

Chosen 441

Chapter 441 Protected By Nature

Lina forced her eyes open, finally realising that the savage noises that she kept hearing weren't merely part of a dream but actually animals outside of her tent.

The princess quickly opened her tent and stepped out, rising quickly to her full height. Her blue eyes cut through the darkness of night quickly adjusting to allow her to perceive her surroundings clear as day. The first thing she saw was fur unlike that of a wolf.

She was frozen for a while, fear threatening to grip her senses as was the natural reaction to danger. However, before the fear could set in, the girl noticed something odd that pushed her worries to the back and replaced them with curiosity.

The creature in front of her wasn't bothered by her presence. In fact, the big cat looked somewhat inclined to have her pet its back if she felt like it. Lina decided against it, regardless of how alluring the thought felt. This was still a mountain lion.

Another reason she wasn't so easily frightened by the big cat was her confidence in her speed and agility. Should it come to it, she was sure she could evade the lion without risking her life.

The girl looked up and noticed far more mountain lions than she'd initially expected. Five of them stood with them in the camp while others stood up on the ledges. If they had been staring at the girl and snarling at her like they currently were, she might have been scared witless, but they had their attention on something else.

Seeing a creature choose something else over herself only meant there was a bigger danger in the vicinity, or at least that's what she chose to think.

'I'm surprised I can be this calm around them.' The feeling these creatures gave her was exactly the same that the jaguar had. Now that she thought back to their run-in with the jaguar, she was more inclined to believe this was a similar situation.

Once the initial fright of being in their presence had passed, all that was replaced was a sense of familiarity and peace around the creatures of the wild.

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"Crysta..." the girl stopped, her words vanishing from her mouth upon following the line of sight of every creature surrounding them, including Crysta. Lina was almost shocked at the sight before her.

Three wolves were snarling in response to the lions. The fur on their backs was raised and they bore their fangs menacingly at the lions. In response to this vicious display, the mountain lions were starting to crowd the camp, spreading out and clearly outnumbering the wolves.

The princess had only noticed the wolves' presence when they turned tails and ran uphill. A loud roar rumbled from the lion at the front before it bounded in the same direction as the rogues. The mountain lions behind them followed suit.

Some chased from the mountain wall, leaping from one inconceivably small ledge to another and making their way uphill in a manner Lina had initially thought impossible... 'Mountain Lions, huh...'

The chase was on.

Lina could only watch as most of the lions bounded out of their camp in pursuit of the rogues at threatening speed. The sound of their paws against the ground only forced her to freeze in place lest she risk being run over by the large beasts.

The two girls remained quiet for a while trying to understand what had just happened. When the sound of the lions chasing the rogues was far enough, the two girls turned their attention to those that had remained.

Instead of all the lions chasing down the rogues, three had remained in the camp. 'This reminds me of the lion that saved my big sister at the coronation,' the princess thought to herself.

"Uh, Lina, is this one of those times when we have to bow to them so they leave us in peace?" Crysta asked, fear in her voice.

"Um..." before the girl could answer her, the lions retreated to the nearly vertical wall that bordered the other side of their camp and began leaping from one ledge to another with extreme precision.

The lions kept climbing until they reached what could be perceived as the top of the mountain wall. Lina assumed there was some sort of path at that altitude. However, getting there was bound to be a completely different story had the wolves decided to try it.

When the lions were out of sight, Lina could now make out just how difficult it was for anything other than these lions to traverse this territory. The lions were strong enough to keep lifting themselves to greater heights and travelling through the mountains without any hindrance.

"I guess we don't get to do that this time," the delta smiled at her friend nervously, "What happened, Crysta?"

Crysta scratched the back of her head, "Um... The rogues were going to attack us, but... well, you can tell the rest."

"You fell asleep, didn't you?" the nerves coming from the delta were quite clear. Lina pinched the bridge of her nose.

A male voice cut through the air, "So you're protected by nature. I don't think I would have seen that coming." Wyatt's voice came from the inside of his tent and with it came the man's intention of not coming out.

"That has come as a shock to me as well," Lina replied, "We can't be sure of that though. There are few people that can talk to animals and I'm not one of them."

"Is there someone else other than Katie?" Crysta asked.

"Yes, there was a woman that could do so back in Lycaon. All the others I've heard of are in myths and mysterious sightings made by wolves and hunters," the girl replied, yawning out loud, "Get some sleep, Crysta. I've had my rest."

Crysta wanted to argue, but couldn't. Not after she'd been caught sleeping on the job. She looked to the tent containing the alpha and sighed.

There was no way he was going to help.

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Chapter 442 Unconscious Change

Drake Sirius ran upstream trying to make the most of his day. Hunger was starting to catch up to him. He eyed the sky and realised the night would be upon him in a few hours.

Trying to estimate when next he would be too tired, the prince found that he could still press on. He also wondered where the extra energy was coming from but shrugged it off as he continued running uphill.

It wasn't the first time this had happened and he certainly thought it wasn't going to be the last. Lately, he'd found that he could no longer estimate the true height of his limits. When he wanted to do something he found possible at a certain point in time, he wasn't surprised when he found that he couldn't do it... and vice versa.

It was almost like his body was switching between different levels of power leaving him to only watch the bizarre changes he was going through. The upside was that he hadn't gotten into trouble because of this yet...

So he didn't mind.

Letting his mind wander, the prince tried to think about what had happened with the mountain pass, but couldn't make a conclusion on what had happened. His thoughts wandered all over, ranging from his sister to the conversation he'd had with the king and queen... and finally wandering to Lina's best friend, Honour.

The thought of the girl made his heart race. A feeling he was now certain wasn't normal. The two of them had spent an abnormal amount of time in the company of each other and were oddly comfortable around each other.

He liked helping her with her errands and admired her free-spirited nature. She was the only person he'd found that could get completely lost in their work.

More times than one, she'd caught him staring at her while she worked in the flower shop and he'd diverted their conversations to her passions. As a result, she had told him a great deal about flowers and their special qualities.

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Honour even kept a journal where she wrote about every different kind of flower she learnt about. Drake wasn't particularly interested in flowers but the subject got oddly interesting when Honour was talking about them.

As a result, he'd started hanging out at the flower shop, helping her about the shop when he didn't have anything to do. When her mother took over the shop for her and Lina got deep into her training, Honour found herself seeking the prince's company.

Everything had been going just right aside from a few magical occurrences that he'd agreed to keep secret. Everything was going just right before...

Before she revealed what she was to him. She'd tried to keep the truth about her powers a secret from him, but eventually, the secret grew too heavy for her to carry.

Honour revealed the powers she was capable of using and what she had done at the reserve. Suddenly the stories he'd heard from the students that survived the attack on the reserve made all the sense in the world.

The information still shook him to this day and had more effect on him than he'd expected. Even after telling him that she could heal others and control plants, the prince still sensed he was missing something crucial. Something about her never added up and the more he spent time with her, the more it nagged him.

When his thoughts started spiralling to the odd things he'd started experiencing, he shook his head and brought his mind to the present.

The landscape around him had completely changed. There were trees around him... the last thing he'd expected to see in the barren Sirius Mountains. He looked around and nearly panicked. The mountain was behind him now...

'Wait, wasn't I just running beside the stream?' his thoughts rumbled within his mind. He couldn't believe what had just happened to him.

No matter how many times he blinked or tried to wipe the fog from his eyes, the colossal mountain was behind him.

When had he crossed over to the other side? Wasn't he supposed to go through the ice cap? Drake doubted he would have been able to miss the drastic temperature difference.

He would have continued to berate his mind if it hadn't been for the dull numbness in his paws. The signs of the snow at the top of the forest were clear on his paws. And even as he noticed it, the pain vanished almost immediately.

The prince looked back up at the towering mountain still wondering when it was that he'd traversed the entirety of the mountain. The journey was also impossible to make in one day. How long had he zoned out? What kind of zoning out had he just experienced?

Nothing made sense.

Thinking only brought more confusion and it wasn't long before the exhaustion began to kick in. The prince wasn't thinking much when he allowed himself to rest in the woods a few hundred metres from the colossal ranges.

The marshland they were meant to travel through before they got to the city was not far, but he was sure from his memory of the map that it wasn't a large distance to go.

Remembering his journey the last time he'd gone through the Trials also provided him with enough insight. That time, crossing the mountain hadn't been as easy either. However, at the time, the mountain pass was still functional so he never had to face the cold at the top of the ranges.

'I hope you do well up there, little sister,' he thought to himself just before his ears perked up at the slightest crunch.

The wolf was on high alert almost immediately, bumping his head on a branch overhead. Drake cursed the low branches of the trees but didn't think much about the matter. His ears picked up the sound of crunching leaves and this was enough to take his attention away from the pain in his head.

The wolf scanned the woods and soon enough, a flash of white notified him of a dashing bunny. The creatures were usually fast and difficult to catch... well, for wolves out on their first hunts.

Drake stalked the small creature as quietly as he could, watching it munch on its new score of food before pouncing on it. With teeth bared and paws outstretched, the wolf made the jump almost instantly, not giving the rabbit any time to react.

The prince bit into the rabbit's fur, not caring for seasoning or cooking fast, 'Hunting feels far easier today. I guess today is my day.'

With something in his belly, the exhausted royal fell unconscious, sleeping without a care for anything that could attack him. It was against all reason for him to sleep like this. Over the past few days, he'd climbed trees to keep himself from being noticed, but the call of the wild was starting to get to him.

His wolf was taking more and more of his mind, guiding him to survive as the creature of the wild he was. Drake didn't know how long he'd spent in his wolf form... or that remarkable changes were happening to his wolf's body.

He didn't notice that the tree branches were not low but that his head was too high.

Sitting atop a branch not far from the royal was a single raven with an inconceivable spark of sapphire glow deep staring from within its dark eyes.

Chapter 443 Facing a Royal

Victor was glued to the spot by the intense stare of the blue eyes before him. He swallowed under the gaze of the colossal wolf watching him. The rogues beside him were in a similar state.

Breathing felt like hard labour at this point, almost as if breathing too hard would prove offensive to the wolf and yet breathing too little would only bring them closer to death.

'A royal... I've never seen one this big. And we'd been so careful to stay out of their way all this time. How did it come to this?' the man berated himself. In the thrill of his expedition, it hadn't occurred to him that he could end up becoming the reason the rogues were rediscovered.

Despite all the training this trio of rogues had been through while in hiding, nothing had prepared them to face a hulking wolf that rivalled all the royals they'd ever seen.

They were sure this one was bigger than all the royals they'd seen including the Rogue King himself. It didn't make a bit of sense... What was logic in the face of death? A lot of logical thoughts broke down when faced with a fearsome opponent.

Trying to make sense of the situation, they noticed something even more absurd. The wolfish colossus was far too big to even move around the trees in the forest.

It was trapped simply because it was too big. Victor looked about but couldn't find any signs of carnage anywhere. It would be impossible for a creature like this one to move around the woods without bending trees and flattening everything in its way, right?

This was a werewolf, by all means, but one that defied the logic that ran their community. Werewolves were generally bigger than ordinary wolves, but they never got as big as the colossus that was towering before them.

For some reason, they didn't want to run. It felt like it would be useless to try and get away from the wolf even though it stared at them from the other side of a wall of trees that formed the treeline around the foot of the mountain.

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Victor was not sure what to do at the moment. Just when he was about to start thinking, something stopped him from coming up with a plan. It was the hint of recognition that sparked in the large wolf's eyes.

The amber-eyed rogue scanned the wolf once more. It was all white, but with a patch of black fur on its back almost like it was being shielded from the sun. The large wolf stared at Victor with increasing curiosity, its ears unconsciously twitching.

'Don't get curious about me. You should be letting me be. We only seek to pass by you... Wait, that fur coat.'

Recognition finally sparked in his eyes mirroring that of the royal standing before them. He recognized the wolf he was staring at. While the size of the wolf was completely different from the last time he'd seen it, he was certain it was him.

'You're supposed to be dead...' Victor snarled. It didn't matter if the wolf couldn't hear him. Just how much would it take to snuff out the life of a single royal?

Bringing down an entire mountain pass hadn't done the trick. Now what?

A blue mist began to surround the large wolf, rolling in from behind the wolf and all around at it once with no clear source.

The subtle crunch of bones filled the air. This was a transformation. The colossus was shifting. This wasn't the normal shift the three rogues had gotten used to. Drake was shifting in a cloud of blue mist.

Frozen in place, they watched as the colossal wolf shifted back into an average-sized man. The same man they had tried to kill earlier when they destroyed the mountain pass.

Victor snarled at the man, anger flowing through his being. 'What is this guy made of? Not even an avalanche was able to kill him.'

Expecting the rogues beside him to back him up, Victor continued to growl at the man. Drake finally opened his eyes, his transformation complete. The fear that gripped the rogues kept them from attacking even through his long transformation.

Attacking during his shift would have been the best moment at first glance, but to these three rogues, it felt as though interrupting the prince would spell their imminent death.

He radiated an aura unlike anything they were used to seeing among the royals... and that was saying something for wolves that had been in the presence of the Rogue King before.

“So you’re the one that betrayed us,” were Drake’s first words.

While Victor was angry about not being able to kill the prince, he was now shocked to see that the prince had recognised him. He was sure the prince had never seen him in his wolf form.

‘How?’ he thought to himself.

‘That voice is the same as well. The same cocky delta that dreamt himself a saint,’ Drake replied, ‘I’m starting to wonder if I should have killed you back then.’

The anger that had only diminished moments ago came back brimming with more ferocity at the man’s words. ‘So you still look down on me. You’ll be dead soon enough. By the time the Rogue King is done with you and the rest of your pathetic family.’

“Don’t you love the colour of your eyes better now?” Drake asked out loud, “It’s a symbol of freedom and innocence. It shows just how much of your life you’re still in control of. The higher you are in rank, the more you’re obligated to work for the royals. You surely realise that, don’t you?”

‘Your values are nothing like mine. You know nothing of what the rest of us go through. You were born with power. You’ve never known what it is to train so hard and gain so little in exchange.

What’s more is that you don’t even know what it’s like to have the power... power that you worked so hard to achieve, stripped from you by a mere command,’ by the time they’d gotten this far into their conversation, Victor was now sure the royal could hear his thoughts.

This only worked to anger him even more. What right did the royal have to invade his mind? They weren’t even in the same pack. He’d only recently broken off from the two empires... but even then, the prince had a semblance of power over him.

Victor bared his teeth at the royal before him. The prince’s clothes were a mess with his shirt and trousers starting to lose their luxurious lustre. But even in this state, he didn’t look helpless. If anything, the presence of three rogues before didn’t faze him one bit.

This was the power difference Victor had grown used to. And it reminded him of the power the prince had taken from him. It was almost like Drake now wanted to mock him for being weak.

His deep loathing for the royal easily clouded his judgement and dulled his senses.

So much that it even kept him from perceiving the clawed hand that suddenly struck his side, piercing through his ribcage with a sickening bone-crunching sound.

The rage that had filled him only seconds later diminished and intense pain flared through his mind. The wolf trembled in pain and fear, his legs going weak. Drake was still standing before him, his expression unreadable with the pain that now flooded Victor’s mind.

The greying wolf turned to his right and locked eyes with the person that had just impaled him.

Instead of meeting the amber eyes of a rogue that he'd been travelling with, as he'd expected, his eyes widened as they were met with the intense burning hue of an alpha's crimson irises...

'H-how...' his thoughts were muddled with the pain that only intensified.

Something wasn't right.

The rogue, in his human form, pulled his bloodied hand out of the greying wolf and pushed him to the ground. As the rogue pulled his arm out of Victor's gut, the wolf lost its balance and tumbled to the ground convulsing in pain at the wide gash in its side.

"I've given you several chances to prove yourself, but with time, I've come to realise just how useless you are to me. After that stunt you pulled with the mountain pass, I was ready to let it slide on the account that a weakling like you had managed to down one member of these troublesome royal families, but alas, even that proved too hard for you."

Drake's breath hitched at the sudden change in his situation. It was troubling enough that the rogue that had just plunged his hand into Victor's side had suddenly changed eye colour. However, when he spoke, something else gripped the more primal fear lying deep within the prince.

The voice that rumbled from the man that Victor had been travelling with was not his. It was completely different. Much deeper and filled with far more hatred and murderous intent.

It belonged to the Rogue King.

Chapter 444 A sign... Any sign at all

Lina failed to rest easy for the rest of the night. Her mind wandered to the rogues that had just attacked their camp and more to the mountain lions that had rescued them. There were rogues out in the ranges that had probably brought down the mountain pass.

They had all known that and the rogues had eventually attacked them. 'What would have happened if the lions weren't around to help us? What then?'

Lina wanted to think like this but part of her mind kept a constant reminder that Katie was always watching. Her presence was dim but now she was sure the Lost Princess was still watching... and helping in whatever way she could.

'Seems like only yesterday that my sister didn't like having the power to speak to animals,' the girl chuckled.

Looking up at the ledges on which the lions had retreated, she noticed three of the lions casually resting there. She hadn't even noticed their presence. It was almost like they were doing their best to remain hidden and not bother them.

What's more, is that the beasts weren't sleeping either. 'Last I checked, mountain lions aren't nocturnal. All the more proof that she's there... Isn't it illegal for someone to help me through the Trials?'

But then again, there was the matter of rogues trying to kill them. If Katie could stop that from happening and not interfere with anything else, perhaps she wasn't breaking any rules.

'I wonder how far the lions chased those rogues... Hopefully into the ice at the top,' the princess chuckled internally.

As the hours ticked by, Lina's curiosity grew more and more. The need to have something clarified was only getting more intense.

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Their entire trip had been nothing short of a breeze when it came to dealing with the wild. There wasn't a single creature that had attacked them and the only one they had crossed paths with was a jaguar. Even that had paid them next to no attention.

Lina searched her mind for the research she'd made on the animals that lived in the Sirius empire. Snakes, lizards, mammals, birds... anything she could remember...

All the indigenous animals seemed a lot more scarce than she assumed they would be. She searched her mind for the memory of the most insignificant creature of them all... The Black Ant...

None...

It was almost like nature was avoiding them intentionally.

It's not like she wanted to be attacked by the creatures. Their behaviour merely worried her. Wyatt's words rang through her mind.

'So you're protected by nature. I don't think I would have seen that coming.'

Each time the mountain lions would catch her staring at them, she would avert her eyes and bring them back when she was sure they were not looking. Fearing a staring contest, this game went on for a bit... Until she'd gathered enough courage.

This time, she wanted to look into their eyes. Her heart hoped she could glean a spark of the wolf she idolised.

The mountain lion stared at her finally sending a rush of fear through her veins. The powerful beast was even more imposing when staring directly at her. Lina resisted the urge to look away from the predator.

She wanted to know. Her curiosity once again proved more than her fear.

And she didn't have to wait long. Staring straight into the catlike pupils of the mountain lion, she was able to see it.

The minuscule almost insignificant and yet strong blue spark burned deep within the lion's eyes. The power of the royal she looked up to.

'So close... yet so far.'

Lina wanted to ask the lion so many questions and yet she was sure the lion wouldn't be able to answer her. The fact that this was the only sign of Katie in her life reminded her of how far the Lost Luna really was.

'Can't stop yourself from playing the hero, big sister!'

The princess remembered one of the first interactions she'd ever had with her sister. Katie saw a problem and wanted to fix it immediately. She also wanted to get close to Lina so fast. At least, that's what Lina had thought at the time.

An outsider... yet she had no trouble fitting in. And yet Lina, who was the insider, had all the trouble fitting in. What an awkward situation it had been!

'Get a grip, Lina. Katie needs to heal,' Lina sighed to herself.

"I don't know if you can hear me, but I'm going to do my best as well. I'll protect them in your absence. Even with you gone, you're still trying to protect me, but I'll show you it won't always be the case. I'll prove it to you."

The lion stared back at her with no form of expression. What else could it do? It's not like it could speak human. But then, Lina thought she imagined the bright blue speck in its eyes shimmering for only a moment.

Whether it had shimmered or not, it was enough. A sign... any sign really, was all she needed.

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Drake was almost certain the three rogues in front of him were supposed to be on the same side, but then again, logic seemed to fly out the window when the Rogue King was involved.

What he was witnessing had him utterly perplexed. One of them had suddenly shifted into his human form, not caring for his nakedness and plunged his hand deep into the gut of the wolf that Drake had now come to recognise as Victor of the Golden Moon pack.

It was hard to forget the face and scent of the person that he'd demoted during his visit to the pack. From the moment he'd taken the man's power as a delta, something had stuck to the back of his mind.

Like the extra power he'd taken from the man lingered within his own... alien to his system, constantly keeping him aware of a werewolf he had punished.

A werewolf that was meant to prove their worth to him. The man was also the one that had sold them out to the rogue king and broken him out of the Lycaon palace dungeons. He might have just been the most treacherous person on the planet at the moment.

Despite all that, the prince still regarded the man with pity. If he'd known this was the same person that had collapsed the mountain pass just to kill him, perhaps he would have taken this situation a little bit differently.

His body still felt odd from coming down the mountain. While his mind had been trying to figure out what was happening, he was far too distracted to notice what kind of danger he was in. That, however,

changed when the rogue that had run Victor through spoke up, "I'm done giving you second chances, runt."

The rogue's voice was deep and intimidating, similar in more ways than one to the voice the prince feared and had only heard once before. When the three of them approached him, he hadn't felt the need to fear this man. Now, something was different.

His answer came when the rogue turned to face him. Instead of the amber eyes that he'd dismissed earlier. This rogue had glowing red eyes. Something was wrong with them. They didn't glow a clear crimson like those of an alpha.

Instead of a glowing crimson iris, the whole of the man's eyes was glowing completely, combining both the pupil and the white of his eye. The odd transformation came with a change in his aura.

"You look like you've seen a ghost, your highness," the man's deep voice came again.

Drake tried to shake the fear that now coursed through his veins but couldn't find the resolve to do so. The man before him was supposed to be a weak ordinary wolf and yet, with a sudden change in his demeanour, the prince was already on his toes.

"Who are you?" the prince asked, filling his voice with as much authority and confidence as he could. The strange boost in power he'd felt earlier was still pulsing through him, but even with it, he wasn't sure why he couldn't relax.

'I'm just glad I'm not feeling weak today,' the prince thought to himself, his mind flashing quick scenes of moments when he'd woken up weaker than he normally was. The erratic change in his power had not yet caused him trouble... yet.

"Oh, don't disappoint me, Prince Drake. You know who I am. I might look a little bit different, but our wolves always know who they are looking at even when they wear another body," the deep voice came and this time, everything snapped into focus.

He was speaking with the rogue king which shouldn't have made any sense. Why would the rogue king be speaking through a body that wasn't his?

Scratch that... what was the rogue king doing here at all? So many things didn't make sense at the moment. Drake already had enough to worry about as it was. Adding this to his list of things was asking too much of him. 'One problem after the other, Drake,' he thought to himself, 'You're the older brother to the Rogue Killer after all. That's got to count for something.'

Another question rose up, "Then, why are your eyes red?"

Chapter 445 Unknown meets Abomination

"Oh? Are they now?" the man asked him, turning to the wolf that was now convulsing on the ground, "Are they really red? They should be blue. Tell me."

Victor's wounded form remained unresponsive on the ground blinded by thoughts of the pain. He was losing blood and getting more lightheaded as the seconds ticked by.

The 'Rogue King' sighed, "You're even more useless now than you were earlier. No matter... Hey, you there. Man whose name I don't know. What colour are my eyes?"

The wolf on the other side of Victor had given the two of them space, hoping he wouldn't get gutted as well. The wolf stared at his changed comrade for a bit. He couldn't speak as a wolf but the rogue king hadn't exactly asked a yes-no question, so nodding seemed out of the question.

Yet standing with his tail tucked between his legs also felt like a sure way to get himself gutted as well. There was only one option left... embarrassing as it was. The rogue shifted into his naked form and answered his partner's question, keeping his gaze on the ground.

"Red... sire?" the rogue responded shakily, unsure what to call his possessed partner.

He wasn't sure what was going on either. The rogue king had just manifested out of nowhere. This should have been impossible... and yet the rogue couldn't deny what was happening before him. His comrade sounded like the Rogue King and even carried himself in a similar way.

There wasn't a hint of recognition in his eyes. And his aura had changed to that of a much more dangerous kind of werewolf. While it was debatable whether his friend was suddenly as powerful as the Rogue King himself, he wasn't the same either.

Drake's mind darted about in search of an answer to this but he couldn't find one. Before him, was something that had never been seen before.

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"So you take control of others now, do you?" Drake asked.

"Oh! You know how to put on an act. I'll give you that. Hmm, this was an experiment though. I must say though... this body is poorly maintained. Not nearly as powerful as what I'm used to... Honestly, can anyone be this weak and still live comfortably?" the man started checking himself out.

While he did, the muscles of the body he'd inhabited began to expand, muscle fibre bulging beneath the man's thin frame to force the frame of a werewolf of a much higher rank.

This unnatural transformation had the prince staring in horror.

The rogue king was smiling darkly when he witnessed the transformation happening to his new host body. "Oh? The host body shifts and changes to sustain the power it's been blessed with. This starting to feel a little better, I guess."

"Are you going to remain in that body permanently?" the prince asked calmly.

While this situation didn't look good, he had his share of curiosity. At first, he'd wanted to attack but something kept him from doing so. He didn't know anything... If killing this rogue would kill the Rogue King.

He didn't know if there was a chance that the Rogue King could escape this body or what happened after he left the body.

What if he killed this body and the Rogue King only jumped into another? It didn't make sense at all. There was too much Drake didn't know.

One more thing worried him. Drake was not sure this transformation was one the rogue king was controlling on his own.

It looked familiar to the body transformation that an alpha went through when they were promoted to the rank of Beta alpha. Only this transformation was rushed and repulsive.

"You almost sound like you care. No matter, I'm merely here to make sure the Sirius Royal family doesn't see your face ever again... or the whole world for that matter," the Rogue King's rumbled.

'I find that confidence of his annoying,' the prince thought to himself.

By the time the rogue was done with his horrific transformation, the man before the prince was packed with muscle rivalling that of a beta alpha.

Had there been time for bone development? Had there been any proper bone development at all? Cole hadn't heard the crunch of bones. He only knew what he saw before him.

The man had been really small in comparison to the abomination in front of him, 'This is all wrong.'

Neither the rogue's body nor his wolf had the ability to withstand this kind of power and yet the king continued pushing them. How did the prince know this? His wolf seemed to be one step ahead of him.

The wolf belonging to the rogue cried out in pain at the oppressive nature of the Rogue King's invasion.

Before the prince could speak, the hulking form dashed forward, an expression of pure murderous intent written in the rogue's bloodshot eyes.

The prince barely had the time to react as he leapt back. If he'd been a second too late, the creature that was attacking him would have had his way.

While the prince had been expecting a punch or something more orthodox when it came to man-to-man combat... or at least a swipe from a clawed hand, this hulking form bit down on the prince's former position.

His white teeth flashed in the bright early morning, revealing two sets of canines... Four pairs... The fangs were not those of an average wolf.

Drake thought all this through whilst he was still in the air from his backward leap. He'd almost forgotten he was airborne and when he braced himself to land on his feet, something unexpected happened... and it left him cursing.

The prince violently crashed his back into a thick tree shaking it to the core as if it had been hit with a battering ram. A spiderweb of cracks appeared in the soil that held it firmly in the ground.

Nothing about the crash was normal in the slightest but Drake didn't have time to think about that, the Rana-infested rogue was coming at him with astonishing speed.

Drake pulled himself from the royal prince-shaped depression he'd made in the tree and crouched down just in time to dodge the hulking abomination's fist, once again avoiding the attack by a hair. The balled

fist went straight through the chest of the Drake-shaped depression, precisely where his heart should have been, sending splinters in all directions. 'He's really trying to kill me...'

Drake had no time to think about what the attack could have done to him. Instead, he gathered his strength into his legs. The man above him was now trying to pull his hand that was lodged deep into the bark of the tree.

'How does he have so much power already? He was only an ordinary wolf moments ago,' Jason's mind raced.

The prince crouched even lower now, putting some sort of distance between himself and the rogue and gathering all his strength, delivered a well-practised spear to the man's gut.

His 'strength', however, was heavily miscalculated. Drake was still oblivious to how significantly different his body was behaving.

Without meaning to, he ripped the man from the tree and viciously launched into the air with him.

A spear that was hopefully meant to through the man a mere three metres or less had evolved into a ten-metre distance.

The breath was completely knocked out of the rogue and his hand was ripped back so hard that it broke and ripped off at the wrist, leaving the hand in the chest of the Drake-shaped depression in the bark.

Drake rolled off the man, stunned by these results. Blood spurted out of the rogue's hand and he coughed violently. Drake could tell from the numerous cracking sounds he'd heard during their short flight that many of his ribs were broken.

The prince reached for the man, but something told him the damage had already been done. He couldn't fix what he'd done to the man.

What was worse though, was that even in the rogue's state, he had a murderous look in his eye and kept trying to bite the prince standing above him. He looked like he'd lost his mind... or like the king really didn't care what happened to his vessel.

There was no howl of pain or scream that suggested he was in pain. 'Revolting...'

Finally giving up on trying to bite the prince, the man's head dropped to the ground, losing all signs of the apparent madness that had kept him gnashing his teeth at the prince.

His eyes stayed trained on the prince's face as the life drained out of him.

"W-where... have you got t-this power from?" he coughed up a worrying amount of blood.

The rogue king waited for an answer that never came. The prince couldn't answer him either. Not because he didn't want to reveal this to the king but simply because he was stunned as well.

He didn't know for certain where this power had come from either. The king, however, didn't know this... and was livid with how strong one of his opponents had gotten. It was only safe to assume the rest of them had grown stronger as well...

While the prince stared down at the convulsing man, he saw the red glow leaving his eyes and returning to their normal amber glow.

The rogue's relief was short-lived as a sharp pain tore through the man's body. The deformed muscles were forcing themselves to shrink back to the size they were supposed to be with no control.

It was only after the life left the man's body that the scream came to a choking stop. He died with a half scream that nearly shattered the prince's eardrums. Regarding the man's body, the prince was utterly horrified...

'That's going to give me nightmares.'

Chapter 446 More Trouble

The prince observed the man's body, trying his best to keep the rabbit contents he ate earlier from returning. The rogue's body, after the Rogue King left, had tried to return to its natural state and the results when combined with his injuries were gruesome.

It was a fate the prince would never wish on anyone... even if that person was his enemy.

The man's limbs were all twisted and his joints bent in odd directions as the muscles tried to contract. The ribs that had been shattered pierced the man's chest randomly and broke the skin, most probably failing to return to their normal positions when they were already broken.

Drake could guess that the man's heart had been pierced as well in all this chaos.

It was also clear from the numerous red bruises littered all over the man's body that he'd suffered multiple fractures because of the odd reverse mutation.

What was worse was that the process had not been completed. The process didn't end with the man at his normal size nothing like his former self. The only part of him that remained true was his eyes which had long lost their glow.

The only explanation Drake could come up with for the incomplete reverse transformation was that the man had died before the transformation was done and remained stuck in that state.

The prince was torn between trying to figure out what to do next and whether or not he was the reason the man had to die like this.

'What do I do now? Do I bury him or... no, we've never buried rogues before.'

.....

Drake was so wrapped up in his thoughts, guilt slowly overtaking him that he did not realise what was happening behind him.

The second rogue that had been presently watching this whole ordeal in horror was starting to grip his head in pain.

Something was happening to him as well and it had started the moment the red glow left his comrade's eyes. The man was trying to fight the invasion his friend had just gone through.

He didn't want to suffer the same fate as his friend had. Alas, this was not going to be the case. His opponent was the Rogue King. He might as well have given up the moment the king commanded his service.

With a low growl, the man's eyes turned fully red, including the whites. He regarded the prince with a look of bitter hatred.

The Rogue King stared at the prince of Sirius through this rogue's eyes, formulating numerous ways to rip the royal into pieces. The man had brought down his previous puppet far too easy for him to simply accept defeat and now he was... pitying his enemy.

'A threat like this one cannot be allowed to live,' the king thought to himself before forcing something even worse than he had of the other puppet he had enslaved.

He forced the man to shift. The breaking of bones and vicious growls that filled the air while the rogue shifted uncontrollably into his wolf almost went unnoticed by the prince.

Drake turned just in time to witness the abomination of a wolf shifting behind him. On one side, it seemed as though the wolf was going to tower a few metres over the prince's frame, however, the other was much smaller.

The disfigurement that was happening to the rogue was nothing short of grotesque.

White foam spilt from his mouth as the orders for a transformation took hold. The wolf fell to its larger side, the other being far too small to even touch the ground, however, that was only momentary.

The smaller side soon bulged in size to match the other half. With that came the end of the painful growls the rogue had been making. It was as though the rogue within had finally given up the fight.

A large black feral wolf was soon standing on all muscular fours with bloodshot eyes trained on the prince.

This wolf rivalled the size of a beta alpha and defeated Drake's logic of what wolves were meant to look like. Instead of the graceful features that blessed the royal wolves when they shifted.

Silken fur that demanded to be touched and an appearance that demanded power while still keeping the feral nature of a wolf at bay. This was what the prince envisioned in all the strong alphas he'd met. It's what he'd known all his life.

What stood before him was the opposite of that. Its fur was disorganised and matted in several places. The thick ropes of muscle beneath its skin could be seen clearly as if the fur did nothing to hide it.

White foam dripped down its muzzle, exposing rows of jagged teeth that had lost all form and order. It wasn't even sensible to count the sets of canines anymore. It's like the abomination in front of him was made to destroy and nothing else. Its eyes held no reason and its long claws dug into the ground with pent-up energy, ready to tear apart the enemy in front of it.

Who was the enemy at this point? Drake could wager this creature was only going to go on a rampage given the chance and kill everything that lived and breathed in its path.

From what Drake had witnessed of its fallen comrade, size did nothing to slow it down. This creature was a hulking mass of murderous muscle that had its target locked on him.

“When I started the Trials, I was sure I would face a lot of things. Maybe find a few rogues that still roamed the wilderness but nothing told me I would be facing a demon controlled by the Rogue King. I must be very lucky,” the prince chuckled to himself.

The wolf, on the other hand, was not in the mood for his jokes and dashed forward to attack him without a second thought. The distance Drake had considered large before was suddenly covered in a few short quick strides. The wolf was large and each stride easily covered a two-metre distance even when it looked like it was trying to keep the strides short.

‘Move, Drake, move...’ the prince’s inner wolf yelled, uttering words for the first time since the prince had been born.

If the prince had stopped to wonder why he’d heard his wolf speak, he would have been devoured by the approaching deranged abomination, but he didn’t. The wolf’s words were what he needed to spur himself into action.

Drake leapt to the right at the last moment as the wolf’s jaws came clamping down on his former position.

His mistake, however, was that he hadn’t considered the speed with which this wolf was able to recover. Normally, rushing at someone at a speed that great would require some energy and time to recover in order to make a sharp turn.

With enough training, this time of recovery could be reduced. Even with that taken into account, nothing had prepared the prince for what happened next. It simply felt impossible.

Chapter 447 Bitten

Drake had grown used to using this short moment of inertia to either take some time to recover or to counter his enemy. In this case, he was trying to recover from the sudden attack but that proved to be an error in his judgement.

The wolf planted one paw on the ground and with the other raked the prince to the side.

The nimble prince was viciously thrown away from the wolf, bouncing hard on the ground before slowing to a roll.

Disoriented and dizzy, Drake trying to sit up at least. His vision had gone blurry and he was seeing double.

Pain roared through his body, pulsing in many places. Most of it was coming from four lateral slashes across his back.

The wolf had got him good in the back and the pain was excruciating. Disoriented and barely able to tell up from down, the prince was in the worst shape to face another assault from the wolf and yet the wolf was barely getting started.

The rogue king regarded the staggering royal as he walked up to him, 'I thought he had more fight in him than this. I guess I might have overestimated him. However...'

Reaching the prince's body, the big wolf bit down on the prince's shoulder. The wolf's fangs went deep into the prince's body in a half bite that curved down and away from his chest and spine.

Since the wolf's maw was too large to fit its whole bite onto one shoulder, it settled for this kind. That wasn't to say the pain would be less. This wolf's teeth were significantly larger than the normal wolf's set. And its bite force was not to be underestimated.

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If Drake hadn't been in so much pain and his mind muddled from the previous attack, he would have wondered why his bones were still intact. He didn't get time to make this realisation as in the next second, the pain was all he knew.

The prince let out a scream, feeling the pain of being bitten by another. Drake had almost no scars and was new to this type of pain. He'd never been bitten. How could he when he was a royal himself?

In this situation, he was now at this abomination's mercy... or at least, he thought he was. Something inside him snapped...

...and in the next moment, the Rogue King regretted his life's choices.

The vessel he'd taken a hold of reeled back, pulling his fangs out of the prince's shoulder. The wolf clawed at his maw, trying to get something out of his teeth. Blood flowed out of the wolf's maw, dripping to the ground.

'What's this?' the Rogue King's thoughts raged but the damage seemed to only be starting. The pain in the host's maw spread to the rest of his body eventually knocking the Rogue King's mind out.

A few moments later, the wolf dropped to the ground... dead.

Drake's screams had stopped but he now felt like he'd been hit by a mountain. He allowed his eyes to travel to a greying wolf on the ground not far from him.

The prince forced himself up, this time keeping his eyes away from the second rogue to die. The sight of the first one was enough for him to take.

Drake approached the wolf and checked for a pulse.

Victor was still alive.

.....

The king led the girls, with his wife in tow, to the car when Madeline was done with her makeover. Their short rest was finally over and they were now meant to enter the Great Arena.

Honour wasn't sure what to make of the colossal wall that loomed over them once more as their car approached it.

The large steel gates that allowed them in creaked open, revealing a large tunnel that cars would wheel through. This was the same entrance that was said to admit the wolves that finished their Trials from the Sirius empire.

Honour closed her eyes and took a deep breath as they went through the tunnel. A feeling of dread came from the walls... as if they could close in on her at any time.

The fear was familiar. When her mind couldn't pick up any such memory, she discarded it and tried to dismiss the eerie feeling of danger that came with mild claustrophobia.

The journey through the tunnel was longer than they'd all initially expected, but eventually, it came to an end. The car continued down a street inside the Great Arena. It almost felt like they were in another city...

Almost...

The difference between this place and a normal city was the fact that this street completely went around the Great Arena, forming a circular highway. Beyond this highway was the perfect augmented environment of vegetation and technology.

It was hard to notice the technology at first glance, but with a little more focus, one could see the cameras that were cleverly hidden within the trees along with the slight grooves in the ground that felt more than coincidence to be there.

'Perhaps it's a transformable arena,' the goddess thought. Even for her, this thought was a bit on the imaginative side. Then again, it wasn't impossible.

"This is where Lina, Bree and Crysta will face off against the werewolves of the Lycaon empire," Honour thought aloud.

Wyatt might have filled in for Bree during the Trials but it was allowed for the royal to use completely different wolves from those they'd used through the Trials... as had been the original plan.

"Yes, this is where... Wait, what makes you think Drake is going to lose? I thought you were his number one fan," Bree was the first to exclaim, shocked by the girl's lack of faith in the prince.

"I just have the feeling that Lina will win. She's been training so hard. I could tell there was so much she was holding in when she set off. Almost like she was ready to let herself loose," the goddess replied with a smile on her face.

The girls knew better than to deny Honour's words. She was the one person on the planet that knew the inner workings of Lina's mind the most.

On this matter, her word could be considered law.

Chapter 448 Homesick!!!

The car parked and the royals, along with Honour and everyone else that had been a part of the King's convoy stepped out. "I don't think I saw the other side of the wall on our way here," Madeline wondered.

“That’s because this parking lot is under the ‘wall’. From the outside, it looks like a really huge wall but it’s just the outer wall of a very large building. In the middle of everything is where the Royal Games take place,” Bree explained.

“So, it’s like a modern Colosseum?”

“Something like that.”

Hearing that explanation was one thing. Actually getting to see the grandeur of the great ‘colosseum’ was something else.

Built into the concentric structure were numerous hotels and facilities all meant to entertain and accommodate the visitors of the Great Arena.

The girls passed so many casinos, spas, lounges, indoor sports centres and a multitude of facilities that they couldn’t believe could fit in the place before reaching an elevator painted gold... or was it made of gold. None of them could tell which was which.

By the time they made it to the elevator, the number of wolves walking with them had weathered down to a handful. King Davin had given everyone instructions and allowed them to break away from the group. Honour wondered why they’d walked for so long.

“Couldn’t we have taken the elevator in the first lobby we found?” she sounded genuinely confused.

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“Well, that would not have taken us where we want to go. The layout of the Great Arena is a little complicated. Navigating it is no simple task.

It’s really large and divided into three rings. We are living in the third ring. The outermost one and that lobby didn’t have an elevator that could get us there. I advise you to take some time to go through the map of the Great Arena so you can at least find it easier to navigate in the future,” the king explained.

The man that was leading them stepped to the side and bowed, “The Sirius suite is on the forty-fifth floor this year and everything has been arranged according to your orders.”

“Thank you. Our key?” King Davin replied.

The man fiddled with his pockets, visibly cursing his incompetence before presenting the king with the small golden key to the suite.

‘I’ve really gotten myself involved with royals, haven’t I? Even after all your warnings, mother,’ Honour mentally lamented.

Just when they’d entered the elevator, a woman made it through the halls and to their door, “Would you hold the door please?” she asked.

Bree put her hand across the entrance, blocking the door’s path and waited for the woman to come through.

A beautiful woman with striking green eyes of a delta made her way for the elevator. She wore a fine leather jacket and stylish clothes that weren’t too glamorous.

This woman oozed strength and confidence that the current occupants of the elevator were almost sure she wouldn't notice the royals.

However, the moment she reached the doors of the elevator, she dropped her gaze to the ground and made an elegant bow, "It's a pleasure to meet you, your majesty... your highness."

Hesitantly, King Davin replied, "The pleasure is all mine. Have we met?"

The woman took this as a sign she was allowed to enter and got in, standing on the other side of the king. Madeline found that she had to move away to make room for the woman to take her desired position beside the king.

"You wouldn't remember me. It was such a long time ago. I am Bella Thorn," the delta proudly introduced herself. When she didn't add anything to the introduction, the king realised he was supposed to have remembered something upon hearing her name.

Unfortunately, that did not happen for some time.

The elevator doors closed and there was an awkward silence while the king searched his mind for a hint of familiarity. He would have been certain if he had seen a strong delta in the past... one that was capable of exuding such a confident aura even in the presence of a royal, but the harder he tried, the more the memory eluded him.

When it seemed he would not remember who she was, he sought out the name Thorn in his memory and that's when he first felt a hint of recognition come to his face.

Then he scrunched his brows. Whoever he'd remembered was not at all the same person currently standing beside him.

The woman's confident smile dropped when the king wouldn't recognise her, "I know the name... Thorn. They were the family of one of Trevor's most trusted deltas but I don't remember any of them looking quite like you," the king replied, raising a brow at the girl.

Between the styled hair, toned muscles and perfectly tanned skin, the king was at a loss. He couldn't think of any of them being this... impressive.

Martha felt her stomach turn at the way her husband regarded the younger woman but decided against lashing out. His mind link didn't indicate any feelings of attraction towards her.

And that seemed to be enough for the queen to let him be.

"Ah, the last time I saw them, they had a little girl with them. She was the cutest... Wait..." mortified, the king turned to the girl and scanned her face.

"Time really does a number on the mind of oldies, doesn't it?" the girl groaned.

Despite her tone, the king was not offended, "So you're their daughter, Bella Thorn. You've grown into quite the woman. I barely recognise you."

“Well, the training at the Lycaon pack got really intense when his majesty succeeded his father. I barely recognise myself either,” the girl chuckled, “The Sirius pack doesn’t know what kind of monsters they are up against this time.”

King Davin was stunned for a moment before bursting into boisterous laughter that reverberated and shook the elevator. The three girls had never heard the king let loose like that before.

The man’s composure had completely dropped and he was laughing out loud.

Bella, on the other hand, raised a brow at the king. When she turned to Queen Martha, the Luna merely looked away with a smirk on her face.

She then spoke for the king, “I don’t think you would want to make such claims before you even see what the Sirius empire has in store for you this year.”

“Under normal circumstances, I would be intimidated by such words, but...” a worried look crossed the delta’s face.

The elevator finally opened on the fifty-third floor which had been reserved for the Lycaon royals. The delta stepped out of the elevator before finishing her sentence.

The king stopped laughing, noticing the odd mood that had taken over the elevator, “The Lycaon team this time... It’s made of monsters.”

With that, the elevator door closed and they continued their journey to the fifty-fourth floor. There was a silence before the king spoke on his own, “I would expect nothing less from King Cole’s pack. Still, we aren’t normal either this time.”

The girls were troubled with feelings of dread. Bella’s words had shaken them to the core, however, when they stepped through the elevator, these feelings, along with all the memories of the previous days were completely wiped from their minds.

The elevator door opened into a short corridor that obscured everything in the suite from view, however, a few steps in were enough to reveal the monstrosity of a luxury suite they’d been invited to live in.

The path quickly dropped down a short flight of stairs into a gargantuan living room with luxurious sofas. The ground was completely covered in marble and the ceiling was far too high for comfort. A beautiful chandelier comfortably hung at the top of the ceiling, lighting the room down below.

At first glance, Honour was not sure what she was staring at, but soon enough, she came to terms with the fact that on one side of this large living room was glass allowing them a clear view of the inside of the Great Arena.

It was only now that she was able to see the size of the Colosseum. It must have spanned several hectares. For she could barely make out the other side of the large concentric wall, “Wow!” Honour and Madeline exclaimed.

“That is the reaction everyone gets when they see this place for the first time,” Bree sighed, regarding the expensive sofas she wanted to drop into, but then deciding against it... purely out of nervousness.

“You girls make yourselves at home. This floor has plenty of rooms similar to this one. The differences are small. Find a place for our contestants to rest and tell us where they are. We’ll handle the rest and those rooms will become the official Dorms for the contestants.

That means no one is allowed there except for them and their friends. Food will be up in a few minutes. The mind link’s open if you need anything,” Queen Martha was gone in a flash, following the king through a door to the side and leaving the girls on their own.

“Seemed like they were in a hurry,” Honour wondered.

“Sort of... there is still a lot they have to do. They have to make sure the other members of the pack know where they’ll be staying and register all the rooms being used so that the staff know which rooms have been used.

Otherwise, calculating that bill would become sort of a problem. That’s why they’ve left the task of choosing, Crysta, Lina and Wyatt’s rooms to us,” Bree explained.

As the only one of the three that had ever been to the Royal Games, she had all the information.

“Wait. Honour... you’ve never been here?” Madeline asked.

“No, I haven’t. I wasn’t here during the last games. It’s only betas, delta, alphas and anyone who has the money to afford the trip as well as a ticket to this expensive place that can make it here,” the young goddess shrugged.

“Oh! That makes sense, I guess. This is overkill though. How is something like this even possible?” the girl moved from one thing to the other. She brushed her hands on a plant that was used to decorate the table beside the largest of the luscious sofa set. She felt the soft material of the sofas.

Taking off her shoes, the girl walked to the glass pane and looked out in awe, “Honour, you can even see the stars from here. Look...”

Madeline’s excitement helped Honour get over her jitters. The young goddess took off her shoes and stood beside the young Seeker, “Don’t get too excited. You lose control of your eyes when that happens.”

“Oh, don’t worry. I have this under control,” Madeline waved a circle over her own face and turned back to the constellations. The stars shined within her amber eyes... As well as something else...

The bright full moon.

In the radiance of the full moon, Honour couldn’t help but have mixed feelings. Feelings of dread towards the floating orb mixed with feelings of longing at the same time.

And not the kind of longing that summoned her back to her home in Sirius, but the kind that asked she returns to the palace in the heavens...

She thought of her garden of lotuses that she hadn’t visited in centuries. Of the pool of water in the throne room that she always used to watch over the humans. She thought of the effect her palace had on the oceans.

Many times, she'd been asked to use it to raise the tide on some human settlement the gods were not happy with.

She thought of the Moon Palace...

The palace that was rightfully hers...

'Didn't think I'd start feeling... homesick?'

Chapter 449 In Search of a Friend

Colours... simple things that are perceived by the eyes. A by-product of creation that turned out so fascinating. The gods surely had no reason to find meaning in colours and yet they did.

Blue... Aqua... Azure... The colour of the sky... the rarest colour of the moon.

This was the one. The colour she chose to create her beautiful lotuses. The same colour that rarely graced her beautiful palace.

The goddess cherished the time when her palace glowed a bright blue. It was a beautiful colour and that came with it a feeling of peace like no other.

Every time she set her eyes on her lotuses, she would finally be calm.

The earth and heavens had nothing to ask from her. The screaming voices of her vanquished titan brethren would cease their incessant cries in the back of her mind.

She was truly at peace here. She didn't have to do anything but keep the moon going through its cycles. If she didn't get it moving right, she would be visited by a few gods that wanted her to do her job the most.

The less attention she attracted from the gods, the better for her, lest she risks getting sliced up into pieces like one of her fallen titan brothers.

Bringing her nose to the incandescent blue petal of one of her moon lotuses, the treacherous thoughts settled at the back of her mind. She could rest in these lotuses for eternity if she was allowed to... but she had work to do.

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The moon was responsible for tidal waves and every once in a while, she got a request from the god of the sea. He claimed to want to bring down a few humans that had desecrated one of his shrines.

The woman didn't really care what his reasons were. Humans had short lives anyway. If she could wipe out a few of them to have the god of the sea get off her back, that was nothing but a small task.

Selene stood from her garden and started the walk back into the Moon Palace. On her way out of the garden, her eyes fell upon the graceful shoulders of the goddess of the hunt.

Artemis was looking as regal as she always did. With a bow casually slung over her shoulders and a quiver full of arrows, the huntress was brimming with happiness. Selene smiled in return, "Welcome to the Moon Palace, Goddess Artemis."

“No need to be so formal, Selene. We are friends, aren’t we?” the goddess replied. Selene wondered what it was that brought the goddess to the moon palace often but couldn’t find that reason and asking the goddess could only antagonise her.

And it was always better not to antagonise the goddess, “Very well, Artemis. It’s a pleasure to see you once again. With your busy schedule, I’m honoured you even come here at all.”

The goddess of the hunt smiled warmly, “I would rather be here than on Olympus.”

“What about with your sisters?”

“Don’t get me wrong. I like being in the company of my sisters but they respect me a little too much. I gave them immortality and a life of servitude to me. That alone makes them afraid to speak to me normally.

They always want to look their best in front of me. You, on the other hand, don’t even change one bit in my presence,” the woman said to her.

“Perhaps I don’t change because you haven’t blessed me with immortality just yet,” Selene replied with a smug smile.

“I’m appalled. That’s not all I’m good for Selene. Now, what are we doing today?” the goddess asked her with a giggle.

“I would have liked to continue tending to my garden like I usually do when I want to relax, but Lord Poseidon asked me to sink a few pirate ships in the Pacific at around this time,” the moon goddess replied, starting the walk to her palace.

“Seriously... again? How many times is my uncle going to keep making you run errands for him?” Artemis groaned, following the moon goddess’s lead.

“I would rather he didn’t involve me in anything else once all is said and done, honestly,” the moon goddess replied, “Tea?”

“Yes, please. I wouldn’t refuse tea from the best herbalist I know that will allow me to decide what sugar I take,” the huntress replied.

“I hope you don’t let your brother hear you say that,” Selene chuckled.

“Oh, I’m sure he wouldn’t mind. The man has enough time to perfect his looks and work on poems to sway the ladies. Speaking of which, has he ever made a move on you?”

“The god of poetry, archery, truth and prophecy... making a move on the goddess of the moon...”

“No, the god of the sun making a move on the goddess of the moon. I’m sure he would find that quite poetic, don’t you think,” Artemis swooned.

“I spend a long time running from the sun. It would be another incident of Daphne all over again. With him in the sun chariot and I in the Moon palace, it simply will never happen,” the woman sighed.

“Yeah, that might be true, but what about during an eclipse...” this caused Selene’s heart to skip a beat. It was true that for a moment every few decades, there was a time when the sun chariot would fly right

over the moon palace, bathing it in its golden radiance and during that time, the god of the sun would pay Selene a visit, but the god of the sun had never once made a move on her.

“Are you recommending your brother all of a sudden?” the woman asked the huntress, narrowing her eyes at her.

“No, never... I wouldn’t wish anyone to suffer my brother’s antics. I was merely trying to pry out your love interest amongst the Olympians is all,” the huntress replied cheerfully.

“Hmm, I’ve never thought of the Olympians as love interests if I’m being honest with you.”

Artemis must have noticed her awkwardness when they spoke of the Olympians, “We aren’t all bad, you know.”

“I know that, Lady Artemis.”

“Then why are you being so formal with me?” she snapped, “You know what... I might have been wrong about all this. You’re just as afraid as my hunters are. And here I thought you would make a decent friend. What do you think of me, really?”

Selene had tried her best to keep from stepping on any land mines, but it was almost impossible with Artemis. She could sniff her stiffness like it was a gift.

It was almost impossible to speak to one of the Olympians without ticking them off in some way except for a few: Free spirits that didn’t really care.

How was Selene supposed to act normal around the goddess of the hunt though? Artemis was among the twelve most powerful beings in the Universe at the moment.

“Go on, tell me,” the goddess of the hunt yelled at her.

The fear Selene held for the Olympians began to resurface. She had one of them in her palace practically yelling at her. How long did she have before this goddess felt she was better off dead or worse, locked up in Tartarus like her shredded relative?

“Artemis... I-I’m not your enemy,” a statement Selene resorted to often, “And I’m not a battle goddess either. It’s only natural that I would be afraid of the beings that killed my brethren.”

“Oh? Given the chance, would you bring those brethren back?” Artemis argued.

“No, life wasn’t much better back then either. I prefer the life I have now, but... I’m still a titan. Nothing can change that. I’m bound to fear the beings that ended my brothers... they were powerful too, you know.”

“I wasn’t among the gods that brought down your brethren. I am the daughter of one of them... You know what... Forget it. I’m leaving...”

“Wait...”

‘What are you doing, Selene?’ the moon goddess mentally screamed when she watched the window of her freedom closing. She hadn’t even thought twice before calling the huntress back. ‘What are you thinking?’

The hunter stopped walking but didn't turn back. Selene got a moment to breathe and gather her thoughts. This wasn't the first time they were fighting but it was the first time it felt like Artemis wasn't coming back.

Selene loved her life of solitude since it allowed her refuge from her dark past. The gods rarely had 'friends' and something within her still yearned for the companionship of a friend. This was her conclusion for why she'd stopped the huntress from leaving.

"Artemis... Why do you keep coming here? It confuses me. You're the goddess of the hunt. One of the Lord of the Skies' favourites. You're surrounded by people that adore you... You have no reason to come to this empty place."

This might have been the most sincere thing Artemis had ever heard the moon goddess saying. While Selene was always sincere, this was different from the rest. She said this without filtering her words to avoid ticking off the goddess. She was speaking what was on her mind for once.

The huntress turned back, "I come here because I'm in search of... a friend. A place where I don't have to be Lady Artemis, goddess of the hunt. Somewhere I can just be me and have someone that knows me for who I am.

I'm not saying I'm not the goddess of the hunt because I am and I like that part of my life, but..." the huntress clenched her fist in frustration. Her explanation had stopped making sense even to herself long before she'd started talking.

Selene, however, knew what this woman was talking about. The gods lacked the companionship of someone that they could let their guard around. It was something almost impossible to find and when they did, they didn't let go of that person. It didn't matter if that person was a friend or a lover or a creature.

Lord Dionysus had found his fair lady Ariadne stranded on an island. While she was human and the god was one of the Great Twelve Olympians, the two of them were what the other needed. Lord Dionysus might have just been the one of the Great Twelve that Selene respected the most.

"I think I understand what you mean, Artemis," the titan sighed, "Please do visit again."

Selene flashed the huntress a genuine smile that reached her eyes.

The frustrated and guarded exterior of the goddess of the hunt shattered. Tears pricked her eyes and she fought to hide them from the goddess of the moon but when the moon goddess didn't judge, she just let them flow. There was no shame in showing a little weakness around the kind titan, "Yeah, I'll come again."

Chapter 450 'Just a little longer.' The warmth of friendship

Honour's eyes fluttered open, staring into space. Like she was witnessing something very far away.

The memories of her dream were still vividly flashing through her mind, muddling her thoughts and making it impossible to think straight. Where was she? Who was she?

Questions she normally wouldn't ask herself.

Rubbing her eyes, she looked around her. A soft glowing blue mist covered the large bed, flowing away from her like a river's current and falling to the ground silently.

While anyone would be shocked by the strangeness of this sight, Honour wasn't moved in the slightest. Her eyes scanned the luxurious room until they landed on the amber-eyed redhead standing by the door.

The girl was dressed in her pajamas and from the heavy look in her eyes, she was just from sleep. Madeline looked to be locked in an odd mix of shocked and sleepy, "G-Good morning, Honour."

"Good morning, Mady," Honour replied softly, taking another look at the now-dissipating veil of mist.

The redhead tentatively walked up to the bed and climbed atop it, finally stopping her advance when her face was too close to Honour's for comfort, "Umm, Mady..."

The girl had waded through the blue mist as if it wasn't a primary concern and was currently staring at Honour. The goddess couldn't read her expression, "What in the moon's light is going on... Honour... Honour... You are Honour, right?"

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"What?" Honour's voice raised a few octaves.

"Yeah, I know that voice. It's definitely you," Madeline brought her finger up to the girl's face and poked her cheek.

"Ouch... Is there something wrong with my face, Mady?"

"I'm confused. When did you put on your makeup?" Madeline was now poking every inch of the girl's face as though trying to solve some mystery, "Not a single sign of it."

"What are you talking about, Mady? I've just woken up now just like you."

"It doesn't look like it. Your face is normal. There are no lines, no scars, no morning eyes and no signs of grogginess at all. Nothing... It's like you've just walked out of a beauty salon," the girl finally gave up and pulled away, sitting atop Honour's mattress, "It's not fair. Is it because you're a goddess that you don't look terrible when you wake up?"

Honour was only now understanding the jibberish spouting from her friend's mouth, "How long... How long has this been happening?"

"I don't know... I've only noticed today because of this bluish mist flowing in your..." the calm demeanour the girl had shattered, replaced with a look of panic and fear, "What's happening to you, Honour? I thought we had until..."

"It's nothing, Mady. I'm fine. Nothing's happening..."

"Except that something is happening. When I came in here, you were glowing and this mist was coming off you like you were some misty spring. It was like watching a mummy waking up... but a divine mummy," the girl tried to describe.

Despite her odd choice of words, Honour understood what she was trying to mean. "So that's what I looked like," Honour sighed. It's not like she didn't know what was happening to her.

She'd known for more than a year now that she was the moon goddess. And this wasn't the first time she was having a memory of her divine life centuries ago.

However, this was the first time she'd had a clear memory and not just some random feeling of nostalgia. Honour still felt her connection to the goddess of the hunt. She still felt the need to comfort the crying goddess in her memory.

Honour wrapped her hands around herself, suddenly looking like she had been dipped into liquid air. Honour's calm exterior shattered, "I don't know what is happening, Mady. I don't know..."

The redhead pulled her friend into a hug, "Hey, we will get through this together."

"We've ignored them for so long, Mady but I don't know if I can ignore them much longer... the memories... the emotions... My powers..."

My birthday will be here soon. In just two weeks, I will turn eighteen... I don't even know if we'll make it that far."

Madelina clawed at her mind, trying to find something to soothe the girl's mind, but anything better would have sounded like a lie. The closer Honour's birthday grew, the more detached she became from the mortal world.

This wasn't the first time she was waking up in a similar state. In fact, her powers were acting out more frequently with each passing day. This was one of the many... but after so many reminders, the magnitude of the miracle didn't matter.

Honour could only bear so much at a time.

"You'll make it, Honour. Just hang in there. Just a little longer... Stay with us longer."

The red-haired girl hugged her friend tighter... there was nothing more she could do for Honour...

Unknown to her, however, at that moment, this was all Honour needed. A friend to hold her... to remember how much she was loved by her family and friends.

'Was... Artemis really in search of a friend?' the question echoed through Honour's mind as her shivers lessened in the warmth of Madeline's arms.

A lot didn't make sense.

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The two girls got ready, finding everything they needed and more in the spacious bathroom before meeting Bree in the common room that would then lead them out of the facilities they had chosen for the contestants and friends.

As it so happened, the fifty-fourth floor they had been blessed to occupy went all around the Great Arena in one colossal ring.

It was such a large facility that they soon found that the elevator was capable of travelling horizontally as well just to get them to another part of the same floor.

Their options for rooms to stay in made the decision hard. In the end, Bree had chosen a unique suite containing three sets of double rooms, each set equipped with one shared bathroom and a common room that joined them all together at the centre, allowing them one exit back into the winding maze of corridors that occupied the fifty-fourth floor.

The other three empty rooms were reserved for Lina, Crysta and potentially... Wyatt.

Bree wouldn't stop yawning as they exited the suite, "You two spend an eternity getting ready."

"How long have you been waiting out here?" Honour asked.

"Not long. Just an hour. Where are we headed?" Bree shrugged. Madeline stared at her slackjawed only to be more surprised when Honour proceeded without a hint of sympathy.

"Breakfast... I'm famished. The king said we can go to any restaurant on this floor and order what we want," Honour replied.

The girls started making their way through the 54th floor leaving a sheet of paper on the table without a second thought. This flimsy sheet of paper was a map...

And it was soon clear that the girls were going to get lost on the gargantuan floor.

Finding a restaurant should have been easy and all considering the 54th floor was packed with just as many facilities as the other dazzling parts of the Colosseum.

However...

They had walked for thirty whole minutes and found so many of these facilities that were still closed this early in the day.

Recreational facilities, saunas, indoor games... the girls were even sure they found a bar at some point(which was open, unlike the rest) but decided against lingering around the place.