

Chapter 11: "My body is a cage"

For a heartbeat, there was only silence.

Stolas looked up at Blitzø, barely breathing, heart still trembling in the cradle of his ribs. The room felt like it was holding its breath with him.

"Run away?" he echoed softly, voice hoarse from tears. "How?"

Blitzø paused, blinking. Like he hadn't actually expected to get that far. He scratched the back of his head, unsure.

"I mean... I don't know yet," he said quickly. He stood up, starting to pace, a nervous energy catching hold of him like wildfire. "We'll figure it out, right? We'll just *go*. Just walk out and never look back. The fucking ice peacock can't control you if you're gone. You'll be free."

Free.

The word settled in Stolas's chest like a star trying to burn in a place that had only ever known shadows. It would be so easy to just let go of everything, every obligation, every fear and just follow his heart.

"But what about the others?" he asked, voice still fragile. "Loona... Millie, Moxxie..."

"They'll be fine," Blitzø said, waving a hand as he paced past the coffee table. "They'll understand. And we can meet them later — after we find someplace safe. Once we're settled," he ran a hand through down his face, eyes brightening with the speed of his own thoughts. "Maybe somewhere in Wrath," he said. "Small town. Quiet. Millie's folks have that big ol' farm we went to visit for some harvest shit last year. Horses, too. Maybe I could work there for a bit, I dunno — shovel shit, wrangle some demons, whatever."

"You'd... work on a farm?" he murmured, eyes wide.

"Hell yeah!" Blitzø grinned. "Get my hands dirty, y'know? Nothing new. You could rest, not have to perform or dress up or fend off creeps all the time. Just, be yourself."

He laughed, a little breathless, rubbing the back of his neck. "We could fix up a place. Something small, but ours. Maybe once everything dies down, the others can come. Moxxie'll hate it, but I'll make him plant vegetables or something. Loona can snap Insta stories of cows. It'll be great."

As Stolas listened and the words began to weave a picture in his mind. A life he had never dared let himself want. A quiet existence. A warm kitchen. A night sky unspoiled by neon haze. Blitzø's laugh echoing through rooms that didn't belong to anyone else. No shadows behind their backs. No strings pulled from above.

He could *see it*. Feel the weight of a teacup in the morning. The warmth of Blitzø's skin in bed, his smell lingering there, where it belonged. The soft knock of hooves in the distance. Peace, like he'd only ever known in dreams.

Stolas swallowed, blinking hard.

"Yes," he whispered.

Blitzø froze mid-step, eyes snapping to him.

“What?”

He looked up, the corners of his mouth lifting — trembling with something soft and terrifying.

“Yes,” he said again. “Let’s run.”

For a moment, neither of them moved.

Then Blitzø *launched* across the room, wrapping him up and kissing him. Again and again, everywhere, his lips, his cheeks, on his brow,, laughing and crying at once. Stolas laughed too, tears still clinging to his lashes as they clung to each other, mouths colliding between whispers.

“I’ll go find Fizz,” Blitzø said suddenly, pulling back just enough to press a hand to Stolas’s cheek. “He’ll know how to help us. We’ll leave *tonight*, birdbrain.”

Stolas nodded, dazed. Blitzø kiss his hands and stood.

“You stay here, alright? Don’t go anywhere. Just... wait for me.”

Blitzø was already halfway to the door, excitement buzzing through him like lightning. At the threshold, he paused, turning back again — eyes wide, filled with something fragile and wild.

“Wait for me.”

Stolas smiled, soft and sure, his heart aching.

“Always,” he whispered.

And then Blitzø was gone, the door clicking shut behind him.

Stolas sat still.

For a moment, he simply stared at the door Blitzø had just vanished through, the echo of his parting footsteps still clinging to the corners of the room. His heart pounded, erratic and bright, like a caged bird slamming itself against bone bars.

They were going to run.

They were going to be free. *Together*.

The thought bloomed in his chest, lush and wild, dizzying as new magic. It was real—Blitzø had said it. Had kissed his hands like they were sacred. Had promised to come back. *Wait*, he’d said. *Wait, and we’ll go*.

The dream shimmered behind Stolas’s eyes: a little house on some quiet edge of Wrath, maybe by a lake. Dusty fields. Sunlight like honey. Blitzø shirtless, laughing, hands deep in soil, freckles blooming against sun-browned skin. Maybe a job at a stable. Maybe planting things. Carrots. Peppers? Lavender? He didn’t know what grew in Wrath’s dirt, but he’d learn.

He’d learn.

He’d help.

They’d be happy.

Stolas stood, his legs trembling slightly with excitement. The room around him suddenly felt too large. What would they need? What could he bring? He began pacing, eyes scanning shelves and clutter with no real sense of reason. His gaze landed on a crystal decanter of aged demon brandy and a decorative fan made of phoenix plumes.

"Perhaps this?" he murmured aloud, lifting the fan like it was a talisman. "It gets warm in Wrath, doesn't it?"

He caught sight of himself in the mirror and jumped, startled. He looked like a madman—half-dressed in what remained of his lace suit, feathers disheveled, his eyes too wide, too bright. He let out a nervous laugh, high and sharp, and tried to tidy himself, smoothing what wrinkles he could, tearing off the dangling remnants of fabric.

The door opened suddenly again.

He turned with a grin already forming, heart in his throat. "That was quick," he said, voice light, near breathless. "I didn't think you'd—"

But it wasn't Blitzø.

Ozzie stood there. Still. Silent. His eyes locked on him with an expression Stolas couldn't name—something ancient, vast, and terrible.

The air thinned. Dread slithered up his spine.

"Ozzie?" Stolas forced a smile, but his voice shook. "What... what are you doing here?"

Ozzie stepped inside. His eyes were glassy. "He sent me."

Everything inside Stolas stopped. His knees gave, barely catching himself against the table's edge.

"Who?" he breathed, though he already knew. Every word tasted like rust.

Ozzie didn't answer right away. He just looked at him with such sorrow it was like having his soul flayed open by grief given shape and eyes.

Stolas's throat closed. "He sent you to kill me," he whispered. Ozzie shook his head. "Not you," he said. "Blitzø."

And everything inside him fell silent. As if his own body had forgotten how to function—his heart stuttering to a crawl, the blood in his veins gone to ice.

He stumbled back. "No. No, he—he's done nothing, he's innocent, you can't—Ozzie, please," his voice broke, raw and frantic. "Please, I—I'll do anything—"

"I can't stop it," Ozzie said, and his voice was shaking now too. "I can't fight him. He controls me. If Blitzø leaves this place with you—if he even crosses the threshold—I will be forced to strike. I won't even be aware of it. He'll be dead before I can stop myself."

Stolas couldn't breathe.

There was a vise closing around his lungs, squeezing tighter and tighter. The world itself had wrapped around his ribs and begun to crush. He clawed at his own sleeves, desperate for air that wouldn't come. The room swayed.

"No," he gasped. "No, please—Ozzie, please. If I ever meant anything to you—please, don't do this—"

Tears welled in Ozzie's eyes.

"You've been my anchor, birdy babe," Ozzie whispered, his eyes glistening. "The only steady light I had left in all this damn chaos. You kept me standing when everything else fell apart. But I can't do this for you. If you love him—if you want him to live—you have to be the one to end it. You have to make him believe there's nothing here worth staying for."

Stolas let out a broken sob, hugging himself as if he could hold the shattering pieces together. He felt Ozzie's arms wrap around him, steady and warm, as he rocked him through it.

"How?" Stolas cried. "He won't leave. He would never—he said—he loves me—"

"He will," Ozzie whispered. "If he thinks you don't love him."

Stolas looked up at his friend, his eyes pleading.

"I can't," he said, trembling. "He'll see through it. He knows me."

"Then make him believe it anyway."

Stolas blinked, breath stuttering.

"I can't lie to him."

"You can," Ozzie said. "You're an actor. You always have been. You've spent your life performing: the perfect prince, the doting husband, the untouchable noble. You convinced the entire Hell hierarchy that you were invincible, that they couldn't destroy you, not even when they sent you to the very bottom of the pit. Now do what you do best. Put on one last show."

Stolas saw himself again onstage, bathed in false light. He saw Blitzø watching him from the wings, smirking like he always did—like Stolas was the only thing in the room worth noticing. He remembered the weight of Blitzø's head resting on his chest at night. The way his hand curled instinctively around Stolas's when they slept. The laugh, low and real, that made Stolas's heart ache with how alive it sounded.

To give that up... to destroy that on purpose...

"It'll kill me," he whispered, voice cracking at the edges. He could feel the tears falling again, carving a path down his cheeks he wasn't sure he'd ever be able to erase.

Ozzie shook his head, grabbing him by the shoulders. "No, you'll survive. You always do. You're the most resilient demon I have ever met. And you love him enough to break your own heart to save him."

Stolas crumbled.

He sank slowly to the floor, the rustle of silk and feathers barely louder than his breath. His hands curled in his lap, trembling. The truth pressed against his ribs like glass—cold, sharp, unrelenting.

He would have to let Blitzø believe it meant nothing.

That there was no future worth holding onto.

He would have to let him go... and pray he never looked back.

The world tilted inward. The velvet walls closed like jaws.

And somewhere deep inside him, something gave way.

He stared at the door Blitzø had walked through, and for the first time, wished he wouldn't come back.



He couldn't fucking find Fizz.

Blitzø had scoured the whole damn club like a hellhound — backstage, under tables, even behind the goddamn piano. Nada. Se había marcado una bomba de humo — pulled a smoke bomb move. Not even a trace of those damn glowing prosthetics anywhere. Just empty space and the low buzz of tired old rehearsal lights overhead.

So he gave up. Scribbled a quick note and slapped it on the mirror in his dressing room:
We're skippin town. Don't freak. Tell Loona, Moxx, n Millie. I'll call when we land – B

On the way out, he swung by Stolas's room. Figured the owl might want something to wear besides the half-shredded suit he'd been clinging to.

He rummaged through the vanity, eventually landing on a couple of plain black blouses and some slacks that didn't look like they'd been attacked by a glitter demon. Then he paused, hand brushing over the robe Stolas always wore on lazy mornings — soft, wine-colored, loose at the collar — and tossed that in too.

Right before leaving, he snagged the dumb pirate book they'd been reading off the nightstand. The one with all the flowery-ass prose and even flowerier sex scenes. Absolute trash. Stolas ate it up.

By the time he got back to the apartment, it felt like he'd been gone forever.

He didn't like leaving Stolas alone too long, not like this. The way he'd looked, wrecked, barely holding himself together, made Blitzø's blood boil all over again. What that feathered prick had done to make Stolas fall apart like that? Blitzø had held him while he shook so hard, it felt like he'd disappear right in his arms.

Stolas was stronger than that. Blitzø knew it. But being strong didn't mean jack when you were being gutted from the inside.

Been there. Done that. Got the matching trauma.

And if Blitzø ever got the chance to claw that smug prick's face off? He was gonna savor every damn second.

The hallway was dead quiet when he got to the door.

Bag over his shoulder, heart thudding just a bit too loud.

He twisted the knob and stepped inside.

"Sorry I made you wait, birdie!" he called, voice easy, automatic. "Fizz must've gone full cockroach and crawled into a vent or somethin', I couldn't—"

He stopped.

Stolas was standing in the middle of the room, back to him. Still. Too still. No nervous feather-fussing. No pacing. Just... straight-backed. Statue-still.

Something in Blitzø's chest gave a weird lurch.

"Hey," he said, softer now. "You okay?"

He took a few steps forward, hand reaching without thinkin, fingers brushing the silk at Stolas's waist.

Stolas flinched.

A cold twist coiled in Blitzø's gut.

"Stolas?" he asked, voice going low.

"I'm okay," came the answer. Soft. Measured. Too measured.

Blitzø nodded slowly, like that made sense. Like any of this made sense.

He took a step back, awkward, too aware of the silence stretching between them like a wire pulled tight.

"I, uh... I grabbed some stuff for the trip," he said, voice breezy but thin around the edges. "Couple shirts. That ridiculous robe you like. And—shit—the pirate book. Figured you'd wanna keep reading it."

He let out a short, breathless laugh.

The kind that begged for a smile in return. For a tease. A roll of the eyes, a soft jab. Something.

But Stolas didn't move. Didn't speak. Didn't even look at him.

Blitzø's throat worked around a sudden lump. He forced it down.

He's just nervous, he told himself. First time he's left the club since he got here. It's a big deal. He's freaked. That's all.

"I can pack the rest," he added quickly, grasping for motion, for control. He set the bag down, hands already moving again, crossing the room with jittery energy. "We can swing by your place if you want. Grab a plant or, I dunno, more clothes, anything that's yours—just so it feels like you're bringing home with you—"

"That won't be necessary."

Stolas's voice, cool as a winter draft, cut through the room like a knife.

Blitzø stopped mid-step.

The words hit him sideways. His spine went rigid. Something primal in him recoiled.

He turned slowly. That sinking feeling had just turned into a full blown blackhole in the pit of his stomach.

Stolas was facing him now. Straight-backed, stiff — that overly perfect posture he pulled when dealing with high-paying assholes at the club. Regal. Distant. *Fake*. Blitzø hated it. Hated how it made him look like a stranger. Completely out of his reach.

His face was a mask, smooth and blank, but his eyes... Blitzø didn't know how to describe it. There was something off. A strange kind of glow that didn't look like him. As if the light had gone out behind them and something else had taken its place.

His stomach dropped, cold and sharp. Something *was fucking wrong*.

“What?”.

Stolas took a breath, slow and careful, before speaking again.

“Vassago was here,” Stolas said, voice low and measured.

Blitzø’s head snapped up. “What?” His voice was sharp, immediate. “He came here? What the fuck did he do—did he touch you again? Did he threaten you? ‘Cause I swear to Satan, Satan, Stolas, if that smug, feathered dickhead laid *one claw* on you, I’ll—”

“He offered me everything.”

The words were soft, but they shattered the room like glass.

“My old life. The Court. My name. Anything I could ever want.”

Blitzø froze.

The air changed. Went thick. Every nerve in his body screamed at him to *run*, to rewind time, to stop him from saying what was coming next.

“No.” It came out flat. Dry. “Don’t.”

“He offered me everything.”

The words were soft — too soft. But they cracked through the air like a bullet through glass.

“My old life. The Court. My name. Anything I could ever want.”

Blitzø froze.

The air went weird. Heavy. His skin felt too tight. Something in his gut twisted hard, like it already knew what was coming.

“No,” he said. Flat. Dead. “Don’t.”

Stolas looked at him, quiet. “I accepted.”

And everything stopped.

Blitzø didn’t move. Didn’t even blink. He heard the words, but his brain refused to process them. It was like someone had handed him the end of a story he hadn’t agreed to be in.

Then the pressure hit — crawling into his chest, curling hot around his ribs, clawing at his throat.

He shook his head. Once. Sharp.

“No.” A step forward. “No. No, that’s—That’s fucking bullshit!”

The last word tore from him like a wound ripped open.

“You’re lying!” he shouted, voice cracking. “You’re fucking lying, Stolas! You think I don’t know you by now?! You don’t want that life back — not after *everything!*” His breath hitched. Fast. Wild. His heart thundered like it was trying to beat its way out of his ribs.

"You *really* expect me to believe this?" Blitzø snarled. "That this was all some sick joke? That it meant *nothing*? You think I didn't feel it? You think I imagined it?!"

His chest burned. His throat was on fire. His voice was splintering.

"I *know* you cared! I felt it, dammit — in my bones, in my fucking chest, every time you looked at me like—" He caught himself, the words choking off before they escaped. Before he could say *like you loved me*.

He swallowed hard. The air cut like glass.

And Blitzø's heart cracked like a bone giving way beneath a boot.

His chest went tight. Too tight. He couldn't breathe right. Couldn't think over the noise rising in his skull.

Of course. Of fucking course.

Why would he stay?

Why would anyone stay?

That familiar pressure came slamming down — like a bag of bricks strapped to his ribs, the kind he'd carried since forever. He should've known. Should've known better than to think any of it could've been real. Even with the softness. Even with the stupid pirate books, and the laughter, and the whispered *I love you's* like they meant something.

He was still just an imp. A punchline. A fucking hurricane of bad decisions.

Just another mess Stolas played with in the dark and dumped when the lights came on.

His hands curled into fists.

Who the fuck was I kidding. Nobody loves me. Nobody ever fucking could.

His hands shook.

And then—memories. Like knives.

Fizz under that beam. The fire. His screams. Blitzø dragging him out, skin melting off in patches, the heat blistering his arms. That smell — cooked flesh and burning wood — he couldn't forget it if he tried.

And then the tent.

His mom's tent, torn open like someone had gutted it. He remembered the way the ash stuck to his boots. The canvas folding in on itself, black and brittle. He walked in and saw them. Their shapes. Bones. His sister's little foot poking out from the blackened pile.

He'd crawled to them, tried to lift what was left. Cradled them through the blisters, through the bile. Screamed until he lost his voice and still no one came. Not his father. Not *anyone*.

He pressed a hand to his mouth, shaking.

And that's when Stolas spoke again — cold. Controlled. Distant.

"I cared for you," he said, "the same way you care for the horses."

Blitzø's head snapped up.

"As something that loves you without condition," Stolas continued, voice like a hollow stage. "That makes you feel warm. Safe. Comforted. But it wasn't love, Blitzø. I was bored. I needed something new. I used you."

Blitzø staggered a half-step back. There was a scream trying to claw its way out of him, but nothing came. Just the throb of blood in his ears.

"You were a toy," Stolas said. "A distraction. Just another game before the curtain rose again. I'm an actor, after all."

Something inside Blitzø *knew* this was a lie. Knew it. Could feel it in the way Stolas's voice trembled on the edges, in the way he wouldn't meet his eyes. But that gut feeling was small. And it got drowned out fast under the wave crashing through him.

Because it didn't matter.

It made *sense*.

Of course it was a lie. Of course it was fake. He was *fucking Blitzø*. He broke things. He *broke* people.

He didn't say anything. He couldn't.

And then Stolas turned.

"That's all I needed to say," he said, almost gently, starting to walk towards the door.

Blitzø didn't follow. Didn't stop him. Didn't even look up.

The silence was deafening.

"Wait," he whispered when Stolas passed next to him. The word cracked as it left his mouth.

He heard Stolas pause. One step caught in place.

He opened his mouth, chest heaving. Tried to speak. Nothing came.

Blitzø didn't look up. He couldn't. He just stood there, breathing smoke and ash and ghosts, the silence settling over him like snow.

And it felt like the last light in the world had gone out.

END OF ACT II



NO

I CARED
FOR YOU
THE SAME
WAY YOU
CARE FOR
THE HORSES.

AS SOMETHING
THAT LOVES YOU
WITHOUT CONDITION.
BUT IT WASN'T LOVE,
BLITZØ. I WAS BORED.
I NEEDED
SOMETHING NEW.
I USED YOU.

NO. NO,
THAT'S—
THAT'S
FUCKING
BULLSHIT...

WAIT.

