**THORNS 69**

Chapter 69: A Little Payback

"Diana! It’s so good to see you again! What’s it been like five years since we’ve last seen each other? I can’t believe–"

"I’m sorry, who were you again?"

’Pffft, ha!’ Kurt nearly burst out laughing but managed to hold it in and keep a straight face.

"W-What? Diana, it’s me. Da–"

"Principal Valentine or Ms. Valentine. Do not address me so informally."

"Heh *snrk* *cough* Ehem! I think I caught something in my throat..."

"Rosie!" Diana panicked and turned her attention back to Kurt. "I knew something was wrong with you! Why did you have to hold it in..."

"What are you doing, you criminal! Get away from her!"

Thud!

"Hey! Why’s you have to push me?! And don’t call me that! The king has already–"

"Shut up! I bet you were so frightened by our king that you decided to spill the beans and tell him where you were keeping Diana!"

"How delusional are you? Did you forget to take your meds?!"

"I'll save our king the trouble and kill you right here!"

SHING!

"Take one more step at my Rosie and I'll make sure you never walk again." Diana threatened and held her sword at him to stop him from going any closer.

"'My Rosie'? Diana, has this criminal somehow brainwas–"

"And I'm not going to tell you again. Either call me Principal Valentine or Ms. Valentine. We are not friends."

"B-But it's me. David. We were in the same academy together. The same year. The same class. We were even part of the ten representatives together..."

"Don't remember. Don't care. The only friend I cared about was, and is, Mia."

"Wha– But you promised me that if I become a 'somebody' that you'll give me a chance. Well look at me now. I'm a royal guard!" David opened his arms so as to highlight the prestigious armor he was wearing.

"Promise? I would never promise anybody anything related to my lovelife during my academy days. If I did then you must've somehow misunderstood me. Besides, I already have someone I deeply care about. I would advise you to give up and move on with your life."

Thud!

David fell to his knees and looked at the ground in absolute shock.

"B-But... Y-You... P-Promised..."

"Let's go, Rosie. I bet you haven't eaten yet. Also *sniff* you need a fresh pair of clothes."

"Wait, Diana." Kurt walked up to David, grabbed a fistful of his hair and lifted his head up.

"Davey Davey Davey... That's why I was smirking at you at the pier remember? I knew this was going to be the outcome and I imagine that I'm gonna deal with a lot more idiots like you in the future.

But it's fine. I welcome it even. Because Diana is mine and I am hers. Nobody is going to come between us. Not any king and certainly not some random royal guard. Oh, and this is for pushing me and treating me like shit without even checking the facts."

THWACK!

Thump!

Kurt kicked him square in the face with the sole of his shoe, causing his nose to bleed and a tooth to fly out.

"See you around, Davey." Kurt walked back to Diana with a skip in his step.

"Was that really necessary?" She asked without looking back or showing concern for the royal guardsman.

"You'd do the same if you were in my shoes."

"Hehehe~ Probably."

SHWOOSH

They teleported away together, leaving David by himself while looking at the ceiling.

"..... Fuck."

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SHWOOSH

"Why'd you take us here?" Kurt asked as they landed at the door of Sophie's Diner.

"I remembered how you were eating her food the last time I saw you here. You looked like you were really enjoying it."

"You were watching me?"

"O-Only a little..." She blushed when she thought back on that moment and when Sophie started teasing her for it.

"A-Also, you were here when we had our first kiss. So I assumed you must really like her food."

'Well technically it was a deal between me and Sophie in which I would only eat here. But since Diana and I are together now, I wonder if it's still valid. Meh, doesn't matter. I wouldn't deny that her food is good.'

"Thanks for bringing me here. Though I would much rather get changed and clean up first. I stay right over there down the street." Kurt pointed.

"At City View Hotel?"

"Yeah."

"W-Why don't you... stay...." Diana looked down at her feet and fiddled with her fingers as she started mumbling.

"Hmm? What was that? You got kinda quiet there."

"I said, why don’t you s-stay... with... m.."

"Huh? Why’re you talking so softly? I can’t hear you." Kurt leaned his ear in and listened carefully.

"Gosh! I’m asking why don’t you stay with me~? I have plenty of space and you wouldn’t have to pay a dime."

’So... So cuuute~!’ Kurt internally fawned at her awkwardness and shyness.

"As in, you want me to move in with you?"

"I-I know it’s a bit sudden but... I’d be really happy if you did..." She kept nervously looking at and away from him.

"Diana..." He took her hands and she looked at him expectingly. "I’d love to but I can’t. Not yet at least."

"But why..." She frowned. "Did I really ask too fast? Don’t you want to stay with me?"

"It’s none of the above. I also would like to stay with you, but I already booked a room for the entire month at that hotel."

"Can’t you just cancel it?"

"I could but... this might sound a little silly, I don’t want to come off as rude to them."

"Rude? What do you mean?"

"I don’t know, it’s just, the people there are so nice. Especially the front receptionist Darwin. They’ve been very accommodating and welcoming that I don’t want to just up and leave without even staying the full month.

I know that they’ll probably understand but it won’t make me feel any less bad. See what I mean by it sounding silly?"

"It’s not silly, Rosie. I’m just relieved that you weren’t opposed to the idea." She smiled warmly at him.

"Oh definitely not. If the offer still stands next month, then I’ll for sure take you up on it."

"Hehehe, I’ll take you in anytime~"

"Ana..."

"Rosie..."

"Are you two done flirting in front of my diner? Good. Then leave or order some food. You’re blocking the way for any potential customers."

"S-S-Sophie!" Diana jumped back. "H-How much of that did you see?!"

"All of it."

"W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W–"

"D-Diana?!" Kurt was confused on what to do when she started jittering.

"Here we go..." Sophie sighed and covered her ears.

"WAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!! DON’T LOOK AT ME!!!!!"

SHWOOSH!

"Wha–! Why?!"

"Same old shy Diana. She’s just afraid that I would’ve teased her."

"Would you have?"

"Yes." Sophie smirked. "So you coming in or what?"

".... Later. I want to get back to my room and freshen up..."

"Suit yourself then." She went back inside and closed the door.

".... Dang. I hope Diana’s alright." He offered her his condolences and walked towards the hotel.

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"Hmm? Emelie? What are you doing here? And what’s with all the luggage?"

"Kurt. I’m glad you’re alright. Amy mentioned to me that this is where you’re staying, so I decided to stay for the week as well for convenience’s sake."

"I see. Convenient indeed. Still, that’s a lot of luggage for the week. Looks like you’re moving in."

"We women have different priorities than you men."

"A woman? You? Pffft!"

"Hey." She glared at him.

"Oh right. The whole regressor thing."

"Whatever. So, are you gonna help me carry this inside or not?"

"How did you even bring these here?"

"Same way I carried you. But I'd rather not waste any more magic than I already have. It took nearly all I had to get to Principal Valentine and warn her about your situation."

"So that's how she knew to come? Well now I have to help you out." He said as he picked up a few of her suitcases.

"Mmhm. Buy me an additional soda and we can call it even."

"Deal."

They came to a mutual agreement and went inside to book her a room.

"Kurt! I'm glad you're here." Darwin greeted him. "You didn't come back yesterday so I was starting to get worried."

"Did something happen yesterday?" Kurt asked.

"Not yesterday but rather this morning. A tailor by the name of Raphael came by to drop a few suits for you, but you weren't here to collect them, so I told him I'd keep them for you."

"Really? Thank you, Darwin. Talk about perfect timing too since I don’t really have anything else to wear, haha."

"No problem Hold on, let me run to the back and get them for you."

"You don’t have anything else to wear? Seriously Kurt? What about underwear? Don’t tell me you’ve been wearing the same–"

"Shhhh! Emy! What are you saying?! Of course I bought different underwear. Jeez..."

"Good. That’s a relief to hear."

Chapter 70: New Neighbour

"That’s seriously a lot of suitcases..."

"I’m pretty sure I didn’t order that many..."

Emelie and Kurt watched Darwin and a few staff employees haul out suitcase after suitcase of Kurt’s new clothing. Five cases in total.

"Ehm, Darwin? Did Raphael really bring all these out for me? It’s a bit too much."

"Why, yes he did, sir. I too was surprised by the amount. When I asked him why he told me it was because, and I quote, "I was hit by a sudden wave of inspiration when I saw and measured his body." He looked especially... happy when he said the words ’measured’ and ’body’."

"Pffft hehehe! Guess we’re not so different now, huh Kurt." Emelie laughed when she saw all his luggage compared to hers.

"Darwin, my friend, is it possible to ask if the employees here could carry these up to my room? I’d appreciate the help."

"Of course! It’s no problem at all. That is why they work here after all. Chop chop people, you heard our dear patron." When Darwin clapped his hand, the employees promptly picked up his suitcases and carried them up the stairs so as to not block the way of anyone using the elevator.

"Now, Ms. Herst. Judging from all the luggage you brought, am I right to assume that you’re here to book a room?"

"You know me?"

"Who doesn’t know about THE Emelie Herst. A.K.A. The Best– Ehem!" Darwin nearly started fan-boying out but managed to compose himself.

"I mean yes. Your reputation precedes you Ms. Herst. It would be stranger if I didn’t know you."

"That so? In any case you’re right in that I am here to book a room."

"That’s wonderful! And how long will you be staying?" Darwin asked as he reached under his desk to grab some papers for her to sign.

"A week. And if there’s a room available, I’d like to have one that’s near him." She pointed with her thumb at Kurt

"Oh my. Are you two perhaps..."

"Distant relatives, yes." Emelie quickly answered before he got the wrong idea. "He’s still new to Eldoria so I took it upon myself to show him around."

"Really, Kurt?! Why didn’t you say you were related to THE Emelie Herst?!" He quickly turned his head between the two of them as if trying to find the resemblance.

"Oh, it errr.... It slipped my mind. Eldoria's a big place compared to where I'm from so I couldn't help but go on my own little adventure. It's the reason why I didn't come back yesterday, haha"

"I see. That's understandable. If I were a tourist, I'd be pretty overwhelmed too. Eldoria's a very beautiful place. Now, Ms. Herst, let me check those rooms for you..."

While Darwin was looking through the list of available rooms, Kurt dragged Emelie to the side where he whispered to her.

"What was that about? Relatives? You really put me on the spot there."

"It's not that big of a deal." Emelie shrugged nonchalantly.

"It is when everybody freaks out by just hearing your name. What if the word spreads? Oh God, I can already picture it. You piss off some random noble boy or girl, and now they want revenge on you by going through me..."

"Funny how I can picture that happening too, haha. But don't worry, I'll be on my best behavior. Don't think about it too hard, Kurt.

Besides, I say it's the perfect excuse. We're going to be seen together a lot from now on anyway, so you better get used to the limelight, partner~" She gave him a cheeky smile and went back to Darwin.

"... She's a maniac." Kurt sighed as he followed her back to the front desk.

"Ah, Ms. Herst." Darwin looked up from his clipboard. "You're in luck. It would seem that two rooms on the third floor have opened up. Room 16 and 17. Kurt is currently residing in room 15. I take it you'll take room 16–"

"17." Emelie quickly corrected him. "Give me room 17 please."

"Do you mind me asking why? Wouldn't it be much easier for both of you if you were next to each other."

"Because my dear Darwin~, last time I was neighbours with him I caught no sleep due to him and his girlfriend staying up all night. You catch my drift?"

"Whoa! T.M.I. Emy!"

"That shouldn't be a problem, Ms. Herst. Our walls are embedded with the best sound proofing magic in the industry–"

"An extra layer of protection? Even better for me then. I'm sticking with room 17, thank you." Emelie smiled as she made her final decision.

"Y-Yes ma'am. The payment amount is listed here as well as where you need to sign..." Darwin slowly slid the contract to Emelie.

Kurt, on the other hand, was staring at a particularly interesting speck of dirt on the ground since for some reason his head felt too heavy to look up at her.

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"Thank you for staying at City View Hotel. We hope you enjoy your time here..." Darwin waved at Emelie as the two of them were standing in the elevator.

"Thank you for having me." Emelie waved back as the elevator doors closed.

Ding! Shut

The elevator ride was awkwardly silent. Mainly since Kurt still hasn't lifted his head and looked at her.

"Why so quiet?" She asked him.

"... The shame, Emy. The shame I feel is unbearable..."

"Oh that? I'm long over it. I was only teasing you back there."

"Still, if there's anything I could do that'll wash away this feeling, please, let me know."

"So dramatic." Emelie rolled her eyes. "Fine. Dinners on you tonight, Mr. Rich-Man. Also, buy me a six pack of grape flavoured soda."

"Deal. What's the soda brand?"

"Drinksalot."

"D-Drinksalot? How... straight-forward."

"You should try it. It's really good."

"Damn. If THE Emelie Herst is saying so, then who am I to refuse."

"Don't you start too..."

Ding

Kurt help Emelie carry her bags into her room then promptly left thereafter before telling her,

"Meet you downstairs in an hour? Looks like we both got some rearranging to do."

"Yeah." She nodded. "See you then. And thanks for the help."

"Anytime." He waved with two fingers and left for his own room.

’Hm?’ He stopped right before swiping his card to unlock the door.

’I can hear something moving inside. A robber? A staff member?’

Kurt reached for his dagger only to remember,

’Oh shit! I completely forgot to take back my weapons! Ngaaah, screw it! Those were cheap and disposable anyway. *Gasp!* Also, Arlo’s tag! I bet Emelie would’ve known how to unlock it. Dammit! I could’ve been so much more richer!’

The movement inside the room suddenly stopped. That’s when Kurt noticed the very faint shadow lurking beneath the door.

’Are they waiting to get the jump on me? Hmph, not if I surprise you first.’

Kurt readied himself to launch himself at whoever may be waiting for him.

’Aright, here we go. In 3... 2... 1... Now!’

Beep

"Got’cha bitc–!"

*meow*

"... You’re kidding me. Kitty?"

*meow?*

"How did you even get in here?" Kurt calmed down and deflated as the sudden rush of adrenaline left his body.

"Last time I saw you was on the ship." He bent down to pet the cat as he thought back.

"C'mon, let's go inside. I don't know the rules about keeping cats here so you're probably gonna have to leave soon."

*meow purrr~*

Shut

Kurt spent the next 45 minutes taking both a shower and a relaxing bath as he cleansed all his worries away and emptied his mind. After which he then sorted through all the suitcases and packed his new clothes away while keeping the ones he decided to wear.

"All done. Let's bounce, Kitty."

*meow!*

The cat jumped on his shoulder and together they left for the lobby.

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"Hmm? Looks like Emelie got here first."

"Kurt. There you are– What's with those shades? And I see that Kitty has once again popped out from nowhere."

"You like it?" Kurt adjusted the round sunglasses on his face and flashed her a charming smile.

"It's... nice."

"Thanks. I like your green crop top too. It's a nice change of pace from your white uniform. Compliments your hair nicely."

"And I see you haven't ditched the black. Didn't you learn your lesson from last time?"

"Whoa whoa whoa! Do you not see the white shirt with a beautiful black floral design? Besides, we ninja are supposed to be stealthy."

"Where did you even get these clothes? I thought you only got suits?"

"They came inside the suitcases. Turns out it was not only suits but a whole plethora of casual and formal wear. I really oughta thank Raphael next time I see him. Maybe give him a generous tip. I was kinda acting like a dick last time I saw him..."

"Yeah, well that can wait. We need meet with Dominik and update him on the situation. While we are walking, you can also tell me how your meeting with the king went." She waved her hand over her shoulder to let Kurt know to follow her.