

MY VILLAINESS EX WON'T LEAVE ME ALONE

Chapter 191 191: 6.2 - Smell Of Success

Lady Lily invited Lucian in when he arrived, motioning to the couch in her private room, "Please, have a seat."

Lucian had rescued her from the ruins of the camp. She was also hiding in one of the pits underground. He covered her tracks and took her to the capital city on his way back after the ambush happened.

If he had not found her, she would have died from exposure to the smoke. If not that, then executed by the royal guards. She was one of a few witnesses to the assassination attempt that happened that night, and would be a liability to the culprit.

"I need breast milk, urgently," he said before sitting down.

"..." Lady Lily's gaze shifted from Lucian to the baby and back. "Is that...?"

"My...child," Lucian replied.

She seemed to understand the situation and didn't ask any more questions, "Wait here, I'll get you some."

She was sharp, knew how to read the room, knew how to be secretive, and had a good intuition. That's why Lucian chose her for this task, and not someone else.

Her relationship with Edmund might be a problem, but Lucian knew Edmund was not going to leave the walls of the academy any time soon. The moment he did, the Rochefort army would come and take him away.

Edmund was a valuable study subject for shackleds, after all. Lucian and Celine would welcome any chance of a cure. That's why he had to be kept alive and under supervision.

Lady Lily returned with a bottle full of milk, "Here. It's from one of the sisters, who gave birth a month ago. It's fresh."

"Thank you." Lucian accepted the bottle, waiting for her to leave the room before he could feed his son.

Once alone, he lifted the cloth covering his son's face. "Little one, time to eat."

The room was dimly lit, but the baby's eyes were still closed; his hair was thin, almost not noticeable, which made Lucian think his son would probably inherit his hair color.

That didn't matter, though. What mattered was his eye color, which would determine the child's destiny.

They would raise the child as a commoner if his son had his eyes, but if the boy had her eyes...

If the child had her eyes, it would be proof of the blood flowing through the child's veins. Only the Rocheforts' bloodline had blue eyes. The world would go after the child with their fangs bared.

Even Celine wished the baby's eyes would not be blue, or their son would have to be hidden from the world.

She wasn't joking when she said she would take care of the child alone and only let him visit once in a while; that's only if the child didn't carry the cursed blue eyes.

If it did, the child would have to stay with him to be safe. She wouldn't be able to protect the child, and that hurt her pride.

Lucian pressed the nipple of the bottle against his son's lips and watched the baby have no strength to suckle. He had to squeeze the nipple to get some drops out for the child to swallow.

His son was very weak, already getting exhausted from the feeding.

Lucian watched his son fall asleep after a few gulps and covered his face again, repeating the process after half an hour.

He didn't put him down even for a second, making sure he was warm as if still in his mother's womb.

'She should be sleeping right now...!' He wondered how she was faring at the clinic. He wanted to visit her, but couldn't, not until his son could open his eyes.

Lucian had been in a constant state of restlessness, and his nerves were shot to hell as the feeding session continued.

He couldn't wait anymore and carefully lifted his son's right eyelid.

The baby flinched, his tiny hand moving, and Lucian's heart dropped to the floor at the sight.

Blue.

It was blue.

As blue as the skies, as blue as the oceans, as blue as the ice covering the mountains.

As blue as the Rochefort's curse.

Lucian's arms shook, and he covered his son's face again, his hands hovering in the air, unsure what to do.

He couldn't even leave him in another person's care and go to work. He had to feed him himself, make sure he didn't die in the care of a stranger. Not with those eyes.

Lucian took out his ledger and wrote a note to Celine, telling her the "good" news. He would leave it there on his way to the south.

The note would have a blue ribbon attached to it.

The baby left a soft cry before falling asleep in exhaustion again.

Lucian hugged his son to his chest and tried not to weep for their future.

It was a miracle the baby had been born alive at all. He should be grateful for that, but his mind couldn't stop replaying the moment when his son had opened his eyes, and the world had suddenly become a lot more dangerous.

Lucian was afraid to go to sleep and let the night pass in a daze.

The next morning, Lucian washed his face with one hand, the other still holding his child. He was in desperate need of a shower and a shave, but his son decided changing his diaper was the most important task he should be doing at the moment.

It was the first time his son needed his diaper changed. Lucian's eyes sparkled with happiness. It meant that his son was alive, was eating, and was able to defecate on his own.

He was doing great, and Lucian was a happy dad. His son was also a stinky one, and Lucian was a tired dad.

"Oof...this is the smell of success," he said as he tried to change his son's diaper while holding his breath. The smell wasn't bad, and there wasn't a lot of waste. "You could do better, but I'll take it. You'll have plenty of opportunities to show off in the future."

The child didn't appreciate his humor and cried softly with his eyes closed, demanding a faster service.

"Patience is a virtue, my dear son. You should learn that soon. Your mother doesn't have it, so you'd better inherit it from me," he washed and dried his son, wrapping a new diaper around him.

He had seen Karoline handle her kids' business, and Lucian swore that her children must have been made out of rubber with how not gentle she was with them.

He was afraid that if he did it similarly, his son would be torn apart like paper and become one with the wind.

'Let's see if we can visit your mother today,' he thought as he dressed his son in a new onesie and wrapped him in a warm blanket. It was going to be a cold day.

Author's note

Roc is a legendary bird from Middle Eastern and Persian mythology, described as so majestic and enormous that it could carry elephants, create storms with its wings and darken the sky when flying.

Lucian had sent a message through Togo to Celine. She didn't recover yet, but the news of her son's departure made her transfer her location to Honeywell street, where their buildings shared a wall, waiting for him to arrive.

Lucian took a quick shower, then changed into a more luxurious suit, one that would make him look like a wealthy merchant on his way to a business meeting.

Compared to his teacher's light attire, this one was darker, with a black vest and a white shirt underneath it, a pair of gray pants, and a long black coat. His hair was slicked back, making him look more serious and less friendly.

He then packed an extra bag for his son's journey, baby supplies to the brim, to be sure that the child wouldn't lack anything.

Fresh breast milk would be difficult to provide, but nothing money couldn't solve in this place.

Lucian got himself two courtesans.

It was normal for a man of his standing to do, and nobody batted an eye at it, except Jax, who found the whole thing absurd.

"I told you I'm not made of stone, didn't I?" Lucian explained himself to Jax after he saw a female figure entering his carriage.

Jax couldn't see the child through Lucian's carriage window, only his boss' perfect side profile, "I thought you didn't like to waste money."

"Who said I'm wasting money? They're doing the job I'm paying them for. You might as well say I'm wasting money on you."

"..." Jax didn't comment further on the matter. He had a feeling it was better to leave his boss to his own devices, and leave the carriage alone, "I'm going to check on the cargo, before we depart."

Lady Lily and the breast milk provider courtesan sat next to each other, while Lucian and the child took the side across from them.

A child's cry sounded from the milk provider's bosom, which made Lucian look away from her as she started feeding her own child, giving her some privacy.

Lady Lily began playing on her flute, a lullaby for the crying child, hoping to calm him down. It worked, her music was soothing, making Lucian notice the effect of her music on his men also, who were enthusiastic to have a beauty like her travel with them.

The coachman held up an umbrella to protect Lucian as he arrived before the Glory's store.

Lucian carried his child in his arms and entered, making many passersby look his way.

The shop's bell rang, announcing the arrival of a guest, his manager bowed to him and then bowed to the two women behind him.

They both had different looks, but both were very beautiful, attracting the eyes of all the customers in the store, especially the courtesan with purple hair, The Queen Of The Night.

Someone could afford to hire the most sought-after courtesan in the kingdom?

The store's customers were curious to know who the mysterious man was that could afford such a luxury, and why he had brought a baby.

They then noticed another child in the arms of the courtesan, and their curiosity grew even more, thinking both the children belonged to the same father and mother.

"Take a short break," Lucian left the two courtesans in a private room, and walked to his office, locking the door behind him.

He looked out of his balcony window, waiting for a secret signal to tell him Celine had arrived at her destination and he was free to go to her.

Togo soon flew to his window and perched on the windowsill, rapping on the window with his beak, leaving a signal: a white stone.

Lucian opened the balcony doors, making sure nobody was around to see him, and then stepped out. Securing the child in the sling around his chest, he climbed up the wall and made his way over to the other side of the building.

He nervously peered into the window, then opened it and slipped inside.

His heart almost leaped out of his chest when he found himself face-to-face with a tip of a sword.

Celine had been waiting for him in the shadows, her eyes tired. She lowered her blade, clutching at her stomach where the incision had been made.

Lucian moved closer, "You shouldn't be moving around so much. The wound is still fresh."

Celine sheathed her weapon, her eyes glued to the bundle tied to his chest.

Lucian grabbed her shoulders and gently led her to her bed.

She didn't say a word, just watched, her eyes following his movements.

Lucian helped her get into a comfortable position, her back resting against pillows, then unwrapped his son and placed him in her arms.

Her fingers were hesitant as she reached out to touch the child.

Lucian noticed her reluctance and slowly pulled back the covers, revealing the small, vulnerable form of his son.

"Lucian Roc Arclight," Lucian introduced their son to her, "Meet your mother."

The child's lids slightly opened, but closed again.

"Help me feed him," Celine's voice was quiet, flinching when she tried to unbutton her gown to feed him, her body still in pain.

Lucian helped her unbutton her dress, his hands brushing against the softness of her skin, and the swell of her breasts.

She guided their son to her exposed nipple, watching as his little lips latched onto it, his tiny hands grabbing her skin.

The taste of her milk seemed to have awakened the child, his tiny eyes opening at the new sensation.

Tears began to gather in her eyes as she caught the sight of them.

Lucian wiped them away before they could fall, his fingers lingering on her cheek longer than necessary.

"Thank you," Celine whispered.

"Thank you," he echoed at the same time.

"Thank you for making this possible for me," they both said the same thing again.

"..."

"..."

Despite sounding the same, both meant a different meaning.

Celine thanked him for saving the child and letting her see it despite what she had done to him, while Lucian thanked her for giving him the chance to have a

family again, a feeling he once thought he would never be able to experience again.

Lucian shook his head, quickly dismissing her gratitude, "I took in two courtesans, one has a child of her own and will provide our son with breast milk. The other will serve as a distraction to anyone that wishes to pry."

If anyone asked, he was turning into a womanizer who had just hired two women for himself, a cover that would make the presence of a child, of suspicious origin suddenly appearing at his side, seem less alarming.

"Your image... is going to suffer," she said, not liking the idea, not after all the efforts she had put into keeping him away from other women.

"A person without a weakness is more likely to attract the attention of people I don't want to be bothered by," Lucian explained, "Instead of targeting my reputation and money, they will start targeting women I'm involved with. I'd rather have it that way."

"Gentleman, huh," Celine's smile faltered, her hands brushing over her son's head in a gentle caress.

"Just protecting what's mine," he replied, leaning closer to her when her focus remained on their child, "Are you not impressed by the new scapegoats I've acquired for us?"

┌─── Author's note ───┐

So many second male leads seem to be womanizers, don't they?

Well, not Lucian just fabricating his own weaknesses (women) and becoming a womanizer himself. 🙄 Celine hates it but still swoons inside, I bet.

Author's note

Extra chapter as a thank you for the recent boost in activity. 🙏

Celine chuckled, a small sound laced with exhaustion.

Her usually sharp and vibrant eyes were now cloudy with pain and fatigue, but still held their cunning light.

He expected a remark in a sense that he was using an excuse to surround himself with beautiful women, but her next words surprised him.

"Yes, I am impressed," she placed her pointer inside their son's palm, watching as the tiny fingers curled around it.

Lucian felt his cheeks warming up. A rare praise from her always made him feel more flustered than any insult could ever do. He had grown to expect her sharp tongue, not this gentle approval.

"However..." she started.

There it was. Lucian could have almost smiled.

"I can't go on with making you hate me forever, when all I want is for you to..." She stopped, her words dying on her tongue. To love her the way she deserved? To cherish her the way she wanted? To care for her the way she craved?

They were not going to meet for a long time, and what he had been doing for the past few months was to make her feel alone, unloved, and abandoned.

"Never mind, are we back to being lovers?" Celine asked. She was not supposed to care about his feelings toward her, only about keeping him with her, "Or are you going to abandon me now that you have what you wanted from me?"

She was going to be too busy to keep an eye on Lucian like before. Even though they didn't officially break up, they also didn't make it clear to each other that they were still in a relationship.

Neither of them was a type of person, who cheated on their partners, or was known to be unfaithful. They would break up with each other first. There was no need to be secretive about it.

So, as long as he admitted that he was her lover, she would have some sort of reassurance that he would have a moral reason to stay committed.

Lucian carefully removed the chain from his neck, dangling the ring in front of her face, "I will come to take it back once we are done with our mission, my beloved wife-to-be."

Her eyes widened, her hand reaching for the ring, but Lucian snatched it back before she could grab it.

"I'll come to you," he said again, "Just wait for me."

He tied the chain around her neck, and slid the ring down her dress. He then patted it, making sure it was safe, and hidden.

Celine's hand followed the path of his hand. She smiled, her cheeks gaining a bit of color, "Wife-to-be?"

Lucian nodded, leaning down to seal the promise with a kiss, but their son decided to interrupt their moment.

Their son was making his presence known with a small wiggle, as if to remind them of his importance.

Celine told Lucian to switch their son to her other breast, so the child could feed from both sides.

That little guy ended up emptying his mother's milk supply, not leaving a single sip for his father.

Both of Celine's breasts were sore, and her body was tired from producing so much milk.

Lucian discovered that the production of milk adapted according to the needs of the child.

Lucian Junior was a premature baby, so his needs were different to a one month old baby. So what Celine produced for him left her feeling drained. She must have been blessing him at the same time for sure.

Lucian took their son from her arms, and stroked her hair as she rested on the bed.

"Go," she murmured, pointing at the luggage she prepared for their son and Lucian, "It's time."

She didn't want to say goodbye, so she turned to her side, showing her back to him.

"I love you, Celine," Lucian whispered in her ear.

Celine didn't respond, but her shoulders trembled a little bit, her hands clutching the sheets.

Lucian kissed her shoulder, then her neck, and then cheek, "I will miss you."

He left the room quietly, not looking back. He knew that if he did, he wouldn't be able to keep his composure.

Women after birth were truly more emotional, that even Celine wasn't spared.

She could fake cry on whim to gain pity and use it as a weapon, but now that she was truly sad, she bit her sheets, refusing to let a single tear fall, staying strong for her family.

How many times did they miss each other's worst moments? How many more would they miss?

They just knew that the best moments were the ones they spent together, and the worst ones were the ones without the other.

He could hate Celine however much he wanted, but the infuriation he craved from her despite all this would still make him treat her as the love of his life. There was no way around it.

It was the same as how she despised him, and yet still wanted him.

The foundation of their relationship was built on control over each other. And even though Lucian wished it wasn't the case, no amount of trust and confidence in each other couldn't change what they had become.

They cared about the outcome more than the method they used to get there. At least they understood the other perfectly.

She knew the ring was more of a trap to keep her bound to him than a promise of marriage, but she still took it anyway, because the result was the same. He would have to return to her.

Lucian packed his things into a large suitcase, ordering his men to carry it to the carriage while summoning one of the smuggled ferals to his office.

He called him Lion Head based on the first beast that had submitted to him. A hairy man with light brown hair and beard, who was in his 40s.

"Master," Lion Head lowered his head in respect, waiting for his command.

"Sit," Lucian pointed at the chair in front of his desk.

Lion Head obeyed without question, his eyes still downcast.

Lucian placed his son inside a basket on the desk, keeping it between himself and the feral, "Whoever sees this child's eyes has to be killed. No exceptions without my direct order."

He picked up the basket and handed it to Lion Head; "I need to attend a meeting in the Academy. You will stay inside the carriage until I return. If you need to pee, use a bottle. Anything you do, the child stays within your sight and inside the carriage."

He still wanted the second person to carry their son to be Celine, and nobody else.

Now that his son had met her, he could start introducing him to more people.

Chapter 194 194: 6.4 - A Farewell Promise

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Chapter 195 195: 6.5 - Stupid Cannon Fodders

Lucian continued to instruct Lion Head, replaying a few scenarios that might happen while he was away.

The ferals' training took more to get through their thick skulls than a normal person's, so it was necessary to repeat things more than once.

Their intelligence should rise with a new hunter rank, and that required raising Lucian's rank as well.

He would definitely have to work on it once he reached the South. It had been on his list for a while, but there was always something more urgent to do, and he always ended up pushing it back.

He let Lion Head carry his son inside the carriage while the two courtesans stayed behind.

They would have to wait until Lucian was back from his business in the Academy (Lucian bought the closest place to the academy for a reason after all).

Edmund's influence as a legitimate heir was not small. Not even the Duke could push his way through the Royal Academy without it affecting the house's political position in the world.

The only way for the Rochefort children to survive was to raise them into powerful leaders that not even the crown could lay a finger on. For that, they had to become someone as powerful as their father, or more.

The academy was not going to let go of a student just because a father was worried about their health or safety.

Celine was not going to get expelled because she bullied a few commoners.

Only the crown had enough power to do that, so that's what Lucian was going to focus on.

He also had to somehow assist the Hunter King Eon with keeping hold of the Lost East Walls.

After acting like Celine's victim before the Dean, Lucian managed to convince him that she was a threat to his well-being, and he was going to have to resign because of it.

The Dean tried to persuade him into teaching other classes instead, which Lucian politely declined.

"I don't want to be viewed as a spy either, and there have been people who tried to approach me for information regarding Southern politics in my previous class. Until the situation stabilizes, I'm afraid it's better to avoid the risk of getting involved in any way."

The Dean could see Lucian's sincerity in staying as a neutral person in the midst of conflict, and didn't have much to offer to make him stay.

Lucian went to pack his things and spotted three students making fun of Mathieu's no talent as a knight outside of the window.

Someone even challenged him to a duel behind a building. They were all under the impression that Mathieu was still an iron rank.

It must have been Mathieu's siblings who were trying to sabotage him.

'Nobody would have dared to touch someone from a Duremont house without fearing repercussions otherwise.'

Mathieu was in truth one rank below Lucian, a bronze knight (from his latest intelligence sources).

Most of the elite male students were stuck at silver rank, despite having a lot of potential. Not everyone was willing to go through the stage trials.

A sneer appeared on one of the student's faces, "Lady Adeline is being kind by allowing you to stay by her side, but that doesn't mean you have the right to act like you own her."

The Duremont siblings have graduated and were busy with their duties, but their influence still lingered within the Academy. Their younger brother, Mathieu, was still a student, and had to deal with the consequences.

Mathieu stayed composed, not letting the insults get to him, "I'm not acting like I own her. She just happens to enjoy my company more than yours."

This made the other students angry, and they began to surround him, forming a triangle around him. They were not planning on letting him go.

Mathieu made a strange pose that Lucian didn't recognize as an attack stance.

Compared to Lucian's fighting style (scare the opponent with one strike), Mathieu's looked more defensive, parrying the strikes and redirecting them with ease. It was a beautiful sight to see, the grace of a skilled fighter.

Lucian enjoyed the scene, until he noticed the glint of a blade from one of the student's sleeves. They were planning to use a weapon on Mathieu, who had no armor on him.

Mathieu noticed too, and dodged the blade, but not before it cut his cheek. He was bleeding, and the students were getting more aggressive.

One of them grabbed Mathieu's arm, and twisted it, another kicked him in the stomach, making him fall to his knees.

That's when Mathieu activated his silver rank, and the tables were turned.

'He has already advanced, huh? I remember his funds being cut off.'

'It seems like he is slowly gaining more influence in the house or has a secret stream of resources.'

Mathieu started to counterattack, fighting back.

Lucian wondered about how to take advantage of this situation.

He searched the area for Lady Adeline with his third eye, and found her walking down a hallway with a group of admirers behind her, occupying her time.

Weakening the Northern factions through their heirs was a good plan. Lucian needed them to get hurt beyond mere bruises and cuts to make an impact.

Lucian had an idea. It was a bit risky, but it could work.

Men's protective instincts were stronger than a mother's wrath at times. If he could turn Adeline and Heroine to damsel in distress, then Edmund and Mathieu's anger could make them kill others in blind rage.

He could also join in to throw a few punches himself.

Lucian finished packing his stuff in the office and went to check on his son, 'The aphrodisiac Lady Lily wanted to use on me will work just fine here...'

'...Not that I will let them go all the way. I'm still a gentleman after all, I can't stand women being treated like that, so I hope the two knights in shining armors will cut off their balls before anything happens.'

Voice interrupted him, seeing the gore scene unfold in Lucian's head, 'You are so weak, you can't even beat the crap out of them yourself.'

'You are weak too,' Lucian replied, 'You can only watch, and whine.'

'My job is to guide others into granting their own wish,' Voice argued, 'But some dumb child wanted to marry while he was still in his diapers. Now he can have anyone, but still chooses the most annoying female in the world to settle down with.'

'You knew I would never be happy with Celine, that's why you didn't approve of her,' Lucian's realization made his steps pause for a second before he resumed walking, 'Failing at your job is not an excuse to insult my life choices, Voice.'

Voice's curses flew Lucian's way as he turned the corner.

Chapter 196 196: Author's note

If you are wondering where is the new chapter.

It's called: 1.14 - The Dumbest Child.

I received so many critical feedback regarding my abrupt changes in scenes and wanted to correct the most jarring ones for the time being, so the transitions are a bit smoother. 😊

I have been in a rush to get to the main plot (otome world's starting point), which caused the story to suffer from the rapid transitions, time skips and the lack of details in certain events. Some snippets were too short and confusing.

Thank you for all your feedback and I will continue to improve the story where possible!

Chapter 197 197: 6.6 - An anomaly

'You are already weak, and you want to be even weaker by carrying a dead weight on your back? He will only slow you down, and you have no time to waste.'

After changing his son's diaper, feeding him, and taking care of all his needs, Lucian slumped against the carriage's seat, taking his first actual moment of rest in days. His body was battered, and he was mentally destroyed, but there was still so much work to do.

'Your enemies are only going to get stronger while you are stuck with a child.'

He had learned to ignore Voice's curses, but whenever a mishap occurred, it was hard not to let it get to him. That it was his fault for not being rich enough, strong enough, smart enough, careful enough, prepared enough.

That it was his fault that Celine was hurting, and his son, too. And that he was a retard, and that he was an imbecile, and that he should just go die in a ditch somewhere, because he was too stupid to be allowed to live.

That it was his fault for not doing enough, for not trying enough, and that he should have known better, should have done better, and if he hadn't been so

stupid, and if he hadn't been so negligent, then maybe things would have turned out differently.

Lucian went to have lunch at the cafeteria, smiling at the female students looking his way and sitting down with a few of them who offered him a place, "I will no longer be a teacher here, so I don't have to keep a professional distance from you."

He winked at the six young ladies around the round table mischievously. They all giggled. One of them even dropped her fork, making the other ladies laugh at her.

"Nothing happened to you all during the horse riding competition, I hope," Lucian reached for the fork on the ground and gave her his untouched one instead. Then raised his hand to call for new cutlery.

"Ah, it's being investigated, and all of us are safe, of course," she accepted the fork, thanking him.

"Culprit is still not found, but there are rumors that it was Lady Rochefort," the lady sitting on his left spoke in a hushed tone, whispering.

The rest of the ladies also began to chime in, sharing their own theories about the incident, "Why else would she be absent? Her brother is also not defending her."

Lucian listened to them quietly, nodding and smiling occasionally.

He couldn't even depend on Celine's father to protect her during his absence. The Duke was supposed to be her shield and sword, not betray her at the most critical moment just because he doubted her loyalty to the house.

Celine had told Lucian not to clear her reputation, and her father didn't take any action to clear her name either. It was like she fed on the public's hate instead of being destroyed by it. It didn't mean Lucian would stand by and accept it.

If he didn't drag Edmund down with Celine at least, he wouldn't be able to call himself a husband to be and a father. Even though he couldn't touch him with his fists, he would use the tools available to him.

"I'm quite worried for Young Master Edmund. He doesn't seem to have the same prejudice against commoners as his sister does," Lucian contemplated with the ladies.

Any reason for the Rochefort Army to enter the academy and take Edmund away, Lucian would take.

The topic changed to Edmund's relationship with the heroine and how he was going to get punished for liking a commoner. The ladies were so excited to share what they knew that they ended up sharing more than they had to.

"Young Master Mathieu had tried to make a move on Lady Rochefort and got rejected," the lady opposite Lucian blushed, "They were seen in the library. It was the talk of the day, at least for those who witnessed it."

"...Excuse me?" Lucian asked, his smile frozen in place. He heard that right, didn't he?

The lady nodded, her blush deepening, "He even tried to defend Lady Celine's honor, and how she wouldn't use the horses to hurt her rivals, but no one believed him, of course. He was dragged down as an accomplice for helping her."

Lucian's fingers clenched around the cutlery, his knuckles turning white with the force of his grip.

The anomaly was trying to win over his future wife, the mother of his child...

Mathieu's family's background, his rapid growth in strength, the favorability system, and now his attempt to seduce the villainess...just like the previous Mathieu... This was not good.

'He didn't correct the rumors either,' Lucian thought.

The ladies didn't seem to notice his inner turmoil and continued to chatter happily about the latest gossip, while Lucian continued to eat his food, his smile never faltering. He assessed their information and decided on the next course of action.

Lucian glanced at his three targets and saw that they were all eating their food in the corner of the cafeteria. He then asked the ladies if they wanted to join him for a walk, and they eagerly agreed.

A big group certainly would attract attention, but also act as a cover. Lucian enamored them enough that they didn't notice where they were going. One lady accidentally pushed against the heroine's shoulders as they passed her by.

The heroine stumbled, the food on her plate spilling onto the ground, her fork clanging on the floor.

Lucian used the chance to slip the powder into the drink of his targets when everyone's attention was on the heroine, then joined in helping the heroine to pick up the fallen food. He also gave her another fork and a new plate of food to show how much of a nice guy he was.

The other ladies were quick to remind him that they were his companions today. Lucian put on a little show of caring, a few flirtatious jokes, and soon they were all laughing again.

During the walk, he monitored the happenings of the Academy, passed a message to Edmund with the help of one of the ladies, making sure everything was as it should be.

Mathieu seemed to know how to predict the future, but to what degree? Would he enter the scene and interrupt it like he had interrupted his arrow game with Celine before? Lucian still didn't understand how he predicted that, but it was a fact.

Compared to Edmund and the Crown Prince, Mathieu could be considered the weakest. His background as an unfavored heir meant he lacked enough connections or alliances to rise to power, but he had plenty of potential to climb higher on the food chain.

Lucian would never consider making an enemy of Mathieu and would try to maintain a neutral relationship with him, but he knew that Mathieu was the key to unlocking the cursed shackles binding Lucian to his fate. This meant he had to force him into revealing more of his hidden cards.

'I just need an excuse to punch Edmund's lights out,' Lucian stopped near the library's entrance with his entourage of ladies.

Edmund should be looking for Lucian now (regarding his sudden disappearance), while Mathieu was in a rush to catch up to Adeline and apologize for standing up to Celine in the interrogation room.

Afternoon sunlight streamed through the massive, arched windows, casting long shadows across the wooden floor. Massive oak bookshelves stretched from floor to ceiling, built to last for centuries.

Lucian asked the ladies for a few book recommendations as they walked inside the library. It was so large, it had multiple floors, separate wings, reading nooks, and winding corridors that could be easily lost in.

While Edmund was trapped inside the academy walls, Lucian casually bought the key to his cage using his connections, his investments, and his contacts.

He had built a web of relationships, favors, and influence that allowed him to manipulate the situation and bend the rules to his advantage.

Even the strict Royal Academy's rules could be bent if the right strings were pulled.

Lucian's thoughts were interrupted by a scream that sounded from the deepest part of the library.

He took off running, causing the ladies who had separated to look for books to follow after him in confusion.

Mathieu was running from a different direction toward the same place upon seeing the crowd.

As Lucian rounded a corner, he stopped short at the sight before him.

Three male students were holding a struggling female figure in their arms, her clothes disheveled. They were trying to remove her undergarments and touch her inappropriately.

Mathieu went wild, shoving the ladies out of the way. He grabbed the assaulters and started beating them up without restraint.

Lucian quickly joined in, placed his coat over Lady Adeline's body, then rushed to one of the targets under the aphrodisiac's effect and delivered a few punches to his body.

He slipped an antidote down his throat, so when they were interrogated later, there would be no sign of aphrodisiacs in their system.

"Adeline!" Mathieu yelled as he tackled another assaulter, "Are you alright?"

Lady Adeline nodded, pulling the coat closer to her body, "Cousin..." Her voice trembled as tears rolled down her face.

Mathieu's expression became bloodthirsty as he started beating the assaulters again.

Lucian grabbed Mathieu's arm before he could do any more damage, "You are going to kill him."

"Good!" Mathieu yelled like he wanted to keep beating them until they were nothing but a pile of bones.

Lucian didn't really want him to stop and was more than happy to enrage Mathieu further, using a fist instead of words. His knuckles made a satisfying sound against Mathieu's jaw, and the young man stumbled back.

It felt so good, he almost forgot that he was supposed to be helping him.

Mathieu didn't even flinch when Lucian punched him hard enough to knock him to the ground. He pushed himself up, spitting out blood, "Get out of my way!"

Fighting 200 hundred ferals on a daily basis for a few months had made Lucian's body adapt to the combat quickly. He could dodge, strike, and counter with ease. But he wasn't going here for the win; he was just pretending to stop Mathieu.

"Ugh," Lucian got punched in the stomach, flying backwards, and hitting the bookshelves. Dust and books flew everywhere.

"Someone stop them!" A few ladies screamed, attracting more attention to the scene.

Edmund was among the first to arrive at the library, taking in the situation, "What happened here?"

The ladies pointed at Lucian with worry, "Mr. Arclight is hurt!"

Edmund joined Lucian in trying to hold Mathieu back, "Hey, that's enough! Stop!"

Mathieu didn't seem to hear him; his eyes locked on the three men on the ground, who tried to run away. "Bastards," he snarled, activating his silver rank and grabbing one of the attackers by the collar, choking him against the floor repeatedly.

Lucian pretended to join Edmund's side, pulling Mathieu's arm while pushing his shoulder to make him stumble. He accidentally tripped Edmund.

Mathieu used the chance to kick Edmund's gut, making him fall, and Lucian 'accidentally' stepped on Edmund's hand, adding to the pain.

Edmund cursed, his emerald rank kicking in, and he grabbed Mathieu by the legs, knocking him down. Mathieu fell backwards, but he quickly got back up and tackled Edmund, slamming him into a table in between the shelves.

Edmund was supposed to stop Mathieu, but he seemed to have switched to fighting mode, their house's backgrounds fueling the rivalry.

Lucian, the good man that he was, tried to pull them apart, avoiding their fists and elbows, getting a few weak hits on his body here and there.

The ladies cried, some of them going to get the teachers.

Lucian had no rivalry with them, so he knew they were holding back, not going full force at him.

Lucian took full advantage of it, leaving bruises on their bodies. He just had to make sure not to use anything too brutal, like targeting their groins or eyes. The ladies were watching after all.

He kicked Edmund's ankle, making him stumble, then hit Mathieu's shoulder with an elbow.

As an emerald rank, Edmund should be easily able to deal with two silver ranks, but Lucian and Mathieu were not normal silver ranks. Even though they didn't do much damage to Edmund, they made it difficult for him to win.

Edmund's fist hurt Lucian's ribs, and he gasped for air, before delivering a side blow to Edmund's waist.

Mathieu had managed to land a few blows on Edmund's face as well.

Lucian didn't know what type of stages Mathieu had gone through to achieve silver rank, but he seemed to have focused on strength and speed more than defense.

Edmund's stages focused on defense and recovery.

Lucian's was endurance. He could keep going, even with broken limbs and shattered bones. He couldn't activate his shackled powers without making his eyes glow yet, but he was still shackled. His strength could make one think he focused on it in his stages.

The guards finally arrived, stopping the fight.

Lucian quickly stopped attacking, but Mathieu was still trying to punch Edmund.

Mathieu was beaten up by Edmund so much that he ended up bloodying the floor with his nose. He almost had his eyes swollen shut, too.

Edmund was almost intact, with no blood or visible injuries. He was just out of breath, his uniform torn in places. Lucian pulled a few of his hairs out to complete the look of the battered.

Lucian then hid among the ladies while the rest of the male students were detained by the guards, who were confused about who to blame.

Of course, the ladies came to Lucian's defense, so the guards let him go while a female teacher escorted Lady Adeline to the infirmary.

She had bruises on her arms and neck, where they grabbed her, and her eyes were open wide from shock. They didn't go all the way, but the horror of what could have happened was enough to leave her traumatized.

The Crown Prince also heard the commotion and arrived at the scene. It was chaos, and Lucian added more to it by worrying about the female student's well-being in the academy.

"Lady Rochefort could have been kidnapped," Lucian said to the guards about the dent on the ground, loud enough for Edmund, Mathieu, and the Crown Prince to hear.

Lucian didn't know if they had investigated the dent in the ground by the duke, where the fight had taken place. One didn't use that type of strength on a woman, or could a woman do that to the ground. Only a knight with an above-emerald rank could do such a thing.

He continued, "It seems like one of the students or staff must have interfered and tried to save her from the attackers, but was overpowered by them. Young Master Edmund was there when I arrived, so he must have seen more than I have."

Edmund slowly turned towards him.

While being escorted to the disciplinary room, Edmund realized that Lucian was not playing along with him, as there was no sign of him seeking revenge against his sister, who had bullied him.

"Who could have kidnapped her?" Edmund asked, accompanied by a guard on each side as if he were a respected criminal, ready to be dragged to the cells, "Who dares to commit such a heinous act?"

The students in the crowd started whispering, looking at each other suspiciously. Some of them pointed at Mathieu with their eyes, whose bloody knuckles told a story of their own.

As two armed guards attempted to hook their arms under his shoulders to escort him to the infirmary, Mathieu violently wrenched himself free, "I can walk."

He then glanced at the crowd, noticing how the students were looking at him, "Isn't Young Master's relationship with your sister a little bit strained, if I may say so? You can't blame me for thinking you might have something to do with it, can you?"

"I am deeply concerned for her well-being, regardless of our familial differences. Accusing someone, who hasn't stepped a foot outside of the academy in months, of being involved in such a crime is ludicrous," Edmund's aristocratic calm remained absolute as his fierce blue eyes shifted toward the merchant, who also had an enmity with his sister, "Isn't Mr. Arclight the one, who seems to have the easiest access in and out of the academy grounds?"

"Everyone saw me running out of the academy empty-handed. How would I manage that?" Lucian replied, and a few guards nodded, remembering him running out of the academy. They kept track of people leaving and entering the academy's grounds. "Lady Lily was feeling unwell, so I didn't want to keep her waiting for long."

"Lady Lily?" A lady asked, and Lucian explained.

Yes, Edmund's secret lover was now in Lucian's hands. The lady, who was Edmund's loyal supporter. It didn't matter if Edmund cared for her or not; she was a valuable pawn to the Rochefort heir.

Edmund showed no signs of distress, but Lucian knew Edmund didn't expect Celine to take a defensive mode instead of violently attacking him, and was now paying the price for his miscalculations.

After providing his alibi, Lucian let out a helpless, harmless sigh and pulled out a bag of neatly wrapped mango slices from his coat's inner pocket. "You wanted to try the imported fruits Lady Rochefort had been eating, right? I have asked my people to get some."

The ladies gasped in surprise and delight, thanking him. A rare treat from a foreign land was a gift they would never reject.

The last one to have an enmity with Lady Rochefort was the Crown Prince. He stood slightly apart from the crowd with his signature 'aloof air', looking annoyed that his peaceful afternoon had been disrupted.

Three students from the most powerful families in the Kingdom, and an exclusive guest. All of them had motive, means, and opportunity to make Celine disappear.

During situations like these, it would usually be scapegoats like the assaulters who would take the fall, and the true culprits would go free. Maybe not even the assaulters, but someone from the commoner class.

Lucian had to make sure not to let that happen. He wanted conflict, not a false resolution.

The Duke must have left the dent for a reason. If he questioned the Academy's safety, they would only increase the protections, making it even harder for Celine to leave the academy grounds in the future.

A dent. In the ground. A crater. An impact.

"We have to look for the savior, not the perpetrator," Lucian suddenly said, "There should be signs on their body from the impact of the gravitational pressure. We might not find the perpetrator, but we would definitely find the savior. Someone who tried to save Lady Rochefort, but didn't report her missing."

Edmund was still trying to recover from the impact of his father's powers. Lucian realized when he fought him with Mathieu, that Edmund couldn't obliterate them because of his weakened state. He was hiding it well, but there was no doubt that the impact had affected him.

Now Lucian also knew why Edmund eagerly joined the fight with Mathieu and allowed himself to be beaten. It was to cover the tracks left by the Duke. He would have been suspected otherwise.

"I agree," the Crown Prince finally spoke up from behind the crowd, "The savior would also have a strong reason to stay silent."

"They could also be in danger if they spoke up," Mathieu agreed, not trusting a single noble around him for sure. The corruption in the academy went deep, and everyone was involved somehow.

Edmund didn't look happy, but he didn't object either. His fierce blue eyes bypassed Mathieu entirely and landed squarely on the hay-head hiding among the ladies, as if he had finally realized that he had an opponent to be wary of.

Lucian bowed slightly to the ladies, "My Ladies," after he was done assuring their safety, "Until we meet again."

He told them how they could read the books they picked for next time he came to tend to the greenhouse, not as a teacher but as part of the gardening staff.

He asked if he should strip to prove his innocence as well, but they didn't take him seriously and laughed, believing he was joking. He wouldn't be able to walk; that gravity force would have broken his bones. They even thanked him for looking out for the female students, even the bad ones.

"Of course," Lucian said, smiling brightly at them, "It's my job to care for all the flowers, even the thorny ones," he left, leaving the girls giggling and whispering among themselves.

Whatever the Duke planned, Lucian made sure everyone kept an eye on the other, so nobody would get a chance to clean after their traces.

Edmund's fist clenched at his sides as Lucian disappeared from his sight.

'Why don't you pack your bags and move into his head, Voice? He is much stronger than I am, and much more gifted too,' Lucian laughed in Voice's "face" and suggested it go possess Edmund.

Lucian never had the luxury of waiting until he was more powerful to take revenge on someone. He had been dealing with people stronger than him his whole life. He had to strike first, weaker or not.

That's how the weak survive, after all. Use the strong to protect them, and make them fight each other, weakening them in the process.

'What a Sissy, no, a sorry excuse of a man,' Voice always found a way to insult him and his abilities, no matter what Lucian did or how hard he tried. It would never be enough.

Nothing would ever feel like a win to Lucian. Every time he felt like he had accomplished something, like right now, Voice would always find a way to make him feel insignificant again.

'Maybe that's why I am still standing here while everyone else died. I didn't chase your advice like them.' Lucian rushed to feed his son.

He was thinking of making a wooden horse with a tail made out of Edmund's hair, which he had just ripped out. A perfect battle trophy for his son to play with.

'Maybe I will return and let Edmund beat me to a pulp, so we can both get a good laugh,' he continued, successfully silencing Voice for a time being.

Voice had no idea what it meant to be weak, to be helpless and powerless, and thus could never understand why some people could not follow its advice. It was the same as telling a beggar, who was starving to death, to "just go buy

food." Or telling someone, who was drowning, to "just swim." Or telling a cripple, "Just use your leg."

Lucian had tried to prove to Voice that the weak had a place in the world, too, but along the way, he gave up on trying to impress Voice and often did the opposite of what it told him to.

Humans were rebellious by nature. Some would do the exact opposite to feel a sense of control over their own lives and decisions.

It was a way to make themselves feel better about their own weaknesses and powerlessness, to feel like they were doing something to change their fate.

Lucian was a little rebel like that, too.

Chapter 200 200: 6.9 - Major Logistical Force

Lucian sent Lion Head outside the carriage to guard it, while he checked on his son.

Lucian junior was fine, sleeping soundly. Lion Head said his son didn't cry, and was quiet the whole time.

"You are just one day old, and you're already having so many adventures, just like your parents," Lucian whispered, touching his son's small fist with a finger, "I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but our combined bloodlines are bound to create a legend like no other."

'Or double the trouble,' Voice mumbled, not amused.

The little guy stirred a little as if complaining that his father was too noisy, and that he needed his sleep.

The carriage ride to the clinic was uneventful, with his son showing no interest in talking or playing.

Lucian went to check on the guy he had knocked out, expecting to find him awake and cursing at him.

He found the man awake and grumbling to himself. When he saw Lucian, he almost fell from his stretcher.

Lucian looked vastly different, wearing a fitted suit, with a tie and a cane. His hair was styled, and he looked every inch a rich, pompous lord.

"I...I didn't know, please forgive me..." the man stammered, his head bowing down. "I didn't mean anything by it."

What luck the man had, to pick a fight with that Lucian Arclight. The only hay head he shouldn't have messed with, and he did.

All hay heads were good looking, all of them. He just thought this one was no different than the others he had seen. A little rougher, a little taller, but still a hay head. Who would have thought that he was that hay head?

"Are you not going to ask for a damage compensation fee?" Lucian asked. He did not want rumors about him beating up a random man in an ale house, "I hit you first, after all."

The man thought Lucian was mocking him and testing whether he would demand a compensation fee. He was not stupid enough to demand one from a lion, and quickly shook his head, "No, My Lord. I was at fault."

"Honesty is a good trait, as is humbleness," Lucian left a few coins on the table, "May the Gods reward you for them," and walked out, leaving the man to wonder what he did to deserve such good fortune.

Lucian was known to be a generous man, and that exerting violence wasn't his preferred way to solve conflicts. Though there were instances where he did so, it was always with a "good" reason.

The man didn't know why he felt like the bad guy, when he had been the one who got beaten up. He knew his intentions weren't good, but he didn't actually do anything.

His head was bandaged and hurt, and yet he felt like he should be thanking Lucian for his generosity. Lucian had the power to ruin his life, but didn't do it. Why?

Lucian left the building, and went to sit in his carriage, taking his son from Lion Head while ordering the coachman to take him back to Glory's store.

'Why are you wasting your money on nobodies like him?' Voice asked.

'It's fun to see men submit when they find out who I am, and even funnier to see them be thankful for getting beat up.' Lucian replied, letting the carriage move forward, 'They always think I'm testing their character for some grand purpose, that I'm going to reward them if they pass, not that I'm doing it for fun.'

They wanted to be in his good graces, so they never tried to make him look bad, and did everything they could to make themselves look better in his eyes.

'It's different from helping a beggar on the street,' Lucian leaned his head against the carriage window, rocking his son in his arms, 'They don't jump before your carriage, begging for your help. Men like these start with a grudge against you, and changing their perspectives has always been kind of rewarding.'

Only thanks to tests like these was Lucian able to punch two dukal heirs without anyone batting an eye.

Lucian doubted he would get a noble title any time soon. Why would the crown give a neutral party more power?

If he bought a noble title from the crown, it would only look like a poor attempt at gaining influence in the Kingdom. It would cheapen his reputation and make people doubt his integrity.

He would have to force them to give it to him, by becoming invaluable to their survival.

He was not going to mingle in the Southern and Northern conflict, but the East Sea conflict was standing in the way of his trade expansion plans, so it was the obvious choice.

Snow started to fall as caravans upon caravans traveled to the south, carrying crates of goods with Glory's seal on them.

The chilling breeze that followed the snowfall made the temperature drop even lower, causing the caravan drivers to shiver in their coats.

It was a sudden change in weather, a sign that the cold season would be harsh this year, much harsher than anticipated. But that did not stop the merchants and traders from their journey to the nearest Glory's warehouse.

In fact, the cold weather seemed to spur them on even more. The demand for warm clothes and blankets was increasing, as well as medicine for the cold and dry skin, and the Glory's warehouses were packed with them.

Lucian overlooked the Glory's business during their short stays in each break point, until the caravans reached the borders of the Southern Alliance.

The northern army depended heavily on the Merchant Guild to supply them, which gave the Merchant Guild more leverage to negotiate better terms.

But no matter how much the merchant guild wanted to sabotage Lucian's caravans to get him out of the way, less competition also meant higher price for the end consumers.

The northern army would be the first to feel the impact, not only in terms of prices, but also risks of a shortage of supplies.

That was how Cansan was able to secure a supply contract with the military, quietly inserting Glory into the war effort as one of the major logistical forces.

The main battlefield was near the Lost East Walls, so a part of Lucian's convoy had to split up to supply the army with what they needed, while the rest of the convoy went directly to the Southern Alliance.

'Time for a stretch break,' Lucian woke up his son when the carriage pulled up to the nearest town for a break.

The weather in the South was better than in the North, with the sun still shining.

┌──────── Author's note ─────────┐

I can't believe that I just summarised 14 years of Lucian's life in 200 chapters... I hope it didn't feel too rushed. 😊

I don't know about you, but the academy arc doesn't seem challenging enough for Lucian to waste his time on.

I mean, there could have been some interesting classes here and there, combat training, competitions, field trips, and all that jazz, but it would slow him down so much. And he can't afford that.

He still has the sea trade to conquer! 🏴‍☠️

