

Chapter VIII: The Reveal

An Introductory Note:

Hi everyone, first of all, I'd just like to apologize for the lack of an update last week. I've been very busy with schoolwork so I won't be making anymore guarantees about updating once a week. Just know that I will update this story periodically and that I won't stop working on it until it is finished! You may have also noticed that I've added song(s) in chapters. These correspond to a companion playlist that I am working on (it is on Spotify; the link will be included at the end of this chapter). There isn't a song that goes with this chapter as of now, I may add one later.

This chapter is not as long as I would have liked and if it seems a little rushed, I'm sorry as well. I wanted to get this chapter out as soon as possible but I may re-upload/edit it another time to make sure it passes my standards. Without further ado, here is Chapter VIII.

Giorgio Giovanna is tired. He rarely admits that to himself but today was going to be exhausting. He's barely even stepped into his office and there's already a call from his secretary.

"Mr. Prime Minister? The university students from Insomnia have arrived," she says.

"I'll be there in a sec, *grazie* Enrica," he replies while fixing his tie.

"Of course, *signore*."

He hangs up the phone before sighing. Putting his coat back on, he walks out of his office and makes his way to the South Foyer.

Several minutes later, he arrives at the grand entrance hall of the Government Estate, overlooking an inlet of the Cygillan Ocean. Enrica, his secretary, is already conversing with several of the students. He approaches them composedly, before accidentally bumping into one of them.

"*Scusi!* Didn't see you there," he apologizes, grabbing a book she dropped on the ground.

"It's fine-Oh! *Signor Primo Ministro!* I'm so sorry," she responds before fixing her dress.

"It looks like someone has practiced their *Accordoano* before coming here. What's your name?" he asks.

She blushes before answering, "Anastasia Tella, *signore*. *Accordoano* is such a beautiful language."

"It's not often you hear a Lucian speaking it though..." he thinks aloud. "Well, enjoy Altissia while you're here. I must talk to the other students, *ciao!*"

He walks over to Enrica who is still engrossed in a conversation with another student, clearly from the desert region of Leide.

"Here he comes now," Enrica says, making way for him. "This is Mohammed Adina, *signore*. He is studying cybersecurity at the University of Lestallum."

"Pleased to meet you, Mister Adina," he says, shaking his hand.

"It's a pleasure to meet you too, Mister Prime Minister."

"There are only two students here?" he asks, turning to face Enrica.

"I think the others made it too late. The Royal Guard closed th-"

She is interrupted by the sound of raucous footsteps as a large number of students run towards the entrance of the South Foyer.

"Sorry for our lateness, Mister Prime Minister," a light brown-haired man says, carefully making his way up the steps. "We are students from Blue Lakes University in Lucis," he continues, shaking Giorgio's hand firmly.

"It's a pleasure to meet you all," he responded, masking his shock at the sheer number of students.

"My name is Marco and these two here are Brian and Jai," the student from earlier says, pointing to a relatively short man from Cleigne when compared to the taller Tenebraean standing next to him.

"A pleasure to meet you both," Giorgio replies, shaking their hands. He briefly sneaks a look behind them where many more students wait to be greeted. Sighing internally, he excuses himself, takes a few breaths, and walks towards the rest of the students.

"Yousef Khan, it's nice to meet you, sir!" a dark-skinned student says, shaking Giorgio's hand enthusiastically.

"It's nice to meet you too, Mister Khan. Let me guess... are you from Leide?" he questions, observing the former's unique clothing.

"I am actually from Lestallum, sir! I'm studying..." he corrects, his smile turning to a more neutral expression.

"Ah, I see. I hope you do enjoy your time here in Accordo." Giorgio quickly concludes the awkward conversation and moves on to the next student.

"My name is Anastasia Tumidus, it's a pleasure to meet you, Mister Prime Minister," a student says, her big, walnut brown eyes conveying a smile.

"And what are you studying, Miss Tumidus?" he asks, feigning interest.

"Anesthesiology, sir. I'm here to work on a study with students from the University of Accordo," she explains, pointing towards a U of A booth outside.

"I hope everything goes well."

"Thank you, sir. It was nice to talk to you."

Giorgio notices yet another group of students arriving, Enrica briskly walks towards them and directs them to the film theatre. He mouths a "thank you" before he gets back to shaking hands and pretending to be interested in every student. Today was going to be a long day...

Several kilometers away from *L'Area Governativa*, Nathan and his entourage are on one of Altissia's many gondolas, traveling through its exquisitely-designed canals.

"You think the queen's awake at this hour?" Rhea asks, breaking the silence that lasted for

the last few minutes.

"I believe that if she urgently needed to see Nathan, Her Majesty should most definitely be awake," Domani speculates, looking in the direction of the palace.

"She better be awake, I would rather be with my parents right now than getting killed by them the next time I see them," Vincent jokes, trying to laugh. It ends up being a sputter at most.

Nathan stays quiet, trying not to panic. "Why does she have to meet with me anyway?" he thinks. The beautiful buildings are a welcome distraction, their distinct designs not seen anywhere else, even in Accordo itself.

The rest of the gondola ride is enjoyed in quiet contemplation. Domani thanks the gondolier in Accordoano as Nathan climbs out of the gondola, stretching his legs before having a good look at the abundantly-domed *Palazzo Altemeria*.

"It definitely has an interesting design..." he thinks out loud. Noticing that a few people were staring at him, he turns away, looking towards his friends instead.

"I have only ever been inside it once. It was when I was very young so I'm afraid I can't specifically tell you how it looks on the inside," Domani informs, he proceeds to check his watch.

"Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go!" Rhea shouts, attracting the attention of the palace guards.

"Uh oh..." Vincent whispers, quickly fixing his tie. He looks at Domani expectantly.

"Your Highness! What brings you to *Altemeria*?" a muscular guard asks Domani, after bowing. Nathan is quick to notice the guard's uniform, it bears the Accordoan Medal of Valor. "Guess those history lessons are useful after all," he reckons.

"We are here to see Her Majesty. She has requested the presence of Mister Ashwolf and we are here to accompany him," he explains, looking in Nathan's direction.

"Mister Ashwolf... ah! Yes, I do recall his name now. Please follow me," the guard replies, directing them to a secluded side entrance.

They pass through a series of security tests successfully and are ushered into a lavish waiting room. It's hard to take it all in and Nathan can clearly see that his friends are feeling the same way he is, except for Domani of course.

"I'm surprised that they failed to confiscate my *cinquedea*," Domani says, pulling out a long dagger-like weapon.

"Why would you bring that in here?!" Rhea shouts, this time careful to keep her voice quieter than last time.

"I always have it on me in case something happens. Better be prepared especially now that the Empire has increased its presence..." he trails off as he spots someone through a window.

"Speak of the Infernian, there goes an Imperial..." he whispers, subtly pointing towards a person wearing Niflheiman armor. He carefully holsters his weapon.

"What are they doing here?" Nathan asks, cringing. "I thought they were banned from entering Altissia?"

"I heard there were rumors that our treaty with them was to be amended. I suppose those rumors are true," Domani says, keeping a close watch on the Imperial soldier.

A knock at the door interrupts their concentration. Vincent rushes to the door and cautiously opens it, revealing an aging man with gray hair and green eyes. He's slightly taller than Domani who's already taller than the rest of the group. Walking into the room with the help of an intricate black cane, he surveys each of them before settling his eyes on Nathan.

"You look just like your mother," he observes, his lips curving into a slight smile.

"Your Majesty!" Domani gasps, immediately bowing politely. The rest of them follow suit with Nathan being the last to do so.

"It is a pleasure to meet you all. I am here to see Mister Ashwolf although I suppose you can all stay here if he permits it."

Nathan nods slowly, still recovering from the fact that the King of Lucis was standing before them.

"Your mother... she was from Galahd, wasn't she?"

Nathan nods again, even though it seems that the king already knows the answer.

"She was not just an ordinary citizen of Lucis. She was the Archduchess of Galahd before Lucis annexed it."

Nathan looks at the king directly for the first time, not fully understanding what he means.

He seems to have understood Nathan's confusion and continues, "Which means that you are to return to Lucis to assume your title as Archduke of Galahd as soon as Princess Caelia becomes queen whereupon Galahd will become independent."

He pauses, letting Nathan digest the information.

"I know that this was not how you planned your life to be but well... destiny has other plans," the king's face distorts into what Nathan can only assume is sorrow.

"This was your mother's wish and they are set in stone with the treaty between the Allied Forces and Niflheim. There is nothing I can do." The king looks genuinely sorry while resolutely keeping his eyes on Nathan.

"I... I need a few moments, Your Majesty," Nathan says, finally able to respond.

"Please, call me Regis. It's the least I can do. I shall leave you for now but I hope to see you at the coronation."

King Regis leaves without another word. The door closes with a resounding echo as tears stream down Nathan's face.

A Closing Note:

A lot of my friends/readers were included in the beginning portion of this story as a sort of "thank you". Thank you for sticking around with me and thank you for reading this story. As I said in the beginning, I'm not completely happy with this chapter so I may re-upload/edit this at a later date. Be on the lookout in case that does happen!

For now, I'll be going to sleep as it's really late here and I have school tomorrow which is another reason why this chapter isn't as good as I hoped it would be. Hopefully I'll be able to add more detail to it and actually add some coherence with the beginning portion and the rest of the story.

See you guys next time!