

ROSES HAVE THORNS #Chapter 21 - "I'm not gay!" -

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Inside the interrogation room Kurt sat in the chair with his hands strapped to the table.

'Where is everyone? They all just left when the intercom buzzed for Dominik.' He impatiently tapped his foot on the ground as he was growing restless by each passing second.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity the door finally opened and entered Dominik swinging a set of keys in his hand.

"Hey buddy! Sorry about that. Duty called and I wasn't gonna hang up on it if you know what I mean." He wiggled his eyebrows at Kurt while he unlocked the table cuffs.

Feeling his now unrestrained wrists free, he stood up and began doing light stretches to loosen the stiff feeling in his limbs from sitting for so long.

"So, I'm good to go now?" Kurt asked him.

"Sort of... You see, although suspicions on you died down, you're still going to be closely watched. By me specifically since you're my responsibility after I put in a good word for you. But hey, better me than some stranger, right?"

"I'm ecstatic." He said sarcastically.

However, that sarcasm flew right over Dominik's head as he excitedly put his arm around Kurt's shoulder, "Great! Love to hear it. So, what's next?"

"Firstly," He took Dominik's arm off of him, "I need to get cleaned up. Walking around like this is bound to cause even more misunderstandings."

"Yeah, looks like you took a blood bath,ahaha. Come on," He led Kurt out the door, "You can use the work showers. I've got a black shirt and pants you can borrow in the meantime too."

"I appreciate it, and sorry for the bother."

"Oh pshht! Don't worry about it. It's been a while since I was so excited for an investigation. It's like we're.... we're..."

"Like Batman and Robin." Kurt finished his sentence with a smile.

"Yeah!" Dominik clicked his fingers, "Like them, whoever they are."

'Just how many gems have been lost to the monster invasion and time?'

"We're here." Dominik pointed with his thumb at the closed door that had a male stick figure sign standing under a showerhead.

"Take any shower stall inside that's free. I'll go get those clothes for you and leave it in the nearby basket. When you're finished, meet me at the lobby."

"Alright. And thanks again."

Inside the shower room there were five unoccupied stalls, each with its own basket, three sinks and a large mirror.

Kurt walked to the stall at the far end of the room and just when he was about to throw his bloodied clothes in the basket, he remembered Dominik said that he'd put the clean clothes in there, so he threw it on the ground instead.

He then took his belongings which mainly consisted of his two pouches of money, his chain with two dog tags attached to them and his phone and put them in the basket while hiding his phone under the pouches.

He entered the stall and hung his eyepatch on top of the door. With so much on his mind at the moment, he unconsciously turned on the shower and immediately recoiled at the cold water it let out.

"Ah shit! Remember to wait for the water to warm before going guns blazing under the shower, Kurt." He mumbled to himself.

"Are you good in there?" Dominik shouted on the other side of the door. "You need help? Want me to hold your hand so you don't drown?"

"Oh, shut up, I'm fine!"

"Alright man, whatever you say. I put your clean clothes in the basket. What do you want me to do with these ones on the floor?"

"Put it in a plastic bag or something. I'll clean them later." Kurt said as he stood under the warm water and his muscles relaxed.

Dominik held his blazer with his two fingers and looked at them doubtfully "Don't you want me to throw them away? It's pretty much ruined."

"No. It's pretty much one of the only things I have left from my home."

"Ah... sentimental value. Gotchu." He dropped it back on the floor and put the clean clothes in the basket without looking inside.

"I'm leaving now!" Dominik stood by the exit door and yelled, "You absolutely sure don't need any help? Because I-"

"Dominik."

"Yes?"

"Leave."

"Ok." He shut the door and left.

'Finally, some silence.'

Kurt scrubbed himself off as all the dried-up blood washed away from his body and hair.

'What's my next course of action now? Let's see,' He thought back on the events that had happened.

'Peter's rally on the street, his warning about how the church are liars, the three priests that stopped and threatened him, Bishop Tobias with his creepy eyes and smile, Peter's death and lastly the man who got away from me.'

He stepped out of the shower and grabbed a clean towel by his basket, that Dominik most likely put there, to dry himself off.

'Thinking about it, what I should do next is obvious. Investigate the church. Or...' Kurt looked at his reflection in the mirror and smiled, *'Find one of the three priests, preferably Tobias, and 'take' them in for 'questioning' haha.'*

Once fully dried, Kurt put on the black shirt and pants Dominik left him. He cleaned his eyepatch by the sink and tied it around his scarred right eye. Wore the same black dress shoes, picked up the rest of his things and left the shower room.

At the lobby, Kurt noticed Dominik bending over and peeking through the chief's door.

"What are you looking at?" Kurt asked.

"Shh! Be quiet." Dominik hushed and gave Kurt a plastic bag for his clothes. "It's just, hehe, my girl looks so sexy when she's in her serious mode~"

"You have a girlfriend? I could've sworn you were..."

"What?! No!" He stopped peeking and went up to Kurt. "I already told you I'm not gay and that I have a girlfriend!"

"And I already told you that the way you're denying it makes it seem like-"

"DOMINIK!" The chief slammed the door open and looked at Dominik and Kurt. "Why are you two still here!? Don't you have work to do!? Unless your new friend here decided he changed his mind!"

"Nonono it's not anything like that, chief! We were just about to leave, right Kurt?"

"Yeah. I just had to borrow the shower to clean up real quick."

"Really? Cause to me it sounds like you were screaming about your sexual preferences out front of my door when I have a meeting inside."

"Dominik, *sniff* Am I not enough for you?" Mia inserted herself on the scene and started fake crying.

"Damn Dom, it's like that?" Kurt egged on the situation, "I didn't mean to come between you two. Sorry but like I said, I'm not interested."

"Can you stop-"

"ALL OF YOU, GET OUT!"

SHUT!

.....

"Pfffft! Ha ha ha"

"Mia! Why're you laughing?? Aren't you going to get in trouble when your boss finds out you blew the contract?"

"Come on, let's get outta here. And no, she won't find out because it's already been signed. We were busy wrapping up until you started screaming about gay this, girlfriend that."

The three of them walked out of the station when Mia addressed the elephant in the room.

"So, Dominik, is this the new friend you couldn't stop gushing about?"

"That's right!" He stood between the two and greeted them, "Mia, this is Kurt. Kurt, this is Mia, my *girlfriend*."

"Nice to meet you, Mia." Kurt shook her hand.

"You too Kurt." She shook back.

"Also, Dom, you can let it go now. I know that you're straight and was only teasing you. Think of it as revenge for the whole Jesus thing you keep bringing up."

"Really?" Mia added. "Could've fooled me cause by the looks of it," She looked at Kurt from top to bottom, "You're wearing my man's clothes. Should I be worried?"

"What?! No, Mia! Not you too. I just let Kurt borrow them since his own clothes are sludged with blood. You know I only have eyes for you~" Dominik walked behind Mia and gave her a hug while resting his head on her shoulders.

"Wait, Kurt, that's right! You're the one who was running around town like a crazy person. Not gonna lie, and don't take this the wrong way but from what I heard of the rumors and the way Dominik described you I didn't expect you to look this handsome."

"No offence taken." Kurt shrugged. "And don't worry, not to brag or anything, but most if not everyone I come across calls me that."

"Wow~ You're starting to sound just like my boss." Mia laughed. "Maybe you should meet up with her. I just about know you two will get along perfectly. Goddess above knows she needs it."

"Another time perhaps. I have too much on my plate right now to be thinking about romance." '*Unless it's from that beauty from before heh.*'

"Hmm, what a shame. Promise you'll meet with her though?" She gave Kurt the puppy eyes which looked eerily familiar. Only to see that Dominik was doing the exact same thing.

"E-erm sure haha..." He agreed nervously.

"Great! With that, *mwah*" She kissed Dominik's cheek and walked ahead, "I gotta babe. See you later. Later Kurt!"

"Bye babe!" Dominik waved.

Kurt however was giving him the dead stare.

"What? Why're you looking at me like that?"

"Nothing. Let's just go."

Chapter 22: Chapter 22 - The 'Extra'

-2 Days Before-

'Hi. My name is Austin, and I'm what you would call an 'extra character', heh.'

Sitting in the corner of class 3-A of Future Academy with his elbows on the table and hands covering most of his face was Austin. A plain-looking boy who has brown hair and eyes and freckles running across his nose.

'This may sound a little strange but the world I'm currently residing in is actually from a popular dating sim called 'My Girlfriend Has A Dark Past And It's My Job To Fix Her'.

He dramatically slouched back on his chair and looked out the window as he continued his internal monologue.

'Heh cheesy title I know but contrary to what you might think this game had a whopping total of five sequels with each game basing itself on each continent. Those continents are Eldoria, Tricea, Riverton, Eden and Myria.'

'My favourite, in case you're wondering, is Eldoria. Mainly because it was the introduction to the series as well as its main heroine Emelia Herst and its secret heroine Diana Valentine.'

'You play as the main character, and prince of Eldoria, Maxwell Dorothy, Jr. with the goal being to fix the heroines and unlock the secret harem ending.'

'Heh, cliche I know but what drove millions of players to play and demand a sequel to this game was its amazing and engaging story but mostly the R-18 scenes hehe.'

"You okay, Austin?" His deskmate next to him asked, "You got drool running out your mouth and you're laughing in a really creepy way."

"O-oh." He wiped his mouth clean with his arm, "Sorry if I'm disturbing you. I just thought of something funny, is all."

"As long as everything's all right." The boy smiled and went straight back to studying.

'What a loser.' Austin thought when looking at him with a smug face. 'Idiot doesn't even know about the upcoming chaos that's going to happen next week because of the cult.'

He then turned to look back out the window and monologue to himself.

'In my old world, which is loosely based on this one, I lived a relatively normal life. Had a wife and kid, although they left me because, and I quote, "You're not paying enough attention to us! You only focus and prioritise yourself on that stupid game!". Heh, who's the stupid one now you dumb bitch.'

'I'm glad that truck ran me over when it did. Now I get to live my true life. One filled with magic and beautiful women.'

'If only I reincarnated as the main character and not this unknown ugly prick. That way I could snag all the heroines in a heartbeat. Oh well you win some and lose some. I'll just steal the heroines from him another way, hehehe.'

The academy bell ran to indicate that the day was over. Austin grabbed his bag and quickly left the room.

"Hey Austin!" His deskmate stood up and called him, "Do you think that we can maybe hang-"

But he was already gone.

"-out...." He dropped his shoulders in defeat and slowly packed up his belongings.

'I gotta be quick.' Austin power-walked through the hall.

'According to the timeline, Emelie's best friend and roommate, Amy tries to collect those version two display tags today but gets robbed instead. If I'm fast enough, I can intercept that and stop that from happening. That way I'll earn some brownie points from Emelie. Maybe even throw a little extra and score with Amy as well hehe.'

When turning the corner of the hallway he saw Amy and Diana talking. "Oh shit! Need to hide." He hid against the wall and waited for them to finish.

'It seems they're talking about the tags. Good, I'm still on time.'

Austin squinted his eyes to take a closer look at Diana and when he did, his nose flared as blood trailed from it.

*'Sweet mother of.... look at those tits! She's practically begging for someone to set them free. I **need** to put my di-'*

"Austin? What are you doing hiding like that?" Before his thoughts could escalate, his deskmate walked up to him and broke his delusions.

'Oh crap!' He quickly pulled his head away from peeking and looked at who interrupted him.

'This loser again?! Seriously, what the hell is his problem?'

"Can I help you...err."

"Y-you forgot my name again? I told s-six times this week alone."

'That's because you're a nobody who serves zero purpose to the plot! At least have the common decency to know your place in the world and don't talk to me!'

"Sorry." Austin put up a facade. "It's just that I'm really bad with names."

"Y-yeah, you said that already..."

'Then take a hint and piss off already!'

He quickly looked to see if Amy and Diana were still there and much to his dismay, they've already ended their conversation and are walking their separate ways.

'Dammit! I need to move!' He was about to turn the corner when-

"A-Austin!" The deskmate grabbed him by the sleeve. "I still didn't tell you my name yet."

'I don't care!'

"I'm sorry but can we speak another time?" He broke his sleeve free. "I've got important business to attend to. You can tell me tomorrow, alright? Cool. See you tomorrow then!" He ran away.

"Okay, Austin!" The boy waved. "See you later!"

Once Austin was out of sight, the boy smiled softly to himself and said, "See you later, my one and only friend."

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'Oh crap oh crap oh crap!' Austin was full on sprinting down the corridors hoping that he'd make it past Amy in order to find a good hiding spot and save her from the robber in the nick of time.

'Come on... nearly made it out the exit gates.'

But right when he took one step out the premises, something grabbed him by the collar and yanked him right onto his butt.

"Oof! Who the fuck-"

"Excuse me? 'Who the fuck', exactly what?" Standing tall above him was none other than his class monitor as well as the main heroine, Emelie Herst.

"E-Emelie! What a coincidence seeing you here ahaha..."

"Coincidence? I think not. I was waiting for you here."

'Waiting for me? Could it be that she's in love with me? But we've barely even talked until now....'

Austin couldn't believe what was happening. Normally Emelie wouldn't give even a moment of her time to someone like him. She would either be training, hanging out with Amy or doing her own thing which involved a lot of brooding.

He sat there on the ground, staring at her minty coloured eyes that seemed to look inside his soul.

'I-I think I get it. With you being who you are you've fallen in love with my mysterious charm, haven't you Em? hehe. You couldn't stand that someone like me has entered your picture. I know how much you hate variables and I know your deepest darkest secret. I know that you are a-'

"Why are you looking at me like that you creep. Stand up and come with me." Emelie clicked her tongue and made space for Austin to stand up.

"W-where are we going? Could it be a date?"

"I must've misheard you. Could you say that again?" She turned and looked over her shoulder.

"O-Oh you did? Sorry, maybe I spoke too softly. I said-"

"I know what you said, you weirdo. I'm not interested in you. Now follow me" She turned her head back and walked on.

"W-what? But you fell for my mysterious charm, didn't you?"

"Mysterious charm? What are you talking about? You think you're mysterious?"

"B-but you're taking me on a date, right?" He started twiddling his fingers.

"No. I'm taking you to the classroom. It is your turn to do after class duties, but you just ran away. As class president I came to get you."

'After class duties?! I don't have time for that! I've got a npc to save and favors to gain! From you specifically!'

Austin tried sneaking away when he saw a chance but alas,

"Get back over here!" Emelie grabbed and dragged him by the collar.

'No! My brownie points!'

When they reached the classroom, inside was a face that he didn't want to see.

"Hi again, Austin." It was his deskmate.

"Why didn't you tell Austin that he's on duty, Gary? You're making me waste my time when I have a tournament to prepare for."

"I did try to tell him, but he seemed to be busy, and I didn't want to disturb him. So, I decided to do it on my own."

"*tsk* That's not how it works." Emelie grew irritated. "Now I have to sit here and wait for you two to finish."

"Haha, sorry about that. Come on Austin, let's make this quick." He smirked and purposefully showed Austin it while hiding his face from Emelie.

'Fuck you Garreth.'

"My name is Gary." He said in a creepy voice.

"How'd you-"

"Less talking and more working!" Emelie yelled.

'Dammit!' Austin picked up a broom. *'There go my chances down the fucking drain.'*

Chapter 23: Chapter 23 - My Name Is

Everyone was silent, sort of. Austin let out the occasional irritated grunt while Gary silently hummed a tune to himself as if he were just happy to be there.

It had been 30 minutes since they started cleaning the room when they finally completed their tasks and began cleaning up.

Right as Emelie was about to grab her bag and leave, the door opened with a,

BAM

"Emelie!" Amy burst into the classroom with a tear-filled face.

"What's wrong? Why're you crying?"

'Aww shit here go.' Austin rolled his eyes

"I-I lost them Emy!" She fell to her knees. "T-the new display tags! I-I lost them!"

"You lost them? How?"

'According to the timeline, Principal Valentine was supposed to collect them when they come to deliver it. How come Mia went instead?' She wondered while rubbing Amy's back.

"Amy," she asked, "Why did you go to collect them if the deliverers were going to bring it here anyway? It was the principal's job to get them, not you."

"Didn't you hear?" Gary walked up to the girls. "Apparently Dale Cooper got hospitalised by those triplets from Kirstenbell so Principal Valentine had to go to a parent-teacher meeting with the Coopers."

"What? Hospitalised? This wasn't supposed to happen. Argh, let me think..." Emelie closed her eyes and concentrated.

'Oh! There she goes.' Austin smiled knowingly. 'Surfing through her past memories to see if something like this has happened before. Quiet the cheat you got there, huh? Little Ms. Regressor, haha.'

'In the events of the game, this is the part where Maxwell, Jr. stumbles upon the scene and, due to his heroic nature, decides to help find and apprehend the thieves. This would've been the chance for the player to increase their favourability with Emelie.'

"Whoa, what's going on here?"

'And speak of the devil.'

"None of your business Junior. Now move along." Emelie brushed him aside.

"Apparently this girl called Amy, from a year below us, got robbed of some very important tags."

"Gary!" She scolded.

"What? It's the prince who asked. We have to respect him."

"She got robbed? Well what are we waiting for?! Let's go get them!"

"Easy there, Junior." Another person entered the room.

'It's the villainess and Maxwell, Jr's. twin sister, Kiana Dorothy!' Austin's eyes beamed with excitement.

"We don't even know where to look, let alone where she got robbed." Kiana looked at Amy who was mildly sobbing in Emelie's bosom. "Amy, was it? Can you be a dear and tell us where all this took place?"

"Like. I. Said. This is none of your business. Why don't you and your little pet brother here stick their nose in someone else's dirty laundry." Emelie stood up with Amy and walked past the two siblings who were blocking the door.

"But Emelie!"

"Let them go brother." Kiana held her brother back from going after them. "If that's what she wants then we have to respect their wishes."

'Ha! As if that's gonna stop lover boy.' Austin snickered. 'This is Emelie we're talking about. The main heroine. Of course he's not going to-'

"You're right."

'NANI?!"

"If that's what they want, then as future king of Eldoria, I should listen to my people and decide the best course of action." Maxwell gave Kiana a resolute look while holding her hands.

'What the fuck?! Is bro taking the incest route?! What's happening to the script?!"

"Hey Austin," Gary tapped on his arm, "You doing okay? You're sweating a lot and have that creepy smile on your face."

"Oh I'm doing just great Garreth. Hehehe, juuust great~"

'Fuck it. If that's what prince charming's going for, who am I to judge? That just means there are more Emelie encounters for me to steal. Hehehe.'

"My name is Gary."

"Get out my face, Goober! I have a heroine to seduce!"

Austin pushed his way past Gary and made a b-line for the exit.

'Luckily for me I came prepared.' He held his pocket tight as if squeezing something. 'With these keys I can easily enter that blocked off alleyway and steal those tags back before that cultist arrives. Those two chump robbers are a bunch of pushovers anyway.'

Right when he once again took one step out the premises, someone pulled him by the collar and yanked him back.

"Oof! who the fuck-"

"Give it."

"Emelie?? What are you doing he-"

"I said give it, you creep." She held out her hands. "I know you have the keys I need. Now give it and don't let me take it from you. I'm only saying this once."

"K-keys? W-what keys? I-I don't know what you're talking abouRGH...." Austin fell unconscious as Emelie chopped his neck.

"Emelie! Why did you do that?" Amy panicked next to her.

She grabbed the keys from Austin's pocket and left him lying there with his face planted flat and his ass pointing to the heavens.

"Let's go Amy. Take me to where you last saw the robber. I don't remember the exact location of the alleyway but I will when I get nearer." She sped walked away

"Alleyway? What are you talking about Emy? H-hey wait up!" She ran after her.

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Walking up and crouching beside Austin was none other than Gary.

He poked Austin on the cheek to see if he was awake, and when he didn't respond, he let out a small giggle.

"Hey buddy. You know that's not a good sleeping place right? Come on," he lifted him in a princess style carry. "I'll take you to your dorm room where you will get better rest."

- 5 Hours later -

"I don't have any keys!" Austin jolted awake from his loss of consciousness.

When he looked out the window he noticed that the sun had set and he was back in his room.

'*Shit!*' He turned over to look at the time. '*It's already eight! Dammit! I missed the whole afternoon event! Fuck!*'

He slid on his slippers and immediately bolted out the room.

'Maybe they got delayed or something and they're still there! Maybe luck hasn't given up on me yet! Maybe-'

Sadly luck was not on his side.

When he made it to the dorm's common room he saw both Emelie and Amy chatting cheerfully.

"But Emy~ I'm really scared I messed things up with Kurt~"

"Just let it go Amy." Emelie drank her soda. "Besides, he's an adult whereas you're just a teen. Seventeen to be precise."

'Kurt? Who the fuck is Kurt?!' Austin hid behind a vending machine as he eavesdropped on them.

'What the hell happened when I was out cold? Speaking of being out cold, how dare that bitch knock me out like that! I should beat the shit out of-'

"Oh hey Austin! I'm glad you're awake!" Gary stood at the common room stairs when he saw Austin hiding. He quickly descended it and ran up to him while shouting his name.

"Shhh! Shut your mouth Grainy!" Austin aggressively whispered.

"Austin?" Emelie looked at the vending machine. "What the hell are you doing spying on us like a creep? Get out from there."

'Fuck! I need to put on a tough guy act or she'll never take me seriously.'

"Ahem!" He slowly revealed himself. "Good evening, Amy and Evel-"

"Shut up and get out of here, you creep. I don't want to see your ugly mug."

"Yes ma'am." He walked away.

"Emy, was that really necessary?" Amy asked, "I mean you did chop him and left him laying out there?"

"Trust me Amy, that guy's a no good bastard who only ever thinks of himself. That creep is all talk but when push comes to shove, his true colours emerge only to reveal that he is a coward who would abandon you to satisfy his own selfish greed." She crushed her empty soda can.

"Whoa... You make it sound as if you knew him personally yet he only transferred here not that long ago."

".... Call it my woman's intuition." She smiled in a defeated way.

"Come on," she stood up, "let's hit the hay. It's gonna be a busy day tomorrow." *'Considering the fact that the sick-in-the-head Bishop named Tobias will finally make his move.'*

The two girls left the common room and went up the stairs to the girls' side of the dorm.

....

"Fuck!"

Crash!

"Dammit!"

Smash!

Inside his room, Austin, who was visibly frustrated, began smashing and tearing anything he could get his hands on.

"Who does that bitch think she is! Just because you're the main heroine you think you can treat other people like shit?! Well fuck you! I know everything about you and can ruin you!"

Shatters!

"Errr Austin?" Gary, who was in his room, stared at him in confusion. "Why're you so mad? I got a chocolate snack bar. You want it?" He offered.

"What the?! How'd you get in my room?!"

"I'm your roommate, duh."

"Since when?! I've always had this room to myself!"

"Since today. There was a freshman who transferred in today. And since your room was free the staff had decided to let them room with you. But I figured you wouldn't like staying with a stranger so I offered to stay instead. Pretty cool huh?"

"No, not cool! Now I have to share my private space with you as well?! Fuck that!" Austin stormed out the room.

"Where're you going Austin? It's past curfew."

"Screw you Ginger! I do what I want!"

Shut!

"....My name is Gary."

Chapter 24: Chapter 24 - Money Sorted

"So, what's first on the list of things we need to do to prove your innocence?"

Going back to present time, Kurt and Dominik were currently walking on the main road to the commercial district.

"Funny how you're the one who's asking me. Aren't you the government official who should be doing the investigating?" Kurt asked as he gave Dominik the side eye.

"I just want to see if you have a plan. I mean you did willingly let yourself get taken in and all that. That could only mean that you're confident in the fact that you know you're not in the wrong!" He winked and snapped his fingers.

"Right you are my dear Wattson." He smiled.

"Wattson?"

"..... Nevermind." *'Am I even surprised anymore?'* Kurt rolled his eyes.

"You can be weird sometimes, you that Kurt?"

"You call it weird; I call it tasteful."

"Riiight... tasteful. So, tell me where we're headed. Judging from the path we've taken, are we going shopping or something?"

"Kind of. Before we begin the snooping, I need to sort some things out first." He slapped his thigh pocket, and the sound of coins could be heard. "I need to open a bank account. Walking around with these pouches seems quite primitive, don't you agree?"

"Ah yes. One of the many weird things about you. Walking around with TWO pouches filled with coins. I bet if the bloody crazy man incident didn't happen, we would've met at the prefect station, where you would be crying to me about how you got robbed of your money, ahaha!"

"No, if that happened you would've been on a missing person case. Catch is you'll never know it was me nor would you find the body."

"Ahaha..." Dominik abruptly stopped laughing. "You're kidding right?"

"Yep."

"Oh phew..." He relaxed. "That's some sense of humor you got."

'Yeah, I'd probably kill that person, leave his mangled body in broad daylight with a bloody note that reads "I stole money and got what I deserved," and you'd still never know it was me. Heh, nice.'

After walking for a while, they finally arrived at the bank.

"Wait for me out here." Kurt said. "Hopefully this shouldn't take long."

"Sure thing. I'll be waiting over there." Dominik pointed at a fountain.

Kurt nodded once and entered the branch.

Once inside he got himself a waiting ticket and sat next to all but one person.

'Good thing this place is so empty. Must be because it's a weekday and it's 4pm.' He thought when looking at his phone.

At the receptionist desk an old man slowly trotted to his seat and called for the next customer which, obviously, was the person next to him.

When he moved one seat forward, he noticed something on the wall that he never really thought about, since he was always so caught up in things. Until now that is.

'Is that... the world map?'

It was the map of the world, and it was unlike anything Kurt had ever seen.

To the left of the map, both bottom halves of South America and Africa were merged together with the bottom chunk of North America to create Eldoria

At the center of the map, the top halves of South America and Africa were merged together and were called Eden.

At the center top of the map, the rest of North America and most of Europe merged together to create Tricea.

To the right of the map, the rest of Europe and nearly the whole of Asia got the Japan treatment and were split into many islands. These islands together were called Riverton.

Lastly at the bottom left of the map, The aforementioned islands of Japan got merged with Australia and a small piece of the Antarctic to create Myria.

The rest of Antarctica, which got split into many islands of its own, was simply called The Ice Lands.

'What... the actual HELL happened to the world?! How is there still a planet left to live on?! Was this because of the invasion war or those seven other wars Dominik mentioned? I'm so confused. Didn't studies show that something like this should only happen hundreds of millions of years from now??'

Kurt stood with his hands to the wall as he stared at the map. Sweat poured down his head, his throat felt dry and his heart started pounding.

'I knew things were bad, but this? Who even came up with these cringy fantasy names!?'

He looked at where Riverton was and where Eldoria is, *'So that's where old man Willy thought I came from... Asia and Europe got merged and split into many islands. That's so messed up.'*

Kurt quickly looked around to see if anyone was watching him. When the coast was clear he grabbed his phone and snagged a picture of the map.

'Only 25% battery left. I need to find a way to charge this up.'

"Next customer please. Ticket number 045." The old man called.

'That's me.' Kurt calmed down and put his phone away.

"Good afternoon young man." The old man greeted when Kurt took a seat in front of him. "How may I help you?"

"Good afternoon senior. I'd like to open an account."

"Ooh, an account hey? A bit late to open one for someone of your age but we all have to start somewhere, isn't that right."

"Better late than never, yeah."

"Are you opening a business or personal account?"

"A personal one."

"Yipee!" the old man celebrated and startled Kurt.

"The heck old man? Why'd you shout like that?"

"Oh, it's just that opening a business account takes much longer to process than a personal one. Besides, it looks like you're the last client. That means I can close up early, hehe."

'Isn't that illegal? Also why does that old man have so much spirit in him?'

"Ha ha... I'm happy for you, senior." Kurt let out a dry laugh.

The old man reached under his desk and took out a familiar orb and a little box.

"Put your personal tag in the box and hold the orb."

"So, how's this going to work exactly?" Kurt asked as he put his tag in the box.

"You don't know? Well, you see the way this works is, this box connects to the worldwide banking system which is governed by the bureau. The orb you're holding reads your magic signature and grants access for the box to register your tag to access the banking network." The old man explained.

"Oh, I get it. But can't anyone do this if they have the orb and keys?"

"I see what you're trying to say but don't worry young man, this equipment here requires personnel that works for the bank for them to work. Otherwise, they'd just make for a good paper weight."

"That's good to hear at least."

"And don't worry about others trying to take your money. Like I said, the account reads your magic signature so that means only you have access to it."

'Damn and here I thought I could squeeze in a few extra bucks off of Arlo's tag.'

"Ah! Looks like it's finished." The old man took the tag out the box and gave it to Kurt.

"Go on. Try it for yourself."

When Kurt imbued magic into the tag, it displayed the new information.

Personal Info -

Name - Kurt Rossana

Date of Birth - 29/02/756

Nationality - Riverton

Occupation - Adventurer

Bank Balance - 0p. 0g. 0s. 0c

'I'm guessing that stands for platinum, gold, silver and copper.'

"Did it come out alright young man?"

"Huh?" Kurt looked at him weirdly.

"The banking balance. Is it visible?" He looked back at Kurt innocently.

"..... Yes, it is."

"Good. With that you're done. Is there anything else you need?"

"Actually," He took out his two pouches. "How do I transfer this money to my account?"

"To do that all you have to do is coat your coins or the whole pouch with magic and then put it in the display pop up of your personal tag. Give it a whirl."

Kurt did as he was told and when he put the pouches in the display panel, they disappeared and his balance went up.

Bank Balance - 0p. 102g. 8s. 10c

'Nice.'

"Thanks for your assistance, senior." Kurt stood up and walked to the exit.

"No problem young man. Have a good day."

Finally done with what he came here to do, Kurt went to the fountain where Dominik was waiting.

When he got closer, he saw that someone was speaking to him and that he looked troubled.

'Is that Emelie Herst?'

"Hey Dom, sorry to keep you waiting."

"Kurt! Finally, man. This girl has been asking me all sorts of questions about Peter."

"Kurt?" Emelie looked at him. "It's you again."

"Hello to you too, Emel-."

"Come with me." She pulled him by the arm.

"Whoa! Where're you dragging me to?"

"I need to speak with you. Privately."

Kurt looked at Dominik and gave him a confused look. All he could do in response was shrug.

When they reached a quiet corner, Emelie slammed her hand against the wall and pinned Kurt into no escape.

"Who the hell are you?"

Chapter 25: Chapter 25 - Confrontation

"Excuse me?"

"I asked who the hell are you?"

"Do you have amnesia or something? We met yesterday."

"Sure, I know your name, Kurt. What I'm asking is who and what are you? Never in all my lives have I ever seen you before."

"Lives? Are you a cat or something? You got nine lives?" Kurt tried easing the tension in the air.

The joke, however, landed flat as Emelie's face turned more serious.

"I'm not playing with you Kurt. Tell me or," She quickly shoved her forearm against Kurt's throat. "I'll kill you."

"Arghk... You'll kill me? Ha... Hahaha. Ahahaha!" He laughed maniacally.

Emelie's tough persona broke slightly as she was taken aback by his sudden change in behaviour.

'What's wrong with him?' She thought.

"Do it. I dare you to try." Kurt goaded her on. "Fair warning though, once you go through with it, I won't hold back."

"You think I'm afraid of you?"

"You should be, Emelie." With a blush now covering his face, he smiled like a crazy person.

'This guy...'

"Hey Emelie, tell me something before you make the worst decision of your life."

"... What is it?"

"Are you... evil?"

"What did you say-"

SLASH

"Ah!" Emelie let go of him and fell to the ground as she felt something get slashed across her thigh.

"Oh Emelie," Kurt twirled the knife he took from Arlo. "I've been nothing but cordial to you, and here you are threatening to kill me out of nowhere. Imagine that you were in my shoes. How would you feel?"

"You bastard," She held her bleeding thigh. "I knew something about you was fishy. First the robbing incident with Amy and now with the death of Peter. The common denominator is that you were always involved and yet I've never met you before until this cycle."

"Common denominator? Cycle? You're speaking mumbo jumbo again. You make it sound like I'm sort of a divine interventor. I'm just a guy who got caught up in whatever storm is brewing."

Kurt kneeled beside her and pointed the tip of the knife to her throat. "Now start making sense before I do something I'll regret. Question one: Why do you keep asking me who I am?"

"....."

"Answer me." He pressed the knife on her throat.

"I've dealt with much more deadly situations than this. Even if I die here, I'll just go back." She smirked.

'Go back?' He looked at her resolute eyes. 'There's something off about her. I'm not sensing any malice from her even though she threatened to kill me. Whatever she meant, she clearly isn't afraid of dying. Need to change my approach then.'

"Emelie."

"What?"

Kurt dropped the knife and stood back with his hands in the air.

"I don't know why but I feel like there's been a huge misunderstanding between us so why don't we just take a step back and be civil about this."

Emelie stared at Kurt as if judging to see if he was lying or not. When she found no trace of that crazy personality he displayed, she nodded and stood up as well.

"Wait? Where'd your wound go?" He noticed there was no cut mark.

"I healed it."

"How? When?"

"How? With magic. When? The moment you cut me."

"That's crazy. The only magic I've seen so far was fire from Dominik, ice from this blue headed girl who's a supposed princess and teleporting from this woman who stole my heart the moment I laid eyes on her."

"Teleport? You talking about Diana Valentine?"

"You know her?!" Kurt excitedly ran up to Emelie and held her hands. "How do you know her?!"

"Argh, what's with you all of a sudden?" She pulled her hand back.

"Sorry. It's just-"

"Yeah yeah you love her. So does every man she walks so much as walks past."

"I mean have you seen her? She's an actual Goddess."

"So, you only love her for her looks?"

"Love has to start somewhere. Her looks just so happen to be the starting point for me. I'm sure I'll find many more reasons after I get to know her better."

"..... At least you're honest about it. As for how I know her, she's the principal at our academy and the only teleport user here in Eldoria."

"Principal? Academy?" Kurt held his chin while deep in thought. Suddenly an idea popped in his head as he slowly turned and smiled at Emelie.

"Why're you looking at me like that?"

"Emelie, it would seem that we're going to be seeing a lot of each other these upcoming days, hehehe."

"I'd rather you not." She gave him a disgusting look. "Anyway, I've answered your question, now tell me exactly, who are you?"

"I guess that's only fair but whatever you're expecting I can promise you it's not that deep."

"Just tell me."

"Haaaa..." He sighed, "My name is Kurt Rossana."

".... And?" Emelie tapped her foot on the ground.

"And I'm not part of any cult. Nor did I kill Peter. I'm also not a divine interventor. Just a guy who was at the wrong place at the right time."

"What about the alleyway? How'd you get those tags?"

"Remember that white cat I was with. He led me to them. As for how I got those tags, well I killed them for it. Or rather that cultist, Arlo, killed the robbers and I killed Arlo. Badaboom badabing I got the magical thing."

".... The cat led you?"

"Yes." He said with a straight face.

".... I see. What about Peter? He was not supposed to die today. What happened to him?"

"There you go again, speaking like things have a predetermined outcome."

"Tell me, Kurt."

"... This morning as I was on my way to the bank, I saw Peter warning a crowd of people about the church. A bishop named Tobias and his two lackeys threatened him to stop so he stopped. Curious about the situation I followed Peter and spoke to him about the... Zealots."

"You can say cult around me, I don't care."

"Right, the cult. Just as he was about to reveal to me why they wanted him quiet, his head exploded. I saw the figure who did it run away so I gave chase. He got away in the end, but I deduced by his build, that he was one of Tobias' goons."

"...Are you seriously not lying to me?"

"Yes. You can ask Dominik. I even willingly let myself get arrested because I know I'm innocent."

After hearing Kurt's story, Emelie was lost in thought about what to do.

'That's it?' She wondered and bit her nail. 'Because of all these little 'inconveniences' all of my plans are getting ruined. Should I kill him to stop him from ruining anything else or...'

"Emelie."

"What now?"

"You can forget about trying to kill me. You'll only fail and, as you put it, 'go back'. Which reminds me, you never told me what that means."

"What? I-"

"KURT! There you are! What's taking you so long man!" Dominik spotted him and called out.

"Looks like our conversation got cut short." Kurt picked up the knife and put it under his shirt. "Let's finish this another time. And I expect you to answer truthfully just as I have."

Emelie watched Kurt's back as he left.

'Maybe I should lean into the fact that he is an anomaly. An unknown. Someone or something I've never seen before. Maybe he can help me escape this 100th cycle.'

Emelie turned around and walked the opposite way.

....

"Hey man, I didn't interrupt you two, did I?" Dominik asked with a worried look on his face. "She seemed kind of distraught when she came up to me. Kept asking about Peter."

"No, you're good. In fact, I think she knows a lot about what we will be investigating."

"Really? You sure you can trust her?"

"Something tells me I can, yeah. Besides from what I can tell, she's pretty strong. Her friend even told me that she's part of some sort of ten representatives thing. Apparently, that's impressive."

"Wha- Impressive?! Dude, what?!" Dominik stopped in his tracks. "Kurt, don't you know what that means?! Wait what was her name again???"

"Emelie. Emelie Herst."

"What the hell! That was THE Emelie Herst!? Oh shit I could've asked for her autograph.... Noooooo!" He held his head in despair.

"You okay, Dom? If it's that important to you, you could always ask her next time."

"You idiot! There is no next time! I bet she's going to be super busy from now on and today was her only day off...."

"You're talking about the tournament, right?"

"Yeah.... You know, Kurt, back when I was at Future Academy, I nearly qualified to make it as a representative. But I was too weak. I could've been a royal guard. Instead, the only thing hard work and talent brought me was to become a prefect."

"There's nothing wrong with that."

"But Kurt, the money~" Dominik leaned on him.

"What the- And here I nearly started feeling bad for you!"