

The Duke 91

Chapter 91 - Where Have You Been?

Receiving no response or any movements from him made me tighten my grip around him. Even if he refused, I wouldn't let him go.

"Tear my entire shoulders apart if you want to leave." I blurted out in a whisper.

I pursed my lips upon realization. However, I thought it was better that I spoke my thoughts aloud.

When Sam put his hand on my linked hands resting on his abdomen, I tightened my grip.

"I won't let you go off on you own again." I murmured, puffing my cheeks.

I felt his back trembled slightly before I heard his faint laugh. Upon sensing he had calmed down a bit, I took a step back as he unlinked my hands.

Slowly, Sam turned around and faced me. I looked up, blinking. He was neither smiling nor frowning. He's just staring at me.

"Come here." He whispered, spreading his arms as I melted into his arms.

I felt satisfied that his dissatisfaction moments ago died down. He's so warm, and I felt snugly in his arms.

During his brief absence, I had too much thoughts it made my head hurts. But with him around, all those jumbled emotions came to a standstill.

Perhaps it wasn't him who needed to calm down. Perhaps it was my thoughts who needed this comfort.

As I closed my eyes, I poured all my focus on his warmth. Ironic. Sam's temperature was always a little colder than normal. But his coldness was not alike those corpses.

But he still felt very warm to me. His gentle touches, loving eyes, and affectionate embrace. They all felt very warm. I would never get fed up with this.

"You know what?" Sam whispered. I hummed a low, questioning tune in response.

"Kisses are nice. But hugs gives a distinct warmth and comfort."

He added. I could not help but smile upon hearing his remarks.

"I know and I agree." I whispered back, moving my head to find a comfortable spot on his chest.

Sam stroked my hair, placing small kisses on top of my head. His actions cemented this smile on my lips. I couldn't stop myself from smiling like a fool.

"Don't think about anyone. Especially the king with or without me." Sam muttered with a weary sigh.

I chuckled. Was he a kid?

"Why?" I asked, curious what's so wrong to think of the king?

"Because..." Sam trailed off and remained silent for a long time.

Yes, I waited for his answer. But it never came. Hence, with a furrowed brow, I broke free from his arms and raised my gaze to him.

"Sam?" I called out. Sam was frowning as he stared at me straight in the eye.

When he let out a sigh, he reached for my hand and guided me towards the window. Sam perched on the edge of the windowsill; his one leg was up while he kept me close.

"Because..." Sam once again trailed off, cupping my cheek as his thumb caressed my jaw.

"I dislike many people. I mean, I dislike almost everyone."

I know. Sam had this strange perspective on things. He loved Grimsbanne and his people. But he also disliked them at some point. He's a simple man. Too simple that it was complicated.

"My brother, the king don't fall in that category."

"Huh?" Did I hear what I just heard him say?

I furrowed my brows in confusion. Sam didn't sound like he's fond of the king. However, now that I think about it, he never sounded he detests the king either.

Suddenly, Sam flicked my forehead, which brought me back to the current lapse.

"Aw..." Out of instinct, I rubbed my forehead and frowned. Was he planning to crush my head? He was still mad at me, wasn't he?

"If you're still mad at me, you could've said so. I feel like every time you do that, it leaves a crack on my skull."

I complained, exaggerating it to get his sympathy. Obviously, it didn't work, as he laughed. How silly of me to think Sam would pity me when he was obviously enjoying his time whenever he did this.

"I'll kiss it for you." Sam offered as he pulled my waist closer to him, tilting his head, and his lips crash against mine.

My hands instinctively rested on his chest as I closed my eyes. That's my lips, not my forehead. But I didn't mind correcting him, as his lips tasted sweet as ever.

It felt nice.

A smile plastered on my lips as our simple kiss — not too deep or too brief — but just about enough to bring out myriads of emotions. He reluctantly broke away, slowly perking his head up to kiss my forehead.

"Isn't that a little overdue?" I humored with a faint chuckle. Sam laughed in response as he drew back to look at me.

"Your way of words starts to amuse me." Sam shook his head helplessly.

Out of habit, I bit my lip, stopping the side of my lips from stretching into a grin.

"What were you saying earlier?" I asked, diverting our attention to our previous discussion.

"Oh..." Sam nodded in understanding, narrowing his eyes suspiciously. "You're really that interested in my brother?"

"I'm interested in what you think about him as a person. Also, he's your family. So, it's normal that I want to know." I explained hesitatingly.

I'm not sure if this was reasonable enough, but I'd rather be honest with him.

"Ohh..." But his reaction told me it was fair enough.

"What I think about him, huh?" Sam muttered, pulling my hand closer as he wrapped his arms around me.

"I neither like nor dislike him. We had our disagreements, but I can't disregard his point and opinions on certain matters. To put it simply, he's a reasonable man."

I didn't expect to hear such words from Sam. I mean, Sam might not mean to praise the king. However, for Sam to say all that, it was an achievement.

At least for me.

"That's why I don't want you to think about the better man. He will snatch you from me."

Sam added, and buried his face in my shoulder. Was that the reason he was so upset? He considered the king the better man when, in fact, admitting someone was better than him just made him the best.

I already thought I was insecure. But, perhaps, Sam also had his insecurities. Was it because what's between us was new for the both of us?

"Don't leave me alone ever again then." I teased and flung my arms to wrap around him. "Speaking of which, where have you been?"

"Uh... I helped the townsfolk set up your sacred place. I made a sketch of you so they could worship your beauty... properly."

Did — did I just hear what I just heard? He was not serious, right?

Slowly, I pushed Sam back and distance myself to see his expression. When Sam looked away and cleared his throat, my lips parted, but no words came out.

No. He's dead serious.

Chapter 92 - A Love So Dangerous

"I'm just being supportive while helping others to strengthen their faith." Sam mumbled before he whistled and looked outside.

So all along, this entire time, the important affair he went to attend was to worship... me? No, no. Sam wouldn't do something so trivial. He made a sketch... definitely, not a shallow...

"Was I naked?" I didn't know whether to weep or laugh at this ridiculous news.

"What? Obviously..." I widened my eyes as I grabbed his chest with both my hands. "... not. Lilove, are you trying to push me off the window?"

My abrupt action made Sam placed his hands on both sides of the jamb. His eyes wide, blinking many times as he looked at me in surprised.

"Uh... it was an impulse reaction." I explained, almost stammering because even I was surprised.

"You will kill me out of impulse?"

"Certainly not!" I instantly denied, pushing his chest out of habit as I took a step back.

I didn't even push that hard. However, my eyes gradually went wide as time moved slower than normal.

My breath hitched. The beating of my heart throbbed loudly, as if it was beating right in front of my ear.

No...

I watched as Sam slowly fall back from the window. His eyes were on me, looking at me, stunned.

Sam...

And my surrounding returned to its normal pace.

"Sam!" I yelled as I rushed to him. My hand reached out to him, but it was too late.

"Sa—"

"Tehehe~!" Suddenly, I heard his devious giggle which grew into wicked laughs.

Sam's upper body hung down the window while his legs hooked on the windowsill. He was laughing, loudly.

I nearly got a heart attack, and he was laughing? I shouldn't get worried about him knowing he jumped to this height.

But...

How could I do that? Despite knowing that Sam was an accomplished vampire, I would always worry about him, regardless.

"Sam!" I yelled as I stomped my feet towards him. I slapped his thigh without restraint, out of frustration.

"Haha! Aw!" Sam chuckled as he suddenly pulled his hanging upper body back to sit. "You're so adorable."

He grinned, poking the tip of my nose with his finger. I ground my teeth as my eyes welled up due to panic.

"Did you get scared?"

I slapped his hand away. "It's not funny!"

How could he give me such a scare like that? I really thought I nearly pushed him to his death.

"Aww. Forgive your husband." Sam persuaded as he pinched my cheek.

But that was not enough to appease me. Hence, I corrected. "Soon to be."

"But it's still the same." He said. "There, there. Smile now."

Sam pressed both his thumbs on either side of my lips and stretched it up. I narrowed my eyes, glaring at his overly playful nature.

"Ah!" Suddenly, Sam's eyes brimmed with excitement. I could not help but furrow my brows upon seeing his mischievous grin.

I don't feel good about this.

"Love, are you that upset?"

Don't I look like I was not?

"Jumping from here will release all your stress. Do you trust me?"

"Huh?" I tilted my head to the side as my gaze fixed on him. "Jump from... here?"

Sam nodded almost immediately.

"No." Horrified at the thought, I shook my head. Jumping from the window would only put me in distress even more.

"Don't you trust me?" Sam fluttered his eyelashes coquettishly.

At this point, I'm tired of saying how breathtaking he was. But no. I trust him, but I disagree that jumping from here would release all tension I had in my mind.

"Come." Sam suddenly grabbed my wrist and tugged it.

Out of instinct, I pulled my wrist back and put all my weight on my feet. "No!"

Sam frowned as his shoulders lowered. Yet, he was still holding my hand, which he placed on his lap.

"I want to try something." He sighed dejectedly.

"Sam, if you fell down from here, you'll be fine. But, if I fell down from this height, I would die." I stressed my words in distress.

I shook my head, sighing. I glanced at Sam and let out another sigh. A dare-devil like him wouldn't understand, would he?

"Sam..." Still, I felt defeated. Sam wasn't saying anything yet, but this was the only time he felt so disheartened after getting rejected.

I trudged towards him. He had his head hung low. Thus, I lifted his chin up by the back of my hand.

"Sam, not every..." My voice trailed off upon seeing the smirk on his lips.

"Have some faith, Lilove." He said, which made my eyes instantly go wide.

Faster than a blink of the eye, Sam wrapped his arm around my waist. He pulled me up against him before he leaned back and we fell down.

Everything happened so fast I nearly choked on my words. After a blink, all I knew was we're falling down — head first.

I couldn't even hear my heart beating or anything at all. It was as if my mind and heart went into a completely blank state.

"Saaam!" I shrieked, clasping on his shoulder tightly. I held onto him as if I was holding on to dear life.

How could he do this to me? I didn't even know what to feel as we continued on falling.

"How—!" Just as I was about to scream even more, I felt his finger clipped on my chin, lifting it up, as something soft smashed against my lips.

My eyes that I shut closed, opened in surprised. He — he's ki — kissing me right now?

"It's alright," He whispered into my mouth. Strange, how I heard his words despite the loud swoosh of air around us.

"Trust me." He added, biting my lip gently.

My grip on his shoulder tightened even more. I wanted to complain, but his lips, his arm around my waist, and his hand stilling my jaw strangely brought reassurance in my heart.

Before I knew it, I slowly closed my eyes. My arms carefully hooked around his neck. I might've lost my mind for responding to his kisses, fighting for dominance.

Our situation didn't change. We're still falling down. But my concern about it eventually faded into thin air, as my mind only had him in it.

Still, a part of me realized that our relationship was like this fall; it's dangerous. We can't stop midair. We could only expect and plan our safe landing while enjoying the entire falling process.

Chapter 93 - Let's F*ck... Hard.

They said there were multiple truths in certain things. I didn't fully understand that until now.

In this fall, it was true that I'm afraid. Not that I didn't trust Sam; I trust him, and that's a fact. However, this fear had been part of human nature.

This arousal as he locked lips with me was also true. It was a simple example of how multiple truth could confuse a situation but made sense — a bit.

I feel hot despite the generous air around us. My heart racing, confused if it was because I'm subconsciously aware we're falling, or because of how he deepened his kiss.

It felt nice, either way.

Suddenly, I felt his lips smile against mine. I slowly opened my eyes and immediately tighten my grip around him.

I'm scared to look to where we're landing. However, my stupid eyes subconsciously moved and saw how close we were to the ground.

"Sam...!" I yelled out of instinct and shut my eyes close. Yet, I heard him chuckled as he cradled my body into his embrace.

"We should do this more often." He said in between his chuckles. I didn't know what to respond.

Should I agree or not? Did I enjoy it? Yes. Did it scare me? Without a shadow of doubt.

"Hold tight and grit your teeth." Sam instructed in my ear. Even without seeing him, just by his tone made me imagine him smirking mischievously.

He just did whatever he pleased. That's so much like him.

As instructed, I pressed my body against him. My arms around his neck, my face buried in his chest, gritting my teeth as I anticipate our landing.

I felt his firm arms around my waist, his other hand stilling the back of my head. His arms were enough to give this reassurance I'm safe. With him, I'm always safe.

And then, impact.

Sam's chest was firm and a bit soft. When a big 'thud' rang in my ear, I buckled my arms around him. I shook in his embrace, but he held me securely.

After a while, I carefully open one of my eye, and then the other followed. We've landed?

Instinctively, I perked up and looked around. Sam was carrying me whilst squatting down.

"See? It's not bad, right?" Sam teased, gazing down at me. "I would always catch you or pull your hand out of danger, remember?"

Even after that fall, he's as dazzling as ever. And even after that, I found him more... attractive in the eye.

His dauntless nature had this special place in my heart. I swallowed a mouthful of saliva as I stabilized my breathing.

"Your kiss made it bearable." I muttered, blushing as I looked away.

But it was true, though. His action during the fall made it bearable and... dangerously hot.

We nearly made love in the air. I'm losing my mind for having such thoughts. But...

I gazed up again, as he was still staring down at me. I often find myself needing more of him.

Sam was enough, but unconsciously, I'm having this insatiable greed. I wanted more of him, more... of him.

Before I knew it, I lifted my head and smashed his lips. I heard him chuckle into my mouth, but I pressed him against me by embracing him tighter.

More. I've starved before, but this thirst and hunger was something I desperately needed to satiate.

He was right. Jumping from that height lifted off the stress that had been clouding my mind. Thoughts of him replaced it.

Just him; Samael La Crox.

After initiating a kiss, Sam was quick to respond and fought me for dominance. My eyes fluttered close as we battled for dominance.

He won. I didn't mind him winning. I love his supremacy. It made him so much hotter.

Soon, I felt my back lay flat against the cold grass. I shivered, but ignored the coldness of the earth.

"Sweetheart, stop teasing me because I'd take you right here and now if you don't." He whispered huskily, breaking his lips from me, and continued on kissing my jaw down to my neck.

His lips had touched every part of my body before. However, each time still gave this new pleasant feeling, which made me feel all tingly in delight.

Sam wanted me to stop him, but the way his hand snuck inside my skirt, crawling up to my thigh, told me he wouldn't listen.

"Then, take me." I whispered breathlessly.

As soon as those words escaped my lips, I felt his teeth sink into my shoulders lightly. I shivered and arched my back as my mouth fell open.

It was not his fangs yet, but my breath hitched as my toes curled. My heart pounded against my chest each time his hot breaths caressed my neck.

And then his tongue sensually licked my skin. I knew what would happen.

Back in Whistlebird, Sam and I made love. However, he avoided on making his fangs or even his teeth have a contact with my neck.

I always paid attention to what he was doing to me. Hence, I could tell the difference.

Sam breathed sharply against my shoulders as his hand clenched my thigh. It was rough and strong, not the usual gentleness.

Still, it just what I needed. Something rough and strong; something different and... dangerous.

"Do it." I said daringly.

Sam pulled back and his eyes hovered over me. His eyes darkened even more the second he caught my gaze.

Slowly, I saw his hand raised, approaching me. Was he trying to strangle me?

Despite what it appeared so, I only swallowed a mouthful of saliva as his fingers carefully wrapped around my neck. I didn't move. He would really strangle me for real?

Yet Sam never tightened his grip. Instead, his eyes drooped as he carefully studied my face without a word.

"Sam...?"

"Shh." Sam remained silent, tapping his finger on the side of my neck. "It's not there."

He muttered as he withdrew his hand away.

"Huh?"

"Nothing." Sam nonchalantly answered as he raised his finger. His nail slowly grew sharp.

To my surprise, Sam used that finger, slicing his palm across, which was quick to produce blood.

"Sam?" I gasped as blood immediately dripped down from his palm before he clenched it close.

"Don't mind it." Sam replied as he placed his fist on the side of my head.

His other hand pinned my hand over my head. His dark crimson eyes showed no restraint as his fangs let themselves known.

My instinct told me to run. But I didn't. Why would I run away from him?

"There are certain reasons some things happened, sweetheart." Sam's tone was low and intimidating.

His gaze never left mine. Staring at him sent a shiver down my spine. The way he looked hungrily at me with lust to the point he looked angry caused my breath to hitch.

Deep down, I knew Sam wanted something else. That this man pinning me down was a part of that dark side of his.

And right now, his lust was overpowering him. I knew what he wanted that instant.

"Tell me if it becomes unbearable." Yet, his words brought relief to my heart.

I loved the gentle side of him. I loved it when he looked at me affectionately. But there's just this inexplicable attraction I had towards his dauntless and dangerous side of him.

"Let's not make love." I dared. "Let's fuck... hard."

That's what he wanted, and I also wanted it right now. After doing it with him multiple times, I felt confident in my stamina to keep up with him.

I was wrong.

Chapter 94 - Illusions

"Let's not make love." I dared. "Let's fuck... hard."

Sam's eyes darkened even more with lust. That's what he wanted. Now that only made sense why he seemed to have a hard time in Whistlebird.

He had to fight against his own demons. He should've told me. But I couldn't really blame him.

The extent of how far and long vampires could take it remained unknown to me. They said a vampire had an insatiable lust.

That's why they could last for days without stopping. I still couldn't comprehend the entire painting of drinking someone's blood to borrow strength.

But I wouldn't need that now, would I?

Suddenly, Sam bit his thumb with his fangs.

"Have some." When blood appeared on his thumb, he offered it to me. "Lick it."

Sam's voice was flat, but his eyes flickered with fascination. He's thrilled.

"Your blood...?" I raised my brows as I darted my gaze from his thumb to his eyes.

"It's just normal blood. You won't turn into a vampire nor it'll be dangerous for you... considering my current state."

Considering his current state? Did he mean... what happened in Whistlebird?

"Can I ask why?" I blurted out, pursing my lips in a thin line.

"You will need it." Sam explained, keeping it short and simple. Yet, that quick answer didn't enlighten me — not the slightest.

I hesitated momentarily. However, I trusted him. Even if I get sired, I'm too in love with him I felt like there's no difference.

With that in mind, I slowly raised my hand and guided his hand to my lips. My lips parted as I put his thumb inside my mouth.

It tasted bitter but had a sweet aftertaste. It tasted very different from the iron taste of human blood.

My gaze barely looked away from him as I sucked the blood from his thumb. Sam's mouth fell open as he watched me suck and lick his blood from his thumb.

I studied his aroused reaction. It pleased me.

As that small portion of his blood traveled down my throat, I felt this scorching heat throughout my body. My throat dried up instantly, as my body desperately needed his touches.

Yes. Right now, here in the open.

Unknowingly, I'm panting for air. My chest moved in and out heavily.

All my emotions heightened; this needs, this wants, this lust, this love. I could feel them all fiercely taking over me.

The bitter taste gradually sweetened, closing my eyes as they rolled back. I'm merely sucking Sam's thumb, but it felt very stimulating.

"That's enough." Sam carefully withdrew his hand, snapping my eyes open. I frowned.

Slowly, he bent down on me, licking his bottom lips.

"Do you now understand what it feels to have heightened emotions?" Sam whispered. The apex of his nose brushing my jaw and ear.

He's teasing me, purposely. Goodness... Instinctively, I clasped his chest tightly.

"Stop teasing —" I gasped, arching my back as I perfectly felt how his fangs sunk into my shoulders.

It was rough, unrestrained, and painful. His gulping resonated in my ear, sending shivers down my spine all the way.

Yet, I couldn't think properly. I never loved pain, but this slight sting was different for reasons unknown.

Unlike our first and our last mating, this time felt different. I blamed lust for dominating us.

Regardless, if it was him, it felt alright. At least for me. It felt just about right.

Sam clasped my shoulder tightly, but not tight enough to break them. He's not stopping.

I should stop him, right? But... I couldn't bring myself to.

Soon, Sam let out a low grunt as he pulled his head back. "Lilou..."

His eyes glinted, grinding his teeth as he glanced at me.

"You won't stop me?" He growled huskily, wrapping his arms around my waist.

Why would I? I replied internally.

Upon responding inwardly, the corner of his lips curled into a smirk. Strange, I thought, but ignored it.

With little effort, he pulled me up to sit with his arm around my waist.

Hence, I ended up sitting on his lap while he sat on the ground. Without asking or pausing, his fangs sank into my upper chest.

He's having a feast and the sound every time he punctured my skin felt strange. His grip around me tightened more and more.

Sam couldn't stop himself. He couldn't control his thirst.

Danger. My life was in danger.

Deep down, I'm aware of that. But, maybe, that's just the way to go.

Slowly, I raised my hand from his back and run it through his hair. Arching my back as I tilted my head back, succumbing to the pain of his fangs into me.

"Sam..." I gritted my teeth.

Sam had been reluctant to drink my blood on our way here. Instead, he drank and only licked the blood that would naturally come out from it.

But now he's sucking me... dry. No wonder he was so reluctant and secretive. Unlike his needs for the first time, his needs this time were different.

It was as if he was in desperate need to survive. A subtle smile resurfaced on my lips.

I'm happy to help. "I love you." As my words slipped past my lips, I felt him pause and stiffen.

Soon, my head felt light. It started spinning as coldness seeped into my bones.

But I felt at peace. It was as if deep down; I saved him for reasons unknown. My heart was certain about that.

"My lady!" Before I succumbed to the darkness, I heard Fabian's worried shouts from a distance.

I felt his fang tearing long marks across my neck. Then, nothing.

When Fabian came and saw Lilou sitting on the ground alone, he shouted.

"My lady!" He rushed to her and Lilou was staring into nothingness.

Puzzled upon seeing her lifeless eyes, he shook her shoulders. "My lady! What happened?!"

Suddenly, Sam came in. His eyes instantly went wide, seeing Lilou's unblinking eyes.

"Lilou!" When Sam yelled and rushed to her, Lilou finally blinked her eyes and shifted her gaze to him.

A subtle smile resurfaced on her lips before she collapsed.

Chapter 95 - How The Bloody Hell Did My Bride End Up Like This?

I've said it before. I'm not the smartest, nor I had all the excellent qualities of a person.

I'm decisive, though. It was either good or bad depends on the situation.

But now that I thought about it, I could not help but wonder. Why haven't I had decided about living?

I've been very decisive about my death. Deep down, I had embraced a good or tragic ending.

I've been decisive about death and love... but never life.

Has anyone felt it? That they're merely existing and not completely living? Because that's how I see myself.

Even when Sam came into my life, there's always a part of me that would give up life if I deemed it necessary. Just like how I ended up in this darkness, I just gave up my life for him.

Not that I needed recognition or appreciation. I'd give my life to him if he needed it. No questions asked.

But... would Sam ask me such a favor?

I could still vividly feel his fangs sinking into my skin. The sound of his drinking ringing in my ears. His grip tightening around me, almost suffocating me.

After having a taste of his blood, all my emotions heightened. My eager need for him, my burning love for him, and my willingness to help and do what I could do for him.

I didn't think. Or rather, I couldn't think with all those emotions clouding my mind.

Now, I perfectly understood the reason Sam often kept his emotions at bay. Because if a vampire felt a certain emotion, that emotion would consume him.

No wonder he rarely took anything seriously. Sam might get annoyed most of the time, but I've never truly seen him furious.

Aren't vampires fascinating creatures? When they hate, they hate for real. When they love, they'd love with all their hearts.

This conclusion might not be accurate to other vampires. But what I'm certain, these deductions had accurately described my vampire.

Sam.

The love of my life. The man I never deserved to have.

But then again, the question remained in my head. Would Sam ask me to give up my life for him?

I'd be more relieved if he could tell me to do that. However, deep down, I knew I would never hear those words from him.

Sam would never, never hurt me. He's the type of man who'd kill himself before he could turn his back on his beliefs and morals.

He was the man who forced himself into hundreds of years of slumber because he didn't want to ruin Grimsbanne. He was the man who selfishly ordered his loyal servants to kill him if he awoke to a different person.

Sam was a man who was aware of himself. He knew he "lacked discipline". Hence, he would refuse to do things, knowing he wouldn't be able to control himself.

Why am I even reevaluating Sam? Right... it was because he sucked me dry, sinking his fangs into of my body, mercilessly.

It was painful, honestly. It felt completely opposite of how he drank my blood the first time.

There was no love or concern, just hunger. The feeling sent a shiver down my spine.

Someone... help me get out of this darkness. It felt cold and scary. My mind clashed against my thoughts of Sam and the Sam I was last with.

It only got to me that, that Sam I was last with wasn't my groom. He was not a part of him, either.

I'm not sure, but this strong gut feeling told me it was... someone else.

Samael stared at Lilou, who was lying unconscious on the bed. His grip on the armrest he was sitting on — near her bed side — tightened.

Silence enveloped the chambers. Fabian stood not far away from the bed; Cameron as well.

Both of them glanced at Lilou worriedly. And then Fabian glanced at Samael, who had been silent the entire time.

Moments later, Samael finally broke the silence as he raised his sharp gaze at Cameron.

"Cameron, I'm giving you a chance to explain yourself. How did my bride end up like this?"

Samael's tone was firm, level, and low. It was the scariest Fabian had ever heard.

"Your highness, after our brief stroll, Her Grace and I had shared a supper and continued our talk. But after that, we had gone our separate ways because I wanted Her Grace to rest." Cameron explained, almost sounding frustrated at the threatening aura emanating from Sam.

Fabian let out a heavy sigh and vouched for Cameron. "Lord Cameron was right. Her Grace told me she wanted some time alone to breathe some fresh air in the garden. But when I looked for her, she wasn't there anymore."

Samael scoffed faintly as the corner of his lips tilted into a smirk. His glinting eyes fixed on Cameron.

"I perfectly said I gave you a chance, didn't I? Cameron?"

Cameron's shoulder stiffened as Sam's coldness seeped into his bones.

"This is your last chance. Your life... no, the entire Cunningham lies in your answer." Samael paused, leaning forward, resting his arms on his legs, as his eyes remained on Cameron.

"How the bloody hell did my bride end up like this?"

Cameron swallowed a mouthful of saliva, hearing how Samael stressed each word. He heard his gulp in his ear as his jaw locked.

Danger.

Samael stressed his every word and made it sound so dangerous. Lilou was a bottom line one mustn't touch. And now, she's fell into a such a state.

Cameron could only imagine the worst for Cunningham. The king was already cruel, but the third prince was the worst.

It just so happened the founding leader of the Crawford Clan chose Samael hundreds of years ago. Hence, they worshiped him regardless.

Still, Cameron was aware of what kind of La Crox Samael was. The worst of the worst; unreasonable, ruthless, and the most sadistic of all.

"I really don't know, Your Highness." Cameron hung his head low as he broke buckets of sweats. "However, a week ago..."

Slowly, Cameron raised his head, hesitant to speak. But the moment he met Sam's intimidating gaze, he cleared his throat and decided.

"A week ago, your brother, the Earl of Monarey, paid me a visit."

As soon as Cameron relayed the news, the temperature of the room instantly dropped.

Chapter 96 - How The Bloody Hell Did My Bride End Up Like This? II

Cameron's breath hitched as he hung his head low. He could sense the ominous air thicken.

"I didn't tell you, your highness, because I thought it's not important. The sixth prince only visited us just like what he did annually." Cameron explained his side of the story.

It was true, though. Every year, the Earl of Monarey from the North would visit the Crawfords' manor. That was to check on them as an order from the king.

Therefore, he didn't mention it to Samael. The sixth prince did nothing unusual. He still mocked them and held a feast during his two-day stay.

There was nothing new.

"Alistair, huh?" Samael murmured, leaning his back against the high-backed chair.

Instinctively, Cameron peeked at Samael. The latter was rubbing his lower lip with his finger as a smirk resurfaced on his lips.

Cameron gulped down again as he looked away. The Crawford had avoided getting involved in the La Crox's internal feud.

Even when they hailed Samael as their god, Samael was kind enough not to involve them with what happened during the annihilation of the Bloodfangs. But now, Cameron was unsure at the fate of Cunningham.

"Alistair La Crox..." Sam gritted his teeth, sucking air through it. He closed his eyes, tilting his head back.

Taking notice at the air emitting from Samael, Fabian turned and faced Cameron.

"Lord Cameron, please forgive my audacity. But, did the Earl of Monarey give you something as a present?"

"Huh?" Cameron furrowed his brows. But he still recalled if Alistair La Crox gave him something.

"No, there's none."

"If there's none, please search the entire castle and burn everything that weren't here before the sixth prince's visit." Fabian's eyes glinted solemnly. "I had recently heard the sixth prince favored a witch."

Fabian didn't have to explain long for Cameron to understand. Just the word witch was enough of an answer.

Witches and vampires never got along. However, there were instances both parties worked together without trying to kill each other.

But that only happened if both parties had a common, formidable enemy. And if only the outcome could benefit them fairly.

"Please do it immediately. The future duchess' life will be in great danger if she didn't regain her consciousness." Fabian urged as his eyes bore unwavering results.

Even though Cameron was a marquess and Fabian was a mere butler, there's just this commanding tone in Fabian that urged him to abide.

"Yes." Cameron agreed as he glanced at Zoey. "But I'm only doing it because it involved Her Grace."

Cameron added his clarification. Lilou was still their new goddess to worship. Hence, he couldn't let her die in this very land.

Above all, Cameron had high regards to Lilou. Her words still lingered in his mind because she's the only human who was brave enough to speak her mind.

When Fabian nodded wordlessly, Cameron closed his eyes. Since this had been his abilities, to talk to people around his vicinity, he sent out the order.

While Cameron had given out the orders, Sam was biting the nail of his thumb.

"I think my brother wanted to experience hell."

Fabian glanced at Samael and let out a sigh. He could tell with just a look that Alistair would never be safe anymore. Alistair purposely provoked him.

"Then, hell it is."

Samael let out a ridiculing chuckle as he gazed at Lilou. The longer he looked at her unconscious figure, the more this fury within him intensified.

"Cameron, if you hadn't heard yet, Anton's Era in Whistlebird ended. But, I left those who I deemed deserving to atone."

He paused, shifting his gaze straight at Cameron. The latter slightly raised his brows, not expecting to hear Sam's remarks.

"But I can't guarantee the same to Cunningham. If my bride didn't wake up by dawn, I'd start killing your people... one by one every hundred beats of your heart."

Cameron held his breath, distinguishing the current threat that befell Cunningham. He knew Samael meant it.

"We will do our best, Your Highness." Cameron mustered the courage. He wanted Lilou to wake up just as much as him.

"But can I ask what could have happened to Her Grace? What did the Duke of Monarey do to her?"

Silence. The air felt tight, thick, and suffocating. Cameron darted his eyes from Fabian to Samael discreetly. There was no answer given.

"Fabian, can I entrust Lilou to you?" Suddenly, Sam inquired without looking away from Lilou.

"No, my lord." Fabian answered almost immediately. "It's not because I can't protect her ladyship, but because I know it will upset my lady if you headed to the Capital alone."

But receiving no response from Samael, Fabian added; "Please calm down, my lord."

It was still a surprise that Samael didn't lose his composure even after what happened. Knowing the sixth prince, a vampire who had the strongest mind control after the King and Sam...

They could only expect the worst. Not to mention if this involved the king himself.

Fabian wondered what illusions Lilou experienced. Because illusions made by the sixth prince had after effects in reality.

Illusions, or dreams, or nightmares created by Alistair always had the worst outcome. It would easily consume a mortal like Lilou. But if the King had taken part in here, it'd be more problematic.

Samael's brothers had made their move even before they could reach the capital.

"Leave us." After a while, Samael ordered while staring at Lilou.

Fabian bowed and glanced at Cameron. Without saying a word, both of them left silently.

When the door creaked closed, Samael extended his arm and reached for her hand. His hand trembling as his breathing grew heavier.

His emotions fought for dominance. Samael could barely contain them.

Slowly, he guided her hand to his lips. His eyes remained on her peacefully sleeping face.

"Please come back to me, Love. If you don't, I..." Samael trailed off as a bitter glint flickered across his eyes.

"I will turn you into one of us. You don't want that, do you? Be a vampire?"

Chapter 97 - Dawn

It's the break of dawn. The break of dawn will come soon. The break of dawn. Dawn.

Dawn.

Dawn..

Dawn...

I kept hearing that word being uttered with different emotions repeatedly as I weakly opened my eyes. What's with the break of dawn?

I opened and closed my eyes, trying to get a hold of my vision properly. Soon, the indistinct chattering grew louder.

"Cameron, I told you what would happen, didn't I?" Sam's voice felt like the chilly breeze in the middle of the night.

"Fabian, have you gathered the Crawford?"

"Yes, my lord. They had also dug their own graves and had picked where they would rest." Fabian answered in an exceptionally solemn tone.

"Your Highness, please don't do this to our Crawford —" Cameron was cut off.

I forced myself to move my head to their direction, furrowing my brows at this mild commotion even before the daybreak. As soon as I did, my eyes blinked countless times.

What I'm seeing was Sam holding Lord Cameron up by his neck. Just using one hand!

"Do, what? Marquess of Cunningham?" Even though Sam's back was facing me, I could tell what kind of frightening expression plastered across his face.

"Were my words not clear to you, Cameron Crawford? The lives of the people in Cunningham and the Crawford are not even enough nor will it compare to... my loss."

Am I still dreaming? A premonition? A nightmare?

Just yesterday, Sam told me these people were harmless folks. Right... they might be harmless, but Sam was a dangerous man!

Wait. Was he going to do what he had done in Whistlebird?

What did they do, though? Which side of truth did I miss?

I still felt so out of it, as my mind couldn't process the situation I woke up to. Did I wake up at the wrong time?

Should I pretend to sleep? Sam wouldn't rob my memories again, would he? He promised, right?

"Snapping your neck right now is mercy." Sam hissed. "I'm not familiar with such a word, Cameron."

I felt a chill run down my spine as I shivered. I've never seen or heard Sam reach such a low tone. So low it could break one's spirit.

Right now, he exuded a very different and very dark aura. There's not the slightest touch of mischievousness or pleasure for blood, just like what he displayed in Whistlebird.

Right now, Sam... I couldn't feel any emotion from him. Which made it more terrifying.

"My Lord, we..." Suddenly, Fabian trailed off as I felt his gaze slowly shifted on me.

"My lady." He called out softly, sounding overly relieved.

Instinctively, I shut my eyes for reasons unknown. I didn't see or hear anything.

Please don't erase this memory, Sam. I somehow found you... hot.

As soon as I closed my eyes, I heard a heavy thud sound resonating in my ear. Huh?

But no matter how curious I was, I kept my eyes closed. Yes, pretend I was still sleeping and just leave all the questions for later.

I'm certain Sam had his reasons for annihilating the Crawfords. Goodness... am I getting blinded by love? Or was this the effect of the "multiple truths"?

After some brief time, there's only silence. Did they leave? I didn't hear the door, though.

But why was it so silent?

Before I knew it, I opened one of my eye to peek. However, as soon as I did, a pair of crimson orbs hovered over me, welcoming my gaze.

Hence, I reluctantly opened my other eyes and sported a smile.

"Did I... wake up at the wrong time?" I asked awkwardly.

"Your Grace!" Suddenly, Cameron exclaimed in great relief while gasping for air.

"Lilou..." Sam called out huskily.

I flinched at the sudden coldness that seeped deep into my bones. My breath also hitched as I shifted my gaze back to Sam.

But this time, the myriads of emotions flickering across his eyes made themselves known. It was as if Sam was about to cry.

Why... such pain in his eyes... my heart clenched. Did I worry him too much?

But... I was just sleeping like usual.

Sam then cupped my jaw as his eyes roamed around my face. "No, you woke up just in time before I could erase Cunningham in this kingdom."

Ah?

I didn't understand Sam's word, rendering me confused. Sam... he planned to erase the entire Cunningham from the maps of the world?

Not just the people? But the entire city?

Did I translate his words correctly?

"I shouldn't have left you alone." Sam uttered, sounding apologetically.

Ah?

Taking notice of my puzzlement, Sam narrowed his eyes dangerously. "Leave us."

As soon as his commands left his lips, Fabian escorted Lord Cameron out. Sam then took a seat near my bed.

His leg resting over the other. He had his arms crossed as his crimson eyes locked with me.

Since I felt uncomfortable lying down, I assisted myself to sit up. Then, I faced Sam whose mien was akin to those noble; distant and cold, so out of reach and detach.

My heart ached. Sam was just sitting not far away. However, the way his eyes glinted made me feel he was beyond my reach.

Unconsciously, I was clasping on the quilt over my lap. I dropped my gaze. What's this distant feeling between us?

"Did you know what happen to you?"

"Uh..." I was too distracted by my current personal feelings that I couldn't think straight.

"What happened to me?"

I mumbled as I recalled last night's event.

"Last night..." I trailed off as I glanced at him. He still had those cold eyes, as if he was looking at another person.

"Why are you looking at me with such cold eyes, Sam?"

I blurted out. Immediately, I pressed my lips together, but didn't look away from him.

Sam, as if he didn't expect such an honest question, slightly raised his brows. His eyes went wide — a little.

Yet, he still questioned. "You don't remember?"

Chapter 98 - Dawn II

"You don't remember?"

"Of course, I do. But, why are you staring at me as if I'm a stranger?" Although I was surprised by my question, I repeated it unhesitatingly.

I remembered Sam staring at me almost similar to this back when I got possessed in the carriage. The difference was quite similar and not at the same time. It was hard to explain.

But my heart could feel the difference.

"Because I'm furious... very much." Sam stressed his words for me to understand.

"Did I do something to deserve your wrath?"

"I'm not mad at you, silly." Sam was quick to reply. But his coldness remained.

"Then..." I looked away with a sigh slipping past my lips.? "... why do you sound as if I committed something unforgivable? I should be the one mad at you after..."

Unconsciously, I raised my hand and touched my upper chest. I furrowed my brows as I looked down before touching my neck.

There were no healing wounds? I'm certain I should've inflicted injuries after all that biting.

But there's none.

"What are you doing?" Sam inquired, curious.

I immediately looked up and cast him a look.

"No marks."

Sam narrowed his eyes. "No marks?"

"Didn't you..." I trailed off as I tilted my head to the side. "Huh?"

"Didn't I, what?"

Strange, I thought. What was I was trying to say again?

"Lilou," Sam muttered before I turned my head to face him.

However, as soon as I did, Sam already stood. His palm resting on the mattress' as his face was only a palm length away from me.

"Lilou, what did I do to you last night?"

For some reason, I felt like I was treading on thin ice. I've gotten too used to Sam's teasing nature that this solemn side of him felt new.

And dangerous.

I unconsciously bit my tongue. Would he kill me if I gave him the wrong answer? But, above all that, what actually frightened me was... losing his affection.

Did he get possessed?

"I..." I looked away. "I don't remember."

"Lilou."

Whenever he called me by my name, it would usually make my heart flutter. But now, I felt like I was getting scolded.

"I really don't remember. I'm so sure I am trying to tell you what happened, but... I can't remember what I was trying to say."

"Did he touch you?"

"Touch me?" With a furrowed brow, I returned my attention back to him. "By who?"

Sam studied me carefully, at this close distance. I felt like looking away again, but he placed his hand on my chin, forcing me to look at him.

He stared at me for as long as I could remember. And then his eyes glistened with killing intent.

"That bastard..." Sam gritted his teeth as if any moment, he'd snap someone's neck.

Please, not my neck.

But before that, I secretly recalled what I did last night.

Last night, I told Fabian I wanted to take a stroll alone. I had too much things to think about that I thought strolling in the garden would make me feel better.

Also, since Sam wasn't around that time. Then I went back into the guest chambers and fell asleep while waiting for Sam.

However, why did I feel something was amiss? I felt like I was missing something very important.

What happened to me that got Sam so riled up? What happened that brought forth the emotions I had never seen in his eyes?

What happened, Lilou? My deductions aptitude, please come out.

But nothing.

No matter how I thought about it, there's nothing. My memory remained the same.

I wouldn't be confused if I remembered.

"Did... something happened?" I raised my gaze back to Sam, asking carefully.

Instead of answering, Sam's jaw tightened. What's with his expression?

Slowly, Sam raised his hand and cupped my cheek. I could feel his restraint fury just by his touch.

"Sam?"

"I'm sorry." He muttered under his breath.

"Huh?" My furrowed brows creased even more. "What happened?"

I could not help but worry about seeing him like this. Sam was never serious, or rather, I had never seen him take anything seriously.

But now, there's this one distinct emotion I could feel from him. His blood... was boiling, continuously.

Despite uttering words of apology, his building up fury remained. It made my heart thump loudly.

"Rest here for now. I had told Fabian to escort you back to Grimsbanne." Sam slowly withdrew his hand as he pushed himself back.

What was this melancholic emotion circling in my heart?

"And you?" I didn't know why he would give such an order.

"I'll set off of on my own." Sam replied coldly as he turned around.

Before I could think or process his words, my body acted on its own. I immediately raised my hand and held on the hem of his loose poet shirt.

He stopped, thankfully. Sam looked over his shoulder and back at me.

"I... don't want to go back." I murmured. "Not without you."

I had waited for him all night. And when I awoke, he was acting differently and telling me to go back?

Not to mention, not recalling or knowing what made such drastic change? I felt like I wouldn't be seeing him again if he goes today.

"What happened to keeping me close?" I added, receiving no response from him. "If something terrible happened while I was asle..."

Before I could finish my sentence, Sam suddenly pinned me down. His eyes glinting dangerously as he pinned my wrist above my head.

Catching me completely by surprised.

"Sa — Sam..."

"I'm slowly losing my mind, Lilou. I can barely contain this anger and I might just explode. I can't let this slide."

I gulped down a mouthful of saliva as my heart raced frantically. Still, I could not help but notice that despite pinning my hands, I didn't feel any pain.

Just staring at him confirmed that something unforgivable happened. If only I could just remember...

Hah...!

Suddenly, snippets of memory started coming back to me. They were just snippets, but I scoffed in disbelief.

"Disgusting." Before I knew it, words slipped past my lips without my consent.

Sam could barely contain his anger. However, I couldn't contain this abrupt fury engulfing my heart.

Chapter 99 - Lara Ashen Grim Crawford

I strained my gaze back to his eyes. I could see my expression reflecting in his eyes.

I had the same expression as him. I've never felt this type of anger before. It was something I couldn't contain or repress.

Sam's expression changed slightly. But mine didn't.

"How dare he... haha!" I laughed at the level of ridiculousness. However, as I did, my anger eventually redirected into someone else.

This anger... I'm extremely mad, insulted, and felt disgusted at... myself.

How could I fall for such trickery? Who did it? I'd make sure to sink my thumbs into his eyes.

I didn't know the extent of my dark thoughts. However, this was the first time I had the pleasure of thinking of doing such a thing.

Sam slowly let go of my hand, taken aback at the expression plastered on my face. However, I clutched his chest.

"Who did it? Was it the Marquess doing? The king?"

His eyes darkened. "Whether it's Cameron or the King. What will you do?"

I paused momentarily upon the question. What will I do? No. He's asking it incorrectly.

It was supposed to be; what can I do? What can a lowly human do?

"I'll end Cameron with my own hands." Still, I responded with a strong conviction.

I would never let this insult slide.

"How so?" Sam toned down as he narrowed his eyes. But I could see the fascination in his eyes.

I smirked. My words weren't as empty as they sounded like.

Thanks to you, I recalled something important.

"Lara."

Sam's eyes instantly widened upon mentioning the name. Lara, the founding clan leader of the Crawford.

Thanks to her, I didn't feel sad in that darkness.

**

During my sleep, I was conscious. Trapped in nothing but darkness. Cold, lonely, and frightened.

When I called for help to get me out of the darkness, someone actually came. At first, I only heard her melodious humming.

It came from a distant and slowly I heard it closer. Until I felt hands cupping my cheek.

They're a nice pair of small and slender hands. They're cold, but ironically, it sent warmth and soothed my racing heart.

As I listened to her humming and blinked my eyes, I found myself in a gazebo. A pond on sight, varieties of flowers under a clear sky.

It was pretty and serene. So much better than any garden I had been.

"How adorable." Suddenly, I heard a woman's voice across the table.

Instinctively, I shifted my attention to the woman across from me. As soon as I laid my eyes on her, my mouth fell open.

Gorgeous.

Green long locks falling perfectly on her shoulders. Emerald eyes, speaking the soul of the nature. She's smiling at me, cupping her jaw, blinking her eyes ever so slowly.

I never thought I'd see such a beauty in my life. She's too beautiful to the extent I feel like getting blinded if I stare longer.

I should look away, right? But I couldn't bring myself to.

When she giggled, covering her lips, my heart fluttered. Instinctively, I placed my hand over my chest. It was beating so fast.

I'm sorry, Sam.

"Are you..." My tongue rolling back out of nervousness. "God?"

"Pfft—!" Her giggles gradually turned into loud chuckles.

Even when she laughed aloud, she's still beautiful. How can a lady exist? It's... unfair.

I would serve her all my life. The peasant part of me urged.

"You're so funny, Lilou."

She knew my name? I raised my brows and blinked many times. I could not help but blush at the thought as I bit my lower lip.

Again, deep down, I wanted to apologize to my beloved groom for waning after seeing a beauty. He would understand, right?

This lady across the table in the middle of this gazebo was just perfect. No matter how I look, whatever angle, her every movement spoke elegance.

She's the face of perfection. She also exuded kindness and sincerity. I don't sense any malicious intent from her.

"No wonder Hell fancy you." She commented.

Huh?

Hell? Did he mean Sam? What an odd name to call him.

"My name is Lara Ashen Grim Crawford." Suddenly, her hand that was cupping her jaw extended across the table.

"You can call me Lara. Also, I'm not God."

Her smile was akin to the coming of spring. Why do I feel so bashful? I'm panicking.

"Uhh..." I glanced at her hand. Hence, I raised my hand and held hers.

"Li — Lilou Roux." Unlike her confidence, mine was nearly nonexistent.

Her hand felt so soft. It suddenly made me feel shy as I know my hands were rough from all the labor work.

When she withdrew her hand, I carefully hid my hands where she couldn't see them. I feel like holding her hand even for a brief moment was a grave sin.

To hold such precious hands... how dare a peasant like me.

Silence enveloped us. The goddess was just smiling while staring at me. Goodness... she's radiating.

Please stop smiling, my lady. I'm getting married soon.

"You're dying, Lilou." Suddenly, she broke the silence and seemed like I got deafened slightly.

Ah?

She's still smiling despite saying such words.

"You don't know?"

Huh? She's... serious?

My eyes slowly went wide. She didn't seem lying or just trying to scare me off.

"Hell will surely massacre the entire Crawford just like what they want."

"What do you mean?" I blurted out hesitatingly.

"Your Groom, Samael La Crox, will kill my kin if you die." She said it with a subtle smile as she looked down at the cup of tea on the table.

"Why am I dying...?"

I didn't know reason, but why am I dying so suddenly? I just... I tried to recall what I did previously, but I couldn't remember how I got into the darkness.

How... no, Sam. I was with Sam before this occurred, right? I was so distracted by her beauty that my thoughts were all over the place. I didn't even ask where we were and all those important queries that I should've asked already.

"Little Lilou." Lara rested her elbow on the edge of the table, leaning forward as the smile on her lip faded.

"What do you think about vampires and the royal family?"

Chapter 100 - Lara Ashen Grim Crawford II

"What do you think about vampires and the royal family?"

"..."

I remained silent for a long time.

Now that she asked such a question before I could raise questions, my focus drifted to that.

"I thought vampires are just blood-thirsty monsters who see us, humans, as their livestock. But after meeting Sam and spent some time with the people working in the Duke of Grimsbanne's mansion, my perception changed."

My eyes softened as my heart warmed up at the thought of Sam and everyone. From Fabian to all the servants in the duke's mansion. Everyone had been kind to me.

Although they relayed their disagreement about our engagement at first, I couldn't really blame them. Sam was a pure-blooded vampire.

A marriage with a mortal — a peasant, to make it worse — was just... ridiculous. Even I had questioned it in the past.

Regardless, they had treated me fairly. And now, I didn't feel any hostility from them anymore.

There's always an exception, though. Sir Knight, Rufus. The way he looked at me never changed, as if whenever he laid his eyes on me, he's judging my entire existence.

That's why I always avoided him. Not because I hated him, but because I thought I sully his mood.

"I figured vampires are not that different from humans. Putting aside their superior strength and long life spans, vampires were just doing what they had to do to survive." I smiled as I raised my gaze.

"We might see their methods unforgivable to mortals, but is there another way to satiate their hunger?"

If the animal's blood was enough, vampires wouldn't even touch humans. That was what I remembered Fabian's words.

To put it simply, it's not the vampires to blame. They were just born to crave for blood instead of water.

"If I see vampires as monster, then I am no different. Animals had life, too. Didn't that mean humans who see them as livestock are just an inferior species of vampires?"

Lara's eyes flickered with amusement. Yet, I didn't feel any satisfaction with the way she looked at me.

What I said just now was not to impress her. I just spoke my mind.

Staying in the duke's mansion and our journey here had made me realize certain things. Everyone was slaves to something and we just do everything to survive.

Just like how vampires sucked human blood; just like how humans hunt animals as food, just like how other animals eat other animals.

It was a natural cycle in this world. And all for survival.

How could I condemn anyone if that's how they survive?

"What an interesting point of view." She awwed, nodding approvingly.

"What about the royal family, then?"

She asked. Again, I remained silent. The first question was simple to answer, as I only based it on my feelings.

But this question... I didn't even know why she was asking.

"I mean, about the current king, what do you think about him?" She rephrased, which baffled me even more.

"His Majesty, the King..." I trailed off. "I only heard things about him, but I didn't want to judge unless I see it for myself."

I gazed down as my voice lowered. Not that I didn't trust the words of the people mentioning the king, I just... I don't know.

"See for yourself...?" Lara muttered, which caused me to glance up at her.

The side of her lips twisted into a bitter smile. Her emerald eyes are still pretty. But what was this pain behind them?

It was as if she was remembering a memory that was so beautiful and bitter. Did she... like the king?

No, that's not the question. Was she in love with the king? I couldn't think of other reasons of why her eyes looked so sad aside from that.

"Haven't you seen him yourself yet?" She asked, tilting her head a little to the side.

Huh? Was she asking me or reminding me?

"What do you mean, my lady?"

"Lara." She corrected. "You don't have to be polite to me, Lilou. Aren't we friends?"

My immediate reaction was to blush. The thought of being friends with her and she's smiling brightly while saying that, felt nice.

I should collect my thoughts. However, my thoughts and important questions kept slipping through my fingers.

It felt like I was trying to grab water. It was impossible.

Lara tilted her head as she fixed her eyes on me. Her naturally curled lashes fluttered beautifully.

"Lilou, right now, we're inside your mind. The only reason you're talking to me is because you asked for me."

"Ask... asked for you?"

"Even I don't know how, but if you're from Grimsbanne and Hell is marrying you..." Lara suddenly trailed off as she contemplated.

What was she thinking about? No, what was she saying?

Lara smiled brightly. "Aren't you special?"

I furrowed my brows as a frown resurfaced on my lips. Was marrying Sam made me special? Well, perhaps an immortal man fancying a mortal was a compliment in itself?

"Either way, the longer you stay here, Hell will soon start killing my kin." The side of her lips twisted. "That bastard... how dare he lash out at my kin just because I'm dead. I'll hunt him."

My back and shoulders instantly stiffen. Lara, whose beauty and reserved demeanor moments ago was suddenly... on fire?

One could tell she wanted to tear Sam's body apart with her bare hands. Despite that, I noticed that Lara's eyes didn't seem she hated him.

"Uh... my lad — Lara?"

"Oh!" As quick as a blink of an eye, Lara suddenly snapped. My under eye immediately twitched seeing her quick transition.

I guess not everyone was perfect, huh? Still, I ignored those thoughts for now. Instead, I raised a series of questions before I could forget.

"You said you're a Crawford? Why are we here? What happened to me? What is going on? Also, is this a dream?" Still, I ignored my current thoughts as I inquired.

"A dream? Well, more or less." Lara rubbed her chin as if she wasn't completely certain about the answer.

"More or less?"

"Is it important?" Lara pressed her lips together, blinking. "Your life and my kin's life are in danger. What happened to you is far more dire than you expect, Lilou. And it won't just stop from here."