

Chapter 6

Chapter 6: A Different Xenois

The hospital room was dimly lit, monitors beeping steadily beside the bed where Xenois lay, his head bandaged, an IV in his arm.

He looked smaller somehow and more vulnerable in a way I'd never thought I would associate with him.

The boys approached the bed cautiously, Troy reaching for my hand.

"Daddy?" Soren called softly.

Xenois's eyes opened slowly, unfocused at first, then focusing as recognition flashed through his eyes as they landed on the children

He smiled, at them as he looked at each of them tenderly.

"My boys," he murmured, his voice hoarse from tiredness. "Come here."

They moved forward eagerly then, their caution earlier forgotten after the explicit permission from their dad.

Xenois winced as they climbed onto the bed but he made no move to stop them, instead gathering them close with his uninjured arm.

"Careful," I warned, stepping forward getting in his line of vision. "Daddy's hurt."

Xenois looked up at me, and something in his eyes made my breath catch.

He looked at me with something...was it relief? Warmth? Something I'd never seen directed at me before.

"Celeste," he said, stretching his free hand toward me. "You're here."

Confused by his tone and his emotions he seemed to be processing, I gently took his hand waving the strange feeling as a result of being drugged which made all his walls crumble.

"Of course. Dmitri told us what happened."

"I knew you'd come," he said with such certainty that it startled me as I didn't know what to say.

Then, before I could respond, he tugged me closer and pressed his lips to mine in a kiss as he seemed to plunge his tongue in mine as I widened my eyes.

I pulled back, stunned. "Xenois?"

He frowned, looking between me and the boys with confusion like I was the one acting strange from pulling away from a kiss. This was the first time that the triplets had even seen us kiss and the last time that happened was on the night they were conceived.

"What's wrong? Why do you all look so upset?"

"You were in an accident, Dad," Troy explained slowly. "You got hurt."

"I see that," Xenois agreed, touching his bandaged head slowly as he winced at the touch before pulling away.

"But I'm fine now that my family's here." His eyes returned to me, warm and... loving? "I'm sorry I scared you, sweetheart."

Sweetheart? My eyes widened in surprise as I looked behind me wondering if Claudia has somehow appeared at my back cause this was unbelievable.

In six years, Xenois had never used a term of endearment with me. Not once.

The boys exchanged bewildered glances with each other as they looked at me and back at the door trying to see if Dad was talking to someone else.

"Dad's acting weird," Soren whispered to his brothers.

Lake tugged at Xenois's hospital gown, gaining his attention as he spoke. "Dad, are you mad at Mom still? About the divorce?"

"Divorce?" Xenois repeated, his frown getting deep as he glanced at me and back at the boys. "What divorce?"

A cold dread settled in my stomach. I turned to find Dmitri watching from the doorway as he has entered quietly closing the door behind him, his expression confirming my suspicion.

"Dmitri," I called softly. "A word?"

In the hallway, I confronted him without punching punches. "My husband kissed me and called me and endearment so I am only going to ask once. He doesn't remember, does he?"

Dmitri shook his head as he replied,

"The doctor said there might be some memory loss from the concussion. Temporary, probably."

"How much has he forgotten?" I pressed him for more information trying to understand what was happening.

"Not sure," Dmitri admitted. "But he keeps asking for his wife and kids. Seems to think..." He trailed off, looking uncomfortable.

"Seems to think what?"

"That you're a normal family," Dmitri finished. "That you love each other."

The irony nearly made me laugh. For three years, I'd loved Xenois silently, hopelessly, knowing he could never return my feelings.

Now, when I was hours away from leaving forever, he'd forgotten that our marriage was nothing but a business arrangement.

"Mrs. Kingston?" A nurse approached, holding a familiar envelope. "We found these in your husband's jacket pocket. I thought you might want them."

The divorce papers. I took them from her, my mind racing.

"Let me speak to the doctor," I said to Dmitri. "Keep an eye on them, please."

Dr. Harris confirmed what I'd feared the most as I held onto the papers for support.

"Retrograde amnesia. It's not uncommon with concussions. From his questions, it seems he may have lost months, possibly years of memories."

"Will they return?" I asked.

"Most likely, yes. But it could take days, weeks... sometimes longer." She hesitated for a moment before she continued speaking in a lower tone.

"It's generally best not to force memories. Let them return naturally to avoid additional trauma or rather additional loss of other memories."

I nodded my head slowly, numb with shock. "Thank you."

When I returned to the room, Xenois was listening carefully as the boys recounted some adventure from the park that morning, his expression, one of genuine interest and affection.

"Celeste," he smiled when he saw me. "The doctor says I can go home tomorrow if everything looks good."

"That's... wonderful," I managed to say to him not sure of what I should tell him.

Dmitri stepped forward, looking uncomfortable as he looked at me as I nodded my head.

"Boss, about today's plans. I can still take Mrs. Kingston to the airport if—"

"Airport?" Xenois interrupted, frowning. "Where is my wife going?"

"Nowhere," I said quickly, shooting Dmitri a warning look.

"Just a... trip we were discussing. It's not important now."

Dmitri cleared his throat. "I found these in the car, sir." He handed Xenois the divorce papers I'd signed that morning. "Thought you might want them."

I held my breath as Xenois examined the documents, his frown deepening as he read. Then, without warning, he tore them in half, then quarters, then eighths.