

# Chosen Mate Of The Beastmen Empire

## Of The Bea 421

Chapter 421

Everyone swapped looks, staying quiet. They could tell Jane was bluffing-hiding her freakout with bravado. She was probably kicking herself for picking a fight with Nyx earlier.

Whoever could drag Marilyn out of retirement to manage Nyx would not let Nyx go short on resources Hurricane Tech's Mr. Williams sure as hell didn't have that kind of pull. Nyx wasn't lying after all

The apartment buzzed with unease. Nyx settled into the van, closing her eyes for a quick nap, when her phone started buzzing like crazy in her pocket.

She didn't want to check it-screen time in a car made her queasy-but it wouldn't stop, so she grudgingly pulled it out Over a dozen unread messages-all from old dormmates, spamming friend requests through the company chat and stuff.

Scanning the names, none were close-some she didn't even know, never spoken to. Now they were piling on, their motives crystal clear. Nyx ignored them all- didn't approve a single one.

She opened the pinned company artist chat, ready to bounce, but saw they were going off about Dylan

[Holy crap! Check the livestream! More people are spilling on Dylan!]

[WTF]

[I knew Dylan was a pimp, but drugging too?]

[No wonder so many of his artists quit depressed.]

[He even smashed someone's nose implant! My new nose just throbbed.]

[AAAAH he kicked a girl 'til she miscarried!]

[I'm done. Thank god I'm not under him.]

[Same.]

[Dylan's toast this time, right?]

[Hard to say-boss might cover for him. They're tight.]

Nyx scrolled up through 99+ messages, slowed her exit, and decided to munch on this drama first. The ride from the dorm to her new place took about an hour. Nyx lurked in the chat, watching the mess explode.

It started with one of Dylan's ex-artists popping off online-said Dylan forced them into a cash-for-sex deal with some bigwig, unwillingly.

Just a random nobody, and Dylan wasn't famous, but the stream blew up anyway. More of Dylan's victims joined in, spilling tea left and right-shocking stuff piling up, views snowballing to insane levels.

Oracle Entertainment had never been this hot. Seafarion didn't want fame this way-things were spiraling out of his gr

Rich guys who'd dealt with Dylan started getting exposed one by one. People online jumped in, hyped, piecing together the year's juiciest scandal.

Nyx clicked the list someone posted-sure enough, Mr. Williams was on it. The Williams Group was indeed no more.

[Cops are here-nobody's saving him now.)

[We're screwed, sisters-not just Dylan, Seafarion and company are tanking too. Jobless time!]

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Long-timers in the biz, even bottom-tier nobodies, were sharp. After a bit of gossip, they sniffed out the company got targeted-probably 'cause Dylan pissed off the wrong person.

It was easy to tie it to Nyx. Chat got cautious-Nyx mentions turned all praise, nobody daring to trash-talk her getting pimped to Williams like last night. Nyx saw friend requests piling up, flipped on do-not-disturby, closed the app, and stuffed her phone back in her pocket.

"I might need to hit the police station," she said, thinking it over.

"Hm?" Marilyn turned from the front passenger seat. "Not yet."

"I've got a rough idea what went down yesterday," she said with a faint smile, like she had it all under control. "If they need you for a statement, I'll let you know ahead of time and take you."

With her around, she'd handle everything-Nyx didn't need to stress. The van parked in the underground garage-a short walk left to the elevator. The assistants hauled Nyx's stuff up to the fifteenth floor.

Nyx set up the fingerprint lock and checked out the new place Lancet arranged. About three thousand square feet-bright, clean, fully stocked. Move-in ready.

Her pajamas, toiletries, and junk were crammed in the boxes. She cracked them open to start unpacking.

"I got it! I'll do it!" The assists)

1. in. "Let us handle it!"

Seeing the box contents, their faces froze. Gavin kept it together, stayed quiet. Helly blurted out, "Where'd all this junk come from?"

"S-sorry!" She clapped her mouth shut, realizing she'd screwed up, face red as she bowed to Nyx. "I didn't mean it like that-

I-I."

www

Nyx wasn't mad-just amused. "It's cool."

Her stuff did clash hard with this plebe. Calling it junk wasn't wrong-it was beat-

up but usable, and she wasn't tossing

1. it. Her old Earth life felt ages away, but this stuff yanked her back to her youth-like she was really eighteen again.

Marilyn opened her mouth to say something but held back, just looking at Nyx with a touch more sympathy.

Luggage sorted, fully settled-it was past lunch. Nyx suggested ordering takeout together, but Gavin said he was a great cook -could handle her meals from now on, wanted to show off today.

"I'll grab groceries!" Helly volunteered, eager to make up for earlier. After checking everyone's likes and no-gos, she bolted out like a gust.

Nyx was stunned by her speed. This girl was built for sprinting-or maybe weightlifting. Assistant gig was a waste of her talent.

"Want to rest a bit?" Marilyn said, pulling her to the sofa. "Or check out some scripts first?"

"I pulled these from the latest batch," she said, handing Nyx a stack of papers. "Summarized the plots, marked roles I think suit you. Take a look-which one you want?"

All big-name writers, directors, companies-she said it casually, like Nyx could pick any role she fancied and it'd She was not bragging about her clout-she'd been tapped by Lancet personally and knew Nyx's backer was Seafarion. With that guy's power, forget roles-if Nyx wanted to be a global superstar overnight, he could make it happen.

ers.

Nyx didn't have that kind of ambition. She dug into the scripts seriously. Three- quarters through the first one, the doorbell

rang.

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Nyx looked up, confused, as Gavin opened the door. Helly wood there, hands full of hulging bags. My thought she was a fast reader, but Helly was just unreal.

"How'd you get back so quick" Nyx got up to grab the bags from her.

"No need, boss-you're not strong enough. Ill take em in Helly insisted, holding tight.

As they tugged back and forth, a soft click came-the neighbor's door opened. Nyx glanced over, surprised. Lancet?"

"You live here too?" she said, squinting slowly.

Lancet was speechless. He started sweating buckets, wishing he could rewind thirty seconds and chop off his dumb hand for opening the door. "Haha, yeah- crazy coincidence."

"Hahaha," Nyx laughed back. "Coincidence? You're funny, Lancet. Didn't you set up this place for me?"

One hallway, two units-she was his only neighbor. She hadn't thought much of it moving in, but now it hit her-someone was playing sneaky.

"Uh, yeah-there just happened to be a good empty spot here," Lancet said, eyes darting, fumbling through a laugh. He couldn't figure why Seafarion insisted on moving here, secretly playing neighbor, and swore him to silence.

If he liked Nyx, he should just be frank about it instead of hiding. What happened already happened-Seafarion was hot, loaded, and generous. Anyone landing that gig would be laughing all the way-nobody'd say no, Nyx included.

He didn't get what Seafarion was thinking, but he followed orders. Seafarion's thoughts weren't his to question.

"You had lunch yet?" Nyx switched topics out of nowhere.

Lancet was still tense and shook his head.

"Perfect-Gavin's cooking," Nyx said, waving him over. "Want to join?"

They'd bought extra-more than enough for another person to join.

"Thanks-maybe next time," Lancet said, stiffly waving it off. "I've got food coming today."

He was too guilty to hang with Nyx right now-scared she'd dig deeper or he'd slip up.

Nyx was trickier than he'd thought. Those clear eyes staring him down-he felt totally seen through.

"Alright then," Nyx said with a small smile, not pushing. "Come by when you're free. I make decent cookies-next batch, I'll drop some off."

Lancet couldn't even picture it-Nyx knocking with cookies, him gone, just Seafarion there. Talk about awkward.

He nodded with a grin, ducked back inside, and reported to Seafarion, asking what to do next. The door hadn't shut earlier. Seafarion was in the living room, ears perked, listening the whole time.

"She's real friendly with you," he said after a long pause.

He sized up his assistant with pale eyes, first time caring about anything beyond the guy's work skills. Lancet was twenty-eight-two years younger than him. Good-looking, not a freakish white-haired, pale-eyed weirdo like him, and fully mobile -no wheelchair. A guy like that probably drew women like flies. Seafarion gripped the wheelchair arms tight, silent. "I recall you've got a girlfriend?"

And the cost odorstand why Seatano was suddenly on his love life. He never cared before

Wayn said akend

Yangi tad kill the sugadour Soarion Begt going "Broke up Why?

u get where sumas face. Seafarion usually softened the edge with a warm vibe. Stone-faced, he looked walign

Rey de la Let's back sweated again. He fessed up reluctantly, "She thought I worked too much-didn't spend

gath

jur quite auff causing faction-feelings might not be totally dead Seafarion nodded slightly, getting it. Til hire another

our your workload. Pay stays the same. Go win her back"

Loving Soatan's place. Laucet was still in a daze, couldn't snap out of it. Waiting

for the elevator, it hit him-Seafarion's sea ames He died hard Sealtation was jealous over nothing.

Thinking over the clues were there. A guy cold as ice for thirty years, then bam- intimate with a stranger. That wasn't just anything at was he at first sigh

By was the one out of it that gin-Scaltation was wide awake. Legs messed up,

sure, but he never slacked on training- wrong as Bell of he didn't want it, he could've shoved her off easily. But he didn't.

Latest swallowed hard. If he was right, Nyx meant way more to Seafarion than he'd guessed.

Elevator in 32. doors slid open with a ding. Lancer pulled it together, deciding to be extra polite to Nyx from now on

Captain bragged about his cooking, and he wasn't lying-it was legit Nyx rubbed

her full belly. "You could be a pro chef" I did study cooking professionally Gavin said with a shy grin. "Got a nutritionist certificate too."

Bring a chef wouldn't pay near what this job did, though With a fat paycheck, they worked hard-both assistants outdid each other, keeping Nyx out of the post-meal cleanup.

she fishing everything Helly snuck glances at Nyx, fidgeted, and pulled out a box. "Boss, for you

Les fine-still scaled She'd snagged it while grocery shopping.

I know you're not short on cash or phones, but I want to apologize," she said. Her

earlier blunder still made her want to crowd in a hole. She couldn't think of a better sorry gift-saw Nyx's phone was ancient, so she grabbed this.

Nyx dices't warn it. It was two grand straight from Helly's own pocket. She wasn't

even mad so she saw no reason to accept

Her some back-and-forth, Helly got antsy, bowing and pleading. Nyx suddenly got deja vu-like a dumb puppy begging forenes her screwing up.

She shook off the weird thought and took it anyway. Swapped the SIM, migrated

data, logged back into her chat app-she saw Lancer had just sent her a friend

request

Lancer: This is Lancer

Lancer: And this is my personal account-you can add it too.] Personal account? Nyx squinted, clicked the profile. Username was a fish symbol,

pic was a dark night sea, bio and posts bank-nothing like Lancer's style, but it

rang a familiar bell for her.

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Nyx stared at it a bit, lips curling faintly. She hadn't even started fishing, and a pretty fish was already biting. Friend request sent-approved in a second. "That eager, huh?" she thought. Nyx was eighty percent sure who it was but tossed a message anyway.

## Of The Bea 422

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Nyx: [Why'd you have me add your personal account all of a sudden, Lancet?]

The reply came fast, like he'd rehearsed it: [This is my life account-separate from work. We're neighbors now, so you can hit me up on whichever you want.]

Nyx chuckled, typing quick: [Sweet-guess that makes you my friend now, Lancet.)

In the quiet room, the phone screen's faint glow lit up Seafarion's face. He stared at Nyx's words, reading them over and over. When she sent a little bunny-peeking-out emoji, he couldn't help tapping to save it.

Nyx: [Actually, I've got a question for you, Lancet-not sure if it's cool to ask.]

The joy washed away fast-Seafarion's heart clenched, like a fist squeezed it tight.

"What question?" he thought, 'Is it something I couldn't answer easily-probably personal. Is she really into Lancet?'

Before he could spiral too far, Nyx's message hit: [Sorry, I couldn't control myself last night. Didn't see Seafarion today, so I'm kinda worried-did I hurt him?]

In a flash, Seafarion lit up-his pale skin went red from his ears down his neck, spreading fast.

Nyx lounged on the sofa, feet up, watching the "typing" bubble flicker on and off for five or six minutes-no message yet. Her stomach hurt from holding in laughs.



After ages, a short one came: [No.]

Two seconds later, he added: [You? Are you hurt?]

Seeing Nyx say she was fine too, Seafarion let out a long breath, but the blush wouldn't fade.

He'd never thought he was some horny creep, but last night kept looping in his head-he couldn't stop replaying it, hooked like an addict.

He touched his burning cheek, took a deep breath, and set the phone down to cool off. The screen flashed-Nyx sent a video. He couldn't tell what it was from the thumbnail. Seafarion's shaky hands fought it, but he caved and hit play.

"Did you set up my place, Lancet?" Nyx's soft, playful voice came through. She held the phone, filming the house with the back camera-living room to every corner.

She sounded happy, like she was smiling. "I love it-thanks, Lancet."

Two short lines, and Seafarion's mood rode her voice like a rollercoaster-wild swings. He'd done the place up-her liking it was the best news. But hearing her thank Lancet so sweetly soured his chest.

The video hit the master bedroom-camera flipped to front-facing. Seafarion wasn't ready-bam, her stunning face filled the screen, heart pounding like drums.

"How's this dress?" Nyx pulled the camera back, spinning half a circle to show off her strappy sundress. "Cute, right? Bought it ages ago-never wore it 'til now."

The skirt flared out in layers, making her look like a flower fairy. Seafarion couldn't peel his eyes off-felt split in two. H his brain screamed 'cute, the other half drowned in jealousy.

'Why'd she doll up and send this to Lancet, asking if he liked it?' he thought.

He clenched his lips, shut off the video-wanted to chuck the phone across the room, like that'd ditch all his messy feelings

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too. But Nyx kept pinging him-asking about the dress.

He couldn't ghost her-gripped the phone tight and typed honest: [Cute]

Nyx [Think Seafarion would like it?]

Dark clouds parted-light broke through. Seafarion couldn't believe it-joy surged up, washing away the bitterness.

Seafarion: (Why ask that?)

Nyx: ['Cause I want him to like me.]

Nyx: [Bunny spinning with heart emoji]

Nyx: [But he doesn't seem to like me-won't see me, doesn't want to be tied to me.]

Nyx: [Guess I crossed a line yesterday-not on purpose, though.]

Nyx: [Sad bunny emoji]

Highs crashed to lows again. Seafarion stared at that crying bunny sprawled on the floor-his chest ached dull and heavy.

Seafarion: [Don't be sad.]

Seafarion: [You didn't cross him-he's the one who rudely crossed you. He's guilty.]

'Do I like her?' Seafarion asked himself.

No more messages came after that-Nyx figured the chat was done, time to quit while ahead. Next morning, she checked her phone and saw Seafarion sent something at 3 a.m.

Seafarion: [You're not a good match.]

Sun was up outside. Bedroom curtains kept it dim.

Nyx stared at that random line, laughed so hard she clutched her sides. Didn't need to think hard-she knew he was wallowing in self-pity again. They clearly liked each other, but he was hung up on not being a good match.

No matter what, he was her guy-she wouldn't ditch him, just tease him a little. Nyx rolled out of bed, ignored the message, slipped on slippers, and headed to wash up.

She'd stayed up late plowing through scripts-missed her alarm, slept 'til ten-thirty. Besides that one message from Seafarion, there were a few unread messages from her agent too.

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Marilyn texted: [Morning, Nyx.]

Marilyn: [Did any scripts or roles from yesterday catch your eye?]

Marilyn: [Or what kinda script do you like? Got any favorite writers or directors in mind?]

Early that morning, Marilyn got a visit from Lancet, who gave her a rundown.

From what he said, it sounded like Nyx could have whatever she wanted-custom scripts, top actors to co-star who didn't want to act, singing, dancing, or doing variety shows were all up to her too.

'f she

If Nyx wanted fame, they'd push her to the top with everything they had. If she wanted to chill, they'd let her be the comfiest couch potato around.

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Marilyn had been in the entertainment biz for years and thought she'd seen every type of relationship, but Seafarion and Nyx still blew her mind. The way he spoiled her, she almost thought Seafarion was Nyx's darf or something.

She passed Lancet's words on to Nyx, but privately, she figured it'd be better for Nyx to take it slow-build her rep one solid role at a time.

With a powerhouse backer like Seafarion, Nyx could strut through the industry no problem, but men's feelings changed like the wind-she shouldn't count on that. In the end, running her own career was the most reliable move

Marilyn had been through a failed relationship herself and felt this deeply. But she got it-Nyx was still young and probably couldn't see it yet. With a shortcut right there, no one would want to grind it out.

Outsiders' advice rarely worked, so Marilyn didn't bother. She just braced herself

to roll with Nyx's antics. At ten-thirty, though, she suddenly got a message from Nyx.

Nyx: [I read all the scripts you sent yesterday, Marilyn, and I'm leaning toward this novel adaptation.]

Nyx: [But the fallen princess role doesn't feel right for me. The shadow guard's more interesting-I want to try that.]

Nyx: [So, when's the audition?]

Nyx: [I've never done one before and don't know the process. Hope you can teach me, Marilyn.]

Marilyn was floored. She double-checked with Nyx to make sure she really meant to audition—not just messing around. Those roles were hers for the picking. With enough cash, she could bankroll her way in, even snag the lead-no need to compete.

"Bankroll my way in?" Nyx waved it off. "Nah, I'd rather audition myself."

Sure, unfair stuff like that was common in the industry—an unspoken rule everyone accepted—but she didn't see the point. In this world, her main gig was landing her partner and passing the test. Everything else was just a laid-back bonus. Marilyn's eyes softened with a bit more admiration for Nyx. She picked up the script Nyx chose, skimmed it again, and hesitated. "Why not the fallen princess? Too few scenes?"

The scripts she'd picked for Nyx were all top-notch, but when suggesting roles, she had to factor in Nyx being a newbie—complex parts might be too much.

"The princess has fewer scenes, sure, but she's stunning—great character too," Marilyn explained gently. "And you wouldn't need killer acting chops."

A gorgeous face was enough. Add a touch of melancholy mixed with grit, and it'd be perfect. Marilyn thought the role was practically made for Nyx—spot-on.

"It's not the screen time," Nyx said, rubbing her nose sheepishly. "She's the world's most beautiful woman—I don't think I can pull that off."

Not to sound vain, but she knew she was pretty. Still, beauty was subjective, and while she was sure her partners saw her as the world's finest, others might not. Plus, the princess's tragic hairpin suicide after her kingdom fell was noble and poetic, but Nyx would probably stab the enemy with it instead.

"If you can't play her, no one can," Marilyn said, shaking her head with a half-laugh, half-sigh. A face that could charm the richest guy around wasn't your average pretty.

She tried nudging Nyx again. "The shadow guard's masked-no spotlight for your strengths. And tons of figh

"Mm-hm," Nyx said, nodding obediently from the couch. "I know, it's fine. I've actually learned a little martial arts."

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In fact, Nyx knew a lot more than "a little".

Marilyn eyed her soft, fair face skeptically, figuring she was bluffing. But since Nyx was set on pushing herself, she didn't argue more. She just gave advice-the call was Nyx's.

The audition was in three days. Not aiming for stardom, but once she committed, Nyx took it seriously.

No time for acting classes, she camped out at the studio for three days, learning the audition ropes and digging into her role as deep as she could. What cheered her up was that the shoot was in Broskel-no long haul, just a comfy ride in the van.

"Might be a lot of people auditioning," Marilyn said, reassuring her. "Don't stress- just do your best

Nyx wasn't some real eighteen-year-old-she'd seen big scenes before. No way she'd freak out over this. But when she got there, the sheer crowd still threw her. She thought, 'A lot? This is insane!'

Even Marilyn, who hadn't seen a turnout like this in ages, looked around and sighed lightly. Nyx sure had an eye-picking a role with this much competition. It was a novel adaptation, yeah, but the book was huge, backed by the top entertainment company, Cosmic Entertainment, and directed by the legendary Zachary Wright. Not even filmed yet, and it was already pegged as a hit. Even nameless extras with one face shot had people clawing for the chance. The audition site was a sea of bodies.

Nyx signed in, grabbed her number tag, and tucked into an out-of-the-way corner. She'd just pulled out her script to review when a few folks sidled up, chatting like old pals. "Hey, can we peek at your script? We forgot ours." They introduced themselves—newbies from Cosmic Entertainment, fresh out of college, recently signed. They'd snagged an edge since their company was an investor, getting through an internal round to land this shot.

"You new too? Which agency? Never seen you before," they said. A stunner like her? They'd remember.

"What role are you going for?"

"You'd be perfect as the fallen princess!"

"Totally!"

"Yeah, short screen time, just one scene, but she's the world's most beautiful woman—and her death's gorgeous. Your face would blow up online."

The group chattered around her, and Nyx kinda wanted to cover her ears and bolt. She kept a polite smile. "I'm auditioning for the male lead's shadow guard."

The air went quiet for a beat, then erupted in laughter.

"Hahahaha!"

"You're a riot!"

"Fine, don't want to spill? Fair—we might be rivals. No point ruining the vibe."

"Real talk, though—if you're serious about the shadow guard, you're toast. Still time to switch," a girl said, shaking her head.

She flexed her arm, letting Nyx feel her muscles. "I'm going for it too. I work out a lot and trained in martial arts."

"Zachary hates flashy nonsense. He might make fight scene actors spar on the

spot," she said, eyeing Nyx's face. "You hate to hit you, but you wouldn't stand a chance." cerely. "I'd

Nyx looked delicate—a push could topple her. She'd lose to anyone here. It was better to switch than flop in front of

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everyone.

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"Word is a big-shot investor's here today. Even our Cosmic Entertainment execs are kissing up—I dunno his deal," the girl whispered.

Messing up in front of a VIP was a nightmare. One sour word from him could tank their careers. Nyx knew she meant well and nodded thanks.

Seeing Nyx stay put, still flipping through her script with no sign of changing her sign-up, the girl opened her mouth, then shut it, dropping the subject.

'Maybe she's just here for kicks—not serious about auditioning. Probably wants attention, she thought. With looks like that, playing the crowd worked better for her. If she got lucky, the big shots might notice and toss her a role.

The group exchanged glances, mood shifting. The way they looked at Nyx lost some warmth. The chatty vibe cooled off.

Nyx sensed the misunderstanding but hesitated, not bothering to explain. She kept skimming her script to kill time. Soon, auditioners got split by role for the first round.

Too many people—each step cut folks out. Just intros weeded out half based on vibe and looks. The rest faced basic line and acting tests, with even steeper cuts.

Nyx had no training, all instinct. She figured she'd tank round two, just there for the ride, but somehow bluffed her way through.

The girl from earlier popped over, genuinely impressed. "Your acting's awesome!"

"Thanks," Nyx said, rubbing her nose awkwardly, unsure if it was praise or shade. The girl's earnest eyes confirmed it was real.

'Am I actually good at this? Maybe it's from playing dress-up with my kitty,' she thought.

After two rounds, the crowd thinned. Only four, including Nyx, were left for the shadow guard's final audition.

Stepping into the room, Nyx's stride hitched as she spotted the figure in the main seat. Wig, colored contacts, hat, mask—all the sneaky bits. But she knew Seafarion instantly. She'd know him even as ashes.

So it turned out he was the mystery big-shot investor. After a quick glance, Nyx looked away, acting like she didn't know him, and sat toward the back of the waiting area. A hot gaze trailed her like a shadow.

She casually looked around, zoned out, watched others perform, listened to the director—anything but meeting his eyes. Seafarion pressed his lips together, feeling a pang of disappointment.

When they called Nyx's name, she stood and walked to the center. His heart started racing again. Zachary, next to the main seat, noticed Seafarion's shift and gave Nyx an extra look.

That look lit him up. Perfect looks, young but poised—ideal for the fallen princess. Before she even started, he was 80% sold

his on casting her there. Picking up her resume,

froze.

gaze

"Nyx?" Zachary took a deep breath, softening his tone to not spook her. "You read the script?"

She nodded, and he got more puzzled. "You're auditioning for the shadow guard?"

"That role's got a lot of fight scenes," he said sternly. "I'm picky—it's not just wirework or dance moves."



Her resume claimed martial arts training, but he brushed it off, not buying it. Fudging resumes was standard-watching one online class could count as "trained." Nyx was probably that type.

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"You could try another role-something more your fit. You've seen the script; you know which one. Coming from Zachary.. that was unheard-of favoritism-never happened before.

Everyone in the room gaped. Even the daydreamers snapped to, staring at Nyx. Used to the spotlight, Nyx still felt awkward.

"Let's just do the audition," a clear voice cut in, bailing her out.

The investor spoke. The masked bigwig opened his mouth for the first time, instantly stealing all eyes.

Nyx looked up at him too. In a sea of gazes, Seafarion only felt hers. He sat up straighter instinctively. But Nyx's glance breezed past, still not clocking him.

She drew a scene slip, memorized it in a minute, grabbed props, and nodded. "I'm ready"

Zachary saw her pick and his heart sank, eyelid twitching nervously. She had pulled the toughest fight scene.

"Go ahead. Be careful," he couldn't help saying.

Worried she'd wreck that pretty face-or that a slip-up would get him grief from the investor. She picked it herself! Not my fault!' he thought.

At the director's "start," Nyx's whole vibe shifted. Zachary barely blinked before she leaped high, light as a feather, drawing her sword midair. With a flick, she spun the sword, striking with fierce precision.

Strike after strike flowed seamless, weaving a silver net. The prop sword-thin, unsharpened-whistled through the air in her hands. No real opponent, but everyone could tell she'd "killed" several foes in seconds.

The room's tension spiked, gripped by her intensity. Then she froze, staggering down-

Gasps echoed from all sides. Some even jumped up to catch her.

Nyx clutched her "arrow-shot" chest with one hand, gripping her sword tight with the other, her gaze sharp and icy ahead. -Dead silence fell. Then it clicked-she wasn't hurt, just acting.

A pure fight scene, no lines, three minutes long, and it floored everyone. Zachary's jaw hung slightly open. He hadn't seen such smooth, gripping action in ages-especially from a young, gorgeous actress.

Before he could catch his breath to comment, the novel's author-turned- screenwriter slammed the table and shot up. "Yes!"

"That's it! That's what I wanted!" He clapped like a seal, plopped back down, and hammered his keyboard, inspiration exploding as he mumbled incoherently. No one caught much, just that he wanted to beef up Nyx's role and give her more

scenes.

Zachary was rendered speechless. A crazed writer was a handful. Good thing the big money daddy wouldn't mind. He glanced at the top boss-Seafarion had his head down, half his face shadowed by his hat, looking not so excited.

After Nyx's killer performance, the other three contenders bailed. They knew they couldn't match that-they'd just embarrass themselves.

"Sorry!" the chatty girl clasped her hands, apologizing for missing Nyx's talent. Thinking back to her bold claim that Nyx couldn't beat her, her face burned, itching to hide.

"Where'd you learn that? Been training since you were a kid?" she asked, mimicking Nyx's wrist flick, awed by those perfect sword flowers.

Not just the swordwork-Nyx moved so light. Just jumping, nothing crazy, but it felt like flying. For a seco believed Nyx could fly.

Facing the girl's starry-eyed grilling, Nyx's gaze drifted. "Yeah, trained for years."

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Not from childhood, though-her partners taught her hands-on. She'd picked up real combat skills, plus some flashy moves in ancient times for fitness. Blended together, she knew how to nail a fight scene.

"Man, classic child prodigy," the girl sighed, not pressing for her teacher's name. Too late for her to catch up anyway.

She whipped out her phone to swap contacts, typing her name-Jenny Thomas- into Nyx's friend list. "Want to grab dinner later? My treat."

Nyx liked her vibe and didn't mind making a friend. Plans shifted, though. As she left, the production team held her back. asking her to stay late. The writer wanted her for inspiration on new scenes, and the director wanted her for another role.

They hadn't cast the fallen princess-none of the auditioners fit. Not that they weren't pretty-some were too old, others too intense. None matched Zachary's vision. After seeing Nyx, who fit head-to-toe, everyone else fell short "The princess doesn't have much screen time-one scene and done." Zachary pitched. "The shadow guard's masked anyway -you could do both."

"Yes, yes!" The writer piped up, eyes gleaming. "I'm merging them into one. You've gotta do it!"

Nyx was speechless. In the end, she couldn't dodge the princess gig. But the writer's tweak-faking death, masking up as a guard, plotting payback-made it interesting. She didn't mind giving it a go.

Seeing Nyx agree, Zachary breathed easy, one worry down. He sized up the young girl, more pleased by the minute. 'Seafarion's got taste,' he thought. Everyone else had cleared out, leaving just the core crew. Zachary squinted, fishing for gossip. "So, what's your deal with Seafarion?"

He and Seafarion were tight privately-otherwise, he'd never dare ask. Seafarion clenched his fists, ears perking, face red.

"No deal," Nyx said breezily, shrugging with a smile. "What's a tycoon got to do with a D-list actress?"

At her level, she shouldn't even cross paths with Seafarion. His empire spanned everything-entertainment was just a tiny slice. Industry folks topped out at Cosmic Entertainment execs, nowhere near his Tanis Group.

The untouchable Tanis Group chairman showing up here today spooked everyone-wild guesses flew, fearing project trouble or pulled funding. Only Zachary, sharp as a tack, sniffed out the truth. Nyx wouldn't admit it, but Seafarion's reaction didn't lie. After years of knowing him, Zachary had never seen Seafarion this rattled. He'd pegged him as

some love-proof monk before. After Nyx left, he couldn't resist a smirk, "Your girl's interesting. Her acting was top-notch-stone-faced, like she didn't know her sugar daddy."

"She's not my girl," Seafarion said, voice low, no trace of a smile. "She's right- we've got no connection."

Start to finish, Nyx's eyes never lingered on him. Maybe she didn't recognize him- or did but didn't care. Just days ago,

she'd chatted with him, twirling in a cute skirt on video, saying she hoped he'd like her.

Seafarion shut his eyes, chest tight. He couldn't blame Nyx-it was his own doing. He'd said they weren't a fit. Nyx was just sticking to their confidentiality deal.

She was so young, vibrant, free-she shouldn't tie herself to an older, crippled guy like him.

Even during her audition, when he thought she fell, his heart stopped, but his legs wouldn't move to catch breathing shook as he gripped his knee hard.

Cutting ties like this was fine-they shouldn't be together. But he couldn't let go.

Seafarion's

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Nyx had dinner with Jenny and crew, made some new pals, and stayed out late before strolling home,

Reaching the 15th floor, the elevator dinged open. Her eyes locked on a bouquet on the hallway cabinet. Satin ribbon wrapped vibrant petals-each bloom full and striking, impossible to miss.

Nyx stared a bit, then checked her phone. Sure enough, "Lancet" had messaged

her and sent her flowers to congratulate her on her audition win. Her lips curved. She bent to pick them up.

Nyx: [Thanks for the flowers, Lancet.]

Nyx: [Why not give them to me in person?]

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The reply came fast, like he'd been anxiously waiting (sorry Works crazy may-I'm not home, sis I coulddict hand them over myself)

Nyx glanced at the neighbor's door, not calling out his excuse.

Nyx: [Okay]

Nyx: [Next time, maybe try a different shop?]

This time, it took ages for a reply: (You don't like them?)

Through the screen, Nyx could almost hear his heart crack. She snapped a pic of the bouquet and sent its I love them they're gorgeous. But they might give me the wrong idea.]

Nyx: [Lancet, you're not interested in me, are you?]

The flowers weren't loud-soft, gentle tones-but every type screamed love, practically overflowing with it. Without saying it was just a congrats gift, anyone would think it was a confession.

Seafarion panicked: [No way. I've got a girlfriend.]

He clutched his phone, kicking himself. Lancet had zilch to do with it. He'd wrapped the bouquet himself. He knew he shouldn't have, but he couldn't help it.

After a long pause, the screen lit up again.

Nyx: [Oops, my bad! Sorry, Lancet!]

Like she was embarrassed, she switched gears: [Oh, I think I saw Seafarion at the audition today.]

Before the male could perk up, she added: [I didn't even glance at him, but Zachary still asked what we were to each other.]

Nyx: [I swore I don't know him!]

Nyx: [Don't worry, Lancet! I'm sticking to the confidentiality deal!]

Nyx: [Little bunny salute emoji]

Seafarion was speechless. His mood became unstable. He knew it was his fault but couldn't help resenting Lancet a bit.

'Why do I have to push that stupid confidentiality deal? Without it, would Nyx treat me differently?' he wondered.

Too late now-he swallowed his pride and typed stiffly: [Good.]

Feeling it was too cold, he added: [Rest up-you're still growing.]

Seeing that, Nyx nearly snorted out loud.

Nyx: [I'm an adult, Lancet.]

It was barely past nine-not bedtime yet. Wide awake, she wanted to chat with her partner more.

Nyx: [Seafarion bailed me out at the audition today. I'm grateful.]

Nyx: [To return the favor, I know a bit about leg massages. Could I help him out?]

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To crack his insecurity, she couldn't dodge the lens. They had to face it together the shisured every strce lately Tour found zip on his leg condition-his privwv game was awright.

That night they'd opened up, though, she'd seen his legs herself-normal, nes fish rail. It was a cave nerve. The chat went silent: Seafarion didn't reply.

Nyx went home, set the bouquet somewhere nice, showered, dipped into pajamas, and grabbed her phone again to lighten the mood. If he wasn't ready to talk, she wouldn't push. They had time plenty of it

Two words in, a new message popped up. Seafarion sent a long paragraph and some meifical reports.

He was born that way, stumping countless doctors-no cure, not even a clear diagnosis. Walking felt like knives, pain shooting up his legs. As a kid, he couldn't learn to walk. Year after year, he stayed in a wheelchair

Reading reports spanning nearly thirty years, Nyx pictured little Seafarion stumbling up, crashing down in agony, and frowned hard. She loved teasing him as her "little mermaid," but she didn't want him suffering like one.

Mentally cussing out Heavenly Law, she perked up and suggested: [How about I massage him? Might help I

Nyx: [I've got special massage tricks!]

Top docs couldn't fix this weird condition-an amateur had no chance. Seafarion knew that but couldn't resist the bait. He just wanted to be near her so bad.

After wrestling with it, he caved: [Okay.]

They set it for ten. Nyx ditched her pajamas, grabbed some essential oil, and knocked next door on time.

The door opened-Seafarion sat poised on the couch. Lancet, the supposed homeowner, was sweaty and breathless, clearly rushed in as a cover.

Nyx snickered inside, not calling it out. She greeted them both politely, rolled up her sleeves, and looked at Lancet. "Mind stepping out?"

Lancet's eyes bugged out. He'd just got here-now he's out.

"Massage needs privacy?" he asked, eyeing Nyx doubtfully.

"Yup," Nyx said, straight-faced and cool. "Secret technique-not for outsiders."

That sounded even flimsier. Lancet opened his mouth to argue, but Seafarion cut in. "Go ahead and leave."

Even Seafarion was kicking him out. Lancet shut up, a weird lonely vibe hitting him-like he was a prop in someone's game.

After two dazed seconds, he turned and left without a word, a weary silhouette, vowing to win his girlfriend back tomorrow and beg Seafarion for paid leave.

The door clicked shut. Alone in the big house, Seafarion's nerves doubled.

Nyx walked over, sat beside him, bringing a faint sweet scent. Smelling her, memories sparked. His face burned, and he forgot to breathe.

Nyx didn't seem to notice, focusing on his legs, reaching to lift his pant leg. After a few tries at the hem, her hand shifted to his belt. Caught off guard, Seafarion tensed up, grabbing her slim wrists in a panic.

"Your

pants are snug-can't roll them up," Nyx said, looking up, eyes clear and innocent. "Can I take them of

For a proper massage, fabric couldn't stay. She needed to rub oil on his legs too.

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She wiggled her wrists lightly. Seafarion jerked his hands back like he'd been burned. He sat rigid-no help, no fight-letting Nyx do whatever. His condition just stopped him from walking, not controlling his legs.

Years of other workouts kept Seafarion fit-his legs weren't scrawny; they were toned, stronger than most. Nyx touched them, relaxing a bit.

Her "unique massage skills" were half-baked nonsense, but she knew some pressure points and techniques-decent enough, just rusty.

Unsure if his legs felt normal or pain hit him harder, she pressed gently, testing. "Does this hurt?"

"N-no, doesn't hurt." The business titan who ruled boardrooms turned into a stammerer.

Enduring Nyx's massage was tougher than any deal-time crawled like torture. He held still a bit, then hunched, crossing his legs to shift.

"Need a hand?" Nyx glanced up.

Her tone was chill, like it was no big deal, but it rocked Seafarion like a storm.



'Help. How would she help? She couldn't help with that,' he thought.

He didn't dare think deeper, shaking his head hard, face red, fighting every urge. Already screwed up once-he couldn't do it again.

He turned her down. Nyx focused on massaging, her face all business, dropping the matter. Her earlier ask felt like a tease. She flipped between flirty and distant, impossible to pin down.

The poor male got toyed with, brain a mess, eyes full of her. Awake, he barely held it together. Dreaming, he couldn't steer where it went.

Morning came, the sweet dream faded, leaving shame and a gut punch of loss. Seafarion pressed a hand to his chest.

Nyx got a message from her "neighbor" first thing. "Lancet" pulled the same trick. This time, he sent her Seafarion's real account. No need for her to add him-he'd already sent a friend request.

'Oh? Tired of sneaky games? Ready to ditch the disguise?' she thought.

Nyx stared at her screen, mulling it over. She didn't accept-she messaged

"Lancet" instead: [What's up with Seafarion?]

Nyx: [Did my message mess something up yesterday?]

Her tone seemed cautious, almost freaked out, through the screen.

Seafarion forgot his shyness, rushing to soothe: [No issues. He just wants to talk directly-no more middleman.]

Every time Nyx got chatty and cute but said the name Lancet, Seafarion's sanity teetered. A decade-plus in business, Seafarion never regretted a move-until pretending to be Lancet. Dumbest thing ever.

Nyx: [Is that okay?]

Nyx: [The deal says I can't contact Seafarion privately.]

Nyx: [The penalty's steep-I can't pay it.]

1

In the office, Lancet sneezed hard, nose tingling. Looking up, he met his boss's

blank stare-chills ran down his spine. He thought, 'Did I screw up?'

For Lancel's loyal pot-taking, Seafarion didn't snap-just quietly grabbed that dumb confidentiality deal and fed it to the

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shredder. Soon, Nyx got a pic from Seafarion. Seeing the deal in pieces, she stopped teasing and accepted his request.

Unlike "Lancel", this account screamed work-formal pic, name, profile, all business.

Nyx got serious: [Hello, Mr. Tanis.]

With Lancel's alt, she'd been a chatterbox, bubbly. Now, facing him, she clammed up. Seafarion felt a sour twinge.

Seafarion: [No need to be so formal-just call me by name.]

Seafarion: [Heard your agent just calls you Nyx-can I too?]

59%

The second he sent it, regret hit. They'd just connected-she barely knew him, hadn't even talked much. It was too forward -plus, it spilled he'd been creeping on

her. Fingers shaking, he yanked it back-just as Nyx replied.

Nyx: [Sure.]

Nyx: [?]

No undoing the recall. Seafarion clenched his fist, cursing his quick trigger. Seafarion: [Sorry, Nyx-slipped and hit the screen.]

Lame excuse-he blushed hard, mortified. Nyx cracked up, rolling on her bed, clutching her stomach. She could picture him clear as day. Pale skin, pink when shy, long lashes drooping, avoiding her eyes.

After calming down, Seafarion messaged: [Yesterday's massage helped a ton- thanks, Nyx.]

Seafarion: [If it's cool, can you keep helping me out?]

Seafarion: [Name your price.]

'Helped a ton?' she thought. Nyx didn't even know she had that kinda skill. She knew her half-assed rubs were iffy, but him biting the hook was expected.

Back when he'd wanted her close, he'd even ripped off scales to get her to rub on ointment-he was nuts. If there were no chances, he'd make them. Now she'd

handed him one, and he'd grabbed it tight.

Nyx: [Anytime I'm free, I'll swing by.]

Nyx: [No payment-you've already helped me plenty.]

She refused cash, citing him saving her from that drugged night. Seafarion got too

flustered to argue, head down. He'd done her dirty too. He was not a saint. There was no reason for her to thank him.

Remembering her casual offer to "help" last night, he scolded: [Nyx, some stuff's only for partners.]

## **Of The Bea 425**

### Chapter 425

Nyx was young, thrust into the grind early, stuck with a pimp like Dylan. Her views got skewed. He didn't want to take advantage anymore-just protect her, fix her outlook, keep her safe from creeps like him.

Nyx: [I know.]

59%

Her reply zipped back in a second, just two words. Seafarion's breathing hitched- he couldn't read her. He thought, 'If she knew, why'd she say that stuff yesterday?'

His mind wandered, scared it was wishful thinking. He stewed all day, too chicken to ask. Mustering every ounce of guts, he only managed a dinner invite.

Nyx said yes. It thrilled him more than a hundred-billion deal. He couldn't hide his giddiness; even the office noticed.

Too antsy to wait till evening, Seafarion ditched work early-a first-prepped dinner, fruits, desserts, snacks, and waited, jittery and excited.

With the boss gone, the company chat blew up with gossip, hounding Lancel to spill what was up. Lancel wouldn't dare snitch. Truth was, he had no clue either. Seafarion and Nyx's thing was getting weirder by the day.

He used to think he was an ace assistant-knew his boss's every move without a word. Now, he felt that Seafarion's heart was a mystery he couldn't figure out.

Right on time, Nyx showed up next door with fresh essential oil. A glance at the table, and she knew Seafarion had asked Gavin about her tastes. She didn't call it out.

Flashing a sweet smile, she said, "What a coincidence-these are my favorite."

Seafarion's handpicked chef was no slouch. Nyx ate happily, full and ready to drop her fork, when a piece of fish landed on her plate. She looked up at the male across from her-ears red, lashes fluttering nervously.

Nyx got it. He'd probably agonized all meal, wanting to serve her but overthinking it. Full or not, Nyx picked up the fish slowly and ate it.

"Thanks," she said, wiping her mouth with a napkin. "I like fish."

The wipe cleared the grease, leaving her lips plump and red, locking the male's gaze. Seafarion tugged at his collar, Adam's apple bobbing.

They were stuffed and buzzed. Another willpower battle loomed. He dreaded screwing up, but he'd asked for it. He'd prepped as best he could.

Nyx noticed he'd layered loose shorts under his pants today and raised an eyebrow. A longtime partner turning shy always tickled her mischief. When the males took charge, she'd dodge. When they held back, she got eager.

She poured some oil on her hands, rubbing it in casual-like. It didn't matter what he wore. It was useless. After a grueling half-hour, Seafarion covered his eyes, accepting the grim truth.

A few slip-ups in front of Nyx, and the shame started fading. Once, twice, a few days of her dropping by, and Seafarion's nerves toughened up. He stopped hiding he was her neighbor-no more Lancet as a front. A quiet understanding settled between them.

No need to plan-Nyx came over nightly for dinner, massaged him, chatted, helped with work, used his bathroom, stashed her stuff in his place, crashed in his guest room. She crept into his space bit by bit. He couldn't resist didn't want to.

Two months later, the delayed costume drama Breaking Chains finally started shooting. Jobless Nyx got busy, heading to set. Filming was in Broskel. She could've gone home daily, but after thinking it over, she picked the crew's hotel.

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## Chapter 425

Marilyn and Helly tagged along. Gavin brought her three home-cooked meals daily around set breaks. Everything ran smoothly. First-time actress Nyx adapted quickly.

11

Her role split into shadow guard and fallen princess-the guard got more scenes, tied tight to the lead, so they shot that first. The princess's solo bits waited till last.

Nyx wore a mask all day for fight scenes, crashed at the hotel after a rinse-still kept a steady routine.

Seafarion, though, hit withdrawal. First night alone, he lay awake, staring at the ceiling. Days of insomnia followed-he visibly wilted.

Office folks tiptoed, whispering to Lancet, "Boss get dumped or what?"

"Dumped?" Lancet blinked, lost. If his memory held, Seafarion hadn't even started dating-maybe a crush at best. Now, with his crush just off working, he'd run himself ragged.

Lancet was stunned but kept quiet, tossing out a tip. "Why not visit her on set?"

A week without Nyx, Seafarion was dying to see her. But showing up meant other actors spotting him—could tank Nyx's reputation.

"Not going," he said, eyes down. He could pay to hush it up, keep leaks tight, but the crew hung with Nyx daily. If they knew she was tangled with a wheelchair guy, they'd judge her, make her uneasy.

'Here we go again. Lancet grimaced inside, baffled by his boss's logic. He was crazy about Nyx, but never made a move- always lurking. If he chased like that, he'd never win his girl back in a million years.

"Well, how about asking her for a keepsake?" Solid ideas flopped, so Lancet went rogue with a dumb one. "Couldn't see her? Grab something to remind you of her!"

Seafarion's eyes flickered, lips pressing-he was tempted. He pulled out his phone, opened Nyx's chat, fingers hovering, stalling.

After ages of drafting, he sent: [Heard the hotel washers are nasty.]

Nyx saw it during lunch break. Fresh off a scene, she washed up, sat to eat, and checked her phone-shoulders shaking, laughing nonstop.

He was roundabout as hell, but she didn't need to guess what Seafarion was after.

Nyx: [Yeah.]

Nyx: [Little bunny sigh emoji]

Nyx: [Dirty or not, gotta use 'em-what else can I do?]

As expected, he shot back: [Send them home-I'll wash them.]

Nyx: [Why bother when dry cleaning is easier? How can I make a tycoon do chores?]

Nyx ate and teased him, batting it back and forth before caving. Back at the hotel that night, she packed all her worn clothes and had Helly run them over to Seafarion.

Helly's jaw dropped. "Are you sure?" she stammered, staring at Nyx. "Let me wash them instead!"

Making Seafarion wash clothes was ridiculous. Everything was in there-even the close stuff. Nyx triple-checked it was fine. Helly set off, shaky.

Delivery went off without a hitch. Seafarion actually took the laundry pile-his quick grab even hinted at eagerness. Helly

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stumbled back to the hotel, dazed.

Nyx lounged on the sofa, rubbing in lotion. Fresh from a shower, her face glowed pink from the steam, her body misty.

Helly's eyes hit Nyx's long, sleek legs and suddenly got why Seafarion went for it. Her boss was fragrant head-to-toe-her worn clothes too. Not dirty at all.

"Back?" Nyx looked up, waved her over for fruit, and asked casually, "Drop-off go okay?"

Helly nodded, still puzzled, mumbling around a strawberry. "Can Seafarion even wash clothes?" A man that rich probably hadn't touched chores in forever.

"He can," Nyx said with a smile, finding Helly's innocence cute, not explaining much.

That night, Seafarion kept Nyx's clothes pile by his side and slept soundly for once. Waking up, he found his face buried in them, took a deep breath, then snapped awake, blushing as he folded them neatly.

Shirts, skirts, costume liners. His fingers snagged a bra strap. Seafarion froze, eyes wide, stunned. His face went blood-red.

Lancet dropped off breakfast and gawked-his boss was cleaning behind closed doors. Women's clothes hung on the balcony, fresh-washed. Scrubbing sounds came from the bathroom. Lancet's brain crashed.

Door opened, and Seafarion clutched the underwear behind his back fast. Frowning, he sidestepped Lancet, not hanging them outside but in his bedroom. "What are you doing?" Lancet asked, still not believing his eyes. Years as a life assistant, and he'd never pegged his boss as a house-husband type.

"Nyx sent her clothes over-I'm washing them," Seafarion said, in a good mood after solid sleep, giving Lancet an approving look for the idea. Seafarion was happy. His bonus was secured. Lancet took the cash, but it burned his hands. Sure, he asked Seafarion to ask for a gift from her, but he didn't mean her clothes. She didn't even gift him her clothes-she'd roped him into washing them.

Lancet's mouth twitched. He wanted to say hire someone-or he'd do it-but seeing his boss so into it, he shut up. If Seafarion didn't want to, no one could make him. Skipping

maids and machines for hand-washing, Seafarion basically volunteered to be her servant.

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Batch done, Seafarion held onto them. Only when Helly brought the next week's load did he return the clean ones. Nyx's clothes in his place calmed him-like she was there, saving him from sleepless nights.

After sticking it out like that for a month and a half, Nyx had finished filming most of her scenes, with only one left-the part where the fallen princess took her own

life.

Before the final scene started, she gave Seafarion the good news ahead of time, then slipped into a long white dress for the shoot and headed to the makeup room

to get ready.

She'd been on set this long, but that was the first time she'd seriously gotten made up. After all, the earlier scenes didn't really need her face on camera-only in the last moment of revenge did she lift her mask for the lens, and even then, it was bare-faced.

The makeup artist was a chatterbox, all exaggerated expressions, babbling nonstop about how perfect Nyx's face was. "How's your skin this good! Even tone, too-you don't even need foundation! Your features don't need a thing. I almost don't know where to start!"

Nyx ducked her head, flustered, thanking her quietly, then closed her eyes as the artist brushed some light red shadow

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around them to give her a worn, broken took a wedden war wher

She followed the sound and saw it was the tree playing supporting mas mat, wh

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"Her name is Joanna. Don't mind her the makeup artie who they are the antes dayhon es zupe you're premier

"She auditioned for your role before, but Zachery dirt pick bwrwdwsky

"Even without you, she'd still be glaring at this person, taring into the one her eyes you dy foueaphiser trase face. No way she could've played the world's greatest way

"She's got someone backing her, though-got her that supporting spot the wich with testng under about how pushing her wouldn't make her a war, then warned yx, "Watch you, try sex to duds wher

Shows from Cosmic Entertainment didn't usually let people buy their way in, so whomer Gouna ber to foe vie dve had some real pull-maybe even ties to Cosmic Entertainment's bifery Mewhile, thy was gud & hist character-no way she could arm-wrestle the big shots and win

Nyx nodded. As long as no one stirred trouble with her, she wouldn't go picking

Ropes Once her mousy od wewe done, Nyx smiled, said goodbye to the artist, and left the room

The crew was filming someone else's scene, so hers had to wait a bit-the booked wound, trying to find a spor so hang or but caught Joanna's eye again in the crowd. She dung to a middle-aged mals arm, way as could be, and thee Nyx a sharp glance,

## **Of The Bea 426**

Chapter 426

11

Nyx quietly looked away. The taunt didn't get the reaction she wanted, and Joanna got all huffy about it. The man next to her noticed something off and frowned, "What's up?"

"Terry." Joanna said, softening her tone and flashing a smile, "nothing much, just saw someone I can't stand."

She had plenty of people she didn't like, and Terry gave a vague chuckle, "Alright, got it. What's her name?"

Truth was, he wasn't clueless-his little starlet had a nasty temper, always starting trouble, looking down on this one, sneering at that one. Her reputation was trash.

But he didn't care who was right or wrong-he wasn't some judge. As long as she stayed pretty and kept him happy, he'd back her up, let her strut around the industry like she owned it.

Joanna leaned into his shoulder, pleased as punch. "Terry, you're so good to me."

She pointed at Nyx. "That's the one-Nyx. She stole the role I had my eye on!"

Someone nearby overheard, frowned, and looked like they wanted to say something but held back. Joanna didn't care who heard-she had her sugar daddy right there, so she glared at them one by one.

Terry followed her finger and caught just a glimpse of a figure from behind. That graceful silhouette looked like a one-in-a- million beauty. Dressed in a plain white skirt, she had an extra touch of innocence.

Terry lingered on that back view a little too long, suddenly recalling the "world's greatest beauty" role that got snatched-he started feeling a spark of interest.

Joanna didn't notice, still whispering in his ear, "She's basically done filming-just cut her scene today, that's all."

It wasn't out of kindness that she didn't want Nyx totally crushed-if she asked to chop all of Nyx's parts, the director, writer, and editor would flip, and it'd get messy.

Just axing today's scene would be easy enough and still kill Nyx's big moment. In the other scenes, she'd been swinging around in that ugly bronze mask-no way she'd blow up from that once the show aired.

"Please, Terry?" she cooed, nudging him.

Terry nodded absently, not bothering to head for the director. After a few more rounds of her wheedling, he yanked his arm free, annoyed, "Enough!"

Seeing her teary, panicked eyes, he softened a bit and said, "Hold on a sec. Let her shoot it first, then get the director to cut it."

Zachary was a professional-getting a scene perfect meant tons of retakes, and Nyx's bit involved wirework, falling from a tower. It wouldn't be a breeze,

Letting Nyx go through all that hassle, only to trash the footage later, would really twist the knife. Joanna thought it over, wiped her tears, and broke into a grin.

The crew had already set up the outdoor tower to look war-ravaged-charred beams, crumbling tiles hanging by a thread. When Nyx's turn came, it was dusk, the setting sun bleeding red across the tower's weathered bricks. Everything was ready, and the camera locked on Nyx.

The vermilion palace gates hung crooked and wide open, rare flowers trampled into the mud, screams and shout from every direction as servants grabbed gold, silver, jewels, and silks, fleeing with whatever they could carry.

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Nyx wore a lavish cloak, its hem dusted with dirt but still elegant, her hair neatly pinned, a floral mark glowing between her brows-she held onto the dignity of royalty.

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59%

Chapter 426

"Hurry, Princess! Get to the carriage!" a loyal guard urged, "The gates are breached-there's no time!"

The princess just stood there, gazing into the distance, her eyes drifting from the grand hall to the concubines' quarters, then she moved-not toward the carriage.

Escape was useless. She had nowhere to go. Her kingdom had fallen, her people scattered, her home gone, her parents and siblings all dead.

The princess pulled her gaze back and stepped toward the gate. She sped up, her hair ornaments jangling loose a guard lunged to grab her robe, but she unfastened it, flung the cloak off, and left their pleas behind with it.

At the tower's peak, she stood in plain white. A troop of cavalry with the rebel king's banners galloped through the streets, charging straight for the palace. From the tower, she could see them-maybe they saw her, too.

Capturing the former dynasty's "world's greatest beauty" alive for their king would be a hell of a prize. The riders whooped, spurring their horses harder.

Ten miles, five miles, one mile. Closing in. They could already make out her pale cheeks, her delicate skin-their eyes glued to that slender figure as she bent to adjust her skirt, then touched her hairpin.

A fierce wind whipped up, her hair flying like clouds or a waterfall-she yanked out the pin and drove it into her throat! The pin shattered as it hit the ground.

Like a white crane with broken wings, she spun and plummeted from the tower, her robes fluttering in tragic red streaks.

"Good-cut!" Zachary called it, laughing and clapping, "Perfect!"

One take, no need for a redo. Nyx had pulled off something even he hadn't pictured.

"You've got this classical vibe, like you stepped right out of ancient times," he said, still buzzing, chasing after Nyx with praise, "That's rare."

Nyx unhooked the wires, peeled off the busted fake blood pack, and gave him an awkward smile.

'Classical vibe, huh. Maybe because I actually lived in the past for a few years,' he thought.

The set was buzzing-tons of folks still caught up in Nyx's performance, gushing nonstop.

Every move she made felt so natural, even her fall from the tower flowed perfectly-no stiffness in her limbs or body. It pulled you right in, made you forget the wires were even there.

Outsiders might not get it, but most people there were industry pros-they knew how tough that was, how skilled she had to be.

Amid the praise, Joanna's face went pale. She clutched Terry's sleeve. "You don't want me anymore?"

In those few minutes, she'd watched him fall for someone else-his eyes on Nyx held an admiration and fascination he'd never shown her. Forget dealing with Nyx for her-he clearly wanted Nyx to take her place.

"It's not that I don't want you," Terry said, prying her hand off and smoothing his wrinkled sleeve, "You've been with me this long. Stay sensible, and I won't ditch you."

It's just that Nyx really hit his sweet spot-he wanted her in his pocket, too. Keeping two lovers at once was no big deal-with enough cash, he could handle a few more.

"Just get along with her from now on, don't make trouble for me, got it?" he warned, patting Joanna's cheek.

She could mess with outsiders all she wanted, but not on his turf. He wasn't about

to let his backyard catch fire and spend his days playing referee for his girlfriends.

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Joanna's vision went dark. Men always chased the new and tossed the old-Nyx was younger, prettier. She had no chance down the line.

She'd just made an enemy of Nyx. Even if she swallowed it and stopped stirring the pot, if Nyx hooked up with Terry, she probably wouldn't let her off easy. "Terry!" she cried, grabbing his arm, "You can't go after Nyx-Zachary and the writer really like her."

Besides the obvious attention she got at auditions, during filming, Zachary seemed extra fond of Nyx, looking out for her a lot.

"Like her?" Terry snorted, "How much can they like her? She's still just a no-name sidekick, isn't she? Besides, who I sleep with isn't their business."

Zachary had some clout, sure, but at best they were equals-no way he'd stick his neck out for some random little actress and cross him.

"When you told me to mess with Nyx, why didn't you say the director might protect her?" Terry sneered, shaking her off. A lover could have some schemes, but she'd better not play him for a fool.

If Nyx had real backing, this chick wouldn't dare poke at her so boldly. Dragging out the director and writer now was just a bluff to scare him off from chasing Nyx.

"While I've still got some patience for you, get lost-don't ruin my plans." With that warning, Terry strode through the crowd toward the studio.

Nyx was in the makeup room, taking off her hairpieces. The artist who'd done her look had gone out to watch her shoot, too, and now her already chatty mouth was in overdrive, rapid-firing praise until Nyx's ears ached and her head buzzed.

Then came a knock-some middle-aged guy walked in, and the whole room went quiet. The chatter cut off like someone hit pause on a speaker. Gossip spread fast on set, and Joanna wasn't exactly subtle-word of her sugar daddy Terry visiting had been everywhere. His face was no secret. Everyone even knew he was a big shareholder in JoyTV, a top video platform. 'Wasn't he there for Joanna? Why'd he show up here all of

a sudden?' she thought. The makeup artist remembered Joanna's blatant hostility toward Nyx and held her breath, nervous.

Nyx's smile faded, but she stayed put, expression blank. She hadn't clashed with Joanna herself—if that girl wanted to stir up nonsense anyway, she'd have to fight back.

"You're Nyx, right?" the man said, adjusting his tie and holding out a hand, "I'm Terry Blanchet from JoyTV."

His hand hung there forever-Nyx didn't take it. Terry pulled it back, not showing his irritation just yet. He sized her up, grinning. "Relax, I don't mean any harm."

"I've spoiled my girl a bit-she's got a temper, might've been rude to you. But I really admire you.

"You're gorgeous, talented-with the right script, you could snag some awards, maybe even become a best actress," he said, raising a brow, hinting, "I've been in this game a while, got some connections, resources. I could help you out."

"Let's grab dinner later, talk it over privately," he added, handing her a business card.

The room was dead silent-everyone was stunned.

Nyx's makeup artist's jaw dropped-she hadn't seen this coming at all. She'd thought he was there to hassle Nyx not hit on her and try to scoop her up.

It was not exactly good news, though-if Nyx didn't play the casting couch game.

The artist glanced at Nyx, worried.

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"No need," Nyx said, not even glancing at the card, let alone reaching for it.

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Twice now she'd brushed him off-Terry's face darkened. "You get what I'm saying. Don't be dense." He didn't like forcing things, but if Nyx wouldn't take the easy way, she couldn't blame him for getting rough.

A nobody like her with no backing-he wanted her, and there was no way he wouldn't get her. After two minutes of her ignoring his threats, Terry's temper flared-he tossed the card aside and reached for her face.

Right before he got close, Nyx dodged, leaving him grabbing air. That was more humiliating than the last two snubs. His face turned purple with rage-he sucked in a breath and raised a hand to strike.

Seeing trouble, a few people slipped out to fetch the crew agent. Others rushed in, holding him back.

"Hey, let's talk this out!"

"You can't hit her!"

"We're a civilized society!"

Everyone piled on, pinning the guy down tight.

Nyx quietly pulled back her fist-she'd been ready to swing but decided to stay civilized, too. She grabbed her phone and tattled to her partner.

In a meeting room, a big screen showed the latest market expansion plan. The vibe was serious-everyone listened quietly to Seafarion speak.

Then a special ringtone cut through, jarring in the silence-someone sharp-eyed spotted a chat app icon flashing in the screen's corner.

'Who was messaging now?' People swapped looks, thinking.

That tone was Nyx's alone-Seafarion didn't even think, just wanted to reply fast, and with a shaky hand, he popped open the chat on his computer.

The execs and board looked up as Seafarion's stern social profile filled the screen.

Amid a sea of business contacts, a fluffy bunny avatar sat pinned at the top. The

latest message was from that bunny-Nyx. A few older chats scrolled into view. Nyx: [How'd one of my shirts go missing?]

Seafarion: [I accidentally ruined it washing it-bought you a new one, try it when you're back.]

Nyx: [This scene's done today, then I'm home!]

Nyx: [Should wrap up before six tonight.]

Nyx: [Little bunny tossing flowers emoji]

Seafarion: [I'll pick you up.]

Juicy gossip alert. The room filled with hushed gasps. Those few lines packed a punch-some execs who'd secretly wondered if Seafarion was dating lit up, dying to dig into who this Nyx really was.

Then they saw her newest message, and their faces dropped.

Nyx: [Some guy tried to touch my face.]

The people in the room were shocked, thinking, Who would be so dumb? Is he tired of living?

## **Of The Bea 427**

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The air went dead still. Lancet swallowed hard, sneaking a peek at Seafarion- even braced for it, that icy glare still jolted her.

The meeting broke off-Seafarion apologized and bailed, and everyone totally got it. After all, he was finally in love after so long, only for his girl to get messed with by some jerk. No way he'd sit still.



It was over two hours from the office to the set-Lancet told the driver to take a shortcut, bumpy as hell but faster. He could feel Seafarion's rage hitting the roof-if they didn't hurry, it'd be bad.

On set, Terry had cooled off some, arms crossed, sitting in a chair. Joanna seized the moment, pouring him an iced coffee, patting his chest to calm him down.

"Take it easy."

She couldn't believe Nyx had turned Terry down flat-didn't even give him an inch, just pissed him off. She was too young, too proud-didn't get that some big shots she couldn't cross, only obey. The obedient ones sailed smooth in this biz- defiant ones, Terry could tank with a word.

Thinking of Nyx screwing herself out of the running, Joanna's gloom flipped to glee-she nearly cackled out loud. On the surface, she kept up the sweet act, suggesting to Terry, "How about I go talk some sense into her for you?"

"Talk sense?" Terry laughed coldly. "Is being with me some awful fate? She'd need convincing for that? This is a golden ticket tons of girls begged for!"

"Go tell Nyx I'm giving her one last shot," he said, his face darkening, ordering Joanna, "Tonight, before ten, Galactic Hotel, Room 2131-be there."

All the humiliation Nyx caused him, he'd make her pay, little by little. "Tell her if she doesn't show, she's on her own."

He thought, 'Clueless little thing-once she loses her gig and the scandals hit, she'll come crawling, but I'm not that patient. Miss the deadline, and begging wouldn't help.'

Joanna had just thrown it out there to look big-hearted for her sugar daddy-now stuck with a job, she fumed. After all this, he was still giving Nyx a chance.

She grudgingly agreed, then turned and jumped, "Z-Zachary!"

Not just Zachary-the set's crew, security, actors, staff-they all stood there in a big, dark crowd, like they'd come to back Nyx up. Joanna shrank back fast.

"If it's business you want, talk to me-not my artist." Marilyn stepped forward in heels, handing over a card. "I'm Nyx's agent."

The place erupted in shock at Marilyn's announcement. They'd filmed this long and had no clue Nyx's agent was the famous Marilyn Bond.

Whispers of disbelief buzzed around-Marilyn sighed softly to herself. It was all because Nyx kept such a low profile, hating the spotlight and gossip, so she hadn't stuck around set during filming.

Even Zachary, who'd wanted to look out for her, backed off when he saw she didn't like special treatment.

Nyx was gentle, kind, got along great with the crew and extras-blended in so well, like a total newbie with no backing, that someone actually dared to mess with her.

"Marilyn?" Terry's face shifted, "You're back in the game?"

Marilyn quit years ago. He hadn't heard a peep about her return. Terry frowned, glaring at Joanna. She panicked. She'd only just found out, too.

But it was too late. She realized she barely knew Nyx-assumed she was some nobody with no clout, so she'd gone after her

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without a care.

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Terry studied Marilyn a bit, testing the waters. "If I recall, years back, tons of folks tried to pull you back in, and you said no. What made you take on a rookie actress now?"

From top stars to newbies-the gap in her clients was huge. Still, it made sense. The industry shifted fast-even the best faded after a long break, and climbing back up was brutal.

Marilyn was just an agent, after all-years abroad for her kid, no room left for her here. Ending up in this sorry state tracked, too-those big offers were probably just hype, PR stunts.

Catching Terry's shifty eyes, Marilyn could guess his thoughts. She chuckled. "People always aim higher. Someone offered me a better deal to manage Nyx. The pay was so good, even I couldn't say no."

Seafarion hadn't just dangled cash-global top-tier medical care for her daughter, something she'd chased forever.

"Ha! For real?" Terry grinned, fake as hell. "The biggest names in the biz tried to snag you. Nyx outbid them?"

He wasn't buying it. With that kind of juice, she shouldn't have settled for a small role. She'd be parachuting in as the lead.

"Tell me, how much can Nyx pay you?" he said, all his doubts melting away, chin up, "Whatever it is, I'll top it. Why not bring her over to work for me?"

Zachary couldn't take it anymore, hacking loudly. He gave Terry a pained look, "This is a film set, not some shady business-s don't get it twisted, Terry."

Playing the game was fine-tons did it; no one could stop it. If both sides were willing, he wouldn't meddle. But pulling power moves on his turf was not acceptable. Especially since Terry's target was a bad pick.

"Don't talk too big," Zachary warned, heavy with meaning, "You're young, successful, a real standout-but remember: there's always someone bigger out there."

"What's that mean?\*" Terry blinked, then scoffed, "You saying someone tougher's got Nyx's back? Go on, tell me who's this guy?"

'Old Zachary pulling a bluff now, huh? Even if Nyx has a backer, either they don't care much, or they don't have the power- sticking her in a small role she had to audition for herself, he thought.

"You know Cosmic Entertainment's top dogs are tight with me," he said, clapping Zachary's shoulder, "This show's all their money-you know what's what."

Zachary got so mad his head spun-he rubbed his forehead, laughing bitterly. Total speechlessness could really make you crack up. He usually didn't ruffle feathers, gave everyone a bit of respect-but right then, he wanted to boot Terry off his set.

"Since you're asking what's what-Seafarion and Cosmic Entertainment, which one's more powerful?" he asked.

Sure, Seafarion had denied Nyx was his kept girl, but Zachary still smelled something fishy. It was just a hunch-he wouldn't have pulled that card if Terry wasn't such a pain.

"Seafarion? What's he got to do with it?" Hearing that thunderclap name threw Terry hard-once it sank in, he doubled over laughing.

Anyone with a shred of gossip sense knew Seafarion's love life was a blank slate- no woman ever spotted near him. There was no way that he would keep a starlet.

"Seafarion and Nyx-two people who'd never cross paths in a million years." Terry shook his head, clicking his tongue. "Or what, you pimped her out to him? He didn't flip on you, so you figured it worked?"

Seeing Zachary turn green with rage, he felt even smugger, pressing on. "Why not call Seafarion right now-see if he'd

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bother with this?"

Before he finished, a voice cut in from the door. "Terry, watch your words," Everyone turned-eyes popping wide. The speaker stood sharp in a suit, looking every bit the part. But no one spared him a second glance-all eyes locked on the man in the wheelchair he pushed. White hair, pale eyes-like he was carved from

snow.

Those odd colors were trendy now, kids copying them left and right, but that flawless face couldn't be imitated. He didn't show up often, but everyone knew that face.

"Seafarion?" Terry's legs went weak. His cocky vibe vanished-his brain replayed every word he'd just spat out. Good thing, good thing he hadn't trashed Seafarion. He could still fix this.

He forced a smile, scrambling for something flattering, but before he could speak, Seafarion's ice-cold voice hit him. "Which hand did you touch her with?"

"Touch who?" Terry froze, then it clicked-he paled, horrified. Seafarion was really here for Nyx. He'd thought Zachary called in a favor.

"Sorry, I didn't know she was yours," he stammered, raising both hands with a weak laugh, "I didn't touch her, really!"

If he'd known, he wouldn't have dared mess with Seafarion's woman-not with a hundred guts.

Some guys in the biz played loose, swapped girls around-others were strict. Seafarion screamed the strict type. They didn't even run in the same circles.

Lucky Nyx dodged fast-lucky he hadn't actually touched her. Terry was secretly relieved when a murmur rippled through the crowd, "What, chickening out already? Weren't you all big and bad, ready to hit Nyx a second ago?"

That sparked a chorus of agreement. Plenty of them had held him back, taking his wild swings-too scared of his pull to fight back, just swallowing it.

Now, with a shot at payback, they weren't about to let it slide. The chatter piled on, and Seafarion's face grew darker.

Terry shrank under that stare, sweat pouring down his face. "N-No, I didn't-I was just bluffing."

A sudden idea hit him-he pointed at Joanna. "I was here for her today! She said

Nyx stole her role-made me teach her a lesson!"

"All a misunderstanding!" he sighed, loud and dramatic.

Joanna had been trying to vanish into the floor-now slammed with blame, she stood there, dazed.

Every eye turned to her-she couldn't argue, shaking with fury, then ripped off a heel and hurled it at Terry. "I told you to cut her scene! Not make a move on her!"

"Did I make you touch her face? Did I tell you to hit her? Or book a hotel room with her?" She roared with every swing-the heel bent, barely hanging on. A long scratch bled across Terry's face-after a blank moment, rage took over, and he fought back.

Seafarion had no interest in watching this dogfight-he turned to find Nyx. He left the PR team to clean up, kick out the troublemakers, restore order, and gag anyone who needed gagging-today wouldn't leak.

Nyx stayed in the makeup room, already washed off her face and changed, waiting for her partner to take her home. Through the cracked door, she heard the chaos outside-knew who she was waiting for had arrived—and sure enough, soon Seafarion appeared at the door.

"Here to pick me up?" she said, hopping off the chair, brushing her skirt, and walking toward him with a light step, "Le

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Seeing her safe and in good spirits, Seafarion felt his mood settle a bit.

They cut through the crowd together-countless eyes followed Nyx, full of awed confusion. No one could've guessed someone on set had that kind of backup. If it were them, they'd have bragged it up and down-but Nyx never said a word. Zachary trailed behind, seeing them off, muttering to Nyx, "You tricked me, saying there was nothing between you!"

He'd been naive and bought it. Now it looked less like a sugar deal and more like real love. Nyx got teased and threatened a bit, didn't even take a real hit, and Seafarion still raced over himself.

"How long have you been together?" Zachary pried, curious.

Lancet, Marilyn, and the rest perked up, eavesdropping for any missed details. Before Nyx could answer, Seafarion cut in, voice low, "Nyx isn't with me."

## **Of The Bea 428**

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Everyone froze, glaring at Nyx. Nyx stayed calm and nodded.

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Zachary chuckled dryly to himself in his head. Fooled once was enough-fall for it again, and he'd be an idiot. His nose was sharp-they smelled the same, not some generic soap scent either-probably living together, and still denying it. Watching Nyx climb into Seafarion's car only cemented his hunch.

After long days out working, the house stayed spotless thanks to Gavin popping by to clean. Nyx dropped her bags, texted Gavin some praise, then knocked next door. 'Dinner together tonight?'

No plans set, but Seafarion was ready-had a chef whip up a full spread at home to welcome Nyx back.

They ate, Nyx tried on the new clothes he'd bought her, twirling around for him, then borrowed his bathroom for a shower and crashed there like old times.

She acted like nothing had happened-mood steady, no talk of romance. Seafarion watched her bright smile, words catching in his throat.

When no one called it out, he could dodge it, not think too hard. But Zachary's offhand question slammed him into reality -Nyx wasn't his wife; they shouldn't be this close. She was young, clueless-he was older, shouldn't have taken advantage of that, tricked her into staying by his side.

"Nyx," he said, lips tight, stopping her as she headed for the guest room, "Your place is next door-sleep there."

Even a guest room wasn't right-unmarried, living under one roof long-term, it didn't add up.

Nyx paused, looked back at him for a moment, then nodded. "Okay."

She wasn't about to push. With a stubborn partner like him, she had plenty of patience-let him cool off and think it over alone.

Nyx didn't hesitate-said she'd go and went. No fuss-she pushed the door open in her pajamas and slippers, leaving everything behind, even the new clothes she'd tried on.

The lock clicked shut, and the big house fell dead quiet. Seafarion stared at the door, lost, feeling a hole in his chest. The withdrawal hit harder than last time.

Nyx's traces were everywhere-big stuff like the bed she'd slept in, small stuff like the lotion she'd left in the bathroom.

He couldn't step into the guest room, but her memory still swallowed him-every glimpse of her things brought a sour ache crashing over him. Pent-up frustration had nowhere to go-he dumped it all on Terry.

By month's end, Breaking Chains dropped a trailer-huge buzz. Nyx picked up fans, and ad deals started rolling in. Marilyn sifted through them carefully, landing her a gig promoting a niche local luxury jewelry brand's fall line.

On the way there, Nyx heard Helly chattering-word was, JoyTV's other execs caught wind and teamed up to shove Terry out to save the company. Betrayed by his own, Terry tanked-seemed like his head wasn't right anymore, paranoid about traps everywhere.

"A few days back, he swore someone was watching him, hunting him-ran up to JoyTV's roof like a nutcase, almost jumped," Helly said, shaking her head, "Someone grabbed him quick, pulled him back, but they say his hands got messed up- dislocates all the time now," said Helly.

"And Joanna," she mumbled, "after wrap-up, Zachary said her scenes sucked, cut the role entirely, and swore he'd never work with her again."

Nyx listened, then went quiet, thinking, 'Little mermaid's got a mean streak.

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Seafarion was one of her milder partners-guess he'd been in a fool mood lately  
"Marilyn, Nyx asked, "Has Seafarion checked in about me lately?"

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She was so blunt. Marilyn's face went awkward. "Uh, yeah, he's got me reporting your schedule and whereabouts daily. I'm not spying on you, I

"I know, it's fine." Nyx soothed her, nodding thoughtfully.

In fact, she could very well be the hunter and Seafarion was the prey. Seafarion peeked at her from the shadows-she was just biding her time, waiting for the catch. As long as the line held, the fish stayed in her pond-couldn't swim away. "And me" Gavin raised a timid hand. "Sorry, boss-I've been telling Seafarion about your meals every day. He didn't want to play spy, but the big guy paid way too well.

"What's with you all?" Helly yelped, grabbing Nyx's hand. "Boss! Trust me! I'm the only one who hasn't done it! I'd never stab you in the back!"

Nyx laughed, patting her head. "Alright, alright, you're the best."

It wasn't really betrayal-Seafarion wasn't an outsider, and he'd set up the studio, paid their wages. She didn't mind him knowing these things; there was no need to hide it.

At the shoot, Nyx realized it wasn't solo- A hot new actor was there for the men's line, and they'd do a duo shot together.

"Why didn't you mention this?" Marilyn frowned, "My artist doesn't do close- contact shoots with guys."

The brand was baffled. "It's standard stuff-not that intimate, right?"



The two had no history-the brand wasn't pairing them up, just wanted some flirty vibes for the jewelry theme. Hand- holding, a hug, no big deal. Actors did kiss scenes all the time-there was no need to be so uptight.

Marilyn still wavered. The brand was right-it wasn't over the top. Her old clients would've shot it no problem. But with Nyx, she had Seafarion to answer to.

Nyx checked the plan, got the gist of the moves, and murmured to her agent, "It's okay, Marilyn, I'll do it. Just tell Seafarion the truth."

Nyx had the final say-once she greenlit it, the shoot went smooth as silk. Solo parts flowed, duo parts clicked-the young guy was a gentleman, kept it professional, no extra moves, saving tons of hassle and time.

Last shot: Nyx stood at a mirror, lifting her hair a bit; the guy stood behind, fastening a necklace, his fingers brushing her pale skin like the photographer wanted.

Faintly, Nyx felt a hot stare from nearby. She played it cool, focused on the shoot, locking eyes with the guy in the mirror- her gaze soft and warm.

"Great! That's the vibe!" the photographer cheered, thrilled-brand reps nodded approval.

Shoot wrapped, Nyx and the guy hit it off, swapped contacts. She waved him off, heading to her agent and assistants. "Time to head home-dinner out together?"

A guy who'd been holding back finally snapped, pulling off his hat, "Nyx."

Nyx acted like she'd just noticed him, gasping, "You're here?"

Hat off, Seafarion's signature hair and face popped-everyone else was genuinely floored. Nyx faked her shock, but they were legit stunned.

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## Chapter 428

The brand rep belatedly got why Marilyn had balked at the close shots-heart pounding. They wondered if they could still use the duo pics.

"Been a while-work keeping you busy? Why'd you drop by?" Nyx said, voice light, "When'd you get here? How'd I do?"

She waved again, introducing the guy to Seafarion. "First ad shoot-Sergio carried me through it."

Sergio stiffened, bowing to Seafarion. Seafarion didn't crack a smile but forced a nod.

Just work-the guy was decent, didn't overstep with Nyx. For that, he offered Sergio a spot at Cosmic Entertainment. Cosmic Entertainment was mid-purge- Terry's cronies got axed if they were dirty, dragging some artists down, too.

Sergio joining now meant steady good gigs-second-tier at least, maybe first-tier with hustle.

Sergio clutched Seafarion's card, dazed. As a fellow guy, he'd felt the jealousy and edge-yet Seafarion held it in, even tossed him an offer for Nyx's sake.

Crowd cleared, Seafarion faced Nyx-met her eyes, then flinched, looking down. "Nyx, there's a banquet tonight. Come with me?"

Big entertainment names would be there-he'd introduce her, so next time he wasn't around, no idiot would dare touch her.

Nyx wouldn't say no to that. "Sure."

Seafarion taking her out in public threw her a bit, though. From how he'd acted,

he hadn't cleared that mental hurdle yet. She couldn't figure it-she shrugged, deciding to wing it.

Hours till the banquet, Nyx hopped in his car-he took her for styling, a gown, then off to the venue. Spotting a license plate stacked with eights, the doorman knew a VIP was coming-flashing a perfect warm smile.

Someone opened the car door with grace, hand shielding the top, welcoming Seafarion-then nearly lost it seeing the woman beside him. 'Who-who is this? Riding with Seafarion!' he thought.

Inside, the hall glowed-glasses clinked, guests mingled, sipping and chatting, laughter weaving through the air. Seafarion stepped in and instantly owned the room-every head turned, jaws dropping. The place hushed, just the tinkle of glasses ringing out.

"Seafarion brought a date? People were shocked. He'd never shown up with a woman-not even for show. First time ever:

Eyes drilled into them-Seafarion frowned, glanced at Nyx, worried she'd feel off at her first gig like this. Surprise-she handled it fine. She tilted her head at him, smiling soft as always.

Back when she first hit Beastmen Empire, Nyx had been timid—but years later, she'd grown used to crowds and stares, no fear left.

Then a burning gaze landed on her-too strong to ignore. She snapped her head up, locking onto familiar green beast eyes. Nyx faltered, her steps stalling for a

second.

"Nyx, this is Mr. Jason Jackman, head of Broskel's Entertainment Association," Seafarion said, missing her glitch, leading her to meet people-she pulled her eyes back and followed. That stare stuck to her like glue, never letting up.

"This is your girlfriend?" someone finally blurted, too curious to hold back. "No-" Seafarion flinched, denying it hard. "Nyx is my sister."

Nyx bit her lip, fighting a laugh. No wonder he'd dared bring her out-he'd cooked up this story.

Folks around traded subtle looks. Seafarion was an only child-he couldn't have a sister. He'd never paraded any distant

cousins either.

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'More like sweethearts, probably, people thought. They thought it but didn't say it-just flattered them, saying they looked good together, easy to mistake.

Seeing Seafarion's eyes light up despite himself, they knew they'd nailed it-Nyx was his woman.

In a corner, some rich kids tagging along with their parents drank and gabbed- one was sloshed, staring at Nyx, flushed, clearly smitten. His buddies yanked him

back, stopping a mess.

"Cut it out, stop gawking!"

"She's Seafarion's!"

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Hearing that name, the rich kid shivered, sobering up fast. Grumbling, he looked away, drowning his sorrows. It was rare to find a girl that hot-and she was taken. Anyone else, fine-but Seafarion. No one dared to cross him.

One glass down, reaching for another, he caught a tall figure heading Nyx's way, his eyes widening slowly.

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## Of The Bea 429

### Chapter 429

A guy dripping with class strode straight to Nyx and cut to the chase. "Hi, can you date me?"

His rare green eyes held only her reflection right then. His voice was low, but the room froze-everyone gaped at the drama unfolding.

Nyx went quiet. This guy was her partner, no doubt-but not quite how she remembered him.

First time she met Kai, he'd been a wild leopard-human form later, he'd seemed polished outside, but inside, he was scarred, stubborn, extreme.

Now, the man before her had sharp eyes, a dangerous edge rolling off him-like a beast in human skin. Broad shoulders, back slightly hunched, he loomed over Nyx, waiting for her answer.

"No," Seafarion said, face like stone, answering for her. Forgetting appearances, he grabbed Nyx's hand to pull her away.

Kai stepped in front, long legs blocking them, blunt as hell. "You're not her husband-you don't get to say no for her."

Boyfriend or not, unmarried meant fair game-let alone just "brother and sister" as he had claimed.

"Mr. Kai, you're not from here-maybe you don't grasp our language or customs," Seafarion shot back. "Here, asking a strange girl out like that's rude."

After jabbing Kai, he turned to Nyx, badmouthing, "Foreigners are real loose- messy relationships. This guy's some big-shot noble from abroad, thinks different than us-don't take it to heart, Nyx."

"I'm not," Kai snapped, hating the smear, proving himself to Nyx, "I'm not loose or messy-I've never dated anyone else."

Still, he hadn't been here in ages-didn't know the local rules. Asking her out like that might've actually ticked her off.

To boost his chances of a successful date, Kai was itching to move forward but decided to hold back for now. He would go home to brush up on his skills and figure out how to pursue Nyx according to local customs.

He eased off a bit, no longer pressing her step by step. Seafarion seized the chance, grabbed Nyx's hand tight, and pulled her far away from the scene.

The drama kicked off out of nowhere and wrapped up fast. The onlookers felt like they didn't get their fill. They could tell this juicy story was far from over, but a front-row seat to gossip like this might not come around again.

The usual scandals in their circle-mistresses, illegitimate kids, and petty fights- were old news. They'd grown sick of it. But two big shots fighting over a girl, that was a fresh twist that perked everyone up.

On one side was the world's richest man, on the other a revered foreign noble with a massive following. Two evenly matched guys turning into love rivals, that beat any TV show hands down.

Putting everything else aside, just looking at their faces, these three outshone any TV actor. Together, they were a sight for

sore eyes.

A rich kid who'd had his eye on Nyx didn't dare entertain a single thought now. He shrank into a corner and downed a bitter drink. Compared to Seafarion and Kai, he felt like a total toad.

On the way back, Nyx kept wondering what to do next. Heavenly Law always seemed to mess with her, throwing tricky problems her way.

Handling two guys at once was honestly tough. Back in the day, she wouldn't have even tried playing the field had no choice-she'd decided to stick with them forever and couldn't bear to ditch either one.

now she

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Seafarion lifted his gaze, sneaking a peek at Nyx's thoughtful profile. He held back as long as he could before blurting out, "A guy who asks you out the first time he meets you is flaky and up to no good. He's not someone you should get serious with."

Nyx snapped out of her thoughts at his words. She weighed it for a second, then shook her head. "But I don't think he's a bad guy," she said, "Plus, he's really good-looking."

A faint smile played on her lips, her cheeks turning a little pink, like she was picturing Kai's face. In that instant, jealousy hit Seafarion like a truck. "What about me?" he demanded.

"You're good-looking too," Nyx answered honestly. "You're just different types. I think you're both handsome."

Her tone was so casual, like she was just appreciating their looks, but her eyes hinted at something deeper-something hard to pin down.

Seafarion's throat bobbed. He wanted to say more but stopped himself. A wild sense of danger he'd never felt before crept up inside him. Sure enough, it turned into another sleepless night.

It wasn't until the sky started to lighten, with faint rays slipping through the curtain gap, that Seafarion finally dozed off for a bit.

But as soon as he fell asleep, he dreamed of a soft little bunny kicking its legs, hopping out of his arms, and bolting ahead without looking back. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't catch up.

Panic and sadness drowned him. Seafarion jolted awake, sat bolt upright, his heart pounding like crazy. "Nyx, Nyx," he murmured.

He fumbled around, tripped and fell, ignored the pain, scrambled into his wheelchair in a mess, and didn't even change clothes before rolling over to bang on her door next door.

He'd messed up. He was a complete idiot. He'd acted all rational and let her go, but he couldn't handle the idea of Nyx leaving him for real. He wasn't the only guy in the world. Tons of people liked her, and he didn't have anything special to offer.

Nyx was a young woman. She'd want to date, maybe even get married. If he stingily refused to give her what she wanted, she wouldn't stick around wasting time with him forever.

He knocked, but no one answered. He rang the bell a few times-still nothing. The door stayed shut tight. Clearly, no one was home. Seafarion wheeled back to grab his phone and called Marilyn. "What's today's work and schedule? Where's Nyx right now?"

Marilyn's puzzled voice came through. "It's a rest day. Unless I got it wrong, I already reported that to you yesterday."

As for where Nyx was, she didn't know. Rest day plans weren't her job to track.

But Nyx rarely went out-maybe a short walk nearby at most. When there was no work or classes, she liked to stay home and laze around. A rest day, and yet she wasn't home-totally out of character.

Panic swelled in Seafarion's chest. He moved to call Nyx, hesitated, then switched to texting: [Nyx, where'd you go?],

He worried he'd blurt out a confession over the phone. Something like that needed to be said face-to-face to feel official.

His special notification chime rang out crisply once. Nyx: [Kai asked me to grab food with him. We're out right now.]

His worst fear came true. The dread from his dream practically solidified. Seafarion slumped back, then propped himself up fast and dialed Nyx's number.

He couldn't let some shady guy trick Nyx away. He had to find out where she was and bring

her back.

Nyx's phone buzzed. She reached to answer, but a veiny hand suddenly grabbed her wrist.

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"Who're you texting? Whose call is that? Why aren't you looking at me?" Kai's green eyes glared down at her, his brow furrowed. "You're on a date with me. No chatting with other guys."

Nyx blinked, totally thrown off. She thought, 'So bossy?'

Their eyes locked. A lightbulb went off in her head, and she suddenly figured out what felt off about Kai compared to how she remembered him.

Before he lost his memory, his gaze had more warmth and attachment. Now, it carried a fierce, possessive heat. Like a leopard gone wild back in the day-once he locked onto her, he'd stubbornly decided she was his.

Nyx knew how to handle this kind of leopard. She lowered her eyes and softened her voice. "You're squeezing my wrist a little too hard. It hurts."

Kai let go right away, a flash of regret in his eyes. He didn't dare touch her fragile frame again. Instead, he pulled out a document and handed it to Nyx. 'Another contract?' she thought. Nyx took it, glanced at the title, and her face twisted weirdly. She read through it slowly, stayed quiet for ages-long enough that the guy across from her started squirming-before asking, "What's your thinking

here?"

"Why'd you give me a sugar baby contract?" She was genuinely curious about this. She didn't believe a memory wipe would turn her partner into some sleazy jerk who'd skip love and duty for a cash-and-sex deal.

Kai sat up straight, dead serious. "Because I'm loaded, and our social standings are miles apart. Last night, I looked into your country's customs and culture. For situations like ours, it usually starts with a sugar baby contract for a long-term, steady dating setup."

Nyx was speechless. She thought, 'Is this legit research? Did he dig up his info from some trashy romance novel site?'

He'd just lost his memory, but it felt like this leopard got dumber. It was like a wild animal barely learning to shapeshift, trying hard to fit into human society but always letting its tail slip out.

Nyx stared at the clause saying the sugar baby can't fall for the sponsor for a bit, barely holding in a laugh. She signed her name carefully in the blank.

She didn't point out that this contract went against basic decency and had no legal weight. She nodded at him all serious-like. "Alright, I'm in."

A cold, cash-only deal was locked in. Kai rubbed her signature with his fingers a couple times, perked up instantly, and slipped into full-on sugar daddy mode.

He picked up a piece of steak and plopped it on her plate, jutting his chin. "Eat it."



Nyx raised an eyebrow but went along and ate it. Seeing this, Kai's eyes lit up. He scooped her some soup-Then came fried shrimp, grilled beef, truffle omelet. Nyx glanced at the omelet. "I don't like this one." She hated black truffles. Kai snatched it back, stuffed it in his mouth, and mentally blacklisted the dish.

After feeding her for a while, Nyx got full first and set her fork down. Kai frowned, muttering she ate too little. When she didn't budge, he finished the rest himself. After the meal, he sipped some tea, secretly pleased. Being a sugar daddy rocked. He could figure out what she liked and didn't like.

"Starting today, I'm calling you Nyx, Kai declared, all bossy. "No one else gets to." He'd heard Seafarion call her that last night.

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Nyx looked troubled. "But it's my first name. My friends have always called me that. I can't exactly tell them it's reserved for my sugar daddy now, can I?\*

Sugar baby deals were hush-hush, not something to broadcast. Realizing that, Kai backed off, dropping his dumb demand Guess being a sugar daddy wasn't all that great.

He shook off the sour mood, kept trying to flex his sponsor perks, and stood up to walk over to her. I want to hug you

He reached out, testing the waters by resting a hand on her slim waist, then wrapped his arms around her lightly. His hears started racing, and when he touched her hand, his face heated up. Everything felt off.

His body heat was insane. Nyx felt like she was stuck in a furnace. She tilted her

head up, studying him with a weird look for a moment, then said, "Want me to kiss you?"

Kai's arms tightened hard, his throat bobbing. "No, no need for now." He managed to fight the temptation. Tll tell you when I want a kiss. Just do what I say."

For a split second, Nyx swore she saw fluffy ears flicker above his head, but when

she looked closer, nothing was there. Maybe just her imagination. She dropped her gaze, lost in thought.

After hugging her a bit longer, Kai let go reluctantly. "That's it for today's date. I'll

take you home."

"Don't I need to live with you?" Nyx blinked, testing him. A sugar baby was supposed to stay with the sugar daddy.

Kai shook his head. "Nope."

Since that was the case, Nyx turned down his offer to drive her back. No need to risk running into Seafarion and sparking a world war.

Kai seemed a little bummed but oddly conflicted too. He didn't push it. They each took a copy of the contract and headed their separate ways.

Though he mostly lived abroad, Kai had a place in Broskel-a hillside villa in a quiet suburb. The whole mountain was his.

The car pulled up, the door shut, and the man vanished in a flash. His sturdy clothes ripped apart into shreds on the floor. A massive leopard bounded out on four strong legs, charging into the woods behind the house.

After tearing through the forest, roaring and sprinting like mad, startling every bird and beast around, Kai's adrenaline finally simmered down. He shifted back to human form.

He opened his phone's chat group. A bunch of unread messages had piled up.

Little Sparrow: [Ahhhh! What's up with Lord Kai?]

Little Sparrow: [Scared me to death.]

Little Squirrel: [Scared me to death.]

Little Hedgehog: [Scared me to death.] Little Fox: [Scared me to death.]

Big Black Bear: [Scared me to death.]

Sunflower Parrot: [What's going on?] Sunflower Parrot: [What happened?]

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Sunflower Parrot: [You guys don't know? Lord Kai went on a date with a human today!]

Sunflower Parrot: [I even gave Lord Kai some tips!]

Sunflower Parrot: [Lord Kai, how'd the date go, my lord? How was it?]

Sunflower Parrot: [Did she sign the contract?]

Old Ox: [Is that contract legit? No humans I know do that for dating.]

Sunflower Parrot: [You're talking about regular humans! Is Lord Kai some regular human? He's the leader of our demon clan!]

Sunflower Parrot: [How can our lord date a human the normal way! For dating, just toss humans some cash-they love that stuff!]

Old Turtle: [Yeah, demons don't last long with humans.]

Kai glanced at Old Turtle's last message and snorted. The demon clan was crazy strong. As long as he had power, he wouldn't age or die. A puny human couldn't take him.

He brushed off the nonsense and replied to Sunflower Parrot: [It went great. She agreed.]

Kai: [She listens to me. She even offered to kiss me and move in with me.]

No one knew how tempted he'd been. If he weren't worried about losing control and revealing his true form, scaring her off, he wouldn't have said no. Sure, he didn't get the full perks, but that didn't stop him from wanting to brag a little.

The group chat blew up with praise, Sunflower Parrot leading the pack, gushing about Kai's unmatched charm-winning over demon ladies left and right, and now even human chicks couldn't resist him.

Kai got tired of the flattery. He didn't care how many females adored him. He just wanted to figure out everything about -Nyx.

He'd been human-shaped for over a hundred years, learning useful human stuff, stacking wealth, climbing higher, and helping out other little demons along the way. This was his first stab at love-unfamiliar and confusing. He had no clue what

he was doing.

Kai: [When I hugged Nyx, my heart was racing, my body got all hot, and I felt awful. What's that about?]

He'd barely kept himself from shifting back into beast form. Otherwise, he wouldn't have cut the date short like that.

Old Ox: [That feeling sounds familiar. But it's not mating season yet.]

Sunflower Parrot: [Who cares if it is! Lord Kai's a natural!]

He privately messaged Kai, sending a video file called "World of Animals."

Sunflower Parrot: [Check this out, my lord! I found you some material!]

He wasn't great at searching online yet and could only find animal stuff. For demons, it was close enough anyway.

They were demons, sure, but demons came from animals that tapped into cosmic secrets. They all carried some beast instincts deep down.

Kai clicked the video without a second thought. Birds chirped, flowers bloomed, and a narrator's voice flowed out soothingly.

"Spring has arrived, nature awakens, and it's mating season for animals once again."

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It was a rest day, so Nyx didn't call her assistant for a ride. She just grabbed a random taxi home. She'd been stuffed to the brim at lunch, and the driver's wild skills left her carsick from all the jostling.

She got out, let the breeze hit her, and felt a little better. But the elevator ride

brought the dizziness and nausea roaring back. She shuffled out weakly and spotted someone at her door. Seafarion sat there, pale as a ghost, eyes red, not moving an inch—who knows how long he'd been waiting. He looked like he might shatter.

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Even though she'd meant to rile him up a bit, seeing Seafarion like this broke Nyx's heart. She punched in her fingerprint, opened the door, and pushed his wheelchair inside. "Why didn't you go home?" she scolded. "What, if I didn't come back, you'd just sit out there forever?"

"Don't," Seafarion flinched, muttering low, "don't go away." It was just an offhand comment, but it stabbed right into his deepest fear.

Nyx glanced down at his fragile, anxious state, sighed softly, and comforted him. "I won't. See? I'm back now."

She tossed the contract onto the coffee table and turned to grab a cup. "Sit tight for a sec. I'll brew you some tea."

Bad luck—the tea sitting out was all gone. She rummaged through the storage room, dug out a box, and came back to the living room. Then she heard Seafarion's hoarse voice. "Nyx."

Nyx looked over and her eyes went wide. The contract. She'd left the contract on the coffee table. Sure, it was her fault for leaving it out, but Seafarion shouldn't just grab her stuff without asking.

The air in the living room got heavy. Seafarion's knuckles whitened as he gripped the contract, nearly crumpling the thin pages into a ball. The usually cool-headed guy was trembling slightly all over, clearly furious, adrenaline pumping.

He owned up to being a creep—he'd been desperate to know what Nyx had been up to, so he'd snatched the papers off the table without permission. He'd only meant to glance at it, but the glaring title hit him like a thunderbolt.

"Kai-How dare he insult you like this?" Seafarion screamed.

In a flash, the whole contract turned to shreds in the enraged man's hands. Looking at his icy expression, Nyx could almost see his resolve to take Kai out. Things were getting tricky.

Nyx's first real slip-up left her scrambling. She didn't know how to calm him down yet, so she bent down to pick up the scraps, buying time and hiding her embarrassment.

Bending over was fine, but she stood up too fast. Her vision blurred, the carsickness surged back, and she gagged once.

Seafarion's face froze. He quickly steadied her waist, patting her chest to help her breathe. "What's wrong, Nyx? Stomach upset?"

All his piled-up anger couldn't outweigh his worry for her. He stared at her nervously, brain racing through possible issues. His eyes landed on her slightly rounded belly and stopped dead.

He wondered if it was just indigestion or something else. Thinking back to that wild night, Seafarion's breathing sped up. His face shifted colors, and he yanked at his hair hard.

He-he hadn't used protection. Even afterward, he'd forgotten to fix it, too busy dodging responsibility. He hadn't thought about Nyx's side at all. A barely adult girl-she wouldn't know how to take care of herself.

In one day, she'd switched companies, moved into a new place, then jumped straight into auditions, studying, and filming. She probably hadn't even checked her own health.

Once that possibility hit him, Seafarion spiraled deeper into panic, head hanging low. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Nyx, I'm sorry."

He kept apologizing, rambling quietly, "The kid might inherit my crappy genes. I know you didn't want to get pregnant. Whether to keep it, I don't get a say. It's your call. But no matter what, I'll take responsibility."

Nyx stared, baffled, piecing together what he meant. Her brain nearly crashed. When she snapped out of it, Seafarion was already planning marriage licenses and weddings. She cut him off fast. "I'm not pregnant. It's just carsickness."

Seafarion didn't buy it. He reached out, gently touching her stomach, full of tenderness.

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Nyx's face flushed. She swatted his hand away, annoyed. "That's just 'cause I ate too much earlier! That leopard fed her nonstop. Otherwise, she wouldn't have gotten carsick so bad she wanted to puke."

Seeing she wouldn't admit to being pregnant, Seafarion didn't argue. He nodded like he got it, then brought it up again. "Marry me, okay?"

Whether she wanted money or love, Nyx didn't need to settle for some gross, unfair contract. Be his wife, and everything he had was hers. Seafarion finally snapped under a sudden blast of heat and woke up.

Nyx wasn't done teasing him yet, though. She pressed her lips tight and shook her head. "You don't even like me. Even Lancet thinks we're not a good match."

Hearing that out of nowhere, Seafarion got mad-ready to dock Lancet's bonus for running his mouth. Then he remembered where that "not a good match" line came from, and his face cracked a little.

He'd said it. He'd said it himself. Words were out, there was no taking them back. After beating himself up for a while, he laid it bare to Nyx. "I like you, Nyx."

It was love at first sight. He was hooked beyond help. He sounded dead serious. Nyx glanced up at him, seemed touched, but still shook her head. "You said yesterday I'm like a sister to you."

Digging further back, her list of his screw-ups was even longer. She'd jotted them all down in her mental notebook, waiting for today. No matter what Seafarion said, she wouldn't budge.

After all the back-and-forth, Seafarion was practically driven nuts by his past self, looking like death warmed over.

He'd screwed up. He'd soaked up Nyx's affection just fine but kept kidding himself, pushing her away. Now all those mistakes boomeranged back, and he had to eat the bitter fallout.

"Marriage is a big deal," Nyx said, blinking innocently. "Don't say you'll marry me just 'cause you feel sorry for me."

With that, she didn't give Seafarion a chance to argue back. Claiming she felt off and wanted to nap, she got up to show him

out.

Staring at the closed door, Seafarion got his first taste of being kicked to the curb. He'd done the same to Nyx once too. He'd brought this on himself.

Cleaning up the scattered paper bits was a hassle. Nyx planned to deal with it after waking up, but when she did, the place was spotless.

A thermos sat on the table with hot medicinal soup inside. A sticky note beside it said Helly had dropped by-Gavin made

the

soup and asked her to deliver it.

Nyx sat down, sipped the soup-herby, but tasty. She texted Helly and Gavin thanks, then sent Seafarion one too.

Maybe he was too worried about her, or maybe that "thanks" spurred him on. For days after, Nyx got a steady stream of medicinal dishes and soups-first from Gavin, then from Seafarion himself.

He seemed dead set on proving his feelings with actions, convinced that winning someone's heart started with their stomach. His cooking skills shot up so fast his teacher was floored. For someone of his status to cook every day without complaint, that alone was jaw-dropping.

Nyx didn't just keep messing with him. She gave him some positive vibes back- ate his carefully made food and softened up toward him bit by bit.

Things with the little mermaid were steady and looking up. As for the leopard, there was no word from hina or ages, and it worried Nyx. Since that first date, Kai had vanished, leaving Nyx fretting.

Thinking back to Seafarion's murderous glare that day, she feared the guys had already duked it out behind her back. The

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thought of that nightmare scenario made her vision go dark.

She couldn't wait around. After a couple more days, she reached out to Kai

herself. "Want to meet up?"



On the phone, Kai's voice sounded normal, brimming with barely contained joy. "You missed me?"

Nyx relaxed and said, "Yeah, missed you"

59%

Those words sent the leopard leaping onto a 33-foot tree in excitement, then diving back down to circle his phone a few times. "I missed you too."

He wanted to meet up, but not just yet. "Let's meet on the eighth of next month," Kai said, counting the days.

From the stuff Sunflower Parrot sent, he'd figured he was in mating season. Going by leopard mating cycles, he'd be in this phase for a while-till next month. He didn't feel off when he wasn't near Nyx, but he figured it was safer to avoid meeting her during this time.

Kai shifted back to human form, glanced at his rock-hard abs, and punched them in frustration. With their contract, she should technically be with him through this. But Nyx was all soft and delicate-whining when he squeezed her wrist too hard. No way she could handle him like this.

After hanging up, Nyx was still clueless why they had to wait till next month. She stared at her phone, zoning out, then caught a familiar profile pic in a short video's like section.

'Seafarion? He watches goofy short videos? And even likes them?' she thought.

Nyx suddenly felt like maybe she didn't know her partner as well as she thought. A little guilt crept in.

Curious, she tapped the video Seafarion had liked and went quiet. She thought, 'Pregnancy and baby tips?'

Not just that one-scrolling back, he'd liked and saved stuff on prenatal diets, postpartum care must-knows, even new dad guides and tips for caring for disabled infants. As she kept looking, Nyx's mix of shame and irritation melted into something tender and bittersweet.

If only she could bring Gabby here. Then Seafarion could see their kid was a cute little merfolk-eats well, sleeps well, no worries, lively and healthy. But for now, she had to set him straight. She wasn't pregnant.

That evening, hearing someone return next door, Nyx went over and knocked. The door swung open fast. Seafarion's eyes shone bright, locked on her.

It was the first time in ages Nyx had come to him on her own. Meeting those hopeful eyes, Nyx felt a pang of reluctance. But better a quick sting than a long ache. The misunderstanding had to end. She grabbed his hand and pressed it to her stomach.

"Hungry?" Seafarion started to say he'd cook right away, but his palm felt the soft, flat surface and he froze.

"I'm not pregnant," Nyx said, letting go and handing him a medical report. "I told you before, but you didn't seem to believe me. So here's proof." Months had passed since that night. If she were pregnant, it'd be obvious by now. But Nyx's waist was slim, hand around. That slight curve from before was gone.

easy to wrap a

It'd just been a temporary bulge from stuffing her face, backed up by the report. Seafarion took the report, read it top to bottom carefully, then lowered his eyes and stayed silent for a long time. The room filled with nothing but their quiet breathing.

Knowing he'd prepped so much and now his hopes were dashed, Nyx figured he'd be crushed. She softened, reached out to pat his shoulder, wanting to cheer

him up.

But Seafarion spoke first, "Your BMI's low, and you're a bit anemic. Is my cooking

no good? Not to your

taste?"

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He didn't look sad-just focused on tweaking her diet or maybe hiring a pro nutritionist to get her healthy.

Nyx wasn't ready for that. She blinked, then shook her head. "No way."

\* 59%

With Seafarion's skills, he'd nail anything he put his mind to. His cooking couldn't suck after all that effort. She just didn't gain weight easily. These past few months, she'd already gotten way healthier than when she first showed up.

"I'm actually kinda chubby for an actress," Nyx joked. "This is perfect-I've gotta look good on camera. Can't balloon up."

Thinking of those stick-thin actors, male and female alike, Seafarion frowned. He couldn't laugh. He wanted Nyx to switch jobs-or quit altogether. But she took her work seriously and worked hard. He couldn't shoot her down with one word. His frown deepened.

"Don't be sad," Nyx said, reaching out a finger to smooth the crease between his brows. She coaxed gently, "Kids will come in the future."

Once they got back, Gabby'd be bouncing around Seafarion, calling him Dad. The memory-wiped guy didn't know about their kid. Hearing this, his pale face flushed with shy embarrassment. "Sorry, I got it wrong."

Nyx was only eighteen. No pregnancy was the best news. Lately, he'd felt like a criminal-whether Nyx kept a baby or not, she'd get hurt either way. Now, that guilt lifted a bit. His tense heart could ease up. He should've been relieved. Sharp-eyed Lancet noticed Seafarion's weird shift. For a while, Seafarion'd been obsessed with pregnancy and baby stuff- borderline addicted. Even the company's related businesses had boomed.

But the last few days, he'd pulled out of it like he'd snapped awake, only to sink into deeper gloom. Lancet didn't dare ask Seafarion directly. He slyly asked Nyx instead.

"What're you up to?" Seafarion stepped out of his office for air and caught Lancet sneaking around with her phone. He prodded, curious.

Lancet jolted, his phone slipping from his hands and plummeting. He lunged with arms and legs flailing, barely caught it before it hit the ground, and let out a huge breath.

He glanced at the screen, saw he'd accidentally sent a video call invite, and his relieved smile froze. He fell apart inside.

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Golden liquor shimmered under the lights, soft piano music filled the air, and the restaurant hummed with classy, romantic vibes. Nyx sat on a cushy chair, soaking in a certain leopard's searing stare.

Her phone screen lit up by the table. She glanced down, and her expression shifted. 'A video call? Lancet never video-calls me. Has something happened to Seafarion?' she thought.

Worry trumped everything. Ignoring Kai's eyes on her, she grabbed the phone and answered without thinking.

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389%

"Lancet?" The call connected. Lancet's panicked face flashed across the screen, then the view spun like the phone got tossed in a dryer, flipping who-knows-how-many times.

Nyx called out, confused. "Lancet? Lancet? What's going on?"

The date vibe got wrecked. Kai stood up, slinking behind Nyx like a leopard on the hunt, silent as anything. His broad shoulders loomed. He braced his arms on the table, boxing Nyx in completely, and peered at her phone.

The video finally steadied. A striking male face replaced Lancet's on the screen. It was Seafarion.

Hearing Nyx's voice, he snatched Lancet's phone without a word, looked at the screen, and locked eyes with a pair of green irises. Both guys went dead quiet.

Seeing Seafarion safe and sound on the video, Nyx let out a long breath. Once she relaxed, her brain kicked back into gear, and she realized what she'd done. 'Uh-oh!' she thought.

Smelling a crash coming, Nyx's hair stood on end. Behind her, a hard chest pressed against her back, no gaps, sticking tight. Nerves sharpened every sense.

Through thin fabric, Nyx felt scorching heat and the rumble of speech. A shiver shot through her like a jolt. She heard Kai growl low in her ear, "Aren't you on a date with me, Nyx? Why are you looking at another guy?"

"Because, uh, I thought he had an emergency," Nyx said, shrinking down, guilty as charged. She felt like her house was on fire.

Back in the Beastmen Empire, the guys naturally rolled with sharing life.

was a straight-up player.

But in a monogamy-only worldview, she

Heavenly Law threw this test at her probably 'cause this kind of world was the norm across the three thousand realms.

Thinking of being soul-bound to her partners, then juggling nine lovers in a world like this next life, Nyx nearly passed out. She could barely handle two guys in a showdown.

"Were you worried about me, Nyx?" Seafarion lowered his eyes, hiding his feelings, then smoothed his tone into something gentle.

Off to the side, Lancelot's jaw nearly hit the floor. He didn't care his phone was hijacked—he was too deep in this blockbuster gossip.

'Holy crap! Nyx is out dating another guy, and Seafarion still won't quit? He's in deep! No wonder he's been down lately. I'd be depressed too,' he thought.

"Yeah, worried about you." Nyx swallowed hard, nodding softly. She knew she was in Kai's clutches right now, but that's why she had to keep things even—coax Seafarion a little over the screen.

Seafarion perked up, pleased. But the breathing behind Nyx got heavier, dripping with irritation.

Kai's lips pressed into a cold, hard line. He didn't take it out on Nyx, though—all his anger surged at his rival. "If you've got nothing important to say, don't interrupt my date with Nyx."

As he spoke, he tightened his hold on the soft little chick in his arms, flexing his sugar daddy rights on purpose. "Kiss me."

Nyx was speechless. She regretted teasing Kai on their last date. If she hadn't messed around and asked if he wanted a kiss, he probably wouldn't have pulled this now.

Too late—the stubborn leopard had his face angled, waiting. If she didn't kiss him, he wouldn't let go. She leaned in quick and pecked him. Veins popped on Seafarion's arm like they'd burst.

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"Ah!" Lancet yelled. "My phone!" He swore he heard a crack-screen or case, he couldn't tell.

Seafarion took a deep breath, forcing his voice steady. "You don't have to listen to him, Nyx. That contract's unethical. You don't need to follow it."

Your foreign rules don't fly here, Kai," he said, staring him down coldly. "Whether you tricked or forced Nyx into signing that disgusting thing, you'd better stop now. Don't try breaking the law."

Kai frowned, a flicker of doubt in his eyes. The tension was thick enough to cut. Nyx felt like an ant on a hot pan, soothing one, then the other.

"I'm just having dinner with him, nothing else," she reassured Seafarion, then vouched for Kai. "The contract's not what you think. He didn't trick or force me- just a little misunderstanding."

Truth was, she thought her goofy partner was kinda fun, so she played along with his roleplay game. After spilling it all, she tapped the call off, slumped back into her partner's arms exhausted, resting on his chest and letting out a long sigh.

Kai wanted to grill Nyx, but that move pinned him in place, frozen. After standing still as her pillow for a bit, his head cleared, and he sorted it out.

The sugar baby contract was unethical, not local custom, and even went against basic decency. Realizing that, his trust in Sunflower Parrot shattered instantly.

Kai's face darkened to pitch black. No wonder he'd waited out his mating season, saw Nyx again, and still felt the same-still that intense, no let-up. The intel guy was a bust. His problem hadn't been fixed at all.

Since the contract was shady and illegal, Kai felt like a deflated balloon. He lost any ground to demand Nyx explain herself or ban her from other guys.

He didn't even dare order her to eat like last time. He cut a piece of steak, set it on her plate gently, and snuck a peek at her reaction.

Demons had beast instincts-cherishing food was carved into their bones. Liking someone meant wanting to feed them. But that didn't work in human society. Lots of humans found it annoying.

Nyx ate the steak and flashed Kai a smile. The on-edge Kai lit up, totally satisfied. Ignoring the hiccup, Kai still counted this date a win. At least Nyx didn't hate him. She ate what he gave her and even fed him some back.

Courting was never smooth sailing. Guys always had to scrap a bit to win a girl's heart.

The first-time-courting leopard bounced back quick, savoring the memory of Nyx's kiss on his cheek. Back home, he bolted to the woods again to burn off the extra hype.

A sunflower parrot flapped over from afar, landed on a branch, and chirped, "My lord, you called for me?"

The leopard acted like he didn't hear, no response, just kept stalking forward with wild, graceful steps.

"My lord? My lord!" The parrot squawked twice, ready to hop down and find him. Wings barely spread, his vision blurred-a whoosh of wind hit, and the leopard pounced onto the branch.

"Ahhhhh-!" The parrot screeched like it was dying. A loud thud-he got smacked off the branch to the ground. If he weren't a tough demon, a normal parrot would've been toast.

The leopard landed light as a feather, pinned his tail with a paw, and glared down with icy green eyes. "Why'd you screw me over?" He'd trusted these little demons so much.

"How could I screw you over?" The parrot wailed, claiming innocence. He was loyal to the core.

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"I wanted to date Nyx, and you tricked me into insulting her with an illegal contract. That's not screwing me over the leopard's stare turned deadly.

He didn't ease up his paw-in fact, he pressed harder, making the parrot shriek and flail.

Jato

"Waaahhh! Don't kill me! My lord! Don't kill me!" Tears soaked his feathers. He shivered, pleading, "Sure, yeah, it's legs, but it works! Upper-class humans do this all the time every country's got it. You've seen it plenty, right? Often, both sides agreed to the terms. It didn't matter if it was legal or not. Kai frowned, thinking it over, 'Have I seen it often?'

Unless it messed with shared spousal assets, he never paid attention to human hookups. But knowing how low humans... especially the guys-could sink, taking shady stuff for granted wasn't a shock.

He lifted his paw, letting the parrot off for now, and warned coldly, "I don't like it." That contract made him love face with his rival and tanked his image with Nyx.

Barely surviving, the parrot shook off the dirt and shuffled away. Still scared, he mustered the guts to speak, "Bot, but, if you want to date her, a deal's the easiest way. You're not going to actually fall for her, right?"

"Demons and humans together? You'll die fast-no happy ending," he sobbed, tears gushing. "The old demons all say so. I'm just looking out for you!"

A king this strong and kind was a once-in-a-millennium find. Countless little demons owed him their lives-they couldn't handle him dying.

"Total nonsense," the leopard snapped, flicking his tail in annoyance.

He'd lived in human society for years-fought wars, played politics. If he weren't sick of the hassle, he could've run a human

country.

Ruthless enemies couldn't take him down. Nyx was a delicate little thing he barely dared touch-she couldn't kill him. He was a born great demon. With Nyx, he felt stronger than ever, never weak.

"Demons and humans don't mix, my lord." The parrot pressed, tears nearly dry. "She'll age day by day, and you'll stay young forever. For demons, a century was a blink. For humans, it was a lifetime."

The leopard went rigid. He stayed quiet a long time. Just as the parrot thought he'd won him over, he growled low, "I can stay with her for her whole life."

He didn't need more-just to be by Nyx's side as long as she lived. "What?" The parrot nearly turned into a screaming chicken, freaking out. "Her whole life? You going to hide your demon side from her forever?" Beast form was their natural state-human form felt like a straitjacket. That's why demons liked the wild, where they could let loose anytime. Living with a human, stuck in human skin forever, was pure torture.

"And telling her what you are? That's even worse!" said the parrot. Weak little demons who slipped up in front of humans often ended up dead. Kai

had fixed identity slip-ups for tons of little demons over the years, seeing firsthand how greedy humans could be.

The parrot flapped around the woods in a panic. "No one knows better than you how rotten humans are!"

'What kind of spell had that human chick Nyx cast on Lord Kai?' he wondered.



The leopard clawed the ground, itching to swat the noisy bird down. Nyx wasn't rotten. Nyx was cute. He'd stay human-

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shaped for Nyx forever if he had to.

But what if I slip up?' Kai didn't dare picture it. He'd handled plenty of demon exposure cases-seen humans demand hush money or lose their minds from fear.

Everyone's breaking point was different. Something beyond comprehension-even a harmless kitten or pup-could freak people out.

And he wasn't a kitten or pup. He was a giant leopard that scared everyone. Nyx would definitely be terrified of him.

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After the date, Nyx fired off messages to Lancet to get the scoop.

Nyx: [How's Seafarion holding up?]

Nyx: [Is he crying?]

Nyx: [Comfort him for me first, keep him steady-I'm on my way!]

Teasing was fine, but not too far. Today's mess went beyond her control, and she worried Seafarion might hide away crying. She'd just pried his shell open-couldn't let him clam up again.

Lancet: [No need to come to the office. He's already home waiting for you.]

Lancet: [He's not crying or mad at you. Don't worry.]

Lancet: [You're seriously impressive. I'm in awe.]

Lancet had to hand it to her. With that innocent, pure face, somehow she was juggling two bigshots at once. The already at each other's throats, and she still hadn't failed.

guys were

If it were him, finding out the girl he was chasing was dating someone else, he'd bail on the spot. But Seafarion wouldn't let go-seemed like it fired him up more. Even his gloom had lifted a chunk.

'Really not crying?' Nyx thought. She wasn't totally convinced. She rushed home, out of breath from the elevator, and saw Seafarion waiting by her door.

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No Ads

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The guy's expression was calm, his usual edge dialed way down. At a glance, Nyx almost thought he'd gotten his memory back. Before she could process, he took her hand, and she dazedly followed him into his place.

A sweet-tangy smell hung in the air. Seafarion brought over a steaming bowl of soup. Just made it-careful, it's hot, he warned gently.

Nyx sipped it slowly. Then a big hand settled on her full stomach. She paused, glancing at Seafarion.

"I've been learning some massage techniques lately, he explained softly. Til rub your tummy-it'll feel better and help digestion."

After all his doting, he rarely initiated touch. Today, though, something had shaken him up, flipping his usual restraint. Nyx raised an eyebrow but didn't say no.

The sofa was decked out with soft cushions. She sank in, cozy as could be, and started drifting off. Seeing her relax. Seafarion picked his moment. "What'd you eat out there earlier, Nyx?"

"A place in the north part of town-Styria style, Nyx mumbled, eyes shut, listing off dishes in bits and pieces.

"Did you like it, Nyx?" he asked.

Nyx nodded, then shook her head. "It was alright, but not as good as your cooking."

One honest line, and the guy next to her was over the moon. He kept digging into which dishes she liked, planning to learn them himself.

"Did you get carsick today?" he asked.

Nyx nodded honestly. "Just a little bit," she said.

Truth be told, the driver's skills were pretty good that day. It was Nyx who'd been too impatient, urging the driver to speed up, which inevitably made her dizzy again.

"But I feel fine now," she said. After downing a bowl of soup, she felt revived, her whole body at ease.

"How come you're back so early?" Nyx wasn't just on the receiving end of questions-she turned it around on him. "Not busy with work today?"

Seafarion had learned to be straightforward. "Because I missed you. I wanted to see you."

Work was, of course, busy. In his position, there was always an endless pile of things to do. But Nyx was his top priority.

Those tasks could wait a day or two. Nyx, though, was one of a kind— irreplaceable— and he couldn't let someone else snatch her away.

They chatted idly about trivial things for a while. Seafarion gradually scooted closer to Nyx, sitting beside her, then suddenly asked, "Did you go out with Kai because he's good-looking?"

Since the sugar baby deal turned out to be a misunderstanding, it meant Nyx had gone out with Kai willingly-letting him hold her, kiss her, all of her own accord.

Nyx lifted her eyelids, her sleepiness fading by half. She realized at some point she'd ended up wrapped in his arms. Seafarion had stretched out his long arm to hold her, gently rubbing her stomach. He gazed at her intently, waiting for her

answer.

"Part of it was that," Nyx replied carefully, "but not the whole reason." There were tons of good-looking cople in the world,

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and she didn't like every single one of them.

"Part of the reason?" Seafarion chewed over those words cautioudy, then ventured an invitatio Tomorrow, could we go on a date?"

His rival's quick progress had sparked a fierce sense of urgency in him. He couldn't afford in donde and we gon That guy didn't have much going for him-Nyx was just momentarily swayed by his looks, that's a turd sand beg looking too, no worse than Kai.

"Sure, but not tomorrow," Nyx said, wanting to cheer Seafarion up a bit. Let's pack another time. Tomy Tee online event with the Breaking Chains crew.

The show had aired most of its episodes, and lately, there were a ton of fan events. Her character was insanely popular, almost overshadowing the leads. She couldn't miss a single event. Work would take up nearly the whole day-there m no time to go anywhere else.

"How about the day after?" he asked.

They settled on pushing the date back a day. Seeing Seafarion content, with no sign of tears, Nyx feud nough w head home. With work tomorrow, she needed to rest early that night.

It was ten o'clock at night. The sky outside had gone pitch black. All the lights in her room were off. Sy ook aan he bath, climbed into bed with limp hands and feet, and soon slipped into a deep sleep.

The house was dead quiet, with only the soft rise and fall of her breathing filling the space. A pair of glowing en besty eyes appeared silently outside her window.

The fifteenth floor was high enough to deter human thieves, but for an agile leopard, it was like walking on fat gro Under the cover of darkness, Kai evaded every city camera, following the intel he'd gathered to sneak all the way to Nyx's place.

He didn't mean to do anything bad. He was just in a sour mood and couldn't resist wanting to see Nyx

After climbing fifteen floors, though, the bedroom curtains were drawn tight, blocking everything inside. He couldn't catch a glimpse of Nyx's face.

Kai was silent and irritated. He stretched out a paw and pushed at the glass in front of him. With a faint creak," the window actually gave way and swung inward.

The leopard froze stiff, wondering why the window was not locked. Instinctively, he wanted to step back but nearly fell. He caught himself just in time. The temptation was right there in front of him, too hard to resist.

He couldn't see Nyx through the curtains. So he'd just go in for a quick look and nothing else, and he'd leave right after

After a long internal struggle, the leopard shut his eyes and slipped through the window into Nyx's bedroom in one swift motion. A wave of warm fragrance hit him, nearly knocking him dizzy.

This was where Nyx lived-her scent was everywhere. The leopard sniffed left and right, his tail shooting straight up. He rubbed his head hard against spots where her scent was strongest, trying to soak it up and leave his own mark

He lifted his head, his eyes locking onto the bed. Nyx was clearly deep in sleep, her cheeks flushed, her breathing steady. Try as he might, Kai couldn't hold back. He leaned in and took a deep sniff at her neck.

Nyx was dreaming of a big tree. Maybe because she missed her life in that other world, the Divine Tree often visited her dreams, weaving a cradle for her, keeping her company through the long nights.

In her dream, she nestled in her mother's embrace, feeling utterly at peace. But tonight's dream took an unexpected turn.

A leopard appeared out of nowhere, circling her, then lunging forward to sniff her fiercely, starting at her neck and working

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Wed, 19 Mar

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his way all over. Nyx reached out to grab him, but he darted back agilely and scampered off.

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Not long after, he crept back with silent steps. She tried a few more times but couldn't catch him-not even a single strand of leopard fur.

Until the leopard returned to her side, no longer content with sniffing. He buried his head and lightly licked her exposed ankle. A rush of hot breath shot through her whole body. Nyx shivered and snapped her eyes open.

It was morning. Nyx sat up and rubbed her forehead, feeling like that dream was way too real. She glanced around-no leopard, no sign of anyone in the room. Was it just a case of thinking about him all day and dreaming of him at night? I went out with Kai during the day, so I dreamed of him?' she wondered. With less than half an hour until her alarm, Nyx got up instead of going back to sleep, washing up and getting ready for her agent and assistant to pick her up.

A few recently worn outfits hung on the bedroom rack. She scanned them, found none to her liking, and started toward the closet-then stopped short. Bending down, she plucked a few light golden hairs from her jeans. They looked like cat fur, but tougher, coarser- something left by a big feline.

Nyx narrowed her eyes, lost in thought. The doorbell chimed once as a heads-up, followed by the sound of the door opening. Her agent and assistant had arrived. Helly bolted in fastest, her footsteps pattering to the bedroom door. She knocked. "Boss! You awake?"

The moment the door swung open, her cheerful grin froze solid. She sucked in a shocked breath, leaned closer to sniff Nyx, then stumbled back two hundred meters like she was rolling away.

Her panicked reaction was like a small animal sensing a predator. Marilyn and Gavin jumped too, exchanging confused looks, unsure why Helly was freaking out.

She'd always gotten along great with Nyx-no way she was scared of her or avoiding her.

"Your room." Marilyn started hesitantly, giving Nyx a questioning look. "Was there someone else here?"

Nyx shook her head and stepped aside, gesturing for her to come in and help pick out clothes.

On the way to the event venue, Helly was unusually quiet for once. Normally, her mouth never stopped-endless topics, chattering with Nyx the whole way. Today, she slumped in her seat, silent, occasionally sneaking glances at Nyx. Marilyn and Gavin had no clue what was up with her, but Nyx had a hunch.

She didn't bother Helly's sulking, giving her space to cool off. When they reached the venue and Helly still seemed shaky, too nervous to stick close, Nyx called over Gavin. "You'll have to work extra today—fill in for Helly and stay with me." Gavin didn't mind and even urged Helly to see a doctor if she wasn't feeling well. With a kind boss and caring coworkers, Helly welled up with tears, streaming like a river.

'I-I didn't mean for this,' she thought. 'It's just that Nyx reeks of a big demon-like she rolled around with one all night!' That scent was overpowering. Humans couldn't smell it, but demons picked it up loud and clear. Getting too close felt like a big demon was clamping her throat, warning her to back off. She was just a frail little demon-she couldn't handle it.

'If I get

close to her, I might accidentally revert to my true form out of fear!'

Helly whipped out her phone and t the demon clan group chat.

'in

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19 Mar

Little Fox: [Wahhh, my boss might've been targeted by a big demon-so scary"]

Little Sparrow: IA big demon? Is it going to eat your boue? What do we do

Little Sparrow: (I remember you saying your boss is a good human-you brag about her a lo

Little Fox: [Eat her? Noooo, please no]

Little Fox: [She is so pretty and smells so nice-I love her. But today the's covered in big demon stench. It scared me to death, wahhh.J

Little Fox: [No! I don't want my boss to get eaten!]

Little Sparrow's casual question sent Helly into a panic, her tail nearly popping out. Old tales of roque demons exting humans flooded her mind.

Sure, Nyx didn't look like she was missing any limbs, but with a fierce demon like that on her trail, she couldn't escape

"Nyx smells so good-that demon probably can't bear to eat her right away. It'd sniff her, lick her to satisfy its cravings first she thought.

Imagining her boss eventually getting devoured by a terrifying demon, Helly broke down, spamming the group with 99- crying messages.

The commotion dragged a few lurking big demons out of the woodwork.

Peregrine: [Alright, stop crying. I'll go check it out.]

Peregrine: [Lord Kai banned eating humans ages ago. Let's see which idiot dares to defy him!]

Brown Bear: [I'm going too.]

-Brown Bear: [Once we catch that punk, I'll twist its head off.]

More and more big demons piped up, itching to teach any man-eating rogue a lesson.

Old Ox: [Hold on, could it be a misunderstanding?]

Old Ox: [I'll go instead. Little Fox, what's your boss's name? Where is she now?]

Little Fox: [Thank you, everyone!]

Little Fox: [My boss is an actress named Nyx. She's at the Breaking Chains online event right now-179 Sunset Road, Bovine District!]

That set the group off like a bomb.

Little Squirrel: [Nyx?]

Little Squirrel: [Your boss is Nyx? The Nyx from Breaking Chains?]

Red-Crowned Crane: [Holy crap!]

Red-Crowned Crane: [I'm watching the livestream!]



Big Black Bear: [Me too!]

Big Yellow Dog: [I'm Princess Nyx's loyal pup! No one's allowed to hurt her!]

4/5

Green Peacock (if I swoop in and exve her, will fiye fall for men

Line Sparrow I'm flying over right now! Chirp

Peregrine Looks like I've got no choice but to god

Brown Bear: Pretty boys will just embarrass themselves this myt

The group erupted with demons big and small, each more typed than the law to a blue, the rat surned imo a Nyx fan club.

Helly stared at her buzzing phone, dumbfounded. Nyx is super propeder with demonst due thought

As they bickered over who should go, a timid Sunflower Parrot popped up: 10m!

Sunflower Parrots fit might be a misunderstanding!

He called it a misunderstanding but stumbled over his words, not explaining what he meant. The fired-up demous quickly lost patience, diving back into heated

detrates and even starting a pell to you on who's best suited to protect Nyx.

Halfway through the voting, with the competition heating up, the rarely active group leader suddenly appeared.

Kai: I'll protect her.)

It's Lord Kaif' Helly thought. Her eyes lit up with excitement, nearly dropping her

phone. As a little fox demon who'd once almost been skinned for a scarf, she owed her life to Kal's demon rescue organization

She'd adored him for years, never meeting him in person. When she heard he'd

come to Broskel, she'd moved there and got a job, hoping for a chance to visit- yet never got the opportunity. Today, she'd finally get to thank him face-to-face With Lord Kai stepping in, he'd surely catch and punish whatever bad demon was

after Nyx.

515

## Of The Bea 433

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The online event was in full swing. Though Nyx was just a minor character, her role's popularity was off the charts. The livestream was packed with fans, and the host kept calling her out to interact.

Since some wild shippers loved pairing her with the male lead, the organizers sneakily added a Q&A segment for just the two of them. The questions didn't need to be flirty-just a little interaction was enough for the shippers.

Nyx had no clue about any of this. At first, the male lead played along, dropping vague hints to hype the ship. But Nyx never took the bait, leaving him winking at a brick wall. He could only sigh and smile wryly

The chat still went nuts shipping them.

[Nyx is so clueless, she's killing me with cuteness.]

[Nyx has definitely never dated!]

[Of course not! Our princess is only eighteen this year!]

[The guy looks so lost!]

[Hahahaha! He's sighing up a storm!]

[She's still young-The dude needs to step it up! You're close to her, so win her over first.]

A big, bold comment suddenly crashed the party: [

The die-hard shippers weren't having it.

[Ugh, so annoying!]

[Can you get lost?]

isn't his wife.]

[Need a reminder? This is their duo interview livestream.]

[Stop policing us. We'll ship what we want!]

[Wait. That tone doesn't sound like a female lead stan. More like a Nyx solo stan.] [Solo stans can scam too!]

Kai couldn't make sense of the chat's gibberish, but he could tell they were pairing Nyx with some other guy. When he denied it, they cursed him out.

The furious leopard nearly crushed his phone. He arrived at the event venue with cold eyes and a blank face, radiating a "don't mess with me" vibe.

A jittery security guard stepped up to stop him, but before he could ask for ID, the event organizer's representative stubbed out his cigarette and hurried over. "Mr. Kai, is that you?"

"Please, come in, come in," the representative said with a big smile, ushering Kai inside.

This guy wasn't in entertainment, but his influence was massive-billions in assets, connections across industries, and big shots bowing to him since he'd arrived in the country.

'Why would someone like him show up unannounced?' The representative probed curiously. Kai kept it short. "Looking for someone. Nyx, where's Nyx?"

1/5

Chapter 49

He dropped her name in casually,

familiarly, that the pond whe

he pointed to Nye's spot Her interview's almen don Wait \*\*\*\*\*

Helly was parked in the lounge, buzzing with sndiripivin my hart are hes get ready

in de out the momen he texted that he'd arrived

cangla

of

Nearby, the event representative's respectful wote na trade red flying spotting a tall, green-eyed Idond man. She froze, a swe dread wedd

The man strode toward her in a few long steps. Helly starind reading any de garage f terrifying big demon scent, and her face went whitewater

Aaaaaaah! The bad demon was here! He was going to eat coment Help me. Low Kate Wydad de

"Mr. Kai, please have a seat, the representative said eagerly, pailling a chat next to My

Helly sat there, stunned. She thought. Mister what? What now? What is happening? shephe

out a shrill yelp and bolted like her butt was on fire.

The room went dead silent. The representative looked puzzled, while Marilyn and free flat Gan de dat recognizing Kai, ran after Helly.

Marilyn, well-connected, knew this was a mysterious overseas tycoon. She

couldn't afford to be the gut que te awkwardness. "Hello."

"Helly's not feeling well today—she didn't mean to offend you, she said, quick to defend her, worned Knife ch personally.

Kai nodded, then shook his head, showing he didn't mind. He'd clocked her as a little demon-dily to expec Nyx's safety in the group chat.

She seemed genuinely worried about Nyx, just a bit dim and skittish. She'd run off so fast probably because wetens spooked and couldn't hold her human form.

Kai calmly took a seat, oblivious to being the cause of her breakdown.

Meeting this big shot for the first time, Marilyn couldn't gauge his mood. She chose her words carefully. "Are you here for Nyx?"

In this huge venue, with so many seats, he'd plopped right next to Nyx's-it was obvious. Sure enough, Kai nodded

So he really was here for Nyx. Marilyn couldn't figure out how and when Nyx had crossed paths with someone so out of her league.

"Nyx never mentioned me to you?" Kai caught her confused look, picking up on her unfamiliarity. He frowned and declared "I'm Nyx's-

He stopped short of saying "sugar daddy," swallowing the words. Annoyed, he realized without that contract, he didn't have a clear label.

After a pause, Kai straightened up and stated proudly, "I went on a date with Nyx yesterday. Our second one." That was the only card he had to play.

Marilyn couldn't believe her ears. "A date? R-really?" Her face was full of shock.

Her brain scrambled. Suddenly, she recalled a vague rumor from a while back-something about two top-tier moguls fighting over a small-time star at a banquet.

She hadn't gotten any details or names-the info was locked down tight, a sign of how powerful the

ers were. She'd

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brushed off that one-line gossip as boring and forgot about it. Now, piecing it together, it felt eerily familiar.

"Really," Kai said, unfazed by her doubt. "If you don't believe me, ask Nyx."

"Or ask Seafarion," he added with a faint smirk, his gaze sharp. "I know you're hieplant by Nyx's side

After yesterday, he'd dug into Nyx's background. The more he found, the angrier he got.

He'd ordered his people to rough up everyone who'd ever messed with Nyx-from Dylan to Williams to that third-rate actress Joanna and Terry. It eased his mood a bit, but not enough.

Before he came along, Nyx's life was already full of other guys. Seafarion had saved her, let her live in his house, even set up her studio. He wondered if that was the reason she stuck by him.

Kai wasn't happy. Everything about Seafarion rubbed him the wrong way. He envied how Seafarion got there first, had the upper hand, protected Nyx. He even envied that

Tanis was human-no overthinking, no worries-just free to chase Nyx, grow old with her, die with her.

Thinking about it drove Kai up the wall. Marilyn was seasoned, well-traveled, and used to dealing with big shots. She rarely flinched. But those eerie green eyes hit her with a crushing pressure, stealing her breath.

The air went still, Onlookers didn't dare breathe too loud. Then a burst of lively chatter approached. The door swung open. and Nyx walked in, surrounded by staff fresh off her interview.

Spotting a familiar figure, she raised an eyebrow in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

In a flash, Kai's whole vibe softened. He stood to meet her. "Came to find you, Nyx."

No way was he letting those drooling demons from the group chat anywhere near her. Marilyn watched him calm down, head lowered, and thought he was like a different person.

"Who were you just livestreaming with?" Kai asked, taking her hand and guiding her to sit.

"The male lead," Nyx replied offhandedly.

"Are your characters a couple?" His face twisted with jealousy as he asked.

"Huh?" Nyx shook her head, baffled. "Of course not!"

The show had no romance at all-not even between the leads, let alone her minor role.

The guy, who'd been holding it in, finally spilled. "The livestream chat kept saying you two are a couple. I told them no, and they cursed me out."

Nyx froze. She knew she had some shippers with the male lead, but she didn't think they were that intense. The interview questions had been totally normal. Nyx patted her partner's hair, soothing the sulky leopard. "They're just making stuff up. It's not true."

"Marilyn, next time tell the organizers I don't do shipping," she said, turning to Marilyn with a heads-up.

Marilyn nodded. It wasn't really "shipping" level, so she hadn't nixed the duo interview this time. But if the shippers got too crazy, it'd be smart to steer clear. They weren't an official pair with a love story-once filming wrapped, they could just move

1. on.

His whining worked better than expected. Kai beamed, crouching by Nyx's feet, nuzzling his head against her chest. Getting cursed out didn't matter-as long as Nyx babied him, he was good.

Nyx ruffled his hair gently. "I've still got work to finish. You going to keep waiting?"

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Kai nodded without hesitation.

"More work?" Marilyn checked her watch. "Didn't your parts all wrap up? The duo interview was the last one? She was sure of it-no mistakes there.

"They added a costume interaction bit," Nyx explained. The audience demanded it, the organizers caved, and she was stuck with it.

She'd have to change into a heavy, elaborate princess outfit. Time was tight- costume change, makeup, no real break. Nyx got busy fast.

Once ready, she waved at her partner. "I'm off. Wait for me."

Kai didn't reply, just stared at the dolled-up little female, eyes burning with infatuation. When Nyx vanished from sight, he pulled up the livestream to keep watching her.

Marilyn rubbed her temples, feeling a headache for Nyx. This guy was as obsessed with her as Seafarion.

Nyx's status was clearly outmatched here. She couldn't afford to cross either of these titans. Picking one was tough-ditching both was impossible. Keeping them both on the hook, Marilyn couldn't even picture how bad that crash

would be. She touched her phone, deciding to keep quiet for now and not report this to Seafarion.

Kai caught her move from the corner of his eye and nodded, satisfied. As long as she prioritized Nyx and had her back, he didn't care if she was Seafarion's mole.

His focus snapped back to the screen. In the livestream, Nyx pulled a hairpin and stabbed it into the actor playing her nation's destroyer. After a slick fight scene, the villain crumpled, finishing an alternate "fallen princess revenge" storyline.

Nyx stood tall, hair slightly mussed, eyes sparkling like she was locking gazes through the screen. Kai's heart pounded, his crush unstoppable. Humans and demons shouldn't mix. He shouldn't chase Nyx or get too tangled up

with her. But seeing her skirt hem askew, he couldn't help wanting to kneel and fix it for her.

He hesitated a few seconds, still undecided, when Gavin beat him to it-darting in to adjust Nyx's skirt, then retreating fast. That was supposed to be Helly's job, but she'd vanished somewhere, leaving him to step up.

Kai's face darkened instantly. When Nyx got back from work, she found a brooding, pouty partner.

'What's up with him now?' she thought. She didn't want to hash out relationship stuff at the venue. After saying bye to her agent and assistant, she dragged Kai to a restaurant alone.

"Order something. Wait for me a sec," Nyx said, plopping him in a seat. She slipped out, hit up the pet store next door, and tucked something into her pocket. She came back in high spirits, eyes crinkling with a smile, which just made Kai's

sulk look deeper. He couldn't hold it in anymore. "Fire your male assistant," he said coldly.

Nyx blinked, confused. "Gavin? What'd he do to you?"

Gavin was a good guy-he'd barely even spoken to Kai. Kai pressed his lips shut, saying nothing. He knew he was being unreasonable.

When he wouldn't explain, Nyx shook her head. "Can't do that."

A lightbulb went off in her head. She slid over to Kai's side with a sly idea, patting his arm. "Don't be mad. Didn't the contract say rejecting the sponsor's demands



means punishment?"

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Hearing her bring up the contract, Kai shook his head, flustered and red-faced.

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Before he could speak, Nyx poured herself a full glass of wine and downed it.

"Guess I'll punish myself with a drink then."

Two seconds after chugging it, she clutched her forehead, mumbling, "So dizzy and flopped softly into his arms.

AD

## **Of The Bea 434**

Kai's muscles tensed up. Her warm breath tickled his neck, sending shivers through him. Hesitantly, he raised a hand to her shoulder. "Nyx. Nyx?"

He shook her gently, but she only mumbled nonsense, brows furrowed, showing no sign of waking. After a standoff, Kai had no choice but to carefully scoop her

up.

'Should I take her home?' Kai thought and frowned.

That place was a gift from Seafarion-he even lived next door. Handing his precious little female back to another guy's nest was something he could never do.

Nyx felt herself being lifted into a car, cushioned by soft pillows on the back seat. Kai stayed close, watching her intently

When they reached their stop, she nestled in his arms, head on his shoulder, and peeked through half-open eyes. It wasn't her familiar building or parking lot-it was a strange villa.

Nyx's lips curved faintly as she closed her eyes, pretending to sleep on. The usually sharp leopard didn't notice a thing. She had him wrapped around her finger, defenseless against her pull.

The villa sat empty most days, with Kai as its lone resident. His territorial instincts were fierce-he'd tolerate outsiders in the surrounding woods, but no one stepped foot inside this house. In that huge villa, there wasn't a single guest room to be found.

Knowing it was improper, Kai's ears burned as he carried Nyx to his own bedroom and laid her on the bed. The bed was big enough for two, but he couldn't join her.

He paced restlessly in the living room for a bit, then crept back to the bedroom, crouching by the bed to watch her. Even though he'd done this last night, it was daytime now. Having her in his den felt different.

Kai couldn't tamp down his excitement. His head dipped lower, sniffing her hair, lost in the sweet scent mixed with her shampoo. Up close, he could see everything clearer.

Nyx's face was pale with a pink flush, like a peach sticky rice dumpling, tempting him to take a bite.

Nyx shifted slightly. It wasn't a big move, but it spooked the guilty male enough.

Kai jerked back half a step, barely keeping his balance without tumbling over. He held his breath, terrified of waking her. Luckily, it was a false alarm. The figure on the bed rolled over and kept sleeping.

Once his heartbeat settled, Kai couldn't resist inching closer again. Nyx timed her flips perfectly, rolling over now and then, teasing the jumpy leopard until he let his guard down.

She flipped again, one hand slipping into her pocket to rip open a wrapper and pull out a catnip ball. At the same time, she opened her eyes.

Caught off guard, their gazes locked. Kai's green pupils shrank to slits. In a panic, his beast ears popped out uncontrollably.

Nyx was quick as a flash. She grabbed one. With a rip of fabric, the man in front of her turned into a massive leopard. The leopard panted heavily, eyes screaming "run," but with his ear in her grip, he didn't dare pull away.

The catnip ball didn't work like Nyx expected. Kai barely glanced at it, staring at her instead. After a moment, he ducked his head nervously, then peeked up at her.

Compared to catnip, she clearly had a stronger hold on him. Nyx stayed quiet, and Kai didn't dare speak. He had no clue what to say or how to explain. Things had spiraled way beyond his control.

He'd dreaded exposing his true self to Nyx most of all, but despite his fears, it happened anyway. The huge leopard curled

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## Chapter 434

up tight, trying to shrink his presence and look less scary. He didn't need a mirror to know how terrifying he must seem to humans.

'Nyx must be freaked out, he thought.

After sizing up the leopard, Nyx slowly let go of his car. "What are you?" she asked, curious. "Beastman"

Having lived here for months, she was pretty sure most people were regular humans, no different from Earth folks.

Kai could've sworn the hand on his ear rubbed it a couple times before letting go- or maybe he imagined it. He shook his head to ditch that wild thought.

"I'm a demon," he mumbled, backing up a few steps until his spine hit the window. With nowhere left to retreat, he slumped to the floor. A leopard talking like a human was freaky enough-he kept his words short, not wanting to weird her out more.

"A demon?" Nyx exclaimed, shocked. No wonder this leopard had a raw, untamed vibe-kinda cute, too.

Curiosity took over, and she pressed closer with questions. "How old are you? Did you just learn to turn human? How many demons like you are there? How'd you get a human identity? Does anyone else know what you are?"

The barrage of questions left the leopard dizzy. Cornered by Nyx, he felt small, pitiful, and helpless, answering everything honestly.

After the grilling, Nyx had a solid grasp of the situation. She nodded thoughtfully. "Don't worry, I'll keep your secret."

The leopard snuck a glance at her, mustering the courage to ask, "Are you scared of me?"

"Nope," Nyx replied flatly.

Realizing why he looked so down, she laughed and patted his head. "Do I look like I'm scared of you?"

She really didn't. Seeing her warm, smiling eyes, Kai's heart leaped, his gaze brightening-only to tense up again.

He remembered she was an actress with killer skills. She'd just faked being drunk and asleep, fooling him completely. 'So, is she faking not being scared too?' he wondered.

Nyx rubbed the leopard a bit more for fun, then stood. "Can I check out your place?"

She wanted to know her partner inside and out-including what kind of space a demon like him preferred. The leopard couldn't say no, trailing silently behind her.

The villa was huge but sparse on rooms, all wide and open. Nyx scanned the decor, noting it matched Kai's pre-amnesia taste-still as neat as ever.

'Even without memories, he's still the same guy,' she thought.

A fluffy paw suddenly appeared in front of her. Its sharp claws were fully retracted, making the big paw look downright adorable.

Nyx raised an eyebrow, stuck her foot out next to it for comparison, and nodded seriously. "Yup, your paw's bigger."

The paw zipped back. Kai felt his face heat up like crazy. Nyx didn't tease him too much, strolling on. Then, out of nowhere, a low, rough growl rumbled behind her- deep and commanding.

That kind of roar from a wild beast would trigger primal fear in any human. But after decades living with fierce creatures, Nyx was unfazed, turning calmly to the leopard. "What's up?"

Kai studied her hard but couldn't spot a trace of fear. He tilted his head, puzzled, and went quiet.

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Nyx didn't push, switching gears casually. "Got any water?"

Hearing she was thirsty, the leopard padded to the water dispenser-then froze mid-step, realizing he couldn't pour it like this. Plus, the whole house only had his one cup-no spares.

Nyx didn't wait, breezing past the stuck leopard to grab the cup, fill it, and drink in one smooth move. She was so quick, Kai couldn't stop her.

Nyx used his cup. That hit the leopard like a truck-shy and thrilled, he wanted to climb every tree in the back hills.

Nyx set the cup down, her fingertip brushing the wet rim. The leopard suddenly felt parched, staring at her finger, dying to lick it. A tiny tease had him hooked, head over heels.

Nyx played innocent, tilting her head toward the stairs. "What's on the second floor?"

She took one step up, and the leopard sprang, pouncing in front of her.

First a paw swipe, then a roar, then a mock attack stance. Anyone could tell he was trying to spook her, give her a little scare. But his body stayed low, his eyes brimming with nerves he couldn't hide. Nyx saw through his conflict.

A touchy leopard like him needed to test her over and over before believing she'd accept him. She softened her gaze, crouching to hug his big head. "What, you going to carry me upstairs?"

Without waiting for a reply, she swung onto his back, settling in like a pro. No one rode a leopard better than her.

The leopard was floored. Her whole soft body pressed against him, clinging tight. Electricity shot through him. He stumbled, legs tangling, forgetting how to walk.

It was her first time on such a wobbly leopard. Nyx wrapped her arms around his neck, legs gripping hard to stay balanced. The tighter she held, the more unbearable it was for Kai.

The poor leopard ditched all doubts, focusing entirely on resisting temptation. After settling her partner, Nyx pulled out her phone to check on Helly, asking if she'd made it home safe.

Helly: [Wahhhhh, boss, I'm so sorry!]

Helly: [I'm home, I got home safe.]

Helly: [I didn't do any work today and even caused you trouble-sorry, sorry, sorry!

Dock my pay!]

Nyx: [It's fine. Feeling better?]

Her kindness and concern made Helly feel worse, sobbing harder: [Wahhhhh.]

Helly: [I'm not sick, don't worry.]

She'd reverted to her fox form from sheer terror and was claw-typing replies to her boss. Thinking of the big demon scent all over Nyx, Helly hesitated, unsure if she should warn her.

She thought, 'If it's Lord Kai, he wouldn't eat Nyx, right? But-'

Before she could decide, Nyx messaged first: [Good to know you're not sick.]

Nyx: [Helly, are you a little fox?]

She was exposed. Helly's fur stood on end, and she leaped three feet in the air. 'Aaaaaaaaah-!' she screamed inside.

adio silent. That

Nyx got back a garbled mess like a face-roll on the keyboard, quickly retracted, then nothing-Helly w reaction only confirmed Nyx's guess. A little fox smelling leopard scent would naturally freak out-everything clicked.

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Nyx finally pieced together who was who around her, sending soothing messages to felly, promising to Veep her were With no reply, she sighed, giving her time to recover

The leopard nearby flicked his tail impatiently, craving, Nyx's attention back on him. Nyx tossed her phone wide, Blogging onto his fuzzy back for a deep leopard-sniffing session, playing until his ears flicked up and down.

Ears down, head round, the leopard turned into a seal on the spot. Nyx laughed so hard she could barely breathe, gaking his face to plant a few big smooches. Of all the big cats at home, Kay's ears were the liveliest.

The leopard's face burned hot good thing fur hid the blush. He felt it for real now. Nyx wasn't scared of him. She liked his beast form.

"I'll show you outside," the giddy leopard said, eager to flaunt his territory. They'd

toured the three-story house, so he carried her out to the back woods for a spin. His phone buzzed nonstop in the bedroom, one ping after another. With his sharp ears, he heard it fine but ignored it. focused solely on Nyx. A roar sent birds and beasts scattering. The woods fell silent, sunlight streaming through the branches, dappling them in golden glow.

Nyx got playful, snapping a long stick, tying the catnip ball to it with flexible grass, and adding, feathers to make a makeshift cat toy. She flicked her wrist, and the leopard pounced right on cue.

The bedroom phone rang for over an hour before finally stopping. A few dozen minutes later, a sunflower parrot swooped in, clutching a fox by the feet, crashing into the woods. "Big trouble! Lord Kai! The little fox's cover's blown! She says Nyx

knows she's a demon-!"

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## **Of The Bea 435**

Spotting the leopard, the parrot dove down hard-more eagle than parrot. Then he saw the scene and-thud-slammed

into a tree.

The fox he'd been holding dropped midair, rolling across the ground a few times.

Nyx was speechless. She put down the cat toy, walked over, and picked up the parrot and fox-one in each hand-shaking off the grass and dirt.

Both little demons went stiff, playing dead. The sunflower parrot couldn't believe his eyes, couldn't process what he'd just witnessed. Kai was aloof and mighty. But he reduced to a woman's plaything, like some kitten trying to please a human for food.

Helly's feelings were even messier. She'd been through too much that day. First spooked by a man-eating demon, then finding out it was her revered Kai. She'd calmed down, only for her boss to call out her true identity.

She'd bawled in the group chat until the parrot offered to bring her to Kai for help. And then-she saw her boss wielding a cat toy, teasing Kai into rolling over. Boom-Helly's worldview shattered into pieces.

The moment Nyx let go, she bolted off crying, fast as lightning-Nyx couldn't stop her. When he saw his buddy flee, the parrot's feathers bristled. He flashed back to Kai swatting him into the dirt and took off too, not looking back.

Nyx turned to Kai awkwardly. "You want to explain to them?"

'How'd they stumble into this private moment? Should've stayed inside, she thought.

"Don't worry about it," the leopard said, rubbing his head on her hands to overwrite the other demons' scents.

Still, Nyx wasn't at ease. She lost her mood for cat-toy games, tidied up, and went inside to check her phone. Helly was still playing dead in her chat list.

Kai's side was a riot. The demon group had exploded. Ignoring Helly's 99+ sob- fest, word of Nyx treating the big leopard like a cat had spread like wildfire in no time.

The parrot was smart, keeping Kai's embarrassment under wraps. But Helly, not the sharpest, blurted out everything she'd

seen.

The group was in an uproar-demons popping out left and right, messages flying, a chaotic mix of languages and animal calls like bleats, barks, and chirps.

Some envied Kai's closeness to Nyx, some doubted Helly's story, but most were worried- Demons and humans couldn't be together unless it was just casual fun, nothing serious. If a demon fell hard for a human, they'd die young.

It was an ancient, ironclad rule. No one knew why, but they all believed it and didn't want Kai testing fate. He could date Nyx, even get closer, but not truly be with her.



Nyx listened to the animal noises, totally lost. She just saw Kai glaring at his phone, his mood sinking fast. Even in beast form, she could read him.

"What's wrong?" she asked, hugging the big leopard.

"Nothing," Kai said, flipping his phone facedown and snuffing the screen. He pulled her into his arms, brushing it off. "Just got a lot of work tomorrow. Don't want to do it."

He was always diligent-work wouldn't faze him like this. Nyx gave him a look but didn't call him out, just hugged him tighter, offering silent comfort. Their hearts pressed close, beating in sync.

'Humans and demons can't end well? Total nonsense,' he thought. He had the strength to protect Nyx and the confidence to

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protect himself. As long as Nyx wasn't scared of him, he had nothing to fear.

Nyx, the leopard murmured, nuzzling her neck, breathing her in deep. 'I want to stay by your side forever?

Realizing human confessions needed pomp, and his current form wasn't cutting it, he scrambled back to human shape.

7-L" Before "I love you" slipped out, he noticed his bare arms, snapped to his senses, and turned beet red. Demons weren't as hung up on modesty as humans, but embarrassing himself in front of Nyx was a different story.

Nyx didn't look away, eyeing him with a half-smirk. This kind of blunder had happened back when they weren't even together yet. She'd been shy then-now she was way past that.

This leopard had skin hunger, always clinging to her for years on end. She knew every inch of him by heart.

Amnesiac Kai had no idea, flailing in shame but puffing his chest under her gaze. A courting male couldn't show weakness- he had to flex his strength at every chance.

He watched her face, thinking she seemed pleased, and ventured. "Satisfied with what you see?\*

"Pfft!" Nyx couldn't hold it, cracking up at the cheesy line. The flirty mood shattered.

"Who'd you learn that from?" she asked, burying her face in a pillow, shoulders shaking. "The same guy who suggested the sugar baby deal?"

She thought he had watched too many cheesy novels, probably. But this time, it was pure coincidence-no one taught him. Kai didn't get what was so funny.

He stared at the giggling female, then reached out, brushed her cheek, and leaned in to taste the softness he'd been craving. Even holding back, his sharp canines grazed her, earning a soft hiss. Nyx wasn't one to lose-she bit back.

A neat little tooth mark bloomed on his right hand's tiger mouth. The perfect sting pulsed through him. Far from revenge, it fired him up, green eyes blazing with thrill.

2/2

## **Of The Bea 436**

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Chapter 436

The expression of a beast preparing to hunt sent shivers down the spine. Nyx didn't want to compare whose fangs were sharper with a feline—she saw the male inching closer again, so she lifted her chin and pressed her lips against his.

The male, kissing for the first time, froze completely, his body trembling as he stared at her in a daze. Two flexible arms. wrapped around his neck.

Ever since arriving in this world, aside from that very first time, Nyx had spent months living a single life. Back home, she found the males too overbearing, but once they were suddenly gone from her side, she felt an empty discomfort she couldn't adjust to.

Finally holding a warm leopard in her arms brought an undeniable satisfaction- she slept soundly until late morning, stretched lazily, and turned to see a sturdy wall of a figure beside her.

"Good morning," she said. Kai pressed his thin lips together, returned a morning greeting, and got up to make breakfast.

Nyx stared at his back, sensing he seemed a little unhappy. She was confused.

Breakfast was lavish, but Kai had no appetite-his eyelashes drooped as he fixated on the bite mark near his thumb, lost in thought. Nyx ate a few bites before setting her fork down, silently watching him.

After a long, tense standoff, Kai broke first. "Nyx, will you take responsibility for me?" he asked.

He had approached their deeper step with the mindset of being officially together. But Nyx had been so passionate yesterday, so skilled, as if he wasn't her first, nor her last male. Once the excitement faded, fear and unease crept up on him belatedly.

"Of course." Nyx nodded decisively, without hesitation. "We'll be together forever."

Seeing her certainty eased Kai's heart a little, though he still frowned slightly. "I'm not the first male you've dated, am I?" He might've been inexperienced, but he wasn't clueless.

The smile on Nyx's face faded a bit. "Does that bother you?" she asked.

Noticing her expression shift, Kai's heart sank-he wanted to shake his head right away but held back, waiting for her

answer.

Nyx rubbed her temples, feeling a headache coming on. Theon and Felix were tied by blood. Having raised her together, they naturally stayed by her side as three lions living as a unit.

Pale Wolf and Aurelius-one naive and easy to tease, the other self-aware as a latecomer-quickly found a balance to coexist.

Seafarion and Kai, however, weren't so easily managed by her at the same time.

"It wasn't dating, but I was with Seafarion before," she said, opting not to hide it. Hearing that name from her lips gave Kai a mix of "so that's it" and "I should've known."

they were together, why didn't it count as dating? What were they, then? Some kind of arrangement? A transactional thing?' Kai didn't want to think too hard about it.

"I don't mind anything else," he said in a muffled tone. "I just hope you won't contact him anymore. Anything he can give you, I can give you too-all of it. If he pesters you or threatens you, I'll deal with him for you."

Nyx's guilt flared up at his words. But at this point, she could only grit her teeth and keep playing the unfaithful player,

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staying silent.

After a long wait with no response, Kai understood. "Are you toying with me?" he asked, and the sad part was he couldn't even muster anger-just heartache.

Nyx shook her head quickly. "No" she denied.

Before she could explain further, the male at the table stood abruptly, unable to hold back his surging emotions-he turned into a leopard and bolted out like a gust of wind

In the vast forest, if a leopard wanted to hide, no one could hope to find him. Nyx dragged her tired legs around searching for a while, then sat against a big tree, reflecting on whether she'd rushed things too much yesterday,

She'd been too confident, assuming her mates would always forgive her-decades in the Beastmen Empire had sadly shifted her mindset, making her overlook a male's possessiveness.

Faced with this mess now, she didn't know what to do-thinking the test might actually fail, Nyx hugged her knees and buried her head.

A pair of green eyes watched her silently from the bushes. The leopard stretched out a paw to step forward, hesitated, and stayed put, torn.

After a while, Nyx sorted out her emotions, stood up, and walked away. The leopard instinctively chased after her a few steps, then snapped out of it and forced himself to stop. He wasn't some male to be toyed with.

Nyx left the villa, called a car, and typed out a message to Kai on the ride- confessing her fickleness but swearing she never meant to play him.

Before her scheduled date with Seafarion, she got home, where he was already waiting. "You didn't come home last night, Nyx," he said.

Even though Nyx tried to hide it, a trace of exhaustion slipped through. She managed a weak smile and was about to speak when a pair of arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her into a broad male embrace.

Seafarion stroked her back gently. "I was just worried about your safety. Next time you go out, can you let me know?"

His embrace was so warm that Nyx's tense shoulders relaxed-she leaned against his chest. "Sorry," she murmured.

"It's fine, no need to apologize." Seafarion soothed her gently. "You don't owe me a report on your whereabouts-it's just my selfish wish."

"Nyx," he asked carefully, "were you with Kai yesterday?"

Nyx nodded. Seafarion's face darkened instantly-he took a deep breath. "So he's not with you now and ran off abroad alone?"

He wasn't a blank slate anymore-he could tell what Kai had done with Nyx. Yet he'd just gotten word from his men that Kai had boarded an international flight.

After taking his fill and leaving Nyx so worn out, he didn't even stay to care for her-just up and left. Seafarion clenched his fists, feeling ashamed and furious on her behalf.

"He went abroad?" Nyx blinked, surprised. "Maybe it's for work."

"But we did argue. well, not really an argument." She pursed her lips. "It's my fault-I'm two-timing."

"Two-timing' Seafarion froze for a moment, realizing he was one of the two, a flush creeping up his face.

So that was it. The root of it all was him. He'd thought he was out of the picture entirely, but Nyx had still kept a place for

2/3

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Chapter 436

him by her side.

"He's the immature one," Seafarion said, tightening his hold on his beloved, secretly delighted and relieved.

"Let's not talk about it." Nyx coughed lightly. "Where are we going today?"

Whether it was figuring out the next step or chasing that leopard abroad to coax him back, she'd deal with it tomorrow-today, she'd promised Seafarion a date, and she'd focus on him.

"Nowhere-we'll go out next time," Seafarion said, carrying her gently to his bed and slipping off her shoes and socks.

He exuded the calm, generous aura of a primary partner. "Today, Nyx, just rest at home," he added.

Then he pulled her pajamas from his closet, turned to prepare hot water, bath salts, and essential oils, and headed to the kitchen to make her favorite soup.

Nyx soaked in a hot bath, changed into soft pajamas, and drowsily watched Seafarion bustle about, wondering when he'd evolved into this.

The sweet soup finished cooking, its warm steam filling the air. Seafarion paused, took a photo of the soup, then one of himself in an apron, and finally a sneaky shot of Nyx's hand holding a spoon.

He edited the three photos and shared them publicly for all to see. Kai wasn't on his list, but the circle was small-gossip would reach abroad eventually. Since Kai had stormed off in a huff, he might as well stay out there-preferably never come back.

## **Of The Bea 437**

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Kai stared at the message Nyx sent him on his phone screen, reading it over and over. He'd run off in a fit of impol, ba his emotions cooled, regret and unease set in.

But the deed was done he was already on the plane with no way to jump off, so he wrestled with whether to reply to thyx He didn't know what he could even say.

Torn back and forth, a friend request popped up-from the little fox in the chat group. Thinking she was Nyx's a accepted it without hesitation.

'Maybe Nyx got impatient waiting for my reply and sent the fox to pass a message? he wondered. His gloom lifted. and a faint smile crept onto his face.

Little Fox: [Lord Kai, hello, I'm Nyx's assistant.]

Little Fox: [Um. Aren't you dating my boss right now?]

Little Fox: [But I just saw Seafarion post an update.]

Helly tapped away at the screen with her front paws, nervous and jittery,

She'd never done anything so disloyal before, but with her human boss on one side and the demon clan leader she'd long admired on the other, she struggled before choosing to snitch to Lord Kai.

At most, she was just passing along info-she couldn't do much else anyway.

Kai jolted upright. He typed: [What?]

Little Fox: [Screenshot]

Little Fox: [Photo][Photo][Photo]

They looked like ordinary home-life shots, but that third photo was unmistakably Nyx's hand.

A soft silk pajama sleeve hugged her arm, revealing a slender, pale wrist-if it were shorter, it might've shown a trail of suggestive red marks. Kai had held that very arm and kissed it all night just yesterday-he knew it too well

Below the post, some nosy commenter teased: [Cooking for your girlfriend?]

Seafarion shamelessly replied: [Yes.]

Kai's pupils shrank. With a "crack," he crushed the phone in his hand.

A flight attendant jumped, rushing over to check on him, calming him down while scrambling to clean up the shattered pieces.

'What kind of monstrous strength did it take to crush a phone like that?' she thought.

His eyes glowed an eerie green, wild with fury. The crew nervously urged him to calm down, keeping their distance but not daring to stray too far, fearing this terrifying passenger might snap.

Honestly, they half-believed he could punch through the plane's hull-it felt that absurd. When the plane landed safely, everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief.

With his phone gone, Kai had no luggage left.

He didn't call for a ride or take a car-he walked far on foot, avoiding people, then tore off his clothes in a desolate spot,

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turned into a leopard, and ran wildly. The cold wind whipped against him, but it couldn't calm him down.

Late at night, moonlight spilled over the castle walls, casting stark, weathered shadows. A sharp crash of breaking glass echoed from the master bedroom-the old butler hurried over, shoved the door open, and cursed the bold thief who'd dared break in.

Seeing the leopard in the dark, his curses stopped short, and he gaped. "Lord Kai? Why are you back?"

Kai didn't always stay in one place. He'd lived in this castle for fifty years, decided it was time for a change, and moved to Broskel. By his plan, he intended to settle in Broskel for decades-no short-term return here.

The old butler studied the disheveled, dejected leopard, swearing he'd never seen Kai look so wrecked. 'Is Broskel some kind of awful place?' he wondered.

"What happened to you?" The old butler couldn't fathom what Kai had been through.

In his eyes, Kai was the mightiest demon clan member-unmatched under the heavens. Whoever could reduce Kai to a beaten stray must've been terrifying.

Kai held it in as long as he could before spilling glumly. "I fell in love with a human."

"What?" The old butler reeled in shock. He'd heard Kai was recently dating a human girl-getting close, even revealing his leopard demon identity. But he never imagined he would say he'd fallen in love.

"Her skin's so fair, her face so soft." The leopard rambled on, praising Nyx from head to toe, every part adorable.



The old butler listened, eyes glazing over. He'd never known Kai could observe a female so closely.

"She's not scared of me at all-she really likes my beast form," said Kai.

The butler took that with a grain of salt, doubting it heavily. It was unlikely that a human didn't fear a massive leopard like

that.

He figured he'd guessed why Kai was so crushed. "Did she vanish? Refuse to see you or reply to you anymore?"

'She probably faked that calm and fondness to escape a leopard's jaws, then bolted the first chance she got, he thought.

Kai shot him an irritated glare, not liking his assumptions. "No," he said.

"She's willing to be with me-we've done everything." Recalling last night, a sweet shyness flickered in the leopard's eyes, quickly drowned by stronger emotions. "But she won't cut ties with another male."

The old butler stood dumbfounded. His imagination had been too limited.

After a stunned pause, he stammered, "W-well, just find a new partner then. She's human-not suited for you anyway."

Under that cold, piercing green stare, his voice shrank, softening to a milder suggestion. "Or, keep dating her and find a few pretty females on the side."

The butler didn't quite get what Kai was agonizing over. No matter how long they blended into human society, they were demons at heart.

Unlike humans who restrained themselves, most demons lived by instinct-closer to beasts. Polygamy and frequent partner swaps were par for the course. Leopards weren't exactly monogamous either.

"Plenty of young females in the clan admire you. What type do you like? Gentle? Lively? I'll pick some out for you," he said.

"Shut up." Before he finished, Kai slammed a paw down, cracking the floor, and stormed out the window in a fury.

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The old butler flinched, falling silent. He got it now. Kai was bewitched by dar tevbeder de

Even so, the old butler wasn't ready to give up.

The next day, as dawn barely broke, the castle filled with gizling female vore "Thanks, Butler, for letting us use the place for a party!"

"Oh! Is this Lord Kai's old sword?"

"What a huge portrait of Lord Kai!"

The leopard returned from outside, damp with cold dew, pushed the door open, and walked rupe in this vese-rate of young, gorgeous demon clan females had taken over his castle, clinking glasses and chatting, away, these Imey drons swirling everywhere,

Surrounded by so many youthful, radiant faces, the old butler's wrinkles smoothed out-he booked computer youare. We winked at Kai mischievously,

Kai stepped back, slammed the door shut, and blocked out their starry-eyed stares,

He leaped up, crashed through the broken window into his room like last night, shifted to human form, dug or some clothes, and rang for the butler. "I lost my phone. Get me a new one-fast

The butler rushed over eagerly expecting Kai to have taken a shine to one of the females-only to hear this and deze t disappointment. "You really don't want to hang out with them? Even if none catch your eye, it'd lift your spirits

Kai buttoned his shirt to the top, giving him a chilly glance. "Don't meddle.

The butler slunk off dejectedly.

With his phone and SIM card trashed, recovering his old number would take days-Kai couldn't wait, so he got a new one.

Nyx was stressing over not reaching Kai-his phone was always off-when a blank account added her as a friend. She rejected it casually.

It sent a second request. This time, it came with a note: [It's Kai]

Nyx narrowed her eyes. After passing the request, she sent a video call straight

away. It took him ages to pick up—his handsome face flashed with panic, clearly caught off guard.

"Why'd you change numbers?" Seeing it was really Kai, Nyx relaxed and spoke first.

Her casual tone eased his nerves too. "Phone broke," he mumbled.

He didn't say how, but Nyx could guess well enough and fell quiet for a moment.

She studied his face, spotting the exhaustion he couldn't hide-his eyes were bloodshot.

"Didn't sleep well last night?" Nyx frowned, concerned.

Her gentle care broke him-his eyes reddened further. Just as he opened his mouth, a strange female voice came from the door. "Lord Kai, want a cupcake?" Kai was shocked. Meeting Nyx's surprised look, Kai's hair stood on end. He didn't even think of using this to get back at her -just shook his head in a panic. "I-I was out in the woods all night. I didn't call them here."

"Them?" Nyx lingered on the word. So there was more than one.

Kai's face screamed despair-he wanted to strangle the butler.

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The female at the door, holding a cupcake, caught his fierce glare and shivered.

But after hesitating, instead of backing off, she walked right toward him.

Kai felt his innocence being slandered-his body tensed as he dodged back.

Seeing him about to bolt, she panicked, lunged forward, and shoved her face into his phone screen. "Nyx!" she shouted.

At her call, a horde of females lurking outside swarmed in.

"Nyx?"

"Is it Nyx?"

"Where's Nyx?"

"Wow! It's really Nyx!"

"I'm your fan!"

"Let me see!"

"Ouch!"

"Don't push! Stop shoving me."

The overexcited females forgot all about Lord Kai-no fear, no decorum-just grabbed his phone with a flurry of hands. Across the chaotic crowd of dolled-up girls, Nyx and Kai locked eyes, both bewildered.

As these brazen intruders turned into beast forms-twisting and showing off their

sleek fur or tough scales for Nyx, whose eyes sparkled with delight-Kai couldn't take it anymore and snatched his phone back.

He glared coldly at the butler frozen by the door. "Clear them out. No one's

allowed in my

room."

The butler's worldview had shattered-he obeyed silently, rounding up the females

who'd spiraled beyond his plan and hauling them away. The bedroom went quiet

again.

Kai yanked off his clothes, turned back into beast form, and paced anxiously in front of the camera, flicking his tail and showing off his body from every angle.

He was stronger than the other demon clan, and he groomed his fur daily- yesterday was a rare slip, but he'd fixed it already.

Nyx gazed at the fluffy face shoved into the lens and smiled. "You're still the cutest," she said.

He didn't reply, but his ears perked up high, betraying his feelings.

"I was gonna come find you today, but work came up-I've got to help someone out," Nyx said, pulling the camera back to show him the recording set around her.

'Work? She is working already?' he thought. Kai scratched his claws, not wanting to give in so easily, but he couldn't help worrying. "Will your body be okay?" he asked. He knew exactly how strong he was and how many times he'd pushed

her.

Nyx paused, then shook her head honestly. "I wasn't great yesterday, but I'm much better today."

Seafarion had taken good care of her. Kai clearly thought of that too-his head drooped in frustration.

"I've got to work now," Nyx said, noticing the head producer approaching. She coughed lightly and winked at the leopard. "It's about a week-over soon. Be good and wait for me to come get you, okay?"

After the call ended, the leopard flopped to the floor, rolled around a few times, and tucked his ears shyly

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good and wait

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88%

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for me? How could she say that he thought.

Nyx pocketed her phone and stepped out from the corner into the crowd. The

head producer lit up when he saw her, clapping his hands together and thanking her nonstop. "Thanks so much for stepping in!"

This cross-genre music show was a big investment for the network-hyped up for ages. But the day before shooting, the lead actress from Breaking Chains learned it was semi-live with minimal editing or autotune, paid a penalty, and bailed.

In just one day, the producer sprouted two stress blisters on his mouth. He had some ties with Marilyn and begged her for help as a last resort.

Luckily, Nyx agreed to fill in. Her status wasn't huge, but her rising popularity could meet audience expectations just fine.

"I don't have experience with this," Nyx said sheepishly upfront.

"No worries, no worries." The producer rushed to reassure her, terrified she'd back out. "The others aren't music pros either."

Besides Nyx as an actress, the lineup included hosts, comedians. Truthfully, Nyx wasn't worried about technical skills-she just feared messing up her first variety show gig.

After some comforting words from the producer, she relaxed. As for screen time, popularity, or rankings, she didn't care- she planned to get eliminated after a week and leave, since Kai was waiting.

After video chatting with her mate, Nyx's mood brightened-she even playfully strummed an instrument that looked like a harp as she passed by.

As she started to pull her hand back, someone grabbed her sleeve. She turned slowly and met the head producer's gleaming eyes.

A week of recording wrapped up-the preview aired smoothly, and the final night was the first episode's live performance.

The demon clan chat group buzzed early-fans grabbed their seats to wait for Nyx's debut.

Little Fox: [Everyone, support my boss! It's her first variety show!]

The demon clan fans were more hyped than Helly, clipping every frame of Nyx from the preview and spamming the group with praise.

After some revelry, someone timidly piped up: [Is this okay? Lord Kai's still in the group.]

That comment chilled the vibe. The demons suddenly remembered their leader had been tight with Nyx-super close-but since they'd fiercely opposed him dating a human, Kai had hit a rough patch lately and even left Broskel.

Helly scratched her head in a panic. It was too late to retract the messages, but thankfully Kai hadn't shown up-probably not watching the chat.

She sneakily created a new group chat: [Join the small group, guys! No Nyx stuff in the big group-let's support her there!]

Helly: [Hurry-two minutes, then I'm deleting this so Lord Kai doesn't see!]

With that urgent nudge, demons flooded the new group-the numbers shot up visibly, and in two minutes, it was nearly as big as the original.

Helly was rendered speechless. She double-checked-Kai's account wasn't in the new chat-so she deleted the invite code with relief.

The big group quieted down, while the small one erupted anew.

Freshly relocated, everyone was extra pumped-Helly officially named it [Nyx Demon Clan Fan Club] and changed her

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nickname to [Nyx's Little Assistant).

The two updates sparked inspiration-soon, everyone tweaked their nicknames too.

Kai frowned hard, watching [Nyx's Husband), (Nyx's Wife), (Nyx's Puppy). [Nyx Favorite) and more pop up everywhere. he finally snapped.

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He fired off an angry message: [Why are you all picking these names?]

These clowns had nothing to do with Nyx. He was the only one who belonged to Nyx.

They were having a blast until this killjoy popped up naturally, the demons weren't pleased. 'Who is this blank account anyway?' they thought.

He'd ruined the good mood, so they tore into him, scolding him left and right. Kai had never been treated like this-he was stunned.

Helly stepped in to keep order: [This is a Nyx fan group! If you're not a fan, please leave!]

She eyed the mystery account, debating kicking him out, when he suddenly changed his nickname: [Nyx Says I'm the Cutest]

Helly was speechless. She thought, 'Fine. Clearly a fan-probably one of those intense boyfriend/girlfriend types who sees other fans as rivals.'

Most fans didn't vibe with that extreme vibe, but Helly didn't mind. Anyone who genuinely supported Nyx was a comrade and could stay.

Sure, Kai had rudely interrupted, but he stayed quiet after-no arguing back even when chewed out-so the spat fizzled out.

The group quickly flooded with Nyx's stunning pics again. Kai sat on the floor, shifting positions, saving every photo-his heart raced, but he felt miserable too, torn in two.

The new group's demons, feeling refined and free from Kai's prying eyes, got bolder with their fantasies.

[Such a cute face! I'd lick it!]

[Lick lick!]

[Lick lick!]

[Lick lick!]



It took everything Kai had not to blow his cover and settle scores. He didn't realize that among all Nyx's fans, the demon clan's style was actually pretty tame and pure. Showtime hit, and the group rushed to the live stream-Kai slipped in too.

Mixed with other guests' fans, Nyx chatter thinned out-thirty big-name performers were on, and Nyx was just a rising newbie among them.

As Kai quietly gifted her on the stream, the camera zoomed in on her. Instantly, the chat flipped-everyone, no matter whose fan, got hooked on Nyx.

[Whoa! What's that instrument?]

[Is that a harp!]

[So classy.]

[This girl's gorgeous-sitting by that instrument, she's like a painting come to life.]

[That's Nyx! Princess and assassin from Breaking Chains-her fight scenes are killer. Stan her!]

[Can she play that?]

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[No way, right.]

Definitely not! Those strings look insane. I'd pass out!]

[Posing with it's enough-she's an actress, not a musician.]

88%

Amid the buzzing chat, the host wrapped up, the stage hushed, and the live audience waited eagerly for the show to start.

But instead of the band, a clear, bright plucking sound rang out-like a mountain spring flowing-piercing and grabbing every ear instantly. Peering closer, everyone gawked.

[She's playing!

[She's actually playing?]

[She's for real?]

[Wait, isn't she an actress? How's she playing that?]

Amateurs heard the fun and pros heard the skill-Nyx had real chops, clearly versed in plucked instruments, her technique

smooth.

Even the producer had been floored, though the audience didn't know that.

He'd first noticed her hands-long, delicate fingers like peeled scallions, not just pretty but classically elegant. A close-up of her playing would've looked poetic on

camera.

But to his shock, Nyx wasn't just for show-she'd figured out the instrument in three or four days. After a few rehearsals, she took it on stage and played like a pro.

The airy, soaring notes flitted like birds one moment, then dropped like precious gems-even with backup music joining in, it couldn't drown her out, only amplifying her grand, breathtaking sound.

The chat went wild with praise, veering into chaos.

[Nyx's hands are so pretty, so nimble, so good-she'd slap me real nice, huh!]

[I get it.]

[A whiff of perfume, then the slap from Nyx.]

[Thanks for the love, but Nyx is my master-keep it chill, folks!]

Kai scowled at the nonsense, reporting each comment one by one. After reporting, he let out a heavy breath, rubbed his face thoughtfully, and opened a jar of face cream.

The first episode ended perfectly-Nyx's playing stunned, her singing shone, and she stood head and shoulders above the rest, nabbing a landslide first place.

Seeing her steal the spotlight and win tons of fans, the other guests felt envy but couldn't argue-she'd earned it. With any other instrument, they might've cried foul and said, "Cross-genre my foot, she'd secretly trained!"

But this was a harp, not a guitar. Not many modern people played that instrument.

Plus, Nyx was a last-minute sub-she'd saved their bacon and classed up the show. Without her, they'd have flopped with that instrument-total embarrassment. Sure, a good flop could've made buzz too, but it'd be sloppy.

Amid the flood of praise, Nyx forced a smile, not thrilled at all. 'How did I advance? I was meant to get eliminated!' she thought.

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Nyx found the producer backstage and earnestly said she had big stuff coming up-she couldn't keep doing the show. The producer clung to her leg, sobbing and rolling on the floor

"No way! You leave now, the viewers will eat me alive!"

Even with some drama, Nyx knew he was right. "When's the next round?"

Seeing her waver, he perked up. "Two weeks from now!"

So, a week off. Nyx mulled it over-a week should be enough to win the leopard back-so she nodded, agreeing to stay for

now.

She pulled out her phone, booked a flight for tomorrow, and was about to screenshot it for Kai when Helly ran up, phone in hand.

"Boss, can I snap some pics for the fan group?" she asked. The group was clamoring for off-stage shots of Nyx.

"Fan group?" Nyx tilted her head. "Don't Marilyn and Gavin handle those?"

A not-so-sharp fox like Helly couldn't manage something that brainy,

"It's the demon clan fan group," Helly whispered, squirming shyly. "I just made it."

Hearing demon clan, Nyx pictured those cute critters from her last call with Kai, a fond smile spreading across her face. She didn't just let Helly take pics-she generously let her record a video too.

In the Nyx Demon Clan Fan Club, the starving demons finally got their feast when Helly dropped the goods. On-stage shots were gorgeous, but off-stage candid had a cozy charm.

Seeing them felt like Nyx was closer somehow. Helly even threw in a bonus-a video Nyx recorded just for them. She grinned at the camera, waving to her demon clan pals.

[Nyx is the best-she doesn't even blame us for her breakup with Lord Kai.]

[She knows we're demon clan and isn't scared one bit.]

[Yeah!]

Helly chimed in confidently: [My boss is amazing! I've embarrassed myself tons in front of her, and she didn't fire me-she even brushed my fur!]

The demons cooed with envy, but Kai's face darkened, his eyes fixating on "breakup."

Just as he was about to jump in and set things straight, a sharp-eyed demon asked: [Did anyone hear someone talking to Nyx at the end of the video?]

Once he pointed it out, they all noticed. It was a young, smooth male voice-sweet and familiar-asking if Nyx wanted a late-night snack when she got home. Hounded for answers, Helly spilled: [It's Seafarion.]

Gossip mode activated, she couldn't stop: [You all know who he is, right? He's been chasing Nyx forever!]

Helly: [She didn't date him before-seems like after splitting with Lord Kai, she moved in with Seafarion.]

Helly had rooted for Kai once, but since he'd bailed abroad, clearly giving up, Seafarion's slow-burn win felt tastier now. Plus, Seafarion was human-better match for Nyx anyway.

Helly: [I overheard him propose to Nyx-they'll probably get married someday.]

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Seafarion's name rang bells-every demon scraping by in human society knew him. Picturing him, even the pickiest couldn't deny he and Nyx looked good together.

[Solid match.]

(If Nyx likes him, I'm good!)

[AW]

[But what about Lord Kai?]

Kai was already en route to the airport. While the group's demons sighed over the pity of it, he boarded a plane with a stony face, switched to flight mode, and cut off the irritating chatter.

He hadn't broken up with Nyx. In just a few days, even the little fox had flipped. He wondered if Nyx felt the same way and thought Seafarion was better.

The thought was unbearable-Kai tossed aside all his doubts and hesitations. He didn't care anymore. None of it mattered. He couldn't even wait for Nyx to come get him-terrified Helly's nonsense might come true.

A sleek black car cruised quietly through the night. Nyx finally got a break, lounging lazily in her partner's arms. Seafarion rubbed her hands gently, asking how she'd rest this week.

"I'm going abroad," Nyx said, not hiding it.

Seafarion knew exactly who she was chasing-his lashes lowered, but he kept his cool and hugged her tighter. "I'll go with you."

'No way that immature punk gets to hurt Nyx again,' he thought.

Nyx hesitated. Letting them meet like this-they would probably fight.

Both SS-level males, they were evenly matched in sparring, but in this setup, Seafarion would be at a disadvantage. She'd felt the leopard's aggression firsthand-when he lost it with Theon, she'd broken up plenty of their brawls. But Seafarion was stubborn-no amount of persuading budged him, so she decided to call Kai first and give him a heads-up. The call went through-he was off. She tried his old number-same thing.

Nyx sat up, frowning, and dialed Helly. "Can you reach Kai?"

Helly tried and failed too. "Come to think of it, Lord Kai hasn't shown up in a while."

That genuinely worried Nyx. Seafarion stroked her hair soothingly. "Don't worry-I'll send people to find him."

"I'll look too," Nyx said, switching her flight to the next available one.

After a grueling ten-plus-hour flight, Kai landed back in Broskel. He hadn't slept the whole way, mind racing with fears of Nyx ditching him. Nervously turning on his phone, a flood of unread messages poured in. Ignoring

the noise, he zeroed in on Nyx's missed calls and texts, his face dazed.

'Is this what I get for not waiting like she asked?' he thought. Standing still, Kai stewed in silence, despairing over missing Nyx. He texted her

he was safe, then bought a ticket to head right back.

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Nyx saw the message on the plane and rubbed her forehead, exasperated. She

didn't know what to make of this mix-up just told Kai, "Good you're okay, Rest a day-fly back tomorrow

Flying back-to-back after ten hours wasn't exactly comfy. Knowing Kai was fine eased her mind-she glanced out the window, half-vacation-minded now, when someone butchered her name in a thick accent. "Ny-Nyx?

She looked over-a stranger, an older foreign guy, spry for his age, staring at her with gleaming eyes,

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At Jouse" Seafarion leaned forward slightly, greeting him potirely

Nyx hadn't expected him to know the old man, but after a moment's thought, is clicked fruste The world fins doen.

Het been churning out thrilling action flicks since his early rentier-decades later, he'd made mestres clars his bigges raking in billions, still topping the all-amme box office charts

Seafarion spoke up first, and Jouse seemed to notice him then He obviously knew Seafarings to, but his reaction was way less enthusiastic than with Nyx-just a quick hello, a bit of small talk, then bark in Nyx, jabbering exrently in a rus

Too bad Nyx barely understood his language. She listened, lost, until Seafarion stepped in to translate

"Ah. Jouste says he'll love to work with you-he's got a role in his new film that's perfect for you, Seafarion wid, blushing slightly as he took her hand. "Nyx, you're amazing?"

She didn't even need the connections he'd lined up-she drew big shots to her naturally,

Jouste eyed their clasped hands, nodded in realization, and chuckled that they were a match made in heaven Sextarion's checks flushed deeper.

Nyx had set out to chase her man across the globe, then pivoted to sightseeing- now, a plum job had landed in her lap

Most actors would've jumped at the chance to schmooze Jouste, terrified of missing out on that pie. Top stars struggled to break into the global scene-getting picked by a big international director was a pipe dream.

Call it arrogance or laziness, but Nyx wasn't exactly itching to take the role. She had zero drive to hit the international screen. She couldn't even speak the language-filming with a mostly foreign crew sounded like a hassle.

Seeing Nyx hesitate, not jumping to agree, Jouste got antsy.

Seafarion translated calmly. "Mr. Jouste really admires Zachary-he watched some of Breaking Chains and loved your performance. Then yesterday, he caught your live music show and decided you're the actress he's been searching for."

Jouste hadn't made a film in nearly a decade, waiting for inspiration-now prepping this one, he'd locked in most roles. except for one female character that'd stumped him for ages.

She had to nail tons of action scenes with minimal stunts or effects, be drop-dead gorgeous, seem gentle and pure on the surface, and ideally carry that classic beauty vibe. It was hard to find someone like that.

Then Nyx came along-Jouste called it divine intervention, handing him his dream actress. Seafarion skipped some of the old man's rambling, but Nyx could see the pleading in his eyes.

She wasn't great at saying no-her resolve softened fast. "But I've got a variety show to record right now," she said.

Just a local gig-any other actor would've ditched it in a heartbeat for this. But Nyx hated breaking promises she'd just made.

She believed in first come, first serve.

Jouste didn't mind—he admired her principles. "My movie's still in prep-it won't start till early next year at least," he said. "If you can, come try out for the role tomorrow at my set."

He'd pegged Nyx at first glance, but with an untested actor, Jouste wanted to be thorough-test her first, confirm she fit, then sign the deal. Nyx agreed tentatively.

They'd left at midnight, flown over ten hours across hemispheres-time zones flipped it back to night on arrival.

Before Kai's message, Nyx couldn't sleep from worry-after, she stayed awake chatting with Jouste, and got zero rest.

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Stepping off the plane, she was wipe-Seafarion's heart ached for her.

"Sit on my lap. Nyx," he said, opening his arms and polling her clove

88%

Wheelchair or not he was sturdy-nothing frail atent him-Nyx trusted her weight to him ne fear of crushing him

full

Burying her face in his chest, she shut her eyes and dored off fact. She woke to daylight, dressed in pajamas, feeling fresh and clean

Nyx xat up-Seafarion, nestled beside her, opened his eyes too. Seeing her scan the room, he explained. "This is my place in the city" One of many, of course.

"It's close to Jouste's set-should we eat breakfast and head over? He'd picked this spot for her audition convenience.



Abroad, Seafarion didn't cook himself he had a local chef whip up authentic dishes for Nyx. Turns out, authentic didn't always mean tasty. Nyx are halfheartedly, deciding home food was still the best.

The meal wasn't great, but a full night's sleep left Nyx glowing-jouste raved when he saw her again, saying she looked even prettier than yesterday.

Nyx didn't catch his words, just knew it was praise, and waved it off. "Oh, not really."

Another woman stood by Jouste, letting out what seemed like a scornful snort.

Nyx glanced over-she flashed a polite fake smile, like that eye-roll never happened.

Seafarion suddenly asked Jouste, "Who's this?"

The woman's eyes lit up, locking onto him eagerly. 'Is Seafarion into me?' she wondered.

She curved her lips, confidently tossing her hair. She figured her looks rivaled Nyx's, and her family was leagues richer. Why should Nyx get such a great guy and a killer role? Those should be mine!' she thought.

Jouste smiled wryly and introduced her. "This is Sherilyn Boyle, the daughter of an old friend."

"Does she have a role in the film too?" asked Seafarion.

Sherilyn looked eager to jump in, but Jouste beat her to it. He shook his head firmly. "No."

"If that's the case, could we ask unrelated people to step out for now?" Seafarion said coolly.

The jab was too direct-Sherilyn's face twisted ugly in a flash.

She bit her lip hard, itching to raise her hand and slap him, but she knew deep down she couldn't afford to offend the person in front of her, so she held it in, turned, and ran off, her footsteps stomping heavily with force.

"Sorry, that kid's too headstrong," Jouste said with a wry smile. "She's an only child, and my old friend had her late in life, so he spoiled her rotten like this."

He knew Seafarion's temperament well-there was no way he'd embarrass someone for no reason. It had to be that Sherilyn did something to upset him. With a little guesswork, Jouste could figure out why, shaking his head with a sigh. "Sherilyn had her eye on this

role too, pestering me to let her audition several times, but she just didn't fit what I needed-no matter how many tries she got, it wouldn't work."

Given Sherilyn's spoiled nature, finding out the role she wanted was going to someone else must have made her resent Nyx.

Seafarion kicking her out turned out to be a good thing. Jouste fully approved. Otherwise, who knew what trouble she might

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have stirred up later.

Nyx felt like she'd watched a play without subtitles, unable to understand what they were saying, only knowing redden had stood up for her again. She flashed Seafarion a bright smile, blinking at him. In an incans, the sera commanding mate blushed, turning soft and vulnerable again.

Jouste looked at them with a warm, fatherly expression, sighing silently. Youth wre is something he fought. He hulet expected Seafarion to be like this when it came to love.

Before the audition started, Nyx checked the time and sent Kai a location pin, jose to the leopard wouldn't get off the plane and wander around cluelessly, causing some mix-up.

She asked Seafarion to translate and mentioned to Jouste, "A friend might come by later to find me

"No problem," Jouste agreed readily. "What does he look like? Or what's his name? I'll les the reception know

"Tall, light blond hair, green eyes. Nyx gestured with her hands. Height alone made her partners stand out in my cront

"His name's Kai," Nyx added, just to be safe.

The moment he stepped off the plane, Kai headed straight for the address Nyx gave him

The receptionist waited at the entrance, spotting the tall, striking figure from afar, sensing something different about him. and stepped forward, seeing those green eyes. "Are you Mr. Kai?"

After confirming his identity, he led the way. About a hundred or two hundred meters from the main gate. Kai paused his gaze locking onto two figures hidden in

a corner behind a pile of props.

A man and a woman were arguing fiercely.

"I paid you plenty already, didn't I? Don't get too greedy!"

"Greedy? Don't you know how much risk this took? When you hired me, you didn't mention she was the richest guy's

woman!"

"If you knew the risk was big, why are you still dawdling here? Instead of arguing with me, take the money and run alreadyr

The wind howled, outdoor noise drowning out their hushed spat, unnoticed by passersby but caught by Kat's sharp ears.

"Whoa-ahhh!"

Out of nowhere, a stern-faced man leaped down from the prop pile, startling them into screams. How did this gay move without a sound?' they wondered.

He moved like a sleek leopard, radiating wild strength. Looking up at his face, Sherilyn's breath quickened, her cheeks flushing.

But in the next moment, someone grabbed her collar, snapping her out of her flustered daze, leaving only terror. She didn't even get to yell "Help!" before Kai hauled both conspirators, one in each hand, out in front of everyone. "Jouste!" Sherilyn screamed, tears streaming, thinking she'd been kidnapped, begging Jouste to save her.

Everyone turned to look, and Jouste's eyes widened. "W-What?"

Nyx was halfway through her audition when she saw this unfold, climbing down a ladder in shock, but on the third step, her foot slipped.

3/4

88%

+63)

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The ladder collapsed. Gasps erupted all around her. To make matters worse, the safety harness snapped with a loud "pop."

Everyone watched helplessly as she lost balance and fell from the height- Kai's pupils shrank.

Without thinking, he flung the two aside, lunging like an arrow, catching Nyx midair, twisting his body with a powerful flex to land safely with her in his arms. Unlike a slow-motion movie scene, it happened so fast onlookers thought it was an illusion, over in a blink. Silence fell, everyone dazed. 'Is this guy even human?' they wondered.

Only Seafarion rushed forward, shouting, "Nyx!"

He couldn't process whether Kai's speed or jump defied human limits-his only concern was Nyx, his face pale with fear, drained of color.

Even Kai lingered in the shock of what could've been. If he'd been a second late, Nyx would be seriously hurt. He held her tight, trembling.

Since the accident happened in Jouste's studio, he couldn't escape responsibility. Once the panic faded, he had a hunch who was behind it, his face grim as he told the police everything he knew.

Facing his old friend begging for help, he stayed stone-faced, refusing sharply. "If you'd disciplined your daughter sooner, it wouldn't have come to this. Now she's hurt an innocent actor and dragged me down too-what help do you expect from

me?"

His friend's face fell. "The case is still under investigation-how can you be sure it was Sherilyn?"

Jouste let out a cold laugh and ignored him. The issue lay with the equipment and props-finding out who tampered with them would lead to the truth, and tracing the money would catch the mastermind.

Kai dragging in Sherilyn with one hand and a crew member who rigged the gear with the other made it obvious who was guilty-all that was left was evidence. Cutting ties with his old friend, Jouste grabbed some prized gifts and went to visit

Nyx in the hospital.

The hospital was quiet, bodyguards keeping out outsiders, even someone like Jouste getting thoroughly checked before being let in. He knocked, stepped into the room, and froze at the sight.

## Of The Bea 440

### Chapter 440

In the ward, Nyx lay in bed, propped up by a soft pillow, flanked by two males.

88%

Seafarion peeled fruit with focus, a long spiral of peel dangling evenly without breaking. Meanwhile, Kai held a bowl of hot soup, blowing on each spoonful before feeding it to her.

Jouste stood there, speechless. He vaguely recalled seeing something like this before, but with men surrounded by doting women, not nearly this attentive.

Seeing a visitor, Nyx coughed lightly, embarrassed, sitting up straighter. "What brings you here?"

Truthfully, she wasn't hurt and felt fine, but both males acted like she'd been through something awful, insisting she stay for observation.

Jouste snapped out of it, guilt washing over him as he sighed, "It's all my fault you got hurt!"

He'd invited Nyx to audition but failed to ensure safety. Never in a million years did he think the girl he watched grow up, who often played at his studio, would do something like this over a role that wasn't hers.

This wasn't petty-it was outright harm. She didn't just target Nyx but anyone who might take her role, convinced that crippling them would secure it for her. Such malice from a kid he'd always doted on left Jouste reeling.

If it had been anyone else, they might've been dead or maimed by now. The culprit would've slipped away in the chaos, and with the local authorities' track record, it'd likely be brushed off as an accident-or buried by her family's influence if clues surfaced.

That's why she'd been so reckless. But she didn't

shutting her down with a few words, and the other

Nyx having two top-tier protectors. One was the richest man alive,

Jouste shifted his gaze to Kai. "Excuse me, sir, do you know a Leopardo?"

When he was young, just starting in film, a noble gentleman named Leopardo funded his debut project, kickstarting his

career.

That low-profile benefactor vanished after, but Jouste never forgot his face, even decades later. Seeing Kai gave him a jolt, like seeing Leopardo again. 'How could two people look so alike? It's like he never aged a day, he thought.

Kai glanced up at him. "He's a distant ancestor of mine." Leopardo was one of the aliases he'd used living here.

"You really look like him." Jouste marveled, studying Kai with admiration. "Have you studied martial arts? Ever thought about acting in my films?"

In decades of work, he'd seen countless action stars, some with family-trained skills, but Kai's display still stunned him. If Nyx's fight scenes showed top-tier skill, Kai had top-tier power.

Kai almost shook his head but paused. "If it's a romantic role with Nyx, I'd consider it."

Jouste fell silent. He'd tried not to overthink it, convincing himself Nyx and Kai were just friends, but Kai's words shattered

that illusion.

Glancing at Seafarion, he saw a hint of jealousy, yet the man stayed close to Nyx. 'What kind of relationship is this?' he wondered.

Seeing Jouste speechless, Nyx's eyes darted awkwardly. She'd picked up some language skills lately and understood Kai's

comment.

'An old director like him probably can't handle something this unconventional-he must be shocked, she thought.

1/5

Chapter 440

Before she could ease the tension. Jore laughed heartily, nodding at her just like your

The industry was full of messy finge-men flaunting multiple lovers wasn't rare, even seen as alwag. If they could, as em Nye

She wasn't some power-atmiting creep or buying affection-Beatarion and Kai willingly fell for her, proving the was genuinely likable

"If I were decades younger, I might've chased you ton, Jouste teased, grinning wider as both men glared at him.

Nyx shook her head helplessly, patting her partners hacks. "Young you must've been a handsome, talented guy, but I'd only admire you platonically-my heart's already with the ones beside me?

Her shaky, newly learned words weren't perfect, but they got through, Jouste's eyes widened, amazed at her language knark. She picked this up in just days? he thought,

The two males, officially dubbed her loves, couldn't hide their joy, bearing openly,

The investigation into the fall wrapped up fast. Sherilyn had bribed a crew member to loosen ladder screws and swap the harness for a flimsy one, aiming to ruin Nyx's career or worse,

Her father tried to buy a settlement but hit a wall, then sought top lawyers, only to fail miserably. He knew Seafarion was behind it but could do nothing, watching his daughter get a harsh sentence, aging him overnight.

Despite their rift, Jouste felt for his old friend's plight. "Nyx didn't get hurt-you should be thankful. Otherwise, a few years in jail wouldn't cut it. With how protective those two were, if Nyx had so much as a scratch, the culprit would've been hunted downL

Sherilyn's father sighed glumly, "I know, I get it."

He finally regretted spoiling her too much. He should've stopped her small misdeeds early, not covered for her-now she'd hit an immovable wall, all her own doing.

Nyx didn't join the trial aftermath, staying abroad just four or five days to lock in her role with Jouste before leaving the hospital and returning home for her music show.

The show's head producer, hearing she'd had an accident, urged her to rest, saying she could skip episodes or quit-no big deal. But Nyx kept her word and came back, moving him to tears.

"Aren't you afraid the audience will eat you alive?" Nyx joked.

The producer laughed, "Yeah! You're the fan favorite-quitting after one episode would get me devoured!"

Sickness or accidents, no matter the excuse, fans would call it a cover-up, raging about shady deals and tearing the show

apart.

Nyx sighed, "Oh well." She'd only stepped in as a last-minute fill-in-her popularity was an accident; she shouldn't have touched that instrument.

From now on, I'll play it safe, stay low-key, aim for early elimination, and finish this gig! she vowed. But dreams were grand, and reality flipped the script.

Maybe the first episode's instrument hit big, or the show planned to push culture all along-the second episode's theme was

opera.

Two guests actually knew opera, thinking they'd shine, but the expert teacher still raved about Nyx, even wanting to take her as a student despite her age.

Nyx politely declined, later suggesting to the producer, "How about cutting a couple of my lines this time?"

2/5

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It was a variety show, not a contest-she wanted others to get a chance. The producer agreed at some thots. The sug guests thanked her personally for it.

Yet on live performance day, no amount of humility outshone the audience's keen eyes-Nyx's two lines stole the skyow, dubbed the finishing touch.

The judges stuck to the script, giving her a middling score, only to get blasted by fans for being blind and de, even the cog scorers' supporters joining in.

Nyx watched, baffled, as fans voted her to first place against the judges. Backstage, facing the quests bumped to second and third, she felt guilty and awkward.

"It's fine-it's your talent," they said graciously, comforting her instead. "Don't worry about it?"

Losing to skill, not schemes, they took it in stride. The audience loved Nyx, and so did they. They got to experience Kyz's talent live.

"How do you pick it up so fast without training?"



"It's pure talent!"

Nyx smiled wryly at their praise. She hadn't studied opera, but back in ancient times, with little else to do, she'd heard it so much it must've sunk in.

"Nyx," Kai interrupted their chat, handing her a small thermos of hot water to soothe her throat.

He doted better than any assistant, though he clearly wasn't one. His aura and closeness to Nyx made that obvious.

The guests knew he was a big deal, but his exact identity eluded them, hinting at his stature. They teased Nyx with grins "Boyfriend's here to pamper you again, huh?"

Sure enough, Kai's face lit up faintly, loving the label. Flattering a big shot with a hundred compliments wouldn't beat that one line.

Nyx nodded with a smile, not denying it. Since the incident, both males seemed traumatized, sticking to her like glue, taking turns watching her.

Kai especially had nightmares, waking up drenched-sweat or tears, she couldn't tell-turning leopard and crashing through her window at midnight, refusing to leave.

He insisted on moving in, sleeping in her bed. Naturally, Seafarion wouldn't stay behind alone.

Nyx felt lucky that the bed was big enough. One accident skyrocketed her mission progress. She didn't even try-both males won themselves over.

Living together, they didn't hide showing up at her work, and gossip spread like wildfire, with no PR cleanup. If anything, they fueled it, slyly spreading word that Nyx preferred one over the other.

The industry buzzed, and online, fans ate it up. Such a wild scandal was unheard of in entertainment history.

Nyx didn't want to dig into her own gossip, but her phone kept pushing it-she even stumbled on fanfiction, making her cringe and swear off the internet to focus on work. She loved her job, it kept her sane.

After topping two episodes, the show's pattern seemed set, and when Nyx won a third time by popular demand, the producer decided to center the season on her.

Her juicy gossip boosted the show's heat sky-high. Other guests didn't win but gained new fans from the spotlight. The whole crew gelled, the vibe unusually chill. But as her fame rose to the top, some sour notes crept in.

3/5

Wed, 19 M

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38%

One morning, Nyx arrived at the set, sensing everyone sneaking glances, hesitating to speak. She grabbed a blunt guest to ask, and they stammered, "Uh, did you see the online fights?"

"Fights?" Nyx blinked. "About what? Me?"

She'd ditched the internet lately and had no clue what was up. Pulling out her phone, she unblocked apps and saw the top trend: [Nyx Rigged].

[This music show's a joke-they think we're stupid. Are we deaf or what?]

+63

[Hilarious-gold-daddy backing gets you first every time. No matter how great the vets are, they're her sidekicks. Why even

compete?]

[Script's too obvious.]

[Watching this trash is a waste of time-it's all rigged.]

No names, but the target was clear, comments exploding with fan wars.

[I might not be deaf, but you sure are!]

[Yes, you're stupid. You got no brain.]

[Real talk-J's fans never thought it was rigged. Nyx is legit strong. I watched for J, but she won me over.]

[They're obviously tight! R's no actor-her fans can tell she genuinely likes Nyx!]

[No point reasoning with them-just paid haters.]

[Who's bankrolling you? Spill it!]

[Live show, audience votes, fairest music gig ever, and you call it scripted? Get lost!]

Nyx's fans weren't alone-other guests' supporters joined the fray, chaos reigning. "Don't look, Nyx," Marilyn said, snatching her phone. "Most of the hate reeks of bots-clearly hired. I've got people digging; we'll know who soon."

The tense contestants relaxed at that. 'Phew, not us!' they thought. 'Hurry, Marilyn, catch the real jerk and clear us! How are we supposed to face Nyx?'

The battle raged all morning, the haters' momentum fading, then surging back like they'd gotten a boost.

The door slammed open with a "bang." An agent stormed in, shaking the crazed artist by the shoulders. "Why'd you pay the bots again? That's Seafarion's girl! Seafarion! Where'd you get the guts to mess with him?"

"And she's got another backer-word is he's worse than Seafarion, roots too deep to dig up! What if he's some mob guy who offs you?"

"What are you scared of? It's done," the artist said, taking a drag, staring at the cigarette's red tip. "I just couldn't swallow it."

She was the show's original pick-Nyx stole her spot and soared, hogging the spotlight. That prize was hers, and Nyx snatched it all.

"Even Breaking Chains-I was the lead, but Nyx got the fame," she muttered, jealousy seeping out.

The agent shook his head. "You still can't take her on! She's got heavy hitters!"

"Huh? What hitters?" She blinked, then laughed, "You believe those wild rumors? Two top dogs fighting over a little bird like

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63

## Chapter 440

her? That crazy? You think it's real?"

She shifted, reasoning with him. "When we shot Breaking Chains, Seafarion might've been her sugar daddy-I saw him once -but he wasn't hovering like the gossip says!"

All told, Seafarion showed up once, hushed them up, proving the rumors were bunk.

"Those tales are nuts-making him sound like some lovesick fool fighting for her," she scoffed. "She probably cooked it up herself."

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