his lips before its corners curled up, shaking his head in disbelief. The heaviness in his heart and pressure on his shoulder felt lighter with her silliness.

"Really," he muttered whilst scratching his temple with his forefinger. "What did I expect?" — with Lilou in her current state, she wouldn't change in a snap of a finger.

Wasn't that the only consolation he had by doing good deeds? He could get to spend days like this, thinking nothing major, despite the brewing danger in the shadows. At the very least, he was collecting memories — good ones with no bitterness along.

"But what did you mean by I will become an empress? I mean, that weirdo calls you Your Majesty, and you said you work in the palace. I thought you were some sort of knight in a mission or you were on the run, so you don't go out that much." Stefan raised his gaze while Lilou mumbled things while rubbing her chin. "I will become an empress... say what? Me? A peasant? What sort of luck did land on my lap to gain such a thing?"

"It's not luck, Lulu." He cleared his throat as he recollected his thoughts, knowing how easily both of them get sidetracked. "Your blood is special. Inside your body is a core that will make you a vampire."

"Huh?" she gasped.

"If you think you're human now, you're not... completely. You survived and aged like humans, but one day, you will become a vampire once the core devoured all your human blood and change it into what it should be. It's a result of a forbidden ritual done by your clan," Stefan explained in one breath, pausing only to see her staring at him with blank eyes. "Are you following me?"

"Do you think I am?" came out a quick sarcastic response. "Lexx, what the hell is a core and I'm not a human? Also not a vampire completely? It doesn't make sense. What am I? A ghost?"

Stefan pinched the space between his brows, questioning himself if he was doing a great job of explaining or if it was Lilou who was the problem.

"What I'm saying is, the blood that is running in your veins is a special type of blood. Let's just say it is considered a luxury good," he explained in simple words, watching her lips form an o-shape while rocking her head. "How it becomes like that stems from your origins. You live and die like

humans, passing the core to your children until a proper host who can contain the power of the core and its will. To clarify, the core can make you stand on the highest ladder of the blood hierarchy."

He paused once again, studying her demeanor just in case she wasn't following him. Fortunately, it seemed Lilou could get a good grasp of his explanation.

"Moving on, that is also the reason I went to see you. I already told you about the reversal of time. I regained my memories of the previous timeline and I'm certain there were people, terrible ones, who will come for you," he continued, but this time, his tone was solemn as his eyes sharpened. "If I had bad intentions, I could simply lead you to do terrible things and take advantage of you for power."

"Why didn't you?" the space between his brows furrowed when Lilou suddenly raised a question. "Why didn't you make me do terrible things and take advantage of me, Lexx?"

Lilou tilted her head to the side, misplaced innocence flashing across her eyes. "I'm saying you're my only family now. So I don't mind even if you turn out to be a man who is on the run. I even considered you are one, that's why I never asked. I mean, at this point, I think everything you will do and tell me is right. I don't care if they are morally correct or just for fun, I will accept anything. So... why didn't you make me do terrible things?"

There was a moment of silence between them as Stefan stared at her, hearing her question in his head repeatedly.

Why didn't he make her do terrible things? He could simply say because he had already done it in the previous lifetime. That he used Lilou and took advantage of the fact that all she wanted was not to leave her all alone once again.

But... that was also the main reason Stefan strayed from the original course of the event. That was also the reason he didn't want to use Lilou, despite knowing she would be fine with everything.

He wanted to love her correctly and be loved by her the same. It didn't matter if it was platonic. He simply wanted some time with her — a peaceful time with her where there were just the two of them — away from bloodshed. Even if it was just a day or just an hour.

Just as his lips parted, Lilou spoke once again. "Is it because I will become a monster who eats children alive?"

"Pardon?"

"A monster! Like someone who can split her body in half or who can morph into a dog! And you want to make me a good person so I don't become like that!"

Stefan blinked twice. At this point, he gave up. Lilou's brain worked in wonder. It was almost amazing how she could jump to conclusions so easily.

"No, Lulu." Stefan pinched the space between his brows, reserving his energy for other important stuff. But the next second, Lilou raised another question.

"Wait. So, how did I become an empress? If you're the king now and you will not become my husband, then... did I overthrow the throne?" Lilou blinked, watching him raise his eyes at her. "I didn't... right?"

Stefan simply remained silent while staring at her. His silence was enough for her to understand that one way or another, that was what happened.

"So, we... were enemies?" came out a muffled voice as her eyes softened with bitterness.

"No." Stefan breathed out and smacked his lips before he forced his next words out. "You... married my brother."

Chapter 662 The descendants of the child of evil

Marrying Stefan's brother was more shocking to Lilou than Stefan being her husband. Although Stefan didn't detail her relationship with his brother, it left her with these conflicting emotions. Sitting in the mansion's garden she and Stefan had been living for the past few months, Lilou looked up at the sky full of stars.

"Samael..." she whispered and frowned. "That's strange."

To be honest, everything was strange to her. Although she believed Stefan's words as a man from the future, she couldn't deny it was still hard for her. It was just... weird. Having someone know who she would become, her relationships, and even the name of the man she married.

Never in her life had she ever thought of marrying. Or rather, Lilou had always thought of marrying a man one day. But who it was, what he looked like, what he was doing right now, and things like that were unknown to her. So, for Stefan to give her a name and know who she would end up with left mixed emotions in her heart.

"Samael..." she repeated under her breath, furrowing her brows. "Samael La Crox. I think I heard that name before..." and then realization kicked in, causing her eyes to dilate in disbelief.

"Wasn't that the name of the Duke of Grimsbanne?" she gasped, putting two and two together, regarding the relationship between the current king of the Heart's Kingdom and the Duke of Grimsbanne. They were brothers, and Lilou lived in Grimsbanne.

Although it was almost impossible for her to charm Samael with how she appeared as a peasant, she now lived under the same roof as the king! That only proved that "all things were possible" at the moment.

"Oh, my goodness!" Lilou held her head in shock, thinking of how, why, when, and what, about how her life as a peasant spiraled. "The core is already giving me a headache, and then this? Me and the duke who had been in his slumber for a very long time?!"

Lilou covered her gaping lips, trying to wrap her head around this entire situation. But alas, it was hard to really calm down when all this information was filling her head. It was too much to take in one go and to think this was simply a small part and Stefan hadn't told her everything!

"My God..." she let out a deep exhale, looking heavenward in distress. "Just what did I do to get tangled up in all this? I mean, I get it. My bloodline is somewhat special and is ought of greatness. However, this is too much!"

She closed her eyes, collapsing on her back. When she reopened her eyes, the stars that were making the night sky beautiful, along with the full moon, were still there. Another shallow breath slipped past her nostrils, pursing her lips into a thin line.

"More than those things... I'm more concerned about my relationship with Lexx. Right now, he is my one and only family, and if it turns out that he has some bad blood with this husband of mine, I will surely take his side. After all... I don't know the duke," she whispered as her eyes dropped until they were partially closed. "But somehow, just the thought of it feels... heartbreaking."

Lilou already had a vague idea of her relationship with Stefan in the future. Although the latter hadn't confirmed it, deep in her heart, she was certain her original story with Stefan was something painful. After all, Stefan, although looking at her with sincerity and affection, also has this sadness hidden in his eyes.

It was the look of someone who accepted loving someone at arm's length. She didn't love him, not romantically, at least. However, Lilou didn't have the slightest idea what it means to be tangled in a romantic affair with someone. She never felt it. All the love she had even before Stefan stepped into her life was familial.

"He's acting like Father, but he can't properly hide the emotions in his eyes." — or maybe Lilou was simply keen on observing people that even if Stefan hid his emotions well, she still noticed it. Well, she wouldn't become a notorious vigilante in her previous life if she wasn't capable.

"Whatever. Come what may, the heaven won't fall... at least, not anytime soon."

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Meanwhile, in Knotley, Cunningham...

"Tilly, what are the odds that Lilou is looking at the sky right now?"

Tilly paused several feet away from Samael as the latter was slumped in the garden, staring at the night sky full of stars. They have just arrived in Cunningham and everyone was now in the dining hall, accommodated by the Crawfords.

"Will it make you feel better if I tell you she's probably doing the same as you do?" she queried in her usual meek voice, gazing at him, who had been oddly silent since their arrival in the march. "If so, I place my hand on my palm and say she is lying on the grass and is staring at the night sky, just like what you are doing."

A chuckle escaped his mouth as he glanced up at her. "Come on, Tilly. Can you say that with more conviction?"

"I am being affirmative."

"Right, right..." he shook his head, peeling his eyes away from her back to the sky. His eyes softened as a subtle smile appeared on his face.

"You know, before this whole fiasco, Lilou and I were also staring at the sky after rolling around the grass."

"I do not want to hear the details."

"We were happy, whispering sweet nothings in each other's ears, and just enjoying each other's company," he continued, ignoring her plea. "At that time, I didn't think this would happen. Although you warned us and we set off to seek my uncle and another auntie, we didn't think much about it since we thought we had time."

Tilly pursed her lips before gazing up. "It's not your fault, Samael."

"I know, but I still feel shit about it."

"The blood of Grimsbanne... being the descendants of the child of evil, is never a gratifying thing to live up with. However, we had lasted this long. Our gifts or this cursed blood might've played a huge factor, but our existence is at risk." Her eyes slowly fell on Samael's face as she continued. "If one of us dies, we will all die."

"I mean it. If one of the Grimsbanne died, we would all die, Samael."

Chapter 663 The seven deadly sins

"I mean it. If one of the Grimsbanne died, we will all die, Samael."

Samael furrowed his brows, propping his elbow on the grass to assist himself to sit up. He then raised his head, cocking his head to the side while Tilly squatted down.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, out of plain curiosity. "I understand our situation is bad, but you never told us that if one of us died, we'll all die. Are you saying our lives are connected to each other?"

Tilly glanced at him before her eyes fell on the grass. She then drew circles on the grass with her index.

"No. I'm not saying if one of us died, we'll all die automatically. However, dying also meant our enemies found a way to exterminate all of us," she explained, drawing seven holes underneath the grass. "The blood of Grimsbanne was special, and three of us: Marsella, Abel, and Tilly, had lived four times than your age. They called us Originals for a reason."

She paused and raised her eyes to Samael. "Even the generations after us, you've survived up until now because you're one of the chosen seeds. So, even your children, although young, are stronger than most pureblooded vampires."

"Basically, even if it's a hundred against one, they will still struggle?" he asked despite knowing this through experience already. Tilly nodded as an answer. "Although I am confident my victories are because of my experience, I cannot deny that my abilities played a huge factor in those barbaric days. But you're right. If they managed to take one of us, it'll be troublesome."

"Glad you understand my worries about not enjoying my youth just yet."

"Honestly, although I understand, I wouldn't care that much." Samael shrugged nonchalantly, ignoring her ridiculous reasoning. "I mean, if not for Lilou and my children, I wouldn't really care about this. However, my wife is somewhere under the same sky, and my children... Law is with me, but Sunny..." he sighed once again at the thought of his daughter.

"How can you leave her alone? I know she's more than capable of protecting herself because she's smart, but she's still my daughter and I am still her father. I will always worry about my daughter."

"I understand."

Samael looked heavenward, sighing for the umpteenth time. "I miss my wife and my daughter."

"It's good that they don't feel the same." He frowned at her blunt response, setting his eyes back to Tilly. "In that case, you're the only one who has to endure the pain of separation."

"Tilly, I understand Lilou wouldn't reciprocate my longing because she doesn't have her memories. However, how are you certain Sunny won't be waiting for me?"

"Because I raised Sunny." She blinked twice, keeping her classic emotionless countenance.

"What do you mean? We are all there to guide her." His frown grew worse. "But well, I can't really deny your claim. Of all the people she could be fond of, she somehow idolized you and Fabian."

He sighed once again, running his hand through his hair. Unlike his son, Law, who was greatly influenced by Rufus' and Lilou's kindness and moral way of living, Sunny was the complete opposite. Although his daughter wasn't vicious, she was developing a character that could send a chill down one's spine. She got along well with Tilly and Fabian, which was way more concerning.

"By the way, Tilly, you said you don't remember a lot of things regarding the past. But you seemed to have remembered something. Is that the reason you came to me?" asked Samael after a minute of silence, knowing Tilly would rather enjoy her snacks inside than accompany him. "Care to share what's in your head? You should, though. Knowing you might forget the important details again."

"Right..." Tilly nodded, recalling the reason she came out to join him. However, when her lips parted, no words came out.

"What?"

"I... forgot."

"..."

Samael pinched the bridge of his nose, rendered speechless by her personality.

"Tilly, I hadn't met your siblings, but are they also like you?" he asked, raising his pair of helpless eyes on her. "I mean, it's better to know beforehand if they were the type we can rely on or not."

"They're not like me, that's for sure." She asserted while looking at him straight in the eyes.

"They're worse."

"..."

Once again, Samael was rendered speechless by her answer. Tilly had mentioned the other Originals a few times. However, she hadn't delved deep into the subject. Aside from the fact that they were powerful individuals, who, for their own reasons, just like Samael's mother, left the mainland years back.

"If that is the case, doesn't this mean we're in trouble as well?" he inquired in a dead tone. "I mean if they're worse than you, doesn't that mean they might or they might not care about this brewing problem regarding our bloodline?"

He paused and pondered about it, putting himself in their shoes. "If I am in their position and I lived that long, I will probably die out of boredom. I only lived for a thousand years, and if I hadn't met Lilou, I would've hanged myself after traveling the world to end it. Being powerful and invincible at the same time is like the best and the worst combination of all." He looked at Tilly with a knowing expression.

"I'm losing hope for your siblings, Tilly."

"They're not my hope in the first place." She answered. "I simply need to remember something from them."

"Ahh... now that I think about it, that's what you said back then. What is it?"

Tilly pursed her lips before she smacked them. "I will know when I see them."

"Goodness..." he shook his head and sighed, collapsing on his back once again with his arms spread open. "No offense, Tilly, but I think this is the reason your siblings left you in that mansion."

"It's not my fault I'm adventurous."

"Just what sort of dictionary do you used to think you're adventurous?"

"Fabian told me I am."

"Don't listen to him. He says anything when he needs something."

"Ahh..." Samael thought Tilly understood his opinions, but to his dismay, her next remarks were about something else. "Now I remember why I came to you."

"Please, just tell me before you forget about it."

This time, Tilly went silent as she gazed at the seven holes she doodled beneath the inched-tall grass. "It's about the prophecy of the seven seeds."

His brow arched, glancing at her. "Seven seeds?"

"Mhm. The seven seeds." She nodded before adding, "the prophecy of the seven deadly sins."

#### Chapter 664 The history of Grimsbanne

At the beginning of the world, it was said that humans only lived in this world. Overseeing them was a lamb, the protector, and guardian of the world, giving balance to life and death; the cycle of life.

Until an event in the empyrean realm — the place where the gods and goddess resided — occurred, resulting in the attempted execution of one of the gods. However, this god, whom other divine being feared because of a prophesy escaped the empyrean realm to the mortal realm.

With this cursed existence present in the world of the mortal, disasters occurred. Hence, to stop him from wreaking havoc on this beautiful world created out of mercy for those who wanted to live, the moon goddess and the god of the underworld had an agreement.

Their alliance has grown into fruition, which would be called the child of evil. The child of evil crawled his way to the surface of the mortal realm, born with only one purpose: to kill the cursed being wreaking havoc in the world.

However, what the mood goddess and the god of the underworld didn't fathom was that as the child of evil stayed in the mortal realm, the more he questioned his existence and purpose. Humans were weak and the cursed god was strong, and yet, he had found the lamb who oversaw the mortal realm.

Meanwhile, the child of evil had to live and survive by taking another. He was born to be evil even before he wanted to become evil. The unfairness of the purpose of his existence and how he was created in the first place had nurtured this seed of anger within.

So in the end, the child of evil, set his eyes on the empyrean realm, blaming those gods for pushing the moon goddess to make a covenant with the god of the underground world, and desired revenge. To do so, the child of evil built an army of undead, which were now called vampires.

The first attempt to return to the empyrean realm resulted in a war that the elders called the holy war between werewolves and vampires. The cursed god, who was a wolf, devoured the lamb and created his own army of brutal lycans.

It was said the holy war was so destructive that the gods had to intervene. Still, due to their persistence and corrupted existence, the wolf, the lamb, and the child of evil survived. The lamb and the wolf managed to hide in the empyrean realm while the child of evil stayed underground, waiting for his chance to crawl his way back to the mortal realm.

The consequence of the holy war for the surviving vampires was to never walk under the sunlight once again. Meanwhile, the werewolves' sentences were lighter than the former race. Despite the display of favoritism, vampires, who couldn't stand under the sunlight, took an oath to live differently and silently, away from the will of the child of evil.

That was why when the time was ripe and the child of evil, the lamb, and the wolf once again walked on the surface of the mortal realm, the vampires had changed. Although the vampires' sentence was lifted with the help of the god of the underground as a retaliation for the moon goddess who betrayed him, they no longer desire vengeance.

What the vampires sought was to live in peace. They wanted to have a place they could call home and where they were accepted. Their patience and good intention soon brought fruit as humans and witches alike allied with the vampires until the small land became an empire.

However, upon the return of the child of evil, everything spiraled into another long darkness. The Grimsbanne, the royal family at that time, was corrupted by the child of evil. The cursed evil used the emperor's grievance about the loss of his empress to his advantage.

Causing discord between vampires and werewolves once again, the crown prince, who watched his kind father fall into ruin as the child of evil corrupt him, made an oath. With no one else to help the vampires, the crown prince sacrificed himself: his morals, principles, and the beliefs he was raised to become a sage king to save his people.

Acting as the villain, the crown prince had become the most vicious vampire and helped the child of evil achieve his goal. All he wished was that the child of evil leaves the mortal realm, to leave his people alone. But the child of evil never left empty-handed, nor he was the type to not have a backup plan.

Hence, he made a pact with the crown prince, hatching two seeds. A twin — a boy and a girl — to continue their bloodline to fulfill the prophecy.

"Two seeds that will reproduce. Seven seeds; a result of the seven sins that will endanger our kind to extinction?" Samael furrowed his brows, repeating what Tilly said just now after the little history time of the mainland and the existence of vampires.

Tilly nodded. "Currently, there were seven Grimsbanne existing. Me, Marsella, Abel, you, Claude, Law, and Sunny. This is probably the reason everyone wants us dead."



"Hell..." he placed his palm on the grass, leaning back comfortably, eyes still on Tilly. "So, you're saying it's just because of a mere prophecy?"

"It could be, but since the vampires on the mainland had initially set their eyes on Lilou, there must be underlying reasons."

"I know, right? The prophecy is just an excuse. They simply didn't like the idea of an abominable existence." Samael rocked his head as he pondered the information Tilly told him. It was new to him because he had always believed vampires existed from the beginning of the world.

The more he thought about it, the more confused he got. So, he snapped his eyes and set them back to her.

"Tilly, why now? I get it that the numbers of existing Grimsbanne now match the ones told in the prophecy. However, there used to be... eight. My little brother died prematurely, and if we count your parents, that makes us ten. Why now and not in the past? It doesn't make sense." he tilted his head to the side, waiting for Tilly's explanation for that.

#### Chapter 665 Sloth and Pride

"Tilly, why now? I get it that the numbers of existing Grimsbanne now match the ones told in the prophecy. However, there used to be... eight. My little brother died prematurely, and if we count your parents, that makes us ten. Why now and not in the past? It doesn't make sense."

There was a moment of silence between Samael and Tilly as they looked at each other. He raised his brows, waiting for enlightenment regarding the thing he pointed at.

"That's why they all died." Her answer brought a frown to his face.

"Huh? Please elaborate."

"Those who shouldn't be born will die prematurely. They might live a bit longer, but their death was predestined to happen. Claude's parents died because that was their fate. Even if they somehow survived your brother's verdict, they will still die on something else," she explained in the same meek tone, blinking almost innocently. "Our blood is a gift to those chosen seeds. But for those who weren't meant to exist, the blood of Grimsbanne is a curse that will kill them from the inside slowly. They wouldn't even notice their life withering."

"Tch."

Samael clicked his tongue in annoyance at Tilly's answer. Although what she said annoyed him, he couldn't really blame her. Tilly was simply spewing facts, and although the word usage was quite infuriating, it was the truth.

"I don't care about the blood of Grimsbanne. All I care about is to set things back to their rightful place. My wife and my children are my priority," he said, looking at her straight in the eye. "The only reason I care now is that my wife is out there doing who knows what and my daughter is left on the mainland. With or without the prophecy, I will burn all those vampires on the mainland if something happened to my family."

"That is the statement of yours truly," he added in a lazy yet full of conviction voice.

Samael then collapsed on his back once again, gazing at the night sky full of stars. A shallow breath slipped out of his nostrils, collecting his thoughts.

"Bless this family drama," he murmured along with another sigh. "The saddest part is not the fact that my family got separated, but thinking of those good times when we're together. I can't even rely on my other family member since even you are unsure if they will be of help or not."

Tilly pursed her lips while Samael grumbled his dismay in this situation, but it couldn't be helped. Although she didn't understand his woes completely, she also wanted to return to those days when she could sit all day doing nothing. Everything after the reversal of time was taxing. She felt like she'd lose the nonexistent fat she painstakingly accumulated.

"I hope they will help," she said after some time of silence, pushing herself up with her hands on her thigh. "Who knows? They might, since we're all in the same hell."

As soon as the last syllables escaped her mouth, Tilly pivoted on her heel to walk away. But just as she took five steps away from him, she halted at his question.

"One last thing, Tilly." She looked back at him, bearing her classic blank expression. "If the two seeds were just children when they were found out by the previous clan leader of the current royal family on the mainland, why didn't they kill the two seeds before they bloom?"

"The child of evil was born to become evil even before he can decide if he wants to become evil. If you think about it, the holy war and all the wars after that were all predestined. Killing the children who have yet to decide which path to take is cruel," she answered with a shrug. "Also, even if they are children, we are the proof they aren't easily killed. Still, the first impression lasts."

With that being said, Tilly peeled her eyes away from Samael to walk away. She continued;

"They said, show them the light, and they will shine just as bright as the sun. Show them darkness, and they will show you the void. Expose them to bloodshed and they... will create an ocean of red. Theodore the First believed that despite being creatures of the night, we're all part of this world now, and thus, we all deserve the chance this life offers."

"What would we become if he didn't show the two seeds compassion and harmed them in the first place?" she added without pausing in her tracks, leaving Samael all alone in the massive garden in the Crawford's estate.

"What would have we become if we weren't shown compassion but hatred instead?" he repeated, averting his eyes from Tilly's back towards the night sky. "Well..."

He trailed off, keeping his silence as he mulled about it.

"I don't think the Tilly I know will be Tilly the Sloth," was the answer that escaped his mouth, thinking that they owe this seed of compassion to the ancestor of the royal family on the mainland.

From what he learned so far, the first two seeds were exposed to the goodness of people. Because deep in his heart, Samael, although he was one hundred and ten percent certain he wasn't a good person, wouldn't be able to love Lilou with all his heart if he was born evil.

"It'll just be Hell and not Sam," he whispered, thinking of the darker side of him. "That's good, right? With this, it also raises the chances Tilly's siblings could've been less evil than I am." — he hoped that was the case since they could resolve this matter if those two somewhere across this globe cooperated with them willingly.

"I really miss Lilou and Sunny." He sighed, closing his eyes to rest them for a bit. But when he reopened his eyes, the sincerity in his voice contradicted the murderous intent filling his pair of crimson eyes.

"Once Fabian regained his memories, I'd kill anyone who stands on my way to reunite with my wife and daughter."

Chapter 666 Love is love

[HEART'S KINGDOM ROYAL PALACE: Avolire Palace]

Silvia blinked multiple times, watching her little sister Cassara enjoy the grapes while sitting leisurely on the divan. Sitting... no, she was lying on her side, which she would never do, at least not in front of Silvia.

"Sister, you seemed to have been in a good mood these days." Silvia smiled as she raised her brows, ignoring Cassara's relaxed demeanor. Although the latter just came into her quarters unannounced, Silvia was already used to her personality. Therefore, being civil was something Silvia was already used to.

"Who wouldn't be in a good mood if I hadn't been seeing our husband's face?" Cassara snickered as a piece of grape hovered before her lips. "Don't tell me you're yearning for his presence in your bedroom? Why not call for a male escort to fill the void in your heart? If one is not enough, try inviting two or three. It'll be fun."

Silvia's expression died. "Calling male escort is not something I enjoy... unlike my playful little sister."

"Heh... well, I respect your faithful heart." To Silvia's surprise, Cassara simply shrugged instead of smoldering in anger like usual after such subtle provocation. "Although indulging with men is fun, I would never know the day a man would truly capture my heart, my eyes, and my entire soul would come."

"Oh?" Silvia quirked a brow, watching Cassara smirk coquettishly.

"Surprising, I know, but I accepted that life is full of twists and turns. One thing, you don't like the person, and then the next... you're in love. Say, sister, how does it feel to love a man?"

"I don't know."

"Huh... is that so?"

"Love is love, Sister. You can try to describe it with all the words you know, but even if you fill an entire library, it will still feel it is never enough to relay what your heart feels." Silvia raised the teacup to her lips, gazing at her over the rim. "It is something you can only express through actions."

"Deep." Cassara rocked her head with pursed lips. "Maybe the joy in my heart is the same. There are no words that could describe how happy I was at the moment I wanted to jump from the rooftop."

Silvia didn't reply anymore as she sipped her tea elegantly. She didn't know what truly made her sister happy, but whatever it was, Silvia must admit conversing with Cassara had become bearable.

In the past, this little sister of hers would just whine and knew how to speak the language of what Silvia considered as a child.

"Huh... should I introduce you to him?" Cassara inquired as her eyes twinkled with excitement. "We had been exchanging letters as of late and he said he will visit me soon. It'll be fun if I introduced the man who made my heart flutter to my dearest sister."

"Stefan might be away and never restrict us in inviting people into our bed. However, you must be discreet. We had the freedom to indulge in debauchery if we pleased, so long as it wouldn't strain the king's name." Silvia placed the teacup back on the saucer, producing a soft click when the bottom touched the porcelain. "The punishment will be dire."

"Thank you for the reminder, sister. But no need to be worried. I simply suggested the idea since you're my dearest sister. We're so close that we even share the same husband, isn't that correct?" Cassara flashed her a sweet smile, throwing Silvia in confusion if she meant it sarcastically or if it was simply a reckless remark. "But anyway, if you don't want to, then that's fine. That only means we have more time together!"

While Cassara giggled and ate grapes, Silvia studied her in silence. No matter which angle she looked at it, Cassara seemed really excited about this meeting. To test if Cassara had truly met a man who made her change, she raised a question.

"How about Hell?" Silvia observed. "Have you let your delusion of being with him go now?"

To her surprise, Cassara simply looked back at her without much change in her countenance. If anything, the mention of Samael did not affect Cassara.

"I've already accepted that Hell will never reciprocate my feelings. He is a good and sweet brother, but I don't think he will ace Stefan in being a neglectful husband. In fact, I think he is worse than Stefan." Cassara nodded, convinced at this argument. "Everything had its end, sister. Even love fades if it has been taken for granted or returned with cruelty. I don't want to waste this life and hold on to someone who will never understand my heart."

It took an entire minute for Silvia to process the words she never thought she would hear from those lips. It was no secret that Cassara saw Samael as her god; she would worship him and join the cults in Cunningham if she could. So, this truly took Silvia aback.

"It seems you truly met someone who captured your heart." Cassara's lips stretched from ear to ear at Silvia's remarks. "I'm intrigued."

"Hehe... he's someone women would swoon over for. I wouldn't even be surprised if just the sight of him will make your heart beat so fast you'd catch up to your breathing," she gloated with twinkling eyes, looking heavenward as she imagined the face of the man she had been talking about nonstop. "I can't wait to see him. It's been a while since we met, so... there will be a lot of pent-up energy we will have to release."

"The last time you met...?" Silvia automatically ignored the rest of her sister's sentence as she stressed the keywords her sister had just said. She knew whatever that was happening in this palace, so she would be aware if Cassara met someone.

"Mhm! The last time. That's around..." Cassara played with her plum hair with her index, humming a tune while she counted the months since her last meeting with this man. "... it's around four months. That right. He was here in the palace to see me and ask for my hand in marriage."

Chapter 667 Yes, no way.

"... it's around four months. That right. He was here in the palace to see me and ask for my hand in marriage."

When those words flew out of Cassara's mouth, Silvia finally realized why her sister had been sticking around with her. There was no other anomaly or strange visits to the palace aside from that time over four months ago. However, knowing Rufus, it was impossible for Cassara to seduce the man.

He was like a wall. Moreover, he didn't hear Cassara being associated with Rufus until now, and if she was, it would surely reach Silvia's ear. So, Silvia simply shrugged Cassara's taunting as something the latter spoke just to annoy her. It was smart, but Silvia didn't buy it.

Who would have thought Cassara could be telling the truth? Silvia didn't think much about Cassara's words until days later.

Standing in the open hallway, Silvia had her eyes on the two figures standing in the open Avolire Garden. Her expression was blank, eyes fixated on Cassara's figure as she held Rufus' hand to drag him with her. Normally, Rufus wouldn't even let others touch him, but he let her drag him in the pavilion's direction near the lake.

"Can't be..." she whispered, keeping her eyes on the two departing figures. "... there's no way."

As she denied what her eyes just saw, Cassara's words the other day hovered over her head repeatedly. Silvia lowered her eyes, scoffing in disbelief.

"No way." Her denial ran on as she couldn't move a muscle, filling her head with how, why, when, and so on. She flinched when a figure suddenly came up to her side, making her raise her head. Her eyes slowly dilated upon catching those squinting eyes with that classic polite smile that felt otherwise.

"Yes, no way," said Fabian in a kind tone, staring at that devastated expression clouding her features. "He's not Sir Knight's type. I thought Your Royal Highness knew that more than anyone."

"You... why are you here?" she asked, in disbelief at seeing this man's face after many years.

"More like... His Grace needs something from her."

"Hell?" Silvia nearly choked on her own breath. "He's awake?"

Fabian kept his smile. "To meet Her Royal Highness Cassara. I need something from her."

His explanation made her brows knit. This man, Fabian, needed something from Cassara? Silvia racked her head for a minute, but couldn't think of anything Fabian would need from her sister. Actually, she couldn't think of anything that the Barrett Brothers would need from her sister.

"More like... His Grace needs something from her."

"Hell?" Silvia nearly choked on her own breath. "He's awake?"

She held her breath on instinct, staring at Fabian blankly. The news about Samael immediately overwhelmed her confused mind regarding Cassara and Rufus. Who wouldn't? Samael had been in his slumber and he didn't have a good relationship with Stefan!

If Samael awoke from his slumber and he was here, that sounded trouble. Especially, Stefan hadn't been in the royal palace and she didn't know where the hell he was all this time. It was not like this was the only time Stefan was away from the capital, but he was taking his time this time around.

What were these people planning?

Fabian smiled until his eyes squinted. "Fret not, your royal highness. His Grace is too busy with something else. He won't wreak havoc, that's for sure..."

"You... don't believe that, do you?"

"I don't." His smile remained as he replied almost immediately. "At least, not now."

Silvia could only look at this butler in disbelief. Although Fabian still appeared he was still in character for being a butler, the sight of him still send a shiver down her spine. This Fabian... forget about Samael. This man was a menace himself.

"What is going on...?"

"A lot, that's for sure." His eyes squinted even more before he peeled his eyes away from her to where Rufus and Cassara went to. When his squinting eyes opened slightly, that was when Silvia realized Fabian was barely in character anymore.

Something was definitely happening, and she didn't know about it until now.

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Meanwhile...

"Why don't you sit down, Sir Knight?" Cassara motioned her hand towards the intricate chair across the round table across from her inside the pavilion in the avolire garden. "It is a surprise that you want to meet me, so I hope you don't mind if I asked my sister to meet the man whom I fancied?"

Rufus' eyes never left Cassara's coquettish expression since the beginning. Expression was still as cold as ever.

"Her Royal Highness Silvia isn't someone who will fall for such a bluff," he said in his signature aloof tone. "Your Highness, I don't know what you're planning, but I need your help."

Cassara laughed and shook her head, propping her jaw against her knuckles. "Sir Knight, that's a surprise. I never thought you will ever need my help. I wonder what it is... oh? Do you perhaps need me to for your lunatic of a brother?"

He didn't have to answer to receive the confirmation. Rufus was a person who was very easy to read. Not because he wore his heart on his sleeve, but a man like him wouldn't go to someone like Cassara if not for her ability.

"Haha..." She once again shook her head before she leaned back, raising her chin, eyes on the beautiful knight. Looking at him, Cassara finally understood why Silvia was so crazy over him. Rufus, although just a mere human, wasn't so bad. He had his own charms, and he looked so manly. However, he wasn't her type — his personality was a "turnoff" for her.

"No." Her eyes sharpened as the side of her lips curled up into a smirk. "Why would I help you? I'm not that generous to awaken a monster. I learned my lesson before the reversal of time. I am not so foolish as to commit a mistake the second time."

Cassara waved her index sideways, referring to the time she used her ability on Lilou. That was the gravest mistake she had ever done and she would never commit the same mistake, knowing what kind of monster Fabian was.

"I am asking you nicely..." she arched a brow when Rufus mumbled as he lowered his head. "... before His Grace arrives."

"What?" this time, the smile on her face faded upon the mention of Samael. "Did you say Hell..."

THUD!

Her breath hitched as soon as she heard a faint thud caress her ears. Cassara turned her head in where she heard the subtle noise, only for her eyes to dilate and her heart to pound against her ribcage loudly.

There, not far away, was a man with his bright silver hair standing up from his crouching position. As soon as her eyes locked with those pair of deep crimson orbs, Cassara swallowed a mouthful of saliva to squash down the sense of dread creeping up her spine.

"No," she whispered.

Chapter 668 I'm not playing

"Hell."

As soon as Samael's name slipped past her lips, Cassara pushed herself up and took a step back, causing the chair to tip over her side. Her dilated eyes were fixed on his approaching figure before she turned her head in Rufus's direction.

"You...!" she seethed, balling her hand into a fist. "What the hell are you expecting by bringing him here?"

There was no way Samael would wake up from his slumber if Rufus didn't do anything. That was what she instantly believed. So, the help Rufus needed from her was to help Samael regain his memories before the reversal of time? And not Fabian? Was that it?

Cassara ground her teeth and shook her head, glaring daggers at Rufus before she faced Samael. The second her brother stepped foot inside the pavilion, her shoulder tensed up. She gazed back at him, only to see his unsmiling face, making her feel cornered.

"No!" she yelled almost instantly. "I'm not helping you, Hell! Why would I make you remember?!"

A ridiculing laugh came along with her words as her eyes glinted with malice. Even if Samael kill her, she would never help this man ever. She hated him more than she hated anyone in this world.

This man... this man she used to adore and almost worship in the past, only brought her pain. No matter what she did for him, he never gave back. She wouldn't let him take advantage of her. Never again.

"Even if you kill me, I won't help you, Hell." Her voice shook, clutching her hand into a very tight fist, shaking her head, eyes fixed on him. "Whatever you want from me, I will never help you. No,

never. It's better if Lilou just ends up with Stefan since that should've been, anyway. That's right... that woman... hah... ha ha!"

Cassara raised her eyes full of mockery to the man she loathed deep in her bones, laughing in ridicule at the thought of Lilou and Stefan. That was the greatest revenge she could do for this man. His beloved Lilou loving another man? Oh... that truly sounded so fantastic.

"Cassara," Samael called before Cassara lose her mind at the conclusion she had in her head. "It seems waking up from hell got into your head and made you a little... crazy? Your laughter is giving a goosebump."

"What?" she froze as her laughter came to a sudden halt.

"I didn't need you to retrieve my memories. I had them all this time. It is as you said, I need Fabian to regain his memories since I don't want to deal with a butler who purely thinks of cleaning the manor," Samael casually explained without beating around the bush, gazing at her from head to toe. "I'm glad to see you alive and well, by the way."

"Hah!" Cassara scoffed as she took a step back, shuffling her thoughts, since her initial conclusion was wrong. "No."

She shook her head, taking another step back. Even if Samael was the same as her and Rufus, who had their memories intact, she would not help them for the obvious reason. The problem remained. Lilou was still with Stefan and if the latter used his cards well, that dumb Lilou would surely fall into Stefan's traps.

Little did she know, the situation was unlike what she had expected. It wasn't like that — it wasn't as simple as that.

"I won't help you get back with her," came out a stiff voice before she raised her bloodshot eyes. "No, Hell. I won't let you be happy. You... don't deserve to be happy."

His expression gradually grew icy. "I agree, sister. I don't deserve to be happy, indeed. A sinner like me deserved to rot in hell, live day by day being engulfed with eternal fire, and spend a lifetime in misery for everything that I had committed throughout my time." Samael rocked his head in understanding, but his cold front remained.

"However, my children had done nothing wrong," he added, taking a step forward, which made her take a step back. "My children needed their mother. My sins are mine to bear, not my children. So, even if I agree with your sentiments, I cannot let you take away the mother of my children and their happiness, even if it means being the worst person to ever exist in this world."

His steps hastened and before Cassara take more steps back, he reached out his hand and grabbed her biceps. Her breath hitched the second their eyes met, seeing the wildfire in his crimson eyes, making it appear they were glowing.

"Cassara, I can't say I understand your heart, but I don't need to understand your heart just so you will help me. My wife is in danger and I don't know until when can Stefan protect her. I am not asking for your help. I am telling you to bring Fabian's memories back in exchange for your life." He uttered while staring straight into her eyes, stressing his words for her to understand him. "I don't need you alive to achieve my goal, Cassara. I can just steal your ability and do it myself. So don't make me resort to the worst — I'm not playing."



Cassara froze and she could only stare at him, whose eyes didn't bear the slightest warmth in them anymore. She pressed her lips into a thin line, feeling her heart shatter in a matter of minutes. This... this look in his eyes was what she had sought in the past.

Why? Because if Samael had only looked at her like this from the very beginning, she wouldn't have her hopes up. However, Samael had always looked at her warmly. She wished he was just as vicious just like everyone believed he was. In that case, she wouldn't feel special to him.

"Bring back Fabian's memories because I needed him. I promise you I will never bother you ever again after this." Samael released her and took a step back. "You'll do it tonight."

With that being said, Samael pivoted on his heel and walked away without looking back at her even once. Meanwhile, Rufus stayed in his spot, watching her scoff, before she slumped on the floor, clutching her hand close to her chest.

There wasn't pity in Rufus' eyes, but he understood Cassara one way or another. Her personality might be something one would be repelled, but he knew she had loved Samael genuinely.

"I'll see you later." He bowed and didn't wait for her as he left the pavilion. When he walked to a distance, he looked back, only to see a tear roll down her cheek. A shallow breath slipped past his lips before he resumed in his tracks.

'Life and love had always been unfair, your royal highness,' he thought. 'I hope we both find a way to move forward and let the things that hurt us go.'

## **Chapter 669 Jump scare**

Meanwhile...

Yulis was walking through the hallway on his way to the inner palace when he saw a kid's shadow turn toward one of the doors. His brows furrowed as he tilted his head to the side.

"Claude?" he muttered, knowing there was only one child in this place and that was Stefan's adopted child, Claude. The son of Lucia and their late eldest brother, Dyrroth. But what was that child doing in the inner palace? Shouldn't he be in the west palace?

Out of plain curiosity and knowing how dangerous the inner palace could be for a child like him, Yulis followed the boy's tracks. Although Claude was a capable child, he was still a child.

"What is Klaus doing?" he wondered, catching the boy's shadow entering the royal library. "Shouldn't he be looking after the child?"

While Yulis was wondering what Klaus was doing to let their nephew out of his sight, he carefully headed towards the library and entered it with caution. For

some reason, Yulis wasn't even sure why he was being discreet, but he was already tiptoeing, looking around at the massive royal library.

He wasn't very close to Claude. Actually, the only person who was close to that boy was Klaus. The latter had too much on his time to play with the crown prince, while the rest were too busy surviving in this damned hell. Still, Yulis, who always kept to himself and stayed on the sideline, was still concerned about this young crown prince.

Claude had lost his parents at a young age and he had to live as the son of his parent's murderer. Letting him face another misfortune while no one else was looking was something Yulis couldn't turn a blind eye to.

Yulis looked around the aisle of shelves. His steps barely made a sound, looking from his left to right.

"Where did he go?" he wondered as his forehead creased, arching a brow when he heard fast footsteps. He twisted his neck to where the sound came from, but nothing. His already knitted brows creased even more as he held his breath.

"Your highness?" he called aloud when he couldn't take this hide and seek anymore.

"Hehe..."

Once again, Yulis turned and looked at where the footsteps and giggle came from. All he caught was a shadow in one of the aisles.

"Your Highness, I'm not playing. You shouldn't be in the inner palace. It's dangerous," he said as he followed where he heard the giggle and footsteps, entering the aisle and making his way to the end.

When he turned his head to his left, there was no one.

"Your highness?" he called once again, feeling this sense of dread creep up his spine. Yulis moved forth, checking the next aisle, only to see nothing. There was no one, and silence soon enveloped the entire royal library.

THUD!

Yulis jolted when a book tumbled from the shelf. His eyes fell on the book and then on the shelf where it came from. He held his breath when he realized there was no way it was the wind that caused that book to fall from the shelf.

Everything in this place was arranged properly and someone had to pull it out.

'Is someone playing a trick on me?' he speculated as a frown resurfaced on his face. He closed his eyes to feel if he was under an illusion, and when he reopened his eyes, he cocked his head to the side.

"What's wrong with me?" he mumbled, marching towards the book on the floor and picking it up. "I'd know if someone is trying to play with my head. I don't think Hanz had the audacity to play with me now of all times since Stefan isn't around."

When Yulis picked up the book, he straightened his back and read the book cover. "Huh..." He rocked his head, seeing it was a children's book that he read in passing in the past, but didn't dwell on it. His eyes shifted towards the empty slot just four levels from the lowest section of the shelf. So he still needed to squat to put it back properly.

Yulis clipped his trousers and raised them before he squatted down to put back the book on the shelf. However, the second he raised his eyes at the empty slot, a pair of emerald eyes were looking at him.

"Ah!" he yelled in surprise, jolting back as his heart raced. His blood felt like it shot up to his head, holding his breath as the boy looking at him from the other side of the shelf took him by surprise. Don't mention the build-up tension before he appeared.

Yulis had faced different situations in the past. However, he never thought he would ever get this scared in his life.

"Goodness..." he patted his chest as he gazed at the pair of emerald eyes still looking at him from that tiny gap. "What... you... who are you?"

He narrowed his eyes as he studied the boy. Although all he could see were his eyes, Yulis immediately knew it wasn't Claude. He wasn't close with Claude and barely interacted with him, but he was certain this boy was someone else.

The boy didn't answer and just ran away, catching him off guard once again. When Yulis realized a lost boy had entered the palace, he sprung up to his feet.

"Hey!" he called, thinking this was just a boy an official brought and got lost. But who would do something so stupid as to bring a child into this place? Yulis shrugged at whatever unnecessary thought as he tried to catch the boy.

As soon as he reached the end of the shelf and into the open space of the library, he halted. His eyes fell on the boy, who was standing several feet away from him. Silver hair and emerald eyes... his forehead creased. Except for the color of his eyes, this boy had an uncanny resemblance to someone Yulis knew. Samael.

"You..." he whispered and tilted his head when the boy smiled.

"It's good to see you again, Uncle," said the boy. "I just came to say hi."

"Huh?" Yulis was baffled, but before he could raise a question of who was this boy and why he was calling him Uncle, he already run away. "Wait—!" but to no avail.

The boy was fast and chasing after him after a second was already enough to tell Yulis a second hesitation was enough for the boy to flee. Looking around, there was no trace of where the boy went, as if he was just a mirage who disappeared without a trace.

"What the...?" Yulis then gaze down at the book he was holding. He then raised his head again and cocked his head. "Uncle? I don't remember having such a nephew, though. How strange... he looked almost exactly like Hell."

## **Chapter 670 It is really a problem**

In the west palace...

Tilly tilted her head to the side, sitting across from the young boy across from her. The small round table between them had tea and snacks they could enjoy, but both of them didn't touch them.

"You look cute," were the first words that came out of her mouth after staring at the young Claude for quite some time.

"Thank you." Claude nodded.

Just moments ago, he had felt her presence in the west palace. There weren't many people stationed in this place. Actually, there wasn't a single maid permanently stationed in this place to serve the crown prince.

He preferred it that way, though. The reason even when Klaus offered him to ask Stefan, he refused adamantly. In other words, he would know if there was another person in this place aside from him.

So he invited this intruder inside the sitting room and prepared her cold tea and snacks since that was the only available. He hadn't asked any questions; he wasn't interested in her intention. His interest leaned more on who this woman was.

"You don't look like someone from here," he pointed out, studying the youthful face of the woman. If Claude was a little less keen, he would get deceived by the woman's appearance. She looked like someone who was in her late teens, but her aura was different. A vampire could tell she wasn't any ordinary vampire.

"Because I'm not from here," she answered in the same soft yet blank tone. "I am traveling with my relatives and dropped by here to check on something."

"I see." Claude rocked his head and didn't probe anymore. He wasn't the type to ask a series of questions; he was used to not asking more than one question or two.

"I hope it is fruitful."

"It depends." Tilly pursed her lips and picked up a biscuit to her lips. "It's hard and cold."

"It's been there for days." He blinked, watching her still chew the hard rock cookie he prepared just to make the table look more appealing. "You don't have to force yourself and spit it out. I won't mind."

"It's alright. I have strong teeth and I'm too lazy to wipe my mouth."

"..." Claude watched her chew the biscuit, listening to the loud crunch each time before her throat moved up and down when she swallowed it. "It's rotten too."

"It's still better than rotten eggs."

He once again remained silent while staring at the strange woman across from him. He thought Klaus, his uncle and the only person who had time to spare for him, was already strange. But it seemed his horizon was still limited and hadn't met a lot of even more strange people.

"It still tastes terrible, though," Tilly commented after swallowing down the piece she ate, only to take another bite. "How can you eat it?"

"I don't. That's why it's been here for days."

"I see." She nodded in understanding, continuing to eat the cookie until she finished the whole thing. "No more."

Tilly dusted her hands and then placed them on her lap. Her eyes moved towards the teacup that had a cold tea on it, wondering if she should drink it even though she preferred it hot.

"Second question and probably the last. Why are you here?" he asked when he couldn't take it anymore.

He never thought someone would bewilder him so much in this life that he was utterly intrigued about this strange visitor whom he welcomed, just because he felt like welcoming this particular guest.

"I told you," said Tilly while reaching for the cold tea. "I came here to check on something."

"Like?"

"You said that is your second and probably the last question." She pointed out, guiding the teacup to her lips. Her expression didn't change even when the bitter taste filled her mouth and her stomach felt cold from the tea she drank.

"It's not good too," she commented in the same tone. "You have a terrible taste in food."

"I don't eat anything that is served to me."

"Then what do you eat?"

"Only the ones my uncle gives me."

"I see..." Tilly nodded as she glanced over the food that looked appealing in the eye but tasted terrible. Well, anything would taste horrible if they were left untouched for days. It was not like this type was meant to be fermented.

minute of silence, gazing up at him. "You shouldn't be here."

"What?" he frowned at her blunt remarks.

"I came to check up on you," she suddenly opened up after a minute of silence, gazing up at him. "You shouldn't be here."

"What?" he frowned at her blunt remarks.

"Your existence is what I mean." His frown grew worse, thinking she was one of them who also thought he should've just died along with his parents. "Don't get me wrong. I didn't mean you should've died. What I'm saying is..."

Tilly trailed off as she raised her head, locking eyes with him. "You two can't live at the same time."

This time, her remarks threw him into an ocean of question marks. The space between his brows furrowed, tilting his head the longer he stared at her unchanging expression. The look in her eyes didn't seem like she was mocking him or anything of what he initially thought. If anything, Tilly looked like someone who was trying to figure out something she was also bewildered about.

"This is a problem," she continued after staring for a minute. "I'm concerned."

"I don't understand what you are telling me."

"Auron." His already furrowed brows creased even more upon the mention of his divine weapon. "Have you wielded it?"

"Why would you ask such a personal question?"

"To confirm something."

"I haven't recently. Why?"

"Can I see it?" Claude studied her for a moment after her request before he slid his hand inside his vest to take out a pocket watch. He placed it on top of the

table, sliding it forward to where his short arm could extend. Tilly simply glanced at it before she raised her eyes back to him.

"It is really a problem." She nodded and this time, her eyes sharpen a little. "A huge one."