

ROSES HAVE THORNS #Chapter 31 - Aftermath [Kurt Side] - Read ROSES HAVE THORNS Chapter 31 - Aftermath [Kurt Side]

Chapter 31: Chapter 31 - Aftermath [Kurt Side]

"Goooooooooood morning Darwin! How's my favourite front deskman doing on this wonderful day~"

"Mr. Rossana, good morning to you too. What's got you in such a chipper mood?"

"Oh, you know, as much as life's got its downs, when it brings you up, it will send you to the moon, hahaha! Also, please, call me Kurt."

Kurt's mood became infectious as everyone who's looked at him or walked by him seemed to have a smile on their face.

"Haha, well I'm happy for you Kurt." Darwin smiled.

"Thank you, my good man. Here's hoping that you too will have a great day!" As he left the hotel Darwin noticed that there was a skip in his step and could only wonder what happened for him to be in such a good mood.

While walking through the street Kurt greeted everyone that he came across with the type of energy that screamed, 'Nobody can put me down'.

"Good morning old man with a walking stick!"

"Huh! What'd you say laddy?"

"Good morning doggy taking a piss by the street lamp!"

Woof!

"Good morning Mr. Academy Boy! Have fun at school today!"

"Life is but a perpetual cycle of misery and torture where the only comfort we find in it is that we will all die someday and become one with the Earth..."

ring ring

Kurt opened the door to Sophie's Diner with much vigor and startling Cindy who stood at the entrance.

"Good morning, Cindy! One breakfast special with a medium sized orange juice, please! And here's me hoping you have a wonderful day~" He winked at her. Although it would've come across as a blink seeing that he has one eye covered.

"O-oh Kurt, welcome. One breakfast special coming right up." Cindy blushed as she rushed into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Sophie was busy prepping ingredients when Cindy barged through the door.

"Kurt's here! And for some reason he's in a really good mood."

"That's great..." Sophie rolled her eyes. "What did he order?"

"Oh! He ordered the breakfast special. Say, do you perhaps know why he's like that?"

"Why would I know?"

"Well, you two have been talking every morning. Unless, did something happen last night?" She struck a thinking pose.

"...Very perceptive of you however I'd suggest you stop your little investigation there. Just thinking about what happened is giving me a headache."

"Really? But he's so happy."

"I bet he is. Now get to work and stop your chit-chatting."

"Yes boss!"

10 minutes later Sophie arrived with his food as well as a newspaper.

"Thanks, Sophie~" He took the plate with much delight and began eating. "Mmm! Your cooking tastes better every time I eat it."

"Save the flattery and tell me what this is." She showed him the front cover of the paper and on it was a bloodied man whose feet were frozen in ice while a prefect was burning it off.

"They took a picture of me? When? I didn't see any cameras."

"That's not the point. Why are you on the front cover? Didn't you tell me you were going to the bank? So how'd you end up looking like this?"

"It's a long story."

"And I've got all morning." She crossed her arms and waited patiently.

"Haaa... fine. Not like it's a secret or anything." Kurt sighed as he put his fork down.
"You see, what had happened was— Oh sweet Jesus!" He got frightened when he looked out the window.

"Hi buddy!" Dominik stuck his face on the window as he waved to greet Kurt.

"What are you doing out there?!"

"Ha ha! I remembered how you told me you liked this place so I figured that since you're such a diligent person, you'd be here having breakfast. And boy howdy looks like my guess was right. I even nailed the time!"

"Yeah yeah, nice deducing skill you got there. Now come inside and stop talking through the window like a weirdo. People are watching."

"Sure!" He walked merrily to the front door.

"Oh great..." Sophie stood up. "Another special customer.'

"You know Dominik?"

"Not really. He came by once with his girlfriend but he had that same energy."

ring ring

"Welcome, customer! Table for one?" Cindy greeted him as he arrived at the front door.

"Nope. I'm here to see my buddy Kurt over there. As for my order I'll have a coffee. 1 Sugar, 2 coffee and no milk, thanks."

"**tsk* At least order some proper food since you're here." Sophie muttered under her breath as she walked into the kitchen.

"Morning Kurt!" Dominik sat opposite him.

"Morning Dom!" Kurt greeted him just as enthusiastically.

"Wow, what's got you in such a good mood?"

"I could ask you the same thing, **Dommy**." Kurt smirked.

"Shhh dude, not so loud. What if someone heard you?"

"Heh. So, I'm guessing the reason you're in such a good mood is because your promise with Mia's been fulfilled?"

"Yeeeeep~ All. Night. Long." He slouched back on his seat and relaxed. "What about you?"

"Me? Hmph." Kurt let out a breath of satisfaction and also relaxed on his seat. "I too might've found my special lady~"

"Damn, for real? Life's just been too good to us lately, huh?"

"All I have to do now is locked in and pursue her. Just thinking about the futures got me all excited~"

"Ahh, young love... Oh shoot!" Dominik flung himself forward and slammed his hands on the table.

"Hey, watch it! My food nearly fell over!"

"Never mind that! Dude, what about your promise to Mia!" Dominik started panicking.

"Promise? What promise?" Kurt ate nonchalantly.

"You promised Mia that you'd go on a date with her boss!"

"Here's your coffee, sir." Cindy put his drink on the table.

"Oh, thank you."

"No problem! If you need anything else, I'll be up front!" She smiled and walked away.

Once she was gone, Dominik went straight back into panic mode.

"And so?! What are you going to do?"

"What do you mean? There's nothing I can do but cancel it. I wouldn't have minded if it was before, although reluctantly, but now that I found someone I'm interested in, I can't be bothered going on a date with some stranger." Kurt shrugged.

"But Mia was so excited about it! Apparently her boss has been lonely for the past five years or so and refused to go out on any dates. But she finally agreed to go on a blind one with you!"

"Where are you hearing these things?"

"From Mia. She likes to get chatty during our pillow talks."

"That mouth of hers is gonna get her in trouble one day. No one likes a tattletale."

"To be fair, she only talks about these things to me.... hopefully...maybe...most likely...ha ha. Anyways you have to be the one to tell her the bad news. If she hears it from me it'll just dampen the image she has of you and you'll seem like a coward who ran away from a date."

"Sure, whenever I get the chance to see her again I will."

"Cool. So what's the plan for today?" Dominik changed topics and got into work mode.

"Today is gonna be a special one." Kurt set his finished plate aside and cleaned his mouth with a wet wipe."

"Special?" Dominik leaned forward with a razor focused look.

"Yeah. Tell me," Kurt pointed to a student walking past their window, "What time does their academy end today?"

"Future Academy? With how busy they are preparing for the tournament, they're scheduled to end classes at 13:00pm. Why do you want to know?"

"Remember Emelie from yesterday?"

"Do I!? Oops," He covered his mouth, "Hehe sorry."

"Ah right, you're a big fan of hers. I guess this is your chance to get that autograph you wanted."

"Nice." Dominik smiled. "So, what about her?"

"I believe she's hiding a lot of secrets in regards to the cult."

"Whoa there buddy I'm gonna have to slow you down. Emelie Herst is **not** part of the cult."

"That's not what I was saying you goof."

"Oh... sorry."

"It's ok. Maybe I didn't word it right. What I'm trying to say is that she could help us with the investigation. Heck, with her on our side I believe we can even solve the problem of those missing kids."

"The ones that the church took, right?"

"That's right. And I'm sorry I don't have any evidence to prove it's true other than hearsay but I'm gonna need you to believe me on this."

"Of course man. I wouldn't have vouched for you if I didn't believe you."

"Thanks."

"But what are we gonna do in the meantime. There's still about six and a half hours left before the academy is out." Dominik reminded him.

"Before I tell you, there's something I need to know. Have you prefects kept a record of the parents who had their child taken by the church?"

"Yes. They had to fill in a form of consent. We and the church both kept a copy of it."

"Good. Then firstly, with your help in getting those forms, we will visit these parents and ask them if this was all done willingly or if they were forced into giving their child away."

"What if they don't say anything?"

"Don't worry. Their faces can say a thousand words. I will know since I've dealt with all types of people. If they don't say anything then we move on to the next."

"Damn, and here I thought I was the professional... What's after that? You did say 'firstly'."

"After that," Kurt dramatically looked out the window, "We go to the orphanage."

Chapter 32: Chapter 32 - Aftermath [Diana Side]

knock knock

"Principal Valentine. It's me, your secretary, Mia. Is it safe to come in?"

...

knock knock

"Principal Vale—"

"Come in." A voice could barely be heard from the other side.

Mia took a deep breath and readied herself for whatever scolding she may receive.

When she opened and entered the office, she saw Diana piled up in work as usual. Her face showed neither contempt nor anger. Only focus as she breezed through her paperwork.

"Good morning, Principal. Lovely weather we're having, is it not?" She nervously greeted.

"Good morning, Mia. And yes it is." She replied without looking up.

"D-Diana?"

"Hm?"

"You're not mad at me, are you? If so, I'm really sorry. I shouldn't have joined that stupid club with Wendy and your mom."

"There's nothing to apologise for, Mia. I'm not mad at you. As for the 'stupid club', don't worry about it. I've already incinerated that accursed book."

"O-oh ok then. I'm glad everything's well..."

Mia sat down at her desk and began working.

30 minutes passed in a blink of an eye when the academy bell rang to signal the students the start of the day.

"There goes the bell. Here's to a peaceful day, ha ha..." Mia tried to break the silence but the only response in return she got was a,

"Mmhm."

.....

tick tock tick

The silence between them was deafening. Only the sound of the clock on the wall and the movement of papers could be heard.

Mia, being completely oblivious to what was going on in Diana's head, tried asking an innocent yet cruel question.

"So, are you still up for that date with Kurt?"

clatter

A pen fell out of Diana's hand as she paused. However she just as quickly as she stopped, she bent over to pick it back up.

"Is something wrong?" Mia stood up.

"It's nothing." Diana replied.

"... If you say so." She sat back down. "Anyways, like I was saying, about that date with Kurt—"

clatter flutter

This time along with her pen falling, her paperwork also fell to the ground.

"D-Diana??" Mia stood up again and rushed to help her pick up the mess, "Seriously, is something wrong? You're being very clumsy which is so unlike you..."

"I told you already, it's nothing."

"...."

Once they were finished cleaning, Mia put the last piece of paper on her desk and looked suspiciously at Diana.

"Kurt." She said softly.

Hearing that name caused Diana to flinch but she quickly composed herself and worked with a straight face.

".... Kurt." She said again.

Mia noticed the slight movement of Diana opening her mouth and widening her eyes but she again just continued on like everything was normal.

'I knew it.' Mia thought as her lips slowly crept up in a smile.

"Don't you have work to do. Stop standing around and get to it."

"Yes, of course." She walked back to her desk and sat down.

Not even a minute passed after that when she suddenly moaned, "Kuuuurt~"

Diana's face flushed furiously as she tried to ignore Mia.

"Kuuuurt~ Kurt Kurt Kurt. Oh Kuuuurt~"

"Stop it!" Diana stood up and slammed her hands on the desk.

Papers flew everywhere as she heavily breathed in and out with a crimson face. Mia also noticed a slight tear forming in Diana's eyes as she was being glared at.

"S-stop saying that name!" She shouted again.

"Ahahahaha!"

"W-why are you laughing!"

"Because you're being so cuuute~ Why are you blushing so hard after hearing that name, hmm?" She walked up to Diana with a devilish smile and her hands behind her back.

"S-stay back!" She tried covering her face but Mia was too strong for her at that moment.

She easily moved and held her hands out of the way, once again saying, but in a sultry voice, "Kuuurt~"

Diana fell to her knees as she couldn't hold in the embarrassment any longer.

"Oops!" Mia fell with her, "Diana~ Why are you so embarrassed?"

"I told you to stop saying that name..."

"But why? It's just a name... Kurt~"

"Mia!" She pulled her hands free and stood up, "I've asked you many times to stop! So why won't you?!"

"Oh, I'll stop... As soon as you tell me why you're so being so sensitive~"

"I'm not telling you! That's none of your business!"

"Fine. I won't ask you anymore."

"T-thank you." She looked relieved at hearing those words.

"... I'll ask Wendy instead, hehehe!"

"No! Fine, I'll talk, just don't go to Wendy! Also, help me clean up first."

"Okie dokie!" She happily picked up the papers that were scattered everywhere.

Once she finished, which was freakishly fast, she grabbed her own chair and dragged it in front of Diana's desk.

"So?" Mia asked like a child waiting to receive candy from her parents.

"So, what happened was... Do you remember that time I went to the docks and healed the young man who fainted?"

"Yes... *gasp* don't tell me, was it Kurt?"

Diana nodded sheepishly with a blushed face.

"Also I didn't tell you this but I also coincidentally met, or rather saw him, that very same day at Sophie's Diner."

"Twice in one day?! Are you sure this isn't the Goddess above showing you a sign rather than chalking it up to coincidence!?"

"I can promise you that this isn't some divine being playing with fate here."

"Mmhmm... So?"

"So what?"

"That can't be all, is what! Do you seriously think I'd believe that you reacted so strongly after finding out your date turned out to be the same guy you 'coincidentally' met twice on the same day?! Ha! I'm not that gullible."

"Shame for you then cause that's it..."

"Hmm... Yes, such a shame... You know since the weather is so lovely today, I think I might visit Wendy. She keeps great company with all her stories~"

"Okay! Okay... I also met him last night at Sophie's Diner. I went there to get some food but..."

"Buuut..." Mia listened closely.

"But I was... d-drunk, so I k-k-kissed him..."

.....

tick tock

".... You what?" Mia was stunned.

"I-I said, I k-kissed him."

"While you were... drunk?"

"Mm." Diana nodded, not wanting to look at Mia.

After a minute of silence, Diana wondered why Mia hasn't started laughing yet. She peaked to see what was wrong and what she saw washed away her embarrassment.

"Are you crying!?" She walked up to her to see if she was not hallucinating but to her surprise, she was indeed crying.

"Why are you crying!?"

"B-because *sniff* y-you finally found someone you *sniff* like~"

"W-who said I liked him?!"

"But look at you! *sniff* I've never seen you act so girly over a man *sniff* Never!"

"I don't like K-Kurt! Hell, I barely know him!"

"Liar!"

"I'm not lying!"

"Then why are you so embarrassed to say his name?! Why did you kiss him?! The Diana Valentine I know would never allow a man to so much as get 20 centimetres near her face! Yet here you are telling me YOU initiated the kiss?! Get real Diana, you like him!"

"I was drunk! Mistakes can happen!"

"Liar!"

"I'm n-not lying!"

"Say his name without stuttering and turning red as a tomato then."

"...What?"

"Go on. Say his name without stuttering nor blushing. Do it then I'll believe you and promise to drop this whole thing."

"Fine, I will, so you better stick to your word."

Mia nodded as she wiped away her tears.

"Suuuuu haaaaa," Diana took a deep breath and calmed her mind.

'Just relax your mind Diana. Think happy thoughts. Something that's totally unrelated to him. You just have to say one word then everybody can move on...'

"Suuuuu haaaaa," She took another deep breath.

"Do you really have to take so many breaths over saying the name of the man you don't like?"

"Be quiet!"

"Okay, yeesh"

'Ok Diana this is it. Just say his name without thinking about him. And without thinking about what happened... forget his stupidly handsome face...the way we held each other...the way he begged for more... the way we passionately kissed.... Just forget!'

"K"

Mia watched her intensely.

"K-Kurt~ *gasp*"

"Ha! I knew it! Look at you!" Mia jumped for joy

"No! That was a mistake! Let me do it again!"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"K"

Mia watched on with a smug expression as if knowing what the end result will be.

"K-Kurt~ *gasp* No—"

"Pfft Ahahahaha!"

"K-Kurt! K-Kurt! K-Kurt!" Try as she might, she couldn't get to say his name without stuttering nor blushing.

"Ahahah I-I'm dying! Ohh my tummy hurts!"

"S-stop laughing!" Diana started to cry from the humiliation.

"Aaaahahahah!"

"K-Kurt! K-Kurt! K-Kuuurt~ Why cant I say it!"

"Diana," Mia put her hand on her shoulder, "Just admit it, you're in love~"

"I'm in... love?"

"Yes. Say it with me now. I'm"

"I'm..."

"In love"

"In... love..."

"With"

"...With..."

"Kurt."

"...Kurt..."

"There you go! Now say it fully without stopping."

"I'm in love with...Kurt."

"Again!"

"I'm in love with Kurt."

"Louder! With confidence!"

"I'm in love with Kurt! I'm in love with Kurt! I'm in love with Kurt!"

It was as if something had clicked inside her heart and brain. This was the first time she ever felt this way towards a man. She was no longer embarrassed to say his name. In fact, she said it with an awful amount of affection instead.

"I'm in love with Kurt~" She held her cheeks as her eyes glazed over with longing.

"Err... Diana?" Mia looked at her with slight worry.

....

On the other side of the door was Austin who listened to her yell and that say name so lovingly.

'Again this fucking KURT! I'll kill this bitch once I find him!'

Chapter 33: Chapter 33 - Two Visits

Both Kurt and Dominik stood outside the prefect station and were about to enter when suddenly,

"Achoo! *sniff*" Kurt sneezed out of nowhere.

"Watch it, dude!" Dominik flinched as he took a step back, "You sick or something?"

"Nah. Someone must be talking about me. Either that or something stinks in the air. I'm allergic to bad people, you see."

"What a weird disease. Although I'd love to have that. It'd make my job in identifying criminals so much easier..."

"It was a joke. Of course I don't have such a convenient superpower. By the way, aren't you gonna bless me?"

"Bless you?"

"Thank you. Now come, let's get those forms" Kurt said and walked to the door.

"Argh I swear, this guy sometimes..." Dominik shook his head and followed behind him.

Kurt, however, abruptly stopped causing him to bump and stagger back.

"Oof! What's the deal this time?" He looked at Kurt who was looking through the glass door with a familiar death glare.

When Dominik checked to see what was wrong, he saw Tobias standing at the counter with his creepy fox shaped eyes and smile.

"What the? It's just like you said. He's here for you—"

But Kurt was already gone.

'How did he slip away like that? Wait, was Kurt an.... Illusion all this time? Have I been so lonely for a friend that I straight up hallucinated? Am I... crazy—'

"Psst hey!" Kurt hissed at him from the corner of the building.

"Huh?" Dominik turned to the sound of the voice.

Visible relief struck his face as he saw who it was. *'Thank goodness wasn't seeing things! Holy shit...'*

Right as he was about to run to Kurt, he heard him hiss again, "Why are you coming this way!? Go get the forms and deal with that creep inside!"

"Oh, right. Duh. Cause that makes freakin' sense. It's what we came here for." Dominik slapped his head and entered the station.

Beep vrrt

The door scanned his tag and automatically opened.

"Dominik, finally!" An officer stationed at the front desk called him. "Bishop Tobias here wants to speak with you."

"I'm busy with something important. Apologies but you're gonna have to wait for another time."

"I'm afraid this cannot wait, Mr. Prefect." Tobias turned and smiled at him without opening his eyes.

"I believe that you were the one who captured this unruly man." He took out a newspaper and showed him the front cover.

"That's right..."

"Splendid!" he clapped, "Tell me, is there a chance that I may see him? As Goddess Bula once said, we should not blindly jump into fear and hatred but rather to understand and love one another as that is the way we rid ourselves of sin. I simply wish to speak and understand what that man must be going through for him to act so....uncivilised."

Dominik could feel a chill run through his bones as he listened to him speak. Normally he would've just chalked it up to him having a quirky personality that could easily be misunderstood.

But after listening to the way Mia spoke of him and how Kurt suspects him, all the points on the graph were making a pretty straight line and at the end of that line was a man guilty of many things. Things that he hopes and prays are not true.

'Calm yourself Dom.' He thought to himself, *'It's all just speculation... for now.'*

"Bishop Tobias, I'm sorry, but this is a private investigation. We found the body of a dead priest in a secluded park. We believe that it's linked to the suspect, and with you being part of the church yourself, we cannot let you see him."

"Do you... not trust me. I come in the name of Goddess Bula. Have no fear, child, for nothing will happen to him."

"It's not his safety I fear for. It's yours. The suspect is very... deranged, you see. Him seeing you might trigger him so please understand."

"Ahh, is that so... I understand. I'll take my leave then." Tobias put the newspaper in his robes and began walking to the exit. "Thank you, Prefect Dominik. Just knowing that a sick man like him is in a cell puts my mind at ease. Please, seek me out once his mind has calmed. I will pray for him."

"No problem." He showed Tobias the way out

Once Tobias left the building and was out of sight, Dominik went to go and fetch Kurt, but he wasn't where he last saw him.

'Huh? Where'd he go? Don't tell me,' Dominik looked in the direction of where Tobias left, *'he followed the bishop?'*

He quickly ran inside the station to get a copy of the forms.

Beep vrrt

"Oh, hey Dominik, you're back so quickly? Your friend just went to the toi—" The front deskman tried speaking but Dominik wasn't listening.

"No time for talk! Gotta go fast!"

He barged into the filing room and grabbed the documents he was looking for. After finding it, he rushed back out only to run into another opening door.

BAM!

"OW!" Dominik fell on his butt.

"Dude, are you okay?" Kurt lent him a hand.

"Kurt?! I thought you left without me. You didn't follow the bishop?" Dominik hoisted himself up with Kurt's help.

"And risk getting caught? Hell no I didn't follow him. He thinks I'm in jail so let's keep it that way."

"But you weren't hiding around the building when I checked? Where were you?"

"Clearly you didn't play hide-and-seek as a kid. You should never stay in the same spot for too long. I sneaked in when you were watching him leave."

"But I didn't hear the door go beep..."

"The door only beeps when it opens and scans whatever tag it detects. I sneaked in while the door was still open. A major design flaw if you ask me." Kurt shrugged like it was no big deal.

"But, but... HOW?! Are you a freaking ninja from the hidden island of Riverton?! If so, that's...that's... SO COOL! Wait till Mia hears about this!" Dominik looked at Kurt starry-eyed.

'Technically an assassin but I guess I could add this misunderstanding to my resume.'

"So, I take it those are the forms?" He pointed at Dominik's hand.

"Yeah. We're good to go."

"Nice. Let's bail before your boss shows up and screams our ears off."

"Sounds like a plan."

.....

"This is the place." Dominik looked at the address on the form and at the house.

"Wanna do the honors" He gestured for Kurt to knock on the door.

"No, you do it. It'll be more professional that way."

"Alright."

knock knock knock

"...."

knock knock knock

"Is anyone there? This is a prefect."

The door slowly opened to reveal a middle-aged woman wearing a red silky night gown and a sharp scowl on her face.

"A prefect? Is there a problem?"

"Good morning, ma'am. No, there's no problem, although there might be in the near future. Do you mind if me and my partner here ask you a few questions?"

"Questions? What's this about?"

"It's about the children who have been 'picked up' by the church. We're here to ask you about your child. Or more specifically, about the people who came here to 'pick up' yours. I presume it's your child?"

"Yes, it is my child and no there was nothing wrong with the nice people who came to fetch him. I signed a form and now he is in training to serve the prophesied one. Now if you'll excuse me, I have bread in the oven that needs tending to."

Shut!

".... Bread?" Dominik mumbled to himself.

"Did you see that?" Kurt asked.

"See what?" He asked as they walked to the next house.

"Her clothes, the furniture in her house, I even saw a half-naked man peeking from the staircase. A very young man."

"And your point is..."

"Take a look around, this isn't exactly a wealthy neighborhood. Even that woman's house blends in with the other shitboxes."

'Shitboxes?'

"But everything she had in her place was really expensive looking. Her clothes as well."

"Ok? But what about the guy you mentioned?"

"That lady's like what, 40ish. That guy I saw was at least in his early 20s. You know what that means?"

"That he's a man of culture?"

"Focus Dom!"

Smack!

"Ow! Well, what does it mean then!? Who cares what kinky people get up to as long as they're adults."

"He was holding a pouch of coins. I would know, I had two of them." Kurt revealed.
"He's either a male prostitute or someone in desperate need of cash."

"What are you getting at with all this?"

"This is just me theorising but what if.... She's been bought out?"

"You mean she sold her kid for money and sex? What the fuck?!"

"It's just a theory for now though. We'll see if there's a pattern as we move through the list."

"I seriously hope you're wrong on this."

"Me too, Dom."

Hiding inside a pile of garbage, two curious little pairs of eyes were watching Kurt and Dominik as they left.

Chapter 34: Chapter 34 - Tristan & Rupee

"I told you already, there's nothing going on with the people of the church! Now stop asking all these stupid questions and get the hell out of here!"

SHUT!

Another door was slammed in Dominik's face as he tried pressing for answers.

"That's house number four we've visited and been rejected at. I think I'm starting to see a pattern here, and I don't like it." He told Kurt as they left the place.

"Yeah. House number one was filled with expensive things. House number two immediately slammed the door after shoo'ing us away when we brought up the kids. House number three was a no-show. And now this one didn't even bother to hide his animosity towards you."

"Very suspicious. Oh hey, looks like that was the last house in this area." Dominik told Kurt as he looked at the list. "Next up is downtown and a few places at the posh side of Eldoria."

"Posh side?"

"Mmhm. Lots of estates and mansions around there. My dream is to one day buy a place there for me and Mia to retire at."

"Sounds nice. I'm rooting for you. So which is closer?"

"Thanks. Downtown's closer. Although it's a two hour walk from here."

"Two hours!? What about the posh area?"

Dominik pointed at the mountains as well as a couple of hills far off in the distance.

"... That's way too far. Seriously, how do you people get around without any cars?"

"I don't know what a car is but we have two options. Take a carriage by horse or use the teleportation circle."

"What's that?"

"Well, as the name implies it's a magical circle that teleports whatever or whoever stands and activates it."

"That... sounds awesome. Never mind the car, let's use that."

"It's expensive though?"

"How expensive?"

"10 gold coins."

"10? that's not ba—"

"Per teleport. It's 10 gold coins per teleport. That does not include going to-and-fro. Unless there's an immediate emergency happening, us poor people have to cough up the coin to use it"

"What a scam! Why is it so expensive?!" Kurt looked disgusted.

"It uses too much mana." Dominik shrugged.

"But you're a prefect. Surely, you're allowed to use it, right?"

"Nope. It's the church's property."

"...Are you sure the churches are the actual good guys here?"

"Uhm, hello misters." Two homeless kids came walking up from behind them.

'Finally, they show themselves.' Kurt thought as he turned to look at them.

"What the?? Where did you two come from?"

"Calm down, Dominik. They've been following us this whole time."

"You knew? Why didn't you say anything?"

"I didn't want to potentially spook them. So, I waited for them to approach us first."

"But what if they didn't show themselves?" Dominik looked between the two dirty kids and Kurt.

"Then whatever they had to say wasn't important enough to warrant our attention. We're busy as it is. However, it looks like they finally revealed themselves, so," Kurt crouched to meet them eyelevel. "Why'd you follow us? Got something you want to say?"

"Uhm..." The boy spoke nervously while holding the girl's hand. "Are you... part... of the church?"

Kurt carefully looked at the terrified boy and then the girl,

'This girl, although covered in mud and filth, I see she has golden hair and crystal blue eyes. She matches the description of the kids the church is taking.'

"No, we're not part of the church. See my friend here, he's a prefect and we're looking for the kids the church took in."

"Hi." Dominik waved.

"See big brother! I told you they were the good guys mommy and daddy told us about!" The scared girl found the courage to speak up.

"How old are you two?" Kurt asked.

"I'm eight and my sister is six." The boy relaxed a little after seeing how happy his sister was.

"Hey! I was gonna tell him my age!" The girl pouted at her brother.

"And what are your names?"

"I'm Tristan."

"And I'm Rupee! Me and my brother are on an adventure!"

"Where are your parents? And why are you so dirty?" Dominik also crouched to speak with them.

"T-they are... uhm..." Tristan looked at his sister and then at Dominik and Kurt as if to tell them something.

"Hey Rupee," Kurt called, "Why don't you tell Mr. Prefect here all about your adventures while me and your brother have a quick chat."

"Ok! Come Mr. Prefecky! I have so much to tell you!" She dragged Dominik by the hand and stood some distance away from them.

"Alright. You can tell me now. Your sister won't be able to hear us."

"Mmhmm." Tristan nodded. "After we got home from church on Sunday, the bad people from the church came. They were talking about how my sister is going to serve the holy baby in the future and that they were there to take her for training."

"I see. Then what happened."

"T-then *sniff* after mommy said she didn't want to give her away they started shouting."

"Where was your sister? Was she not at home?"

"N-no. *sniff* She went to play at her friend's house."

'So that's why she doesn't seem fazed.'

"Can you tell me what happened after they started shouting? Do you remember what they said?"

"T-they wanted to give us a lot of money, but my dad gave it back. After that they shouted even more and then *sniff* and then *sob* t-they k-killed my daddy! *sob* And then *sniff* they took my mommy up the stairs and then *sob* and then *sob* sniff*"

Kurt quickly pulled Tristan into a hug and rubbed his back to calm him down.

"Shhh, it's buddy. If you don't want to say anymore you don't have to. Thank you for being so brave and staying alive until now."

'I can pretty much guess how this story ended. Come to think of it, at the third house we visited, no one answered.'

Tristan cried for another 5 minutes before calming down and pulling himself out of Kurt's arms.

"Are you okay now?"

"...Yes."

"Good. Then let's go back to the prefect and your sister."

Kurt held his hand as they walked back to Dominik and Rupee who was currently riding on his shoulders.

"Hey, we're done talking."

"Big brother!" Rupee practically jumped off of Dominik and landed like a cat.

"Be careful Rupee! What if you hurt Mr. Prefect!"

"No. Mr. Prefecky is very strong. He's ok. Right?"

"It's all good little man." Dominik gave him a thumbs up.

"Still... let me see if you're okay, Rupee."

While Tristan was checking up on his sister, Dominik pulled Kurt aside and asked, "So?"

"It's bad, Dom. Remember the third house that no one answered at, it belonged to those kids. They're basically orphans at this point. They've been wandering the streets since last Sunday when the church came to their house to take the girl. But when their parents refused, they got murked. I take it you can guess what happened to the mother especially."

"What the fuck..." Dominik whispered.

"Yeah. I'm guessing they kept Tristan as leverage for when they tried kidnapping Rupee later, and that's how he saw the whole thing. He then somehow escaped, quickly got to his sister and told her they were going on an adventure."

"Dammit!" Dominik slammed his hand against the streetlamp. "We've gotta take them to the station. Oh shit, but what about the house! There could still be evidence..."

"Slow down, Dom. Let's take them to the station first. I highly doubt there's any evidence left after nearly a week. That would be too sloppy of them."

"You're right... you're right... Hmm? Kurt, your hand is bleeding."

Kurt didn't even realise that his hand was balled up tightly into a fist. His nails digging deeply into his flesh, causing him to bleed.

"Oh shoot... didn't notice. It's just hearing about how a child loses their parents always seems to get me."

"Here, give me your hand." Dominik took Kurt's hand and poured water over it using magic.

"Water magic too? I thought you only had fire. Fire and water... pretty broken if you ask me."

"Heh, I am the second strongest at the prefect station. With the chief being the strongest. Although if you ask me, I'd say I caught up and surpassed him already."

Dominik reached into his green cloak under his armor and took out a bandage to wrap around Kurt's hand.

"What else do you keep in there? You're starting to look like a magician"

"Oh, you know, this and that. There, it's all wrapped up."

"Thanks. Now let's get those kids to the station. This should count as evidence of the church's wrong doings, right?"

"Yes. Although not as substantial since we have no concrete proof that it was the church who caused this other than the word of these kids."

"What? That's stupid, Dom, and you know it."

"I know but it is what it is."

"Well, I'm not gonna stand here and watch these kids' lives get ruined because of insufficient evidence."

Kurt looked at the kids who had finally been brought hope in this messed up twist of fate and came to a decision.

"Take those kids to the station. I'm going back to their house to check for clues or any dirt they've missed."

"Really? But how are you gonna collect evidence, if there are any left?"

"Don't worry," Kurt held his pocket where his phone is, "I have a way."

After seeing the determined look on Kurt's face, Dominik gave in and smiled at him in approval.

"Alright. I'll meet you at the station, yeah?"

"Yes. See you later."

"Alright kids!" Dominik turned to Tristan and Rupee, "Let's get you all cleaned up at the Prefect Station!"

"Yaay! We won the adventure game!" Rupee celebrated.

Tristan looked at Kurt as he walked away with Dominik.

"See you later, mister! And thank you!" He shouted.

Kurt waved at him without looking back as he left for their house.

....

rustle rustle

meow

Chapter 35: Chapter 35 - Searching For Clues

"Hmm... no dice."

Kurt stood at the front door of the siblings house. He wrapped his hand with his shirt to try and open the door but much to his dismay it was locked

'Did the killers seriously lock the front door after killing the victims? I don't know if I should call them thorough, courteous or foolish. Hopefully there's a thing such as fingerprint scanning.'

'Also, didn't anyone think to come and check in on them? This isn't exactly a big neighbourhood.'

He looked around to see if anyone was watching him, but no. There's not even a peep.

Deciding not to break the door down, he walked around the house to try and see if there was another way in. Luckily for him there was indeed a backdoor. Doubly so since it was unlocked.

'Jackpot. Guess they didn't check the back.'

The door squealed as it opened slowly, revealing the kitchen room.

'Unwashed dishes: check, the rotting food lying on the counter: check, the heavy dust floating in the air: check. With all these signs, plus the eerie silence, I, Kurt Rossana,

professional assassin and self-proclaimed room analyst, declare this kitchen officially abandoned.'

Kurt stood at a place where he had a full view of the kitchen and began taking pictures with his phone.

'20% battery should be enough, right?'

After he finished up in the kitchen, he went into the room in which he guessed where the whole altercation went down. The living room.

What he saw was something he was not expecting, due to how filthy the kitchen was, but it did linger at the back of his mind.

"What in the hell? It's so... clean."

There were no signs of a struggle anywhere.

Before checking anything, he took some more pictures as he walked around the room and when he got to the front door he noticed something barely noticeable to the naked eye.

'They cleaned up well but apparently not well enough. These are scuff marks. Something heavy was dragged out of here. A body perhaps?'

He proceeded to take a close-up picture of the marks after which he looked closely from where they came from.

'Up the stairs, huh? Must be where the parents' room is.'

thud CRASH!

The sound of something bumping and glass breaking could be heard from upstairs.

'Oh crap! Is someone here? Have they got wind of me and Dominik snooping around, and do they know that I'm here alone?'

Kurt turned full assassin mode as he quietly crept up the stairs. Like a thief in the night, he slowly made his way to the parents' bedroom.

When he made it up the stairs, he peaked and saw that there were 3 sets of doors that led into different rooms. The scuff marks also disappeared which meant whatever was being dragged from the bottom of the stairs, was clearly being lifted up from the top.

'Now, let's see...'

The first room was a bust.

'Just the bathroom. No unusual signs that immediately come to sight. Alright, next.'

He quickly took a few pictures and moved on.

The second room was the children's room. There was a blue bed and a yellow bed with scattered toys lying on the ground. It was hard for Kurt to tell if any signs of a struggle could be seen since in his experience of breaking in homes, children's rooms are always messy.

'I'll take a couple pictures just in case.'

Once he was finished, he made his way to the final room.

'The sound must've come from that room. However, judging from how clean everything else was, I doubt I'll find anything of note in there. But who knows. Maybe they slipped up and missed something.'

He very gently and slowly opened the door so as to not make a squeak and catch whoever's inside by surprise.

However, as he expected, the room was clean. Too clean.

The room was not large. Only one couple sized bed and cupboard occupied the room. There was also one window which was suspiciously broken.

As he walked closer to the broken window, he felt a presence from behind him. He could feel its deadly eyes piercing through the back of his head but ignored it.

He waited for whatever it was to come closer and closer. Once it was close enough it suddenly moved quickly as if to attack him. Kurt just as quickly turned around and aimed his hand for where the human throat would be.

When he felt that he grabbed something he swiftly brought out his knife to swing for the kill. But what Kurt caught, however, sent a chilling relief throughout his body.

"Oh. It's just you." He stopped his arm mid-swing and put the knife away.

meow

"How do you always seem to know where I am?" He asked the cat with a head tilt.

When he put the cat down, it started purring and rubbing itself on Kurt's leg.

"Now now little guy, I'm a little busy at the moment but I'm nearly done. We can leave together once I've finished."

meow

The cat went to sit and wait at the door while Kurt began taking pictures and looking for clues.

'Wow. Can he actually understand me? What a smart cat.'

Kurt found nothing of note when looking around the room. The bed was made up, the floor was clean and nothing smelled off. The only thing out of place was the broken window.

'So this is what broke? Did the cat do this when he got in? But how? Can cats really break through windows like that? No, it can't be...'

Kurt looked out the broken window to see how the cat got in exactly.

'There's not even a support ledge for the cat to stand on. We're also on the second floor. Did the cat somehow build enough momentum to launch himself through the window? No, it's too high. Then again, this is a magical world. Is he a magical cat?'

"Hey, are you a magical cat?"

meow? The cat tilted his head.

"Hmm, thought so. But let me just check something real quick."

Kurt walked over and picked up the cat. He looked carefully at the condition of its fur and body to find any evidence that it was him who broke through the window.

'There's nothing. No glass shards, no scratch marks. Just a bit of dirt which I'm guessing he got from all the roaming around he must be doing.'

He put the cat down and looked around the room one last time hoping to find something. He searched under the bed and found nothing. He looked inside the cupboard and found nothing. He practically scrutinised the floor for any more scuff marks but once again found nothing.

'So it had to have been the cat who broke through. The church members who were here really cleaned this room up well but for some reason there were visible marks at the front door.'

Kurt stood and looked out the window when a glimpse of light shone in his eye.

'Oh crap!' He ducked under the window

Fwip

BANG!

A beam of light traveled from across the opposite house and shot right through the broken window and hit the wall, causing a hole to form.

'My head nearly exploded! Was that a sniper?! No. The hole is too big. Magic?! Dammit!'

Another was fired but this time it landed against the wall Kurt was covering behind of.

'Shit, I'm gonna get blown up if this continues. Luckily it didn't break but I gotta move ASAP!'

Kurt readied himself to run out. He shifted slightly away from the breaking cover he hid behind and waited for one more shot.

Fwip

BANG!

The shot broke through the wall and Kurt quickly sprinted out the door.

"C'mon kitty, follow me!"

meow!

They both ran down the stairs and into the kitchen to leave through the back door.

Fwip

BANG!

"Whoa!" The shot just barely missed his foot.

Kurt looked at where the blasts were coming from when he saw someone standing by the opposite house firing through the window of the second floor.

"There!" He pointed, "Let's get em', kitty!"

meow!

The cat ran ahead of him and enveloped itself with magic. Afterwards it jumped all the way up and through the attackers window.

"What the hell! So you were a magic cat!" Kurt yelled as he ran to the house.

He barged through the front door and ran up the stairs to catch the perpetrator.

"Get off me you stupid little shit!"

meow! *Hisssss!*

Kurt heard and ran to the sound of the struggle.

Inside the room he saw the cat clinging and scratching the perpetrators face who tried but couldn't break free.

"Good job, kitty!"

Kurt ran up and swung his foot on the side of their head.

"Argh!" The kick caused the perpetrator to fall on their back, giving him the chance to mount and lock them in place.

"Get off me you crazy fuck!" The attacker flailed around but Kurt didn't budge.

"Shh. Be quiet. Now let's see who we got hiding under that hood, shall we?"

When Kurt took off the hood, he immediately recognised who it was.

"It's you..."