

Heavy

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He stood for a moment outside her door, a pause pregnant with intention. If he listened, he could just hear her moving inside her room, the light footsteps, the gentle rustling of fabric, and his imagination took over from there. She was putting on that dress, her dress, *his dress*, stitched from cloth so black it might as well be glass, for when he looked he saw only himself reflected back at him.

And it had been sweet, so sweet, to see her descend in his image, as if joining him down in hell; if it was a seduction, it was willing, he saw it in the curve of her smile and felt it in the heat of her gaze.

But enough, was it enough? He wanted, *needed* her to be more. She was dabbling at playing the game, her moves well placed but based on intuition rather than complete understanding. Chaos was a ladder to climb but the climb was a burden... she didn't feel the weight of it, threatening to pull her, *us*, down. No, she didn't feel it, and she didn't *yearn* for it, the thrill of chances and risks, of tilting the rules in your favour, that heady rush of looking down to see how high you've come, and who has fallen.

So he knocked, softly, before resting his palm on her door, listening once again, until he heard her respond with an invitation to enter. It was unlocked, all that was needed was a gentle push, before he was in her room - and despite the preparation his imagination had attempted he still felt all the breath leave his body when he saw her in that dress once again. His gaze took her in, all of her, he made no attempt to hide it, and when he finally met her eyes they were as unwavering as his own.

"You look lovely, sweetling," he rasped, and was this how his voice was going to sound around her now? As deep and breathless as the pit he had dragged himself out of?

Finally her eyes dropped and she turned away, having no response. "I'm almost ready, I just need my cloak," she answered instead, opening the wardrobe tucked away in the corner.

"Not that one," and she turned to look at him, a slight furrow on her brow the only sign of her confusion. "I brought you something." He lifted the garment off his arm, previously inconspicuous due to its similarity to his own. It fell open in his hands, and he held it out to her, with a slight nod of his head to indicate she should put it on.

He relished the feel of her slipping inside, before she moved towards the mirror to fasten it along the fur-trimmed collar. "Oh," she sighed, and he followed to watch her reflection over her shoulder. "It's..."

Decisions, deceptions. It is seeing everything, hesitating at nothing. It's the strings of the world aching to be pulled, so many ladders on the cusp of being toppled.

"It's... heavy," she breathed, and he saw in her reflection her eyes were wide as saucers.

"Yes," he replied simply, lifting his hands to smooth the fabric resting on her shoulders. "It is."