

ROSES HAVE THORNS

Chapter 6: Chapter 6 - Encounter

"Excuse me mr patrolman," Kurt stopped a man in familial armor who was passing by.

"Hmm? What is it? I'm busy so make it quick."

"Did something happen?"

"Nothing that a civilian like yourself should be concerned with. Now what is it that you want?"

'Tsk prick.'

"Never mind then," he made way for the patrolman to go by, "don't wanna keep you."

".... just wasting my time...." he mumbled under his breath as he stormed off. Bumping his shoulder against Kurt in the process.

thud

"..."

He looked at where he got hit then stared coldly in the direction of the man.

And just kept staring.

Even when the patrolman was out of site he wouldn't look away. As if invisible chains were holding him back from running after him.

"Hey, are you okay?" a passerby asked.

"Huh?" he snapped out of it.

"Everything good? You've been staring at nothing. Haha, what, you plotting a murder or something?"

'The heck is wrong with this guy?'

"Nice joke haha." Kurt played along.

"Joke?" his soft demeanor changed, "Who said I'm joking?"

"What....?"

"I'm kidding! Lighten up friend hahaha!" He patted Kurt on the back.

"Argh Jesus, what's wrong with you?" He slapped the stranger's hand away.

"Who's Jesus?"

"Wait wha- ah aahhh you're not getting me with that again haha."

"....."

"No way you're-"

"HAHA got you again!"

"YOU MOTHERFU-"

"Whoa whoa whoa relax man!" He raised his arms in surrender. "It's all fun and games. I was just checking up on you and decided to tease you a little, no need to get all uppity."

Kurt put down his hands which were suspiciously aiming for the throat.

"Haaaaa sorry I've been having a stressful day. I'm Kurt by the way." He gestured a handshake.

"I'm Jesus." he shook it.

crack-

"Ow ow ow! Alright I get it, jokes over! I'm sorry! You're gonna break my hand!" the stranger cried.

"Really~" Kurt said with a sly grin, "I must've misheard. What was your name again~?"

"DOMINIK! IT'S DOMINIK!"

"Nice to meet you Dominik." he finally let go.

'Huffuuuuu' he blew on his hand as if that would lessen the pain. "Jeez, that's some monster strength you got. Did you really have to enhance yourself with magic to do that?"

"Enhance with magic? No, that's all natural."

"Seriously!?"

"Yep."

"Daamn....." Dominik admired with a small twinkle in his eyes. "Welp it's good you're alright. Also like I said I was just checking up on you, and you seem to be okay. With that done I bid thee farewell."

"Wait!" Kurt stopped him.

"Is there something else?" he looked back

"Yeah. Do you know of any good places to eat around here?"

"It's only our first day meeting and you already want to go on a date? You move fast Kurt."

"Haha a date with my fist and your face sounds lovely."

"You bad boy~"

"Dominik...." Kurt raised his fist and slowly walked toward him.

"Go straight down this street and take the first left. You'll see a diner called "Sophie's Supper" Can't miss it."

"Thank you." He patted Dominik's shoulder and walked past.

'*Phew*' "I nearly died for real back there.... oh well." he shrugged it off and also continued on his way.

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'*Let's see now...ah there it is.*' After turning left Kurt saw the diner, just as Dominik said, and made his way to eat.

ring ring

The doorbell chimed as he entered.

Looking around he noticed that not a lot of people were in the place. Which was great for him, meaning he can eat in peace and collect himself.

A waitress greeted him and offered him places to sit.

He sat down at the back corner seat where it had a view out the window and took a look at the menu.

'Fried Griffon? Basilisk Wings? Of course I don't recognise any of these.' He put the menu down and waited for an employee to take his order.

While waiting he saw a man and woman, possibly a couple, on his opposite side about three rows ahead, with a mean look of fury on their face.

'Who pissed them off?'

He strained his ears to try and listen in on what they were saying.

"...where is.... Dale...injured...the tournament."

"...I swear...responsible.... incompetent."

'Hmm.I can barely make out what they're saying. Not that it's any of my business.' He gave up on listening to them and stared out the window.

Outside he saw some students lifting boxes of material with magic and other people walking around with weapons on their back and hips.

'Whoa.... I wonder how they're doing that? Also are those people going out to war or something. Why are they just carrying weapons out in the open like it's normal?'

Across the road in an alley, he noticed two eyes looking at him. Perched on the trash bin was a white cat staring right at him.

'How creepy.... but kinda cute.'

When he waved at it, the cat immediately jumped off the bin and ran away.

'What a bummer.' he put down his hand.

step step

'Finally.' Kurt turned towards the approaching waitress.

"Are you ready to place your order, sir?"

"Yes, I'll have the afternoon special."

"Mhm," she wrote on her notepad, "And anything to drink?"

"A glass of water please."

"Alright I'll be back in about ten minutes with your meal. In the meantime, I'll get you your drink."

"Thanks."

The waitress left and shortly came back with his water.

"Here's your water sir." she placed it on his table, "If you need anything else just give me a call."

"Will do." He smiled back.

The waitress blushed at his smile and walked away with an extra skip in her steps.

While waiting for his food to arrive, the doorbell chimed as someone entered. Taking a quick glance from his window staring to see who it is, Kurt was caught completely off guard.

Ba-dum

His heart made a quick beat as a woman entered.

'Oh...my...lord. She's gorgeous.'

She had beautifully long and straight platinum hair that is parted at her forehead that shows off her face. Sharp fiery-red eyes, a cute small nose and luscious red lips that hinted at an intoxicating, sultry voice. She wore a red suit that was parted slightly at her chest which accentuated her "womanly charms".

She quickly looked around as if searching for someone and her eyes briefly met Kurt's before finding their target.

Ba-dum Ba-dum

He was so starstruck that his mouth hung slightly agape.

'Wow....I've never seen anyone this.... this...'

Before his mind could wonder, the sound of the woman's heels broke out as she walked towards the angry couple from before.

She bowed to them with a look of shame, confusing him. Afterwards she sat down and began conversing with them.

Kurt carefully tried to listen in again but with the background music playing and all ambient noise coming from outside he couldn't hear them properly. It didn't help that the couple spoke quieter than before the woman arrived.

'I wish I could just go in and say hi or something, but it looks like she's speaking about something serious. Maybe when she's finished I could-'

He then saw the waitress arriving with what looked to be his food.

'What the heck is that?'

"Your order is ready sir!" She put the tray food on the table with practiced ease.

"Uhm...sorry I'm new to Eldoria, can you describe what this is?" He asked, looking at the tray with mild concern.

"Oh, is that so? Then it's understandable you wouldn't know. This is an Eldorian special: Finely cut Wolf Beast kin meat and Cockatrice liver that was prepared into small bite-sized proportions for the customers enjoyment. All of this with a bowl of Kraken soup and a small plate of fried rice on the side. It's called "The Monster Feast".

"...I see..." *'Gulp'* "It looks delicious." He smiled trying to hide his nerves.

"I promise you it is! Please enjoy your meal sir." The waitress left with a giddy smile on her face.

Kurt took a spoon and decided to try the soup first.

Sluurp~

'What the hell?! This is delicious!'

To his surprise the food actually turned out to be really good despite the source it came from.

'And here I thought the only good thing was the fried rice.' He thought as he devoured the food. Having not eaten anything all day, it tasted extra delectable.

'Wait stop with the distractions!'

He looked up from his plate to see if the beautiful woman was still there but to his dismay she was gone.

'No no no! Stupid food! How could you do this to me!'

He got up from his seat and frantically looked around, hoping that she'd still be nearby. Then he noticed a red silhouette leaving through the exit and practically jumped out of his seat.

"Wait!" He yelled not caring that he sounded like a total weirdo.

He then pulled the door wide open and searched around. Seeing her walk away on his left side, he ran up to her like a kid running to a christmas tree, excited about opening their presents.

"Excuse me I-"

But just as he was about to reach her, she vanished.

SHWOOSH!

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Kurt stood arm stretched out, red in the face from excitement and panting out short breaths as he looked at where the woman was standing just seconds ago.

He dropped his arm and had the saddest frown as he realised what possibly happened.

'Goddamn magic...'

Chapter 7: Chapter 7 - Diana Valentine

- Ten hours earlier -

In the centre of Eldoria stood the famous "Future Academy".

Founded during the invasion war by the king of heroes, Lucas M. Dorothy. Its purpose, like the name suggests, is to nurture and train the future warriors, mages and possibly heroes.

Of course, not just anyone is able to enter this prestigious place. Due to the sheer number of applicants it received in past times, a strict entrance test was established in order to flush out the lazy from the hardworking and talented.

Every year a tournament is held that pits all five continents, and their own academies, against each other. Ten representative students from each continent would be chosen in order to compete and showcase their prowess.

This year Eldoria has been elected to host the tournament and with only one week left until it begins, the students but mainly the principal could not be any more packed and drowning in work.

Knock knock

"..."

Knock knock

"Principal, this is your secretary, Mia."

After waiting a couple seconds she heard a faint call, "Come in."

Opening the door, the first thing that greeted Mia was the stacks and stacks of papers that cluttered the main desk.

"Is there something you need?" A voice startled Mia.

"Did the mountain of papers just speak to me?" She asked innocently.

"Stop being silly and tell me what you want. I'm extremely busy."

Walking around the desk she saw Diana flipping and signing through paper after paper. When looking closer she also saw a faint sign of dark circles around her eyes.

"Perhaps you should take a break, Diana."

"I told you to call me Principal Valentine. And no, it's only 10pm. It's too early to take a break." She said while reading another page of documents.

"10pm? Principal, it's 6am. You've been here all night."

"What?"

Mia walked towards the curtains behind her chair and shunned it open. To Diana's surprise the morning light glared through the window.

"Haaaaa..." She sighed, slumping in her chair. "Why did Future Academy have to be chosen to host the tournament this year?"

"That's just how the wind blows, Principal Valentine." She giggled.

Diana slowly turned her head to Mia and asked, "What's today's schedule looking like? How swapped am I?"

"Your schedule starts with you taking a short rest. Being up all night is not good for your skin, you know?"

"I have an academy to run that's in the middle of organising the biggest tournament in the world right now."

"A tournament that is still one week away. Listen, as your personal and oh so helpful secretary, I will handle all the menial papers and tasks while you freshen up. I mean, what would your future prospective husband think when he sees you looking like an old witch hmm?"

"Haah?" Diana shot Mia a sharp glare, "Firstly, twenty-seven is not that old. I'm at the peak of my womanly charms." She scolded while puffing out her chest. "And secondly, any man would be lucky to be with me. Old witch or not."

"I'm sure they would..." Mia rolled her eyes.

"What was that?"

"I said of course you're right Principal Valentine. Everyone knows that you're the most beautiful woman in all of Eldoria!" She clapped her hands together and smiled apologetically.

A satisfied smirk slowly crept onto Diana's face as Mia kept up the praise.

If there was one thing that Diana Valentine loved more than anything it was people complimenting and praising her looks.

'I can practically see her nose growing longer.' Mia thought.

"That's enough Mia." Diana caught her composure. "I understand that you're concerned about my well-being so yes, I'll be taking a break."

"Yes Principal."

"But only for two hours. After that it's right back on the horse. There's still much work to be done."

"Of course. That's only fair."

"Good." Diana grabbed her purse from her drawer and coat from behind her chair.

She then stood up and walked towards the centre of the room, "I'll be back at around eight. Good luck with those 'menial papers'". As she waved, faint particles of magic enveloped her when suddenly-

SHWOOSH

She teleported away.

Mia walked over to the desk and looked at the pile of papers just waiting to topple over.

"Haaa I need a coffee first." She sighed.

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Diana appeared outside of her mansion, up in the hills, where maids and servants could be seen working and tending the garden.

As she walked to the front door the people around noticed her presence and gave a respectful bow, "Good morning, Ms. Valentine." they each greeted her.

"Yes, good morning to you all." She greeted back. "Has anyone seen the head maid, Wendy?"

"I'm right here Ms. Valentine."

Standing by the now opened door was a middle-aged woman with brown hair that was tied in a bun and green soft eyes that had a look of maturity only those with much life experience would have. She wore a different, more dignified, maid uniform from the rest that signals to her position as the head maid.

"You have been out all-night Ms. Valentine. I take it you have come to rest?"

"What makes you say that?"

"Surely you must have noticed." Wendy pointed a finger under her eye.

"Is it really that bad?"

"My my, you don't want to chase away the men now do you heheh."

"Not you too. I already had Mia on my case just now." she complained while rolling her eyes.

"Well, I'm glad that she's looking out for you at work."

Diana walked past Wendy, handing over her coat and purse, "I'm going to rest for about two hours. If I'm not up then wake me, please. Also prepare a light meal and warm bath before I leave."

Wendy gave a short respectful bow, "Of course ma'am."

The mansion had two floors and located on the second was Diana's room. The walls were painted in red and white, with perfectly placed window panels that had a beautiful view of the city of Eldoria below.

Diana entered her room, closed the doors and stood in front of her full body mirror. She then leaned in to get a good look at her face to see how bad Mia and Wendy made it out to be.

'It's really not that bad.' She thought while touching her face. *'Only if you really squinted would you be able to notice, which everyone does for obvious reasons hehe.'*

She started taking off her clothes until she was completely naked and then slid into her queen-sized bed where she fell asleep.

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"It's time to wake Ms. Valentine."

"Hmmm...."

Wendy lightly shook Diana's shoulder. "Come now Ms. Valentine, I know you want to sleep in but it's been two hours now."

"Zzzzz...."

"If you don't wake up your favourite cappuccino muffin might just.... disappear." She whispered.

Diana slowly opened her eyes and groaned in a lazy voice, "noo..."

"So silly hehe." Wendy helped her sit up when she realised, "Ms. Valentine, why do you insist on sleeping naked? You could catch a cold."

"Because I like it. It's more comfortable that way." She answered as she stood up.

Putting on a red silk gown she asked, "Is my bath ready?"

"Yes ma'am. It's warm and waiting for you. I'll make up your bed and prepare your clothes while you freshen up.

"Thank you, Wendy."

Diana went into the bathroom that was behind another door inside of her room and first cleaned herself at the showerhead before sitting in the warm tub to rejuvenate.

Twenty minutes passed when she stepped out of the bathroom where Wendy plus two other maids were waiting for her. She sat at her dressing table where the maids dried her hair using magic and put on her makeup.

"How would you like to wear this suit for today Ms. Valentine?" Wendy suggested, showing Diana a red suit.

"It's perfect." She smiled.

After getting dressed she walked down the stairs, with Wendy following close behind, and stopped in front of a servant holding a tray of her favourite muffin and a cup of coffee. She took her breakfast and the servant bowed to leave.

"Here's your purse ma'am." Wendy put it over her shoulder. "Will you be out overnight again?"

"Thank you and yes, I most probably will."

"Understood."

Diana walked out the entrance to teleport away, "I'll be off now. As usual, look after the place and if there's any problems-

"Use the magic strip that tells you I need your assistance, I know. Have a great day Ms. Valentine."

"Hm." She nodded and teleported away.

Inside of the principal's office Mia has taken off a good chunk of the paperwork and was deep in concentration when suddenly-

SHWOOSH

"Waah!" She nearly fell off the chair.

"What are you getting startled for? I said I would be back in two hours."

"It's nearly nine o'clock! That's almost three hours, principal!"

Diana looked at the clock on the wall as it showed its 8:50am. "I'm technically still in the two-hour range."

"Enough with the technicalities! You are needed at the docks in about ten minutes. A shipment of imported material is arriving for the upcoming tournament and requires your signature." Mia stood and composed herself.

"Is that so? I'll go once I've eaten my muffin."

While Diana was eating, Mia explained what the rest of her day was going to be like and when she was finished, she prepared to teleport to the docks.

"I'll be back shortly. Hopefully it won't take long."

SHWOOSH

She arrived at a relatively quiet place where her teleporting wouldn't disrupt any business. She then walked towards the place she needed to go and sign, all the while catching a few yearning eyes of men she walked past.

As she got closer to the busiest of the market square, at the docks, she noticed a crowd forming and looking all in a single direction.

'What's going on?'

When she got closer, she saw that the source of the commotion was a young man with an eyepatch writhing and panting on the ground.

Chapter 8: Chapter 8 - A Busy Day

"What's wrong with him?" she asked the person next to her.

"Aye Ms. Valentine, we do not know. The folk here said that they'd seen him lying there when they noticed something wrong. So, they called for me but I'm no expert in these circumstances."

"Is that right?" Diana walked closer and crouched down to get a good look at what's wrong.

"...She's so beautiful..."

"...Should I try my luck?"

"...Wow she smells so nice..."

Ignoring the passing remarks she thought, *'It looks like a panic attack but...'*

Placing her hand on his back, she focused on the mana readings in his body, and the results were concerning.

'It's like his body has never been in contact with magic and is now desperately trying to acclimate to it. The mana is trying to find paths to flow through while his body is creating those paths simultaneously. No wonder he is like this. Fascinating.'

"...I wish she would touch me like that..."

"Can everyone please quiet, I'm trying to focus." She turned to those who couldn't help but be infatuated with her and scolded them.

"Yes ma'am!" The men in particular all said in unison and covered their mouths.

Turning her attention back to the young man, she focused her own mana on him to help his body speed up its "transformation". By holding off the mana trying to force its way in him, his body can smoothly create paths for it to flow.

'By the looks of it he would've assimilated with mana eventually however this should help calm him down quicker. Less painful as well.'

Five minutes later and finally the young man settled down. Diana stood up and called over the guardsman who explained the situation to her.

"What's your name, senior?" She asked the old man.

"It's Willy, ma'am."

"Alright Willy, I am extremely busy with work and have other places to be. Can I ask you to look after this young man?"

"Of course! Tis' not a problem at all. Does ye happen to know what was wrong with him?"

"He was just drunk and threw a fit." She lied, not wanting to explain herself. "He might be a bit disorientated when he wakes so help him sober up when he does."

"Yes ma'am!" He saluted. "It's always the drunks causing a ruckus, wouldn't ye say haha!"

"You could say that." She said as she left.

Although she would've loved to stay and ask questions of the young man when he woke up, her responsibilities were too much right now, so she had to leave.

After making her way to the imported parcel pickup centre and signing off the ordered items, she teleported back to the office where Mia was pacing up and down the room biting on her nail anxiously.

"Is there a problem Mia?" She asked, sitting herself down at her seat.

Mia ran up to her with a look of relief and worry. "Principal, you're finally back!"

"I was gone for thirty minutes and you're acting like the world is crumbling."

"It certainly feels that way! Principal, a fight has broken out."

Diana raised an eyebrow at this news and asked, "Can this problem fix itself or does it require my attention? I hope it's the former."

"Do you remember Dale Cooper?"

"Dale Cooper? The third-year student who wouldn't stop complaining about how he deserves to be part of the ten representatives for our academy?"

"Yes." Mia nodded.

"What about him? I thought that Emelie Herst and her group of friends beat the idea out his head?"

"They did but apparently it wasn't enough to convince him. Right after you left for the docks, Dale decided to take matters into his own hands and went on to provoke and harass the representatives of Kirstenbell."

"Those arrogant mages? Tsk dammit!" She clicked her tongue in irritation. "Where's Dale now?"

"And that's where the problem lies. Dale is currently in a coma at the hospital. He suffered from severe third degree burns on his face and bruises all over his body caused by a group beatdown..."

"WHAT!?" Diana shot up from her seat. "Was he alone?! What about the Kirstenbell students!?"

"He was alone, ma'am. The students are claiming self-defense. They say that they were attacked first."

Furious wouldn't even begin to describe the emotions going through her at this moment.

'Even if Dale is not part of our representatives, he and his family are still people of high status. They won't be quiet about this and will want some sort of repercussion.'

Diana sat down with her hands on her forehead and began contemplating. A minute passed when she spoke, "Mia, inform the Coopers that I want to meet with them at around 15:00pm this afternoon. Tell them to go to Sophie's Supper."

She then took out a small piece of paper, wrote the address on and gave it to Mia.
"Here give this to them."

"Any reason in particular you want to meet over there?" She asked as she put the paper in her breast pocket.

"While I'm there I want to sponsor her diner to make food for the upcoming tournament. Mainly its participants."

"I see. Well then, I'm off to deliver this then."

"Please do. In the meantime, I'm going to see the ones responsible for this mess."

As Mia left through the front door, Diana slouched back on her chair and spun it around to look out the window. The skies were clear and off in the distance she could see Royal Airships making their way to the king of Eldoria's castle, Maxwell Dorothy.

Incidentally, the first prince, Maxwell Dorothy, Jr. and second princess, Kiana Dorothy, attend Future Academy. They are both part of Eldoria's representatives which makes it even harder for Diana to rest easy, since the king now has an extra set of eyes and ears keeping tabs on what's happening around them.

Gathering her composure, Diana stood up and got ready to teleport to the Kirstenbell students.

'Better settle this before things get even more out of hand. Great. Just great

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SHWOOH

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Located near the academy were four different lodging houses made specifically for the representatives of each continent that will participate in the tournament. At the moment, most of these students were out touring Eldoria, seeing as this is their first time visiting. However inside of house Kirstenbell a loud voice could be heard shouting.

SLAM

"What the hell is wrong with you boys!"

Sitting on a couch were the three students responsible for what had happened to Dale. They were triplets with forest green hair and wore a yellow uniform that had the Kirstenbell insignia on.

"Oh, come on teach~ We all know it was self-defense. My brothers and I were attacked first~ Weren't we?" The brother in the middle mocked.

"Yeah teach~ What would have happened if we got injured right before the tournament huh?"

"Yeah...hahaha...poor pfft...us."

"This isn't a joke! We are not back home. What do you think would happen if you get disqualified from the tournament for misconduct?!"

"Why would that happen?" asked the brother on the left. "That punk isn't even part of it. The way I see it is that we've just squashed a mosquito, buzzing around, yapping about shit we don't care for."

"Besides, it sends a message to all those worthless competitors. 'Don't fuck with us' hahaha." Gloated the brother on the right.

"Are you idiots trying to paint a target on your backs!? If Principal Valentine hears about this-"

"She already did." Diana said, appearing right beside them.

"P-Principal Valentine!" Stuttered the teacher with visible fear on his face. "I-I can explain! You see-"

"There's no need for explanations. I've already heard the gist of what happened from my secretary."

She then turned to look at the triplets sitting on the couch.

"Wow~ Who's this sexy babe?" Stood the brother in the middle. "Why don'tchu say me and my brothers here take you away so that we can have some fu-"

"Sit. Down. Boy."

THUD

He fell to the floor as Diana released a magical pressure inside the room.

"P-Principal please...they're suffocating..." the teacher begged.

Tears filled the brothers faces as they struggled to breathe.

"Argh.... ark...please...ack...stop."

"Huff...argh...we're s-sorry..."

"T-teacher please...ark...huff....us..."

All three brothers begged as it felt like their insides were caving in itself.

"Principal Valentine, I beg you. You're going to kill them." *'Fuck this woman's pressure is starting to affect me.'* He thought as sweat poured out his head.

When she finally spoke, there was no anger in her voice, only a professional calm resonated in their minds. Making them hang on to each word.

"Listen well, students of Kirstenbell. The fault clearly lies in our court. Dale Cooper was indeed the one who provoked you first. So, it's understandable that you'd be upset. However,"

She looked at the brothers faces then their uniforms.

"However, I see no marks, no bruises, not even a speck of dirt on either of you. You know what that tells me. It tells me that you are all just.... bullies."

"Princi-"

"Teacher, can you please be quiet. I am lecturing your students. Something that is clearly not in your skillset."

"...."

"Thank you. Now where was I.... oh, it looks like you boys are about to pass out."

She finally released the pressure she was emitting and the brothers let out heavy gasps as they were freed from it.

"Like I said, the fault lies with Dale, therefore myself. Your experience here in Eldoria has been soured because of his presence but that does **not** give you the right to damn near kill him." Her aura threatened to leak again.

"Please Principal! We're sorry! Forgive us!" The brothers groveled on the ground as they feared experiencing that dreaded feeling again.

"Tomorrow, I want all three of you to go to the hospital and beg the Coopers to let this go. Otherwise, I will personally see to it that there is no academic future for you anywhere. Do I make myself clear?"

""Yes, Principal Valentine!!!""

She then turned her attention towards the teacher behind her. "I trust that you and the rest of your colleagues will deal with their punishment?"

"Of course, ma'am..." He answered with his head down in shame.

"Good, then I'm done here."

SHWOOSH

And just like that she left.

"You boys can get up now."

Despite her being gone, the brothers were still groveling on the ground, visibly shaking from the encounter.

'Idiots...' the teacher shook his head. 'Could've been a lot worse. We got lucky.'

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Appearing back in her office, Diana sat in her chair and relaxed.

'That's one problem down.' She thought, closing her eyes. *'Next up is the diner and Coopers.'*

Chapter 9: Chapter 9 - Is This Fate?

"Mia, you're back? How were the Coopers doing?" Diana asked as she noticed Mia enter the room.

"Not so great as you would imagine. The hospital feels like a funeral ceremony."

She walked over to the corner of the room and prepared some tea.

"Did you give them the note?"

"Yes, though they were not exactly thrilled with the idea of meeting you." She replied, putting a teacup down by Diana.

"That's to be expected. Thank you," she said as she lifted the cup.

The tea was warm and smoothing enough that it took off some of the tension resting in Diana's shoulders.

"Looks like you needed it. By the way I never asked you about why you were late. Usually that never happens."

"Oh that. There was a commotion that caught my attention at the docks."

"That's surprising. What was it? 'Gasp' Was it a man?" Mia wiggled her eyebrows suggestively.

"Sort of-"

"Oooo la la! Has spring finally come for you hmmm~?"

"Argh get out my face!" Diana shoved Mia's annoying head out the way.

"Was he handsome~? Give me a rating from one to ten."

"How should I know? He was lying face first on the ground!"

"What about his body? Was he packing?"

"From what I felt, he was pretty sturdy- HEY that's not the point!" Diana shouted, her face flushing red.

"Wow~ Look at you all assertive! You already know what his body feels like~"

"Can you stop making assumptions and let me speak! He was unconscious! The mana in his body was going rampant, so I helped to settle it! Stop making it weird! I don't even know the guy! Besides, you know I'm busy with-"

"Ok ok I get it hahaha! I'm only teasing."

Diana pouted, feeling embarrassed that she fell for Mia's silliness.

"You know for someone who gets attention from men all the time, you get flustered easily when it comes to tackling the subject head on."

"I did not get flustered."

"Could've fooled me." Mia shrugged.

"I was just trying to correct any misunderstandings."

"So, tell me the story then. I promise I won't interrupt you~"

'Grrrr'

"Ahem, as I was saying: I went to the docks, helped a young man with his mana problems and signed off the papers. I was late because helping took time. That's it."

"Is he going to be alright?"

"Should be yes. I left him with a guardsman."

"That's good. What about the Kirstenbell students?"

"Sorted. They'll go to the hospital tomorrow and apologise to the Coopers."

"Haaa I feel bad for saying this but I'm glad that it was Dale and not one of our representatives that got caught up in this situation."

"You should feel bad," Diana said as she sipped on her tea, "We should protect our own, no matter how dumb they can be, and not cause any drama. Especially with the tournament coming up. But I understand what you're trying to say."

"You're right, I apologise for thinking that way."

"Don't worry about it. Now come, we still have much paperwork to get through before I have to leave again."

"Yes ma'am!"

Diana and Mia both continued to work through the morning and into the afternoon with quiet professionalism. Until finally it was time to meet with the Coopers.

"It's time. I'm going now." Diana stood up and walked to the door. "Feel free to continue working or take a break."

"You're not going to teleport there?" Mia asked, puzzled.

"No. I don't want to waste any more magic. Besides, taking a walk and seeing the preparations happening should help to motivate me."

"Good point. Well, I've got just a few things left to do then I'll take a break."

"Mhm." Diana nodded. "Be back soon."

Mia waved her off and got right back to work.

Walking through the hallways of the academy, Diana was greeted by the students around. They rarely see their principal around campus, so when they do it's always in a moment of reverence towards her.

"E-excuse me, P-principal Valentine!" A voice called from behind.

Turning around she saw a twin braided pink-haired student with round glasses that covered almost half her face. She wore an indigo tie which indicated that she was a second-year student.

Incidentally the academy had grades that went all the way up to seven years, with each class being split into A, B and C. Although it may sound like a lot, in essence each class only averaged about twelve students.

The yearly grades were split like this:

1st Year - Violet tie

2nd Year - Indigo tie

3rd Year - Blue tie

4th Year - Green tie

5th Year - Yellow tie

6th Year - Orange tie

7th Year - Red tie

"Yes?" Diana answered, "Is something the matter?"

"S-sorry for stopping you! I-I know you must be b-busy!" She bowed, nearly falling over herself.

"It's alright. Just breathe, introduce yourself and tell me what you need." Diana spoke in a soothing voice and put on her signature, motherly-warm, smile that could melt anyone's heart.

'Wow.... seeing her up close.... she's amazing.... No snap out of it!' She shook her head and took a deep breath to calm herself.

"M-my name is Amy. I'm in class 2-B and am part of the Media Club. T-the reason I called you is, I w-was wondering if the imported version two display tags from Tricea have arrived?"

"Nice to meet you, Amy. Yes, they arrived at the docks this morning. I've already signed them off and they'll be arriving later on today."

"Oh, thank goodness..." Relieved, Amy held a hand to her chest.

"I must say," Diana continued, "I didn't know that the version two display tags had been invented. Well done to you and your club members for taking initiative and getting those. Now we'll have a bigger and better picture quality for the audience watching."

"O-of course ma'am! We're glad to help!" She bowed again.

'So cute.' Diana let out a small laugh as she watched Amy stumble over herself.

"Will that be all? If so, then I'll be going." She asked.

"T-that's all ma'am! Thank you for your time!"

Diana then patted her on the head and walked away.

'Waaaah! Wait until they hear about this!' Amy held her head as she made her way to the clubroom.

The journey to Sophie's Diner was an uneventful one, at least according to her. She received tons of affectionate gazes from men and women alike and every so often they would try to flirt with her. But with her being used to this kind of attention she could easily fend them off.

Finally, she reached the diner.

She stood in front of the door, straightened her clothes and closed her eyes to prepare for the yelling she may receive.

'Just be professional. Explain that the situation has been handled and leave.' She repeated to herself.

ring ring

The doorbells jingled as she opened it.

'Now where are they?'

Diana looked around the diner for the Coopers when suddenly she felt a strong gaze directed at her.

'Hmm?'

Staring at her, wide eyed in the corner seat, was a young man she recognised. He had near-shoulder length black hair, an ocean-blue left eye and an eyepatch that covered his right. He wore a black suit with a blue tie and the look on his face told her that something in his brain just fried.

'Isn't that the person I helped at the docks?' She wondered.

'Looks like he recovered. That's good but why is he staring at me like that? Oh, who am I kidding, I can probably guess why heh

.'

She almost smirked at the thought when out of her peripheral she saw the Coopers, waiting for her with not so happy faces.

'And here we go.' She lamented.

Walking over, she stood opposite them and greeted, "Good afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Cooper."

"... Good afternoon." The husband greeted in a low guttural voice.

"Yes, good afternoon, Principal Valentine. This is quite the place you asked us to meet at." The wife greeted next.

There was an impatient fury in her tone that suggested one wrong word, and not even the title of "Principal" would be able to stop her wrath.

"I don't want to waste anybody's time here today so I will make this quick." Diana bowed respectfully and apologised. "Firstly, I deeply apologise for what happened to Dale. Something like this should have never happened."

Taking a deep breath, the wife spoke, "Please.... sit. I want to hear from you about what happened."

Sitting down, Diana recounted to her what had transpired. About how she had to leave for the docks and about how while she was away, he harassed the students of Kirstenbell.

"I have already dealt with the students, and they will be punished. Additionally, they will be sent to the hospital tomorrow to personally apologise to both of you."

Feeling deflated, the wife sagged her shoulders and whispered, "Why did this have to happen to my baby."

"One again I apologise. Please leave any and all the hospital fees to me. If you are not satisfied by the end of the meeting tomorrow let me know and I'll do anything in my power to help you."

"..."

Without saying another word, the couple stood up and left.

'Haaa... that went...well?'

"What was that about?"

Looking up Diana saw a woman with blonde hair wearing a chef's clothing and hat. She was the owner of the diner, Sophie.

She sat down where the couple were sitting and asked, "Everything alright?"

"Hi Sophie. It could be worse but I'm alright. You?"

"Oh, I'm great," She pointed her head towards the young man behind them, "I love seeing customers wolf down my food like that."

Diana took a quick glance at him and indeed he was "wolfing" the food. She smiled at this then noticed Sophie giving her a teasing look.

"No Sophie," she straightened her face, "Not you too."

"I didn't say anything!" she raised her hands and smirked, "But what do you mean by "not you too~" hmm?"

"Urgh!" Diana took out a piece of paper from her purse and shoved it to Sophie, "This is a sponsor contract for your diner! Whether you accept it or not, I don't care!"

She then stood up, red in the face and power walked out the door.

ring ring

SHUT

'What's wrong with everyone today?'

Just as she was about to teleport away, she heard a faint yell, "-cuse me I-"

She was about to turn around to see if the call was directed at her, but the spell was already finished.

'*Whatever.*' She thought.

SHWOOSH

Chapter 10: Chapter 10 - A Cute Cat

Kurt walked back to the diner feeling remorseful for what he had done.

'*Can't believe I just dined and dashed. Hope I don't get in trouble with any authority.*'

ring ring

When he entered the diner, standing at the entrance, arms crossed as if waiting for him, was Sophie.

'*Aww crapbaskets.*'

"Oh, looks like the thief started feeling guilty and decided to return."

"I can explain."

Narrowing her eyes, she spoke in a patient tone, "Go on. I'm listening."

'*Shoot, I can't just tell her I ran after seeing the most beautiful woman ever slip away without even trying to talk to her. I mean I could but... argh!*'

"You see... the thing is... what had happened was... what I'm trying to say is..." Too embarrassed to tell the truth, he fumbled all over his thoughts.

"You were chasing after a woman?"

"WHAT?! No! Pssht, me? That's dumb."

"So, you were running away after eating and not paying? Cause if you were I'd have to-"

"You're right! You're right. That was the reason. I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me." Kurt quickly interjected before she could finish her sentence.

"Hmm..." She looked at him skeptically.

"Listen, Ms. Chef, I'll do whatever so please don't tell the cops. I've got enough worries on my plate as is." He pleaded with his hands closed.

"I don't know what 'cops' are supposed to be, but you seem like a decent fellow. Given the fact that that was your reason for running and you've returned. So, I'll let this slide."

"Thanks. Also, what do you mean you don't know what cops are? It's the coppers, you know, the police."

Raising her eyebrows she asked, "You talking about the bureau's prefects?"

"Is that what you call them?"

"That's what I should be asking. You not from around here or something?"

"Uhm... yeah. I'm from Riverton. Except, way out in the boonies."

"That right?" She started eying Kurt up and down.

"You said you'd do whatever I want?"

"If it's within my power..." He answered cautiously.

"Ha! No need to get so tense, it's a simple favour. But first tell me, how'd you like the food?" She asked.

Kurt relaxed his posture and answered honestly, "It was the best food I've ever eaten if you want me to be honest."

"Good! Then the favour I'm asking is for you to become a regular here. A handsome face like yours is bound to bring in new customers."

"I mean..." he hesitated to answer, "This is the only place I've eaten in Eldoria so far. There are still other-"

"You might see that beautiful woman from before~ She and I are friends, you know?" Sophie wink.

"Looks like you'll be seeing me more often, Ms. Chef." Kurt immediately changed his attitude and struck out his hand.

"Perfect! Also please, call me Sophie." She shook on it.

"Pleasure doing business with you, Sophie. I'm Kurt."

The two of them had wicked smiles on their faces as they shook hands. With Sophie mainly thinking about the profit she would passively make with Kurt being in the diner, and Kurt thinking about the encounters he would soon be having with Diana.

Sitting back at his seat to finish the rest of his food, a sudden thought clicked in his brain. *'Wait, 'Sophie'? Is she the owner of this place? If so then I seriously lucked out by not getting in trouble.'*

A short time passed when Kurt finished his food and the waitress came to collect his empty plates and receive payment.

"How was your meal, sir?"

"To be honest I had my second thoughts at first, but it was proven to be wrong. It was fantastic, thank you. Hats off to your chef."

He smiled gently at the waitress causing her to turn tomato red.

"I-it was my pleasure, s-sir!"

"How much do I owe?"

"T-two silvers."

Kurt reached into his blazer pockets and grabbed his coin pouch. He then handed the waitress three silver coins.

"The one silver is a tip for you."

"Wow... thank you dear customer!" She quickly bowed up and down, feeling grateful.

With that, Kurt has finished what he came here to do. He stood up and walked to the exit when he heard Sophie from behind the counter and in the kitchen yell,

"See you around, handsome!"

Without turning around he waved her off and left the diner.

Taking a quick glance at his phone, he saw that it was just about to hit 17:00pm.

'Hmm now what to do?' He thought.

After walking for a bit, he reached an intersection. Just when he was about to take a left to get on the main road he heard,

"Get out my way!"

"What the- oof!" Kurt staggered sideways as a man in all black pushed him out the way and ran at full speed.

'What a dick.'

Shortly afterwards a student in a white uniform with pink braided hair and big round glasses came running up to him and asked,

"E-excuse me sir! Have you seen a man come running this way? He was wearing-"

"Yeah. He went that way." Kurt pointed behind himself. "You better hurry before he gets away."

"T-thank you!" She bowed and gave chase.

'She's pretty slow to be trying to catch that guy. I would help if not for the fact that I just ate. Feeling pretty bloated.'

Deciding that it couldn't be helped, he stuffed his hand in his pockets and carried on his way.

meow

"Hmm?" He looked down.

Blocking his path was the same white cat that was staring at him from before.

"Why hello there little kitty. Nice seeing you again." He bent down and started petting the cat. "Who's a cute kitty? You are~ Yes you are~"

purrs *meow*

"Excuse me young man, you're blocking the way."

"Oh. Sorry granny." He stood up, making way for the old woman.

When she trotted past him, he noticed that the cat had disappeared. Feeling disappointed he continued on his way only to see that the cat was blocking his path again.

'Huh?' "Where do you keep popping from, little kitty?" He bent down to pet the cat again but this time it swatted his hand away.

meow *hiss*

"Whoa! Talk about a change in attitude. I'll leave, no need to get hostile."

Kurt stood up to leave but the cat clung onto his pants.

"You're gonna rip it! Let go!"

The cat let go of his pants and skipped a few steps behind him. Kurt ignored this, thinking the cat would also leave but when it saw him walk away, it turned around and clung to his pants again.

"Ow! What the hell?! Your claws are sharp so let go!"

meow *hiss*

It let go and skipped back again, only to turn around and look at him.

"What? You want me to follow you?"

meow

"...Okay then." He said softly.

Although he was reluctant, he followed the cat to see what it wanted.

At first it was just walking through the street, looking left and right as if searching for something. Occasionally it would also look back at Kurt to see if he was still following it.

'Seriously, what does this cat want? I've got other things to do.'

Suddenly, its tail shot straight up as if it had been alerted of something. It turned to Kurt, hissed and broke out running.

"HEY WAIT!" He shouted, running after it

While running, the cat took a hard left into the alleyway and jumped over a flimsy steel gate.

'Oh, come on!' Keeping up his momentum, Kurt jumped, latched himself on the top of the gate and smoothly maneuvered over.

Landing steadily on his feet he continued chasing after the cat without breaking pace.

'Where are you taking me, little kitty?'

Just before reaching a corner in the alleyway, the cat finally stopped and stood on top of a dumpster. When Kurt caught up, he was about to ask the cat what was wrong. That was until he heard voices coming from around the bend.

Keeping his back to the wall, he peeked over just enough to see what was happening,

"It took a while, but I finally shook that girl." A man in familiar all black said.

'Wait a minute. That's the guy who bumped into me... Who's the other bald guy though?'

He looked at the cat next to him and back at the men and thought, *'So this is what you were pestering me about. But how'd you know where to go?'*

Focusing his attention back at the men, he listened in,

"Where's the buyer?" asked the bald man, "He's supposed to be here by now."

"I don't know... Hey, do you know what he'll look like?" The man in all black nervously responded.

"No, he just sent us a card with this location. I told you those cult lunatics all keep their identity a secret."

'Cult lunatics?'

"Ah shit! *tsk* Always making things so difficult." The bald man took out a cigarette and lit it with fire magic.

"Say, why do you think they need these display tags? Don't get me wrong, stealing it off that dumb girl was easy but how'd they know where she'd be and that she'll have them?"

"What's with all the questions? Who cares about why they'd want them? I just want to get paid."

"Ha! Fair point. Just wish they'd hurry up. This place gives me the creeps."

'There're just a bunch of petty thieves looking to make a quick buck. Not a job for me. I know their faces, so I'll report this to those so-called prefects'

As Kurt was about to quietly sneak away, the cat decided to open its mouth and let out a loud-

meow

'Oh shi-'

"HEY! WHO'S THERE!"

