

Rebirth: Fated to the Lycan King

#Revival 31 – 40

Read Rebirth: Fated to the Lycan King Revival 31

Chapter 31

Nyssa pov

“Thank you for shopping in my humble mall. Please be sure to come again whenever you wish; it would make this old man. happy.” Philip said with a smile, lowering his head in a small bow.

The corners of my lips lifted into a bright, grateful smile **as I** stared at him.

“No, thank you, Philip, for letting us shop here for free. I’ll definitely be back next time,” I responded with a teasing tone, gesturing to the sales assistants who were busy loading the bags into the car. I watched as Philip’s eye twitched, but instead of saying anything, he turned to Darius, lowering his head even further before speaking.

“It seems that the king didn’t buy any clothes today. Perhaps next time, when the king comes with the lady, he will purchase something I’ll make everything free then.”

—

This time, it was my eyes that couldn’t help but twitch.

This man was certainly sneaky. He’d essentially implied that I could only get things for free if I brought Darius with me, and he bought something.

Pfft, I knew Darius was the real reason Philip had made everything free for us, but he didn’t need to make it so obvious especially with the way he was practically staring at Darius, his eyes practically filled with dollar signs.

However, Darius didn’t say anything. He simply stared at Philip with an expressionless gaze.

Soon, the sales assistants had left, and Philip eventually made his exit. Thankfully, the crowd that had been surrounding the place was gone, probably chased off by Philip. The only people left were Serene, Cassian, Drake, the driver already in the car, Darius, and me.

Without hesitation, I turned toward Darius, lowered my head, and spoke.

“Thank you for today, Your Majesty. It was truly an honor spending the day with you. If you don’t mind, I’ll take my leave now.” I added, intending to leave with Serene in the car we arrived in. After all, Cassian and Drake had come with their own vehicles, so the king should go with them, right? Plus, I was looking forward to a meal with Serene, and if Darius came along, I doubted we’d have much of an appetite with him around.

Darius watched me for a brief moment without saying a word. Just when I thought he might agree, he turned to Cassian, who stood beside him, and ordered,

“Follow them. Make sure you return with them.” His words made me frown, and I glanced at Cassian, who immediately bowed slightly and responded,

“I understand, my king.”

Why would he tell his beta to follow us? Darius didn’t strike me as the type who cared about others especially me, the mate he didn’t want. The only reason I could think of was that he wanted Cassian to keep an eye on me. But why? Did he think I might run away?

My lips parted, ready to voice my disagreement, but as soon as Darius’s cold gaze flickered to me, I snapped my mouth shut. I watched as he turned and walked toward the car, with Drake trailing behind him. Drake quickly went ahead and opened the door for him as he slid inside.

With a frown, my eyes stayed glued to the car as it sped off into the distance, leaving only Serene, Darius, and me behind. As soon as it disappeared from view, a mocking scoff escaped me. I rolled my eyes, folding my arms in frustration. Who did he think he was, ordering one of his men to follow me? Did he really believe I’d run away just because he wanted to reject me?

Just because he **was** the Lycan King didn’t mean he could do **whatever** he pleased.

“Exactly. Just **because he’s**

the Lycan King, he can do whatever he wants. He’s that powerful, **Nyssa**.” Sheila’s voice echoed in my head, and I pouted, knowing she was right even if I didn’t want to admit it.

“Whatever,” I muttered back in frustration, hearing her sigh in response.

“You know,” she said, “instead of getting mad and avoiding Darius, why not get close to him? Or better yet, try to seduce him **so** he won’t reject us.”

My eyes widened at her suggestion, but before I could respond, a voice pulled me back to the present.

“Miss? He’s speaking to you.” I blinked and turned to find Serene pointing at Cassian. As I looked toward him, his grin brightened, and he met my gaze with a teasing glint in his eyes.

“You seem to have a lot on your mind,” he said, and before I could respond, he clapped his hands together, his excitement palpable. “But where are we going? Is it somewhere fun? Are we going to eat? I rarely leave the pack, so I’m sure there’s a lot to do around here.”

My eye couldn’t help but twitch as I watched him. He couldn’t be more than 25, yet here he was, acting like an **excited** puppy. I couldn’t help but wonder if this was truly the king’s beta.

I shook my head and rubbed the bridge of my nose in frustration.

This was going to be a long day.

Chapter 32

Kieran **pov**

Something was terribly wrong. I didn’t fully understand what **was** happening, but one thing was clear- she had changed. She was completely different from the girl I once knew.

The Nyssa I remembered would never have slapped me. This **was** the girl who would lose her mind over the slightest **scratch** I got during training. The one who would cook my favorite meal and rush to the training grounds just to watch me eat it all.

She **was** the girl who would get me anything I wanted, whether it was a higher position in the pack’s army or a collection of gifts. The girl who would argue with her father every time he said something unkind about me. That **was** Nyssa, the girl I kept around for my own gain. The girl I left my mate for, the girl I didn’t love, didn’t care about, the one I was on the **verge** of marrying.

Yet, that girl had changed. The love that once shone in her eyes had been replaced with something darker- hatred. Pure, unfiltered hatred.

And it happened in mere seconds. The moment she was about to say “I do,” her eyes shut, and when she opened them again, the first emotion that crossed her face was confusion, followed swiftly by rage, the instant she saw Aria and me standing there.

“How could she change so much in just a moment?” I muttered under my breath, frowning. Before I could dwell on it further, Aria, who was wiping the blood off my lips, scoffed dramatically. Her eyes narrowed into a glare, and she paused in her movements.

“Is that really what you’re worried about right now? You were almost killed by that cursed king, Kieran!”

She leaned back, her grip tightening around the cloth in her hand.

“And it’s because of that bitch. How could she do this to you- to me? She shoved me to the ground and just stood there with a sickening grin while the king threw you against the wall.” Her words hissed through clenched teeth, and I sighed, leaning back against the couch, narrowing my eyes.

Aria wasn’t exaggerating. I had seen it too- the twisted grin on her face as she looked at me earlier. If I had to put it into words, it wasn’t just a grin. It felt like she wanted me dead. No, I was certain of it, there had been a hunger in her eyes, an eagerness for my downfall.

“What has even gotten into that bitch? She’s so different now- calling off the wedding and acting like we don’t even exist. Is it because she’s the king’s mate now? She thinks she can do whatever she likes?” Aria scoffed, flopping onto the seat beside me with an exaggerated eye roll.

“That dumb, stupid girl. Does she really think the king won’t reject her? And when he does, she’s going to die!”

—

Her words made me frown as my mind wandered back to the king’s expression earlier, the jealousy that had radiated off him, the way he had roared at me for simply touching her. His mate that’s what he had called her. With the way he had looked at her, a nagging doubt crept into my mind, whispering that maybe... he wouldn’t go through with the rejection after all.

“Aria, the reason she’s acting like that...” I paused, my gaze flickering toward her, watching as she met my eyes. “Do you think it’s because she found out about us? About our secret?”

The moment she heard me, her eyes widened, flashing with fear **as**
she stiffened.

That could very well be one of the reasons she was acting this way because she knew about Aria and me, about the fact that

we’re **mates**.

But **before she** could, she fainted.

What **if what she had** been trying to **expose was** the truth about Aria and me?

My frown **deepened**, and my hands instinctively clenched at my sides.

If that **was** the **case**, **then** everything **we** had worked **for** would have been for nothing. And I refused to accept **that**.

I refused to accept it- not when I **was** already so close. So close to the position **that** rightfully belonged to me.

"T—that's not possible," Aria stammered, shaking her head **as she** stood abruptly from the couch. "She doesn't know. I doubt she does, because **if she** did, she would **have** already told her father and cried her **eyes** out. I know her, she wouldn't just ignore us **like** this. **If she** knew the truth, she would hate **us**, and he would have **cast** us out of the **pack** by now," she said, trying to reason it out.

And as I listened to her, I knew she **was** right about one thing

If Nyssa truly knew our secret, she wouldn't have stayed silent. Her father would have made us pay for what we had done to his precious daughter.

Yet no matter how much I tried to convince myself, I couldn't shake off the memory of the look on Nyssa's face, how it burned with a strong, deadly intent every time her eyes met ours.

But now wasn't the time to voice my doubts especially not to Aria, who never knew how to handle pressure well. One wrong word could set her off and make her do something reckless.

"You're right. I'm just overthinking. Don't mind me," I said, forcing a reassuring smile onto my face.

Before she could say anything, I reached out and grabbed her hand, pulling her toward me. Settling her onto my lap, I wrapped my arms tightly around her, drawing her closer. Gently, I brushed her hair away from her neck and leaned in, inhaling her scent deeply.

The scent of my mate filled my **senses**, calming and intoxicating me all at once.

My eyes fluttered shut as a groan rumbled from my chest. I reached for the zipper of her dress, desperate to pull it down, to undress her before my eyes.

Goddess, I needed a **release** and my mate had always been the perfect remedy.

"Fuck, Kieran," she gasped, moaning as my lips trailed kisses along her shoulders, my hands working their way to the clasp of

her bra.

“Yes, mate,” I grunted, pulling her even closer against me.

Yes, Aria **was** my mate and Nyssa couldn’t know about this or else our plan would fail and I wouldn’t be able to get the Alpha’s position.

The position that should have been mine.

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Chapter 33

Nyssa pov

You know what? Spending the day with Cassian wasn’t as bad as I had expected. **The** difference was that he wasn’t constantly staring at me **in silence**, and no one crowded us like they did with Darius. Well, aside from the occasional women stopping to glance at the handsome man, but even that wasn’t too bad. All in all, it turned out to **be** actually fun.

We went to one of my favorite restaurants, ate, and chatted especially Serene, who seemed to be having a blast. She had a million questions about the king’s pack, which had been closed off to outsiders for centuries. To my surprise, Darius was kind enough to answer her questions without getting irritated. In fact, he seemed thrilled to talk about it.

That explained why **we** arrived back home so late. As we walked toward the packhouse, I could hear Serene’s excited voice trailing behind us, speaking to Cassian.

“Is it true that everyone from the king’s pack is really wealthy and no one is poor? I also heard that everyone is super attractive, like you and Sir Drake. **Is** that true?” Serene asked, her curious eyes sparkling with excitement. Both Cassian and I chuckled at her enthusiasm.

“Well, first of all, thank you for calling me attractive,” Cassian began, without missing a beat. “And secondly, I guess you could say most pack members are attractive. But, of course, not everyone **is as** good-looking as the king, Drake, Zayn and me. Those are just exaggerated rumors. Don’t believe everything you hear, kid.”

I rolled my eyes at his words. At this point, I was used to his bluntness, but that didn’t mean it didn’t still surprise me sometimes.

“Wow, really?! Then what about-” Before she could finish her sentence, I froze as we stepped into the packhouse. Both Cassian and Serene stopped beside me, following my lead. Sitting there, with a stern expression, was my father, flanked by his beta and

gamma, Benjamin and Calen standing behind him. All their gazes were fixed directly on me.

Immediately, I felt the air grow heavy, a cold tension creeping over me as I met my father's serious stare. I knew that look all too well, it meant I had done something wrong, and I was about to face his wrath.

"Huh? What did I do wrong?" I thought, confused. I couldn't recall doing anything to upset my father... could I have?

For a moment, the silence lingered, thick with tension, as we all stood frozen, staring at one another until Cassian's voice cut through the air, laced with mild amusement.

"Ah, I guess that's my cue to leave." He gave me a casual wave, a playful smirk tugging at his lips. "It was really nice spending the day with you and the kid. I can't remember the last time I had such a decent evening out, so thank you. Goodnight, and I'll see you tomorrow." He waved at Serene, who had lowered her head, the previous excitement gone in an instant.

Before I could get a word in, Cassian strode into the packhouse, Benjamin and Calen offering him a brief, respectful bow. Despite being older, Cassian's status as the king's beta put him above them in rank. My father, however, gave him only a small nod as he passed, heading toward the quarters where the king was staying.

Well, I guess the evening was officially over.

I took a deep **breath**, puffed out my chest, and forced a smile before stepping forward.

"My favorite dad! How are you doing? What's keeping you up at this hour?" I asked with an exaggerated grin as I walked

inside.

But the moment I stepped in, a chill ran down my spine. My father's cold gaze locked onto me, narrowing with **such** intensity that my smile faltered, and I found myself swallowing back my words.

Yep, I'd definitely messed up, but **whatever** it was, I had no clue.

"Hm..." Before I could respond, my father turned **his** attention to **Serene**. Without saying a word, he simply tilted his head towards the other side, and she immediately understood.

Without hesitation, **Serene** bowed her head respectfully and headed upstairs, not sparing me a single glance.

My **jaw** dropped, watching her **leave**. I scoffed, irritation rising in my **chest**, before turning my **gaze back** to my father. The disapproving looks from Benjamin and Calen didn't faze me.

I waited for my father to speak, but when the **silence** stretched on, I rolled my eyes and walked toward the **seat** in front of him. I dropped into it with a thud, crossing my legs and fixing my gaze on him.

"Alright, I know I've done something wrong, so let's just **get** it over with, Father. Today's been exhausting, especially with the king around, and I want nothing more than to sleep."

I leaned back in the chair, folding my arms, ready to endure whatever lecture he had prepared.

But instead, his next words surprised me.

They weren't words of scolding, nor were they words of blame.

Instead, my father sighed heavily and sat up straighter, his eyes softening as he looked at me.

"You-" he started, but paused for a moment before continuing, "You're hiding something from me, aren't you, **Nyssa**? Something you can't seem to say... and I think I know what it is."

My eyes went wide at his words and I felt all the air in my lungs leave my body almost instantly. Something I couldn't say? Did he know... that I have been reborn?

hapter 34

Nyssa pov

My heartbeat thudded in my **ears as I** sat frozen, staring at my father in shock, my eyes wide and struggling to process what **was** happening. Hiding something from him? Yes, I had **been**, and the truth **was** that I **had** been sent back into the past by **the** goddess. It was something I couldn't **share because** if I did... I would die.

But now, my **father...** did he know?

I watched **as** he frowned at my silence before turning to his beta and gamma, exchanging a quiet look between them- one that spoke of disappointment and pity? My heart sank, but I couldn't quite place what it meant.

“F—father, I—” I stammered, my **voice** trembling as my eyes began to well with **tears**. I didn’t understand how he knew, but it didn’t matter anymore. I had so much to say, so many apologies to offer.

Apologies for letting Kieran and Aria destroy everything, for allowing them to take the pack for themselves. Apologies for being naive and gullible, for making decisions that led to I and my unborn child death.

“I—I wanted to tell you, Father. I wanted to tell you so badly that I’ve been sent back—”

Before I could finish my sentence, I froze. My father, without a word, pulled out his phone, tapping on it. He turned the screen towards me, and my confusion deepened.

There, on the screen, was a video from the mall when Darius had shoved Kieran into the wall. But the video that was being played to me was when Aria had rushed over, holding Kieran close, her eyes narrowed in worry, her hands instinctively reaching for him as if nothing else mattered in that moment.

I blinked, trying to process everything at once.

Huh?

My gaze flickered to my father, who watched me with a sad expression, his lips curved into a frown. It was as though he expected me to say something, but how could I when I had no idea what was going on?

When I remained silent, he let out a deep breath, turned off his phone, and placed it back into his pocket. He then began to speak, his voice softer now.

“Why didn’t you tell me, princess?”

I raised an eyebrow, confused.

Tell him what? That Darius had shoved Kieran against the wall? I had just gotten home and barely had time to breathe before being interrogated.

“That’s why you’ve been so upset. That’s why you didn’t want to see them, why you’ve been angry, right?” His fist slammed against the seat, his rage radiating off him in waves. “I should’ve known that bastard would do this to you, but I can’t believe “Aria would betray you like this after everything you’ve been through together. I’ll kill both of them,” he hissed.

And then it finally clicked. His words echoed in my mind.

Aria betrayed me? Wait- did he know that Kieran and Aria were seeing each other?

My eyes brightened as I looked at my father, excitement bubbling inside me. Oh my goddess, this was **great**- truly fantastic but I needed him to confirm it with his own mouth to be certain. **If I** said it first and it wasn't what he meant, I'd probably die. But if he brought it up himself and I simply confirmed it, it wouldn't count as me revealing anything about the future.

"Y—you **knew?**" I stammered, **my voice shaky as I stared** at my **father**, trying **to** mask my **expression** and the urge **to** smile.

My father's frown only **deepened**, and **I sucked** in a shaky **breath**

, **forcing** a **sad expression** onto my **face**.

"**So** it's true? Kieran and **Aria are seeing each** other and you **knew** about it but decided not to say anything **just** to keep them **safe?**"

Yes!!

Oh my goodness, that was it. I wanted to jump up and burst into laughter, but instead, I dramatically slammed a hand **over** my mouth, feigning shock. I took **several** deep breaths, forcing **tears** to well up in my eyes.

"H—How did you know?" I whispered, my voice trembling **as** tears began to spill down my cheeks, my lips quivering for

effect.

My father's eyes immediately darkened, and a strong wave of killing intent radiated from him, making even me flinch.

You **see**, my father was a good and kind Alpha- beloved and respected by the entire pack. But he rarely got angry. And when he did... he became someone **else** entirely.

I once watched him behead a man with his bare hands, all because the man had plotted treason to steal his position. My father hadn't even hesitated.

A small smirk tugged at the corner of my lips as I pictured Kieran in the place of that traitor, my father standing over him, blood dripping from his hands.

It would be such a beautiful sight.

"How could you still choose to protect him after what he's done to you? I can't believe you knew and decided not to tell anyone! Do you love him that much?" my father hissed, his voice echoing through the packhouse as he stood up, his face flushed red with anger.

Love him? I wanted to kill him.

“And that Aria girl,” he continued, practically spitting the words, “after all these years, how could she betray you for that bastard?”

I watched him lose his composure, his eyes flashing with raw, unrestrained fury. Calen and Benjamin kept their gazes trained on me, and I could see the heavy disappointment written clearly across their faces.

If I told them the truth that Kieran and Aria hadn’t cheated, that they had been mates all along and had tricked everyone just to steal the Alpha’s position, would that count as breaking the rule of not revealing the past?

Definitely.

I shook the thought from my head, forcing myself to focus. Rising slowly to my feet, I reached for my father’s hand with teary eyes.

“F–Father, please... please forget about this. Let’s not bring it up again,” I choked out, letting my voice **waver** just enough. “I–I don’t want anything to happen to them... Even though I’m hurt, even though I want to cry, just... **please** forget about it.”

My father froze, frowning deeply as he stared at me. I made sure to keep my expression as broken and vulnerable **as** possible, watching carefully as he shook his head, pulling his hand away from my grasp.

“Princess, I can’t do that. I can’t let them off for doing this to you. You are my daughter, and no one bullies my daughter. No matter what you say, they are going to be punished for what they’ve done.”

My eyes lit up at his words, and **I** opened my mouth, ready to **agree**. In particular, **I was** about to hint **that** they should be killed for what they did, but before **I** could **say** anything, my **father’s gaze** shifted behind me and in the **next** moment, he stiffened and quickly lowered his **head** in greeting.

Even Calen and Benjamin immediately followed, bowing their heads.

Almost instantly, I knew who it was.

I scowled, fighting the urge to roll my eyes at the terrible timing of this man.

Without thinking, I turned around, narrowing my **eyes** into a glare at Darius, who stood upstairs, leaning casually against the railing with an expressionless gaze locked onto me. His white, baggy shirt and trousers matched his hair, making him look almost ethereal—like a god that had descended to earth.

Behind him was Cassian, who watched the scene with eager eyes, his grin widening when he met my gaze.

Just great.

Chapter **35**

Darius **pov**

“King! King!”

I lifted my head just **as Cassian** burst through the door, **his eyes** sparkling with **excitement as** he rushed toward me, stopping just inches away, his breath ragged **as** he wiped the sweat off his forehead with **the** sleeve of his shirt.

I frowned, my gaze cold and unimpressed **as I** stopped flipping the coin in my hand, **silently** waiting for him to **speak**.

Despite myself, a flicker of annoyance stirred within me.

Cassian was... different from the others.

Unlike his **ancestors**—over four hundred of them who had served me faithfully before him, Cassian was an oddity. A bright, reckless oddity.

I had long since stopped keeping count after the four-hundredth death. There was no use in counting the endless **deaths** of those around me, so eventually, I stopped-watching as my betas and gammas died one after another until **I** grew used to seeing a new face each time.

But the first time I saw Cassian, he was just a boy, no older than five years old. I could still remember the excitement on his **face** as he tore away from his father’s grip and ran toward me, hugging me tightly with a sparkle in his eyes as he muttered, “I love you, my king.”

I clearly remembered the frown I wore as his father quickly pulled him off and apologized, and how, without hesitation, I asked the man if he had any other descendants that could serve as beta.

Unfortunately, Cassian was his only child.

And that’s how he ended up as my beta. Even though I didn’t care much for him- his talkative nature grating on me, I couldn’t deny the strength he possessed. It was far greater than most in his generation.

“Whatever you have to say, it must be important for you to barge in like that,” I said, my gaze lifting to meet his. His grin widened, and he stepped closer.

“Of course, My King. This is very important— it’s about your mate!”

The moment he said the word mate, my gaze sharpened into a glare. I watched him visibly shudder, his smirk faltering **as** he quickly lowered his head, mumbling an apology.

“Forgive me, Your Majesty.”

I ignored him, reaching for the glass of wine beside me, taking a slow sip while waiting for him to continue.

Cassian took the hint, lifted his head, and his grin returned. He began speaking again.

“You know the lady’s ex and her best friend- the ones I mentioned from the mall? Well, turns out they were indeed cheating together. That’s why she canceled the wedding that day. Her father just found out, and they’re having a discussion about it downstairs.”

He shook his head in amusement. “Can you believe it? I was right! I really do have a gift for this kind of thing.” He chuckled before his expression shifted to annoyance. “But seriously, that guy is **a** bastard. Why would he **cheat** on **her** with that woman? It makes no sense. Even if they aren’t mates, she’s a really fun, nice person... and honestly, way **prettier** than her.”

Chapter 5o

I raised an eyebrow at **his** words, placing the wine on the **desk** before resting my chin on my hand, silently processing his statement without **a flicker** of emotion.

Cheating on her? It was obvious from the start, and it didn’t surprise **me** that **she** knew. Her words **earlier**, when **I** passed her,

made that **clear**.

“You should have killed him.”

I didn’t mishear that. The look in her eyes had been unmistakable- she wanted him dead.

But I didn’t care about that right now. What mattered was the wolf within me, growling in fury.

“You should have let me kill that bastard. Why did you let him live if you don’t even care?” Silas’s voice **was** thick with frustration, and his anger was palpable that it made the corner of my lips curl into a humorless smirk.

He **was** right. I didn’t care whether that man lived or died, but what infuriated me in that moment was the **fact** that he had tried to control my emotions once again. That was the tipping point- it was what finally set me off and made me stop him before he could get what he wanted.

So, the reason I spared his life? It was simply to teach Silas a lesson. Nothing more.

“Next time, don’t act out,” I warned, my tone cold and final. “If you had asked for control, I would have given it to you. But the moment you try to take it by force, that’s where the problem starts.”

Silas scoffed but remained silent, cutting off the connection once more. I lifted my head to find Cassian still talking, a grin on his face.

“King, this is why it’s good to leave the pack sometimes. We don’t usually have dramas like this back home—”

Before he could finish his sentence, I stood up, running my hand through my hair, effectively stopping him in his tracks.

Cassian blinked in confusion as I spoke.

“Take me to the girl. I would like to see her.”

Chapter 36

Nyssa pov

“My king,” my **father** bowed, his **voice** laced with **respect as** we all turned our attention to Darius, who stood at the top of the **staircase**. His gaze was **fixed** on me, a sharp intensity in **his eyes** that left me both breathless and irritated.

Breathless because his stare seemed to ignite a heat deep within me, making my body **react** involuntarily to his **presence**. Irritated because he had interrupted me just as I was about to speak, and not only that- he had shoved Kieran against the wall earlier today and failed to finish what he started.

Oh, how could I have forgotten? He was about to be the reason for my death too.

My gaze shifted to Cassian, a frown forming on my face as I noticed his smug grin. A nagging feeling crept in, telling me that Cassian had overheard our conversation and had gone straight to tell Darius.

“Your Majesty, is there something you need? Or have we disturbed your rest? **If so**, I deeply apologize,” my father said, and for the first time since Darius arrived, the king turned his attention to him.

Without changing his expression, Darius simply gestured toward me with a casual tilt of his head.

“I would like to speak with her.”

The moment the words left his mouth, everyone’s eyes snapped to me. I could feel the surprise radiating from their gazes, and truthfully, I was just as surprised. The king, who had always treated me as if I were invisible, now wanted to speak with me?

It was a strange shift- he almost seemed... relaxed?

I watched as Cassian glanced at Darius, confusion flickering across his face, before his eyes widened as if a realization finally hit him. Under his breath, I heard him mutter,

“Holy shit, he’s had a lot to drink.”

Before I could even process his words, my father, who had been standing behind me, suddenly beamed with excitement, clapping his hands together.

“My goddess, of course, your majesty! You can definitely spend time with your mate- I mean, my daughter!” he blurted out, causing me to freeze and slowly turn toward him, my eyes wide in disbelief. His delighted grin had replaced the anger that had been there moments ago. What the hell?

“Father! Why would you-”

But my father didn’t even spare me a glance as he turned toward Caleb and Benjamin, his demeanor completely changed.

“Let’s give the king some privacy with his mate- oh, I mean my daughter.” He laughed, shaking his head, as he walked away with Caleb and Benjamin.

I stood there, still in shock, my mouth opening in disbelief. Weren’t we just discussing something important? Hadn’t he been angry just a moment ago? How could he switch so suddenly? And most of all, how could he leave me alone with the Lycan King when he wanted to reject me?

My frown deepened as I watched my father walk off without sparing a second glance at me. With a frustrated scoff, I turned to **face** Darius, but the sight of him caught me off guard. He was lazily resting his chin on his hand, leaning against the railing, his eyes locked on me with an unreadable expression. But that wasn’t what startled me the most.

Behind him, Cassian was shaking his head at me, gesturing with his hand for me to leave, his lips mouthing the word,

“Leave.”

I raised an eyebrow in confusion, watching **as** Darius turned around, his gaze locking onto **Cassian**. **Cassian** immediately stiffened, forcing a smile before lowering his **head**.

“I will **leave** now, Your **Majesty**,” he said, **his** tone respectful but nervous. **He** began to walk away slowly, glancing **back** to check if Darius **was still** watching him. The moment their eyes met again, Cassian flinched, quickening his **pace**

. But just before he fully disappeared, I caught the faintest trace of his voice in my head—a mindlink.

“Miss, the king **is** drunk and can’t handle his liquor. He tends to...”

The message trailed off **as Cassian** away, leaving me in a sudden silence.

I blinked, trying to process his words. The king was drunk?

But I couldn’t afford to dwell on that thought. Because in the blink of an eye, Darius was right in front of me, standing only inches away. I inhaled sharply, my body instinctively taking a step back from him.

Fuck.

He was fast— way too fast. He hadn’t jumped from the stairs; no, he had sprinted toward me, his figure blurring in the air as he closed the distance between us.

My lips parted, breath coming out ragged as I stared at him, unable to tear my gaze away. I wasn’t sure if it was the discomfort or the fact that we were **so** close—there was barely any space between us.

Despite myself, my eyes couldn’t help but trace his flawless features in awe. He was gorgeous- perfect. He looked like something carved from a painting. White hair, silver eyes, and...

Before I could stop myself, my gaze flickered to his lips, and instinctively, I swallowed, running my tongue along my bottom lip. The moment I did, I saw him shift his focus from my eyes to my lips, and I swear I saw something flash in his gaze— something dangerously close to lust but it was gone as quickly as it had come.

Before **I** could react, a breathless gasp escaped me as Darius grabbed me by the shoulders, and with a speed that left me dizzy, he slammed me against the wall behind him. My eyes widened, but instead of the pain I expected from the impact, my back hit

his arm that was wrapped around my shoulders, closing the space between us until there was barely an inch separating us. I could feel his hot breath fanning my face, and I shut my eyes, my body trembling with fear, my heart hammering painfully in my chest.

Oh, my goddess...

"Mate?" he murmured under his breath, a low chuckle escaping him as if the word itself were some sort of cruel joke.

"You're my mate?" he repeated, the question sounding more like he was speaking to himself than to me.

I **froze as** his hand reached out, brushing my hair to the side, exposing the vulnerable curve of my neck.

Then he leaned in, and instinctively, my eyes squeezed shut as I raised my hands to push him away.

"W—What do you think you're doing?" I stammered, my voice trembling with uncertainty.

But Darius didn't respond. Instead, I felt the brush of his nose against my skin, a shiver racing down my spine as he inhaled deeply.

In a low, almost dangerous voice, he murmured,

"What am I doing? I'm checking **if** you're truly my mate. If the goddess **is so cruel** to make you my mate

Chapter 37

Nyssa pov

—

The story behind the Lycan King's curse I had heard it countless times.

If it wasn't from my father recounting **it**, then it was from the gossip whispered by the maids around me, or the idle **chatter of** the ladies during their tea parties.

No matter where **it** came from, it was a tale that had been passed down from generation to generation.

And like all legends, **over** time, the **details had** become twisted. Events were exaggerated, **facts** blurred, and truth became something almost impossible to **grasp especially** after the king closed off his pack away from outsiders. The only

way we could **hear** about what truly happened was through the stories passed down by our **ancestors**.

But one thing remained certain about the tale behind the king's curse: his mate- his queen had been killed. Some said it **was** the fault of the pack members, who believed she **was**

unfit to be their queen because she was wolfless. They poisoned her, hoping the king, who had been bewitched by her beauty, would choose someone more suitable for the position.

Others, however, claimed that the real mastermind was the king's brother, who manipulated those around him to **seize** the throne for himself.

Either way, the end result was the same: death swept through the pack. Darius had gone rogue and annihilated half of his pack by himself, killing everyone who had been involved in his mate's death, one way or another. But he didn't stop there- he slaughtered their families too.

Yet, even in his rogue state, with little to no control over his mind, he never laid a finger on the children.

Yet what he did was enough to anger the goddess herself, and before he knew it, her wrath descended upon him.

He was cursed to live forever, forced to watch everyone around him wither and die, one after another.

Cursed to carry the memory of his dead mate for eternity.

No matter how he tried to end his life- no matter who tried to kill him, death would never come.

The only thing capable of ending his existence was the blood of a white wolf but white wolves hadn't been seen in centuries. The chances of the king dying were next to none.

That was the story behind the great king cursed to live for eternity- the same king who now stood before me, currently sniffing my scent.

Kill me.

"What am I doing? I'm checking if you're truly my mate. If the goddess **is** cruel enough to make you my mate," he whispered, his voice low and cutting, sending shivers down my spine and making my body instinctively tense.

What was going on? Why **was** he acting like this? It was obvious we were mates even now, I could feel the bond between us, pulling me toward him like a spell.

I shut my eyes **as** the tip of Darius's nose brushed the curve of my neck, trailing slowly upward. A gasp escaped me when his hand slid to the back of my neck, guiding me closer to him. My hands clenched into fists, and all I could hear was the loud pounding of my heart.

Oh Goddess, it **was** the mate bond. That had to be the reason my body was reacting like this, why heat pooled between my **legs at** his touch, why I had this unbearable urge to hold him **close**.

1/2

to stop. I had to **stop**

this.

But then I froze.

His lips brushed against my **neck**.

My breath hitched, my **face** turning a **deep** crimson. I **stared** ahead, lips parted in shock, my mind struggling to comprehend what **was** happening.

And then, my heart plummeted.

Because the next thing I felt **was** the faintest sting, his fangs grazing my skin. Darius had opened his mouth

Was he about to mark me?!

My first instinct **was** to push him **away** and run but this **was** the Lycan King we **were** talking about. I raised my hand and pressed it against his chest, trying to shove him **back**, but he didn't budge an inch.

Panic surged through me **as** I felt the sharp sting of his fangs grazing my skin. A hiss escaped my lips from the pain, but just before they could fully sink in, the words leaving my lips before I could stop them.

"Please stop" I gasped out.

Darius stopped. His fangs retreated, and I inhaled a shaky breath, my chest rising and falling in disbelief.

I watched as he slowly pulled away from my neck, stopping just inches from my face. The moment our eyes met, I swallowed hard, my body trembling instinctively under his intense gaze.

Darius's face remained expressionless, his lips pulled into a subtle frown but it was the look in his eyes that stole the breath from my lungs. Was it lust? Anger? Or a twisted mix of both? I couldn't tell. All I knew was that he looked ready to sink his fangs into my neck and mark me.

"You really are my mate," he murmured. The word mate didn't sound like a curse this time- no, it was laced with quiet indifference, his cold gaze locked on mine. "That is really a shame."

I stared at him, stunned, confusion clouding my thoughts. What the hell was happening? Why did he seem so... different?

I parted my lips to speak, to ask what was going on, but Darius calmly walked up to the couch and took a seat, his gaze fixed intently on me.

He held up two fingers.

"I'm giving you two choices," he said, his voice smooth and unwavering. "Both will lead to the same outcome, your death but you get to choose how it happens. What do you say?"

AD

Comment

Chapter 38

Nyssa **pov**

I hadn't **slept a** wink all night.

The king's words kept replaying in my mind like a haunting echo, keeping **me** wide awake. Now, with the sun risen and **my eyes** staring blankly at the ceiling, I **heard** his **voice for** what felt like the hundredth time.

"**Two** choices. The pain of rejection **is severe**, and you will lose your **life** to it- just from the pain alone. So you can either be rejected when the three **days** are up... or let me end you the **easier** way. **It** would be quick and painless."

I frowned, my **eyes** narrowing at the ceiling **as I** repeated his words under my breath.

"A potion that would make me **sleep** and **never** wake up."

I sighed, running a hand through my hair in frustration.

What the hell **was** going through that man's mind to suggest something like that? Either way, death **was** certain, but he had the nerve to call it a choice.

Clicking my tongue, I sat up in bed, my messy hair falling **across** my face. Brushing the strands away from my neck, I reached out and gently touched the spot where his teeth had almost sunk in yesterday.

My face flushed a deep shade of red as I recalled our close proximity last night- how he had almost marked me. But that wasn't what I should be thinking about right now.

After the king said those things, I'd asked him for time to think. I could still picture the casual nod he gave before walking away, not even sparing me a final glance. That had stung more than I cared to admit.

I shook my head, stretched lazily, and yawned, reaching to toss the blanket off. But a knock on the door froze me mid- motion. My gaze shifted to the door.

"Come in," I called, already knowing it was Serene.

The door creaked open and Serene entered, carrying a tray of orange juice. She shut the door behind her and walked closer, her expression grim. I immediately knew she'd heard the news about Kieran and Aria. By now, perhaps everyone had.

"Good morning, Serene," I greeted her cheerfully, offering a smile as she placed the tray gently on the bed in front of me.

I picked up the glass of juice and noticed the way her frown deepened at my cheerful tone, but she said nothing. She simply stood **there**

and watched **as** I drank. When I was done, I let out a satisfied hum, wiping my lips with the sleeve of my dress.

Then I looked up at her again, this time with excitement.

"Happy birthday, Serene. I ordered something for you- it's from another pack, so it hasn't arrived yet. But it'll be here by afternoon, don't worry."

Her frown deepened, and she opened her mouth like she wanted to speak, but instead, she just sighed and lowered her head **respectfully**.

"Miss, I **saw** Sir Cassian this morning. He asked me to give you a message. Would you like to hear it?"

I **raised** a brow at that, curious. Remembering the look on his **face** yesterday, the urgency in his eyes- I gave her a small

nod.

1/3

Serene lifted her head. “**Sir Cassian** said... **whatever the** king did yesterday, **you** should forgive him. **He was** drunk, and he **doesn’t** act like himself when **he’s** been drinking.”

I **blinked**, stunned. But then, **as I** recalled Darius’s strange behavior, her words **began** to make sense.

“**How** much did he drink to **act** like that?” I muttered, frowning.

Serene’s expression **shifted** at my confusion. **She** blinked, then leaned **in** slightly, her voice tinged with surprise.

“Oh... you don’t know, miss?”

I furrowed my brows. “Know what?”

She glanced around and lowered her **voice**, as though sharing a **secret**.

“The king can do almost anything but liquor **is** the one thing he can’t handle. Everyone in the world knows this. He’s powerful, but when it comes to drinking... he **is** barely himself”

I tilted my head at her words and slowly began nodding. Well, that explained why he did all that yesterday, I guess.

“I see... Anyway, what’s for breakfast? Is Father around? I’d like to eat with him today and you should join us,” I said **as** I tossed the blanket off and stood up, stretching through a tired yawn, trying to shake off the stiffness from tossing and turning all night.

Serene didn’t speak at first, but I caught the disappointed glint in her eyes, the same look she’d been giving me lately, for reasons I still couldn’t quite figure out. Still, she answered in her usual composed tone.

“The Alpha is downstairs. He’s waiting for you, Miss.”

I nodded and stepped closer to her, reaching up to gently cup her cheeks, lifting her face so she had no choice but to look at

1. me.

Her

eyes

widened, caught off guard, and I grinned before pinching both cheeks playfully, making her blink in surprise.

“M—Miss, what are you doing?” she asked, clearly flustered.

Without replying, I released her cheeks and leaned in to wrap her in a hug. She stiffened under my touch.

“You really need to stop looking at me like that, Serene,” I murmured. “I promise you, I’m fine. So don’t worry about me, okay?”

“I—I wasn’t looking at you—”

Before she could finish, I leaned back with a gentle smile and cut her off.

“So, how about you go put on one of those pretty dresses we bought yesterday, and let’s eat breakfast together? I’ll bathe and **dress** myself.”

She opened her mouth to argue, but I pressed a finger to my lips, giving her a firm, pointed look.

“That’s an order, Serene. Go get dressed- you’re having breakfast with us.” I paused, briefly recalling the dresses we bought **yesterday**. “Wear the pink one. It brings out your eyes.”

She stared at me for a moment, **then** exhaled and shook her head. Still, a hint of a smile played on her lips **as she** bowed slightly.

2/3

Chapter

38

I understand, Miss. Please **call me if you need** anything.” She hesitated, then offered a **shy**, radiant smile. “**And thank you for yesterday. I really** enjoyed myself. I loved **spending time with you**. I’m saving **up**, so **next time** we go **out**, I’ll be able to buy something **for you**.”

Her words **pierced** through me, **and** though I smiled, it **was** stiff and hollow.

‘Next time.’

There wouldn't be a next time, Serene.

Eventually, Serene left the room, and I took **a deep breath** before walking over to the drawer. My fingers trembled slightly as I opened it and pulled out **the dagger**, staring **at** the blade with a deepening frown.

Tomorrow morning, before the rejection ceremony... I would die.

Not by rejection.

Not by poison.

But by my own hand by driving this blade into myself.

Chapter 39

Nyssa pov

I stared at myself in the mirror, taking in my reflection- my dark makeup and outfit consisting **of a** pair of **jeans** and a **crop top**. **A** small smile tugged at my lips **as** I nodded in satisfaction, **pleased** with how the makeup matched the edgy vibe of my clothes. **I could already** picture the disapproving look my father would give me the moment he **saw** what **I was** wearing.

I had worn it—just like in the **past**, knowing it would **piss** him off.

I remembered being thirteen, in the middle of my rebellious teenage phase. I'd started wearing **black** clothes mostly tight **jeans**, **crop** tops, or mini skirts that showed off my thighs **because** I wanted to be like the older girls. I hated how my father always treated me like a child.

So, every time I wore something like that, his mood would shift instantly. He'd scold me and then ignore me for days. **Back** then, I didn't care. **I**

was stubborn and childish, and it was always Calen and Benjamin who tried to play **peacemakers**, trying to mend the rift between us.

A chuckle escaped me at the memory of my father's face turning bright red from frustration. That was **exactly** why I dressed like this today- to bring that memory back to life.

I popped my lips together and tucked a loose strand of hair behind my ear, smiling at my reflection. It felt good to **see** a hint of the glow I used to have before I married Kieran, before the sickness, before the silence.

I placed the lipstick on the cabinet and gave myself one last look before stepping out of the room, whistling a soft melody **as I** strolled down the hallway.

“Good morning, my lady,” the maids greeted as I passed. I offered them a cheerful grin and a wave, but just a few steps later, I caught the hushed whispers trailing behind me.

“Why **is** she in such a good mood today? I heard the rejection ceremony is tomorrow, and the king hasn’t changed his mind.”

“**Yes...** and the Alpha is losing it over all this.”

Their voices were low, laced with disbelief, but I didn’t slow down. My smile lingered, even deepened slightly. Let them talk.

It was a beautiful day. Serene’s birthday. One last day to spend with the people I cared about, one last *day* to breathe, to feel, to **exist** freely.

I started skipping down the hall, light-hearted and carefree.

Nothing was going *to* ruin my mood today-

“Miss! Good morning, you seem to be in a good mood today!”

I froze, my smile vanishing, replaced by a scowl. I cursed under my breath, recognizing that voice.

Cassian.

He **wasn’t** the problem- not really. The problem was who I knew stood behind him. I’d caught his **scent** just before Cassian called my name.

“Perfect,” I hissed, fighting the urge to pretend I hadn’t heard and walk away. But I knew **better** than to do **that**.

“Huh? Didn’t she hear me?” Cassian asked, confused.

I slowly turned around,

facing the **group of** men behind **me**.

Cassian, **Drake**, and **Zayn- the pack doctor** were **all** staring at me.

Cassian and Drake’s smiles faltered immediately, **their eyes** sweeping down my figure. I caught **Cassian** whispering **a low** “Oh my” under his **breath**.

Zayn, **however**, didn't look surprised. **His gaze was** calm, **steady**, and he offered me a kind smile.

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And then there **was** Darius.

He was unreadable **as** always. If he **ever** showed emotion, it **was** only that familiar **trace** of disdain he reserved for being his unwanted mate.

But this time... it felt different.

His **eyes** dipped to my exposed **waist**, and for the first time, I noticed the faintest tug of a frown at his lips.

It **wasn't** disdain. Not quite.

It was something **else** entirely.

Anger?

As his gaze lifted to meet mine, I gulped, my mind flashing back to last night. The way he held me. The sharp sting of his fangs sinking into my neck. A shiver ran through me and warmth flushed my cheeks.

I quickly shook the memory away, lowering my head respectfully.

"Good morning, Your Majesty," I said, my voice polite and formal.

As expected, he didn't respond. But I didn't let it bother me. Instead, I turned to the three men behind him and offered a small smile and a nod in greeting.

Cassian blinked, parting his lips to say something, but I averted my gaze before he could speak, pretending not to notice

him at all.

"If you'll excuse me, I'll take my leave first," I murmured and turned sharply, not waiting for a reply. I walked away, not sparing a glance at anyone behind me.

Just great. My mood was officially ruined.

I sighed and made my way downstairs, already dreading the awkward tension that would settle over breakfast especially if the king decided to join us again.

But the moment I stepped into the dining area, I felt it- the weight of everyone's attention snapping onto me like a trap.

I froze, lifting my **gaze** to find my father, Calen, and Benjamin already seated. Serene stood nearby but everyone of them had the same expressions on their faces.

Shock. Pure, unfiltered shock.

My eyes flickered to my father, seated at the head of the table. Slowly, I watched **as** his **gaze trailed over** me, his **eyes** widening until they looked like they might pop out of their sockets. Disbelief washed **over** his **face**- only **for** it to twist into rage a heartbeat **later as his** gaze shifted **past** me, likely spotting the king and his men behind me.

His face turned a furious shade of red as he jabbed a trembling finger in my direction.

"Y-you!" he stammered.

I smiled sweetly, lifting a hand in a casual wave.

"Good morning, Father," I said cheerfully, my mood lifting up.

hapter 40

Nyssa pov

My father was livid- I could see it in the way his eyes locked onto mine, his grip tightening around the fork in his hand.

But he said nothing, not aloud at least. Not with the Lycan King seated only a few feet away.

I figured he didn't want to cause a scene in front of him- didn't want to give the King yet another reason to reject me.

But that didn't stop his voice from ringing sharply through the mindlink.

"Are you serious, Nyssa?! What are you wearing? Why is your waist exposed? Where are your dresses? Didn't you go shopping yesterday? Why didn't you buy proper clothes instead of that... that thing you're wearing?"

I didn't bother responding. Instead, I calmly sliced a piece of waffle and took a bite, savoring the warm, buttery flavor. Then I gave a thumbs up to the chef standing stiffly behind my father. He cleared his throat and bowed his head awkwardly.

Turning to Serene, seated beside me, I reached over and placed another piece of waffle onto her plate with a bright grin.

“Eat this too. It’s really good,” I said.

Serene lowered her gaze in submission, but her voice still found its way to me in a whisper.

“Miss, why would you wear-”

Before she could finish, I leaned away and took another slow, deliberate bite.

“L- Look at this girl. How dare you ignore me—”

I cut off the mindlink, reached for my glass of milk, and took a long, unbothered sip, the corner of my lips curling into a smirk as my father continued to glare daggers at me.

But as I placed the glass back down, a small frown tugged at my brow when I shot a quick glance at Darius- only to find him still staring at me without touching his food.

Why was he staring so much? Hadn’t he eaten? Since the day he arrived at the pack, I hadn’t seen him take a single bite. Even though werewolves could go a day or two without food, he had been here for a week now especially if I included the time I

was in a coma. That wasn’t normal.

“Ahem... here, happy birthday, kid.”

Cassian’s voice cleared the silence, drawing everyone’s attention to him. I turned just in time to see him pull a small box from his pocket, holding it out to Serene, who blinked at him in confusion.

But I smiled.

I guess the king’s pack members weren’t so bad after all.

Serene had only mentioned in passing yesterday that today was her birthday, and Cassian had remembered. He even got her something. That was... surprisingly sweet.

Serene seemed to realize then that Darius had gotten her a birthday gift, her cheeks flushing a soft pink as she looked at me, unsure whether to accept it.

I smiled and gave her a small nod, urging her to take it. Still hesitant, she turned to my father instead, silently asking for his

permission. **Despite** his obvious irritation, he managed **a** smile and **gave** her a nod as well.

Blushing, Serene lowered her head slightly and accepted the gift from Darius's outstretched hands.

T-thank you, Sir Darius, for the gift," she **said** shyly.

Darius waved a hand nonchalantly but **wore a** smug grin.

"Don't thank me. It's nothing," he replied, though he **clearly** puffed up with pride.

"Ahem."

This time it **was** my father clearing his throat. We **all** turned **as** he stretched out a hand. A maid stepped forward, carrying a neatly wrapped box. She handed it to **Serene**, whose eyes widened in surprise. She turned to my father, who gave her a soft smile.

"Happy birthday, kid. You've grown up well. Your mother would be proud."

Her eyes instantly welled up with **tears**, and she bowed her head deeply.

"Thank you, Alpha," she whispered, her voice cracking.

I couldn't help but grin at my father, though he just rolled his eyes and looked away. Still, I was too happy to care, happy to

see Serene smile.

Serene was the daughter of my nanny, who had died during childbirth. She had grown up by my side ever since. Everyone in the pack loved her for her kindness, and my father had always been especially fond of her, having entrusted me to her

care.

I remembered in my last life, she never even got to celebrate her birthday- not because she couldn't, but because I had forgotten. I was too focused on trying to please Kieran.

"Happy birthday, kid," both Calen and Benjamin said at the same time, and Benjamin reached out to place a gift in Serene's hands. She gave them both a bright, grateful smile.

Calen and Benjamin exchanged a knowing look with matching grins.

Oh, and did I forget to mention? They were mates.

Yes, father's beta and gamma were mates and they were really adorable together.

"T-Thank you," she whispered, clutching the gifts with a soft smile. I gave a small nod and tapped her shoulder gently, murmuring for her not to cry, then turned toward Drake, who sat beside Benjamin.

Without a word, I subtly gestured toward Serene with a tilt of my head, signaling for him to give her his gift.

Drake blinked in confusion, then scratched the back of his head awkwardly. He leaned toward Cassian and whispered under his breath, "Why didn't you tell me, Beta Cassian, to bring a gift?"

Cassian only shrugged, sipping his juice with a smug grin. "I forgot," he replied nonchalantly.

Drake let out a quiet sigh before facing Serene with a polite, if sheepish, smile.

"Happy birthday," he said. "I apologize- I didn't bring a gift, but I promise I'll make it up to you later."

Serene shook her head, about to object, but I swiftly nudged her leg under the table, silencing her.

Chapter 10

Of course," I said with a polite smile. "Thank you, we'll be expecting it."

Just as I turned **to speak** to Zayn, **he** beat me to it and held a potion like substance toward Serene.

"Happy birthday. I didn't know today was your birthday, **so** please **accept this,**" he said, his tone **calm as** ever. "It's **a** potion I crafted myself. **Use** it **once** a day, and your skin will **become** smoother- **you'll** be even more beautiful than you **already are.**"

Serene blinked in confusion, staring at the item in **his** hand, but I quickly nudged her **again**

, urging her **to** take it.

Oh my goddess. A potion made by Zayn himself? The best doctor in the entire world?

This **was** more precious than gold. I'd heard of it before- how countless people, both men and women, had tried to get their hands on it. They offered gold, silver, and **every** luxury imaginable, but Zayn had always refused. Rumor had it he simply couldn't **be** bothered; he didn't **care** what they offered.

And now... he **was** giving it to Serene?

This wasn't just a birthday gift- this was the ultimate birthday miracle.

"Miss?" Serene looked at me, puzzled, but my grin only grew greedy as my gaze locked onto the potion in Zayn's hand. If Serene used that, she'd become even more beautiful. Maybe when I was gone and she came of age, she'd have plenty of admirers, maybe even a home of her own.

"Take it," I said, pointing at the bottle. "It's worth more than gold, so take it. This is the best gift, you should thank him properly."

The moment I spoke, I felt the weight of everyone's gaze shift to me. From the corner of my eye, I saw Cassian's lips twitch, amused. Serene, noticing my enthusiasm, did as I said, lowering her head politely.

"Thank you, Sir Zayn, for your generosity," she said, placing the potion beside her other gifts.

Heh. These people were really rich. It wasn't a bad idea to squeeze a few gifts out of them for Serene especially after they'd been eating and drinking here for free all week. They owed us something.

I chuckled under my breath, almost wickedly, and turned to the last guest about to speak- only to freeze when I saw who it

was.

Darius. He stared at me without a hint of emotion.

Well then... That was everyone then

I quickly averted my gaze from Darius and turned toward the clock, silently praying for my order to arrive and break the tension. But before I could even take a breath, my heart stopped at Serene's sudden outburst.

"I- thank you, Your Majesty!" she exclaimed, her voice loud and filled with disbelief.

Gasps echoed around the room, and I whipped my head in her direction- only to find her holding a necklace. A white jade pendant, glowing faintly with an ethereal luster.

My **heart** dropped.

My **gaze** snapped **back** to Darius, who hadn't moved an inch but was watching me intently. And then came my father's voice, **hoarse** with **disbelief**.

“T–That **is**–”

Before he could finish, the door opened and a maid stepped in, bowing respectfully. 3/4

“Greetings to the King and Alpha. I apologize for interrupting your breakfast, but Sir Kieran and Miss Aria **are** here. They request an audience with you.”