THORNS 83

Chapter 83: Three New Faces

"S-Sir?" A servant of Diana’s timidly spoke up from behind Kurt.

"Yes?" Kurt answered when turning around from the door that the three maids just walked into.

"Good morning, sir. If you would please follow me to the dining room, your breakfast awaits you there."

"Oh, thanks. Lead the way. I only know what Diana’s room and the kitchen really looks like. Also, you don’t need to call me ’sir’. It’s a bit stifling, no?"

"N-Nonono! Head Maid Wendy told me to think of you as my superior and to be treated with respect! F-Forgive me, but I must insist on calling you ’sir’. Lest I face punishment or lose my job... P-Please! Please don’t make me lose my job. I-It’s all I have! W-Waaa! *Sob* Waaah!..."

"Ok! Ok! You can call me sir! I’m sorry! There’s no need to get on your knees and cry like that! You’re gonna get snot on my pants! Stop it!"

As Kurt tried pushing away the head of the servant from his pants, he noticed a sudden movement from Diana’s door. When he turned back around to see what it is, he saw,

"... *Tsk!*"

Shut!

"You’ve got to be shitting me..." He sighed as he saw the same irritated maid click her tongue again and scorn at him before shutting the door this time.

"Is everything alright?"

"Wha– Weren't you just ugly-crying on the floor just now?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. Now, once again, please follow me before your breakfast gets cold, sir." The servant elegantly walked down the stairs and waited for Kurt halfway.

'Don't tell me that was all pre-planned? Haaaa, I seriously hope not. Going through the ringer of Diana's personal servants' and maids' antics is something I do not find particularly amusing.'

...

"This is where I shall stop since I have much work to do. The dining room is just beyond this door. Enjoy your breakfast, sir."

"Thanks. And one more thing before you leave." Kurt stopped him before he walked away.

"Yes? W-Was my escorting skills not up to par? A-Are you somehow dissatisfied with me?! I-I'm sorry! Please don't tell the Head Maid! W-Waa–"

"Stop it! Holy shit! Don't grovel on your knees and start crying again, Jesus Christ..."

"T-Then... what's the problem?"

"... It's nothing, don't worry about it."

'I was just gonna ask if he was actually crying back there or if he and a couple of servants and maids have a problem with me. Safe to say this guy has a screw loose upstairs from always thinking of the worst possible outcome. That, or his just sacred shitless of this Head Maid.'

"I see. Well then, if you would excuse me." The servant politely bowed once and left Kurt for whatever work he spoke about.

As Kurt entered the dining room, he was immediately hit by the scent of freshly baked bread, the smoky smell of bacon that had a hint of something otherworldly to it, the familiar sulfuric scent of egg that screamed 'welcome home, and to top it all off, the rich, complex and comforting scent of warm coffee that would draw anyone's nose in.

Growl

'I think I'm gonna cry too, Mr. Servant.'

"Well someone's hungry~" Diana appeared from behind him and poked his cheek.

"Yeah. It smells amazing." Kurt nearly foamed at the mouth as had his eyes glued to the table like he just found a piece of treasure.

"I'm glad you like it. The chefs would be pleased to hear it. Now come, let's eat." She dragged him by the hand and directed him to the head of the table to sit down,

"Are you sure I should sit here? I am a guest after all."

"Don't be silly. What's mine is yours and this seat belongs to you. Now sit." She pushed him down by the shoulders, and forced him to take a seat.

"But where are you gonna sit? There's only one chair."

"Why, right here of course." Diana plopped down and sat on his lap.

"Uhm... Diana. How am I supposed to eat like this?"

"Exactly, Ms. Valentine." Wendy entered the room while carrying another chair. "Please show some common decency and take a seat. Here, I've brought one for you to sit on."

"A pity for you, isn't it Rosie? I know how much you like you like to feel my–"

"AHEM! Ms. Valentine."

"You're so boring at times, Wendy." Diana pouted and sat in the chair next to Kurt.

"I apologise about her behaviour, Mr.... err... Rosie?"

"Hmm!?" Diana shot her a mean glare. "Did I hear you correctly? Why are you calling him Rosie? Huh? Is there something you wanna say to me?"

"Excuse me? I-I don't understand?"

"It's Kurt! Kurt Rossana! Diana's the only one who calls me Rosie, you see."

"Ooh... Oh my goodness! Ms. Valentine, I'm truly sorry! I did not know–"

"It's ok. I understand. It's partly my fault for not introducing you to each other earlier and as they say, there's no sin in not knowing. But do be careful from now on."

Tsk!

'Hm? What the! Since when did those three get here?!' Kurt noticed the three maids from before now standing near the diner door as if to await their next orders.

The first maid had shoulder-length straight black hair and facial features that looked distinctly Asian. Kurt recognised her as the one who was always clicking her tongue and was currently giving him the stinkiest of looks.

The next maid stood in the middle of the two and had blonde hair which was tied into twin tails. She had lively green eyes and sharp facial features that would make anyone second-guess whether she truly was

a maid and not part of any well known family. Kurt recognised her as the one who gave him a very ’enthusiastic’ greeting and was currently trying her best not to laugh.

The last maid had soft facial features and gentle blue eyes. Her hair was a light shade of purple and was neatly tied into a braid that hung over her shoulder. Kurt recognised her as the one who tried but fumbled over her words when she greeted him. She was currently fiddling with her braid like her life depended on it while trying not to look up.

"Mr. Rossana, pardon the late introduction. My name is Wendy and I am the Head Maid of this mansion and its employees as well as the personal maid to Ms. Valentine. Please don’t hesitate to ask me if you need anything."

"Nice to meet you, Wendy. Although I just said my name, let me formally introduce myself. My name is Kurt Rossana and I’m–"

"My lover." Diana chimed in and proudly took a bite from her muffin.

"Pffft–"

"... *Tsk*"

"Oh my oh my. So it’s trueeee~"

"You three! What with the ruckus!" Wendy turned to them and scolded.

"I-It’s nothing, bossmaid! You must be hearing things."

"Y-Yes! Uhm... nothing, ahaha..."

"...."

"Honestly, you three. Please forgive their rudeness, Ms. Valentine. Mr. Rossana. Even though they're special maids training directly under me, it seems as though they still lack discipline."

"I don't mind." Diana waved it off nonchalantly.

"Yeah, it's fine. Although, if they're 'special maids', shouldn't they also introduce themselves?"

"Of course, Mr. Rossana. Girls! Line up!" Wendy clapped.

"Yo, bossman– I MEAN–! Mr. Rossana. The name's Sadie. Nice to meet'cha!" The blonde-haired maid greeted him first.

"H-Hello, Mr. Rossana. My name is Isabel. I am at your shervichshy... s-service." The purple-haired maid greeted him second while once again, tripping over her words.

"Yuna." The Asian greeted him lastly. Sort of.

"Nice to meet you all. Here's hoping we get along." Kurt ignored all of their quirkiness and greeted them normally.

"Hehee! You got it, bossman–!"

"You three can go back to your stations now. Please don't mind their behaviour, Mr. Rossana. I can personally vouch for them that they are capable maids."

"I believe you." Kurt shrugged and dug into his food.

"Rosie~ You got a little something right there."

"Hmm?"

"Boop. Hehehe~" Diana touched his nose for no reason and giggled at his clueless face.

"... C-Cuteness overload."

"... I’ve never seen Ms. Valentine so playful before. Wooow."

"... *Tsk!*"

...

After Kurt and Diana were finished eating they stood at the front and held hands as they got ready to teleport away.

"Ms. Valentine, will you be back by tonight or working overtime?"

"I’ll be back. Work should slow down a bit now that I’m just about done with the paperwork."

"I see. And Mr. Rossana? Will we be expecting you again?"

"As much as I’d love to, I can’t. I’m already staying at a hotel but I don’t plan on cancelling it due to... well, let’s just say work."

"I understand. Please know that you are always welcome here." Wendy and the other three maids bowed at him.

"Thanks."

"So where to, Rosie? I believe Emelie is still at the dorms if she hasn’t left already."

"No. Take me to City View Hotel. I have something I want to pick up."

’I’m sorry Diana. But this small lie will only last for 1 week, I promise.’

"Sure. See you later Wendy. Girls."

""""Have a good day, Ms. Valentine."""""

SHWOOSH

Chapter 84: Heavy Rain And A Clouded Mind

SHWOOSH

The world snapped back around Kurt and Diana with a wet crack. They appeared inside of a cramped alleyway and were standing protected under the ventilation ducts from the light rain.

"Where are we?" Kurt asked as he looked around, not recognising the space he’s at.

"Relax, we’re just around the corner of the hotel. I didn’t want to alert people by suddenly teleporting inside of the building."

"Oh. Good thinking, but I get the feeling that that’s not all there is to it."

"Haha. You caught me. I just didn’t want people to see this," Diana reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck as she pulled him in for a kiss.

The kiss was slow and deep, the kind that lingered as they ignored the sound of rain which was turning from a light drizzle into a heavy downpour.

When she finally drew back, a thin, clear thread of saliva stretched between their lips for a fleeting second before snapping in the cold air.

"Now I feel extra energised for the day. And as much as I'd like to stay longer, I sadly must go. I kind of just ditched Mia yesterday so I owe her an apology–"

But before she could finish her sentence and teleport away, with a firm tug by her forearm, Kurt pulled her back into his space. This time the kiss was fierce and grounding. The kind that took her breath away as she melted in his arms.

When he finally let go, she stood there for a heartbeat, dazed and flushed against the grey backdrop of the rain.

"Sorry, but I can't have you always taking the initiative in this relationship. Now I too have a bit of extra energy to take on the day." Kurt smiled as he wiped away the tiny trace of saliva that clung to the side of her mouth, being careful as to not smear her lipstick.

A look of genuine reluctance crossed Diana's face as her hand hovered near where his grip had been. She looked at him with a longing gaze before finally giving in and hugging him goodbye.

"See you later, Rosie. And please stay safe. I don't want to nearly get another heart attack again. I love you."

"I will. I love you too."

After they said their goodbyes, Diana vanished from her spot, leaving the cramped space they were together in feeling much emptier.

'Now. It's finally time to get back to business.'

Kurt ran out of the small alleyway and took a left to get to the hotel. Luckily for him, he didn't get too wet, which earned him a nod of approval from the janitor who was currently mopping the floor.

"Hey Darwin. Quite the weather we're having this morning, huh?"

"Kurt. Good morning. Yes, indeed it is, but that's just how Mother Nature operates at this time of year. We were fortunate that it's been clear for a couple of days, however it seems that winter is not done with us yet."

"Uh-huh. Say, did Emelie come back yesterday? I don't wanna knock on her door only to find that nobody's home."

"She sure did. Although she was not in the best of moods. She returned back soaking wet, ignored anybody who tried asking for her autograph and retired straight to her room. Has this got something to do with the events that transpired in the park yesterday? I heard you also participated in it, but alas, I wasn't able to attend."

"Probably? Hmm. I should go check on her. See if she's okay. Later Darwin." Kurt pushed himself off the front desk and walked to the elevator.

"Yes, until next time. Enjoy the rest of your day."

Kurt rode the elevator up and quickly entered his room to change into something warmer, on account of the weather.

'Let's see... I guess this will do.' He opened one of the suitcases and found something more casual that mainly consisted of a plain white t-shirt, blue denim jeans and a light brown leather jacket. Soon after he left his room and made his way to Emelie's.

Knock Knock

"....." Ten seconds went by and Kurt heard neither a whisper nor a peep from the other side of the door.

'Is she really here?'

Knock Knock

"Emelie, you there? It’s Kurt."

He waited another ten seconds but still heard nothing.

’You know what they say, third time’s a charm.’

Right as he was about to knock again, he heard a beep and clicking sound which indicated that the door was unlocked. The door also slowly opened up with seemingly nobody behind it, and once it was wide enough for Kurt to enter, he saw the room’s keycard, which was floating in midair, fall down to the ground.

"Damn, what can you not do with that magic of yours. That’s some serious convenience you got flowing through your veins." Kurt picked up the keycard and closed the door as he walked in the room.

The first thing that Kurt noticed was that the room was oddly clean. He sort of expected it to be messy considering all the luggage she brought.

’But then again, she is the serious type and not exactly your typical teenage girl.’

The bed, however, had its sheets completely removed. His eyes were drawn to a massive cocoon-like structure made of said bed sheets and blankets which sat in front of the sliding glass door.

"That you, Emelie?" Kurt walked around the cocoon when he saw Emelie staring out the glass door while watching the rain with a blank stare and listening to music through her wireless earphones.

"What are you listening to?"

".... Just some Lo-fi tunes." She answered without looking at him.

"Lo-fi, huh? Very atmospheric."

"Hm."

...

He waited for her to say more, but instead she just kept quiet and watched the rain.

"So uhm, how do those earphones work? I don’t see any phone or device that you’re connected to."

"... It’s through the recording tag around my neck. It’s connected to my earphones through some magical frequency bullshit I don’t really care to know about."

"Ahh. You talking about bluetooth?"

"Dunno what that is. Never heard of it, so it’s probably not that. But like I said, I don’t really care."

"Right, right..."

"...."

Kurt then crossed his legs and sat down next to her.

"Have you eaten yet?" He asked her.

"No."

"Are you hungry"

"No."

"I see..."

"..."

"Emelie."

"Hm?"

"Is something bothering you? If this is about me getting, you know, stabbed, then you don't have to beat yourself up over it. As you can see, I'm fine."

Emelie finally turned her head, and after looking at him for a good five seconds, she turned back to the glass door.

"I'm glad you're okay. Congrats on your recovery."

'So this is not about me?'

Suddenly, from Kurt's peripheral vision, he saw a bolt of light strike down from the clouds which then was immediately followed up by a thunderous clap.

"Goddess Bula must really be weeping from above. I wonder what upset her?" Emelie muttered.

"Emelie."

"Hm?"

"Do you want to tell me what's bothering you so much? I may not have the answers you're looking for, but at the very least I'm a good listener."

"I... I just feel like shit, that's all." Emelie took out her earphones and put them back in its pod.

"My relationship with my best friend is going to shit. People acting up and doing what they're not supposed to, is shit. You, getting under my watch hurt is shit. This stupid rain that doesn't look like it's going to stop soon and reminds me of so many bad memories, is shit."

"That's a lot of shit. You sure you don't need to use the toilet? It'll lighten the load."

"Pffthahaha! Really? You're so corny. Aren't you supposed to comfort me?"

"That's a dangerous word you're using. I'd rather not have Diana crush my balls, thank you very much."

"I meant you should give me words of comfort. You know, tell me everything's gonna be alright and whatnot."

"I'd rather we just tackle those problems you're facing head on. Clear up the fog in your mind and free up some space so that you can focus on what really matters, saving the future."

"The future, huh?"

Emelie looked up at the heavy rain and closed her eyes for a brief moment. After which she opened them and turned to look at Kurt who was smiling gently at and waited for her response.

"We're in this together, right?" She asked him with a tinge of vulnerability.

"It's ride or die. And we're definitely going to make it the shitty ending that awaits us and the whole world." Kurt pointed his fist towards her with a beaming smile that radiated confidence.

"Yeah. We will." She pointed out her own fist and bumped it together with his.

"Sorry for being all broody and whatever. That was totally lame of me."

"Nah. You’re good. Everyone needs a little pick me at times." Kurt stood up and stretched his back. He then offered his hand to Emelie so that she could pull herself up, and when she did, it revealed an unexpected sight to him.

"What the hell are those granny pajamas?!"

"Shut the fuck up and wait for me downstairs!" She yelled in embarrassment as she pushed him towards the front door.