

Still, with the distortion of my alcoholic vision, I stared at Syvis, her eyes darting back and forth as if she were caught in the middle of a fierce internal battle. I could see the struggle etched across her face, the way her lips quivered, and her hands shook ever so slightly. I have never seen Syvis act this way. Whatever she wanted to tell me was undoubtedly causing her great conflict.

"D-Darx," She started hesitantly, "Y-You see..."

I was so confused by her attitude. "Syvis, whatever is troubling you," I began, my voice gentle and holding her hands, "I want you to know that I love you. If there's anything I can do to help, I won't hesitate for a moment to help you."

Syvis, her eyes widening in surprise at my words. Her expression, a mixture of shock and hurt, locked eyes with me. A couple of tears glistened in her eyes before she lowered her head, hiding her face beneath her hair. For the next few seconds, Syvis remained silent, causing me to feel nervous until she finally raised her face.

"Darx," She started hesitantly, "about what I said earlier... I need to ask you something."

"Of course, Syvis, anything," I replied gently, trying my best to reassure her.

"During the trip, you told me that if I had to go to the territory of the dark elves to see my father, you would accompany me. Did you mean that?" Syvis asked me.

I furrowed my brow, confused by her sudden change of topic. Syvis' question took me a little by surprise. Was this what was worrying Syvis all this time?

"Syvis, Is this what you were worried about? Being separated by circumstances beyond our control?" I asked.

Syvis once again lowered her face and, with her eyes on the ground, responded, "Y-Yes... After what happened to me in the cave, I decided that my time in Riledo was numbered, and if I couldn't stay in the capital for much longer and I still wanted to contribute to the war against the demons, the best thing I could do was to visit my father and ask for his help, even though I know what he's going to demand from me. It might mean the end of our relationship."

What happened to her in the cave? Is she referring to the demons?

"Syvis, I meant what I said. I'll accompany you to see your father, no matter what," I reached for her hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze, "Maybe it's selfish of me, but I wouldn't let you go even if it meant not receiving help from your father and the dark elves in incoming war. We'll talk to your father and find another way for him to help us that doesn't require you and me to separate."

"Thank you, Darx, and... I'm sorry...." Syvis murmured, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

"You have nothing to apologize for," I said, pulling Syvis into a tight embrace. She hesitated for a moment before wrapping her arms around me, burying her face in my chest, "Let's face whatever comes our way together, alright?"

As we hugged each other, I could feel her body trembling slightly. I tightened my grip on her.

"By the way, how did you find out about my mother and Kase?" I asked.

I felt Syvis's body strangely get tense.

"I-I... I... I heard it from s-someone in my guild when I went to see Agnes," Syvis said, sounding nervous and having difficulty finding the words she wanted to say.

"I see..." I said while thinking that it was strange that someone had said something like that to Syvis as soon as she returned when she was thought dead.

"Ilene is now part of oblivion, so that's why I found out." Syvis continued, sounding like she was trying to reinforce that it wasn't strange for her to know.

"Is my mother part of Oblivion?" I asked, feeling incredulous.

So, my mother also quit her job as a royal guard, a position she had taken when she arrived in the capital. She had explained that she wasn't interested in joining a guild since that would occupy much of her time and involve extensive travel, making it difficult for us to meet frequently. As a royal guard of the princess, my mother would be stationed in the castle, allowing me to visit her whenever I could. At that time, my mother told me that being close to me was her priority. However, her marriage to Kase and her subsequent involvement in Oblivion meant that Kase now occupied most of her time.

"That's right," Syvis continued, "I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry about," I said as I hugged her a little tighter, "On the contrary, I should thank you since I feel like you are the only person I can trust and rely on."

Syvis didn't answer anything and stayed silent for a few seconds while I felt her trembling a little in my arms.

"Darx, I... I don't deserve you," Syvis spoke.

Her words stirred something in the pit of my stomach – a nagging feeling that there was more to the situation than I knew. But I pushed it aside, focusing instead on comforting her.

"Syvis, you're the best thing that ever happened to me," I reassured her, rubbing her back gently as we continued to hold each other close.

"Come on, let's get some rest," Syvis said, realizing that I was still quite drunk and my head felt heavy.

I agreed, concern etched upon her face as she guided me through the streets of Riledo. We eventually arrived at an Inn, where Syvis rented a room for us. She helped me up the stairs and into our room, her strength evident as she supported my unsteady form. I could feel Syvis' warmth close to me, yet there was still that inexplicable distance between us.

Syvis tucked me into bed, her gentle touch soothing my aching body. As I drifted off to sleep, I heard her whisper, "I'm sorry" once more. It lingered in my thoughts as I succumbed to the intoxicating pull of slumber.

Morning light filtered through the curtains as I stirred awake, blinking away the grogginess. Memories of what happened the day before came back, reminding me that it wasn't a nightmare. In addition to the headache from having drunk too much the day before, they made me feel terrible as soon as I opened my eyes. My head throbbed from last night's drinking, but the sight of Syvis standing by the window bathed in sunlight eased my discomfort a bit.

"Good morning, Darx," Syvis greeted me softly, her eyes distant as she gazed out at the city, "How are you feeling?"

"Morning," I replied, sitting up with a wince, "Still hungover, but I hope it will go away soon."

"I see," She replied, her voice tinged with a hint of distraction as her gaze remained fixed on the window, suggesting that her mind was preoccupied with something else.

We exchanged a few more words, the conversation strained and stilted for some reason.

"Darx," Syvis finally stopped, looking at the window and turning to look at me, "I need to go to the castle today. I'll be seeking an audience with Queen Zara to discuss our trip to see my father. I know we just arrived, but I would like to leave as soon as possible. Are you okay with that?"

It's hard to believe that just yesterday, I was eager to return home and reunite with my mother and friends. Now, all I want is to escape from this place, hoping that everything that happened yesterday was merely a terrible dream. I'm utterly lost; I have no idea what to do now. I'm unsure how to face my mother, and the pain from her betrayal still lingers. With Harold gone and Dante out of reach, I don't have anyone to turn to for advice. My guild friends are either far away in the north or caught up in quests, leaving me with no one to talk to. At this moment, I feel really alone. If Syvis weren't here with me, I think I might lose my sanity. Perhaps leaving the city as soon as possible, as Syvis suggests, is the best course of action.

"Alright," I reply, "As soon as you are ready to go, I will be too. In the meantime, I will try to find out as much as possible about the church."

"Thank you, Darx," Syvis says with what seems like a forced smile.

I can't help but wonder if what Syvis wanted to tell me was really what she told me last night or if there was something else that she didn't mention. Still, I trust her enough not to pry.

"It's getting late," Syvis said, starting to gather her things, "I'll walk with you to your guild, and from there, I'll go to the castle."

"No need," I replied, "Don't worry about me. I really feel better now."

"It's not that. I just want to walk with you. That's all." Syvis said, graving my hand.

"In that case, I wouldn't refuse such pleasant company," I replied, managing a faint smile.

Despite Syvis's usual demeanor, which often comes across as reserved and difficult to approach, spending so much time with her has revealed her caring nature. Even though she insists that she merely wants to walk with me, I am certain she is genuinely concerned about me.

Syvis and I, holding hands, left the Inn, heading to my guild. As we walk towards the guild, the morning sun casts its warm glow on the city streets. The bustling market comes to life, with merchants setting up their stalls and calling out to potential customers. Amidst this lively atmosphere, I find myself distracted by my thoughts, focusing on what I need to do next.

"Darx," Syvis interrupts my train of thought, concern evident in her voice, "I know you want to learn more about the goddess Imris and Harold's death, but promise me you'll be careful. The church holds a lot of power, and they may not take kindly to your inquiries."

"Of course," I reply, giving her hand a squeeze, "I won't take any unnecessary risks. By now, the church must be aware of my return to the capital. Even though I haven't sought them out, I am certain they will come looking for me," I responded thoughtfully. "If they truly intend to use me in a plot against the queen, as Harold suggested, I will seize that opportunity to uncover what they know about the goddess Imris and Harold's death."

She gives me a faint smile, "Just... be safe, okay? My intervention could complicate things for you, but don't hesitate to contact me if you need help."

"I will," I reply, touched by her display of genuine concern.

As we continue our walk, I can't help but feel grateful for Syvis's presence. Despite the chaos that seems to surround us, she remains steadfast, offering support and comfort when I need it most. As long as we're together, I believe we can face whatever challenges come our way.

After walking for a while, we finally reach the guild, the familiar building standing tall against the busy streets.

As we approach the entrance, I'm shocked to see my mother and Kase outside the guild's doors. Their presence catches me off guard, and Syvis's too, since her grip on my arm tightens ever so slightly. As we continue walking towards them, I can feel Syvis's grip on my hand tighten. Her thoughts seem to be racing just like mine are.

Watching my mother as we approached, I could see how nervous she was. In contrast, Kase's expression is hard to read.

As soon as Syvis and I were in front of my mother and Kase, I asked, angry and uncomfortable, "What are you doing here?"

"Darx," My mom calls out, her voice laced with hesitation, "I thought it would be a good idea for you and Kase to...talk." She glances at Kase, who smirks at me, fueling the fire that had been simmering within me.

"Really?" I reply, my tone dripping with sarcasm.

Kase smirks as he crosses his arms, "Yeah, we do."

I can feel my blood boil at the sight of him, and I clench my fists in an effort to control my anger. Syvis senses my tension and gives my arm a reassuring squeeze. Her touch helps ground me.

"Fine," I say through gritted teeth, trying to keep my composure, "Will you tell me that you are a changed person and not the same piece of shit you were before?" I questioned, my voice carrying a blend of skepticism and bitterness, "Because if that's what you're trying to sell, maybe you managed to fool my mother, but you can't fool me."

"Darx, that's not fair," My mother says, attempting to mediate the situation. Kase remains silent, his eyes locked on mine, "Kase and I have been discussing things, and we think it's important for both of you to put your differences aside," She persists, glancing nervously between us.

"Fair?" I snap back, "Do you know what's not fair? Having to accept that my own mother willingly married this... asshole," I scoff, glaring at Kase, "He has done nothing but try to ruin my life, and you know that!"

"Well, whether you like it or not, I don't care," Kase declared, his grip firm on my mother's hip as he pulled her closer to him, "Ilene is now my woman. And as her husband, I will not let anyone disrespect her, even if it is her son."

"K-Kase, this is not what we talk about." My mother spoke, looking stressed.

"Batard...." I said through clenched teeth, feeling how my anger was increasing more and more.

"Darx," Syvis whispers, urging me to calm down. I take a deep breath, fighting to regain control over my emotions. I don't want to give Kase the satisfaction of seeing me lose my temper. Syvis tries to restrain me, her hand gripping my arm firmly.

My mother, too, was struggling to control Kase, placing a calming hand on his chest.

"Enough!" My mother shouts desperation in her voice, "You two need to find a way to coexist. We're family now, whether you like it or not."

I was shocked by the absurdity of my mother's words. It's like she doesn't care to realize how frustrating and humiliating all of this is for me, only concerned about having both Kase and me in her life as if the past didn't exist. I could hardly recognize my own mother anymore.

"Family?" I scoff, anger boiling within me, "Mother, you have just been deceived by this idiot. Open your eyes and realize the mistake you are making."

"Deceived!?" Kase said with a mocking smile, "If it were something as simple as a stunt, do you think Ilene would let me do this?"

Then Kase did something that made me lose my temper. While looking at me, with the hand he had on my mother's hip went up until he grabbed one of her breasts from underneath and lifted it while squeezing it. I was so shocked by Kase's action that I could only open my eyes in disbelief at how low Kase could go.

"K-Kase, stop...!" My mother said, removing Kase's hand from her chest, also looking shocked.

I started to see red. Without conscious thought, I didn't even think and just act. I wriggled out of Syvis's grip, my body moving on its own accord. In less than a second, my left fist shot towards Kase's face with all my strength. Just before my blow could connect, Kase swiftly dodged by crouching, countering with an uppercut. I sensed his movement and managed to evade it by moving my head to the side. It seems that Kase didn't expect me to be able to dodge his blow because the surprise on his face was evident.

Seizing the opportunity of Kase's surprise, I unleashed a powerful kick towards him. Although he managed to partially block the impact, I pushed him back and left a scratch on his face.

The anger on Kase's face became palpable, but I didn't hesitate. In a swift motion, I drew one of my swords, launching myself at him with a jump. However, Kase managed to evade my sword strike with agility. He countered with a well-placed kick on my hand and then my chest, forcing me to release my sword midair. Before I could regain my balance, a dagger seemingly appeared out of thin air in Kase's hand. Seizing my moment of vulnerability, he lunged at me, intent on attacking with the dagger.

I realized I wouldn't be able to dodge the attack, but it might be my chance. I braced myself, preparing to block his dagger attack with my arm. Even if it pierced my arm, I could take advantage of that moment to counterattack with my other sword. Then, heal myself with my new skill once I retaliated. I watched Kase's every movement, readying myself for the right moment.

But suddenly, Syvis positioned herself in the middle of me, and the attack Kase was about to do, causing Kase to halt.

"STOP THIS!!" I hear my mom scream, also standing in front of Kase.

Syvis took out her book as if she were willing to intervene in combat to stop Kase. Kase didn't say anything, and they just stared at each other without saying anything for a few seconds.

It seems that the scandal we were making made Elina and other members of my guild come out to see what was happening.

"WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?" Elina screamed, "D-Darx!?" She asked once she saw me.

Syvis turned around and walked towards me, "Are you okay?" Syvis asks concern etched on her face.

"Y-Yeah..."

At that moment, Elina and the other members of the guild came down the steps and were next to us.

"What's going on here?" One of the guild members asked.

Elina seemed to comprehend the situation instantly upon seeing, me and my mother next to Kase. Elina turned to see Kase and my mother, and sounding annoyed, she spoke, "What are members of Oblivion doing outside our guild? Even if you are an S-Rank, don't think you have the right to do whatever you want in the territory of other guilds."

"I'm sorry, we didn't want to..." My mother tried to say before I interrupted her.

"That's enough, mother. Just go. It's already clear to me who your priority is."

"Darx, I'm sorry... I didn't mean this to happen," My mother said with glassy eyes.

"Let's go, Ilene. We don't have anything to do here anymore." Kase said, starting to walk.

Kase continued walking without stopping and looking ahead, but as he passed me, he whispered, "They saved you again, but the next time will be the last."

I was about to lunge at him again, but Syvis held me down, "Darx, let him go. Don't fall for his provocations."

"Fine," I relent, the heat of my anger subsiding slightly under Syvis's calming touch.

My mother also started to walk behind Kase but stopped in front of me, "I'm sorry, son. I know this is difficult for you, but I will never give up on you."

I didn't answer anything or look at her. I just stood still, waiting for her to start walking again away from this place.

Elina and the others asked me what happened and if everything was okay, and after giving them a vague explanation, they all returned to the guild but not before offering me their help if I needed it.

"Are you okay?" Syvis asked me once we were alone.

"Yeah..." I reply, but my voice catches in my throat.

Syvis suddenly hugged me, perhaps detecting the pain I felt in my words, "Promise me you'll stay safe, Darx," She whispered into my ear, her breath warm against my skin.

"I promise," I reply, feeling the weight of those words settles over me like a solemn vow, "I'll be fine. Go to the castle before it's too late, and I'll see you later."

"Okay, Syvis responded by letting me out of her arms, "Don't drink anymore, okay!?"

"I won't," I responded, trying my best to smile.

With one last look and a kiss, Syvis turns away and heads towards the castle. As I watch her disappear into the distance, I can't help but wonder what the future holds for us.