born lucky // lucky to be born

Summary

She is Azula. She is powerful.

Azula always lies.

Azula is crying, tears flowing down her four year old face. Zuko hovers uncertainly over her, golden eyes wide with worry. There is a scrape on her leg, bleeding a bit, the cause of her distress. Father is nowhere to be found, as usual, and their mother is muttering curses as she tries to wrap it up in gauze. Azula just cries a bit harder at her mother's displeasure, stiff, causing her to scowl, just a bit, saying something about ozai and spoiling under her breath. After the wound is covered, their mom rushes off, leaving zuko to calm the still crying child down.

“Does mom hate me?” Azula's eyes look up, full of odd acceptance, calm, monotone, as if all of those tears were simply an illusion. They were. She wanted to test if her mother cared, loved her, hated her, feared her.

“S-she doesn't..” oh, and how tragic it is, that she does, in reality, pushing the blame onto her for her husband's misdeeds, spite and anger making her nauseous just to look at her child, always favoring the less loved of the two, zuko, over her, and blaming azula for the lack of love in his life, for she ate
“Then, why?” The prince was at a lost of what to say, eyes sad as he gazed upon her, her calm, curious expression cracking, just a bit. How could he explain something he didn't even entirely understand?

“I don't know.. maybe you just need to get her attention?” He tried, tentatively, and she thought. Yeah, maybe she just needed to do something to get her attention.

oh, and how she did. She decided, she'd make them look at her, be perfect for her mother, please her father. Make them notice her.

And so she kills a rabbit.

It was zuko's rabbit, she doesn't know why, why she chose his, but she did. Later in life, she'll realize it was because she resented him, despite all he did, because her mother loved him more, and as much as she wished it didn't, it stung. Even later in life she'll say without hesitation that she hates zuko. At this point he would say he loved her.

Even later he'd just look sad.

But that's then, this is now, with a shaky grip on a knife, pressed against the bunnies fragile neck, as it squirmed. There was something a bit exhilarating in holding someone's life in her hand, even if it was just a bunny, and she finds a humorless laugh escapes her.

She does it again.

And again.

And againagainagain— laughing, laughing, crying, the girl continues to hack up her brothers bunny.

She's still shaking.

Her father praises her. Her mother looks disgusted.

She wants to run up and shake her, screaming, I did this for you, I did this for you, look at me! But she doesn't, instead smiles a smile of perfection, crafted after nights and nights of staring in the mirror, unhappy with what she sees. It wasn't fair, zuko got all the love, all the attention, and he didn't even realize it. He got the pure love of their mother, she got the twisted one of her dad.

Her dad always said she was born lucky. She didn't believe that. Everything she did, everything she got, was because she fought for it, because she didn't hesitate to destroy the others around her if it got her what she wanted. She worked for what she had; fought tooth and nail for any kind of love. Luck had nothing to do with it.
She clung to it, any love. Any fear. Any feeling people showed her. Because that meant they were looking. And every time her father praised her, better than zuko, she glowed. She was better than him. She was better than him. One day, mother would see that, would stop looking at her as if she was a monster. She was better than him, because she had to be.

She is bitter, she is fierce, and she is unremorseful. Her mother hates her. Good, she thinks.

The first time she burns zuko it is a accident. She is three, barely walking, yet breathing in and out fire as if it was air. A natural, prodigy, they call her. Zuko is five, thumbling, hardly even getting a spark. She is perfect; expected to be, and he is barely passing. Sometimes she envies that. Clumsy, he trips, into her stream of fire, and she stops, concern creasing into her like a curse, zuzu, are you okay?

Her father scolds her for stopping; she should have kept going, not indulged her brothers weakness. Next time her falls, though she trembles, she resists the urge to stop her flame. Her father praises her.

Eventually, she starts burning him on purpose. She gets more praise. Her mom hates her, almost as much as she hates herself. She smiles. She hates zuko, it was his fault. She smiles. Why did mother love him, and not her? She starts burning him on purpose. She laughs as he cries.

She doesn't know what she wants, she doesn't know what she's trying to do, and there's a gnawing pain in her stomach. She ignores it, instead teasing zuko with a smile pulling on her lips. Only when she's causing his pain does she feel truly happy.

She meets mai and ty lee, and they become a trio, of sorts. It was innocent enough, maybe, at first, despite the sometimes cruel pranks they pulled on her brother, ty lee's giggles and mais stone face intriguing her, the praises and cold indifference so different from her mother's disapproving looks and her father's high expectations. But Azula is small, and Azusa is afraid, so when ty lee's lips meet her own, she pushes away, insults streaming out of her as she scowled.

The next day ty lee left for the circus, and Azula growled, thinking what a freak.

She pretends that it doesn't hurt.
She is azula. She is powerful.

She's not supposed to sob in the night, that's something pathetic zuzu—she spits the once affectionate name out like an insult, now—would do, and she's better than him.

So she's not crying, she's not, she thinks, as she bites into her hand and screams.

She wonders, for a moment, if anyone would come to check on her. There was no doubt that someone heard, no doubt, and for a moment, ever so fleeting, she wonders if anyone will care enough to check on her.

Nobody came.

Azula lies, it a well known fact, she bends the truth a bit to get what she wants, she always lies. She doesn't like lying.

Truths hurt more than lies, though, she knows, and so she lies, lies, lies, to herself, saying that father loves her, she's better than zuko, fear was the only way.

Azula always lies.

Her father is going to kill him. There's dread in her stomach, so she tells him. It comes out as a taunt, a smile playing on her lips, but there is fear there. She doesn't know what she'd do without him, she's model her entire life around him, around being better than him. So she tells him. She shouldn't, telling him is basically warning him and warning him is treason, but she can't help it. She makes sure he runs away crying. Good, she thinks, now you know the truth hurts more than lies, zuzu.

Her mother disappears. She hates everything.

She smiles as her brothers face is scarred, his screams echoing through the room.

And then he is banished, leaving on an impossible quest to capture the avatar, probably never to be seen again, as punishment for not fighting back. He's always been the weak one.

She doesn't miss him. She doesn't. She doesn't.
She hates him. Mai has been moodier than normal. Ty lee has left. She hates him. They should fear her.

That's the only way to get people to stay.

They would all fear her, respect her, adore her.

No one loved her. But they feared her. And, what was the difference, at this point? Fear was the closest thing she had.

She makes mai and ty lee come back, manipulation used with a sweet smile. Ty lee is loyal, still, adoring. She hates that look on her face, that smile, so she bites into her lip and ty lee whimpers. She'll fear her, because fear was better than love, fear was certain, something she always had, something she knew how to handle.

Love was not.

They betray her. It's a ridiculous thought, that the girls she broke most, fire dancing at their feet whenever they dare disobey, framed as if it was something sweet, would dare betray her. It hurts. It shouldn't, but it does, as all she has built falls down on to her, as she is betrayed not just by her once friends, but by every lesson her father has taught her, every trauma her empire was made.

And she hates this, this weakness, this vulnerable feeling, this hurt.

She is Azula. She is powerful.

Azula always lies.

She will be fire lord, after all these years, she'll finally be fire lord. She laughs. Everyone will bow to her, submit to her. Her mother mocks her from the mirror.

It is the last Agni Kai. She loses.
She is azula, and she is weak.

She was born lucky. Her dad always said that. She always wanted to scoff at it, everything she did she did herself, or so she believed. But maybe there was some truth to her father's words. Because, after all, *luck always runs out.*

She was born lucky, but she was never lucky to be born.

And that, maybe, was her downfall.

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