



The Acquaintance



A bead of sweat raced down Lucinda's temple as she held her position. The air, thick with humidity and the stench of rotting leaves, was getting unbearable. Thanks to the cloudy sky, her team could hide longer in the tree line waiting for her command. As she breathed in deep, a twig snapped behind her and she felt the serrated edge of a blade on her arm.

The warm breath on her neck told her that the person was at least a head taller than her, leaving her at a slight disadvantage. Her breathing slowed, forcing herself to remain calm. "May I help you?" Lucinda's voice is tight, a mere whisper.



"What do you think 'dear'," the man says in a maddeningly posh voice.

Every strategy and thought flies out of her mind at that accent, almost like a complete memory wipe. All she can think of is a blade that was dotted with engravings of roses laid against a black material. Why is it just now that that memory returns? She shakes her head, trying to think clearly.

"I see I have slipped your mind already..." His voice is thick and laced with annoying knowledge. His fingers wrap themselves around a few strands of her ashen-brown curls, a teasing warning.

She licks her lips, every bone in her body readying her for a fight she will win. "You seem somewhat...familiar. Have I threatened you before?" She acts genuinely confused, but behind her voice is ecstatic joy at the fact she's messing with his ego. Without thinking,

Lucinda turns her body, minding the blade playing lazily on her sleeve.

Her head tilts up, her chin jutting out stubbornly letting her eyes fall on the man who she hasn't seen in a year. Her eyes read his face, knowing fully well what her words are doing to him. She sees the egotistic anger seeping from him, his nostrils flaring making him look like an angry goat. She stifles a giggle at the thought.

"Even when we were kids, you always thought you were funny," his voice is strangled, and his face tightens.

"Who me? I'd never do something like that," she smiles 'innocently', enjoying the different emotions crossing his features. "Somebody's cranky," she adds just to put icing on the cake.

"Somebody needs to shut up." His statement is quick and short, already having enough of the mind games. "Honestly, since when did you become a leader?" He is getting tired and decidedly changes the subject before she can say anything.

She suddenly becomes annoyed at him and sighs heavily, "Honestly, Damon! Mind your own business."

For a moment everything in the forest is silent except for the shuffling of soldiers. Up until that moment, Lucinda had completely forgotten about her legion of warriors. She coughs, looking up at her old frenemy, wondering how he is still alive. *Win in silence, let them think you're losing*, she thinks back to the words he had spoken to her last year, before... "What are you doing here then?" he chuckles ruefully, lowering his gaze in apology for speaking, whilst she seethed with annoyance toward him.

"Honestly? She asks, speaking again when his eyes meet hers again. "Either walk like a Queen or walk like you don't care who the Queen is.