

The Duke 731

Chapter 731 He had fallen

"I don't feel safe."

Heliot watched her reaction and saw nothing. Tilly's expression remained the same, blinking every once in a while, and then taking another bite from the biscuit. "Very well. A servant will come if you needed something else, and my men will prepare a carriage for you." He planted his hand on the armrest, getting his cue to leave her alone. "You do not need to inform me of your departure and if you can, give my word to His Grace. My people are already assembling."

With that being said, Heliot pushed himself up and sauntered off without another word. But just as he was several steps from the door, he stopped at her remarks. "What did you say?" he asked, looking back at Tilly. Tilly shot him a glance and then turned her head to the window. "He had fallen," she whispered. "He?"

Tilly didn't answer, knowing Heliot had already guessed whom she was referring to. She put the biscuit back on the plate, pushing herself from the chair. She didn't speak a word and simply sauntered towards the balcony, pushing it open. The wind immediately blew past her face, causing the bell tied in her hair to ring softly. Seeing her action, Heliot followed her and stopped by the entrance of the balcony. His brows were knitted together, watching her plant her hand on the railing. She was looking in a direction, her hair floating back, and the bell continuously rang. "I had warned him..." she whispered after a prolonged silence as her eyelashes drooped. "He should've fled."

"Are you referring to the king of the mainland?"

"He's still alive," she continued, ignoring his question. "Though, barely."

Heliot frowned, but he stayed to listen to her. As he did, he studied her back and felt the brief melancholic air surrounding her. He didn't hear anything regarding this woman's relationship with the king, but he was certain the current king on the mainland regarded the woman in the forbidden forest with the highest respect.

But that wasn't what was important to him. Heliot lowered and narrowed his eyes, pondering the little detail she spewed just now. 'He had fallen?' he repeated in his head. 'Did the royal family on the mainland had fallen?'

His eyes darkened with the thought. Aside from the Grimsbanne clan, the royal family on the mainland was the most powerful among all clans. For them to fall, a stupid scheme wasn't enough to overthrow the throne. The opposing forces should not only be cunning but also equally powerful in terms of strength and blood. This wasn't good. While Heliot was mulling about the situation on the mainland, his train of thoughts was once again cut off when Tilly spoke. He slowly raised his piercingly sharp eyes, carrying murderous intent. As soon as he did, Tilly was already facing him. Her expression was still the same, but sincerity lingered in her beautiful eyes. "Karo... will fall?" he repeated what she said just now, almost scoffing, dissatisfied by what she uttered with certainty. "Yes." Tilly nodded. "This beautiful place will fall."

"How are you certain it will?" he inquired solemnly. Normally, the reply should be, 'are you mocking our Karo's forces?' but this was Tilly: the woman in that forbidden forest. This woman might be strange, but what Heliot had observed from her was that she would never bluff on things

such as this. This matter involved the royal family of the mainland. Even if she didn't care about the land of Karo, she wouldn't benefit from anything by uttering such an omen. "Because my friend had fallen, therefore, all purebloods who were gifted with an enormous amount of power would be next," Tilly explained calmly. Her eyes held his gaze for the longest time. "Not only they were after the Grimsbanne, but also those bloodlines who had been there since the establishment of the mainland."

"The Grimsbanne, the La Crox, Von Stein, Le Blac, and the rest who had been supporting the king all these years to maintain peace," she continued, turning to look in a particular direction. "Vampires were free to go and venture the world beyond the mainland. However, they could not return as much as they pleased and would be treated as traitors."

"That was established so everyone would have second thoughts. It is also to protect our kind from the outside world, not just from humans, but from the wolves who had always been the favored ones over our kind and other creatures who walks on the surface of this world," Tilly added, imparting the knowledge that the king had passed to her every time he visited her in her home. "Karo is a magnificent place and the Von Stein clan were amazing to build a land that sheltered very few greedy individuals."

"It would have been nice if you had shared your methods with him. In that case, he would've been able to prevent it before they had poisoned the mainland." Her eyes softened and her hand on the railing carefully curled. "He had always been so foolish."

"Who... had taken down the king?" Heliot breathed out solemnly, eyes still on her frail back. "Was it the Moriarty?"

"Who knows...?" she whispered, looking up at the moon shining unnaturally bright. "Who did it doesn't matter. What they would do next or who they were going after next is the real question."

Heliot remained silent, putting himself in the shoe of whoever overthrew the throne on the mainland and could've caused mayhem. If he was in their shoes... after taking down the strongest clan — the Grimsbanne Clan excluded — on the mainland, Heliot would surely go after those weaker ones. Although some pureblooded clans weren't at all weak, they were all inferior to the descendants of evil. If he considered the enemy's awareness of Samael's plans, then they would surely try to cut anyone who could help them. But then again, it didn't make sense. "The Grimsbanne Clan are powerful. You can put them in their place. The Duke of Grimsbanne can even do the dirty work for you." Heliot pointed out, eyes glinting with intrigue. "It's impossible that they can be this confident, knowing you, an Original, can squash us like bugs."

"You are correct."

"So how?" he asked without beating around the bush. "What sort of people are coming after us?"

"Everyone."

Chapter 732 Your name is super long

"Everyone."

Heliot swallowed a mouthful of air at Tilly's answer. "Everyone?" "Everyone... yes." Tilly nodded, letting out a shallow breath. "What would they gain?" he threw another question to get clarity of

this entire situation that could endanger their land and his people. "If the Grimsbannes are so powerful, aren't they afraid..."

Heliot trailed off as a realization crossed his head, watching Tilly nod as if to confirm what hadn't been spoken. His breathing grew heavy as his hand closed into a fist. "Just like what they did to Claude, they will exploit the power of Grimsbanne to their advantage. Samael, Law, and Claude hadn't had a grasp of what they can do. Samael might control it now, but he had a family to lose. Our enemy would stop at nothing and they will target his wife or children to push him to the abyss," Tilly explained without changing her tone. But alas, Heliot felt the weight of this information. "You had been associated with the mainland despite being traitors. Therefore, I presume you are also aware of my siblings," she added, but Heliot's brows furrowed.

"You are the last Grimsbanne."

"I am the last Grimsbanne who is on the mainland," Tilly corrected. "But you are not certain if those other Originals were alive," Heliot argued. "Do not misunderstand, my Lady. I am not saying I was hoping they were already dead, but the mother of the Duke of Grimsbanne, the late Queen of the Heart's kingdom, perished."

For the briefest second, anger and sadness flickered across Heliot's eyes. But Tilly caught it.

"You knew Ameria?" she asked.

"No, but I had heard about her. Our clan swore loyalty to her, and she had a significant relationship with our clan. Therefore, we, the Von Stein, respect her sincerely," Heliot explained. "It doesn't matter if we had met her or not. Her name alone rings a bell to every Von Stein, and we would be forever grateful to her, even when we do not know the reason. That is the vow the previous clan leader had passed down, which we would also pass down to our offspring."

Silence descended on them as the night breeze whispered in their ears. Tilly pursed her lips and smiled subtly. It was barely noticeable with the lack of practice in moving her facial muscle, but Heliot was keen enough to catch that faint smile. "Ameria had always good with people," she remarked. "I'm glad the Von Stein honors her even after her death."

"I assumed. Since we carry this affection for her despite not knowing her as a person."

"Ameria is good."

"I heard."

"And silly," she added, gazing heavenward. "She's the only one among us who made friends on the mainland. And then she and her friends left the mainland to follow Soran. I bet they had fun adventures together."

"Not knowing it'll all end in tragedy where they would eventually part ways."

Tilly pulled her head down until she was staring at him. "Mhm. Not knowing their friendship would end on a terrible note. I do not blame the La Crox for being greedy. I blame the blood that had sustained our lives and our kind."

"No one blames them. It was a mutual agreement, and the founding families found their homes like us. Karo is now our home and the only time we will have problems with the founding clans is if they barge into our homes without knocking on the door."

"Then that settles it." Tilly nodded. "You are now on our side."

Tilly had already agreed as if Heliot verbally did, but he didn't dwell on it. Not that he had too much of a choice, but to fight alongside them in the name of Karo and their proud Von Stein clan.

"How are you certain the rest of the Originals are still alive?" he queried, returning to their original subject. "And are they aware of the situation?"

"That is the reason Samael needed you. My siblings don't know about the situation and they weren't as easy to deal with. Marsella seemed to have lost control while my big brother..." Tilly looked in a certain direction and, for the first time in a long time, she genuinely frowned. "My big brother had gone mad."

"The bottom line?"

"They are unpredictable and they might join the enemy... for fun." Tilly set her eyes back to Heliot, telling him something she didn't tell Samael. His nephew would totally lose it. "We had lived longer than anyone, Eli. And death still sounds a reward."

"Eli?" Heliot blurted out, knowing he shouldn't dwell in that name she called her. "Your name is super long."

"And so was Samael."

"Eli." "..."

Tilly drew a breath before turning on her heel. Without a word, she planted her hand on the railing and hopped until she was standing on it. The wind continued to blow past her, making her silver hair illuminate the color of the moon. She closed her eyes for a moment and took another deep breath. When she reopened her eyes, they weren't the same as those doe crimson eyes that appeared so innocent like a child. "I'll protect Karo and preserve America's memory the La Crox had erased from their memories." Her eyes were sharp, giving her a totally different look. But in them didn't bear sadness nor did they carry the slightest anger. "In turn, assist Samael and protect his family."

"If you were able to protect our land, can't you protect them as well?"

"I wish." Tilly locked her eyes in the thick darkness far away from her vantage point. "Once they had succeeded, I... am also a threat to them. I do not want to hurt my friends, and therefore, I would rather give them a safe place where we cannot touch them when the worse happens."

"What do you mean?"

Tilly didn't respond anymore, closing her eyes ever so slowly. Her lips moved, but her voice didn't come out. The next thing Heliot felt was this tug in his chest for just one second. Not just him, but every single person in Karo felt the sudden tightness in their chest that only lasted for a split second. "You..." Heliot was still clutching his chest, looking at her back, wide-eyed. "... what did you do?"

Tilly glanced over her shoulder. "A... protection spell. I will count on you, Eli." As soon as those words slipped past her lips, Tilly slowly fell over the railing. His eyes went huge ever so slowly, watching her fall until she was gone. Heliot instinctively took enormous steps towards the railing, gazing over it, but Tilly was gone. "She didn't even land," he whispered, seeing no trace of her anywhere.

Chapter 733 I'll see you in Spade

[Back in the residence]

"Good night, Law." Lilou smiled at Law after tucking him in. She just finished one story for him, brushing his hair with her fingers gently. "Good night, Mother." Law smiled back, holding the end of the quilt over his shoulder. Lilou was wearing a smile on her face, but for someone who had always looked at his mother, Law was able to discern the difference. "Is there something wrong, Mother?" he asked without beating around the bush, making her brows raise. "You can tell me if something is bothering you."

Her eyes and smile grew gentle. "Do I worry too much before as well? How can you be so mature at your age?"

"Mother never worries me, but I know when she's upset."

"You..." A shallow breath slipped past Lilou's lips. "I feel ashamed that my ten-year-old son is offering his ears to listen to my dilemma."

He shook his head. "Mother is also my friend. She is my mother, but she is also my best friend. That's what you always tell me, so whenever I need a friend, Mother will be there to listen as a friend."

"She really sounds amazing, doesn't she?"

"Yes."

Lilou just smiled and ruffled his hair gently. Her son's eyes twinkled with anticipation and eagerness to listen to her, but Lilou decided to keep it to herself. Even though she didn't recall what she had told Law before the regression or how she raised him, Lilou knew deep in her heart that she wouldn't burden her child with the problems of the adults. No matter how mature and keen Law was, he was still a child. "Nothing is bothering me. I was simply tired and only came here to put you to sleep, and then I will return to my room to rest as well," she explained. Not that she was totally lying. Lilou was exhausted from last night and this morning's activity. She only snuck out of her room to put him to sleep, but she planned to return to her room right after.

"Come on, my sweet son." She fixed the quilt once again and smiled broader. "Sleep now, alright?"

"Mhm."

Lilou stared at him for a moment before leaving the edge of the bed she was perching on. As a routine, Lilou went to the stands to blow out the candles. She went from one to another, blowing the candles until there were only a three left to keep the room dim. Once she finished, Lilou glanced at the bed one more time and smiled upon seeing his shut eyes. When Law heard the faint click of the door, he turned his head to make sure Lilou left. Propping his elbow against the mattress, Law pushed himself to sit upright. "Tilly," he whispered, turning his head in the balcony's direction. "What is she doing at this hour?"

His eyes didn't bear any sense of urgency, but they bore worry. He kept staring at the entrance of the balcony for as long as he could as if that could help him see what was going on. "Sunny..." came out another whisper, frowning. "What is that girl doing now?"

Meanwhile, in Stefan's chambers...

Stefan was standing in front of the window with his hands behind him. His gaze was also lost in the thick darkness ahead.

"Mathilda Grimsbanne..." he whispered. His expression was solemn. "Surely, their bloodline was on an entirely different level."

His throat bobbed, still sheltering this lingering feeling he felt for a brief second. It was brief, but until now, his heart was thudding against his ribcage. The sudden burst of aura and inexplicable power left a deep impression and even if it only lasted a split second, one would remember the dread it left.

"Just what does she think she's... ah." He snapped his eyes ever so tenderly. "There's only one person who isn't here that she claimed as her friend."

Stefan drew a deep breath, closing his eyes. When he reopened his eyes, a glint flickered across them. "The king had fallen, huh?" his jaw tightening, clutching his wrist behind him tighter. "They are... moving and gaining results quite fast. I'm afraid at this speed, we might fall a step behind and that is already dangerous."

His reflection on the window glinted, growing clear in his eyes. Stefan looked at his solemn countenance and then caught a figure standing behind him in the darkness. Despite that, his expression didn't change, nor did he move an inch from his spot. "When will you visit me with your physical body?" he asked, eyes fixed on the figure the window was mirroring. "I had told you everything you need to learn. I need to hear your response, Alphonse."

Silence was the only response he received, but Stefan was used to it. He wasn't even surprised, since Alphonse would send his shadow to Stefan only to watch him in silence. Maybe to mock Stefan or observe him; either way, Stefan didn't mind knowing that his brother was still alive. "Alphonse..." he called after minutes of silence, letting out a deep exhale. "Let us... follow our heart in this lifetime. You might see me as a hypocrite since we didn't go back to the time when everything went down."

Stefan paused, thinking about everything he had done for years. If he could reverse the time, he would've reversed it to the time when they were still peaceful. To the days their common enemy was their father and not each other. Because Samael and Stefan might be acting cooler with each other now, Stefan couldn't erase the things he had done before this. "Lucia and Dyrroth... still died in our hands. We took that child's parents and we do not have an excuse for that. It was the same with the massacre with the Bloodfang, Lara... and the list goes on." His eyes softened and were filled with bitterness. They only returned for ten years, but ten years... was still too short to erase what they had done for centuries. "Even if they had seemed to forgive us, they would never forget. Let's repent and die without regrets... brother."

There was another long silence that dominated the chambers once again. He wasn't expecting anything in particular, since Stefan couldn't force his change of heart on others. But when another minute had passed, his brows rose as the shadow spoke in a rasped, deep baritone.

"I'll see you in Spade."