

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace Novel

CHAPTER 121

Posted by **AdminJ**, 1984 Views, Released on May 15, 2024

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Back then, Cedric didn't understand why Orion was so enamored with Xanthea, utterly captivated by her.

Today, having witnessed their intimate, flirtatious exchanges, seemingly oblivious to the world around them, Cedric finally got it.

Although Cedric had been by Orion's side for years, he'd never seen Orion like this.

With Xanthea, Orion seemed alive, vibrant and splendid, joking, feeling jealous, getting angry, and even doing some domineering yet childish things. He truly behaved like a twenty-year-old young man hopelessly in love.

It was not like the usual decisive, fearsome chairman of Twin Towers, nor the cold, workaholic head of the Lockwood Group, who usually exuded a maturity **and** chill beyond his peers.

Xanthea brought out a side of Orion that seemed so unlike him, yet perhaps it was his most genuine and joyful self. So often, it seemed Orion couldn't control himself, falling deeper willingly, right?

If only Xanthea didn't have someone she loved, if only there wasn't a Matthew.

Xanthea initially closed her eyes simply because she didn't want to see Orion.

But whether it was the comfort of the seat, or the pain in her arm slowly fading, as soon as her eyelids shut, a wave of exhaustion from being chased by fans and arguing with Orion overwhelmed her, swiftly carrying her into slumber.

Her even, soft breathing filled the car, and Orion, whose gaze had been fixed on a dense contract, finally shifted, resting openly on her.

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Stripped of the fierce demeanor she had earlier, Xanthea curled up in the seat with her small figure. The sleeping girl seemed incredibly sweet **and** docile, like a sleeping beauty from the fairytale, unrealistically perfect, irresistibly inviting one to touch, to disrupt.

Thinking so, he did exactly that.

Orion leaned in slowly, inch by inch towards the sleeping girl, unbuckling

He was like an addict, starved for days, who had finally found his poison, greedily lapping it up.

He thought, "Xan, Xan, I could have endured the darkness, had I never seen the light. But from the moment you smiled at me from across the Nightshade family event, there was no clearing between us, only an endless entanglement, until death do us part."

"Hmm."

In her sleep, Xanthea felt as if she were outdoors, stalked by a ravenous wolf, its eyes locked on her, ready to pounce and—tear her apart any second, which made her let out a small yelp.

That sound, like a sudden alarm, jolted Orion who was so close to her.

Orion was about to pull away, but just then, Xanthea slipped directly into his arms. As if fearing she would fall, she tightly clutched around his waist, her nose rubbing against his firm abs. She murmured discontentedly in her sleep, "Kitty, you're so hard today."

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The soft, sweet scent of Xanthea nestled into Orion's arms, like a seductive, charming cat, twisting and turning while murmuring playfully in a childlike voice. It almost instantly stirred something within him, a wild, fierce desire shadowing his still infatuated, handsome face.

He looked down at the unknowingly enticing girl asleep in his arms, his warm palm subconsciously cradling her lovely face, inching closer with every breath.

Even in her sleep, she was a little temptress.

The partition between the front and back seats of the Maybach Landaulet slowly descended. Cedric, puzzled, glanced in the rearview mirror and saw Orion leaned in, his eyes intensely focused on Xanthea's "lips, their proximity almost negligible.

Cedric thought, "What on earth was Mr. Lockwood thinking? Ms. Nightshade was just asleep, not unconscious! What if she woke up to this scene – wouldn't that turn into a massive uproar? And besides, Ms. Nightshade already had a boyfriend, with whom she was

deeply in love. Mr. Lockwood needed to control himself, be careful not to fall too deep and end up unable to extricate himself.”

Everglade, nightfall.

“Hmm.”

Xanthea woke up, stretching her hands and rubbing her sleepy eyes, slightly disoriented as she gazed up at the glittering, beautiful starry car roof.

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What a wonderfully comfortable nap that was not only was the air conditioning just right, the quiet, undisturbed, but there was also a sensation of being held, reminiscent of sleeping curled up in her mother’s arms. She felt utterly safe.

And beneath her was something soft **and** warm, though next to that was something hard and hot like an iron pressing against her face. She needed to see what it was!

Xanthea slightly turned her body, her eyes meeting a white dress shirt and a faint scent of pine filling her nostrils. She froze, her gaze fixed for a long moment before she suddenly sat up.

Damn!

How did she end up sleeping on Orion’s lap?

Beside her, Orion’s eyes were barely open, his expression calm, his pristine suit without a wrinkle.

Was he asleep?

He must not have noticed her lying on his lap then, right?

Just as she was silently rejoicing, Orion slowly opened his eyes, his deep gaze tinged with red veins as if tormented by something, his voice slightly hoarse, “Ms. Nightshade, you’re awake.” Seeing **him** like this, Xanthea knew she was the cause of his torment.

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She opened her mouth, awkwardly pointing at his legs, “The **space** in the car is a bit cramped, I didn’t realize I rolled over... did you know?”

“Of course, Orion smiled, “Ms. Nightshade, your body gives out an intense feeling.”

There was a hint of amusement in his eyes as he emphasized the words ‘body’ and ‘intense

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Xanthea thought he was hinting at her weight, which made her grind her teeth a bit.

Wasn't it because he had locked her in the car? Otherwise, how could she have rolled onto his lap?

“Why didn't you push me away?”

“I tried, but you were holding on too tightly.”

Xanthea's mouth twitched. That was undeniable. Ever since she was little, she had a habit of clinging tightly in her sleep, much like an octopus wrapping around her mom or a large Hello Kitty plush, impossible for anyone to peel away.

Geeze, did she do something stupid in front of him again?

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Chapter **123**

“Well, that's only because you locked me in the car! Otherwise, I could have-”

Before Xanthea could finish her sentence, Orion interrupted her, “No worries, I don't mind, and Ms. Nightshade, you shouldn't either.”

He was not the least bit uncomfortable; on the contrary, he seemed quite at ease.

Xanthea paused, “I wasn't minding!”

“Mr. Lockwood, Ms. Nightshade, we're here.”

Cedric stopped the car and swung open the door.

After being cooped up in the car for five or six hours, arguing relentlessly with him, Xanthea couldn't stand another second inside and was eager to get out. She stepped out and was greeted by the sight of the sprawling, majestic Estate.

Inside the estate, there were towering pavilions, vast, rippling lakes, chirping birds and rare wildlife, and even a dense, man-made forest that blocked out the sky—it was indeed a top-tier private villa.

On the grand golden gate at the front of the villa, the name 'Marlowe' was prominently displayed.

Marlowe Manor?

Xanthea murmured, "Could this be the famous Marlowe conglomerate that Dad often mentions? The wealthiest family in Everglade? No wonder they own such a luxurious estate."

Orion noticed the admiration in her eyes and said, "I have one in the northern areas of Crestwood too, ten times larger than this."

Hearing this Xanthea turned to look at him and thought, "And? Are you trying to show off?"

"Chairman Lockwood!"

"Long time no see! Please, come in. Mr. Anthony has been waiting for you in the study for quite some time

now!"

From the estate, a group of servants dressed in formal suits came out, all smiling warmly as they approached to take things from Cedric,

Just as Xanthea was about to speak, Orion said, "Please, Ms. Nightshade."

Xanthea thought, "I'm not staying here tonight, am I?"

She had assumed his earlier mention of a destination inaccessible by public transport was just to tease her, but seeing how remote this place was, it seemed he was telling the truth.

"Orion!"

As they entered the main hall of the villa, a particularly clear voice called out from the winding staircase.

Looking up, Xanthea saw a tall man with a lively demeanor descending the stairs. He was dressed casually in a shirt and trousers, his hair a light, sandy color. He appeared about the same age as Orion but with an entirely different energy..

If she wasn't mistaken, this had to be Leonard Marlowe, the heir of the Marlowe family.

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"I've been waiting for you all day."

His eyes, filled with laughter, suddenly froze when they landed on the girl next to Orion, overtaken by sheer astonishment.

"Xanthea?"

Startled by being unexpectedly named, Xanthea looked at him curiously. How did he know her? Could it be that she had become famous overnight after her appearance on "The Masked Singer, famous enough that even this elite heir noticed her?"

"Orion, why did you bring her here? Don't tell me you guys..."

His incredulous gaze shifted back and forth between Orion and Xanthea, seeking confirmation. However, Orion merely pursed his lips, a reminder of his calm demeanor.

Realizing how his shocked gaze lingered between her and Orion, Xanthea quickly caught on, "Oh, don't get the wrong idea. I'm not close to him. We just happened to meet on the road, and I hitched a ride."

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Chapter **124**

Leonard chuckled when he heard her words, his face breaking into a 'you must think I'm a fool' expression. How incredibly convenient it must have been for Orion to bump into the woman he'd been dreaming about for years right on the street?

Even if it were a coincidence, it surely was a planned one.

But observing their interactions, Leonard thought that their relationship wasn't as he had speculated. After all these years, Orion hadn't even dared to step closer to Xanthea, let alone date her.

"Hello, I'm Leonard,"

He strode towards her with a beaming smile and introduced himself.

"Hello, I'm Xanthea."

traveled up

"I've heard so much about you, Ms. Nightshade, but seeing is truly believing." Leonard's eyes and down her figure as if admiring a fine piece of art, unable to stop himself from exclaiming, "Ms. Nightshade, your beauty is simply otherworldly, far more stunning in person than on any screen. No wonder you're the muse of so many."

As he delivered the last line, he glanced meaningfully at Orion, catching a warning narrowing of the man's eyes.

Really?

Just a look and Orion's jealous?

Seeing the normally stoic Orion showing signs of thawing, treating a woman like his prized treasure, Leonard couldn't miss this.

"Thank you, Mr. Marlowe, you flatter me, Xanthea responded, puzzled by his effusive praise on their first meeting but replied politely nonetheless, "You yourself are quite the accomplished young man, well-renowned."

"Ms. Nightshade, please, let's keep it casual. We're all friends here. No need for formalities. Call me Leo, 'Mr. Marlowe' just ages me."

Leo?

Xanthea raised an eyebrow and thought it was interesting.

After his comment, Leonard sneaked a peek at Orion and indeed saw his expression darkened visibly, then he opened his arms wide, moving to embrace Xanthea, "I grew up abroad and I'm quite fond of the greeting customs there, may I have the honor of a hug, ah!"

Before he could finish, his voice morphed as the slipper on his foot was crushed under Orion's polished **black** shoe.

Orion said, “Leonardoodle, long time no see.

Leonard’s lips turned white with pain as he wrestled his slipper free from under Orion’s foot. Xanthea couldn’t help but laugh when she heard ‘Leonardoodle’, his nickname? Quite simple and unpretentious.

“You said you wouldn’t use my nickname anymore.”.

Orion’s expression was indifferent, “I forgot.”

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Forgot? He **clearly** wanted to embarrass him in front of Xanthea!

“Ori.”

Suddenly, a sickly sweet, high-pitched female voice descended from the upstairs, hitting everyone’s ears sharply.

Xanthea shivered unexpectedly and looked up to see a girl in a lavish yellow Lolita dress running down the stairs, her face bright with a joyful smile, like a fluttering butterfly.

“You’re here!”

“Leo didn’t tell me, and I’ve been waiting upstairs all this time!”

She made a beeline for Orion, and upon reaching him, looked up with big, bashful eyes, sparkling brightly.

Xanthea watched her expressions, enjoying the drama unfold.

That wide smile, those fervent, glowing eyes – she must be Orion’s little fan.

With her round face, big eyes, small cherry lips, and a cute nose, she looked like a pristine doll from a shop window. Orion indeed was a lucky man!

“Hmm.”

Orion responded indifferently, then turned to Xanthea, “I need to discuss some business with Chairman. Marlowe shortly. It’ll take about two hours.”

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Xanthea **raised** an eyebrow indifferently, “Oh, and then what?”

Why was Orion telling her all this? She wasn't his assistant.

“If you're hungry, you could...” He glanced at Leonard, then turned to Cedric, “ask Cedric to prepare dinner early. Let him know if you need anything.”

Leonard, caught by the swift shift of gaze, widened his eyes in astonishment. No way, was Orion actually starting to guard against him?

Well, years of brotherhood lost to a single embrace with **his** darling!

“I'm not very hungry, I can wait a couple of hours.”

Xanthea thought, “Did I eat too messily the last couple of times **we** dined together? Did he think I was always ready to chow down? Please, I just had a particular fondness for his cooking skills!”

Her casual reply hit Orion's ears but painted an entirely different picture.

Orion's eyes narrowed slightly, a hint of a smile emerging, “**You** want to wait to eat with me?”

Xanthea was shocked.

How did he derive that meaning? She just wanted to say she wasn't always thinking about food!

Meanwhile, Queenie Marlowe looked expectantly at Orion, only to see his gaze not linger on her but burn intensely towards the woman next to him.

That was when Queenie noticed the stunningly beautiful woman beside him, enchanting like a siren, her every smile and gesture seemingly flirtatious.

Why else would Orion talk so tenderly to this woman, his eyes so focused, even smiling?

Queenie had known Orion for so long and had never seen him smile, especially not at a woman!

“Ori, who is she?” Queenie pouted, her eyes full of hostility towards Xanthea.

Sensing Queenie's mood, Xanthea reiterated to her what she had just told Leonard.

Queenie's eyes, burning with jealousy, shifted to outright scorn, "Oh, a stray you picked up from the streets? No wonder she looks all scruffy! Ori, you better be careful not to be fooled by such women who jump into men's cars so easily. Who **knows** if it's just her clothes that are dirty, or her body too."

Before she could finish, Leonard covered her mouth with his hand, his voice harsh, "Queenie, shut up! Who taught you to talk to guests like that? It's so rude!"

"Leonard, what are you doing?"

Queenie angrily pushed him away, about to continue her rant, when she met Orion's glare, venomous and terrifying as if he wanted to tear her apart, causing her to step back in fright.

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"What did you say?"

"Orion, don't be mad! Queenie's young and spoiled by her family, she speaks without thinking!"

Leonard, recognizing the severity in Orion's stormy demeanor, quickly pulled Queenie in front of Xanthea.

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"Apologize to Ms. Nightshade right now, and ask for her forgiveness!"

Queenie, coddled and praised all her life, had never been reprimanded so harshly by her cousin before, nor had she been looked at with such frightening eyes by Orion.

It seemed he detested her to the core, all because of this scruffy, sly temptress who had bewitched everyone's hearts!

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Chapter 126

"Boo hoo hoo."

Thinking about it, Queenie didn't know if she was too scared or just felt too wronged, but her tears suddenly fell, causing the clueless servants around to gather, soothing her with kind words and almost alerting her parents.

"And you have the cheek to cry? Apologize to Ms. Nightshade right now!"

Leonard furrowed his brow, his patience wearing thin.

He had given her an out, and if she didn't take this chance to gracefully apologize to Xanthea and seek her forgiveness, continuing to create a fuss, he feared she might not even be able to get away with it!

After all, he knew Orion's temper well; crossing his boundaries was a disaster.

Xanthea watched Queenie who had first hurled insults and then played the victim burst into tears, and couldn't help but chuckle.

Every year brought its share of oddities, but this year seemed particularly rife.

There were those who played innocent lambs to the public but were snakes behind the scenes, those who bullied others by flaunting their powerful backers, and now here was one who spoke madness and played the victim first. Seeing so many, she had inevitably accumulated some experience.

Each type of oddity required a different approach.

For instance, engaging in a war of words **with** Queenie would only spoil her own mood, and physical confrontation was out of the question—especially not in Marlowe Manor. Even if she detested Orion, she wouldn't ruin his business. So, the best approach was.

"It's alright, Ms. Marlowe, you don't need to apologize."

Xanthea offered a gracious smile that surprised everyone present.

They thought, "Despite Ms. Marlowe's rude remarks, Ms. Nightshade wasn't upset but dismissed it with a smile. That was the poise and grace befitting a lady of her standing!"

Queenie looked at Xanthea, puzzled, only to see her suddenly wrap her arms affectionately around Orion's neck, her lips curling into a bright smile, "It's my fault, actually. Due to some special reasons, I intentionally hid my romantic relationship with Orion, which led Ms. Marlowe to misunderstand."

What?

Queenie's eyes widened in disbelief.

She was Ori's girlfriend?

Impossible! Absolutely impossible!

Leonard was Qrian's close friend and knew him best. Orion was known for his ascetic lifestyle and disinterest in romance, which was why Leonard always advised her not to waste her affections on him. And now suddenly, there was a girlfriend in the picture?

This must be some sly fox telling lies!

Xanthea suddenly pulled Orion closer, her lashes fluttering and dimples showing, her radiant smile making

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her seem

like a temptress capable of unsettling the world. Orion was momentarily stunned, his usually cold eyes gleaming with an intense light, trembling rapidly as her gentle laughter filled his ears—'Orion, 'romantic relationship'.

"It's not true!" Queenie shouted in despair, "You're lying! Ori would never fall for someone like you. Let him go—don't tarnish him!"

Xanthea's brow lifted as she observed the emotionless, seemingly soulless man before her, narrowing her eyes in displeasure.

What was he thinking? Not playing along?

He shouldn't forget that it was he who insisted on bringing her here, causing her to be humiliated for no reason, and now he wouldn't even partake in this little act?

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"Such a shame, I've already tarnished him."

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Xanthea **flashed** a mischievous smile at Queenie, her pale fingers tracing a path down from Orion's neck, slowly sliding under his crisp suit jacket to his white shirt. With a gentle flick, she undid the top button, revealing a bright red bite mark beneath.

Queenie's face turned ashen when she saw the mark, the color matching Xanthea's lips tick perfectly. It hit her like a thunderbolt, leaving her rooted to the spot in shock,

Was Xanthea really Ori's girlfriend? Had they already slept together?

"Wow-"

Even Leonard couldn't help but whistle at the sight.

The intensity of that bite mark spoke volumes.

"Is that right, Ori?"

As Xanthea's fingertips grazed another bite mark along his collarbone, her voice carried a hint of playful coquetry, her allure nearly palpable. Anyone would be ensnared by her charm.

Yet, Orion remained unmoved.

Seeing Queenie so devastated, Xanthea almost pushed away the dull man in front of her.

Unexpectedly, a strong hand gripped her slender waist and pulled her into a fiery embrace. "Hmm."

"Yes."

Orion's features were taut, his eyes tinged with a fierce red. Even his monosyllabic reply was gruff and hoarse, his body trembling with a tingling sensation, as if about to explode from her teasing.

Devilish woman.

He clenched his teeth, his brows furrowed as if struggling to maintain his crumbling sanity. How dare she provoke him so openly, wasn't she afraid he'd lose control and take her right there?

"Ori."

If Queenie had held any sliver of hope before, it was now shattered at the sight before her.

“How could this be, how could this **be!**”

Xanthea was nearly suffocated by his overwhelming embrace, frantically pushing against his chest but to no avail.

Hey! Was he trying to play along or was he trying to kill her? Failing to break free, she stepped hard on his shoes several times and twisted around until he finally released her.

She was catching her breath, about to speak, when Orion suddenly grabbed her hand and planted a kiss on it.

Xanthea froze, her eyes wide in shock-

Unable to withstand the onslaught of emotions, Queenie covered her mouth and ran out the door sobbing, “Wahhhhh.”

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How could this be? How could this be! Ori had truly fallen under the spell of this temptress! As a man so famously indifferent in matters of the heart, he kissed a woman so passionately in public!

“Click.”

The sound of Leonard snapping a photo with his phone brought the stunned Xanthea back to reality.

She swiftly pulled her hand back, staring at Orion as if he were crazy, “What are you doing?”

Orion slowly lifted his gaze, a trace of amusement still lingering in his desire-filled eyes, “Ms. Nightshade, didn’t you want me to play along with your little drama?”

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Chapter **128**

“I asked you to play along, not to get carried away! Who gave you permission to actually kiss me?”

Xanthea frantically wiped her hand while glowering at him.

She had never been kissed by a man before. Wait a minute!

She almost forgot, that night at the Rlan Hotel, not only did he kiss and hold her, but he also touched her, stealing many of her firsts!

Back then he was drunk, but now sober, he still dared to take advantage!

He was nothing but a thorough scoundrel!

“It makes it look real,”

Orion glanced towards the direction Queenie had run off to and offered Xanthea a handkerchief. “Ms. Nightshade, are you not pleased with the outcome?”

Xanthea caught his suggestive gaze and thought, “So it’s all my fault, is that it? If he hadn’t been flirting around and leading on every girl in sight, would I have needed to resort to such drastic measures to fend off his little admirer?”

Really? After all this, he still claimed it was all an act?

Leonard stared at the photo on his phone of Orion tenderly kissing Xanthea’s hand, already calculating the hefty price Orion would have to pay to secure it.

“Pleased, very pleased!”

Xanthea gritted her teeth and snatched the handkerchief, rubbing the neatly folded, expensive fabric into a crumpled mess on her hand.

“Mr. Lockwood, your acting is so convincing, you could win an Oscar!”

“Not as good as yours, Xan.”

Orion spoke and headed upstairs.

Xanthea stood frozen for a few seconds before realizing what he had said.

Xan?

Ugh! How revolting!

She shuddered, her skin crawling with goosebumps.

He was not only despicable and shameful but also petty and vindictive. All she did was to ease his little admirer by calling him 'Ori, and this was his response.

But true, 'Ori did sound quite sickening!

"Tsk tsk," Leonard watched his retreating figure and shook his head. "You two really know how to play."

"Don't start with that nonsense!" Xanthea protested innocently. "There's nothing babyish about it, we're just... Just acting"

Just acting Leopard finished for her, "No need to explain, I get it. But what about that hickey on his neck?"

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Looks fresh, must have been left recently, right? Orion drove here today, don't tell me you **guys** were playing around in the car."

"Enough!"

Xanthea cut off his increasingly wild and inappropriate speculations. "Believe it or not, it wasn't a hickey, it was a mark of my victory!"

A mark of victory?

It was the first time Leonard had heard such a description and couldn't help but laugh, picturing the scene in his mind.

No wonder Xanthea looked so reluctant earlier; she had been forcefully brought into the fray. Impressive, after all this time, the secret admirer Orion had started to enforce his love.

"I've always heard that you are a woman of great intelligence, the top scholar of Crestwood Hall Academy. Seeing you today, I can say your reputation is well-deserved! Your reaction and acting earlier, even almost believed it was real,"

If it were anyone else insulted by Queenie, they would either have a public outburst or just walk away. But Xanthea responded with a smile, using the simplest yet most devastating method to hit back at Queenie, extinguishing her hopes as well. Truly, a silent killer in action.

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Chapter 129

Leonard thought Xanthea and Orion were cut from the same cloth, full of tricks and mischief.

Xanthea arched an eyebrow. "Flattery will get you nowhere, Mr. Leonardoodle. Shouldn't you be comforting your cousin right now?"

"Her? No need for comfort. If she's really over her crush on Orion, I might actually thank you on behalf of her parents." Leonard started, then paused as if something just occurred to him. "Wait, what did you just call me?"

With a sly smile, Xanthea tucked her handkerchief into her pocket and turned to leave.

"Xanthea, you're picking up Orion's bad habits!" Leonard called after her, catching up. "Don't use my nickname, got it?"

"Why not? I think it's quite catchy, easy to pronounce."

"Easy to pronounce?" Leonard looked at her in amazement. "Are you sure you don't know Orion well?"

How could her thoughts about his name sound exactly like Orion's?

"Of course, but I'm curious, why do you know so much about me?"

Leonard shrugged. "Because of something related to you, I guess."

"You mean like enjoying The Masked Singer?"

Leonard laughed; he didn't know what 'The Masked Singer' was, but he knew that the only song on Orion's music playlist was "Butterfly," sung by none other than Xanthea.

"Yeah, I'm a fan of yours!"

Indeed, Xanthea nodded.

“By the way, there’s a ‘Zoo’ party happening on the back hill. Interested in going?”

“A ‘Zoo’ party?”

Xanthea glanced towards the brightly lit back hill. No wonder music **had** been drifting over from that direction; they were throwing a party.

“Is it full of animals?”

“Not exactly, it’s a costume party with an animal theme.”

“A costume party? Sounds fun, let’s check it out.”

“Sure, but” Leonard eyed her attire, “you can’t go dressed like that. Come upstairs with me and change into an evening gown.”

Xanthea looked down at herself.

Her

neat casual outfit from the morning had become crumpled and dirty after encounters with overzealous fans. No wonder Queenie had been so judgmental earlier.

In the Whimsy Haven Estate, fourth floor.

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Leonard pressed a remote, and a vast, luxurious wardrobe slowly opened to reveal dozens of intricately

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designed evening gowns themed around various animals—bunnies, peacocks, ragdoll cats, deer, foxes.

Although Xanthea was prepared, she was still stunned by the sight.

These themed gowns weren’t the garish, over-the-top costumes you’d see at a typical comic con. Each was uniquely designed, meticulously tailored to blend the characteristics and habits of the animals with the model’s body proportions, achieving a harmonious and beautiful synergy between humans and nature. It was her first time appreciating the beauty of animal-themed gowns. Previously, such costumes had been tagged as ‘sexual’ or ‘vulgar,’ but these were different. And looking at the design ideas and sewing patterns, Xanthea found something familiar.

“This can’t be Matilda’s work, can it?” she asked, recognizing the signature style of the internationally renowned designer.

Leonard straightened up against the wall, a look of admiration flashing in his eyes. “You really are the Nightshade family’s heiress, your eye for detail is impeccable!”

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Since the collection of haute couture gowns was acquired, Leonard had invited numerous guests to admire them, including aristocrats and celebrities. Their comments were invariably the same—“lovely,” “beautiful”—but none had ever recognized the designer behind them at first glance.

Matilda’s unique style was the essence of these gowns.

Xanthea commented, “For my coming-of-age party, Samuel had invited her to design a gown for me. Even then, it wasn’t part of a collection, yet it was worth over a million. This animal-themed collection of yours must be over a hundred million, right? No surprise there, Marlowe Enterprises is really top-tier.”

Leonard laughed modestly, “Oh, hardly that. Even the combined wealth of the entire Marlowe family “wouldn’t come close to one ten-thousandth of Orion’s personal assets, let alone this animal-themed collection of gowns. If you liked it, he wouldn’t blink an eye even if you asked for an ‘island-themed’ gown.”

Xanthea looked puzzled, “Why would he buy me an island-themed gown?”

“Well, I’m just saying—if you were his girlfriend.”

Xanthea rolled her eyes, “In his dreams!”

Watching her reaction, Leonard smirked, sensing that Orion had a long way to go in winning her over, ahead, pick any that you like.”

Was Matilda’s exclusive gown collection really just there for the taking?

“GO

Surprised, Xanthea looked at him and mentally tagged him as 'generous' among the wealthy. "Since you're so inviting, I won't hold back! Out of all these gowns, the little white bunny one must suit my personality the best!"

Just as she was about to grab the cute bunny gown from the wardrobe, a sexy and enticing red fox dress caught her eye.

"Are you sure you're not mistaken about yourself? From top to bottom, inside and out, where do you resemble a timid little bunny? You're obviously more of a fox, and not just a fox—a thousand-year-old nine-tailed fox!"

Xanthea was speechless. Although she knew he meant it as a compliment, almost everyone who disliked her had used that term, leaving her with no fondness for foxes.

Still, these were his gowns, **and** it was generous of him to lend them to her. Being picky wouldn't be appropriate.

"Alright, I'll try it."

Minutes later, Xanthea emerged from the fitting room in the exquisite 'Sylvan Fox' evening gown.

Leonard, who had been sipping tea, looked up at the sound. When he saw her in front of the mirror, he was momentarily frozen, his eyes glued to her.

She was stunning.

She looked like a celestial fox from a dream, enchantingly beautiful, hardly seeming real.

Xanthea twirled in front of the mirror, pleased with her reflection.

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Chapter 130

She had thought her bold features combined with the seductive fox gown might look vulgar.

But the gown was sexy yet adorable, with a skirt adorned with 'nine tails' made of light, airy tulle. A deep V-neck was perfectly covered by a fox mask encrusted with diamonds, and plush fox tails surrounded the off-the-

shoulder neckline. The entire ensemble was romantically beautiful and dreamlike. She loved it.

“I must say, you’ve got a good eye!” she complimented.