

The Duke 801

Chapter 801 Far beyond your limit called morality

Hell's Gate.

There was only one person Lilou knew who could unleash such power. It was an ability Tilly used back on the mainland, and out of curiosity, Lilou bugged Tilly to explain to her this ability's real nature. According to Tilly, Hell's Gate was akin to blood and darkfield. The difference was that the bloodfield mostly controlled the blood that was within it. If the caster of the bloodfield was stronger than his opponent, they could control their opponent through their blood. A darkfield, on the other hand, was a level higher than a bloodfield. It didn't have much difference, but a darkfield was more like a dimension. The caster of a darkfield would have the upper hand as its caster would enhance its caster's ability, strength, agility, and so on. It was a double edge though because if the person who could cast a darkfield met a formidable opponent, the darkfield would only suck the life out of its caster. The hell's gate was like both that leaned more on the side of the darkfield. However, there was one thing that made hell's gate different. Just like its name, Hell's Gate, everyone who was within it was hovering at death's door. It was an ability that could take everyone to a different dimension that wasn't affected by time, or the occurrence outside, and could weaken everyone who was within it. If one was not strong enough, being inside the hell's gate was guaranteed death. In other words, Tilly said that if she didn't want to bother the rest of the world, she would unleash hell's gate, so no one would bother her as well. It was an ability that only a few could do, like Tilly. Even Samael and Fabian just started learning it back on the mainland out of boredom. And what Lilou could say was that Samael and Fabian — those two who were no doubt excelled on the battlefield — had a hard time learning and maintaining a small hell's gate. But Zero...

Lilou held her breath, gazing far away to where her eyes could reach. 'How can Zero unleash such a huge hell's gate?' she slowly shifted her dilated eyes back to Zero, only to see him smirk. "You... just what are you trying to do?"

"Isn't it obvious, my fiancée?" Zero cocked his head to the side, his arms spread wide open. "I am ending everything and starting anew. As you can see, everyone in this place was a... disaster. If there were no people, there was nothing to rule over, wasn't it?"

Lilou's entire body shook in anger, realizing how Zero could unleash such a powerful ability. "No wonder you..." she trailed off, grinding her teeth in anger, unable to continue her realization. That was right. Zero couldn't unleash such powerful hell's gate all by himself. Even though Zero came from a powerhouse clan, Moriarty, his blood wasn't on the level of the king on the mainland or the damned clan Grimsbanne. Compare to the Grimsbanne and the royalty on the mainland, the Moriarty could be called exceptional but not to that level. For Zero to pull this off, he sacrificed hundreds of thousands of people for this power. And that sacrifice?

The people of Spade Kingdom. All those undead... were nothing but victims in all of this madness. They were forced to battle in the front lines to become fodders, and when necessary, Zero would steal their life forces, energy, and every bit of their strength for his own. "How sickening," Lilou spat out through her gritted teeth, feeling her stomach churn at the thought. "Zero. Just how far will you take this for power?"

"Far beyond your limit called morality, my fiancée." His grin stretched wickedly, malice swirling in his glinting pair of golden eyes. Her heart thudded uncontrollably at his sickening answer. She was aware Zero would stop at nothing to get what he wanted, but this stretched far beyond her expectation.

This was real madness.

"You..." Lilou gripped her scythe tightly until her fist trembled. Her olive and red eyes glinted until her green eye slowly turned red to match the other. "... I had always been scared of myself, Zero."

"Sometimes, I get so terrified of myself that I avoided looking at my reflection. Do you know why?" her voice turned softer as she assessed the wicked grin plastered on his face. "Because every time I see my reflection, I do not recognize myself. That look in my eyes... that bloodthirst, that wickedness... I don't like them."

Lilou slowly lifted her chin and when she blinked, the green eye was no more. Both of her eyes shone with crimson red, making the corner of her lips hooked up into a sinister smirk.

"She... was evil, Zero," she breathed out. Her tone sounded different from a moment ago, as it reeked of lust for blood and madness. "But now that we are in hell's gate, I don't see any reason to stop this demon from coming out."

Zero's eyes narrowed, witnessing how her expression, tone, and aura changed. It was not like her face and body changed, but now, he could feel the blood of Bloodfang taking control of her instead of the blood of the virtuous Crawford from her mother's line. "Lilou Bloodfang." His lips stretched until his fangs were showing. "You won't deny that name anymore, huh?"

Lilou didn't speak, tilting her head to the side. "Moriarty..." she blinked ever so tenderly, listening to the countless voices screaming in her head. "... right. They were the ones who were at fault, huh?"

Lilou closed her lips into a thin line, gazing at him from head to toe. Her lips curled up subtly, eyelids drooping, but the dangerous glint that flickered in her bloodthirsty eyes was apparent. "Was the core —" Zero's breath hitched when Lilou suddenly appeared right before him. She was fast — faster than the wind. His eyes dilated as time slowed down for him, watching her, cocked her head without blinking. "I guess a clone isn't as capable as the original, huh?" her chilly and monotonous voice sent dread down his spine, and before he knew it, the tip of her scythe plunged deep into the center of his abdomen. Without a second hesitation, she pulled her scythe to the side, slicing half of his body from the center of his abdomen to his waist.

Chapter 802 A trust like no other

THUD!

Lilou wiped the blood that squirted onto her cheek with the back of her fist. Her eyes were fixed on Zero's severed body lying on the ground, watching the dark mist come out of his wounds. "What a troublesome lad," she murmured with a deep exhale while the severed body slowly disintegrated in the air. "No wonder he was so brave to face everyone head-on. He had another card up his sleeve."

Lilou kept her focus on Zero's body just to study what was there to expect. What she learned as she watched his body disappear into thin air slowly was that Zero's body was shallow, like a balloon that was popped. Although he appeared as though the real Zero spoke like how Zero would speak,

and even his attacks were fierce, once he inflicted a fatal wound, he would be like a balloon with a leak. "So there's no other way to know if he was the real Zero, not unless he gets inflicted by a wound, huh?" she rocked her head in understanding, turning on her heel when the last part of his body turned into mist. Lilou gazed up, blinking when another loud crash caught her attention. Her husband was still fighting this gigantic thread. Usually, she would question Samael for being held down longer than expected, but since she had a brief conversation with Zero, she understood that Zero was a worthy opponent. "Sam!" she shouted her lungs out.

Despite the great distance between them, Samael, who crashed into another castle, heard her loud and clear. A grunt escaped his mouth, pushing a huge rock that landed on him upon his crash. "Fucking —" Samael snapped his tongue in irritation, stretching his neck that produced loud cracks. He gazed up at the hole in the roof his body had caused after the crash.

"Sam! I will find his body! Keep him busy!" her voice echoed in the air while Samael didn't move from the floor immediately.

"I knew it." Samael breathed out, catching up to his breathing. "So he prepared stand-ins, huh?"

Samael already realized something was off when he first clashed with Zero before these black threads launched continuous attacks. Now that Lilou confirmed his suspicion, everything made sense. "Hell's gate, huh?" he mumbled, listening to his wife's footsteps that sounded distant every passing second. Samael trusted his wife more than he trusts himself, and when she said she would find Zero's body, he knew he had to do his part. Keep Zero busy. Zero might be listening somewhere and knew their plan, but that didn't matter. But instead of attacking the black threads, Samael idled. He kept his eyes on the hole in the roof, gazing directly at the unnatural dark sky. "Hell's gate," he repeated, assessing the hell's gate that was covering the sky. "So he was really working with the people on the mainland, huh?"

There was only one person Samael could think of who could've granted this power to Zero. Although hell's gate was a natural ability of a powerful vampire like the king of the mainland or an Original Grimsbanne could unleash, it was not impossible for others to do so. Many tried, and many failed, though. The cost of trying such a dangerous technique was heavy.

There were only rare cases in which someone had succeeded. But Zero?

Samael was certain there was another party that was at play for him to reach such a height. But then again, considering the Moriartys' were involved in the massacre of the Bloodfang clan that bore a fruit which was Lilou's core, things such as this shouldn't be surprising. "God damn..." Samael slowly dragged his body to stand, dusting off the dirt on the apparent crease of his trousers. He swung his heavy sword, Catharsis, resting the back of its blade on his shoulder. When Samael gazed up once again, he bent his knees before catapulting through the hole in the roof. Samael landed safely on the roof, raising his brows as he searched for the black threads that gave him a break for a minute. Samael narrowed his eyes, assessing the black thread from the banquet hall coming out of the hole it made in the walls. It was just waving in the air like leaves, making one wonder why it wasn't attacking anyone. "Ahh..." he rocked his head in understanding and then his lips stretched from ear to ear. "... so he needs some time to recover, huh?"

"What a downside." His eyes glinted menacingly, grinning. In a heartbeat, Samael disappeared from his vantage point like a shadow. At the same time, the black threads that were previously waving in the air also sped through, stretching in a particular direction. As this was happening, Lilou was

skipping her steps away from the royal palace. Her brow arched upon sensing danger coming behind her like a bolt of lightning. However, instead of looking back, she kept her eyes ahead. Even when the black thread caught up to her and was a palm length away from the tip of her hazel hair, Lilou didn't attempt to block it. SLASH!

A small part of the tip of her hair was snipped, falling behind her speeding figure. This time, her steps skidded to a halt. Looking back to see what was going on, the corner of her lips curled up. There, standing a meter from her, was Samael. He had his back facing her, swinging his sword after chopping the tip of the black thread which fell on the ground along with her hair. "Thanks, love," she expressed with a satisfied smile, watching Samael languidly cock his head back to look at her. "My wife trusts me so much she didn't even attempt blocking this ball that looks like Quentin's nasty pubic hair he collected for years." He grinned, a misplaced chief plastered on his dashing face. Samael then faced the black thread that was pushed back, bolting in his direction. However, from the way it was going, he quickly realized that the black thread wasn't going for his head but to his wife a meter behind him. "Haha." He let out a dry laugh. "Don't stop, my love. I'll deal with him."

Lilou let out a shallow breath and smiled mildly. "Don't die," was all she said, turning on her heel to flee this scene for her own mission. As Lilou ran away, the black threads split into many parts to avoid Samael and stop her. But alas, just like what Samael said, Lilou didn't stop. Instead, she kept moving forward while Samael kept his promise. Not even the tip of her hair was touched, successfully leaving the royal palace and leaving Samael to deal with this troublesome opponent.

Chapter 803 Devil's Dust

From the east border to the sea within the Spade Kingdom territory, all battles paused momentarily upon the appearance of Hell's Gate. Some dwell in it as their hearts brought this sense of dread down to the pit of their stomach, others seemed to have expected such a thing from unfolding. But one thing was for sure, this wasn't the peak of this dreadful night. It was just the beginning. Knights from the Spade Kingdom, for some reason, suddenly regained their morale. Especially, in the battle occurring on the eastern border against the persistent people of Karo led by Heliot. With Heliot fighting on the front line, covering his people from the aerial attacks and proving the cannons and arrows useless with his presence, the battle was leaning toward a one-sided battle. However, when the night sky was covered by this thick layer of darkness, the undead and the knight grew stronger. Their glowing red eyes shone brighter as their sclera slowly turned black. Their movements, speed, strength, everything skipped several levels, and in no time, the battle that was almost one-sided turned equal once again. Heliot slowly landed on the ground, clenching his teeth at the cry of his men as they fell into the hands of these vicious people one after another. Yet, regardless of the casualties and losses, the people of Karo didn't stop advancing. "Quentin Zero Moriarty..." Heliot turned his head heavenward, keeping his fist tightly to his side. "... so you've really conspired with the people in the mainland?"

The Hell's Gate only proved that the mainland of vampires had something to do with all of this. Even if they weren't the ones who were directly involved, Heliot knew they were a part of this one way or another. After all, Hell's Gate was never used outside of the mainland. Heliot and the Von Stein Clan had been affiliated with the mainland since their clan left the Heart's Kingdom. Their relationship was diplomatic. The mainland had strict rules and strongly refused to welcome anyone back, but they made an exception for the Von Stein Clan. The relationship was simple, centered on the trade and the Von Stein acting as their middleman to do their bidding in the outside world. In

other words, even though the land of Karo and the mainland had such a relationship, Heliot was keen enough to understand the mainland. Since the mainland was a conservative nation bound by strict rules, no one in the royal family left the land. Meaning to say, there was no way in hell any of them could learn or even try unleashing such powerful conjuration without proper guidance from the royal family. If not the royal family, there was only one clan that could perform this Hell's Gate and that was the Grimsbanne Clan. But considering there was only one pureblooded Grimsbanne left on the mainland and that person, Tilly, was here fighting Zero, the blame directly fell on the royal family. But who?

"The mainland fell..." whispered Heliot, recalling Tilly's news to him. The people he sent to check the mainland hadn't returned, but despite that, Heliot took it as confirmation that the people of Karo weren't welcome on the mainland anymore. Their failure to return only meant his men died on duty and that alone was enough motivation for him to back up Samael's plan since the mainland turned its back on them without prior notice.

"The new king, huh?" Heliot's eyes glinted with anger as the slightest doubt in his heart that the mainland didn't have anything to do with this disappeared without a trace. Heliot didn't have to hold back or think of their diplomatic relations with the mainland. The latter cut them off, and it was clear as day that they wanted to make enemies with the land of Karo. 'If that is what they want...'
Heliot blinked ever so tenderly, bending down to grab a handful of soil. The soil was damp with blood, spreading his arm to the side as a bit of grain fell from his grip. '... if they had chosen the Spade over Karo, I'll show them they weren't as wise as they thought they were.'

Heliot threw the soil in the air, and instead of it falling, it stayed midair. The wind around the vicinity of the battlefield grew stronger, taking the dust and soil, and small materials on the ground until the entire battlefield was within a large whirlwind.

"Ugh!" Knights from Karo, who were very much aware of their prince's abilities, had to strategically stop fighting. Those who could immediately find ways to stop themselves from getting caught in the powerful wind. Others continued fighting, only to stab their weapons deep into the ground to hold on to them. Bodies and severed limbs that had littered the battlefield slowly turned lightweight as the wind kicked up their bodies until the whirlwind wasn't just dust and soil or twigs. Soon, the whirlwind surrounding the entire battlefield was filled with bodies, severed limbs, and weapons. Its color slowly turned red with the blood that came along with the soil. Devil's Dust. As the Devil's Dust grew stronger and more aggressive, even those who were still alive and didn't have an idea of what this could mean were sucked into the air.

The people on the border that weren't within the dust devil could only stare at the terrifying sight of it. Their mouth fell open with equal awe, shock, and fear. They watched the whirlwind grow bigger until its tip formed into an ancient creature's head that was once told in fables. GROWL...

A resounding roar shook the land of Spade as the appearance of the whirlwind appeared as though a sand dragon that was only told in fables suddenly came to life. Even its roar sounded rear, making their hearts thud violently against their chest. At that moment, everyone that was protecting the border had one thought in mind. Retreat. The border wasn't defended. How could they fight against something so monstrous that had no real physical body?

Heliot's entire body trembled. He was the only person who stood in the middle of this monstrous whirlwind who wasn't holding onto anything. "Make way... for my people," came out his shaking voice and another piercing roar rang in the air. He ground his teeth angrily. "Obliterate that border."

The moment that order rolled out of his tongue, the Devil's Dust roared once again and it started moving, rearing its head straight to the border. "Retreat!!!" *****

Chapter 804 Until then, they must fight together.

As the warships from the Heart and Spade kingdoms came closer, the fires of cannons grew intense. Soldiers on both sides hoist their anchors, shooting it up to the upcoming naval ships to invade one another. The battle was so intense with no land surface for a fight, thus, conquering each other's ships was their only way to win such a battle. Even when the thousand elegant stars that were dominating the sky disappeared due to the layer of darkness that covered the sky, land, and even the sea, no one paid attention to it. Those who did were people who were capable enough to pause. For instance, Stefan. Stefan stood mightily on the deck, stopping the cannons from hitting the ship he was in. Despite the distance of other ships, some of his men jumped from the ship. Using their agility, they were able to reach the enemy ship, and the enemy had done the same. Some of them fell into the sea as they met halfway, and others landed successfully. Thanks to them, no one had reached Stefan's ship so far. "Hell's Gate," whispered Stefan, looking heavenward.

Unlike the surprise of others upon seeing the Hell's Gate, Stefan didn't show the slightest surprise. He had conspired with Zero in the past, and he was also aware of Zero's connection to the mainland. The reason Stefan was able to go into hiding when Samael overthrew Stefan's regime before the regression was because of that. "Foolish Quentin," he continued under his breath. "You knew the mainland wouldn't care whether you succeed or not. Yet you are continuing to unleash such dangerous powers they lent you."

Zero might be a genius and a powerful vampire. However, those on the mainland were cruel. Stefan couldn't judge, though. Zero would stop at nothing to attain what he wanted. He was just as selfish and greedy as those on the mainland. Stefan was aware that if Zero succeeded in his plans and defeated all of them, the mainland would come after him just like how the mainland came after all powerful vampires outside the mainland for their own twisted reason.

"I do not pity you..." Stefan peeled his eyes from the sky to the battle ahead. A loud explosion was heard from one of the enemy ships, and despite the distance, Stefan could clearly see Dominique wreaking havoc all alone. "I told you once, my friend, that you should back out. But alas, you did not take my advice." His eyes narrowed, letting the wind blow past his face. "Samael and Lilou... those two including those other people behind them, are persistent people. No matter what sort of power you borrow from another party, they wouldn't just back down. They're troublesome people to deal with and draining as well."

The reason Stefan didn't have the slightest worry for those people that were already in the land of Spade Kingdom. It was the same for those people; they didn't have the slightest worry about Stefan that was surely battling in the sea because they were each other's enemies in the past. Therefore, they were aware of each other's capabilities. Stefan might've died at the hands of Samael, but before his death, he gave them a challenging time. Considering it was just Stefan versus everyone in the past, one couldn't underestimate Stefan. If it was just one versus one, then the outcome would be uncertain. "Maxine," called Stefan quietly, and the person standing behind him remained silent. The woman, Maxine, a member of the Divine Order, kept her eyes on the king's back. Stefan stood motionless on the deck while they waited for whatever orders he had for them. So far, Stefan only ordered Dominique to assist their soldiers in battle on the front line. "Send a word to everyone to

get in formation," Stefan ordered without looking back at the members of the Divine Order he had gathered months before this attack. "We'll enter the battle soon."

Stefan slowly turned to face the people behind him. There, multiple familiar people were standing with Maxine. His eyes scanned each and every one of them; even Ramin, Charlotte, and Kristina who were originally Lilou and Samael's people, were present. Unlike the sharpness in the other members of the Divine Order, those three, in particular, had a different look in their eyes. They were looking at Stefan without the same fire in their eyes. Instead, they had this incomprehensible look, which was understandable because they remembered everything. Stefan's eyes lingered on Ramin, the holder of Labyrinth. "As you all know, Quentin unleashed a powerful ability called Hell's Gate. Since I am not a person who could unleash such a dangerous power, I am unsure myself how stable this ability was," said Stefan, glossing his eyes over their grim and solemn countenance. "But that wasn't what was important. We need to reach the land sooner."

"Please." Stefan drew a deep breath and lowered his head, humbling himself to ask for their help. "The Divine Order wasn't directly working under the king, but I am asking you to help us in this battle."

It was no secret the Divine Orders weren't mandated to work under the king. The Order was a different group of people who could wield their divine weapons. And their purpose was to stop the king if ever he lost his mind and start the carnage. That goal that was instilled in their weapons and their hearts was what made the divine bearers one. Zero might be a different king of another land, but since his success could implicate the Heart's Kingdom in the future, Stefan was humbling himself to ask them to lend him strength. "I used to work alone..." Stefan slowly raised his head, revealing his solemn countenance. "... but I cannot do this alone. I need your help."

Those members of the Divine Order who didn't manage to regain their memories were moved by the king's action. Only the three of them weren't affected by his actions. Ramin, Charlotte, and Kristina looked at each other but didn't say a word. Charlotte cleared her throat, marching to the side that caught everyone's attention. No one stopped her from whatever she was planning, watching her take this spear lying on the side. She glanced at Stefan before she blew on the tip of the spear. "I am not fighting for you..." she said, peeling her gaze from Stefan to the ship far away. "... I am doing this because my master and madam were somewhere on the land of Spade, risking their lives. Not being able to assist them is the greatest insult to me. That is why..."

Her eyes glinted as they sharpened, throwing the spear with all her might. Everyone's gaze instinctively followed the spear she threw, and much to their surprise, their keen eyes saw it pierce through the person that came up behind Dominique. "You don't need to tell us or bow your head." Charlotte dusted her hands off, setting her eyes back on Stefan. "Until we reunite with them, we'll assist you. But if you were ever to betray them, we will make sure this ocean will be your grave, Your Majesty."

Stefan maintained his stoic expression, glancing at Ramin and Kristina, who shared the same fire in their eyes. "Do as you wished." Stefan nodded in agreement. "Until then, let's fight together."

Chapter 805 If you lie, make sure you perfect it

Meanwhile, back in the Heart's Kingdom...

Silvia wrapped her body with the silk coverup standing on the balcony of her room. Her eyes were fixed on a particular direction since sunset. "You called for me?" she snapped her eyes ever so

slowly upon hearing Klaus' voice behind her, glancing over her shoulder. "What do you need me for?"

Silvia swallowed a mouthful, turning on her heel to face her brother. "What did you talk with Yul that day, Klaus?"

"Huh?"

"Yulis left the royal palace for inspection. It's been two months since — it's just an inspection, Klaus. Stefan already gathered his soldiers and ships to war and my husband hadn't returned." Silvia drew a deep breath, stopping herself from going hysterical because of the growing worry in her heart. "Where did Yulis go?"

Klaus kept quiet for a moment before he shrug nonchalantly. "I don't know, Silvia."

"Klaus!" Silvia stomped her feet toward him, grabbing the lapel of his suit tightly. "Don't lie to me. The inspection is just a cover, isn't it?"

Seeing that Klaus was keeping a tight lip, her jaw tightened. "He remembers everything, did he?" she breathed out, keeping her shaking eyes on him. "Yulis has his memory, isn't it?"

"I confronted him and tried, Silvia. What I can tell you is that he doesn't."

This time, Silvia let out a dry laugh. She released him ever so slowly, shaking her head while taking a step back. "You should really learn how to lie, Klaus," she remarked in dismay. "I don't know why you are trying to hide the truth, nor do I understand the reason Yulis chose to feign ignorance. Honestly, I don't know a lot of things ever since the regression. I had no idea why Stefan and Hell are working together now, and what else was there?"

"Was it because you can't trust me enough? Or did this have something about not being capable enough?" she continued, hurt that she was being kept in the dark. To be fair, Silvia cared little about the reason Stefan set sail with several warships, which he hadn't done before. If Samael and Stefan found the same equilibrium and chose to be allies in this lifetime, Silvia was glad. That was better than her brothers trying to kill each other. But this? Yulis? And Klaus? Silvia had no idea why they were denying it. She wouldn't have such a conclusion if Yulis returned, but the people Silvia sent to check Yulis' entourage told her Yulis used a proxy. The person doing the inspection wasn't her husband, but someone else. Furthermore, Yulis was never with them. Why did Yulis lie to Silvia? If Yulis had other plans or orders, he would've hinted at Silvia. But no. Yulis didn't leave a clue and just made her believe it was just an inspection; he would come back. Klaus's answer confirmed her suspicion. Although Klaus didn't show the slightest hesitation, that fact alone was enough to confirm her assumption. Klaus answered so fast as if he simply wanted to stop her from prying. Normally, he would show even a slight concern, but he didn't, which meant he already knew Yulis didn't do the inspection. "Silvia." Klaus's expression turned solemn. "The kingdom is now at war. The king, the Duke of Grimsbanne, and the Divine Bearers were probably engaging in a battle as we speak. Since the king isn't here, the least we can do is make sure everything in this place is in order."

"Is that the reason you chose to stay behind, Klaus?" she returned immediately. "Or do you have another reason?"

Silvia assessed the solemn countenance plastered on Klaus. "I guess it's the latter. I figured it was strange that everyone was preparing to set sail and participate in the war while you are here. You,

Klaus, of all people, will not miss slaying people like a maniac to unleash your murderous intent. It was strange that you didn't even throw a huge fit for not participating."

"What is it, Klaus?" she asked without giving him a second to think for an answer. "What is so important that you willingly stayed behind with us?"

"As I've said." Klaus cleared his throat, maintaining his composure despite the series of questions from her. "The kingdom is at war and since the king led the royal knights and the Divine Order, someone needs to stay behind. Cassara is, overall, useless in the royal court, and someone needs to assist you. You can't do everything alone, Silvia. Therefore, I chose to stay behind with a heavy heart."

"This world might've returned ten years in the past, but I am not the same Klaus anymore, Silvia. Don't forget what we've been through before this point." Klaus raised his chin, sticking to his story to protect her from the truth. It might hurt her since she knew he was lying, but that was better than letting her know what those hands of hers had done. "Do not forget, I was the Duchess of Grimsbanne's personal knight before becoming the chief knight of the Earl of Monarey. During my time, the knights from the north were the most vicious and capable. Those knights trained under me became the Earl's strongest card in his sleeve, and also the reason Claude had the strongest military in the kingdom," he added proudly, spewing nothing but facts to back up his lies. "I do not throw a huge fit just because I couldn't wield my sword and kill the people I never met. I admit I was once foolish, but even the most foolish man had to get himself together to not burden those people who didn't give up on him."

"Stefan, Hell, Lilou, and everyone was already risking their lives. The least I can do is to make sure once everything is over, they have a place to go home to and rest." Klaus huffed as a thin layer of frost coated his eyes. "If that sate your curiosity, I'll be on my way. Look for me once you had calmed down and your judgment had cleared up."

Klaus lowered his head, and without wasting a second, he turned on his heel and walked away. Silvia could only watch his back in silence, biting her inner lower lip. 'If you learned how to lie, you should practice it more to perfect it.' Silvia let out a scoff. 'That level isn't enough to fool me, Klaus.'

Little did Silvia and Klaus know the person who could give Silvia the truth she so desired was listening in her room, concocting her evil plans to sprinkle chaos in this place.

Chapter 806 What did they do to my real twin brother?

Silvia stayed on the balcony while deep in thought. Her exchange with Klaus didn't alleviate the heaviness in her heart. If anything, it only left her with a myriad of unanswered questions and doubts. It just didn't make sense to her. However, there was a point that was clear to her. Regardless of her personal issues, she was still currently the king's wife. As Stefan's wife and royalty, Silvia had to protect the court from collapsing while the king was in the war. Many officials already declared their opposition to Stefan's participation in the war, especially without a son and heir.

Claude might be the current crown prince and Stefan had already declared Claude his official heir. But despite that, many didn't support that. The only reason everyone just accepted that fact was that they were terrified of Stefan. Now that he was away without a guarantee of return, Silvia's duty was not only to protect the young Claude, but also to keep the order in this kingdom. "Seriously." Silvia

drew a deep breath with her eyes closed. "Once this was over, I won't just let them off that easily. And that includes Yulis, Klaus, and even Lilou. How dare they leave me behind just like this?"

Silvia reopened her eyes ever so slowly, letting out a deep exhale.

"Get yourself together, Silvia. We'll figure out the truth one day." She nodded in agreement, telling herself Klaus or whoever would explain the reason. There must be a deeper reason why they were keeping her in the dark. So it was only a waste if she dwell on this instead of doing something more productive. Silvia turned on her heel, going back inside her chamber to rest. But as soon as she closed the balcony, she jolted upon catching a figure standing in the dark. Her hand clutched her chest, turning her head to the person who was standing several steps from her vantage point.

"Cassara?" her brows furrowed, assessing Cassara from head to toe. "What are you doing here?"

"I just thought my sister needs some company tonight." Cassara shrugged and smiled, causing Silvia's brow to raise. "Did you find that strange?"

'It was suspicious,' was what Silvia wanted to tell her sister, but bit her tongue to stop herself. All she could do was hold Cassara's gaze momentarily. Her relationship with Cassara wasn't enough to consider good, but they had been civil. At the very least, Cassara had behaved herself for the past months. Cassara had also been vocal in wanting to live peacefully and luxuriously without getting involved in her sibling's craziness. 'I guess she really wants to change.' Silvia mentally sighed once again, feeling a little guilty for always being so wary of her sister. "Do you want some tea?" offered Silvia with a subtle smile. Cassara smacked her lips. "Up to you."

"I see. Then have a seat. I'll call for someone to bring us some."

"Alright."

Silvia watched Cassara march to the set of chairs in her chambers near the fireplace and let out another sigh. 'I'm really terrible for thinking she always has bad motives.'

She didn't dwell on her thought, shaking her head mildly. Silvia then sauntered toward the stand, picking up a bell to alert anyone outside. In almost an instant, the personal maid serving Silvia came to the chamber where she received an order from Silvia. "Yes, Your Royal Highness," said the maid politely before leaving the chamber. "The night is quite cold, so it's better to stay in," Silvia remarked as she sat down on the divan across from Cassara. When she lifted her eyes, she caught Cassara staring at the hearth silently. Her lips parted just to keep the mood light since silence meant awkwardness. "Crazy isn't it, Silvia?" Cassara mused before Silvia could speak, facing the latter squarely. "Pardon?"

"We are sisters, and yet, it feels like we are just strangers put inside the same chambers," explained Cassara with a light chuckle, setting her eyes back to the fire. "You know, Silvia, I had always thought why I was always so drawn to Hell. Even when he rejects me and abandons me, I always yearn for him."

"I realized my heart and my emotions aren't what I thought they were. It wasn't that kind of love that drove me to yearn for him, but because I felt like he was my only family. He is the only one I have, Silvia," she continued with a tinge of nostalgia in her soft tone. "Dyrroth and Hell, they're my precious brothers who loved me sincerely. So when Dyrroth left with Lucia, I couldn't believe that he had left me here. I thought Hell wouldn't do the same, but he also left to travel the world."

"At first, I told myself, everything will be fine. He will return and wouldn't leave just like Rottie. But in the end, he also abandoned me. I've always known Hell won't come back for me, but there's a stubborn part in my heart that believed he will not forget about me," she added, chuckling bitterly. "It's strange, isn't it?"

Cassara slowly faced Silvia once again. "Rottie and Hell are my half-brothers but my love for them was deeper than most biological siblings. Yet, I can't feel the same connection to my twin brother, Yulis."

"It's not even as distant as my connections to the rest of my siblings like you, Klaus, Alistair, Alphonse, and everyone. One way or another, even when I'm not particularly close with everyone, a part of me... my blood in particular recognized you as my siblings." She peeled her eyes from Silvia back to the hearth. The light from the fire danced on her beautiful, unsmiling face. "It just feels nothing as if he wasn't my family at all, like a stranger that has no connection to me except everyone's claims that he is my twin brother and carries the name La Crox."

The corner of her lips curled up. "Should I keep turning a blind eye to that, Silvia?"

Silvia held her breath, eyes fixed on Cassara's side profile. When the latter faced her once again, her lips quivered open, but her voice was stuck in her throat. "Or should I keep wondering what did they do to my real twin brother?"

Chapter 807 I'd rather face the cruel truth than be coaxed by a lie

"Or should I keep wondering what did they do to my real twin brother?"

Silvia held her breath as she stared at Cassara's face, gripping the armrest unknowingly. In the future, everyone would know that Yulis wasn't actually a La Crox, but a pureblooded Bloodfang. No one questioned it, nor did this truth even matter. There was a more important matter to settle, and Yulis's origins were not of them.

Yulis was with Lilou; thus, his loyalty was all that mattered. However, it was an entirely different case with Cassara. Cassara always believed Yulis was her twin brother. Growing up, Cassara and Yulis were the closest and the distance between them just somehow grew wider.

"Did they kill him?" Cassara inquired, breaking the building-up silence in Silvia's chambers. "Did they kill my brother, Silvia?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Cassara."

"There's no need to pretend, Silvia." Cassara shook her head mildly. "I am not asking if this was the truth. All I want to know is whether my real brother is still alive or if they killed him even before he could see the beauty of this world."

"Cassara."

"I always had this feeling even before, but I deluded myself that it was probably because I am not just as fond of him as much as when we were children. My focus was on Rottie and Hell, so I blamed myself for the growing distance between me and my twin." Cassara cut her off mid-sentence. "Back then, every time I look at him, I have to shun this guilt."

"Maybe I should be a little more considerate of him. He is my twin, after all. However, he doesn't even care about me. Why would I care? Those were my thoughts back then. I would go on with my

day with those thoughts, but deep in my heart, I knew I was simply deluding myself," she continued in a quiet voice. "A big part of my heart couldn't help but blame him."

"If only my twin brother care about me enough, I wouldn't have to squeeze myself into Rottie and Hell's life. If only he showed even the slightest concern. Perhaps I wouldn't crave love from a sibling. He would be enough for me; after all, he was my only real family and we're siblings," she added, smiling bitterly as she lowered her eyes. "But instead of blaming him and hating him, I just thought maybe if I ignore him, I wouldn't hate my brother."

"He is my twin, and it's better if, instead of loathing his existence, we'll remain passive with each other. I don't want to hate him, Silvia. I love him because, at the end of the day, he was my twin." Cassara slowly raised her eyes, holding Silvia's gaze firmly. "But as I grow older, I couldn't help but raise some suspicion about our connection."

"Is he really my twin brother? But why can't I feel the same connection I had with the rest of my step-siblings?" she tilted her head to the side. "It took me two lifetimes to come up to a logical conclusion. Or rather, it took me two lifetimes to have the courage to acknowledge this conclusion."

"Yulis isn't my brother, is he?" Cassara added with a tinge of certainty. "He is not my brother or yours or even has a little bit of blood of the La Crox."

Silvia opened her mouth, but her voice was lost in her throat. How was she supposed to answer that? Yulis's real origin and purpose were easier to accept back then, but the situation was different.

"I have no idea." Silvia shook her head when she recovered her voice, sticking to her initial resolution to feign ignorance. "If you have concerns, you should ask Yulis, not me. I have more important things to settle since Stefan was out there in the front line for you and me and for the people of this land."

Cassara let out a dry snicker. "Right... my concerns were always not important to anyone."

"Cassara, that is not what I mean."

"And what do you mean, Silvia?" Cassara cocked her head to the side. "That my concerns, my feelings, and my questions could be dealt with later? That my feelings are important, but they can take another delay? Isn't that so hypocritical? Do you... people really take me for a fool?"

Silvia let out a deep exhale, pinching the bridge of her nose.

"I know I cannot blame everyone, since I've always acted spoiled and clueless." Cassara shook her head, letting out another short, dry laugh. "It's not that I am a fool, Silvia. It's just that I really don't care about everything that's going on in here. I don't have a huge ambition in life."

Cassara planted her hand on the armrest, pushing herself up while continuing her sentiments.

"All I ever wanted was for my siblings to have a good relationship, just like when we were children. Those peaceful days... when we didn't care about who takes the throne or how to get more power. Everyone, you included, is just tense. That is why I always thought that perhaps if they have a foolish sister, they would loosen up a bit." "What are you doing?" Silvia arched her brow, watching Cassara approach her seat. She raised her head when Cassara stood beside her chair, cocking her head to the side, puzzled. Cassara gazed down at Silvia in silence momentarily. Her eyes were emotionless; the pompous princess she used to be was gone. All that was left was the lack of

emotion for the person before her. Matter of fact, Cassara didn't seem to care about anything anymore.

"Cassara." Silvia pushed herself up, only to sit down again as Cassara pressed Silvia's shoulder. Her eyes went wide in surprise, gazing up at Cassara in surprise. "Cassara, what are you —"

"I went here tonight because I cannot decide whether to punish you or not." A thick layer of frost coated Cassara's eyes. "Deep in my heart, I was hoping my sister will at least share my sentiments and try to console me. However, you just shrug off my concerns like usual. Thus, don't blame me for punishing you, Silvia."

Cassara swiftly moved her hand from Silvia's shoulder to the latter's temple. Her other hand was on the other side of Silvia's head, bending over until they were at eye level. "At this point, I'd rather face the cruel truth than be coaxed by a lie, Silvia. I hope you are the same." The side of her lips curled up. "Because your truth... will cripple you, Silvia. I'll teach you how to enlighten someone."

Silvia's lips parted, wide-eyed. Before she could retaliate, she was suddenly pulled to the crippling memories Silvia, herself tried to seal so she would forget about them.

Chapter 808 Silvia

Love... was something Silvia always had to think over a hundred times. Her first love came to ruin with how it ended with Rufus and her. She loved Rufus and even after years — decades, Silvia always hoped to mend their broken heart by giving each other a chance.

Obviously, that didn't happen. Even when she met Rufus again after many years, Rufus was stubborn. He wanted nothing to do with her, or even if he had to work with her, he made sure to keep a clear line between them. That was how she ended up with Yulis.

It might appear that Silvia was simply using Yulis to forget about Rufus. No, it wasn't. What she felt for Yulis was something unexpected, and a feeling she suppressed, afraid she would ruin her familial relationship with her 'brother.'

She struggled to keep her budding feelings for him until it just happened. There were no plans or anything of the sort. Silvia and Yulis just became lovers, and they were happy. It might not be as smooth sailing at first, but they got married and supported each other. No doubt they were happy, looking forward to spending the rest of their endless life with each other. His love was like no other. Yulis was different; he made Silvia love herself more, knowing he was just right behind her, supporting her every step of the way. It was the same for her to him. Whatever decision Yulis would make, Silvia would be there cheering for him. But how come this love she was so proud of and the relationship she cherished the most had such a dark and tragic turn?

With the unsolicited help from Cassara, Silvia was able to see how happy she was with Yulis for the first two years of their marriage. The two of them barely have disagreements, and even if they had, they would talk it out and settle it. Despite that Silvia stayed in the La Lona March while Yulis in Grimsbanne, he would go to her no matter how far it was to be with her. Or Silvia would go to the Grimsbanne whenever she missed him.

Their distance wasn't a huge problem, giving their people priorities but at the same time, not making that an excuse not to do their marital duties. When the third year of their marriage rolled in, something happened that both of them didn't expect. Their relationship was just as good as the past year until Silvia met with someone. That was when everything about Silvia went south.

"Thank you for granting my request to visit you, marchioness." Silvia stared at the person sitting across from her inside the sitting room of the Marchioness. "I was afraid because the empire will be welcoming an empress soon, and you will be busy with the changes and arrangements."

"There is no need for formality, Beatrice." Silvia kept a stern countenance. "You know that I am currently preoccupied with assisting His Majesty and His Highness Heliot with this union. But alas, I have to make time since you said in your letters the Empire and the Karo Kingdom are in great danger."

"Let's not beat around the bush and get to the point." She continued without a moment's pause. "What is the mainland wants from us, Princess?"

The corner of Beatrice's lips curled up into a smirk. "They want everyone's demise."

"Hah..."

"Silvia, you do understand that the founders of the Heart's Kingdom were heirs and heiresses of their clans. They had responsibilities in the past from the land they came from, but alas, they chose to leave that land and become traitors," Beatrice continued. "Leaving the mainland was never a huge deal. However, with multiple heirs leaving at once, unnecessary problems rose."

"Being an heir of a powerhouse clan means these people were capable. I think that's not a surprise, considering most of them built their kingdom from scratch after parting ways," she added in the same solemn tone. "My point here is, since the people in the mainland — mainly, those who replaced those heirs were threatened."

"Are you saying because they were threatened that their relatives were out here, minding their own affairs, they want to end all of us?"

"Not really." Beatrice chuckled, shaking her head mildly. "All I'm saying is since Quentin had been in contact with them, you have to be careful."

"Quentin is dead. What else can a dead person do?"

"Do not underestimate Quentin, Silvia. He might've died, but don't be complacent. He is not someone who will go down that easily. It wouldn't be surprising if he comes back from the dead," humored Beatrice, smirking. "I am simply warning you since the Cross Kingdom and the Heart's Empire were now allies. I still get intel from the mainland, so I'm keeping an eye on the people who helped me."

Silvia narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "Princess, I am baffled."

"Hmm?"

"If this matter is so important and you are truly concerned about the empire, why did you come to me?" asked Silvia bluntly. "You've spent a good amount of time with His Majesty. Therefore, I don't think he will disregard your requests, especially if it was as important as this."

"Well..." Beatrice smiled, but it didn't reach her eyes. "I believed he is busy."

"Don't lie to me, Beatrice. You asked for my time. Don't make me regret sparing you a moment of my time just to listen to your half-truths."

Beatrice laughed dryly. "Well, you can say I was hopeful to see Yulis."

"Princess, are you still hopeful of seducing my husband?" Silvia's expression turned icy the moment Yulis's name rolled out of Beatrice's vile mouth. "Leave Yulis alone. I think he had already made it clear enough for you to understand there's no way there's a chance for the both of you."

"You speak so cruelly, marchioness," Beatrice humored. "Admiring your husband is a form of flattery. You should be proud that a beauty like me admires Yulis."

"If that is all, you may now leave." Silvia didn't beat around the bush. "I will investigate this matter."

"Very well." Beatrice pushed herself up, straightening her back. "Take care, Marchioness. I mean it. Don't get bitten by anything. They sting."

Silvia just assessed Beatrice's short smile before the latter turned around to leave. She didn't think anything else about this exchange at first, a little distracted by Beatrice's delusion about Yulis. Little did Silvia know, letting this meeting happen with Beatrice was akin to opening a door for a nightmare to enter easily.

Chapter 809 This punishment was indeed crippling

Days later...

Silvia wiped the blades of her saber while sitting on the edge of the bed. Her white nightdress was drenched in blood and her face had some speck on it. She cleaned it so calmly, but her eyes looked dim and lifeless as if she was unconscious with her eyes open. "It's crazy," she whispered, blinking and a sign of life resurfaced in her eyes. "How did I get this far for you."

Silvia looked back and her eyes fell on the dead and bleeding body of Yulis lying on the bed. She smacked her lips, not showing the slightest remorse for what she had done. "I warned you many times, Yulis. I sent you as many letters and invitations. What did you do?" Silvia twisted her body, crawling her way on top of his lifeless body. "I was left with no choice, Yulis."

The only time her eyes revealed a tinge of sadness was when she thought of the longing she felt every time Yulis made her feel unimportant. Even her act of kindness and sincere deed, he wouldn't listen to her. If only he did, Silvia, or rather, the person who possessed Silvia's body, wouldn't need to sully her hands. "Now, you won't have to worry about many things, Yulis." Silvia cupped his cheek, smiling subtly at him. "You will rest in peace... and I'd be at peace too. After all, I wouldn't think of what you and your wife are doing since she wouldn't be able to be with you."

Her eyes narrowed until they were partially closed. She bent over until she was resting her body on top of his lifeless body. The side of her head rested on his bloody chest, humming him a lullaby. "They won't be able to hurt you anymore, Yulis," she whispered after some time, patting his arm with her fingertips. "And you wouldn't be able to see what else I'm about to do. Or rather, what I'd do with these hands. Don't worry, Silvia wouldn't know a thing. Once everything is over, I'd join you to hell, Yulis. Silvia can just do whatever the hell she wants to do. I'm tired."

Exhaustion washed over her face and her eyes softened as if all hope she used to have disappeared. "I missed Alphonse," came out a murmur, letting out a deep exhale. "Good for him he died early. He didn't need to witness or experience everything I was going through. Cross Kingdom is in shambles because of those damn wolves. Now, the mainland had everyone on a leash."

"How would I face Alphonse in hell with this failure I'm carrying with me?" she continued, speaking the things that she only knew. "I need to make things right. Quentin is still giving me a headache even when he's dead. Seriously. Just what the hell did that man do to make the king support him and silence Stefan?" "I think it's all Stefan's fault," she added with another deep sigh. "If not for him, I wouldn't be in this mess."

Silvia pushed herself up, setting her eyes on Yulis's pale face. "It's Stefan's fault, right? Or was it Heliot? Well, Stefan's dead, and Heliot is about to die soon. People are just dying with no one knowing. But you... those people you care for might not know your death, but I will always remember you, Yulis."

"See? I am the only one who truly cares for you." She cupped his face once again, smiling. "Too bad you'd never realize that. But oh well, it's your honor to die in the hands of the woman who truly cared for you."

"Do not forget, Yulis," she added, giving her remarks a little bit of stress. "Beatrice Le Blac. That is the woman you need to come after."

Silvia's face turned colder as the thin smile on her face disappeared. That night, Silvia locked this chamber in her castle in La Lona March and forbid anyone from coming inside. The next day, when Silvia woke up, all she felt was her aching muscle as if she did a marathon. However, she didn't dwell on it as she went on with her day like usual. That same day, she received a letter from the Grimsbanne — a letter from her husband. Not knowing her husband was simply rotting in one of the rooms inside the same castle. Since then, her setup with Yulis continued, living separately. There were a few times Silvia would 'meet' Yulis and spend time with him, not knowing she was simply living in a well-crafted illusion. Not just her, but everyone especially in the duchy lived in an illusion where Yulis was alive. Not knowing, the Grimsbanne was slowly crumbling down with people from outside the empire taking charge bit by bit. No one knew what was going on and how the capable empire like the Heart's Empire was getting handicapped without their knowledge. Until that night of the attack, the same person once again possessed Silvia's body.

Just like what she did to Yulis, Silvia carefully poisoned Rufus so he wouldn't struggle like Yulis did. Rufus trusted Silvia so much that he didn't know she was already ruining him like a parasite. Even the empress, Florence Von Stein, had no idea she was keeping a snake under her nose. However, no matter how perfect her plans were, things still didn't go the way she planned. On the night of Rufus's death, Fabian was in the imperial palace. Hence, Fabian managed to stop 'Silvia' or rather, Beatrice, who had gotten control of Silvia's consciousness. That night, Florence was able to live and Fabian ended Silvia without mercy. Silvia, who was very useful, died beside her first love. Meanwhile, Fabian was able to find her, but before he could kill her, Zero's plans came into motion. The time reversed.

It saved Beatrice in a nick of time, and the damages she caused were repaired, driving her to square one. It wouldn't be a problem if people didn't know. However, some troublesome people retained their memories. Cassara brought Fabian's memories as well, and now Cassara had done the same to Silvia. Cassara brought back all the memories that were not originally Silvia's, but of the person who possessed her while she was inside Silvia's body. It was, indeed, Cassara's punishment for Silvia. This truth was enough to cripple Silvia.

Chapter 810 Misery loves company

[PRESENT TIME]

Cassara slowly retrieved her hands from Silvia's temple. Her eyes were cold, taking a step back, studying Silvia's blank countenance. Bringing back Fabian allowed Cassara to see things she never wished to see and uncover some truths she wasn't ready to know. However, Samael forced her to bring Fabian's memories back, knowing that the butler's twisted mind was harmful to Cassara or even to anyone. It was unfair when Cassara was struggling to keep her sanity, while Silvia was being protected. On top of that, Cassara loathed Samael and Yulis for pretending to be her twin brother. She might not know what happened to her real twin brother, but it didn't matter. He could've been murdered so Yulis could replace him.

"I... am all alone in here," whispered Cassara, watching Silvia's blank eyes move to hold her gaze. "I don't have anyone to protect me. Now, you might have everyone to protect you, but yourself."

"May the guilt of killing your husband and Rufus and everyone around you eat you alive you'd wish to die." The corner of her lips curled up into a smirk. "That is just a small portion of how my mind torments me. I hope now, you will understand my sufferings."

Another layer of frost coated Cassara's eyes before turning on her heel. Just as she took a step away, she halted upon hearing Silvia's tiny, shaking voice.

"Why...?" Silvia breathed out, barely keeping herself together with these vile memories playing in her head repeatedly. "Why are you doing this, Cassara?"

"Why?" Cassara scoffed weakly, glancing over her shoulder. "Misery loves company, my dearest sister. I am all alone in here, hence, I invited you."

With that being said, Cassara resumed her steps, leaving the chamber without looking back. All Silvia could do was stare at her sister's back until the door shut behind Cassara. "Hah..." Silvia clutched her chest, gasping for air as layers of tears coated her eyes. "I... I..."

Silvia's breath hitched, unable to grasp and come to terms with these vivid memories in her head. She slowly raised her trembling hands, staring at these palms that killed the people she cared about.

"Hah!" her face scrunched up as tears stained her cheeks. "What did I do?"

Although Silvia was aware she was possessed by another when she did those atrocious acts, guilt still gnawed at her heart. She should've known, was what she told herself. Silvia should've known something was wrong with her instead of throwing those thoughts at the back of her head. If only she did, she would know Yulis wasn't in Grimsbanne and he wasn't the person sending those letters. If Silvia paid close attention, those letters and that handwriting from Yulis were hers, and Yulis's rotting body was just right around the corner.

There were many signs which Silvia purposely ignored, complacent that everything was over and there was nothing to be afraid of anymore. That this story already came to an end, and they should all live happily ever after. But alas... because she was complacent, she didn't get to value and treasure the meaning of happily ever after. The end of the story didn't mean their lives came to an end, but rather, it was simply a new beginning of what sort of life they had to protect and maintain. Silvia failed to realize that or rather, she realized it far too late. Even if Yulis was alive now and the time-reversed, the guilt remained. No wonder Yulis chose to pretend he didn't regain his memories and Klaus chose to keep it a secret as well. The truth was something they could barely grasp; what more, Silvia, who was used as a tool to harm the people she cared for?

"Ahh..." Silvia sobbed and her cry had a tinge of unspeakable pain. She was clutching her chest while her other hand grabbed her hair.

Silvia could only lament as misery embraced her tightly; her pain hindered her from sleeping despite the amount of tears she had shed. There were no words to describe the pain; the memories were akin to a time bomb, tick-tocking, waiting for someone to set it off, before it detonated, destroying her from the inside. *****

Meanwhile...

The Cross Kingdom was known to be a land reigned by vampires who blatantly and shamelessly publicized their hate for werewolves. In this land, werewolves were nothing but pets, and over time, owning one or owning at least their pelts had become a symbol of status. With this information laid on the table, Yulis could only say one thing: The people of the Cross Kingdom were not only twisted but capable. For vampires to go against the werewolves, it only meant they were confident they could fight the werewolves head-on. This practice had dated back many generations, after all, and this practice continued up until this day. Standing in the dark alley, Yulis leaned his side against the wall. His arms were folded under his chest and his head was covered with a hood. His eyes were fixed on the crowd, thronging the plaza for a special festival in this land.

'While other people were fighting and dying in a war, the people here were having the time of their life,' he thought, observing everything unfold. 'Not that I blame them, though. The war between the Heart and Spade Kingdom had nothing to do with them.'

'However...' Yulis eyes glinted, watching some people approach the platform in the middle of the square. 'I have some serious business with the people in this place.' His jaw tightened, setting his eyes on some people on the platform wearing the Le Blac royal family insignia. With them was a man tied up, ushering him to the guillotine for a public execution. Yes. One of the main events in this festival was a public execution of a werewolf. This was to show that their country was stronger than ever and to reassure the people even the werewolves couldn't touch them. Just when Yulis thought the Heart's Kingdom was already worse; who would have thought there was an even worst kingdom?

Yulis slowly raised his eyes at the towering Royal Palace standing gloriously at the peak of the mountain. "Beatrice Le Blac," he whispered as contempt swirled in his eyes. "I hope you are prepared just as you said."