Chapter 29

Jonathon Lancaster

I was surprised to find that the two representatives weren't as much of a nuisance as I initially thought. They were very amiable—they knew their boundaries. In the weeks that followed their arrival, they did their work quietly and without fuss.

Dr. Nguyen looked through all the paperwork, and he was very thorough. Everything filed since Serena arrived was subject to his scrutiny but of course, he did not find any anomalies. He actually commended the recording and programs that Serena made to computerize files.

I was happy that he was going to report on Serena's good work, it would surely make the tribunal stop doubting the validity of our mating.

It was Captain Zulu (or Nandi, as she asked me to call her) who had the much more tedious job of shadowing me. She conducted interviews with palace residents on my behavior. I was nervous that people might mention the incident with Clayton, but after having a few words with him, Clayton assured me that he wouldn't do anything to jeopardize my standing. In fact, is he admitted to me that he was ashamed that word might get out.

I was currently in my office, and with Serena off training the she-wolves it left me alone in Nandi's company. I was sending an email to an agent I assigned to watch Captain Desay.

Nandi had been staring at me blatantly for the past ten minutes or so. It was starting to get on my nerves.

"What?" I asked through gritted teeth, trying not to show my annoyance. If she had just silently been this fly on the wall, I would not have minded as much.

"What why, your highness?" She asked in a sickly sweet voice, smiling at me. Her teeth were straight and perfect, and she immediately straightened up in her seat.

"You've been staring at me and it's getting annoying. So, Miss Zulu, is there anything I can do for you?" I asked, going back to typing.

She let out a light, airy giggle and raised her legs to rest on the table in front of her.

"Put your feet down. My mate is very particular about cleanliness." I ordered. She immediately put her feet down.

"That must be tedious." She muttered under her breath.

"Excuse me?" I growled

"Just kidding!" She giggled. I sighed and went back to work.

"What are you working on?" She asked. I rolled my eyes.

"I have agents on the field all across the territory. I am communicating with them." I said.

"Oh." She said, sounding disappointed. She sat down on the seat in front of my desk.

"What now?" I asked.

"Nothing. It's just..." She looked at me smiled, flipping her hair. "So far everything's been boring...just emails and meetings. I thought I signed up for something more exciting?"

I scoffed. "Like what?"

"I don't know. Someone announced that they were sending two representatives to the palace with the prince...when you work for the tribunal for long, everything gets monotonous. I jumped at the chance." She shrugged.

"You volunteered?" I asked, suspicious.

"Hell yeah. Everyday there is paperwork, and cases with packs. I thought going to work for the tribunal meant I'd get to experience the real meat of conflict in the werewolf world. Turns out, when packs fight, they mostly just exchange land and money." She said.

"And what did you expect?" I scoffed.

"I don't know. Adventure. I watched the human shows House of Cards and that other one...How To Get Away with Murder. I thought it would be like that." She grinned.

"I'm sure you didn't get the Captain stripes by just doing paperwork." I chuckled.

"Well, sometimes I do detective work, you know, when there's crime within packs—mostly because I'm very inquisitive." She winked.

"You mean nosy?" I asked, chuckling.

"Prince Jonathon, I didn't know you joked."

"So why did you come here?"

"Please, anyone who's anyone is in Lightwing! I don't know...maybe I wanted to scope out the job market. The war effort might need some help, and I could put this to good use." She said, raising her silver bracelet.

"You think I'd poach you from the tribunal?" I asked, scoffing. "They'd skin me alive!"

"Oh I could always resign. No one would be surprised if I worked for the war, I have an impressive record." She bragged.

I leaned to address her properly.

"Hmm..." I trailed off. "It's worth considering. What sorts of things are on your record?"

"Is this a job interview, Prince Jonathon?" She asked, winking at me. I rolled my eyes.

"Let's say it is." I stated. She threw her head back in laughter, curling a strand of her hair in a finger.

"Well, I told you about the detective work. Remember that girl in the Blood Moon pack who went missing for two weeks? I was the one who found her." She said, jutting her chin out proudly.

"Oh? How'd you do that?" I asked.

"Same thing I'm doing now. Snooping around, asking questions. She had a human boyfriend who was in the mob and things got really messy." She shrugged.

"I see."

"So what do you think? Could I work for you? Fight in the frontlines, kick some rogue ass?" She asked, kicking a leg up.

"Not so fast." I smirked. "How old are you anyway?"

"26." She said, smirking at me.

"Still unmated?" I asked. She giggled, putting her hand on her chest.

"Why Prince Jonathon, how forward of you." She said through a fit of giggles. Embarrassed, I lowered my head and cleared my throat.

"I'm sorry, I understand that that can be a sensitive issue. I just..." I stammered.

"No, I was kidding." She waved me off.

She began to unbutton the top two buttons of her collared shirt, showing flashes of smooth dark skin. I could almost see the top of her cleavage. I tilted my head at her, confused, before she tugged on the collar and showed me her neck—bare.

"Unmated." She said, winking at me. I felt blood rush to my cheeks as she smoothed her collar.

"I see."

"That's exactly my mom's reaction every time I come home from a claiming ceremony." She laughed. "Don't worry Prince Jonathon, if you send me to war no one will miss me."

"Were you at the ceremony where..." I trailed off.

"Where you claimed your mate? Oh no." She shook her head. "But if I knew that you were out there looking for a mate, I might have gone." She ended her statement with a wink.

What?

"I wasn't there looking for a mate, everyone knows that." I said, confused. Again, Nandi threw her head back in laughter.

"Oh, Prince Jonathon, you are just...something else..." She said, shaking her head. She ran her fingers through her hair and smiled at me. I noticed she hadn't buttoned up her shirt yet.

I looked outside as the sunlight flitted over the garden. It was a warm day, maybe she felt hot.

I shrugged, leaning back on my seat. I winced when I felt a crick on my shoulders—I needed to get that popped. I didn't sleep in a good position last night. Serena and I had been tangled up until after midnight and by then I was too exhausted to lie properly.

"What's wrong?" She asked, leaning forward to put her hands on the table. I looked away, uncomfortable, as her new position had given me ample view of her bosom.

"Nothing, just my neck. Didn't sleep well." I said. She smirked and folded her arms in front of her.

"You know, in the tribunal sometimes we'd spend the whole day sitting in front of our desk doing paperwork. It takes a toll on our backs. Luckily, I give great massages." She grinned.

"There's really no need..." I began, but she cut me off.

"Relax, your highness, I'm very good at this." She smiled, cracking her knuckles. "Besides, if you don't put me in your army, at least you can hire me as a personal masseuse."

No thank you.

She walked over to me and I stood, trying to stop her. She managed to wrench me down the seat and I feared that if I struggled, I'd hurt her. She began to rub my shoulders and I relaxed. But then, I remembered how highly inappropriate she was being so I made to push her off of me.

"OH MY EFFING GOD?"

A shrill, imperious voice suddenly sounded loud, echoing across the room. Nandi immediately recoiled her hands from my back. I snapped my head to look and sure enough, Serena was there.

Serena. My mate.

She looked beautiful in a blue sundress, and her intoxicating citrusy scent immediately had my senses engaged. Her arms were blissfully bare—I wanted to tell her to put on a cardigan because even though it was a sunny day, it was still autumn. I was about to remind her, but the look on her face kept me quiet.

She looked furious. Her eyes were widened, her nostrils flared, and her mouth hanging open. Her hands were on her hips and she was standing very, very still like a statue.

I suddenly remembered the state she found me and Nandi in. I realized it must have looked very inappropriate and intimate. I wanted to placate my mate, to reassure her that I would never consider doing anything with another woman because only she held my heart.

Would now be a good time to confess my love?

I stood up and pushed Nandi to the side. I was about to stride over when I saw her put a hand up to stop me.

"Oh, don't come near me." She pointedly said.

"Serena, I..." I began, but she cut me off.

"So what exactly was happening here?"

"Nothing! Nothing! I was about to push her off and..." I tried to tell her, but again, she interrupted.

"Oh it most certainly did not look like nothing." She hissed.

"Princess, this is all just a misunderstanding and..." Nandi began to talk but Serena looked at her with so much fury that she shut up.

"I swear, BITCH, say another word and I'll show you why they gave me this!" Serena snarled, raising her gold bracelet with her hand fisted.

Whoa.

Suddenly, my mouth felt dry and I felt my desire for my mate intensify. I wanted to grab her and throw her on the bed and make love to her endlessly. She was just so fierce and desirable. But before I could do that, I realized I had some damage control to do.

"Serena...sweetheart..." I began. She flinched at the term of endearment that I had never used before.

"Oh so now I'm sweetheart?" She chuckled humorlessly. I took a step towards her and she immediately stepped back. Rejection felt like a knife in my heart.

The sudden feeling of rejection awakened my wolf from his rest. I could feel him sifting through my recent memories, trying to figure out why his mate was upset. When he realized what had happened, he gave a loud roar and I ended up with a splitting headache. He was livid that another female had touched me in that manner and he demanded that I tilt my neck in submission to Serena.

"It was...I swear it was nothing. She was...it was...job interview...and..." I stammered, not being able to speak clearly because the weight of my wolf's rattling coupled with my mate's fury was taking its toll on me

"Job interview? With her shirt unbuttoned?" Serena accused. I looked at Nandi and she hastily buttoned her shirt back on.

"It's not...please...Serena, mate..." I pleaded.

"Oh don't you dare call me that!"

I stopped. Serena took a deep breath and stilled herself.

"I need to not be here right now. Try to keep your hands off each other while I'm gone." She sneered at us. With that, she turned to exit the room.

I growled at Nandi, who did the smart thing and stepped back. I raced to follow Serena. I almost lost her in the sea of people milling around the halls, but I spied her luscious red hair.

"Serena!" I called, as she was about to turn a corridor. She turned her heel and her eyes snapped to meet mine. I was uncaring that people were already staring. She continued to walk but I caught on and held onto her arm.

"Let go of me!" She cried, wrenching her arm away from mine. My heart broke when I saw her face. Tears were streaming down and she looked very angry.

"Serena please let me explain!" I said, earning the attention of a few curious people.

"Oh my Goddess shut up! You're making a scene!"

"I'll beg for forgiveness and shout out loud if I have to!"

"Just leave me alone, Jon!"

"No! Not until you let me explain!"

Her chest was heaving as she angrily stared me down. I softened, reaching to wipe the tears from her face but she recoiled. Finally, she narrowed her eyes and grabbed my arm, hauling me to the nearest room. She slammed the door close.

"Alright. Explain." She said, crossing her arms in front of her chest.

I ran my hands through my hair and struggled to find the right words.

"I'm waiting." She said, tapping her foot.

"It was a misunderstanding. We were talking about her working for the war, and I mentioned I had a bad neck from how we were sleeping last night." I said.

I saw her eyes soften, but they hardened not a second later. I sighed frustratedly.

"Then she said she was going to massage me. I told her no, and when she came over to me I tried to avoid her. She held me down and I tried to get her away and that's when you entered. Nothing was happening, I swear!" I implored.

"Then why the fuck was her shirt UNBUTTONED?" She screamed, her fists clenched and her cheeks turning red. Tears began falling from her eyes again.

"She was showing me that she was unmated! I asked! She must've forgotten to put it back on or something! You have to believe me, Serena, I would never do that to you!" I exclaimed.

Serena shook her head, gulping as she wiped her tears away. I walked over to her and gathered her in my arms, trying to embrace her. She struggled in my hold and pushed me away.

"Don't touch me!" She cried, stumbling back. "Jon...I need to...I can't be in the same room as you right now. I need to think..."

"What is there to think about? Nothing's changed! Just forget this!" I growled, causing my wolf to whine ceaselessly.

"Jon, just let me be pissed, okay? I have the right to be pissed because some woman was pawing at my mate! I just need to feel angry right now and you need to let me!" Serena cried out.

"But you shouldn't be angry because I told you nothing was going on! Don't you believe me? Don't you trust me?" I asked, baffled by her line of thought.

"Women don't just go up and massage guys, Jon! Nandi was flirting with you, okay? And you...were you just so oblivious that you did not see it?" She demanded.

"Yes! Maybe I was! I don't know shit about women, Serena! How the hell should I know if that woman was attracted to me?" I exclaimed. "And even if she was, so what? She can't have me. You're my mate! There is no reason to be jealous!"

"Oh give me a break! I know what she looks like, and I know what I look like so don't you dare say I can't be jealous!"

Wait, what did appearances have to do with this? Granted, Nandi was attractive but she could never hold a candle to my mate who was the very definition of desirable. It was time to shake this notion from her head.

"Serena, why are you comparing yourself..."

"Because I'm insecure, okay? I can't help but think that if it weren't for this..." She flashed her gold bracelet. "I have nothing else to offer you but she..." She sniffled

What?!

"You got all that from seeing her massage me?" I cried out, utterly befuddled. Why were women so difficult? I started to get angry. "I thought we were over this! Have I ever made you feel that way? I value you, Serena, not your bracelet! You're being irrational!"

"I'm irrational? Excuse me but I just found my mate being massaged by a Victoria's Secret model!"

"NOTHING WAS HAPPENING!" I roared, causing her to tremble. I stepped back and took a deep breath. My wolf clawed at me harshly, causing my voice to break.

I closed my eyes and focused, trying to reach her wolf through our bond. I wanted her to feel the love I had for her and if she wouldn't listen to me, then maybe she could listen to her wolf. However, I could feel something blocking me.

My wolf stirred, panicked that his mate had cut off their connection.

She was silent. I took a step towards her and knelt down, putting my hands on her hips and pressing my head against her stomach.

"Serena...my mate, my light, why would I ever want another?"

"I...I should have seen through her actions, I'm sorry. But you can't accuse me of cheating because I never did! So please, let's just move past this..." I growled, my voice hoarse.

She took a deep breath.

"I just...I need some to be alone right now, Jon." She murmured, wrenching my hands off of her and stepping away from me.

"What does that mean?" I gulped, scrambling to get up.

"It means...I have to get some air...and get that image of her hands on you off my brain. I can't do that with you in front of me begging for forgiveness so just please...leave me alone. I'll talk to you when I'm ready." Serena said, dejectedly sighing.

She turned and left, closing the door behind her.

My wolf immediately shook its cages, and suddenly, I let out another loud roar that shook the walls and the lights above.

I held my head in my hands. Why did this have to happen? Just when I was trying to figure out how to tell her I loved her...this happened! I couldn't believe my misfortune.

I should have seen that Nandi was being flirtatious. But how would I know? I never spent much time with females! Serena knew that, and I knew I did nothing wrong.

Why couldn't Serena just let this go? I never failed to constantly tell her how important she was to me. Did my words mean nothing to her? She must have known I would never jeopardize our mating. Why couldn't she just spare us both the pain and just move on from this?

And why does she have to be insecure? I would never make her feel replaceable because she wasn't!

Fucking ridiculous.

I made my way to a cabinet and opened it, taking out a bottle of brandy and a glass. I rarely drank, but now, I needed something to help numb the pain from my mate's anger.

My wolf kept on clawing at me. Hopefully the brandy will tranquilize him.

A/N

Y'all hate me now or what?

Poor Jon, poor Serena. Whose side are we on?

If anyone's interested, Nandi was named after a princess from the Mhlongo tribe in Africa. She was the mother of the infamous Shaka, warmongering King of the Zulus during the 1800s. Dun dun dun, she was also known as a second wife

I'm a huge history buff, so you might find clues of that incorporated in my story. I borrow lot of plot points from various significant events in world history. I know, I must be fun at parties.

Thank you to all those who asked about my play. My schedule's pretty packed this week but I promise I will update on time. One of my plays is getting published and the book launch is on Thursday, and I have another play opening in another country next week. Yikes.

Please drop comments and votes!

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