

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Misunderstandings~

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Here's the thing about epithets... even when you got to pick your own, you didn't *really* get to pick your own. 'Devil's Smile' had been one of a few ideas that Luxion and him had brainstormed together, and in the end while Leon had tried out a handful of different titles, that was the one that had wound up sticking.

It made sense, to be fair. He'd started his life as a Sky Pirate relatively young, long before he could grow facial hair, so some sort of beard-based name was right out. Even now at twenty, he still struggled in that particular department. Not that he was upset about it! No sir!

Regardless, Devil's Smile hadn't been Leon's favorite of the numerous ideas he and Luxion had come up with. Mostly because... it wasn't entirely in his control. He didn't *mean* for his smiles to come across as that of a maniacal serial killer about to bathe in the blood of his enemies and wear their skin! Honest!

Alas, that was apparently just the vibe he tended to give off. So while he was currently trying to offer the two young women standing amidst his automatons his best roguish grin... he probably shouldn't have been surprised when their shared reaction involved flinching back away from him and cowering a fair amount.

Though... he's even more surprised by Angelica Redgrave rallying and quickly putting herself in front of Olivia again, her chin jutting out.

"W-Whatever you're planning to do... please leave Olivia out of it. Take me instead... she's done nothing wrong; she doesn't deserve any of this. Please... just let her go."

"L-Lady Angelica!"

To be fair, Angelica had done that already once before, back before the destruction of the merchant airship had cut her attempt at defiance off. However, Leon has to admit... he's still impressed. As well as utterly baffled. This was the villainess shielding the heroine... after apparently taking the commoner woman as her servant.

How had that happened? How had the plot of the otome game gotten so off the rails? Well, Leon could think of one obvious reason... the plot of the otome game was nonsensical and utterly unrealistic, the kind of fantasy that could only exist in a woman's mind.

Some things had carried over, Leon had seen that for himself... however, he'd also seen for himself that just as many things did not. It was entirely possible... nay, it was even likely that this world did not operate under the same 'logic' as the otome game. That would make it more realistic, he supposed.

And so a young commoner woman like Olivia would no longer be the main character. She would no longer seduce her way into a reverse harem... instead, she might find herself under the wing of a young noble woman like Angelica, who might take pity on her and bring her into her service.

That *was* much more realistic than what had happened in the dating sim, Leon could admit. However, it didn't explain one thing... why had Angelica Redgrave been forced into exile all these years later?

Letting his smile drop off his face, Leon sighs and shakes his head before waving a hand for them to follow as he turns and walks deeper into his airship.

"I'm not planning on hurting either of you."

The automatons make sure that Angelica and Olivia have no choice but to follow after him, crowding around them and escorting them along. As they walk, Leon turns back to face them, walking backwards. Easy enough when he knows this ship better than the back of his hand.

“You might not think the best of me... fair enough. I am a pirate after all. However, I still have standards.”

Olivia looks uncertain while Angelica scowls, her eyes flashing.

“Is that right? Are you going to tell us you would never hurt a woman or something like that?”

He almost smiles at that but knowing how his smiles are often misinterpreted, Leon keeps his lips straight and simply shakes his head.

“No. I’ve hurt plenty of women. Even killed them, same as men.”

It was a dog eat dog world after all, and in this world there were several Sky Pirates of the fairer gender. Not that most of them were ‘fair’. They were usually just as ugly, both inside and out, as the men they served alongside.

Still, Leon would be lying if he said he’d never killed a woman before. He had the blood of both genders on his hand. That said...

“I don’t hurt innocents though. And you and your servant are innocent, as far as I’m concerned.”

Angelica’s eyes narrow and she glances back the way she came.

“... You just killed every man on that ship back there.”

Olivia whimpers at the reminder, while Leon just shrugs.

“Every man on that ship back there was perfectly happy to pawn you two off on me. Even knowing what I could do to you both, even believing the same as you that I would hurt you both for my own satisfaction and pleasure. Not a single one of them tried to protest... and not a single one of them would have tried to protest whenever they finally decided to kill you both off... as was the plan before I showed up.”

Angelica flinches while Olivia looks stricken. The latter finally breaks her silence, wringing her hands.

“B-But... surely not... they were... there were a few sailors who were really n-nice to me. They couldn’t have *all* been... been like *that*...”

From the mouth of babes. Or rather, ‘a babe’. Olivia had truly grown into a spectacularly fine woman, Leon can’t help noting. He’ll keep his hands to himself of course, but damn if it isn’t a wonderful view. Of course, as he levels a distinctly unimpressed look in her direction, that’s precisely what he points out.

“They no doubt hoped to get under your skirts.”

Olivia goes bright red and immediately turns into a stuttering mess while Angelica squawks and glowers at him.

“Don’t talk to her like that! You don’t know what was really in all of those men’s hearts! You can’t know for sure that all of their motivations were as black as their Captain’s!”

... Fair enough. He HAD done that whole song and dance, offering even one of the crew of sailors the opportunity to speak up against the injustice being offered by their Captain. And none of them had taken him up on it. As far as Leon was concerned, that DID make them all as bad as the man who had led them. Sure, peer pressure was a thing... but if you would rather save your own skin and not even speak up in the defense of two lovely young women... he didn’t have any mercy for those types.

In the end though, he just shrugs as they finally reach their ultimate destination and he pushes open the door before gesturing for Angelica and Olivia to step inside.

“I’ll be perfectly honest... your opinion of me is mostly meaningless. I’ve curated a particularly vicious reputation for a reason, so it doesn’t really matter if you don’t trust me or not... in fact, it makes plenty of sense.”

As the two women carefully step past the threshold into a well-appointed guest bedroom with two beds, Leon stands at the doorway behind them, not following them in.

“You will, of course, be confined to quarters for the time being until I figure out what to do with you both. Please do not try to explore the ship. In the meantime, if you need anything such as food and water, simply ask one of your guards and it will be provided to you.”

Olivia is looking around in wonder... to be fair this might be the nicest bedroom she’s seen in her entire life. Angelica is less impressed and more confused, turning to direct an uneasy glare in his direction.

“What is this? Some attempt to soften us up? It won’t work, you know. If you’re going to be a boor, just be a boor...”

Leon smiles thinly, his patience definitely fraying by this point.

“Lady Redgrave, you really don’t want me to start acting the part of a boor. If not for your sake, then for the sake of your friend... let’s keep things cordial.”

That sharp reminder makes Angelica jerk back as if slapped, realizing she’d already asked Leon to spare Olivia only to turn around and do everything she could to question and antagonize him. To her credit, she finally backs down, ducking her head and mumbling an apology that probably took a lot for a noblewoman of her standing to say.

Leon just nods and pulls back from there. The two automatons he’s leaving to guard the door take up their positions, with one of them pulling the door shut on Angelica and Olivia’s faces.

They don’t have total privacy of course, Luxion is forever observing every part of the ship, given how tied to it he is... but Leon at least doesn’t intend to spy or perv on the two young women. They’ve been through enough at this point, he figures.

... Though he still has no fucking clue what he's going to do with them. Let them go at the nearest port, maybe? But his curiosity was piqued now and he'd beat himself up if he didn't at least find out what was up with them first.

Tch... who knew today was going to be the day that he'd be dragged back into the affairs of this damn messed up world...

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Olivia watches as Lady Angelica carefully inspects their surroundings, her Mistress using that ever-critical eye of hers to try and glean what she can glean from their new situation.

... These quarters they now have are better than their last ones. By a frankly ludicrous margin, in fact. However, they weren't prisoners on the last ship, so that was a pretty big change.

Or was it? Hadn't they been prisoners all along without knowing it? The Captain of the last vessel... he'd seemed like a nice man when greeting Angelica and her upon their boarding. However, listening to him talking to the pirate who now held them captive... it became obvious he'd been lying about his intentions all along.

They were never meant to make it to their final destination. They were never supposed to survive this trip.

"... I'm sorry, Olivia. I'm so sorry I got you caught up in all of this."

Olivia blinks, pulled out of her thoughts as she sees Angelica collapse onto one of the beds, her head held low. Quickly, she rushes over and sits alongside her Mistress, quick to clasp the noblewoman's hands in her own. It wasn't technically proper, but their relationship had been closer than simply Mistress and Servant for quite some time now... Lady Angelica even insisted that they were friends from time to time.

Still...

“Lady Angelica, please don’t say things like that... and definitely don’t repeat them! I already said so before, didn’t I? If I weren’t here and you were all alone... that would be so much worse. I’m glad I’m here with you... I’m glad you have me.”

Angelica’s lower lip wobbles and her eyes glisten with unshed tears... before finally, she turns and all but throws herself into Olivia. Burying her face in Olivia’s bosom, wrapping her arms around Olivia’s midsection, the noblewoman truly lets herself go, the mask and façade both falling away as she allows herself to *feel*.

Olivia holds her in turn, wrapping her Mistress up in her arms as Angelica sobs, keeping her as close as possible while running a hand through her lady’s hair.

Things had been... bad for a long time for them, truth be told. It had started out relatively good back at the Academy. As a Scholarship Student back in her First Year, Olivia had been floundering and the other noblewomen had enjoyed taunting and teasing and harassing her for her lesser standing.

It was Lady Redgrave though who had taken pity on her and taken her under her wing. It was Angelica who had proven to be the one noble who didn’t just want to disparage her for daring to attend the Academy with them.

Angelica didn’t deserve the things that had happened to her... but Olivia knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that her own assertion was right... it would all be ten times worse if Angelica had to go through it alone. Even if... even if this ends poorly for them, she’s glad she’s here right now, to offer her lady a semblance of normality and a shoulder to climb on.

Plus...

“What if he was telling the truth?”

Olivia’s question causes Angelica’s sobbing to hiccup for a moment before the other blonde slowly pulls back and looks at her with tearstained cheeks.

“W-What?”

Olivia shrugs.

“The pirate... what if he... what if he really means us no harm? Perhaps he can be reasoned with?”

A full body shudder runs through Angelica at that and she fully straightens up, fixing Olivia with a serious gaze.

“Olivia... that man is Leon Bartfort. They call him the ‘Devil’s Smile’... and we both saw why back there when he destroyed our previous vessel. He delighted in murdering all those men... in killing all those sailors. He enjoyed it.”

Angelica bites her lower lip and looks down at their laps.

“... We can’t trust that he truly means us no harm, and I highly doubt that he can be reasoned with. We are at the mercy of his unpredictable whims at this point, I’m afraid...”

Olivia hums in response. She can tell that Angelica isn’t going to be swayed right now. Although...

“Well... we should at least test his generosity, no? Let’s see if we can really get food and drink provided by one of his golems...”

Angelica looks uncertain, even as her stomach grumbles a bit at the idea of food. Neither of them have eaten since breakfast after all.

“I... I don’t know if we’d be able to trust it. He could put anything in the food...”

Olivia just smiles.

“Then I’ll try it first, to make sure it’s safe for you, my lady.”

Angelica squawks at that and immediately starts berating her about comparing herself to a common taste tester. Olivia just lets her do it, enjoying how lively Angelica gets, even as they do eventually give in and ask for sustenance to be provided.

At the same time... Olivia knows Angelica will almost certainly pass out before her at this rate. And once Angelica is unconscious, she thinks she might just ask one of their guards if she could possibly have a chat with this 'Devil's Smile' while Angelica was sleeping.

It was a servant's duty to see to her Mistress' health and safety after all. No matter what it took.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!