

## The Duke 691

### Chapter 691 Don't

Talking to Law and doing simple things with him, such as reading books until he had fallen asleep for an afternoon nap, felt natural for Lilou. She used to play with children; actually, she always spent most of her time playing and reading stories with them. So she was very good with children.

Still, it felt different. There was just a different satisfaction in her heart while staring at Law's sleeping face. Each time he smiled, although he usually spoke like an adult, he was still a baby in her eyes.

"He's even smarter than me," she mumbled, brushing the stray hair from his forehead. Her smile had been cemented on her face and it wouldn't come off of her face.

"Who would have thought...?"

A chuckle slipped past her lips before she took a deep breath. Lilou leaned her upper body against the edge of the mattress while she was sitting down on the armchair. The view was better from this position.

The more she stared at him, the more she cherished him and his existence. And the more she couldn't believe having a child. She might not remember how she pushed him out of this world, but her blood knew he was her blood and flesh.

"Father, I now have a son..." she whispered as her eyelids drooped until they were partially closed. "... it's weird, but I think... I now understand you."

A slight bitterness mixed in her soft emeralds as she remembered her father, whom she loved the most. Lilou had always wondered why her father chose to provide for her and tried his best to give the little comfort he could offer to her.

She finally understood why her father would rather freeze in the cold just to keep her warm, or why he would rather starve himself just to fill her stomach.

The unconditional love he gave Lilou until death... Lilou could finally understand what it meant to love your children.

Lilou, although thankful for her father, always had this thought that he would've lived longer if he abandoned her. She loved him so much that sometimes, she wondered if it was better if she died first instead of him. Not that there was something more beautiful in the world they lived in, but there was always something much more in life than death.

"Perhaps... because of him... I cannot turn my back on you selfishly," she added in a whisper while playing with the tip of her son's silver hair. "Because he never turned his back on me. No matter how hard life was, and how painful it was, and even how hopeless it may seem... he chose me over everything else."

Creak...

The door was left ajar as Samael stood frozen, hearing Lilou's sentiments. Even if he didn't hear the entire context of her sentence, he already knew Lilou was talking about her father.

'Now that I think about it, Lilou rarely mentioned him to me,' he thought as he carefully entered the room with his lithe steps not to disturb Law. Lilou was the only person who could make their children sleep in the afternoon.

Samael stayed in the corner, leaning his back against the wall, arms crossed. His eyes softened as he watched his wife brush Law's forehead gently with a gentle smile on her face.

"He is beautiful," Lilou remarked as she cast him a quick glance, making him shrug. "Smart and very obedient, too."

"He's your son." He smacked his lips proudly before he retracted his back from the wall. Samael trudged towards the bed until he was standing by the bedpost, across from her. He slowly sat down on the edge, eyes on Law's peaceful sleeping face and then at Lilou before he smiled.

"He's never been at this peace for months. Thank you."

"Why would you thank me?" she laughed, casting him another quick look before setting her eyes back to Law. "He's tired because he had no choice but to come to me."

Lilou's smile slightly grew bitter as she held Law's hand. "Whenever I think about you taking him on such a journey, I can't help but get annoyed. But then again, you can't really leave him somewhere, can you? If I was in your shoes, I won't as well. He might be smart and I'm certain he is capable even at this young age, but I will never be at peace knowing he is not with me."

"Mhm..." Samael lowered his eyes and bit his tongue, refraining from mentioning Sunny. Lilou threatened him this morning when she heard about Law strolling in Karo. She would kill him if she knew Tilly left Sunny on the mainland.

"It must be hard for you." He raised his head at her remarks with knitted brows. "I feel bad for everything I said last night and even this morning..."

"Don't."

"Huh?"

He smiled subtly. "It was hard to get rejected by my wife and be seen as a stranger, but you gave me a chance. That's what matters to me. Don't feel sorry for something that you felt right for yourself. It's not your fault we're in this situation — it's mine." Samael laughed bitterly as he fixed his eyes on Law.

"It's my blood — the blood of Grimsbanne," he added in a strangely low voice. "The cursed blood that is running through my children's blood... it's my fault."

Lilou bit her lips as she studied him in silence. There was this inexplicable force gripping her heart as she noticed the sadness clouding his features. There wasn't any vestige of deception he was trying to get her sympathy.

If anything, he was showing his vulnerability because he trusted her. Even Stefan doesn't show his vulnerable side in front of her and often masquerades his pain with a sharp front or a simple smile.

"Your existence..." she whispered, lowering her eyes to avoid his. "... is something Law is grateful for. I don't think he blames you for it, and neither I blame you for it."

Silence fell in the room before she mustered enough courage to raise her head and face him.

"Stop blaming yourself for something you have no control over..." She forced a smile, fumbling with her hand as she didn't know if she was supposed to be saying things like this. "Please don't be sad and don't cry anymore."

Chapter 692 Sorry too!

"Please don't be sad and don't cry anymore."

His eyes softened as he smiled, nodding at her. "I'm not crying."

"Your heart does... it's bleeding." Her brows rose as her nervousness increased. She didn't know if she had the right to point out the things she had been noticing ever since her eyes met with those pair of crimson eyes the first time until now.

Samael had a fatal beauty, yet his eyes looked like they were someone who was on the brink of breaking.

It was painful to watch.

"Maybe..." he shrugged and was followed by a weak chuckle. "Lilou, I know you gave me a chance, but refrain from saying things that touch my heart. I might forget you don't remember certain things."

Lilou blinked as she cocked her head to the side. "What are you going to do?"

"Huh?"

"What will you do if you forget I don't remember things?" she repeated out of plain curiosity.

Hearing her inquiry and the expression plastered across her face, Samael could not help but laugh. He shook his head, running his fingers through his hair while biting his lower lip.

"What would I do if I forget the line?" he dawdled, raising his eyes on her, only to catch the genuine wonder in her eyes. "A lot."

Lilou furrowed her brows before she raised them, moving her upper body forward in intrigue.

"Like?"

"Like... a lot." She frowned at his repeated response. "Haha. Lilove, there's countless on my list that a day is not enough to tell you one by one."

"Mhp!" Lilou clicked her tongue as she narrowed her eyes in dismay. "You just have to tell me one, so I know what's going on inside your head, but never mind. I think the only good thing about you is Law."

Lilou rolled her eyes at him before she pushed herself away from the bed. She made sure Law was asleep before she lifted her skirt and walked away to let her son sleep. However, just when she was by the door, Samael's voice came from behind her before a hand held her arm to stop her.

"Huh?" she looked back with surprise dominating her face. She didn't even feel him behind her until he held her arm, and neither did she hear his footsteps.

"You want to know what's inside my head?" he asked as he pulled her arm to him and wrapped his arm around her lean waist, settling his palm on her back, lips falling open. "Let me show you what's going on inside my head."

Samael pressed his thumb on her chin and lifted it up while he bent over. He tilted his head to the side and without a moment's notice; he closed his eyes before his lips crashed on her. The second he felt her lips after a long time, his grip around her waist trembled and his heart thudded against his chest.

Inhaling her breath felt like he was finally out of the water to breathe, guiding her mouth to open with his lips to feel the warmth of her lips. His mind was telling him to stop right now, while it was easy to stop himself from going further. But his heart and body were aching for her, wanting to confine her in his arms until she would speak the words she would usually whisper in his ears: his name and her love.

Sam... he yearned to hear his name from those lips once again.

Meanwhile, Lilou's eyes went round as warmth dominated her lips. She gripped his shoulder blades while her back stiffened. For a moment, her brain went blank at the situation, and when she realized what was going on, she still did nothing.

Instead, she gripped his shoulder tighter as her eyes moved, only to see his shut eyes. Slowly, she closed her eyes to feel what he was feeling. More than how his lips sucked hers tenderly and how his tongue swirled inside her mouth, guiding her tongue for a slow dance, sending shivers down her spine.

Lilou felt his yearning, his frustration, his heart.

"That's..." he breathed out as he finally mustered the strength to break away from her lips, resting his forehead against hers. "That's what's going inside my mind whenever I look at you. No, actually, there were more things."

Lilou gasped for air as she clutched his chest. "Like?"

"Making love with you or fucking you... hard," Samael confessed under his breath, feeling her spine with his palm until his thumb reached the side of her neck. "Your clothes, no matter how many layers you wear and cover your body, I can always rip them apart in seconds."

He closed his eyes as he caught up to his breathing, pulling her until he was embracing her. Samael lowered his head until his forehead was resting on her shoulder. As he embraced her in silence, her breath hitched while noticing the vibration of his grip.

"You're driving me crazy, love," came out a muffled remark. "I'm not experimenting with you... I am loving you deeper and deeper."

Her lips pressed into a tight slash as she raised a hand. But before she could place it on his back, Lilou paused.

"I'm sorry... I can't remember," she muttered bitterly. No matter how good and gentle her first kiss was and how it left her weak and wanting more, she couldn't understand his struggles. Or maybe a little, but not entirely.

"But... what I can remember is you stole my first kiss." This time, his trembling stopped as he froze instantly. "I don't know what to feel."

Samael blinked back to his senses before he carefully let her go. Holding her shoulder as he distances himself, his mouth opened and closed like a fish, but no words came out.

"I — I'm sorry...?" he blurted out in panic, but her unreadable expression immediately turned sour which he didn't intend.

"That's what you are going to say if you steal a maiden's first kiss?" she asked in dismay.

"No — I mean, I was just lost —"

"Tch. Jerk," Lilou mumbled as he tried to explain, clicking her tongue in irritation. "Sorry too, then!" she spat out before stomping her feet away, leaving him confused.

Chapter 693 What a dangerous game

"Sorry..."

Lilou ground her teeth and kicked the stand in the hallway. She nearly choked and immediately hunched in pain when pain crawled from her pinky toe to the very root of her scalp.

"Goodness!" she hissed, limping with one foot as she held on to the wall to keep herself from falling. "That... duke...!"

Her face was already red in anger because the more she thought about Samael's apology, the more her blood continued to boil. Of course, Lilou understood why he was apologizing. However, he kissed her without asking for permission!

Shouldn't he take responsibility for it aside from saying sorry? It was disappointing!

"Had he not thought of the effects it will do to the other person before doing whatever he wants?" she grumbled in distress before her brow arched. Lilou limped towards the window, checking the people who were there outside.

It was Tilly and Fabian.

"What are they doing there?" she wondered as Tilly was simply following Fabian while keeping a meter distance from him. Meanwhile, Fabian was carrying tools to clean the garden. It doesn't look like he was aware Tilly was following him.

"Are they lovers or what?" she mumbled and sighed deeply, biting her lower lip out of habit. Her face crumpled as she could still feel the heat of Samael's lips on her lips and how tender they were. Even the sweet taste of his tongue lingered in her mouth.

"Is this even normal?" she muttered while covering her lips, looking around to make sure no one was seeing her flustered state. "It's my first kiss, and he is acting like I'm the only one who likes it."

Bitterness filled her eyes as her frown grew uglier. Lilou shook her head as Samael's apologetic face crossed her head.

"Get a grip, Lilou!" she slapped her already flustered cheeks to clear her head. "It's not that special! That's right."

She swallowed a mouthful of saliva to stop her racing heart whenever she would think about the feeling of being kissed. Lilou raised her chin, keeping this false bravado to hide her distress.

"It's nothing special..." She nodded, convincing herself she was simply flustered because of the surprise. Nothing more, nothing less. "That's right. That's right."

Lilou took a deep breath and closed her eyes for a moment. When she reopened her eyes, determination twinkled in her pair of emerald eyes. She balled her hand into a fist and huffed, marching through the hallway engulfed by an invisible fire.

Lilou didn't stop walking until she reached Stefan's room. As soon as she stood in front of the chancery where Stefan would usually spend most of his time, Lilou knocked on it as loud as she could.

"Lexx!" she yelled, knocking on the door hurriedly. "I'm coming in, alright?!"

She didn't even wait for him to answer as she had already barged inside. Her eyes searched the room only to catch Stefan sitting behind the desk, unfazed by her loud knockings and intrusion.

"Lexx!" she yelled once more, rushing towards the desk while he raised his head ever so slowly. She slammed her palms on the desk, watching him leisurely lean back against the chair.

"What is it that you want from me now?" he asked with a cool voice, not surprised by her explosive moods anymore.

"Kiss me." His face stiffened as her eyes blazed with determination. "Now."

Stefan coughed weakly, and he took a moment to register her abrupt and outrageous request. He raised his eyes at her and sighed quietly, seeing her flustered face.

"You want me to kiss you?" he asked, and she immediately nodded, so he raised a follow-up question. "Where?"

Her breath hitched as her mouth opened and closed like a fish. Lilou had to clear her throat with force before she straightened her back, standing straight in front of the desk.

"Here." She pointed at her lips, chin up. "Can you do it?"

"I can." His answer was quick as he leaned forward, arms on the edge. "But do you want it?"

"Yes! That's why I am asking you!"

"For?"

"Lexx! Why are you asking me such a thing?! Can you just do it?" she gasped in dismay, only to frown when he laughed weakly.

Stefan sized her up and shook his head. "Lilou, just because my brother kissed you, you will use me to confirm if it should be felt that way?" He sighed while reclining comfortably.

"Since that is the case, pay me at least ten gold bars. It's cheap, but since we've been together for months, ten golds are fine," he added with a nod.

"What?!"

"Sweetheart, you're asking for something I preserved for a long time. I can't just give my chastity for free." He arched a brow and tilted his head to the side, biting his tongue to suppress his laughter at seeing the ugly frown plastered on her face.

"I didn't even earn 1 gold coin for getting my first kiss stolen! And you're asking me ten?!" she harrumphed, even more furious at Samael, since she didn't know she could earn from it. "Lexx! Seriously?!"

"Seriously." Stefan nodded solemnly. "Give me ten golds and I will kiss you for as long as you want. But without it..." he waved his fingers with a devious smirk on his face.

"Try asking others. They might give it to you since our guests are always bored," he advised, smiling kindly to hide the mischievous glint across his eyes.

Lilou smacked her lips and huffed. "Alright!" she nodded as she remembered their guest claimed to have lived with her. That means they were close, right?

"I can't believe you put a price on your lips when I'm asking for your help." She clicked her tongue and glared daggers at him. "Tch!"

With that being said, Lilou huffed and stomped her way out while Stefan chuckled. When the door shut closed, he shook his head lightly. A deep exhale slipped past his lips before he cocked his head back, unable to focus on what he was doing before she came in.

"I would've done it if you truly want it. What a dangerous game she's playing."

Chapter 694 Their asking price

Lilou rushed to the mansion's garden to meet Tilly and Fabian. She didn't bump into anyone, fortunately. She was a little cautious since she didn't want to see Samael in her current state.

"Here. There's dirt here." As soon as Lilou reached the garden, Tilly was pointing in a direction. "And there's a grass that isn't cut the same as others."

"Lady Tilly, you're very helpful." As usual, Fabian smiled until his eyes squinted into mere slits. His eyes fell in the direction she was pointing at and over the grass were cut petals. When he raised his eyes to Tilly's hand, she was holding a flower whose petal was the same as that one she was asking him to clean up.

His lips stretched. "Lady Tilly, don't you want me to finish my task?"

"I am training you," she replied in her usual dull voice. "Fabian don't get annoyed easily."

"That is because no one is purposely trying to annoy me."

"But breathing already makes you annoyed."

Fabian chuckled. "Lady Tilly, I will not argue. I know you are doing this for me. Therefore, I appreciate your mess."

"You're welcome." Tilly nodded while Fabian walked towards the ripped petals to pick them up one by one.

Seeing this and overhearing their conversation, Lilou's under-eye kept twitching. If she were Fabian, she would be very annoyed. There was nothing to appreciate in Tilly's way of testing his patience!

"Why would she even test his patience?" Lilou wondered, but shook her head as that wasn't important. "Right..."

She took a deep breath and huffed it. Lilou marched towards them until she was at arm's length from Tilly.

"Hello," she greeted, only to furrow her brows when Tilly laid her palms open. "Huh?"

"Hundred years of your life," Tilly answered, blinking almost innocently. "That's my price."

Lilou's mouth fell open as she looked back at her in disbelief. "You were listening?"

"You were too loud, Lilou."

"And you were asking for a hundred years of my life?!" she gasped and Tilly nodded. "Are for real?"

"Fifty, then."

"Will I even get that old?" Lilou frowned and sighed as the price they were asking her just kept on upgrading. Stefan was ten gold bars and Tilly's asking price was a hundred years of her life — cut down to fifty! It was still too much for Lilou! She would've been this wise instead of getting swept by Samael and giving her lips for free!

Hopeless, Lilou glanced at Fabian. She cleared her throat as she returned her gaze to Tilly.

"You will not change your mind?" she asked Tilly one last time only to receive an answer, "Twenty. That's the last offer."

"Are you all businessmen?!" Lilou clicked her tongue before she shook her head, setting her eyes back to Fabian. She cleared her throat and raised her chin, approaching Fabian.

Fabian straightened his back after picking up the petals and faced her with a smile. "Yes, my lady?" he asked with his usual demure.

"Can I ask you a favor?" asked Lilou timidly.

"Well, of course. Anything for my lady."

"Then..." Lilou cleared her throat and took a deep breath before flashing him a kind smile. "Can you kiss me?"

Fabian's slit eyes slowly opened. "Sure, my lady."

"Really?" Her face brightened up, as it seemed there was one person who could understand her without asking for anything in return. However, Lilou's relief was short-lived at his next remarks.

"Yes, my lady." Fabian nodded. "All I'm asking in return is you will allow me to open you up at least once."

"Huh?" she blinked with a gigantic question mark hovering over her head.

"I've always been curious what the inside of your body looks like," he explained with a smile as if he was simply speaking about a flower. "Also, how the wires in your head are connected. It will be an interesting experience."

Her face contorted while gazing at Fabian. Compare to the three, Fabian's asking price made all the hair behind her neck raise. If anything, Stefan was right. His price was very cheap and 'almost' for free compared to Tilly's and Fabian's requests.

Lilou frowned, and her shoulders relaxed. "Do you always ask for anything in return?"

"Of course not, my lady." Fabian chuckled, waiting for her to look back at him. "However, what you are asking also translates to 'please die for me.' Dying for you is not a problem, but I would rather die fighting for you and not for something... so silly."



"Lilou, why are you asking us to kiss you?" asked Tilly, although she overheard Stefan's remarks before Lilou left him alone.

"Well.." Lilou dragged her feet towards the nearby bench and perched on it. "It's His Grace's fault. He stole my first kiss and then apologized. He's such a jerk for acting as if I was the one who initiate it."

"You're saying you want to confirm if what you felt is something normal, and will be the same if it was others?" Fabian asked and watched her look up at him.

Lilou nodded. "Yes."

"Then you came to the wrong people, my lady." Fabian chuckled with his lips closed. "The matters of the heart is something we haven't figured out yet."

"We? You mean... you and Tilly?"

"Kissing is boring." Tilly raised a hand and spoke with a straight face. "Holding hands is like shackles that restrict my movements, and embracing is very appalling. I do not understand why people even embrace when all you will feel is the person's ribs and hear their heartbeat."

"Before the regression, I was on a mission to kiss every beautiful lady I meet and each time..." Fabian smiled. "It only makes me wonder what's the fun in it?"

"I did come to the wrong people," Lilou mumbled after hearing their answer. She thought the two of them were lovers, but it turned out they were just a pair of weirdos.

"If you are so distressed about Samael's action, why don't you ask Rufus?" Tilly suggested. "He's a hopeless romantic and is adept with the matters of the heart."

"That Rufus...?" Lilou scrunched her nose up.

"I will help you." Tilly offered kindly, giving Lilou a little confidence.

Fabian also chimed in. "I know where he is at."

## Chapter 695 Gullible

Just as Tilly and Fabian promised, they led Lilou to where Rufus was training. As soon as Lilou asked Rufus about her request, her complexion turned pale at the sound of the sword being drawn.

"Please don't kill me," she mumbled immediately, seeing the large sword in Rufus' grasp. "Just say no if you don't like... hey..!"

Lilou staggered back and looked in Fabian and Tilly's direction, only for her heart to sink, seeing their unfazed expression. Fabian was smiling while Tilly was simply looking at her with no emotion.

Did she make a mistake by going with their suggestion? Just then, Lilou remembered what Stefan told her. Their guests were... bored as hell! Was this their way of entertainment? To watch her get herself killed?!

Her thoughts grew more negative the closer Rufus approached and when he towered over her, her mind entered a blank state. Lilou slowly raised her head to meet Rufus's dangerous eyes. In her perspective, Rufus looked like a giant while she was an ant he would crush easily.

Was this the end for her?

Lilou shut her eyes when Rufus moved his sword towards her. But the pain of getting slashed in half didn't come. She slowly opened one of her eyes, only to furrow her brows. When she opened both her eyes, she looked at Rufus with confusion as he was giving her his sword.

"My lady, if I offended you, I will accept any punishment." Her nose scrunched up at his serious remarks. "You do not have to go around in circles."

"What?" she nearly choked as soon as she realized what Rufus meant. Just like what Fabian said, her request was the literal translation of asking them to die.

Rufus kept his solemn front while holding his sword to surrender to her. Lilou cleared her throat and shook her head mildly, pushing his hand away slightly.

"It's not like that. Goodness... why are you all so extreme?" she mumbled with a deep exhale, glossing her eyes over at Tilly and Fabian before setting them back to Rufus. "I'm simply asking to be kissed to know if what I felt from getting my first kiss stolen is that..."

"Magical?"

"Yes —" Lilou bit her tongue and gazed at him cautiously. Fabian and Tilly had a different view of human intimacy, but Rufus surprisingly described it perfectly.

"My lady, it won't be the same with others." Rufus sighed quietly as he retrieved his sword and placed it back in its sheath. "Even if you kissed everyone in here, it will always feel different with that special person."

"How am I supposed to know that if I hadn't kissed anyone else?" she blurted out, covering her mouth when Rufus quirked a brow.

"That --" Rufus shrugged as he scratched his jaw. "That is not my problem. I'm just telling you what I know from my experience."

Lilou studied his expression before she rocked her head in understanding. It didn't seem he was trying to deceive her.

"My lady, if you do not mind me asking, may I know why are you so determined to prove it's nothing special?" asked Rufus out of plain curiosity, as he wanted to help to make up for their first meeting.

"Well..." Lilou bit her lower lip out of habit, as she also had to ask herself the same question. All the questions thrown at her were: "why was she doing this?" but only Rufus asked this particular question.

Why was she so determined to prove Samael's kiss wasn't special?

'I don't know,' she answered in her head as she hung her head low. She didn't really know the reason. Lilou was just simply doing this for the heck of it because Samael pissed her. It was more like an act of revenge — a petty one.

"Samael stole her first kiss." Tilly raised her hand to get their attention as she broke the silence that fell on them. "Although they used to make out at every corner of the mansion, she was in distress for this first kiss."

"Lady Tilly, the Madam couldn't remember that now." Fabian laughed when he noticed Lilou's beet-red face.

"And then Samael apologized for it," Tilly continued and blinked innocently. "Samael had been under too much stress he had lost brain cells. I will wear black tomorrow for the funeral."

"So it was more like an act of revenge?" Rufus furrowed his brows as he glanced at Lilou. The latter averted her eyes to avoid his gaze.

"Why was everyone has an asking price when I got mine stolen?" she mumbled as she was still bitter about that fact. But Rufus heard her loud and clear and put everything together to get a clearer picture of what happened.

If Lilou had gone to him, that meant she already asked others. Knowing Tilly and Fabian, they had probably asked for the impossible in return.

"My lady, why don't you collect His Grace's debt instead?" Lilou furrowed her brows as she looked back at him with confusion. "Instead of wallowing in getting your first kiss stolen and there's no way anyone in here will agree to kiss you, why don't you just get the benefit from it?"

"There's a benefit?"

"His Grace is wealthy and had vast connections," Rufus explained in a knowing tone. "He will surely pay for the damages for stealing your first kiss."

Tilly hammered the bottom of her fist against her palm. "Ah. You can ask for a hundred years of his life and pay it to me then."

"He will surely allow me to add or take out another organ from him." Fabian nodded in agreement, while Rufus and Lilou looked at the two in disbelief.

Now, Rufus finally understood their asking price just for a mere kiss. Did they think their lips were made of gold?!

"In any case, he will surely give you anything you want to compensate you." Rufus cleared his throat and ignored the two. He watched Lilou ponder about it in silence before the side of her lips curled up.

"I should do that." She giggled evilly before she looked at them, all smiles. "I got to go and collect debts!"

Lilou didn't even wait for their response as she rushed to meet Samael and collect the debt that he owed her. Just thinking about earning was enough to excite her. Little did she know, as she was skipping her steps away, Rufus's face contorted after hearing Tilly's and Fabian's comments.

"I didn't know Lilou was this gullible," Tilly commented while watching her skip away.

"Oh, good old days." Fabian smiled and faced Rufus. "You're very cunning, Sir Knight."

"That's right. Rufus is very cunning."

"I didn't —" Rufus halted as the two already started walking away. He sighed deeply. "I did it out of pure intention, but well... I think I gave the wrong advice. She will hate me this time for sure."

Chapter 696 Striking up a deal

"Your Grace!"

Lilou ran towards the vestibule of the mansion to catch up to Samael standing under the foyer. Samael looked back, lifting his brows at this misplaced excitement in her eyes. He leaned back a bit when she perked up in front of him, knitting his brows when she opened her palm between them.

"Hundred gold!" Lilou exclaimed while he tilted his head to the side. "For stealing my precious first kiss."

"A hundred gold...?"

Her excitement and resolve waned. "Was it too much...?" she asked awkwardly. "What about fifty?"

Samael blinked almost innocently, processing her words and these abrupt demands. But to her, she perceived his silence as something like a client having second thoughts. Fabian and Tilly were asking for years of her life and the other one was her organs, so fifty golds shouldn't be that much, right?

'Wait... Lexx only asked for ten, though,' she thought and bit her lip out of habit. "Twenty?"

"Lilou, you are asking for a hundred gold as repayment for that kiss?" he asked just to be clear.

She nodded, raising her chin proudly. "It's for the damages and the sort. I'm a virtuous maiden and think I should be compensated, to say the least." She then cleared her throat and laid her palm open once again.

"You're rich, so it shouldn't be a big deal for you, correct?"

"Correct." Samael rocked his head, fluttering his eyelashes ever so tenderly, taking a step forward.

"Wait —" Lilou took a step back when he took another step, panicking. "Wait. Why are you..."

Slam.

Lilou swallowed a mouthful of saliva when he slammed his palms on either side of her as her back hit the wall beside the entrance. She felt like shrinking under his gaze, looking to the side to avoid his eyes.

"What — what are you doing?" she stuttered nervously. "Haha... Your Grace, do you think intimidating me is enough to get away from your responsibility? Why you —"

"A hundred gold for a ten-second kiss. That will be six hundred golds for a minute," he calculated under his breath, lips falling slightly apart. "I hadn't counted the amount I had on the mainland and in the duchy. But it should be worth a lot — I'll give them to you."

Her eyes dilated, looking back up at him in horror. "What?"

"Although I never thought you'd ask for money for a kiss, it doesn't matter. Let me strike up a deal. I'll give you all the money and jewelry you want — even half of my lifespan or my organs — without questions asked." His eyes narrowed as he bent over until his face was only a palm length away from hers. "Just let me hold you, feel you, kiss you, and love you."

"Wait —" her breath hitched as she placed her hand on his chest to stop him from leaning closer. She could feel her heart thudding against her chest and echoing in her ear. Her eyes were shaking as she gazed back at him, pursing her lips into a thin line.

Why was he saying all this? She came to collect a debt, but she didn't expect him to offer her a deal!

Lilou studied him and saw him raise his brows, waiting for whatever she would say patiently.

"I'm not a whore..." she lowered her eyes. "I just came here to get paid for the damages..."

"And that damages are?"

She snuck a look at him and then looked away almost immediately. "For the brain... and the heart."

"Lilou." He let out a quiet sigh as his jaw tightened. "Do I disgust you enough for you to feel like earning from it would make you feel better?"

"No... I mean..." Lilou fidgeted with her fingers nervously, unable to give him the proper answer. How could she tell him it was she didn't know if liking the kiss was normal or if she should feel something else? That would kill her yet to bloom business.

She bit her lower lip, eyes teary when she gazed at him, as she felt scared of him. "It's because you didn't ask for my permission and I don't know what to do."

"Lilou..." his heart softened seeing she was on the verge of tears. The innocence she carried, which he hadn't seen for years, only tugged his conscience. Samael got used to stealing kisses from her and seducing her in broad daylight, and he forgot she wasn't as wild as when they were back on the mainland.

Lilou liked being asked. Even during their first kiss, he needed her permission to not scare her.

"I'm sorry," he expressed as he straightened his back and wrapped his hand around her. "I didn't mean to violate your personal space. I forgot where I stand. Forgive me."

But unlike his intention to soothe her before she cry, Lilou stiffened in his embrace. Her face was beet-red, seeing circles at the intimacy. Her heart was also racing at the heat enveloping her, and if he wouldn't let her go now, her head would totally explode.

Fortunately, Samael didn't hug her that long as he let her go several seconds later. Holding her bicep, he flashed her stiffed face a smile.

"Lilou, I..." his brows furrowed upon noticing her flustered face while she was looking in a different direction. "Are you... alright?"

"Hah... yes... ahah!" Lilou laughed awkwardly, standing froze on her spot, clutching her chest as her heart was breaking her ribcage. "Today is very nice. Haha. Great weather, isn't it?!"

The side of his lips curled up, biting his lower lip. She was silly. She couldn't even hide her awkwardness at the situation.

"I don't know who gave you this idea, but do you want to come with me?" he asked. "I am planning to go to the borders where Heliot was. It's dangerous, but I'm with you, so you'll be fine."

Lilou looked back at him and blinked twice. "The border?"

"Mhm. That's where our enemies are. I will go there to give Heliot some help since I am the one who brought them here anyway," he explained and then smiled. "Do you want to? To get some things off of your mind?"

Lilou hesitated for a second before she nodded. "Alright."

## Chapter 697 Hard riddles to crack

With that being said, Samael and Lilou set forth to the borders to help Heliot and his troops. Since she 'didn't' know how to ride a horse, she had to ride with Samael. As they galloped away from the driveway of the estate, Stefan was staring at them from the window on the second floor.

His lips curled up subtly. "In the end, her heart will always seek him," came out a low voice while holding his hand behind him.

"Hell came in here and told me Lilou recognized Law. She also mentioned Yulis subconsciously," he continued, recalling that Samael dropped by Stefan's office to update him about Lilou's progress. Although Stefan and Samael didn't agree about anything, the latter took initiative and informed him about it.

"He probably thinks I deserved that much." He laughed weakly. "Do you think she'll hate me once she retrieved her memories?"

"Who knows...?" Tilly's voice came from behind him, making Stefan look back, eyes falling on the futon where Tilly was enjoying a cup of tea. Tilly placed the teacup back on the saucer and then raised her eyes to him.

"I can't see the future. You do. Why don't you check?" she suggested in her classic toneless soft voice.

"Peeking at the future had messed with my head." Stefan shrugged as he strutted towards the armchair on her right and perched comfortably on it. "I've grown dependent on my... gift, that I heavily relied on it in the past. And what did it do to me?"

"There might be good things that happened because of it, but the losses and sacrifices weren't worth it," he continued casually. "My relationships were damaged permanently. Because of it, I made a decision that I regretted and still do. I let her go, thinking that's the best for her. Look what Hell is doing. He's just keeping her around and will even invite her to a dangerous place as if it would be an ideal place for a date."

"I'm not saying I feel bitter or anything. All I'm saying is... wondering about the future is better than knowing it." Stefan smiled at Tilly. "Although I'm curious what will be her reaction, I'll leave that worry for tomorrow."

Tilly studied the resolve and peace in his eyes, tilting her head to the side. She had heard about him, but she hadn't truly spent time with Stefan that much. But from the This time, Stefan's smile grew bitter. "He had all the right to hate me. I murdered his parents, let Lena trigger him, and leave without a word. I can't even use the excuse of short time she interacted with him, Tilly could tell Stefan wasn't truly vile. Well, he wouldn't be here if he was, nor would he leave a warning letter to her before the regression.

"Claude hates you," she replied with an entirely different subject since there was no point in dwelling on his resolve. Stefan had already decided.

This time, Stefan's smile grew bitter. "He had all the right to hate me. I murdered his parents, let Lena trigger him, and leave without a word. I can't even use the excuse of having a blood contract with Quentin since I had done many wrong things to him even before that."

Stefan smacked his lips and sucked air through his gritted teeth. He gazed at her and leaned back, resting his leg over the other.

"He had gone through a lot after unleashing such power. I don't blame him, nor do I criticize his hatred towards me. I think it's just and if he comes to me, challenging me to a duel, I will happily accept it."

"He didn't unleash such power." Tilly picked up the teacup and raised it to her lips while Stefan's smile lines faded.

"What do you mean by that?"

There was a moment of silence between them while Tilly took her precious time to drink her tea. When she put it back on the saucer, she raised her gaze back to him. Her expression was still the same as if she was simply having a normal conversation without revealing a shocking truth.

"Claude's power is still unstable. All his life, he can only reverse the time for a minute at max. He is a chosen seed, but without proper control or enough knowledge, the seed will devour him if he unleashed such power," Tilly explained, but instead of giving enlightenment, it only confused Stefan. "What he did is simply put us all in between the past and the present. Thus, there were two of him."

"The regression of time... is done by someone else," she added.

Once again, silence descended on them as her explanation was like hard riddles to crack. Claude's ability was to reverse the time. Although there was no record that he could reverse it for such a long time as ten years, Stefan believed Claude's emotion was enough to push his nephew beyond his limits.

Now, Tilly was saying Claude simply sealed them between the past and the present, and didn't reverse the time?

Tilly sighed quietly as she noticed the plethora of questions in Stefan's eyes, but the latter was simply wondering what question to ask first. She would explain it in detail, but honestly, she was so lazy about it since she knew she would have to explain it again in the future.

"My sister," was all Tilly said. "She's the real holder of time. I do not know how you knew about the regression of time, but whoever told you about it, must have known about my sister and waited for the right time to strike so Claude can seal the world in this timeline."

"In other words, the world is unstable as it is, with two Claude in the same timeline. If one of them dies..." Tilly trailed off as she pondered about it. "Right... I shouldn't have left the young Claude, but never mind."

"Wait." Stefan massaged his temple. "Are you saying the young Claude will be in danger?"

Tilly pressed her lips and averted her eyes. "No."

"Ahh... you left Samael's daughter on the mainland despite knowing it was dangerous..." Stefan let out a deep sigh as his trust in Tilly continued to deteriorate every time he would speak with her.

"Sunny has her own mission and the young Claude will be safe for sure," Tilly defended. "After all... they will rather target the older version to change their future."

Meanwhile...

Lilou pursed her lips and lowered her gaze at the hand that was holding the reins. Around her hands were Samael's, holding her securely, but not tight enough to hurt her.

'I appreciate he asked me to come with him even if it's dangerous,' she thought and snuck a glance at him discreetly. 'But honestly, he was the most dangerous of all.' She only planned to take a peek at him, but now that she was looking at him up close, she couldn't help but notice how pleasant he was in the eye. Defined and sharp jaw, pointy nose, thin lips, long curled eyelashes, and fleek brows. His pair of crimson eyes gave off a dangerous yet alluring gaze.

He looked phenomenal, and she couldn't help but stare longer than she should have. Ever since they met, Lilou would usually look away, or their surrounding was dark and she couldn't see him properly. But now, with the light scattered in the world, under the blazing sun, she could see him better.

Did she really marry such a dangerous beauty? But what did this man see in her to like her? Surely, she believed there were more beautiful ladies out there and she just looked average. She had seen nobles in the past and she could tell they all had their allure and often stood out.

So, what was so special in her that this man see?

After minutes of staring, Lilou noticed him raise his brows and gaze down at her. She held her breath the second their eyes met; his eyes just seemed to see through her soul as if no matter how she hide, he would find her.

"I want to pretend I didn't know you were staring, but you were staring for too long. It baffles me what is inside your head," he explained with a weak chuckle and then gazed ahead. "I have my means to know, but you'd find it offensive if I intrude in your head, will you not?"

"Huh?" she snapped her eyes and shook her head mildly. "What do you mean by that, my lord?"

"Literally."

Lilou frowned as she had to exercise her brain for a moment. When she pondered about his sentiments, her eyes dilated, and looked up at him in horror.

"You... you can read minds?!" she gasped while he laughed.

"It's not what you think it is. I can read your mind if you allow me to drink a portion of your blood. We can even talk in your head." He shrugged indifferently.

"I didn't know about that..."

"Now you know and that's what matters, don't you think?" Samael glanced at her and smirked, winking at her before setting his focus back on the road ahead. "So, would you mind sharing your thoughts after examining my face? I might not be your type, but I'm confident with my looks. Still, I wonder if I... passed?"

Lilou coughed, as she didn't expect the horror of her claims last night would haunt her this soon.

"No — not bad." She looked away, biting her tongue.

"Haha!" Unlike what she expected, Samael simply laughed heartily. "Not bad? Well, I can take that."



Lilou looked at him once again. "You're not angry?"

"Why would I?" he returned, lowering his head slightly. "I am trying to impress the most beautiful woman I laid my eyes on. The greater the ambition, the greater the difficulty, and I'm up for the challenge."

"Most — most beautiful woman?"

"Mhm."

Lilou pressed her lips into a thin line as her face flushed in red, looking away to hide her face even when he wasn't looking. Little did she know, he glanced at her and smirked proudly. Knowing Lilou — this younger and silly version of herself — she had low self-esteem and doesn't see her own beauty.

If only she knew... he thought. If only Lilou could see herself in his eyes, she would know how magical she was.

"Do you — do you think flattery is enough to charm me?" she cleared her throat, convinced he was simply saying such things to get her trust.

"I can offer my services."

"What?"

Samael just shrugged as a smug smile dominated his face, casting her a knowing look. "Don't think too much about it. Your head will go into overdrive."

"Did you just... insult me?" she gasped with a natural blush from anger and flattery on her cheeks.

"Did you just say I'm stupid?"

"I just said something perverted," he corrected and chuckled. "It's fine if you missed it the first time, but it will be in my conscience if you can't focus because of it. I realized late that I shouldn't throw things like that easily."

Lilou bit her lower lip as she reviewed their conversation just now. Did he say something perverted? But she didn't know what perverted...

'Services.' Her eyes went round and Samael caught how her face stiffened.

"I told you." He clicked his tongue and lowered his head, bumping his chin against the top of her head mildly. "My bad. But my offer is always valid."

Lilou frowned, and before she knew it, she slapped his chest lightly. "Are you trying to console me or tease me?"

"Haha. Come on... I'm being honest here." He laughed while she fumed. "If my looks are average in your eyes, then I have another card, and that is my performance in the bed. If that isn't still enough, I'm confident with my size."

"..."

"My body is also trained so I can —"

"Please stop." Samael bit his tongue as he glanced at her, only to see the horror on her face. "No more. Thank you, please."

He shrugged and chuckled mischievously. He didn't mean to scare her, but it was only a matter of time before she would realize she married a lustful man. Pretending he wasn't would only bring trouble, since just looking at her was enough to make him bite a finger while thinking of having her all to himself.

Samael bit his lower lip and swallowed the tension in his throat. He gazed down at her and she seemed she had calmed down from her shock.

His eyes squinted while the corner of his lips curled up. "Hold properly, Lilove. We'll need to pick up our pace since I believe I should blow off some steam as soon as possible."

"What —"

Before she could even register his words, Lilou held onto him as if her life depended on it as they galloped away.

Chapter 699 I can take you to heaven

Lilou didn't know how bad the border was until they reached it. Scattered around the border of the land of Karo were soldiers. Under the blazing sun, sand formed a fog.

"Lilou," Samael called, offering his hand to her as he stood beside the horse.

"Uh, ye —" she coughed even before she could finish a sentence, holding her breath as she clasped his hand. As soon as she jumped and landed on the ground, she fanned in front of her to breathe a little. The dust was too much since everyone was just running or jogging, ambling up the dirt road without a care for others. But then again, the soldiers would just jump so high to the top of the borders, so they wouldn't need to care. Everyone was capable vampires — no care for a human visitor like her.

"Uh... wait." Her brows rose, watching him take off his cloak, which he draped over the horse. Samael then took off the shawl around his neck and then sniffed it, checking the smell meticulously.

'What is he doing?' she wondered, watching him think about it before returning her gaze.

"Smell it and see if you can take the smell." He handed the shawl, making her brows raise. "I forgot that this land is unlike the mainland and the heart's kingdom."

Lilou furrowed her brows and darted her eyes between him and the shawl in his hand. She knew what he wanted her to do with it, but it was strange for him to think its smell would bother her.

"If you know me that well, you'd understand I am a peasant." She accepted the shawl and smell it, looking back at him. 'It smells good... just like him.'

"I know, but it's not about you but me. I have a woman to impress." He shrugged before he offered, "let me help you."

"It's fine. I can — " She couldn't finish her sentence because he had already taken the shawl from her and stood in front of her.

"I know you can, but I enjoy doing things like things like this," came out a low voice, laying the shawl open and then placing it over her head. He clipped his thumb and index on its corner and then pulled it across her lower face, tucking it behind her ears.

Lilou gazed at him as he left this gap for her to see, studying his solemn expression. As she did so, her heart kept pounding against her chest and it was growing louder by the second. She was lucky the shawl was covering her face, so she didn't need to hide her flustered face.

'I'm afraid I will have a heart attack if he keeps doing things that make my heart flutter.' She flinched when he set his eyes back to her and smiled. She panicked internally. 'My heart...! Stop it!'

"Better?" he asked with a satisfied smile. "Mhm?"

She lowered her eyes and nodded. "Better."

"Then, shall we go?" he offered his hand to her, tipping his head towards the border. Lilou gazed at his eyes and that charming smile before her eyes fell on his hand.

'Why does it feel like... everything feels so familiar?' she wondered, reaching her hand to hold his hand hesitatingly. Watching his slender fingers carefully wrap around her hand made her hold him back, raising her eyes back to him.

His lips stretched even broader before guiding her with him, walking a step ahead of her while her eyes remained on his back. She was aware this place was dangerous, but looking at his back, she felt at ease.

'He has a very reliable back,' she thought and smiled, squeezing his hand before skipping a step to keep a safe distance from him. 'I feel like I'm on a date.' From the time they were riding a horse until now, Lilou had always recognized the familiarity of his presence. Knowing of the regression, she was aware they probably had done it in the past. Hence, the awareness. But even so, it made her a little giddy. But this exhilarating emotion was short-lived when Lilou and Samael stood in front of the border.

She looked up at the towering border and caught a few soldiers jumping up to it and down. She swallowed a mouthful of saliva, wondering how she would get over there.

"Was there a ladder?" she blurted out because there was no way she could jump that high.

"For?" she looked at Samael, who was standing beside her, holding her hand safely.

"For that, obviously." Lilou pointed up. "Or are we going to pass the gates? Didn't you say it's dangerous outside?"

"It is, but using a ladder is exhausting." He blinked almost innocently, tilting his head to the side.

"Then do you think I can jump that high?"

"Of course." Samael bit his tongue and averted his eyes, having this idea in mind.

She scrunched her nose up in disbelief and faced the border. "This high? Has it ever occurred to you I am — kya!" a loud squeal escaped her mouth as Samael abruptly swept her off of her feet and before she knew it, he was carrying her in a bridal style. Lilou clutched his shoulder on instinct, wide-eyed.

"I can just carry you." He smiled innocently until his eyes were squinting. "See? I had tons of services to offer. If you married me, you'll not only get a husband but also a servant."

Her eyes widened even more, as she couldn't believe he was promoting himself right now. "Wait, I —"

"Hold tight, Lilove. We'll jump... I can jump really, really high and take you to heaven." He winked, and before she could even process the hidden meaning of his words, Samael looked up and bent his knees down. Without a moment's notice, he jumped while she hid her face in his neck, holding him as if holding onto her lifeline.

THUD!

The second she felt they landed, Lilou kept her eyes shut and face buried in his neck. When she felt no movement around, she mustered enough courage to pull her head away, only to see multiple blades aimed at them.

"How dare you show yourself in here?" came a voice from ahead of them and when she turned her head to see who it was, Lilou instantly recognized those dreamy eyes.

Heliot.

Chapter 700 So long?

"How dare you show yourself in here?"

Lilou's mouth fell open, wide-eyed. Her entire body was frozen, tightening her grip around Samael's neck on instinct. She swallowed a mouthful of saliva, knowing one reckless move and one of those sharp metals would plunge into her neck.

'Is this what he meant when he said dangerous?!' she ground her teeth as all the good points Samael earned just now went negative in a flash. 'Right... his enemies are the good guys and he was practically the villain here! How can I forget he led a horde of enemies in Karo?!'

"Heliot." Unlike the terrified Lilou in his arms, Samael's lips stretched from ear to ear, unfazed by the weapons pointing at him. "Why don't you ask your people to put down their toys? It won't be nice when the person who simply came here to help is being treated terribly."

Heliot stopped several feet away from him, studying Samael and that woman clinging to him. His eyes returned to Samael. This time, his gaze was colder.

"Simply came in here to help...?" Heliot's face was stoic. "I warned you, Duke Samael. Do not show your face to me after what you brought upon the land of Karo. But alas... your insufferable personality had not changed, even after all these years."

"Come on, Heliot. Don't be like that."

Displeased by Samael's air of nonchalance, Heliot glanced at his soldier around the two of them. However, instead of telling them to attack Samael, he raised a hand, signaling them to yield their weapons.

"Stand back," ordered Heliot, eyes on Samael. "He is not someone you can touch recklessly."

"Heh..." Samael chuckled with an arched brow, watching the soldiers stand back without question asked.

As expected of Heliot's people. Heliot's words were absolute and just like that stiff guy, his people were also used to patterns. An order was an order and must be executed, and no one even voiced their worry about Heliot. Maybe they were simply confident in Heliot or they were not allowed to voice their worries. Either way, Samael had come here to blow off some steam since he couldn't do that with Lilou. She was the unsuspecting culprit.

A soft gust of wind blew past the two with the fog of sand that was surrounding the area. Samael kept his smile and Lilou in his arms, while Heliot kept his straight face.

"Your Grace, as a Prince of the magnificent land of Karo, I hereby sentence you to death along with that woman," Heliot announced and Lilou's blood instantly ran cold. "I will send your remains to His Majesty, along with a delegation, to explain what had occurred."

"How polite." Samael chuckled; Heliot was awfully polite.

Ignoring Samael's indifference, Heliot whistled, and a gust of wind suddenly blew past them. The sand that was already polluting the air thickened, and the soldiers stepped back to avoid getting caught by this. Lilou, who was in the middle of this all, held onto Samael in fear.

"Please..." she muttered through her gritted teeth, narrowing her eyes to avoid the sand from getting into her eyes. She could even see the sand clinging to her lashes, and if not for the shawl around her face, she was certain this much sand fog would suffocate her.

Samael glanced at her as she buried her face in his neck, smiling in satisfaction as she held him so tight she would snap his neck. It made him feel she didn't want to let him go, just as much as he didn't want to put her down.

"That human..." Heliot drew a sword out of the fog that opened a small portal. "... is the reason you stepped into this land, is it not?"

"She is." Lilou gasped at Samael's quick reply. "I brought all those people over there because I'm in a rush to see her. I'm also here because she kept seducing me and I need to do something... or I might end up dragging her to a corner and sin."

"..." Lilou's brain went blank, unable to wrap all these confessions in her head. What did he say?

"Is that so?" Heliot didn't react strongly as he nodded in understanding. "Then that means she is just as equally at fault."

"She is."

Heliot remained silent for a moment, scrutinizing Samael from head to toe. The latter was standing, carrying Lilou in a bridal style, not calling for his infamous weapon, Catharsis. Not just that, but Samael didn't give off any fighting spirit as he simply stood there.

How could he fight while carrying a lady in his arms? It baffled Heliot. But in any case, Heliot didn't care. What Samael did was unforgivable. Because of this crazy La Crox, Heliot's people were injured fending off the borders. Those undeads weren't even his enemy... although a part of Heliot knew they would be in the future.

"If I cannot defeat you, I will agree to your propositions," said Heliot as his eyes glinted. "But if I did, I will hang your head in the gates for everyone to see."

"Sure..."

Swoosh!

In the blink of an eye, Heliot disappeared from his vantage point, only to reappear in front of Samael. The latter didn't move an inch, eyes to where Heliot was standing.

Heliot thrust his sword down straight into Samael's head. "So long —" His eyes dilated when Samael suddenly opened his mouth and kept the blade in between his teeth, smiling.

"So long?" Samael spoke while keeping the blade in between his teeth. "Too early for that."

When Samael's eyes glinted dangerously, Heliot hurriedly pulled his sword away and Samael let it go. Heliot jumped back, puzzlement in his eyes.

"You were... absorbing it?" Heliot muttered as he glanced at his sword, turning it to check it. Just now, he felt Samael's fangs absorbing his weapon's gifts, just like how a vampire drinks blood. Was that even possible? Samael didn't sink his fangs, but he could absorb any life forces on inanimate objects?

"Amusing," he expressed and set his eyes back to Samael. "I didn't know you can do this."

"Likewise," Samael confessed. "But... I learned a lot about living with an old sloth, Prince Heliot."

He then licked his lips. "That one tastes better than Maleficent. Shall we continue?"