

Released

Content Tags: identity loss, memory loss, mourning, unreality

Character tags: Landry Violence, Persephone, Yazmin Mason, Famous Owens

ILB player's contract written by Stara

Excerpt from the Phlegethon Press circa Season 10, post-election day:

An out to Be Celebrated

Tidings of the election, as a result of day X, the front office of the Internet League Blaseball announced in a press release the completion of deals and subsequent releases of the following players and legends of the league...

Landry Violence has been released.

Landry looked at Persephone through the flames. His contract burning up on her desk page by page. They were sat in silence. He was trying to read her face but regardless of how long they'd known each other, Persephone remained unreadable. At most her hands would shake but it was impossible to deduce her emotional state from that alone.

"Afraid you'll miss me?" Landry attempted levity. Persephone blinked her pose loosening with a long sigh. "No, I'd made my peace with that." She deadpans, her voice low and devoid of the inherent grandeur that normally unsettled the players she spoke to.

Persephone turned in her high back chair to look out the window, the large burgundy cloud coursing with red lightning still lingered over the stadium. Landry followed her gaze back and forth before the connection sparked in his head, "Nostalgic?".

Persephone appeared to consider the word, "Perhaps." She turned back to Landry, her eyes inspecting his features as they rippled in the heat of the flames rendering the last pages of the contract to ash.

"I don't remember the last time you were not Violence." Her voice dropped as if lost in memory. "Yeah me neither." Landry took a deep breath, "It feels new."

"What will you be doing?" Persephone waved her hand, a light breeze scattering the few ashes left off her desk. "I'm not sure." Landry looked into the cloud again, "Settle down as a civilian, try not to miss the wood of a bat. Maybe pick up fishing, I hear it's a fulfilling hobby to pass the time with."

Persephone's eyes narrow as Landry stood back up. "You're waiting for him." She said simply, reading through the infernal's facade of a smile. Landry looked down briefly, marking a pause at the open doorway. His left hand slid up to the ring hanging from the silver chain around his neck. It clinks lightly against his own championship ring as he grasps it. "Always, Percy... Always. You know how it is." He simply says, smiling to an old friend as the door shuts on him.

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Excerpt from the ILB player's contract:

The Player's term is indefinite, and will remain assigned to the Club even when Incinerated or Returned to the Void, regardless of siestas. There may be the potential for a player to withdraw from Play only under the two following circumstances:

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Yazmin Mason has been released.

Yaz tripped on a willow root that pierced the soft mud of the river bank she steadied herself to keep running by catching a low looming branch, stripping the lightly translucent 'bark' and causing crimson red sap to bleed out of the tree and into her footprints behind her. The bank of the Lethe was as risky as its contents, if only because it could lead you to fall into said flow. Something Yaz wouldn't be half upset to have happen. But no, it had to be done correctly.

"Famous!" Her voice was frayed, harried, out of breath. The shapeshifter turned to greet her as she stumbled through the weeping willow leaves. "Yazmin darling, you shouldn't be here." Famous smiled, the upper half of their face was hidden behind a half mask resembling a raven's head, the beak extending far out in front of their face. Their pose was relaxed and, under their coat of faces, they were wearing a hideous Hawaiian shirt open at the top like they were on a beach holiday. Their voice spoke with no urgency, or concern, it flowed easy and slick out of their lips in a way that never failed to irritate her.

"Cut the shit, Famous." Yaz tried not to give in to Famous' game, panting and catching her breath, "I'm here for a favour.". Famous tilted their head, slick strands of hair falling out of order onto their mask, "Oh a favour? Give me a moment to think, darling, but I appreciate the dedication just to offer-".

"Owens! I said cut the shit." Yaz, stood fully up, taking a deep breath to finally steady her breathing. Famous tilted their head to the opposite side, the surface of the mask seemed to bristle slightly as they laid eyes on Yaz properly.

"I'm here to ask you a favour." Yaz said, taking a step and sinking to half of her trainers into the mud. Famous' expression stilled -what of it she could see anyway- and the demon straightened their head in understanding, "No.".

Famous took a light step back, disguising it as shifting their weight. "Oh come on, Famous, you don't even know-" Yaz took another step and was stopped when Famous raised a finger, interrupting her. "You don't know what you're asking, darling." Famous' voice wavered but remained slick with the aspects that made them unbearable to extended company.

"I do know. And I want- I need it." Yaz pressed on, stepping past the hand and forcing Famous to step back to maintain the distance. "I talked with P and-" Yaz kept trying to press the space but she slipped on the slick mud of the bank. Too tired from the racing over, she braced for falling into the mud face first and closed her eyes.

Except she didn't fall into the mud but Famous' arms instead, as they rushed to close the space and catch her. "You're clearly agitated, let's get you ho-" they attempted, their facade cracking and voice losing its irritating qualities as they attempted to reason with her. On the ground, a few feathers of the mask had fallen.

"Don't you dare." Her voice was cutting, her gaze even moreso. "I don't know what that is anymore, Famous. The last time I was here, we'd lost all of that." She inhaled, "Look you may have moved on since then but I didn't get to. I died, I was *killed*. And the next thing I know, I'm staring down the Nut with only a bat and a glove in my hands. And now I'm just supposed to go back like congratulations, Yaz, you got out." Yaz dropped, sitting down into the mud, much to Famous' displeasure. She was staring a thousand yards into the river. "And then I'm supposed to watch from the sidelines, while you all have to do it all over again." Her voice sunk low. Famous squatted down next to her, "You don't have to watch." This was why they didn't do emotional availability. They were bad at it. Being a bastard was a lot easier.

On the ground, feathers of the mask had fallen.

"How do you expect me to do that. All my friends play, *Zion* plays, all my life was about playing even after I died, I arrived her with nothing but the game- *because* of the game. I can't just therapy that away." Yaz raised her eyes to stare into Famous', they were grey today. "I want a clean slate, Famous. I want to forget."

Famous stood up, "I said no." Their voice had lost all affect, they were genuine for maybe the first time Yaz had ever heard them be. "I know you do it for others, Famous. Hell, you're not subtle about it." She pointed to their coat. "That is different! Think about what you are leaving behind, think about Paula, the co-op, Zion-" Famous interrupted themselves when they saw the light in Yaz' eyes, she cocked a brow. "How do *you* know I help at Paula's co-op?" Famous took a step back. "Zion mentioned it." It was a lie and, normally, Famous was a lot better at lying. Yaz didn't say anything, she knew they knew they were found out and the silence spoke louder to expose the bad lie than anything she could have said. On the ground, feathers had fallen.

"Why is it different than with anyone else?" Her voice was calmer, like she knew she had them but wasn't pressing her advantage. Famous' shoulders slumped, "They're... strangers. It's... not... because..." The words felt foreign to their mouth. "Because you won't forget me." She said for them and ever so slightly, quietly, they nodded.

"Have you talked to Zion?" They asked simply. "She doesn't like it. But she understands. She said goodbye to me when I burned. All she asked for is that I don't tell her when I do it." Yaz

had thought it all through. Ever since Persephone mentioned the possibility over the flames of her contract.

On the ground, feathers fell.

Yaz could see beyond the mask now, how Famous' eyes shone like the surface of the river. Their expressions, often disguised behind a mask or a smug grin, read clear as day to her now. "Are you sure?" Their voice almost wavered. "Yes." She was.

Famous approached her now. "You won't remember this. Or me, or Zion." Yaz nodded, she knew that already, that's what she'd sought after instead of just taking a dunk into the Lethe. It had to be done properly.

Famous' arms wrapped around Yaz' shoulders, pulling her into a rare embrace. "I will miss you." She barely heard their voice. She thought forgetting would feel like something missing, like she would see memories fade into echoes of dreams but as Famous pulled away, the faceless once known as Yazmin Mason had forgotten. They stared blankly ahead, skin reforming around the eyes already but they couldn't see yet. They wouldn't until their new face would be fully bloomed. A face only Famous Owens would remember. "I will miss you, my friend." They repeated, holding the face they had taken in one hand up against their heart. When they pulled it away, through the opening of a hideous hawaiian shirt, was a tattoo of a deer skull with one broken antler.

On the ground, tears fell.