

The Duke 81

Chapter 81 - Leaving Whistlebird

Lord Anton cast Fabian a look. Then silence. The only sound that dominated the dining hall was my fork faintly hitting my plate as I ate.

Everyone stopped eating, but I couldn't. This felt new to me, after all. The Duke of Grimsbanne's mansion was too peaceful. I got used to it.

I promised to accept whatever Sam's side would show me. But I didn't expect to be in a suffocating situation early in the morning. Thus, I'll remain silent and act naturally.

Yes, natural. But heck! Stuffing my mouth was not natural... well, this meat was actually tender and flavorful.

Unlike my plan to stay away and pretend I'm not here by eating, the effect was the opposite. One after another, under this stifling silence, all eyes turned to me.

With a stuffed mouth, I awkwardly skimmed through the eyes that were cast upon me. What?

Unconsciously, I still shove the fork inside my mouth carefully.

"Are you..." As I chewed half of the meat in my mouth down, I asked. "... going to kill me?"

"Pfft—!" I immediately turned my attention to Sam who suddenly burst out in laughter. "They want to, Silly. But you're eating too much, it feels awkward to stop you midway and not finish your last meal!"

What? My eyes instantly went wide. I would choke on my food if I didn't stop chewing the food in my mouth.

"Your Highness, do you think the king will approve of your marriage to a mortal?" Lord Anton sneered as he lowered his tone.

"With what have you done to our clan, I'm won't be surprised if the Davidson and other clans in Grimsbanne had experienced worse. Do you think His Majesty, the King, will just sit still?"

The Davidson... My brows furrowed. I heard that noble family as a peasant. Being a peasant, we're very wary about the people we shouldn't offend.

That noble clan nearly killed me in the past. When someone pushed me down the road, I nearly got run over by their family carriage. If not for a kind samaritan who pulled me up just in time, I'd be dead long ago.

Wait. What did Lord Anton say? What did Sam do to the Davidson?

"He knew about my awakening. I wonder why the Remington and his other supporters hadn't heard about it?" Sam cocked his head to the side, sporting an innocent look on his face.

Slowly, Sam leaned forward, resting his elbows on the edge of the table. His eyes narrowed, linking his hands together as he placed his chin on the back of his hand.

"You all know that if I wake up from my long slumber, none of you are safe."

Sam, acting like a cunning nobleman, looked a little... appealing. I'm too used to seeing his sweet side that I forgot he's a Duke. I like it, either way.

"Is that a threat again, Your Highness?"

"A threat?" Sam sneered, pleased at something I didn't know. "It's a fact. You, along with the Davidson and other nobles, had started the rumors about me wanting to covet the throne. How come you sound surprised if I wanted to play the role?"

What? Instinctively, I cast Sam a look. He glanced at me and cleared his throat.

"I mean, obviously, I didn't want to carry the weight of the crown. But you keep pressing that matter and consistently put a wedge between me and my brother."

Sam added, looking away from me. Did he take it back because I looked at him?

Did he remember getting bitten? Heh.

Was my thoughts due to stress? I felt like they're getting darker.

"I won't step down as the Duke of Whistlebird, Your Highness. I only obey and listen to my king. Whistlebird is my fief, and you returned our kind gesture of welcoming you by demeaning our family's honor." Lord Anton's tone grew firmer.

His crimson eyes didn't leave Sam. Aside from him, the rest remained silent. Just like what I'm doing.

"Did I sound like I'm requesting you to step down? Anton?" Sam raised a brow. He then slowly stood up, walking calmly towards Lord Anton.

My gaze followed Sam's figure. His fingers trailed the high-back chairs which caused the individuals across me whom he passed by stiffened.

Suddenly, Sam stopped behind Noah's seat. Unlike last night, that man was like a tamed cat. His complexion paler, sensing that Sam stood behind him.

I didn't understand the fear creeping out on their faces. I'm aware Sam's mien was different. However, perhaps it was because I'm a mortal that I couldn't sense what these noble vampires sensed.

Lord Anton didn't yield as he remained his eye contact with Sam. "Will you use violence again? Unfortunately, even if you kill us all now, we won't turn back on our words."

"We? You mean you and your entire family's words?" Sam smirked as he tapped Noah's shoulder. "Is that right?"

He asked, cleaning on Noah's side. The latter's lower lip trembled as he breathed through his lips.

To my surprise, Noah turned his eyes towards Lord Anton. His eyes flickered with resolve.

"No, Your Highness." Noah answered. "The Duke of Whistlebird had committed unforgivable crimes and used the Remington's name for his own benefit."

I blinked my eyes in disbelief. Did I hear him right? Was he selling his own father out?

"Noah!" In a greater disbelief, Lord Anton slammed his palms against the table. "Have you lost your mind?! I already knew you're a failure of a son! But, I didn't know you'd be this foolish!"

"No, Father." Noah argued immediately. His voice thundered, resonating across each corner of the dining hall.

"You are the one who's foolish! You got blinded by material things and the people of Whistlebird suffered!"

"Noah!" The tension between Sam and Lord Anton shifted immediately between the father and son.

"Do you know the consequences of your action, son?!"

"I'll take responsibility for my action, Lord Anton. And I no longer see you fit to the title."

What was going on? Why did this Noah suddenly had a change of heart?

"Kill this disgrace in our family." Lord Anton ground his teeth as he ordered. However, no one around the table acted under his order.

Instead, they all turned to Lord Anton and smirked. Even without saying a word, I felt that everyone of them had sided with Noah.

"The tide has turned, Father. It is time for you to step down." Noah smiled as he briefly cast a look at the rest of the people around the table.

"My lady, are you done with your meal?" Suddenly, Fabian came up from behind me, snapping me back from my puzzlement.

"Uh, n — yes." But I'm intrigued by how things would unfold.

"Please follow me. It's time for us to set off." Fabian informed. I blinked and glanced at Lord Anton, laughing maniacally.

It seemed he didn't expect this to happen. Well, I didn't. Just... what happened?

Chapter 82 - Leaving Whistlebird II

When I followed Fabian, Sam remained with the Remington. I kept tilting my head from side to side, glancing at Fabian's back constantly.

My lips parted, but no words came out. I'd ask Sam instead.

Soon, we reached outside the mansion. Wow... the Remington's mansion was twice as huge as Sam's.

The knights were already outside, and so was our carriage. As we approached them, I thought about something.

"Mister Fabian?" I called out, furrowing my brows.

Fabian looked back at me. "Yes, my lady?"

"Now that I think about it, why did Sir Rufus left behind in Grimsbanne? Shouldn't he supposed to escort his grace?" I asked.

We stopped in front of the carriage's door. Slowly, Fabian faced me with his usual smile.

That's right. I forgot to ask this question yesterday. But now that I saw the knights waiting for us outside the mansion, I remembered this question.

"Because he needed to watch over Grimsbanne while the Duke is not around."

"Oh..." I nodded in understanding. The last time Sam went to the Capital, schemes had put Grimsbanne in peril. Doing precautionary measures now just made sense.

"So you came to escort the duke instead?" I perked up, throwing another question at him.

Although I didn't want to judge Fabian, but wasn't he a butler? How would he protect the Duke?

"No, my lady. I came with you as your personal attendant." Fabian reminded me.

Right. He already told me that. How could I forget?

"The Duke will soon follow us. Please wait for him inside, my lady." Fabian beckoned.

I glanced back at the mansion for the last time. As I looked at its beautiful structure, a sigh slipped past my lips.

This mansion and the Duke's mansion might not appear the same from the outside. However, both mansions emanated gloom if one stared at it.

"I guess wealth is not enough to fill the emptiness in a vampire, huh?" I mumbled, without realizing it.

"No material things can't fill that void in a vampire's world, my lady." Only I realized I spoke my thoughts aloud when Fabian answered.

But well, I could tell anything to Fabian, and he wouldn't judge it.

"So, why are the vampires fighting for material things if it won't fill that void?" I queried once again.

The King had done everything to secure his throne. The Remington gathered their wealth despite the sufferings of their people. Most vampires I've seen indulged themselves in luxury; expensive dresses, jewelries, and lavish lifestyle.

I thought those were their ultimate goal in life to maintain their lifestyle. But now, with a different perspective, it didn't look like it.

"Because we're all slaves into something which drives us to live, my lady." Fabian answered me politely. "I'm not a noble vampire, but to what I see it, it is their only means to fill that void."

"Slaves into something..."

"Lord Anton's method was to be the wealthiest man in the Heart's Kingdom. But to maintain that wealth, he had to exploit more. And that keeps him busy for hundreds of years." Fabian elaborated for me to understand.

He didn't need to. I already understood his point.

But what was interesting was how Fabian worded his previous remarks. We're just slaves.

And this quick journey in Whistlebird had proved that argument. And for that reason, everyone was just pitiful.

"I guess there's only a few nobles in this kingdom." I smiled and shifted my gaze to Fabian.

He smiled back and chuckled. "You're one of them, my lady."

"No, I'm not." I shook my head lightly as I pivoted on my heel, facing the carriage's door. "I'm also a slave. The happiest and the willing slave of the Duke of Grimsbanne."

I shot Fabian a grin. He replied with a brighter smile before assisting me inside the carriage.

It didn't take long when Sam and Noah exited the mansion. Sam was walking ahead of Noah. I watched them through the window as the two approached.

When they reached the carriage, Sam faced Noah. "Don't worry about the King. I'll tell him about what happened here."

"Thank you, Your Highness." Noah placed his palm on his chest and bowed.

Sam nodded before he turned around and trudged towards the carriage. However, just as he opened the door of the carriage, I heard Noah exclaim.

"Your highness!" Sam turned around, raising his brow upon Noah's call. "The Remington will support you if you plan to..."

"No." Sam halted Noah's words. "I only meddled in this town's affair because of my good friend Alfie. What you plan to do in Whistlebird hereafter is none of my business."

Sam remarked solemnly. He then hitched inside.

When Sam entered the carriage, I stared at him in silence.

"What?" He asked, finding his comfort position on his seat.

Slowly, the corner of my lips stretched into a smile. My eyelashes fluttered rapidly.

And the carriage started moving.

"What?" Still puzzled, Sam leaned back as he gazed at me in disbelief.

"Nothing." I shook my head, but I couldn't hide the grin on my lips.

Sam put his finger up in front of him and said, "My love, that expression of yours tells me it's not nothing. And it's quite terrifying, Lilove."

My traitorous chuckle escaped my lips. I then pursed my lips in a thin line and cleared my throat.

"So what is it?" He asked, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

"I just realize I'm a slave." I confessed.

"Well, that doesn't sound like a good news, Love."

"It's not?" I asked. "How could that be?"

Sam scratched his temple in distress. Why would he look so distressed about what something I'm happy about?

"You're starting to worry me, love." Sam mumbled with a sigh.

I chuckled, cupping my cheek in delight. "I love you."

Sam flinched, which made me happy even more. His expression told me he didn't expect to hear that right now.

"What did Fabian tell you?" Yet Sam remained suspicious.

But I ignored it. Although being a slave truly was terrible, I didn't mind if my master was him.

"Nothing." I chuckled as I shook my head. "Care to share what happened to the Remington, master?"

I said that to divert his attention from me. However, Sam's cheek suddenly reddened.

"Master?" He gasped, fanning himself. "Darling, be careful with your words. Goodness... we're still in the mansion's vicinity and we might stay for a little while if you continue this."

"Hehehe..."

"I feel so sensitive. Goodness. Am I pregnant?" Sam mumbled as he opened the window for some air.

Chapter 83 - Day And Night. Even Afternoon?

"What?" I gasped in disbelief. "Lord Noah and Teddy are friends before?"

Sam nodded, crossing his arms. "They are best friends."

Did I hear him correctly? How could...?

"Hundreds of years ago, I stayed in Whistlebird for quite some time. Noah is a child back then. I remember he used to play with a child from the Brown in secret. How time flies and now they look much older than me!"

Sam shook his head dejectedly while clicking his tongue. I could not help my face but sport a conflicted look.

Teddy and Noah didn't look older than Sam. They looked... the same age as him.

Sam is really old, huh? He's like my ancestor.

"But Anton had this firm belief that nobles should stay above others."

"Is that the reason their friendship ended?" I wondered, shrugging my other thoughts away.

"Well, more or less. But they're friends until recently when Anton found out that Noah and Teddy were planning to change Whistlebird." Sam added.

I furrowed my brows, casting him a look to continue. Taking notice of my interest, Sam cleared his throat.

"Kiss me after this. My throat will —"

"Kiss." Before he could finish, I kissed in the air and smiled. "There you go."

Sam sighed upon seeing my action. "You're so precious, Lilove." He said before he continued;

"Alright, I mean Noah and Teddy had this plan. However, as I've said, Albert found out about it and you can guess how Anton heard this news. Fast forward, instead of Albert and Anton punishing the Browns, Noah volunteered to do it himself."

"Punish? You mean that's why Lord Noah had done all that in the restaurant?"

"Mhm. It is his way to redeem himself in the family and to save his dear friend. Being humiliated is better than to die, right?" Sam cast me a knowing look.

If they put it that way, I couldn't argue about it. It was unfortunate that Noah had to hurt his friend and himself to keep that friend alive.

"But, why did he have to bring Arthur for revenge?" I queried with a furrowed brow.

"Sweet darling," Sam sighed. "Noah had figured who I am. If he was truly on the Remington's side, he wouldn't bring Albert knowing he's delivering his brother to death."

"Oh..."

"Noah is a cunning man. When you think someone is weak, that's when one person slowly realizes it was them who's gone weaker. He used me to teach his brother a lesson! Isn't he wise? How dare that young one use me to his plans!" Sam complained as he frowned.

"But you let him use you." My reply caused Sam's brow to arch. "You already know about it, didn't you? But still played the role. Why?"

"Oh, Lilove." His eyes flickered in amusement. "How can you see through me like that? I feel violated~!"

I pursed my lips in a thin line. "You know Noah's nature. And it's not Albert, it's Arthur."

Not that I'm lying. However, at the back of my head, it only made sense that Sam already figured it out. When did he figure it out was not important.

"What happened to Mister Brown?" I asked, diverting the subject.

"He nearly died, but he's fine."

"Nearly died?"

"Well, Albert made a hole in Teddy's chest! Even a vampire will die, love." Sam shrugged his shoulder as if he was merely describing a worm inside an apple.

"A hole in Teddy's chest... goodness." I gasped, covering my lips with my palm.

"Don't worry about it. He nearly died but didn't die, alright?" Sam clicked his tongue in annoyance. "How annoying."

"Why are you so annoyed?" I blurted out, not realizing I took notice of his tone.

"Because you're getting all worried about another man! I already have to fight with Fabian for your attention." Sam unhesitatingly exclaimed.

"What?" Stunned, I blinked many times. He's jealous? Over a simple thing?

Sam shrugged his shoulders indifferently. His brows raised.

"I should be the only man inside your mind and heart." He selfishly announced.

"Is that an order? My lord?" Slowly, my brow arched as I narrowed my eyes suspiciously.

He pressed his lips together, scratching his temple as he looked away. "Do you listen to orders?"

My expression immediately vanished. If I listen to him, he'd really order me to think just about him? Not that I'm against it.

"I already think about you day and night, though." I mumbled, as I scratched my chin.

But Sam's hearing was keen — very keen. Hence, he heard me which made his eyes brimmed with sparkles.

"Hmm?" Upon noticing his sparkling pair of eyes, I furrowed my brows. "What is it, my lord?"

"You think about me day and night?" He asked, grinning.

"Uh... yes?"

"Even afternoon?"

I blew air through my mouth and slightly puffed my cheek. "I think about you every second of every day, my lord. That's why I'm a slave."

"Heh."

He's happy. It was fascinating how easy to make Sam happy. With simple words — not even heartfelt — already brought this charming smile on his face.

My heart warmed up as I looked at him longer. Maybe it was not just words, but honesty as well.

It was unbelievable to think I had an argument with him last night. Never in my life I would have ever imagined being in the same carriage with him.

Having conversation with him without being afraid for my life. It still felt surreal. But I've been slowly embracing my reality now.

"By the way, how long until we reach the Capital?" I asked, out of curiosity.

We just left Whistlebird hours ago. I wondered how many days it would take us to arrive in the Capital and how many towns and cities would we have to stop by.

"Three to five days. Why?" Sam answered and queried back. "Are you excited?"

"No." I shook my head lightly. "I just want to know so I can prepare myself."

I explained. Our short time in Whistlebird had showed me a glimpse of what to expect in the Capital. The complicated land of where Sam had lived half of his life.

A land of schemes and schemes and schemes.

Taking notice of my abrupt silence, Sam extended his arm to me. I raised my gaze and saw his gentle smile.

"You'll be fine."

Seeing his smile made my heart at ease. However, my eyes slowly went wide upon seeing blood from his nose.

"Sam..." I gasped. "Your nose..."

Chapter 84 - Sip Well

"Sam..." I gasped.

Sam also realized the blood from his nose. He slowly raised his finger to his nose. Checking the blood as he withdrew his hand in front of him.

"Are you... alright?" I asked, worried.

"Oh..." Sam nodded without looking away from his finger. It stunned him as well.

"Mister Fabian!" because of the adrenaline rush, I immediately opened the window and called Fabian in panic.

"The duke is bleeding!"

I exclaimed. However, just as I did, the carriage abruptly halted and Fabian already rushed towards the window, as if something already alarmed them before I could call for help.

"My lord!" As soon as Fabian saw Sam, his complexion turned pale.

Fabian's expression only made my heart race faster. Fabian looked so scared and worried.

What's going on?

Fabian didn't waste a second as he opened the door. Instinctively, I moved back to give them some room.

"I'm fine." Before Fabian could speak further, Sam raised his other hand. "Give me a napkin and don't stop on the next town — they're bothersome people."

Sam ordered as he accepted a napkin from Fabian. He then wiped his bleeding nose nonchalantly.

"But, My Lord, you should rest as well." Fabian sighed, exasperated. "You had exerted too much life force saving Mister Bro—"

Fabian abruptly halted as Sam cast him a look. Still, I grasped what was Fabian trying to tell him.

"We're not making stops anymore. We have to reach the Capital in three days." Sam ordered as his nose continued to bleed.

"Mister Fabian, is the duke, ill?" Under my breath, I asked, without looking away from Sam.

"Heh. How am I ill, silly?" Sam chuckled, but I kept my blank expression.

Slowly, I shifted my gaze to Fabian. "Is the duke ill?"

My tone this time was firmer. Sam wouldn't tell me the truth just so I wouldn't get worried. But Fabian, I hope I could trust him to tell me what he knew.

Fabian glanced at Sam. But when he gazed back at me, a determined glint flickered across his dark eyes.

"The duke had saved the life of Teddy Brown by giving him his blood. A blood for vampires is their life-forces. To save a person in a brink of death, one must give their own life force."

"Fabian." Not pleased at Fabian's defiance, Sam closed his eyes as his tone low but dangerous.

"My apologies, Your Grace. However, you can't hide this from my lady." Fabian expressed courageously.

"Is the duke dying?" Without beating around the bush, I queried while staring at Sam.

Please don't tell me Sam was. Just the thought of it made me unconsciously clench my skirt tightly.

"No, Lilove. I'm not."

"But you will, my lord." My heart instantly sunk upon hearing Fabian's remarks. "If you don't... rest."

No. Fabian changed his words. I've been with them for a long time. Thus, I figured they were hiding something from me right now.

"Do you need blood?" My question came out only above a whisper.

Silence. Neither of them spoke momentarily.

"Have mine." Determined, I stared at Sam and stated. No. It was not a statement, it was an order.

Sam's eyes immediately darkened, tempted. However, he shook his and refused.

"Love, one is enough."

"Mister Fabian, give us a moment." Without looking at Fabian, I requested. "Please."

From my peripheral vision, I saw Fabian look at me and sigh. He didn't speak anymore and closed the door and window.

"To save one, you want to sacrifice your life?" As soon the Fabian shut the door, my words escaped my lips immediately.

"I'm not sacrificing my life. It's just... I haven't regained all my strength after my long slumber."

"Because you're not feeding properly?" I said, pressing at this matter even harder.

Sam took away the napkin from his nose. Blood stained his upper lip, leaving a faint red hue. It was painful sight to see.

"The last time I sank my fangs into you is not the same if I sink them again with a different intention." Sam looked me in the eye with resolve. "Don't do this, love. It's dangerous and you might die."

Death, huh? How many times did I face death and gave into it? Do I look like that terrified me now?

"I don't get scared at the same thing repeatedly. You're bleeding, and Fabian's expression told me it's not normal. What else do you expect me to say, Sam?"

Unconsciously, I bit my lower lip as hard as I could. If giving my blood, or life, to him was something I could do, I would.

"There's nothing much I could help you with. So, why won't you let me do the things I can only do?"

I added, along with my faint scoff. Life or death... it never mattered to me. I'd die someday, anyway. Hence, if I'm going to die, I'd rather die doing my purpose.

"Goodness..." Sam closed his eyes as he rested his palm between his shoulder and neck.

His fangs had slowly appeared as he stretched his neck in a circular motion. He looked annoyed and distressed.

Pursing my lips as I watched him gather his thoughts. But my eyes remained on his fangs.

If he kept refusing me, I'd just force myself. Right. Just do what I wanted, just like what he had always told me.

Upon having that determined thoughts in my head, I leapt forward and clumsily attempted to force my wrist into his fangs. However, I accidentally stepped on my skirt, tripped, and fell on his lap.

"Ah!" My forehead bumped into his knees as my body produced a loud thud upon collapsing on the carriage floor.

That hurts. How can I be so clumsy?

I frowned as I rubbed my forehead. There's a slight lump as I rubbed it.

"Pfft—!" Slowly, I looked up to him, who bore this wicked smirk on his lips. "Are you trying to do what I think you're trying to do?"

He asked as he laughed out loud. I've never felt so ashamed until this failed attempt.

"Do you really want to help your sickly groom?" Sam asked. Without a second hesitation, I nodded profusely.

Obviously!

"Heh. I just thought of an idea." Sam grinned, as if delighted at something that crossed his head.

Now this smirk looked scary. My courage intensified whenever he refused me. But when he wasn't and grinning like a maniac, it somehow made my resolve wane.

My heart was so fickle. Goodness.

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In the end, the idea Sam came up with was simpler than I expected.

"Aren't you full yet?" I asked curiously, tilting my head as I stared at his side profile.

Sam slowly cast me a side eye. He clipped my forefinger in between his teeth.

"I'm drinking like a newborn. Have you tried drinking from a woman's breast as an adult?" Sam bluntly uttered, which made me flush instantly.

As I pursed my lips, Sam continued on, sipping from the tip of my forefinger leisurely.

"Is this really enough?" I wondered. Studying his complexion, which started returning to what it normally looked like.

"I guess so." I mumbled, and he glanced at me again.

I smiled upon meeting his gaze and patted his head gently. "Sip well."

Chapter 85 - Samahell

Uh... my head was spinning. This rocky path we're taking and how I bounced along with every major and minor bump just made it worse.

I felt very dizzy. I blinked, glancing at Sam, who was leisurely sightseeing with my finger in between his lips.

I told him to sip well. However, he'd been sipping from my finger for almost the entire day. He'd take a break every so often and then continue.

It was still surprising I'm still alive. But I'm finally feeling I'm being drained.

Oh, my head. My vision shook a little, and my thoughts had a constant pause.

Goodness... I'm going to faint. No, I can't... I shouldn't...

THUD

"I'm sorry, I couldn't stop." I heard Sam's faint, worried voice caressed my ears.

My eyelids felt heavy as I tried to open them. His warm hands stroke my head. Oh, how they're so soothing.

"Please wake up, love." Sam whispered. His voice was low and regretful.

Why did he sound so sad? I'm alright. I could hear him. I'm not dead. Don't make it sound like I'm dead.

"My lord," Fabian's voice came in. "Are we going to make a stop in Cunningham?"

Cunningham? Did Fabian mention Cunningham? Didn't they mention we'd make a detour because Sam wanted to avoid that city?

"I don't plan to, but Lilou needs to rest." Sam replied in the same low tone. "I should've known better."

Listening to them felt like I was eavesdropping on a private conversation. However, I couldn't open my eyes and it's frustrating.

"My lord..."

"Let's be discreet about our entry in Cunningham. I don't want to meet any from the Crawford Clan." Sam ordered sternly.

I didn't know what feeling was this. But, based on Sam's tone, he didn't like the Crawford — whoever they were. Were they his enemies?

Am I going to burden Sam about this slumber? Even with all that heavy breakfast I ate, it didn't help. I still fainted.

I should've eaten more... Why am I thinking about food at moments like this?

"But their knights securely guarded the entrance of Cunningham. We'd surely had to state our identities. They must've heard about you, my lord."

"F*ck..." To my surprised, Sam let out a low curse as if he was gritting his teeth.

Was Cunningham that dangerous? Sam would go on a long detour just to avoid this place.

I needed to wake up. I should. Wake up, Lilou. Wake up!

Just as I was screaming internally so I could wake up, I felt like I was going deeper into my sleep. Deeper and deeper, trying to reach out for help, but I couldn't.

"You can't... just yet." Suddenly, a woman's voice suddenly rang in my head.

Her voice sounded soothing, like a lullaby putting me back to sleep. She hummed in my head, and my consciousness started fading into the darkness.

I felt like a newborn being cradled to sleep. What a pleasant voice. It was as if humming was meant for her voice.

Soothing... I could fall asleep peacefully like this. What a nice voi...

"No!" I gasped as I suddenly forced my eyes to open. My heart raced restlessly, as if I got saved from the brink of death.

I was just sleeping, but I felt that if I fell asleep, I wouldn't wake up again. The thought and feeling it enveloped my heart felt traumatizing.

I panted for air as I unknowingly patted my chest. Goodness, what was that?

"Lilou." Suddenly, my gaze caught the pair of deep crimson eyes hovering over me.

Sam's eyes softened as he heaved a sigh of relief. I've never seen him this worried. No wonder he sounded so sad... he looked regretful.

"Sam," I breathed, and forced a subtle smile onto my lips.

I was sleeping on his lap. Hence, I tried to sit up upon noticing the dark surroundings around the carriage.

However, Sam placed his forefinger on my forehead and pressed it down. "Rest. Don't force yourself."

"But, Cunningham..." I argued, rubbing my throat as it felt parched.

"Cunningham?" Sam slightly furrowed his brows. "How did you know we're near that place?"

Uhh... I swallowed down my saliva to salivate my throat, but my mouth also dried up. I felt like I just lost all my moisture.

"Because..." I cleared my throat. "I heard you."

Sam frowned and let out a sigh. "Here's your water."

But he didn't explain his dissatisfaction as he assisted me up and handed me the waterskin for me to drink. When water touched my lips, relief enveloped my heart.

"Careful." Sam beckoned, seeing me chug down the entire water as if it was my first time drinking for a long time.

When I felt full and satisfied, I smacked my lips as if all my vitality had returned all at once. Since when did I feel this satisfied drinking water?

Immediately, I turned to Sam and smiled. "Let's make a detour!"

I proposed, but Sam's face was deadpan. He slowly leaned back and let out a sigh.

"It's too late. I knew it. It's strange for you to faint when I'm just licking your finger." Sam clicked his tongue annoyingly. "Those bastards..."

"Huh?" I blinked, confused.

"I barely sipped blood from you, love. I only licked the blood that's dripping from your finger." Sam cast me a side eye as he gradually returned to his old self.

What's this sudden coldness? Instinctively, I tugged his sleeve.

"Are you mad at me?" I blurted out, which I immediately realized.

"Huh?" Sam raised his brow and gazed down at my fingers clipping his sleeve. "Heh. No."

He chuckled shortly and shook his head. But I could see he wasn't entirely happy, too. Couldn't we turn back? I'm fine now.

"No. We can't." Sam answered, pointing at his temple. "I can hear you again."

"Oh..." I pursed my lips into a thin line as the carriage halted. "Are we in trouble?"

Hesitant, but that's what I've been wanting to ask. The answer was obvious, but I still asked just to confirm.

"Are we stepping into an enemy's territory?"

"It's worse than that." Sam uttered solemnly. My heart instantly skipped a beat out of nervousness.

What's worse than stepping into an enemies' territory? Just then, I heard a knock from the closed window.

"Your Grace," Fabian called out. "They've given us entry to Cunningham."

"You want to know what's worse than stepping into an enemy's territory?" Sam raised his brow. Without thinking twice, I nodded my head profusely.

Just a moment ago, I felt like dying. But now, I'm back to normal. Strange.

The carriage started moving again, as Sam's eyes never left me. "See for yourself."

Suddenly, Sam slid the window opened. I perked up and peeked at what's outside. My eyes instantly went wide, seeing tons and tons of people cheering as if there's a parade going on.

"What...? Are they that happy to see an enemy?" I mumbled in disbelief.

"Cunningham is the land of the self-proclaimed worshipers of Hell. It a land of cults." Sam informed as he let out another weary sigh.

"Cults...?" I repeated under my breath. "Worshiper of Hell?"

"Welcome to Cunningham, Your Grace!" The people outside cheered, waving in delight.

"Are they welcoming you?" I cast Sam a look and saw him let out a sigh once again.

I've never seen Sam sigh so much in a row. What's going on?

"Mhm. I told you they're cults. My loyal worshipers."

"Ah?"

Taking notice of my bafflement, Sam massaged his temple.

"Worshipers of Hell. Me. Sa. Ma. Hell."

Chapter 86 - Congrats, My Bride.

I dropped my jaw. Literally dropped my jaw.

So, a land that was worse than entering an enemy's territory was a land of his cult? I've always found myself in a conflicted situation. This one was one of the hardest situation where I didn't know what to feel.

"They must've put a large spell, so you'd faint. These bastards just do what they want to do." Sam grumbled, cracking his knuckles as if he was ready for a kill.

"A spell? Huh?"

"At first, I thought I've sipped too much of your blood that you fainted. Well, deep down I know that's not the case. Fast forward, we have to make a stop in here tonight." Sam explained, but his annoyance was clear to me.

"It — it's not that bad, right?" Clearing my throat as I moved closer to him.

Or not...

Sam frowned as he faced me. For some, popularity was a compliment and people would love to indulge in it. However, knowing Sam, having this fame... sucks.

Right. He was not just your ordinary vampire who indulged himself in these things.

"Do you know the reason I want to avoid this city?" Sam inquired as he closed the window to shun the cheering outside.

I didn't speak because my puzzled expression was enough for him to know my curiosity.

"They're annoying."

That answer was rather predictable, knowing him.

"Also, they would do everything just so I'd stay." Again, Sam massaged his temple in distress.

I've never seen him in this distressed back when we've arrived in Whistlebird. But now, it seemed, he wanted to flee.

What a strange man to dislike things most people would want. And find some situation a person didn't want to be in interesting.

Was Sam a strange man or an interesting one? Perhaps both.

Suddenly, the carriage halted. And Sam immediately closed his eyes and rubbed his palms against his face.

After that, a knock came from outside the window of the carriage. Since Sam wasn't responding, I extended my arm and opened it.

Fabian stood outside and offered me a subtle smile. "I'm relieved to see that you're awake, my lady."

I nodded awkwardly and glanced at the distress man beside me.

"My lord, Lord Cameron welcomed you personally."

And that just made things worse for Sam. I thought internally as I stared at Sam's unmoving figure.

What a poor thing. I never thought I'd ever pity Sam this way.

"Can you tell Lord Cameron the Duke of Grimsbanne doesn't feel well?" Since he wasn't responding, I shifted my attention to Fabian.

Fabian pressed his lips together and sighed as well. We're in the same boat; sympathizing Sam.

But well, we could have avoided this place if I was strong enough. But wait... if the reason I fainted was because of a spell, did that mean that woman humming was also their doing?

I furrowed my brows while I unconsciously bit the nail of my thumb. That humming nearly put me into an eternal slumber... or not? I couldn't tell.

Thinking about it still brought this fear into my heart. It's a gut feeling — a strong yet vague gut feeling which I couldn't pinpoint yet.

"Lord Cameron invites us to his castle tonight, my lady." Since Sam wasn't moving, Fabian returned and informed me.

"Will it be rude to refuse?"

"Yes, my lady." Fabian instantly answered with a nod.

"Then, refuse."

My answer slightly made Fabian's brows to knit. He didn't expect that, did he? Well, I wouldn't say such bold words... on normal days.

However...

"I may overstep my bounds. But, the Duke of Grimsbanne didn't want to be here. They had put up a dangerous spell that put my life in peril. How are we supposed to trust people who would do foul means just to achieve their goal?"

My words just came out naturally, without even thinking. However, those words came from my heart.

Aside from the fact that their actions nearly put me to "death (?)", Sam was in an uncomfortable situation. I'm not in the position, but the marquess wouldn't know it was my order, right?

If I put myself in Sam's situation, he'd probably say the same. Or rather, he'd be more brutal and savage than usual.

"My lady..." Fabian called out under his breath, blinking. His eyes darkened with surprise.

Why was he looking at me like that?

Suddenly, Sam also moved and raised his head towards me. There's not much emotion in his eyes, but he held my gaze for a long time.

After his long silence, he asked. "Who are you?"

Huh?

Sam, it's... I smiled, but that smile immediately faded away as I saw my reflection in his eyes.

Why am I smirking evilly?

"Get out of her body." Sam cocked his head to the side, his tone especially low, as if he's talking to another person.

Sam! It's me! But my words resonated inside my head. Moments ago, I'm just talking to Fabian, but now... I couldn't control my body?

My body moved on its own as my hand rested on my chest and bowed. "My lord, please accept our invitation. My apologies if I had to do this because Mister Fabian wouldn't let us talk to you."

It was my voice... but this we're not my words. What... no. How dare they?

"Do you really wish to die so bad?" Sam inquired coldly.

Even though I knew he wasn't talking to me, I could not help but shudder in fear. I'm scared, as his eyes weren't the same as when he usually looked at me.

"We will atone for our sin, Your Highness. It's just been hundreds of years, so we were desperate for your grace." I answered.

Stop using me... I whispered internally. Just when I thought I've met anger, I was wrong. I was never been this infuriated in my life.

I'm immune to insults, but this was just a level of insult I could not tolerate. Using me because I'm weak? They were using me this time to talk to Sam because they couldn't get through Fabian.

If they could use me, they'd do far worse than this if I did nothing.

"Get the hell out of me right now, or I'll trap you inside me forever. I assure you, this body will be your grave. Don't test me."

I only realized my warning came out from my lips when I finished talking. It left?

I wondered, blinking. When my gaze caught Sam and Fabian's surprised expression, I pursed my lips in a thin line.

"I didn't mean that... hehe." I awkwardly explained, as I only tried to scare that person away. "I didn't know it would work."

"Congrats, my bride." Sam suddenly clapped slowly. I furrowed my brows in confusion.

"You saved me this time."

"Save you? From?"

"Mhm." Sam hummed and nodded. He then pointed outside as Fabian stepped aside.

"Listen to what they're saying."

Still had my brows furrowed, I did as what I was instructed. Soon, their indistinct murmuring grew into cheers and shouts.

"Lilou! Lilou! Lilou! Lilou!"

Chapter 87 - Cunningham

I was never a holy person. BUT, this blasphemy had shaken me to the core. All throughout our journey towards the distinguished Crawford Clan castle, the people praised my name repeatedly.

At this rate, my name would reach the heavens. I could only wait for the heavenly judgment to befall me.

To make things worse, Sam had been smiling the entire time. I glanced at him and that stupidly charming grin of his never left his lips.

"We should've taken a detour." I mumbled helplessly.

It felt strange to have an entire city calling your name. No, this entire Cunningham was a strange place.

It was entirely different from Whistlebird. That town was expected. I mean, what happened there was not entirely expected, but how the community followed the difference between humans and vampires was.

Or not.

Either way, Cunningham was something I would never forget. I might as well offer my neck to the king for this blasphemy.

Soon, our carriage stopped, and the cheering from the outside subsided. Fabian knocked from the outside and informed us we've arrived.

"You hear that?" Sam turned to me with a grin.

He seemed thrilled about all this. I'm not.

"Didn't you dislike the Crawford?" I raised my brow. "What's this sudden change of heart?"

"Don't worry. They're kind folks. They won't hurt you." Sam reassured as he smiled until his eyes squinted into a thin line.

"If they're kind folks, why did you dislike them?"

"Because they're people, I'm not fond of." Sam answered almost immediately.

I narrowed my eyes suspiciously. "I doubt."

Their enthusiasm and quick change of heart bothered me. If they were as what they call themselves worshipers of hell, how they suddenly sing praises to my name only told me how shallow their beliefs.

This was just... ridiculous.

"Come, Holy Lilou." Sam teased, offering his hand for me to clasp.

"You're enjoying this, huh?" My tone was flat as I slipped my fingers in his hand.

"Heh. I finally got rid of some annoying devotee after hundreds of years." Sam chuckled as he escorted me out of the carriage.

"You got rid of that problem and I inherited it." I muttered.

As soon as we hitched outside the carriage, several people wearing strange white and black uniform welcomed us with a bow. Unlike the Remingtons', whose hair shared the same stroke of red mixed with black, the Crawford had this jet black hairs.

"Thank you for accepting our invitation, Your Highness." A youth greeted politely.

He seemed younger than me. Was he a vampire as well?

When he raised his head and set his eyes on me, they suddenly twinkled. I stepped back, taken aback at his emotional eyes.

"Your Grace, we are very pleased to meet you." The youth expressed as he slowly bent down on his one knee.

Just like what the youth did, everyone with him went down on their knees.

"Sam..." Instinctively, I clipped my fingers on Sam's sleeve and shrunk beside him.

Sam cocked his head to me and offered a kind smile. Stop smiling. This felt very weird.

"I'm Cameron Crawford, the marquess of Cunningham. This humble one will be at your grace's service." The youth, who turned out to be the Marquess of Cunningham, expressed.

But wasn't he too young to be in that position? Even though he's a vampire, I still could not help but judge him by his youthful appearance. Its human nature.

"I hope you find your stay here comfortable." Cameron expressed sincerely.

He should stop doing this if they truly wished me a comfortable stay. I glanced at Sam, and I could not help but glare at him.

He's so happy that he had sold his bride. A sigh slipped past my lips. I should start questioning this love between us.

Just as I waited for more formal pleasantries, Cameron said nothing anymore. Instead, they remained kneeling with their heads hung low.

"Huh?" My brows furrowed as I turned my head to Sam.

"They will kneel there until you tell them to rise." Sam explained in a knowing tone.

Were they truly giving someone they haven't known that power over them?

"If I were you, I would let them kneel until sunrise. If you do, they won't bother you until we set off."

Sam added, nodding in agreement with his own statement. Hearing him state such cruel words made me pity the Crawford.

How could they worship Sam...?

Ah... they're kind folks... that's why Sam disliked them. Somehow, I finally got his point.

Sam was the type of person who liked freedom the most. He did things because he wanted to. However, the Crawford's were the kind of people who willingly and extremely bind themselves in this stuff.

We're truly slaves of something to move forward, huh?

A subtle smile resurfaced on my lips. "Please rise. Thank you for your warm welcome."

Since Sam told me they're "harmless" folks, I don't see the point of being cruel to them. Their mean and fickle, religious hearts might be strange, but part of me grasped the founding idea of Cunningham.

"Thank you, Your Grace." Cameron smiled as soon as he stood on his feet. "I know you had a long journey. Why don't we go inside our humble abode?"

I glanced at the enormous castle behind them. That's not what you call humble abode. That's bigger than the Duke of Whistlebird and the mansion of the Duke of Grimsbanne.

But before I could accept their invitation, I snuck a look at Sam, who looked proudly at me. And then shifted my attention to Fabian, who bore his usual smile.

If these two weren't refusing, that only means it was alright, right?

"We're in your care, Lord Cameron." I agreed politely.

Expectedly, Cameron's face brightened up as his eyes twinkled once again. I could not help but think that his eyes were like a night sky full of stars whenever they twinkle.

They're beautiful.

"Please." Cameron beckoned as he led the way. The other clan members stayed behind as we headed inside the castle.

As we headed in, Cameron had briefed us about the history of this castle. I didn't pay attention as I looked around.

Paintings hanged on the concrete walls. Although the castle was huge, it wasn't furnished inside. I'm only grateful that it had a generous amount of torches that gave us this place a warm and bright ambiance.

"It had been hundreds of years since blessed this place with his presence. But now, not only we had to be graced by Hell's presence but also our new Goddess." Cameron's tone grew gentle. He sounded so happy and satisfied, it was contagious.

However, the more Cameron talk, the more question rose from my head.

"How did I become someone important here?" I queried without my realization. I only realized my words when Cameron stopped and faced me.

"You were chosen, Your Grace." Cameron smiled subtly.

Confused, I glanced at Sam who stood beside me and then to Fabian standing behind us. They seemed they already knew about what Cameron was saying.

"Chosen, by who?" I queried, out of curiosity. I still didn't know if talking casually to a marquess was rude. But it didn't seem he mind.

"By the founding leader of the Crawford, my lady."

"???"

Chapter 88 - Cunningham II

Long ago, the La Crox, the founding royal family of the Heart's Kingdom, had sheltered five fellow pure-blooded vampires: the Bloodfang, Crawford, Von Stein, Le Blac, and the Moriarty.

However, with six pure-blooded vampires in the same kingdom incited constant dispute against each other. Hence, three of the most powerful pure-blooded clans — Von Stein, Le Blac, and the

Moriarty — that was said to par with the La Crox's strength, had left to establish their own kingdom.

It was a peaceful mutual decision regarding each other's different perspective of governance.

Two clans remained in the Heart's Kingdom and supported the La Crox family through and through. The Bloodfang and the Crawford had believed shared the ideals of the founding clan leader of the La Crox.

Those two clans had ought to serve and pass the will of the founder of this kingdom. However, as time flies and a new generation came in to take the throne, things had changed.

"Despite the change, we, the Crawford, never turn our backs on the Heart's Kingdom." The corner of Cameron's lips curled into a smile.

Upon asking my previous question, Cameron and I had taken a walk together outside this maze-like garden. Obviously, Sam insisted to come. I refused as my payback for smiling throughout this confusing situation.

Also, I'm glad I did. Because of how I see it, the La Crox had abandoned the people who had been there for them since day one. I glanced at Cameron, who was walking beside me.

"But, why?" I asked in a low tone as I set my eyes ahead. "Why do you have to stay and worship someone you didn't know?"

"My lady, as I've said, you're chosen by our founding leader."

"Where is he, then?" I immediately threw my follow up question.

It just made little sense to me. I had heard about the Bloodfang's tragic ending. Why did the Crawford stay, knowing the King might annihilate their clan whenever he pleased? They're pure-blooded vampires — it still surprised me until now.

"She had perished long ago, but her spirit remained."

"She?"

Slowly, Cameron turned his head to me as he halted in his tracks. I also stopped with my brows furrowed.

"Have you heard her humming?" He inquired. I held back on answering, taken aback at his question.

"I haven't heard of her humming. Not one in the Crawford had heard it."

Cameron added with a smile. However, I noticed the glint of bitterness and longing flickered across his eyes.

"What do you mean by that?"

"There were few people who had heard that humming — his Highness and you, my lady, are one of them."

Huh?

Taking notice of my baffled expression, Cameron chuckled as he took a step forward. I followed.

"If one heard it, they would either sleep forever or be put on another test." Cameron continued. I followed him closely, listening to his every word, afraid I'd missed something.

Sleep forever, huh? So I'm not over thinking about it. I discreetly patted my chest as I literally came out from a bloodless life and death situation.

"The Crawford Clan had abilities to possess someone's mind for a brief moment of time."

"That's sounds..." I trailed off and Cameron guessed.

"Awful?"

"Fascinating." I corrected. I'm not lying, though. Sometimes, I just wanted to go inside Sam's mind to know what he was thinking.

Not that Sam was lacking in explaining things to me. However, I'm intrigued by how his mind works.

Cameron's expression slightly changed before he smiled. "You're quite surprising, my lady. The person who possessed you earlier was the founding clan leader, and you forced her out of your mind."

"Ah?"

"You're the second person who could do that." Cameron let out a quick chuckle.

"The first one was Sam?"

"Yes. If a new figure appears in our head from our founding clan leader, we are ought to serve him or her with our lives."

"In... where?"

"When our founding clan leader perished, she had passed on her will to the next clan leader of the Crawford. We inherit that will and abide by it no matter what." Cameron explained.

That sounded... sad. No wonder Sam disliked them. They may mean no harm, but the Crawford was nothing but prisoners of their own mind. They live to follow the will of someone who had perished long ago.

However, who am I to judge? We're all slaves to something to survive.

We continued on our stroll.

"The reason the Crawford had stayed alive despite being a pure-blooded vampire is because our abilities were useless against the La Crox."

Useless? How could that be useless? If I had an ability to control someone's mind, I would've... uh. I never had such thought before, so I didn't know what to do if I had such power, honestly.

"The royal family can easily counter our abilities; they're far stronger in every aspect. If one had a stronger and much refined will, our mind-control is useless. What more, the royal family had a better mind control prowess."

Sam's family had the same abilities? Right. Sam had robbed a memory of mine, but he couldn't return it. Not because he didn't want to, he just couldn't.

"Also, because our founding leader put the sake of the Crawford and the Heart's Kingdom, she had passed her will to us to never go against to the royal family for our own benefit. That's why we had lived in silence."

"Living in silence by worshiping other people instead of the king?" I blurted out. When I realized it, I pursed my lips in a thin line.

Did I sound sarcastic? I didn't mean to.

"The current king had abandoned us long ago. But, we never abandoned him. We still serve him, follow his royal decrees, and never schemed behind him. The Crawford never turned their backs on our words. We would live in silence, away from the political affairs of the royal family, and fulfill the long wish of our clan."

"Wish?" I repeated. "Is it rude to ask what kind of wish is it?"

I'm curious.

Cameron cast me a look and smiled. "Even after hundreds of years, to be honest, I still don't know what our clan wishes."

After Cameron's answer, we remained silent the entire time. We walked back to the castle. It was a long walk, but neither of us talked.

To inherit a will to serve someone who passed the test of the spirit the second they were born. To live and wanting to fulfill a wish the Crawford didn't know...

"The history had always multiple truths." I whispered unknowingly.

"My lady?"

I snapped out of my thoughts upon Cameron's call. Slowly, I faced him and offered a subtle smile.

"Do you want to kill me?" I asked, just to make sure.

"Huh?" Cameron furrowed his brows, baffled at the sudden question.

Hence, I rephrased my words. "If I cross a line, will you kill me?"

"No, my lady." He answered almost immediately. "We had served his Highness."

Cameron didn't even need to explain why they wouldn't harm me, even if I ended up a bad person. Mentioning Sam's name was enough for someone to realize how long their patience was.

It's silly, but effective and believable. If that's the case... I took a deep breath, clenched my teeth, and pluck up my courage to speak about what's inside my mind.

"I hope I'm not crossing the line, Lord Cameron. But, have you ever wondered if the founding clan leader was mind-controlled as well?"

Cameron's expression suddenly changed. It told me they never thought about that. And that expression only solidified my thoughts about this entire ordeal.

It's a curse.

"I don't know if I'm in the position to say this, but what if... that wish the Crawford had ever desired to attain was to break free from this curse that befell upon your clan?"

At this point, Sam's words had finally registered on me. In the Capital, there were often multiple truths.

Having multiple truths didn't mean one side of the truth was not credible. It's just that... there's always a reason not to put all the eggs into one basket.

Chapter 89 - Dejavu

I'm not a smart person, neither I was wise. My instincts weren't keen as well. But ever since Sam came into my life, I knew something changed deep within.

When we set off to the Capital, I get to learn new things every moment. From Grimsbanne, to Whistlebird, and now, here in Cunningham.

No matter how little they were, this knowledge had changed my perspective on certain things. What more? The major information passed on to me. Until now, I couldn't confidently say they were gifts or a curse to know too much.

After my brief stroll with Lord Cameron, Fabian came to me to tell me to eat. Sam wasn't there; Fabian told me he just had to do something important.

Even after our late supper, even Sam's shadow was not seen. I wonder if what's so important that until now that I finished bathing and ready for bed, he still hadn't come.

A sigh slipped past my lips as I gazed outside the window. The guest chambers they accommodated me in were almost at the top of the castle. That's exaggeration, obviously.

But from this height, I looked up and smiled. I felt closer to the moon. This moon that only appeared at night never failed to comfort me.

"The king..." I whispered and sighed. "I wonder what he is actually like?"

From what I had heard so far, my impression of him was not very pleasant. However, if I parse their words, he seemed he's the least hypocrite among everyone.

I know. I might get hate and odd glares from thinking like this. However, back in Whistlebird, I realized people often decide for others.

Although the reason was acceptable, part of me felt... sad.

Noah Remington had to hurt his friend just because he wanted Teddy alive. Even though humiliating Teddy and his wife was cruel, he did that to keep the two of them alive.

But did Lord Noah ask Teddy for consent? That betrayed and hatred look in Teddy's eyes told me he knew nothing. I wondered if Lord Noah asked Teddy, would the latter agree to the former's methods?

Sam did the same, and it disappointed me. When he erased a part of my memory that I'm still bothered deep down until now, my disappointment was genuine.

Now, here in Cunningham, things just got more odd. A pure-blooded clan who devoted their lives to someone they didn't know. They now see me as some kind of God, but I'm only human.

I wouldn't save their lives even if they pray for my name. I'm just not cut out for that. I knew my limits and my capabilities.

But what's more disappointing was that they were devoting their lives to someone for reasons unknown. The King abandoned them? But they're still living in silence?

I would believe them if Cunningham was just like Whistlebird. I don't believe there's a neutral side in this kingdom.

You either oppose the king or let him be. The Crawford didn't oppose the king, but their actions didn't seem they're letting him be as well.

They twist their words just to make them feel good. If that wasn't hypocrisy, I didn't know what was.

Well, who am I to judge? I'm also a hypocrite. That's why I said the king might be the least hypocrite among everyone.

The king seemed to be the person who knew what he wanted. From what I heard so far, he seemed very much alike Sam... and not at the same time.

He knew what he wanted and very clear about that. They didn't conceal their intentions regardless if they would look villain.

Perhaps it was because they're siblings? Why am I thinking of the King I haven't met yet?

Was it because I would meet him in a few days? I'm... uncertain of the answer.

"I wonder what was Sam doing? I'm having so much strange thoughts without him around." I murmured and let out a sigh.

Just as my sigh escaped my lips, I jolted back upon the sudden swoosh of air from the window. My eyes went wide, blinking in shock as my shaking vision settled on the figure on the window.

Sa — Sam?

I gasped, staring at Sam kneeling on his one knee on the windowsill. His other palm on the jamb. His hair a bit disheveled as if he just came out of a tornado.

Did he jump from below?

"Goodness. What a persistent bunch of people." Sam panted as he clicked his tongue. He then peeked outside the window before he immediately hopped inside to hide.

Didn't he notice me? My eyes blinked countless of times as I watched Sam peeked outside with his hands on the windowsill.

Was he being chased? Did he jump here not because he knew I was here, but because it was opened?

"Uh..." I couldn't articulate my words at the moment.

When Sam heaved of what it looked like a sigh of relief, he spoke as he slowly turned around.

"Oh. I'm sorry. I was being chased. I didn't mean to..." Sam trailed off upon meeting my gaze.

"Lilove?"

This... it appeared so romantic as a first meeting in a fiction story. However, what if Sam snuck in another woman's bedchambers?

Obviously, I wouldn't be pleased. Am I over thinking things to make myself jealous? I'm having strange scene playing in my head I felt like crying.

Goodness... am I going crazy from all this excessive thinking? My brain was never meant for thinking, after all.

Now I missed the days I didn't need to think. I strangely missed the days I could only think of labor work.

"Oh my, Lilove." Sam smiled as he trudged towards me with open arms. "I think we're really meant to be. Of all windows, I ended up landing in your room! Is this what they call fate?"

Before Sam could embrace me, I raised my palm and placed it on his chest to stop him. With a raised brow, I said.

"You stink, my lord."

Oh... how did I feel like this had happened before?

Chapter 90 - Are You Perhaps Horny?

Sam's brows briefly raised, surprised. A frown then resurfaced on his lips.

As I saw his dejected expression, I now then realized what I had said. Instinctively, the hand that I placed on his chest clasped.

"I — I'm not serious." I stammered as the corner of my lips tilted into an awkward smile.

Did I lose my mind? How dare I tell him he stinks? Me? Of all people?

I was a little lost at the strange scenarios that suddenly played in my head that my mouth just went off on its own. Stupid mouth!

"Did I make you unhappy?" Sam inquired, making me a bit confused.

But I still answered, shaking my head. "No. Definitely not."

"If that's not the reason, are you, perhaps, horny just now? I don't mind tainting this sacred castle if you need me to."

"Ah?" What was he suddenly saying with a straight face?

"I don't see any reason you'll tell me I stink if not for those reasons." Sam shrugged his shoulders as he cocked his head a little to the side.

What? I'm confused. Are we on a different page again?

I blinked my eyes countless of times. Suddenly, my mind had finally retrieved a memory from the past.

You stink. Were Sam's words during our early days. I thought little about it since it was the truth. Well, unlike now, having to bathe in the past was rare.

However, now that he was saying this, I recalled Sam had a different meaning on things. Sometimes, he uttered words with different meaning and intention.

"Before, you — you said I stink." After pursing my lips in a thin line, I asked. "Why did you say that?"

"I was horny and very sensitive. If you touch me that second, I would have pinned you down and tore all your clothes. I told you I might end up fucking you... hard, didn't I?" Sam bluntly explained.

His memory was excellent. Applaud. However, my fist claspings his chest trembled. My knees felt weak as they wobbled.

"So that's the reason..." I looked down, taken aback, as I didn't expect that.

"Did that bother you until now?"

I nearly forgot about it, honestly. But, now that it returned to my memory, it bothered me.

Slowly, Sam took a step forward, and I instinctively took a step back. As I raised my head, he smiled, holding my hand that was on his chest, and pulled me closer.

His other hand smoothly glided around my lean waist as he bent down with a smirk. His action brought my other fist to rest on his chest.

My heart thumped loudly as my breathing grew heavier. Until now, my heart still raced around him. I could not help but be dazzled by his beauty despite seeing it every day; first thing in the morning, and the last before I sleep.

Especially whenever he looked at me as if I was the most desirable woman. His gaze alone was one of the best compliment that boosted my confidence — a little.

"Silly, you. I wouldn't have seduced you if your odor ever bothered me." Still smirking, Sam cast me in a knowing tone.

He then guided the hand he pulled towards his shoulder. That same hand of his then ran down my spine as it carefully untied my bodice. His eyes never left my gaze despite that his hand was busy.

"Do I have to do it again to make you remember?" He raised a brow, licking his lower lip, ready for his meal.

"Uh..." My throat felt parched as my bodice loosened. We're in someone else's stronghold... was it alright to do it?

Well, we had made love in the Remington's manor. But this castle, though. It gave a feeling of a... church.

"I'm here, but your mind is flying elsewhere. Not good." Taking notice of my distraction, Sam snapped his tongue as he inched closer.

His breath instantly wafted my nose. When his lips were an inch closer to mine, I felt him smirk.

"What are you thinking?" Instead of kissing me, Sam teasingly traced my jaw by the apex of his nose.

His hot breaths made me feel all tingly as it transferred heat to my body. My skin secretly demanded for his lips. And he knew that.

That's why he was purposely holding back.

"Hmm?" He hummed, snapping me back to my senses.

"The — the king."

No, Lilou. That's not what I wanted to say, but my words escaped from my lips before I could stop them.

If the atmosphere between us was like the peak of the summer moments ago, my answer invited winter to come early. Sam slowly drew his head back, his eyes sharp and intimidating. The wrinkle on the side of his lips due to smirking faded.

"What did you say?" He asked, coldly.

I nearly froze to death upon hearing his words. I've never heard Sam sound so cold. He's blunt most of the time, but he always had ways with words.

Was he angry...?

"I —" My tongue rolled back as I heard his teeth grinding. His jaw clenching as he locked gazes with mine.

He was definitely angry.

"You're thinking about the king?" Sam inquired, stressing his words. "While you're with me?"

"Do you want me to think about him when I'm not... with you?"

Stupid mouth! I bit my tongue as I immediately covered my lips with both my palms.

"Haha... Lilove." Sam chuckled, but one could tell how dangerous that chuckle sounded.

"What should I do with you?" He whispered as his gaze dropped and scanned me.

"I'm so angry I don't know what to do with it. Oh, my love... I wanted to burn Cunningham so, so, bad."

Bloodlust flickered across his dangerous crimson eyes. I felt his grip around my waist tightened, gritting his teeth as his fangs made themselves known.

He's panting for air.

I won't lie. This side of him... the anger and jealousy combined into one frightened me.

Why was he so mad about, though? I knew Sam was possessive, but this anger was on a different level. Was it because it involved the king?

Fear slowly crept into my heart, sending shivers throughout my body. Deep down, I knew Sam meant what he said.

If I let him be, I'm afraid he'd run amok in Cunningham. The people in here were already pitiful. Even though I didn't have a good impression of them, I didn't want to trouble them just because of my stupid mouth.

Slowly, Sam let me go as he took a step back.

"Rest, Lilou. I'll run outside to clear my mind."

Without waiting for me, he turned around and walked directly towards the window. Did he mean he would run, as in run amok? To clear his mind?

But aside from my worry about this city, I hated the aura I'm sensing from his departing back. Without thinking twice, I hopped towards him.

Immediately, my arms wrapped around his waist. "Don't go. My thoughts had been killing me before you showed up from that window."

Fortunately, Sam stopped. I felt his back stiffened.

I rested the side of my head on his back. I linked my hands together, locking him so if he jumped from that window, I'd be dragged along with him.

"I won't lie about thinking about the king. However, that's just because what I knew about him just reminds me of you. I would always think of people, things, places, and memories that remind me of you." I whispered and pressed my body against his back.

"So, don't go and stay with me."