THORNS 59

Chapter 59: Atonement

"I asked what's going on here?"

If looks could kill, Kurt would've been dead.

"P-Principal Valentine! I was just–"

"Shhhhh Emelie. Let the adults speak. Well Rosie?"

'Rosie?' Emelie thought as she looked between the silently pissed Diana and the 'I'm nervous but won't let it show' Kurt.

"Emelie was just healing my face from an injury."

"Injury?" She grabbed his cheeks with one hand. "I don't see any injury."

"W-Weally? I guessh she mut've healed it then. Nyo wunder she'sh your best shtudent."

Diana didn't let go and just kept staring at him in silence.

'L-Lord if you're watching please send all my future blessings to the present.'

"Kurt! I'm back with the women!" Dominik came running with the wagon.

'MY HERO!'

"Principal Valentine, I see you got back here first. Why are you holding Kurt's face like that? Oh shoot!" Dominik let go of the wagon handles and zipped up to them both. "Your face! It's healed! My salve plus Emelie's healing must've done the trick, huh?"

"How'd he get injured?" Diana asked in a deadpan voice.

"I errr... I mistook him for an enemy and hit him with a flying kick... Right in the face..."

After hearing him explain what happened, Diana turned back to Kurt, who was trying his best to smile at her, and went from squeezing his cheeks to gently caressing them.

"Rosie, are you okay? Want me to kiss you better~?" She asked him in a cute voice as she looked at him with pity.

'Holy shit! It's that cutesy voice again! Kurt, just who the hell are you!?' Dominik stared with his mouth open.

'So it's true after all. Damn Kurt... You really did the impossible...' Emelie smiled.

"Not here Diana. I thought you didn't like showing affection in public."

"I feel like I need to change that part of myself if I'm to be with you. I need to make sure that women know who you belong to..."

Diana, who was red in the face, leaned in closer and closer to Kurt's cheek. Just as she was inches away from pressing her lips on him is when...

"K-Kurt.. we.. go home.. now?" The quiet girl, who's now starting to look brighter, came in between them.

"Y-Yes!" He jumped away from her "We're going home now, ahahaha... By the way, I didn't catch your name."

"Name? Name.. is.. Courtney." She blushed as she held her sword close to her chest.

Grrr

Once again, if looks could kill, Courtney would be dead.

"C'mon ladies! I'll lead you to the ship." Dominik dragged Courtney and the others away before hell could be unleashed.

meow

"Kitty?" Kurt looked at the rowboat from where he heard that cute sound.

And indeed, the small cat jumped out of the boat and stood next to him.

"Oh that's right. Before we knew it, this little one had already followed us on the ship. Did it somehow know you'd be there?" Emelie wondered as she crouched down to pet the cat.

'Come to think of it, I also saw him right before Diana slashed me. And even before that, every time a major event happens this cat is always there somehow then just mysteriously disappears when it's over.'

"Ahem! Kurt, could you show me the sight of the cave you told me about. I want to pray to the fallen women." Emelie subtly winked at him, hoping he'd get the hint.

"Hm? Oh. Sure. Diana, I'm gonna quickly show Emelie to the cave. You want to come with us?"

"No. I trust when you told me nothing's going on between you two. Just be quick. In the meantime, I will check out the ship. I want to see these cultist members for myself and... I want to see what the rooms look like..." She blushed when she said that last part then squeezed her gem and teleported to the deck.

’The rooms?’

meow The cat rubbed himself on Kurt’s leg.

"Guess it’s just the three of us then. C’mon I’ll show you the way."

"No need." Emelie floated off the sand and concentrated her magic around Kurt and the cat causing them to float as well.

"W-Whoa! I’m flying! I’m actually flying! Now this is what magic should be used for!"

"Heh. Make sure you close your mouth. I don’t want you biting your tongue on the way."

FWOOSH!

...

All three of them landed safely in the middle of the goblin camp.

"What a mess. Is this Principal Valentine’s doing?"

"Yep. You should’ve seen her. At that moment she showed me what her title as Crimson Flash stood for and boy did it not disappoint. So, why’re we here? To be honest I didn’t want to come back here."

"Did something happen?" Emelie looked worried.

"More like it didn’t. *Tsk!* I was going to burn this whole place down until I met this one ugly goblin. Ruined my whole mood."

"Oh." Her worried look disappeared when she heard his reason. "What goblin?"

"That one." Kurt pointed to the broken front gate where a disfigured corpse of a goblin laid.

"Wait. That's the treasure goblin I came here for! Why is he so fucking beaten up?!"

"That's the reason we're here? You should've told me. Didn't you see the huge sack on the wagon Dominik brought? That's the loot I took from it."

"No wonder I didn't see it on the way here... Hey! The cat!"

Emelie ran to the cave, where she saw the little cat enter, but stopped when she reached the entrance.

"What's wrong?" Kurt asked her when he noticed stood still.

"It's just... inside that cave are the women I left to die over and over... I know I don't have any right to be but I'm afraid to go in."

Kurt put his hand on her back and gave her a little push. "I can't imagine the guilt you must be going through right now, but Emelie you need to face this. Not only for yourself but for these women as well. Besides, Kitty and I will be with you. You're not alone."

"... You're right. I can't just stop and look away from every mistake I let happen. That's the coward's way. Thank you, Ku–

"If it makes you feel any better, just know I had a great time cutting the dicks off those hobgoblins~"

" –rt... Excuse me?" She looked at him in disgust.

"Yeah. I can't wait to show you my art piece, hehehe."

"Suddenly I don’t feel like going in for an entirely different reason. Hold on, wasn’t the principal with you? Did she just watch you do this?"

"No."

"Oh thank good–"

"She helped me. It was a team effort. Although when I suggested we ram its own dick up its–"

"OK I HEARD ENOUGH! Let’s just go in and NOT talk about goblin dick!" She interrupted him and pulled him inside before he could continue.

Kurt noticed the slight tremble in her hands but chose to ignore it as he smiled at her like a proud father would.

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"Are you ready?" Kurt asked her when they stood at the corner of the base.

Emelie didn’t say anything but instead took a step forward and walked inside.

The first thing she saw was around 15 dead women all neatly laid next to each other. Some were obviously pregnant while others were completely malnourished.

"I’m sorry... Please forgive me..."

Her heart broke when she stood in front of them, but she refused to cry. Instead, she chose to kneel down and pray for them. When she finished, she got up and went to the cage with dead bodies and broken-off limbs, praying for them too.

"I wish I could bring them all back somehow but carrying them all with my magic would put too much strain on me. If only I were at my peak..."

"About that, I think I may have a solution. Hey Kitty, could you do your thing?

"Hmm? Do what thing?"

meow~

The little cat, who was perched up on Kurt's shoulder, jumped down and opened his mouth.

"What's happening?" Emelie asked Kurt.

"Just watch. Don't let me ruin the surprise."

A magic vortex suddenly appeared and sucked up everything that was in the cage.

"What the hell?"

It then went to the bodies that were neatly lined up and sucked them up as well. After which it jumped back on Kurt's shoulder and let out a yawn.

"Did that cat just..."

"Yep. I was surprised too the first time I saw him do that."

"Wait, then that means... at the alleyway..."

The cat jumped down from Kurt again as if he remembered something and this time instead of absorbing, it gagged out three bodies.

"Holy shit! It’s Arlo, Wesley and Ricky?! Why do you have them Kitty?"

"It’s the cultist and thieves who robbed Amy... So, you did kill them, Kurt."

"No. Only Arlo."

"...Why are you calling them by their names?"

"Because, even if it was for a short period in that alley, we were all friends." Kurt looked at the bodies with nostalgia.

"Riiigghht... I wonder why the cat gagged them out here?"

"Isn’t it obvious? It’s because this is a fitting grave for them~ Who wants to carry around a bunch of evil scum in their belly? Ain’t that right, Kitty~?"

meow

"Let’s just get out of here before you guys give me a headache."

"But I still haven’t shown you the goblin’s dic–"

"NO! We’re getting out!" She screamed as she lifted up Kurt and the cat then flew out the cave.

Once they were out, Emelie raised both her hands as she shot a telekinetic blast at the entrance, completely destroying the cave.

"Now the world will know pain..." Kurt mumbled.

Emelie, having figured him out a bit, decided to ignore him and fly with them back to the ship.

Chapter 60: Shooting The Shit

"Looks like they all got on the ship safely, although Dominik seems to be rowing back to shore for some reason." Emelie said when she spotted the boat halfway to the shore.

"He probably didn't know I could fly so now he's going back to wait for me. Silly Dom."

"No, I'm the one who's flying. You're just along for the ride. Don't make me drop you so that you can row your little boat with Dominik."

"So petty, Emy~"

"E-Emy?! Why are you calling me that!"

"Why not? We're friends, aren't we?"

"Still! Only Amy's ever called me that and my..."

"You're what?" Kurt became suddenly curious. "That little husband of yours you mentioned to me in your backstory, hmmm~?"

"S-Shut up! And stop wiggling your eyebrows like that else I'm throwing you off the deep end!" She began moving him towards the open sea.

"Alright! Ha ha ha! I'm sorry! I learnt my lesson so please stop."

"Hmph!"

"What the! You could carry Kurt like that Emelie?! Dammit, now I gotta row back!" Dominik screamed when he saw the two of them flying over him.

When they landed on deck Kurt saw five people tied and gagged up to the mast of the ship.

"So these are the cultists who were bringing those women to the island huh?"

He crouched down and pointed his steel dagger to their faces.

"You're lucky that my prefect friend already has plans to take you all to the station. Otherwise, we all would've had so much fun together. Your screams of torture would've been music to my ears..." He coldly whispered to them so that no one could hear.

Sweat profusely poured down their temple as they saw the look in this madman's eye. And the way he hovered and twirled the dagger near their faces only enhanced their fear.

pfffft tooot *sob*

"Did you just... *sniff* Aw shit! You're disgusting!" Kurt stood up and abruptly walked away.

"What's wrong Kurt?" Emelie asked when she saw him at the edge of the ship.

"That disgusting cultist just shat his pants after I threatened him a little."

"Maybe it was a defense mechanism, hahaha."

"Augh! What's that stench?!" Dominik chimed in as he boarded the ship.

"Kurt made that cultist over there shit his pants after he saw his ugly mug, tee-hee hehe."

"Whoa! Misinformation! I do not have an ugly face!"

"Pfft haha! Tell that to Brown Pants, hahaha!" Tears fell out her eyes as she couldn't stop laughing.

"Why you little... Get over here!" Kurt tried to catch her, but she was too nimble and flew away while laughing like a witch.

"Don't worry Kurt. I don't think you have an ugly mug" Dominik gave him a thumbs up.

"I– You–!" '....Haaaa just take the compliment, Rossana.' "Thanks Dom."

"No problem."

Kurt and Dominik both leaned over the ship's railing and looked out into the ocean as they spoke to each other.

"So, you the one who sailed this massive ship?" Kurt asked.

"Yep. I have this little fascination for them. It was pretty exciting to sail one for the first time."

"I'm sure you must've had tons of fun. What about the flying ship? Any interest in that?"

"Not really. I like the water physics that comes with sailing. It really makes me feel... connected with the sea and ship. What about you? Any hobbies?"

"Kill–AAHHH! Ehem! *Cough!* Sorry, spit went down the wrong pipe..."

"Ooof be careful man. I didn't even ask you anything complicated."

"I know. It’s just... This is embarrassing but I don’t really have any hobbies. Back at the... ninja village... all I ever did was train. Does training count as a hobby?"

"If you enjoy it then sure I guess?" Dominik shrugged.

"Then that is my hobby. Hmmm, I don’t see Diana or the ladies anywhere." Kurt looked around the deck for them but could not spot them. "Where are they?"

"The ladies didn’t want to be anywhere near those cultists so Principal Valentine took the below deck and showed them to their rooms. She also said something about teaching Courtney a lesson on how not to look wrongly at nor have any sinful thoughts of another woman’s man. Sounds like you’re going to have your hands full with her. Haha."

"And I’ll gladly keep them full." Kurt held his hand on his chest as he looked lovingly out the sea.

"Cupid really shot his arrow straight through your heart, huh? Same with the principal. Listen, if you need any help with problematic guys trying to get between you two, you can always hit me or Mia up. Especially Mia. She’ll chase away any man that surrounds her like a rabid dog now that her best friend finally got herself a boyfriend."

"I appreciate the offer, really," The hand that Kurt was holding to his chest suddenly turned into a fist and the loving look he just had turned into a twisted yet delighted smile as he looked towards Dominik.

"But I actually want to see the man who has the ball to try and take what’s mine. Who knows, maybe they’ll be the next to shit their pants, hehehe~"

’Oh my sweet Goddess above. They’re both crazy...’

"So, Dom, we just gonna shoot the shit all night or are we sailing back home?"

"Aww and here I was having fun hanging out with you. If we sail back now, we should make it back by midday tomorrow."

"You’re not going to get tired and fall asleep behind the wheel? It is pretty late and dark."

"The challenge excites me. Besides we’re on the clock now so we have to move fast before Tobias notices something’s amiss."

"I pray you get us all back safely, Captain Dee." Kurt pushed himself off the railing and went to the door that led to below the deck. "Oh yes, do you have any idea where Emelie went? I wanted to ask her one last important thing before calling it a night."

"She’s probably in her room. By the way, hers and Principal Valentine’s room is the first door to your right when you go down. They’re sharing a room. Yours is opposite theirs. We’re supposed to be sharing, but I’ll be up here taking us home. The rest of the two rooms were split between the rest of the women."

"Got’cha. Night Dom." He waved and he went down to see Emelie.

"See you in the morning bro."

Shut

"Nishishishi~ I hope you have fun tonight, Rosie~" Dominik giggled maniacally to himself as he watched Kurt leave.

...

Knock Knock

"Emelie. Diana. Can I come in?"

"You can come in. It’s just me anyway." Emelie called to him from within.

"Diana’s still giving her ’lesson’?" Kurt asked as he sat on the bed opposite hers.

"There’s that, yes. Also, she found some white wine in the kitchen and is drinking with Mrs. Cooper. I would drink with them but alas *sigh* I’m still seventeen."

"Womp womp." He smirked at her.

"Argh!" She threw her head back on her pillow. "So why’re you here? Your room’s opposite here in case Dominik didn’t tell you.

"I know, he did tell me. There’s something important I wanted to ask you but never really had the chance to. Depending on your answer, operations going forward will be either simple or very complicated."

Emelie sat up and looked in his eye with stern professionalism.

"Okay. Go on, ask away."

"... From what I know so far, you always have worked alone and kept your secret to yourself. But for some reason, despite your numerous regressions and actions taken, you always seem to fail, and the world ends during the second invasion war, right?"

"...Yes."

"Now, you see, I find that really strange. There’s just no way that’s possible. You said this is your 100th cycle and that the world would always end in 10 years. Not to sound like those geeks on reddit but–"

’Reddit?’

Emelie thought to herself.

"But that makes you approximately 1000 years old. That's too long of a span to not see any change. This leads me to my question. Emelie, is it possible that someone knows about your secret and struggle, and is purposefully interfering with you behind the scenes?"

Emelie looked at him wide eyed. She was surprised that Kurt could've figured all this out. But then again, if she were in his shoes, she'd also find it strange that no change has occurred in all these years and would also most likely have come to that same question.

"... Yes." Emelie answered. "There is someone that knows about my identity..."

"Really? Then all we have to do is–"

"But we can't kill him."

"Why? Wouldn't killing him eliminate the potential cause of all this?"

"If we kill that person, it'll only speed up the end of the world. Trust me I've tried."

"Speed it up? How?"

"... When that person is killed... he revives. And with his revival, a far worse entity awakens inside him. This entity makes him far stronger, faster and smarter than he's even been."

"Do you know this entity? Can his awakening be stopped somehow?" Kurt asked.

"No, the awakening cannot be stopped. As for this entity, I have searched the entire world for clues about its origin and found absolutely nothing. Thus, I came to the conclusion that it must be otherworldly. And as for the name, I've heard him say it a few times. He calls it 'System'."

"System? Sounds... errr... technical?"

"In any case, we don’t have to worry about him for now. He is not the cause of the end of the world, but he could become one if we kill him. As long as he doesn’t die everything should be fine."

"So, we ignore him? Even though he is a threat?"

"It’s more complicated than that but yes. Just leave him to me and don’t seek him out. He doesn’t know about this ’System’ yet and I would like to keep it that way."

"..... Alright. I’ll trust you."

"Thank you, Kurt. Is that all you wanted to ask?"

"Yeah..." He got up and walked to the door. "Goodnight, Emy."

"G-Goodnight, Kurt. Jeez, I’m not gonna get used to you calling me that."

"Womp womp~"

Shut

From two doors away Kurt could hear the sound of women laughing and talking as if they were having a party.

’Best to just leave them be.’

He went inside his room and threw off all his clothes as he got into bed. He laid down facing the ceiling with his arm behind his head and thought about the conversation he just had.

’Should we really just let this person be? *Sigh* Forget it. I’m sure Emelie knows what she’s talking about. Let’s just focus on what’s in front of me, which is capturing Tobias and saving those kids.’

With his resolve now clear, Kurt closed his eye as he drifted off in a deep sleep.

....

SHWOOSH

"Rosie, hehehe~"