

## **“She Knows Lies feat. Snow”**

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Snow can perceive lies.

Sometimes, it is a sound.

Sometimes, it is a color.

Sometimes, it is a shape.

Sometimes, it is a wave.

Sometimes, it is a scent.

Sometimes, it is the temperature.

Sometimes, it is a presence.

Sometimes, it is a premonition.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Nothing but lies. This world is overflowing with lies.

Lies reveal themselves in various signs. It's difficult to express those signs precisely, but Snow perceived them as a way of “*knowing*.”

At first, she didn't realize that this "*knowing*" was a symptom of her Cocoon Phase.

Until then, her father and mother had been very close. Being their daughter made her feel truly happy. Thank you, God, for letting me be the child of this father and mother. She had even felt grateful like that. But one day, suddenly, she "*knew*" it was a lie. It wasn't something she witnessed. It wasn't a confession. It wasn't an anonymous tip. She simply "*knew*." Snow felt very disappointed by it, and so, so sad that she cried every day. Her father and mother worried about her as she cried her eyes out. The fact that their concern wasn't a lie was at least some small comfort.

Her Cocoon Phase made her aware of many lies. Promises with friends were lies. Greetings from passing strangers were lies. Even the new bill passed by the Blood Pact Council was a lie. There was a stray cat from the neighborhood that sometimes came by. It meows when it wants food. That wasn't a lie. The purring sound it made when it was affectionate. That wasn't a lie.

A cat often slept on Snow's lap. Not just cats, animals lie less than humans. Snow especially liked cats. Apparently, even in nature, there are liars. Leaf butterflies, stick insects, inchworms. Their lies are mimicry to protect themselves. She'd only read about them in books, but Snow didn't dislike those kinds of lies. She did dislike praying mantises, though. The lies of a mantis are to hide from its prey.

Even after coming to the Clan, she continued to "*know*" many lies.

To a greater or lesser extent, everyone lives while telling lies. By that time, Snow had grown completely accustomed to the world of lies. Just like air is taken for granted, lies were everywhere. In fact, without lies, the world might not function properly. A moderate amount of lies isn't necessarily a bad thing. As long as they're used correctly, lies can even be good. She disliked most lies, but there were some lies she liked.

Like: "Let's meet again someday."

That's a lie, yes, but not a complete one. Because it holds a wish, of sorts, within it. That's why lies sometimes become truth.

Because Snow was like that, her encounter with the girl who joined the Clan shortly after her was especially memorable. That girl, Lily, had no lies. The signs of lies that everyone gives off, she had none of them. Could such a thing truly exist? Even Snow, for once, was skeptical at first.

Her "Good morning"s, her "Hello"s, her "Good night"s.

Whether smiling, angry, or composed.

Whether bored or having fun.

Especially when she looked sleepy.

There were no lies anywhere.

It was the first time since entering her Cocoon Phase that Snow had met a vampire like that. "Like a cat." Snow thought.

Snow quickly became close friends with Lily.

When she was with people who told lies, Snow also had to lie. And she wasn't good at that. So she tried to avoid others as much as possible. But when she was with someone who didn't lie, she didn't have to lie either. It felt good. It felt like they were destined to meet. One day, during some random conversation, Lily said, "What are you talking about, Snow? We're best friends, right?" That wasn't a lie either.

And so, Snow was always with Lily. The two were best friends. But, there was a faint discomfort. When she was with Lily, she felt a slight sense of guilt. The

reason was the lie that emanated from herself. All her memories from before coming to the Clan were lies. Snow could “*know*” that. Even knowing it, there was nothing she could do about it. Even the name Snow was a lie. She couldn’t remember her real name. Even this sanatorium-like Clan she was in was a lie. She could “*know*” that it was a lie, but she couldn’t tell what kind of lie it was exactly. The signs never explained the contents in detail.

When did she become so full of lies? She didn’t know. She couldn’t understand. She had no idea. An indescribable fear swelled in her chest. And yet, she didn’t run away. Because Lily was there. In a world full of lies, including herself, Lily was like a single visible light in the darkness of a desolate night.

"Good morning, Snow." "Good morning, Lily."

Today again, in this world of lies, she could feel as though she had found the one and only truth. She wanted to ask, "Hey, do you like me?" No matter what answer came back, she knew it would never be a lie.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

A world full of lies. And yet, she alone was not a lie.

It felt almost like a miracle.

Maybe... maybe her Cocoon Phase had existed just so she could meet Lily. It wouldn’t be strange for Snow to think that.

On the other hand, there was someone like a lie itself.

False. From the top of his head to the tips of his toes, he seemed entirely made of lies.

A prefect in the boys' dorm. He would sometimes come to the girls' dorm just for fun. He was fairly popular with the girls. Some even swooned when he flirted with them. He was friendly with all students, boys and girls alike, and had many friends in both dorms. But Snow was different. If someone could only connect with others through lies like False did, then she'd rather choose a life of connecting with no one at all.

Snow despised False. He embodied more lies than any she had ever been able to "*know*." If all the lies in the world were gathered together, perhaps something like him would be formed. That's how much he felt, like the embodiment of falsehood. Whether he was flirting with girls or laughing with friends, to Snow, it all looked like he was just "*playing pretend*." The intense sign of lies that emanated from him. It was a smell. A stench so strong it made her dizzy. No, it was more than a smell. It was a stench. An indescribable reek. If she were forced to name it, maybe, the smell of a sewer rat?

Since entering her Cocoon Phase, Snow had been living in a world of lies. She wasn't good with lies. She hated them. She wanted to keep as far away from them as possible. Even so, she had to survive. Snow tried to adapt, to some degree, to the world of lies. She told herself she could tolerate a few small ones. But False's lies were impossible. They weren't the kind she could ignore with a calm face. They weren't something she could turn a blind eye to. His lies were fundamentally wrong, lies one must never utter. Like telling a lie against life itself, a taboo. And so, Snow kept her distance from False as much as she could. She wanted nothing to do with him. She wanted to reject everything about him. His appearance, his voice, all of it. Not just for herself, for Lily too. She wanted to keep

something genuine away from something entirely untrue. But then he chose Lily as the target of his little game that day. Of all people.

They had made plans to meet in the afternoon, but Snow was delayed by something. She hurried to the meeting place, thinking she needed to apologize, but she was too late. On a bench in the courtyard, Lily and False were sitting side by side. They seemed to be chatting happily. Snow couldn't hear from where she stood. Lily was laughing. A smile without a single lie. False was also smiling. A smile full of nothing but lies. It was like sunlight and the darkness of night blending together. As if something pure was being defiled. As if dignity itself was being violated. An indescribable despair filled Snow's body. At the same time, rage surged within her. She had to get False away from Lily as fast as possible. She had to absolutely reject his very existence.

Suppressing her panic, Snow walked toward them. Her steps felt heavy. Reject False? How? Should she punch him? Insult him? Her thoughts were in disarray. Before she knew it, she was standing in front of them. Lily noticed her and smiled, eyes clear of any deceit. False looked at her. And that smile of his, was the last thing she wanted to see.

"Damn dhampir."

The words left her lips before she even realized. Snow herself was shocked.

Why had she said that? Dhampir? Who was she accusing of being a hybrid of vampire and human? Even if Lily were a dhampir, Snow would never say such a thing. Even if Lily was, she would accept her without question. Then was it False? She'd never heard such a rumor. Why had she said it? Snow, flustered, tried to trace the sign. It was the stench. The stench of lies that radiated from him compelled her to say those words. Even if she blamed the sign, what came out of her mouth was nothing more than an unfounded insult. Just like in childish fights,

yelling "stupid, stupid, stupid!" without reason or thought, just to hurt. She only wanted to separate Lily from False. And yet, how low she had stooped. Before she could even feel ashamed, False's eyes changed.

It was something Snow would come to know, his gaze without lies. A face without masks, from a being of nothing but lies: False. That was his true face. So that's what it was... Even though he's a dhampir... he tried to defile my Lily.

Snow cursed him again, this time with certainty and undeniable hostility: "Damn dhampir."

After that, Snow lost her memory.

It was the second "baptism" she received after coming to this clan, a memory alteration initiated by False. A world of lies, false memories, a fake clan. Snow existed in a world full of lies. As if the time she had spent here had never existed to begin with. As if there was no place she truly belonged. She, who tried not to get involved with anyone as much as possible, was alone.

And yet, she met her again.

The one who wasn't a lie. Snow and Lily quickly became close friends. Lily called Snow her "best friend." And to Snow, Lily was her "best friend," too. As long as Lily was there, Snow wasn't alone.

The dorm supervisor of the boys' dorm. False. He sometimes came over to the girls' dorm to hang out. Popular. Snow, who had the ability to "know" lies, still couldn't stand him. Still despised him. One day, that same False chose Snow as the target of one of his playful games. He tried to entertain her with conversation, but because everything he said was a lie, Snow couldn't help but pity him.

"Why are you all alone?"

Snow asked that before she could stop herself, directed at the clan's most popular member. False was shaken, his eyes darting around. Snow, having had her memories altered, had forgotten it, but that was the second time she had seen that look. His expression without lies. Once again, Snow had stripped away False's untrue face.

"Why do you think I'm alone? I have so many clanmates around me."

The first part of his reply wasn't a lie, so Snow answered without hesitation.

"Because everything about you is a lie. No matter how cheerful you act, no matter how much you joke around, you're lonelier than anyone."

"Why do you think that?"

He, who was like the embodiment of lies, now seemed to be shedding those lies—if only for now.

"Because... you've always been alone."

"Aren't you alone, too?"

"I have... Lily."

"Lily? Oh, that girl."

"We're best friends."

"Well, I have a best friend too."

A sign, his aura, begins to drift in the air. A lie. He had cloaked himself in lies again. So Snow simply replied honestly: "That's a lie." He suddenly grew agitated, raising his voice.

"It's not a lie! I do have a best friend!"



He desperately tried to pile on more lies. But it was a strange kind of lie. A lie mixed with truth. Something different from just a regular lie. Like “Someday, we’ll meet again.” A lie filled with hope. But it wasn’t just a wish. It was something else. What was this feeling? Snow searched for the right word to describe it. But she couldn’t find it easily. She needed more to go on.

“Who’s your best friend, False?”

When she asked, he suddenly fell silent. That silence wasn’t a lie either. When he was with the other members of the clan, his eyes looked like lies themselves. But when talking to Snow, he revealed something like his true face.

“UL...” False finally said.

“My best friend is someone named UL.”

Unfortunately, it was a lie. A lie filled with longing. A strangely nostalgic lie. A somewhat sad lie. What wish lies behind this lie of yours?

“There’s no one named UL.” Snow exposed the lie again.

“You’re lonely, aren’t you?”

She said it, intending to comfort him.

“I’m not lonely... What do you know about me?!”

On the face stripped of lies, anger swelled. Snow loved Lily. She hated False. But maybe... she could come to like this version of False. Because he wasn’t lying. But it wasn’t meant to be. Due to memory alteration, Snow forgot once again.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

Full of lies. This world is overflowing with lies.

And yet, Snow still ended up meeting Lily.

Snow, who had the ability to “*know*” lies, felt like she was drowning in the overwhelming number of lies, and she couldn't help but be drawn to Lily, who wasn't a lie. Because that was the only place where she truly belonged. Each time, they became best friends, irreplaceable best friends. And each time they did, False altered Snow's memories. As if to forbid her from ever having a best friend. As if to force her to share in his own loneliness.

No matter how many times Snow and Lily forgot, they would meet again, become close, and once more become best friends. They would forget, meet amidst the lies, be drawn to one another, and become best friends again. Over and over. Countless times. And each time, they would forget that they had ever been best friends.

— Then, after more than 700 years had passed, something changed.

The effect of the Initiative that False had cast on Snow began to weaken. False, an immortal being, living in eternal time. The Sanatorium Clan was an experimental facility he created to produce his eternal companion, UL.

In this false paradise, boys and girls who had become ageless through a special “*medicine*” distilled from False's blood lived together. Though they had stopped aging, they were not immortal, and they were subjected to repeated human experimentation, a nightmare-filled dumping ground. And now, the “*medicine*” began to show a new effect in Snow.

She began to show signs of existential merging with False. The Initiative no longer worked on her. There was a possibility Snow had become the same as False,

an immortal. False was overjoyed by this. To confirm it, all he had to do was kill Snow once. But he couldn't bring himself to do it. If the experiment wasn't perfect, she might not come back to life. And that terrified False more than anything. He didn't want to lose Ul a second time.

Though Snow no longer forgot Lily, Lily continued to forget Snow. Eventually, Snow stopped trying to approach Lily. In a world of lies, in a world of false memories, in a fake clan, Lily was the only one who wasn't a lie. But because Snow could no longer forget, she had to lie just to meet Lily. The greeting, "Nice to meet you." Even pretending to meet by chance, it was a lie. Just as she didn't want Lily to be near the lie that was False, she didn't want Lily to get close to what she herself had become. From the day Snow thought that, she could do nothing but give up on becoming Lily's best friend. She avoided everyone else in the clan. So, behind her back, everyone called her: "Lonely Snow."

Memories erased again and again by the Initiative. She never remembered them. Her current memories only began after she broke free of False's influence. Everyone else may forget. But only she could no longer forget.

And then, one day, she suddenly remembered something from long ago.

A day far, far in the past. The first time she met a girl named Lily in this clan. They quickly became friends, and before long, they were calling each other best friends. Snow felt like her loneliness had been saved. In a world full of lies, she had encountered the miracle of truth for the first time. She remembered it. She had remembered it. Had she never remembered, she would not have suffered. How many hundreds of years ago had that been?

Now, that precious memory of Snow and Lily belonged to Snow alone.

Snow, free from the curse of the Initiative, could leave the clan at any time. But she didn't. In the world outside the clan, hundreds of years had already passed. Her family and friends were long gone. And without the "*medicine*," she would lose her ageless body. As long as she stayed here and drank the "*medicine*," she could live forever. A false eternity. That deeply confused Snow. Because eternity, in its paradox, made the concept of death stand out all the more clearly in her mind. Because of that, Snow began to constantly be aware of death. And developed an extreme fear of it. It's a lie. It's a lie. It's a lie. I can't die. Snow wished that death, which comes to all living things, was itself a lie. But she could "*know*" lies.

Snow is always alone.

While reading a book in the courtyard of the Clan, she spotted Lily among a cheerful group of girls. She was smiling. It wasn't a lie. She looked happy. It wasn't a lie. Snow was the only one who remembered that they had once been best friends. But this was Lily, after all. Surely, she had best friends among those girls now. And that was fine. As long as she was happy. And if that happiness could last forever... Then Snow would gladly swallow all the lies of the world.

She didn't need to do anything but watch. That honest gaze. That undeniable presence. That the girl named Lily was happy. Just watching her like this was enough.

So please, Snow prayed. Let this false eternity go on, forever. Let her remain unaware of what I have come to know.

And so, more decades passed.

To maintain a peaceful and happy Clan, memory alterations were sometimes triggered. When someone disappeared from the Clan, their entire existence, and the memories shared with them, vanished. Even the girl once called Sylvatica, who had lived here, was completely forgotten by everyone. From the minds of the adolescents in their Cocoon Phase, inconvenient truths were quietly deleted. Curiously, False never used the Initiative just to satisfy his personal desires. Even though he could control everything freely in this false paradise, he was never a tyrant. All except for one thing. He never allowed Snow and Lily to become best friends.

"Damn dhampir." Was it that phrase that had violated some untouchable boundary of his? Or maybe, he had just wanted her to understand the same loneliness that he carried.

Aside from that, time passed like a still, windless calm.

Snow remained all alone. By herself, day after day, she let her girl's body soak deeper into the world of lies. She noticed the other girls whispering about her from a distance.

"Snow is a strange girl."

"She always looks so lonely."

"But she doesn't try to talk to anyone."

"Snow is a strange girl."

"I've never even seen her smile."

"Her gaze is cold like ice."

Snow noticed, but pretended not to. That kind of lie? She was well used to it by now.

Snow “*knows*” the self that is soaked in lies. She doesn’t want to be friends with anyone.

Dignified, cold, unsociable. Say a word to her, she won’t answer. Invite her to a tea party, she’ll ignore you.

Lonely Snow.

Lonely Snow.

Lonely Snow.

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## Flower Language

### **Snowflake (Suzuran Suisen)**

“Innocence” / “A pure heart” / “I wish for your death”

With leaves similar to the narcissus and bell-shaped flowers that hang downward like lily-of-the-valley, it is called *Suzuran Suisen* (*Leucojum Aestivum*) in Japanese.

Its flower language includes meanings like “innocence” and “a pure heart,” derived from its graceful and delicate appearance. On the other hand, it is also a very hardy plant. If its bulb is planted in autumn, leaves will sprout by February the following year, and flowers will bloom by mid-March, continuing to bloom for several years. However, the plant is toxic, and accidental ingestion can cause symptoms of food poisoning.

There is a similar flower called the Snowdrop, whose name means “drops of snow.” While the Snowflake produces bell-shaped flowers with six petal segments, the Snowdrop has six petals too, but arranged in two distinct sets: three long outer tepals and three shorter inner ones. Their blooming seasons also differ. Incidentally, the flower language of the Snowdrop is “I wish for your death.” The white petals evoke the image of a “burial shroud,” and the flower came to be seen as one offered to the dead.

In the main story, both flowers' meanings are used intentionally.

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