

ROSES HAVE THORNS

Chapter 36: Chapter 36 - Joint Attack

"The male prostitute..." Kurt revealed.

"I'm not a fucking prostitute, you moron!"

"Really? So, it wasn't you at that old lady's house? You seem a little young to be in a relationship with someone like her."

"Fuck you! She's not even that old! I like my women ripe for the taking!"

"T.M.I. dude, I didn't ask about that."

"The fuck is T.M.I.!?"

"Geez seriously, it's like every day I learn about something that's been forgotten to time."

"What the hell are you talking about?!"

"It means; Too,"

SMACK!

"Much,"

SMACK!

"Information,"

SMACK!

"Stop smacking me!" He cried at Kurt.

"Why the hell were you trying to kill me, huh? Afraid that someone's been snooping in your back yard?"

"That's none of your business! Whatever happens in this place is none of your business! So why don't you just die!" He tried freeing his arms but couldn't.

"Did the church send you? Are you part of the cult?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

Although it was very subtle, Kurt noticed the slight eye raise and twitch of the nose when he brought those two words up.

He then took out his knife and stabbed it into the floor right next to the young man's head.

"Does this knife look familiar to you?"

"... Where did you get that?" He looked at the knife in surprise.

"Oh! So you do know! That's great..." Kurt smiled. "As for where I got it, I believe we have a mutual friend. Do you know the name Arlo?"

"Ar...lo? Was it you, you bastard! Were you the one you killed him!? No... no, I don't believe it! You couldn't have! Arlo's too strong for the likes of you!"

"Why don't you believe it? This is his knife after all. Unless you need more damning proof? Because I have it."

"What are you talking about— Oof!"

Kurt reached into his shirt and threw a chain onto his face.

"This is his personal tag I took. I was going to use it to take the money out from his account, but it turns out it's not so simple."

"Get this tag off my face! How am I supposed to know it's his?!"

"Oops. I forgot to pour mana into it. Here," Kurt took the tag off his face and imbued it with mana. A projection popped out of it revealing the owner of the tag.

"It... it really is Arlo's... you mother... you motherfucker!" He burst into a fit of rage.

"Whoa there, Mr. Prostitute. It's very ironic that **you're** the one calling **me** that, given that you're the one who... you know... pfft."

"I'll kill you!"

Mana surged through the young man's hands as he blasted through the floor below him. The wooden floor cracked and collapsed as it exploded with the impact from the blast.

"Oh, you've really done it now~" Kurt smiled as they fell together.

When the dust settled, the young man threw the wooden debris off of himself and frantically looked for Kurt.

"Where are you, bitch?! Come out and fight me like a man!"

He carefully listened to his surroundings, hoping to spot and kill anything that so much as moves.

rustle

"There!" He shot magic at the sound, but it was nothing.

"Fuck! Where did he go..."

He walked over the debris and readied another shot of magic.

rustle

"Got you, bitch!" He turned around and fired another blast.

BANG!

But once again, no one was there.

"Dammit! I cannot keep wasting my mana like this..."

He readied another round of magic but this time his hands grew even brighter than before.

"I'm not going to play this game of cat and mouse with you! If you don't show yourself in the next five seconds, I'll blow this entire place to kingdom come! Five!"

He started counting down as he walked around and looked for Kurt.

"Four!"

"Three!"

"Two!"

When he reached the number two, he saw a shadow hiding from under the staircase. He smiled devilishly and approached it quietly.

"One!" He jumped to the shadow, hands ready to kill, only to find,

meow

"The cat?"

"Zero!" Kurt appeared from the rubble below and gave him a death punch right in the liver.

"Argh! *cough!* F-fucking! *blech*" He coughed out a winded breath and nearly gagged as he tried to aim shaky hands at Kurt.

"Oh no you don't, happy hands!" He quickly closed the gap between them and grabbed his wrists together and lifted them up.

"What the fuck are you doi-"

STAB!

"AHHHHH!" He screamed in pain as Kurt stabbed the knife through both his hands, lodging him into the wall.

"There, now no more magic for you." He clapped his hand to dust off any dirt on it.

"P-please *sob* *cough* I-I'm sorry." He started crying.

"Aww here we go with this nonsense. You do realise you were trying to kill me, right?"

"T-they forced me too *sniff* you have to believe me."

"So you admit that this was the cultists' doing? They left those two kids homeless, and they kidnapped all those other kids not so that they can serve this 'holy child' but instead use them for their sick they're planning at the end of every month?"

"Y-yes to all of that! But you have to believe me, I'm not involved!"

"No. I don't believe you. Pfft, what a stupid lie."

"F-fuck! Just kill me already! Those freaks will kill me anyway after they find out you're still alive! So please, I beg you, end me quickly and painlessly!"

"That's gonna be a no from me Mr. Prostitute. I'm gonna take you to the Prefect Station so I can clear my name. But first, I want my just deserts~"

"Your what-"

"Kidney punch!"

Bam!

"Argh! *cough!*

"Another kidney punch!"

Pow!

"Oof! *blech!* *Hurf!*" He vomited all over himself.

"Ewww. You're disgusting Mr. Prostitute~ Is this how you also treat your clients?"

Kurt stared at the now unconscious young man who was teary faced, covered in vomit and hanging to the wall with a knife in his hands.

"What cinematic art... And oh boy, was that just deserts a treat. Luckily, he only passed out, otherwise I would've been in deep trouble."

meow The cat tapped on Kurt's leg.

"Well, well well if it isn't my partner in crime~ We've got to stop meeting like this. Hoh hoh hoh." He bent down to pet the cat.

"Good work on the distraction. I'll get you a nice treat at Sophie's later."

puurr

"Now, let's get our new friend here back to the station. The only problem is how? We've made such a ruckus that the people around here have probably noticed something is wrong. If I was by myself I would've escaped somehow but..."

Kurt thought deeply about what to do. He couldn't just leave him lying there on the wall while he calls for backup. But he also couldn't risk being seen carrying an unconscious man on his back.

'These people could all be in on it and attack me on site. Hmm should I just risk it?'

"... I think the commotion came from here!"

"... You think he's still alive?"

"... No. My man is strong; He surely must've killed that stranger by now."

'Dammit! Did I jinx myself?'

meow

"Not now kitty." Kurt whispered, "I gotta think fast."

meow

Suddenly, when the cat opened his mouth, a suction vortex appeared and swallowed the unconscious man whole.

"Did you just eat that guy?!" Kurt yelled.

"... Hey! Did you hear that?!"

"... Let's storm in together!"

"Shit! I'll think about this later. Let's go kitty!"

meow!

They both quickly hurried out the back while the mob intruded from the front. Kurt peeked around the corner of the house to check how many people there were.

'There's at least twenty of them. All with weapons, magic and a lot of killing intent. Could they all be part of the cult? No that's unlikely, they most likely have been bought off. Still, they helped evil. Scum like them don't deserve to live... but not now. Escaping and getting to Dominik is my priority.'

Kurt turned away from them and hopped over a couple fences in hopes that he wouldn't get seen. After hiding in a few bushes and sneaking past some houses, he finally made it out of the area.

"Home free. Here's to hoping those pictures I took as well my and those kids' testimony should be enough to clear my name. Let's mosey on out of here, kitty."

meow

.....

When he made it to the station, he saw the kids sitting on the waiting chairs, looking totally different from how he'd seen them.

'I guess Dominik must've had them take a clean shower.'

"Hey kids," Kurt called them.

""Mister!"" They sprang up from their seats and ran to hug him.

"Whoa there! I wasn't even gone for long." Kurt held them when he nearly fell over.

Gasp! "Who's this cute kitty~ What's his name, mister?" Rupee snuggled against the cat.

"I don't know, really. I just call him kitty since he's so small."

"Kurt you're back!" Dominik came out from the chief's room. "And? What'd you find?"

"Not much, but you won't believe what I have to tell you."

Chapter 37: Chapter 37 - Secret Ninja

"And that's how I got away."

Kurt and Dominik stood in front of the chief's desk as Kurt finished giving his report. Coincidentally he noticed the metal name display that stood on his desk.

'So his name is Hudson. Chief Hudson, huh? Has a nice ring to it.'

"Going off of what you're saying, you're telling me that the whole neighborhood in that area has had dealings with the zealots?" Hudson tapped his finger on the desk as he listened to Kurt.

"I don't know about the rest of the people there, since we've only ever checked four houses, but chances of that being the case is very high."

"I see. What about those kids' parents? Tristan told me his side of the story and it's been recorded and filed. I assume you've brought evidence that could back up his claims."

"...Yes, I did." Kurt took out his phone and opened the gallery app to show Hudson the pictures he took.

"What is this?"

"Yeah Kurt, what's that? I've never seen something like this before." Dominik looked at it curiously as well.

"I didn't want to tell you this but it seems I have to. I need you both to promise me that you'll not tell anyone about what I'm about to say."

"Why? Are you being threatened?" Hudson narrowed his eyes.

"No. But if **they** find out that my secret's been revealed, I might as well be."

"They?"

"Yes. Incidentally Dominik has already figured out who I am."

"I did?" He confusingly pointed at himself.

"Yeah. The thing is, Chief Hudson, I'm actually from a hidden ninja village located on a secret island in Riverton. For obvious reasons I cannot tell you exactly where."

"You're... what?"

"Wait! I was right?! Holy shit!" Dominik grew excited after hearing his theories were true.

"Yeah, you were right. I didn't want to confirm it since you could've been in danger."

"Are we not in danger now then, since you revealed your secret?" Hudson turned serious.

"No. I've already made sure that we're safe before coming here."

"I...see. So tell me, what is this?"

"This is a special recording device that is able to capture a still moment in time and save it in its memory chip. We call it: Taking a picture." Kurt tried making it seem like no big deal.

"Capture a moment in time? Can you demonstrate?"

"I can't." Kurt shook his head. "Do you see how that says '8%' on the top corner? I can only take a picture once it's 15% and above."

"Is there a way it can be filled?" Dominik asked.

"Yes. But for that we need electricity and a special charging port. Unfortunately I haven't seen anything like that here in Eldoria so I can only show you what I've taken. Although we have to be quick since it's going to die soon."

"I do not know of this special 'charging port', but I am a lightning magic user. Will I be able to fill its charge?" Hudson lifted a finger and made a small spark appear.

"I... I don't know. I mean, you can try but you'll need to be extremely gentle with it. Don't use too much spark or you might blow the whole thing up." Kurt flipped the phone over so that the battery side faced up.

"Don't worry. I'll barely use any power."

Hudson put his finger on the phone and made a very small and quick zap.

bzzt

"Well?" He asked. "Was that enough?"

Kurt checked the phone to see if it was dead.

"You know in retrospect I should've shown you the pictures first before trying this, but I guess curiosity got the best of me."

"Too late now~" Dominik waited in anticipation.

When Kurt flipped the phone over he felt relieved that it was still alive. But more than that...

"It went up to 20%" He smiled. "I was seriously worried for a second there ha ha..."

"So can you demonstrate it now?"

"Actually while you are here. Do you mind doing that again but fill it all the way to 100%"

"Ha! The chief can be like your own charging port!" Dominik laughed at the thought.

"No, I will not. I'm only doing this now since it's an emergency. Find your own means of charging this thing once we're done." Hudson said as he began to zap the phone again.

'Dammit Dominik! You ruined it!' Kurt looked at him with a death glare.

"What? Why don't you take a picture of me? That way you don't have to stare at me like that." He said as he flicked his hair back.

'Urgh...'

"There, it's fully charged." He gave the phone to Kurt who then proceeded to take a picture of Dominik in his goofy pose.

snap-click

"Ah! My eyes!"

"Oops..."

"Dominik! Are you ok?!" Hudson rushed in to check on him. "What did you do to him?!"

"I forgot to turn off the flashing option. Dominik's fine. He's just overreacting."

"I-I am?" Dominik squinted and opened his eyes. "Oh. I am, ha ha..."

"You idiot!"

Smack!

"Ow! Ok I admit that I overplayed that. But it was kinda funny."

"By the way, this is how it came out." Kurt showed a picture of Dominik mid pose with his tongue sticking out while his one eye was bigger than the other.

"Wow. Talk about realistic." Hudson was impressed with the result.

"I'm not that ugly! I want a do-over!"

"No." He moved Dominik aside. "Now show me the pictures you took that will serve as evidence."

"Sure."

Kurt then scrolled through the evidence he took of the house. From the abandoned kitchen, into the living room with the scuff marks at the door, and up the stairs where there was the bathroom, kids room and the parents room with the broken glass.

"As you can see it's been pretty much abandoned. The scuff marks at the door indicate that something was recently dragged out. If I was a betting man I'd say it was a body. And based on what Tristan said, I would've guessed that they took the mom into the parents room but the room was too clean. " Kurt explained as he showed Hudson.

"Hmm, yes. It does look suspicious. And this is the window you mentioned that male prostitute shot?"

"Yes. Although, since the room has now been halfway destroyed, I doubt we'd find anything in there. Which reminds me, do you prefects have a magic fingerprint scanner? We might find a lead if we scan the front door."

"A magic fingerprint scanner?" Hudson looked at Kurt as if he said the most ridiculous thing. "No we don't have those. But we do have a Forensics Expert Team that's specialised in these sorts of situations. I'll have them comb over the whole house."

"Great! Does that mean I'm free of any suspicions?"

Hudson looked at the pictures and then at Kurt. He then let out a breath that he'd been seemingly holding in for a long time.

"Although this doesn't prove that you didn't kill that priest in the park—"

SLAM!

"Mister!!" Tristan and Rupee barged through the door.

"Mister! The kitty puked out a man!" Rupee tugged at Kurt's shirt.

"H-He's bleeding and he smells gross." Tristan closed his nose.

"He did what?!" Kurt ran out the door with Dominik and Hudson following right after.

In the lobby lying unconscious on the ground was the same man in which whom Kurt brutally beat as well as who the cat swallowed.

"Oh shoot! It really is him!" Kurt turned the unconscious man's head over to double check. "Chief Hudson, this is the guy I told you about!"

"So this a member of the zealots? Dominik! Take him to a cell and call a medic. We've finally found ourselves a solid lead."

"Me?! But look at him! All disgusting and shit!"

"Shit?" Rupee repeated after him.

"Oops. Sorry Rupee. Pretend you didn't hear that..." Dominik rubbed the back of his head.

"But it sounds so funny, ha ha! Shit! Shit! Shit!"

Kurt, Hudson and Tristan looked at him in disappointment. Ashamed at him for somehow letting that word slip with kids around.

"... I'll take him away, sir." Dominik reluctantly dragged him away.

"So, you were saying before?" Kurt turned to Hudson with a smirk.

"Haaa. What I was going to say is that you've brought in sufficient evidence which we could use to start a proper investigation, even though it doesn't prove you didn't kill that priest in the park, and that you were free to go. Although there would still be a sliver of doubt at the back of my mind."

"However..." Kurt led on.

"However, now that we have an actual member of the zealots. We can extract proper information from him and cross reference the information you told us versus what he knows. Even though you don't work for us, Kurt, I must say you've done a fine job and any doubt that was in my mind has been erased."

"Sweet. By the way..." Kurt went up and whispered in his ears.

"What are you gonna do about the kids? They're practically homeless and going back to that neighbourhood is too dangerous."

"Ah yes. About that..."

Chapter 38: Chapter 38 - Change Of Plans

"We're going to have to put them in the orphanage. But Dominik told me that you have suspicions about the place and are going to investigate it. Is that right?"

"Yeah." Kurt crossed his arm and nodded as he looked at the now orphaned kids and back to Hudson. "It's just a quick visit though. I want to get a feeling of the place, see if anything nefarious is going on. If everything's good, I'll register those two in there as well. Two birds, one stone."

"Does that mean you are going to keep investigating the zealots? You are free to walk away from this."

"No, I can't walk away now. That bishop is still on my case, and we haven't found those missing kids yet. It'd be cowardly of me to just up and leave."

"That's a good head you have on your shoulders. Very well, I'll allow you and Dominik to continue your investigations and tell the other prefects not to intrude on your work. And although you're not an official prefect yourself, you have immensely helped and pushed this case forward. On behalf of everyone who works here, you have my deepest gratitude and respect."

Hudson gave him a sharp salute and spoke to Tristan and Rupee. "You two are all finished up here. Go with Uncle Kurt and he'll take you to a place where you can make lots of friends."

"But what about mommy and daddy? Aren't they worried about us?" Rupee asked Tristan.

"U-uhm... A-about that erm..." Tristan stuttered not knowing what to say.

"Actually, your mommy and daddy are on their own secret adventure!" Dominik chimed in.

Gasp! "They are?!"

"Yep! And the mission was given to them by none other than the king himself, Maxwell Dorothy!"

"Wow! That's so cool!" Rupee's eyes sparkled.

"They even sent me a letter to give to you. Here." Dominik reached into his coat and gave her an envelope.

'Seriously. One day I need to see what he keeps in there.' Kurt made a mental reminder to himself.

Rupee quickly unsealed the letter and began to read it but just as quickly scrunched her face the more she looked at it.

"I can't read this! Here, you do it big brother." She shoved the letter to Tristan.

"O-oh, okay. It says:

'Dear Rupee and Tristan,

How are you doing? This is mommy. When you get this letter, it means that you just completed your adventure and safely made it to the prefects.

Congratulations, we're so proud of you. Mommy and daddy are also on an adventure that was issued by the king.

It's a little sad but we're going to be gone for a while, but don't worry the nice prefects will find a place for you to stay where you'll make lots of friends.

We don't know when we'll be back, but we will send you another letter every week so don't feel lonely my sweet children.

Rupee, be a good girl and always listen to your brother. Tristan, be a good big brother and take care of your sister. We love you both very much and are praying for you both every day.

Thinking of you always,

Mom & Dad.'

Tristan closed the letter and looked confusingly at Dominik.

'Damn, that kid's only eight years old but he read the whole thing without making a mistake. He might just have a bright future ahead.' Kurt thought.

"See, what'd I tell you? There's nothing to worry about. In fact, your mom and dad are pretty impressive if you ask me." Dominik rubbed his nose in pride.

"Mmhm!" Rupee ferociously nodded her head up and down.

"So uhm... where are we going?" Tristan asked Dominik.

"Didn't you hear? It's a place where you'll make lots of friends. Come on, let's go!"

"Let's go!" Both Dominik and Rupee marched out the station hand in hand.

"Uhm... uncle Kurt... a-about that letter..."

"Dominik probably wrote that up in order not to reveal the heartbreaking news to your sister. She's too young after. I mean, so are you but... you know."

"H-ha ha... y-yeah. I understand." Tristan smiled sheepishly.

"Dang, you really are a smart kid. You don't have anything to fear from now on. I promise to you that all those scumbags will get what's coming to them. I will find each and every last one of them and bring them the reckoning they so righteous deserve. Now come," Kurt tapped his back and walked ahead, "Let's mosey before we lose them."

"Y-yeah," Tristan whispered as he clenched his fist, "I'll kill them too. For mom and dad."

"What was that?" Kurt looked over his shoulder.

"N-nothing! I'm coming!" He caught up to Kurt and held his hand.

meow?

The little cat watched all of them leave from outside but instead of following them, went the opposite way.

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..

...

"Hey Austin, why do you look so angry?" Gary sat next to him during break time.

Austin, who sat alone at the cafeteria, glanced to see who was talking to him then went back to poking his food, "...None of your business, loser. Now go away. I'm busy."

"Busy playing with your food? That's not very productive. You're supposed to eat your food."

SLAM!

"I'm brooding here for fuck's sake!" He slammed his hand on the table, dropping his food on the floor in the process.

"Shit! Now look at what you've done!"

"I-I'm sorry. I was just checking on you."

"Who asked you to! *tsk!* I'm leaving." He abruptly stood up and began to walk away.

"Aren't you going to clean that up?"

"Not my job!" He raised a middle finger and left the cafeteria.

"..... Oh, Austin. What will I ever do with you?" Gary smiled as knelt on the floor and picked up the mess left behind.

"Uhm, Gary?" Two girls came up to him and looked at him in pity.

"Yes?"

"Why do you always try to talk with that creep? He's always mocking you and forgets your name even though you remind him." The girl with straight-long hair spoke first.

"Yeah, like, seriously, you should just, like, forget about that creep. No one likes him anyway. He's always sitting alone and mumbling to himself like he's some sort of badass. Total loser energy." The girl with a blonde ponytail and loose clothing spoke next.

"Creep? Loser?" Gary's eye twitched when he heard that. He stood up and over them with a threatening demeanour. "Why the fuck are you calling Austin that?"

The girls twitched at his sudden mood shift. That quiet and friendly boy always looking for Austin's attention was now gone.

"Have you two even tried talking to him, huh?"

"I-I, uhm. W-we were just—"

"Shut up, you blonde bimbo bitch, and listen up. You too bitch no.2. I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear what you just said but mark my words if I ever hear you talking shit like that again I swear," He leaned in to whisper to them, "I'll make you both disappear and no one would even bat an eye."

He backed away from them and was back to his usual friendly self.

"Cool?" he asked with a gentle smile.

"Y-yeah, we're cool." The blonde said first.

"S-sorry for speaking like that about him. We won't do it again." The black-haired girl bowed and dragged her friend away.

".... Haaa... now where did he go?"

...

'Fuck! I need to calm down and think. I can't let these little setbacks slow me down.' Austin thought to himself as he power-walked through the hallways while biting his nail.

'Doesn't the main character usually get a system by now? Where the hell is my golden finger!? It's been a whole month since I reincarnated but still nothing! Things are getting out of control.' He left the academy building and sat in the courtyard.

'Emelie is acting hostile towards me despite us barely knowing each other and Diana is talking about how she loves some random limp dick named Kurt! Even Kiana is grasping her dirty little mitts onto Prince Junior's love life. Do I just abandon them and go for the sub heroines instead?'

"There you are, Austin. I was worried you might've caused trouble again." Gary sat next to him again as he ate a jam filled bread.

'No...' Austin ignored him, still lost in his thoughts. *'The sub heroine's route is only unlocked after completing the main game. Mia and Amy are just going to have to wait. Besides the main girls H-Scenes are just too tempting to let go. Especially Diana's.'*

Austin licked his lips as he thought about the events of the game.

"You eat something tasty? Wanna trade? This jam bread is quite good." Gary pointed the food to Austin's mouth.

"The fuck?! What's wrong with you!" He smacked it away.

"Aww, what a waste."

As Gary was picking up yet another mess, Austin decided to shoot his shot and ask him a question he knew he'd not know the answer to but tried anyway.

"Say, Gunther..."

"Gary."

"G-Gary. Do you know of any person named Kurt?"

"Kurt? Can't say I do."

'I knew it—'

"But if you're looking for someone specific, I know some people who'll be able to help."