

Draft.

The smell hit him before he saw it.

Silas looks up from his textbook and searches for the source, crumpled leaves and withered flowers fall down the bench as he stands up — and spots a crow. Freshly dead, stabbed through one of the spikes of the black fence that surrounds the entire campus— he takes a hesitant step forward and pulls it out from the picket, grimacing as more blood splatters onto the ground and catching onto his clothes. he stares at it for a second too long before dropping the carcass onto the ground, tumbling back in delayed alarm.

Dead.

So much for a normal day.

Silas picks up his poor textbook up from the damp soil and takes a sniff, scrunching his nose in distaste. he lets out a sigh of exhaustion and smacks the dirt and sod off the pages before placing it carelessly beside his ink cartridge and pen, Silas eyes the crow and lifts it back up into his grasp, looming his eyes over the blood-stained spike.

It twitches. This time, Silas doesn't drop it, he watches with rapt attention to find any more sense of movement before he deems the poor thing worthy of a dignified burial, scrubbing away the blood and dirt riddled all over the carcass at a nearby stream to get rid of the pungent smell. He steadily grasps the shovel from the cupboard into his hands and places it on the trunk of the oak tree, staring at the dead bird in his grasp again.

Silas plucks away the loose crows feathers and pitches the dead animal out of the property, he feels guilty —in a way— although it was cruel to see it pass it's life in such a way, he drops his eyes and buries it down the soil, the twitching had stopped and the eyes of the crow had glazed over, Silas sighs and picks the leaves out of its tangled feathers before throwing the lump of dirt over the bird.

He picks up the shovel backed on a tree, the iron handle rusted and worn from use. Silas tosses the dirt on top of the dead bird until it's buried beneath mounds of muck. He grunts and peers at the bench he sat on again — the shriveled flowers and dead leaves he sat on unintentionally had stuck on the pew, he grazes his fingers on them and brush them away, Silas stuffs his belongings into his leather satchel and ghosts his fingers over the sweet pastry the lunch lady gifted to him the day before.

I truly have not to wonder about such things, birds are dumb, they think stupid.

Silas aimlessly throws the now clean as new shovel into the gardener's cupboard before jogging back to campus, really hoping that his professors didn't see him venturing the gardens without their permission.

It's when the clock strikes 3 that the shrieking bell rings throughout the school grounds, Silas watches from his classroom window as students file out of the building, a butterfly pitched on his fingers clasped on the window as the wind tickles onto his nose, if he strained his ears hard enough he could hear a professor downstairs lecturing rowdy students for running across the hall.

He sneezes and glances at the door before going back to stare out the window, letting out an insufferable sigh as he remembers the amalgamation of assignments due the next day.

"There goes Mrs Whitney the II." A boy dusting out the chalkboard eraser jokes, catching the eyes of the remaining students in the room "acting like he is a tragic character from one of Shakespeare's plays"

In the courtyard, Professor Samuel follows out with the rest of the seniors. His head held up so tall with such normalcy that Silas might've not noticed the faint trembling wracking his mentor's body, he frowns.

"Oh shush, Clifford" Auden scolds —although a bit too loud for him to not know what they're saying— Silas could see him from his own hindsight, clearing off the rubber scraps on the desks and heinous graffiti on the cabinets, his posture stiff and rigid from all the carrying he had to do, and honestly, he feels just a tad bit pitiful for them.

"It's not like he has anything going on in his life at all- don't you, Silas?"

Silas stares in ecstasy as Professor Samuel shrews the flailing students back to the dorms before casting his face in the warm heat.

"Silas?"

Ah, I almost forgot.

Silas rolls his eyes and grabs the clothes hanging out on the windowsills, "well, at least I've never been whiny before-" he brings the two in, placing the wet clothes onto a nearby stand.

"-As whiny as Clifford during the chess openings he and his dad bring him to" his voice pitches up into a mocking tone, high and whiny and annoying, "Fatherrrrrr, let *me* compete against them insteadddd, you know *I'M* better than you!"

— Clifford's face flushes in embarrassment and he could see him fume in terror—

Auden cackles and luckily escapes from Clifford's first 5 hits in the ribs, his wheezing grows louder as Clifford failed to attempt assault on hi

"Oh shut up, will you too?" Icarus groans out, Silas had to stop himself from hurling against the said boy and choke him in his grasp.

The three turn around to stare at him.

"I'm trying to take a nap and you guys are keeping up a ruckus" He shoots a pained grumble at Auden and straightens down his disheveled hair before going back to laying his head on the desk.

Silas peeks out the window again, suddenly, the professor's sprawled against the ground, worried seniors surrounding him as he tries to keep up his facade, the anger and embarrassment on Professor Samuel's face is obvious, His mouth tight lipped into a grimace, fists held tight onto his shoulder.

"What's going on?"

Icarus had planted himself next to him, Silas shrugs and stretches his legs a little more to peak out the edges of the curtains, damned thing, they were. Always blocking the eye path of the pupils, the school had better change the drapery whilst it would last, he purposefully kicked his leg onto Auden's gut.

"I'm not so sure"

Auden grasps onto his leg and groans in pain, curling up against himself, Silas shifts and points down to where Professor Samuel had finally recovered from his grimace, standing himself up as the worried school staff lead him to the campus infirmary.

Silas drags the three down to the meadows, ignoring the pained yelps and profanities coming out of their bloody mouths, wretched granny smith apples. It all made their mouths bitter with curses that could last a lifetime.

The nurse down on 5th Wing told them not to worry about the professor.

Seniors had blocked Silas and his classmates from view, a few glimpses of the school's professor lying in a makeshift stretcher and his headmaster looking down on his injuries made

him even more convinced that their superior was not okay, Silas grips tightly at his leather satchel.

The pendant he picked up from the restricted section warms on his neck.

Students murmur and glance at him as he walks up upon the cot, Silas drops down on his knees and hesitantly brings his professor's hand up to caress it.

Professor Samuel blinks and stares up at him. A shutter of light, the yell of a woman.

He flinches.

"I'm sure you know what you are doing, Silas?"

Silas shifts his position and gives a reluctant nod, tightening his grasp and letting out a muttered affirmation.

Professor gives him a wry smile and pulls him forward, Silas stumbles and topples onto the empty space on the stretcher, he doubtfully laughs and drops down his satchel, the whispers become louder, causing commotion and letting people peek out the balconies to see what was happening.

"You see, death never comes by itself"

Professor shudders and clenches at Silas's hand.

"Atleast for me"

"I'm sure you do know what happens when you've done something wrongfully, murder or not"

"But-"

"Hush, Silas, hadn't i told you before?"

Silas blinks and nervously laughs, scratching his scalp before saying,

"I don't remember anything you have said, Professor"

Professor Samuel huffs,

"That's odd..."

"Huh"

Professor chuckles and brings his hand to Silas's face.

"At Least try and remember, for now"

Silas watches silently as Professor Samuel closes his eyes and slumps back down on the cot, breathe evening until it stops.

The nurse drags him away and hands him back into the shuttered hallways, murmuring sweet nothings and soft curses and telling him repeatedly, sounding unconvinced herself, that the Professor was ok, that there was nothing to worry about other than his studies and own health.

His eyes burn.

The cat stares at him with a passive gaze.

It stands stationary near the gardener's cabinet, eyes unblinking and looks at him with such disinterest that he feels almost offended and displeased by the emotion it acted out upon, Silas grumbles and tries to open the lock again.

The cat jumps and hisses at him.

oh-

Silas sighs and gives up, throwing his satchel on the bench before placing his textbooks onto the table, The big patch of dirt is recognizable from afar and he blinks at it with a timid gaze.

The cat growls.

He strays further from the cabinet.

The pendant hums.

Silas flutters his eyes and holds onto the pendant, tentatively handling it as the warmth purses through the amulet, he peered at the cat and back to the necklace, the warmth wavers.

Is it you who did that?

The cat looks back at him with no ecstasy and fascination he had given to it.

"Right", he mutters, disappointed "cats don't talk"

Silas twirls his pen around his fingers and pouts at the parchment, the cat was still staring at him and he grew more and more uncomfortable in every passing second, the pregnant silence

had put him on the edge, and his work was left unwritten and unthought of when he finally minds himself into other things.

The grass crackles and crunch as ascending steps approached towards the exit gate, he flinched and halted from his work .

What-

Silas hadn't realized how close he was from contact out of the school, he ducks at the back of a big pile of red leaves, shuffling until he sits in the comfortable position.

I'm so happy the gardener took his time to actually clean the turf.

The cat stares at him, behind the heap of leaves and into his eyes.

The crunch of dry grass follows by, stopping from track to track, the person grumbles something about dinner.

Silas keeps quiet.

In a situation like this, Silas hadn't known what to expect, but it was certainly not like what happened last time he was out without permission, the man had already found him and pressed into his chest to keep him in his sight, hand rammed against his mouth to stop him from screaming, Silas can feel the frustrated tears threatening to come out of his eyes.

It takes the person to take a quick glance at him to drop Silas from his grasp, still holding tightly against the collar, he refuses to look at the man in the eyes and weakly shuffles away.

"Oh!" the man cheerfully exclaimed, dropping his suitcase down onto the lawn "it was you all along!"

Silas stuttered and shook his head.

What the-

