

ACT 1: THE PRINCE AND THE CLOWN

Chapter 1: Prelude

The last rays of the sun disappeared over the reddish buildings that crowned the sky above the Pride ring. Blitzo drummed his foot on the elegant marble steps that presided the entrance to the palace.

His father was late. Again.

That didn't worry him as much as it should. He was used to finding himself rather low on Cash Buckzo's priority list. Most of the time, he came right after cleaning the horseshit out of the stables.

He sighed, resigned, and rested his chin on his palm. His father told him he had to spend the afternoon with one of the Goetia princes, but he didn't say exactly *how* long that would be. Blitzo asked when he could come home just as his father was collecting the payment from the imp butler.

"Shut your mouth and do as you're told. Entertain the small shitter and take as much stuff as you can," Cash growled between his teeth, digging his claws painfully into his son's wrist. Blitzo knew better than to argue with his father when money was involved. He yanked his arm out of the man's grip, shaking with pent-up anger.

After he left, the butler just guided him to the young prince's quarters. He had spent the last five hours scampering through the halls of the huge palace that loomed behind him, stealing anything he could find of value while the Goetia chick tried to keep up.

It wasn't so bad, Blitzo thought. The prince was a sweet little featherball who blushed easily and did everything he told him to. *Stolas*, Blitzo remembered. His faceplate had flushed beet red when the imp had shaken his tiny hand, stammering as he introduced himself.

Blitzo thought he was kind of a weirdo, especially at first, and he couldn't help but get bored when the kid kept going on and on about plants and books. But as soon as Blitzo suggested playing treasure hunt, the prince jumped right in. He had to admit that it had been fun. It couldn't compare to the afternoons playing with Barbie and Fizz, or the time he spent with the hellhorses after the circus closed each night, but it hadn't been bad at all. Especially when the imp servant brought them a tray full of fruit and chocolate cookies, enough for Blitzo to stuff his mouth full three times over. Hed wanted to keep going, but his stomach was ready to burst.. Stolas offered for him to take some home and ordered a box with a selection of sweets to be prepared for him. Blitzo couldn't wait to show his mother and sister.

And speaking of getting home, his father was nowhere to be seen. He stood up from the stairs and looked out the front gate. Still nothing.

Suddenly, he heard hurried steps behind him and a soft voice calling his name.

"Blitzo! Wait!" Stolas huffed. He was running down the stairs as fast as his stubby legs would take him. Blitzo turned around. What was he doing there? They had already said their goodbyes. The owlet was supposed to be enjoying his fancy dinner in his fancy ass bedroom, unless...Blitzo's heart skipped a beat. He fidgeted nervously.

Maybe... Stolas found out that Blitzo had robbed him blind? His pulse quickened.
Better see what he wants before doing anything stupid.

"Yeah?" Blitzo squinted his eyes, confused. The young prince raised a hand, trying to catch his breath. Stolas huffed so deeply the imp thought he was about to pass out. After a few moments, he just extended his little talon. He was clutching a familiar plush horse in it.

"Y...you...forgot it...!" He gasped.

Blitzo blinked at that hand for a minute, not really grasping what was happening.

They had been playing with their toys for a bit, Stolas showing him the small mountain of trinkets and plushes in his playroom, which was bigger than Blitzo's family tent in the circus. Blitzo had just shyly taken out his favourite horse plush, *Staple*. He always carried it with him. It was a worn out piece of rag put together clumsily in a vague shape of a horse, but he had made it himself. He'd explained to Stolas how he had sewed the pieces together with the help of his mother.

"That is amazing, Blitzo!" Stolas exclaimed. Blitzo felt his face grow hot, a mix of bashfulness and pride reddening his cheeks.

"W...well, it's not such a big deal. The stitches are uneven and the stuffing is lumpy all over. Plus, my mom had to do a lot of the work, so..."

"But you did it with your own hands, and that makes it unique," Stolas said sweetly, smiling up at him. "I may have a lot of toys, but none of them are as special as this one. You should be proud."

Blitzo's heart had skipped a beat, and if someone asked him, he wouldn't be able to explain why. But when Stolas asked for permission to play with Staple, for the first time in his life, the imp allowed it.. Not even Fizz had ever managed to pry Staple away from Blitzo.

After that, they'd started playing around in the palace, and Blitzo forgot he had left the toy in Stolas's room.

He extended his hand to get it back, but thought better about it.

"Keep it." The words left his mouth before he could think them through. Stolas' eyes widened, surprised.

"Oh, no, but I couldn't! It is yours." He tried to give it back to Blitzo, but the imp stopped him.

"Nah, take it as a birthday present. I didn't give you anything, so...keep it." Blitzo smiled, pulling his hands in his pockets, rocking on the balls of his feet. "Plus, you liked it, and I can make another one. I could practice more that way," he added with a smile..

Stolas looked at him, and then back at the plush in his hand. Suddenly, he hugged the toy tight against his chest. Although Blitzo adored Staples, the look on Stolas' face was worth it. Beaming so happily, the owl gently held his hands out and hooted.

"Thank you, thank you so much," he whispered. "I will treasure it *forever*."

His red eyes turned watery when he raised his head to look at Blitzo.

“Woah, hey, are you crying? For real?” Blitzo was a little taken aback.

“Oh! Don’t worry, it’s a happy crying!” He sniffed, wiping the tears from his eyes.

“This is the best birthday present I’ve ever had.”

The imp looked at him, wide eyed. Blitzo found it hard to believe that a prince of Hell would consider a tattered, secondhand stuffed animal to be the best gift of his life. He didn’t know whether to be uncomfortable, skeptical or flattered. He didn’t have time to analyze it much further either because suddenly, the owlet grabbed his hands with an excited hoot.

“I want to give you something in return! Let me go back to my room and give you one of my toys,” he said, squeezing his hands. Blitzo blinked a couple of times, surprised.

The thought of taking advantage of the opportunity to grab something of value crossed Blitzo’s mind, but an ugly feeling pulsed in his stomach almost instantly. He was his father’s son, but he wouldn’t stoop as low as him.

He shook his head, patting the owl’s hands before releasing them.

“No need, you already gave me the sweets. Plus, I’m getting a little too old for toys anyway.” Blitzo didn’t say that his father would probably sell it out as soon as he saw it.

Stolas’s expression fell a little at that, but then a big smile spread across his face. Then, without warning, he raised his hand and simply plucked a feather from his head, squawking a little.

“Here!” Stolas said, offering it to him, his face all bright as if he’d just gotten the brightest idea of his life. “I want you to keep this, to remember me!”

When Blitzo took it, their hands brushed slightly, and Stolas’ feathers puffed a bit, pink dusting his cheeks. Blitzo didn’t notice. He turned the feather between his fingers. It was a beautiful bluish colour that glowed in purple hues when the imp turned it to the light.

“Thank you,” Blitzo said, a little moved. He put it in his pocket.

“That way, come what may, you know that you have a friend in me,” Stolas said with a sweet smile.

“Come what may, huh?” Blitzo grinned.

“What? Did I say something wrong?” Stolas asked, tilting his head in confusion.

“Nah, nah, it’s just…”

A half smile tugged at Blitzo’s mouth, softening his features. The face of his mother suddenly appeared in his mind, warm arms circling him.

Come what may, my love. I will always be with you.

He shook his head and looked at the owlet with a broad smile. “It’s just something my mom says too.”

A sudden honk startled them both, making them jump in surprise. Cash's old van screeched to a halt, turning the corner of the street.

"Come on, boy! What are you doing there?! Get off your ass and get in the car!" Blitzo's father screamed.

"Well, that's my cue to leave, I guess," he groaned as Cash honked like a madman.

"Oh, well, I...I suppose this is goodbye," Stolas said sadly.

Blitzo opened his mouth to say something. He wished he could invite him to his home, but he didn't think a circus tent would be a good enough place for a prince. Plus, the circus moved around through all the rings of Hell. It's not as if they were going to be friends, right?

Still, the owl had such a sad expression that Blitzo felt his heart sink. He didn't want to go when Stolas looked like that.

"We'll see each other again," Blitzo said finally.

Stolas raised his head, big eyes twinkling.

"Really?" The prince said, hopeful. A small smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. Blitzo grinned wide.

"Sure! We'll meet again, you'll see. Also, I'll have to check up on Staple at some point, so make sure to take good care of him for me."

Looking from the horse to Blitzo, eyes bright and grateful, Stolas let out a relieved breath.. He nodded, clutching the horse to his chest. " Promise?"

Blitzo felt a sudden warmth spreading from his chest through his limbs, a feeling he only ever got with his mother.

He smiled and nodded.

"Come what may."

Chapter 2: “Your Song”

It never stopped raining.

Blitzø walked along the dark sidewalks of the Lust ring. His boots splashed the permanent puddles on the pavement, muddy water seeping through the seams of his boots. He already felt dampness through the hole in his socks, but he didn't care. He hadn't bothered to grab an umbrella; he'd rather let the drops of water slide from the tips of his horns to his forehead. It kept him anchored to reality.

Lust always managed to make him forget his problems, if only for a while. The neon lights decorating the entrances to the venues, the muffled music pouring through the soundproof walls of the buildings flanking both sides of the street. The smells of spices and expensive perfume assaulted all his senses, clouding his mind into a stupor that made it almost impossible to think. Instead, he let his body guide him almost instinctively through the crowds that filled the sidewalks.

Tonight, he had to keep his cool.

He took the street on his right, quickening his pace only to run face first into the little imp waiting for him around the corner. The crash made him stumble and land in the middle of a dirty puddle, soaking his clothes in a matter of seconds.

“Fuck, Moxxie! We already know you like it underneath, but if you want me to stick it in, just say so. This was the only decent suit I had!” Blitzø yelled.

“S...sorry , sir!” Moxxie stammered. He grabbed his boss's arm and pulled to help him up. “I just wanted to check if you were Millie, she left a while ago. Just a precaution, you know. The streets are dangerous at this hour, and...” Blitzø glared at him, which made Moxxie get the message and shut his trap. *Thank Satan for small miracles.*

The fabric of his coat hung ungracefully. Blitzø sniffed it; great, some asshole had pissed in the middle of the street. Just *perfect*. He shook the crumpled fabric out, trying to make it look slightly more decent and failing horribly. Blitzø felt his anger skyrocket by the minute; if it built up any more tension, he would end up popping like a thong on Mammon's fucking ass...making Moxxie piss his pants in the process.

He finally let out an exasperated sigh, trying to relax.

“Where did Mills go?” Blitzø asked, changing the subject.

“Eeeehm, well you see...” Moxxie hesitated, averting his eyes nervously.

“Spit it out, Mox, I'm not getting any younger.”

Before Moxxie could finish speaking, Millie appeared, trotting down the street while dragging Loona by the tail. The hellhound clutched a bottle of liquor in her claw, emptying it in big gulps.

“Moxxie, I found her! Ooooooh, Blitzø, you've arrived too!” She waved cheerfully as she approached them.

Blitzø's eyes widened and panicked, holding his hands to his head.

“Loonie! What happened?!” He whined.

“That's what I was trying to tell you, sir...Loona said you were taking too long and decided to leave and get some drinks. We've been looking for her everywhere for over an hour!” Moxxie replied, but Blitzø ignored him. He approached his daughter with his heart in his fist. The hellhound only deigned to give him an uninterested sideways glance, focusing again on the bottle she was quickly emptying out.

“Honey, why don't you stand up? W...can't you walk?! Who did this to you!?!” Blitzø howled. He pulled out the flintlock he always carried inside the pocket of his jacket to load it. “I'm going to kill the son of a bitch who put a finger on you...!” He bellowed, out of his mind.

“Don't worry, B!” Millie gave him a strong slap on the shoulder, nearly sending him back to the ground. “There's nothing wrong with her, she just overdid it a bit with the Beelzejuice and couldn't walk straight when I found her, but she's fine.” Blitzø straightened up, rubbing his sore back.

“Millie, *I swear to Satan*, if you or your husband ever come within six feet of me again when I'm wearing this suit...” He suddenly realized they were in full view of the crowd. Blitzø cursed through his teeth as he urged his team to hide in the alley where they had agreed to meet.

Just as they hid in the shadows, a pink limousine drove past them, screeching to a halt in front of the club that dominated the main street. The owner of Ozzie's, the lord of Lust himself, appeared with his characteristic elegance, his three faces grinning in unison. But Blitzø was more interested in the small figure following him, who disappeared into the club with a couple of agile pirouettes.

Blitzø swallowed hard. He hoped the plan worked. Their future depended on it.

“Alright, gang, it's time. Are you ready?” He glanced over his shoulder at his team. The two imps and the hellhound looked puzzled, as if they had absolutely no idea what he was talking about.

“Eeeeh...Blitzø, you still haven't told us what exactly we're doing here,” Millie said with an uncomfortable smile.

Ah, *crap*. Right. He'd been so focused on getting every small step they had to take planned out that he'd missed the small detail of telling his team about it

“We're used to your odd quirks, sir, but we haven't learned to read your mind yet,” Moxxie said peevishly.

Blitzø grabbed Moxxie by the jaw, squeezing his chubby cheeks. “If I wanted your opinion, Mox, I'd stick it in an investment fund first and see if between now and *NEVER*, it raises any interest!” He shook off his jacket, still soaked and reeking of piss, very pleased with himself. “And now, if you've stopped talking *bullshit*, listen carefully.”

He squatted down, extracting from his back pocket an extremely crumpled sheet of paper decorated with a multitude of scribbles. He spread it out on a dry piece of pavement as Loona, Moxxie and Millie bent over it.

"Here's what we're gonna to do to save IMP," he said.

Ozzie's was crowded with demons of all kinds and from all walks of life. One of the club's main mottos was "*passion has no boundaries, no name, no race; you are the one who holds it back or embraces it.*"

Those two are doing more than just embracing, Blitzø thought as he watched a couple shamelessly groping each other right in front of the stage.

Blitzø dodged the jumble of bodies tangling with each other, looking all around to locate his target. It didn't take long, Fizz was an attention whore. He was in the middle of a huge crowd of ass-kissers who couldn't stop laughing at one of his lame fucking jokes.

Bingo!

Fizz took a graceful bow and then nimbly climbed off the crossbars that connected the strippers' cages, slithering down one of the stage poles like a snake. Blitzø's stomach lurched as he watched Fizz's prosthetic limbs grow inordinately long, much longer than normal arms would.

He shook his head; he couldn't think about that now. He had to get Fizz alone to talk in private.

Blitzø was going to have no choice but to hold out until the show was over to corner him.

Your number will be the last, of course. *Always putting on airs, saving your act for last. You'd die if you couldn't be the main attraction, huh,,* Blitzø thought, irritated. Fizz had been the star of Ozzie's for years, everyone knew that. And it still stung Blitzø.

But to his surprise, Fizz did not grab the microphone to introduce the opening act of the evening. Instead, he approached the main box where he exchanged a few words with the King of Lust (the *Rooster Fucker*, as Blitzø secretly liked to call him), before sneaking out through a side door.

Game on.

Blitzø glided like a shadow, sticking to the wall of the club. He had given orders to Millie, Moxxie and Loona to mingle with the people and study the terrain. Some drunk idiot was sure to tell them what was cooking around here. They needed to know what they were getting into. And he wanted to talk to Fizz alone.

Blitzø checked to make sure no one was watching him before slipping behind the curtain that concealed the door Fizz had disappeared through. It closed behind him with a muffled *click*.

"You've always been a spotlight junkie. I'm surprised you're not rolling around on the stage. What's up, you don't mind another slut taking your throne?" Blitzø said in greeting.

Fizz gave a startled gasp and turned around.

"Wha...?! Blitzø!?" He said, eyes like saucers. His grimace of disbelief suddenly turned to fury. He lunged at Blitzø, landing a punch to his face that narrowly missed.

"I'm going to... Do you have any idea *how long* I've been looking for you, asshole?" Fizz exclaimed, straddling his chest and trying to strangle him with the prosthetics.

"The o is now *silent*, idiot!," Blitzø gasped, trying to get Fizz off him. They struggled for a few moments until Blitzø managed to pin him to the ground, tying an intricate knot with the metal limbs.

"Phew, never thought you had such a short fuse, Fizz. Where'd you get the bad blood? It's been *that long* time since you've had a good fuck?"

"Get...off...me, you jerk!" Fizz rolled up his prosthetic legs like corkscrews, propelling himself forward and pushing Blitzø off. He landed with his back on the edge of the table.

"Fuck, Fizz, I was just teasing!" Blitzø slowly sat up, groaning in pain. He was pretty sure he had a tube of lipstick stuck up his asshole.

Fizz huffed, eyes filled with tears. *Shit.*

"Hey, hey" Blitzø approached his friend, hands outstretched. "Hey, I didn't know that..." He was prepared to bear a couple of punches if needed. *To be honest, I deserve them.* But he wasn't ready for tears.

"Fizz, I'm sorry for leaving like that. I...I couldn't stay, I..." He paused. What else was he going to tell him. That after what had happened, he couldn't stand to be there a minute longer than necessary? He waited until he was sure Fizz was gonna be okay, and then he just left everything behind.

Without saying goodbye.

Blitzø looked at the prostheses again and felt guilt like a hand gripped around his throat. *He hadn't been able to bear seeing* Fizz lying in that hospital bed, struggling between life and death; his mechanical limbs were just another reminder.

"Sorry," he mumbled, lowering his outstretched hand.

Those same mechanical arms suddenly encircled him, clasping him tightly as Fizz rested his forehead on his shoulder. Blitzø felt the collar of his jacket dampen. He didn't quite know what to do, but Fizz squeezed him even tighter. He felt his eyes watering, so he buried his face in his friend's neck. He didn't want Fizz to see him cry.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry," Blitzø choked out quietly.

They stayed like that for a while, holding each other, until Fizz finally pulled away, wiping away his tears and clearing his throat.

"Yeah, well, you owe me an explanation and you're not going to get away from it," he said, serious, only for a half-smile to immediately soften his expression. "But I can't cry anymore in this makeup, so it'll have to wait. You owe me dinner and a longggg explanation sometime soon, asshole."

Blitzø nodded.

"Well, what brings you here?" Fizz asked as he changed out of his costume. He was unfazed Blitzø was there; he began to undress, remaining in his underwear as he

selected one of the gaudy outfits hanging on the dressing room rack. Blitzø merely leaned against one of the boxes stacked against the walls.

"Weeell, you see..." He didn't quite know how to continue. It took a lot of nerve to show up after Satan knows how many years to ask for favors. Was that going to make him back out? Probably not, but after the emotional reunion, he was hesitant to ask Fizz for anything.

His friend rolled his eyes. "You need something, don't you? Come on, don't make me beg!" He insisted as he adjusted his corset. He was having trouble tying the laces, so Blitzø reached over, pulling his hands away to help him.

"I'm screwed, Fizz," Blitzø said finally. The middle knots were tricky little fuckers, but he managed to adjust them, focusing hard as he talked "We've haven't had a decent contract for months, and I've been kicked out of the apartment. I need work by yesterday," he admitted, embarrassed. He still had trouble acknowledging his failure outloud, but having Fizz looking away helped a little.

"We?" Fizz echoed.

Crap. He almost forgot they hadn't seen each other for almost 15 years.

"Well, let's see. Long story short, I've been bouncing around here and there with shitty jobs (dispatching assholes, mostly) but I got fed up, so a few months ago, I set up a touring acting company. It's called Infernal Masquerade Productions, IMP for short. I have two employees who I plan to fuck in the near future. They definitely want too but need a little more warming up first. Oh yeah, and I have a daughter," Blitzø summarized with a "no big deal" shrug.

"What... *a daughter*? But since when..." Fizz couldn't believe it. He put a hand to his forehead, trying to rearrange his thoughts. "Wait, slow down. You're going to have to tell me that story more slowly later too." He took a deep breath to focus. "So, you're here because you need me to..."

"...talk to your sugar daddy to get him to give us a job, yes," finished Blitzø hopefully.

Fizz folded his arms and leaned his hip on the dressing table, brow furrowed. *Wow, it's not going to be that easy.*

Blitzø fidgeted, waiting for Fizz to talk. He didn't like the look on his face *at all*.

"Blitzo...I mean, Blitzø," Fizz corrected himself "My relationship with Oz — fuck, *Asmodeus* — right now is..."

"Hot as fuck? Passionate? Transcendentally orgasmic?" Blitzø tried to help.

"*Difficult*," Fizz replied as he gave him an exasperated look. "And that's an understatement. He averted his gaze, rubbing his arm. "He...things are complicated, and it's my fault. I don't...I don't want to put any more pressure on him than he already has. It's bad enough that I've had to take a back seat when it comes to performances, I don't want to create any more tension between us." he said, clearly annoyed.

Blitzø snorted.

"Fizz, I saw you crawling out of the stage, I really doubt it was *you* who decided not to be the star of the show. What's up, did your sugar daddy get mad at you and cut you off?"

Fizz glared at him. *Looks like I've hit the bull's eye.*

"Be that as it may..." Fizz continued, "right now, I'm not in a position to ask for anything, at least not directly. Things have changed a lot around here, Blitzø." His gaze darkened somewhat, but he didn't elaborate further.

Blitzø's heart skipped a beat. Fizz was literally his last resort. He had exhausted every possibility he could think of before turning to him. And if he couldn't do anything, Blitzø was royally *screwed*.

He ran a hand across his forehead, letting himself slip to the floor. What was he going to tell the others? Loona? He had failed them...

"I'm sorry Blitzø, I really am. It's just bad timing, really." Fizz walked over, sitting down next to him. Their shoulders touched. "A few months ago, there wouldn't have been a problem, but since the *Frigid Siblings* got their talons on the club's holdings, everything's gone downhill fast. It's a fucking nightmare; all we can do is try to make things work.."

They stayed like that for a while, in silence. They had never needed to speak to know how the other felt. For the first time in a long while, Blitzø's mind was blank; all the ideas that used to dance in his head, all the plans labeled A, B, C and D...nothing. They vanished in one fell swoop. He heard Fizz sigh beside him.

"What?" Blitzø asked.

His friend took another long moment to answer "I still owe you."

Blitzø knew what he meant, but he didn't want to talk about it. He nudged him with his shoulder.

"Don't be an idiot, you don't owe me anything. It was my fault."

Fizz snorted, irritated.

"It wasn't and you know it, Blitzø. Stop blaming yourself for everything bad that happens around you. You're not the center of the universe, you know? It was an accident, it could have happened to anyone." Blitzø didn't want to argue, so he didn't answer.

"Really, I'm sorry I can't help you. Ozzie's been so cranky lately, the only one he listens to is..." Fizz's eyes suddenly widened as if he had seen the light. "*Stolas!*"

"What?" The name sounded strangely familiar, but Blitzø couldn't put a finger on why.

"Stolas. He's the new face of the club," explained Fizz. He jumped to his feet, propelling himself with the prosthetics to pick up a crumpled poster and throw it at Blitzø. A slender figure appeared surrounded by shadows, two pairs of red eyes glowing sensually in the darkness. Blitzø couldn't look away, even when Fizz kept talking "He's always liked to act, but where he really shines is when he sings. Maybe if I talked to him...but no, he's been a bit distant since he took over my place. It would

be best to introduce you directly. He has a weakness for lost causes, I'm sure you'll get his attention. But you'd have to think of something that might appeal to him like...I don't know, a fancy opera or something. What kind of plays does your company perform?"

"Uh, what?" asked Blitzø in dazed confusion. He was still mesmerized by the figure in the shadows. Fizz snapped in front of his face.

"If we're going to do this, I need you to be focused. What kind of work do you do?"

"Eeerrrm...well, you see, to tell you the truth...Moxxie is the head writer, and he wanted to do musicals, but I'm more into action thrillers, you know, with stunts and fights, all that. And Millie likes Greek myth plays, so..." Blitzø stared blankly at his friend, whose expression was turning more and more horrified by the second.

"Don't tell me...you haven't even properly performed before..." Fizz said weakly.

Blitzø jumped to his feet, the poster still in his hand.

"W...we're a fledgling company full of kick-ass talent! We can nail any play we perform, no matter the genre!" He exclaimed.

"But what have you been doing to LIVE for these past months if you haven't performed a damn play!?" Fizz demanded to know.

"W...well, the truth is that we've been getting hired here and there to act as bodyguards and crowd control, that kind of thing. Oh, and also for a swingers show. That was a good one," Blitzø chuckled at the memory.

Fizz let out a groan and leaned back on the counter.

"Why do I have to get myself into this..." he muttered to himself.

Blitzø approached hesitantly. He *knew* he was being naive, but he loved performing. He would give it all up if there was nothing else to do. He would change professions and try to make it in one of his backup careers (bodyguard, assassin, etc), but he wanted to try all the possibilities first. He owed it to himself. He owed it to his mother.

"Fizz, we can do it, really," Blitzø assured him. "Just give me a fucking chance."

Fizz looked up at last, watching him skeptically. He let out an exasperated sigh.

"I don't know how you always manage to get it your way," he said, resigned.

Blitzø gave a triumphant smile.

"Sooooooooo, you gonna help us?"

Fizz grinned at him in return, resting a hand on his hip.

"What choice do I have, you jerk? Come tomorrow around two o'clock. That's when Stolas does his main act. I'll take you to his dressing room when he's done so you can present the project to him. And make sure it's something good with musical

numbers and lots of drama, he'll love that. And please bring another suit." Fizz looked down at him with a grimace. "The one you're wearing is embarrassing."

"Hey, shut your mouth. It's my best outfit," Blitzø said smugly.

Fizz reached over, sniffing the fabric. His eyes watered.

"Did someone pee on you?!"

"Sir, are you sure your friend summoned us here?!" Moxxie shrieked.

They were lining up at the entrance of the club, waiting for the buff incubus who guarded the door to let them pass. He had his arms crossed, blocking their way as soon as he laid eyes on them. Okay, maybe they looked like beggars, but they had VIP tickets!

"I have a special pass, asshole, so if you don't want to deal with the club owner, you'd better let us in!" Blitzø threw a middle finger his way.

"His Eminence Andrealphus has given strict orders not to let in any lowly demon tonight. The function is exclusively for members of the nobility," he said in a deep voice. "I recommend you get out of my sight if you want to keep all your limbs, firetoad!"

Blitzø swelled up like a rooster. "You asked for it, fuckwad!" He howled, lunging at him.

"Jessie, hey!" Fizz appeared just as Blitzø was trying to rip one of the incubus' wings off. "They're with me, let them through...what the FUCK...?"

Fizz took in the scene: Blitzø perched like a gargoyle on the bouncer's back, who was squirming madly as he tried to shake the imp off. Millie and Moxxie latched on his legs in turn, biting his ankles. And finally, Loona taking pictures and posting them as new Sinstagram stories..

"Blitzø! Stop being an idiot and follow me!" Fizz turned around to walk back into the club, muttering between his teeth something that sounded like *I knew I was going to fucking regret this*.

Blitzø hopped off the incubus's back to follow him, all smiles again

"Come on, gang," he cheered. "Get ready to party!"

The atmosphere inside was completely different from the previous night.

They had removed the tables to set up small stalls arranged in a semicircle, bordering what appeared to be a circus ring. The strippers' cages no longer hung from the ceiling; they had been replaced by huge chandeliers that sparkled with bluish reflections. *What a waste*, Blitzø thought. *These people wouldn't know how to appreciate some good nudity even if they got slapped in the face by a nice pair of titties.*

Fizz led them to one of the better-located tents, right in front of the ring. They all settled into the cushioned armchairs around a low table. At least they were Goetia size, and Loona had no problem stretching out her legs. After a couple of drink orders,, they waited for the show to start.

"I never thought you'd turn into such an elitist jerk, Fizz. Exclusive show for the stuck up birds? Really?" Blitzø muttered.

They had put up with enough shit from the Goetia when they both worked at the circus. The royal chickens always came with demands and complaints, whining about how everything smelled like a horse's ass and that they'd need *special* boxes *exclusively* for themselves., Once or twice, they even booked the entire circus for a whole day for one of their stupid celebrations. The sons of bitches were flush with money, and for ole Cash Buckzo, that was enough to spread his asscheeks and beg if needed. But even at a young age, Blitzø's blood boiled every time they showed up.

Worst of all, his father had sold him as a toy to one of their chicks one time. If that wasn't *fatherly love at its fucking finest*, Blitzø didn't know what was.

Fizz looked away. "I told you, things have changed around here." He took a sip of his rainbow drink, stirring the ice cubes with the straw. "The new owners like to host these kinds of events a couple of times a month. They're convinced the *exclusivity* makes the customers more willing to spend."

"New owners? Wasn't the club *Ozzie's*?" Blitzø asked, confused.

"Yes and no." Fizz looked around, making sure there was no one who could hear him before leaning over the table, crooking a metallic finger so Blitzø would lean in closer. "The *ice queen*, Marquis Andrealphus, took over 80%t of the shares for the club a few months ago because of an...incident." Fizz grimaced at the word."Just don't ask me for fucking details, all right? It's dangerous to talk about it here. Let's focus on tonight. Have you planned what you are going to present to Stolas?"

"Who?" Blitzø said.

Suddenly, the lights dimmed, enveloping them in a soft gloom. Artificial fog spread from the edges of the stage, creating a dreamlike atmosphere, trapping them in a different reality. People stopped talking and an expectant silence hung over the room. Everyone was staring at a point high above the runway, their eyes eager, entranced.

And right there, surrounded by clouds and darkness, time stopped for Blitzø.

As if it were the fallen angel himself, a figure descended from the shadows, suspended in the air. He was glowing, surrounded by a halo of light that silhouetted his long, thin frame against the heavy curtains along the back of the stage. An elegant tail swayed behind him, moved gently by an invisible breeze; the soft feathers that adorned it sparkled as the spotlight swept over them.

And his eyes. They flickered like burning embers under thick lashes, glowing in the darkness. Somehow, across such a large, hazy space, they seemed to land directly on *Blitzø*.

A warm smile spread across the performer's face as if he knew him, as if he was able to see through the darkness, right into his very soul.

Blitzø's breath caught. He had never seen anything *so beautiful*.

The owl was wrapped in a shimmering white velvet bodice that hugged his figure, enhancing his elegant curves and exposing his long legs. A small black top hat rested on the feathers of his head.

"They call him the Fallen Prince," Fizz muttered under his breath, as if scared his voice might break the spell Stolas wove in the room.

Blitzø couldn't look away. Everything felt like a dream. This creature's mere presence cast a spell over his body, some deep, powerful magic that shoved him onto the edge of an abyss. One wrong move would have him falling into the void, but he didn't feel scared. Instead, it was exciting. He was sure he wouldn't regret it.

Stolas' every movement defied reality itself; his slender waist widened into generous hips that swayed with the swing, a forbidden promise. Blitzø couldn't help to imagine how those hips would mold to his own body, taut muscles flexing under him. How they would move in a frenzied dance, thighs encircling his waist, urging him to go faster, smothering him, making him come...

It was then that the owl started to sing, and Blitzø lost himself completely.

Stolas' voice echoed through the room in a deep, enveloping whisper. Liquid fire spread through the imp's body in slow waves, consuming him, dragging him ever closer to the steep drop

The air was charged with a new, exhilarating energy. It was unlike anything Blitzø had ever felt before, enough to make his spines stand on edge. He shuddered, his throat bone-dry all the way down.

I'm in deep shit.

Chapter 3: “Let the show begin”

“And that's why this club is perfect for you, Your Highness,” Andreaphus purred, finishing his fourth martini of the evening. “Do you not think it magnificent? At last, a worldly entertainment worthy of our class! From now on, they won't be able to reproach us for not mixing with the commoners when we share both space *and* amusements.”

“I do not doubt it,” the mysterious guest nodded from within the depths of his red hood.

“But of course, we don't limit our attractions to only the most exquisite circles of society. Our artists entertain all the people of hell! Even the races whose savoir-faire is more ...questionable.” he grimaced at the imp who had just passed by with a tower of drinks on a tray. The guest cleared his throat, and Andrealphus hastened to hide the sneer with a sugary smile.

“I am glad to see that your establishment has such...generous regulations regarding access. I hope that does not affect the needs I expressed to you in my letter,” the stranger commented in a soft voice. He had an apparently gentle timbre, but it concealed an authority that gave no room for retort. “I seek *discretion*, my dear Marquis.”

“But of course! Rest assured, your Eminence,” replied Andrealphus in an affected tone, “the privacy of our clients is our utmost priority.”

Asmodeous, King of Lust, mighty lord of the night, stifled his fifth yawn with the back of his hand as he signaled the waiter to bring another drink. He was *so done*.

He had been listening for hours as Andrealphus showered praise and false flattery on the prospective investor, who didn't seem particularly impressed. Ozzie accompanied them during the tour of the facilities before the night's opening, listening as the peacock talked about the club as if it was actually his. As if the endless hours of effort and dedication in making Ozzie's the most exclusive place in all of hell was his merit.

This is all mine, you fucking frosty chicken. So often, he had to clench his fists to keep from smashing that lanky face against the wall.

But worst of all, it technically *was* the Goetia's. Ozzie's first business, the crown jewel of his empire...in the clutches of a frigid turkey who wouldn't know what a dick looked like even if he was slapped silly with one. Quite the opposite from the hedonistic principles Ozzie based his way of life on: *seduce, conquer, repeat*.

I doubt you ever let that icy ass be conquered, he thought, *although I can tell you're looking forward to getting a pole stuck in it, you bastard*.

Andrealphus had wanted to conclude the visit by allowing the guest to enjoy the main show of the evening. They were settled in one of the small but luxurious tents that lined the runway, waiting. Ozzie checked the time; there were only five minutes left. He looked around for ah...yes, Fizzarolli was a couple of stalls away, meeting with a group of new customers as well.

Imps? Ozzie squinted, but just then the lights dimmed.

The show was about to begin.

A single spotlight illuminated a point at the top of the stage, where Stolas' slender figure was silhouetted against the light. Ozzie had to admit that he looked magnificent, as always. Who would have thought that behind that dreary facade of a repressed prince, a true diva was hiding?

Ozzie watched Stolas' graceful movements on the swing with pride. He had the audience spellbound, and not just with his performance. The demon king could smell the light lavender and silver scent of Stolas' magic in the air.

Eliminado[Chloe W]: ;

A movement on the other side of the table made him look in that direction. The mysterious investor had finally decided to reveal his identity, unveiling his face. Ozzie was surprised to see Vassago himself, Prince of Time, completely bewitched. His eyes dilated as Stolas began to sing, the fist that held his cup clenching. The feathers of his scarlet crest were ruffled.

Bullseye. He had taken the bait.

You like what you see, huh? Ozzie thought with a sly smirk. He enjoyed witnessing the birth of lust in a dull heart; and it wasn't just desire that radiated from Vassago's eyes. He could feel it. He wasn't the King of Lust for nothing.

Eliminado[Chloe W]:

Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Andrealphus' avid expression as well. *You got what you wanted, you sly bitch.* It pissed him off that the peacock was getting his way, but he had no choice but to suck it up if he wanted his club back. If he wanted *Fizz* back.

Just a little longer.

A horrified gasp rose from the audience, interrupting his thoughts. Ozzie stood to his feet, alert, only to see Stolas' delicate body slide off the swing. For a moment, he was like a petal falling gently from a tree.

And then, all too quickly, he was hurtling into the void with nothing to slow down his fall.

"Baby bird, I have excellent news!"

Stolas looked over his shoulder, surprised to see Asmodeus in his dressing room. As a rule, the King of Lust saw to it that no one disturbed him before performances; he knew he needed time to prepare mentally and preferred not to be interrupted. All stars had their peculiarities.

Stolas' was that he took advantage of the moments just before going on stage to...*explore* new horizons. He would take out his box of "special" toys that he hid under the couch (in a place like this, it was odd *not* to always have a good vibrator with a full battery on hand), and he would spend the thirty minutes before performing making sure he stayed relaxed.

A couple of orgasms always helped him calm his nerves and get into character.

But Ozzie's expression told him sacrificing his routine today would be worth it.

“Oh! Well then, don't keep me waiting any longer,” he replied with a sweet smile, readjusting the sleeve of his favorite robe and patting the divan so that Ozzie would join him.

However, the rooster was so excited that he began to wander from one side of the small room to the other. Stolas tilted his head, curious.

“It's a matchless, magnificent opportunity! My only regret is that the idea is from that frigid chicken you have for a brother-in-law. *Ex*-brother-in-law, I mean. Sorry, honey,” Ozzie corrected himself fast, apologetic.

Stolas gave his hand an elegant wave to indicate he wasn't bothered by it. “There's no denying that Andrealphus has good witticisms from time to time. He's nothing like his sister in that regard,” he said with some derision, remembering Stella's stupid idea to fire all the service imps because their colouring didn't match the palace decor.

“Oh, baby bird, if all goes well, you might even get your freedom back,” Ozzie said with a smile. He sat down next to him at last, holding his hands tenderly.

“Andrealphus has found a potential investor, a prince. He is especially interested in *you*.”

“In me?” Stolas said, raising an eyebrow.

“Yes, dear. Andrealphus thinks that if you can win him over, he'll bring in enough money to make the expansions he's been talking about for months. He's offering him part ownership of the club. I'm not going to deny that it's a project I'd like to see come to fruition. And another majority partner would even the balance of power, possibly in our favor,” Ozzie explained, only for his expression to sadden somewhat. “I'm just sorry I'm going to have to depend on you for this, Stolas. Andrealphus insists that you are the key piece. He wants you to seduce him.”

Stolas let out a skeptical laugh. “Oh, please, I doubt very much any member of Goetian royalty would risk associating with the Fallen Prince, much less have a love affair with me. It might sully their status.” He rose gracefully and made his way to the dressing table, selecting the makeup he was to apply that evening. He knew perfectly well the nickname he was known as in the underworld. And he had partly taken it upon himself to nurture the name; he was quite fond of it.

Ozzie stood behind him, right in front of the mirror. He rested his hands on Stolas' shoulders before speaking, squeezing them.

“Dearest, Andrealphus has promised to release you if you get him to invest in the club.”

Stolas' pulse skipped a beat. Release him? No, it was not possible. It had to be some sort of trap. Andrealphus never would agree to something that'd bring Stolas happiness. And besides, the club's profits had doubled since he'd started to perform. The marquis wouldn't let his golden goose go so easily.

“The contract is tied to Stella. As much as Andrealphus would like to...” He heard himself say faintly.

“Stolas, my dear. You know perfectly well that your ex-wife can’t put two healthy brain cells together. Andrealphus is perfectly capable of manipulating her into breaking the bond.”

Ozzie was right.

“He just wants the status and notoriety that goes with club fame. He's humiliated us both, he's already shown his power and come out on top,” Ozzie commented with restrained rage. “All that's left is to seize the opportunity to get him off your back. Get your life back, finally,” he said with a teary smile. One that brought a lump to Stolas’ throat.

“But what will happen to you?” Misfortune had made the two of them a mainstay in each other's lives, a shelter in the storm. He couldn't bear to watch his boss, his best friend, suffering in solitude while he regained his freedom.

“Don't worry about me, baby bird.” He gently kissed the back of the owl’s hand. “Another owner would mean a new possible ally. Besides,” he wiped his eyes as he helped Stolas to his feet, “I have my own plans.”

Stolas smiled up at him, trying to untie the knot in his throat.

“Okay, I’ll trust you know what you are doing. How will I recognize this dashing prince you say wants something of this?” he said, wiggling the feathers of his tail.

Ozzie let out a throaty laugh, nudging him with the hip.

“He will be disguised in red, it is the only information he gave us. He is very private, you know?” he mocked and whispered confidentially. “You know how you baby princes like to play around with magic, so you can expect anything” he shrugged. “Just make sure to enchant him with that killer voice of yours, love”.

“Oh” Stolas said, letting a lazy smile spread through his face “I intend to do more than just *enchant* him”.

If seducing a prince from Hell was all he needed to get his life back, that's what he would do.

After all, it's my job, he thought as he put the small top hat on his head. He took a breath and adjusted his bodice, making sure the swing supported his weight before he climbed onto it and the technician lifted him into the air, ready to go on stage. He closed his eyes to concentrate.

The stars are never afraid to shine, even in the deepest night, he mused to himself, courage surging within him. It was a phrase Ozzie told him just before his first performance. It had become his anchor.

Stolas lifted his head as the spotlight shone directly on him. The room had fallen into an expectant silence, and he smiled.

It was show time.

He let his energy concentrate in the center of his chest, releasing it in gentle ripples out into the audience. It was just a spark of magic, a bit of his own life force to make the patrons more receptive; he discovered that feeling his magic surrounding him

helped him keep a cool head. The danger was that Andrealphus could realize that he still retained some access to his power, so he had to hide his trail. It was a delicate exercise, requiring great concentration and an expenditure of energy that eventually drained him, but being able to use his magic was what had kept him sane for the past year. His body *breathed* every time he felt that torrent flowing through his veins, In those moments, he was more alive than ever. It was part of himself.

The swing allowed him to move around the room, getting a general idea of the audience. He tried to locate the mysterious investor. Ozzie told him he would be hidden, wearing a reddish disguise. Stolas narrowed his eyes as he stretched in a graceful motion on the swing, arching his back seductively. Red, red... *there!* In one of the VIP tents, a small fiery red creature was talking with Fizzarolli, the club manager.

What an interesting choice, Stolas thought. The investor seemed to have chosen the form of imp as a disguise; he was taller than usual, and had striking horns that curved imposingly from his skull. He seemed strangely familiar....

The imp was staring at him, and Stolas gave him a seductive smile before turning his back on him. He had to set the stage for later.

The excitement in the room reached its peak. Energy was boiling in the audience, mixing with his own. Stolas was exhausted, he felt the fatigue dragging his limbs, his thoughts becoming fuzzier. He was using too much strength to shield his use of magic in a way that couldn't be detected, but he had to hold on until the end. He completed one more lap with the swing, stopping in the center of the track, suspended high above. He took a breath, slowing his heart rate.

And then he began to sing.

Stolas always enjoyed this part of the performance. Singing had been his way of expressing himself since childhood, but he never had the freedom to do it publicly during his years as a prince of the Ars Goetia. It was the only good thing he had gained from his new way of life.

But suddenly, his vision blurred, his voice faltering. Stolas heard his heartbeat in his ears, pounding like drums. His strength failed him; he felt his body leaning backwards, towards the void. He tried to hold on tighter to the chains, but he misjudged the distance, and his fingers slipped on the metal.

Oh, was all he could think, numb and slow. *I seem to have miscalculated.*

And then he fell.

At least he wouldn't have to be tied to Stella anymore.

He was finally free.

A second. Just that.

In a second, you can look at someone and know you'll need him for the rest of your life.

And then another second passes, and that dream is shattered into a thousand pieces, pierced by screams of horror as he falls.

Stolas's body arched in an impossible curve, a rainbow drawn in the sky on a rainy day. He fell into the void.

Blitzø's muscles moved before he even realized he had given the order. A white noise blocked his eardrums; all he heard was the frantic rhythm of his blood pumping at full speed through every cell, every fiber of his being urging him to run faster, to pump more oxygen into his legs.

He leapt over the rail that bordered the track without taking his eyes off Stolas's body. A multitude of loose feathers framed his fall, the trail of a comet that had lost its way in the night sky.

Blitzø skidded to the center of the track, spreading his legs wide and planting his feet firmly. He stretched out his arms just on time to catch the fallen prince's body.

His knees buckled almost completely under the owl's weight as he did his best to cushion the fall. Blitzø held Stolas's head, preventing it from snapping with the impact. He stood slowly, cradling the prince's body against his abdomen. He could feel the beats of the bird's heart alongside his own, syncing until they became one.

And suddenly, everything made sense, as if the last piece of the puzzle had just fallen into place. He had wandered through a labyrinth his entire life, uncertainty at every corner, only to find the exit in an instant of time. He felt soft sighs against his skin, and it was like being completed.

He gasped, his heart pounding as he processed what had just happened. His senses suddenly came back, the screams of the audience flooding his ears, unintelligible. A firm hand tugged him away from the stage.

"Come with me," Fizz urged, his voice trembling. He led him through a maze of dimly lit hidden corridors at a brisk pace. Stolas still had his eyes closed and his breathing was heavy, but he was alive. Blitzø nearly tripped over a crack in the floor, too focused on the body in his arms. He shook his head to clear it and tried to concentrate on Fizz instead. His friend pulled aside a velvety curtain and led him into the most sumptuous room Blitzø had ever been in.

Not pausing to survey the place, he approached the huge four-poster bed that presided over the bedroom, laying the prince gently on the satin sheets. Fizz took his pulse at the wrist as he measured his temperature.

“He doesn't seem to have a fever, and the pulse is strong.” he commented with relief. His phone suddenly rang. “Shit,” he cursed as he read the message he had just received. “Ozzie needs me to come down and perform. They seem to have gotten the audience to think the fall was part of the act.” He turned to look at Blitzø, eyes full of concern. “I'm sorry to ask this of you, but could you stay with him? At least until he wakes up. Just make sure he's okay, let him know what's going on.”

Blitzø could only nod, still looking at Stolas passed out on the bed. One of his garters had come loose. The stocking had slipped down his leg, exposing his upper thigh.

Fizz rested his hands on his shoulders and looked at him very seriously. “Don't do anything that might embarrass me,” he hissed..

It took Blitzø a few seconds to process what Fizz was implying, his face heating up fast. “What the...! What do you think I am, some freaky pervert!?”

Fizz let go of him and headed for the door. “We grew up together, I know exactly who you are. You can't tear your eyes off him, Blitzø. I've seen that look before. Just, y'know, wait until he wakes up, and then you can leave. We'll talk tomorrow.” And then he shut the door, not even allowing any time for a reply.

Blitzø sat down with a huff in the armchair at the foot of the ridiculous bed, folding his arms.

He wasn't going to do *anything*.

He drummed his foot on the soft carpeting that covered the room, avoiding looking at the prince again with all his willpower. Instead, Blitzø decided to distract himself by checking out the place. The walls were lined with elegant draperies in shades of purple and maroon that gave the room an intimate feel. A small, low table with drinks was arranged near the bed, so Blitzø decided to help himself to something. He took a sip and then promptly almost gagged as he realized that on the ceiling, just above the huge bed, was a heart-shaped mirror.

Gotta get your fucking money's worth, I guess, he thought, swallowing hard. The Stolas in the mirror stirred in his sleep, arching his back. Blitzø hurried to take another swig from his glass and approach the huge terrace that dominated the opposite wall.

He needed to get some air.

The balcony had a privileged view of all of Lust with its eternal neon lights. Blitzø let the light rain soothe him, trickling down his horns.

What the fuck had even happened!?

He was too old to behave like a horny teenager. He'd been in control of his erections...*emotions* for years, he couldn't afford to lose his head over some lanky bird he didn't even know. He finally looked over his shoulder toward the bed. Stolas was still asleep, one of his arms resting on his slender abdomen while the other laid near his head. His legs dangled over the edge of the bed at an odd angle. *That can't be very comfortable*. Blitzø approached him. That corset wasn't doing him any favors either, but his pulse quickened just thinking about taking it off.

Blitzø almost slapped himself. *Fuck, you're not a teenager who's about to get his cherry popped! Just keep your shit together! Loosening it a little is enough.*

He leaned over the owl, reaching for the laces that kept the garment tied. He didn't want to move him too much, just a slight lift at the waist to access the back. He felt the warmth of Stolas' body through the bodice; the soft feathers on his back caressed his fingers as he untied the knot. Blitzø thought he could hear a soft sigh of relief.

He realized he was completely bent over Stolas, one knee leaning against the mattress as he rested his hand beside the fallen prince's waist. He could feel his breath on his face, warm and sweet....

And Blitzø allowed himself to truly take a look at him for the first time.

The feathers on his head were delicate, gently framing his heart-shaped faceplate. They had a bluish color that darkened at the ends. Both pairs of eyes were closed, but Blitzø could see each of the eyelashes perfectly, resting on his cheeks. His beak was half-open, and Blitzø wondered what texture it would have; it looked sharp enough to cut with a light touch. He was tempted to caress it with his fingertip. *How would it feel to kiss it?* He shook his head, pushing the thought away. He'd probably end up with a severed tongue, and he'd deserve it.

Stolas' neck was long and slender, just like the rest of him, and gave way to a torso where a voluminous plume of feathers flourished on his chest. Blitzø really wanted to just bury his face right in there. Would they be softer than the feathers on his back? Probably, but he definitely wasn't going to check.

His torso expanded into generous hips that gave way to the most incredible legs Blitzø had ever seen. Okay, he *did* feel kinda like a pervert as he admired them, even though he hadn't actually touched Stolas beyond just his clothes.

He had that sensation again, the same feeling that had taken hold of him when he had held Stolas in his arms. The certainty of knowing he was complete, of having finally found the last clue to an enigma with no apparent solution only for it to suddenly, inexplicably make sense.. As if everything he had done up to that moment, every mistake, every misstep, had led him, inevitably, to this. He couldn't find the words to explain it.. It couldn't be so easy. The whole thing was fucking absurd.

It was a spell, he was sure. Royalty had access to powers that imps like him couldn't even imagine, even the banished ones.

A loose feather rested on Stolas' forehead, and Blitzø couldn't resist the temptation to push it away from his face. His heart was pounding as he did so, a lump forming in his throat.

You're going to be so much trouble, I can tell.

Suddenly, Stolas let out a sigh, stirring. He blinked several times to clear the last remnants of sleep from his eyelashes before looking directly at him.

Blitzø froze.

Shit.