



22 22- Support System

Phoenix: 1

"We don't need to worship him, Alpha Blake."

I paused and let that sink in, "But we do it smartly. No desperation, no weak position. We host, we lead. We are allies, but we control the decisions regarding our pack."

There was a moment of silence, but it wasn't awkward. All those who were sitting there seemed impressed.

Along with others, I turned my head when Kiara chimed in, "He is the king!" she smirked, "Don't you think with this stupid '*no desperation*' and '*no weak*' position analogy we can end up looking like fools? If we make him stay in one of our best quarters, assign him some of our beautiful slaves, and make him happy, then he might donate us... a big chunk. Moreover..."

Now, why do I detect that smug streak in her voice?

Seriously? Are we after his donations?



"We'll talk about everyone's suggestion later," I cut in with a polite smile, turning just enough to meet her eyes, "For now, let's stay on track."

She blinked, clearly not expecting it. She was there in the meeting because we both were competing for the head warrior role.

This room only had top-ranking officials, and no lower-ranked person was allowed inside.

Alpha Blake cleared his throat, "That's what I like about you, Phoenix. You are tough and clever— a rare combo."

"So he praised you, and that's why you're happy?" Jal asked me and tossed his stethoscope on the table.

"Why? Is it something bad?" I asked him while playing with his access badge.

I came to the hospital straight after the official meeting and was now sitting in his office, in his chair, telling him about Kiara's bitchiness and Alpha Blake's praise.

"No. Praising isn't bad," he sat across me, "But don't depend on other people's opinions, Phoenix," he stretched and then yawned loudly,



"Any movie plans?"

This was the best thing about him. No dragging. No nose poking. Just enough advice and moving on.

He was a perfect guy.

"You haven't found your mate," the remark was out of my mouth before I could stop myself. Horrified, I covered my mouth with my palm, "I'm such a monster. Forgive me, Jai."

But he was already shaking his head with a chuckle, "Don't worry. No, I haven't found my mate. Now stop worrying about my nonexistent mate and let's go to watch a movie." 1

Sitting in his chair, I almost freaked out, "A public place? No. I can't bear this mask for another hour," I pointed to my face.

When normal she-wolves felt relaxed after getting rid of their undergarments before going to bed. I had to worry about my mask, too.

It was torture to use the mask, especially when it was too hot outside and I had to train beside other she-wolves.

We ended up grabbing a quick dinner instead—just some spicy fries, wings, and soda from a



diner near the hospital.

On our way back, I kept teasing him about the waitress who served us.

"She kept smiling at you like you were a dessert," I nudged him with my elbow, and he gave me a gentle push.

"Why, Dr. Jai? Didn't you like her?"

Jai gave me a warning glare, "Phoenix! She asked YOU if you wanted extra sauce. Not me."

The poor guy was being defensive, but I didn't want to let it go. After all, how would I call myself his friend when I couldn't pull his leg?

"Yeah. Extra sauce was for me. But she kept looking at you..." I grinned, dragging him aside near the footpath.

He walked me to my room in the warrior's block, "You're coming in, right?" I asked him, "You must be tired and need a good rest. Why walk back to your place when you can stay here?"

He was about to unlock the door for me when he paused, "Sweetheart. I think I should head back —" 1

"But it's your day off tomorrow," I cut him off,



"No excuses this time."

He raised his hand to look at the ceiling and closed his eyes, "Phoenix!"

I made a pout and then slapped his arm, "What? Are you spending the night with someone else?" I wiggled my brows playfully, and he rolled his eyes.

"Shut up!" he gritted his teeth and snatched the keys back. I had seen that smile on his face, which he was trying hard to hide.

Wahoo! He was staying!

Most nights, we'd just throw on a movie, stretch out on the couch, and talk until we both crashed. Nothing serious.

Just cozy.

And tonight it wasn't meant to be any different. I turned away to collect the official mail from the box that was mounted on the wall, right across my room.

I heard him flicking on the lights, and then a loud crack echoed in the room, and I spun around just in time to see Jai stumble... then fall.

"Are you kidding? What kind of joke is it?" I



asked him laughingly. But when he didn't move, I screamed, "Jai!"

I was horrified when I saw the blood pooling around his head.

I stood frozen for a second, trying to process what had just happened, until my eyes caught the movement.

A dark figure slipped out through the window in the corner.

I wanted to chase after him, scream, or maybe shift to my wolf if it was possible.

But I couldn't leave Jai like this.

I dropped beside him, my hands trembling as I touched his cold cheek, "Jai! Please open your eyes..." I then looked around and shouted with all my might, "Somebody please help!"

The doors in the corridor started banging against the walls. Help was coming.

"Jai!" I cried, "Stay with me. Please."

And at that moment, I realized that he was the only family I had.

He was the only one in my life whom I could rely on.



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He was my only support system.

And someone just tried to sabotage my support system.

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