

ROSES HAVE THORNS #Chapter 11 - The Exchange -

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Chapter 11: Chapter 11 - The Exchange

"COME OUT RIGHT NOW!"

'Dammit kitty. You have the worst timing.' Kurt thought, giving the cat a stink eye.

"If you don't show yourself, I swear I'll burn this place to smithereens! You have five seconds!" The bald man warned.

'Really!? You didn't hear the meow? It was clearly a cat!'

"FIVE!"

'Come Kurt, think. What's the best way to get out of this?'

"FOUR!"

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

'Screw it. Let's improvise.'

Stepping out from his hiding place, Kurt showed himself to the two thieves and walked to them with a vote of confidence.

"Sorry I'm late, boys." He spoke smoothly.

Still feeling agitated, the bald man raised and pointed his lit hand at Kurt.

"Who are you, one eye?"

Kurt raised his hands to show that he is of no threat and asked, "What do you mean? Who else would ask to meet you two here?"

"Boss," the man in all black whispered, "I think this is the buyer."

The bald man, who is referred to as boss, stared at Kurt carefully. He scrutinized him. Trying to look for any signs that he was indeed the buyer and not some random person who happened to be spying on them.

Finding nothing that suggests the latter, he asked, "Hmm. Are you really the buyer?"

Kurt did not say anything. He only smiled and nodded as if he expected their reactions.

"Ha!" the boss put down his hand and laughed, "You're late, you know. Any second longer and I might've looked for a new buyer."

"Sorry about that. Being late is a bad habit of mine." Kurt too put down his hands and walked closer.

"That's bad for business. You better fix that habit before it gets you in trouble."

"I'm well aware.... Speaking of business." Kurt led on.

"Ah yes, let's get to it shall we. Tell me, you got the money?"

"That depends," Kurt answered, "You got the stuff?"

"Of course we have the stuff," the man in all black interjected, "Let's not play these games and get this over with. I don't want to be in the creepy alley any longer than I have to."

"You make a fair point my ninja friend. No wasting time it is." Kurt took out his pouch of coins and shook it in front of them.

"Looks a little light, don't you think?" The boss questioned.

"It's only gold coins." Kurt bluffed, "Think of it as a bonus for stealing from, and losing that pink haired girl so cleanly."

"You were watching me?" The ninja-looking man was surprised by this revelation.

"In case something went wrong. One can never be too careful." Kurt acknowledged him.

"Wow~ No one ever notices me. It's only ever the boss here." He looked at Kurt with a creepy look that suggested he's smiling underneath his mask.

"The hell are you getting all emotional for?! Move it!".

Pushing him out the way, the boss took out four dog tags.

"These are the version two display tags that your cult requested. So how are we going to do this?"

"Let's keep things simple," Kurt suggested, "I take ten steps back and you put the tags on the ground. Afterwards, you take ten steps back and I move to take the tags and put the coins on the ground. I leave with the tags, and you leave happy rich men. Fair?"

"I don't like it," the boss shook his head, "Why do we have to let go of the goods first. As far as I'm aware, you're the ones who need us. Not the other way around. We can just look for other buyers."

'Damn you baldy! I thought you had a pea-sized brain.'

"Fine. I'll go first then. Happy?" Kurt smiled.

"Swell."

The two thieves proceeded as planned and took ten steps back. When they stopped, Kurt crouched down and put the coins on the ground.

'Am I really doing this? Just for some random pink haired girl I don't even know? Argh, this is all that cat's fault!'

After putting the coins down, Kurt stood up, raised his hands in the air and slowly took ten steps back.

Seeing that the coins were lying there, the boss slowly walked towards it with the tags in his hands. Behind him, however, the ninja followed.

"Why are you following me you idiot! This is a one-man job. Are you trying to spook the buyer or something?!"

"S-sorry boss. I didn't know..."

"Yeah yeah. What **do** you know? Just go stand back."

The ninja walked back with deflated steps as he got yelled at.

'Oof. From what little I've seen of their dynamic, I'm almost starting to feel bad for him. Almost.'

When the boss reached the pouch of coins, he put the box of tags next to it and looked at Kurt as if waiting for approval.

He nodded and Kurt nodded back.

The boss slowly grabbed the pouch, stood up and carefully walked back.

'Dammit. That was my lifeline in this messed up world. Sorry Willy.'

The boss finally stood next to the ninja and waited for Kurt to pick the tags.

"It would be rude of me to just leave. I'll wait for you to take the goods. That way we can both leave satisfied."

"How magnanimous of you." Kurt replied.

As he walked to pick it up, his face showed no signs of suspicion but on the inside was another story.

'Please don't look inside the pouch! Please don't look!'

Just as he was about to pick the box up, two sets of voices spoke at the same time, "Hey! This isn't only gold coins!" The boss yelled — "What's going on here!" The new voice could be heard yelling as well.

"What the—" The boss was distracted and looked at the unknown person.

'Now!' Kurt sprung up and threw the box at the ninja.

"Hey! Be careful with that!" When the ninja tried catching it, he noticed Kurt sprinting towards the distracted boss.

Confused on what to prioritise for that split second, he had a brain fart and stood still.

That split second was enough time for Kurt to grab the boss in a choke hold.

"Acch hrrk ugh...." The boss tapped and struggled to breath as Kurt squeezed.

"Shhhh. I'm holding just enough so that you don't pass out." He whispered. "Now let's see where this new development takes us."

Kurt focused his attention on the new arrival and asked, "Who are you?"

"My my my... What an unprecedeted turn of.... events~"

The new figure was a man dressed in thick black robes that covered his whole body and had a hood covering half of his face. On the hood, covering his eyes, were two crudely painted red eyes that were crying out blood. This blood design trailed from the eyes all the way down to the bottom of the robe.

"Are you perhaps... a cultist?" Kurt took an educated guess.

"What an ugly thing to call us!" He yelled.

Raising his arm up into the air and tilting his head back, he continued, "We... are the children... of Goddess Bula~ AHAHAHAHA!"

"W-wait a minute," the ninja, now holding the box in his hands, turned to Kurt and asked, "Weren't you the cultist?"

"HAA?!" The cultist screeched.

"I mean! Uhm... gentleman. Weren't you the gentleman you were supposed to meet us here?"

"Oh noo..." Kurt said sarcastically. "You got me. Cats outta the bag."

"Ark... I-let go! Hrrk... of me!"

"Quite baldy!" He squeezed a bit tighter. "You're just a worthless small-time thief so you don't get a say in this. By the way, I'll be taking this back."

He quickly snatched back the coins he lost and continued the hold.

"Excuse me boys. I don't mean to interrupt whatever game you're playing but if you don't mind me, I would like to purchase that box the fellow in black is holding."

"What?! No way! How can I trust that you two are not working together?!" The ninja held the box closer to his chest as a precaution.

"No no no my friend~ That's not how this works." The cultist reached into his robe and took out a pouch of coins. He then dropped it on the floor and out came coin after coin after coin. All of them, gold.

"W-whoa..." The amount falling out stunned the ninja.

"Are we in business my friend?"

The ninja looked at the coins then at the boss.

Faintly but ever so clearly, he heard the words come out the boss's mouth,

"R-run...ugh... a-away."

"W-what?"

"You better listen to baldy here." Kurt said. "That lunatic dropping the coins on the ground like that is practically a sign that screams 'this is a trap'."

"B-but-"

"RUN YOU IDIOT!" The boss yelled, pulling Kurt's arms away just enough to do so.

Snapping out of his daze, the ninja prepared himself to run away when suddenly-
"Oh no you don't!"

The cultist drew a knife and stabbed it into his right hand. On his left hand were markings that had all sorts of shapes and symbols and when blood gushed out the right, he clapped the two together.

CLAP

Mana burst out from him and scattered around the area.

"ARGH!" The ninja froze.

'Why can't I move?' Kurt too froze

"Good~ It seems my spell worked hehe." The cultist walked slowly towards the ninja and took the box. "I'll be having this, thank you."

"N-no!" The ninja panicked.

"Hmm? You can still talk? Guess I still need to refine the spell~ Ah well! There's always next time! AHAHAHAHA!"

"Give it bac-"

"QUIET FILTH!"

SLASH!

GUSH!

thud

The ninja's head fell to the floor as the cultist cut right through it.

Chapter 12: Chapter 12 - The Cultists Plan

"NOO! RICKY!"

Still caught in Kurt's arms, but with his grip loosened a bit thanks to whatever trick the cultist did, the boss screamed at what just happened.

"I'll kill you, you fucker! I swear I'll kill you!"

'His name was Ricky? Huh.' Kurt thought, not even dazed at what he saw.

"Aahh yes! The sound of someone's grief is like music to my ears~ AHAHAHA!" The cultist tilted his head back and laughed hysterically.

Anger, grief and helplessness struck him all at once as tears began flowing down the boss's face.

"You cultist freak! I'll make you pay for what you did to Ricky!"

"AHAHA- What did you call me?" He turned his head to look at the boss.

'Oh no...'

"I told you, didn't I? The cultist walked in their direction, "I told you... that we are not cultists."

"Oh really?! Ha! That fucking clown getup you got on says otherwise! You freak!"

"Are you trying to provoke him, baldy!" Kurt scolded.

"Stop calling me that! My name is Wesley, bitch!"

"Ok Wesley Bitch. How about you apologise to the gentleman that's slowly making his way to us with a purpose?"

"Wha- Who you calling a bitch?! Also, this situation would never have happened if it wasn't for you interfering with our business!"

"You're the ones who got paranoid over a cat meowing! I was about to leave when-"

"Excuse me, Wesley." The cultist pointed the knife against his tear-streaked cheek, "Do you mind repeating what you just called me? Maybe I misheard."

He then slowly guided the knife to sit right under Wesley's eye, sanked it in his flesh and began cutting down.

"Y-you bitch," Wesley winced at the pain, "S-stop cutting."

"Tell me, Wesley~" He started cutting underneath the other eye, "What did you call me?"

"Aaah! F-fuck! I-I called you... Ha! Ha ha ha..."

'Oh, here we go...'

"I called you... A freakin' cultist, you bitch!"

..
..
..

"Aaaha... AHAHAHAHA!"

"HAHAHAHA! Yeah, you like being called that! Cultist bitch!"

"AHAHAHAHA!"

'And here I thought I was the crazy one.' Kurt thought as he watched the two laugh in madness.

"Get over here you swine!" He grabbed and lodged Wesley out of Kurt's hold and threw him on the ground.

"Ow! Be careful you fuck!" Wesley yelled as collided onto the concrete.

The cultist stood over him and licked his blood-covered knife.

"Call me that again, Wesley~" He leaned closer to his face. "I dare you."

Ptoo Wesley spat in his face.

"Fuck you, you cultist bitch. That was for Ricky."

The cultist slid his knife across his own face to wipe off the spit.

Then... He licked it.

'Ewwww. What the hell?' Kurt thought, nearly gagging.

"...Ha! AHAHAHAH!"

STAB

"Fuck! You crazy bitch!" Wesley screamed as the knife got stabbed in his stomach.

"AHAHAHA~"

STAB
STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB

"What's wrong Wesley?! Where'd all that bravado go, huh?!"

STAB
STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB STAB

"AHAHAHAHA!"

The body at this point became unrecognisable. Blood pooled everywhere as he just kept on stabbing in a frenzy.

Eventually the knife hit the concrete instead, as there was no flesh left to stab where he was hitting.

wheeze "Haaaa huff. Now...it's your turn, one eyed boy~"

Looking in Kurt's direction, he noticed that he was gone.

"What the- Where'd he go? How'd he move?"

The cultist frantically looked around but Kurt was nowhere to be seen.

"Show yourself! I know you're still around!"

Rustle

"There you are~" He spoke quietly.

He started tiptoeing so as to not make a sound. When he reached the corner of the alley he readied his knife for a surprise attack.

"FOUND YOU!" He jumped round the bend only to find-

meow

-A cat sitting atop a dumpster.

"Oh my, aren't you a cute cat~ Say you wouldn't happen to have seen a man with an eyepatch come through here, did you?"

meow?

The cat tilted its head.

"Thought not."

When the cultist turned around to continue his search, a figure jumped out from the dumpster and grabbed him from behind.

Lo and behold that figure was Kurt.

He grabbed the cultist from the back of his head and shoved it directly against the wall in front of him.

SLAM

"Ah, dammit-

CRACK

"AHH!"

Kurt grabbed his arm holding the knife then twisted and bent it upwards. With his arm broken he dropped the knife and yelped in pain.

"H-How?!"

"How what?"

"How'd you move?! Even with the spell incomplete, you shouldn't be able to move your body until I release it! So how?!"

"Ah that? I don't know, really? It sorta just happened when you were on your stabbing spree. So, I took the opportunity to hide while you were.... Distracted."

"T-that's impossible!"

"That's enough questions from you Mr. Gentleman. It's my turn."

While holding him by the back of the head, Kurt took his other arm and asked, "Unless you don't want another broken arm, I suggest you answer me honestly."

"Ha! That depends on what you're asking."

"Well for starters, what's the deal with those tags? Display tags you called it. What do you want to do with it?"

"Hahaha! A reasonable question considering you could have died today."

"Answer me." Kurt twisted his arm.

"A-alright alright! I'll tell you." The cultist pleaded. "You see, the reason why we need those tags is because we want to show you something."

"Show me something?"

"Not you specifically, idiot!"

"I know. I was just speaking to myself, jackass!"

"Ow Ow Ow! Stop twisting, you're going to break it... *gasp* ha ha ha."

"What is it you want to show? And answer properly."

"The thing we want to show, you see, is... an execution. And! And before you ask whose execution? Let me ask you, have you heard of the prophecy?"

"... No. What is it?"

"Ah~ A lost little lamb you are. You see, little lamb, the prophecy states that a child of golden hair and crystal blue eyes will be born, here, in Eldoria, in the year 780. And it is said that that child is a direct descendent of... Goddess Bula..."

"... Ok, and?"

"And? And don't you get it?! How can there be only one child of the Goddess! And one of direct bloodline? BLASPHEMY!" The cultist screamed at the thought of it.

"We are her children! Not some wannabe fake that the church decides! *Gasp* Haaahufff... So, we all have decided to put on a little show."

"What did you do?" Kurt spoke menacingly.

"You see, little lamb~, there are many children with similar features to that which was prophesied, so we just kidnapped all the children that match the description! AHAHAHA!"

"You did what?! Didn't you say that the church said it 'will be born'? Why kidnapped innocent children!?" Kurt slammed the cultist face against the wall.

Blood spilled out his nose from the impact, but he ignored the pain and spoke on,

"How can we know if they're telling the truth? They're liars! All of them! And they dare to speak the Goddess's name in vain?! No no no little lamb~ We will kill all those children. We will slit their throats, rip their guts out and feed it to the wolves. These tags were the last piece of the puzzle."

"You're going to 'show' it to them." Kurt mumbled.

"Yes! Now you get it, AHAHA! These tags are amazing. With just four tags, one acts as a camera while the other three acts as a screen. And those screens ha ha ha... oh how

ginormous they are~. We will scatter those screens across all of Eldoria and at the end of every month this year... you will watch us murder those children! AHAHAHA!"

Kurt, now visibly disgusted at what he just heard, tightened his grip and asked,

"Where are the kids?"

"You think I'm just gonna tell you? I'll never betray my brothers and sisters"

"I suppose not. Good thing you'll die here today."

"Ah yes about that," the cultist looked down at Kurt's feet and put on a creepy smile.

He then slightly lifted his own foot so that Kurt wouldn't notice and slammed it down hard against his foot.

"Ah, dammit!"

Feeling his grip loosen a bit, the cultist shook his arm out of Kurt's hand and elbowed him in the gut. He used this opportunity to jump away and ready himself for what's coming next.

"Finally," he wiped his bloodied nose, "That's some serious strength you got to pin me to the wall and break my arm like that. You done this before?"

"... If you weren't dead before," Kurt picked up the knife that was dropped and walked to him, "Then you can bet your worthless self that you are now."

"I don't think so!" The cultist used the blood that was from his nose and smeared it on his symbol covered hand.

"Freeze, little lamb!" He shouted as mana burst out from him again.

This caused Kurt to pause momentarily.

'Should've broken his other arm.'

"AHAHA! Thought you had me, huh little lamb?! Should've thought twice before- WAIT! How are you still moving?!"

Kurt didn't say anything and continued walking at him.

"N-no! Stay back! Get away from me-"

BAM

CRACK

"Aaaah! My arm!"

Chapter 13: Chapter 13 - Goodbye, My Friend

"Y-you insolent wretch! How are you still moving?!" The cultist yelled as he fell to his knees.

"Your little magic trick did work. It's just...hmmm how do I say this? While I was stuck in place, slowly my body started pulsing and I could feel myself able to move bit by bit." Kurt explained.

"What?! How?! Yes, the spell was incomplete, but you shouldn't be able to move your body!"

"Oh, I know. I've seen what you did to Ricky and Wesley. Preying on them while they were helplessly still. I must say that method of killing is very unique. I've done similar jobs, but my methods usually involve me tying up my prey."

"W-what are you talking about?" The cultist was starting to feel uncomfortable around Kurt.

It was as if a switch was flipped in him when he spoke about how the two thieves died.

Kurt stared at the man who was practically helpless on the ground. He looked deep in his eyes, under the hood, and saw something he liked.

He saw fear.

"W-why are you looking at me like that?" He tried shuffling back on his knees, but Kurt grabbed his hood and pulled it all the way back.

He then pulled his head closer and whispered, "You a really bad man Mr. Cultist. Very...evil."

Looking at Kurt's face, the cultist saw a faint blush on his cheeks and absolutely no life in his eye.

"You're crazy... hahaha."

"I've been called worse... hahaha." They both started laughing in madness.

"Hahaha! Y-you should join our following brother! We would happily welcome someone of your prowess!"

"Hahah-.... What did you say?" Kurt paused to ask.

Gone was the almost 'lighthearted' feeling in the atmosphere.

"I-I said... you should join our-"

STAB

"Aaaah! Shit!" The cultist fell forward as Kurt stabbed him in the thigh.

"Why would I ever join your disgusting cult!"

"WE ARE NOT A CU-"

STAB

"AAH FUCK!"

"It's funny how you can easily dish out pain but as soon as you're on the receiving end..."

"H-help m-m-me!" The cultist, now sobbing, tried crawling away like a worm.

"Ah, look at you. You pathetic, weak, sad thing." Kurt stepped on his back to prevent him from moving.

"You still didn't tell me," He sunk the knife deep in his back, "Where are the kids?"

"Aaah... I-I told y-you, I w-will never-"

"What's your name?" Kurt asked abruptly.

"W-what?"

"Your name? What is it? I find it a bit distasteful that I don't even know what your name is. I mean, we're practically friends at this point, no?"

"What the hell are you talking abou-AAHH!"

"What. Is. Your. Name?" Kurt asked again as he twisted and bent the knife in his back.

"I-it's Arlo! M-my name is Arlo so please stop doing that!" He cried out.

"Are you lying?"

"N-no! It's on my personal tag. It's hanging around my neck, just look!"

Kurt pulled his robes back, by the neck, and yanked off the chain.

After imbuing a bit of magic into it, a hollow projection popped up and read:

Personal Info -

Name - Arlo

Date of Birth - 29/02/746

Nationality - Eldoria

Occupation - Priest

Bank Balance - (Concealed)

'A banking balance? I should get one of those.'

"Born on a leap day? Ha! Sucks to be you. What are you, like, ten years old or something? Ha ha ha!"

"Just kill me already..."

"Now hold your horses Arlo. You still didn't tell me where you're keeping those kids."

"I-I will never-"

"Five minutes." Kurt leaned down to whisper, "Listen to Arlo me and listen carefully. I am going to torture you for five minutes. If you still don't give me an answer after that, it's either you don't actually know where they are or your loyalty is just that unbreakable."

Kurt took the knife out of Arlo's back and pointed it to his mouth.

"Let's start with your teeth, shall we? Maybe they are some sort of metaphorical wall that's blocking information from going out. Tooth by tooth, I'll break them out of you."

"N-no, please don't! Stop!"

CRACK

POP

"AAAHHHH!"

..

...

Five minutes later.

Arlo laid still in a pool of his own blood.

Scattered around his body were the blood covered teeth Kurt crudely pulled out as well as a few nails from his hand.

"And this little piggy.... Arlo?" Kurt stopped right when he was about to cut the nail from his pinky.

"Please tell me you just fainted and not died." He stood up to check and see if he was still breathing.

He then leaned in and listened for signs of breath.

"Hmmm... Wakey wakey Mr. Priest." Kurt smacked his face.

Still not getting any response from Arlo, there was only one logical conclusion Kurt could deduce,

"He's dead."

Looking around the alley, he saw a headless Ricky, a gut opened and body disfigured Wesley and finally an arms twisted, toothless mouthed Arlo.

"Pfft ha ha ha... ahahaha!" With tears of joy, Kurt held his stomach as he started laughing at the scene.

"Oops!... I did it again ♪" He began singing as he walked around the scene and picked up a few things.

Mainly taking the box of display tags, Arlo's personal tag, the bloodied knife as well picking up the gold coins that were dropped.

'Money's money.' He thought when filling his pouch

After he finished, he walked towards the exit corner he came from and turned around to look at the dead bodies one more time.

"I have to thank you three." Kurt saluted. "I thank you, Wesley and Ricky. Without you two making a deal with the devil, I never would've met my good friend Arlo. And I thank

you Arlo. Without you I never would have come to know of your disgusting cult. I mean, I might've known by the end of the month, but you get the point."

Putting his hand down, Kurt left the scene. Leaving the cleanup to whichever unfortunate soul stumbles on the place.

meow

"Oh, hey little kitty~" He petted the cat under the chin. "Thanks for not ratting me out to the priest. Lucky for me the dumpster was empty, otherwise I would've been stinking up the place.

purr

The cat jumped down from the dumpster and together they walked out the alley.

After walking for a bit, they finally reached the front gate from where they jumped from.

Looking closer, Kurt noticed that there was actually a handle on the side of it. Though it was locked.

'Hmm...' He thought, 'I don't want to break it. Do I really have to maneuver myself over again?'

"Who are you supposed to be?"

While Kurt was contemplating on what to do, a young and stern voice came out from the other side.

She had short grayish-white hair that had mint green streaks flowing through it. Her eyes matched the colour of her green streaks and she wore a white academy uniform with a blue tie.

'Where have I seen that clothing before... Oh!'

But before the thought could fully form, another voice entered the conversation.

"Emelie, I told you! He ran the other way- O-oh it's the mister!"

'It's the pink-haired girl that was chasing Ricky. I knew I'd seen those clothes somewhere.'

"Hi again." Kurt greeted her.

"You didn't answer my question." The girl called Emelie spoke out.

"... What's it to you?"

Emelie narrowed her gaze almost threateningly and said, "I don't know you. Also you're not supposed to be here."

"Of course you don't know me. We just met. And what's that second part supposed to mean?"

"Emelie, stop it!" The pink-haired girl pulled her aside, "I know I asked for your help but that doesn't mean you should interrogate an innocent person."

"Innocent person? By the way, Amy, how do you know this man?"

"He helped point me in the right direction of the robber." Amy explained.

"And he didn't help chase after him." Emelie's suspicion of Kurt only grew. "How do we know he's not one of them and just led you astray."

"W-well y-you see... uhm..."

"Are you perhaps looking for this?" Kurt took out the box with the display tags.

"The version two display tags?! Y-you got it?!" Amy beamed.

"Yeah. Shortly after you ran, I gave chase as well."

'Technically I didn't lie.'

"See Emelie! He's not one of them. You can't just throw around accusations like that."

"Hmm." After looking back and forth between Kurt's innocent smile and Amy's trusting gaze, she finally gave in.

"You win Amy." She took out a pair of keys from her pocket and unlocked the gate.

'She had keys? Lucky~'

Kurt was about to step out when the cat jumped ahead of him.

meow

"Aww~ Who's this little guy?" Amy went to pet him.

"Can't say. It's just been following me recently. Heck, I didn't even know it was a boy cat."

As he walked past Emelie, the look on her face changed from stoic to surprise. But it changed back to normal almost instantly.

"The box." She demanded and reached out her hand.

"Alright Ms. Grumpy, here you go." He handed it over.

".... Looks like it's all here." She said after checking inside.

"Thank you so much!" Amy stood up and bowed. "If it wasn't for you, I'd be in so much trouble. If you need anything from me, please let me know!"

"Ha ha, it's fine, really. No need to bow like that." Kurt insisted.

"No! You have no idea how badly you saved me. Please let me repay you somehow!"

Realising that she wasn't going to let this go, Kurt thought up something quick, "Actually, you see, I've just arrived in Eldoria and have no place to stay do you-"

"You want to stay with me! T-that's... I-I-... Y-you" Amy blushed profusely.

".... I was going to ask if you know of any hotels I could stay at...."

"O-oh! I... errrr..."

Kurt looked at Emelie as if to ask, 'Is she always like this?' And the only thing she had in response was to facepalm herself.

Chapter 14: Chapter 14 - A Place To Stay

"I-I know of a place that you can stay. If, of course, you don't mind me taking you there."

"Saves me the trouble of looking for it myself."

While Kurt and Amy were discussing amongst themselves, Emelie was deep in thought.

'Who is this man? I've never seen him before.'

She looked at Kurt and searched deep in her memories but to no avail.

'He has an eyepatch with a decent looking face so you'd I'd remember something but no. Nothing comes to mind.'

'Then there's also the fact that he came out from where the cultist was supposed to leave. And... he smells of blood...'

"You've been staring at me for a while now. Like what you see?" Kurt tried teasing her.

Gasp! Amy held her hand to her mouth, "**THE** Emelie Herst is taking interest in a man?! Has spring finally come for you."

"Don't flatter yourself, eyepatch. And you," She flicked her finger at Amy's forehead, "Stop trying to make up fanfics to fuel your perverted brain."

"Ouchie!" Amy whimpered.

"That's the perfect segue for me to introduce myself. The name's Kurt. Not eyepatch."

"Oh! I'm Amy! And I'm a second-year student at Future Academy. Nice to meet you, Kurt!"

"Ha ha. You too, Amy."

"And this is..." Amy led on.

"I'm Emelie Herst. Third year at Future Academy." She introduced herself in a deadpan voice.

".... Right.... Nice to meet you too, Emelie."

"Don't mind her Kurt. She's not used to talking with strangers."

"Clearly."

"What was that?"

"Oh, would you look at the time? Amy, can you show me to the hotel? It's getting late you see and I'm a bit tired."

"You're right! I'm sorry I didn't mean to keep you. Come on, let's go! It's actually near the place we first ran into each other." Amy tugged on Kurt's arm

"Really? How convenient." He smiled.

"You coming, Emelie?"

"No. You two go on without me. I need to get this to the principal." She waved the box.

"Alright then! Thank you again Emelie for your help. I owe you one as well."

"Buy me a soda when you get back to the dorms."

"Ok! See you later!"

Amy waved her off and Kurt gave a quick little nod as they left.

"Say, did you know that Emelie is one of our Academy's representatives for the upcoming tournament?"

"Really? That sounds awesome."

Once the two were out of sight, Emelie turned her focus onto the alleyway.

meow

"You're still here?"

meow

"Shall we go in together?"

*meow *purr*

The cat rubbed itself on Emelie's leg and walked through the gate.

Once she made sure that no one was looking, she stepped through the gate and locked the handle bar behind her.

The sun was beginning to set as she walked through the dark alley and it was eerily quiet.

With the only sound heard being her footsteps.

'I don't like this.'

After walking the straight path, she finally reached the corner turn where the cat could be seen sitting on top of a dumpster.

Emelie hid. Back flat against the wall as she peaked round the bend.

'The robbers or that cultist freak could still be here. Not that they'd stand a chance against me.'

'But then again....' She thought back on Kurt and the way he smelled of blood.

Rustle *meow*

The cat jumped down from the dumpster and ran around the corner.

"Wait-" She tried to reach out but it was too late.

Exposing herself to a potential threat, she readied herself for a fight but what she found instead surprised her.

"... Nothing."

There was nothing.

No signs of a fight.

No blood marks.

And no robbers nor cultist.

The place was empty.

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"This is the hotel!" Amy showed Kurt.

The hotel had a historical charm to it. Standing proudly at five stories tall, it had a beautiful outer garden where guests could relax. Its walls were painted in white and had artistic wooden balconies running across them, giving the room attendants a scenic view of the city.

"Woah..." Kurt admired it. "I've never really been to one of these places before."

"I'm glad you like it!" Amy clapped

'Looks expensive though. But with the money I recently 'acquired' it shouldn't be a problem.'

"Thanks again for showing me the way."

Kurt looked down the street and recognised a certain diner.

"It's even near Sophie's Diner. Very convenient." He nodded in approval.

"You know the place? Maybe we can go eat together sometime?" She whispered shyly.

"What was that?"

"O-oh N-n-nothing. I didn't say anything! Nope, nope not me ahahaha!"

'Sorry Amy but I've already got my eyes set on somebody else.'

"Well if that's everything then this is where we part ways. I still have to book a room."

"Book a room? Y-yes of course! Don't let me keep you."

After finishing their greetings of departure, Kurt entered the lobby of the hotel and was blown away by how elegant it looked.

Antique furnishings covered the area that was wrapped in a marble floor finish. To the side was a small fireplace which was lit in what seemed to be the lobby's chill area and up front stood the reception desk.

'Very cozy.' he thought when walking to the front desk.

"Good evening sir," The male receptionist greeted, "How may I be of service?"

"Good evening. I would like to book a room for an extended period of time."

"Of course, sir. What do you have in mind? We offer weekly and monthly pay plans."

"Hmm, I'm still new to this place so I'll take the monthly plan. How much would that be?"

"The initial pay would be three gold coins, then at the end of every month would be twenty-five silver."

"Hmm.." Kurt furrowed his eyebrows and saw the name tag of the receptionist chest read Darwin.

"Darwin?"

"Yes, sir?"

"This might sound embarrassing but can you give me the quick rundown for the currency of these coins? Like I said, I'm new here."

"That's no problem, sir. Are you familiar with any sort of money system?"

"Do cents and dollars count?"

"Wow, talk about ancient! I love history so this will be much easier." Darwin beamed with excitement.

"So, you know cents and dollars work right? Now look at this,"

He took out a notebook and drew three rectangles. Inside of each rectangle, he drew five circles neatly lined up next to and inside each circle he drew the numbers 1, 5, 10, 20, 50.

"Each coin, that being copper, silver and gold, is divided numerically like this. The higher the number on the coin the more value it has. 1 silver equals 100 copper and 1 gold equals 100 silver. Additionally," He drew another rectangle. This time with two circles.

"Additionally there is another tier above these three, but you'll hardly ever see that."

Inside the two circles he drew the numbers 1 and 5.

"These are platinum coins and only the extremely wealthy carry these coins. 1 platinum equals 10 gold."

"I see." Kurt followed along.

"I get the gist of it. Thanks Darwin."

He reached for the pouch Willy gave him and paid the amount needed.

"You're welcome, sir." He took and put the money inside of a dog tag using magic.

'What the hell? Is that thing like a wallet or something? Which reminds me...'

"By the way Darwin, do you know of any banks around? I would like to set up an account tomorrow. I can't be seen walking around with a pouch, know what I mean?"

"Ah yes. I was wondering why you took out your money like that ha ha. Just give me one second..."

He took out a box of keys and asked, "We have rooms available on the third and fifth floor. Which one would you like?"

"The third floor. Preferably one with a balcony that has the view of the city."

"Very well. Room 15 it is then."

He then tore out a page from his notebook and quickly drew a map that points the way to the bank.

"These are your keys and this is a map to the bank starting from our location." He handed the items over to Kurt.

"Thank you, Darwin."

"I'm only doing my job. You can take the elevator to the third floor. And thank you for staying with us." He bowed.

Kurt entered the elevator and pressed the button to the third floor.

While going up he wondered, *'From what I've seen so far, there's no form of electricity. I wonder what powers these things? Magic maybe?'*

Ding

The elevator doors opened.

He walked along the corridor and looked for his room.

'Room 15... Room 15.... Ah there it is.' He entered the key and opened the door.

Click Shut

The room, as expected, was also beautiful. From the elegant furnishing to the rich fabrics, everything about the place screamed luxury.

Kurt walked to the glass panels and opened it, stepping on the balcony.

"What a view..." He thought while leaning on the railing.

'Although my old world is lost to time, at least this one has something going for it. Isn't that right you cultist scum. Also...' he looked in the direction of Sophie's Diner, *'There's also you, mystery beauty. I can't wait 'til we meet again~'*

'But for now,' he pushed himself off the railing, *'It's time for some R&R.'*

Chapter 15: Chapter 15 - Good Morning

knock knock

Emelie stood in front of the principal's office and waited for a response.

"I'm busy." A voice called from inside.

"Principal Valentine, this is Emelie Herst. 3rd year student and representative for the upcoming tournament. I have something to give you."

"... Come in."

Receiving permission, she entered the office and waited at her desk.

Diana was swapped in paperwork and her secretary Mia could be found drowned in the corner of papers as well.

"If it's not anything important. Pass it over to Mia." She waved her hand in Mia's direction without looking up.

"What! Prinicpaaaal.... I'm busy too. And I'm tired~" She nagged.

"Quit whining and work faster. I want to sleep in my own bed tonight." She mumbled the second part.

'I'm sure glad I'm not any of these two. This is way too much.' Emelie thought as she looked at them with pity.

She then reached into her pocket and grabbed the box she got from Kurt.

"These are the version two display tags that were ordered."

Putting the box on Diana's desk. She finally looked up from her work.

"Why do you have it and not Amy? Didn't she go get it when the deliverers came?"

"That's the thing. You see Amy was so excited about them that she went straight to the docks to collect it but there was an incident."

"An incident? What happened? Is she ok?" A look of worry flashed her face.

"She's fine, yes. The incident was nothing major. I handled it. That's why I had those and came to drop them off."

"I see. If there are no problems then all's well. Good work Emelie."

The worry immediately left her and she resumed working, "If that's everything, then you're dismissed. I'm sure you're busy preparing for the tournament too."

"Thank you, Principal." She bowed.

When walking to the exit, she saw Mia crying in her corner as she mouthed the words 'save me' to Emelie. She ignored this though and made her way out.

Arriving at the dorms, she saw Amy in the distance waving her arms up in the air and shouting her name.

"Emelie! Emelie!"

"Yes yes, I'm coming." She spoke under her breath.

"Emelie, you're finally back!" She ran up to her after getting impatient. "What took you so long? I thought you'd be here when I got back."

"I took my time walking back. Thought it'd be a nice change of pace from all the training."

"Really? Then we should've at least bumped into each other on the way."

"I took a different route. No need to overthink things."

"Well... If you say so." Amy shrugged. "Anyway here's that soda you wanted."

"Thanks." She cracked it open and took a sip. "Though I prefer grape flavour, I'll let you off this time."

"Your generosity knows no bounds your majesty, hehe"

"Let's just go inside. Curfews about to hit and I'm not trying to deal with the dorm mother."

"Yes ma'am!" She saluted and walked through the door with Emelie beside her.

"By the way I think I might've messed up my chances with Kurt..."

"Like you had any."

shut

Back in the principals office, Diana and Mia continued working in silence. From important documents and letters all the way down to the most menial of complaints, rest was something of an oasis in the desert.

"Arrrrgh I can't take this any more!" Mia threw her arms back and slouched down her chair.

"It's nearly eleven o clock and we're still not done yet..."

"We're half way done Mia. Hang in there."

"But Diana~"

"I told you not to call me that."

"Oh psht! Nobody's around anyway."

"Doesn't matter."

"But Diana~"

"Haaa..." She sighed dramatically and put her pen down. "Fine you win. We can stop here for today."

"Yaay!" She sprang up from her seat.

"You act like such a child at times."

"It only happens when my brain gives up and needs to take a break."

"You should probably see a doctor for that." Diana gathered her things and prepared to teleport home.

"Let's go out for a drink!" Mia suggested.

Diana stopped and stared at her as if contemplating whether to take her up on the offer and against her better judgement, "Sure." She agreed.

"Yesss!" Mia pumped her fist inward.

She pitter-pattered up to Diana after gathering her own things and grabbed her shoulder.

"To the bar!"

'I'm going to regret this aren't I?'

SHWOOSH

.

..

...

tweet tweet

Birds sung as the morning light shined its way through the curtain panel of Kurts room.

"Hmm just five more minutes little birdies..." he mumbled lazily.

tweet tweet

'.....Some things never change.'

After, begrudgingly, opening his eyes he turned over and lied on his back, "An unfamiliar ceiling... pfft, that was cringe."

He tossed his legs over the bed and sat up as the blankets fell off him.

Yawn "That was the best sleep I've had in ages. Thank you fluffy bed."

Without it even registering in his brain, he walked to the window panel and stepped out on the balcony... naked.

"Oh my~"

"Nice cojones daddy!"

"Put that away!"

"Oh crap!" He hurried back to his room while covering his morning wood.

*'Note to self: Always make sure to wear off the grogginess **before** getting some fresh air.'*

After taking a quick bath, he put on his suit, grabbed his coins and left the hotel.

While standing outside he looked at his phone to check the time. '30%? The phones gonna die pretty soon. And it's still 8am. I take it the bank's not open yet so I might as well go grab a bite to eat.' He slid the phone in his pocket and left for Sophie's Diner.

ring ring

"Welcome! Oh, it's you from yesterday." The waitress blushed. "Would you like the same seat you were at?"

"No, I'll take the front seat this time. Preferably by the window."

"Of course, sir. Follow me."

The waitress guided him to a front seat that had a clear view of the street and handed him the menu.

"Is there anything you'd like to drink while deciding what to eat?"

"There's no need to wait. I'll have whatever breakfast special you've got going on. As for the drink, a large orange juice"

"Right away, dear customer!" She took back the menu and left to place the order.

15 minutes passed and instead of the waitress bringing the food it was Sophie.

"Here you go. One breakfast special." She put his food down and sat opposite him.

"Why'd you bring the food? Aren't you supposed to be in the kitchen- As the CHEF I mean."

"No need to worry handsome I knew what you meant. And no, business is awfully quiet in the mornings. Quite frankly you're the one of the only customers to show up in the morning. Other than Diana."

"Diana?"

"The woman who left your mouth hanging for flies to enter. Her name is Diana Valentine."

"Diana Valentine.... What a wonderful name.... Wait, why are you telling me this? Don't get me wrong I appreciate it but I would've liked to learn it from her."

"Think of it as a bonus for actually keeping your word and showing up. Because you did, now I've got a good feeling about you."

"Is there.... anything else I should know? Like her favourite colour? Favourite food? Her hobbies? Oh! What about-"

"Whoa whoa whoa! Slow down there handsome. Don't make me change my perception of you now. Besides, didn't you just say that you'd like to find those things out for yourself from her?"

".... You're right. I got a little too excited there. It's just I've never felt like this from a woman before."

"Really? You've never been in love? Colour me surprised."

"Nope. Too busy with work." He said as he plucked an egg with the fork.

"Understandable. By the way..." She looked carefully at Kurt while he was eating.
"You're wearing the same clothes as yesterday. Couldn't you change into something else? Don't have any other clothes?"

"...No. I told you yesterday, didn't I? I'm not from around here. I do have money though so if you know of any shops, I trust you will recommend a good place."

"Who me? What do I know about men's fashion? Just go to the commercial district, I'm sure there are plenty of men's clothing shops."

"Coincidentally is the bank there too?"

"Yes."

"Perfect. Two birds, one stone."

The two spent the rest of morning eating and talking about random topics that informed Kurt about the way people lived their life in Eldoria.

But of course seeing is believing so when the time hit twelve, Kurt paid for his food, greeted Sophie and the waitress, who he came to learn as Cindy, and left for the commercial district.

'Now lets see,' he took out the map that Darwin drew up. 'If I start at the hotel... I take a right... then left...then turn around the corner to the main road then walk straight down until I find it. Not too bad.'

When he made it to the main road, he noticed a crowd forming by a man standing on a box. As he got closer to look, he saw that the man was wearing black and white robes and held a book that looked suspiciously like a bible.

'No creepy robes or hood. Is he an actual priest? Or is he-'

"Listen to me, people of Eldoria!" the priest warned. "Do not trust the church!"