

## The Duke 721

Chapter 721 Let's free him

"He will kill you if you move an inch further."

Lilou instantly froze and then retracted her hand in panic. She narrowed her eyes at Klaus cautiously, clutching her wrist closer to her chest.

"Is that true?" she asked Klaus, which the latter found stupid. Of course, he would shake his head profusely and deny it. He wasn't crazy like Fabian, who wouldn't deny his evil intentions. +

Lilou didn't buy it, though.

Keeping her eyes narrowed, she raised her eyes at the person who interrupted her. She cocked her head, seeing a man under a thick cloak stop several steps away from her. The hood over the man's head covered almost half of his face, and all she could see were his untrimmed beards and his narrow nose.

"Who...?" she muttered, knitting her brows and tilting her head to the side.

Claude, who was unlike her, could see her innocence in her eyes. His eyes softened as his breathing turned heavy, moving his gaze from her out of guilt.

"He will bite you until your wrist breaks if you let him go. Can't you see he is looking at you like a mad dog?" he continued, watching Klaus glare daggers at him.

Lilou frowned as her eyes fell on Klaus again. "Are you really planning to dupe me?" she asked, and as expected, Klaus shook his head without a second hesitation.

"But he said..." she sighed, scanning the dirt clinging onto Klaus's body, face, and hair. The food storage wasn't kept clean and some foods here were already rotting. That was why she would have to go to the market to buy a week's worth of food ever since living in this mansion.

Lilou noticed the red marks around Klaus' wrist and felt bad for him. Just what did this man do to deserve to be bound in here? She wondered. A part of her brain wanted to free the man, not because she pitied him blindly, but because she felt like this man was actually more like a victim. But the other logical part of her brain was telling her she shouldn't because Klaus was bound here for a 'hopefully' relevant reason.

"You should at least let him speak or yell." She glanced at Claude, who found a spot on the corner not far away and sat down on the crate. "No one will hear him anyway... or would it be dangerous for that?"

"Not really," answered Claude languidly. "But it's better to keep him silent."

Lilou frowned and pursed her lips into a thin line, nodding in understanding. Seeing this, Claude bit his tongue and studied her squatting figure a few feet from his uncle. She looked at Klaus with conflict in her eyes and, knowing Lilou was actually very fond of Klaus before the regression of time, Claude understood her inner dilemma.

"Fine." He huffed in surrender, dragging himself up to Klaus. He glanced at Lilou, who was looking at him with eyebrows raised and bafflement, he shook his head and squatted beside Klaus.

Without a word, Claude untied the ropes behind Klaus' head. As soon as Klaus spat out the cloth in his mouth, he glared at Claude, followed by a series of profanities. Lilou immediately covered her ears until Klaus was panting and out of breath.

"You're extreme," she mumbled, flinching when Klaus shifted his glares at her.

"Extreme?!" Klaus ground his teeth, in disbelief that was he being told as being the extreme one here. "How am I extreme when I'm abducted by my brother? Keeping me bound for no damn fucking reason?!"

Lilou drew away cautiously. He was furious, but did he say he was bound here for no reason?

"Uncle --"

"Scram!" Klaus harrumphed at Claude. "If I ever get out of here, you, Hell, and that damn Fabian will die a miserable death."

"This is why they don't want to free you from your restraints."

"Fuck!" Klaus grumbled on and on like a broken record since it was the only way to vent his frustration about this humiliation. While he harrumphed in anger, Lilou stayed silent whilst listening to him.

"Let's free him," came out a quiet voice, but somehow, sounded clearer despite Klaus' echoing rumblings. Klaus and Claude looked at her while she shrugged under their gaze.

"I think he shouldn't be treated this way," she explained, almost bringing tears to Klaus' eyes. She looked at Claude and asked, "Was he lying? About being abducted for no reason?"

Lilou patiently waited for Claude's response, and when a minute had passed in silence, a shallow breath slipped past her nostrils. For some reason, although Klaus scared her a bit, she sympathized with him. Moreover, she didn't feel like Klaus would kill her. Even if he planned to, the other man seemed reliable and would protect her.

"Let's free him," she repeated with a smile.

"What will you do if he strikes you?" asked Claude, assuming this was all a part of Lilou's emphatic nature that could lead her to a dangerous situation.

Lilou cast Claude a look. She might've not seen his eyes or the entirety of his face, but she knew he had been staring at her. She could feel his gaze penetrating through that hood.

"You're here," she replied with a kinder smile. "I don't think you will let me fall in danger. You looked reliable."

Her words were akin to a knife slicing through his heart. Reliable? Claude lowered his eyes. Her trust left this bitter taste in his mouth. She was only saying that because she didn't know what he had done. Lilou was only smiling at him because she had no idea why she was in such a state or the reason they were here in the first place.

He wasn't reliable, but rather, he was nothing but an arrogant prick, who fell into an enemy's trap and dragged everyone into this mess. That was what he believed ever since Penny's death.

While Claude was having a moment to recompose himself, Lilou shifted her attention to Klaus. Her lips curled up into a warm smile, seeing that the man was almost on the verge of tears.

"Don't cause trouble, alright?" she reminded him with a brighter smile. "I know what they did to you is unreasonable, but we still have a problem at hand. You can wait for later and settle scores."

Chapter 722 Stop this slander now

"I know what they did to you is unreasonable, but we still have a problem at hand. You can wait for later and settle scores."

The hot-headed yet softhearted Klaus marveled at her beautiful and warm smile. In his eyes, she was akin to an angel lost in hell. Perhaps it was because no one had shown Klaus kindness, since everyone in here was a lunatic. That was why he was so moved by Lilou's words.

'Oh, gracious,' he thought. 'If only she knew they treated me like some sort of circus.'

When Claude regained his composure, he moved closer to Klaus and warned him. "Uncle Hell will kill you if you caused him inconvenience."

"This little --" Klaus bit his tongue, suppressing the swelling anger in his chest at Claude's audacity. He shouldn't lash out at him now, since Claude might change his mind.

Klaus remained calm and held his anger in until the ropes around his wrist loosened. He hissed in satisfaction, but when he spread his arms, he winced. Being bound for days numbed his muscles, giving Claude time to undo the bounds on his ankle.

Unlike what Klaus, Lilou, and Claude expected, Klaus just lay flat on his back like a dead tuna. Claude, who already had his hand on his dagger just in case Klaus would assault Lilou, furrowed his brows in bafflement.

"Fuck..." Klaus breathed out, closing his eyes to rest them for a bit.

"Feeling better now?" he reopened his eyes when Lilou's voice caressed his ears and then turned his head on her.

"Yes, but damn... I feel exhausted." He clicked his tongue, letting his stiff muscles relax and enjoy this freedom that was taken away from him for days. If he didn't feel numb, Klaus would have sprung to his feet and knocked Claude unconscious, before running amok to settle scores with Samael and Fabian.

Although he was aware he would end up being tied up again. Worse. Fabian would bury him. But Klaus just had enough of those two and their crazy schemes.

"Are you hungry?" asked Lilou, pleased that Klaus was surprisingly keeping his word. If only she knew he didn't plan to, but his body was so beat, she wouldn't be smiling so brightly.

"I haven't had breakfast," she explained. "And it seemed they had left the manor. You can join me for brunch. I don't think I have ever seen you eat."

"I'm good in here." Claude waved weakly, walking back to the crate. Taking out two daggers, he grazed their blades against each other to sharpen them.

Lilou pursed her lips and sighed. Looking at Claude gave her this immense feeling that she couldn't point out what exactly. But what she was certain of was that this man seemed to be close to her and the distant air around him felt... upsetting. But she simply tossed that thought at the back of her mind to ask Samael later.

"Let's go." She pushed herself up and raised her brows. "I'll be making food. Don't refuse the blessings. You will come too."

Claude furrowed his brows as she turned on her heel and skipped her steps. He just told her he didn't feel like eating, but the way she stressed her last remarks sounded a little threatening. For a moment, Claude felt his Auntie Lilou talking.

"Is she... good at cooking?" Klaus mumbled as he lazily dragged himself to sit up. His nose scrunched up at the light breeze his movement caused and allowed him to get a whiff of his rotten scent. "Ugh... I smell like a dog --"

Klaus flinched when Claude suddenly sprung up to his feet. Gazing at the man who was a part of his abduction, the line in the space between his brows deepened.

"What?" he asked impatiently, catching the slight panic in Claude's face.

"She's cooking," Claude mumbled and without further ado, he marched to follow Lilou.

"Oy, wait!" Klaus yelled, stopping Claude's tracks. "What do you mean by that?"

The latter slowly turned and looked at him in dread. "She'll poison us," were the only words that came out of his lips before running after Lilou.

Meanwhile, Klaus cocked his head to the side and scrunched his nose up. So he meant that naive girl was a terrible cook? Not that Klaus felt the need to panic just like Claude, but with his rumbling stomach, eating terrible food for the first time after a long time was not the best way to celebrate his freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

"You're a great cook." Lilou was in awe as soon as she had a taste of the stew Claude prepared himself. "That's surprising."

Claude simply glanced at the woman across from him and kept silent for a moment. "I learned it from him." He tipped his head to his left, where Klaus was gobbling his food five seats away from him.

"Huh?" Stuffed with food in his mouth, Klaus looked at Claude in dismay. He pounded his chest as he swallowed down the food in one go. "Hey, you. I don't know you, alright? Stop this slander now. I don't remember teaching anyone to cook — I don't cook!"

"In Monarey..." Claude's voice was low, almost faded into the sound of Klaus's cutlery hitting the plate. "... it's part of the survival training."

While Klaus didn't hear Claude's remarks because of how busy he was shoving down food in his mouth, Lilou heard him loud and clear. Her eyes softened, pursing her lips into a thin line, eyes at Claude, who was barely touching his food.

She felt like a hand was clenching her heart the more she observed the man's demeanor. How could someone carry himself in such an intimidating way, but at the same time, feel like he had deemed himself as nothing?

'Why am I so worried about him?' she wondered. If this was Law, she would understand. But this man... looked like he was much older than her. With all that untrimmed beard and his rough hands,

she should feel like he was her uncle of some sort. But alas, she felt this motherly concern towards him.

'Law is my firstborn... as far as I remember...' she thought, sighing at the throbbing pain in her head. 'Knowing nothing, but feeling something is surely starting to get annoying. Just who is this man, and that other person for him?'

Lilou darted her eyes between the meek Claude and the glutton Klaus. The familiarity she felt towards Samael was the same as with these two. Although it wasn't the same attraction, her heart... recognized this familiar affection. But it seemed Claude was the only person who retained his memories and Klaus was just the same as her.

'My head hurts...' He shook her head mildly, focusing on her food since she believed it was because she skipped breakfast.

### Chapter 723 Root

Meanwhile, in the room Lilou failed to check, a group of people were inside. The air was thick and silent, yet no one seem willing to break it. On the chairs around the table sat Samael. Next to him was Rufus, and then Tilly and Law. From Samael's left — next to a vacant chair — was Stefan and then Heliot.

"Tilly." Law tugged Tilly's skirt and called in a whisper. When she gazed at him and tilted her head, he asked. "Do you know where Mister Fabian kept the princess?"

Tilly looked up for a moment to ponder. Looking back at Law, she nodded.

"Where?" he perked up cautiously, keeping his voice as low as possible.

"Six feet under the ground."

Law's face froze when he felt this aura Heliot was pulling upon Tilly's answer. Right now, Fabian was retrieving Heliot's little sister like a piece of luggage while they wait in here. The prince would've gone himself, but since he was already here, Samael and Stefan trap him in here to talk. Stefan wouldn't have agreed, but since the matter was urgent and he could blame Samael for it, he feigned innocence.

"Don't you all understand we cannot approach this matter so easily?" Heliot breathed out through his gritted teeth, keeping his anger at bay. "You are putting our Karo at risk."

His fist on the table trembled, glaring daggers at the La Crox. He even sent a death glare at Stefan, who has purposely looked away as if that would make him appear innocent.

"Come on, Heliot. What's there to put risk when whatever you do, it's still a risk --"

**SLAM!**

"Our Karo had been affiliated with the mainland ever since our Von Stein clan left your land." Heliot's voice shook at the audacity of this Samael. "We are unlike you, who can make decisions out of personal whims. We regard our decision as important, for we always consider the lives of our people."

"And those lives will be taken in a moment's hesitation," Samael returned firmly. "Heliot, it is not like I do not understand the reason you want to approach this matter as carefully, just like how you approach a virgin for your first night. However, Karo will be in danger. The mainland may have

fallen by now — or rather, the royal family might've fallen in the hands of those greedy purebloods as we speak."

"It seemed you are the one who cannot understand the gravity of this situation," he continued, leaning his arms against the edge of the table, eyes glinting solemnly at Heliot. "This isn't about me or you, Prince. I don't care if Karo or the Heart Kingdom fall. You can all die for all I care. However, this situation also involved my family."

"No." Heliot shook his head and leaned his upper body forward. "Your family isn't just involved here, but you are the root of this problem. You want me and my men to march to Spade and become your fodder."

Samael smirked. "I won't deny that, but I tell you, Heliot. If we, the Grimsbanne, chose to be selfish, then you lot better bid your loved one farewell. We do not want this problem and we didn't ask for this, but there were certain people who wants us dead with just the sheer thought of our existence."

"Do you understand why they were targeting us?" he added and cocked his head to the side. "Because we are fucking demons, by heart and by soul. If we want mayhem, we can always cause one. And no one can stop us."

Samael moved closer and his eyes never left Heliot. "Listen here, Heliot. We are giving you and other people a chance to live. Be our friend or our enemy, I'm fine with either. Don't think you are doing us a favor, because you're not. I am doing everyone a favor by trying to settle this in a much, much more peaceful resolution so my kids don't have to live amongst themselves."

There was a long silence in the room after Samael's threatening remarks. The latter leaned back, eyes still on Heliot. Samael's usual aggravating smirk was gone, replaced by solemnity and killing intent. Surely, every time Samael would take things seriously, his words stung.

Even Stefan was unable to rebut that because what Samael said was facts. They might appear to be helping them, but it was actually the other way around. The Grimsbanne was the direct descendants of the original vampire who held extraordinary power only the gods could fight. If the Grimsbanne clan simply chose the easiest route and that was to exterminate every threat by killing them, then this story would be a lot thinner.

However, instead of choosing the easiest way, they resorted to seeking others' help. Claude's reversing the time — or as mentioned, opening the portal to the regression and locking the imbalance of the world, and he only bore a portion of the Grimsbanne blood was the perfect example of how terrifying creatures they were.

There were more out there, like Tilly, who carried pure Grimsbanne blood. That was why... what Samael was saying was true. They may be the root of this problem, but they could easily manage it on their own, but in a much more brutal and troublesome way.

"Samael is right." Tilly broke the prolonged silence with a nod. "If he decides to let things on their own since Lilou is with him again, sacrificing the memories and relationships they built with others is not much of a sacrifice for him."

Heliot huffed as his anger slightly subsided, eyes landing on Tilly's petite figure. "Should I thank you for that?"

"Not me, but him." She pointed at Samael, not getting the sarcasm in his remarks. "He is the one who decides. Thank him."

"Hah..." Heliot chuckled in disbelief as he shook his head. Samael was an arrogant prick who was unfortunately blessed with a sharp mind, and the other Grimsbanne was someone who was going with the flow without care.

"I want Florence unharmed. Not even a scratch," he mumbled, swallowing down the tension in his throat. "If that butler brought her here safely, then I'll do what you are requesting, but at my own discretion. I will not allow you to order me around and send my people to their death."

"Fabian won't harm his sister-in-law... oh, I think your sister wants to be harmed by him," Tilly commented in the same tone, looking at everyone who was looking at her in bafflement. "I hope they get married because Rufus didn't treat her right," she added.

"..."

## Chapter 724 Not a scratch

Happening at the same time...

Inside a small house situated on the outskirts of the capital, Fabian was standing by the open wooden door. His eyes were on the lady sitting on the chair near the window. At one glance, it only appeared it was a scene with a fallen lady from a noble house and his butler coming back empty-handed. But that was definitely not the case.

Fabian, like usual, was smiling until his eyes were squinting. "What did you say?" he asked as if he didn't hear her words just now.

"I don't want to go back," Florence repeated, setting her pair of midnight blue eyes that complimented her tan skin perfectly, on him. "You abducted me yesterday, so you have to take responsibility."

"..." Fabian cocked his head to the side, trying to understand the logic behind her remarks. "His Highness, your brother, already gave a handsome reward."

"I don't care. I'm not moving from here or returning to that damn place!" she adamantly retorted, holding the armrest tightly, and only loosening her grip when it showed cracks.

Yesterday, Florence fled the royal palace to live a vagabond life. But alas, while walking through the dark street of the capital, this man appeared out of nowhere. He simply told her he didn't want to fight, but his intention was to abduct her for fun before knocking her unconscious.

When she regained consciousness, she found herself in this small, old house somewhere on the outskirts of the capital. She wasn't bound or anything of the sort, quite strange for being abducted. However, she didn't leave until he returned, telling her she was free to go.

Which now led to this dilemma.

Florence originally fled her home, and there was no way she would come back. Unless, of course, Fabian forced her and knock her unconscious.

"My... what a dilemma," Fabian crooned, sensing the determination from the lady. "What shall we do then?"

"Huh?" her brows rose at his question.

"If you do not want to return home, what should we do?" he repeated, strutting his way toward her and stopping three feet from her. He tapped his chin with his index lightly before an idea crossed his mind. "How about this, your Highness? I'll return you to your brother, then I'll help you flee again?"

"What?" her brows knitted together, sizing him up cautiously.

"Your brother nearly beheaded me for abducting you to get his attention. And he will make it hard for my master if I don't return you in one piece," he explained in the same light tone. "Unless you return, otherwise it'll be troublesome."

Florence remained silent as she swallowed down a mouthful of saliva. She studied him for a moment before looking out the window.

"No," she replied adamantly, not allowing his words to sway her. "The only way you can take me back there is by force. I'm not returning with my own two feet."

She flinched when a hand carefully landed on the armrest, making her gaze up at him. Her eyes went huge as soon as she met a pair of dark eyes looking back at her, and an unsmiling man. Florence held her breath for a second, sizing up the face that was almost a palm length away from hers.

She only met him twice; last night when he abducted her, and now that he had arrived. However, never once had she seen his eyes or there was a moment he wasn't smiling. Therefore, unlike this harmless aura he exuded previously, his unsmiling face paired with his naturally sharp, narrow eyes brought this sense of dread seeping into every fiber of her body.

'Run!' was what her brain screamed as soon as she recognized the threat, but her feet were still on the floor. All she could do was stare at him with her lips falling ajar. Despite the dangers embracing her like a black shroud, Florence couldn't deny the fact this man had this dangerous appeal that was... magnetizing.

'No, Florence. Don't get distracted,' She told herself, clutching the armrest once again until her grip turned white. How could this man give off such a threatening aura — to a pureblood such as herself — when he was, in fact, a human?

"Please, Your Highness." His voice hit another level of low; it was almost chilly, making the hair behind her neck raise. "Don't make it hard for me."

Her lips quivered, but her voice was stuck in her throat. Fabian let out a shallow breath while his eyes studied the stubbornness in her eyes. His lips curled up into a smile.

"You look as beautiful as you are ten years later, Your Highness," he crooned, but not surprised since she was a vampire and retaining her youthful, beautiful visage was no shock. Although what he meant was the grace she naturally carried, which only meant she was healthy enough to be operated on.

"Now that I think about it, the first time we kissed was quite nice, right?" his smile stretched until it once again reached his eyes. "Shall we do it again?"



"What --" Her pupils dilated when he leaned closer and before she knew it, his lips had already claimed hers. She froze when he slipped his tongue inside, making her breath hitch, and her brain malfunction. Meanwhile, he glanced at her and smirked, pulling his head away with a smile.

Florence blinked once, staring at him and noticing the blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. However, before she could wonder why he was bleeding, her vision zoomed in and out, and then darkness.

Fabian instantly caught her forehead from falling, sighing as he looked at her. There were many ways to force her to come, but knowing Heliot, he would demand to return her unscathed. Therefore, he should return her without a single scratch.

But she made it hard for him, so he didn't have a choice but to poison her. He had been poisoning Tilly and Samael and himself since regaining his memories. Although those two could go by on their day without a problem, the poison he had been concocting as a hobby was strong enough to kill a lower vampire and paralyze a weak pureblood like her. In other words, Fabian's blood was carrying poison, and biting his tongue to let her have a taste was the most peaceful solution he came up with.

"He will demand not a scratch," he muttered, carrying her in his arms carefully. When Fabian straightened his back, his smile stretched broader and brighter. "But he won't say poisoned, right? Your Highness?"

He gazed down at her unconscious face before he sauntered off without making the slightest sound.

Chapter 725 If only

After their brunch, Lilou helped Klaus get some rest and run him a bath. He was even more tamed than she thought as he was exhausted, stressed, and needed a well-deserved rest. So after running him a bath and offering Stefan's spare clothes for Klaus to wear, she was about to head to her room.

But upon reaching the mansion's entrance hall and catching Claude's figure exiting, she sprinted for no reason.

"Wait!" she called, stopping him by the door.

Keeping his hand on the door handle, Claude looked back silently. "What?" he asked.

"Uhm..." she cleared her throat, thinking of anything she could think to give a proper excuse for her action. She clutched her hand closer to her chest and smiled awkwardly.

"Are you leaving now?" she asked. "Your uncles might look for you, so... I mean, they know where to find you."

"I'll return even before they can think of me."

"Ahh..." she rocked her head awkwardly, biting her tongue. She perked up when Claude tilted his head down slightly and seemed to resume in his tracks.

"I —" he stopped once again when she spoke, arching a brow and glancing over his shoulder. "I'll send you off."

"No need."

"I insist," Lilou stressed adamantly. "Let me."

Claude pressed his lips into a thin line, catching how her hand turned white while gripping her own wrist. Had he ever said no to her?

"Alright." He nodded, pulled the door open, and sauntered off.

Lilou smiled in relief before jumping and skipping steps to catch up to him. When she caught up to him, Lilou held her hand behind her. She studied his side profile cautiously as they walked towards the driveway, heading to the stable situated somewhere on the east side of the residence.

"Why do you always keep your head low?" she asked out of plain curiosity, noticing this habit of his since meeting him. But alas, Claude remained silent and didn't answer, bringing a frown to her face.

For some reason, she wanted to talk to him. It was a gut feeling; a strong gut feeling that wouldn't let her sleep at night.

"Uhm... you probably know my name, but I'd introduce myself. My name is Lilou." She smiled, biting her lips to stop it from stretching broader. "What about you? I don't think you have told me your name yet."

Claude hastened his steps, hoping if she was jogging she wouldn't talk anymore. Sadly, the outcome was the opposite. Lilou jogged, but she was still talking about the stew he cooked, asking him if he had time to teach her how to make it. The more lively and carefree she sounded, the more annoyed he got until Claude couldn't take it anymore and halted completely.

"Huh?" she stopped from her steps on instinct, looking at him with raised brows. "Is there something wrong?"

"Stop it," he breathed out, balling his hand into a tight fist, still looking at the ground instead of facing her.

"Stop, what?"

"This!" he huffed and said louder. "Stop acting like this now!"

Lilou flinched in surprise, watching him slowly walk on the same spot until he was facing her. Claude drew a deep breath, mustering a lifetime of courage to face her. As soon as he did, their eyes met for the first time. Despite the hood's shadow over the upper part of his face, Lilou could see the fiery eyes looking back at her.

"You... do you know why we are here ten years in the past?" he asked with a shaking voice. "Do you have any idea who is the reason you know nothing now? Why you are here, wondering who I am and the people who came in here? Do you know who is the reason why you... why everyone is suffering?"

Claude ground his teeth as bitterness filled his eyes. "Yes, you're correct. It's me who couldn't control the power that lies in my veins and brought everyone into this plight. You and Uncle Hell reminded me over and over, but I... didn't listen and simply lose my temper."

"If only I listened..." he lowered his eyes slightly. "... this wouldn't happen. Not to you, not to Law, not to Uncle Klaus, not to Penny, and not to everyone."

Tears shone in his eyes as he recalled Penelope, the leader of the Owl Guild in Monarey, where Claude became a part of it. During the arrest of the Nightwalkers There was a moment of silence

after his last remarks. Lilou pursed her lips into a thin line, clutching her hand across her chest, and having this pain in her heart.

"Why...?" she whispered with a shaking voice. "Why did you do it?"

His face crumpled at her question, making him recall the trigger for his unleashing of power. "I had a friend... a dear friend. She had the same hazel hair, but she died."

Tears shone in his eyes as he recalled Penelope, the leader of the Owl Guild in Monarey, where Claude became a part of it. During the arrest of the Nightwalkers that had plagued Monarey, Claude was injected with a strange substance that made him hallucinate.

He thought it would wear off if he let it sit since he was a pureblooded vampire and such a drug would not affect him. However, he was wrong. The night Penelope told her to meet in the castle's garden, all he saw was her dead body lying on the grass. And when he turned her, Lilou's face overlapped with hers.

But Claude couldn't tell her all that. No matter how much he wanted to explain, his voice wouldn't come out. So, in the end, he simply turned on his heel and walked away without saying a single word.

"Same hazel hair..." she whispered, staring at his back without moving a muscle. She wanted to run and try to talk to him, but she felt it was better to let him alone for now.

In her eyes, Claude seemed like he was carrying the entire world on his shoulders. Thus, she wanted to be sensitive and approach him carefully. He was unlike everyone he came with. Even Klaus wasn't as serious or as dejected as him.

"Was it because of me?" she murmured, biting her inner lower lip at the thought. "Why am I hurting?"

Lilou wiped her eyes with her arm to stop the tears that were forming in the corner of her eyes from falling. She idled in the same spot for minutes before turning on her heel and sauntering off in the opposite direction from where Claude left.

As she walked away, her soft eyes glinted with a little determination. The reversal of time wasn't favoring anyone... she believed. It was only bringing pain and confusion to everyone who was affected by it, and thus, her determination to resolve this matter increased.

Chapter 726 Not the right type of life he wants for his family

When Lilou returned to the mansion, she flinched at the figure leaning against the wall when she closed the door. "Goodness!" she patted her chest, looking to her side only to see Samael leaning against the wall, arms crossed. "Since when did you return and what are you doing here leaning behind the door?"

"I didn't return because I never left," he explained and then cocked his head to the side. "Are you alright?"

"Oh..." Lilou pressed her lips into a thin line, giving him a cautious look. She cleared her throat and raised her chin up, mustering her courage to ask him a question.

"Can you... tell me how this regression happened?" Samael blinked twice, ever so slowly. "Sure."

"Really?"

"Mhm."

"You will tell me everything?"

"Of course. You hate it when I keep you in the dark and threatened to divorce me if I keep another secret from you," he explained in a knowing tone, drawing his side away from the wall. "Come. Let's find a place to talk."

Samael simply cast her a look and cocked his head, signaling her to follow him. She nodded in understanding, following closely from behind him. As they sauntered through the silent hallway, Lilou furrowed her brows.

'Wasn't this the way to his room?' she scrunched her nose up and looked at his back in dismay. But before she could voice out her thoughts, Samael spoke.

"As much as I want to grope your body, I won't." He tilted his head back and his eyes instantly landed on her. "Simply because I want you to recover first. You are straining your body too much, Love."

Lilou pouted as she lowered her gaze. "I was hungry."

"I know, and I apologize for not returning immediately." He smiled, which she caught after sneaking a glance at him. "Heliot came in like a storm, and Fabian didn't have a choice but to disembark immediately."

"It's alright. I don't need someone to serve me since I can do it myself. I'm not a cripple," she mumbled, while he rocked his head.

"You're not a cripple, but I still want to serve you properly and right." His eyes softened, looking ahead of the hallway. "I'm still adjusting a bit since I was used to what you are before, so I'll make mistakes here and there. You might find me annoying."

Lilou glanced at him and smiled subtly. "It's alright. I understand."

When the last syllable slipped past her lips, Samael returned her gaze and smiled gently. They didn't talk much on the way to his room, and as soon as they reached his chamber, he told her to lie down and rest. Lilou cautiously slipped under the sheet, still feeling a little exhausted from the activity last night and her search this morning. Meanwhile, Samael sat down on the armchair beside the bed, keeping his distance to refrain himself from pouncing on her and rolling under the sheet with her. "So." She smacked her lips, lying on her side to face Samael. "Can you tell me who is that bearded man and the one bound in the food storage? And how did this regression happen?"

Samael pressed his lips into a thin line as he hummed a long tune. When he smacked his lips, he tapped his fingers against the armrest before he started it from the beginning. As mentioned, someone injected Claude with a drug that made him hallucinate during the seizure of the Nightwalkers in the north, Monarey. And because of that, the death of Penelope, Claude's dearest friend, who had the same hazel hair, amplified his hallucinations and Claude mistook her for Lilou. Everyone knew Claude was so fond of Lilou that he wanted to marry her. But it was almost the same as a child confessing his love to his mother. Lilou was akin to Claude's mother, sister, and auntie figure. She was the first to show him warmth after his parents' execution and living within the strict palace rules forced him to mature faster than anyone. She was more than just an auntie to him; her role in his life was something even more special. Claude had said it before; that the only

thing that could rattle him was if Lilou would be put in danger. And for Claude to see Lilou dead in his arm, or hallucinate of watching her life slip away from her eyes, meant his world crumbling down. Thus, with this perfectly concocted plan devised by a genius puppeteer, the world turned back and the people who had died once again walked the surface of the world.

The enemies they had already defeated were back to life with an added problem of some people on the mainland aiming for the Grimbanne Clan, who had been minding their own business all this time. Claude blamed himself for the situation getting more complicated. The more Claude sees how people like Lilou, Klaus, and Heliot didn't remember a single memory they had, the more this guilt ate his conscience. That was why Claude couldn't face Lilou and barely talked back to Klaus. It had been concerning, but Samael decided to focus on resolving things instead of comforting Claude. After all, he couldn't get through to Claude even if he tried to talk to him. Claude already blamed himself, and he already set his mind on that. Lilou pressed her lips into a thin line, now understanding why Claude was like that. She now understood the reason for his sudden outburst when she didn't do anything wrong. "I don't blame him," she whispered, and Samael rocked his head.

"No one blames him." He let out a shallow breath, resting his temple against his temple. "But with his personality, he will keep blaming himself. After all, not only did he reverse the time because of his hallucinations but also because his dearest friend died. He didn't even have time to grieve for his loss because he had to meet Rufus in the duchy."

"Why are they doing this...?" her voice shook as he looked at Samael with watery eyes. "We... you did nothing wrong. Why would they do this to us?"

Samael forced a smile as he shrug. "I don't know, Love. I don't fucking have no idea why they want us dead just because we fucking exist." He clutched the armrest tightly, clenching his teeth.

"I'm sorry..." he whispered, looking back at her before bending over. Samael bent down on his knees beside the bed, reaching for her hand and placing it on his forehead. "I'm sorry for dragging you to this kind of mess."

His grip trembled. "This is not the type of life I want to give you and our children..."

"I know..." Lilou bit her lower lips, but she couldn't say anything further. All she could do was hold his trembling hand and keep silent. Although the two of them didn't shed a tear, their heart was burning in rage for those people who messed with their peace.

Chapter 727 Tilly's wisdom (?)

It had been Claude's habit to ride on a horse and just gallop around to clear his head. But with the hostility they had gathered from the Von Stein forces, riding a horse at full speed was taxing. Klaus was now free, so there was no reason for him to stay in the food storage. Thus, here he was, on the roof to kill some time. "Tch." Claude clicked his tongue in irritation, ruffling his hair for the umpteenth time. "It's not her fault — ugh!" He clasped a portion of his hair, hunching in. He admitted he acted rashly and lost his temper at Lilou. Although he didn't want to, he just couldn't help it. Her kindness... sliced through his heart. It would be better if she just got angry with him or ignored him. That was what he deserved, not kindness, since it only amplified the guilt for Penelope's death and the guilt about their current situation.

But he just had to lose it and make it sound like this was all Lilou's fault. What a dumb man. "Do you have biscuits?" Claude flinched in surprise when Tilly's voice rang to his side. He glanced at her and Tilly was already sitting beside him, looking at him with an innocent countenance. A deep exhale slipped past his lips. "Can you carry yourself with presence?" he requested. "I didn't even feel your approach."

"That is because you weren't paying attention to your surrounding."

"No, that's not — never mind." He shook his head, sighing for the umpteenth time. "So, do you have biscuits?"

Claude cast her a dead look. "No, I don't."

"Then why did Fabian tell me to come in here?" she asked.

"Stop hanging out with Mister Fabian. I mean, don't believe everything he says."

"But he sounds reliable."

"He had centuries of practice duping other people. He is even deceiving himself for that butler persona of his."

"Make sense." Tilly nodded, although it didn't seem she would listen to his advice. "Really... how can you two not change in this situation?" he grumbled, shaking his head and sighing one more time. "Will changing just like you make things better?" she inquired; a harmless question she just threw out there that rendered him speechless. Tilly waited patiently for his answer, keeping her eyes on him, and took the word 'patiently' to another level.

"Tilly." Claude breathed out in distress when he couldn't take her undivided attention anymore. "I don't have biscuits. Why not try asking His Majesty? He had funds and Auntie Lilove likes snacks, so he would surely keep some."

"Oh..." she nodded once again, while Claude pinched the bridge of his nose. When he noticed she didn't move an inch from her spot, he arched a brow and took a peek at her. "What?" he inquired impatiently. "What?" she returned.

"Why are you not leaving yet?"

"I am... tired."

Claude kept quiet for a moment, watching her blink innocently. Another faint exhale escaped his nostril, deciding to let her be because Tilly was just as strange as Fabian. Actually, she was even stranger than Fabian; she was like someone who would never be fazed by anything in this world. Claude looked up at the night sky and slowly collapsed on his back. There was a long silence between them as neither of them talked for a while. "Tilly," he called after the prolonged silence, eyes still on the clear night sky. "Why are you always so calm? Just how do you keep your composure in every situation?"

"I'm not calm," she denied shamelessly, although anyone who would hear her tone would think otherwise. "If I am, I wouldn't be here, but in our home."

steps didn't even falter when she took a step out of the roof, landing perfectly on the ground as if  
10:47

nothing happened, and continued to saunter off. He glanced at him. "Your home."

Tilly kept silent for a minute and gazed ahead. Looking at her, Claude could not help but wonder what was going on in this woman's head. Was she thinking? Or just looking without thinking about anything else?

"Claude, why do you want to be hated?" she asked after a minute of silence, still keeping her eyes ahead. "Because... I deserved it," he whispered, peeling his eyes away from her to the sky. "We wouldn't be in this situation if I didn't allow my emotions to take over me. I cannot protect Penny or Uncle Klaus. Even Auntie Lilou and Uncle Hell. Now, everything is just a mess, and that is because of me."

"That's strange," she mumbled. "For someone to think they deserve to be loathed instead of being understood that you are not perfect."

His brows creased slightly as he glanced at her. Tilly was still looking in the same direction, tilting her head to the side. "The house on the mainland was never my home, but when Samael and everyone came there... they made it into a home, I would like to share with everyone. If you suppose being hated is what you deserve, then I think you deserve it. Because there's no greater insult to your family who is fighting for you and embraced what you call mistakes with all their heart, but gets chased away in return." Tilly slowly set her gaze back to him and instantly locked eyes with him. "You think hurting yourself is enough, but hurting yourself only hurts those who truly care for you."

"Lilou and Samael, Fabian, Rufus, Law, Sunny, Silvia, Yul, Klaus, and you... were my family. You had accepted the way I am, and thus, I accept you the way you are. You showed me what family is like; something that sticks together through bad and good times, and accepts everyone's flaw without judgment." Tilly didn't bear any change in her reaction, as if she was simply reading a script, which... she was, albeit more like what Rufus, Samael, and Fabian told her to memorize. Although her first sentiments before this originally came from her. "Rather than asking them to hate you, thank them for understanding you," she added, this time adding her own thoughts since she forgot the rest of the ones she memorize. "And if you truly want to take responsibility, then give me biscuits."

Claude just stared at her in silence, knowing parts of what she said didn't come from her. Even so, he didn't point it out as he averted his eyes from her to the sky. "If I truly want to take responsibility... instead of dwelling on what had already happened, I should put the past behind me as a lesson, not something to hold me back, huh?" he continued, guessing what Tilly forgot to say. "I don't have biscuits. Ask His Majesty."

Tilly pressed her lips into a thin line and nodded. "Alright."

With that being said, Tilly slowly stood from her spot and sauntered towards the edge of the roof. Her steps didn't even falter when she took a step out of the roof, landing perfectly on the ground as if nothing happened, and continued to saunter off. Meanwhile, Claude stared at the night sky in silence. His eyes softened until a tear rolled down his temple, smiling. He covered his eyes with his arm, biting his lower lip to muffle his cries. Even if Tilly spewed all that after being bribed (probably), her words still got through to him.

"Thank you..." he hiccuped through his gritted teeth. "... Uncle Hell."

Chapter 728 Bound one way or another

[ Karo Royal Palace ]

Under the orders of Prince Heliot, an emergency gathering was held in the royal court. Standing on either side of the aisle, everyone voiced their displeasure at Heliot's plans. The latter stood at the first step of the stairs, going to the empty throne, listening to their complaints.

"Your Highness!" one minister harrumphed. "Our Karo had been affiliated with the Mainland and we cannot simply disregard our century-long affiliation just because of the La Crox!"

"The La Crox had chased away the revered Von Stein from the land they had claimed as theirs! How dare they step foot in the Land of Karo and demand things?!" "Please, Your Highness. Waging a war with the Moriarty and those on the mainland is a huge risk!" another man's voice erupted.

"We, our people, and this land the Von Stein Clan built from scratch will never regain peace if we make enemies with those people!" "Your Highness! We are not the people of the La Crox, and therefore, they do not have the right to demand anything from us. This is their problem they must resolve on their own. There was no need to extend our helping hand."

More and more arguments were raised, obviously, showing their displeasure at the thought of the La Crox. For them, this wasn't as simple as building a diplomatic relationship between two kingdoms. But this was the La Crox abusing their powers in their eyes, just like how they greedily claimed the Heart's Kingdom and chased the other pureblood clans who were also the founders of the said land. Heliot remained silent, keeping his stoic expression as usual. He allowed them to voice out their displeasure to their heart's content whilst taking what he needed to hear and ignoring what he deemed unnecessary. When the ministers were finally panting for air, they all turned their attention to Heliot. It was the practice they had already gotten used to. They would voice out their arguments until they were done before Heliot would speak. It was the order they had all followed since everything in Karo had its order in every aspect of life.

"I had heard your concerns and I understand why you do not want to send our people to march to the Spade Kingdom." Heliot's voice was calm and toneless like usual, glossing his eyes over everyone's faces. "However, this isn't about the La Crox."

Heliot's last remarks triggered most of them, but all they could do was smolder in anger. The prince wasn't done speaking yet, and they had to let him speak since Heliot had allotted them time to raise their concerns. "The delegation from the mainland the previous month had been acting strangely, and the movements in the Spade were just as odd. As you all know, our history with the La Crox and the Heart's Kingdom is one of the reasons Karo stands now as a kingdom. I do not give the credit to them, but what my concern is... since we were bound with each other one way or another, it is not a surprise if Quentin, the sovereign of Spade, targets us," Heliot explained in one go, his eyes glinting dangerously. "He is a man worthy to be wary about. Even if the mainland isn't involved, he is still a threat to our Karo."

Silence fell in the royal court after Heliot's last remarks. No one argued, even though what Heliot said was still speculation. The Kingdoms of Karo, Heart, Spade and Cross had never messed with each other's business for centuries after the founders of the Heart Kingdom — the Von Stein, La Crox, Moriarty, and Le Blac — went to their separate ways. If this matter was raised in the past, everyone wouldn't get swayed. That was impossible. Even though those clan leaders of those pureblood families went on their separate ways on a terrible note, they had enough respect for each other to ignore each other. But since time stopped for no one and most of the founding leaders had met their end, no one could tell about the new generations. For instance, although Heliot wasn't the



king, everyone had already treated him as one. And therefore, he had fallen into the category of the new generation. Heliot might have planned to continue to ignore those other pureblooded clans the Von Stein clan had a long history with, but there was no telling if the other new clan leaders of those families planned to uphold the same honor the previous generation carried.

Hence, the dilemma that was tearing the ministers of Karo apart. Heliot remained silent for a minute, waiting for anyone to still voice out their opinion, but it was pin-drop silence. Just as he expected, the ministers of Karo weren't foolish and were all quick-witted. There was no way they would argue with everything laid on the table.

"Our Karo had always remained neutral, but just as much as I dislike the idea, we had to take a side before it is too late." Heliot's voice grew firmer as his eyes glinted with resolve. "I do not mind being misunderstood as the La Crox's dog if you truly see me and my principles as that lowly. However, I will not allow anyone — whether they were the La Crox, the Moriarty's, or those from the mainland — to hurt my people or take my land."

"I am giving you another opportunity to object," he added, keeping his silence. When minutes had passed and all he heard was everyone's breathing, Heliot rocked his head. "Prepare your soldiers. We will march to the Spade soon with me in the lead." The minister lowered their head and let out a deep exhale. It wasn't that they were afraid, but more like they didn't want to risk the peace they had kept for centuries. But it seemed this was inevitable. Thus, everyone lowered their head and was about to answer Heliot in unison, only to stop when the entrance produced a loud creak.

Heliot frowned, catching the shadow stretching near his vantage point before his eyes landed on the petite figure standing by the door.

#### Chapter 729 Give me biscuits

Since the establishment of the Kingdom of Karo, there was not in the records that someone successfully intruded on the royal palace. Assassinations in most kingdoms weren't new, but in Karo, assassins would die even before they could step out of their sanctuary. The reason everyone's jaw dropped as soon as their eyes landed on the figure standing by the door of the royal court. No one felt her presence until the doors creaked loudly and her shadow stretched to several feet from Heliot's feet. Heliot narrowed his eyes, staring at the familiar petite and small frame of the girl.

"What..." someone breathed out in disbelief. "... who let this woman --!"

The minister, who was just recovering from the shock, was rendered silent as soon as his senses tingled. Not just him, but everyone held their breath, with pupils dilated. Yet, as some knights on standby took a step to drag her away, she took a step at the same time, and everyone just stopped moving. The aura she exuded stilled them on their spot, forcing them to lower their heads. They could feel their hearts pound against their chest, sweating buckets. The only person who maintained his composure was none other than Heliot, keeping his chin up unlike the noble vampires, who could barely keep their knees from falling. Heliot had already felt Tilly's aura in that mansion where the La Crox was settling right now. If he was a little weak, Heliot would share the same reaction just like everyone else at first sight. Now that he thought about it, those people... Samael, Stefan, Fabian, Rufus, Lilou, and even Samael's child didn't seem to feel how intimidating the natural air surrounding this strange woman was. In his mind, it was either Tilly was concealing her aura or they just couldn't feel her. He was certain it was definitely not the former since Tilly carried the same air during their meeting. But he also doubted the latter; they were all vampires and they

should at least feel something. Perhaps... it was because they were already used to the suffocating air she carried?

"Cough! Cough!" Heliot glanced at the minister Tilly passed by, watching the minister scratch his neck as if he was being strangled. The minister slowly wobbled to his knees, gasping for air. "Take him out here," he ordered tonelessly, shifting his eyes back to Tilly, who stopped several feet from his vantage point. Heliot couldn't pull an aura on Tilly to fight for dominance because that was akin to suffocating everyone as well. "This meeting had already met a conclusion, therefore, you are all dismissed," he added, keeping his eyes on Tilly. "Now, what is the purpose of this intrusion, my lady?"

The ministers who heard Heliot's order helped each other to rush out of the royal court. In this royal palace, Heliot was known as the strongest vampire — stronger than his father, the King. With the appearance of another powerful pureblood, the noble vampires could barely leave them alone unless they all wanted to suffocate to death. However, as everyone rushed outside to leave Heliot to deal with her, they halted and looked back as soon as her tiny voice echoed in the royal court. "Give me biscuits." Tilly opened her palm at Heliot, blinking innocently. "Claude said I should ask His Majesty for some and he was certain you are keeping a few."

"..."

The ministers, who were supposed to have fled the scene, looked at her back in disbelief. Her aura was still the same, but her voice and what she had uttered contradicted that domineering air she naturally exuded. Meanwhile, Heliot's brows furrowed, narrowing his eyes. "Biscuits?" he asked, and she nodded almost immediately. "You snuck inside the royal palace, intruded on the royal court, and interrupted our meeting because of biscuits?"

Tilly blinked twice and looked around, only to realize there were other people. "Oh." She looked back at Heliot. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry...?" Heliot let out a dry laugh, glancing at everyone around. He then waved at them weakly. "Leave."

"Uh, yes, Your Royal Highness!" With that being said, the ministers rushed outside lest the two fight. It was strange for them to leave someone as important as Heliot all alone with the enemy, but that had been Karo's way. Heliot's orders were absolute; if he ordered them to leave him, they would leave him no matter how dangerous the situation was.

When everyone left the royal court, leaving the door wide open, Heliot set his attention back to Tilly. A shallow breath slipped past his lips.

"I supposed you misunderstood the person who gave you this idea," Heliot broke the silence between them. "It seemed he was talking about His Majesty Stefan La Crox."

"Ah..." Tilly blinked twice and nodded in understanding. "That made sense."

Seeing her lack of reaction, but at the same time, obvious realization, another shallow breath slipped past Heliot's lips. He studied Tilly as the woman looked back at him with clear crimson eyes. "Very well. I will ask Stefan." Tilly immediately turned on her heel without going through any proper greetings whatsoever. She didn't speak another word as she sauntered off soundlessly.

Watching her retreating figure, Heliot cocked his head to the side. This woman was definitely strong, he thought, but he couldn't help but wonder if she was dense. "You've already traveled here," he spoke, stopping her steps. "Follow me. I'll ask a servant to serve you some."

Tilly turned on her heel immediately and took hurried steps in his direction. This time, she only stopped when she was a step away from him. Her expression remained unchanging, but her eyes were gleaming eagerly. Heliot arched a brow. "You really came for biscuits?" he asked one more time and Tilly just nodded profusely. "What a strange and shallow reason to intrude a royal palace," he mumbled before turning on his heel, walking at his own pace to the other exit in the royal court. As they sauntered off, he glanced over his shoulder to see her following closely behind him.

Chapter 730 I don't feel safe

Tilly happily ate biscuits served in the drawing-room. They served her all sorts of sweets, leaving no space on the table. Heliot watched the woman from across him. Ever since coming to the drawing-room, the two of them didn't speak a word. Tilly just sat down on that seat, and then waited patiently for the servants to serve her sweets. Now, even while eating, she didn't speak a word, nor did she give him the briefest glance. She kept her eyes on the food while eating a biscuit as if she was wondering which one to eat next. That wouldn't be a problem if she was eating normally, but her bites were smaller than a toddler's bite.

"Will you leave after eating?" he asked, breaking the silence that had been reigning in the sitting room. Tilly paused and looked up at him. She nodded. "You went here all alone?" another question escaped his mouth, and just like previously, Tilly answered his query with a nod. Silence once again fell in the room as she continued eating while he simply watched her. Heliot was no stranger to silence; he liked his silence as it brought him peace. However, his intrigue with this woman consistently increased.

"You... are the woman in that house, are you?" he broke the silence once more, almost breaking a record since he rarely initiates a casual conversation. This time, Tilly nodded once, keeping the biscuit in between her lips, eyes at him.

"They said you never go out of the forbidden forest," he continued. "Does this have anything to do with what the La Crox called the regression?"

Tilly nodded, taking a careful and small bite. She was chewing every meager amount like a cow as if she would choke if she didn't chew properly. "So it's real?" Heliot mumbled. Although he gave Samael and Stefan the benefit of the doubt, there was still lingering doubt in his heart. Those two had little to no credibility since they would say anything to achieve their goal. However, Tilly was different.

As a man who was affiliated with the mainland — particularly the royal family — he heard a thing or two about the woman in the forbidden forest. There wasn't anyone on the mainland who hadn't heard about her since the forbidden forest was off-limits because of her. There weren't many stories regarding her, but everyone was wary of her existence. Some respected her for some unexplained reasons, while others wanted nothing to do with her. In other words, Mathilda, Tilly for short, had a reputation that wasn't meant to scare or idolize. Her reputation on the mainland was more like a reminder that she was still in that land of vampires. A vampire stronger than the royal family, and would always have a right to claim the throne on the mainland. "Have you heard from him?" Heliot

snapped out of his train of thoughts when Tilly spoke for the first time after coming to this room.  
"Pardon?"

"From him," she repeated in the same soft and low tone. "The man on the mainland."

"By him... are you referring to the king?" Heliot asked for some clarity. There were a lot of men and women on the mainland, so her question was too vague of a question. "Mhm. Him." She nodded.

"No." He shook his head. "The last time I heard from him was months ago. That was also the time the delegation from the mainland visited Karo. May I know the reason for this sudden interest?"

Tilly took another bite and chewed it carefully. Fortunately, Heliot's patience was long, as she surely took an entire five minutes to chew that tiny bite. When she swallowed it down, her lips parted, and he was all ears.

"Nothing." "..."

Heliot looked at her unchanging countenance with his classic unsmiling front. Did he wait for nothing? She could've just answered before eating! Why must she make him wait to hear that one-word reply?

"Karo is a hot place. It will make me evaporate if I stay too long," she added, making anyone wonder where did that come from. That was random. "I am practicing my social skills. Fabian said I had improved and now I am convinced."

"..." Heliot looked at her without the slightest change in his expression. The more she spoke, the more his perception of her changed. It was quite disappointing in a way.

"Anyway, can I take the sweets back?" she inquired, glancing at the feast of sweets on the table. "I would like to share it with everyone."

"No."

Tilly frowned as she raised her head at him. "I'm begging you."

"You have a problem with your tone," he pointed out. "You don't say 'I'm begging you' as if you are simply reading it."

"I'm begging you," she repeated, fixing her tone, but to no avail. She sounded the same!

At this point, Heliot was almost stunned at her. This woman had no notion of how to talk to people, nor does she know how to express her feelings. Not that Heliot was any better, but Heliot didn't know it was a problem, not until now that he was talking to a wall just like him. "Sure." He gave in without even putting up a fight, watching her nod in satisfaction. "I'll finish this biscuit and leave," she remarked.

Heliot glanced at the biscuit in her hand. "You'll take at least an entire day to finish it at that speed."

"I have time."

"I'm not accompanying you for an entire day."

"It's alright." She nodded. "I'll follow you around."

Heliot was once again speechless at her response. He would mostly don't respond to people whenever he felt like there was no point, but never in his life was he rendered speechless. This was

something new to him, and it rather left this strange impression in his patterned life. "I do not think I would like you around me," he voiced out his honest thoughts, making her frown. "I do not like or dislike you. I simply want to protect my peace."

Tilly blinked twice, absorbing his words to understand them clearly. "If you die... you will not need to protect your peace."

"..." Heliot looked at her blankly and blurted out. "I don't feel safe."