

Seven candles are lit in the room Paschur uses as an office in The Beehive. He's been catching up on nearly a month of missed managerial duties. Thankfully, his staff knew enough of business operations to get by this long without him, even if they were stressed from the added responsibilities.

He toys with the beaded bracelet on his left wrist. Carefully, he manipulates it around his claw and sets it on the desk.

The Cleric thinks back on what happened and decides to talk himself through it. Maybe hearing the words will make the thoughts more clear.

“She told me she needed to get back, that she had a plan to leave. She asked me not to say anything, not to lie but simply not to share this information. That's reasonable, information has a price.”

He uses a single taloned digit to gently swirl the bracelet around on the surface of his desk.

“She asked me to gamble. I was caught up in everything else, but thought that I should make the time to indulge her vice. She even got Zubi in on it, teaching him to play. Watching he show someone a knew skill was.... Well, I didn't cry or make a scene, but I was so proud of her. I should have tried harder to lose tho. What if that was her way of asking for just a little bit of help to make sure she could eat or have a room at an inn? I know she'll be fine, but I hate thinking I was too blind to see her trying so hard to ask for help without asking, trying to keep her mask in place and keep anyone from noticing what she was doing. I should have seen through it, I should have known better.”

With two talons this time, he moves from the bracelet to the candles. He snuffs one out, six remain.

“She gave her bracelet to Zubi. It took me bloody forever to make that thing. I'm not meant to create, to craft. But I tried. I put so much effort into giving her something that she could see as a physical connection to me. To a family she felt she was missing. I hope it was because she was trying to tell me to protect Zubi and not because she thought I was giving up on her or abandoning her.”

Two candles snuffed, five remaining.

“Now The Beehive has a new mascot in Zubi, and Calder has the start of a new Pack with this child. Wolfie will probably be leaving soon too now. I can't blame them. Staying at The Beehive forever can't be their goal, just a convenient spot to be while waiting for the next part of life.”

Three candles snuffed, four remaining.

“I missed the end of the conclave. As far as I know, there's still time. He's not dead yet, he's not dead until I see a corpse. I can still see the thread of fate, so he... he can't be dead yet.”

He looks to the bracelet again, thinking about the necklace he had given to The Traveler. The necklace he gave when he knew he'd met someone he actually wanted to marry, not just a convenient body. Not just someone powerful that could protect him. He lifts his bracelet, considering tossing it into his fireplace. He winds back his claw, ready to launch it.

“Why do I keep making these awful trinkets? They don't protect anyone. They're terribly crafted. They'll only serve to... decorate a memorial someday.”

He lowers his claw, pulls open a drawer in the desk, and deposits the bracelet there.

Four candles snuffed, 3 remaining.

“Subversion of stolen power is what is truly important. Out of all the advice, this was unexpected. Especially from Them. How maddening a world this is.”

Six candles snuffed, one remaining.

“Power. *I* never had power. Not until **We** did what **We** did. *I* don't always understand if it even was **We** who did it or just something *I* had to do. The fog, The Delusion keeps me from knowing fully. It's what's driven me to hunt the truth. *I* am this way because **We** made us this way.”

Seven candles snuffed.