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Seeing that Lucianne needed nothing more than food and bed rest, the doctors discharged her before noon. Russell obediently went to kindergarten, leaving the hospital with Annie. Xandar, Christian and Lucianne grabbed a quick bite before they headed to the police station. ①

Xandar only brought Lucianne because he didn't want to let her out of his sight. But he reminded Lucianne to use as little strength as possible when she was there, meaning no excessive mental gymnastics with whatever they were about to hear from Chief Dalloway.

The Chief brought them to see Agnes Fitzgerald. They peered through the one-way mirror at the tear-strained, exhausted-looking woman. When Xandar asked why she chose to confess, Chief Dalloway said that she 'regretted ordering the murder' as soon as she found out what really happened.

Lucianne asked in a soft voice, "How did she know what happened? I doubt the hired killer was able to make a phone call to his employer before he passed out from the blade in his buttocks. And there's nothing in the news saying that a child was involved. How does Agnes know that it was her contract that went sideways?"

"She said that she hired two people for the task, my Queen. One to kill; and one to drive the killer away after he'd completed his task."

Christian asked, "Chief, are you saying that the second one got away?"

"That's what she is saying, your Grace."

Lucianne pressed the old man, "But you don't believe her, do you, Chief?"

He looked helplessly at the Queen, and sighed before he said, "I've seen criminals, your Highness. And I have to say, this woman doesn't exhibit any form of criminal behavior. The evidence fits but look at her, my Queen," he gestured to the window and went on, "She just looks tired and frightened."

Lucianne had to agree. It was like he said, Agnes was just exhausted and terrified. She didn't even look remorseful. Xandar then asked Chief Dalloway, "What's her occupation?"

"One of the two personal secretaries to the head of audit at the National Audit Department, my King."

"Helena Tanner?" Xandar asked, and the Chief nodded but before Xandar could ask, Chief Dalloway said, "She denied that she was coerced. She said she wasn't threatened by her employer, her husband, her family or anyone else." ①

"She has a family?" Lucianne asked in surprise.

Chief Dalloway didn't see a reason for her reaction so he simply answered, "A mate and a toddler, my Queen." ①

Christian asked, "What is her motive for the kill again, Chief?"

"She said it was a colleague rivalry, your Grace. She wanted her colleague's position for years now, and she has told the intended victim's mother to swap department positions with her countless times. But it seems her colleague refused."

The three of them exchanged knowing looks, knowing that the whole line of reasoning was utter rubbish. Ellia had been with Annie and Christian for days and they spoke very often. She shared the ups and downs of her work life there but she never mentioned such pestering or rivalry.

Xandar was contemplating on using his King's Authority but he just promised Lucianne that he will never use it on anyone innocent. And this woman in front of them seemed innocent. Suddenly, he felt a tug on his hand and he was sucked into two large, black orbs like they were black holes.

"Let me talk to her?" Lucianne whispered.

His lilac eyes widened with panic and concern as he held her by her shoulders and said, "No. Baby, you're supposed to be on bed rest. I wasn't even supposed to bring you here. And we agreed, no mental gymnastics."

"No, we agreed to no 'excessive' mental gymnastics." She said innocently, blinking those black orbs at him.

"Sweetheart, no." Xandar's voice was soft and pleading. Everyone there knew that he was going to lose soon. Xandar gave one final attempt when he said, "You just woke up hours ago. You're still recovering."

Lucianne argued weakly, "She's cuffed. I doubt she'll pose any danger. Talking to her won't require much strength. And the Chief will be there with me."

He held both her hands and suggested, "Baby, Christian and I can talk to her. You can mind-link your questions when I'm in there and I'll ask her. How about that?"

Lucianne asked rhetorically, "Do you think she would tell you anything differently from what she already told the Chief?" Everyone knew she wouldn't, not unless Xandar used the King's Authority, which felt very wrong to use at that moment.

Lucianne continued to speak softly, "She's scared, Xandar. Odds are, her family's safety is at stake. If we force her to open up, we'll only drive her further away. Let me talk to her."

He thought hard about it. She then mind-linked him, 'Unless you'd rather use the King's Authority to get the truth?'

Xandar looked at his mate in dismay and answered her question aloud, "It doesn't seem right to use that in this case." He sighed, and pondered on his predicament as he looked into her black orbs, which was a guaranteed way of giving into his mate's demands. In the end, Xandar groaned and said, "Ten minutes. Only ten minutes. That's how long we'll be in there with her."

"We?" Lucianne asked.

Xandar smirked, "You didn't think I was going to let my Queen go in there without her King, did you?" Lucianne smiled radiantly, and pecked a kiss on his jawline before whispering, "Thank you,

my love.”

Xandar’s heart melted but he tried to remain stern with her. “No over-exertion in there, my Queen, got it?” Lucianne nodded like a doting Queen who heeded to the orders of her King but Christian and Dalloway were fully aware of who the real winner was.

Chief Dalloway held the door open for them, and Lucianne stepped in first, followed by Xandar behind her. Agnes straightened her back when the door opened, and she stiffened when she saw who walked in.

She started crying as she pleaded, “P-lease. I’m sor-ry. I-I’m sor-ry.”

Lucianne got Xandar to stand on the side, and she approached the crying Agnes. She took the seat in front of her, studying Agnes’s reaction. Lucianne then offered a small smile and started speaking in a calm voice, “Agnes, what are you saying? What are you apologizing for?”

Lucianne’s voice had somehow emitted a tranquil energy in the small room. Even Christian and Dalloway, who were both listening in through earphones, felt the change in the tense atmosphere inside.

Agnes sobbed, and her voice was steadier when she said, “I’m sorry f-for ordering a child to be killed.” Her voice cracked towards the end and she broke down again.

Lucianne remained calm as she said, “Agnes.” She called out to the woman but Agnes only hid her face and kept sobbing. So, Lucianne reached out for her cold hand and gave it a gentle squeeze as she called out her name again.

Agnes was surprised by her touch, especially after what she had just said. Her eyes met Lucianne’s comforting black orbs, and the Queen was giving her a warm smile as she whispered, “You didn’t do it, Agnes.”

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Agnes was taken aback with what Lucianne just said but she stubbornly insisted, "No, I did. It was me. Please. I've always h-hated Ellia Morgan, a-and I wanted her j-job, a-and..."

"Who do you love most, Agnes?" Lucianne interrupted her with a seemingly-unrelated question.

Agnes was confused but seeing Lucianne's warm, encouraging smile, she nodded with uncertainty and uttered, "M-My child, your Hi-Highness."

Lucianne smiled wider and leaned closer as she asked, "A boy or a girl?"

"G-Girl." She was still lost.

"What's her name?"

"B-Bethany... we call her Beth."

Only then did the men know what the Queen was doing. She was getting Agnes to trust her enough to open up. But Lucianne wasn't done yet, and she asked with interest, "How old is she?"

"Four. Well, five next month, my Queen." Agnes said, stuttering and fidgeting less than before.

"Is there anything in particular that Beth likes?" Lucianne asked, and when Agnes looked into her eyes, she saw no manipulation, no hidden agenda. It looked like Lucianne was genuinely interested to know about her little girl.

Agnes cleared her throat before she offered a small smile and said, "Chocolate, especially fondue."

"Oh, so does my niece! We always got her chocolate fondue instead of a cake for her birthdays." Lucianne shared.

Agnes was sucked into the conversation so she said, "That's actually a good idea. Peter and I never thought of that. Probably time to do away with the cake tradition." Lucianne chuckled lightly, encouraging Agnes to smile wider.

Agnes suddenly remembered where she was and what she was doing. Lucianne caught her regaining awareness too so she reached for her hand again and said, "Agnes, we know you didn't do it. It's okay if you don't want to tell us who asked you to do it but I need you to tell me something." This piqued Agnes's and everyone else's curiosity. Wasn't finding the culprit the whole point of questioning Agnes?

Lucianne peered into the woman's lilac eyes and asked in worry, "Beth and Peter, are they safe?" ①

Agnes's eyes widened and she was going to break down again but Lucianne leaned closer towards her and said with determined eyes, "Agnes, tell us where they are. We can protect them. We've been looking after Ellia and the others for days. They're all safe. The three families are safe. We can offer you the same protection. But you have to let us help you. You don't have to tell us anything yet. But we need to know where your husband and child are."

Agnes was terrified and shocked at the same time, "H-How did you..."

Lucianne said sadly, "Your colleagues were forced to do things they didn't want to do because they wanted to keep their families safe, too. Agnes, were you given a timeline to make this false confession?"

Agnes blinked and furrowed her eyebrows as she uttered, "Uh... I have until three in the afternoon, she said. What time is it, by the way?" Everyone caught the word 'she', and the three of them knew exactly who they were after. ❶

Xandar's eyes glazed over as he linked Christian, 'I want Helena Tanner arrested.'

'On it, cuz.' Christian immediately conveyed Xandar's order to Chief Dalloway, and he disappeared into his office to assemble a team, give instructions and deploy them.

Lucianne checked her phone and said, "It's one in the afternoon. There's still time. Now, Peter and Beth..."

Before she could finish, Agnes willingly said, "Peter is at work in Gauss Enterprises. Beth is in Pokey Oaks, about a ten-minute drive from Peter's place. I didn't tell him about any of this."

Lucianne nodded in understanding, "Okay, we'll go get them." She turned to Xandar, who gave her a head nod as he linked, 'I've just got Christian to send people to go get them, Lucy.'

When Lucianne's eyes cleared from Xandar's link, she looked at Agnes again and asked, "Is there anything you need while you wait? Food? Or water?"

Agnes shook her head and wrapped her arms around her body. She got lost in thought for a moment before she said in despair, "I just... really need them to be safe, you know?"

Lucianne matched her despair as she whispered, "We all do, Agnes. What's being done to you isn't right."

Agnes's eyes locked with hers again as she said, "If you have Ellia and the others, it means that... you already know who's doing this."

Lucianne gave a small smile and uttered, "We have a good guess but until we hear it from you, Agnes, it's just a gue..."

"Helena Tanner." Agnes said.

Lucianne nodded sadly, "Yeah."

For the next agonizing fifteen minutes, the room was in dead silence, with Agnes taking audible, anxious breaths from time to time. Then, Xandar's eyes glazed over for a moment before a smile graced his features. He walked over to Lucianne and caressed her shoulders lovingly before turning to face Agnes as he said, "We got them, Agnes. Your husband and daughter. They're on their way here."

Agnes let out a sigh of relief, and tears started flowing down her cheeks. The weight she had been carrying from the moment she was threatened is now easing. Lucianne held her hands before locking eyes with her. "You did the right thing, Agnes. You saved your family."

Another fifteen minutes later, there was a knock on the door and Christian held it open before

allowing Peter and Beth into the room. The couple embraced, and Agnes then wrapped her arms around the little girl who called out, "Mommy!"

Everyone else left the room, giving the family some privacy. Outside the interrogation room, Chief Dalloway had bad news. "Tanner is not at her office. Our team at her house couldn't find her there either. We tried contacting her husband and sons but they seem to have vanished. Neither of them turned up for work, and no one has heard from them since yesterday."

Xandar then asked, "Camera footage?"

"Those in their house have been disabled since this morning, my King."

"Anything before that could be helpful?" Christian asked.

"Not that we know as of now, your Grace."

The cousins exchanged worried glances before Xandar asked, "How is the progress with the rogue Lycan?"

"He's being very cooperative, your Highness. But I don't know how much more he knows. There seems to be no end to his knowledge of everything you've asked of him."

If the rogue Lycan could give them everything they needed to know about Wu Bi Corp, there was no need to let the five people from Ellia's list roam free any longer. They had to be arrested and held behind bars before anyone else got hurt. Xandar looked at his mate, who was watching the family reunite without knowing what they were saying.

His hand reached for her waist and he linked her, 'We have the rogue now. We don't need to hold the arrest of those five for corruption any longer. We should detain them before anyone gets hurt.'

Lucianne didn't say anything. With a straight face, she gave a firm nod as her eyes continued to be fixed on the family. Xandar got Christian to give the order. Dalloway, though stunned by the people he was asked to arrest, deployed his teams again.

Xandar pecked a kiss on Lucianne's temple as he linked, 'What's on your mind, baby?'

She shook her head in dismay as she responded to his link, 'This happened because Tanner wasn't arrested earlier. Because I said that we shouldn't touch any of the five yet.' Despite her hardened expression, her glistening eyes betrayed how she was really feeling inside.

"Baby, hey, come here." Xandar pressed her into his chest. Although he didn't hear her sobbing, he felt her tears on his shirt. His heart clenched, and he kissed her hairline before he uttered firmly, "None of this is your fault, Lucy. The plan was to not touch the five to find the sixth party involved. We just found the rogue to get that information. We didn't know Tanner could be arrested earlier."

'Someone could've gotten hurt.'

He parted their bodies and cupped her cheeks, pulling her face up to meet his. As heartbreaking as it was to see his mate's red eyes and tears, he peered into those black orbs he loved with his entire being and said firmly, "But no one got hurt, Lucy. It was a possibility but it's not anymore. Look at them, they're safe. The danger they were in is now gone. Because you saved them. You got Agnes to talk to us. Baby, the crook is Tanner. This is none of your fault. Please, don't blame yourself, my

little freesia. Don't you see they're only safe and relieved now because you got the truth out of her?" 2

Christian was minding his own business on the side until he saw Lucianne's teary eyes, so he started listening to what his cousin was saying to the Queen. When he realized that she was blaming herself for Tanner's threat, he slammed his forehead against the wall at her absurdity. 1

"Christian, are you okay?" Lucianne asked in a hoarse voice when she heard the loud thud from the impact.

Christian groaned softly. He rubbed his forehead for a moment and said, "My Queen, I'm not the one who shielded a child from Oleander, went unconscious for hours, was close to death, woke up drained, and then got the truth out of a victim who was stubbornly confessing to a crime she didn't commit to protect her family. I think I'm quite fine."

Lucianne wasn't expecting that kind of answer and she didn't have a response. Xandar lifted her chin and said, "You're more, Lucy. Much more."

She smiled at him gratefully before leaning into his chest. His arms wrapped protectively around her small body as she took in his scent to calm herself.

'How are you feeling, baby? Any dizziness or headaches?'

'No. Just sleepy.'

Xandar chuckled lightly and said, "We should head back to your place then." She nodded with a small smile.

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When they reached the hotel, Xandar accompanied Lucianne until she was in her room before he felt at ease. After gently lifting her chin up, he kissed her briefly on her lips before he asked nervously in a hushed voice, "Can I sleep here from now on?" ③

Lucianne was surprised, even a little shocked. But given how everybody was indicating that she almost died the previous night, she understood where Xandar was coming from. The corner of her lips curled up, and she stood on her toes to kiss his cheek as she whispered, "I'd like that."

Xandar's tense posture relaxed, and a smile replaced his anxious expression. He pecked a kiss on her forehead before he uttered, "I'm going back to get a few things. I won't be long, I promise. You get ready for bed, okay?"

Lucianne nodded dotingly. After another brief peck on her cheek, Xandar left her room to head back to his villa, where he was going to meet his contractor. For once, his animal was actually happy to leave Lucianne's room, clearly because he wasn't going for that long.

The contractor was already waiting for him when he reached home. Xandar brought the man to the part of the house that he thought could fit the renovation for what he had in mind.

After a forty-five-minute discussion, Xandar finalized the layout, colors and pricing. The contractor said he and his employees only needed about a week to get the project done. After seeing him off, Xandar went to his room to pack a few clothes and grabbed a few files he may need and put them in his car before speeding back to the hotel.

When he was outside Lucianne's room, his Lycan hearing could pick-up that their mate was already asleep from the slow rhythm of her breathing. He thanked Goddess that Lucianne had given him the keycard to the door before he left. He cringed a little when the door beeped, and prayed he didn't wake Lucianne up. Very quietly, he opened the door and entered. What he didn't expect was to see some of the lights still switched on.

He strode quickly and quietly to the bed, and found Lucianne sleeping in an upright position, her head leaning against the headrest with her eyes closed and a book on her lap. Xandar shook his head and chuckled to himself as he muttered under his breath, "Unbelievably amazing."

Very gently, he lifted up the book from her lap and closed it before setting it on her nightstand. Then, very cautiously, he reached for her body with the intention of putting her under the sheets. Upon feeling his touch, Lucianne's eyes snapped open and she took in a sharp breath.

Xandar cooed in a hushed voice, "It's okay, baby. It's just me. Let's get you under the covers."

After tucking her in, she asked Xandar with sleepy eyes, "Can you lie here next to me?"

Both him and his animal were unquestionably surprised at her request. Xandar was happy enough to be able to sleep on her couch every night. He took a good two seconds before he pecked a kiss on her earlobe and whispered, "Anything for you, Lucy. Let me change first, okay? I won't take long."

Lucianne let out a sleepy moan to indicate that she heard him. 'Adorable', Xandar thought to himself as his animal cooed in tenderness.

After setting his backpack on the couch and changing into fresh clothes, he turned off the rest of the lights before slipping under the covers facing his mate's back. One arm went around her waist and the other reached for her hand that was on the pillow slightly above her head.

When Lucianne felt Xandar's touch, she awakened briefly and turned her body to face him before scooching into him, snuggling deeper into his chest. As soon as she felt comfortable in his warm embrace, she fell back into deep sleep.

A stream of happy tears trailed down Xandar's face at this point. He still couldn't fathom how he got so lucky to have been bonded to Lucianne, who was now willingly making her place in his arms. 'Thank you, Moon Goddess', was all he could utter at that moment. He listened to her steady breaths and kissed her hair before muttering, "I love you, my little freesia. Always and forever." Xandar then, too, fell into deep sleep. ②

Xandar woke up a few hours later when he felt Lucianne's body escaping his arms. Instinctively, he tightened his grip around her small body. Lucianne's annoyed voice then rang through his ears, "Xandar, let me go! I have to pee!"

Xandar groaned in frustration with his eyes closed and muttered, "Just do it on the bed, Lucy. I won't judge." ⑤

"Xandar, the toilet is just ten steps away! Let me go!"

He groaned again before releasing her, and lay on his back as he listened to her quickened footsteps speeding towards the bathroom. The door closed with a slightly aggressive thud after she went in. He and his animal were still drowsy, and it took Xandar a moment more to get out of bed for a little stretch.

That sleep was as satisfying as the one he had after the Jewel Pack incident. Lucianne's scent and her very presence always calmed the negative emotions lingering in his being, making it easier for him to doze off.

When he heard the familiar sound of a flushing toilet and water flowing from the sink, he approached the bathroom door and waited for his mate to emerge. When Lucianne came out, Xandar scooped her up without warning, making Lucianne gasp in shock as he carried her to the couch.

Xandar placed her on his lap like he always did. After pecking a few kisses on her face and admiring her blushed cheeks, Xandar buried his nose in her hair as he asked, "How are you feeling, baby?"

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"Better. My legs feel stronger. I might even be able to start training again tomorrow." Lucianne said optimistically.

Xandar's eyes widened in worry, and he locked gaze with her as he said firmly, "Lucy, the doctors told you to take things slow. Please don't push yourself. It's okay to take a few days off, especially after what just happened. Baby, it's okay to put yourself first sometimes."

Lucianne leaned her head into his chest while lifting her legs up one at a time to test their strengths again before she uttered, "I should be alright by tomorrow. If I'm not, I'll just watch them train." Xandar sighed with relief before pecking another kiss on her temple.

She gave him a shy smile as she said, "Thank you for lying with me while I slept."

Xandar's flirtatious gaze met her black orbs as he uttered in his deep voice, "Babe, if you think I only did it because you asked me to, then I must disappoint you. I have wanted to lie next to you since the night we met."

He kissed her nose before continuing, "This mate of yours isn't as selfless as you think, my little freesia. I don't deserve to be thanked, considering that I did it for myself too. And as expected..." he pulled her body closer and said, "I sleep better when I'm with you."

Moved by his words, Lucianne pecked a kiss on his lips only to be trapped in a deep kiss by her yearning mate. Xandar's tongue demanded access, and Lucianne gladly obliged with a soft moan. 'That was the cute moan', Xandar thought, and he and his animal started getting aroused as they waited for the louder 'sexy moan' from their mate.

Xandar didn't have to wait long. Within seconds of the assault of his lips and tongue, along with his hand squeezing along Lucianne's leg up to her thigh, she let out a second moan - the sexy one, which sent Xandar's animal to the edge. The smell of his arousal filled the room, and he started kissing her neck when she ran out of air.

Lucianne tilted her head to the side to give Xandar more access, not at all worried about his long, hardened manhood pressing against her buttocks. She closed her eyes to savor the blissful moment. Her fingers were in his hair, and she clung onto his thick locks as he sucked on the skin of her neck and collarbone.

Every time Xandar sucked her skin deeply, Lucianne let out a moan as she pulled his locks. This made Xandar emit a low, appreciative growl. The sound was dangerous yet alluring, making Lucianne even more aroused.

Xandar's teasing squeezes on her thighs and kisses built up a pleasurable ache in her lower abdomen, and she felt his lips on her neck curl into a smirk when his fingers reached the wet area of her shorts. Unlike the last time, he didn't pull away to tease her. Instead, he sucked on her neck harder as he linked, 'Moan, baby. Moan.'

His husky voice was enough to increase the wetness in her shorts as she let out an even louder moan. Xandar was ecstatic, and his manhood got even harder than it already was. He gave a

gentle squeeze on the cheek of her butt as his lips traced her jawline, and Lucianne moaned in ecstasy and whispered his name.

Xandar's lips moved to her ear. "That's it, baby. Moannn. Let me hear you moannn." His voice and choice of words made her arousing scent rival Xandar's.

Lucianne's arousal was so strong that Xandar's eyes turned onyx with lust. The animal part of him was demanding control, and Xandar knew he had to stop before things got out of hand. Slowly, he stopped his assault on her thighs and buttocks. He then turned the lustful sucking on Lucianne's neck to gentle, affectionate butterfly kisses.

When he reluctantly removed his face from her neck, their eyes locked. Lucianne pecked a kiss on his cheek as she whispered gratefully, "Thank you, for restraining yourself."

Xandar scoffed and kissed the back of her hand before saying, "Lucy, this is not something you need to thank me for. No one should force you against your will. I'm your mate. I'm the first person who needs to honour your wishes." ①

Lucianne's eyes glistened in tears, completely touched, and she leaned in to kiss his jaw before whispering, "I love you, my acacia."

Xandar's animal, which was initially angered that his human part stopped the make-out session, suddenly melted in bliss at Lucianne's words. He then pecked a kiss on her nose before declaring, "I love you too, my little freesia. Always and forever."

His lilac eyes of anticipation fixed on his beautifully-flustered mate as she whispered, "I know. Thank you."

Buzzzz.

Lucianne reached for her phone on the side table as Xandar closed his eyes and ran his fingers through her hair while taking in her scent. Lucianne unlocked her phone and opened up the message she just received. Her body stiffened, making Xandar's sight shift to her screen for a mere second before Lucianne received an incoming call from 'Clement, Alpha'.

She swiped to answer without hesitation and put him on speaker as she continued looking at the photo the Alpha just sent to her. "Alpha Clement." Lucianne acknowledged the caller. Her voice was serious and worried, a complete change of demeanor from a few seconds ago.