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Flames of fire burst out from my hands, heading straight for her, I shot out from the bed. 1

She retreated quickly, "Shit. Aels, what's wrong with you?"

"The fact that you wouldn't leave me the fuck alone. Fine then, I'll keep beating the crap out of you till you let me be.

I could see the confusion swirling in her eyes, but I refused to let her manipulate me once more.

"Aels. It's me, calm down." She kept dodging my attacks, by now the air was thick with smoke, but I pressed on, barely giving her breathing space.

"Stay away from my babies. I don't care what you are, but I'm going to kill you" I increased my assault.

"Don't make me fight back" she snapped, by now we had pushed into the hallway where it was only us. Other members rarely came this far into the pack house.

"Fight. Bastard. Fight me, I'm not afraid of

you coward, you think hiding behind your little petty tricks makes you formidable? Or makes you think I'll be scared of you? Newsflash, I'm not"

"What the heck. Why are you attacking Celeste?" I heard Ava's voice through our link,

"You've invaded my thoughts too? Huh?" I sneered.

"I'll get you out, even if it's the last thing I do" I cursed.

"Baby girl, What's going on?" I spotted Eros rushing towards us, eyes soft but shocked, like he had walked into a surprise party.

I laughed wildly, "Take a guess"

Something shifted in his eyes, "Whatever it is, we can always talk it out. Extinguish the fire" he said, referring to the ball of fire in my hands.

I raised my hands, "you mean this?" I shot it straight to them.

They both dodged, I charged in without giving them a chance to recover, "I've had enough of you messing with my head. Coward, come out" I screamed.

I could hear my own fury, it felt like

something raw in me was reopening, something protective, a need to ensure that anyone or anything that tried to go after my family would meet a terrible end by my hand, no matter what form or shape it took.

I remembered Sage's words about my babies and fate, he had said creatures would try to prevent their birth.

Something told me this was not an ordinary nightmare, it was after them. And if killing things that looked like my friend and mate was all it took to protect them, then I would do it without batting an eyelid.

"Doll, you need to calm down" Eros spoke up, I could see him approaching me slowly and cautiously one step at a time.

"Stop moving" I bared my fangs at him, he exchanged glances with Celeste as though passing a secret signal to each other.

I attacked instantly, Eros switched to offence, charging head first for me, Celeste muttered an incantation and instantly the entire hall was plunged into darkness.

I attacked blindly, relying solely on my instincts, I felt an arm wrap tightly against me.

I resisted fiercely, thrashing around, "stay the fuck away from my babies" I screamed, still struggling against the arm.

The arm locked me down, restricting all movement, "Calm down doll. Listen, it's me." A smooth voice whispered directly into my ears, his breath fanning me.

My body relaxed at the familiarity, "Eros?" I called, my body greedily taking in that familiar air.

"That's right doll. It's really me" he affirmed, his hands caressing my body, tracing his fingers along my bare arms.

The light came back on, Celeste stood arms folded, glaring at me, but beneath the glare her eyes held worry.

"What the hell Aella?" She pursued her lips, "see what you've done"

"I'm really back?" I asked rhetorically, "I'm back" I said, touching myself, Eros spun me around to face him, his eyes searching mine for answers.

"What happened?"

I traced his jawline with my fingers, my eyes roamed around me, the hall was damaged,

the tiles broken, the wall charred. Words dried in my mouth, how do I explain that I had thought I was dreaming.

"I—" the words were still stuck in my lips when everything blurred and the world went dark.

(Some hours later)

My eyes blinked open, "ugggh" I groaned, my head hurts like hell. I clutched it

"Finally, sleeping beauty is up" Ava snarked, I could hear the accusation in her tone.

"Come on, you're not really mad at me are you?" I asked, pulling a pitiful expression

"Stop acting all guilty. I'm the victim here" she sneered.

"I didn't mean to." I muttered, "I thought it wasn't real. I'm Sorry"

"Well, that doesn't explain why you'd go ballistic, you almost hurt mate" she snapped, I felt her anger, she barely contained it.

"I'm sorry." I whispered once more, the guilt of my actions resting in, my eyes roamed around, Eros sat beside me, eyes closed tired lines defining his face.

I tried moving to let him get more comfortable, "Doll" he mumbled, his eyes blinking open, "how are you feeling?"

"Good" I sat up with his help, "I'm so sorry, I—"

"Shhhh" he cut me off, placing his hands on my lips, "no need for all that"

"I almost—" I paused, I couldn't bring myself to complete the statement, I could have hurt both he and Celeste.

"I'm not blaming you" he said, caressing my face

"Celeste—"

"Is not blaming you either" he completed, "the nightmares are getting worse?"

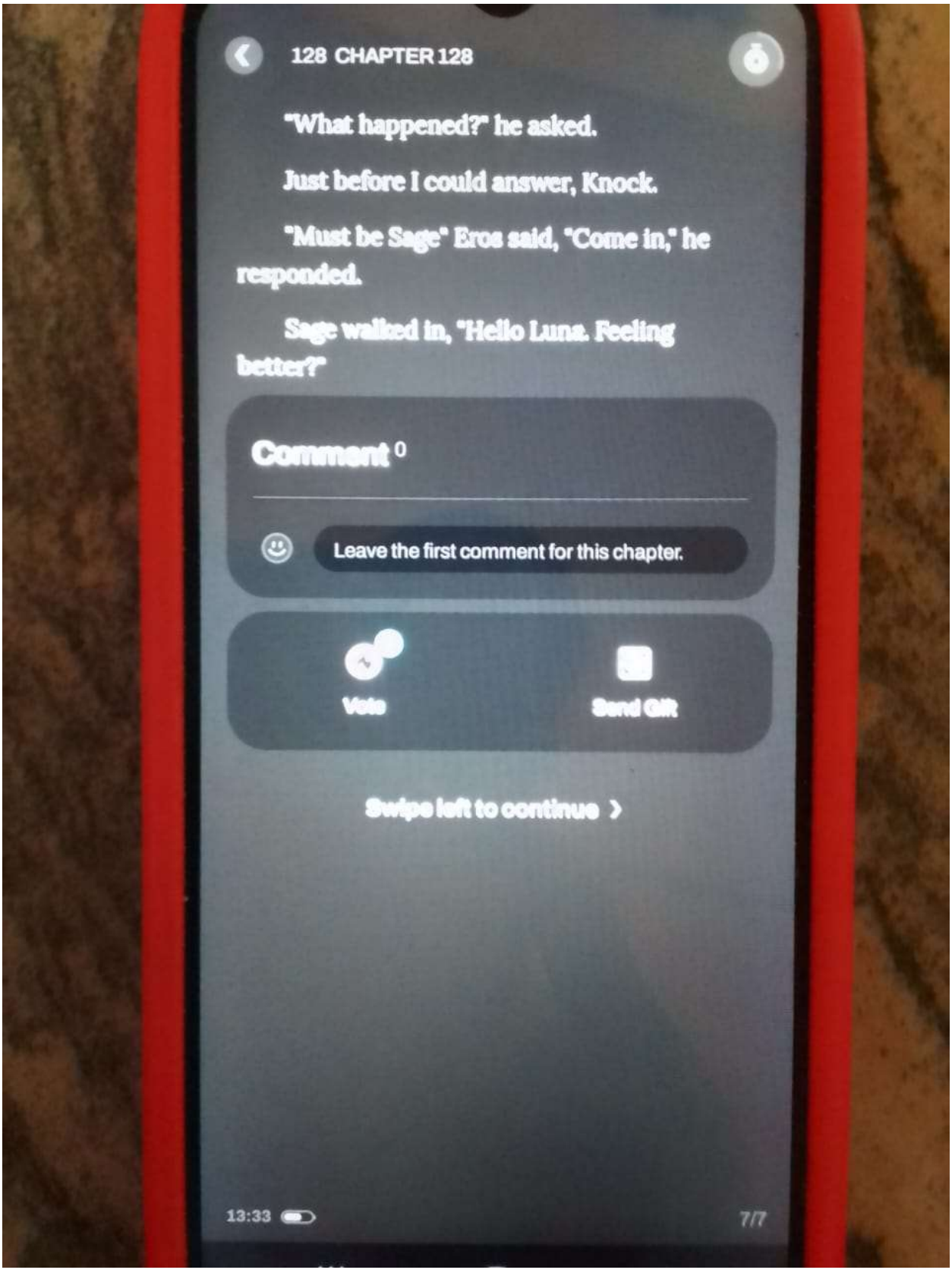
Sigh.

"Yes and no"

"Oh?"

"It felt like a nightmare but this time it felt different, real even"

I was chilled to the bones at the mere thought of, I had nearly handed over the little one I held in my arms, they had been the ones to draw me out of the trance.


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"What happened?" he asked.
Just before I could answer, Knock.
"Must be Sage" Eros said, "Come in," he responded.
Sage walked in, "Hello Luna. Feeling better?"
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129 CHAPTER 129

Aella 1

"Yes. Thank you"

He nodded, but staring at me, a strange look on his face. "Weird. Didn't expect it to run out so fast" he mumbled.

"Huh?" I looked at him surprised, did he know what was going on.

"Nothing important. Do you think you can narrate your experience?" he asked.

I looked at Eros, he squeezed my hand reassuringly, letting me know he was here.

"Yeah," I nodded, then began to recount my experience, right from when I fell asleep.

Finally by the time I was done, he nodded. "It's just as I thought."

Eros's jaw ticked, like he had a lot to say, his mouth opened first then went shut once more.

He simply cradled me in his arms, "I'm sorry doll" he whispered, leaning into my neck.

His shoulders tense, knuckles tightened

like he was barely holding himself together.

"Hey" I placed my hands on it, wincing from the coldness of it, "it's not your fault" I squeezed a little, ignoring the chill.

"When you lovebirds are done casting faults, then inform and we can get to the root of this" a voice said slightly teasing.

"Come back." Eros said, interlocking our fingers. I rested my head on his shoulders now, watching his interaction with sage.

"Again, not a member of your pack Alpha. You don't command me" Sage rolled his eyes, bored. Almost like this was a constant.

"You're in my land. If you don't like it you're free to leave." Eros snapped.

"Whatever you say kid" Sage shrugged.

"Stop calling me that"

"Why? Don't want your mate to know that I showered the great Eros Shaw as a kid?" he chuckled, "no worries your secret is safe with me" he winked.

Red spread through Eros cheeks, up to the tips of his ears. I looked at them in surprise, was Eros embarrassed?

I've never seen him this way, their interaction was so natural. Well they had grown up together so that was a given.

"I'm not a kid" Eros grumbled, "And that was ages ago"

"Whatever you say kid" Sage ruffled his hair not bothering to hide his amusement.

I could barely believe it, my hard tough Alpha looking and whining like a kid, it almost felt unreal. I was almost tempted to pinch myself, just to confirm that what I saw was real.

"You're embarrassing me in front of my mate" Eros glared.

"What? Forgotten how I used to sneak you all those lollipops so soon? Keep acting all tough and I may just be tempted to remind you" He teased

"Okay. Okay. Stop teasing my mate Sage" I cut in before the Eros could respond, his pouty lips and eyes were all so adorable that I might melt if this conversation went on.

Who would have thought, the feared Alpha was such a baby, I couldn't help the urge to want to tease him, but I controlled myself.

"Fine by me. Don't you think so kiddo"

"You're unbelievable" he huffed, "We're not kids anymore"

"Oh please. Don't be so uptight, I can remember when you still called me big brother. Following me around wherever I went, y'all grow up too fast" Sage chuckled.

"Stop talking," Eros grumbled in a child-like voice.

I bit my lips to hold back my laughter, they had a sweet sibling dynamic. But despite all that I could still see the respect and admiration in Eros eyes. It was deeply rooted, not the type that

came from just growing with someone you consider your elder brother no but the type built on trust.

"Alright. I'll stop for now kiddo, after all I've got to save you some dignity" he broke into a wide grin.

Eros muttered something under his breath, but I could see the relief in his eyes, guessing there really was someone Eros Shaw was acting wary of.

"Now Luna, I believe you were attacked by what we call a dream eater"

"Attacked? Why?" I had my suspicions but I still held onto the tiny bits of hope I had.

"Precisely" he nodded.

"I haven't offended any creatures to the best of my knowledge" I've heard of creatures that prey on dreams, but they were also known not to attack uninvited.

"Well, I did mention the peculiarity of the children you carry" he stated factually, "Your sister's spell had held off for long, but even a spell has its limit against a barrage of attacks which are not physical."

"Lilith's spell?"

"I'll assume she didn't tell you then" he said, "my fault for being the one to break the news, but you sister cast a protective barrier around you Luna"

My mind went back to the dream, how something always seemed to keep stopping them from reaching for me, it'd explain why they had to switch to sweet talking me into leaving the barrier willingly.

"She knows," I mumbled.

"Likely not," Sage shook his head, "logically speaking, if she did, she would have used a

much stronger barrier. Well, the barrier had weakened, I'm guessing that's why the dream eater was able to infiltrate your dreams"

"It wanted my babies" my hands moved on their own accord, wrapping round my belly, Ava's roar echoing in my head.

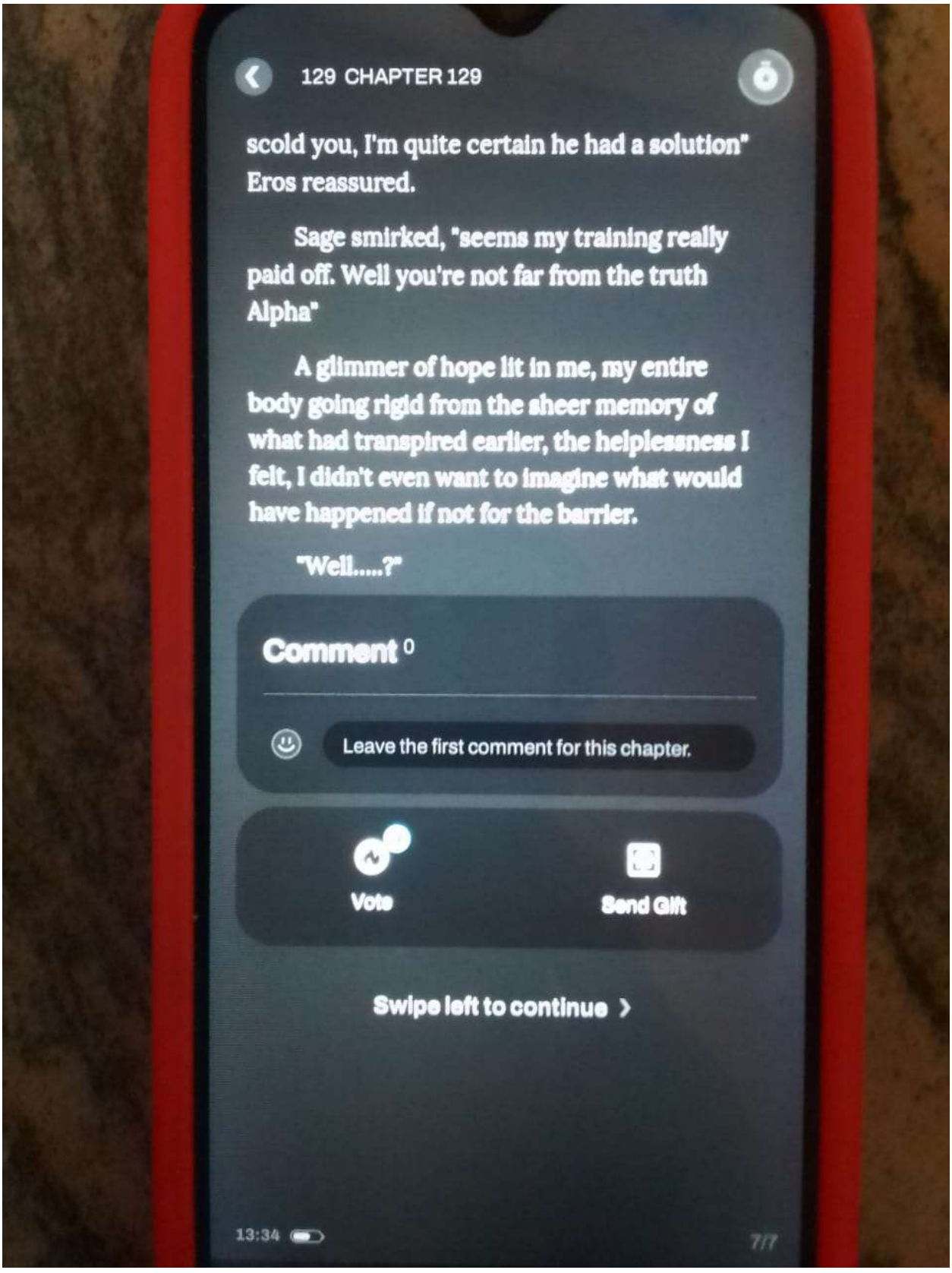
"Yes." Sage replied, "I told you Luna, they're not the average kids, there will be things after them, creatures that will try to stop their birth by whatever means necessary." His tone suggested his disinterest in sugar coating the words.

"It's all my fault" I whispered, "If only I hadn't rejected you when you first tried to talk to me about them. Instead I let my selfishness get in the way," Something wet dripped to my thighs.

"You couldn't have known." Eros comforted, his hands mechanically wrapping around me, letting me feel his warmth.

"I'm their mother and instead of protecting them, I'm the one putting them at risk" my entire body shuddered.

"Stop thinking that way of love, you only want the best for them. It's the same thing we all want. And besides since he has the time to


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scold you, I'm quite certain he had a solution" Eros reassured.
Sage smirked, "seems my training really paid off. Well you're not far from the truth Alpha"
A glimmer of hope lit in me, my entire body going rigid from the sheer memory of what had transpired earlier, the helplessness I felt, I didn't even want to imagine what would have happened if not for the barrier.
"Well.....?"
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130 CHAPTER 130

Aella 1

"He's not entirely wrong, I did come with something, it's not a solution, neither is it temporary, but at least it's something."

My heart clenched, "what is it?"

"A suppressant" he smiled, "a scent suppressant"

I bit back the remark at the edge of my lips, and replied in a more subtle tone, "What good is a suppressant going to do?"

"Well for starters, it'll kill that delicious scent emitting from your body." He grimaced, "At least, it'd buy us some time for something more permanent"

"Okay." I nodded, at least half bread was better than none right?

"It'll be fine" Eros assured, "we'll get through this. Together" he winked.

I returned his smile, even though I could feel it in my bones, this was only a way to prolong the inevitable, the only solution to this was to get stronger.

If I had been any stronger a mere dream eater shouldn't have rendered me powerless, weak.

"You look like you've seen a ghost Luna" Sage called out. "My potions are potent, you have nothing to worry about, anything more permanent or more powerful than it may affect them."

"I don't doubt the potency of your potions Sage" I shook my head slowly, "I only lament my own weakness" I finished. Curse this weak body, somehow I could tell that there was more to this body, something I was yet to reach.

Was this the punishment mother had intended all along, what she wanted me to feel?

The torture of remembering where I once stood, and being reduced to one that could barely protect her self not to mention her family. I clenched my fists, I was going to protect them, no matter what, and nothing was going to stop me"

"You are stronger than most" he stated like he was reciting a paper, "dream eaters prey on only those they consider vulnerable, to have woken up and of your own accord nonetheless shows your strength." He shrugged.

"After all, those things preferred to latch onto their prey, draining them until they were only but a shadow of themselves, repeating the same nightmare over and over again until it breaks them, coming out intact clearly speaks something"

His words felt like a bucket of ice was poured over me, "they latch onto their prey?"

"Yes," he confirmed.

"Does that mean it'll strike again?" Eros finally broke his silence

"Not necessarily. But with my potion you'll be safe for now" he said, "or till you give birth, I can't really say. It varies for each user"

"The potion" I stretched out my arm before I could have second thoughts.

"Are you sure?" He eyed me, "Eros.." he called out, his voice carrying a hint of warning at the edge.

"Darling" Eros spoke softly, his voice a sharp contrast to the raging storm going on, "I need to tell you something"

I looked from Eros to Sage and then back to Eros, "I'm listening" I muttered, ignoring the unease growing at the back of mind.

"Sage's potions always have side effects." Veins lined on his forehead, like he had to force himself to speak.

I stared directly at Sage, "Will it harm them?"

"No." He shook, "it'll protect them, as that is its only purpose. But aside that it will a take a severe toll on you"

"Well it won't kill me either?"

"Well no." He said, "at least not yet" he muttered

"So it's a possibility?"

"You can say that. But it makes their presence disappear. Even you would have trouble sensing it much less others. But you may loose some of your powers, temporarily of course."

"That's good enough. Although I wonder why it will have such side effects, I've never encountered potions that had one"

He tossed the potion to me, "Think about this carefully. Even I don't know what the extent of it's effect on you"

I caught the bottle, it exuded a faint

fragrance that seemed to seep into all my pores, I let a shaky breath I hadn't I held onto, even my head felt lighter. "Any permanent effect?"

"No. All temporary till you put to birth" he replied

My eyes lit up, this was even far better than expected, I raised my brow, a question stuck at the back of my mind, just who or rather what exactly was sage.

I took off the cap of the bottle, a soft glossy scent wafted out of it, flooding my nose instantly, even Eros heaved from it.

I raised it to my lips, a hand stopped me halfway, my eyes connected with Eros's worried ones, searching if there was even a hint of regret.

"Let me" I shook my head.

He nodded, then slowly, released his hands, lowering them to his sides. It was a simple gesture, but yet it carried a heavy weight.

I gulped down the potion before I could have a rethink, it was surprisingly sweet, I stuck my tongue out to lick off the remaining liquid that dripped out.

Eros wiped them off with his fingers. Instead, I could feel his worry and fear through our bond, but beyond that was something else, trust. He trusted me to make the right decision and he was going to stand beside me through it, no words were needed.

I tossed the empty bottle right back at sage, he caught it effortlessly. "Decisive. Good. You'll need it" he said approvingly

I scoffed, "yeah right."

His brows furrowed, "Something baffles me still."

"What?" Eros asked.

"The spell casted by your sister was quite powerful, it should not have weakened so easily."

"What are you driving at?"

"Aside from the inexplicable weakening, she seems to have disappeared." He added.

"Welcome to the club." I chuckled, Lilith did have a disappearing streak.

"No. This is different," he shook his head, his eyes holding things I couldn't understand, "Something is wrong" his voice was calm, way too calm what his words implied.

"That can't be right" I shook my head, but experience had taught me not to take his words lightly.

I reached out through our bond, "Lily." I called out.

And for the first time since we connected.

Nothing.

Only an empty hollow feeling that hit my gut. The uneasy feeling from earlier was back, "what the hell is going on? Wait, how do you know about Lilith?"

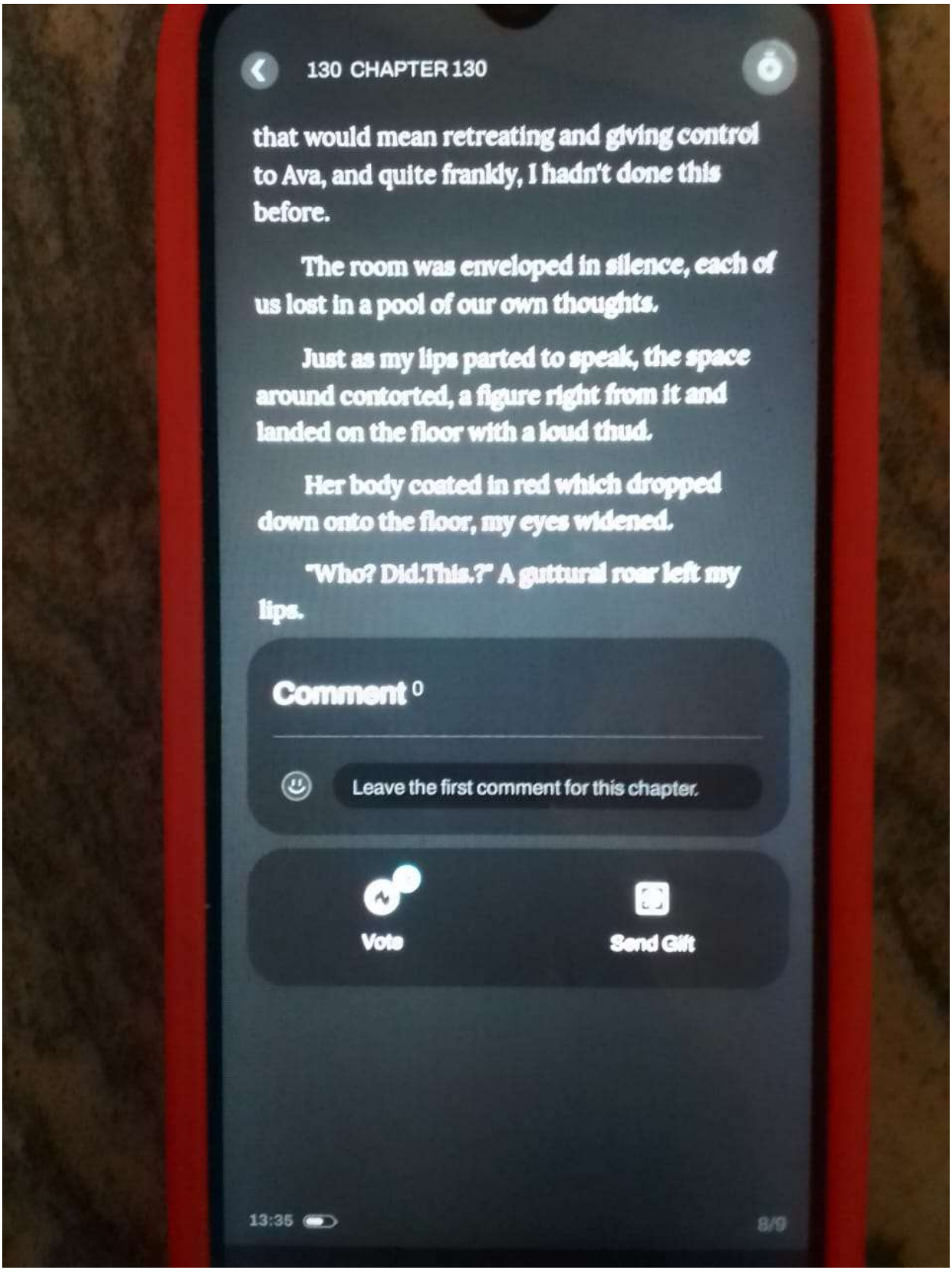
"Long story" he muttered, his eyes glittering under the soft yellow light of the bulbs.

I didn't press for more, "I can't reach her" I admitted, shame hitting my gut, inserting itself deeper into me.

"That much is expected," he said methodically.

Eros held me, lost in thought, "You said there was a way she reached out to you last time. When you are in trouble, try reaching out" he suggested.

"Right." Why hadn't I thought of that, but


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that would mean retreating and giving control to Ava, and quite frankly, I hadn't done this before.
The room was enveloped in silence, each of us lost in a pool of our own thoughts.
Just as my lips parted to speak, the space around contorted, a figure right from it and landed on the floor with a loud thud.
Her body coated in red which dropped down onto the floor, my eyes widened.
"Who? Did.This.?" A guttural roar left my lips.
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