

Ambition and Desire

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Ambition saw her sitting there, knees curled under her chin, eyes looking towards the distance forlornly—or perhaps, longingly.

The gulls flew above them, cawing, and the sea hissed from underneath them. He approached her, his steps slow and steady, careful not to startle her. But the young girl of iridescent hair and glimmering skin didn't seem to care. He knew she could hear his steps somehow; she had a way of detecting intention. It was in her name, after all.

She didn't turn to look at him when he sat down beside her, his eyes looking out at the view before them, the breeze shawled over him.

“Are you going to continue sulking forever?” he asked, fully aware that his tone was thick with disappointment and judgment. He knew she'll snap at him. There was something about him that she despised, and what could he do about it? Dwelling on the possible reason why she resented him would do nothing to him—he was well aware he is an unchanged man. She lifted her chin, only to rest them on top of her folded arms, not even sparing him a glance. She said nothing.

“It didn't go the way you wanted it to,” he said, and he noticed her wince, “Is it that upsetting?”

“You don't get it,” she hissed. Ambition merely watched as her fingers curled in frustration. Her face turned red and her jaw tensed. She finally looked at him, her eyes tinting from one color to another?from crackling orange to burning red.

“And what do I not get?” he inquired.

Her lips pressed before her words came out. “I thought you'd understand. You should know better than anyone. Don't you... feel angry if something doesn't go your way?”

Ambition's brow raised. "There's always a Plan B for that. Things won't always go my way—I will admit it is frustrating—but there's no reason to cause a tantrum. You can simply strategize rather than agonize."

Desire's eyes burned on him. Ambition knew she hated how indifferent he was, how he seemed like he didn't care. Based on her reaction, Ambition could deduce two possibilities: either she despised him for being himself, or he knew too much.

Perhaps it was a combination of both.

He sighed. "You expect too much."

"And you don't?"

He glanced at her. "I have control over what to expect. That's why I have backup plans."

"But in having backup plans, that would mean your goal stays strong, does it not? What right do you have to criticize me?"

"Your reason to yell and throw tantrums when something doesn't go your way is unjustified. You expect that everything will go your way just because it's what *you* want," he paused, then scoffed. "It's like having a map but you don't know where the north is pointed."

A force pushed against him. Had he not been aware of her mood swings, Ambition would have fallen off the cliff (not like he'd die, of course, but there was the inconvenience of having his finest shirt torn). He was on one knee, keeping his balance, and Desire stood from her spot, her teeth clenched, her eyes redder than before. An indescribable red, full of emotions he thought were reckless and idiotic—a nuisance.

She was a nuisance.

"Don't mock me," she roared, her feminine yet child-like voice overlapping with a deep, beastly growl. She must have hated his flat expression, even when she tried to push him off the cliff and into the merciless sea.

His chest swelled with an uncomfortable feeling. Perhaps, he realized that he hated her too. Desire was reckless, negligent, selfish, and, above all things, an idiot. She was deserving of the errors that occurred in her plan if you'd call it that. To Ambition, her plans were beautiful

paintings in her mind, but they were nothing but scratches on canvas when she tried to make them a reality. She was a joke, and she was supposed to be a generation older than him.

That fact was a hard pill to swallow, Ambition would admit. Her figure was that of an adolescent girl despite being an eon old, yet her strength marveled even some of their siblings and peers. One of their siblings, Orcus, mentioned that Ambition could match her strength if he gave it his all, but fighting her would prove meaningless to him. She was shorter than most, her head could only face his chest, but her color-shifting eyes were only daggers towards him. Their siblings rarely got the same treatment. She showed smiles to her sisters, would throw occasional insults to her brothers, ask for advice from her non-conforming siblings, but she'd never throw daggers at them if they weren't Ambition.

Ambition slowly went back up his feet. He was tall, pale, and well-built. He easily towered over her, but Desire was not one to let her siblings overcome her. She grimaced as she watched him walk toward her, only to sit down where he originally was sitting. Ambition said nothing but stared at the sky as inky indigo began creeping into the pink and orange hues.

"Sit down," he said simply.

She scoffed, but after earning a glaring glance from him, she obliged though exasperated. She continued hugging her knees and they sat in silence for some time.

"Did you let everyone know what was upsetting you?" he asked.

Her mouth opened to answer, but he added, "Don't tell me you expected them to know what it is you want."

She heaved a sigh. "I was upset because they *knew*. They acted like it was inevitable, that everything I did was supposed to end in vain. I wanted to hope it wouldn't, so I kept trying."

If she had told him and their siblings this, then a tantrum and a half-broken mansion would have been avoided.

“And what was it that you were trying to achieve?” he inquired.

She took her time with her silence. Ambition wondered if it was something that hurt her—despite being a race that understood the universe a thousand times better than humans, some of them still acted like mortals. Desire was obviously one of them.

“That girl,” her tone was low, almost a whisper, “I wanted to give her her deepest wish.”

“A human?” she nodded solemnly at this, and he added, “Unlike you.”

She chuckled as if she knew that very idea was foolish. That she was foolish. She nodded nonetheless.

“Humans can’t see us, but we have influence over them,” she admitted, “and I thought I could... drive her to achieve her wish. To finally be herself. To live as the person that has been caged inside of her for a long time. That was what she wanted.”

Ambition restrained himself from commenting. There wasn’t much to say to the situation yet, but knowing Desire’s stubbornness, he could probably predict the human girl’s fate from there. He chose to say nothing, however.

“But I didn’t realize,” her voice was somehow thick with sorrow now, “that I pushed her over the edge.”

He turned to her and watched as the fire in her eyes subsided to an empty blue—like the ocean at night. Darkness with no light. Her dark eyes glistened and her lips quivered. She hid her face under the folds of her arms and the mess of her hair.

“I added too much fuel. There was a price to that gnawing desire that bloomed inside of her. If she didn’t have what she wanted, she’d die or be forced to live her life in hell. She faced so much rejection and abuse in life—wasn’t that already hell for her? I wanted to give her courage to stand up for herself, but I didn’t realize that I wasn’t giving her any courage.”

“The cup overflowed,” Ambition muttered, “and she was the price.”

The ground shook underneath them, her fingers curled to fists. He knew this feeling—the feeling of frustration. Now that he knew the storm flooding her mind, it was much easier to understand her.

“Desire,” he said, pressing her name to her ears before she’d cause a calamity.

Her face lifted from the curtains of her arms and hair, her irises now a lapis lazuli blue welled with tears. His siblings rarely cried, if ever. They understood the complexities of human emotions, how fragile yet powerful they were. How a single trigger can wreak havoc on the world. Emotions were dangerous, indeed, and he considered himself lucky to never have to rely

on his emotions too much. He admired Orcus for relying more on logic and how Orcus dealt with the fates of human souls without much of a second thought, but even someone like Orcus still held sympathy for the souls he was assigned to.

Desire looked at him, searching for the answer in his countenance or trying to predict what he’d tell her. Her pressed lips and fists told him that she was ready for whatever bluntness he had in mind, but the mood to be brutally honest with her somehow drifted away.

“Why didn’t you tell this earlier?” he asked.

“Like I said, they knew. I knew I wasn’t supposed to get attached and I knew I shouldn’t do anything to reverse the girl’s fate. But I’ve watched her for a long time. I’ve seen others like her and I’ve seen some succeed while others fall to their death. She wanted to be strong, to be resilient, to survive. I wanted to see her achieve that dream. I wanted to give her all that but I—”

—am only an emotion.

Her words drifted off to silence. That was what they were. It was as simple as that. Desire fed the girl too much, it drove the girl mad, and she paid the price. Perhaps that was what their siblings were trying to tell her—to understand and see the limits of emotion and want. To understand how they could ruin someone. She’s seen countless lives lost to senseless desires, and she’s lived since time immemorial. So what was it that made her act in such a way? She was supposed to know better, yet—

Ah, that's right.

When your heart is set on something, no words can rein upon it.

He laughed silently, showing her only a bit of his smile. *She was right; what right did I have to criticize her?*

No matter how many plans he made, no matter how long he thought and strategized, his end goal was always the same. He could make new plans and his end goal would remain unchanged. Desire may have acted with no proper plan, but all her plans and efforts were done to accomplish one purpose. She wanted to grant a person happiness. If someone told him that he shouldn't achieve something, what was the most likely response he'd give? He'd show skepticism, and he'd tell himself that if the said person was right, he would've noticed an error by then.

Desire, however, couldn't see the errors in the path she was pursuing. As such, she led a human to her doom, and the blame fell on her shoulders.

Had Ambition been in her place, perhaps the human girl would still live. Perhaps she would not have the most joyous life Desire had envisioned, but a happier, better life being herself despite the discrimination and suffering.

"It's my fault," she admitted bitterly, her voice quivering. "If only I knew better; if only I was more careful, more calculative..."

She let out a frustrated sigh before throwing her face to her palms. A short, choked laugh escaped from her. "If only I was more like you..."

"Then you'd have to deal with the pain of overthinking," he responded coldly.

"At least I knew what I was doing. At least... I know where the north is pointed."

Ambition had seen mortals who envied the lives of others, who set their dreams to *be* like the ones they so admired. These were foolish dreams, for as he understood it, each person had their own unique traits that were incomparable to others. Sure, perhaps there would always be another who was better in the field, but there was always something about a person that was irreplaceable.

Desire's wish to become more like him was enough to make him laugh had it not been for the pain she felt. For the tears she shed for a mere mortal. He sighed.

"And if you were me," he began, "what would you do?"

Her eyes scrutinized him before they drifted off to watch the waves come and go. She was lost in thought—and *she's certainly taking her time*, Ambition thought exasperatedly—before she said, "I don't know."

He raised a brow. "You wished to be more like me but you don't know what you'd do if you attained that wish?"

"If I was more like you, then I'd be less of a brute," she scoffed, and he felt a twinge of annoyance in his chest, "but I don't think that's what I want."

She paused, calculating her words and seeing if they were aligned with her intentions. When she offered her gaze to him, Ambition noted how the deep, dark blue slowly turned to a lighter shade. The lighter the shade, the better, and the sooner he can return to their siblings.

Eventually, her words poured out, "What do *you* want, Ambition?"

He narrowed his eyes. "Are you avoiding the subject?"

"Think of this as a... subtopic to our current subject," she grinned, and it was the first warm expression she had offered him in a long while.

He smiled. "Perhaps... I want to see people achieve their dreams, no matter how stupid and ludicrous they are. I'm sure you feel the same way."

She nodded, "But what are your reasons?"

He looked at the setting sun, and he saw the moon peering through the invading dark—an eye watching the two of them.

"I don't get attached to them. I'm only interested to see *how* they'll achieve their goals, what they'll do to reach that light. What prices they'll have to pay, how far they'll go."

After a brief pause, he asked her, "If you could save that girl, and the only option for doing so is to kill the people who've damned her in life, would you?"

The colors began to swirl in her eyes—green, blue, glimmers of white. When a myriad of colors swirled in her eyes, then he must have overstepped his boundaries. However, his reason to fear and falter subsided. The colors in her eyes weren't hostile and she was just simply baffled by his question. Despite being the older sister, there was still some innocence in her. If that innocence was protected by their older siblings, then perhaps she wouldn't have gotten involved with the human girl. She would still watch over her and dismiss her once she dies. But nobody stopped her. She was free to do as she wished, to face the consequences of her actions.

Maybe it was time for her to understand what 'desire' meant.

This brought back a memory to him. One from who knows how long ago, when he finally understood what 'ambition' meant. When he saw a human man deceived, killed, and manipulated many for his own wishes; to attain greatness—and to him, greatness was endless wealth and invincible power.

After he watched the man die, Ambition remembered one of his brothers, Compassion, asked him, "*Would you kill one to save ten?*"

To which Ambition responded, "*If the remaining ten are of any use to me.*"

Her voice snapped him of his reminiscing. "But if it means she won't be happy, then there's no reason for me to kill."

He said nothing, urging her to continue. She went on, "What I wanted for her was her happiness. If killing the people who damned her means she'll be happy, then I'll gladly do it. Even if I'm not supposed to. We aren't supposed to kill humans, and yet, I've killed the girl I wanted to save."

"Do you think she'd ask you to kill them?"

Desire shook her head. "Her parents and peers may have condemned her, and she may have held a grudge against them, but somehow... I just don't see a reason why she'd want them dead by her hands."

"What was she like?"

"She didn't like the body she was born in. Her soul and body were different. All she wanted was for people to understand her, to let them see what she had to go through. She wanted someone to understand her pain, the things she had to go through, the things she had to fight so she could be herself and accept herself. Despite all the suffering and pain, the hatred and rejection, she held onto the hope that one day, she'll find someone who could understand her, who would accept her as she was."

Desire smiled in reminiscence, but there was torment in her eyes.

"Did she find that person?" Ambition asked.

Desire nodded. "They didn't get to meet, though. They exchanged letters."

"Then is she not already happy?" her eyes widened in disbelief at this, and he briskly added, "She is free from her pain now, and though she might not have met this person physically, at least she knew that someone out there loved her as she was."

The disbelief melted into realization, and a tear streamed down her cheek—she hadn't been crying till this point.

"You thought you were seeing things from her point of view," Ambition explained. "You might have understood her, that is undeniable, but you were only looking, not seeing."

She was silent, taken aback by the realization. To Ambition, it seemed like he was only stating the obvious. But Desire had an innocent and juvenile soul, and perhaps she'd have to live with that until the universe meets its end.

And she'll forever be a nuisance, Ambition thought with a mental sigh, *although she isn't as bad as Wrath, I suppose.*

"What am I supposed to do now?" she whispered, more so to herself, but Ambition would provide his insight anyway.

"Believe that she was happy albeit briefly. Perhaps it was you that also pushed her to meet her loved one. That *is* what you wanted, isn't it?"

She nodded reluctantly; to her, the realization was a hard pill to swallow although it was also a source of relief. He could understand that—what Ambition couldn't grasp was why she still refused to forgive herself. Even without Desire's influence, the girl would still meet her end in a similar way somehow (based on his observation, at least).

He didn't understand love. The closest thing to love that he could grasp was attachment, but Desire's 'attachment' to the human girl seemed too strong to be considered one. Perhaps that was why she was so pained and anguished by the aftermath.

"Let it settle down," he told her, "I wouldn't say it wasn't your fault because you *are* partially responsible, but she wouldn't have achieved that brief moment of happiness without you."

Desire scoffed, and Ambition couldn't believe his next words: "I'm serious."

She couldn't read much from his flat expression, but she seemed surprised to see that he was surprised. Eventually, she burst to laughter, and he watched her incredulously.

"You're always serious," she remarked.

"You didn't seem to take me seriously," he shot back.

Desire rolled her eyes, her irises now a shimmering, pastel color. "I did."

She stood up, looking at the sky one last time, the moon now clearer, and some stars started embellishing the dark curtain. She turned her heel and as he watched her leave, she stopped midway, looking at him expectantly.

"Aren't you coming?" she asked.

"I thought you'd be harder to convince," he said and she groaned.

"I am not a child," she spat before her expression slowly melted to concern. "Do you think... Sister Destiny is going to be mad at me?"

He almost laughed, but he sensed the genuine concern behind her opal-like eyes. He bit back a smile. "That depends."

"Not helping,"

"Logically, she wouldn't, but you'd still earn a lecture. If you had changed that girl's fate entirely, Destiny might curse you."

The opals turned darker for a moment as she gulped. She nodded slowly, and Ambition let out a laugh. Her eyes widened.

He stood up, walking over to her. "Come now, a lecture is nothing compared to getting cursed. I hope you did nothing to stir her mood prior to this."

"I *almost* destroyed the mansion, though," she said.

"The mansion can be easily mended. Destiny will be mad at you for *that*, at least. That's nothing."

"I hate how everything sounds easy to you," she grimaced.

"Experience is the best teacher," he shrugged, "this is just one of them for you."

She sighed, giving up all hope of trying to understand him. Ambition didn't mind. Perhaps they still resented each other even after their talk, but he did sense some development. Perhaps tomorrow they'll get along for once.

"Come," he said, "everyone's waiting for you."

She smiled. "Ambition?"

He glanced over at her. She said, "Thank you."