

## Chosen 421

### Chapter 421 My! How the Tables have Turned

The cracks were now quite pronounced and spread out to the distant front of the steep escarpments which was where the prince was supposed to be going. Further ahead, it looked as though the Mountain pass would cave in at any moment, however, this was not the same for the back of the gorge.

Coincidentally, Drake was standing at the centre of this chaos, his destination riddled with uncertainty, yet the start of the gorge still looked perfectly safe.

Looking back, the prince could see that he'd already run a decent distance, however, it was nothing compared to what he had left to travel. 'Is there some other way to cross the mountains without going around them? That trip would be far too long and I'm sure my speed devil of a sister could make it in much less time than I ever could...'

"Ugh, why do you have to be such a worthy adversary, Lina?" he screamed internally. To the standby observer, this large black and white wolf was howling in frustration.

The wolf hung its head low to the ground in desperate thought, but his decision was soon made for him as a low groaning sound made it to his keen sense of hearing. 'I just had to open my big mouth...'

One more crack but this time in the direction he just come was enough for him to tell him that the Mountain pass was completely unsafe. As if confirming his conclusion, the mountain groaned with more cracks riddling the two walls of the crumbling gorge... It was coming down.

The prince turned on his heels, "Why now of all times... you've been standing for centuries... Oh, goddess of the moon that lights up the night sky, I was not meant to die like this... My Little Sister will think she's better than me."

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"Wyatt, wake up... it's time to go. For goddess's sake, you sleep like a log," Crysta shook the alpha awake, trying to understand how one werewolf could sleep so much. It was the third time she was trying to wake him up in the same morning. After having tried to wake him up twice before sunrise.

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The sun was now out and clearly telling them how late they were. The two tents belonging to the princess and the delta had been neatly packed, but without being able to wake the alpha, it was impossible for them to work on packing his tent.

"Out of the way, Crysta," Lina growled furiously. The delta looked back and saw her friend walking up to her with a mischievous grin. There was a slight twitch in Royal's eye which made her look borderline insane and in her hand, she held one of their water cans... The same water cans that were supposed to sustain them till they got to the creek.

"No, Lina, we need that water. Him, most of all," Crysta tried.

"We'll get more water when we reach the stream. He, on the other hand, is wasting far more time than we can spare," Lina replied, trying to push past her friend and spill water on the sleeping alpha.

“We have to be smart about this, Lina. We don’t know what the future holds. What happens when one of us gets injured and we can’t make it to the stream as fast as you expect us to do?” the delta suddenly asked. It was a plausible scenario.

“No, that won’t be happening,” the Royal growled stubbornly, “Because we will make it to the finish line before my big brother and this one measly alpha won’t slow us down any more than...”

“Lina, if it was Bree, would you do the same?” Crysta interrupted the rampaging Royal. Surprisingly, the princess wasn’t forcing her way past her friend and the thought that she was holding back only lightly crossed Crysta’s mind.

This statement, however, had a negative effect, “Bree knew what we were doing when we came on this journey. She would have woken up before I did and we would have already started our journey. In terms of consistency, she would be a much better travel companion,” Lina fumed.

“But she’s not here now and it’s because she knew we would do better with him than we could with her...”

“Did she though? When we set off, none of us thought he prove weaker than you are. In fact, he made it seem like he was stronger than you,” Lina argued, “At this rate, the colour of his eyes could be nothing but a fluke.”

“Hearing that coming from you, of all people. My, how the tables have turned? How the might have fallen?” a male voice interrupted the quarrelling females.

Wyatt was standing with both backpacks assigned to him slung over his shoulders and the tent he’d been sleeping in already packed, “Maybe you would try to think of the weight of carrying these bags. I am not exactly running empty-handed here.”

“Can you feel the weight of the bags when you shift?” Crysta was suddenly curious. It’s not like she knew what it was like to have your belongings stay with you after a shift.

“Yes, yes, I can. And running with them for three-hour periods is even worse,” the man replied with a yawn, “Now can we get going?”

Lina sighed and turned to the alpha, “I’m sorry for everything you just heard. I just don’t want to lose to my dorky brother. I can already imagine the grin on his face when he finally says... ‘You still have a little way to go, Little Sister.’”

Chuckling, “I don’t consider him the type to brag. Although I see no shame in losing to your brother. He’s tough to beat. In the last Royal games, he was able to go head-to-head with Cole Lycaon, the one people nicknamed The Impervious tank back in the day. So don’t get yourself too worked up,” Wyatt spoke up, seemingly unbothered by the insults that had been indirectly hurled at him during the girls’ argument.

“I guess you’re right about that, but...” Lina balled her fists, “I’ll be the one going against Cole this year. All you’ve said would be true if I hadn’t worked so hard to make myself powerful enough to face my brother. I can’t lose to him. I refuse to lose to him.”

The princess walked up to Wyatt and yanked a bag from one of his shoulders, slinging it over hers before shifting, “You better run like losing will kill you... because if it doesn’t, I just might.”

During Lina's conversation with Wyatt, Crysta hid behind a tree and changed out of her clothes before shifting. The tone in Lina's voice sent shivers down her spine. The Trials were getting Lina more worked up than the delta had ever seen her... ever.

She didn't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing... to see Lina want to win something so badly. 'Could there be something Lina hasn't told me yet?'

Wyatt being the only one left in human form was tasked with packing Crysta's clothes before shifting into his black wolf himself.

In a few minutes, they were running again with Crysta leading the way.

#### Chapter 422 Fear and Panic

The steep sides of the mountain corridor had ceased their indecisive groaning and were now letting loose rocks of all sizes, including boulders down upon anything that dared to cross the gap between them.

This, unfortunately, included Drake. The wolf dashed back in the direction he came, fear coursing through his body, 'This mountain pass is more than ten times my father's age. Why now? I should have run as soon as the gorge started grumbling... What was I thinking standing around?' the prince mentally yelled. His wolf took the reins and got a hold of his muscles completely against the prince's permission.

This wasn't to make him run faster as he'd thought though... The black wolf suddenly jerked to the left and at the last possible moment as well.

For a giant boulder the size of a bison crushed in the position, he would have been had it not been for his wolf's agile reaction. Drake allowed himself a second of shock before resuming his mad dash. The gorge wasn't letting down mere pebbles anymore and the distraction and rumblings of the crumbling wall were now exponentially louder.

"I guess you're done bluffing, huh, Sirius mountains... How dare you try to kill your namesake!" another bison-sized boulder hushed the prince's rambling thoughts. He had to focus on saving his hide.

Drake dashed across the stone floor of the gorge, disregarding the aching pain in his paws each time he struck the hard ground. He thought for sure the bones in his paws would shatter at the sheer continuous impact, but thankfully, his paws held firm, despite the throbbing pain as he dashed for the exit.

Without his consent, his muscles tightened once more, ruining his fluid running. The black and white wolf planted his paws firmly on the ground in a desperate effort to bring himself to a stop.

When he had just stopped, he quickly darted to the right, dodging another falling rock that had nearly crushed him. This one was nearly the size of a house and he understood that simply weaving to the right while at top speed wouldn't have gotten him clear of the boulder. 'How does my wolf know when to dodge... Never mind, I'm barely alive as it is...' this time his thoughts sounded more like a desperate cry for help...

'If it was Little Sister in this situation, she would have made it to the other side by now... but no, it had to be me getting stuck in the middle of a crumbling gorge, not that I would want Little Sister to get trapped in

a crumbling gorge... Why did this have to happen to me anyway? I used this pass the last time without any problem...'

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Drake was almost sure he heard his wolf growl within his head... but dismissed it as effects of the fear of death that was currently ensnaring his entire being.

The prince felt like retreating to the back of his mind and letting his wolf handle everything. He had dodged two boulders... Two boulders that were large enough to kill him, but he wasn't nearly as close to getting out of the Mountain pass either.

A loud deafening crash stopped his thoughts and sent shivers down his wolf spine. A boulder the size of a house had just crushed far in front of him, completely closing off the path he was headed in. Now he was sure of what his wolf had actually been trying to dodge when he stopped abruptly.

This sudden development, however, only put him in more danger. The prince shifted into his human form and searched for a spot on the large boulder to act as a foothold for him to climb.

Turning back was not an option and staying put would be a sure way of committing suicide. The instinctual fear within him was slowly turning into panic Drake took hold of the side of the rock before him and began to climb. He feared so much for his life that he didn't notice he cracked the rock under the pressure of his grip.

Surprisingly quickly, he made it to the other side of the large boulder and shifted into his wolf form even before hitting the ground and as soon as he did, he was bolting as fast as his Royal paws could manage. This time, his wolf worked in his favour and quickly supplied the prince's limbs with all the support it could from the extra divine energy Royals possessed.

Drake didn't have the time or focus to notice how fast he was running. He simply wanted to get out of danger. Without realising it, the white and black wolf darted out of the corridor at a high speed that gradually turned him into a blur, leaving a divine blue streak in his path.

The moment he was out of the corridor, he collapsed, rolling several times on the moist loam bordering the forest at the gorge's exit. Without putting much thought into properly braking, he tripped the moment he tried and violently rolled towards the trees, crashing right through the first tree he rammed into at the forest tree line with a massive force. He went right through it and slammed into another under the cover of the forest.

This crash, however, was nothing in comparison to the loud roar that came from the collapsing gorge. Drake, feeling sore, raised his head in time to see everything he'd staked his hopes on winning, crumbling before his eyes.

The whole Mountain pass was getting destroyed right before his eyes and there was nothing he could do about it. Soon, it would be nothing but rubble... the result of a Calamity.

The blue shimmer about him had not yet vanished and he only caught a glimpse of it in his peripheral vision. His curiosity vanished when he took a look at his paws and body, there was nothing out of the ordinary. The black and white wolf stood up stretching his legs in search of the bruises and broken bones he was sure to have.

After fully stretching all his previously sore muscles, Drake froze in place, his heart racing even more.

There wasn't a scratch on him.

Not even his aching paws retained the bruises he was sure to have felt when he was running through the gorge. 'I'm glad I'm fine... and there is no use worrying about that now... but wait, what happened just now? No... I need to find another way across this mountain.

Little Sister has already made enough progress to nearly catch up to me by now,' steeling his resolve, Drake decided against thinking about the oddities of his situation. Nothing made sense, but worrying about it would only make him lose the Trials and he wasn't willing to do that.

Chapter 423 Brown and Ecstatic

Drake Sirius froze at the sight of paws in mint condition. The pain that had plagued him during his mad dash was gone. What was more was that his wolf retreated to the back of his mind, like its mission had been accomplished.

The prince was still trembling from the near-death experience... but something else comforted him.

...He hadn't brought anyone with him this time. If he had come with someone during these Trials, he would have had trouble protecting them from something like this. Were the rogues behind this sudden development?

Mountains didn't suddenly change their topography without a trigger.

If this had been an earthquake, the trees in the surrounding forest would have been affected and much more than the Mountain pass would have been taken down in the ensuing destruction.

He had questions... but questions that added to more questions that plagued him. 'Nearly two years of nothing... And yet, my gut tells me that it's when we should have been worried the most.'

The prince blocked a deluge of memories and shifted into his human form. He had questions, but standing around wasn't going to get him any answers. He retrieved the map that had been guiding him thus far and started studying it.

Without the Mountain pass, he was going to have to change his entire plan. There was a creek that came out one side of the mountain not far south of the mountain pass. The contours surrounding the creek made him scrunch his brows. This can't be right, can it?'

The lines that told altitude changes suggested an anomaly with this creek. What was more was that it didn't wind around the peaks. The creek went winding up the mountain, almost like it came from the very top.

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'Glacial river!'

It was clear the creek was coming from the peaks of the mountain. Going up the creek was one option but that meant going over the freezing peaks of the Great Sirius mountains. Drake shuddered at the thought of having to get that high into the air. Not to mention the air was thinner the higher one went.

'The Trials just got a lot more difficult. I wonder what Little Sister will do about this... Good luck, Little Sister.'

If I hunt now, I should be able to make it to the other side of the mountain before I need to hunt again. I can collect water from the creek. It might be freezing, but well, I'm not in the palace. Can't get picky, right?

Finally making his choice, Drake wrapped up the map, shifted and started the journey south.

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At the same scene of this devastation, among the top rubble that covered the plugged corridor, a hand stuck out through the pebbles and dust announcing the life of one of the three rogues that had been watching Cole... waiting for the right moment.

Victor forced himself out from underneath the rubble and tried dusting his browned self to no avail, 'That didn't go exactly according to plan.'

There was a ledge near the top of the steep escarpments that had allowed the rogues access to a front-row seat watching the prince meet his doom. This ledge, despite their meticulous calculation, had crumbled as well.

Victor had to run as fast as his average werewolf strength could manage. He could have made it if he was Drake... or at least a delta, but the same royal had stripped him of that power. This was the source of his hatred towards Drake.

At some point, he switched from trying to get the prince to forgive him to trying to kill the prince so that his commands would lose effect.

His incessant obsession with getting revenge also contributed to his carelessness and his scheme hadn't gone according to plan. The three of them had fallen when the narrow path couldn't hold out any longer as well. Fortunately for them, this path was among the last things to give way and when they fell down, the fall wasn't that high and the rubble that hit them was minimal.

Victor was covered in numerous small cuts and bruises. He could feel many parts of his body aching as well, but he was alive and he could walk.

In the end, he survived. A dark chuckle left his lips, slowly building up to a loud evil cackle that rumbled across the blocked gorge, "What is wrong with you? Are you trying to get them to hear you?" one of his rogue cronies who was only getting up as well asked him.

"Oh no, it doesn't matter now. There is no way that fraud of a royal could have survived this... We... I succeeded. The prince is dead and it can all be considered some unfortunate accident," the man continued to cackle, his bliss getting out of hand, "My revenge... finally... take that, smug self-righteous bastard. In the end, what did those worthless virtues get you?" his cackling continued, however, this time he started stomping on the rubble beneath him almost like he wanted his words to reach the dead prince several feet beneath the rubble.

The third rogue looked at him wide-eyed and shook his head in disbelief, "This dude's insane. You can stop celebrating now. That was far too easy to kill a royal. We'll have to look for another royal to at least get confirmation from their conversations.

They are more connected to each other than normal wolves, so if he is indeed dead, they will feel it. That's one way we can know that something happened. If they are stricken by grief."

Victor finally got a hold of himself, even if he couldn't wipe the mad grin off his face, "You're right... the looks on their faces will certainly be golden.

Oh, that moment when that large boulder trapped him in the pass was the best. I couldn't help it... the excitement was almost too much to contain. It's sad that the ledge had to start trembling at that moment and the dust became impossible to see through."

"This path that we've destroyed was an important route for both rogues and humans alike. Let's hope the rogue king likes the way you've wasted it. I've seen some messed-up rogues before... Even the generals seem to have a screw or two loose... but you, you're something else," the other rogue chuckled, "Now let's head off to the Great Arena."

"I'll take that as a compliment... and we won't need to go to the Great Arena. We merely need to trail the next royal that's going to come through here. Lina Sirius will offer us all the confirmation we need," the man chuckled darkly, "Who knows? We might just be able to bring her some share of misfortune. If she chooses to use the river to make her way across, getting rid of anything that can keep her warm will increase her chances of dying from the cold at the top of the mountain."

"You're vile, Victor," the taller rogue with a deep voice confirmed. Despite the other's appearances, he wasn't as dirty. In fact, he looked clean in comparison to the rest and Victor was now just noticing it.

"Hey, how did you stay clean?" Victor asked.

"I got lucky. I held onto a jutting rock from the crumbling road while the mountain caved in. That part didn't crumble and I simply had to wait out the tremors," the man said to him.

Victor shrugged and led his cronies back over the rubble on the mountain pass in the direction opposite that of the Great Arena. They followed him, doing their best to ignore the mad grin that wouldn't vanish from his face. He was ecstatic.

"Isn't he getting ahead of himself? We'd feel something if the prince had died, right," the shorter man asked his taller comrade.

"Just let him be. There is no point in trying. As for whether we would be able to feel the prince's death, I don't know. The moment one chooses to become a rogue, they are cut off from the moon goddess's sight.

Our wolves even start to turn into the common dirty grey and we look the same as ordinary wolves. I don't think we'd feel the death of a royal at all," the taller and seemingly more composed rogue replied, sighing. He could see no point in trying to advise the man while his mind continued to feed him with dreams of a world without Drake Sirius.

“But do we really have to shift again? We just got these coats,” the shorter rogue whined, finally realising the implication of their new mission.

“We’ll find another stash of clothes. I’m not comfortable travelling in human form. Have you any idea what dangers lie in these mountains?” the taller rogue was quick to argue... but that’s also when he realised that his companions had no idea what he was talking about.

“What... kind of dangers?”

A silence took over them... ‘This is going to be a long lecture.’

#### Chapter 424 Cherishing the Little Things

The scent of fresh morning dew hung in the air, the warmth of the rising sun against the skin, and the slightly cold breeze that announced the changing seasons. These natural subtleties of nature didn’t go unnoticed by the still king that seemed deep in thought.

Lately, Cole Lycaon had begun to take note of the little things in life. He now knew the serene calmness that came to one who walked through a meadow and let their thoughts wander.

...the delight one could take from something as simple as reading a book to ease the mind.

Now the king stood in front of three grey headstones that were starting to change colours with time. The trio of headstones were some of the newest in the cemetery. Despite that, they were already starting to grow moss at their bases. With minimal maintenance, they could be kept looking good without disturbing the resting place of their loved ones.

Among the countless headstones scattered through the cemetery, this grey trio held the most sentimental value to the king..

...aside from that of his dearly-departed mother.

‘Good morning, Father,’ Cole thought to himself, placing the assorted wreath of flowers he’d brought with him by the headstone. Cole stepped back from the man’s headstone, his eyes never leaving the engraved letters of his father’s name, and took a seat in a white chair that had been set there for him a while ago.

The king was known to come to this place at least once every week. At first, the werewolves thought this would go on for as long as he was mourning, but soon enough, it became clear that he would keep visiting the graves of the past king and his beta alphas.

...and no one questioned this decision.

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On the contrary, most found it to be admirable of him. The rumours of the king’s hatred toward his father faded with each visit he made to the cemetery.

King Cole didn’t care for the rumours that milled through the ranks of pack warriors and civilians in the capital. He had an empire to run after all. “It’s getting easier. I’m actually surprised the empire has been doing well this long. I know I’m not as strong as you were.



I owe a lot of it to my beta alphas. Caden and Jason adjusted to all of this like they were born for it. They've been a great help...

Kyle too," Cole sucked in a deep breath at the thought of his mate's beta alpha. The man's face blew through his mind with a myriad of memories of the past several months. Some were as serious as training while others, holding equal significance, were simply memories of Kyle goofing off with Jason and sometimes... Caden.

Despite the beta alpha's treacherous and dark past, Kyle was showing an astounding will to change and the results were equally staggering. "I'd thought I will be taking care of Kyle like she wanted me to... but no, he's doing fine on his own. If there's anyone who's still struggling, that would be me... and Margaret."

The king thought back to the numerous times he'd seen a tear unexpectedly roll down the queen's cheek. She often spaced out and took melancholic moods at nostalgic times of the day.

Cole sighed and leaned back in his seat. 'The Trials... They are back again. I wish you could be here to watch them... All of you, but you're not. I hoped Katie would at least be here to go through them with me.

Yeah, that would have been fun, but... I guess she's not. It's almost two years since she left. Sometimes it feels like she's not coming back at all, but... Kyle is still alive, so I know she's still alive.'

"There you are, dear," a melodic voice interrupted the peaceful silence of the empty cemetery. Cole lazily turned his head to a dazzling woman walking towards him.

Margaret was dressed in a creamy-white gown and carried herself gracefully, exuding the aura of a queen. Her sparkling sapphire eyes were the only other pair that existed in the empire of Lycaon.

The last two remaining royals of the Lycaon empire.

"I was just... paying them a visit like I always do," Cole replied, getting up from his seat, "Good morning, mother."

"Good morning, Cole," Margaret hugged the king lovingly.

After releasing him, she walked past him and to the headstone flanked by two others, Alpha Duncan and Alpha Cross. This was the place King Trevor had been buried after the attack on the Lycaon capital nearly two years ago.

Margaret placed her wreath beside Cole's and pressed both her palms together in prayer, settling into a comfortable silence. While she retreated into her mind, in prayer and memory, Cole took his seat. His mind wandered as he tapped his thumb on the armrest unconsciously, thinking of nothing in particular.

Queen Margaret was now a widow and Cole's only surviving relative. King Trevor didn't have any brothers and for reasons that Cole didn't know of, had no parents either. Unlike the Sirius empire which was filled with Royals, the Lycaon family was dwindling in number with their only hope of an heir gone from the mortal world.

This was the very reason why the Lycaon palace had been offered more protection by the hunters during the attack on the Moon Goddess's chosen twenty years ago. The baby had survived the attack

but his father had sustained a serious injury while trying to protect him... and his mother had already died during labour.

For a long time, the empire of Lycaon was shrouded in an era of darkness, with a wavering future. Cole even remembered his thoughts of running away from the palace those many years ago but the beautiful woman kneeling in front of him had kept him from making such a terrible decision.

The empire wouldn't survive without Cole... He was the only heir to the throne...

"Why didn't you..." the question hadn't fully come out when the queen finished it for him.

"-have another child?" Queen Margaret sighed. After a short pause, "-I don't know. We tried... many times but weren't successful. I wasn't worried though."

"How come?"

"I had you," the queen turned around, a loving smile gracing her countenance.

"...I'm glad you were there for me and hope you can continue to be here," Cole returned her smile.

"Of course, I'm here Cole. Do you really think you would be able to function without me?" the woman cocked her head to the side, "Who would have taught you to swim? You didn't even know how to have proper fun. You've always been hopeless without me."

The king chuckled lightly before laughing hard. Unable to keep her facade, the queen laughed along with him, "You're right. I was a mess growing up."

"Oh? What did I miss?" a male voice interrupted the Royals.

The two Royals turned to see a blonde male walking up to them. He wore a smirk on his face and looked bigger than he'd been two years ago having completely grown into his role as a beta alpha.

Beta alpha Jason had died his hair blonde a few months ago and was as cheery as ever, "Oh, not much, Jason. Is everything ready?" Cole replied, standing up to address his dear friend.

"We must hurry or you'll miss the best part. Kyle might have gotten a little carried away," Jason chuckled, "Not with that abnormal growth spurt and annoying attitude adjustment."

"You're one to talk, Beta Jace," Margaret placed her hands on her hips... shaking her head.

"Oh, come on... My transformation is normal in comparison to his, but I understand where you're coming from." Turning to the King, "Shall we go, then?"

"Lead the way," Cole nodded. With that, the beta alpha gave a slight nod and turned to the cemetery exit.

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Chapter 425 Duel for the History Books

It wasn't long before they made the trip from the cemetery to the training arena on the ground floor of the colossal Lycaon palace. As they approached the double doors of the gym-like training arena, the trio

could hear loud noises coming from the pack warriors inside, "What's with all this commotion?" Cole asked.

"It would be better for you to see for yourself," Jason facepalmed, "Everyone's psyched up."

Inside the gym, the pack warriors were gathered around the largest ring at the centre of the gym-like training arena and shouting all sorts of things. From the few sounds, he heard statements like 'Kick that rookie's butt' or others like 'Size is not all that matters' and 'Don't go getting cocky, boy.' Cole could clearly deduce what was going on.

Inside the ring, two men, both heavily built, but one clearly larger than the other were shirtless and cautiously circling each other, unbothered by the noise that bounced about the colossal room.

The larger man, despite all logic, was Kyle. He wore a cocky grin on his face and bore within his eye, a determined glint. Even when his opponent was going to be beta alpha Caden, Kyle didn't show a shred of fear in his eyes as any other normal person would.

It was the same look the king had seen countless times in Katie or Sandra's eyes when they went against the odds, 'Is he really excited?' Cole asked himself.

"Cole, what's going on?" the queen asked when she noticed the king was not shaken by this odd display. The werewolves in the room were expecting a battle of the ages and the king wasn't trying to break it up.

"It's a contest to decide who gets to go with me on the Trials. Normally, it would be Jason and Caden with me, but this year, we realised one of them has to stay and run the kingdom."

"Why couldn't Kyle just fill in for you while you were gone?" Cole paused at the question. Even he was surprised the queen hadn't thought twice about asking him this, considering Kyle's treacherous history.

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Shrugging off the implications that the beta alpha had fought to gain the trust of the kingdom, he answered the queen, "W-we tried that but when Kyle heard that we would be leaving, he argued that it was unfair and challenged Caden to a duel. Whoever loses, stays behind to run the kingdom while the others go with me on the Trials.

Since Caden was the one put in charge of training him, it only seemed right that he was the one Kyle would challenge. If he can beat Caden, then he will have earned the right to go in his place."

The queen turned back to the beta alphas that were just about to duke it out. The two figures were like gods of destruction about to face each other. A beta alpha was a force to be reckoned with in the werewolf world, one that even the royals tried their best not to antagonize... and yet here were two of them, about to face off like it was nothing.

'What has the world come to?' the queen lamented.

Caden had years of experience as a fighter on his side, while Kyle only had his heightened abilities that seemed to surpass those of both the king's beta alphas.

The factors that could determine the outcome of this duel were far too many for her to put into mere words. In the end, she couldn't tell who would win. Caden was an amazing fighter and at first glance, that was the conclusion anyone would come up with. Caden would be the obvious winner of this battle... and yet, there was doubt.

Kyle had been training a lot in the past two years and the improvements he'd made until this point were by leaps and bounds. For anyone that had been watching his progress, the decision on who would win was not as simple as experience. The queen unknowingly smirked, "Interesting..."

"So you can't wait to see who wins either?" the King raised a brow at her.

"Even I get curious every once in a while, dear. Besides, whoever wins this will be able to protect you better out there," the queen sighed.

"If the king has agreed to this, then I'll go and initiate the duel," Jason suggested and left only after receiving a confirmatory nod from Cole.

"I'm surprised they were able to keep themselves from starting the fight this long," the queen commented as the two royals turned for the bleachers. At times like this, this part of the arena became useful. Cole, along with Queen Margaret could oversee the entire match from higher ground without any hindrance from the cheering mob of pack warriors.

"This is stupid. We all know who'll win. Good morning, Cole," a female beta approached the king, getting her sentences coming out in the wrong order.

The king continued seemingly unperturbed by the sudden newcomer, "Good morning, Bella. I wouldn't call it 'stupid.' When you look at it from Kyle's perspective, he finally gets to prove that Caden's lessons have been teaching him to be a better fighter."

"Even then, he's only been training for two years. You, Caden and Jason, were training for much longer than he has. It was after serious training that the three of you could even think of taking on King Trevor's beta..."

"BELLA," the king suddenly snapped at her, his eyes flashing bright blue.

The delta recoiled, "I'm sorry, your majesty. I shouldn't have... brought him up." Bella held her head low in a bow of submission. Through the mind link, Cole could feel the fear that coursed through her body... However, it was mixed with worry and concern along with emotions that the prince couldn't decipher.

Any other emotions would have made this situation worse. Cole sighed and the blue tinge that had started to taint his vision vanished, "Then keep it in mind the next time you decide to speak..." Cole paused. The room had gone quiet and everyone had turned their attention to the source of the king's booming voice.

Most of the pack warriors hadn't noticed the king come in when he did and had continued along with their actions... Now some of them wore looks of horror.

Cole was here... and they weren't training.

Instead, they were all standing around a ring urging a fight that had nothing to do with the king's development.

In a disorderly panic, the pack warriors hurriedly turned to the king and bowed in unison, "Your Majesty! How's your morning?"

Queen Margaret chuckled, "Isn't it funny when they think you're going to be mad at them for slacking off?"

Cole sighed and turned to the bleachers. Speaking through the mind link, he directed his thoughts to Bella, 'Now see what you've done. I would have liked to witness my subjects in their most natural state. And after I had gone through so much to conceal my presence.'

"Everyone at ease... I'm only here to watch the duel. Same as all of you. May the strongest beta alpha win," with that, the pack warriors let out an uproar in support of the first-class entertainment they were about to witness.

"In the Rookie's corner... you know why I'm calling it that. We have our newest beta alpha, one that was turned by our very own Luna. Standing before us today several times larger than the scrawny little runt that came to us two years ago..."

"Jace, you don't have to..." Kyle tried, but the man was not paying attention. He was already going...  
...and there was no stopping him.

"He might look mighty... He might look beefy... He might even taste good as a dish that rivals venison, but he's nothing to take too lightly. It's Kyle, the Third Lycaon Beta Alpha," there was a chorus of cheers and laughter bursting through the crowd as Jason continued to rile them up.

"Yes, you heard me right, gentle warriors. The rumours are true. Kyle challenged his former teacher and mentor to a duel. The winner of this duel gets to accompany the King on the Trials. Standing in the opposite corner, with a size, weight and physique perfectly identical to yours truly. Confident and experienced, less beefy and probably less tasty.

Packed with a temper that's to be feared by all and enough combat prowess to send a hunter to the hospital. Lycaon's very own serious Beta alpha and one of the king's right-hand men... we have Caden."

Caden stared wide-eyed at his friend, "You're enjoying yourself a little too much this time..."

Jason smirked but didn't reply to his friend's 'wild' accusation.

Instead, the referee beta alpha thrust his hand high into the air. The arena went dead silent at the gesture and the two contestants suddenly froze and focused on each other.

If anyone watching this didn't know what was going on, they would have felt as though the match was unfair.

Beta alphas had astounding physiques, but Kyle seemed to be an anomaly. Not to mention the speed at which he had been improving himself in the past two years.

Coupled with his hulking appearance, there was proof from the many times that he'd proved it, that his power was only increasing. Muscular build and an arrogant smirk were not all he had to show for his training. There was actual skill building up within the rookie beta alpha. From afar, he was like a walking tank of raw power that was ready to crush any and all opponents.

The two wolves stared themselves down, each determined to overpower the other.

Despite the way this situation looked, Caden was dead calm. His eyes were those of a seasoned warrior. In their crimson depths lay tales of battles that had made him the warrior that he was today and garnered the respect that made this battle extremely unpredictable.

Tension rose in the air and the whole audience tensed up, growing anxious to know what was going to happen. Jason's smile grew even wider in anticipation. The tension between these two was so thick you could cut it with a blade, 'I expect a duel for the history books.'

With that thought to both the alphas, he let his hand drop...

A signal to start the battle...

It was then, that the battle for the king's escort position would be decided... Through combat and wit alone: the requirements needed by anyone who was to make it in a world so vicious.

Chapter 426 You're no Rogue Killer

Kyle was the first to lunge forward, closing the distance between the two warriors in a short second. Despite his hulking frame, the rookie alpha was quick on his feet and where he lacked in speed, he made up for with brute strength.

He went for a punch to his mentor's face meant to disorient him completely.

Caden's eyes looked genuinely surprised if only for a second before he tipped his head to the side, dodging the attack by the breadth of a hair before making his next move.

The Rookie alpha was not holding back and that first attack sent the message home.

The king's beta alpha quickly moved his feet, pivoting on one and avoiding the knee that was aimed at his gut. The colossal alpha's eyes turned in their sockets, desperately scanning for his mentor's smaller frame in the time that he could not react.

Kyle didn't bring his leg to the ground after missing the attack to the gut as that would have taken him too much time. Even a second was too much to waste when fighting his mentor.

So instead, he extended his leg out and swung it in a fast vicious lateral arc. Caden leapt back and just narrowly missed the power kick that would probably have broken a few ribs. He'd been on the receiving end of the Rookie alpha's attacks before and lately, they were packing one hell of a punch.

"You're as nimble as always, Alpha Caden," Kyle growled before rushing in for another attack.

Caden snarled in frustration, "You're getting too full of yourself, boy."

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Kyle's next attack was a downward strike with his folded fist aimed at his mentor's shoulders which had gained the name, Hammer Strike because of the way it resembled the motion of a hammer.

The move had numerous flaws and was commonly executed when one's opponent was worn down and too tired to evade. If this hit true, Caden would collapse from the pain of feeling his clavicle shift from its normal place.

Instead of evading completely like before, however, the beta alpha spun in place and delivered a full-force kick to the hulking man's gut. Kyle normally wouldn't be shaken by an attack like this one... if it had come from a normal pack warrior.

The Rookie alpha had worked to make his body impervious to most attacks. His body had grown resistant to the pain of most hits and he'd even gotten into the habit of letting some strikes through simply because they couldn't cause any real damage.

In short, he could take a punch!

But this was Caden... It was going to take a lot more than workouts to keep the man's herculean strength from causing some form of damage.

Packed with the momentum from Caden's well-executed spin and the incredible strength he naturally possessed, the rookie alpha was sent flying to the side of the ring in a lateral arc, catching himself at the ropes.

The battle had only just begun, but Kyle was panting heavily, partly because he just had all the air knocked out of him and partly because this battle was much... much harder than he thought it would be.

There was a gasp in the crowd, the first break in the silence that had gripped them since the start of the fight. Kyle got himself up, holding onto the ropes for support as he recovered. Caden looked to be in much better shape. There wasn't a scratch on him and he didn't look even the slightest bit winded.

This was the first hit to land since the fight had started. They were moving so fast that it was hard to follow. After witnessing this first attack, however, a silence swept through the room, only momentarily and it was quickly followed by a massive uproar.

To the rest of the warriors watching, these two were moving almost too fast for their eyes to follow, but to the two of them, everything had gone incredibly slow and quick calculating thoughts and reflexes were the difference between victory and defeat.

Kyle finally regained his composure and stood ready to attack his mentor once more, "I knew this would not be easy, but still... you're one hell of a fighter, Caden."

Caden knitted his brows... There it was again, the tone he'd used earlier, "Haven't you learnt anything yet?"

"No..." these were Kyle's last words before he dashed toward Caden, staying low to the ground this time and keeping his arms outstretched. Not wasting time, Caden launched into an attack of his own. Kyle's movements were obvious this time since his hands were spread out.

A brutish move that allowed him to lift his opponent off the ground and slam them into the ground. This attack only worked when the person someone was fighting an opponent smaller or simply much lighter than they were.

Having size on one's side, however, would mean that person wouldn't get much space to escape their grip and guarantee a high level of success. It also had to be executed fast enough to avoid any kind of counter.

The hulking frame quickly approaching Caden could definitely lift him up. It was another one of the frightening things about Kyle's transformation. In terms of brute strength, Kyle had the upper hand, 'If he pulls this off, no... no time to think about that.'

Caden brushed off the distracting thoughts and brought his hands down to his sides. Two calculating steps forward and power jump later, Caden was soaring through the air with his legs stretched forward and aimed for... Kyle's face.

At the speed they were going, the impact would probably shatter anyone's jaw. The speed at which Kyle was approaching and the momentum of Caden's whole body was enough to put a dent into a metal beam if he was to collide with one...

...and it should have taken the Rookie alpha out.

Caden collided with Kyle's face, stopping the hulking man in his tracks and sending him back several metres. The king's beta alpha bent his knees and kicked off Kyle's body, but as his toes lost contact with the man's body, he felt a hand wrap around his ankles and gasped.

Kyle was barely fazed by the surprise attack despite the force with which he'd been hit. Caden's eyes widened in shock. The feeling of shock was replaced with fury when he noticed the wide grin on Kyle's upturned face.

The Rookie alpha stopped sliding back far earlier than Caden had estimated and pulled his head back.

A trickle of blood rolled down his cheek, but Kyle looked unbothered by it. In the next moment, he let go of Caden and rushed forward throwing a fist into his mentor's gut.

Caden was stuck wondering what had happened. He'd been sure Kyle would go down with that kick but it seemed the Lost Luna's beta alpha had grown in strength yet again.

It was an attack that only the king could face head-on and even then, it would be because Cole was made of different stuff compared to normal werewolves. Kyle, unlike normal wolves, was not fazed by the effort...

This was why the mentor didn't get the time to dodge or even notice when Kyle drove a powerful fist into his gut raising him high into the air from the sheer amount of force.

A gasp went through the crowd as they watched the experienced battle-hardened beta alpha Caden rise into the air. Before Caden could land, Kyle spun with a round kick, struck the beta alpha's side with the sole of his foot and sent him flying across the ring.

"Who are you calling 'cocky', Caden?" Kyle roared, feeling energy course through his body.

Jason rushed over to his beta counterpart, but the man held up his hand to stop him. Caden coughed up a worrisome amount of blood, "No, I'm fine, Jason. I can still fight."

"But..."



"I can fight, dammit..." the beta alpha slammed his fist onto the hardwood floor in anger. The sound of snapping bones could be heard echoing through the room.

Jason wanted to point out the severe wounds and bruises on Caden's side. His injured side was rapidly turning red with a tinge of purple probably caused by some internal breathing, but that same injury was what suddenly caught everyone's attention for this was the source of the crunching noises.

Something seemed to be moving beneath the beta alpha's skin.

Right before their eyes, the bruises were steadily vanishing and the movement beneath the beta alpha's skin could only indicate one thing. He was healing...

Kyle's kick packed enough force to put a human in the hospital. It was a miracle that Caden could still want to fight after taking such a beating but then again... the pack warriors would expect nothing less from the king's beta alpha.

In the span of ten seconds, the beta alpha's ribs had repaired themselves and he was back on his feet, "I still have a lesson to beat into this rookie's skull... So I'll continue fighting."

There was an uproar that rumbled through the watching pack warriors. This was indeed first-class entertainment.

Kyle was looking at the beta alpha with an even more amused look on his face, "You're tougher than I gave you credit for even though I've known you for nearly two years. Still though..." the beta took on a fighting stance, this time it was one that was centred more on combat prowess than brute strength and his opponent took on a stance that was meant to combat this fighting style.

The rookie smirked, "...you're no Rogue Killer."

Chapter 427 A Monster's monster

The Lycaon pack watched in anticipation as the two prominent warriors went head to head in a battle to see who was stronger and who was more suited to accompany the king on the harrowing Trials.

Caden was circling the ring, keeping a close eye on the werewolf mirroring his actions and panting with exhaustion. The battle had gone on for a while with neither of them seeming to land a decisive blow on the other.

The beta alpha's eyes were trained keenly on the opponent in front of him.

As if staring into a mirror, Kyle the Hulking rookie alpha was also circling the ring, his actions a reflection of Caden's footwork.

The two of them were currently locked in a stalemate, having broken this deadly dance of fists a few times before. Both of them had survived getting defeated by deadly blows by a wolf's whisker.

As a result of their elevated combat expertise, none of them had been able to land a decisive blow. Knowing a blow was decisive in and of itself was turning out to be a difficult task.

Kyle was large and could take more of a hit than Caden had given him credit for while Caden's healing wasn't getting any slower. It was only when the duel had gone on for a while that Kyle had remembered a lesson on healing once...

'A werewolf's healing will double or even triple its normal rate depending on their will to survive and their determination to come out on top. It's what makes a lone wolf so deadly,' the lesson had come from none other than his mentor himself.

True lone wolves were rare, but the man had meant this term metaphorically. Werewolves like Caden, who often kept to themselves and shouldered their ambitions without expecting anyone else to help them carry the burden... that's what the alpha had meant by a lone wolf. It was no doubt this man had incredible regenerative capabilities.

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Since this was a duel between two friendly wolves and not something that was as severe as honour or a mate, none of them was expected to use their claws or teeth to fight. They could tap into their insane reserves of supernatural strength, but that was about all the help they could get from their wolves.

In the first moments of the battle, the audience had noticed Kyle break his mentor's ribs with a deafening round kick and they'd also noticed the miraculous healing speed that alpha Caden possessed.

After that incident, Caden had become more careful and in some ways, even more deadly, making it hard for Kyle to find an opening to make a decisive blow without risking his own skin.

Each of them ran simulations of what methods would be best to bring down their opponents, but the more the duel dragged on, the harder it seemed to get. Caden was armed with battle experience and the ability to instinctively predict all of Kyle's moves with deadly precision. In addition to that, Kyle's attack power wasn't to be taken lightly.

From Kyle's perspective, if he dropped his guard just once, it would spell his defeat by the end of this duel... and a boatload of paperwork for the entirety of the Royal Games.

During their previous entangles, Caden had gotten close to pinning him twice despite the difference in their strength and the sudden change in the cadence of the fight damaged his confidence severely.

Kyle smirked, "You're being careful. It seems you're starting to see who's really the stronger one here. It's important to know when you're outmatched." A hole in his confidence had nothing to do with his recently acquired arrogance.

"Oh, don't get ahead of yourself, Rookie. I was only trying to see if you'd actually learnt something in the better part of the two years that we've spent together and offered you an opening. And you have been learning," Caden spat back, "I'll stop going easy on you now."

Kyle chuckled at the comeback and sprung forward, breaking their endless circling motion once more and heading straight for Cole's beta alpha.

Caden was quick on his feet and sidestepped again, dodging the man's fist by a hair, this time though, Caden had put some thought into his movements and reactions, choosing to fight with more than just instinct but a bit of wit as well.

Kyle was shocked when the man stepped to the left and not to the right like he had done many times before during their duel... 'Had that been intentional so he could use that against me at some point?'

The rookie alpha didn't get the time to think through such questions as his opponent was still not done. To Kyle's disadvantage, he was still stuck with the momentum of having missed Caden completely. His guard was completely down.

Caden was changing the flow of his actions to throw Kyle's predictions off. Without wasting any more time, the seasoned warrior followed through with the smooth footwork and form that had been trained into his bones and that allowed him the time to deliver a full-force kick to Kyle's exposed torso in the next fraction of a second.

In a matter of seconds after Kyle had launched into an attack, the colossal beta alpha was soaring towards the ropes. The pain of getting his stomach kicked that hard screamed through his gut so loud that dark stars started to dot his vision.

The rookie alpha gritted his teeth and turned his back on the elastic ropes, landing neatly in their embrace. 'He's good... really good... but how? No, I have to focus,' there was no time for Kyle to have such thoughts. 'I'm not staying behind on office duty...'

Kyle used the push he gained from stretching the ropes outward to fly back in through the air and deliver an unexpected spear to Caden's gut. The beta alpha was a second too late to evade him and had the wind knocked out of him.

The two men went flying shortly before crashing in the centre of the ring. Roars erupted from the crowd of pack warriors that had been watching this happen. This was exactly what Caden had been hoping to avoid all through their battle. A wrestling match with a beta alpha as massive as Kyle wasn't a good way to go about winning this duel.

"Damn you, boy. You won't get the best of me," Caden complained as Kyle tried to restrain him. With the wind knocked out of him, Kyle had the upper hand while Caden was disoriented. Kyle got to work restraining his mentor. He flipped him so he was facedown and grabbed his arm with the intention of twisting it till the man surrendered.

While Kyle wasn't skilled in this part of combat, he had grown considerably stronger than the boy that Katie had taken under her wing. Kyle was even considered stronger than the other beta alphas, but this was in terms of brute strength.

In battle, this wasn't the only factor that would guarantee victory which was why determining who would win this duel was so hard to do. Against Kyle's strength, Caden pushed himself up with his free arm, throwing the man off him before he could completely loop his arm behind his back.

Kyle landed on his feet a few meters away from Caden before dashing forward. The rookie had finally seen it... an opening. Caden was still disoriented and Kyle wasn't planning on allowing Caden any time to regain his composure.

The rookie alpha lunged for him a short second after hitting the ground, with his fist aimed for Caden's face, 'I could...'

The thought was cut short when Caden shifted slightly, but in a very calculated movement that meant the difference between a clean hit and a complete miss. Kyle, having not expected it, met the full force of an uppercut from the King's beta alpha, "I said, don't get ahead of yourself."

The crowd picked up again with a loud roar... This was more entertainment than anyone in the whole room had been hoping for. Even after all the times that these two had sparred during their training. It had never seemed this competitive and the fights were never this impossible to predict.

"He's doing well, isn't he?" Jason's voice broke the king's focus on the duel.

"Oh?" Cole broke out of his trance from watching the fight and turned to his other beta alpha. Jason wasn't in the ring anymore, but no one had noticed him leave the ring. The fight was far too enchanting to allow them a minute to blink.

"Yeah, he is doing well. I've heard rumours..."

"Oh? What about?" Jason stood next to his alpha and turned to face the duelists with amazement in his eyes.

"They say he's even stronger than you."

"It was one arm-wrestling match, Cole..." Jason huffed. The king raised a brow at him.

When it was clear the king was not buying his fake excuse, he sighed. The blonde turned back to the match, "Yes, he is stronger than me but his technique in a fight is still too unrefined to actually defeat me in battle. With a little..." Jason stopped talking when he watched Kyle deliver a deadly right hook to the side of Caden's face.

Jason's hand unconsciously flew to his left cheek where a slight burning sensation made itself known to him.

The pain from his comrade rippled through the connection he held with him as a beta alpha giving him all he needed to know that it hadn't been a simple hit. Caden, without any more strength left, collapsed at Kyle's feet and fell to the ground in a heap. He was unconscious.

Jason muttered more to himself, "I guess a monster can only have a monster for a servant."

## Chapter 428 Luna's Sunrise

Jason narrowed his eyes at the anomaly in the ring. 'Did Caden just lose to him in a fair duel?'

"Oh, don't feel so down, Jason. I have a feeling he can best you too. Although it's not because he's a skilled fighter or a quick learner..." the queen suddenly attracted their attention.

Queen Margaret's eyes had been glued to the sparring ring since the start of the duel, not uttering a word. It seemed she was now ready to talk, "It's only my theory... but perhaps he needs another beta alpha with him. That way the power would be split in two and then he wouldn't have that much of an advantage over you."

This did not comfort Jason one bit, "What you're suggesting would mean he bears the power of two beta alphas," the beta alpha's tone suddenly went up. Queen Margaret only nodded unperturbed by the

gravity of her deductions, "It's like watching a demon being born. Is he going to continue getting stronger? At this rate, I can't imagine what sort of beast we'll have on our hands."

"Not a monster... that's your Luna's beta alpha. Don't let that slip your mind," Cole reminded Jason, "...besides, the bird's always watching... which means Katie is always watching."

The trio looked up at the ceiling and surely enough, there was a pigeon perched on one of the metal beams that ran across the length of the ceiling.

"Hm, okay then. He's a special person in the Lycaon palace and I have to treat him the same way that I would Caden, if not even with more respect... happy now?" Jason asked him.

"Yes. That's much better," Cole chuckled, turning his attention to the ring as deltas helped the defeated beta alpha up from the ground.

Kyle helped to get Caden up and out of the ring, checking to make sure that the man was okay.

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Cole didn't miss the feeling of sadness that emanated from Jason when he watched his beta counterpart go down.

Jason, taking this as his cue to leave, turned to face Cole one last time, "You've never said this and I've always kept it to myself... but ever since... well, you know... You've been treating him like a part of the pack that's always meant to be there. It's like you've forgotten his past crimes."

Knowing his friend and king, Jason could tell he'd stepped over a line. Talking about the time his mate was taken from him was a dangerous subject even when brought up in the most abstract of ways. When the king didn't reply, Jason sighed, "I'll just go and announce the victory."

The king nodded and let the man leave the raised podium in the bleachers. In the match that had just ended, Cole finally was able to see Kyle's newfound power in action against a real opponent.

"Are you worried?" the queen asked, having noticed Cole's ponderous silence.

"No, mother. I'm not worried. I'm just... curious," Cole responded.

"Curious about what?" the queen asked.

"You've explained where he gets his power from. Since-Since she left, he's only been getting stronger and the improvement is so steep that it's astonishing. What's more, is that it's almost as if he's only getting started. He keeps getting stronger," the king replied, his voice still distant as the thoughts bubbled through his mind.

"Thinking about it now won't get you any answers. The three of you will be travelling to the Great Arena tomorrow. So you better get ready," the queen said to him, "It was already decided that the person that would lose this battle would stay behind with a group of hunters to protect and take care of things in the capital."

Jason went on to announce the winner of the match, a loud chorus of cheers erupting from the crowd. A smile graced Kyle's face, however, there remained a tinge of sadness that resided in his eyes. Sadness and respect for the warrior that had fought valiantly against him for this opportunity.

Cole could almost hear the young alpha's thoughts as he promised to win the games for Caden. After all, the two of them had grown very close during the time they had spent together.

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The remainder of the day proceeded normally. After the morning session that had contained the battle between the two beta alphas, there had been a celebratory feast arranged at the end of the day.

The feast had been meant to be a farewell celebration for the king and his beta alphas, but it soon turned into an event congratulating Kyle on making the team of three that was going to journey to the Great Arena.

They feasted on meat and wine(for those that fancied a taste) as well as all sorts of drinks and delicacies that the palace cooks could prepare for them. A performance by a rising star, Candice in honour of the king was held. For that night, the palace of Lycaon was in high spirits.

It might have been the first time the pack warriors had let loose in a long time. For the unmated males that hadn't found their mates yet, this was also a time for them to remember the sorrow of them being incomplete.

On the other hand, a good share of the mated couples got the chance to have a good time as a couple at a gathering... a sight that sent beta alpha Jason to bed an hour too early.

The next morning came sooner rather than later, announcing the start of the trial with the king having to make the entire journey to the Great Arena as it had been done for a long time.

Under normal circumstances, Cole would take his two beta alphas with him just like he had done in the Royal Games before these ones, but this time, there was a third contestant for the position of who gets to escort him and Kyle had wasted no time in challenging Caden and Jason for the position.

The sun wasn't up yet and the scent of morning dew was still fresh. Even the early morning birds were shocked to see a group of wolves already standing by the edge of the forest when they got up(for they could have been responsible for the decline in worm count that morning...).

"Did we have to start up so early?" Jason groaned, tying the laces of his running shoes. The beta alpha stifled one of the countless yawns that had escaped him so far.

"I couldn't get any sleep," Cole gave a nervous chuckle.

"Your excitement wouldn't stop leaking into the mind link," Jason yawned once more.

"I still remember the last games like it were yesterday. I wonder if Drake will be using his sister at the Arena like he did the last time. She was fast... and I've heard rumours suggesting she's much faster now," Cole mused.

Jason reserved his thoughts on the king's mood. For someone that didn't have his mate with him anymore, he was rather cheery, "Yeah, I understand what you mean," he replied...

'I wish I could cheer up like he does...' the alpha sighed.

Just then, someone came jogging up to them. The footsteps were far heavier than normal ones. A trait of the man they were starting to get used to.

Carrying a large rucksack, Kyle came running to them. His face carried a smile and behind him, a large crowd of pack warriors followed in the distance, "Hey, Alpha Cole. The rest of the guys insisted on bidding us farewell." Kyle called out when they made eye contact.

"Did they now?" Cole asked with a chuckle, "And here I thought they wouldn't make it."

The sun was just peeking from its hiding place over the horizon. A sunrise that reminded Cole of his coveted mate. Every sunrise did.

Ever since the morning that she woke him up with the sole purpose of seeing the first rising sun after a week of rain.

A smile graced the king's face as he watched the pack warriors make it to them.

Kyle was in an exceptionally good mood as well. He had been for a while now. The gloomy mood he carried with him when he'd just graced Lycaon with his presence was long gone, "Kyle, what's on your mind?"

The question was so random that Jason was not sure where it had come from. The answer, however, trumped all his suspicions, "I'm thinking about how fun it will be to win the Royal Games. I know she would have done nothing less." His grin was priceless and just as vehement as the sense of determination that washed through the mind link.

'Looks like the Rogue Killer leaves traces of herself... Even after nearly two years, it's like I'm staring at her disciple. Then again, it could be that he's her beta alpha. Still though... No one was quite this determined... No one except for...' Jason sighed, shunning the rest of his thoughts and bringing himself back to the present.

#### Chapter 429 Refreshing Stream

Lina and her escorts had been running for three hours by the time they made it to the stream. From this part of the river, the mountains were not far from reach but the mountain pass they planned to use, was indeed further north and quite the distance from their current location.

Wyatt was not as winded as he'd been the day before and could only confirm that the bags had been the ones holding him back. Then again, he was still approaching his limit. The change was not great, but fairly noticeable.

Lina, on the other hand, had still not shown any sign of tiredness. She was as energetic as she had been at the start of the run. The delta couldn't believe her eyes when Lina shifted back into her human form retaining the normal breathing rate.

The difference between her composure and Wyatt's were like night and day, not to mention her own steadily tiring body.

"Lina, you're abnormal," Crysta announced through the mind link.

"I'll take that as a compliment," the princess chuckled. Lina took out one of her water cans and got to refilling their water supply as well as refreshing herself.

"How long does it take you to get tired?" Crysta asked her, out of curiosity.

Lina gazed into space in thought. It seemed the answer to this question was a lot more complicated than Crysta had expected... or wanted, "At this pace, I honestly don't know. I usually take three to four hours to get tired at twice or nearly thrice the pace we are using right now... I think. I'm not good at the estimates. I... just love running."

"How are you not sure?" Crysta asked.

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"Partly because it's frustrating to gauge my progress while training and also because I was still training by the time the Royal Games arrived. I can't feel my peak yet.

I finally came to terms with it being different from everyone else. Reminds me of the story of Jeanie Sirius. Sometimes I wonder if it was just an old folktale at all. Jeanie Sirius, the fastest werewolf to ever live. At least that's what Father called it," the princess thoughtfully replied.

Wyatt shifted into his human form and approached the water as well, keeping his distance from the odd royal. He'd known she was weird but what he had now witnessed since the start of their journey had him rethinking what he thought of her...

She was... extra weird.

The grey wolf couldn't shift into her human form with her clothes like the others, so she merely walked to the stream and started to drink from it in her wolf form.

Lina soon noticed the situation and sent Wyatt to hide a little in the forest.

When the girls were sure the alpha was far enough from them, Crysta shifted into her human form and was wrapped in an azure robe, "You can come back now, Wyatt."

The alpha returned and took a seat at the shore of the creek. He dipped his hands into the rushing current and flinched at the sudden sting of cold that permeated through the skin of his palms. The water was ice cold... 'Glacial river, huh...'

Ignoring the cold, he brought a handful of water to his mouth and took a sip. The first sip was a catalyst for the others that came immediately after. He lost count or sense of how much he drank before his thirst was sated.

Finally refreshed, he spoke his mind, "We still have a long distance to cover. It makes me wonder why the royals bother with the Trials every time the Royal Games come around."

"There are many stories surrounding the Trials. One of them is that the Trials were a tradition used to prove to the werewolves that the Royals were indeed powerful enough to try out in the Trials.

Another rumour says that the siblings of the royals would compete this way for the honour of becoming the heir to the throne. This was the competition that decided who the next king would be.



Although back then, the competition was far more gruesome. All humans that were found during the Trials were to be transformed into werewolves and they would follow the royals on this journey.

It was from these new rogues, that they would then pick one of their beta alphas based solely on which of them had helped them the most during the Trials.

One story that I've recently heard. This one's the rarest of them all. They say the Royals of the past used to travel to the Origin through the wilderness and made the return journey. Their return was a must and there wasn't a time that they got lost out in the wilderness.

So these Trials are meant to be completed by the Royals... partly because failure is not an option. I do suspect that they will soon put an end to all this though. I can't imagine sending my child out into the wilderness because of some ancient myths," the princess finished her explanation.

'I might not know as much as Crysta does, but this much I've heard,' she thought to herself.

"But if the Trials are so dangerous, why would Drake go through it on his own?" Crysta tried.

"He's been through the Trials before. Besides, Drake said he wanted to make things interesting this time. I don't know what's going on in his head these days... We better get going. We've spent too much time here already," Lina was in a rush all of a sudden.

Crysta shed her robe and shifted effortlessly.

"I was hoping we could at least take a dip in the stream before rushing off," she grumbled.

"I'm sorry, Lina. But we haven't come across a single sign of my brother. Not even through the mind link. Who knows how far he's already gone? I know this isn't about speed, but the man's been through the Trials before. How are we supposed to win on our first try if we don't take advantage of every chance we get?"

We'll take showers when we make it to the Great Arena. There are spectacular facilities that are prepared for the contestants of the Royal Games," Lina paused and turned to the alpha that had remained quiet the whole time. Wyatt was capping the last water can they'd carried, "Just like Wyatt said, we have a long way to go."

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#### Chapter 430 Other Side of the Queen

The trip to the Great Arena was even longer by car. The mountains were completely avoided and the highway was built to go around them. Their steep and rocky nature proved to make building the road more difficult.

A history of rockslides and sudden quakes in the structure of the rocky Sirius mountains was more than enough to warn engineers from building a road through the mountains.

Fortunately, cars were much faster and the journey was so smooth that the concept of time saved by a direct route was warped and the debate was considered trivial.

The Sirius Royal convoy made a few stops in the towns along the way to have lunch, refuel and restock on supplies before making it to the Great Arena within the span of two days.

The king had come with more than one kind of board game and the group had played almost all of them whenever they got too bored. At times, the king chose to narrate stories of the Trials when he was still a prince of the Empire as well.

Honour found King Davin's jovial mood comforting. His personality didn't inspire fear but still garnered the respect commanded by his title. He fit into the role of a king perfectly while still retaining his own personal flair.

'Could it be why Lina wasn't frightened by the thought of being Queen if she'd ever been given the chance?' Honour had asked herself during a moment of pondering. This was the longest time she'd ever got to spend with the Royal family.

Madeline was lazily sleeping on Honour's lap when the car stopped moving. The young goddess hadn't bothered to move her. Instead, she had placed a cushion on her lap for the Seeker to rest partly so the girl would be comfortable... but mostly to protect herself from Madeline's drooling.

Drooling aside, Madeline was both cute and obnoxious when she was sleeping. To the young goddess, the girl was cute when she slept, retaining the charm of a young child regardless of her age.

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Among all the people Honour had met, with exception of Katie and... eventually Lina, Madeline was true to herself to a fault and the young goddess respected her for that.

Additionally, the girl was almost incapable of deceit. It was only when it cost her life that she was able to perfectly obscure the truth from her enemies. The two girls were also alike in many ways.

In the aspect of strength, both found themselves severely lacking even for amber-eyed werewolves.

Seated opposite Honour, on the other side of a board game-littered table, was a couple resting in each other's arms. The king had his hands wrapped around his queen, covering her with a thick scarf, with his eyes closed as well.

Honour had just opened her eyes to take in the scene when the king opened his as well but with a sudden jerk. He instinctively rubbed circles through the queen's back waking her up gently.

'Huh! Queen Martha is a light sleeper. Nothing like her daughter, I'm afraid!' Honour figured he'd been woken up by a message through the mind link.

"We've..." the king paused, taking in the sight of the limousine's cabin. Bree was fast asleep on the other side of Madeline. Not as unceremoniously, but out of it nonetheless.

Honour gave him a weak smile as he finished his sentence, "...arrived. They should probably wake up. Get Madeline to wear this hoodie while you take her to the hair salon."

"Okay," Honour replied, catching the large hoodie the king threw at her from a small duffel. She started gently nudging the heavy sleeper resting on the pillow on her lap. 'Do you have to sleep with your

mouth open? Crysta will never stop popping peppers in there unless you learn to stop,' the girl thought, allowing the thought to leak through the mind link.

That did the trick...

A few minutes later, the three girls exited the car. Honour found herself glued on the spot, her eyes struggling to take in the gigantic wall that stood before her running in both directions.

Curving only slightly at both sides, a large stone wall rose high into the air towering over them higher than the girl could have guessed. The wall dwarfed the settlements surrounding it and for a moment after stepping out of the car, it seemed as though it was the only thing that existed.

Numerous diverse establishments stood on either side of the road that led to the grand entrance. The young goddess tried to imagine this wall was supposed to be circular in nature but that came along with accepting that it was built by human and werewolf hands. A feat that seemed impractical when she thought about it.

It was simply too big to have been built by human hands... wasn't it?

"Lina had the same expression the first time she saw it too. The hunters check everyone that enters along with the cars before letting them in. That includes the royals. In the meantime, go with Martha and Madeline to one of the saloons outside for a makeover, then come back here and meet us when you're ready," the king said to her.

"Won't you miss me, dear?" the Queen suddenly asked, her voice sweeter than Honour was normally used to.

The king noticed it as well and searched his wife's pleading eyes. It was like watching the ruler of an empire be defeated by something so harmless as a look. The man sighed heavily and pulled his wife into an embrace, "If you take too long, I'll come looking for you. Greet them for me, okay."

"In that case, come get us when you're ready. You can greet them yourself. And don't make me wait too long," the queen responded giddily before placing a kiss on the king's lips.

With that, she left the two men to themselves, dragging Bree, Honour and Madeline with her. A feeling of worry rose from the pit of Madeline's stomach. She felt like something dreadful was about to happen to her.

The queen knew her way through the city outside of the Great Arena. The streets were loud and chaotic, filled with all kinds of businesses. Some of the paths the queen used were too small to hold two cars.

A myriad of scents came from the different establishments, sometimes being the sweet aromas of foods the girls weren't used to and other times acrid odours that could make a skunk flee in terror.

The queen rushed them through the convoluted maze of settlements until she brought them to a luxurious saloon filled with everything a girl could ever dream of in a beauty salon. The difference between the quality of shops, markets and the different structures in the city was impossible to calculate.

There didn't seem to be a system or any laws that governed the appearance of the buildings or stalls set up. Then again, perhaps different places held different standards and customers were never the same.

These thoughts were all wiped from Honour's memory when she noticed something odd about the saloon they'd just entered.

The women that worked inside were both human and werewolves with their eyes ranging in colour from amber to red and yet it seemed none of them acknowledged the difference in rank.

When Honour noticed a yellow-eyed hair stylist send for a hair dryer only to be handed one by an alpha as though it was nothing and several other similar occurrences, she took a step back to assess the situation. 'Something not right here...'

"Now this is the one place I'm sure will do exactly what we need," the queen nearly squealed, coughing to conceal her delight.

She wasn't fooling anyone.

"Oh dear, is that her majesty the Queen of Sirius, Luna of the Sirius pack and Mother of the Moon Goddess's Chosen, Queen Martha?" the woman at the counter squealed, rolling the titles off her tongue in no particular order. Her tone also suggested no respect, whatsoever. The queen turned red at the announcement. All the attention in the room suddenly switched to her.

The dark-haired woman who was having her hair washed strained to try and get a look at the new arrival, as did everyone else in the saloon, "Oh my, she's come again. I told y'all she wouldn't miss paying us a visit."

"Your majesty, do you know these people?" Honour asked the queen.

"None of that here... For as long as you're here, your social standing doesn't matter. This is where all ladies are equal and strive to make each other just as loved and beautiful as the other. Just relax and enjoy the fun," the queen smiled, suddenly shedding her Royal facade.

"But the king made it sound like we'd come to do something very important and time-sensitive," Madeline whined.

Queen Martha's excited expression switched from delight to something between a devilish grin and a witch's smile. It was one that the three girls had never seen before, "Delila, would you help these ladies relax? You know where to send the bill."

Three women appeared behind the three girls holding their shoulders firmly, "We'll take good care of them, your Greatness," a white-haired female holding on to Honour's shoulder yelled back in a mocking tone when she used a title.

The trio of women dragged away the three girls whose faces couldn't have looked any less priceless.

The queen herself seemed to be headed in an entirely different direction. Honour guessed she was headed to another gathering of women to gossip, but her knowledge of the queen did not allow her to believe she was one to do such a thing... right?

Then again, she had just handed them over to complete strangers and left them without a second thought. There was so much they didn't know about the queen, to begin with.

The girls were dragged through to the side of the hair saloon going through two large double doors and into a corridor. None of them had noticed how large the saloon was until they were deeper inside. The entrance looked simple enough to have made it appear to be a single-room establishment, but now they knew they were heavily mistaken.

The next door they were led through turned out to lead them straight to...

A bathhouse.