

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 21

Chapter 21 "Angel, stop singing, you've already captured my heart!" Good Lord, even 3D modeling can't craft a figure so flawless. This contestant must be a visual treat planted by the show's producers!" Matthew had planned to present flowers to Miranda as a pre-show gesture, but the moment the challenger appeared, he froze, especially when he saw her wearing a seductive fox mask, revealing just her rosy lips, mesmerizing enough to make the bouquet in his hand crash to the floor.

What a beauty, so enchanting that his eyes couldn't move away.

Previously, the most beautiful person he had seen was Xanthea, but the girl before him now surpassed Xanthea in grace and aura, unimaginable how stunning she would be without the mask.

"Wow!" wwwww Cedric covered his mouth and nose, fearing his excitement might lead to a nosebleed. She was just too, too beautiful! He turned his face and saw the man next to him focused on his work, quickly shut his mouth. Orion, aside from his special attention to Ms. Nightshade, showed no interest in other beauties, and Cedric knew better than to disturb. Oliver stood with arms crossed, smiling proudly from the audience. This was exactly as he had imagined; a show-stopping entrance! Only Miranda, observing the stirring atmosphere and Matthew's obvious distraction, felt a flicker of disgust and jealousy.

An attention-grabbing outfit like that, just a ploy for fame, no shortcuts here on Masked Singer' stage for mere looks, without talent one is just a jester! The stage filled with elegant, soothing music, the unique gentle tones of the viol gradually calming the restless air.

Xanthea approached the microphone and as the music climaxed, she began to sing. Her voice brought a deathly silence over the audience so intense you could hear a drop.

The three judges on stage were stunned, incredulous as they looked towards the gorgeous girl behind the microphone. It had been years since they'd heard such a captivating voice in the industry, years since anyone made them feel the urge to bow respect. Today, it happened on this stage! Her pure, ethereal voice, like a gentle breeze, traveled through the hall, knocking on the 1/2 14:56 Chapter 2 and leaping into every listener's ear.

...nerve, reaching even the VIP seats where a focused man Orion's hand paused on his mouse, his gaze slowly lifting from his computer and following the divine contours of the girl up to the seductive fox mask adorned with a delicate iris on one side.

It was her!

Her subltone, the piano's fluctuating melodies, and the gripping lyrics unleashed at powerful energy that contrasted with her appearance, immersing the entire auditorium in her beautiful song. Slistened enraptured, others teared up, lost in a dreamlike intoxication. Could there really be a girl so beautiful and with such a melodious voice, a true fairy descended? Cedric, excitedly turning to look, saw Orion was also watching her, no, more than just watching.

In his deep eyes, there seemed to stretch a vast net, intricately binding the radiant girl under the spotlights, pulling her into a boiling, scorching depth, slowly devouring her completely.

Cedric saw a nearly savage emotion in his eyes, a possessiveness so intense it was palpable.

For the first time, he saw Orion show such fierce emotion for someone other than Ms. Nightshade, utterly NQ.

surprising. But who could not love the stunning beauty on stage with a voice of an angel?

Who knew, not only was she gorgeous, but her singing was enchanting too. Is the such a perfect girl in the world? Matthew was completely mesmerized, forgetting pick up the bouquet intended for Miranda. "Goodness, this is too delightful! Even I, a singer of many years, must admit defeat me, this has nothing to do with technique or practice, it's pure natural talent!"

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 22

Chapter 22 "I swear, next to her, the 11 of us look like amateurs!" "No kidding, she's totally schooling us, okay? Where did the producers find this surprise contestant? Looks like she's set to steal the crown!" "Is it even a surprise anymore? Just look at the judges' faces and the crowd's reaction. When her scores cout, she's definitely breaking the charts!" Backstage, ten contestants were fervently discussing, all eyes eventually landing on Miranda, each filled with a mix of awe and sympathy. Everyone had thought Miranda, the reigning favorite, was a shoo-in for the title. Now, it seemed her chances were slipping right through her fingers.

How could this happen? Miranda watched the young girl on stage, disbelief etched across her face. Anyone with a bit of musical sense could tell-they were all outclassed the moment she started singing.

Where did she come from? Why hadn't she been on any singing shows before suddenly appearing on 'The Masked Singer'? And with such a natural talent, why hadn't the producers scooped her up sooner to build hype? Something didn't add up.

She must be a seasoned singer the producers brought in for a ratings boost, not just a surprise contestant! Yet, scanning the current music industry, there was no one so young and stunningly talented. Was Miranda truly about to lose her crown to this newcomer? No, it couldn't be.

Miranda clenched her fists, her body trembling slightly from nerves and fear.

As the violin faded, Xanthea's rendition of "Butterfly" drew to a close. The microphone caught her last breathy note, and the venue erupted in prolonged applause and ecstatic shouts. Fans would've stormed the stage if not for the security holding them back.

"Champion! Champion! Champion!" The final night's atmosphere had reached a fever pitch, with thousands of spectators chanting in unison, almost lifting the roof off the venue. The judges exchanged looks, marveling at the true power of music.

"Finally, a miracle has graced our stage," the host exclaimed, grabbing the microphone and rushing onstage. "Thank you to our third surprise contestant for tonight's auditory feast. Now, let's see her scores!" With each thud, the judges' lights lit up, and the giant screen showed the online voting numbers skyrocketing. Not just the live audience, but the entire network was going wild, pulling in friends and family to vote for Xanthea.

1/2 11-67- Chapter 22 In just a minute, the surprise contestant's votes had already tripled those of the previous top scorer, Miranda! The host, visibly shaken by the rapidly climbing numbers, shouted, "Let us give a roaring round of applause to congratulate our surprise contestant who has garnered over five million votes, and now, I officially announce the champion of this season's 'The Masked Singer' is..." He paused for a moment, "Let's have Producer Oliver make the announcement!" Oliver, beaming with pride, strode onto the stage, bypassing the host and confidently placing his hand on Xanthea's shoulder—a move that instantly caused a stir.

What was this producer thinking?

Capitalizing on his position to boldly flirt with the beautiful singer on live TV? Who would stand for this? Just as the audience began to protest, Oliver chuckled, "Xan, you may remove your mask now."

Xanthea gracefully untied the butterfly knot of her mask, and in an instant, a stunningly beautiful face appeared on every screen, captivating everyone. "Hello everyone, I'm Xanthea."

The venue plunged into a moment of stunned silence, then was quickly drowned by a tidal wave of praise and cheering. "Oh my gosh! Gorgeous lady, I'm crazy for you, absolutely nuts!" "Her beauty is unreal, like she stepped out of a 3D model!" "She's got to have the highest beauty rating ever. I'm a fan for life!" In the front row, Matthew stood up in shock-Xan? It was her? When did she join 'The Masked Singer'? Could this be the surprise she mentioned a few days ago?

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 23

Chapter 23 The surprise was palpable in the air as Matthew watched her on stage, a revelation in every sense of the word. Never had he known she could sing, and so beautifully at that. Dressed in a stunning evening gown under the dazzling spotlight, she resembled a radiant superstar, eliciting uncontrollable screams from the audience. The shy girl who usually hovered in his shadow seemed to have transformed completely. It was mesmerizing.

Xanthea? Miranda reeled back in disbelief when the mask was lifted, her face draining of color as she staggered, nearly falling over. Jealousy and hatred swelled within her, uncontrollable and fierce.

How could it be Xanthea? How could she appear on "The Masked Singer"? Before the contest, hadn't Xanthea helped her write songs and wished her victory? And when it mattered most, Xanthea had snatched the championship right from her hands. It must have been deliberate, a ploy to crush her and bask in her superior vanity. That wretch! Why would Xanthea do this? Wasn't everything she already had enough-wealth, family, friends, classmates, and Matt's attention? Did Xanthea know how much she had sacrificed for this day? She despised Xanthea! "Ms. Nightshade?" Cedric's jaw dropped upon seeing Xanthea, almost tumbling from his seat. More than shock, his heart was filled with sorrow.

He had hoped that a new goddess would divert Orion's attention, allowing him to move past his unrequited love for Ms. Nightshade. But fate had cruelly looped back to her. It seemed Orion was destined to fall for her.

Oliver grabbed the microphone, "Xan is my niece, and her participation in 'The Masked Singer' caught off guard but delighted me. I'm amazed by her courage to step up a wild card contestant and by her talent in clinching this stage. Congratulations, Xan!" "Thank you, Uncle," Xanthea's eyes twinkled with joy.

The host then announced, "Now, please welcome the major sponsor of this season, Mr. Orion Lockwood, CEO of the TOYUM Group, to present our champion, Ms. Xanthea, with the honorary crown!" A spotlight suddenly illuminated the VVIP seat, casting light on Orion's noble and composed figure, provoking waves of gasps and cheers from the female audience. "Oh my gosh, he's so handsome!" "Is he really a CEO and not an actor?" "Is this really 'The Masked Singer' or just a feast for the eyes?" As everyone's eyes turned to the sponsor's seat, Xanthea's gaze inadvertently met Orion's. She couldn't shake off the feeling that he had recognized her long before, watching from the shadows.

1/2 14-57 Their paths seemed intertwined, destined to meet here of all places.

The crown for "The Masked Singer" finale was a masterpiece, intertwined with vines and adorned with thousands of pearls, perfectly matching her gown's theme.

Orion stepped forward, his tall, impressive figure overshadowing her on the stage.

Xanthea looked up and smiled brightly, "Mr. Lockwood, we meet again." "Indeed, Ms. Nightshade." As if dazzled by her smile, Orion's gaze briefly flinched, then focused on the radiant crown. He carefully lifted the crown, gently placing it on her elegantly styled hair, as if fearing the sharp jewels might snag a strand.

Hearing him call her 'Ms. Nightshade, Xanthea couldn't help but chuckle lightly. The stark contrast to the more intimate 'Xan' he once used made her curious and playful, eager to explore the man behind the facade. She tiptoed, teasing, "Did you use the ointment I gave you last time?"

Orion momentarily lost himself in her stunning presence, his hand slipping from the crown to her neck, appearing almost as if he were about to pull her into a kiss.

Oliver, observing from the side, overheard their familiar and somewhat intimate exchange, surprised, "Xan, you know Mr.

Lockwood?" Xanthea nodded, "Yes, we've known each other for some time." "Really? You never mentioned that before." 2/2

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Xanthea said, "We don't have frequent interaction before. Only recently..." "I applied." Orion's belated response and irrelevant answer made both Xanthea and Oliver stunned for a moment.

"Yes, I applied it well." Oliver looked at Orion's serious eyes that were burning at Xanthea, and sensitively sensed a trace of unusual feelings from it. He hurriedly said, "Xan, the program will end later. The organizer will hold a cocktail party. Let Mr. Lockwood bring you to attend it. There are many celebrities at the cocktail party. He can introduce them to you. I have to go backstage to deal with trivial matters. I can't accompany you anymore. I'll pick you up when it's over." After Oliver proposed, Orion stared at Xanthea for a moment. His nervousness expectation were hidden under his dark eyes.

and Xanthea hesitated, her mind a whirlwind of thoughts as she contemplated attending the upcoming party. Her decision was made for her when she caught sight of Matthew and Miranda causing a scene below.

"Matt." Xanthea's voice trailed off as she watched the unfolding .

Matthew was about to rush forward with a bouquet for Xanthea when Miranda, stumbling and tearful, crashed into his arms. Her face was blurred with tears as she sobbed, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I let you down. I didn't expect Xanthea to show up out of nowhere." "Miranda, let go of me!" Matthew frowned, trying to disentangle himself from her grasp, which only tightened. "You think I'm useless, don't you? I can't measure up to Xanthea. You won't start hating me. now, will you?" Miranda's voice was choked with despair.

Without the championship and the lucrative endorsement from the TOYUM Group, all her carefully laid plans had evaporated. Now, clinging to Matthew was her last chance to turn. things around.

Matthew, annoyed yet restrained by the fact that Miranda was Xanthea's sister, couldn't just push her away harshly, especially not in public where it could cause a scene. He comforted her and led her out of the venue, his mind racing with irritation.

Well, the pair were heading to the hotel earlier than planned, their urgency palpable. Xanthea thought she better follow them.

Realizing the gossip that could ensue, Xanthea made a quick decision. "Uncle, I need to handle this. I won't be attending the party!" She hurried down, her dress fluttering behind GIL 14:57 - Chapter 24 her. As she raced past, her crown's sharp embellishments grazed Orion's hand, drawing blood that dripped ominously, mirroring the dark smirk on his face.

Outside the Discovery Pavilion, Matthew had just ushered Miranda out and was calling a cab. "Miranda, you're not in the right state; I'm sending you back to the Nightshade residence," he suggested firmly.

"No, I won't go back there. They'll just laugh at me!" Miranda clung to him desperately, shaking her head frantically.

"They're your family," Matthew said, his patience wearing thin.

"They're not my family; they're her family. They only care about my sister, never seeing my efforts. At the Nightshade residence, I'm just like a servant, unnoticed and uncared for. All I have is you, Matt. You won't despise me, will you?" Her hands moved suggestively down his chest, hinting at more. Usually, Matthew might have responded, but today his thoughts were consumed by Xanthea, leaving no room for Miranda's advances.

"Miranda, you're misunderstanding something here!" He pushed her away firmly, confusion etched on her face.

"A misunderstanding? All the kindness you showed me, was that all just a misunderstanding? You came today to support me, was that also a mistake?"

"I was kind because you're Xan's sister. If it wasn't for that, we'd have no connection at all!" Miranda was stunned, the cold dismissal contrasting sharply with the warm gestures he had shown when they were alone. Her heart ached as she struggled to reconcile this new, distant Matthew with the one she thought she knew. v sister?

"Matt, have you also fallen for her? Do you think she's better than me, ready to abandon me?" Her voice cracked, a mix of betrayal and desperation echoing with each word. 2/2

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 25

Chapter 25 "What are you talking about?" Matthew snapped at her fiercely. "I've been your sister's boyfriend, I am now, and I always will be. I only love Xanthea. Stop spouting nonsense and daydreaming, or don't blame me for being heartless!" With those words, he turned and walked away, leaving Miranda alone in the cold wind, screaming uncontrollably, "Ahh-" How could she have pinned her hopes on a man who lived off his girlfriend? Ridiculous! Now she had lost everything—her championship, her man, all stolen by Xanthea! After shaking off Miranda, Matthew, carrying flowers, hurried towards the venue, but the event had ended, and the audience had thinned out. He saw no sign of Xanthea.

At the Rlan Hotel, Xanthea, with a camera in hand, stood at the door of room 1010 and swiped her key card.

act.

She had bribed the hotel manager earlier, just so she could catch a cheater in the Scanning the room for the best hiding spot, she noticed that the wardrobe next to the master bedroom offered the best view and was least likely to give her away.

Checking the time, Xanthea deftly slipped into the wardrobe with her camera, anticipating the imminent arrival of Matthew and Miranda, given their frantic behavior earlier.

On the hotel's top floor, 'The Masked Singer' after-party buzzed with activity as directors, producers, and invited celebrities mingled in high spirits. Yet, the protagonist sat in a dim corner of the banquet hall, downing one glass of wine after another.

Cedric, noticing the two empty bottles on the table, fretted, "Mr. Lockwood, please stop drinking. Wine packs a punch; if you keep going, it might end badly!" He couldn't fathom what had happened. Before the award ceremony, Orion had been composed, but afterwards, he seemed like a changed man, emanating a chilling aura that made people shiver. Surely, Ms. Nightshade must have said something to upset him this much.

The high alcohol content dulled Orion's senses and numbed his body, though his heart ached more intensely. Orion's eyes, bloodshot, fixated on a neatly folded silk handkerchief on the table, while echoes of nightmares resounded in his ears.

"Get away, I'd never be friends with a lunatic!" "Why is it always you? Get lost, I hate you, I hate you the most!" "Don't cnear anymore. I'll never like you in my life." "So, you fancy the Nightshade family's darling, huh? Keeping her picture hidden, so twisted at such a young age. Look at your scars; are you even worthy?" 1/2 14:57 Chapter 25 Despite the fortress he had built around his heart, a simple "Mr. Lockwood" and her smile had easily breached his defenses. What was he longing for? A mere semblance of respite powered by her inherent kindness, which she extended to everyone? A cynical smile broke across Orion's lips, more terrifying than tears.

In the middle of the banquet hall, surrounded by everyone, starlet Olivia held a wine glass, occasionally glancing at the man in the corner.

She had cto the party specifically for Orion, CEO of the TOYUM Group and the power behind the Lockwood Group-the youngest billionaire in Crestwood and the shadowy big boss of Starlight Media. A connection with him, even for just a year, could set her up for life! Noticing his somber mood as he brooded in the corner, she wondered what troubled him. Perhaps a gentle, soothing approach might endear her to him.

With that thought, Olivia, smiling coyly, approached the secluded corner.

"Mr. Lockwood, hello, I'm Olivia from Sunshine Media." Before Cedric could intervene, Olivia placed her wine glass on the neatly folded silk handkerchief in front of Orion.

As soon as the glass touched the table, Orion looked up his gaze m intense and dark as a demon's, making Olivia shiver from head to toe. "Mr. Lockwood, ah-" The glass was knocked aside by Orion, spilling red wine all over Olivia's hair and dress, leaving her in utter disarray.

The commotion caught the attention of the entire party. The organizers Gom and agents rushed over, putting a trembling Olivia away. "Olivia, what are you doing? Apologize to Mr. Lockwood right now!" "I'm so sorry."

Cedric glared at Olivia with a mix of anger and urgency as he watched Orion pick up the handkerchief, his expression terrifying. 2/2

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Ever since Xanthea dropped her handkerchief at that event, Orion cherished it like a priceless treasure. He took it everywhere, but somehow, he lost sight of it, and that young starlet snatched her opportunity! Olivia didn't even know what she did wrong to infuriate the mogul, who was fuming with rage. She just kept weeping and apologizing, but the situation only escalated. Cedric, worried Orion might do something reckless in his distraught state, quickly asked Oliver to help clear out the guests.

"Mr. Lockwood, you've had too much to drink. Lethelp you to your room to rest." In room 1010, hidden in the wardrobe, Xanthea was initially anxious and alert, waiting with her camera.

Eventually, she dozed off, her head lolling until it hit the back of the closet, jolting her awake.

Rubbing her head, she glanced at the time-strangely, almost an hour had passed. Why hadn't the scandalous pair shown up yet? She was sure she got the room number and tright.

Just as she puzzled over this, the hotel room door banged open.

She perked up instantly. Here they come! The two stumbled in, noisy and reeking of strong red wine, which wafted into the wardrobe, making Xanthea cover her nose and mouth. Apparently, the couple had stepped out for a drink to set the mood, no wonder they were so late-and so plastered. Didn't they worry about not being able to perform

later? From the bathroom cthe sound of running water. Xanthea strained her ears but couldn't make out anything else.

Cedric, using all his might, managed to help the nearly six-foot-three man into the bathroom. He was panting as he turned on the shower, adjusted the temperature, and got everything ready for a bath. He hesitated about whether to help Orion with his buttons, but just as he bent down, Orion snapped his eyes open and coldly barked, "Get out!" Startled, Cedric scrambled out of the bathroom, "I'll be going then, Mr. Lockwood. Please callif you need anything. Don't strain yourself!" Half an hour later, there was still no sound from the bedroom. Xanthea was getting impatient. Did the couple decide to just get it on in the bathroom? If so, her trip here would be a waste. She had to check.

Just as she was about to open the wardrobe door, a large, veiny hand beat her to it.

At that moment, the bright chandelier light flooded the dark closet, the air momentarily thick with tension. Chapter 26 Xanthea's face froze as she looked up to see defined abs that made her rethink everything she knew about Matthew-had she really never noticed his physique before? She slowly lifted her gaze, following the trail of his sculpted chest up to his neck, then the water droplets tracing his defined jawline, and finally, to a strikingly handsome face.

Orion? Her eyes widened in shock-it was him! A mix of surprise and relief filled her. Thank goodness it wasn't Matthew. If she had been caught red-handed, all her plans would've been ruined! Curled up in the closet like a frightened deer, her face lit up with a radiant smile, oblivious to the ominous change in the man's expression above her.

Seeing the girl suddenly appear before his eyes, Orion's m alcohol-blurred vision sharpened briefly, his stare piercing, then overwhelmed by a tidal wave of immense despair. Another hallucination.

How many times had it been now?

His longing for her was deep-seated, always manifesting as illusions that he could only watch from afar, m followed by a profound emptiness and loneliness. Maybe he was truly drunk today, the hallucination lasting so long and so vividly animated that he wanted to unleash all the pent-up emotions he had been suppressing.

"Mr. Lockwood, what a coincidence to see you again." Xanthea timidly extended a hand, greeting him m politely yet awkwardly, "I know you must be wondering why I'm here, but don't rush, just helpout of this closet, and I promise I'll explain everything!"

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Was she talking? Orion tilted his head slightly, a look of confusion evident on his face.

Xanthea couldn't help but find the gesture endearing, especially since the man standing before her was nearly six-foot-three, with a physique rivaling that of an international supermodel, and was clad only in a loosely draped bathrobe. His cold, executive demeanor mixed with such an innocent expression was both jarring and adorable. She only saw the cuteness, completely missing the sinister twist in his deep eyes that flashed the moment she spoke.

In reality, even hearing her speak was a luxury. In his mind, could he not take control? Indulge in those dark, hidden desires that haunted him day and night.

With a a swift motion, he pulled her from the closet. Xanthea was surprised by how effortlessly his strong arms lifted her-she weighed about 130 pounds, after all. Clearly, he was the sman who had effortlessly dealt with Matthew on the rooftop.

"Thanks, you're really strong, those muscles aren't just for show, huh?" Just as Xanthea was about to give him a thumbs up, she suddenly found herself dizzy and tumbling onto the large bed.

Orion didn't just lay her down as she had imagined. Instead, like a predator that had been lurking in the jungle, he pinned her down with fierce determination, trapping her limbs beneath him.

Her curvaceous figure sank into the soft bed, her hair disheveled, and her V-neck slightly open a stark contrast against the wine-red sheets, sparking a predatory glint in his dark eyes.

All he could see was her stunning face and alluring body, driving him to madness with each beautiful curve. "Orion, what are you-" Her words were cut off as the brooding man leaned down and captured her lips fiercely.

"MMpph. Mm!" Her eyes and mouth widened in disbelief, giving him the opportunity he needed.

He devoured her like a starved beast.

"Baby, darling, I've missed you so much." Xanthea panicked, her eyes watery and trembling, trying to turn her head away as her body writhed in resistance. Her clenched fists struggled against his strong hold, but her 14:57 Chapter 27 naive attempts at resistance only seemed to entice him more, unbeknownst to her that her feeble strength was like spitting against the wind.

"Orion, what are you doing? Let go, now!" "Jerk, creep, you've got the wrong person, who's your darling." Her first kiss in this lifetime, taken by him in a drunken haze, was something she had intended to preserve. Sweet, intoxicating, irresistible-like a beautiful poppy, dangerously alluring despite the poison lurking within. As she struggled, something inside Orion ignited explosively. His movements froze for a moment, and just when Xanthea thought to escape, he pulled her tightly against him.

His embrace was tight, almost suffocatingly so.

"Darling, don't be afraid, don't run, okay? Just look at me, just once. gm Don't be so cold or Xfear I might go mad, might not be able to stop myself from doing something we'll both regret." His grip tightened further, as if trying to meld her into his very bones, his voice turning from pleading to ominously menacing.

Xanthea coughed violently, pounding his arm with her fists. For the first time, she felt the stark difference in strength between men and women, how even basic resistance was futile in such danger. Yet, he eventually let her go.

But as soon as he released her, his hand tore through her blouse. As Xanthea struggled, she saw his m nearly pathological obsession and the lust in his eyes, like a demon lost in fantasy and desire, ringing alarm bells in her mind. He couldn't possibly be thinking of... 2/2

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 28

Chapter 28 No, she couldn't let this continue. If she did, she was literally going to lose it! Xanthea gritted her teeth, bracing herself to use all her strength to strike at Orion's nape with her bare hands.

But just as she was about to make her move, Orion collapsed onto her with a loud thump, like a machine that had suddenly been switched off, completely incapacitated.

Xanthea blinked in surprise and quickly crawled out from under him.

She clutched her tattered dress and stood by the bed, her expression one of righteous indignation, like a damsel who had been wronged. She rushed to kick his peacefully sleeping face, but stopped her foot just before it could touch him. No woman could bring herself to mar such a perfect face, but how could she let him off without teaching him a lesson after all the trouble to keep her first kiss intact for two lifetimes! Biting her lip,

Xanthea was pondering which cruel retribution to use when she noticed his robe was disheveled, exposing his chest.

Wait! She had always wanted to see if he had the iris tattoo on his chest, to confirm if he was her lifesaver. What better than now? She carefully knelt beside him, poking his face several times to ensure he didn't react before she felt relieved. It seemed she wasn't misled; men really do lose certain abilities after drinking.

Gently, she lifted his robe, and as a stunning blue-purple iris slowly unfolded on his right chest, Xanthea was speechless.

Was it really him? On her coming-of-age day, the person who saved her in the lake behind the garden wasn't Matthew, but him! It turned out he was her savior in a past life as well! Xanthea sat dumbfounded on the bed, unable to fathom why he had helped her so much, saved her life, and never told her. Was it just to be a good person, or did he fear she would cling to him? Underneath the iris tattoo was? She couldn't help but touch the uneven skin beneath the tattoo, which appeared to be old burn scars, probably from cigarette burns given their shape.

Who would dare to torture the heir of the Lockwood Group, leaving burn marks on his body? 1/2 She remembered the old news about the brutal family feuds within the Lockwood Group. If they were true, then like her, Orion was just a child at the time, with no chance to resist, which might explain his current cold, distant demeanor. Perhaps the iris tattoo was meant. to cover those scars? Xanthea felt a pang of sympathy, but her hand was suddenly grasped tightly by his.

"Ah!" She screamed in fright, quickly shaking off his hand and looking at him as he crashed again, standing up with her heart still racing.

She was crazy, how could she feel sympathy for an almost-assailant! But considering he had once saved her life, she would call it even. Besides, he had drunk so much, he probably wouldn't remember whether he was embracing a person or a ghost tonight, and who were all those endearments and bizarre words meant for? It was hard to believe such a handsome, talented, and wealthy man would harbor unrequited love.

Forget it, she thought, better leave now. If he got up in a drunken frenzy and pinned her down again, she'd be utterly helpless.

Xanthea quickly got dressed and ran out. Reaching the hotel lobby, she remembered her camera and turned back just in time to see the unmistakable outline beneath his robe, making her feet slick with fear.

A man that tall, that intimidating, could have been disastrous had he not passed out! Back at Serenity Oaks Estates, the Nightshade family home.

In the dead of night, Xanthea crept into the house like a thief, just about to head upstairs when the lights flicked on. In the hall, her parents, Ethan, and Matthew sat neatly lined up. Xanthea was dumbfounded.

Seeing her, Matthew rushed over, his face etched with concern, "Xan where have been? I've searched the entire convention center and couldn't find you!" Christopher and Susanna said, "Xan, why are you back so late?" you Ethan said, "About appearing on 'The Masked Singer' without giving us a heads-up, don't you think you owe us an explanation?"

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 29

| Chapter 29 Samuel frowned as he looked at Xanthea, swaddled in layers despite the scorching summer heat. "Xan, why on earth are you wrapped up like it's winter? And that scarf, really?" Bombarded with questions, Xanthea felt her head spin.

"Well, can I just go upstairs and drop off my stuff first?" Without waiting for an answer, she dashed upstairs, yanked off her scarf, and grimaced at the twin 'love bites' Orion had left on her neck. Were they from a dog? What would parents think if they saw? a her She grabbed her concealer and worked diligently until the marks were barely visible, then slipped on a turtleneck just to be sure. Satisfied that no one could see the marks, she opened her door.

Matthew, who had been waiting right outside, nearly stumbled in.

"Matt?" "Sorry, Xan," he stammered. "I was just about to knock. Where were you tonight? I've been really worried!" "Tonight," Xanthea glanced at him, a trace of hurt in her eyes. "After the awards, I wanted to tell you first, Matt. But I saw you leaving with Miranda, and when I tried to catch up, I got mobbed by fans. My dress almost got ripped, and it was only when my uncle showed up that I managed to escape." Matthew hurriedly explained, "Xan, don't get wrong. I didn't leave with Miranda on purpose. She was upset, and I thought it might affect you, so I had the driver take her home." So that's why she hadn't seen them at the event.

"I wouldn't misunderstand, Matt. It's just sad I couldn't celebrate with you His guilt, already simmering from the wait, deepened. He cursed himself for his indecisiveness with Miranda, which almost led him astray.

previous "I'm sorry, Xan. I really wanted to celebrate with you today. I even bought flowers. And you, you were so stunning on stage tonight, so charming, totally different from usual." His eyes, filled with passion and admiration, didn't escape Xanthea's

notice. She chuckled inwardly; he really could have been an Oscar winner, not just a charming face in the crowd.

"Really? Then I'll sing just for you, Matt." "Please do!" 1/2 Just as Matthew reached for her hand, Xanthea, light as a bird, flitted downstairs. "Mom, did you make all this delicious food for my celebration?" Watching her retreat, Matthew let his hand fall, resigning himself to wait a little longer. Soon, he thought, they would be engaged, and she would truly be his.

Back when he considered engagements merely a formality, now he couldn't wait for theirs.

Susanna, hearing Xanthea's voice echo through the mansion, scolded gently, "Keep it down, don't wake your sister." Xanthea stuck out her tongue playfully. She loved stirring things up.

"You little mischief-maker! Not a peep about competing in 'The Masked Singer, especially to Miranda, She's n so confident, braggin about winning since the first episode. And then you swooped in and snatched it right from under her. She's been crying in her room since we got home." "Mom, it's not 'swooping in' if it's done fair and square with sheer talent!"

Samuel, unable to contain his pride, wrapped an arm around Xanthea in "Xan, Pwatched the Ethan chimed in finale live. In a word, you were spectacular, the star of the show." "Thanks, Ethan, Samuel!"

"There she goes, gloating again. Spoiled rotten by her brothers! You don't understand the situation!" Christopher scolded her. "Xan, you were wrong not to tell us earlier. Go get your sister for dinner." As he spoke, Miranda's door upstairs swung open.

The girl emerged in a thin nightgown, her hair disheveled, eyes red and face streaked with tears.

Seeing her state, Susanna rushed over. "Miranda, you're up! Come, the food's ready. Your sister just got back, and I've already scolded her."

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace - Chapter 30

Chapter 30 "No need, it's not Xan's fault." Miranda looked down, shaking her head slightly as she picked up a cup of coffee and offered it to Xanthea. "Xan, congrats on winning the championship." She hadn't finished her sentence when she burst into tears.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'm falling apart. It's just that I feel so useless, such a failure. I've tried so hard, for so long, and in the end, I'm nothing. My carefully prepared song couldn't even match up to the one you sang offhand. I just don't know what I can do anymore." Tears streamed down her face, and though she spoke no bltowards Xanthea, every word seemed to point towards her.

Xanthea observed the silent tension at the table and the accusing looks from her parents, and she smirked inwardly.

What a bitch! In her past life, it was with this masterful strategy that Miranda had won her father's heart, infuriated her mother, and ended up with Matthew. This taround, Xanthea wouldn't let it happen again.

"Sorry, Miranda, I didn't mean to steal your thunder. You know I'm not really interested in for championships; otherwise, I would have launched my career long ago, Xanthea said, biting her lip, her face a mask of guilt. "But last night Uncle suddenly called me, saying the third surprise guest for 'The Masked Singer' had backed out at the last minute, and he couldn't find a replacement. He thought of me. I wanted to refuse, but he said if no one could fill in, the show would suffer a huge loss and might even be canceled under suspicions of foul play." "Oliver called you?" Susanna asked, surprised.

Xanthea nodded. "Yeah, you can call him if you don't believe it." She thought, "Sorry, dear uncle, but sometimes you have to play your cards." "I see." Susanna's expression softened. "Well, I can't blyou then. Oliver is carefu his decisions; he wouldn't have asked you unless it was absolutely necessary." Xanthea continued, "And I didn't expect that the song I threw together last night would surpass the one you worked on for a month, Miranda. 'Whispers in the Dark' was something I crafted with care!" "What?" Christopher was stunned. "You wrote Miranda's competition song? Miranda's hand trembled as she held her coffee cup, while Ethan and Samuel looked at Xanthea in surprise.

1/2 14:57 "Yes, the song Miranda used in the finals, from the lyrics to the arrangement, was all my work. Didn't you guys know?" Xanthea looked puzzled at Miranda, who, under the questioning glances from around the table, had tears awkwardly hanging on her cheeks, unsure of what expression to wear.

Miranda thought, "When did she becsso manipulative and innocent-looking?" With just a few words, Xanthea had managed to cover up the fact that she had snatched the trophy, even though they had agreed to keep the songwriting between them. Now, Xanthea revealed it in front of everyone, blatantly embarrassing her! "I-I had prepared three songs for the finals. I didn't plan to use 'Whispers in the Dark,' but my coach madedraw lots, and that's the one I picked."

Miranda's stuttering explanation sounded redundant to the Nightshade family. Since event the ve competition song was written by Xanthea, what did success or failure have to do with her? Rather, they should be thanking Xanthea.

Christopher chuckled and served Xanthea a piece of steak, "Alright, let Steak, it go. The past is the past: Whether its Xan winning the championship or Miranda, it's a reason to celebrate." "Thanks, Dad." Xanthea smiled happily, holding her plate, while Miranda, her nails nearly digging into her! palms, looked utterly miserable..

In her previous life, Xanthea's downfall was due to her romantic naivety, not because she couldn't compete. This life, she intended to make Miranda relive everything she had endured.

"Xan, I had no idea you were not only brilliant in your studies but also so talented in music creation," Matthew impressed. He had heard said, clearly impress 'Whispers in the Dark' be the finals and loved it, thinking Miranda was the author and even felt moved because thought he was the inspiration. To find out the true creator was Xanthea.

He was about to ponder this when Xanthea gave him a satisfying reply, "I should rea thank you, Matt. Without you, I wouldn't have had such great inspiration."