

Quiet. That's Mairon's favorite thing. Quiet because quiet means that nobody is dying and nothing has been set on fire. Hours that are quiet are a blessing, days that are quiet are suspicious, both things he's learned from experience.

My claws tap idly against the desk, unsure of how to finish up my letter to Natasha. I stand up with a sigh and walk over to the wrought iron balcony attached to my quarters. Staring down at the courtyards below I see my soldiers training. Do any of them have families? Surely not... at least not ones that care. I pay them well enough with lodging, food, and a place to belong. Is it good enough? Are they happy here? They certainly haven't tried to overthrow me or leave, not that I would stop them from trying to leave. They live and work here just as I do. I've met all of them at least once, when they came to plead for mercy and acceptance. Their families do not want them. Outcasts, murderers, cannibals... the abused and the tortured make up my friends and dare I say family. The way they tread carefully around me at the start, their faces when I tell them they are welcome. It is a privilege to witness the change.

Sure there have been issues in the past, the cannibal stench of a cccat taking time to get used to despite the knowledge that they had no choice. I do not welcome true cannibals, those who eat just because they can. Those are creatures who are irredeemable in my eyes.

They are not an army. Sure they train like one and would absolutely rise to serve as one should the need become serious but their true purpose is not that of an army, not like it used to be.

I used to force it, take in the weak and mold them into mindless slaves at my beck and call. I don't do that anymore. Not since *he* died. They are my companions now, not my slaves. I am not a slave.

I'm roused from my thoughts by the sight of a cccat walking through the wrought iron gates.

*Ah, she is here.*

Turning from my balcony I step back into the room, taking a deep breath before starting to walk down the halls to meet Nat. May she have good or bad news. I am glad to see her in these precious times.