

Fated out Chapter 36

36 The Panther encounter...

Lyla

1

"What?" my eyes widened as my heart began to pound again. "What did you say?"

"That table is asking for you and Mrs Grayson," Sarah repeated eyeing me strangely. "Are you fine though,

you..."

"Why?" Nanny cut her off, "What do they want?"

Sarah shrugged, clearly just as puzzled as us. "They didn't say. They insisted I call the m

ger and also ask

Lyla to come."

I and Nanny exchanged worried glances, both of us feeling a knot of unease settling in the pit of our stomachs.

"Why are we even afraid?" Nanny scoffed speaking in our native tongue as she leaned towards me. "It's not like we did anything and you don't have to worry either, they don't seem like they're from Blue Ridge."

I nodded, I wanted to tell her about the weird feelings. va I have been getting by just staring at both men but I

10:27

36 The Panther encounter...

pushed it aside. We had a business to run, after all.

"Well," Nanny switched to English, straightening her apron. "Let's see what this is about."

As we made our way across the café to Xander's table, I tried to steady my breathing. I could feel a strange pull toward Xander, the same way I had felt today when he had sat next to me. Unlike his father, it wasn't fear... it was a strange attraction – the drooly type. It was as if an invisible thread connected us, tugging at my very core.

3

–

When we reached the table, Xander's face lit up with smiles. "Lyla!" he exclaimed, flashing me a disarming smile. "I didn't know you worked 1. I was just telling them you're my classmate."

I gave the newcomers a hesitant smile, wondering why Xander felt the need to say that. He was making it sound like a family introduction.

"Yeah, I've been working here for a while."

Before the conversation could go any further, Nanny,

cut in with a businesslike tone. "What can we do for

you?"

Xander's father – Mr Dunree sitting across from him

19:27

2010

<

36 The Panther encounter...

smiled at Nanny's directness. "We were wondering if you could handle a large takeout order for tomorrow morning – cakes and coffee for about thirty to fifty people."

–

The woman next to him nodded, her perfectly manicured nails tapping on the table. "We're having a celebration tomorrow morning. We thought starting them off with coffee and cakes would be lovely."

The woman turned and reached into her designer bag and pulled out a folded piece of paper, handing it to Nanny. "Here's what we had in mind."

Nanny took the list, her eyes scanr

were numerous from the snippets I could see and the order needed to be ready by morning. She sighed softly and shook her head.

"I'm sorry, but this is a pretty long list for such short notice. If the event were later in the day, we could manage, but by morning? It's not just possible."

The three newcomers at the table exchanged glances, as disappointment flickered across their faces. The woman sighed and nodded. "That's understandable. I am a dummy for thinking this can be done in a blink of

8/10

36 The Panther encounter...

an eye. I know I should have placed the orders ahead of time."

Nanny, seeing their crestfallen expression, quickly added. "There's another café across town that specializes in large orders like this. I'd be happy to give you their information."

"Really?" the woman turned to Nanny with eyes filled with gratitude. "Thank you so much."

"Don't mention," Miriam chuckled. "I'll go get their

card, give me a moment," she turned and started going back to the counter.

Seeing that I wasn't following her

paused and

asked me in a stern voice. "What are you doing, Lyla?"

Let's go."

"Actually," Mr Dupree raised his hand as if to stop me. "I was hoping I could talk to Lyla. Do you have time?" he

asked staring at me.

I blinked in surprise, caught off guard by the request. I hadn't expected, Mr Dupree to single me out and the sense of unease I'd been feeling all evening spiked. Before I could respond, Miriam stepped forward, her

voice tense.

4/10

<

36 The Panther encounter...

"And why do you need to speak to her?" she demanded narrowing her eyes.

Mr Dupree raised an eyebrow, amusement dancing in his eyes. "My, you're quite concerned about her, aren't you?"

"Because I am her mother," Miriam replied, giving him a

cold look.

Mr Dupree's expression shifted, softening with a hint of sympathy as he rose to his feet and bowed slightly towards her. "Ah, I see. My apologies if I caused any

concern."

n a gesture of. Extending his hands towards Nan peace, he said. "I'm Xander's father. Xander just joined Lyla's school and they've gone quite far in their curriculum. I was wondering if Lyla could tutor Him. I've spoken to their teachers and they highly recommended her. Money is not an issue."

I blinked, caught off guard by the request. I hadn't expected that, though the idea of tutoring Xander felt slightly pleasing to me and I couldn't tell why.

Miriam eyed Mr Dupree warily but nodded. "We'll think

it and let you know."

5/10

<

36 The Panther encounter...

With that, the conversation ended. I and Nanny made

our way back to the counter before the three people who had joined Xander's table left. As I resumed serving other customers, the strange feeling was back. Occasionally, I would look up at Xander and our gaze *wuW.no(v)@1wOr.cOm*

would meet.

I was making conscious efforts not to walk over to him. As closing time reached, I started cleaning up. Wiping down tables, mopping the floors and wiping down the machines. Xander and his father were the only customers left and since we wanted to be polite, we just cleaned our way around them.

e trash to the Sarah left earlier, so I had to tak dumpster out back. Finally, with the floors swept and everything in place, what was left for me was to take out the trash bags and I'll be done for the day.

I hefted the two large trash bags and headed for the back door the cool night air washed against my skin as I closed my eyes, loving the change from the stuffiness inside.

I had just tossed the bags into the dumpster when a low growl froze me in place.

6/10

<

36 The Panther encounter...

"Well, well." A familiar voice drawled from the shadows. "Hey, look it's our friend."

I spun around, my heart hammering as I recognized the shifters from before only, they were just three now. They emerged from the darkness; their eyes glowing in the dim street light. They blocked my path and their leader from before came forward.

–

"Looks like the little bitch got lost, again," he sneered "Or maybe you're a wolf – aren't you? Where is Daddy now? call him to save you."

"Go ahead!" another voice teased "Shout for him to

come save you."

My eyes darted to the café's back door. It was too far. I'd never make it even if I make a dash for it. Plus, these men were Panthers... they were fast.

"I don't want any trouble, gentlemen," I said trying to keep my voice steady "You don't want anything from me. I am poor and broke and my body is riddled with incurable diseases. So, just let me go back inside and I promise, I won't breathe a word of our encounter to

anyone," *wuW.noVe1wOr@m.cOm*

Their leader laughed, a harsh, grating sound. "Oh, but

36 The Panther encounter...

we do want trouble. You see, we have a message to send to that new Alpha in town. And you, little bitch is going to help us deliver it. Tell him we don't like his kind around here and that this town belongs to us now."

"I don't know him like that," I said quietly, my eyes darting back and forth as I tried to assess the situation. "You should send him the message yourselves. I doubt he'd ever listen to me,".

"Really?" their leader mocked "Just tell him anyways. I have a feeling he might be into you,". *wWw.N(e)Ve1wOr@m.cOm*

"I don't want any trouble," I said twly backing away from the light.

"We shal see," they crooned in unison their teeth pulled back in glee.

Suddenly, their leader lunged forward with such speed before I could react. Instinctively, I reached for the discarded broom leaning against the wall – it wasn't much but it was better than nothing.

I swung the broom with all my might catching the first shifters on the face, momentarily stunning it. But there were more, and they were faster, stronger.

<

36 The Panther encounter...

a

Just as the second one tried to lunge at me, Mr.

Dupree's voice came again, he didn't sound pleased.

"I thought we already settled this..."

When I turned, he was at the entrance of the alley and this time he had Xander with him. The Panthers snarled, backing away but still poised for a fight.

"Take Lyla and go!" Mr Dupree said to Xander who nodded and reached for my hand.

"C'mon, let's get out of here!"

As we sprinted lightly to the back door, just before the *Www.noVe1wOr@cOm*

door closed, I saw Mr Dupree r

–

towards the

panthers – moving with inhumana.. speed and grace..."he struck the first panther, sending it flying into a pile of crates, scattering the bottles in all directions.

I gasped, and turned only to see Xander staring at me with amusement in his eyes.

"C'mon," he said "My dad hates it when people stare too much."

37 The rift in our world...