Letters to say I Love You

by Wordsmith8

Summary

"As I have already made plain, I do not agree with this course of action. If you are to leave without me, I will not help you go" Ciel is leaving for France on the queen's orders to investigate a series of curious murders. Sebastian is staying at the manor. A compromise is reached, and a series of letters ensue, leaving their hearts inextricably intertwined. (Ciel is 18-19, Sebaciel)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Sebastian watched haplessly as his charge struggled to lift his luggage into the waiting carriage. Even from the top of the mansion’s steps, he could see the frustration and stress in the young man’s face as his hands slipped and clawed at the worn leather of the trunk. Finally, the earl called out to his butler.

“I don’t suppose you’re going to help me with this, are you?”

The young man’s words were sarcastic, but his tone was defeated. Sebastian shook his head, inky tresses catching in the cool September breeze.

“As I have already made plain, I do not agree with this course of action” he said, descending a few steps to avoid shouting. “If you are to leave without me, I will not help you go”.

With the Funtom business booming and the queen’s orders continually filtering in, it had become impossible for both earl and butler to attend to each task together, as had been done in the past. Now that his master had reached a slightly more independent age, it had become a frequent practice to separate in order to complete the earl’s duties as the head of a company and guard dog to the queen. Much to Sebastian’s chagrin, the most menial and least dangerous tasks were left for him to complete, while his master most unwisely took on the demands of the queen in solitude. The longest his master had been away was a week, however the queen’s new orders would take a month to fulfill; much longer than Sebastian was willing to have his charge out of his care.

Ciel’s sigh was audible even from a distance. He attempted to lift the trunk once again, but gave up midway, resulting in the bloated case toppling out of the carriage and landing directly onto the earl’s foot. This proved only to enrage him further and elicited a few choice words on the subject. Still seething, the earl turned his attention to the stoic butler on the stairs.

“Where on Earth is Finnian? Call him at once”

Sebastian pursed his lips in annoyance. “I sent him to run a few errands for me. He should be returning in an hour or so. Perhaps while you wait, we can discuss how best to deal with the issue of your departure-

“There is no issue” The boy interrupted. “My word is final, Sebastian. You will remain here to regulate the company and placate her Majesty while I investigate the murders in France. Are we clear?”

Sebastian said nothing. Ciel crossed his arms defiantly and waited for the customary answer. Minutes ticked by and still the butler stood on the steps, his face a stony mask of contempt. The wind picked up suddenly, carrying the scent of rain over the countryside.

The earl shifted his weight, fiddled with the hem of his sleeve and sniffed heatedly several times to make a point before stalking up the stairs to where his butler stood.

“Stop acting like an impudent child and help me with my damned luggage. I won’t be in any immediate danger where I’m going, so quit pretending that you care about my wellbeing. My soul will be intact when I return, that I can assure you”

Sebastian remained dispassionate as Ciel’s single cerulean eye bore into his own twin vermillion irises. Abruptly deflated by his butler’s indifference, the earl sighed and started for the carriage.

“I am unsatisfied by your choice to investigate alone, however I would be willing to form a
compromise”

Ciel turned at his servant’s words. “And what would that be?”

“Write to me. Daily.”

His master quieted, irritation evident in his creased brow.

“That is positively uncouth, Sebastian”

“I’m afraid you have no choice in the matter if I am not to be at your side”

“I don’t have the time for this nonsense, I’m going to miss the train.”

“Give me your word”

Ciel’s annoyance intensified and he took a slow breath. “And if I am unable to write?” He questioned, steadily meeting Sebastian’s gaze.

The butler’s response was immediate. “Find a way. It will take time for the letters to reach me, but I do expect one for each day you are not here”

The earl huffed and turned away. “Fine. I’ll send the first one when I arrive. Now let’s go, my train is leaving in twenty minutes” He had only taken a few steps when he realized Sebastian hadn’t followed him. Ciel swiveled on his heel. “What?”

The demon quirked a brow.

“…I give you my word, Sebastian”

Satisfied, Sebastian followed his master to the carriage and lifted the trunk effortlessly inside. After Ciel was comfortably seated, the butler settled himself at the head of the carriage and took the reins. With a flick of a wrist, the horse jolted into motion and the carriage swung out of the Phantomhive estate.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

A/N: Just a side note on the letter-writing; I have no idea how long it would have taken for a letter to get from Paris to London back then, but for plot convenience, I'll keep it to 2 days. I also don’t know how long it would have taken for someone to get from London to Paris, so again I just guessed, man (honestly I’m too lazy to go searching for the answer). Thanks for reading, more on the way!
Wordsmith8

Ciel’s hand wavered as he set the nib of his quill down on the creamy white page before him. He watched with mild curiosity as the dark ink bled through the paper, inching further and further away from the tip of the pen. He lifted the quill from the page to observe the dark blot marring the sheet like a fresh bruise, and promptly threw yet another paper to the floor. Plucking up another from the small stationary bag beside the desk, Ciel began anew.

Although, there was still the problem of what to write.

“What does one write to an impertinent servant…” He mused aloud, smoothing out the edges of the paper. The sun had already sunk far below the horizon by the time the earl reached his destination. The third day of travel by boat had been grueling, but he recalled his promise to the insolent butler upon seeing the quill pen tucked among his clothes.

His attention turned back to the page, and he began to write.

September 3rd 1895

My tactless butler,

I have arrived in Paris without any trouble, although I am quite exhausted. I’d almost forgotten about your heinous ‘compromise’, however, I must admit it is difficult to completely dismiss your insufferable idiocy. I am set to investigate the crime scenes tomorrow. According to the queen, they’ve likely been tampered with. I suppose this will serve to keep me occupied long enough for her to exercise her true agenda. I have reason to doubt she has decided to tote me along to France only to solve a few petty murders. I hope this is enough to convince you of my good health. I already loathe writing to you. Be content, and never ask this of me again.

Cordially,

Earl Ciel Phantomhive

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“Mister Sebastian! There’s a letter from Master Ciel!”

The butler, who had been dusting the library dutifully in his master’s absence, paused in his work to appraise the young gardener as he burst through the doors.

“Thank you, Finnian” Sebastian stretched out his hand to receive the letter, which was thrust into his
hand with unnatural force. Tucking it away in his breast pocket, he resumed his dusting. Several minutes passed, and still the fair youth stood at the butler’s back.

Sebastian turned slightly and gave a half smile. “I said thank you Finny, you may go”

The teen seemed slightly puzzled by this. “Aren’t you going to open it?”

The butler coughed lightly, struggling to keep the mounting annoyance out of his voice.

“Perhaps later. I believe the tulips require watering, could you take care of that for me?”

The teen nodded fiercely and scrambled out of the library. Sebastian chuckled, plucking the letter from his pocket and reading it over once he was sure the servant was outside. He read and re read it. And then read it once more for good measure.

_Cordially,

Earl Ciel Phantomhive_

Sebastian folded the paper carefully back into its envelope and pocketed it once more.

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Later that night, the demon set to writing a reply.

_September 5th 1895_

_My callous Master,

I have received your letter._

_Though your journey was long and tiring, it seems your wit has not suffered since I last saw you in person. My idiocy and tactlessness also seem to have been too offensive to ignore, as here I sit with a letter penned by your hand at my request. Pleasantries aside, I must ask that you exercise caution. If your suspicions are correct, there could be imminent danger that we are unaware of. I suggest a thorough investigation of the police force overseeing the case before proceeding with your own analysis. If it would please you, I shall conduct a small inquiry regarding the circumstances of the murders and send you my findings._

_Fear not, I will never share this correspondence, nor ask this of you again._

_Ever faithful,_

_Sebastian Michaelis_
Fear not, I will never share this correspondence, nor ask this of you again.

Ever faithful,

Sebastian Michaelis

Ciel scoffed at his butler’s words.

“The prat doesn’t even sign with his position, just his name. So much for the so-called aesthetic”

Picking up his quill, the earl set to writing a response.

September 7th 1895

To my irritating butler,

I was not aware that I would be receiving letters in return. As I have already expressed, I find this arrangement less than satisfactory and would therefore much appreciate it if you would simply accept my words without a reply of your own. Additionally, your initial request for a letter every day of my absence is proving to be quite a feat, seeing as it takes two days for each one to reach you (I say this under the assumption that I will be receiving a reply regardless of whether I want one or not). If we must speak over such a distance, I prefer at least to have a proper conversation rather than a haphazard amalgamation of correspondence.

Since my first letter, I have investigated the crime scenes. Your advice to question the police force was both unwelcome and unhelpful. It seems the Queen’s powers only extend so far, and my position as watchdog was insufficient proof of my right to do anything other than review collected evidence. Even their findings and hypotheses are out of my reach. To make matters even more complicated, I encountered Charles Grey loitering about. Though it is clear that his purpose is to tail me, I question what exactly he is looking for. Perhaps her Majesty has decided to test my loyalty and competence once again.

Despite these minor setbacks, I have concluded that these are in fact serial killings. The murderer is of middle age, possibly an aristocrat, with a strange obsession with fine art. Seeing as I am unable to uncover much more on my own, it would be helpful if you could do more research.

Sincerely,

Earl Ciel Phantomhive

Setting the pen down, Ciel looked over the letter, slightly miffed at having to ask for the brute’s assistance. With a sigh, he folded the paper into an envelope.

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Sebastian couldn’t suppress a small smile at seeing his master’s familiar handwriting amongst the mail that morning. Setting the rest of the letters on the kitchen table, he set about opening the envelope. He had no sooner pulled the creamy paper from its container when a blond head poked in from the doorway. Sebastian paused mid-action and stared questioningly into Finnian’s wide eyes.

“Is that from Master Ciel?”
The butler gave the youth a careful look. “Yes…”

There was silence for a moment before Sebastian slowly slid the letter back into the envelope and placed it in his coat pocket, patting it possessively. All the while, Finny watched him.

“Is there something you require, Finnian?”

The young man tore his eyes away from the butler’s coat and laughed awkwardly. “Oh, not at all! I’ll-uh water the gardenias!”

Shooting Sebastian a grin, he bolted out of the room. The butler shook himself and peeled open the letter once again.

It was quite late by the time Sebastian sat down to write his reply.

September 9th 1895

To my wayward master,

You are quite the walking contradiction, my lord. First, you seem surprised at my response, yet later you seem to expect it. I admit, I am confused as to your wishes. Furthermore, your wording has invoked my curiosity. Communicating over such a distance, you say? Do I detect a hint of longing, sir? As for the issue of daily letters, I am willing to acquiesce if you agree to continue our conversation. It so happens that I share your disdain for disorderly letter writing and would be more inclined towards a coherent exchange.

I suppose it must be quite a shock for the common rabble to turn their noses up at your rank, though it is sure to be a valuable lesson in humility. However, I do regret that my advice was of no use. I will certainly look into the circumstances of the murders and send my findings. You must forgive my impudence, but you have not commented on my request for caution. I must insist, now more so than before, seeing as her Majesty’s lapdog has been sent to keep watch on her hound. Perhaps there is a way to make him reveal his hand; I leave that to your expertise.

Lady Elizabeth came by the manor yesterday. She seemed quite distraught when I informed her of your absence. I recommend you attempt to communicate with her as soon as possible, as I believe her family (particularly her mother) is becoming quite irate at your continued truancy.

Sincerely,

Sebastian Michaelis
Chapter 4

Ciel couldn’t mask his disdain for the sad cup of tea placed before him. He muttered his thanks to the waiter and sipped the muddy water gingerly. Setting the cup delicately on its saucer, the earl fingered the corner of the page before him. He’d written the letter the night before, but hadn’t yet sent it. He’d read it over and over, searching for the reason for his hesitation but only succeeded in becoming irritated with his own indecision.

Cursing under his breath, the earl folded the paper up into his pocket and took another sip of tea, trying not to think of his butler’s eyes scrutinising his every word. Not two minutes later, the youth pulled the now slightly crumpled paper out of his jacket and flattened it roughly on the table once more, his single eye skimming over his words.

September 11th 1895

Sebastian,

Stop fooling around. I have not 'longed' for you, nor will I ever harbor such deplorable thoughts. Put it out of your head, you licentious fiend. I expected your reply simply because of your tendency to disobey direct orders. That is all. As for Elizabeth, tell Aunt Frances that I will be returning soon, and that perhaps I will have acquired some trinket or other for her daughter as an apology for my absence.

Do not attempt to school me on humility, devil. You know nothing of the sort. I do, however, commend you on your consistency. You truly are as false as your words. I have revisited the crime scenes and seem to have been able to piece together more of the story. I believe the man responsible is Comte François de Boulainvillier. Despite my best efforts, I am still unable to access any information about the French aristocracy. Send me your findings as soon as possible. As for Charles Grey, he seems to have disappeared. I cannot understand why the Queen has decided to test me so. For once, I will wait and allow her agenda to unfold before taking action.

On a side note, I do miss quality tea. The French seem to only drink coffee, though I can’t imagine how they stomach the stuff first thing in the morning. There is a pot and stove in my room, however I am reluctant to use them seeing as it appears they haven't been properly cleaned in what seems like several hundred years. I'll not take a decent pot of Darjeeling for granted ever again.

Have the kettle brewing for when I get home.

Sincerely,

Ciel Phantomhive

Refusing to allow himself to stall any longer, Ciel folded the sheet up, drank the rest of his tea with a cough and walked out into the waiting day.

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"Finnian… Would that be today's mail?"

The blond youth looked startled and dropped the pile of letters he'd been eagerly sifting through a moment ago. His expression of shock slowly melded into one of sheepish guilt as he gathered the fallen papers and handed them to the butler.
Sebastian accepted them with a thin smile. "Thank you. The greenhouse needs cleaning"

As he turned to walk away, the butler heard an almost inaudible sniff. Stopping in his tracks, Sebastian reluctantly turned on his heel to face the teary-eyed youth.

"Yes? Is there a problem?"

Finny was quiet for a moment before the waterworks began.

"I-I… I just wanted to see how Master Ciel is! He's never been away for this long and-

Sebastian silenced him with a blithe wave of his hand. "I assure you, he's quite well" He began to turn away again but the sobs persisted.

With a lengthy sigh, the butler handed the crying boy a handkerchief. "I will write to our Master and pass on your message, alright? Excellent. Now, dry your eyes and see to your work"

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September 13th 1895

My lord,

You say you 'have not' and 'will never' long for my company, however you discreetly skirted around your present feelings on the matter. Through your violent retorts, I sense a careful evasion. If it should ease your embarrassment, I admit I have missed our daily banter. I have sent your message to the Lady Elizabeth. For your sake, I hope it will be enough to assuage her ladyship's anxieties.

Pardon my audacity, but I believe you are mistaken in your assessment of my knowledge on human matters, particularly those concerning emotions. I have observed your kind for many years, and though I can never experience your feelings firsthand, I have amassed an extensive understanding of the origins of such emotions. Though I could go on, I will spare you the technicalities of the workings of my kind. I'm sure it would be of no interest to you.

I had compiled a list of French aristocrats with strange affinities for art, however I assume this is no longer necessary as you have found your suspect. I'm afraid there isn't much information regarding the murders themselves, though with some interference, I have discovered why Earl Grey has followed you to Paris. It seems he was initially sent to complete some business for her Majesty, however there were several complications. The aforementioned 'business' was to perform a trade; one priceless painting for another. Unfortunately, the traded painting was a fake, and the thief managed to make off with a priceless masterpiece held near and dear to the Queen's heart. As we both know, her Majesty is often prone to fits of rage, and likely set her dog on the innocent in petty retaliation. In light of this new information, I believe it is likely that our 'François de Boulainvillier' is but a figment of her imagination made real by our very own Charles Grey.

After having read of your tea-related predicament, I have taken the liberty of enclosing a small bag of Darjeeling tea leaves for you. May they lift your spirits (assuming you are able to clean the stove. I have also included a washcloth for this very purpose).

Ah, I'd almost forgotten. Finnian has asked me to relay his worry for your safety to you, and wishes that you come home soon. For his sake and my sanity, please do.

Sincerely,

Sebastian
September 15th 1895

Sebastian,

I truly hate to praise you, but I think it is only proper that I thank you for sending the tea leaves. They gave me (quite literally, in fact) a greatly missed taste of home. Now before you become too smug, I'd like to kindly remind you that it is against a butler's aesthetic to cause their master feelings of melancholy. On another note, it pleases me to know you miss our talks. I admit it is difficult to carry on a witty conversation with such large time gaps between our letters. Moreover, I often feel there is too much to tell, as though I am incapable of condensing everything onto a single page. I'm not quite sure why I am relaying all of this to you. Loneliness is a peculiar thing and I fear I have grown far too accustomed to your presence.

Your theory regarding the Queen's motivation for sending me here has unfortunately proved to be true. After much grief, I located more information on François de Boulainvillier. He was born in the mid-14th century and died at the age of 16 after a lengthy battle with smallpox. Her Majesty truly does enjoy her games; Boulainvillier shares his date of death with the late Prince Albert. Obviously, it is impossible that he is the culprit, though this does not conclude my investigation. It seems this revelation has uncovered more questions than answers, and I am at a loss as to what is being asked of me. Is it wiser to play into her Majesty's hands, or to expose her ploy? I assume Charles Grey is still running amok somewhere in the city. Whichever choice I make, he will be there to report it to the Queen.

You say you understand human emotions, though I have yet to see any evidence of this. I'd very much like to hear how this is possible. Seeing as solitude has become such a common part of my life, explain to me exactly what you 'understand' about it. Furthermore, do not assume that I would prefer to live ignorant of your true nature. Tell me more about your kind. What's more, I received a letter from Elizabeth yesterday. Aunt Frances is not pleased, but I am more unsettled by the listless tone of her daughter's words. As it is, I simply do not have the time to write to her as well as you. Tell Finny not to worry and that I will be home soon.

Have patience

Ciel Phantomhive

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September 17th 1895

My lord,

It seems an age since we last spoke in person. I am pleased you enjoyed the tea (if you wish it, I will send more). Finnian hounded me for your answer ever since I promised him that I'd send his message. Now that his worries have been assuaged, perhaps I will be able to tend to my duties properly. Speaking of dismissing worries, would you care to lessen mine? Since we both agree that the Queen has sent you on a wild goose chase, I suggest you return at once to discuss our next move. If this is not plausible, at least allow me to join you. I would feel much more at ease by your side than waiting anxiously for your letters.

You surprise me sir, I did not know you were interested in my kind. I'd be happy to disprove your
skepticism regarding my understanding of emotion. I believe I mentioned in my last letter that Demons are incapable of feeling emotion firsthand. For the most part, this is fact, however there are certain outliers who have taught themselves to feel in the same ways humans do. Like your kind, they allow their newfound emotions to impact their actions and cloud their reasoning. Most do not survive past their first few hundred years (roughly 16 to 20 in human years). The remainder tend to mock humans and revel in their own ignorance and filth, tearing into your societies with no more grace than rabid dogs. I'm sure I can guess your question as you read this, therefore I will answer it before you need ask. I consider myself an onlooker, perhaps even a connoisseur of souls. I concede that in my youth I partook in certain unfavourable endeavours, however I have grown since then and no longer associate with lesser Demons. Although we are by nature relatively solitary creatures, we do have our own societies and actively communicate with one another, though because of my choices, I have been quite neatly ostracised. This is how I know of loneliness.

You mentioned that there is 'too much to tell' in your previous letter. Feel free to write as much as you like, bore me to tears with the mundane and the ordinary, record your thoughts as you see fit; only, do not stop writing. In truth, I am flattered that you humour me so. I understand all too well the void you feel at your side. These past few mornings, I have found myself steeping your tea, only to remember that there is no one to drink it. Please consider my offer to join you, I believe it is the best course of action at present.

Do take care of yourself,

Sebastian

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September 19th 1895

Sebastian,

You say you are an onlooker, yet you are an eager participant in the corruption of souls. What exactly makes you so different from the rest of your kind? And what 'choices' have you made that caused your isolation? Forgive me, but I believe I have more questions now than before. As for the matter of your request, you have been denied. If Charles Grey is still observing my movements, he surely knows by now that I am alone. Allowing you to come here could be read as a threat, and as much as I miss your presence, I cannot allow her Majesty to believe that I wish her harm.

Do you feel lonely often? I admit, after hearing your story I am thoroughly intrigued. How old are you exactly? Do you shun the Demons who feel emotion, or do you envy their insight? You must tell me more.

It would be nice to have more tea leaves. I've used the ones you sent so many times they are practically falling to pieces. For some reason, I can't bring myself to throw them away. Forgive me if this letter is short, I have yet to purchase more ink.

Tell me what you know of happiness in your next letter

Ciel
September 21st 1895

My most curious master,

Your questions are welcome, there is no need for apologies. I will not waste any time in answering. I consider myself something of an anomaly. Most Demons do not make contracts, though they also seldom care about the quality of the souls they devour. I, on the other hand, am extremely selective. Even if I am starving, I will not lower myself to their level by consuming low-grade souls. My choice to remain solitary is another defining factor in the reason for my exclusion. Yes, I'm afraid I do feel alone quite often, though by making contracts, I stave off boredom and acquire much-needed company. I have no particular thoughts on Demons who would live amongst you, though I do feel pity for them when I hear news of their deaths. The price for living as you do is quite severe, especially when one's natural instincts are being repressed. And my age? Well, let us just say that I am old enough to have known the splendid gardens of Babylon, walked among pharaohs of Egypt and laid waste to city after city beside the Roman emperors.

Your latest query is proving to be quite a feat to answer. Happiness is not an emotion I understand very well. Its origins are even further beyond my ken, given that my natural inclinations are so far removed from anything of the sort. Nevertheless, I shall do my best to relay my limited knowledge.

I have seen happiness in many humans over the years, mostly in instances of the material kind (this, I cannot comprehend. Your lives are so very short, why bother with defending your property?). I have, however, witnessed a happiness of a different variety. Friendship, laughter, family. I have never known a species quite like your own. You are capable of such great harm and can still walk on with your hearts in your hands. I don't believe I will ever fully comprehend how others contribute to your own happiness. Is it not something that can be achieved alone? Forgive me for asking, but I cannot understand it.

I have attached more tea leaves for you, rosehip this time. I hope my answers have been satisfactory.

Ever faithful,

Sebastian

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September 23rd 1895

My dutiful Sebastian,

Your thoughts, as ever, intrigue me. I hope you do not feel lonely too often anymore. I believe I understand where you stand now in relation to others of your kind. You're essentially an outsider; a perverted gourmet (I say this with utmost fondness, for if you weren't, I would never have met you).

So, you have lived since the time of king Nebuchadnezzar. Is this considered old for your kind? And how are Demons created? Is it true you are fallen angels? It would be interesting to hear of your past adventures. Tell me what you know, the things you've seen, anything really will do. It's been quite dull here. Thank you for the tea, it was lovely. It has been quite some time since I've tasted
Happiness is a fickle mistress. It comes and goes, waxes and wanes. Though our lives are short, we struggle and fight for it. We bottle and sell it in other forms, boast that we have the best, but the purest kind lies in the examples you have given. It has been such a long time since I've felt it myself. I almost share your objectiveness. To answer your question, no, it is not something that can be obtained alone. Often, at least one or more people contribute to your happiness as you contribute to theirs. Families operate on this unspoken principle, as well as many friendships and romantic partnerships. We are only truly happy when around people who care for us. Speaking of such things, I have another question for you. Excuse my indelicacy, but have you ever cared for another? I understand such emotion is likely beyond you, however I can't help but wonder. In many ways, you are still so foreign to me. I'd like to know you better.

Perchance, you could tell me what you know of affection next

Ciel

…

September 25th 1895

My kind master,

I assure you, I am not lonely anymore. How could I be, what with your company. I am flattered that you consider me intriguing, and I truly enjoy sating your appetite for answers. I, too am glad we have met. I never thought my days could be filled with such adventure, although since you have stepped into my life, everything seems changed, brighter somehow. It saddens me to think that one day it will end.

You are as sharp as ever, my lord. I came into existence shortly after the reign of Nabopolassar, near the height of the Babylonian empire. I was born of fire and air, nothing remotely heavenly. I fear it was the work of a few pestering Demons who created the myth of fallen angels. If I remember correctly, it began as a particularly unsavoury doodle meant to disgrace the creatures of heaven. It then came to pass somehow before the eyes of a human, who evidently took its meaning as fact. I'm afraid the majority of my 'adventures' during that time were of the kind not suitable for polite society. It would be indecorous of me to reveal such things to you. I scarcely believe I could remember many details regardless.

What do I know of affection? You truly challenge my ability, sir. Affection has been described to me as the gateway for love. Uncontrollable, unintentional and unbidden are all words I have heard used to portray it, though I believe love is the stronger of the two. I have seen love in the way a mother looks at her child, in the way family stays together, lovers in an embrace. It seems to be humanity's only saving grace, it is what keeps you from tearing yourselves apart. As a creature of destruction, love is even more foreign to me than happiness. I can scarcely imagine what it must feel like to suffer so deeply, to endure both pain and pleasure for the person your heart is set upon. It seems extremely taxing and really quite futile, and I count myself lucky that I will never experience such sentiment. You are a largely senseless and unequivocally short-sighted breed, but I suppose there is a strange beauty in your fierceness and your folly.

If I may, why ask my thoughts on such an emotion? It seems strange to question a Demon on fickle affairs of the heart.

Slightly perplexed,
Sebastian

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September 27th 1895

To my butler,

Forget it. Forget everything. I see now I've made a mistake. How could I forget your true nature? You're an emotionless brute, a depraved creature of hell. What would you know of love? I'll not be returning this week as planned, I still have some investigating to do and a gift to purchase for my betrothed. Do not write back unless there is an emergency or you have found relevant information pertaining to the case.

Earl Ciel Phantomhive

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Wordsmith8
Chapter 7

"What's wrong, Mister Sebastian?"

The youth's voice cut through the silence, interrupting the butler's thoughts as he gazed at his master's letter on the desk, his eyes scanning the words blankly. Scattered across the worn mahogany was the entirety of their correspondence, upturned and sorely bent from the many times they had been read and re read. He turned his head sharply and cast the gardener a cruel look.

"Nothing. Attend to your duties and leave me be"

The demon heard the boy take a few hurried steps backward in fright at his tone. Casting the page aside, the butler clasped his gloved hands over his lips, closed his eyes as if in prayer, and waited for Finnian to vacate the doorway.

"I-if there's something wrong…" Finny began, gathering his courage. Sebastian's eyes snapped open, his crimson irises full of a crazed fury the other servant had not yet experienced from his superior. No words were spoken, the butler's gaze was enough to send the youth packing down the deserted hall. He listened to the sound of the boy's receding footfalls, sensed his erratic breathing, the frantic heartbeat pulsing in his chest as he raced away. Sebastian sat, still and emotionless as a stone façade, until the sun had sunk below the rolling hills of the English countryside and the moon rose above the plain, cold and unforgiving as his master's words.

The butler let his hands fall from his lips. He rested them lightly on the varnished wood for a moment, breathing deeply. Then, with great misery on his usually composed features, he lowered his face into his hands.

I don't understand…

With a cry of pure madness and ire, the demon thrust the letters, inkwells, quills, candles, paperweights, documents and records from the desk with a single swipe of his hand, watching from behind a curtain of pain and anger as they cascaded messily onto the floor in a heap, ink spilling over the many pages and clotting over the words. With a brutal snap, the quill pen was crushed under an oval paperweight gifted to the butler by his master, whose glass ornamentation shattered fitfully across the carpet, skittering noisily under the bookcase and disappearing from view. Sebastian breathed hard as the ink sank through the letters and papers into the carpet, staining and diluting the carefully woven colours until the image was irrevocably obscured and the make entirely damaged. A few stray pages descended softly over the mess, concealing his awful misdemeanor under their creamy surface. The butler took another breath and calmed his rage, a sense of revelation and unveiling having come over him at what he'd done.

Slowly, and with much regret written on his fine features, Sebastian knelt by the wreck.

He gingerly selected one of his master's letters from the discombobulated pile, stained and illegible, and set it aside. Sebastian continued in this pattern for some time, picking out his lord's correspondence with careful hands until it had been laid out before him.

Very little was salvageable. Most papers were ripped and soaked through with ink, though the butler did his best to preserve the undamaged portions. The rest, he left lying on the floor. Seating himself again at the desk, Sebastian produced a spare quill and a fresh paper. Using the spilt ink on the wood, he began to write.
September 29th 1895

My most dear master,

Forgive me.

It is as you say, I know nothing of love or happiness or affection or anything that pertains to you or your kind. I am a Demon. I am base and hellish, on both counts you are correct, and if you wish it, I will become emotionless as well. I do not understand your sudden anger. Please, explain to me my faults and my wrongdoings.

I miss you deeply. Write back, I implore you.

Yours,

Sebastian
I miss you deeply

Ciel shook the butler's words from his mind, frowning at his irritating lapse in willpower. It had been a week since the letter arrived, and three full days since the young Earl had deigned to open it. His anger hadn't subsided in the least since their last correspondence, and had served only to enhance an already taciturn countenance. Despite only having read it once, the letter's contents seemed to pursue him in earnest, and, to his chagrin and heartache, invoked once again a great yearning for Sebastian's company.

Forgive me

Gritting his teeth, Ciel snatched up the offending paper and shoved it deep into the rubbish pail by the desk, and, seating himself on the bed with a huff, extracted Lizzy's letter from his bag. He had only read through a quarter of her flowery script before his thoughts wandered back to his butler and his tender words.

I know nothing of love…

He stood with haste and retrieved the letter from the garbage, smoothing it out with care. The boy thumbed the corner of the paper, eyes tracing the other man's swooping handwriting as he tried to imagine what would possess his *demon* to write such sweet apologies.

Yours,

Sebastian

Cursing his own ineptitude and weakness, Ciel folded the page and stuffed it into his bag along with his servant's other letters, fiercely doing up the clasp and shoving the thing as far away from him as was possible in the small space. Moving towards the desk once again, he slammed a fresh page down onto the wood and viciously plucked his quill from the inkwell. At once, he began to write.

October 9 th 1895

Vile creature of Hell,

Do you enjoy torturing me so? As I have said before, your words are false and your warmth shields your true nature. If you truly believe a few tender words will make me lower my defenses, you are sorely mistaken. Drop this charade at once, I command you.

With renewed animosity,

Earl Ciel Phantomhive

…

October 11 th 1895

My lord,
I do not wish to cause you pain. Though I still do not understand your newfound hatred of me, I will cease to reply, if it is your will, as I have observed that you do not much care for my words. However, I must be sure of your safety, therefore I humbly ask that you continue to write. Project every insult you deem fit upon me; only, indulge my request.

Since this will be my last letter to you, I would like to make clear my feelings regarding our correspondence as well as you yourself. You must know by now that I do not lie. I have never in the course of these letters, wished for anything but your wellbeing. It is no charade; my words are genuine.

You are unlike any creature I have previously met. Your soul is eternal, your mind a true marvel, and though such things are fleeting among your kind, I find your beauty quite easily unparalleled. Steadfast, inquisitive, and unrelenting, you have captivated me, ensnared my senses with your delicate hands and coy smiles. I am all too pleased to be a pawn in your games, and stand proud at your side as you vanquish your foes. You are beautiful then, too.

I do not know when I began to care for you, only that I do. It has become fact, as much a part of my life as my name. I fear the devil behind the veil has fused with the mask, creating something entirely new without my noticing. Never again will I think of myself as a nameless entity. Whether I wish it or not, I will forever be Sebastian, and by association, as well as by choice, I am yours. I must admit however, that I do not know what to call this feeling of mine. I am aware that my words on love have perhaps been too harsh, though it is possible that this has been the case simply because I cannot accept what I am feeling. Still, I am beginning to wonder if I am truly capable of experiencing romantic inclinations. It is quite feasible that I have underestimated my capacity for emotion after all. I am not so foolish as to give myself freely to every passion I encounter, though not so frigid as to ignore them altogether. Perhaps I stand somewhere in this murky middle ground, loving you.

It appears that even as I write this, I make more and more discoveries on the topic of my affection. I cannot halt these words, they pour forth, unbidden. Though it has been interesting carrying on conversation like this, I believe it is time you came home. I ache to see you. I sincerely apologise if such sentiments repulse you. I assume my affection has been the cause of your distress, and for this I cannot forgive myself. Though, if you can find it in your heart to release me from my burden, I would be much obliged.

With love, (for I believe at this point, it cannot be much else)

Sebastian

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Wordsmith8
Hello friends! I would just like to say thank you for supporting the story and leaving such wonderful comments (I am very flattered and extremely surprised by the reaction this has garnered tbh) It makes me so happy that you are all enjoying the story. I will endeavour to update more frequently!

Thank you again!
Wordsmith8

October 13th 1895

Sebastian,

I find myself at a loss for words. The bitterness that once held my pen seems to have dissipated somewhat, though in its absence, I now find confusion. Your letter has left me in a shambles and my mind is adrift.

Let us leave the issue of our relationship in the margins for now. I have heard tell that Charles Grey is back in the city.

Write back soon,

Ciel

…

October 15th 1895

My lord,

Pardon my lack of restraint, it shall not happen again.

I find it extremely worrisome that Grey has returned. I cannot see any reason behind this move. Perhaps the pawn has decided to betray its queen in favour of its own agenda. Tread carefully, master.

I will send more tea leaves to calm your spirit. Do not think too much on these past events, it will cloud your intellect and only cause more trouble. I trust a blend of Chai will suffice?

Sebastian

…

October 17th 1895

Sebastian,

I have heard of the calming properties of Chai, and though its healing tendencies elude me, thank
you for the effort. Although Grey strikes me as the sort to run rogue, I doubt this is the case. Her majesty still awaits my move and has grown impatient at my brazen torpidity. I have already sent our findings on her fabricated culprit as well as the reason behind her actions. Hopefully, she will appreciate my insight. As for Grey, he is little more than a weak threat. Assuming I've made the choice most favourable to the Queen, no harm will befall me.

I refuse to let my reasoning blur. It seems the only thing I have control over these days. I hope this letter finds you in good health.

Ciel

…

October 19th 1895

My lord,

You seem quite listless. Are you sleeping well? I cannot help my fretting, I'm afraid. It is possible you are correct in your assumptions. Nevertheless, I would advise caution if you happen to cross paths with Mr. Grey. If her Majesty has not sent him herself, he may prove to be more of a hazard than we planned. Though, if there are further casualties, we can assume that the Queen is not quite finished with her work. Keep your wits about you, sir.

I apologise for the ineffectiveness of the tea. Would you perhaps enjoy a different blend? Or something else entirely? Please do not confuse my intentions, they are pure. I only wish to lift your spirits.

I know we had agreed to cast the issue aside, but I have noticed the gradual shortening of our letters these past few days. I duly hope the trust we've built has not been overwritten by my brash words. You may still confide in me your thoughts without fear. My duty as a butler is always my first priority

Mildly concerned,

Sebastian

…

October 21st 1895

Sebastian,

You are as astute as ever. I haven't been sleeping much. I have reason to believe Grey is not alone. His other half and a few others seem to be watching my every move. I sent my report to the Queen some time ago, she is sure to have seen it. Perhaps it was not the answer she was looking for. It is possible she is not pleased at my discovering the truth and I fear more civilians might find themselves at the brunt of her anger, and by consequence, Charles Grey's sword.

I, too, have observed the curtailment of our correspondence. My faith in you has not diminished, only, I am confused and ashamed at my feelings. In that respect, I am still lost.

I think, perhaps, it is time you joined me here.

Ciel

…
October 23rd 1895

Of course, sir. I will come at once.

Sebastian buttoned up his wool overcoat quickly, nimble fingers flying over the fabric with practiced ease. Glancing out the window, he noted the sinking sun and decided it was time to depart. Checking that his pocket watch and extra gloves were secure, he strode confidently into the foyer and found himself face to face with Finnian, clad in his nightclothes and sporting a perplexed look.

"Where are you going, Mister Sebastian?"

He sighed, but allowed himself a small smile.

"Our master has called for me"

The boy's face lit up. "Will he be coming home soon?" he asked excitedly.

"I'm not sure, that would depend on him"

The gardener gave no indication of having heard the butler's second statement, and proceeded to prance about the foyer, humming happily to himself. Sebastian decided to leave him to his joy and offered a final command.

"Tanaka will take over in my absence. When I return, it will be with our lord"

Sebastian reached for the door, but paused at a sudden exclamation from behind him.

"I'd almost forgotten! This arrived today. You were busy, so I picked it up"

In the youth's outstretched hand was a letter. Curious, the butler plucked it from his small fingers and turned it over. The crimson seal of the queen was unmistakeable.

"It's strange, isn't it?"

Sebastian looked up confusedly. "How so? Our master receives many letters from her Majesty"

Finny shook his head. "I know that, but this one isn't addressed to the master-

Sebastian turned the letter again and read the neat script on the front.

"It's addressed to you"

To Sebastian Michaelis,

Butler of the Phantomhive household

He glanced up from the letter to the boy's face and in one swift movement, opened it.

October 23rd 1895

Dear Mr. Michaelis,

Thank you for taking such good care of my sweet boy. He has become so very talented by virtue of your guidance. So talented, in fact, that he uncovered the truth. Unfortunately, this has become somewhat of a problem, as the report condemning my actions has been misplaced, stolen perhaps.
In light of these new developments, I have decided to detain your master for a period of time. Do not worry, he will be in the gentle care of my most trusted servant, Charles Grey and though I have told him not to hurt your darling lord, I cannot guarantee his total safety. Now, be a dutiful servant and hurry to his side. I'm afraid he will need you quite desperately in the days to come.

Warmest regards,

Her Majesty, Queen Victoria
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The wind whistled in the demon's ears as he sped over the countryside, heart pounding madly with every inhuman step. He was but a shadow in the growing darkness, a silhouette sprinting hysterically over bridges and dewy grass, flying over dirt roads that eventually gave way into cobblestones as he neared the city. His pace was relentless as he hastened down the winding streets, dodging the few passersby and keeping his senses fixed on detecting signs of the nearing harbour.

Sebastian paused for a moment at a small intersection, breathing deeply. A stout woman came laughing out of a nearby tavern, wiping her pudgy hands on her speckled apron as she called to someone still inside the seedy establishment. The light and noise emanating from the open door were overwhelming, and Sebastian turned his eyes away, irises adjusting to the now darkened street. He heard the woman utter a last farewell, then the door slammed shut and all was still.

He lingered for a moment longer, watching as the sturdy maid strolled assuredly down the road, humming to herself as she was swallowed by the gloom. Then, he was off again, tearing down the streets and around the bends in his worried frenzy.

He reached the docks not long after, and searched desperately for a means to get across the water. His keen eyes spotted a small rowboat bobbing merrily further down the pier and swiftly crossed the boardwalk to examine it.

"Wah- Hey! Get outta there ya bleedin' thug!"

The thick cockney accent caught him by surprise, as did the sudden blow to the back of his head. Sebastian grabbed his attacker by the collar and sent him spinning across the dock like a discarded ragdoll, his limbs flailing about uselessly as his broken body tumbled under a streetlight. The lump groaned and raised its head.

"What…What are ya doin'…"

The demon ignored the half-hearted query and set about untying the boat. A few moments later, he heard the sound of fabric scraping over stone. He glanced back at the youth and noticed he'd dragged himself along the ground, almost halfway to where Sebastian was standing. As his face came into the light, the butler noted that he couldn't have been more than 17.

"I'll leave the money for the boat here. And perhaps some extra for your trouble"

Sebastian set down a bag of coins on the pier and stepped into the boat. Taking up the oars, he began to paddle into the night.

…

It was still dark when Ciel came to. As his eye adjusted to the shadows, he noticed his surroundings. He seemed to be seated in a small stone room, complete with tiny slot-shaped windows near the ceiling and a little rickety desk pushed haphazardly against the wall to his right. He touched his cheek, feeling a tender bruise beginning to blossom below the skin as he attempted to remember the events before arriving in the room, recalling vaguely a rough hand on the back of his neck as his head was shoved unceremoniously into a thick canvas bag. He turned his head, still observing the space, and noted a large wooden door just across from where he was seated. Standing with much
difficulty, he stumbled towards it.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you"

Ciel whipped his head around to see an unperturbed Charles Grey leaning against the wall behind where he was previously sitting.

"And why would that be?" He rasped. Grey pushed himself off the wall and circled around to Ciel.

"Please, have a seat. You look a fright"

He sat reluctantly, eying the queen's butler as he promptly kicked the desk over to the centre of the room, seating himself on its weathered surface.

"I suppose you're wondering why you've been brought here" said Grey, leaning his elbows on his knees.

Ciel crossed his legs neatly. "I assume her Majesty is not pleased. Let's get this over with so I can make swift amends"

Grey chuckled, hand feathering over the hilt of his sword. "I wouldn't be so blithe. See, you've committed two extremely, lewd crimes against our esteemed sovereign" He strolled leisurely around the desk as he said this, charcoal eyes laughing. "Would you like to know what they are?"

The earl of Phantomhive snorted contemptuously. "That would be a start"

"Don't get smart with me, Phantomhive" he snarled, leaning against the desk.

"It's the report you sent her Majesty"

"What of it?"

"First of all, it's the truth. You've created evidence that the Queen has lied, and now, it's been stolen"

Ciel paused at his words, stunned. "And she believes that I was somehow involved in the theft? That my intention was to expose her actions?"

Grey shook his head. "She doesn't doubt your loyalty, only your judgement. Seeing as you were the one to write the damned thing, she has decided to punish you"

"That's ludicrous. How could I know it was to be stolen?" The butler shrugged and began to pick his teeth. "Dunno, maybe she really is angry, maybe she's just bored. Anyway, that's not all" Ciel's expression darkened as Grey extracted several documents from his pocket.

"Her Majesty has decided that your punishment is to take full responsibility for the crimes, as well as the 'forging' of the report. Consequently, you will be charged with-

"Treason" Ciel finished. Grey nodded and waggled the papers around a bit, as if swatting a fly.

"And why would I do that?"

At this, the butler nodded to the papers in his hand.

"The Queen has devised a certain incentive"

"Which is?"
Grey smirked at his annoyance.

"Several letters addressed to a certain Sebastian Michaelis were intercepted and copied recently. If you do not take the blame for the murders, we will be releasing these copies to the public"

Ciel was quiet. He could feel his heart beginning to race as cold sweat beaded at his forehead. His hands clutched at the sides of the chair, pale as death. The sapphire ring stood out on his ghostly flesh.

"What?" He murmured finally.

Grey beamed. "Didn't I say your crimes were lewd? We've got all the juicy bits here, nothing about our made up criminal or the reports though, we've edited those parts. Everything else has been copied, right down to your handwriting" Grey seemed to revel in the youth's shock and strode confidently around him like a leopard stalking its prey. "Oh, and don't worry about anyone finding out the true nature of your beloved, that can be a secret between us"

Ciel sat, unmoving and unresponsive. Grey had taken his seat on the desk and was swinging his legs to and fro like a child.

"Aren't you going to say anything? Her Majesty is so very generous. She's given you a choice, treason or lechery"

"…How.." His voice was almost a pained moan.

"Come on, Phantomhive. I haven't got all day, you have to choose"

Ciel suddenly glared up at the butler. "And if I refuse?"

Charles Grey's mouth slid into a drunken smile, eerie and crazed.

"Well, that's where the fun starts. Final answer?"

Ciel breathed hard, noticing Grey's menacing stance and the dangerous look in his eyes. His thoughts wandered to Sebastian.

"I will not play her game. I will not willingly destroy myself for her pleasure"

Charles Grey grinned and removed his gloves.

"That's what I hoped to hear. Well then, let's get started, shall we?"

…

It was nearly dawn when Sebastian first caught sight of the port. A searing pain in the center of the contract seal had spurred on his rowing through the night and into the early hours of the morning, reminding him of his charge and the perils he might be facing. As he neared the pier, Sebastian stared distantly into the pinks and oranges of the rising sun.

Docking the boat, he entered the city, searching for a sign of his master. Deciding to start at the place he'd been staying, Sebastian took off down one of the narrow roads ahead of him, searching for the name of the hotel.

After a few wrong turns, he arrived at his destination.

Which had been completely annihilated.
The area was closed off by a few makeshift fences, and other than the gaping hole in the tightly constructed plaza, there was no sign of anything having been there at all. It seemed the wreckage had been cleared some time ago, although it couldn't have been long since the establishment had been destroyed. Still, Sebastian endeavoured to inspect the area.

He hopped gracefully over the fence, hoping no one was nearby to interrupt his investigation. He began by scouring the perimeter of the empty space, looking for any signs or trails that could lead to his lord. After several minutes, eyes inches from the ground, Sebastian concluded that there was absolutely nothing there. Sighing, he was about to cross over the fence once more when a voice stopped him.

"There was a man in white here before" He turned in time to see a little girl skirt behind the façade of a neighbouring building.

"He left this, for a man all in black" She held out a letter to him, emblazoned with the royal seal. Sebastian took it from her, smiling gently. She was gone before he could thank her.

He turned back to the letter and opened it.

*October 25 th 1895*

*Dear Mr. Michaelis,*

*I hope you are well. Your master is alive, although I must dissuade you in your endeavours to find him. You see, your correspondence has been copied, and I would so hate to have to release such personal revelations to the public. For now, I would much enjoy it if you would join us for tea in the Chateau de Rambouillet on the 28 th . It shall have to be late in the evening, I'm afraid; 7:00 on the dot. We have much to discuss.*

*Her Majesty, Queen Victoria*

Chapter End Notes

The plot thickens! Thanks for reading

Wordsmith8
Chapter 11

Ciel moaned, fingers digging into the wood of the chair as yet another blade pierced his shoulder, its path curving almost sensually down his collar bone to the center of his naked chest. He hissed as the familiar stinging sensation set in, blood seeping from the broken skin. By the time his captors had settled on the blades, his back was already numb with pain.

"Had enough, earl?"

Ciel growled inhumanly at the sound of Grey's voice near the door of the cell. He raised his head slightly and offered a defiant look.

"Not quite"

Grey gave a genuine laugh and approached the blood-soaked chair. He crouched to meet Ciel's gaze and nodded for his restraints to be slackened. The two thugs immediately loosened the bands of leather that had held the young man in place as he writhed in pain, revealing angry welts in his porcelain skin.

Grey took notice of these and quirked a brow.

"You're tougher than I thought, though really quite misguided"

It was Ciel's turn to laugh, albeit a touch coarser. "Time in a satanic cult will do that to you".

The butler stood, and gestured for the other two to leave. Once they had, he leaned by the tiny window across the space and regarded the earl with an air of curiosity.

"So, I take it you're not going to choose?"

"Not today"

"Tomorrow?"

"No"

Grey appraised him thoughtfully. It was the first long look they'd shared, free of animosity.

"Your butler won't be able to save you"

"Yes, he will"

He seemed taken aback by the young man's conviction.

"Why, because he's not human?"

"Because he's contractually obligated"

"So, he really loves you, then"

Ciel blushed and averted his gaze. Grey chuckled, having gotten his desired response.

"I read the letters, remember? Some of them I even copied myself. You're certainly a pair of lovers, if I ever saw one". The butler drew close to the chair, almost breathing in Ciel's face.
"Though, I suppose we'll see in time if you're fated to be star-crossed…” He trailed off with another laugh and retreated to the corner of the room. Ciel regained his composure and spoke up.

"Either way, you can't keep me here forever. Sooner or later you're going to need someone to control the underground"

Grey only smiled condescendingly, as if the earl was still but a child.

"Don't you remember your incentive? If you refuse to do her Majesty's bidding, we'll combine your punishments; the Earl Phantomhive, a tale of treason and lechery"

Ciel clenched his teeth. The butler grinned.

"But that's only if we truly can't come to a compromise. Hopefully, it won't come to that"

Grey sashayed over to the door and offered Ciel a final, cheeky smile.

"We'll start again after dinner. Hopefully you'll have changed your mind by then"

With that, he vanished through the open door, slamming it decisively behind him. Ciel held his breath, unused to the silence. For the first time, he noticed the dried blood caking his pale arms and abdomen. He tried to straighten up, but winced as his wounds opened anew. Letting his chin fall to his chest, Ciel thought of his butler.

He wondered where Sebastian was, why he hadn't found him yet, where he could be. He ran through all the possible scenarios, perfecting his worries and fears and speculating on whether or not his butler would actually be coming to save him. This doubt only served to solidify his anxieties and left him more dismayed than he'd been before.

It was then that Ciel felt a tingle in his eye, a small pinprick in the center of the contract seal. It traveled slowly, radiating out until his entire eye socket was on fire. He gasped, scrabbling at his restraints in an attempt to relieve the pain. After a few agonizing moments, the burning ceased, leaving only a dull irritation in its wake. He gasped again, struggling to calm his frantic heartbeat.

The door to his cell opened again, softer this time, and a sleek black shoe emerged from the shadows. Ciel raised his head.

"So you're finally here… Sebastian.."

…

Sebastian regarded the letter with distaste as he folded it into the pocket of his coat. There were no trick-words or double meanings, no secret message he was supposed to uncover. It seemed the queen was genuine in her invitation. Though, this gave the demon no solace from his anxieties.

He'd decided to attempt to retrace his master's steps, visit the places he'd gone and the people he might have seen in the hopes of formulating an idea of where he might be. The back of his left hand had been burning ever since he'd set foot in the city, confirming that the earl was alive, though perhaps not entirely well. His latest endeavour, a café near the site of the destroyed hotel proved a waste of time. The owner hadn't seen his master, and nor had any of the regulars. Puzzled and consumed by worry, Sebastian decided to sit for a moment under the awning outside the small shop to ponder his options.

His leg dangled lazily over his folded knee, foot swinging to and fro in time with the music of a group of buskers just down the street. People swarmed around the plaza, some with a cup of espresso coffee, others with a heated debate over bread and cheese. The late afternoon sun filtered delicately
through the striped canvas, allowing just enough light through to read by, as many local Parisians were doing at the surrounding tables. The crease in his brow and the nervous tapping of his fingers however, removed Sebastian from the routine atmosphere.

He had almost given up on asking around when he felt a sudden tap on his shoulder. A young waiter looked down at him, whispering in rapid French that the owner didn't want anything to do with missing Englishmen, but that a young man all in blue had, in fact, visited the café some weeks ago.

"Would you happen to know where he might be now?" Sebastian pressed. The youth shook his head, but offered a last bit of information.

"There have been a lot of Englishmen around the Saint- Jacques Tower. You should look there"

Sebastian thanked him and set off to find the tower.

It took little time for him to locate it; the four spires emanating from the top of the structure were quite distinct from the rest of the city and could be seen from afar. As he drew closer, Sebastian took note of the single entrance and exit, as well as the street names surrounding the small square.

"Rivoli… and Victoria Avenue" He gave a sniff of disdain. "How vain of her Majesty."

The demon circled around the tower a few times, admiring the flying buttresses and sculpture, the long stained glass windows and pristine white façade. Deciding it was time, he approached it cautiously.

There seemed to be no outward supervision by French guards or otherwise, though his heightened senses detected a few souls within the structure. As he passed under the archway, the contract seal began to burn as though he'd thrust his hand into the center of a white-hot flame. He turned his gaze up, where he was sure his master was awaiting his arrival, and darted out of the shaded area and onto the outside of the building, climbing higher and higher, as if to reach the final rays of the sun before it disappeared entirely below the horizon.

Once he had reached the top, Sebastian looked out across the city. He could see the Eiffel tower, the Seine swerving through the sprawling metropolis, the dun-coloured roofs of the many buildings below. He paused for a moment, taking in the view from behind a snarling gargoyle.

Then he was gone, flying through the small trapdoor in the center of the landing.

It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the gloom. As his pupils dilated, Sebastian began his search, sniffing out his master's soul from the array of other beings occupying the space. His movements became less refined as he drew closer to the source, his human form losing its solidity and giving way to the jagged edges and tarry black shadows of his true nature. He had almost completely changed when he came to a wooden door guarded by two burly men. With a flick of a wrist and the flash of knives, they were felled, and Sebastian had entered the room.

The dark space smelled strongly of blood, he noted, lingering in the doorway. He heard a sharp inhale from the center of the room and took a tentative step in.

"So you're finally here…Sebastian"

The demon's eyes widened as he appraised his master. Bruises were scattered along his skin, cut in many places and bleeding. His hair was matted and unkempt, and stuck to his grimy forehead. As Sebastian approached, he observed the hopeful look in his contractor's eye.

"You're…" The butler began, unsure of what to do with himself. He felt suddenly exposed as a
wave of suppressed emotions overtook him.

His master seemed slightly shaken, himself. His voice trembled slightly as he spoke. "It's been a while"

Sebastian fell to one knee a few paces from the chair, eyes locked on his master's gaze. He put a shaking hand over his heart and bowed his head. They were both silent for a moment, awestruck by their abrupt proximity.

"Sebastian…" Ciel began, the tremor still audible in his voice.

The servant raised his head and kept his distance, seemingly fearful of being too close.

"Yes?" He held his breath.

"…My restraints. Break them"

The demon rose to his feet at once and set about snapping the thin bands of leather, making sure not to brush the youth's skin.

Once they had all been torn, Sebastian stepped back, putting some distance between them. Ciel noticed this and stared at the floor.

"I need help to stand" He said quietly.

Sebastian moved forwards reluctantly, extending a hand. The youth took it and, using the arm of the chair, pushed himself into a standing position. Sebastian tentatively offered his other hand, which Ciel gratefully took. They stood like this for some time, the earl getting his footing and the butler attempting to still his beating heart.

"So.. How are you?" Ciel asked jokingly.

Sebastian's face split into a soft smile, and for the first time, he gathered his master in his arms.

The earl hesitated, then wrapped his own arms around Sebastian's middle, fisting his hands in his coat. They collapsed into one another, sinking to the floor in a relieved heap as they sought to be closer and closer still. After a few moments, Ciel retreated slightly, still desperately clinging to his demon.

"You-"

Sebastian's words caught in his throat as Ciel kissed him.

The youth tasted of blood and pain, of love and hate. The demon smiled as his master's hands wound their way to the back of his neck, gently combing through his hair. He tilted his head slightly, cupping the youth's bruised cheek in a gloved hand.

Sebastian pressed their lips closer, noting his master's embarrassment. Though inexperienced, the youth kissed with a fierceness Sebastian had scarcely experienced. He secured his grip on the earl and allowed his senses to be carried away in the moment.

It seemed an age before they broke away, breathing hard. Ciel brushed a stray hair from his butler's face, thumb tracing the curve of his cheekbone. Confusion clouded Ciel's eye, his mind visibly trying to fathom the reason behind his own actions. Sebastian stroked the back of his hand in an attempt to calm him.
"Stop that at once"

The abrupt change in tone took the butler by surprise. He withdrew his hand and stared questioningly into his contractor's stormy gaze.

"I- You have to leave. I'll call for you"

Sebastian inhaled sharply, nodding his head.

"Yes, my lord"

Extracting himself from his master's embrace, he went to the door.

"Sebastian"

He paused, turning to face the blushing youth.

"That was…Nice"

The demon smiled.

"Yes, sir. It was"

And then he was gone.
Rainwater sloshed about the cobblestones as Sebastian made his way to the Chateau de Rambouillet.

The streets were empty save the occasional passersby shuffling meekly through the downpour, hats tugged firmly over their heads and coats drawn tight about them as they walked. Sebastian's pace was lax in comparison. He made no attempt to cover himself, allowing the rain to soak him to the bone; his thoughts were fixed firmly on the impending meeting and its possible outcomes.

As he pondered the queen's strange request, images of his master drifted through his mind, winking into view, then retreating back into the shadows. The demon thought of his duty as a butler, their contract, the kiss.

Ah, yes…

It had been a day since they'd met, but Sebastian couldn't seem to forget the sensation of the youth's lips on his, couldn't forget the way he had looked, cradled in the demon's arms. That one moment had pierced his stagnant heart with a heat unparalleled. It was as if he'd been experiencing life through shadows dancing on the wall of a cave, only to be guided from his prison and into the sunshine by the evasive silhouette that was his master.

A shock of icy water down the back of his neck jolted him from his thoughts. To his surprise, he'd stopped walking and now stood directly under an overhanging gutter spewing filthy rainwater. Shaking himself, Sebastian continued down the street.

He noted the time as he passed through a square centered around a small clock, and, noticing the late hour, decided to pick up his pace.

By the time he reached the chateau, he was considerably less wet.

Strolling up to the large double doors, he knocked sharply. A sheepish attendant answered, bowing his head as he allowed the demon entrance. The foyer was elegantly furnished, though it was clear to the butler's keen eyes that there had recently been refurbishing. The ornate silver-rimmed carpets were carefully placed to cover gold tile embellishments littering the floor, dark wood panelling had just been varnished and windows cleaned. The drapery was brand new, the chandelier hastily installed and swinging slightly off kilter. Amidst the gleaming finery, Sebastian noticed a small blemish. As he was ushered up the stairs leading to the second level, he caught sight of small scuff marks leading up to and even on the stairs. They had clearly been darker when first created, although the fading of the carpet surrounding the darkened patch suggested they had since been cleaned, nevertheless, unsuccessfully.

As they ventured further into the place, many more signs of a disturbance became clear to him; a vase had been pieced together, flowers replaced, table scratched, chair askew and stained as the carpet.
"This is quite a fine establishment" Sebastian remarked carefully. The servant was all too willing to support his statement, a twinge of fear sparking in his eyes.

"Oh, yes. Her Majesty purchased it not long ago"

Sebastian hummed in response and decided to push the subject.

"I see. And exactly how many violent exchanges have occurred within these walls since it was bought?"

The servant stopped abruptly.

"Pardon?"

Another voice sounded at the end of the hall before Sebastian could repeat himself.

"And what violent acts do you speak of, Mr. Michaelis?"

There, by an open doorway, stood the queen herself, decked in black as was her custom. Her hands were folded neatly below her abdomen, as if cradling the fabric of her dress, and her greying hair was pulled back into a bun, a small veil of black lace covering her wry smile. Sebastian gave a little bow and approached.

"Surely you have noticed? A butler of my caliber would never have let such impurities sully the image of my master's home" He spotted Charles Grey leaning smugly by the door and smiled smoothly.

"Though, your servants can hardly cope with normal affairs handled by a butler, let alone covering up the fact that you've relocated your prisoner"

Yet another voice, one quite familiar to Sebastian, echoed from inside the parlour with a sly lilt as the queen's calm disposition faltered.

"Well, it's about time"

The demon grinned and strode past queen and butler, into the room where his master was being held, tied to a fine wooden chair.

"Quite right, my lord"

Their eyes met for a moment, gazes conveying hope and fear in equal measure. Then, Grey slammed the door.

"For a man of such high standing, you have disgraceful manners" The queen intoned softly, strolling over to a small tea set on the dark mahogany table. She seated herself in one of the chairs, and gestured for Sebastian to do the same. He glanced at his master.

"He will be fine, as long as you comply with my wishes"

Casting a final tortured glance at the young man, Sebastian sat, facing the queen. She motioned for Grey to pour the tea, making sure that two lumps of sugar were added to the demon's cup. As she lifted the dainty porcelain to her lips, she shot him a pointed look, eyes flitting between Sebastian's face and the tea before him. He took a wary glance at the teapot.

"I am sorry to disappoint, but holy water has no effect"
"I am well aware. However, I hear salt is quite potent"

The demon's eyes traveled to the small pile of sugar cubes by the teapot, sniffing reluctantly. As was expected, the sugar was not sugar at all, but sea salt. Sebastian let his gaze fall to the cup, remembering how Grey had put two cubes into the tea.

"Drink"

He took the small handle in his gloved fingers, lifting the rim to his lips. With a pained smirk, he downed the mixture in one swig, swallowing the burning sensation as it traveled down his throat. As he set down the cup, the queen burst into laughter, causing the table to shake dangerously. She clapped her hands with glee and removed the veil shadowing her features.

"That was wonderful! You really are such a good dog when given the right motivation"

Her wrinkled gaze rested on the youth behind them, a kind of animated cruelty shining in her cold grey eyes.

"Enough of that now, let's get to business. I tire of your disobedience, little hound. You have outgrown your usefulness, and now, you will face your crimes." She stated blithely. There was a beat of silence before Ciel spoke, contempt in his voice.

"I've already got too many people out for my head. I'm afraid you're not very original"

The queen laughed again, lighter this time. "I am aware, young earl, though you seem to be mistaken in your assessment of my originality. You see, I will not be killing you"

The youth frowned, searching her face for a clue to her foreboding words. He glanced at Sebastian.

"Oh no, I have a much more fitting fate in store" She rose, strolling past Ciel towards the window facing the gardens. She tilted her head back slightly to smile at them.

"No, I think I'll just separate you"
The room was at a standstill. Rain still pelted the windows and Sebastian could hear the distinct dripping of a leak somewhere in the estate. He glanced from his master to the queen, unsure of what to do. The old woman turned back towards the table and motioned for her servant, who procured a large weathered volume from one of the tables lining the room. He placed it in her lap and retreated to his station.

"I went through a great deal of trouble to find this, dears" She crooned, patting the leather affectionately. "Best be careful with it"

Sebastian strained his eyes to see the tiny inscription on the cover. Recognizing the runes on the front, he recoiled.

"And how, may I ask, did you find that?" He demanded. The queen only smiled and began to leaf through the pages.

"I have many friends in many circles"

Ciel glanced at the butler, confusion evident on his features. Sebastian shook his head almost imperceptibly and edged closer to where his master was seated. The queen seemed to notice this and laughed.

"There's no need for that, dear. We've already got you right where we need you"

As if on cue, Charles Grey strode over to the table and began lifting the carpet around the legs, revealing the marked tile below. Sebastian stood, but was halted by the other Charles, sword in hand.

"You'll not want to move, sir"

The pair watched as Grey removed the rest of the carpet, carelessly cutting away the fabric and tossing it behind him. Circles and runes swam before Sebastian's eyes, his breath catching as he recognized their meaning. He sifted through his memory, catching glimpses of where he'd seen the strange symbols before. His mind drifted to the first day he'd been summoned and he nearly fell to his knees.

No..

"It's been happening this whole time, you know. I'd thought you'd have noticed…" The queen seemed almost disappointed. Sebastian stared incredulously back at her.

This can't be—

"What? What's been going on? Sebastian—"

Ciel paused mid-sentence as he saw the expression on the demon's face. He was about to call out again when he felt a sudden burning sensation in his eye socket. It began as a few pinpricks, then slowly developed into a raw burning that consumed his entire face, making him double over in agony.
"..Sebastian.." He gasped, attempting to raise himself to face the servant.

The demon attempted to exit the circle, but was barred by an invisible force at the edge of the runes. Sebastian looked on helplessly as Ciel redoubled and clutched at his eye. Sebastian wrenched his attention from his pained master and gazed pleadingly at the queen.

"Stop" He breathed. The queen only smiled and cocked her head to one side.

"It's a tad late for that, the process is nearly complete. Of course, if you begged however…"

"Please…" He began quietly.

The queen tapped her cheek innocently.

"Please, please. Stop it"

She smiled and raised her hand as if to call off the young man's suffering. Sebastian noted her serene expression, her grace in the presence of another's misery and sought to contain the fierce hatred he suddenly experienced. He observed her manicured nails curve, and in the half-light, her smile became a sneer.

"I'm afraid that isn't possible"

Ciel gave another cry of anguish and blood seeped from his marked eye. The youth gasped and raised his head to meet his demon's eyes, two perfect cerulean orbs gazing out of a sallow face. Ciel blinked and mumbled something under his breath.

"What was that, child?" The queen asked.

"My eye…I can't see"

Sebastian watched as the previously marked eye turned milky white, almost opaque. Blood and tears seeped from the reddened flesh below it, streaking down Ciel's cheek and dripping off his chin and onto the floor.

"What have you done…" The youth whispered.

Nothing stopped the demon from crossing the edge of the circle. He knelt by the youth and cupped his face in his hands. In a sudden fit of rage, the demon whirled around and smashed a nearby flower vase, sending the broken stalks careening onto the floor and across the runes. His shadow grew long behind him and his eyes glowed scarlet.

"What indeed" The butlers started but the queen remained impassive.

"You've lost your master, there's nothing more you can do here" She stated simply. "You don't exist without him, you're nothing"

The demon took a few steps towards her, the darkness around him growing with every menacing stride. A hungry smile enveloped his face as he realised her mistake.

"Perhaps you should have revised your sources before attempting to try the patience of one such as myself"

In an instant, he had drawn the room into a suffocating darkness that infected the lungs and clouded the eyes, stuffing the ears and inhibiting all movement. A few muffled yelps were heard, along with decisive snaps and the distinct sound of death. Ciel closed his eyes, sensing the creature's anger and
drowning in his lust to kill. He felt the loss of the demon's protection like a gap in his heart and wondered briefly if he too would be annihilated. Somewhere within the fog, he heard a dark chuckle.

"No, my lord. I will not be rid of you today"

With that, the shadows receded and the room was flooded again with weak light. The only noticeable difference was the absence of the queen and her butlers. There, in the center of the now immaculate room was his butler, slightly disheveled but still grinning. He took a few tentative steps towards the youth and knelt to help him from the chair, vermillion eyes shining. Now free of his bonds, Ciel smiled.

"Sebastian.." He murmured.

The butler cupped his cheek and drew him close. Their lips met in the pale light of dawn.

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Several Months Later

"Sebastian! Have you seen my cane?"

The butler appeared just outside the bathroom door, still dressing and combing his hair.

"Is it not next to the piano?"

"No, I already checked there"

"Perhaps in the drawing room?"

Ciel rolled his eyes and sauntered over to where the demon was standing, throwing his arms about his torso.

"What's this?" The butler asked with a grin, encircling the young man with a free arm. Ciel said nothing, but planted a contented kiss on the corner of his mouth.

"Nothing. I'll find it later"

He strolled out of the room and walked down the stairs, passing Finny on the way. Ciel paused at the startled look on the servant's face and cocked his head questioningly.

"What's wrong Finny?"

The youth said nothing, only shaking his head as if getting rid of a fly. He smiled and his blue eyes sparkled mischievously.

"Nothing sir, it's just that I was right about something"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to all of you who followed this story through to the end, I really hope you enjoyed it! Another huge thank you is due for all the wonderful comments. Your support was incredible and I love talking to all of you! I have a few more story ideas to come, so stick around!
End Notes

Thanks for reading, (I'm still transferring my stuff from Fanfiction to here and it's taking me foreverrr) feel free to leave your thoughts!
Wordsmith8

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!