

ROSES HAVE THORNS

Chapter 16: Chapter 16 - Liars

"Do not trust the church! They have been lying to you all!"

Slowly more and more people gathered around to listen to his sermon. If one could even call it that.

From what Kurt had learned from Sophie, the people of Eldoria are serious when it comes to their faith. This all started all the way from the founder of Eldoria, Lucas M. Dorothy, who, just as much as the Saintess, revered Goddess Bula.

But now a man, in priest clothing no less, is telling them that they should not trust the church and that they'd been lied to? As expected, they were not happy.

"What did he just say?!"

"How dare you!"

"Aren't you a priest?!"

The priest however did not back down. "I was a priest! I left the church and my faith behind the moment I learned the truth. Have you not wondered about what happened to the missing children?!"

"Missing children? Those aren't missing children, their children who have been blessed by Goddess Bula in order to serve the prophesied child!" An old lady in the crowd retorted.

"That's where you're wrong! Don't you see? You have all been brainwashed by the lies they tell you!"

While Kurt was listening to all this, three men in the same attire as the priest made their way through the crowd.

"Excuse me young man. We would like to pass through." They politely asked Kurt to move.

'Uh oh~ Someone's getting in trouble~' "Go ahead." He made way for them to go through.

"Thank you. May Goddess Bula bless you."

"Those are not servants of the prophesied child... they are-"

"Excuse me, Father." What looked to be the leader of the three interrupted before he could continue.

"... I have left my faith behind. Do not call me that, you heretic!"

GASP

The whole crowd fell silent after that proclamation.

"Very well then, Peter. We will not call you that. The Goddess forgives even those that stray from her righteous path, for they all return to her eventually."

"I will never-"

"However, I must ask you to stop what you're doing. You clearly do not know what you speak of and you're upsetting the people."

"Yeah, leave you idiot!"

"You blasphemer! Do not disrespect Her name like that!"

"Go away!"

The people started getting riled up. With many calling him a blasphemer and screaming at him to leave, it was clear that whatever warning he was trying to convey was not getting through.

"You hear the people, Peter. Leave. Whatever you're trying to do won't work." His eyes turned fox shaped and he wore an evil smile that was out of sight to the people, but Kurt caught it clearly.

"You cannot change what they believed all their life. Their faith is unbreakable."

"...Damn you." He looked at the crowd and saw that no one was willing to hear what he had to say. So, he stepped down and left.

As he was walking, the fox eyed priest stopped him and whispered something in his ear. Although Kurt couldn't hear what was being said, he did notice the subtle look of fear that flashed on Peter's face. After he was finished whispering, the priest let Peter go.

He then stood on the box himself, raised his arms as if to hug the crowd and spoke,

"Everything is alright, my fellow believers. Contrary to what was said I, Bishop Tobias, personally guarantee that all children that have been taken are faithfully carrying out

their duties in order to serve the prophesied child. So let us forget that this moment ever happened and continue on with our lives. And may Goddess Bula forever be with you."

Clapping and cheering resounded all around as they felt their hearts be at peace. With some die-hard believers even crying while kneeling as they thanked and praised the Goddess.

Stepping away from the scene, Kurt looked at the defeated back of Peter as he walked away and looked at the road ahead where the commercial district would be.

'Hmm... I now stand at a crossroads. It's either I go about my business and pretend I didn't see anything or I stick my nose where it doesn't belong and maybe find a clue about those missing kids. Which is a stupid question since there's only one answer.'

Kurt turned around and went after Peter.

'Better stick to tailing for now. Never know if any of those priests are watching from somewhere.'

Keeping a safe distance away from him, Kurt followed him for about 10 minutes before he finally stopped and sat on a bench inside of a little park.

"Hey there." He greeted Peter and sat down next to him.

"Who are you?! Are you with them?! Have you come to finish me?!" Peter cautiously shot up from his seat.

"Calm down old man, I'm with no one!" He lifted his hands in the air to show that he meant no harm.

"I'm someone from the crowd earlier. I wanted to hear more of what you were saying. My name is Kurt." He put out his hand for a handshake.

"...I see. Kurt huh?" He shook his hand and sat back down. "My name's Peter. You can forget about earlier. Just think of it as a crazy old man spouting crazy nonsense."

"Nonsense? I have reason to believe that what you were saying is not far from the truth."

"What are you talking about?"

"Arlo. Does that name ring any bells in that old noggin of yours?"

"Arlo?! You know Arlo?! How?!"

"Is it that strange that I know a priests' name? What if we coincidentally met at a church one random day?"

"Of course... you're right. How silly of me to think- HEY!! What are you grinning like that for?!" Peter reached out to bonk his head.

"Whoa whoa whoa! Calm down, I was just messing with you."

"I swear, young people these..." He put his hand down and calmed his composure. "Why did you mention Arlo? Did you know he's been missing for a week now?"

"A week? I met him yesterday."

"Yesterday? Where is he now? He should know what happened to those kids."

"Arlo's dead."

".... What? He's dead? What happened to him?"

"I killed him." Kurt said with a serious face. "Because he was a sick cultist who knew nothing. If I had to guess, I'd say he was the bottom of the pecking order. Just a goon who follows orders without being in the big boy meetings."

"How could you kill him?! We could've at least had a prisoner of the cult. Even if he was just an errand boy, he should at least have known about a base we could raid! Or what they were planning to do with those kids!"

"Although I don't know of any bases, I do know what they are planning on doing with the kids."

"You do? Please tell me!" He grabbed Kurt's shoulders in desperation.

"...."

"What? Why are you quiet all of a sudden?"

"Is there something you're not telling me?" Kurt took Peter's hand off him. "You're coming off way too strong."

"That's..."

"Is it something you can't speak about?"

"That's right. I hope you can understand, so please tell me everything you know."

"Alright. From what I've gathered it would seem that the reason these cultist freaks kidnapped those kids is because they believe, just like you, that the church is a bunch of liars."

"They what?"

"Yeah. Arlo spoke of a prophecy. In that prophecy it is said that-

"That a child of golden hair and crystal blue eyes will be born in Eldoria this year, yes I know but what does that have to do with the other children?"

"I was getting to that. The reason they kidnapped the other children is because they're afraid."

"Afraid? Afraid of what?"

"Wait, sorry, 'afraid' is the wrong word. It's more like they're disgusted. They're disgusted by the fact that the prophecy says that the child will be of a direct bloodline to Goddess Bula. He claimed that 'they're', that being the cultists, are the true children of the Goddess."

"So, they took innocent children?! How does that make any sense?"

"That's the thing. They don't know who or when the child will be born so they took whoever matches the description and have decided at the end of every month, they'd kill them."

"Kill.... them? No no no... how are we going to stop this?! I-I can't..." Peter nervously bit his nails.

"Hold on now, Peter. I do have some good news. I believe that I've stalled their plans."

"Y-you did?" He stopped panicking. "How? And for how long?"

"As sick as this sounds but they planned on streaming the whole thing. Called it a 'show'. For that they needed these things called display tags. Long story short, they don't have them anymore. As for how long, who can say? It could be for a week, or they'll wait for the next month as they think of another plan."

"Ok, that's good. You did well Kurt." He started mumbling to himself. "Today is the 18th of February. We still have a week and some change before the 28th..."

'Looks like you don't get a birthday this year, Arlo.' Kurt smirked.

"Kurt!" Peter abruptly stood up from his seat.

"Yeah?"

"Thanks to you I know I still have some time to save her."

'Save her?'

"Do you remember Bishop Tobias and his two lackeys? I have reason to believe that they are involved in all of this."

"What makes you so sure?" Kurt stood up next to him.

"That's because..." Peter hesitated. "That's because they want me quiet. Otherwise, they'll kill my-"

POP!

PSSHHHH

Blood sprayed all over Kurt as Peter's head exploded right next to him.

Chapter 17: Chapter 17 - The Chase

Kurt stood in a daze at what had just happened.

It hadn't even been that long since he met Peter and already he'd lost a crucial lead in this whole mess.

He quickly snapped out of it and looked around for someone or something that could have caused this.

'There!' He saw a figure run out of the park and ran after them.

'Dammit! And I was just starting to like Peter too. We could've been like Batman and Robin, solving this mystery together. With me being Batman of course.'

"Stop running!" Kurt yelled while chasing, "You look really suspicious when you do! What, are you guilty of something?!"

Looking closer at the retreating figure he noticed something familiar about them,

'That build. He might be wearing a different outfit and a mask but there's no mistaking it, he was with the bishop!'

While running, the man grabbed anything that came in his way and threw it back at Kurt in order to obstruct him.

"That won't work, Mr. I Blew Off Someone's Head! I'm used to chasing losers like you! And yeah, the name's on purpose!"

Slowly but surely Kurt was gaining up on him. That was when the man started screaming for help.

"Help me! There's a lunatic chasing after me!"

"You're the freakin' weirdo running around in broad daylight with a suspicious mask on! I wonder who's the real lunatic!"

'Nearly there..... What the-'

WOOSH WOOSH

Wind enveloped the man as he used magic to jump on small shopping stalls to get to the rooftops.

"Are you kidding me! Seriously?!" He yelled furiously.

Not stopping for anything, Kurt continued chasing on foot while keeping an eye on him jumping from roof to roof.

"You're going to eventually run out of space to go and when you do you're dead, you hear me!? DEAD!"

The chase continued for another 5 minutes when finally the road ahead was coming to an end. At the end of the road was a T-junction and a river right behind it.

'By the looks of it it's either he jumps off into the river or he jumps down onto the road again in which chase I'll easily catch him.'

"Ha! I've got your number now! Nowhere left to run!"

Right when Kurt was about to reach the bend,

THUD!

"Argh!" Kurt fell straight down as he got tackled from the left.

"I got him sis!" A teenage boy with light blue hair and violet eyes called while holding Kurt to the ground.

"Good job junior." Said the other teenager as she floated down from the sky. She had similar but more feminine features as the boy and they both wore the same white uniform as Emelie and Amy.

"Get off of me, bubblegum head! He's gonna get away!" Kurt struggled but couldn't shake himself loose.

'What kind of strength is this?'

"Bu-bubblegum head?!"

"Hehe." The girl giggled.

grrr "The only one who's not getting away is you." He held Kurt's arm behind his back.

"I said get off me!" He twisted his body and used his other arm to elbow the boy in the kidney.

"Oof!"

Once he felt the grip loosen, he knocked the boy square in the face with his forehead and shoved him away.

"Junior!" The girl ran up to check on him.

Kurt meanwhile ran to the end of the road and checked left and right if he could still spot him. But alas he was too late.

"Dammit, he got away!" He slammed his fist against the street pole.

"Freeze!"

"Huh? Wait what the hell?!"

Ice crept up from his feet and stopped at his knees as he got frozen in place.

"That should keep you from running away." The girl walked up to Kurt and patted the ice with her staff.

"What is wrong with you kids?! You just let a murderer get away! Are you crazy?!" Clearly not happy about letting Peter's killer get away, Kurt scolded the girl.

"Crazy? Us? Have you looked at yourself recently? If you did, you'd know who the real crazy one is."

"What are you talking about?"

The girl then raised her staff and summoned a reflective ice full body mirror.

"This is what I'm talking about."

Kurt looked in the mirror and to his surprise, he too could not recognise himself since he was covered in blood from head to toe.

'Oh God, I look like a psychopath.'

"Also," The girl shattered the mirror, "You raised your hand, or rather your head, against royalty. That alone is punishable by death."

"Royalty? Who the heck are you?"

"....Who are we?" The girl was momentarily stunned. "You really want your head rolling down the chopping block don't you? We are-"

"I couldn't give two shits about who you are!" Kurt interrupted. "Just get me out of this ice or face this ass whooping I'm about to give you when I break out of this."

"Y-you! Why you-"

"One." He started counting.

"Break out of that? As if. My ice proficiency is one of the highest in the nation. You'll never be-"

"Two." Kurt's legs shook as his body tensed up.

Crack

A crack formed on the ice.

"How are you doing that?!" She began to panic.

"Last warning Ms. Ice Lady. Break this ice."

"Junior, wake up! Now!" She screamed.

"Three-"

"Sorry I'm late!" A man in a green cloak with silver steel plating came running. "We have received complaints of a mad man covered in blood running around and yelling through the street."

'Is that?' Kurt recognised him.

"Finally you prefects arrive. This is not supposed to be our job." The girl calmed down.

"Your Highness Princess Kiana!" The man bowed. "My deepest apologies for causing you trouble. I'll take it from here."

'She's a princess? That explains the attitude. I'm guessing that so-called Junior is.... her twin brother, judging by the similarities they've got going.'

"Good. Then I'm leaving. I need to take my brother to see a doctor." She shot one last glare at Kurt and said, "I'll remember you."

Shen levitated her unconscious brother up in the air and flew away.

"Wait Your Highness! The ice—aaannnd she's gone. Great."

"Hey Dominik." Kurt called.

"What? How do you know my name?"

"It's me Kurt. We met the other day. You recommended me to Sophie's Diner."

"Hmmm...." He posed with his hand on his chin.

"Oh yeah! I remember now. That's right, Kurt! The Jesus fan."

"That's how you remember me?"

"No. I also remember that you had an eyepatch and that you wanted to go on a date with me despite us not knowing each other for very long."

Crack

"Excuse me?!" The ice cracked even more after he heard that.

"Oh come on Kurt you know I'm only joking."

"For some reason when the joke comes out of your mouth I get the urge to punch you in the face."

"Ok but in all seriousness how'd you end up looking like... that?"

"It's complicated. And I'd rather not talk about it, frozen stuck, in the middle of the street. So help me out of this"

"Looks to me like you're gonna break it pretty soon though." Dominik looked at the nearly shattered ice,

"I'd rather not waste my energy."

"I'll take you out but I'm gonna need you to come with me after this."

"Where to?"

"The prefect station. You are still technically under arrest."

"Oh come on, what? Dominik I was chasing after a murderer."

"Looking like that?"

"He's the one who did this! He blew up an old man who was next to me and I chased after him. Sorry I didn't have time to wash the blood off."

"Speaking of blood. Hey you kid!" He called over a boy who was walking by. "Wanna make a quick coin."

"Do I?!" He jumped up and down, getting excited.

"Awesome. Now let's see.... Oh! You see that bucket across the street?" He pointed, "Fill it up with water by the river and bring it over here."

"Ok!" He quickly bolted.

"Why don't you get it yourself?" Kurt asked.

"If I do, then who's gonna watch you? That's just negligence."

"How noble of you."

The boy returned and handed Dominik the bucket.

"Thanks kid." He handed him 1 silver.

"Yaay! I'm rich! Mwahahaha!" The boy did a villain-like laugh as he skipped away.

"You better not do what I think you're going to..."

"Sorry Kurt. But it must be done."

"At least give me time to-"

SPLASH

"W-wait *cough* you didn't give me time to-"

SPLASH

"There's that handsome face I know." Dominik looked at him as if satisfied with his work.

"You're a dick, you know that." Kurt begrudgingly said to him as the water washed away the blood.

"But I'm *your* dick.... Wait, that came out wrong—Wait!"

"Jeez dude I didn't want to say this before but if you're gay just say so, I won't judge. I will, however, tell you that I'm not interested. I don't swing that way."

"I'm not gay!"

"Why are you getting so defensive about it? You're only making it worse."

"I'm straight, you hear! Straight! I love women and boobs and their fat asses! And my **girlfriend** ticks all the boxes!"

"Not so loud dude!"

Dominik quickly covered his mouth when he realised what he just said.

Looking around he saw all the women around stare at him in disgust.

"Waaaahhh..." He fell on his knees and started fake crying.

"Hey at least get me out of here before you go on a spiral!"

Chapter 18: Chapter 18 - Two Nice Guys

"Can't you burn this any faster? The looks I'm getting's really starting to make me uncomfortable."

Dominik, who is currently sitting on the bucket he used to splash Kurt, was slowly melting the ice off of him with very weak fire magic.

"If I go any faster, I'll burn your leg. Just be patient and ignore them."

"Haaa... whatever you say." Kurt folded his arms and closed his eye.

Moments later the ice was finally weak enough for Kurt to shatter it with little effort.

"There we go. Try breaking free now."

The ice cracked into tiny shards as he broke free.

"Thanks."

"Don't go thanking me just yet, you're still under arrest in case you've forgotten."

"Can't you just let it go. I'm innocent. I told you I was chasing a murderer."

"Proof?" He asked.

"Proof? The proof is in the blood I got blasted with."

Dominik still looked at Kurt with a hint of skepticism.

"That's not enough to go on, but," He took out a small vial from his cloak pocket and scooped up some blood residue from Kurt's clothes, "If what you're saying is true, lead me to the dead body so that when I take this to forensics, the blood in the vial should match what you've shown me."

"What happened to innocent until proven guilty?"

"From the complaints we've been getting, you're the last thing innocent. Seriously Kurt, some old lady told us she saw a crazy person running through the street covered from head to toe in blood, cackling and screaming, 'You're dead!'. At least try to understand where I'm coming from."

"I mean, when you put it like that...."

"See! Besides, I'm just doing my job."

"Fine!" He scratched the back of his head and sighed. "I'll comply with you but only because I'm really innocent. Follow me. I'll show you where this all went down." He walked ahead.

"Much appreciated. If only all criminals were like you-"

"Ha?! What'd you say?" Kurt stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"Oops!" He covered his mouth while shaking his head, "I didn't say anything. Nope, not me!"

Kurt looked at him for a second longer then turned his head back and continued walking on.

"For what it's worth," Dominik caught up and walked next to him, "I think you're innocent."

"Sure you do." He rolled his eye.

"No seriously! Even though you nearly broke my hand upon our first meeting and now, not even three days later, you're under arrest for being a public nuisance. Did I also mention you knocked out a member of the royal family?"

"What are you trying to say, Dominik?"

"What I'm trying to say is despite all that, I think you're a pretty nice guy. Call it a gut feeling."

"Thanks for saying that." Kurt smiled.

"Besides, you're also handsome to boot. I've yet to see a handsome bad guy."

"What are you talking about? There are plenty of handsome bad people out there."

"Like who?"

"Like...."

'Oh crap, is he right? I've never really assassinated any handsome people before.'

"I'm waiting." Dominik smirked.

"Beauty's subjective anyway." He quickly dodged the question, "What's ugly to one person could be beautiful to another."

"Mmhm, sure. Whatever you say. By the way, who were you chasing?"

"I don't know his name but if I'm right then he's a member of the church. Possibly a cultist too."

"Whoa whoa whoa!" He covered Kurt's mouth and looked around if anybody was looking at them.

"Thank goodness no one heard that. Listen to me Kurt, do **not** say that word in front of random people. It triggers them." He spoke seriously.

After hearing the change in Dominik's tone, he nodded once and removed his hands that were covering his mouth.

"What do you mean by 'it triggers them'?" Kurt asked.

Dominik walked up to a food stall and ordered a meat kabab.

"You want one?" He looked at Kurt.

"Yeah, I'll have one."

After getting their food, they continued walking and talking.

"What I mean by that is, hmm let's just call them zealots. You see these zealots have been around since the invasion war. I take it you know the story of how humanity got their magic powers?"

"Goddess Bula descended from the skies and blessed those who still had faith, right?" Kurt answered.

"That's right, and because their prayers had been answered by the Goddess, all that faith that they had to whichever God they worshipped had been redirected to her."

"But what do they have to do with the zealots though?"

They took a left turn and were now nearing the park.

"The first generations of humans to obtain magic became, how do I say this, they became 'purists'."

"Purists?"

"Yep. I don't know if you know this but right after the invasion war ended, another began. This time however it was humanity fighting amongst themselves."

"World war 3?" Kurt mumbled out unconsciously.

"You really know your history huh Kurt? Most people confuse the invasion war as world war 3, but no, that war was its own thing. World war 3 had those who believed that were blessed with magic pit up against those who didn't."

"But why? That's just dumb. Humanity should be standing as one especially with the threat of other worldly beings in the picture."

"Aren't all world wars dumb? You should've read about the 7th one. Some crazy shit's been happening in that one."

'There were seven?!"

"But yeah," Dominik spoke on, "During world war 3 not all those blessed with magic sided with those who were."

"Hold on, why do they want to kill those who weren't blessed with magic in the first place?" Kurt interjected.

"Because the blessed ones saw the others as a stain on their record. Why live with those who have already given up on life? In their eyes, even Goddess Bula didn't love them since they hadn't received magic. In the end it was a grueling war in which they lost thanks to the help of the five summoned heroes."

"I see. Going off on your story I'm guessing that there were survivors of that war and that's how the zealots came into being."

"Nice summary smarty pants. Right on time too. We're here." They stopped in front of the secluded park.

"Fair warning, what you're about to see might not sit well with your insides."

"Is that a challenge I hear? Don't worry, I'm a professional." He bumped his fist on his chest

"Whatever you say Dom."

gasp "You gave me a nickname?! That means you see me as a friend?" Dominik gave him the puppy eye look.

"Yeah. I think you're a pretty nice guy too." He said as he walked in the park

"Kurt.... H-hey wait up!" He hurried after him.

When he caught up, he saw Kurt standing in front of the park bench with his arms crossed.

"Damn man, you walk pretty... fast. What the hell?"

Sitting on the bench was a headless dead body. The neck was leaned over the back as blood was dripping from it. The bench itself has lost almost all of its wood brown colour and was replaced with the kind of red that makes anyone's gut ache.

"Are you doing alright? Not gonna puke?" Kurt asked Dominik who was completely caught off guard at the site.

"I-I'm fine." He managed to speak, "It's just from what you described and how bloodied you were... I knew this was gonna be bad but."

"It happened so suddenly too. One second, he was there and the next he was-"

"I get it man. Head spontaneously blew up. Noted." He walked around the bench and took out another vial to collect a sample of blood that was leaking from the base of the exposed neck.

"Alright I got it." He sealed the vial and put it in his pocket. "Now we wait for the medics to get here."

"How would they know to come here?"

"I've already sent them a distress signal through my work tag. They'll be here any second."

"That sounds so primitive. Don't have any phon- I mean communication device? In fact, now that I think about it, I've never seen anyone have anything like that."

"I hear the inventors in Tricea have already solved that problem and are in their mass-producing phase. Apparently alongside the version two display tags they're also making a tag that lets you communicate with anyone who imbeds their mana into it, over extremely long distances."

"Wow. Sounds neat I guess." Kurt said in a monotone voice.

"How come you don't sound impressed? This shits revolutionary man."

'If only you knew Dom. If only you knew...'

Suddenly a bunch of footsteps could be heard as men in red and white robes came rushing in.

"Oh look, medics here." Dominik turned.

"Good afternoon prefect. We're here because we received a distress signal from this area."

"Right over there doc." He pointed at the dead body. "I need you to take this to forensics and identify the body. Once you do report immediately back me at the station. Got it?"

"Understood. Alright men, let's pack it up! Be gentle with the body."

Another two men came through as they put the body in a bag, laid him on a stretcher and left.

'I'm sorry and goodbye Peter.'

Chapter 19: Chapter 19 - Girl Talk

Around the same time as what was happening at the park, Diana and Mia were at the commercial district, sitting by the outside table of a small coffee shop.

"When are they going to get here?" Diana asked in an exasperated tone while adjusting her sunglasses.

She tapped her finger on the table as the look on her face clearly suggested that her patience was running thin.

"It's only been ten minutes, Principal. Might I add that we're actually the one who arrived early since you didn't want to be late."

"I knew going out to drink with you was a bad idea. I blame you for feeling like absolute garbage. This hangover is killing me."

"Oh, don't scowl like that Principal~ You'll ruin your beautiful face~ Besides, I got your consent, didn't I? You went on your own volition." Mia closed her eyes and bobbed her head up and down, wearing the most smirkiest of smirks.

"Only because you wouldn't quit nagging at me. You also invited me when I was tired of work and in a vulnerable state."

"But it was fun, wasn't it? You sure know how to let loose when you're drunk, hehe."

"I can hardly remember. You know I'm a light drinker, but you just kept on pouring. I don't even remember how I got home."

"You teleported as usual." Mia sipped on her coffee. "Although you would've slept in if I didn't come get you to remind you of this meeting."

"Mmhmm. Thanks for that, I guess." Diana sipped on her glass of water.

"Did you hear about what happened near the main road by the river?" Two women could be heard gossiping by the table next to theirs.

"No. What?"

"Apparently there was a crazy person covered in blood yelling and laughing out 'You're dead!'"

"Oh no!" The woman covered her mouth in shock. "Did he hurt anyone?"

"No. Some people say that he was chasing another person who was running on rooftops. Others say he was just a crazy person on the spectrum who finally lost it. Which doesn't sound too far off considering he knocked out Prince Maxwell, Jr."

"Oh, good heavens! I hope he didn't get away. Otherwise, I wouldn't feel safe walking down that street. My husband runs a shoe shop over there as well. I hope he didn't get

caught in the crossfire." Tears started falling down the woman's face as the fear crept in.

"Don't worry sweetie." She held her hands. "A prefect already caught him with the help of Princess Kiana, and I bet your hubby is fine."

"Thank goodness..."

"You hear that, Diana?"

"What are those twins doing?" Diana rubbed her head. "They were supposed to be training in preparation for next week's tournament. Not play vigilante."

"That's what caught your attention? I'm more interested in the crazy person. She said the prefects got him right? Maybe I should ask Dominik, you know, my **boyfriend**, about the details."

"Don't start with this again, Mia."

"But Diana~ Is there seriously nobody you're seeing? No secret lover/fiancé I should know about?"

"You're starting to sound like my parents." She rolled her eyes.

"Rightfully so! You know you're getting up there in age-"

"27 is not old!" She slammed her hand on the table earning the eyes of people walking past.

Realising what she did she then flashed a quick smile to show them that nothing's wrong.

"Sorry for yelling. It's just that I've got a pounding headache, and your incessant nagging always seems to strike a nerve with me."

"Hmph! That means it's working. I just want to go on a double date with my best friend."

"Too bad. So sad. And no there is no secret lover and or fiancé. I don't know if you've noticed but work has been consuming my life."

"What a shame. You know you can basically get any guy you want. Is there nobody you're at least slightly interested in?"

"I do know that and no. Nobody comes to mind."

"Hmmm, I bet you're the type that falls deeply in love and that's why you're still single and a virgin."

"What did you say-"

"Excuse me, ladies. Is this a bad time?" A man wearing a priest's robe suddenly entered the picture and spoke to them.

"Bishop Tobias," Diana stood up and took off her sunglasses to greet him, "Thank you for coming."

"Please think nothing of it. In fact, I should apologise for being slightly late. I had an emergency situation to take care of with a fellow priest you see." The corner of his lips raised lightly crooked when he said that.

"Right... Please sit." She gestured toward the seat opposite theirs.

"Oh my, and who's this beautiful woman with us?"

"My name is Mia, Father Tobias." She stood up, put her hands in front of her and gave a courteous bow. "I'm Principal Valentine's secretary."

"Ha ha, is that right? I'm sure Principal Valentine is lucky to have someone so..." His eyes slowly drifted down to check out her body, then quickly met back with her eyes, "so capable, yes."

"Right... Thank you, Father." Her face turned disgusted but not enough for Tobias to notice.

"Let's get to business, shall we?" Diana spoke before things got awkward.

"Yes, of course. That is why I'm here after all."

"Could've fooled me." Mia muttered.

"Mia, can you go in the shop and order..." She looked at Tobias.

"A medium sized coffee. As well as a scone, thank you Mia dear."

"Yes ma'am. I'll be right back." She got up and went into the shop.

While Mia was walking, Tobias's gaze drifted back to Mia's rear end.

"Bishop Tobias." Diana called out in a low voice. "I suggest that you stop whatever it is you have going on in your head about my secretary. I am respectfully only going to ask you once."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Principal Valentine. She merely reminds me of a certain woman I used to know; hence I was caught up in nostalgia."

'You keep telling yourself that.' She looked at him with a hint of skepticism.

"This is the contract for the healers we'd like to hire for the upcoming tournament." She proceeded to take out a sheet of paper from her purse and handed it to Tobias.

"You don't mind if I thoroughly read through this and make some changes here and there, if need be?"

"Go ahead. This is important so I'll wait."

"Perfect." He took out a pair of glasses and began reading.

At the same time Mia came back and put the scone and coffee next to him.

"Thank you, child." He stared for just a second too long before reading through the contract again.

"Mia." Diana called and took out another piece of paper, "I can handle things from here. I want you to go to the prefect station and negotiate a contract for security with them. Can I trust you to take care of it?"

"Of course you can Principal Valentine." She took it and put it in her own purse.

"Alright then, you go on ahead. We'll meet back at the office later."

When Mia left, Diana watched to see if Tobias tried sneaking any suspicious glances, but contrary to that, he kept his head down and continued reading.

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"So, you're telling me that the reason you were running through the streets covered in blood is because..."

Back at the prefect station, Kurt sat in the interrogation room giving his testimony to try and convince them that he is not guilty of any misconduct.

"Because I was trying to catch a possible cultist, yes." Kurt answered for him.

"And the reason you knocked out the prince of Eldoria is because..."

"I didn't know who he was and he tackled me to the ground right when I was about to catch him, yes."

"How do you know that the man you were chasing is even a member of the cult?"

"Because not even 30 minutes before Peter got killed for trying to warn the people of whatever he found out about the church, he was threatened by three other priests."

"Threatened him with what exactly? And who are these priests?"

"I don't know. He was about to say until his head got blown off. That's how I got the blood. As for the priests, I only know one name. Tobias."

"Tobias?" The interrogator asked. "That's a heavy accusation Mr. Rossana."

"How'd you know my surname?"

"At the front door, we have a magic scanner that automatically scans all personal tags of those that come through."

'So that was what that beeping sound was.'

"But I concealed it."

"Who do you think manufactured these tags? Of course, only the bureau, therefore us prefects, have this sort of advanced magic technology. Don't worry, we don't let any sensitive information like this leak."

'Different time period, same government dogs.'

"Oh, come chief! I can personally vouch that Kurt's a good guy. So, let's stop this whole song and dance." Dominik pleaded. "I mean he even complied and willingly came here. What kind of criminal does that?"

"One with a guilty conscience."

"Does it look like he has one?"

The interrogator/chief looked at Kurt and saw no sign of guilt.

"Just trust and leave this to me chief." Dominik gave him the puppy eyes.

"Argh fine!" He threw his hands up in defeat. "But whatever goes wrong will be on you."

"Yes!" He pumped his fist. "You got it, chief!"

"Dominik." A female prefect spoke over the intercom. "Your girlfriend's here."

Chapter 20: Chapter 20 - Creepy Vibes

"Mia!" Dominik ran up to her and gave her a big hug.

"Dominik not now." She muttered in his ears . "I'm here for work and you're still on duty."

"Oh pssht, who cares~ I'm just happy to see you. Talk about a nice surprise."

If Dominik were a dog, then one could practically see his tail wagging furiously.

"Oh Dominik... You always know what to say." She hugged him back.

"Hehehe~ Squishy squishy." He let out a creepy little giggle as he groped her butt.

"Ahn~ Dominik...."

"That's enough, you two. Break it up." The chief ordered as he went into his office.

"Dominik, make sure your friend in the interrogation room gets cleaned up. He looks like shit with all that dried up blood on his clothes."

"Sir Yes sir!" He stopped his shenanigans and saluted.

"Also, this case is on you. Suspicions have been lifted from Kurt because you personally put in a word for him and I trust your intuition. Find proper evidence about the man he was chasing and maybe we won't throw him in a cell."

Dominik, receiving the message loud and clear, gave the chief a thumbs up and turned his attention back to Mia.

"By the way Mia, why're you here? Not that I'm complaining."

"Like I told you," she took out the contract from her purse, "I'm here for work. I need to negotiate some terms with your chief about the security for the upcoming tournament next week."

"Sounds boring." His shoulders sagged. "How about I introduce you to my new friend instead? He's got this mysterious badass vibe going on about him. The eyepatch definitely helps with that."

"Maybe later ok?" She held his cheek and gave him a quick kiss. "Sounds like you'll be busy with work too. So get to it before you anger the chief. If you do, I promise well have some fun later tonight~"

That really got Dominik's attention. Suddenly his whole demeanor changed from a sad little puppy to a german shepherd ready to crack down on drugs.

"Wait, are you waiting for Mia? Let's get to work." Dominik, with a straight face, walked out the lobby and into the back door where the interrogation room could be found.

Right when Mia was about to enter the chief's office, she heard him running back to her again. "Mia, wait! I forgot something."

"What is it now?" She sighed and turned around.

"You said to me this morning that you were going to meet a church member with your boss, right? Do you think you can introduce me to them? I want to ask questions about Bishop Tobias."

Mia's whole posture became rigid as she heard that name.

"Hey, what's wrong babe?" He held her shoulders to stop the shaking.

"Dominik," She spoke softly and held his hand. "That's who we met with."

"Really? But why are you shaking like that? Did something happen?"

Mia looked around the station to see if anyone was watching her. She then grabbed Dominik by the sleeve and took him away to a quiet corner where no one could overhear her.

"Theres something very off about that man. And I mean really off."

"Off? What do you mean? He's a Bishop from the church so maybe you misunderstood something?"

"No, Dominik." She held her arm and looked away. "It was his eyes. They way he looked at me like he was.....stripping me. The way his eyes lifted open, and his smile nearly hit the corner of his mouth. It felt violating and disgusting."

Dominik clenched his fists as he stood there listening to her. He managed to reel back his anger and calmly asked her, "Did... did your boss not notice him?"

"She did, and I'm glad." Mia smiled, visibly relieved at the thought. "That's why she sent me here, to be away from him. You said you had questions about Bishop Tobias? Is something going on with him? Should I warn Principal Valentine?"

"Do not tell anybody this but we have reason to believe that," he looked around and whispered to her, "He may be part of the cultists group."

"What!" She screamed and attracted a bit of attention to them,

"Shhh!" He covered her mouth. "Haha! Don't worry guys, I apologise for the ruckus. It's nothing to worry about."

"Y-yes, haha. I'm sorry for yelling..." She took his hand off and apologised with him.

Once eyes were off them and the coast was clear they let out a breath of relief and continued speaking in hushed voices.

"That's a serious accusation, Dominik. Especially against a member of the church. Yes, he gave me creepy looks but does that really warrant such speculation?"

"I already told you we have reason to believe that he is."

"How? Where did you even get this information from?"

"From my new friend." He crossed his arms and lifted his chin in pride. "It's all thanks to him that we have a new lead on them. I'm glad I decided to make friends with him when I did. I swear I think the Goddess has made our path cross again for this very reason."

"Again? Who is this man? It's very rare for you to make friends on your own. Normally it's the other way around."

"It's the guy I told you about. You know the one who nearly broke my hand with a handshake the other day. I met him again today while working. He was covered in blood from head to toe haha! You should've seen how this old lady run up to me, she was like-"

"The Jesus guy? I've heard rumors about him. And that was **you** who caught him? Nice~"

"Word spread that fast? Damn, it hasn't even been a day yet." He scratched his head in embarrassment. "Also *technically* it wasn't me who-"

"DOMINIK!" The chief slammed his door open, "Why are you still here!? Don't you have work to do!"

"Oh shoot he's right! I gotta go babe, don't wanna keep my buddy waiting." *mwah* He kissed her on the cheek. "I'll see you later, alright?"

"Okay. See you later. Introduce me to your friend when you have the chance."

"Definitely."

After greeting each other goodbye, Dominik left for the interrogation room and Mia entered the chief's office to begin negotiating a contract.

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"And that's about it. Everything else looks good otherwise." Tobias put his glasses away.

"Perfect. With that the terms have been settled." Diana conducted herself professionally and put a copy of the contract in her purse.

"If you're free Diana-"

"Call me Ms. Valentine or Principal Valentine." She interrupted him while putting on her sunglasses.

"...Ms. Valentine. If you're free you should come to the daycare at the church. I'm sure the kids would love to see someone with your level of caliber and... charm." He sneaked a glance at her chest while she was strapping her purse around her shoulder.

"I would love to visit the kids. Unfortunately though I have a whole academy of them to manage especially during this week so I'll have to respectfully decline. Another time perhaps?"

"That's perfectly understandable." He nodded

"Lovely. Thank you for your time today Bishop."

"No prob-"

SHWOOSH

"..... Stuck up bitch." He began talking to himself in a low voice so that nobody could hear.

"Thinks that because she has the looks she can do whatever she wants? No no no that's not how this works, Diana. Oh Mother Bula, it seems that we have a lost lamb that needs proper guidance."

He thought of Mia and the way her body swayed. His face then contorted into a creepy smile as a sliver of drool left his mouth. "Two of them, Mother. Hahaha, there are two that need proper guidance hahaha."

From the shadows of the coffee shop building came another priest and sat at the table where Tobias was.

"Ah you're back. Tell me, how'd the 'cleanup' go? Has the Peeter problem been dealt with?"

"Yes, Bishop. He is no longer with us. Although there is a slight problem."

"A problem?" The smile he had on his face disappeared.

"Yes. There was, or rather is, a witness who may or may not have recognised me."

"....Excuse me? Witness?? Recognise you? How? Were they not wearing a disguise? Had you not waited for him to be in a secluded area?"

"I...know not how he recognised me since I was in disguise and he was in a secluded area. It's just, the person he was with seemed to be following him, so I decided to get rid of the problem before he started blabbing."

"Then why didn't you eliminate him?"

Tobias, who's fuming on the inside, was having a hard time not flipping the table as the priest spoke on.

"Because he started chasing me before I had the chance to. But worry not, I managed to escape him and confirmed that he has been arrested."

SLAM

He banged his fist on the table.

"Didn't you just say he recognised you? What if he knows about me too? What if he reveals to the prefects about it?"

"O-oh...I...didn't consider-"

"Shhh... please do not speak anymore, brother. Lest you regret it." He leaned on the table with his hand on his head.

"By eliminating one problem you've created another...."

The priest pushed the chair back and kneeled in front of him, "Brother Tobias, let me fix this!"

".... Haaaa." Tobias gently put his hand on the priest's shoulder. "No brother, this is our problem," His fox shaped eyes opened and revealed a pair of dead black pupils as he looked at the kneeling priest. "And together we will solve it."