THORNS 67

Chapter 67: The Minor Villain’s Monologue

"I must say, Your Majesty, this isn’t... *sigh* this isn’t the way I was hoping things would go down." Tobias spoke in a somewhat sad tone as he removed his hand from the spear and stood up.

"You sentenced my poor brother-in-arms to death and for what? For speaking out of turn? My, how... tyrannical of you He did not deserve that, oh no he didn’t. He was supposed to act like a victim at this damn clown show and yet you... *sigh*."

"....." Maxwell just kept staring at him with those golden dead eyes that showed neither panic nor fear.

"What’s wrong, Your Majesty? You were so chatty just now? Cat got your tongue~? Oh what am I saying, of course you cannot move. This is a new spell that my brothers and sisters had invented in order to stop anything that moves with a fifty-meter radius. Although it takes some pre-preparation. Here, look."

Tobias took off his priest robes which revealed a body filled with crude and cursed looking crimson tattoos.

’So that’s the completed spell? Arlo’s version only seemed to go up to his wrist.’ Kurt thought when looking at him in a frozen position.

’Also, is it just me, or am I finding myself frozen in place more and more these days? Arlo, the princess, Emelie and now Tobias. There’s also Diana if you count what she did to me in bed, hehe~’

"This is a wonderful spell, Your Majesty." Tobias spoke again after showing off his body and putting his robes back on. "Once it is activated, I have exactly ten minutes to do whatever I want to those caught inside it. But there is a way to extend that time."

Tobias pulled out a black dagger, grinned twistedly, and stabbed it into the neck of one of the royal guardsmen who was restraining him. The red tattoo on his palm began to quickly light up and started to absorb the blood as he held it over the spot where it was leaking.

"This spell needs a... fixed amount of blood to function properly, you see. Hence the need for pre-preparation. So tell me, your Majesty, where do you think we get the blood needed for this spell?

And before you can guess it, let me just tell you that using the blood of my brethren would most definitely be a no-go since we would need a deadly amount of it.

What's that? Monster and animal blood you say? Nope. Wrong answer again, Your Majesty. Their blood is not pure enough.

Come on now, the answer isn't that hard. Isn't that right Kurt?" He turned head at a creepy ninety-degree angle when looking at him.

'No... it couldn't be... Don't tell me it's–!'

"Ahh there's the reaction I was looking for. Although your face is frozen, I can still see the look of despair in your eye. Oh, and it looks like this body has been sufficiently dried up too." Tobias kicked away the thinned out and dead body of the guardsman.

"It's the children, Your Majesty. Their pure and untainted blood is what allows this spell to last for ten minutes. Any other human blood source would only yield flimsy results. That guardsman I just killed? A minute at most."

'This–! This sick bastard!' Kurt seethed with rage.

"But there's no need to worry, for you see not all our brethren are allowed to use this spell. Only those worthy and have proven themselves may. Otherwise we'd quickly run out of children to... use. And that wouldn't do because, as Kurt so appropriately put it, we still have our 'show' to put on."

Step

Step

Step

Tobias began to walk over to King Maxwell and stopped when right in front of him.

"I'll be taking this." He took away Arlo's tag from the king's grasp and looked him in his eyes.

"Still no life in those piercing eyes of yours. Do you even care about what I just said? Do you even care about the safety of those children?"

"..."

".... Haaaaa. After I kill you, maybe I should pay your dear children after this. The prince we don't need. The princess however, hehehe. Yeees. Although we couldn't have fun with the late queen before she died, we most certainly can with– hmm?"

He noticed the air around him was starting to feel denser and that Maxwell's body was slightly trembling.

"It... was... you?!... Killed...my... queen!" The king grunted between his teeth.

"... Ha.. haha... Ahahaha! Finally! You show a response! But don't get the story twisted. You were the one who was too late to save her. So doesn't that mean it's technically your fault?"

"TO...BI...AS!" Blue and golden aura was emitting from Maxwell's body the more he heard him speak.

"Hmm. As expected of a King. Not even this spell could've held you down forever. No matter. This is where you die. Farewell, Your Majesty!" Tobias swung down his dagger and aimed for his neck when,

Snap!

The dagger broke in pieces when it touched the king's aura.

"Oh my, how anticlimactic. Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned your wife and kids. But can you blame me? Your face is awfully dull most of the time."

Suddenly, Tobias' shadow began to stir and moved around as if it had a will of its own. The shadow then jumped up and landed next to him in a figure that was dressed in the cultist's robes and hood.

"Father." The figure spoke. "Was it really wise for you to blab all of our secrets like that? You even taunted and failed to kill the king."

"It matters not. The moment that heathen found out about our little goblin island and rescued those women, my identity would've been compromised anyway. It's funny how fate toys with us. Not only was nobody supposed to find that island, but we've also gotten our ship stolen from us and our brothers and sisters captured.

It feels like all of our plans are crumbling down right under our noses and that we're dancing in the palm of someone's hands."

"Father, that's enough monologuing. We've already lost three brothers in the span of a week, and you have about two minutes until the spell wears out and starts draining your own blood instead. We cannot lose you too. Let's leave."

"Always the impatient one, aren't you? Also, it's three minutes to be precise. I killed and drained another person."

"Father..."

"I know I know. His Majesty over here also looks like he's about to pop a vein any moment now. However, before we leave there is someone we absolutely need to kill. That's the whole reason why I came to this castle."

"Kurt Rossana." The figure said.

’Aw crapbaskets... And just when I was starting to feel like a fly on the wall too.’

A dark shadow enveloped both the figure and Tobias as they instantly appeared before Kurt.

"So, you’re the cause of all my dear friend’s trouble. Killing you and bringing your head to him will surely make him see me in a better light. May I have the honors, Father?"

"I’d personally prefer to finish him off myself, given all the trouble he’s been causing for myself as well, but if it makes you happy then sure. Go ahead. Hopefully this will put me in your good books, and you’ll take on more missions after this."

"Hehehe~ Thank you, Father." The figure took out his own black dagger and swung it towards Kurt’s throat.

’Now!’

Kurt grabbed hold of his wrist and subsequently twisted his arm.

"Wha–"

CRACK!

"AHHHHH!"

"NO! Why you–!" Tobias picked up the dagger that was dropped and immediately went in for the kill.

But right as he was about take a swing at Kurt is when–

SHWOOSH

SHING!

SPLAT!

"ARRRGH!" Diana appeared from above and cut his hand off with her crimson blade. The same hand that was used as a catalyst for his spell to work.

"Rosie! Are you okay?!" She ran up and grabbed his face to check.

"Diana! Watch out!" He then grabbed a hold of her body and jumped away.

"TOBIAS!!!"

"FATHER–!"

BOOOOM!

When the dust settled, Tobias and the figure were standing at the front door with a shadow cloak enveloping them both.

"That was dangerous, Your Majesty~! You could've killed me had it been a second too late! Kurt, it's a shame that I wasn't able to kill you here today but mark my words you will be hunted down by us. You'll regret the day you stepped foot in our world and killed our brothers!"

"You're not going anywhere, you filthy cult demon! Now die where you stand!" The king lunged forward with a burst of speed that left a mini crater in the ground.

Right when his hand was about to reach Tobias' face, the last thing Maxwell saw were those fox shaped eyes opening up to reveal the glimmer of a demonic red glow. And a smile so twisted it would make anyone shiver at just a mere glance at it.

"Goodbye, Your Majesty. Until we meet again~"

Maxwell phased straight through a dark smoke that they left behind and crash landed right outside the castle's steps.

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".... They're gone." Kurt whispered while still holding onto Diana.

When he tried to get her off of him, she only held him tighter and buried her face in his chest.

"Diana?"

"Guards!" Maxwell stormed back into his castle and screamed. "I want you to go to the church where Bishop Tobias does his service and gather up all the priests!

Royal Advisor Freed, I want you to go to the lodging of the Saintess and tell her to meet me at the church! Now go!"

"""Yes, Your Majesty!!!""" They all hurried to do their given tasks.

"Just you wait, Tobias. You will not escape my grasp..."

Chapter 68: Tobias The Fool

Far away from the chaos that had just happened at the king's castle was Austin, who was pacing up and down inside of the abandoned warehouse located about a hundred metres away from the church.

"Shit shit shit! Where are they?!" He infuriatedly yelled as he kept looking back at the black magic circle from where they were supposed to appear out of. "They were supposed to be here ten minutes ago! Fuck!"

He kicked an empty soda can against the wall as his impatience quickly grew.

"'OoOhHhh, your job is to stay here and keep watch over this magic circle for us, AuStiN.' Oh yeah, well fuck you and your stupid orders! I've waited long enough! I'm leaving!"

Right as he was about to leave, the magic circle finally activated, and out from it appeared Gary and Tobias from a shadowy cloak, looking like they had just returned from war.

"It's about tim–!"

"What the fuck was that about, hah!?" Gary shoved Tobias against the wall with his one good arm.

"Whoa now, little lamb. No need to get so mad." Tobias hit him with his usual creepy smile as if he did nothing wrong.

"What happened to you guys?" Austins pointed at Gary's twisted and broken arm as well as Tobias' missing hand.

"Why don't you ask this idiot!" Gary yelled as he pushed his forearm against Tobia's throat. "He had them all caught up in his spell and then he started fucking monologuing and provoking the king!"

"Wasn't plan A supposed to be that you two go there and make that Kurt guy look so bad that the king could order his execution? Why resort to plan B and use that spell? Did you get caught?"

"No. I mean, sort of." Gary begrudgingly let go of Tobias and walked away from him.

"Apparently that Kurt guy had already figured out what we were doing behind the scenes in regard to the children and the island. He even had evidence to back up his claims. So our so-called 'leader' here decided to resort to plan B and STILL failed!"

'Well, he is a minor villain after all. And not exactly the brightest tool in the shed.'

"Now now Gary." Tobias finally spoke. "Surely you must've enjoyed seeing the look on Maxwell's face as much as I have? That's not something you'd see every day. Maybe even in your lifetime."

"And I would've been just fine! I don't care about your stupid beef with the king! I only cared about going in there, making sure that Kurt dies one way or another and getting out! Speaking of Kurt, how the fuck was he even able to move before the spell was over?! Did you prematurely deactivate it?!"

"No, of course not, Gary. Who do you think taught you magic? The spell was perfect. Maybe he was out of my radius?" He asked himself. "No, I saw him get frozen too so that shouldn't be possible... Hm, what a mystery..."

"So Kurt isn't dead?" Austin asked Gary.

"N-No. Sorry Austin..."

"Wait a minute, weren't there three of you? Where'd the other priest go?"

"Unfortunately, our brother has fallen to the whims of that tyrant king." Tobias answered as he joined them to create a circle. "I suspect he is currently being tortured or is dead. Thankfully for us he does not know or contain any sensitive information that Kurt had already spilled the beans on."

"Oh my God..." Austin panicked as he held his hands on his head. "Not only did you royally fuck up but you also got our identities discovered."

"Not ours." Gary muffled while he was taking off his robes from over his head. "Only Tobias'. We're still in the cle–"

"Wait, Gray, do you hear that sound?"

"... Is that... marching footsteps?"

They both ran to the bordered-up window and peeked through what little space they could see out of.

"That’s–!"

"The royal guards. Looks to be about seven of them. The king must’ve ordered them to raid the church."

"Do you not see the other ten prefects with them?! We’re fucking surrounded!"

"It’s fine Austin. They’re not coming here."

"What do you mean ’it’s fine’!?"

"I mean that it’ll be fine even if we get caught. We’re both in our uniforms and they haven’t suspected us. Only Tobias."

"Oh my, I may have misheard but it sounds like you’re going to just leave me here."

"You didn’t mishear anything, Father." Gary scowled at him. "This is all your fault. They’re after you, not us. Your identity has been revealed, not ours. While there’s still time you should leave Eldoria and fix that hand of yours. I’ll send a letter to our brotherhood to let them know what has happened and that we should lay low until the end of the month."

"Hehehe, as cold as ever Gary."

"C’mon Austin. We’re leaving." He grabbed Austin by the arm and pulled him along with himself.

"But what about your arm?! Surely the guards must be looking for two people with a missing hand and a broken arm!"

"Thank you for worrying about me but there’s no need for concern. Look," A shadow had devoured Gary’s whole arm and soon enough...

Crack! Pop!

’Eurgh, what the fuck?!’ Austin cringed in disgust as he watched Gary’s arm fix itself.

"There. As good as new. Now, let’s get back to the dorms." Gary dragged Austin with him but then stopped and slightly turned his head at Tobias one last time.

"Good luck with the consequences of your actions. Despite how idiotic you’ve acted, you’re still my teacher and somewhat of a parental figure to me. I truly wish that you’ll come out of this unscathed so that we may see each other again soon. Goodbye, Father."

Shut!

"... Hehehe. How sentimental of you, little lamb..."

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"Diana. Psst hey. At least let me stand up." Kurt lightly shook her shoulders, but she still wouldn’t pull away from him.

"I-I thought I lost you, Rosie..." She trembled in his chest as she spoke with the feeling of having a lump in her throat.

"I’m fine, really. You know that I’m a tough nut to crack."

’Holy shit, she smells amazing~!’

"That hardly means anything when you're in front of a king who would sentence you to death just for looking at him wrong."

"I hardly consider that to be an offense. If they looked at my children the wrong way however, now that is a different story."

"Y-Your Majesty! I apologise for–"

"No need for any apologies, Rossana. It's thanks to you that we have identified a member of the cult. And a bishop of the church no less. It makes me wonder just how far their filthy hands have etched their way into the hierarchy... Speaking of hierarchy, Diana Valentine. What do you think you're doing?"

"....."

"D-Diana. The king is talking to you..."

".... Haaaa. What do you want, Maxwell?"

'Maxwell? Why so informal?' Kurt was surprised by the lack of respect in her voice.

"I asked, what do you think you–"

"That's what I should be asking you! Why the hell did you arrest my Rosie on false charges?!" Diana stood up and yelled at him.

"Did you not check your facts before you gave the order?! And why were their members of the cult in your castle?! What if Rosie got injured or worse, died?!"

"I assume by 'Rosie' you mean Kurt Rossana? I arrested him because he had hurt my child. It just so happens that he also had other charges against him as brought up to me by Bishop Tobias and my royal guards.

I was surprised to hear that he had kidnapped you. Although thankfully that turned out to be false, hence why you're here."

"Still the same insufferably doting parent I see."

"Protective is the word I'd use... Hmm?"

Maxwell noticed the subtle, yet not so subtle movements of Kurt as he leaned in closer to Diana and pulled her closer to him.

"I've been meaning to ask for a while now but, is there perhaps something going on between you two?"

"That's none of your business, Maxwell–"

"Yes. Diana and I are lovers." Kurt interjected.

"R-Rosie?"

"Lovers you say?" The eyebrows raised on Maxwell's perpetually bored face.

"Mmhm. Isn't that right, Ana~?" He held her hand and looked at her with the dark feeling of possessiveness taking hold of him.

"E-Ehm... y-yes..." Diana looked down and furiously blushed as she nodded.

"Hm. I see." His face went back to its usual self.

"In any case, Kurt Rossana, thanks to your efforts we have found a lead on the cult. By the way he was acting however I'm guessing that Tobias is only a small part of this massive problem. But a lead is a lead, and I will forever be grateful for what you contributed.

Regarding the offense of you attempting to murder a priest I hereby close that case due to the events that have just transpired. It became obvious when Tobias targeted you that you were indeed chasing a member of the cult and not a priest.

Next, regarding the offense of you suspected to have harmed and kidnapped Diana Valentine I hereby close that case as well. Clearly by the way you two are... acting, it was just a misunderstanding.

Lastly, on the offense of assaulting my son. Well, as I've said before, I will leave your punishment for him to decide. Your public lashings however I will revoke. You have enough problems on your plate with the cult now wanting your head."

"You were going to publicly lash my Rosie?" Gone was the shy look off her face as she stared at Maxwell threateningly.

"Hm. I was. But not anymore." Maxwell picked up his crown that was lying nearby and put it back on his head.

"Now if you'll excuse me, I cannot keep my men waiting. Rossana, you may leave as well and will be properly compensated in the near future. Farewell."

"Wait you–!"

"It's fine Diana." Kurt held her back from chasing after him. "It was a nothing burger of a punishment anyway."

"But Rosie..." She was about to touch his cheek when suddenly a royal guardsman came running from the entrance, waving and screaming her name.

"D-Diana Valentine! Diana Valentine! It's me, David!"