

The World 401

Chapter 401 Doing Naughty Stuff With Elise (4)

Leon's cock trembled deep inside my ass, and I felt his grip on my hips tighten, digging into my skin as he took full control. His thick meat pulsed violently, and suddenly, I was filled with the hot rush of his cum spilling into me.

"Higah?! Ah, ahh, uooooon, uooooooooonnh!"

A raw, animalistic scream tore from my throat, my body collapsing against the floor. Leon's cock kept throbbing, pumping more of his seed into me, each pulse sending shockwaves of pleasure through me as I shuddered under him.

Leon's POV

"Mmmm, yeah, mmmm..."

Elise straddled me, her body trembling with effort as she rode me, her hips grinding desperately. With my cock buried deep in her ass, she struggled to keep her balance, her movements shaky, unsteady.

Her face was a mess—sweat, tears, and drool mixed together, dripping down her chin. She was biting her lip so hard, trying to hold back her moans, but her eyes betrayed her—full of lust, completely lost in

the moment. The elegant beauty she once was had disappeared, replaced by this needy, desperate woman, all for me.

"Ah, ah~, ah, ah... Haa, haa, ha~a..."

Her legs spread wide in an "M" shape as she squatted over me, but her strength was fading fast. Her hips slowed, her body trembling as she gasped for air, her chest heaving. Her eyes blazed with raw need, completely different from the calm, composed woman she once was.

"Leon, aaaah~ Leonnnn~ Aaaah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah...!"

She was getting used to it now, her hips moving smoother, finding a rhythm. Still, her tight little ass felt so different from a pussy. When I thrust deep into her back hole, there was no end, just a tightness around the entrance, and I knew I had to hit the right angle to really drive her crazy.

I pulled her arms, grabbing her wrists tight as I thrust into her hard and fast. Gabrielle had once told me this position could stimulate a woman's uterus from behind, making it even more intense. The second I angled my thrusts, Elise's whole body jerked, her reaction changing instantly. Her teeth clenched, her breath coming in ragged pants as her moans grew louder, more desperate, completely overtaken by the pleasure.

"Hiiiiii! That's... ahhhhh! Aaaaah! Gghhh, aaaaaaaahhhhhh!"

Elise writhed beneath me, her body trembling, trying to escape the overwhelming waves of pleasure, but there was no chance of escape. Each thrust sank deeper, harder into her, my cock stretching her

tight hole. Her eyes rolled back, losing focus, her breathless moans shifting into soft, airy gasps, almost incoherent.

With every plunge, her muscles twitched, the slick heat of her asshole clenching around me as if her body was begging for more despite her weak protests. By the time my climax built up inside me, her body had gone limp, completely spent. She had cum over and over again, her body barely holding together.

"Aaaahhhh... d-dwon't... aaaaaah... noooooo..." Her words slurred, her hands weakly bracing as she arched her back in one last desperate convulsion, her body trembling, teetering on the edge of collapse.

Then, it hit me. The heat rose fast, surging from deep within my balls, rushing up through my cock like an explosion, flooding her insides with my cum.

"Hwaaahhh, ahhh, aahhhhhhhhh...!"

Elise's body snapped upward, her back arching sharply, neck exposed, as her moan turned into a muffled, desperate cry. Her entire body jerked violently as I emptied every drop inside her, filling her completely. Finally, I let her go, watching as she crumpled backward, utterly spent, my cock slipping out of her. She lay there, unconscious.

Satania's POV

The only sounds echoing in my chamber were the constant beeps and boops from the device the otherworlder called a television. I sat there, controller in hand, immersed in a game from Earth, surrounded by an array of junk food from that world. Thanks to my skill that allowed me to freeze time for certain objects, I had preserved enough of this junk food to last me for centuries, indulging whenever I wanted without worry.

"Why are you doing this?"

The woman I was fighting in the game questioned my actions. She believed humanity deserved to be wiped out, arguing that humans had destroyed the world and the planet was already dying. She figured it was better to finish it off herself than let the humans do it slowly.

"Can't you see how much the world is suffering already?! Why are you stopping me when you understand it better than anyone else?!" The woman's voice trembled as she spoke, desperate.

My character pressed the blade against her throat, her face cold and resolute.

"Because no matter how dark it gets, humanity still deserves a second chance," she replied.

"Ugh, that line's so corny. I'd never actually say something like that," I grumbled, rolling my eyes.

But those words—those lines—they were mine once. Back when I defeated Lilith and stopped her from wiping out this world. This woman had the same agenda as her, the same desperation.

"But you're my sister! Why are you helping them and leaving your own flesh and blood behind?!" she screamed.

"I'm sorry, but I've never once thought of you as my real sister," my character said flatly, right before swinging the sword and slicing her head clean off.

Blood splattered across the screen, and then... nothing. The game cut to a series of rushed, patched-up scenes before rolling the credits.

"Ugh. What a shitty ending," I scoffed, tossing the controller aside. That final scene? Could've been way better. It felt so unfinished, so hollow. It reminded me too much of my life. Did I ever truly think of Lilith as my sister? She was there when I grew up, but... no, there was no point in thinking about all that now.

The past was dead, and all that mattered was the present.

I stood up and walked out of my chamber, stretching my limbs, yawning as I passed the soldiers. They stood at attention, saluting with rigid postures.

Stepping onto the balcony, I looked down at the courtyard below where countless soldiers—hundreds of thousands—trained in formation, their movements sharp and precise. The preparation was intense, like they were gearing up for war. And they were. War was coming, and it wasn't far off.

We were really going to war.

Chapter 402 Satania Of Wrath

I lounged on my throne, feeling the warmth of a woman kneeling beneath me, her tongue tracing over the arch of my foot, almost like she was in a trance. Her hand gripped my ankle with reverence, holding it as if it were some sacred object. I barely paid her attention, my gaze fixed on the woman standing in front of me.

"Your sadistic nature hasn't changed a bit, Satania," said the woman, another Princess of Hell like myself.

"Well, your proclivities are far worse than mine, Asmodeus," I shot back with a smirk.

Asmodeus, the Princess of Lust, was infamous for her unquenchable desires, a fitting title for her. While I reigned over Wrath, her lust wasn't what one might expect—her cravings were directed solely toward women. She could grow limbs at will, and even parts that didn't belong on a woman. That ability was the source of many of her exploits.

"So, what brings you here? With the war against the humans on the horizon, I'm assuming you're here to check on the preparations."

"Well, I'd be lying if I said that's the only reason I came," Asmodeus replied, her smile turning sultry.

"Oh? So, there's more?"

She flashed me a knowing smile, one filled with the kind of desire she didn't bother hiding. Her eyes lingered on me, taking in every detail.

"If you're thinking of that," I said as I swapped feet, the woman at my feet eagerly switching to lick the other one, her tongue tracing the skin like she couldn't get enough, "then don't even bother. I'm not like you, who grows a man's private parts just to have her way with women."

"I'm not nearly as bad as you, Satania of Wrath," Asmodeus purred. "But I'd be lying if I said I wasn't interested in your body. Out of all of us, you're the only one whose body looks like it hasn't aged since puberty. I wouldn't be surprised if nothing's grown down there at all."

Asmodeus was always this crude, her words as sharp as her lustful nature. Out of all the Princesses of Lust, she was by far the most vulgar, never holding back from saying exactly what she wanted.

I clicked my tongue, the sharp sound echoing in the chamber, my annoyance barely contained as I glared at her.

"Well, the real reason I'm here," Asmodeus began with that sultry tone of hers, lips curving into a smile that promised mischief, "is that I've found something rather fascinating. There's this group calling themselves the Eclipse, and they're trying to take over the world. Their name's been spreading like wildfire ever since they made the news on some human technology—what was it called? A smartphone? Anyway, the atrocities they've committed are all over it. Seems like they revere whoever they worship."

"And what does that have to do with me?" I asked, not in the mood for her games.

"Remember the man who was there last time? The one who witnessed the battle when you and the others took down Lilith, the former Princess of Pride, using that otherworldly technology? He's the one who mass-produced that tech and made quite a fortune for himself here."

Was there someone like that?

Seeing the confusion in my eyes, she smirked and continued, her voice dripping with amusement, "Oh, I see you've forgotten. He's the one you had on his knees, licking the filth off your feet—dirt and blood mixed together. You made him clean them with his tongue as he bled out. I remember it well because it was one of the most arousing sights I've ever witnessed. Watching him debase himself at your feet... That image still stirs me even now."

16:57

A faint memory surfaced. "I don't recall it," I said, though the recollection was starting to return. I did remember the fight with Lilith, and afterward, installing Lucielle in her place as the new Princess of Pride. I remembered Asmodeus stepping into the role of Princess of Lust after the former one perished. Oh right. Yes, there was a man... on the brink of death, caught up in the chaos of that battle. I'd made him lick the blood and mud from my feet before his life slipped away. It had been such a fleeting amusement, barely worth remembering.

Asmodeus watched me intently, her smile widening as the memory flickered in my eyes. "You Princesses," she said with that crude smirk, "hold power that rivals the Great Ones, or at least you did when you fought as one. People believed you were the last of the Greats. But they could never quite name you all as such, could they?"

A heavy silence hung between us, the only sound breaking it was the wet, obscene slurping of the woman worshipping my feet with her tongue.

"Lilith called you the one destined to envelop this world in darkness, didn't she? And that man—he recognized you as such too. He called you the Great Darkness. No, he called all of you the Great Darkness and started worshipping you like gods, like you were the Great Ones. He even built a monument and an entire church in your honor. He believed you saved his life because you were the last thing he saw as he was dying. But in reality, you were just making him lick the blood and filth from your feet."

I narrowed my eyes, not fully grasping why she was telling me all this.

"And?"

"And from that moment, the Eclipse was born," she continued, the smirk on her lips widening. "His descendant took that madness, rebuilt it, expanded it. Now it's this massive, sprawling cult, all trying to summon a being that doesn't even exist. A complete fabrication, something his ancestor conjured from his broken mind."

I crossed my arms, growing bored of her storytelling. "Why are you telling me this?"

She grinned, eyes flashing with mischief. "Because it's an interesting story. Don't you think? Almost... heartwarming."

I rolled my eyes, pulling my foot away from the woman's eager mouth, her tongue frozen mid-lick as I used my power to stop time around her. "It might warm your twisted little heart, but it's meaningless to me."

Slipping my shoes back on, I stood up, my patience wearing thin. "Anyway, I've got more important things to handle. My troops need to be prepared. The war is imminent. You'd better be ready."

Asmodeus licked her lips slowly, eyes fixed on me like a predator eyeing prey. "I don't particularly care about this war. Hell, I don't even understand why the Demon King is so set on fighting the humans again. But I'd be lying if I said the chaos didn't excite me."

She grinned wickedly as I turned to leave, her eyes filled with hunger that had nothing to do with the impending battle.

Chapter 403 Stalker (1)

Leon's POV

After Elise and I parted ways, I walked to the academy with a lingering warmth between my legs, the ache from our intense session still fresh in my body. I had never experienced anal sex that raw and overwhelming before. Maybe it was because Elise, like me, was part of Lilith. The forbidden nature of it—us both being part of her—and the taboo thrill of fucking her ass made it all the more intoxicating. That had to be why it felt so damn good.

The snow had finally started to let up, and though the cold still lingered, it wasn't biting like before. Spring was on its way. I spotted Titania waiting for me, standing by the entrance, her eyes fixed on her phone. She was wrapped in the scarf I had given her during our winter vacation. Seeing her wearing it sent a wave of warmth through me, the memory of that date fresh in my mind.

"Nia," I called out as I got close enough.

"Leon!" She lit up, throwing her arms around me in a tight embrace. The moment we hugged, I could hear people around us starting to murmur, their whispers sharp and bitter.

Snatches of their comments reached me—"Why is she even with that useless loser?" and "I wish that guy would just drop dead..." The jealousy and resentment in their voices were hard to miss.

Before I could react, I felt a pair of soft breasts press against my back as someone hugged me from behind.

"Hello, darling," came a sultry voice. It was Trill, her breath warm against my ear. "Why don't we head to class together?"

"Hey, Trill, it's my time! Leon's coming with me!" Titania protested.

"Huh? When did we agree to that?"

"Last night, on the phone, remember?"

"Did we? Must've slipped my mind."

It seemed like they'd already worked out some sort of schedule for sharing me. Titania and Trill were the only women I had at the academy, aside from the professors, so they were constantly negotiating for time with me.

"Well, since we're all here already, how about we just head to class together?" Trill suggested with that teasing grin of hers.

Titania pouted, clearly not happy. "I told you, mornings are my time to walk with him."

"You can still have him when we get home. How does that sound?" Trill countered, all smooth and casual.

Titania grumbled but finally gave in. "Ugh, fine. Whatever."

With that settled, both of them latched onto me—one on each side. They wrapped their arms around mine, pressing their bodies against me. My arms were swallowed up between their soft, warm breasts as we strolled toward the academy.

"L-Look at him..."

"Is this real? He's got two princesses clinging to him."

"I feel like this is reminding me just how hopeless my life is..."

"Wait, is he actually dating both of them? Lucky fucker."

"How does a guy with no skills end up with two women on his arms while I'm over here alone?"

Everywhere we went, people were staring, whispering, shooting jealous glances our way. Titania, the princess of Bethlan, and Trill, the princess of the beast race—both hanging onto me like I was something special. Of course, people were going to talk.

"You're really popular, Leon," Titania teased, squeezing my arm tighter, her breasts pressing more firmly against me.

"Obviously," Trill chimed in, smirking as she pressed her chest into my other arm. "He's the man we chose, after all."

Honestly, it felt like I was in heaven. If this wasn't heaven, I didn't know what was.

But as we walked, I noticed something strange—someone was watching me. Unlike the usual stares, this one felt more deliberate, almost hidden. The gaze was familiar, like I'd felt it before. Whoever it was, they had some kind of intent behind those eyes.

Maybe it was time to find out exactly what she wanted from me.

I texted Charlotte. If I wanted the scoop on what was going on with the second years, she was the one to ask.

It was lunchtime.

I waited for her at the back of the gym. When she finally showed up, she looked annoyed—like I'd interrupted her nap or something.

"What do you want?" she snapped, clearly not in the mood.

She wasn't wearing her usual twin tails today, just letting her hair fall loose down her back.

"Why are you so grumpy?" I asked.

"Because someone called me. And whenever that someone calls me, it usually means he wants to do something sexual. And I know how you are—you'll want to do it somewhere not private. And newsflash—I'm really not into doing it behind a gym. So, please, spare me and find another place."

She was already gearing up for what she thought was inevitable, even though I hadn't said anything about sex yet.

"Well, that wasn't what I was thinking," I replied casually. "But since you brought it up... now I can't get it out of my head. So yeah, why not?"

Her eyes widened. "You're kidding me, right?"

"Isn't that better for you? You've only got to do it with me three more times, and you're free of me."

She stammered, "B-But... here? Of all places?"

"Don't worry," I said, shrugging. "Everyone's in the cafeteria right now. No one's gonna see us."

She stared at me for a moment, then let out an exasperated sigh. "You're a fucking scumbag, Leon. I swear."

Even with her words dripping with disdain, she still reached under her skirt, slipping her panties down her legs, stepping out of them completely.

"Just... let me keep my clothes on, okay? I'm not stripping down in a place like this."

"That's fine," I said, watching her intently.

"Turn around and put your hands on the wall," I instructed, my voice firm.

She obeyed, turning and pressing her palms against the cold wall. I freed my cock, already hard, and pressed it against her ass, feeling the warmth of her body through the thin fabric of her skirt. My hand lifted it up, revealing her bare ass underneath.

I lined up my cock with her pussy, feeling her tense beneath me. Then, without hesitation, I pushed in, feeling her walls stretch around my girth.

"HnnNNnnnnnnnn~!!!"

Chapter 404 Stalker (2)

When I slid into her, her body welcomed me with no resistance at all, already soaked and ready. The slick heat inside her wrapped around my cock effortlessly.

When I asked her why, she casually replied, "I knew you'd skip foreplay, so I masturbated in the bathroom before you called. I made sure I was ready."

"Well, you're really getting the hang of prostituting yourself now, huh? Now tell me, who do you think about while you're playing with yourself?"

She went silent. Maybe she didn't want to admit it was me she was thinking of, or maybe she didn't want to say because it wasn't me, and she knew I'd get pissed. Either way, it didn't matter. If she was still thinking about Sesillian, I'd just have to break her even more.

I grabbed her waist and started thrusting.

Charlotte shut her eyes tight, biting down on her sleeve, trying to muffle her voice.

"Nnn... nnn... nuu... aaa... uuunn...!"

I reached around, unbuttoning her blouse, rolling her bra up so I could feel her breasts spill into my hands. The sensation of her tits in my palms while I fucked her from behind was unbearable in the best way.

I quickened my pace, slamming my crotch against her ass, each impact sending ripples across her pale skin. The sound of our bodies slapping together echoed outside.

"Muuuun! Nnnuunn! Uuuu! Muuu! Mmuaaaaaan!!!"

Charlotte's muffled moans got louder, despite her biting down on her cuff. I licked her nape, both hands gripping her tits as I pounded into her harder. I could feel her getting closer, her pussy tightening around me as her moans grew louder.

"Cum, Charlotte! Cum while you're being fucked like a dog out in the open!"

I whispered hotly in her ear, panting against her skin. I reached down with one hand, sliding it between her legs to rub her clit.

"Nnn!"

Her whole body trembled from the rush of pleasure. Then...

"Nnn!... Nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!!... Munuooooooooooooooooonnn!!"

Still biting her sleeve, her back arched sharply. Her entire body convulsed, and her pussy clenched around my dick like a vice.

"...Nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnguu!!!"

I couldn't hold back any longer, and with a deep, hard thrust, I came again, pressing my swollen glans against the entrance of her womb as I poured every last drop inside her. The heat of my thick cum spread through her insides, a scorching, white-hot wave flooding her womb, filling her completely, almost unbearably.

"...Aaaaaaaaaaaah!"

The sheer shock of being so thoroughly filled with my cum ripped a moan from her lips, her mouth instinctively pulling away from her sleeve as the overwhelming sensation overtook her.

"Aaaah... it feels so good...! It feels so good...! Being filled feels so good!"

She was starting to crack. Her mind might have still been clinging to resistance, but her body? Her body was surrendering, breaking apart under the weight of my cock and cum. If she wasn't crumbling, there's no way she would be saying things like that. Good. She was mine.

Charlotte's POV

I was slowly being corrupted by Leon. My body was surrendering to him. My brain resisted, but my body... it was completely his. I could feel it. Every time he touched me, I couldn't fight the way my body responded.

Lately, when I touched myself, it wasn't Professor Sesillian who came to mind. No, it was always Leon. His strong, rough hands gripping my waist, the firm, possessive way he handled me. His hot breath grazing my neck, sending waves of shivers down my spine. The way his dick stretched me, filling me until I couldn't think of anything else but the pleasure. He knew exactly how to make me cum, and it drove me insane.

I tried convincing myself that maybe it was just because he was the only man who had touched me, that if I had sex with someone else, this twisted hold he had on my body would disappear. I thought my body was just lewd and perverted, accepting Leon because of its own nature.

But deep down, I knew that wasn't the truth.

Earlier, when he called me, I felt my heart race, excitement surging through me. I couldn't help myself. I rushed to the bathroom, locking myself in a cubicle to masturbate, getting myself wet just thinking about him. The image of Professor Sesillian had completely vanished from my mind. All I could think about was Leon—his hands, his cock, the way he made me lose control. The pleasure was driving me insane, and I didn't know how much longer I could resist.

Leon was taking full control of my body, his hands gripping my slender hips tightly as he pistoned in and out of me with relentless force. His skilled, rhythmic thrusts had me completely captivated, my body reacting instinctively to his movements. Without even realizing it, I started to rock my hips in sync with his, our movements becoming more frantic as we built toward the inevitable.

I could feel it coming—an intense climax like nothing I'd ever felt before.

"Aaaaah! Ah, nnngh, nnn, nnnnnnn, nnnnnnnn! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

My mouth hung open, drool slipping from my lips as I sloppily pressed my hips back against his, driven by raw instinct, desperate to reach that peak. His cock, now fully engorged and ready to explode, slammed against my cervix, sending jolts of pleasure up my spine.

"NnnnnnnnnnnNnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!"

My mind shattered into a haze of blinding ecstasy as the climax hit. My body convulsed uncontrollably, gripping him tightly inside me, my pussy squeezing him with every wave of pleasure that ripped through me.

Leon wasn't far behind. I felt his cock throb, and with one final deep thrust, he emptied himself inside me. The hot rush of his cum filled me completely, coating every inch of my womb and pussy. The sensation of being filled by him—of his warm, thick cum spreading inside me—triggered another orgasm that made my entire body tremble violently.

His cum overflowed, leaking from my pussy as he pulled out slowly, his thick cock slipping free. A steady stream of his hot seed dripped down my thighs, making me feel dirty, used, and strangely satisfied. The sensation of his semen marking me was almost too much to bear, but I wanted more. Needed more.

Chapter 405 Stalker (3)

"Do you want to continue?" Leon asked, his voice low and commanding.

"Yesh~," I breathed, no hesitation in my voice.

I was falling apart. My body had long since stopped resisting, and I knew it wouldn't be much longer before my heart and mind followed. And maybe... maybe that wasn't such a bad thing.

But as I lay there, another thought crept in. What would happen when these sessions ended? We only had two more left—the contract would be over after the sixth time, and this was our fourth. The thought of him stopping after that... scared me.

Even while I was lost in my thoughts, I noticed something. Despite just cumming, Leon's cock was still rock-hard. Before I could process what was happening, he flipped me onto my back, pressing me up against the wall. His dick throbbed, and just the sight of it made my pussy twitch, my body surrendering all over again. There was no way I could resist him now.

His dick pressed hard against my skirt, slick with my juices, and the thick, white-hot semen still dripping from the tip was slowly oozing down. The sight of it made me want to lick it off, to taste it.

Leon closed the distance again, his body covering mine as he slid his cock back into me, the thick shaft filling me completely in one smooth motion. My back hit the wall, cool against my skin, contrasting with the heat between us. His hips pressed against mine, forcing me to take him deeper, the sensation intense as he bottomed out inside me.

"Huuu... my head... it's so foggy... naaaa, I'm gonna cum...!"

He started to move, rocking his hips in a steady rhythm while his hands found my breasts. My leg locked tighter around his waist, holding him close as he squeezed my tits roughly, pinching my nipples between his fingers. He didn't stop there, his hand moving down to pinch my clit, each sharp tweak sending jolts of pleasure-pain that made my whole body tremble. Every pinch made me arch into him, moaning as the mix of pain and pleasure drove me wild.

With my hips gripped tightly in his hands, Leon picked up the pace, his thrusts turning wild, animalistic. The way he pounded into me, each stroke hard and fast, felt desperate, like he was chasing his release with everything he had.

My pussy tightened around his dick, more sensitive than before. His violent thrusts sent shockwaves of pleasure through me, my body reacting uncontrollably. Every thrust pushed me closer and closer to the edge until I couldn't hold it anymore.

"It's coming! I'm cummingggggggg!" I screamed, my whole body shaking as the orgasm ripped through me, intense and overwhelming.

As I came, Leon pulled out, his cock slick and throbbing.

"Get on your knees. I want to cum on your face," he demanded.

Still shuddering from the aftershocks of my orgasm, I dropped to my knees, looking up at him with my mouth open as he stroked his dick. It didn't take long—his hot, white cum sprayed out, splattering across my face, coating me in the sticky heat.

"Fuaaah... haa, haa... aaaa..." I panted, feeling his cum dripping down my cheeks, my lips, still catching my breath.

But just as the haze of pleasure began to fade, I noticed something strange. There was movement—someone watching. Through the space between Leon's legs, I saw her. My vision sharpened, and there she was, half-hidden behind a tree, peeking out.

"L-Leon...!" I gasped, pointing with a trembling hand. "She saw us! She saw us!"

It was Ella—one of the bronze-class second years. Her wide eyes met mine for a split second before she turned and ran, disappearing into the distance.

"It looks like it," Leon said casually, as if the whole thing didn't bother him in the slightest.

"She saw us! What do you mean 'it looks like it'? This could ruin me!"

"She's been following me all day," Leon said, unbothered. "Maybe now's the time to confront her."

"C-Confront her?" I stammered.

"Yeah. Now that she's seen everything, you might as well be the one to handle it."

Ella's POV

The bell rang, echoing through the room, and I shot up from my seat like I had a fire under me. My heart pounded in my chest as I slung my bag over my shoulder. I'd just seen something I had no business seeing. I needed to hide before they came looking for me.

"Is Ella here?"

The voice made my blood freeze. I glanced toward the doorway and there stood Miss Charlotte, talking to two of my classmates.

"Huh? Who's that again?"

"Beats me."

"You don't know her? The girl with the glasses and twin braids?"

"Ohhh, that one. Yeah, no clue. I don't even notice her."

My legs moved on autopilot, and I dashed out of the classroom, my pulse racing. I couldn't let Miss Charlotte see me. I didn't know what I was going to do. I'd just witnessed something I wasn't supposed to, something that could get me in serious trouble. Miss Kayla was the reason I was in this mess—she was the one who had sent me to dig into Miss Charlotte.

Miss Kayla had expected her to crack, thought Miss Charlotte would fall apart within days of losing her status. But it had been months, and the woman was still standing strong, not even a hint of breaking down. Miss Kayla suspected Professor Sesillian had a hand in it, but there was always that nagging feeling it wasn't him—she was suspecting that Mr. Leon, the skillless student from the first year's bronze class, was the one who was changing Miss Charlotte.

That's why I was sent to spy on him.

But today, I stumbled upon something that should have stayed hidden.

Leon and Miss Charlotte were together like that. I couldn't believe it. They were doing it in secret, which had to mean their whole relationship was kept under wraps too.

If this got out, it would be explosive. Leon was publicly dating the Princess of Bethlan, and rumors were already swirling that he was getting it on with the Princess of the Beast race as well.

I couldn't breathe. I had to disappear. If they find me, I had no idea what they'd do to me.

Chapter 406 - Stalker (4)

That night, a loud knock echoed through my room, making me freeze. My body instinctively curled up, and I pulled the blanket over myself, trembling as the pounding on the door grew louder and more impatient.

"What in the world are you doing in there, Ella? Can't you hear me knocking? Do you want me to bust the door down or what?"

The voice on the other side was sharp and familiar, and it made my stomach drop. It was her—Miss Kayla. The woman who had forced me into stalking Mr. Leon. She used to cling to Miss Charlotte like a parasite, sucking up to her when she still had power. But when Miss Charlotte lost her status, Miss Kayla turned on her, bullying her relentlessly.

Now she had me under her thumb too.

I couldn't bring myself to open the door, not even for someone else. My body was shaking, paralyzed by fear. I didn't want to deal with this right now. I just wanted to hide.

"Open the door, Ella," Miss Kayla's voice dripped with threat. "If you don't, I'll call my servants to kick it down. And you know what that means, right?"

"W-What is it, Miss Kayla?" I asked, my voice barely steady.

"How long were you planning to keep me standing out here?" she spat.

I swung the door open fully and stepped aside to let her in. The second she walked in, her face twisted in disgust.

"Ugh. This place is so cramped! How can you even live like this?" she scoffed, clearly irritated by the lack of space.

"I-I'm sorry," I mumbled, lowering my head, feeling the weight of her judgment.

Life in the bronze class meant the bare minimum—a bed, a tiny kitchen jammed into the same room, and a small, cramped area that was supposed to pass for a living room. It wasn't much, but it was all we had. And of course, it wasn't enough for someone like her.

"Anyway, give me the report."

I froze. Should I really tell her what I saw behind the gym? Miss Charlotte and Mr. Leon... having sex? No way. I couldn't.

The thought of revealing that made my stomach twist. If I told her, something bad—no, something really bad—would happen. I could feel it.

But if I didn't say anything, I had nothing to report.

"Ella, don't tell me you didn't see anything?" Kayla's voice sliced through the air like a blade, sharp and venomous. "You've been ignoring all my texts, and now that I'm here in person, you have nothing for me?!"

"I-I'm sorry! But Mr. Leon's getting suspicious of me. I think he's already noticed I've been watching him."

"Tsk!" She spat like I'd personally insulted her. "You're so fucking useless! What good is that shitty skill if you can't even use it properly? It's no wonder you're stuck at the bottom of the rankings—incompetent and fucking worthless!"

Her words hit like blows, but I couldn't argue. My skill, 'Stalker,' really was a curse more than a blessing. I could only silence my footsteps—sneak up on people without them hearing me. But if they had sharp enough senses or were suspicious enough, they'd still notice me. That's it. That's all it did.

It wasn't enough.

"Get back out there and find something for me, Ella," Kayla hissed, her voice cold as ice. "And if you don't, you know damn well what's gonna happen."

"Y-Yes..." I barely managed to stammer out the words, feeling the weight of her threat sink into my bones. Discover stories with empire

Without even sitting down or pretending to care, Kayla turned and stormed out of my cramped room. The second the door clicked shut, I rushed to lock it, my heart hammering in my chest. I slumped against the door, then dragged myself back to bed, curling into the covers as if they could protect me from what was coming.

Charlotte's POV

Kayla, once one of my closest allies—always clinging to my side like a parasite—stomped back into the dorm with a disgusted scowl plastered across her face. Her nose wrinkled in contempt the moment her eyes landed on me. The hostility in the air was suffocating, but I didn't hesitate. I walked right up to her.

"Kayla," I called.

Her eyes flashed with fury. "Why the fuck are you using my name?" she snapped. "Didn't I tell you not to show your pathetic face in front of me again? Haven't you figured out yet where you fucking stand?"

Her growl was meant to intimidate, but it barely fazed me. Why did I ever let her treat me like this? Why did I allow this girl to slap me, to bully me when I had every right to put her in her place? Even now, with my status gone, she wasn't as powerful as she thought.

"What's with that look? You want me to remind you of your place again?" Kayla's voice dripped with malice, her eyes gleaming with superiority as if she still had control. But I wasn't in the mood to play games anymore.

"I'm not here for that, Kayla," I replied coldly. "I just need to know something. You know Ella, don't you? You've got her running errands for you like a lackey. I want to know where her room is."

Her expression twisted, a sneer pulling at the corner of her lips. "Tsk! I told you not to call me by my name!" She snapped, her hand flying toward my face in a slap. But before she could land the hit, I caught her wrist mid-air, twisting it sharply.

"I'm getting real tired of your attitude, Kayla." My voice was sharp as I glared down at her. "I actually thought you'd make a good friend at some point. But it turns out clinging onto people like a parasite is the only thing you're good at."

Her eyes widened, and she stammered, "U-Unhand me! What the hell are you doing?! You're nothing now!"

"The academy doesn't care about status here," I said, twisting her wrist even harder, making her wince. "So even if I break your arm, no one's going to punish me for hurting a noble like you. At worst, I'll just be sent to the disciplinary office. But you? You'll be walking around with a broken wrist. So, I don't mind taking that risk."

"W-Wait! If you do this, my father won't let you get away with it!" she pleaded, panic creeping into her voice.

"I've got a backer stronger than your father could ever dream of." My voice dripped with confidence as I leaned in closer. Leonamon's power dwarfs her entire family. Leon could crush you like he crushed me. "So, I'm not afraid to hurt you if it means getting what I want."

Chapter 407 - Stalker (5)

After getting Kayla to tell me what room Ella was in, I headed there right away. Classes above bronze could access the bronze dorms, but those in bronze couldn't do the same for higher classes. It was the same deal with the silver class, except we weren't allowed into the gold dorms. Gold class, though? They had no restrictions and could walk into any dorm they pleased.

The academy claimed it was to let the gold class enjoy their privileges, but to me, it was just a way of showing who they really favored.

That's why I had no problem going through the bronze dorms. I was in the silver class, after all.

The bronze class dormitory looked like a building that had seen better days. The floors were creaky wooden boards, and the furniture in the lobby looked like something straight out of an antique shop. It was clear the dorm mother didn't care about keeping the place clean. And the people living here? They looked just as gloomy as the building itself.

In comparison, the silver dorm wasn't nearly as run-down. Sure, the lobby furniture was used, but it was nowhere near as ancient as the stuff in bronze. The floors were marble, not wood, and the rooms were big enough to fit three cabinets full of clothes, with space left for a queen-sized bed. By regular standards, it felt more like an apartment than a dorm.

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If the silver class had it that decent, I could only imagine how extravagant the gold dorms were. I'd never been inside one, and with my rankings tanking, I didn't think I'd get the chance anytime soon. But I could assume it was a whole other level of luxury.

"And the administrators love to say at every entrance ceremony that they treat all students equally. Yeah, right. They only say that for show, for the image they want the students to have. The discrimination here is obvious."

I never noticed how messed up things were when I was still a duke's daughter. Back then, I was blind to the corruption around me, too sheltered to see the cracks. Maybe what happened to me was for the best, though—it had definitely broadened my perspective. Made me see the world for what it really was.

I shook my head, trying to push the thought away. If I kept thinking like that, I'd never escape Leon's grip.

With that in mind, I finally reached Ella's dorm room. The sign on the door was impossible to miss: "Ella's Room" scrawled in big, bold letters. I raised my hand and knocked.

No answer. No sound of footsteps. I knocked again, a little harder this time.

"..."

Still nothing.

Instead of waiting, I raised my voice. "Hey, you're Ella, right? Can you open the door? I just need to talk to you about something from earlier."

I didn't bother tiptoeing around the subject. I went straight to the point. Hiding my reason for being here would only make things worse.

But still—silence.

"Look, you don't have to worry. I'm not mad that you saw us, alright? But I need to say something to you, and I can't exactly do that while we're standing out here. So can you please just open the door?"

"I... I didn't see anything!" A timid voice finally slipped through the crack under the door. The tone was shaky, full of panic.

"I saw you," I said. "You were hiding behind that tree, watching us. Don't lie. I promise I'm not mad."

"I-I swear... I didn't see anything!" she stammered again, voice even shakier this time.

It was obvious she was lying. Her voice was shaky, scared. I had seen her eyes, wide with shock, staring at us. It must have been the first time she'd seen something like that. If I were in her shoes, I might've run away too. But I couldn't afford to let her leave without having this conversation.

If she snitched to someone like Kayla about what she saw, it could ruin me. Not only could I lose my relationship with Professor Sesillian, but I'd also get branded as the girl who had sex in public. There was no way I'd let that happen.

But she wasn't budging. If I wanted to get through to her, I needed to step it up and use a little force. In situations like this, Leon could've been useful—but he left this mess on my plate. Guess he's the type of guy who runs from situations like this, huh? Like those assholes who get a girl pregnant and disappear.

"Ella," I said, my voice dropping to a lower, more serious tone this time. "Open the door. If you don't, Leon might decide to do something... and trust me, you don't want that."

Silence hung in the air. I could feel her hesitation, but I kept pushing.

"That guy's a lot more ruthless than you—or anyone at this school—realizes," I continued. "He knows how to make people with weaknesses submit to him. I mean, why do you think we were doing it in public? It's not because I'm in love with him, you know that, right? You hang out with Kayla enough to know who I really care about."

It wasn't exactly a secret, at least not in my circle or even in the circles connected to it. Anyone with half a brain could tell who I had feelings for. Ella knew who I was talking about.

"Leon is cruel," I pressed on, hoping to drive the point home. "He's got something on me—that's why I'm under his control right now. And I bet all those other girls flocking around him are probably trapped in his web too. It's not a stretch to say you could end up like them if you're not careful."

I was definitely painting Leon in a bad light, but I didn't care. If scaring the hell out of her was what it took to make her open up, so be it. Besides, Leon was the one who dropped this situation on me. If he didn't like it... well, I just have to face his anger then.

"I can protect you from him," I offered, softening my tone just enough to sound convincing. "But you need to open the door so we can talk. I can help you, but you have to let me."

Chapter 408 - The Noble Party (1)

Rose's POV

"I never thought my family would dare force me to attend this damn ball," I muttered under my breath, my fists clenching at the thought. Even after cutting me off, they were still pulling strings, making me jump through hoops for them. I could've told them to fuck off, but they wouldn't have let it go. They never did. Besides, I had my own reason for coming here tonight—Sesillian.

He was going to be at this party, and from what I'd heard from Leon, he wasn't coming alone. He'd invited Charlotte Sierra to be his date. It was one thing for me to get an invite—even after being cut off from the family, I could still attend if they sent me an invite—but Charlotte Sierra had no connection to nobility anymore. Stay tuned for updates on empire

Her father had been disgraced and stripped of his title when all his dirty secrets were dragged out into the open.

Anyway, the party was in the Capital City, where all the high-ranking nobles and officials lived, along with the royal family in the nearby castle. Weirdly, though, the royal family wouldn't be attending. Word was, it was a precaution so none of them would risk getting assassinated. Since the castle walls were basically impenetrable, they preferred to stay locked up inside.

The venue was a massive manor, bigger than your typical large mansion. The place was packed with people, all dressed to the nines in formal wear. As for me? I didn't bother. I wore a simple white blouse with long sleeves and black jeans. Dresses weren't my thing anyway.

But the moment I arrived, I became the center of attention. Every set of eyes in the room locked onto me, glaring and boring into me from all directions.

"Isn't that...?"

"Why is she wearing something like that to this event?"

"Isn't she ashamed? Not only showing up looking like that, but also continuing to tarnish her family's name?"

I ignored the whispers. My family had already cut me off, so their opinions weren't my problem anymore. But, well, I expected this reaction. It was only natural, given the circumstances.

After a while, I made my way over to where my father stood, dressed as formal as the rest of them. His green hair had already started to fade into white, but there was still an air of authority around him. That same intimidating presence that used to make me hesitate to approach him when I was little.

But I wasn't a little girl anymore. So, I walked straight up to him.

"What exactly are you wearing?" His voice was just as terrifying as the last time I'd heard it.

"Well, technically, I can wear whatever I want," I replied, unfazed. "It's not mandatory to wear formal clothes, right?"

"In occasions like this, yes, it's mandatory, even if it's unspoken," he shot back, his tone sharp.

"Well, that's news to me," I shrugged, not really caring.

He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "This is why you've never fit in with our family. You've always been such a tomboy. I can't believe I wasted my time trying to raise you into a proper lady. How did you turn out like this, when I raised you the same as your sister?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's just who I am," I said, meeting his glare without flinching. The old me would've shrunk under that stare, but not anymore.

My mother arrived then, accompanied by my sister, both of them dressed to perfection in their formal attire. "I can't believe you'd show up dressed like that. Are you still stuck in your rebellious teenage phase, Rose? Why on earth did you come here in that outfit?" my mother snapped.

"I told you, it's not a big deal. As long as I'm not breaking any rules, they can't kick me out, right?"

That's right. There weren't any specific rules about what to wear here. The invitation didn't say anything about formal attire being required, so I didn't bother with it.

"How exactly do you plan on getting married when you keep acting like that?" My mother let out an annoyed sigh, her eyes narrowing in frustration.

She had been pushing this marriage crap on me for years. Always obsessing over when I'd finally "settle down." But how could I? Every man she introduced me to was a scumbag, not worth a damn.

"And here I am, planning for you to meet a man who will give you the life you deserve," she said, her tone dripping with disappointment. "And you're wearing that?"

"So I was right, huh?" I said, crossing my arms. "You're setting me up again. You brought me here just to push another marriage scheme on me." I wasn't surprised in the least. It was the same old story.

They wanted to marry me off to some powerful family, using me as a pawn for their political and social connections, and tie our family—well, technically their family now, since I'd been cut off from it—to another one.

"You're going to end up a lonely old woman if you keep this up, you know," my sister chimed in, her voice just as irritating as it had always been. She was already in her forties but still flaunting her so-called perfection.

She had the same green hair and sharp gaze as our mother, traits I had also inherited—though, if we're being honest, I still won in the bust department, even after she popped out kids. "Look at me," she continued, "I'm still as seductive as I was at seventeen, barely aged a day. I'm wearing the latest fashion from Leonamon, because my husband is so rich, he buys me anything I want.

Meanwhile, you have to work just to afford a shitty car. And you don't even have time to wear anything nice. I can't believe you were ever my sister."

Her smug tone made my blood boil. She'd been acting superior ever since we were kids, lording her "perfect" life over me every chance she got. The urge to punch her in the face was real.

"This is an order from your family, Rose," my father suddenly cut in, his voice cold and commanding. "You will go with Sir Fier today, and you will do whatever it takes to bed him."

Sir Fier? That asshole with seventeen wives? Like hell I'd ever be part of some harem.

"Don't tell me what to do," I snapped back, glaring at him. "I'm not your daughter anymore, remember? I came here out of courtesy, just to say hello. Now, I'm done. I'm leaving."

Without waiting for a response, I turned and walked away.

"Rose, come back here!" my father shouted after me, his voice echoing in the grand hall. I didn't even bother looking back.

Chapter 409 - The Noble Party (2)

While I sat back with a drink made by the Leonamon, the sweet burn sliding down my throat, I overheard some gossip that grabbed my attention.

"I heard the owner of the Leonamon is coming here, along with his co-owner. Isn't that something?" one of the women said, her voice dripping with intrigue. She was dressed to impress, her outfit almost glowing under the lights, detailed with flowery embroidery that shimmered every time she moved.

"I know, right?" another chimed in, her excitement barely contained. "It's one thing for the co-owner to show up, but the real owner? He's kept his identity a secret for so long. Hearing he's coming out of the shadows is huge. Right, Kayla?"

"Yeah, whatever. He's probably just some wrinkled old man," Kayla muttered, glancing up from her phone. Her clothes were even fancier, like she was trying to one-up the others. She sat with her legs crossed, but her mood made it obvious she didn't care to be part of the conversation.

"Oh, come on, don't jinx it!" the first one laughed, her eyes flashing mischievously. "You never know—he could be hot! And, honestly, I wouldn't mind if he's an old man. Older guys love women half, or even

a third, their age. It's always the same story." She leaned in, a sly grin spreading on her face. "I'd jump on the spot to get a rich old man with fat stacks of cash.

And, let's be real, with how old he probably is, it wouldn't take long for him to kick the bucket and leave all that money behind."

"You're so bad," teased the other woman, giving her a playful nudge, their laughter filling the space between them.

Kayla, though, remained glued to her phone, barely even glancing up.

"Hey, Kayla! Isn't this supposed to be a celebration? You're killing the vibe. What's with you staring at your phone like that?" the first woman asked.

"Nothing. Sirches isn't answering my texts. He was supposed to be here already, but he's not, and he's not replying."

"You mean your current boyfriend? The one who can't even fuck you right?" the second woman teased with a sly smirk, her giggle cutting through the air.

"Don't say it like that. Yeah, I'm always left unsatisfied when we have sex, but the guy's loaded. And with him being the heir to a viscount title, I'm basically guaranteed to be his wife and still be part of a noble family. My brother's the one inheriting our family's viscount title, so I'd be left out anyway. I'd probably just end up as some knight in the family, and I'm not about that life.

Besides, his family owns the coal mines in the south, so my future's set. Unlike you, my plan is realistic—and I'm not chasing after some old man."

The second woman rolled her eyes, shifting in her seat with a bored expression. "Ugh, I'd still rather have some old man fuck me senseless than be stuck with a tiny, useless dick that doesn't do shit."

It was getting to the point where I was hearing things I really didn't want to. Their conversation was turning into something I'd rather not be a part of, so I walked away from them.

"By the way, you heard, right? Charlotte's coming with Professor Sesillian," the first one continued, her voice lowering but still loud enough to catch.

I froze mid-step. Before I could get any farther away, their next words hit my ears.

"Yeah. That bitch still thinks she's a noble, doesn't she? Clinging to that fantasy, even though her family's been stripped of their status ages ago. What a joke."

The conversation stirred something in me. Maybe Leon was right all along. Maybe Charlotte Sierra was just a pawn in Sesillian's larger game, and that's why she was going to show up at this party. My thoughts swirled with suspicion as I considered the implications.

Then, as if summoned by my thoughts, Professor Sesillian Quinn arrived, his presence impossible to ignore. In noble circles, he was a legend—famous for his sharp mind, his undeniable charisma, and the

way he commanded attention. Walking beside him was Charlotte Sierra, draped in an elegant dress that clung to her in all the right places, making her look like the embodiment of a noblewoman.

Her posture was flawless, her expression calm, almost serene, like the harsh realities of her life hadn't touched her at all. She still looked like the daughter of a noble, untouched by hardship.

"Why the hell is Sierra's daughter here? I thought this party was for actual nobles," someone nearby muttered, their tone sharp and judgmental.

"The Sierra family isn't even part of the nobility anymore," another voice replied, equally condescending. "Her mother crawled back to her old family, and her father's dead. Does she really think she can restore her family's name by pulling a stunt like this?"

"No chance. If it were that easy, they wouldn't have lost their title in the first place. And what's with Quinn's eldest son walking in with her?"

The whispers spread like wildfire, the murmurs growing louder, the judgment and curiosity rippling through the crowd. People stared, some trying to piece together what was happening, others just enjoying the spectacle of it all.

Watching Sesillian stride in, completely unbothered by the noise around him, was unsettling. It was like he didn't give a damn about the rumors or the stares. His calmness, his absolute indifference, sent a chill through me.

"It's almost disturbing how unfazed Sesillian is," I muttered under my breath. "It's like he's not even concerned about the backlash, or the fact that people are talking shit right in front of him."

But then, someone said, "Oh, so that's why, huh? Well, I guess that changes things. Makes sense now."

A sudden chill ran down my spine, unlike anything I'd ever felt before. What the hell just happened? One second, everyone was all riled up about Charlotte Sierra being here, and the next, they'd done a complete 180—talking like it wasn't a big deal at all. Nobles don't just let things slide, especially when someone without noble blood shows up at an event like this.

Their egos are too damn big for that. And yet, with just a few words, Sesillian had made them all back down, like it wasn't even worth getting pissed about.

"Sesillian must've used his skill on them," I muttered, piecing it together.

His skill... that ability of his—it lets him charm people, make them believe whatever he wants them to believe. And now that I'm thinking about it, it's pretty much just brainwashing, plain and simple.

Chapter 410 - The Noble Party (3)

After that, another figure stepped through the entrance, and the moment I saw who it was, I nearly choked on my drink.

What the fuck—? Is that Leon? Why the hell is he here?

But he looked completely different tonight. His outfit was ridiculously luxurious, something that looked like it came straight from the finest Leonamon fabric, but somehow, it seemed even more exclusive, like

it had been handcrafted for him alone. The way the material shimmered under the light made it clear this wasn't just any expensive attire—this was his attire.

His long white hair, tied high into a sleek ponytail, flowed down his back, and his cold, white eyes gleamed behind a pair of glasses, giving him a sharp, almost otherworldly look.

Yet, despite all the changes, I knew it was Leon. There was no mistaking it.

"Who the hell is that?"

"I don't know. I've never seen anyone like him before. Is he some noble from another country?"

"Who knows?"

The murmurs spread through the crowd like wildfire. Every eye in the room was drawn to him, his presence commanding attention. The way he stood there, poised and graceful, oozed power and nobility—like someone used to being admired, maybe even worshiped. His very stance screamed authority, and his clothes only reinforced it, practically shouting that this was a man of immense status.

"Hey, isn't he kinda... hot?"

"Right?"

The young women who had been chatting earlier were now fully fixated on him. One of them, who had been staring at her phone the whole time, finally looked up to see what all the fuss was about.

"Yeah."

"See? Even Kayla, who's been bored out of her mind, thinks so!"

The three of them couldn't tear their eyes away from him, but they weren't alone. Hell, almost everyone was staring now, like they couldn't help themselves. Even Charlotte Sierra was looking, though her gaze held more exhaustion than interest, while Sesillian's eyes were locked onto him too.

"Let's go talk to him!" one of the young women urged, excitement bubbling in her voice.

Without missing a beat, the three of them made a beeline for him.

"Hello," one of the women purred, flashing a seductive smile. Her eyes lingered on him, practically undressing him with her gaze. "Um, may I know your name?"

"Oh, I'm Faust," he replied, his voice smooth as velvet, accompanied by that charming smile of his. "Christopher Faust."

The three women giggled, eyes glinting like they had just struck gold. A wave of disgust and jealousy immediately surged inside me. Why was I jealous? Sure, I'd slept with Leon once, but I swore I wouldn't fall for his tricks again. So why the hell was I feeling this way? It's not like I'm still in love with him... right?

While my mind was spinning with that, Leon—now calling himself Christopher Faust—gracefully excused himself from the women, giving them a polite nod.

"Um, Mr. Faust!" one of the women called out, her voice dripping with eagerness. "May I ask your status? You're obviously not from here, and judging by your appearance, you must be of high status. Are you, by chance, a duke from a foreign country?"

"No, no," Leon replied, giving a slight shake of his head, a calm smile still playing on his lips. "I'm just a lowly commoner."

The effect of those words was immediate. The women's faces fell, the air around them growing awkward as they exchanged quick glances.

"Wait, he's just a commoner? What a disappointment."

"Let's get out of here."

They turned away from him in an instant, their previous excitement vanishing. Around them, the onlookers began muttering in annoyance, their faces twisting with disgust.

"A commoner? What the hell is a commoner doing at this party?"

"Is this event going downhill, inviting commoners now?"

The nobles were clearly pissed off. This was supposed to be an exclusive party, and now not only were there outcasts from nobility, but a commoner? The arrogance in the room was practically tangible.

And then, Leon—no, Faust—spotted me. His gaze locked onto mine, and despite every fiber of my being wanting to avoid him, I knew it was too late. He was heading straight for me. I sighed, my shoulders slumping as I gave in.

"What the hell are you doing here, Leon?"

"What? Sorry, miss, but the name's Faust. Christopher Faust, at your service. I'd appreciate it if you'd call me that while we're here."

"Quit the charade. It's obviously you, even with the changes in your appearance."

"Is that so? I dyed my hair white for this, put in contact lenses to make my eyes match, grew out my hair, tied it back, and you're saying it's still obvious I'm me?"

"It's painfully obvious. Well, to people who actually know you, at least. Charlotte Sierra definitely noticed you too, judging by the look on her face earlier. Seems like she recognizes you."

"Ah, Charlotte," he mused. "Yeah, we had a little thing going on for a while."

"And why was that?" I shot back. "No, wait—don't answer. I don't want to hear about your messy-ass love affairs. If you did, I might end up ripping out all my hair."

Suddenly, a strange heaviness fell over me, and I felt it—eyes on me, burning into my back. It was like whoever was staring wanted to twist a blade of jealousy right into my gut. I rubbed the back of my neck, trying to shake the feeling, but it wouldn't leave me. Turning around quickly, I scanned the room, but no one seemed to be looking at me anymore. Yet I knew someone had been.

Sesillian was standing behind me, almost too casually.

"Well," Leon—or should I say Faust—smirked, "looks like my little appearance change is working. He's practically eyeing me like he wants to eat me alive."

"Who?" I asked, narrowing my eyes.

"That's a secret," he said. "Something you'll figure out before the night's over."

I didn't like the way he grinned at me, as if he was planning something shady. That smug look plastered across his face told me something was definitely up.

"Rose." My father's voice rang out from behind me. I turned to face him. "Why are you with this man?"