

Chosen 471

Chapter 471 Old Friend And Valuable Escort

“WHAT!?!” the grey-eyed woman thundered. Mixed with her rage was a slight hint of fear... desperation.

“Try to calm down, Beatrice. You just heard what he just said...”

“I DON’T CARE ABOUT WHAT HE SAID...”

“Try to keep your voice down. You’re not getting anywhere by yelling,” Whitney tried again, cutting her distraught relative off.

A look of annoyance crossed the alpha’s face before he stepped up, “My decision is made. The safety of the capital and the werewolves of the empire comes first to me. Any irrational decisions I make now would only serve to put everyone in danger. Until communications are back up, I’m afraid I can’t help you.”

Alpha Phillip had his fist clenched on the tabletop while he spoke. His anger was evident... but so was his frail sense of control.

The man was trying his best to keep his cool. Watching the woman rant on and on about his incompetence was starting to get on his nerves. After the phone call with Caden, things had taken an unexpected turn and the man had declined her request to contact the king.

When Beatrice was just about to lash out again, a hand grabbed hers. The woman turned to Lyla who’d been silent the entire time, “Lyla... Not now... not after I’ve...”

“It’s not over yet, Beatrice. But you have done all you can here,” the girl paused and regarded the woman’s eyes, searching for some form of reason left behind her grey orbs, “It might not look like it but Alpha Phillip has his hands tied. He made the phone call without asking questions, didn’t he?”

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“Yes, but...”

“We just have to get another way of reaching the king that won’t endanger the lives of countless others,” Lyla reasoned.

The beta alpha chuckled, “You’re smarter than you look, human girl.”

Alpha Phillip pulled a form from one of the drawers and started filling it out before stamping it with the king’s official seal, “I hope you’re able to get to the king in time. If you face any resistance in getting to the king, you can use this form. It grants you direct clearance and audience with the king... no questions asked.

An alternative would be to look for your granddaughter. She has direct access to the king as well.”

Beatrice took the form from him, stunned by what he’d said. Her outburst had almost sealed her chances of getting help from the beta alpha.

She found that she had to remind herself to remain calm even when she was trying to stop the imminent destruction of the world as they knew it. Beatrice bowed her head, "I'm sorry... for the misunderstanding."

"Pay it no mind. It wouldn't be the first time," Phillip chuckled.

"If I may ask, how does Mady have direct access to the king?" Beatrice asked, suddenly curious to know what her granddaughter had been doing this whole time.

"Funny story... You owe it all to the princess. She's the one that started taking care of Madeline in the first place. When the king found out, everything else fell into place..." Alpha Phillip sighed, "...I don't think you have time for this kind of conversation. You should be going. Whitney, go with her. It will be easier that way," the man commanded, turning to the florist.

"I wasn't planning on letting her go on her own," Honour's mother bowed.

"Goddess be with you, Seeker," Alpha Phillip bowed.

With that, the group of four left the palace with a new destination in mind.

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Peter gripped the wheel of the car in deep thought as they slowed at the large opening gates that led them out of the palace. "So, where to next?" the man asked them.

Lyla frowned in response but didn't answer him.

Beatrice was the first to speak up.

"Do you know the way to the Great Arena?" she asked him.

The man frowned, "I was afraid you were going to say that... but... that's so many miles away. I don't trust my ability to drive for many hours."

"Oh... I hadn't realised," Beatrice responded before descending into her own thoughts as well, "Is there some sort of public transport we could use then?"

"Two days ago, that would be a possibility, but now—"

"PETER, WATCH OUT..." Lyla screamed in tandem with the sound of screeching wheels from a black SUV that came speeding out of nowhere.

Had it not been for Peter's swift action on the brakes, the two vehicles would have collided. From the sight of the hulking SUV, Peter's hatchback was bound to receive the lion's share of damage... along with his passengers.

"What the..." Peter exclaimed but stopped when he locked eyes with the other driver. The man's face contorted into one of rage. Peter was livid, "What the hell was he thinking?"

"Umm, Peter, that's a hunter," Whitney cried out.

“Hunter my foot... That’s freakin’ Trevor,” the man growled, unbuckling his seatbelt and exiting the car with fury dripping from his pores. Somehow, knowing the hunter’s name didn’t comfort the florist one bit.

He-Trevor-, was still a hunter after all.

From the black SUV, a lean man exited dressed fully in black, with a leather jacket on top of his normal clothes and a thick scabbard on his back.

The hilt of a sword peeked over his shoulder. His odd appearance indicated he was on duty. “Is it okay for him to approach a hunter like that?” Beatrice asked tensely.

Outside the car, Peter was stomping his way towards Trevor, looking ready to drive a punch through the man’s gut the moment they collided, “Ah! Peter, there’s the man I’ve been looking for,” Trevor exclaimed when he saw the livid man approaching.

“EXPLAIN YOURSELF, TREVOR,” Peter yelled at him.

“I needed some way to stop you from leaving without me. This went well, wouldn’t you say?” the hunter smirked, “Why so red, man? Aren’t you happy you don’t get to drive all the way to the Great Arena on your own? Last I checked, you don’t do long distances.”

The anger suddenly vanished from his face, “How did...”

“Alpha Phillip contacted the agency and told us of the situation. Since they didn’t have that many hunters to spare, I offered to escort you to the Great Arena. I didn’t save you those many years ago just to have you die on me again. No, sir.”

Trevor threw his head back and laughed boisterously.

Lyla had exited the car as well. She rubbed her temples and shook her head as though massaging a forming headache, “You nearly rammed into us. What’s so funny, Trevor?”

“Oh, don’t be such a stick in the mud. Cheer up! I’m here to help. I heard you have some urgent message for the king that must absolutely get delivered. Mind getting me in on what this is about? I came as fast as I could, you know...”

“Yeah, I can tell...” Peter started his explanation, speaking to the hunter at length. On the bright side, if Trevor chose to help them, they would get protection and someone more equipped to drive the long journey.

Perhaps nearly getting killed by the man’s recklessness was worth it... right?

Beatrice and Whitney watched this exchange from the safety of the backseats, “Are these three friends?”

“I would like to think so, but if that means we’ve got a ride to the Great Arena, I’m not complaining,” Beatrice chuckled.

Chapter 472 [Bonus chapter] Divine Calling

The smell of wood and steel... the faint scent of sweat and the strain of laser focus coupled with a wavering resolve. These were the first things that Honour noticed when she regained her senses...

Or not... It seemed, once more, that her senses were not her own. And neither were her actions. She was back in the body of a beautiful goddess dressed in a white flowing gown, standing in the compound of a grand white palace.

"Relax your shoulders... feel the wind... Don't tense up or you'll mess up. Do you know what my divine arrows can do if you miss? You could sink a whole island with one reckless mistake..."

"Arty, please... I can't relax when you keep scaring me like that," the bow-wielding female being instructed whined.

"Then do as I tell you or else I'll keep saying the same things over and over again until you get it right," Artemis replied in the same commanding tone, completely skipping over the girl's pleas.

Selene groaned but chose to do as the goddess had said.

'Breathe in, breathe out...

Clear your mind...

Relax your shoulders...

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Feel the wind...

Master how the arrow feels against the current before taking aim...

Hold the arrow steady...' the words she'd been hearing went through her mind as she finally set her eyes on the target before her. The silver bow in her hand had within it a silver arrow nocked.

The arrow itself hummed and shimmered with a frightening amount of power. This was the goddess of the hunt's favourite bow.

'She let me use it! Why?' Selene thought to herself before a voice interfered with her thoughts.

"That's it, Selene. You almost got it. Steady with your aim... focus on the target and the target alone..." for once, Artemis wasn't screaming into her ear but rather letting her voice flow gently into the breeze that would then be delivered into her ear.

The effect would allow the goddess of the moon to keep her focus on the target. 'Is she this serious about becoming friends with a Titan?' the woman asked herself as she finally felt her aim was true.

"There you go," Artemis's voice sang and with it, the goddess of the moon let the arrow loose.

The silver projectile sang gracefully through the air and struck the bullseye with a frightening shockwave that shook the moon palace and sent tremors through the entire moon's surface with its power.

"That's going to cause a few storms and hurricanes in the land of mortals. Hopefully, nothing serious," Selene sighed...

Regardless, she was happy with the result. The arrow had lodged itself deep into the target, half its shaft going through the sacred wood and straight through the red mark that Artemis had drawn into its bark.

“YOU DID IT, SELENE,” the goddess of the hunt squealed, dashing over to the target. Selene watched the joyful goddess marvel at the results of her mentoring, “We are not taking this out. I’ve never seen a more impressive shot. It was so accurate. Wow, you could take on my brother with a little bit more training.”

At this, Selene laughed hard, “Oh no... I would never be a match for the god of archery.”

“Yeah, that was being too ambitious of me... But still, this is beyond what I would have expected. To be honest, I thought you would destroy a few islands and cause a few accidental typhoons in the land of mortals before you got one shot on target,” Artemis chuckled... and Selene joined her in her merry mirth.

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The goddess of the hunt’s chuckles was drowned out as Honour woke up to a groggy start. Her mind was muddled with a poor grasp on the present. “Honour, are you awake? Honour wake up...” Madeline’s voice cut through her fog.

Honour lifted a tired eye and witnessed a blue glowing room. A blue mist covered every inch of their room along with a floral incense that slammed Honour with a wave of nostalgia.

‘Moon lotuses... The scent of moon lotuses...’ she thought to herself.

“Honour, can you... um, get rid of this before someone sees?” Madeline asked her.

The girl sighed and waved her hand in the air. The blue mist swirled all around the room, turning colourless the faster it went until it was gone from view. It was as though the mist had never existed.

“Are you okay?” Madeline put her hands on the girl’s shoulders.

“Yes, Mady... I’m...” Artemis’s face flashed through Honour’s mind once more, muddling her thoughts. The power of a goddess surged through her veins the more vivid these memories became. For a moment, she lost her grasp on reality.

Honour was a werewolf born to the Sirius empire and not a goddess that had been double-crossed in the name of vengeance, ‘No, I’m not that goddess,’ she tried to convince herself.

With each passing day, this was getting harder and the feeling of divinity was getting even stronger for her. The pull towards her original home was getting much stronger.

“I’m fine, Madeline. I just need to take a shower to clear my head,” she groaned, rolling out of the bed.

“The memories are still there, aren’t they?” the Seeker asked. Honour paused at the door to the bathroom, slightly out of breath.

“They are getting worse...” she replied, before closing the door behind her.

The young goddess made fists and clenched her toes, straining to feel her body. To grasp the feeling of her mortality.

'It's like I don't fit in my own skin anymore,' she sighed and stepped into the shower. Honour allowed the water to flow down her back. Shivers racked her body as she struggled to grasp her sense of self.

The dreams were not only getting clearer but they were also tugging at her heartstrings, rousing emotions from centuries ago... Old memories felt as clear as day, 'Was Artemis really my friend back then?'

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Inside her room, a delta rushed in through the door, "Where is she? Did you tell her?"

Crysta slowed down when Madeline didn't react to her urgent tone, "Mady?"

Madeline looked up from the bed and to the door to the shower, "It's Honour. That mist came back. It was worse this time..."

"Where is she?"

The girl pointed to the shower. As she did that, the sound of falling water came from the other side of the bathroom door. The girl began tapping her foot on the ground impatiently, "Alright then... You wait for her. I have to go to Lina now... Make sure you keep Honour calm. We wouldn't want her to get riled up. Who knows what could happen?"

"Hey... that's Honour you're talking about. She wouldn't..." Madeline recoiled at the thought.

"I know, Mady, I know. Just keep her safe and calm. When she can, meet me, Lina and Bree, before the start of the games," with that, the delta left the room, leaving Madeline frozen at the goddess's bed. The sight of the swirling mist wouldn't leave her mind. Honour's face when she'd tried to wake her had looked odd as well.

Instead of the normal Honour, they were used to, the woman that had lain in the bed had been stunningly beautiful with perfect skin and features. There had been an ethereal glow about her body and when Madeline had tried to wake her up, her eyebrows had scrunched in frustration.

It was only after her opening one eye that her appearance began to revert back to her normal self... 'How much time do we have left, Honour?' she wondered to herself.

Chapter 473 Uncanny Resemblance

Crysta rushed through the colossal hotel in search of the exit, leaving Madeline behind to tend to the young goddess.

After getting lost in the facility so many times the day before, she now knew her way through the maze of corridors and doors and knew how to get out of the massive facility.

At times, she wondered how hard it had been for them back then... considering there were signs at the end of every corridor to guide them through.

However, after hearing Bree's recollection of the trio's first day in the Great Colosseum, she figured getting lost was normal for everyone.

Eventually, she made it to the exit of the Great Arena and rushed out, following Lina's presence through the mind link.

The tournament was about to begin and they all had to be present for the announcement of the rules, but something had come up at the last minute. Something so drastic that the princess left her station and rushed out immediately.

Leaving Bree to follow the bullet-like princess, she rushed to call the others. That's when she'd found Madeline frozen and unable to react to the news.

'Dammit, we can't afford to be this disorganised before the start of the Royal Games. We barely won the Trials as it was,' the girl screamed in her mind.

'For goddess's sake, what are you thinking, prince Drake?'

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Lina stood in front of a short-haired male holding her arms out and barring the way to the Marshland beyond the settlements surrounding the Great Arena.

The man was dressed in travel clothes with a bag on his back.

Drake was taller than her and looked that much stronger but that didn't seem to stop Lina from standing up to him. Her fiery sapphire orbs stared intensely into the identical copy.

Despite Drake's serious injuries only days prior, he looked perfectly fine now, "Where are you going, Drake?"

"I have something to do, Lina. Out of my way," the prince replied calmly.

"Why won't you talk to me? What are you going to do? Everyone's here for the Royal Games... Do you... Do you think I can't win? Do you also think I don't stand a chance against him?" Lina yelled.

She was panting and beads of sweat had started to form on her brow from the early morning exertion... but that didn't bother her. Drake looked taken aback by her words, "I didn't say that..."

"Then where are you going? What could be more important than cheering me on like Mum and Dad? Not even our restless busy sister would do something like this. She watched me when I went against Liam at the reserve," Lina stared him in the eye.

The prince's neutral expression softened and he walked up to his sister, pulling her into an embrace.

Lina sucked in a deep breath, her thoughts racing even more. Frustration was replaced with curiosity, worry and fear, 'Drake?! Hugging... What has he gotten himself into?'

"I'm sorry, Little Sister. This has nothing to do with you. I would have loved to watch you win against him in this year's games. I know you can. I've watched you train and I know what you're capable of," he said in a soothing tone.

“Then why... why aren't you staying to watch? What have you been doing these past two years, Drake?” Lina asked him.

The prince opened his mouth to speak and at that moment, his voice failed him... just like it always had. Countless times before, he'd tried this same thing.

To tell them everything he'd come to know about himself, but divine laws bound him from doing such a thing. Even now, he found himself testing to see if the laws still bound him... and they did.

Ever so tightly...

His only comfort was that he wasn't the only one who had to endure this...

No, in fact, his own mate was in the same predicament, “I don't know how to tell you, sister, but one day... I will. And when I do, I hope you'll understand everything. I'm onto something. I can't tell you what it is, but it's important. And I have to see it through, so if you can find it within you to forgive me, please...”

Lina stayed silent for a while before she spoke up, “Mum and Dad didn't bother following me. You know what that means, don't you?”

“They are giving up... Yeah, I know.”

The prince flinched when his sister suddenly lightly slammed her fist into his chest, “We'd never give up on family. They have run out of options, Drake. Don't ever think we'd give up on you... ever.”

The two royals finally broke their embrace and Lina stepped out of her brother's way, “I hope you find what you're looking for, Drake.”

“I will find it, Little Sister. If you don't hear from me in a few hours, try calling me. I started using the electric telephone, you know,” the man smirked.

“You don't have to use the whole word, you know. How old do you plan on sounding?”

“Older than you, Little Sister,” the smile on Drake's face suddenly fell, “Take care of them for me.”

And with that, the prince turned his back on his sister and shifted into his white and black wolf before dashing from sight. Lina stood frozen at the spot clenching her fists in frustration... Drake had left, just like he'd told their parents he would that morning.

A disorganised rumbling of footsteps notified the incoming group of werewolves that had tried following Lina. In the end, they were all too late except for her. Guards and pack warriors wanted to know what all the commotion was all about.

A member of the Organising Committee approached the princess, “Your Highness, the games are about to start. Would you like them to be postponed?”

Lina was quiet for a moment before someone else broke her dazed state, “Lina, where is he?”

Crysta and Bree forged their way through the crowd until they made it to their friend.

With them around, Crysta's reactions came smoother and her mind cleared much faster, "He left... He said he had something important to do but that he wouldn't tell me what it was yet."

"What's that supposed to mean? Is there anything more important than..."

"Crysta!" the princess stopped her rambling friend. The delta balled her fists in frustration and stared in the direction of the marshland. The random tufts of tall grass stood tall and opaque. The smell of damp soil assailed her nostrils.

Lina had run across this treacherous expanse of land like it was nothing. And that was only because of her abnormal abilities. If they had to go through this place without that to help them, she couldn't even imagine what trouble they would go through.

There was no doubt that a multitude of horrors was hidden within the damp bug-infested swamp. Not to mention the cold that was bound to eat at someone little by little. And yet, the prince had dived right back into that cold hell. The scattered bundles of tall grass obstructed the view completely at some point, concealing anyone who was at least five hundred metres in.

If the prince was still nearby, they wouldn't know, "Let's just get back and get ready for the games."

"But Wyatt...? he won't be able to..." Bree started.

"I wasn't planning on playing the games with Wyatt. He should rest... This time, Bree will take his place," the princess announced, turning to face the members of the Organising Committee that were present.

Fidgeting with pen and paper, they began to note down the changes the princess had just made to her team, "Is Bree the same person you'd put on your list of potential candidates?"

"Yeah, that's the one," the princess replied.

"Very well. If the three of you would just go to the Sirius pack's Waiting room, everything will be explained from there," the short man politely suggested.

"Alright."

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The Sirius Waiting room, as it had been called was a room meant for the contestants of the Sirius Royal family to prepare themselves for the games. Within the room was a large screen that was split into six sections to show different parts of the arena.

Three lockers for the three contestants, access to changing rooms and showers for both genders. At the centre of the room was a large triangular table with three chairs set for the contestants.

The wolf sigil of the Sirius empire was drawn into the surface of the table and the walls were lined with blue ribbons as was the colour used by the empire at events like this, unlike the green of the Lycaon empire.

Lina sat at the triangular table with Crysta and Bree, her chin resting on her hands while they had a moment to gather their thoughts.

"Any of you nervous?" the princess asked.

"Of course, we are... we are going against the royals of the Lycaon empire. To be honest, I don't like our odds," Crysta said through gritted teeth.

"If you're worried about having to face off against Cole, you can leave that to me. I'll handle the Steel Tank of Lycaon," Lina offered.

"No, we handle this as a team. Werewolves live in packs for a reason," Bree cut in.

"You're right... but we don't even know what the games are going to be this year. Last time, we ended up witnessing a duel between my brother and Cole. It wasn't pretty."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. Cole doesn't go down easy. If it comes down to a one-on-one duel, I don't know what we'll be able to do against him," Crysta whined.

"Well, we won't be able to do anything if all we do is worry about crossing paths. If we are defeated in our minds, then the battle is already lost. Look back to the training you've been doing these past years. We've come a long way since the last time we saw him."

"You're right as always, Lina. We can't give up hope so soon. Still... I can't help but fear our opponents," Crysta tried, turning to the screen which had just sparked to life.

"AND NOW, LET'S LOOK AT THE CONTESTANTS WE'LL BE HAVING FOR THE GAMES THIS YEAR!" the announcer's voice suddenly blared through the speakers.

"From the Sirius pack," the top six portions of the screen suddenly flickered and showed three contestants with varying expressions.

The first was Bree, her amber eyes, while a signal for weakness in this tournament, held more determination than the spectators expected.

Crysta's image barely looked at the camera and held a look of boredom, as though taking the picture was a waste of her time. Nonetheless, the prestigious green hue of her iris was one to be feared by those of the werewolf community.

And finally, Lina's face held a blank expression. Normally her blue eyes would send a wave of fear through the audience but what had captured their attention now was not simply that, but rather the astronomical transformation of her appearance.

Her hair fell to her shoulders and with a neutral expression, she looked like a carbon copy of the Lost Luna, Luna Katie of the Lycaon pack.

Katie's story was now known throughout the entire kingdom which meant everyone knew her face. Staring at Lina now, the resemblance was so uncanny that it wiped away all doubts of the Lost Luna's identity.

The family resemblance was undeniable. After a short moment of silence, the crowd erupted in support of the Sirius pack.

However, what appeared on the screen next drowned out their screams in an instant...

"AND HERE ARE THE CONTESTANTS THAT WILL BE REPRESENTING THE LYCAON PACK..."

Chapter 474 First Stage

The silence and tension in the Sirius Waiting Room were so thick a knife could cut it. Bree and Crysta momentarily lost their composure the moment they set their eyes on the screen. Lina, on the other hand, simply froze and scrunched her eyebrows... 'I'm not scared,' she convinced herself.

Noticing her thoughts had gone through the mind link, 'And neither are the two of you.'

'Yes, Lina,' Bree and the delta replied dutifully, keeping their eyes on the screen.

The first frame held a picture of a jolly crimson-eyed alpha with blonde hair that had been cut short. His toothy smirk was playful and warm while also displaying a sense of confidence that was impossible to miss.

It took a while for Lina to recognize who it was, but after squinting her eyes for a bit, she gasped in recognition.

The red-eyed handsome man in the first frame was the beta alpha of the King of Lycaon. It was none other than Jason. Except for his eyes and jolly expression, he looked different.

'He's really changed his look.' the princess thought to herself before moving on to the next frame.

The next image was of a man she couldn't recognise at first sight, but after reading the name below his image, the colour drained from her face. 'Beta Alpha Kyle of the Lycaon pack! Kyle... Kyle is a beta alpha! Since when is Kyle a beta alpha? And what's with that neck and shoulders? He looks like he's been lifting elephants for a living with all that mass,' the girl screamed in her head.

Yes, Kyle's hulking form was impossible to hide even from the half-image they'd taken of him.

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There was the matter of his expression as well. Kyle wore a cocky grin on his face as he looked straight into the camera. For some reason, he seemed higher than the rest of the contestants in the other frames... like his oppressive aura had forced everyone to appear small in comparison to him.

His face, along with his hulking form, was enough to send shivers down anyone's spine.

The third frame was of Cole Lycaon who was, by far the calmest of the three members of that team. He didn't wear a neutral expression like Lina but his slight smile and warm expression were not that pronounced either. His calm features and Jason's jolliness were enough to even out Kyle's animosity.

"Are we allowed to panic now?" Bree chuckled loudly after a short pause.

"Not even in your wildest dreams," Lina returned. Crysta almost said something but stopped at the sight of her alpha. Lina looked... excited.

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The Lycaon waiting room was a mirror image of the Sirius Waiting room, with only the sigil at the table and the green colours as a difference between the two identical rooms. It was also intuitive that the two rooms were on opposite sides of the Great Arena too.

Cole sat in his chair tapping his finger unconsciously on the table until the screen sparked to life. They watched as the faces of their opponents appeared on the screen. The king gasped at the sight of Lina's transformed face. It looked like his mate's, but being Cole, he could tell the difference.

Lina was younger, after all.

The minuscule differences between Katie's sister and her were all plain as day to the man, however, he couldn't deny the resemblance. Katie had a tendency to smile when facing strong opponents. Her emotions were always on display even though everyone around knew not to get on her bad side.

Lina, on the other hand... was an awakening of a powerful wolf from Katie's same lineage. Cole had no doubts the games would be interesting this year. So much so that he didn't really trust his impervious skin to get him through the games unscathed.

"Hey, Cole, have you noticed we are going up against an all-girls team this year?" Jason asked suddenly.

"Yeah, I've noticed... I wonder what they are thinking," Cole replied.

Kyle raised a brow at his companions, "What does being girls have to do with anything?" Cole and Jason stared between themselves and the rookie beta alpha, trying to discern what they'd said wrong, "Are you already forgetting who your mate is?"

"No... but, well... Katie is Katie. There is a difference," Cole tried.

"Not by much... Lina is related to Katie if you've forgotten. And look at that resemblance! Besides, I've seen many females do surprising stuff other than Katie. Samantha, Jackeline, Sandra... all of them were really impressive fighters," Kyle argued.

"Kyle, we aren't looking down on them or anything... It's just that when it comes down to a brawl, it would be easier fighting males than females," Jason tried his turn.

"Oh!" Kyle thought about it for a moment, "I guess that makes some sort of sense. I hadn't thought of it that way."

"Were you really planning on beating them up as you did with Caden?" Jason blanched.

"I grew up in a place where females were just as scary as males. Excuse me if I don't see their gender as an excuse for holding back," Kyle huffed, "And delta Bella wouldn't let me forget that."

The other two shrugged it off, turning their eyes back to the screen.

The screen then showed their faces on the screen, drowning out the noise of the audience, "Kyle, did you have to look so much like you in front of the camera?" Jason cringed at the man's cocky image.

"And could you look any more different?" Kyle countered the now-blonde Jason, "It's like you're trying to make a statement."

Jason switched his attention to the current picture of him that he'd worked so hard to change, "Do you think she'll notice?"

Kyle sighed, "Of course, she will. I'm sure she would notice a new freckle just as much as your hair turning blonde and receiving a thousand piercings."

“Ugh, don’t remind me. The piercings kept healing before I got the chance to even get any ornaments through. It was impossible to get that one. Now I know why werewolf women don’t pierce their ears,” the blonde threw his hands in the air in exasperation.

“Katie had her ears pierced though,” Kyle wondered, “Well, I guess she couldn’t heal so well when her wolf was suppressed. It never occurred to me.”

“Both of you get your head in the game, the Announcer is about to declare the rules of this year’s games,” Cole suddenly intervened.

“Yes, your majesty,” the beta alphas replied in unison, compelled by the power of their leader.

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“The Royal games have never been predictable and each year, the games have been different, chosen by a group of werewolves and hunters and the final decision for this exciting event is kept secret until this very moment.

In a few minutes, the first game will be starting. Without wasting any more time, I will explain how this year’s royal games are going to play out.

The Royal games are played in three stages and different games are chosen at each stage and played over the span of a week.

These games will be revealed to the contestants only ten minutes before the start of each stage and they will only have ten minutes to come up with a strategy.”

As soon as the announcer had said this, the lights in the Waiting rooms went dark and the screens floating above the arena suddenly started showing what was inside each room.

Within the Waiting Rooms, the screens showed what was happening in their rooms alone. This way, the royals knew the cameras were rolling, but couldn’t see what was happening in the opponent’s Waiting Room.

The audience, on the other hand, had a view of everything as it happened.

The entrance to the Sirius Waiting room suddenly opened, allowing a short man in a fitting black suit to walk in. Behind him, a timid assistant followed, gripping a yellow envelope that she placed on top of the sigil on the triangular table at the centre.

“Your ten minutes will begin...” the man pulled up his sleeve and stared at a luxurious watch on his wrist. Together with the motion of his thumb, he said, “NOW.”

A mirror representation of this was going on in the Lycaon Waiting room. Lina calmly retrieved the envelope and opened it. As soon as she had looked at the first upper case bold letters at the very top of the missive inside, her eyes widened in shock.

Aloud, she read, “THE BLIND SEARCH!

This contest will happen completely without the help of one’s sense of sight.

Contestants shall be required to make their way through the forest in the grand arena in search of special items set to give off a particular scent and return them to this room. After finding this item, the contestant shall return to the Waiting room and the next shall go out.

Maiming of contestants is absolutely prohibited. However, stealing the other team's items is allowed. Combat between players is allowed for as long as it is within the limits of safe combat.

For every claimed item, a team will be awarded three points.

For every stolen item, the stealing team will be awarded one point and the other team whose item has been stolen will lose one point.

Only one person per team can be out in the forest at a time.

Removing the head gear covering one's eyes while on the field will lead to a penalty and the loss of three points. If there is an item in hand at the time of regaining sight, this item will be considered pointless and be removed from the forest."

Lina stared at the picture at the bottom before placing the paper on the table before them. It was an aerial image of the Great Arena. The arena at the centre of the gargantuan colosseum had been completely converted into a forest, filled with obstacles of all sorts scattered through it.

"Just how big is this damned thing?" Crysta shuddered.

"You were here the last time, weren't you?" Bree wondered.

"Well, yeah... but... It's bigger when I'm told I have to get through the games," the delta replied.

Five minutes had gone since the timer had started. There was a timer on the screen counting down. The red glare from the digits running down felt too ominous to stare at, "They've really outdone themselves this year," Lina giggled, staring at the aerial image before them, "I'm guessing this picture won't even do us any good since we are going to be blind the whole way."

"Yeah, that's probably true... How are we supposed to make our way back if we can't see either?" Bree asked them.

"You have a point there. It would prove to be too hard. There is a lot we don't know here. What do these 'items' look like, to begin with?" Lina asked, turning to the man standing by the table.

The short man backed away from the princess, "All we can tell you is what is in the envelope," the man nervously chuckled.

"You look far too happy," Crysta growled at him.

"Of course, I am. I didn't know what was in the envelope. Now that you've read it out loud, I'm excited. I can't help but wonder what you're going to do," the man replied sincerely.

"Crysta, we don't have time to waste. Three minutes left. We need a strategy otherwise we won't be able to finish this. How long will this game last?" Lina asked.

"One hour and a half."

“That’s not so much time... There is so much we don’t know about this, to begin with,” Lina argued.

“Two minutes, Lina. Who’s going first?” Bree intervened.

“I don’t have trouble going first, but would you want to get us started? You weren’t able to participate in the Trials, so you could start this one,” Lina smiled at her friend.

“Really... Okay, that would be awesome. But... I don’t know how I will return once I’ve found the item,” the amber-eyed girl perked up.

“Don’t worry about that. I just figured it out. You’ll use the mind link...”

A loud siren started to beep through the Waiting Room, forcing the girls to turn to the screen. Nine... Eight... Seven...

The timer was counting down. “How do you plan to go out? On foot or in your wolf form,” the short man asked. In his hand, he held a blue blindfold with an adjustable metal clasp on both ends.

His assistant to his right held a large metal headgear which also bore a blue ribbon at the part where the wolf’s eyes should have been. They could only go out wearing one of these two items, which meant they had to choose which form to spend the search in before retrieving the item.

The colosseum was huge and there were plenty of obstacles.

Six...

There were so many choices that could lead them to victory and so many others that could lead them to defeat... but no sure way of knowing. How were they supposed to go about winning a competition like this in the first place?

Five...

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Going out in their wolf forms allowed them the advantage of speed and heightened senses while staying in their human forms allowed them the advantage of manoeuvring the field carefully.

Four...

There was the matter of these items they were supposed to pick up. There was no telling if these items could be easily lifted in their wolf forms. There was no telling if some of these items were stuck somewhere... Their human fingers would be able to pry them from any place they were stuck in... if that happened to be the case. There was a lot they didn’t know.

Three...

There was also the likelihood of meeting someone from the opposing team while they were out. Would it be better to meet them in their human forms or werewolf forms?

Two...

Bree wondered if they were even allowed to face off against each other once they were out there...

“Does this mean we get to fight them blind?”

One...

“Yes, Bree, if it comes down to it, you’ll have to fight,” Crysta answered in an ominous tone.

Chapter 475 Sudden... and Interesting Development

Facing off against one of them was a definite possibility. Intuitively, an alpha’s senses were much stronger than those of the average wolf... and an average wolf was exactly what Bree was.

She had the amber in her eyes to prove it.

Her mind went over her own perspective of the game at hand.

To keep the other team from stealing points, if at all they got petty, they’d most definitely pick a fight with you.

Finding an item was bound to be hard and it made sense that fully retrieving one would earn them a whole three points.

When it came down to it, stealing an item offered the opposing team fewer points. However, if the item was stolen from an enemy that was still in the process of returning the item to the Waiting Room, then the two-point gap would take on a whole new meaning.

They would have lost an item that could get them three points and the opponents would have had an easy time getting it from them. Two points, while less than three, were much easier to get... which made that strategy dangerous.

‘So, I might have to fight after all!’ A shiver went down Bree’s spine when she realised this was going to be a lot harder than she’d first thought it would be.

Going through the forest blind was starting to see like the least of her worries. Now she had to worry about fighting blind as well. Were they even capable of fighting blind, to begin with?

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“Have you made your choice, Ms Bree?” the short man asked her.

“Oh... I don’t know... This is so hard. If I end up meeting them when I’m in, I could... Oh no!” a loud grating sound suddenly interrupted her speech.

The three girls turned around to see the front of the Waiting room slowly lift up, letting in a stream of golden light from the other side...

The damp scent of the forest wafted into the Waiting room along with a cool breeze. Even the rhythmic chirping of birds could be heard in this man-made forest. The occasional breeze and rustle of leaves, “They really go all out with creating the environment,” Crysta exclaimed.

The timer was counting down...

The games had started and Bree hadn’t chosen what form she would take. A choice that seemed impulsive at first boiled down to reason and got buried in a mountain of worries and doubts.

Two hands grabbed the anxious girl’s shoulders and turned her away from the Great Arena.

“Hey Bree, look at me. Deep breaths. We all get nervous,” Lina cooed.

“What are you talking about? You’re perfectly calm,” the girl argued.

Lina chuckled, “Laughter and anxiety are very similar actually. If you decided to laugh right now, you would find it really easy. You don’t have to go out the moment the timer starts running. Calm down... this is a blind search after all. You have to listen to your senses better. That’s what will get you through this round. See that,” Lina pointed to a blue handkerchief that had been placed on the table.

That handkerchief is laced with the perfume that the items will be emitting. Your sense of smell will be your most important sense out there,” Lina suggested.

“Okay,” Bree picked up the cloth and brought it up to her nose. The distinct scent of the perfume that had been infused in the cloth flowed into her nose. Her tracking training kicked in and she memorized the scent with an astonishing degree of clarity.

With this small action, the nerves she significantly lessened. Bree felt ready to take on the world. “Let’s win this, Bree.”

Bree nodded and turned to the short man holding a blindfold in his hands, “I’ll go in my human form,” she announced.

‘There is too much I don’t know about the battlefield or the items we’ll be picking up. They’ve been too vague about that subject that I can’t even tell if they are talking about actual items or simply the same thing.’

There was so much the girl didn’t know, but whether she liked it or not, the games had begun and she’d already used five minutes to settle her nerves. She couldn’t afford to lose any more time... at the same time, she couldn’t afford to be careless.

The short man had her turn around while he fastened the blue blindfold over her eyes. In a moment, the world had gone completely black and the rest of her senses began to heighten.

Bree walked out through the large doors, feeling the cold air hit her once she was outside. Her ears immediately picked up on the different sounds in the forest. The birds chirping in the woods, the leaves rustling, the wind whistling, the sound of her footsteps crushing the leaves beneath her shoes.

There was so much information flowing into her mind through her senses that she couldn’t decipher anything at first. A few more steps into the forest and she collided head-first into a tree.

Lina suppressed the laughter that wanted to escape her, “Hey, Lina, I can tell you’re laughing,” Bree said through the mind link.

“Well, you bumped right into a tree,” the princess said to her in a controlled tone. Despite this tone, the waves of mirth coming from the princess were utterly unrestrained.

“Well, I wonder what you’ll be doing when I finally get out of your field of view,” the girl huffed but continued feeling her way as she walked deeper into the forest.

“Focus, Bree... Focus on the wind, sniff out the items we have to find,” Lina encouraged.

“I know what I’m supposed to do. You don’t have to tell me.”

“Yeah yeah yeah...” Lina chuckled and watched her friend cautiously advance into the woods. ‘So far so good, I guess,’ the princess thought to herself.

Lina genuinely thought everything was alright until she listened to the words the announcer was saying. Her blood ran cold...

“The contestant from the Sirius Waiting room finally came out. Wow, she certainly took her time. If I remember correctly, this girl’s name is Bree. And she is the first average werewolf to ever play in the Royal games. I don’t know what gave her the confidence to go against the most powerful werewolves in the world, but she’s here folks... and we expect a good show.

Oh my, looks like she’s still having trouble finding her way through the forest. While she’s having trouble going through the forest, Alpha Jason seems to be moving through it just fine. In fact, it’s almost like he’s running with his eyes open...”

“WAIT... RUNNING?” Lina nearly screamed at the screen.

But she couldn’t deny what her eyes were showing her. On the screen in the waiting room, one of the frames showed a clear video of King Cole’s beta alpha running through the woods with a green blindfold around his eyes.

He was clearly blind but that didn’t slow him down one bit. He was jogging through the woods like it was nothing, dodging all the trees without a single problem in search of their items.

The commentator’s voice came again through the Waiting Room speakers, “I’m here with Stan. An expert tracker from the Lycaon empire. He’s also an informant for the Hunter’s Organisation and a member of the Royal Games Organising committee this year. Stan, tell us what inspired you to come up with this... unorthodox game that seems to have the royals at the edges of their seats.”

“Well, Bill, this is one of those games you just sit down and only dream about. When I first mentioned this to the committee, I had expected them to turn it down but... pfft, here we are. I guess dreams do come true.”

“Yes, Stan. They certainly do. Tell us about what we are supposed to expect from this. Speaking personally, I find this game bloody impossible to win,” Bill asked.

“Oh, but that’s where you’re wrong, Bill. For werewolves, this is a different matter. Our kind picks up so much at a single time that there is almost no way to distinguish these pieces of information without practice. And with that control comes the power of tracking. The best trackers out there will tell you that they barely need their eyes anymore. They’ve got all the senses they need to find their prey.”

“Fascinating, Stan. I had no idea the simple idea of tracking could hold so much information...” there was a momentary pause, “What’s this? Could he have...”

“Yes... yes, he has. I applaud that beta alpha’s unique talent,” Stan replied fondly, as though he’d known the contestant once before.

Lina tensed up when she noticed the alpha tip his head to the sky, scrunching his nose a bit. In the corner of the screen, she could see a waving green ribbon.

Jason had found his first item...

'Not good,' the princess felt her stomach turn. The beta alpha turned his head directly at the ribbon swaying in the air. It was high up in an oak tree and he would clearly need to climb to find it.

He thought for a bit before smirking... with that, he turned his head away from the ribbon and started jogging deeper into the forest.

"Jason just abandoned one of the items he'd clearly found. What is he thinking?" Lina gawked at the screen.

"That idiot... I didn't think he was the petty type," Crysta yelled at the monitor.

"Calm down, Crysta. Jason is not breaking any rules. Besides, this competition is about having fun. How you win, no matter how underhanded and as long as it doesn't break the rules, is all a part of the game," the princess chuckled.

"You can't be fine with this, Lina. Can you?" Crysta argued.

"There is not much I can do about it. I'm just hoping Bree will be fine. That's all I'm hoping for. If she can find our item and bring it back, then nothing will really matter. Stealing another person's item would only get them one point and remove one from us. Even if Jason was able to get an item that belongs to us, we would still be ahead of him as long as we retrieved our own items," Lina explained, switching her attention to the monitor showing Bree.

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Bree was moving shakily through the woods, her world glitching in and out of her perception. The information flowing into her mind wasn't slowing down... No, instead, it was increasing. The more she spent without her eyes, the more her other senses heightened.

The sound of the birds, the sound of woodpeckers... even the shuffle of a cricket's wings and the sound of falling leaves were things she was becoming aware of. Her wolf forced its way forward, but the girl forced the urges to shift to the back of her mind.

Shifting would only get her turn cancelled and they would even lose points for it because the ribbon covering her eyes would be no more.

'Breathe in... Breathe out...' a voice suddenly wafted into her ears through the wind, interrupting her chaotic thoughts. With this voice's invasion came a powerful sense of calmness.

This voice sounded a lot like one she'd come to know. However, the way she heard it was alien compared to what she was used to.

Instead of coming through her mind link, Honour's voice was echoing through the wind and viciously cut through the storm in her mind instead of adding to it.

'Clear your mind, Bree... Relax your shoulders... This is no different from the training you've gone through...' the voice came again.

'Don't fight your senses... Embrace them, Bree. You're a werewolf, not a human. Allow your senses to take over you. Let them be your eyes...'

The girl took in a deep breath once again, listening to the words in the wind. As she did, the little panic left suddenly vanished. Her fangs extended within her mouth and her ears grew longer, sharpening into tips with grey fur sprouting from the top of her head.

Surprisingly, he found that she wasn't afraid of the transformation at all.

With the sudden change, her senses rose even higher and higher, letting in every little detail, overwhelming her mind so much that she was starting to feel the world spin.

Right when she was about to doubt the voice in the wind, the most unexpected thing happened.

A monochromatic image of her surroundings suddenly became clear to her, revealing everything that was around her, almost like she had never needed her eyes to see.

"Folks, there has been a shocking new development... Is she..."

"Yes, Bill... That girl right there... is she sprinting?"

The crowd gasped before erupting into a chaotic uproar...

Bree was zipping through the woods at top speed, making a beeline for something that had caught her attention.

Chapter 476 A Battle Against Odds

Lina stared dumbfounded at the video of one of her best friends dashing on the screen. Bree was weaving through the trees faster than anyone thought possible making great distances without a moment of hesitation.

And doing spectacularly so with a blindfold over her eyes.

She ducked when a branch was too low and leapt over roots with great ease and effortless foresight as she continued to make her way deeper and deeper into the manmade forest.

The carefully planted cameras in the woods kept switching at rapid speeds just to keep up with her inhuman speed. Thankfully, she wasn't wandering aimlessly through the woods which made it a lot easier for the cameras to keep track of where she would appear next.

An algorithm that had run the recent data from the forest calculated her path and brought up a dormant camera in the distance, far ahead of her current position, her most anticipated destination.

The screen showed a large pit in the centre of a clearing. At the very bottom of it was something waving in the air... a blue ribbon, but that was not all.

This ribbon was attached firmly to something else which was also painted with blue strips... a lance planted deep in the ground. It wasn't long after showing this item that Bree broke through the treeline and approached the pit.

There was a gasp from the audience when they saw where she was going. At that speed, she would fall straight into the pit and in the worst-case scenario, hit her head on the steel shaft of the lance.

But to everyone's surprise, that didn't happen. As soon as the girl broke through the treeline, she slowed down her pace and stopped at the rim of the large pit. Bree stood straight and sniffed the air for confirmation.

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The ribbon was blowing in her direction which explained why she was so sure of its location.

The deadly accuracy with which she had discerned its location, however, was not to be scoffed at. "Astounding, she found the item this fast and without much trouble. Who could have known there was a werewolf out there that wasn't a royal but was this talented? Am I right, Stan?" the commentator screamed over the speakers.

"Actually, Bill. Talents like these have been heard of over the years. Once in a while, a wolf is born into this world with an astounding sense of smell and with the ability to discern their surroundings with such deadly accuracy that it's almost like magic," the guest speaker explained.

"Would you happen to be one of these special werewolves, Stan?"

"Unfortunately, I am not. I had a lot of training to get where I am today and I still find enigmas like the girl down there," Stan sighed.

"There you have it folks. The Sirius team brought a trump card into the games this year. They seem determined to show us that the colour of one's eyes does not determine how strong they can really be," Bill announced with a well of enthusiasm that was just impossible to ignore.

Bree didn't linger at the rim of the pit. Having grasped the nature of her new surroundings, she stepped inside and slid down the sloping wall of the pit and made her way to the bottom. However, as soon as she had, something else caught her attention.

With everyone paying attention to her, no one noticed the presence of another werewolf. Standing on the other side of the rim was a blonde man whose crimson eyes were covered with a green blindfold.

"I didn't think she would choose you to join the Sirius pack's three contestants. Clearly, there is something special about you since you've already made it this far without your sight," Jason chuckled, staring down at the girl approaching the lance, "Now hand that over..."

The beta alpha went silent as he heard the resonating sound of metal. Bree had yanked the lance from the ground without listening to a word he had to say.

"I should have known Lycaon wouldn't play fair."

"Oh, but I am. There are points awarded for stealing an item and a point deducted from the opponent. I'm not the one who makes the rules," Jason smirked.

Bree turned to him and froze in place, unmoving.

Jason stared at her for a good thirty seconds, trying to understand why she wasn't trying to escape the bowl she was standing in, "Did you suddenly forget how to climb?"

"Nah... but if you waste the whole game trying to steal my item, then no one wins. It would be easy for you to steal this if I tried climbing out of this thing.

So, if you want the item, you will have to come and take it from me," with that said, the girl gave the lance a good spin, wielding it like a deadly weapon and facing the alpha in a determined stance.

"Interesting..." Jason stepped onto the sloping side of the steep side of the bowl-like pit and began sliding into it. A buzzing drone high in the sky hovered above the pit to get a better view of what was going on inside.

Since both of these werewolves were blindfolded, it was hard to believe they could move around this confidently.

Still, to all that had been watching, favour had begun to tip in Bree's favour. The young girl was handling herself far better and more smoothly than the beta alpha in the absence of sight.

As it turned out, sliding down the side of this manmade bowl was more disorienting than the alpha had initially anticipated. He first lost his sense of altitude and the mental image of his surroundings suddenly wavered.

A wave of panic threatened to get a hold of him, making his balance suffer next. While he was trying to regain his bearings and make it look as though nothing was wrong with him, he felt his instincts flare up.

The sound of rapid footsteps was the first to reach his ears, alerting him of motion coming from something in front of him, 'Of course, she had some trick up her sleeve...'

Bree wasn't planning on actually fighting the beta alpha of the Lycaon pack. While she believed herself to be a decent fighter, she was not ignorant of the power difference between herself, an amber-eyed werewolf and Jason, a crimson-eyed beta alpha.

If the most powerful werewolves in the world were to be ranked up, she had no doubt that Jason would end up in the top ten... And those weren't odds she was willing to test.

There was simply no way she could challenge him to a fair fight and she wouldn't do so if she could help it. So, instead, she'd asked him to join her at the bottom of the somewhat deep pit for a fair battle for the item she'd found.

Just when she heard him start to slide down the smooth side of the man-made earthen bowl, she called on the accurate moving image of her surroundings and got low to the ground and gathered all the energy her legs could muster.

The girl then launched into a sprint going straight for the alpha. The crowd watched, entranced by the sudden action, as the small nimble wolf went up against a creature way out of her league.

By the time Jason realised what was happening, all he could do was bring his arms out in front of him to block her attack, "You don't play fair either."

The alpha grunted when two feet slammed into his forearms with enough force to throw and bury him into the side of the man-made bowl, creating a Jason-shaped depression.

Bree leapt off the beta alpha's arms and flipped high in the air, flying in a neat arc and landing smoothly on the rim of the earthen bowl, "See you later, Jason."

The beta alpha rolled to the bottom of the pit before rapidly standing. The man dusted himself off a bit and out of sheer amusement, threw his head back in a great peal of laughter.

This was the first time he'd ever been tricked by an average werewolf and he'd be lying if he said he wasn't intrigued by the sudden turn of events.

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After what Bree had just pulled, the girl had her heart pumping very fast. Whether it was from adrenaline or the fear of having attacked a beta alpha, the real reason was unknown to her and irrelevant as well.

She had only one mission alone now...

And that was to get the item back to their Waiting room which was now serving as their base. The girl dashed forward as fast as her legs could carry her. To her surprise, this was faster than her normal human running speed.

For some reason, after she'd listened to Honour's voice in the wind, her abilities and senses had doubled allowing her to reach speeds she'd never tapped into in her human form.

Her thighs and calves screamed for relief but she couldn't stop... not now when she was so close to victory.

Fortunately for her, the mental image that her senses projected in her mind was more than her eyes could ever offer her, for she could even see around trees in a way she couldn't describe.

The downside of this ability soon became known to her as she picked on the presence of a werewolf pursuing her with tremendous speed. Jason was not holding back anymore and he was closing in faster than the girl could escape.

Tapping into the pack link, the girl located the Waiting Room. It was still too far and the man was coming closer. 'What will he do to me if he finds me?' she panicked, 'No, there is no time for me to worry. I have to see this through... In whatever way that I can...' she thought as she gripped the shaft of the lance even tighter.

A well of raw determination poured into her as she braced herself for the sprint of her life. With her mind no longer clouded, she gathered the facts she knew about what was happening with the hopes of finding some leverage over the beta alpha that would enable her to extend her survival time. Simply running wouldn't get her to the Waiting room unscathed.

Jason was stronger than her in more ways than she could count, but there was something she could still use to her advantage. It was something she'd already used before back in the bowl-shaped pit.

It was that her perception of their environment was a lot sharper and even harder to shake than Jason's. Even as he barreled towards her, she could still hear him cursing every time he tripped over a root or obstacle in his path and she heard the ruffle of leaves each time a low-lying branch struck his face and the frustrated grunt that followed.

Bree continued running through the forest, a plan beginning to take shape in her mind. Suddenly, she was no longer filled with fear and instead, she was filled with more determination to see this through.

The two tore through the forest, against all logic, rushing through it as though they hadn't been robbed of their sight. Jason found keeping up with the girl to be a bit problematic as his mental perception of the world kept fading in and out of focus.

Each time he nearly tripped over a tree root or a rock or got hit in the face by the leaves of the oak trees, his concentration was disrupted and his mental image suffered greatly, giving way to more possibilities to trip and bump into obstacles.

But his determination to catch up with the girl was stronger than ever, 'How is she able to move so well and at that speed? Sirius wasn't messing around in its selection of candidates after all. They've got some tricks up their sleeves this year but that won't change anything.'

With that last thought, the alpha finally caught up, flanking Bree on the left. Jason extended his claws and made a swipe to the right. With one move, he would stop her in her tracks and take the item from her with barely a fight.

It was like cornering a frightened hare, 'There is nowhere for you to run now...'

The alpha swiped to the right with all the force he could muster and his hand took a vicious lateral path that should have hit the girl's head even at their pace, however, to his surprise, his hand followed the path unhindered by anything.

When the mental image in his head cleared, an expression of shock replaced his former triumphant look. Bree had dropped so low to the ground at the right moment like an athlete starting a race... and completely dodged his attack.

The amber-eyed werewolf was crouched low to the ground without breaking her dash.

In the next moment, Bree shot forward, leaving the beta alpha dazed by the sudden development...

"WHAT HAVE WE JUST WITNESSED?" the announcer, Bill suddenly screamed over the speakers.

In the Sirius Waiting room, Crysta started chuckling, "I knew Bree was amazing... but even I didn't see this coming." The girl sprinting through the forest never once broke her concentration.

Lina scrunched her brows at the frame containing Bree's running form. 'Something's different... Has Bree always been capable of a half shift?'

Chapter 477 The Smell of Rain

The sudden evasion came as a shock to not just Jason, but everyone watching as well. Bree had made sure to drop down at the last moment, keeping her ruse from the alpha long enough for him to perceive his actions as perfect.

After missing once, Jason wondered whether it would be a good idea to chase after Bree one more time and stop her in her tracks. The beta alpha gritted teeth and forged forward easily catching up to the female wolf and going for a low attack this time.

'Her perception of her surroundings can't be that...' his thought stopped when he missed once more. This time the girl had leapt into the air this time, completely evading him. To his surprise, he felt like she'd soared high into the air.

Trusting his wolf's senses was hard in this situation but it was also all he had. Bree had leapt much higher than the average wolf was capable of, clearly putting a difference between her and ordinary werewolves.

Something wasn't right here...

Jason pushed forward, forcing himself up and forward.

However, Bree had other ideas. To make her point, she decided to show Jason just how much she was unhindered by her lack of sight and when she leapt into the air, she didn't propel herself forward.

The girl jumped high enough to let the alpha's body get past her before using his blonde mop as a platform for her next stepping stone. The wolf pushed off Jason's head, slamming his body into the ground once more and rushed forward, wasting no time in creating a distance between them.

Bree rushed forward at top speed, not caring for her aching muscles or screaming lungs. If the alpha chose to chase her down after that, there was a possibility she couldn't evade him again... but she'd never planned on actually defeating him. He was bound to get a pattern to her movements sooner or later...

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She'd utilised her element of surprise to the best of her abilities and now placed her trust in sheer speed.

As she pushed on, she started to involuntarily slow down. Her thighs screamed out in pain at the exertion. Her breathing doubled in difficulty and her movements became sluggish. It was only then that her right hand's biceps started throbbing from carrying the lance.

She switched the lance into her left hand, but as that wasn't her dominant hand, she soon switched it back to her right. The mental image in the girl's head started to falter for the first time, but her instincts still remained sharp.

Bree had reached her limit... and the adrenaline was wearing off. Fortunately for her, the beta alpha wasn't pursuing her any more.

Bree could also feel herself getting closer to the Sirius Waiting Room through the mind link. Her speed suffered even more when she tried to keep the mental image of her surroundings.

With each passing minute, it felt like holding it was sapping most of her energy. Interpreting everything picked up by the rest of her senses to replace the role of sight with an even greater form of vision was starting to take its toll on her mind.

This was her first time doing it and it had come so naturally after listening to the soothing voice of her friend, Honour. Knowing this, she was oblivious to any side effects of pushing past her limits that way.

Her wolf was tasked most with making these primal interpretations so that Bree wouldn't get confused by the different things she was picking up with her senses.

Now that she was exhausted and no longer pursued by the beta alpha, everything was crumbling.

Her concentration... the image got even dimmer and for the first time since obtaining it, she bumped her shoulder into the trunk of a tree, sending a wave of fear and pain through her.

Her relaxation was now broken and her mental image suffered more. She was turning blind once more... just like she'd been at the beginning of the game, "You're almost there, Bree," the melodic voice of her best friend reached her ears.

As it turned out, the sound of her friend through the mind link, crushed her mental image even more. It was nothing like Honour's soothing voice in the wind. While both sounds were soothing, Lina's voice in the mind link felt even more oppressive and demanded attention.

The voice in the wind was... almost comforting. Like there were ethereal arms hugging her at that moment, whispering into her ear.

Lina was calling out to her through the mind link. Bree was indeed close to the large exit that led into the Waiting Room, however, she was tired and barely had the energy to walk.

Her throat was dry with thirst and a sharp pain went through her gut... a vicious stitch. Her breathing was laboured and her muscles were screaming for some form of relief... even then, she continued pushing forward.

"Just a little further, Bree..."

Now completely blind, the girl wondered why she hadn't crashed into another tree yet... and that's when she noticed the ground get hard and even. A pair of arms wrapped around her and pulled her into a warm embrace.

"I made it..." she muttered. The clang of the metallic lance rang through the room when she dropped it to the ground, "...I made it."

"Yes, Bree, you made it," Lina cooed, "And you made us proud. Now rest. We'll take it from here."

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Jason rolled onto his back, panting with exhilaration and frustration. 'It's like she can see... Now that's a talent. I can't believe I was beaten by an ordinary wolf... Just how much lower will I fall? And 'she' could have seen all of that... ugh, this sucks,' his thoughts at this point were no longer aimed at the Royal Games.

"Get up, Jason. This is not the time to daydream," Cole's voice rang through his head.

"Yes, your majesty," the blonde alpha replied before standing up and changing course. It took him a few minutes to find the item he'd first spotted earlier before turning for the Lycaon team's waiting room.

Upon arrival, he found the king standing at the entrance with a blindfold over his eyes, "You underestimated them, Jason."

"Yeah, I know what I did," the beta alpha said, unclasping the cloth over his eyes, "Although, I wouldn't have expected a normal werewolf to have that much mastery over their senses. It wasn't... normal."

"Well, she is the first yellow-eyed werewolf in the Royal games... ever. There was bound to be something special about her," the king chuckled before leaving the room.

Cole walked at an even pace, showing no hindrance caused by his lack of sight. Nothing could be determined of how well he could perceive his surroundings if he didn't run... so the audience watched in tense anticipation.

When the beta alphas watched the king leave, they couldn't help but wonder if the king had ever trained for something like this before. Jason turned to the screen and noticed there was a camera that was stationed right outside the Sirius Waiting room. Their contestant was already out. 'Damn it. I wasted too much time,' Jason berated himself.

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Crysta was the next in the arena playing for the Sirius team. Being a delta, her senses were a lot stronger than Bree's senses... but even she was not sure she could pull off a performance as spectacular as Bree's.

During Bree's performance, she'd tried walking around the Waiting room with her eyes closed and this had yielded devastating results and slightly damaged her confidence in her abilities.

She'd bumped into practically everyone in Waiting Room.

Lina had tried getting her to relax but that wasn't helping her at all. In the end, she'd settled with performing the blind hunt in her werewolf form... The form in which her senses were most sensitive.

Getting out of the Waiting room had been easy as long as she kept her footsteps steady and paid attention to her surroundings. Unlike her attempts in the Waiting Room, Crysta was surprised when she'd been prodding along for three minutes without bumping into anything.

Just when she was starting to feel comfortable, the grey wolf tripped on a tree root, bringing her to a frightening halt. Her breath hitched and the panic started to seep in once more.

'It's just a tree... Nothing so dangerous,' she tried.

After finally relaxing, the grey wolf continued deeper into the forest, wondering what kind of item she was going to find. From the looks of it, the item could be anything. Jason had picked a ribbon in the first round while Bree had found a lance.

Both of these items would have been difficult for a werewolf to take, but that's also when she noticed something with the wolf's metal clasp.

Hanging on both sides of the strange contraption were two metallic claws that could be activated by a button on the side. Fortunately, the short man who stayed with them in the Waiting Room was more than willing to explain how the device worked...

'This is going far worse than Bree's time in here. How was she able to sense her surroundings so well? She was even better at it than Jason...' she wondered.

This was the first time Bree was excelling at something so much better than her and additionally, she had done it so spectacularly as though she was born blind.

Just when she was about to stop for a rest, two scents hit the grey wolf's nose. One made her feel like squealing in delight while the other made her shudder with dread... and curiosity.

The grey wolf raised her head to the sky... 'That's weird.'

The first scent was that of the Sirius team's item not far from where she was. The second one... was much more peculiar.

It was the smell of rain.

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Jason stood in the Waiting Room staring at the monitor and watching the frames that showed both team members on the field along with whatever item was most likely to be found in their current paths.

Cole hadn't bothered to jog or run during the first three minutes that he was out. "Jason, when you were out there, could you hear the sound of the commentator?"

"No. Surprisingly, I couldn't. That guy doesn't shut up, does he?" Jason replied rhetorically before something caught his interest.

Cole had stopped walking.

"What is he doing? It's not like he has all the time in the world," Jason wondered.

"Well, the other team's contestant is not doing so well either. Just look at her... she can't even tell which way is south or west. I thought the girl who outsmarted you was their weakest, but this one is worse than her... far worse," Kyle scoffed.

"I wouldn't underestimate Crysta..." Jason paused, squinting at the king's frame.

Cole now leaned against a tree and stared into the sky. If it hadn't been for his experience behind the strange green blindfold, he would have thought the king could see through the fabric.

The soft rumble of thunder caught everyone's attention, "What's this? The weather forecast spoke of clear skies today. Don't tell me..."

Kyle laughed, at first calmly before settling into a deranged laugh, drowning the voice of the announcer in the Waiting Room. Jason couldn't blame him for doing so...

'And I thought I was the only one who would try to use such underhanded tactics,' Jason chuckled to himself.

"Well, it's not against the rules," Kyle announced with excitement.

'Although, that's even crueller than what I tried to pull,' Jason sighed.

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Cole leaned against the tree and continued to stare into the sky, calling on the powers he had recently learnt to control.

‘A little twister to put some spin on this competition,’ he smirked.

Chapter 478 Taking Indirect Action

Honour sat in the Royal family’s suite, watching the screens that had been set up and occasionally taking a look at what was below them. Occasionally, she would see one of the contestants in the forest when they weren’t shielded by the great canopies.

‘Looks like whispering to her through the wind worked,’ the girl thought to herself. The goddess could not help mortals directly which meant they had to find a way to work around it.

At first, Honour thought this rule was stupid, but then, another message from Celeste sent through the wind explained everything. ‘Just imagine the gods could directly interfere with mortals. Mortals would ask the gods for everything and lose the ability to evolve and survive.

And from another perspective, the gods would be able to kill any mortal if they’d done something that angered them. Trust me, the gods can be petty.

Yes, the gods have done that before using their powers of calamity but it was never directly. And sometimes the mortals were able to survive these calamities.

Limiting the interaction between the gods and mortals allows them to grow and live. Even knowing that the gods probably don’t exist drives humans to become more and more innovative.’

The message in the wind had drilled this into her mind quite literally...

But it had also given her the clues she needed to finally help her friends. Honour didn’t have to just sit back and watch. She could still help her friends and oppose the Rogue King all at once...

Even before the start of the Royal Games, she’d started working on helping her friends... setting her own pieces into motion.

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The Night Before...

Honour walked silently through the near-empty halls of the infirmary and soon made it to the emergency room she’d been looking for. The girl pushed it open without knocking and silently closed it behind her.

“You know there are cameras that can see you come in,” a male voice suddenly filled the silent atmosphere of the white room.

“Yeah, I know,” she sighed, turning to the royal laying in the bed. A frown formed on her face, “You look pale. Are you okay?” The prince remained quiet as she walked up to him. The machines that monitored his condition looked fine. His heartbeat and blood pressure were alright but her eyes didn’t lie.

Earlier, he looked like he was getting better, but now he seemed to be getting worse.

“Honestly, I don’t know,” Drake responded.

Honour wasn’t paying any attention to his words. She placed the back of her hand on his forehead.

“You’re heating up. Tell me what you feel,” she asked him.

“I feel cold... and my mind’s a little fuzzy,” he told her which didn’t help much.

“Drake... give me your memories.”

Drake’s eyes suddenly widened... ‘What?’ But this wasn’t a request.

Honour put a hand behind his back and helped him rise, placing her forehead against his with her eyes closed. Drake lingered for a moment, ‘She’s so close. Has she always had such flawless skin?’ he wondered before closing his eyes, ‘How is she so calm about this?’

Her mind soon invaded his in search of something. The prince guided his mate through his memories to the moment when he had to face off against the rogues that had attacked him during the Trials.

The girl watched them expressionlessly until a moment when she asked him to pause the rushing images. It was when one of the wolves had bitten him. Drake hadn’t taken the bite into consideration, but Honour seemed fixated on this peculiar incident.

“What is it?”

“Something’s wrong with the wolf with the red eyes,” she said before vanishing from his mind.

When the prince’s eyes opened, Honour was staring directly into his blue orbs, “Hey there,” the prince casually greeted. Honour blushed red.

‘You notice this now?’ the prince mentally screamed.

The goddess gently laid him back on the bed, still flustered, “I-I’m sorry if I made you uncomfortable.”

“Not at all,” Drake replied, “Do you have an idea of what’s going on?”

“Yeah, I think I know what’s happening. It feels really far-fetched but not impossible. And if it is the truth, then we are in a lot of trouble,” the girl mentioned before carefully folding back the prince’s sheets so his upper body was exposed.

Honour looked about the room in search of something. In one of the kidney trays laying on a table, she found a pair of scissors and started snipping Drake’s shirt at the left shoulder.

“I see we are undressing me now!”

“Yes, dear. You’re my little experiment. I won’t let you die on me,” the girl replied, hiding her discomfort.

"You could cut my trouser too. I felt an itch earlier today. I think I was stung by a scorpion earlier. Just to be sure."

"You're a jerk, Drake Sirius."

Drake laughed. Her first attempt to play along had taken him by surprise which made victory this much sweeter.

His laughter died down, however, Honour started cutting through one of the numerous bandages that wrapped his shoulder and torso. An intense wave of pain went through the prince's body when the cold steel of the scissors touched his skin, "What are you doing?" he asked through gritted teeth.

"Oh no..." Honour gasped. The first cut through the bandages at his shoulder had revealed a spiderweb of black veins beneath the skin. Honour noticed how it hurt the prince when she touched it, so she chose to cut a different part of the bandages instead.

"What have you found, nurse?"

"Try doctor... and there is something on your shoulder. I think it's where you were bitten. Let me just..." the girl paused as she focused on cutting the fabric covering his chest, "...get rid of the bandages."

The prince stayed still until she was done. When the bandage left his skin at the shoulder, another intense pain shot through his body. This time, it was clearly coming from his shoulder. The pain was so intense that hot tears pricked his sight.

"It's just like I feared," Honour panicked, "Hang in there, Drake."

The goddess placed her hand over the black bite mark. An acrid stench was already coming off the bite mark and a black liquid was escaping the blackened flesh beneath the teeth marks. After a few seconds, an ethereal blue light began to shine under Honour's hands.

The warm light flowed over the wound and traced the black veins. When everything was mapped, an intense glow filled the room forcing Honour to close her eyes from the sheer intensity of the bright blue light.

When the light had completely vanished, Drake's skin was left good as new. Her healing ability hadn't even left a scar behind. It was as though the wound had never existed. The black liquid that had stained the bandage had changed to red, purified of whatever toxin turned it into the bizarre black goop.

"What was that?" Drake asked.

"It was a bite... that was meant to turn you into one of the Rogue King's henchmen. I can only assume your body fought it so well because you're a royal. Royals can't enslave fellow royals," the girl explained.

"But I haven't come close to the Rogue king. I know he regained the power to turn more humans into werewolves, but he's locked up at the Origin, isn't he?" Drake asked.

"Yes, he is. But from your memories, he must have figured something out. I don't like the look of this," Honour replied.

Drake sat up from the hospital bed and started taking out the needles that had been maintaining him, "What are you doing?"

"I'm all better, thanks to you. I can't sit by knowing what's happening and do nothing. I won't... It's too much to bear," the prince clenched his fists in frustration. Knowing his family was in danger and not knowing how to help them was starting to take its toll on the kind man.

"You don't have to... We can do something," Honour replied. This stopped the prince in his tracks and got his full attention.

"I'm listening..."

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Looking back on it now, Honour wondered whether she'd done the right thing to send him out like that. She was the reason Drake had left early that morning on a mission he couldn't speak of. Their lips were sealed indefinitely but that wouldn't stop them from helping out.

Just then, a tingling sensation went down her spine and her hairs stood on ends, suddenly on high alert. In the safety of the Sirius Royal Suite, there wasn't much that could attack them. In fact, her senses were picking up on something that wasn't going to happen in the suite.

The girl stood up and turned to leave without saying a word. That's when Madeline's voice filled the silence of the living room, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to walk around. My legs are feeling a little stiff," she lied.

"Oh okay... come back quickly or you'll miss Lina's turn," Madeline cooed.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world, Mady," Honour replied before making her way for the door. There was something important she had to check on. The feeling in her gut only got worse when she stepped out of the Royal Suite.

Something was wrong...

Chapter 479 The Pain of Being Powerless...

Honour took the elevator to the floor that housed the infirmary. To keep the medical facilities close to everyone, this floor had been built to run all around the Great Arena for easy and quick access. As soon as someone needed medical attention, they simply needed to access any one of the six elevator shafts that were positioned at equal distances from each other around the Great Arena.

The floor itself had white walls and bore the quiet drug-scented atmosphere of an actual hospital. Surprisingly, the voice of the commentator didn't make it through these walls.

The concentric hospital remained untouched by the chaos going on outside.

Except for the staggering lack of nurses and doctors bustling about, this place was normal. 'I guess even medical workers like to watch the games,' the girl thought to herself before walking up to the receptionist.

The woman seated behind the monitor had her eyes glued to the screen with earphones in her ears similar to the ones Lina wore when using her tablet. Having the sensitive hearing of a werewolf, her ears picked up on the sound of the commentator suddenly yelling over the microphone from the woman's earphones.

Despite that, the receptionist seemed unbothered by the loud sound.

'A human receptionist?!

When she reached for the receptionist, the white-robed woman jumped back at the sudden invasion of her personal space. She quickly pulled out one of the earphones in her ears and put on a well-practised smile, "I'm sorry. How may I help you?"

"I'm looking for a room containing someone named Victor. He's the werewolf that Prince Drake was carrying when he arrived," she told her.

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"Oh, that one. Would you happen to be family with him?" the woman asked, her fingers flying over the keyboard in a flurry of clicks and clacks.

"I'm a... friend of a friend. I was asked to check up on him," Honour replied.

"Oh, I see. Well, I thought Victor had no family. It's sad really... for someone that handsome to have no one to look out for him. I'm glad he does have some family left. A family that cares enough to come to visit him," the woman chirped.

With a click of her mouse, a machine beside her started to whirl. After a bit, a bronze card labelled '19' in bold letters peeked out from within a dark slit in the small metal box that was making a whirring sound. The machine went quiet as the woman pulled out the card and handed it over to Honour.

"Normally, the doctors would take you to the room, so you wouldn't need this. But most of them are now watching the games, so I can only give you this. Make sure to return it after getting out the door. It will stop working after using it to get out, so make sure you bring it back so we can reuse it for something else," the receptionist smiled.

Honour took the card from her and turned away to go. Something still bothered her though. She wanted to know something more about what the woman had said. Right when Honour was about to turn a corner and start the journey through the halls to find the man's room, she figured out what was bothering her.

With a gasp, she turned to the receptionist, "What do you mean by Victor having fam..."

But when Honour turned back, the woman had placed the earphones back in her ears and turned her attention to the Royal games playing on her screen. The young goddess sighed and turned around.

The hospital was even quieter when she got to the rooms holding most of the admitted patients. From the number on the card, Victor had been moved to another room to make space for worse cases.

Honour followed the numbers on the doors of each room she passed by.

Her card read '19' and she was currently passing by room '32' which meant she still had a way to go. The numbers kept going lower and lower as she walked the halls.

'31 30 29 28 27... tap tap tap...' went a sound foreign to the calm serenity of the hospital.

A door further ahead of her suddenly opened and the girl suddenly stood frozen. First to peek out the door was a thin tapping stick. Following it, a man stepped out of the room tapping ahead of him with the stick in hand.

It was subtle but the goddess noticed it. This man's gait was only slightly laboured and noticing this also allowed her to keep her face from reacting. Her heart, however, was not that easy to control.

Despite his fabulous impression of a visually impaired man, he seemed capable of finding his way around very easily.

The man was tall with a slightly muscular build. Honour tensed when the man looked her way. His eyes were hidden behind dark sunglasses, but the young goddess could see through them like they weren't there.

This man was not supposed to be here... and he wasn't blind either.

Maintaining his act, the man turned in the opposite direction and started tapping his way down the hall. In his hand was a card very similar to the one Honour was holding and on it, a number was inscribed: '19'

It was the same number as the one Honour held at the moment. 'Victor doesn't have a family.' The young goddess increased the speed in her step when she was sure the man was gone and swiped the key card to open the emergency room.

'Please don't be dead,' she begged, partly wishing she could pray to the goddess for help. The irony of being a goddess herself was not being able to say things like that.

The emergency room appeared undisturbed with everything still in order at first glance. However, Honour wasn't going to let that fool her. She drew the curtains standing between her and the patient residing in the room.

The heart monitor was beating normally but something else caught her eye. The leather straps that were meant to hold the man were torn. The jagged nature in which they'd been damaged easily identified the work of claws.

The second thing Honour noticed was a fresh bite mark on Victor's wrist. The werewolf himself was still unconscious. His forehead had turned red and swollen, probably from a heavy hit.

The gnawing feeling in Honour's gut got worse. She remembered the scene from Drake's memories and this was enough to make her move.

Without wasting any more time, the girl began to search the room frantically for anything she could use to restrain the werewolf. When she couldn't find anything, she decided to get creative.

First, she found a pair of scissors and cut one of the sheets into neat strips which she quickly braided into strings as firm as she was able to.

With this, she began to tie the man to the hospital bed. As she was tying his second hand, Victor started to stir, "You'll have to use stronger bonds than that. Even those flimsy leather straps were starting to give when 'he' came in here," Victor grumbled.

"What did 'he' want with you?" Honour asked.

"You don't want any part of my burdens. Just get out of here and warn the hunters. The rogues are already in the Great Arena. I don't know how they got in. I don't know what they plan to do, but it's nothing good," Honour finished making the last knot and turned to leave.

"And one more thing..." she turned to Victor, "Actually, two more things... I would like you to put as much of that sedative in the bag up there. Then close that door and find a way to make sure it never opens again."

"That bite. What will it do to you?" Honour suddenly asked.

"My best guess... is that it will turn me into the same monsters that tried to kill prince Drake when we were out there... Not that I was any different. I wanted to kill the man too," Honour put her best show to fake shock from the man's words yet in truth, she had known this about him.

Victor was the man Drake had stripped of his power as a delta and the same man tasked with helping Madeline and guarding her. A little while after being given his job, he'd defected and sought out the rogues in an attempt to get his revenge against the prince of Sirius.

This man was the reason everything was such a mess, to begin with. Almost two years ago, the Rogue King had been captured. The war could have ended... but Victor was too focused on his revenge to see the bigger picture.

"Do you feel better? For releasing the most dangerous man in the name of revenge?" Honour reached for the bottle containing the sedative Victor had asked for.

"Hmm, I like to look at it in a way that this outcome was something completely different from what I had in mind. I had a plan and it simply didn't go as I'd envisioned it. My intention was never to unleash the Rogue King on this world. It was more to kill the prince and nothing more," Victor sighed.

Honour found this logic repulsive because it didn't address the danger of unleashing the Rogue King into the world. Yes, the Rogue King had been contained at the Origin by the goddess but if that hadn't been the case, he would have turned the whole world upside down with carnage.

There would be no end to his slaughter and yet, the man responsible for it all only cared about petty revenge. What was worse, was that the part of his plan that hadn't worked out... was Prince Drake keeping his life after all this.

"You would trade the whole world to have a taste of revenge?" Honour asked. She plunged a syringe into the soft cap of the bottle and filled it before transferring the liquid to the bag delivering water into his system.

"You have no idea what it's like... to be powerless," the man yawned. Honour wasn't sure if it was the sedative getting to work. She'd only just administered it. All the same, he was now out like a light.

'No idea what it's like to be powerless, huh...'

Chapter 480 True Blindness and The Essence of the First Stage

Crysta's hunch turned out correct... and the delta cursed as she felt the temperature change. It wasn't enough that she was finding difficulty in tracking down her item, let alone moving about, now she felt the scents about her stir and get impossible to distinguish.

This was just the beginning, however...

A powerful updraft of wind shook the trees and raised dust from the forest floor of the man-made forest that was the playing field of the first stage in the Royal Games. The audience could only watch as the trees strained in protest against the strange force of nature that was the wind.

One of the active cameras kept an eye on a grey wolf leaning against the trunk of a young oak and staying close to the ground hoping to outlive the sudden change in weather while another showed a royal casually walking through the woods in search of an item.

Cole didn't look bothered by the sudden change in weather. In fact, he looked at peace with the chaos that had just invaded the forest. After a few minutes, the wind came to a stop... only to change direction.

This time, the wind blew in a perfect circle, bending the trees counterclockwise in the shape of a great giant twister. The wind kept a threateningly steady velocity almost like it was being controlled by some lever in a control room.

As Cole made his way through the forest, he came across a timid blind delta bracing herself against a young oak for dear life. It was only after noticing her frightened presence that the wind stopped howling, "I see you chose to compete this year. Who would have thought I would face you at 'The' Royal Games!"

"Cole... Is this your doing?" Crysta barked.

"What on earth could have given you that idea?" the king feigned ignorance.

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"I've heard the stories. The day she vanished, the wind blew so hard, lightning split the skies every few seconds and the thunder... was so loud I thought my ears would bleed.

When we heard the story of her disappearance, we didn't doubt it was true. You are the goddess's chosen after all. Anything is possible for the two of you," Crysta explained.

"An interesting story. I've never heard it told quite like that before... and I've grown bored of this conversation. For your convenience and for the sake of your team, I do hope you find your item. Good luck," Cole said before starting to walk away.

"Wait, Cole..." the wolf yelled through the mind link, bringing the king to a halt, "I... I'm sorry... about everything. I know we didn't always see eye-to-eye, but... for what it's worth, I'm sorry about everything," Crysta still remembered everything she'd done to gain the prince's attention in the path.

What made her cringe the most was her thought process at the time. The lies she'd weaved into her own mind and believed to be reality. It only took Cole's mate nearly killing her to realise that, "I also forgot to thank you for saving me that day," she sighed.

Cole's irritation towards the delta eased up and he turned back to face her. She was nothing like Bree had been a few moments ago. Crysta, while more experienced and a wolf of higher rank, was actually blind and oblivious to her surroundings.

The grey wolf wasn't even staring at Cole as she spoke through the mind link and every step she took forward felt extremely calculated. 'At this rate, she won't be able to do much,' Cole sighed.

"I just did what any sane person would have done. You didn't know who you were dealing with at the time. So, I'm glad you learnt something. After seeing what Bree pulled, I assumed you would all be the same.

It seems I was wrong, so I must apologize for making this too hard for you. But it doesn't change much really. My team will be winning the Royal Games... again. It's the only way," the prince said before walking away from Crysta.

Crysta could tell from the sound of his footsteps that he was having no trouble navigating the forest without his sight. Unlike her, Cole was traversing the woods with no trouble.

"Bree, how were you able to move so accurately?" Crysta asked through the mind link. There was no rule against them communicating with their teammates outside the forest. Since this was a competition that depended heavily on one's senses, speaking through the mind link was a bad idea as it was bound to severely break one's concentration.

Crysta's situation was hopeless. She had to call out for help and Bree was ready to help, "A voice spoke to me through the wind, giving me instructions on how to move without my sight."

"I'll skip over the red flags scattered throughout that explanation and ask you what the voice said," the delta sighed.

"Well, if I recall the exact words, they went:

Clear your mind...

Relax your shoulders...

Don't fight your senses... Embrace them, Bree, I mean, Crysta.

You're a werewolf, not a human.

Allow your senses to take over you.

And let them be your eyes..." Bree recited the words exactly as she heard them.

Crysta was stunned for a moment before replying, "They certainly don't sound like something you could cook up. Thanks, Bree."

"Hmph... What if I'd given you my idea? Would you have taken it?" Bree raised her voice over the mind link.

“You’re my friend, Bree. Of course, I would consider your idea,” Crysta chuckled before blocking her friend out of the mind link. She had to try...

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Crysta started her walk again, allowing her werewolf senses to flood her mind with information, ‘If Bree could do it, then so can I!’ she convinced herself.

The sound of the birds, the rustling of the trees. The variety of scents filled her nostrils with each deep breath she took. The scent of bark, the scent of the soft loam that covered the forest floor... and the scent of rain.

The wolf stared blindly at the sky above. During the twister that had torn through the arena earlier, the girl had come to the conclusion that it would rain as well. The scent of rain had been thick then, but now... it seemed to be receding.

‘So he really can control the weather,’ she confirmed.

Wiping the thoughts out of her mind, the werewolf searched through the scents she could pick up, looking for one in particular. The scent of the item she was meant to be looking for.

Crysta had already wasted enough time as it was and she didn’t feel like wasting any more of it for her team. So she studied the different scents, isolating the different strands of scents in her mind, searching for that one in particular.

After what felt like an eternity of walking aimlessly through the woods, she caught a faint whiff of the scent she was looking for. Crysta turned in the direction she knew it to be coming from and switched from a slow walk to a trot.

Unfortunately for her, she didn’t get the clear mental image her friend had received when travelling blind. It felt like creating one was next to impossible.

And because of that, the delta tripped over rocks, roots and several other obstacles that she couldn’t identify before eventually crushing snout first into a tree. The grey wolf took a step back and shook her head in dizziness. It was getting worse...

Ever since she’d caught the faint scent that marked her team’s items, her focus on her surroundings had deteriorated even more. It was frustrating. ‘I can do this. Lina and all the others are counting on me,’ this is all she could say to keep herself from breaking down.

She was about to take another step forward and weave around the tree when she noticed something odd. The scent was now going in three different directions. For some reason, she was now picking up on the scents of three different items.

The delta stayed stationary for a moment, wondering what she was supposed to do now that she had three options. ‘Something is not right here. The items can’t be this close to one another,’ the girl thought to herself before taking one step to the right.

Two of the three scents vanished, including the one she had been following earlier.

'The wind... It messed up everything in the forest,' she cursed, 'That idiot probably walked away from me knowing I wasn't going to succeed.'

This revelation was terrifying.

The strong wind summoned by the king had blown the perfumed items' scents in all directions, making them extremely hard to track. If he had let it rain, it would have been next to impossible as the perfumes would be completely wiped from existence.

It seemed the king had only intended to make this competition a little bit more challenging, but not impossible. But something didn't add up in this whole scheme. Raising a twister of that magnitude was bound to make tracking down an item infinitely harder for both of them...

'Tracking...' the girl gasped, 'Damn it! He got me good. I should have seen this sooner. Cole knows he has a stronger sense of smell than I do.'

In a situation like this, only the best trackers were capable of finding the item they were looking for... which required a great amount of concentration.

The girl got low to the ground and began forging forward once again. Her perception of the games changed, 'I'm not against the same person Bree was facing... which makes my situation infinitely different.

Jason wanted to overpower Bree and take her item from her but Cole has a completely different approach. If I can't track down the item with my nose, I won't even be able to leave the forest until the games end."

It wasn't that Bree was a terrible instructor. Using her senses was bound to help her if there hadn't been that one problem of a twister scattering the scents in the forest.

This time, when the delta drew on her senses to create a mental picture of her surroundings, she understood what was wrong with it.

Instead of getting a clear picture of the grand man-made forest towering all around her, she got random distorted images of nature with mismatched signals and images coursing through her mind.

The confusion was even worse when her brain tried to interpret the chaos that came through her senses. Her ears tried to correct the picture, but with her sense of smell picking up all the wrong messages, it was impossible for her to come up with something exact.

And yet, she was meant to use that very sense of smell to get herself out of this situation.

Crysta had heard of it before. On her search for power that would help her rise through the ranks among the pack warriors, she'd heard a few tips from the trackers.

'When tracking, the best ability a tracker must acquire is not an extremely sensitive nose, but the ability to isolate a single scent out of the myriad of scents they had to sort through.'

Crysta's victory in this round was completely hinged on her figuring out this technique, finding the item and returning it to the Waiting Room. And all this was supposed to be done in time to allow Lina a chance to get their team points as well.

She had to figure out how to track down her item... and this was the True Essence of the First Stage of the Royal Games.

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"I think she's got it, Bill," Stan suddenly spoke up over the speakers.

"Got what, Stan?"

"What she must do to make it through her turn? The only question is whether she can make it in time," Stan sighed, keeping his inside knowledge on tracking all to himself.