

Chosen 481

Chapter 481 Keep Moving Forward

Crysta stood still for about three minutes sorting through the different scents that invaded her senses, ignoring those she didn't need at all. Scents like the scent of soil and everything that lived inside it or rotting bark.

She focused on what mattered, the scent of fresh bark, which she only focused on when it got too strong to keep her from crashing head-first into the surrounding oaks.

The wind would tell her where the scents were coming from and allow her to adjust her course.

Soon enough, the delta was travelling blind, following her intuition and trusting her judgement of the scents she had to work with. She followed the faint trails of items' scents.

Sorting through the different scents was nearly impossible but Crysta didn't have a choice. She found that some of the times she picked up on a trail, it turned out to be feint... a wisp...

A remnant of the perfume that had been carried by the twister. Similar clouds of the perfume were scattered throughout the forest at this point and it took the delta a while to figure out how to differentiate between what was real and what wasn't.

The fake clouds of perfume only had a particular direction when they first hit her nose, but a short step in their direction and it would be clear that it was just a plume of the scattered scent floating about aimlessly.

As such, she was able to find and follow the only scent that proved to be real. The delta struggled to make sense of everything invading her nostrils, tasking herself beyond what she was normally capable of.

She knew she couldn't master the art of tracking in a matter of minutes and many times she lost the 'real' trails she was following but her determination didn't waver. Not once did the delta feel like giving up. She wouldn't allow despair to win.

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Bree might have performed spectacularly, but the delta's friend hadn't gone against a royal with the power to change the weather.

From this perspective, Crysta actually felt her trial was equally tasking as that of her friend.

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It took more time than she would have liked and the delta made so many mistakes that she lost count, but eventually, the grey wolf made it to the item she was looking for. The wolf placed her paw on the scented item, feeling for its structure.

Was it something she could easily hold in her mouth or was it something she would have to activate the metal clasps for?

The wolf sniffed the item and felt for its shape. It was slippery to her nose, a little rubbery and the perfume coming off it was so intense. Almost as if it was intended to change the very essence of the item that had been sprayed.

Crysta got frustrated when she could figure out what it was and bit down on the item.

'QUACK!!!' went the rubbery item.

'A RUBBER DUCK!' the grey wolf screamed in her head. If she was in her human form, she would have facepalmed.

'In any case, it's better than having to carry around a lance,' she thought to herself, 'Now I just have to make it back to the Waiting room.'

Turning around offered her a spell of dizziness all on its own.

The only thing that kept her from completely losing her cool... was a foreign mental map of senses that she'd gathered from Bree. The map seemed to spawn in her mind at the right time, showing her where everything was actually meant to be.

With the forest's scents completely amok, it was hard to use this map. However, after so much time had passed, the scents seemed to get back in order.

Crysta's blindness started to lessen and her mind was able to form an image in her mind once more... albeit shaky.

The map Bree had transferred into her mind through the mind link, however... was something short of perfection.

'I know I can perceive my surroundings as well... but this is different,' the girl mused. Bree's map was nearly accurate... as though she'd seen everything in the forest with her own eyes dozens of times to create the perfect map.

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It was a while before Crysta managed to make it back to the Waiting Room. With the help of the mind link, she could tell where the Waiting Room was...

Even though using it impaired her concentration and slowed down her progress.

Nonetheless, she made her way through the forest and eventually made it to the Waiting Room where Lina had been waiting for her calmly.

Crysta collapsed on the floor in her wolf form, panting heavily from the exertion. The wolf dropped the rubber duck to the ground unceremoniously as Bree got to work on the contraption keeping her friend blind, "How are you doing, Crysta?" Lina asked the girl.

"Cole's nasty trick made it a lot harder. Bree, I tried doing what you said but..."

"It's okay... The commentator made it clear why you were having trouble. Cole, on the other hand, wasn't having as much trouble as you were... even though his movements were confusing. I'm sorry I couldn't help you more," the girl apologized.

“You have nothing to apologize for,” Crysta sighed.

The wolf tried to open its eyes but closed them immediately when the light that came in stung her eyes like needles, “Ouch... that’s going to take some getting used to.”

“Is it that much harder than normal tracking during hunts?” Lina suddenly asked.

“It was.”

“What do you mean?” Lina asked.

“On my way here, I noticed something. The effects of Cole’s trick were starting to wear off. The scents were back in order and I could move much easier without my eyes. You won’t have the same trouble I had out there. We are just lucky he didn’t decide to make it rain,” Crysta sighed, finally managing to open her eyes.

Everything was blurry at first before she could make out the images coming into her eyes. “What are you still doing...” the girl stopped her speech short when she noticed the princess had her blindfold on. The blue cloth wrapped neatly over her eyes, obscuring her vision and yet she faced the wolf.

Lina showed no signs of being blinded. Not like Crysta had been, “I needed to make sure you were okay first. Rest, Crysta. You did well.”

The delta watched the princess jog outside and vanish behind the trees of the man-made forest. The sun was shining brightly again and the clouds from the king’s disruption were gone.

The wolf walked to a door at the left side of the Waiting Room. This was the changing room that had been attached for privacy... just in case the cameras within the Waiting room were active.

A minute or so later, the delta walked out of the room pulling her dark hair back in a ponytail. “Are you feeling better now?”

“Yeah. How is Lina doing?” Crysta asked.

“She’s doing well, I guess. But it doesn’t look like she’s into it,” Bree sighed, leaning lazily against the triangular table while she watched the recordings on the screen.

“Why wouldn’t she...” the delta stopped mid-sentence, “Oh... I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright. Cole just... played dirty. I didn’t know he had it in him though.”

“Hmm, I don’t know. I would say you scared him. If we’d kept the momentum you set, they would have been in serious trouble,” Crysta chuckled.

Bree didn’t return the laughter. Instead, she clenched her fists in frustration, “Then let’s make them regret it in the next stage.”

“What did you do the Bree that I know...” the delta paused. Something about her friend was different. It wasn’t a bad thing, though, “We’ll give them hell in the next one then.”

As it so happened, the Sirius team was down 6 to 12 as the screen showed. Crysta had spent nearly a whole hour out in the forest and only ten minutes were left on the counter. Even if they found an item

now, it wouldn't really matter. The other team already had an overwhelming lead and from the looks of it. They were planning to make the gap just a little bit wider.

Cole's turn had come around again and he was walking back to their Waiting Room with an item in hand. This time, the item didn't bear the green stripes of the Lycaon team. Instead, the stripes were blue.

Crysta growled at the sight of the colours on the item he had in hand.

The screen showing Lina's form showed the princess jogging in another part of the forest and the frame that showed the item she was most likely to find was already displaying a blue-striped hammer placed at the top of a large boulder.

"Is she as good at reading her surroundings as you are?" Crysta asked.

"She's a royal. She should..."

"No, Bree. That's not what you showed us out there. Even royals struggle with that level of precision and mastery over their senses. Don't sell yourself short. If it hadn't been for the knowledge you shared with me..." the delta bit her lip as a pang of guilt tore at her.

Their defeat was already in sight... Lina's pace showed it.

Bree pulled the delta into a warm hug, "It wasn't your fault, Crysta. Cole just pulled a mean trick. That's all there is to it."

Bree didn't forget what her friend was just about to say but chose to ignore it.

The delta's resolve was shattering right in front of her and she needed a friend.

"It looks like the Sirius team can tell who has this game. It should be evident to all of us now. And with the Lycaon team switching to the dark side of the rules like that, they will even have more trouble closing the gap. It's hopeless. Only ten minutes remain. That first performance really had the Lycaon team shaking.

No one could have thought the wind would choose that moment to pick up when it did," the commentator said over the speakers.

During Crysta's turn, the Lycaon team had retrieved three of their items while Crysta had only retrieved their second. "I've only made trouble for..."

"No, don't think like that. You know how highly Lina thinks of you. She could have yelled at you when you returned but she asked you to rest. Don't take those words for granted," Bree argued.

"It still doesn't change the fact that..."

"That you went up against the King of Lycaon, a chosen of the moon goddess and can still stand to face him again. We watched everything, Crysta. Cole is not an opponent any of us was ready to face. Especially me..."

If I had been in your place, I wouldn't have been able to track down that rubber duck. I know it doesn't look like much... but you never gave up. Not even once. You don't find that kind of determination lying around, Crysta," Bree allowed as much sincerity as she could muster to filter into her voice.

Crysta stared at the screen teary-eyed and watched Lina leap through the air athletically and grab the hammer before starting her journey back to their room. Once again, the princess made it look too easy...

Just like she had in the Trials.

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They lost... 8-13

Chapter 482 Lina's Burden

Lina sat in the Waiting Room listening to the words of the commentators. The highlight of the first stage of the Royal Games had been at the very beginning... with Bree's sudden and unexpected display of mastery over her other senses.

At the time, it looked like they stood a chance against the Lycaon pack but Cole had crushed all those hopes like they were nothing more than childish delusions.

This was similar to the games that happened four years ago. At the time, Cole had earned his infamous title 'Steel Tank'... and he'd demonstrated the insurmountable resilience of his hide in a battle between him and Drake.

This same duel was the one that would decide the winner... And while Drake was a good fighter, bringing Cole down seemed next to impossible.

Lina was so frustrated that she couldn't find the words to say. "Lina, I slowed you down... again. I'm sorry."

The princess snapped out of her trance and stared at the delta who had her head bowed low. The princess was genuinely confused, "What are you talking about?"

Crysta raised her head to face her friend. To her surprise, the princess looked confused by her actions... this emotion was reflected in the mind link as well. There was no dismissing the princess's frustrated feelings, but as it seemed, they weren't directed towards Crysta like she'd thought they would be.

"I took too long to retrieve the item and slowed our team down... just like I slowed you down during the..."

"Oh! No, no... You haven't slowed me down at all, Crysta. I actually believe you handled yourself well out there. After the stunt Cole pulled, it should have been impossible for you to find your item. Though I must say..."

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A rubber duck! That was hilarious. The thing kept squeaking with every step you took," the princess suddenly laughed.

"Wait... what?" Crysta turned red.

“You really couldn’t hear it? Had you really tuned out all the useless sounds that well? That’s impressive, Crysta,” Bree exclaimed.

“That’s one word for it. Still funny, but impressive. Now let’s get going. I haven’t got the chance to see where we are actually supposed to be staying. I also want to check up on Wyatt.”

“Okay. Where would you like to go first? From what I’ve heard, we get a day’s rest before the next stage of the games,” Crysta asked.

“I’ll start with checking on Wyatt.”

“Ahem...” the short man, who’d been silent this whole time suddenly coughed, “If I may, the three of you have to meet up with your opponents from the Lycaon empire and shake hands. It’s just protocol.”

“Yeah. Let’s get that over with,” Lina shrugged.

Following the man out of the Waiting Room and into the forest, the group felt the ground shift beneath them.

“Lina, what’s happening?” Bree suddenly screamed.

“Have you forgotten? The Great Arena was designed to be able to shift and change depending on what they wanted it to look like. It might not be able to achieve every landscape someone can dream up, but what little it can achieve is still nothing short of a miracle,” the princess explained.

The tremors rumbling through the forest weren’t violent enough to throw them to the ground but for someone that hadn’t expected them, there was a chance they would fall from the sudden shock.

The trees seemed to part away from the direction they were walking in, shuffling closer and further away from their destination as though to create space for them.

At the centre of the large forest, they found three men standing side by side. Crysta squinted at the hulking man at Cole’s right.

“I thought the picture was exaggerated. That’s a giant.”

“Tell me about it!” Cole groaned.

“I’m fine the way I am,” Kyle grunted, “Princess Lina, it would have been nice if I got the chance to go against her, don’t you think?”

‘Huh, princess?’ Lina paused at the title. The question had come out of nowhere and frankly, Lina was not ready to answer something like that. The short moment before she replied allowed her to think through the various possible intentions he could have had behind his question, “Why is that?”

“The blind delta was no fun at all,” the alpha shrugged.

“Cole, you might want to invest in a muzzle,” Lina replied through gritted teeth, “Let’s just get this over with.”

Cole walked up to the large man and stared him in the eye. Kyle was bigger than Cole but it was clear who was stronger of the two. “What’s—Ouch!!”

SMACK!!! Went a thumping sound of the king's palm across the back of the beta alpha's head.

The action had been so swift that only Lina had noticed it. Kyle had been completely still and even then, the pain registered a second after he'd been hit, "Behave yourself, Kyle. I won't always tolerate those arrogant whims of yours," Cole scolded the whimpering man.

"Yes, Alpha Cole," Kyle sighed, humbling himself in front of his monarch. The transformation was like day and night. Only then did Lina realise that Kyle had meant no harm in challenging Bree and looking down on Crysta.

Just then, a pigeon fluttered through the trees and landed on the beta alpha's shoulder, perching there comfortably. Everyone except for the wolves of the Lycaon pack found this peculiar.

"Good. Now apologize before you get on Princess Lina's bad side," Cole commanded.

Kyle groaned, rubbing his throbbing head as he walked past his king and made his way to the princess. Lina eyed the pair, wondering what kind of relationship had grown between them.

...Along with the bird that was perched on the man's shoulders.

'Could it be...' the thought forming in her mind was cut off by Kyle's words. The beta alpha bent in half, bowing to the princess, "I apologize for my rude words. It won't happen again."

"I hope, for your sake, that it doesn't. For future interactions, I will gift you this advice. No one likes a pompous person. Save that for the people that really know you. Just this once, I'll forget this little incident," Lina said sternly.

"Understood," Kyle replied before returning to the king's side.

The rest of the short ceremony proceeded without incident. The players from both sides shook hands and went their separate ways. It had not been an easy ninety minutes and all the players needed to wash off and relax before the next game.

Lina and the Sirius contestants went up to their quarters where they got refreshed and changed into more comfortable clothes.

The first stage of the Royal Games had come to an end and thankfully without an injury. After watching Bree's first turn, it had been expected that everything would escalate...

But thankfully, it hadn't.

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The candidates for the royal games, along with Honour and Madeline had been placed in a set of four rooms, each capable of holding two people. At the intersection of these four setups was a common room.

Seated in the sofas were Honour, Bree, Madeline and Crysta. A comfortable silence gripped the room, interrupted by the sound of the shower coming from Honour and Lina's room.

"Lina sure is taking a long time in there. You think she's fine," Madeline suddenly asked.

Honour turned to the bronze door that led into her room for a moment before turning back to the table between them, "Yeah, she's fine. Lina's... how do I put this? Adjusting."

"Adjusting to what?" Crysta suddenly asked.

"I thought you'd all noticed. I guess not... None of you is in her situation. I noticed when she'd just come from the Trials. I'm sure the king and queen noticed as well since they took her away from us as soon as she returned. They noticed the look in her eye," Honour replied, half to herself.

"You're not making any sense," Bree facepalmed, "Could you maybe speak in a language we can all understand? Madeline is having a hard time following what you're saying."

Honour scrunched her brows in deep thought, "Okay... Let me try explaining it this way. When you were out there, something happened and Lina couldn't stop it. Am I right?"

The question was directed to Crysta but the delta was not sure what she was supposed to answer, "The fastest werewolf in the world should be able to save anyone in need of her help."

"No... we were asleep when Wyatt..."

"That's not the point, Crysta. The point is that Lina was the royal with you at that moment. You were her responsibility. During the Trials, the royals can't ask for any help and can't even visit the neighbouring packs for help. When I saw her after she'd brought you back from the Trials, she looked... paralyzed," Honour tried explaining.

"So you mean she's blaming herself for Wyatt's injury?" Crysta asked.

"It's more than that. Drake asked to step down from the throne. Katie is mated to the only heir to the Lycaon throne. If... if Drake steps down, it will leave only one person..."

Before Honour could complete her statement, a feminine voice interrupted the tense silence of the room, "You always seem to know what's going through my head."

"Lina! I..."

"You're right, Honour. I-I might be the one next in line for the throne. I know what that means. I've always known what that means. My father has taught Drake and me what it means to be a royal. All the times we went on hunts with him and the time I watched my brother train with him.

I've even gone with him to visit other packs. But... when we were out there—in the Trials—, I found myself facing a side of royalty I'd never known. I don't know why Drake is stepping down but he says he has a good reason for it. I also know that as the heir to the throne, my life is precious to the kingdom.

But so are the subjects I'm meant to lead. Wyatt was meant to be my escort... For a moment, I thought... 'What if he dies?' and the thought frightened me," as Lina spoke her hand balled into a fist.

The princess walked up to the sofa and dropped beside Honour, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm better now. My parents seemed to know the problem as soon as they saw me and helped me through it. The battle of Lycaon..." she paused with a look of heavy sadness on her face, "Now that I think about it. All those lives that were lost were weighing on the shoulders of whoever was in charge..."

Noticing the dark cloud in the room, the princess shook her head violently, “Enough of that. Who’s coming with me to see Wyatt?”

Chapter 483 An Indecisive Visitor

“Are you done getting ready?” Honour cried out, impatiently waiting with Bree, Crysta and Madeline by the door. By this point, the girls were quite close and nearly inseparable. The sound of fabric, moving furniture and all sorts of rummaging could be heard coming from Honour and Lina’s room.

The princess seemed to be frantically looking for something.

“Just a second... I can’t find my phone,” Lina yelled back.

Honour facepalmed, ‘Why would a werewolf even need a phone?’

A few minutes later, she emerged from her room, with her hair a little messed up with a slight film of sweat on her brow. Lina jogged through the common room and joined the girls in the halls.

Crysta was tasked with leading them through since she knew the way to Wyatt’s room best.

“You have a pack link that allows you to speak to anyone through your mind. You don’t need a phone,” Honour wasn’t letting this go so easily.

“What if I met with a hunter and needed to communicate with them a little more?” Lina countered, “And why does it matter if I can’t leave my phone behind?”

“It doesn’t bother me but this is the first time I’ve seen you go fret this much about it. Is something wrong?” Honour asked.

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Knowing her best friend, she noticed immediately when a dark cloud of concern crossed Lina’s face.

“No, there isn’t—”

“There is something wrong. What’s the matter? We can talk to Wyatt through the mind link if you’re that worried about him. We could...”

“No, Honour. That’s not it,” the princess cut her off, “Stop trying to read my mind. It has nothing to do with Wyatt.”

“Well... if it’s something you can worry about when you’re on your way to visit Wyatt in the hospital, then it has to be important,” Honour raised a brow at her, “Right?”

“Well, I’m not sure how to say this. A message arrived this morning before the games but I didn’t want to think much of it then. Do you still remember that movie star...? The one that plays in that in that survival series I used to like so much...”

“Ah, Jack Boggle! And I wouldn’t say you ‘liked’ that show. You were obsessed. You would be glued to your tablet for hours watching episodes that you’d already seen a few... hundred or thousand times. Come to think of it, I haven’t seen you watching that thing for a while now,” Honour recalled.

“Thanks for that... ‘overly descriptive’ reminder of my obsession,” Lina sighed, “You haven’t seen me watching the show because I stopped watching it. About a year ago, I told Jack to stop sending me episodes because I no longer had time to watch the show.

He got really mad and stopped talking for about two months. The next time I heard from him, he’d calmed down and was instead curious about why I’d stopped watching.

Something about making the show more engaging so that they wouldn’t lose more fans as they’d lost me. I told him there was nothing wrong with the show and that it was simply everything different going on in my life.

Surely by then, he must have heard of my sister’s disappearance... so I didn’t dive deep into what was happening in my life. We talked for a while and I told him about how easily Madeline figured out the rogues were also actors.

Ever since then, he would send a simple message a week and I would reply... sometimes taking two weeks. Messages of his progress and the changes they were hoping to make. Sometimes, he wanted my thoughts on the matter and I would give him my honest opinion... which he liked very much.

But recently, those messages stopped. I didn’t think about it because I take too long between our talks that it’s easy to forget. This morning though... a message came. And it was all sorts of weird.”

“What was the message saying?” Bree suddenly asked. The girls were gripped by the story and severity in Lina’s voice.

“He was asking if we could meet again. Here at the royal games... That’s not the weird part though. He wanted to see me alone.” Lina explained.

“Let’s see the message,” Crysta asked, getting defensive.

The princess didn’t hesitate in unlocking her phone and displaying the message on the screen. It read:

Dear Lina,

I know it has been a long time since I’ve spoken to you. Technically, four weeks, three days... seven hours, twenty-eight minutes, give or take a few seconds.

But during that time, I’ve been doing something of my own.

Sort of like a personal challenge if you know what I mean. I’d like to meet up with you... alone if you don’t mind. The Eastern Lobby of the Great Arena at dusk...

Don’t be late.

Jack”

There was silence for a while after Crysta had read through the message. Madeline was the first to break the tension, “He sounds bossy.”

“Yeah, even more than usual. He also didn’t mention his series or his anything about the current state of his acting career. Maybe I’m reading too much into this.

But he's never sent a message and ended the communication without telling me about something amazing he's done or some amazing place he's been to," the princess pondered.

"Maybe it's that personal challenge thing that he has going on," Bree tried.

"I would like to think that as well but... He's always had an eye for the flashy stuff. The personal challenge part was nothing like him at all either," the princess groaned, nearing her mental limit.

"Maybe he chose to turn over a new leaf and pursue something more real than his fake show?" Madeline tried.

"I would like to believe that. It would be good for him... but his show was his life. After failing to become a hunter, that was what he fell back on and he was good at it. When we find something we are good at, it's hard to let go," Lina explained... from experience.

"Oh... okay..."

As they rounded a corner, Crysta came to an abrupt stop. Lina, who was directly behind her crashed right into the delta's larger body.

"Crysta, why did you..." Lina's instincts kicked in and everything slowed down as she stepped around the delta to get a better view of the situation. When she did see what had stopped Crysta in her tracks, she relaxed.

Standing at the door to Wyatt's room was a man with dull crimson eyes. At times, one could confuse the colour for maroon or brick red.

The alpha stood with his hand at the knob for a moment, frozen in thought, his face a myriad of emotions. After a short moment, he sighed and his hand then flew to the back of his head. He then turned away from the door, facing the other side of the hall ready to leave.

The alpha ruffled his hair in frustration.

"So you want to see him?" Crysta's voice broke the silence.

The man turned around to see who had spoken.

"What are you doing here?" Liam spat with venom in his voice.

"We are here to see him too," Lina said to him, "Why don't we go in together? I'm sure he has missed his best friend."

Liam stood frozen for a moment before turning away from them, "You go in. Tell him I said 'hi.'"

Lina was in front of him before he could take another step forward, "No... You'll tell him that yourself."

The alpha snarled, "Step aside, princess. I'm leaving."

"No... Wyatt wants to see you. He's in pain. Why won't you grant him that much?" Lina asked him.

"Did Wyatt say it himself? That he wanted to see me?" Liam stared the princess in the eye. When she wouldn't answer him, he sidestepped and walked past her, "Didn't think so. Don't go assuming anything."

After a short silence, Lina walked to the door and swiped the card they'd gotten from the receptionist. Inside the room, the bedridden alpha was sound asleep behind a draw of azure curtains.

The machines beeped rhythmically and showed stable vital signs. Honour walked forward and placed a hand on the man's forehead, "He's a bit feverish."

"Isn't that a normal thing for someone in his condition?" the princess asked.

"I would like to say that it is... but, I don't know. He should have healed. He's a werewolf and an alpha at that. Was he bitten?" Honour asked.

"Yes, he was," Lina approached the sleeping alpha and gestured to the spot on his torso where she'd seen the horrid bite mark.

"Send me a pair of scissors," the young goddess asked gesturing to a pair of steel scissors in a kidney dish. The princess passed them over to her.

The girl lifted the hem of his shirt and started making a clean cut up to the spot that Lina had gestured to.

When they pulled the shirt up, they found fresh clean bandages. There was no sign of a wound. In fact, the man looked absolutely healthy. If it wasn't for his slightly pale skin, they would have thought he was healed.

"Did I worry you that much?" a male voice startled the females.

Lina nearly leapt away from the alpha they had woken, "Damn it, Wyatt. You scared me."

The man chuckled, "I'll take that as a life achievement. You guys were awesome out there. I also highly underestimated Bree's abilities. She was clearly meant to guide you through the Trials."

"How—" the alpha cut the princess off by gesturing to a screen opposite his hospital bed.

"The screens go on during the matches and anyone that has the strength to watch gets to see everything as it goes down," the alpha responded, "How did it feel like to run blind?"

"It was... irritating and troublesome. If only I could have a word with whatever genius thought that was a good idea for a game," Lina groaned.

"You looked fine to me. Don't lose hope yet. There are still two games left. You will definitely win those ones," Wyatt replied, "Who knows? Maybe this time I'll be able to watch from the audience and not in this hospital bed."

"Are you sure you're feeling better?" Honour asked him this time. There was a hint of worry in her voice that Lina found a little confusing.

"Yes, Honour. I am fine although I didn't think I would cause 'you' any worry," the man smirked, "Am I really that charming?"

"I wasn't the one most worried about you. You should see the person we met outside," Honour replied, intentionally dodging his question.

“Oh? Who was that? I need to meet the most valuable person in my fan club,” Wyatt smugly asked.

“It should be obvious who your number one fan is...” Crysta trailed off, leaving the guessing to the alpha.

His whole act collapsed at the realisation of his potential visitor. He looked to Honour and when next he spoke, he’d lost every bit of jolliness in his voice.

“L-Liam. W-why didn’t he come in?”

“I’m not sure... but he made it sound like you didn’t want him to actually visit. Like he would have come if you’d specifically called for him,” she replied with a sigh.

“Hmm... I see,” Wyatt’s eyes wandered to the white sheets that covered his lower body. Suddenly, he wasn’t too happy.

“What happened between the two of you?” Crysta searched for his eyes. Wyatt and Liam had been best friends for as long as any of them could remember. Seeing them apart like this... not just for a few days, but for more than a year, was nothing short of unsettling.

“Well...”

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Chapter 484 Suspicious Meeting

Wyatt remained silent for a while, his expression seeming to hold on to what could have been before sighing heavily. It was a story that drained the cheerful facade straight off the alpha’s face, “Almost two years ago, we were inseparable... And then, we weren’t. Liam and I have been friends for as long as I can remember. He’s been by my side and I’ve been by his... in everything we do.

You all know that he can have a bit of a temper and more than once, that temper has gotten him—us into trouble. Even more times, I’ve got him out of it.

But, two years ago, we got ourselves into trouble... or you could say that it was I who got us into trouble this time. You know the story...

I don’t know what to make of it anymore. And maybe he blames me for it. For losing his right to succeed in his father’s place as alpha of the pack.

When he wouldn’t talk to me, we got into a fight. He expressed how much he hated me—which I don’t feel was true. But if he needed to say that before getting to the point and revealing why he was really angry, then I thought it would be worth it.

Unfortunately, he stopped arguing without ever saying what he really mattered. A lot remained unsaid that day.

Now... it’s like I barely know even him.”

“Sounds to me like you’ve not made any progress in the past two years,” Crysta crossed her arms.

“None whatsoever, and it’s been getting much harder. He stopped hanging out in the same places we used to and after a few months, I just grew tired of having to look for him. I figured he would seek me out when he finally came to his senses. But even that didn’t happen,” Wyatt sighed.

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“Then what was he doing at your door just now?” Crysta wondered.

“Your guess is as good as mine. I’m feeling sleepy. Might I?” the alpha yawned.

“Oh sorry. We didn’t mean to tire you out. We just came to check on you. Glad you’re making a quick recovery. I was worried,” Lina took a few steps back and dipped her head.

“You sure you’re okay, Wyatt?” Honour asked once more.

“Never better,” Wyatt replied.

Lina was the first out and the rest followed suit and exited the room.

Wyatt stayed in the silence for a while before gritting his teeth and balling his fists. Sharp claws extended from his fingertips, forcing their way through his clenched fists and cutting into the flesh of his palms.

‘You have a strong will. I’ll give you that but it’s only a matter of time. You cannot resist my control forever,’ a deep voice echoed through the alpha’s mind. Shivers shook his body as he turned even paler, as though the blood was draining right out of his face. As though he was suffocating.

‘I’ll resist for as long as I can. Even if I die doing it,’ the alpha replied as an intense wave of pain washed over his entire being. He tried calling out through the mind link but it seemed as though no one could hear him.

His wolf surged forward in an attempt to help but achieved a similar version of failure, ‘How long do you think you can keep me out? I am far beyond your mind’s comprehension. It’s not a matter of who’s stronger but time...’

‘You might be right about that... and you might be wrong. But I don’t give a damn. I’ll do everything I can to block you out. For as long as I can,’ the alpha yelled back into his mind.

‘Ugh! I’m getting tired of all your tough-guy acts. They are getting old... even when you know you’re fighting a losing battle. Is that... perhaps, why you didn’t ask the princess to call that dear friend of yours to visit you? To protect him...’

Fear threatened to shatter the alpha’s resolve but he wouldn’t let it, ‘You’re despicable. You’ll do anything to get into my head. But I won’t let you.’

‘Interesting...’ the deep voice resonated before bursting into a cackling madness.

In the next minute, the voice was completely gone and Wyatt was covered in a thin film of sweat. He’d spent a lot of his energy... and with that, he fell asleep.

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Lina sat in one corner of the lobby, occasionally staring out while she waited for another message. The rest of the day had gone by faster than she'd expected and the night was now upon them.

Miraculously, she was feeling refreshed and from what her friends had said, they were getting better too. Either their healing rates had always been this good or the goddess of the moon was smiling upon them...

'The irony...' Lina smirked.

The perks of being a werewolf came in handy sometimes.

Even Bree was healing faster than the princess thought she would. 'We'll definitely mop the floor with Cole's team in the next stage... And I won't be holding back.'

Lina remembered how holding back had cost them a lot in the previous game. She had felt using her speed would make winning too easy... but that's not what had happened.

Cole had used his abilities to completely overwhelm Crysta's senses and render her completely blind. Lina wanted to call it playing dirty... but it wasn't against the rules. In a real-life battle, victory was all that mattered... no matter what the means... It wasn't always bound to be fair.

'My sister probably knew this,' she told herself, gripping the phone in her hand with conviction.

Vrr, vrr... the endangered phone in the princess's hands suddenly vibrated.

The princess unlocked the device and read the message, "Come outside. I'm in the parking lot. Jack"

Lina scrunched her eyebrows. 'Parking lot... What is he doing there?'

"What are you doing there?" she texted back.

"Hiding from fans... you know how it is for movie stars," another text came almost immediately.

Sighing, the princess stood up and exited the lobby, pulling her hoodie tighter to shield herself from the cold. The walk to the parking lot wasn't long from the lobby... where they had originally planned to meet up.

She found the entrance to the underground parking lot and froze...

It was dark inside. Instinctively, she opened herself up to the pack link, making her presence and location most known to the royals and her best friends.

"Is something wrong, Lina?" Queen Martha's voice came through the mind link.

"I don't know yet. Just thought I would as well..."

"Are you doing something dangerous?"

"No, nothing like that, mother. Just meeting an old friend," Lina calmly replied.

"Okay then... Pass our greetings along then," the queen responded, going silent. The necessary members of the mind link had listened to this dialogue and didn't ask any further questions, leaving Lina to her thoughts.

With their minds aware of her whereabouts, the princess felt safer. Lina descended the ramp and walked into the parking lot. The lights underground were dimmer than she remembered them and for a while, she couldn't find the person she was looking for.

Everything was quiet... too quiet. White fur sprouted from the princess's hair, mixing with her dark locks. Her ears grew to tapering tips, drawing in more sound. Her canines extended as well as her claws, a rush of energy flooding her system.

"L-Lina, is that you?" a familiar masculine voice caught her attention.

Lina turned to a dark green car and noticed a familiar blonde peeking from behind it. Jack emerged from behind the car, dressed in a black turtleneck and tight-fitting black jeans.

Compared to how he used to dress, this was rather simple.

However— Lina squinted—, he looked to have lost some weight. Not malnourished, but not as muscular as he used to be.

Lina's claws and fangs immediately retracted, returning the princess to her human appearance, "Jack! Hi. I'm sorry if I scared you."

"You... Scare me?! Pfft!"

Lina raised a brow at him, "I'm the one with the fangs here."

"Yeah! Yeah!" Jack chuckled, "How have you been? You're looking well. You've grown taller too... and more... beautiful," Jack's breath hitched as he blew through the compliment.

"Thanks. I've been... training for a while now."

"Don't you train normally?"

"No, this was a little extra. Is there something you wanted to tell me specifically? This place... It's suspicious," Lina waved her hands at the setting with which he'd met her.

"Well... I do have reasons. I just don't know how to say it... Hmm, let me see," Jack rubbed his chin thoughtfully, "Do you think you could perhaps... end the Royal Games and have everyone go home?"

Lina stared at him dumbfounded for a few seconds, "I'm sorry, what?"

"Everyone here is in danger. I was hoping you could... stop the Royal Games and save so many lives. You're the only person I know who has that kind of power. So I came to you with this," Jack replied.

"What makes you think people are in trouble? The Great Arena is the most heavily guarded place on the planet right now. If you ask me, letting people leave here in panic would only expose them to more enemies," Lina argued, "If there is any danger, to begin with."

"No... you don't understand..." Jack stopped himself and buried his head in his hands. His jovial demeanour was gone... replaced with a look of hopelessness.

"What have you been doing all this time though? How has your show been going?" Lina asked.

"Oh! The show! We put it on hold for a while," he replied.

“Oh? What happened?”

“I-I needed some time off,” Jack rubbed the back of his head nervously, then stole a glance at his wrist, “Oh, would you look at the time? I have to be going. It’s been nice talking to you again, Lina. You really have grown more beautiful and powerful than anyone could have ever predicted.”

“Thanks... again,” Lina replied as she watched Jack retreat, leaving her alone in the underground parking lot.

As she left the parking lot herself, she couldn’t wipe one thought from her mind. This thought seemed to be a nexus of many suspicions that were too premature for her to solve, ‘But Jack wasn’t wearing a watch.’

As the girl rounded the bend heading back to the entrance to the hotel, she collided with someone familiar. His crew cut and striking resemblance to Thorrin and Tom Chase was too hard to miss.

While he looked younger than Thorrin, Lina knew she couldn’t forget the face of Micah Chase. “Apologies, princess. I didn’t see you there.”

“Such an odd thing for a Chase hunter to say. What happened to always being aware of your surroundings?” the princess asked.

“Sorry... I was focused on something else. But it seems to have vanished before I could... Wait.” The man looked back to where the princess was coming from, “Did you see anything in the parking lot? Anything at all.”

“I saw Jack Boggle,” Lina mentioned, “Nothing else out of the ordinary though.”

“Jack... Jack Boggle! Phony Survival Hunter Jack Boggle!?” Micah asked.

“Yeah, the very one.”

“That’s odd!”

“How come?”

“He’s supposedly missing. Did he do anything or say anything to you?” Micah asked.

“He asked me to... Get everyone out of the Great Arena. That everyone was in danger and that’s the only way he could think of to save them,” Lina explained, “But when I refused, he looked down. Then quickly left.”

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Micah stood still for a moment, thinking through the princess’s words, “That’s definitely odd. But without seeing the man myself, I can’t say if he was hiding something from you.”

“I got the feeling that he was.”

“Okay then. The next time you meet him, try keeping track of him until we can question him more. In the meantime, I’ll ask the hunters to be on the lookout,” Micah sighed.

It seemed whatever the hunter had been looking for had escaped him. Lina pulled her phone from her pocket and typed out a message: 'Where are you?'

Before hitting 'send.'

An hourglass image started to rotate on her screen and she stared at it, normally expecting it to say 'Sent' before she put away the phone.

One minute... Two minutes...

'Failed! Network error!'

Chapter 485 Meeting a Former Traitor

The first stage of the Royal Games had ended in the Lycaon's team victory.

Surprisingly, Lina had taken this defeat well. The princess didn't lash out or exhibit any form of hostility towards their opponents either.

Contrary to what they expected, she was actually eager to face the Lycaon pack in the next stage of the Games. The same couldn't be said for Crysta who'd decided to go for a run and Bree had followed behind, leaving Madeline and Honour alone in the common room.

Honour had her eyes glued to the pages of a book she'd carried with her from the capital. Madeline hadn't really found a reason for the girl to carry it along with her... but well, here they were.

Having crept so close to the edge of boredom, the goddess had been forced to retrieve the book in an effort to fend off the yawn-infested boredom that hung heavy in the air. Lina had gone to meet with Jack, leaving them behind with nothing to do.

Madeline, on the other hand, couldn't help but feel there was another reason the young goddess was trying to distract herself.

Unfortunately, getting that information out of her was just as impossible as splitting a stone in two.

Lately, Honour was getting harder and harder to read and speak to her about what she had on her divine mind was getting even harder. Perhaps she was trying to keep them from worrying about her or maybe she was always thinking of the limited time she had in the land of mortals.

Without her saying anything, the girls couldn't say for sure what was bothering her. She seemed well enough through the mind link as well... but instincts always had a way of manifesting even when all logic suggested otherwise.

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"Sooo, it's just the two of us," Madeline sighed.

Honour's darting eyes stopped over the pages and curiously regarded the Seeker for a moment, "What is it, Mady?"

"I'm bored, Honour. Can we at least do some exploring?" Madeline begged her friend, "Maybe then, you... you could tell me more about what's happening with you."

Honour sighed and stared off into space, thinking through the request, "I'll walk with you but I'm not sure how much I'll tell you... if there is even anything to say."

Honour had already tried to tell her friends countless times... and failed countless times, but she wasn't one to give up if there was some way she could help. And if she'd learned anything from the few months in her restricted state, it was that she had to take any chances she could get.

Her mind strayed to the man she'd tried restraining in the hospital... a premature thought began to form in her mind. 'When are you returning, Drake?' she thought to herself.

"Anything is better than driving me insane sitting here with nothing to do," Madeline groaned loudly.

"Very well then. Let's get going. Do you have something in mind?" Honour asked, folding her page and putting the book aside.

"Hmm, we've spent the whole day in the Royal Suite and watched the Games from there. We should check out where everyone else gets to watch the games from," Madeline mentioned, her face sparkling with delight.

"Very well then. Let's go," Honour stood, retrieving a scarf from the sofa. The walk through the interior of the Great Arena was a lot less chaotic this time and calm. Partly because they didn't have Lina with them and partly because of the unconscious influence that Honour's mood had on the werewolves around her.

This time, they noticed the signs that pointed them in the right direction and followed them. Something they seemed to have missed on their first trip through the Great Arena. Walking through the large facility almost felt natural now. The Great Arena wasn't as 'great' and intimidating anymore.

"So, are you going to tell me what's going on or not?" Madeline asked her friend.

"Hmm, let's see. Where do I start?" Honour thought to herself.

She didn't want to end up speaking noiselessly by attempting to reveal something the divine rules prohibited her from revealing, so she had to think about what had no direct consequence on the course of events.

As it stood, she had a feeling that there were rogues within the Great Arena but she also knew there was no way she could reveal this.

They were werewolves as well, so she could detect their presence. However, revealing this was also considered a direct interference with the normal flow of events.

Shelving this thought, she was interrupted by Madeline, "Earlier this morning, when I came to wake you up. I'd come to tell you about Drake leaving. There is so much happening and so little we can do about it.

When I found you, you looked... different."

This caught Honour's interest. She knew Drake was supposed to leave that morning but she couldn't tell Madeline that. What caught her attention now was the last thing the girl had said.

“Different! How?”

The young goddess remained silent as she heard Madeline describe the state of her room that morning. The swirling blue mist... the transformation her face had undergone, making her look more regal, refined, expressionless, intimidating— and so many other things that described a powerful creature from another world.

This description was the furthest thing from Honour’s character. So different that Madeline had only been able to confirm it was her through her scent... and the fact that the blue mist was nothing new.

After hearing the short story, Honour sighed, “Madeline, the memories... they’re getting clearer. Not just flashes anymore but long conversations and events. It happens when I fall asleep. And the more I dream of the past, the more I feel my former self returning.

I... I have feelings I’ve never thought I had before.”

“But... you still have time, don’t you?” Madeline asked, “It’s still too early.”

“Yes, Mady, I still have time. At least, that’s what I know,” Honour replied, opening a door to the bleachers.

The two girls were bombarded by a cool breeze from the wind. Suddenly Madeline understood why Honour had brought a scarf along with her. Fortunately for her, the feeling of cold lasted only a short moment before her body heated up once more...

‘At least, some part of me is more werewolf than human,’ the girl sighed. With how weak her wolf was, it was easy to forget that she was one.

“I’m sorry you have to go through all this, Honour,” Madeline said with a ton of concern laced in her voice.

Honour sighed, “It’s fine, Mady. Let’s just try to enjoy the time I have here. It’s all I ask.”

“You got it, your holiness,” Madeline replied enthusiastically.

“I’m not sure that’s how it works but I’ll take it,” Honour replied with a hearty laugh.

The two girls walked idly through the seats that overlooked the Great Colosseum, talking about anything and everything that came to their minds.

They talked of the games that, Madeline spoke of her life back at the Golden Moon pack and Honour brought up the past as well. Both of them avoided any topic pertaining to the future unless it had something to do with the games.

They got so comfortable that they didn’t notice another presence approach them.

“What a happy pair!” a deep rumbling voice interrupted the peaceful silence.

The two girls stopped laughing and turned in time to face a large man walking up to them. His eyes glowed a deep crimson and his muscles screamed power. His face, on the other hand, was slightly flushed... which destroyed his intimidating image entirely.

Honour was quick to step in front of Madeline, shielding her from the one wolf that could see past her disguise. After taking so much time to change the colour of her hair and her very appearance, this powerful alpha had seen through it all.

Kyle raised his hands up in surrender, "I don't mean you any harm. I only wish to talk to the girl that you're hiding behind you. Is that okay?"

"What's she to you?"

Kyle rubbed the back of his head nervously, "That's what I would like to figure out. Just a talk... I've been informed to keep the colour of her eyes a secret. You have my word."

"I don't trust you. A former spy for the rogues, which you probably still are, could be going for someone the Rogue King is still after. This is the exact same thing you did with Katie if I remember correctly," Honour blurted out.

This time, Kyle looked even more confused, "The Rogue King is after her?"

Honour didn't miss the defensive tone with which he asked this. She wanted to argue with him more... but her powers didn't sense any malicious intent coming from him.

He didn't seem to have ulterior motives... let alone malicious ones.

If anything, he just seemed curious... and a tad bit desperate.

The goddess sighed and turned to Madeline. The amber-eyed redhead had her eyes glued to the alpha with her lips drawn to a thin line, "Will you be okay?" Honour asked.

Madeline could only manage a stiff nod of her head.

'I won't be far. Just call for me as soon as you feel unsafe,' Honour said through the mind link before walking away from the pair.

Madeline was soon left standing alone in the presence of the hulking alpha. Compared to him, she was but a small insect.

"Hi," she managed.

"Hi... We didn't really get to talk the last time," Kyle responded sheepishly.

Kyle is a beta alpha, isn't he? The girl thought to herself. He seemed somewhat nervous in her presence which was a first for the little Seeker.

"A walk?" she asked softly.

Before she could debate whether he had heard her, he replied, "Sure!"

But his voice came out high-pitched, completely different from his normally deep voice. Kyle coughed, clearly trying to ease his nerves.

'What is happening?' the girl mentally screamed as they started walking in a random direction.

The Great Arena was designed concentric to the colosseum that stood first, leaving the large ring of seats for the spectators to remain undisturbed by the constructions that turned it into the impressive facility that it was today.

So they had a lot of walking they could manage.

After walking for a short while, Kyle spoke up, "Have they told you about..."

"Yeah, they told me everything..."

"About?"

"About your history with the Lost Luna... and how you... umm, stabbed her in the back," Madeline stuttered.

Kyle's shoulders slumped dejectedly, "So much for first impressions!"

"First impressions?"

"Yeah... I was hoping I'd get to talk to you first. Without my history getting in the way," Kyle sighed. This information seemed to have gotten to him.

Kyle seemed to value what she thought of him even though they'd never met. 'A beta alpha of the Lycaon pack cares about my opinion of him. I must be dreaming.'

"I would have found out one way or another," she shrugged.

"Yeah, though I would be the one to tell you," Kyle replied, "And perhaps by then, you would have come to learn about the kind of person I am without knowing of the person I was."

Madeline couldn't argue with that sort of thinking. But then again, there was the matter of how she would have found out. What if Kyle lied to her or twisted the information when the day came? What then?

It didn't seem to matter now that she knew though. Instead, she knew his past... and now that she got a closer look at him, he didn't seem like the sort of person that could do that.

"Do you... regret it?"

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Chapter 486 A Seeker's Dilemma

"When... Oh, you mean the backstabbing? Hmm, that's a difficult question," he responded thoughtfully as he visibly wrestled in search of an answer to this question.

To Madeline, this answer shouldn't have been too difficult, possibly because she expected him to simply say 'yes.'

"Luna Katie told me to forget about it and move on. Helping her with the future she intends to bring upon this world... but it's not as easy as it sounds," Kyle, who almost always acted on impulse, was suddenly thoughtful.

“But that’s beside the point. I don’t know if I can say I had the chance to regret what I did. Luna Katie... sort of robbed that opportunity from me and skipped straight to forgiveness and redeeming part.”

Madeline tried to understand his words but there seemed to be something missing. Kyle wasn’t saying he regretted what he did. She sensed no malice coming from him... but she also couldn’t understand how someone switches sides without feeling regret for the actions they took while on the enemy’s side.

“Perhaps you don’t understand the question. When you think back to that time, do you... cringe or feel bad about what you did?” Madeline asked.

“Hmm, would it make you more comfortable if I said that I did?” Kyle gave her a weak smile.

“Maybe...” she sighed.

“I can offer an explanation for what I did and I can admit I was making the worst mistakes in my life but I would say I regret what I did. Back then, I was one of the Rogue King’s most trusted spies.

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I had power... and I even had the protection of the most dangerous werewolf in the world. I was born a rogue, trained to be a spy and sent on an assignment. To me, nothing I did was wrong.

I won’t force myself to feel regret for something I thought was right at the time. But I won’t deny the fact that I made mistakes.”

“Oh! You... grew up as a rogue?” Madeline asked suddenly.

Kyle smirked, “Yes... yes, I did. And I must say, I’m glad to have kept myself alive until this moment.”

“Oh, have you found worth living for?”

This brought Kyle a bit of confusion, “I’ve found you. What else?”

“Huh!” Madeline suddenly panicked, “What do you mean? No—don’t tell me.”

“You can’t feel it, can you? The mate bond?” Kyle asked, crestfallen. He must have suspected it since Madeline hadn’t shown any signs before.

The colour drained from the girl’s face and she froze as Kyle studied her, “Mate bond? What mate bond?”

The Seeker felt something invade her mind... a consciousness she’d never felt. It wasn’t hostile but its presence did not go unnoticed.

“Hmm... Your wolf doesn’t even acknowledge it. But she won’t deny it either. Am I missing something here?” Kyle asked.

“Yes... you are. You’re missing a lot. I can’t sense my mate... At least, not until I’m marked by them,” Madeline replied, taking a step back. Kyle quickly closed the gap.

“Well then, let’s get on with...” Kyle held the girl by her shoulders. His words were drowned out by her yelling and squirming...

His motions were swift but gentle. But when she struggled, he wouldn't feel her resistance. Almost like she was barely resisting him... and yet the vein pulsing down her forehead spoke a different language. Madeline was indeed struggling against him.

'She's so... weak and frail.'

"Stay away from me," Madeline fought against the man's iron grip. Despite his firm grip on her shoulders, he didn't hurt her like her instincts said he would.

"Hey, stop struggling. You'll hurt your—"

"Step away from her," a cold feminine voice interrupted Kyle, freezing the two of them. Standing a few steps above them was an emerald-eyed delta. Crysta looked like she could kill Kyle with her glare.

"This isn't what it looks like," Kyle started.

"You heard what Madeline said. She asked you to stay away from her and that's what you will do," Crysta replied with the same cold tone.

Kyle turned to face the girl in his arms. She had indeed asked him to stay away from him. Whether it was because she feared his touch or simply because she got caught in the moment was beyond his comprehension.

And staying away from her was the last thing he wanted to do. This wasn't looking good for him.

How could he start explaining something that was so one-sided? While he held her, sparks flared where their skin touched and he felt the urge to hold her in his arms even more...

But those emotions and urges weren't reflected in her eyes. He came off as someone who was harassing her instead... and he could see that.

'This sucks!'

The beta alpha gently let the frightened Seeker go and bowed slightly, "I'm sorry if I frightened you."

"N-no, it's fine. You just—"

"Come with me, Mady," Crysta interrupted the girl and pulled her away from the beta alpha. To Kyle, she yelled, "And you! Just stay away from her if you know what's good for you."

Kyle merely clenched his fist and suppressed a frustrated growl. A delta was telling him what to do. Ordering to stay away from his mate who couldn't even feel the mate bond. How was he supposed to get around these circumstances?

Since becoming a beta alpha, this was the first time Kyle had found something he wanted... something he wanted for himself. So close... and yet out of reach.

This was his second attempt at talking to Madeline... and it had ended in failure. Each time, he was met with more mysteries. She couldn't feel the same pull that drove him to such lengths as he did... and she had the most beautiful grey eyes he'd ever seen in a wolf.

'Was a wolf even supposed to have grey eyes?' he wondered to himself. Then again, he'd also never heard of a wolf that couldn't feel the mate bond. For some reason, he believed her... and not because the mate bond was wrong... but for reasons he wanted to find out from Madeline herself.

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"Mady, are you alright? Are you hurt? Did he hurt you?" Crysta asked the girl once they were back in the Sirius common room, checking her over for any signs of injury.

Honour sighed and dropped into the sofa, grabbing her book once more and turning to the page she'd stopped at.

Bree closed the door behind them and stared in silence.

"I'm fine, Crysta. He didn't mean to hurt me," Madeline shook her head feverishly.

"Then what happened out there? You seemed panicked," Crysta asked, worry etched on her face.

"I'm fine, Crysta. He just caught me off-guard is all," Madeline tried.

"If he makes you feel uncomfortable, we can make sure..."

"No, Crysta. It's fine. I can handle myself around him," Madeline cut her off.

"Then why was he forcefully holding you when we found you? You were already panicking before. He looked like he was about to harass you," Bree stepped in.

"Well... That could have been sort of... my fault," Madeline turned a light shade of red.

Crysta stopped in her tracks, confused by this statement. Something wasn't right here. She also noticed that she hadn't really paid attention to the last thing Mady had said, "Did you say you could handle yourself around him?"

"I think you should let Madeline explain what's happening," Honour sighed. The delta nodded in agreement and allowed the Seeker to relax, taking a seat before she started explaining.

"Kyle thinks that... I could be his mate," Madeline admitted with a tinge of red on her cheeks.

Crysta's jaw nearly dropped. She didn't know much about Kyle, to begin with. He was a very powerful beta alpha capable of a lot. She also knew about his former transgressions. But she didn't know what kind of person he was now.

Alpha Cole seemed to trust him and he hadn't conducted himself in any questionable manner yet. When she'd seen Madeline struggling against him, she'd jumped to the worst conclusions.

Despite the staggering difference in their power, he respected her wishes and let go of Madeline without much resistance.

"Is he?"

"I don't know. Seekers can't feel the mate bond of their own mates," Madeline replied.

"Can't you just check who his mate is and figure out if that's you?" Honour suddenly asked.

“That’s a good idea... but it’s happened more than once for the Seeker to see nothing when they try finding out who someone’s mate is. Sometimes, it’s simply because that person’s mate is still too young or probably unconscious at that time, so finding them becomes harder.

So even if I tried to check him, I might come up with nothing.”

“Or, you could come up with his true mate’s face and guide him to the right person that’s definitely not you,” Honour suggested.

“Yeah, that would be nice,” something about this suggestion didn’t sit well with Madeline. What if Kyle wasn’t her mate after all? What then?

“But you forget one thing... I don’t know how to use those powers yet,” she hurriedly defended.

“Oh yeah... That’s right. You need to test it out on someone and figure out how it works. Try checking who Crysta’s mate is,” Honour suddenly threw her book away and stared at her friend in childish anticipation.

Madeline and Crysta turned a deep shade of red. Crysta’s somewhat military facade suddenly crumbled, “H-Honour... can we stop getting these wild ideas?”

“Oh, come on, Crysta. You must be curious. You’re twenty years old already. Two years too old,” Honour shook her head like a disappointed elder, “That just won’t do.”

“What about you? She could try it on you,” Crysta rushed, pointing fingers.

“I know my mate. It’s Drake. You, on the other hand, should...” Honour stopped speaking when she noticed the room had gone deathly quiet.

The three girls were all staring at her—like hungry wolves that had found their prey.

‘Oops!’

The storm began...

“How long have you known?”

“Who revealed it first?”

“Have you guys kissed yet?”

“Has he marked you?”

“Why hadn’t you said anything?”

“How far have you guys gone?”

“Aren’t you mad that he didn’t say goodbye this morning?”

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Honour was covering her ears trying to block out their questions. At once, she yelled at them, “One at a time, please!”

"I have an idea. We should take turns, starting with me..."

"No fair! I want to go first."

"Madeline first, then Crysta and finally Bree. I'll only allow one question each," Honour ordered.

Madeline sat back, thinking over her question for a moment, "When did you find out?"

"Are you crazy, girl? You were supposed to ask her how she found out. We need the juicy details," Crysta whined, shaking Bree in disappointment.

Honour stared at her friends dumbfounded.

How was she supposed to answer this question... or any of their questions at that? She'd wondered the same exact thing herself. She knew Drake was her mate. But when was it that she had actually come to this realisation?

This answer eluded her, "I'm not sure. I guess as we spent more time together, it became more and more obvious."

"But you're not eighteen yet," Bree pointed out, keeping Crysta at an arm's length as she massaged her temples.

"I know... but I'm not a normal werewolf either," she sighed.

Bree was right... she wasn't eighteen yet. For some unknown reason, the goddess kept the definite pull of the mate bond away from the werewolves until their eighteenth birthday.

However, it wasn't unheard of for two wolves who got along so well to turn out to be mates once they were of age. Sometimes the connection between two people was so powerful that it was undeniable that they would end up as mates...

And most times, it would come true...

Most times.

And besides, she had plenty of mystical ways to prove Drake was her mate... 'Mystical ways indeed! When did life get so complicated?'

Chapter 487 Bliss, Love and Pain

If someone else had given this answer, the girls would have been left with doubts but this was Honour, the next moon goddess. If it didn't turn out to be true, there was even the seed of suspicion that she could create the bond all on her own...

But none of them mentioned this little suspicion. It bordered quite close to treachery in this context.

"Fine... My turn!" Bree squealed, "Have you kissed him yet?"

"Kissed who?" a female voice interrupted the girl's gossip session, sending chills down the girls' spines.

They all turned to see Lina standing at the door with a suspicious look on her face, "Did you guys totally forget to include me in this gossip? Not fair... I want to hear everything."

Honour turned a deep shade of red. Not only had she gained a bigger audience but Lina was a part of it as well.

"How did it go with Jack?" Honour asked.

"Oh, it was fine. I'll look into it later though," Lina shrugged.

"What did he say?" Honour asked.

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"Something about putting an end to the games. I told Micah everything. He's going to deal with it," Lina summarized, "Stop stalling, Honour."

"Oh! Fine..." the goddess caught the princess up on what had so far happened and even gave a detailed explanation of why she was certain Drake was her mate. The attraction was mutual.

'...he also seemed capable of accessing my Divine Energy and using it for himself. And I can heal him, which isn't the same with everyone else...' she wanted to add but she knew these parts of her thoughts wouldn't leave her vocal cords.

"Okay then... I'll take the fourth question then," Lina giggled, settling in the semicircle surrounding her best friend.

"Okay then... To answer Bree's question. No, I haven't kissed him... yet!" why did this confession taste bitter on her tongue... and even worse, why were her cheeks burning?

Honour covered her face, wishing she could vanish somewhere isolated. Had she seriously never thought of it this way?

"Why is that?" Crysta wondered.

"Is that perhaps, your question?" Honour's eyes gleamed with a hint of mischief.

"Yes, that's my question," she didn't bat an eye.

'Tough cookie...' the goddess mentally cried.

"I don't know. I've never thought of it. I guess I was too wrapped in feeling safe about him to actually push the relationship that far," Honour covered her face as she said this. This was true as well, considering everything she heard in the wind and how Drake was almost always there to hold her.

Her words held the truth... but not the whole truth and she felt bad about twisting it in order to answer her friend's question but there was simply no other way.

Regardless, Drake was her safe haven.

"I see! Lina... Your turn."

"Mine's simple. Does he know?" Lina asked... not finishing the whole sentence as it was obvious.

"Yeah, he knows," Honour replied calmly.

It was clear that the girls wanted to know more about Honour and the princess's brother, but fortunately, they didn't pressure her for any more information.

After their question limit was hit, they decided against putting more pressure on her as she couldn't turn any more colours than beet red.

They told Lina about Madeline's encounter with Kyle and how all of this had started. When they tried to coax Madeline to seek out their mates again, however, Lina stopped them, a memory of the past sparking in her mind.

A memory of a time it seemed Madeline had accidentally activated her powers, only to recoil in pain back in the Golden Moon pack two years ago.

Lina didn't know whether she'd seen anything and Madeline never spoke of the incident ever again. Lina's fears had encompassed her curiosity for the first time ever...

Even now that they thought of manifesting the Seeker's powers, she found herself afraid of hearing the answer the girl would give her.

"So, do you think he's the one?" Lina suddenly asked the Seeker.

The princess tried placing Kyle's character but couldn't seem to get a read on him. Cole seemed comfortable around him... comfortable enough to allow him to compete alongside him in the Royal Games.

He'd disrespected Crysta without even realising it and apologized promptly, sounding sincere all through. It was almost like he said everything on his mind without a care for the consequences.

Compared to the person she knew from Katie's past, he seemed completely different. He was... an anomaly she couldn't place. Admittedly, this was Lina being optimistic. She couldn't dismiss the fact that Kyle had indeed once been a spy out to bring down her sister.

"I can't tell, Lina. I can tell he doesn't mean me harm. But I also can't tell what he's thinking," Madeline's eyes stared off into the distance as she relived the short moments that she'd been in Kyle's presence.

"Well, it's no use overthinking it now," Honour tried to steer them away from the topic.

"Oh! Honour, what do you think of him?" Lina turned to the young goddess.

Honour narrowed her eyes at her best friend, "You know what I mean, Honour. You wouldn't have left Bree all to him if you hadn't noticed something... would you?" Lina added.

'What use was being friends with a moon goddess if you couldn't get some celestial insight, right?'

"No, he didn't mean her any harm. But that's all I could tell," Honour replied briefly, returning her attention to her book. Lina sighed... 'That can't be all she can tell me!' but she didn't press her for any more information.

The girls shifted their attention to different random topics. They had one day of rest which they planned to utilise. They played a few board games, ordered food and played a few silly games before they ran out of energy.

At the end of it all, Honour was the one left awake. The girls had fallen asleep in the sofas, not having the strength to retreat to their rooms. Despite being the weakest out of them, Honour had failed to sleep.

She stood up and walked to her room to take a shower. The goddess closed her eyes once the water was flowing through her hair, calming her nerves... and shivering body. A stream of silent tears streamed down her porcelain face, her divine shackles loosening in her solitude.

Tapping into her connection with the prince, she watched his progress through his eyes. The prince was in his wolf form, following a few life gestures through a thick forest, careful to keep his distance but tracking them down nonetheless. Everything was going well on his end, as expected, "How are you doing?"

"I'm fine, I guess. I'm not sure how well this will work but I'm hoping it does for our own sakes," the prince sighed.

"Yeah, same here..." Honour responded.

After a short pause, his voice came through, "Are you okay?"

"How am I supposed to answer that?" Honour's voice nearly broke. The prince's mind invaded hers even more... like a warm blanket of love and care.

Without asking, he gently sifted through the goddess's most recent memories. The memories Honour was clinging too tightly in this moment of weakness.

Blissful laughter and giggles coming from the group of friends she'd grown fond of filled Drake's mind along with a feeling of impending gloom. "Many years ago, as a child, I was not capable of making friends. I was a weakling.

You know what our society is like. The kids show off their power and cling to those that are strong.

As someone weak, I was easily shunned.

For some reason, that didn't bother me. I had hobbies to keep me occupied. My mother's flower shop was more than enough to take my time.

But that was all before I met Lina Sirius. A girl who valued a different kind of strength. She was so lost back then... Unaware of how powerful she truly was and also being eaten up by the darkness of being rejected by her friends.

We became fast friends... I'd never thought that one friend would bring me many more."

The memories of the fun she was having with this group of girls rippled through the goddess's mind, sending waves of grief as well as unimaginable bliss, love and pain through her body.

"The more fun we have, the more I'm reminded of the limited number of days I have here."

"Isn't that the point though? To have as much fun as you can... before you can't," Drake tried.

"Yeah... but the more fun I have, the more painful it will be when I have to leave," Honour's voice now came as a whisper that the prince had to pay attention to.

“Then you have all the fun you can. The one thing you can’t change is leaving this plane... but you can spend as much time as you possibly can with your friends. So have the time of your life... so you can leave with no regrets,” Drake consoled.

Honour paused for a moment, relishing in her mate’s presence. She got the feeling if she wished, she could just appear where he was with a bit of divine energy.

...as long as it didn’t interfere with the lives of mortals...

But she held out on doing something that drastic.

“What about you? Shouldn’t you have been spending more time with your family?” Honour asked.

“You have me there,” the prince sighed, “Perhaps I was trying to get them to notice something by acting out. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“Maybe you were thinking the same thing I was...”

“Not good at following my own advice,” Drake chuckled when he noticed his own behaviour to be similar to Honour’s... even though his own was to a much greater degree of childishness.

“Yeah. Maybe after you’re done with your mission, you could spend more time with them,” Honour sighed.

“I’m looking forward to it...” Drake replied, “You should get some rest.”

Honour chuckled humourlessly, “That’s one of the things I’m most afraid of.”

“Hey, you’re not going anywhere yet. Besides, you need your rest if you’re to have a blast tomorrow. You have the day to yourselves, don’t you?” Drake pointed out.

“Yeah, we do...” after a short pause, “Good night, Drake.”

“Good night, my lady,” Drake replied with a tad bit more lovingness than the girl was used to getting.

The goddess finished her shower and exited the bathroom only to get surprised by a staggering Lina. The princess was leaning against the door, rubbing her eyes and yawning in exhaustion.

She looked ten times more exhausted than Honour thought she was. “Are you okay, Lina?”

“Yeah... Just a little bit... tired,” the princess said in between yawns before making her way to the bed.

Honour rushed to her before she could fall and helped her get into the bed, “What made you this tired?”

“Hmm, something about exhaustion hitting me much later than it’s actually supposed to... I don’t... know,” Lina was out like a light.

‘Just how exhausted was she? Was this supposed to be the kind of backlash she gets from using her insane powers? But then again, Lina had used her powers a long while ago. ‘Much later than it’s supposed to...’

If this was her backlash from finishing the Trials, this was more than much later than it should have been.

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Honour's thoughts were stopped when Lina reached for her.

"No, Lina. Only Mady keeps moving about like..." resisting was futile.

With a mortal present, the goddess's powers were reduced to nothing and before she knew it, Lina was holding onto her like a little kid.

"...like she's looking for a teddy bear." Honour uselessly finished her statement, imprisoned in her best friend's clutches.

Lina mumbled, "Hmm, no... not a teddy. I'm holding... h-holding the moon. So pretty and relaxing."

The princess yawned before her movements came to a stop and her breath slowed down to that of a mammal in deep sleep.

'Holding the moon, huh...' Honour regarded the princess, marvelling once more at her resemblance to the Lost Luna...

'Good night, Lina.'

To the moon, 'Good night, Katie.'

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Surprisingly, that night, Honour slept without any dreams.

Chapter 488 Contagious Excitement

Honour woke up the next day still trapped in the clutches of her best friend.

The only difference between this and every other night—well, besides having a princess clinging to you—was that she hadn't had a dream or memory throughout the night.

Her divine energy also seemed in check for the first time and what was more, they didn't have any games that day. Today was a day to relax and have some fun in the hopes that Lina, Crysta and Bree would be well-rested and rejuvenated enough for the next stage of the royal games.

Wriggling her way out of her friend's arms, she took a bath and got dressed for their free day, oozing with excitement. Nothing was going to ruin this precious day.

Considering what state her friend had appeared in the night before crashing into the bed, Honour thought it better to let her rest longer to recover her strength.

In the common room, she found Crysta and Bree still passed out on the couches. Madeline was silently going through something on the tablet by the table, fiddling with whatever it was that had caught her attention.

"Good morning, Honour. I just realised we can order food through this instead of looking for a restaurant. And I'm also starting to think we could have done that the last time too."

“Seems there is a ton of things you miss when you’re new to a place. The adventure was fun though... So I won’t complain,” Honour sighed, approaching the Seeker.

“How long do you think they’ll remain asleep? They seemed pretty tired yesterday,” Madeline asked, regarding the sleeping wolves with a hint of concern.

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“So you noticed. Lina managed to get herself in bed at least but I don’t think they’ll be waking up any time soon,” the goddess replied, reevaluating the situation.

With that assumption in place, they ordered food and had breakfast while waiting for their friends to wake up.

Honour covered her friends with warm blankets and brought pillows from their rooms, making sure to make them as comfortable as could be—whilst swatting the string of bacon Madeline kept waving under Bree’s nose.

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‘NOON!!!’ Honour nearly screamed out loud.

Lina was the last to wake up with the sun nearing its zenith, three hours after Crysta and Bree. She didn’t complain no matter how badly she wanted to.

The five girls had a hearty meal before setting out to explore the Great Arena. The large facility had a lot to offer and they were eager to see it all in the name of having ‘fun’.

They visited a few malls, dragging Lina through a variety of cloth stores and dressing up in silly and stylish outfits. Fortunately for the store owners, Lina actually ended up paying for some of them... before ordering the lot to be taken to their rooms.

They visited a few arcades and were quickly bored by the games before finally landing in a sports centre.

This place has an indoor basketball court, volleyball court, badminton and swimming pool... all well-spaced and with enough room for spectators.

Speaking of spectators, there was a crowd gathered around the one kind of sport that caught their eyes the most.

They could have walked away from this facility but the sight had them glued to the spot. Madeline noticed a glint of excitement in Lina’s eye and facepalmed. There was no way they were getting out of this place.

Standing at one side of the basketball court was a group of alphas and high-ranking werewolves facing off against each other. It didn’t take much to notice the hulking figure playing defence against the King of Lycaon.

“Why does it have to be Kyle marking me every time?” Cole screamed out in exasperation.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Kyle grinned mischievously, locking eyes with the King in challenge.

To Cole's right was a female with green eyes and impressively athletic build darting about the court with Jason on her heels, their footwork nearly flawless—whether from training or their supernatural abilities, no one could tell.

After watching for a few seconds, it was clear the beautiful delta was on Cole's side and she was trying to get herself clear of Jason in order to aid her King.

Jason, however, wouldn't let that happen.

"Of course, it is, Kyle... Jason's a big coward," Cole snickered before attempting to dribble past the hulking form of the beta alpha blocking his path to the hoop.

Kyle, despite his size, easily closed any gap the king attempted to open up in his defence. After three attempts, however, Cole managed to slip past him and make a swift dash for the hoop.

He nearly blurred across the court as he dashed past Kyle. Kyle didn't give up though and jaw-dropping as it was to watch, the king's headstart was only for a moment.

The beta alpha had covered the gap in long quick steps, destroying Cole's hard-earned advantage like it was nothing. Kyle was once again between the alpha and the hoop, albeit in a dangerous position. The hoop was much closer now... and Cole was less than willing to stop his drive-in.

Cole gritted his teeth and grinned in amusement at the beta alpha's tenacity. There was no getting around Kyle that easily.

Thankfully for the king, he was not alone and hadn't planned to take on Kyle alone from the beginning.

Cole leapt into the air, aiming for the basket and as expected, Kyle quickly rose into the air, blocking his path completely and making a statement on who had greater jumping power.

When everything looked hopeless, however, the sound of nimble footsteps announced the presence of someone else.

Cole pulled the ball down from the air at the last second and passed it to the side. The female delta, as though appearing out of nowhere, grabbed the ball as she'd expected it and jammed it into the hoop with so much force that it shook the board.

A loud applause from the pack members around rattled through the walls of the Sports Centre at the spectacular display of teamwork.

For the four girls standing with Lina, something else rattled through their minds and bodies, gripping them with a conviction greater than anything the crowd could muster... And that was Lina's excitement.

"Crysta, Bree..."

"Yeah, we hear you loud and clear," the girls replied in unison stretching out their arms and cracking their necks... much to the 'inaudible' cracking sounds their bodies would make from the gesture.

The sight made Madeline giggle.

Kyle turned immediately as though the soft giggle struck his senses like lightning. Cole followed his eyes and his face lit up, "Ah, fair competition. Would you guys like to join?"

The crowd went silent when they noticed the new arrivals.

“Fair competition? You were having trouble with him and you know it,” Lina chuckled.

“Well...” Cole trailed off, “I’m still stronger... but I can tell it won’t be for much longer.”

“Wow, Cole Lycaon admitted weakness. You could always claim to be stronger with a single bolt of lightning,” Lina joked, reminding the king of his earlier stunt.

“I apologize for that. But if I’m being honest, you caught me by surprise with that gifted wild card of yours,” Cole responded, “So, fancy a game?”

“Yes. You are four though... How’s that going to work?”

“Bella?”

“Oh no... I want a piece of this action too.”

“Fine then. Ja—”

“Don’t even think about it,” Jason snarled.

“I’ll sit this one out,” Kyle volunteered, shocking everyone. The big guy was covered in a thin film of sweat, showing he was only getting started, which was cause for even more suspicion.

“You’re sure about that.”

“I want to watch them play first. Also, Bella can swap out with me the moment she gets tired or if things start to look tough,” Kyle shrugged, walking off the court.

“Hey, what’s that supposed to mean? I can handle myself just fine against these weaklings,” Bella screamed at Kyle’s retreating back.

“I highly doubt that, Bella. Do your best,” Kyle chuckled, not turning back to see the fuming delta.

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Lina was standing to one half of the court, in the centre ring with Bree and Crysta standing behind her, facing off against Cole with Bella and Jason who mirrored their positions, albeit with more relaxed demeanours.

Jason almost looked bored while Bella looked hungry to leave this team of ‘weaklings’ in the dust.

Standing in between them was a member of the staff that worked at the sports centre, holding a ball in between them.

For some reason, the tension coming from both sides was so vicious that he felt he would be squashed by the tension coming from them. Bree was matched up against Bella and Crysta was matched up against Jason.

While they were aware of Bree’s capabilities, Crysta was still a delta and one that hadn’t got the chance to show them her capabilities during the first stage of the games, so they had put her against Jason.

...that and the fact that Jason’s ego was still a little sore from losing to Bree during the blind search.

By this time, a bigger crowd had gathered around to watch the royals go against each other. “Oh my! If it isn’t the contestants of the Royal Games going at it in a friendly match.”

It only took seconds for the cameras to start rolling and for the sports centre to fill with spectators.

For some reason, the sports centre didn’t get completely full.

Madeline confirmed the reason for this when she noticed a man at the door collected a hefty sum for anyone that wished to watch this match in person... only to have the doors close and the match get broadcast across the Great Arena as a ‘bonus game.’

“I would normally say, ‘I want a clean game but I guess you guys know the rules. Since you’re going to have the second stage tomorrow, this will be a short game. First to 11 points wins.” the referee said to the two royals standing in the centre ring.

“Which means you won’t have to hold back,” Cole pointed out.

“Is that a challenge?”

“Pardon my curiosity, ‘princess,’” the king laughed nervously. Cole had heard of the princess’s insane powers but he was yet to witness her in action.

And with that out of the way, the referee threw the ball high into the air—and yes, he threw it really high, practically three metres... which wasn’t hard for a werewolf. However, the royals had to commend the man for keeping the trajectory perfectly vertical after straining so much.

The two contestants waited patiently for the ball to reach its peak before leaping high into the air.

The referee breathed a sigh of relief when they didn’t complain about how high he’d thrown the ball. Even with the three-metre height he’d thrown the ball, the two royals didn’t seem to complain.

Considering these two were strong, the referee had just assumed they would want the ball higher for a clear aerial battle...

But nothing had prepared him for what came next.

For the two royals soared through the air, each aiming for the ball and chasing it into the air with no restraints or complaints.

They easily covered the whole three-meter distance, meeting the ball at its zenith before it even had the chance to descend... Lina had got to it first, clutching the ball in her palm, she locked eyes with Cole and smirked.

Time seemed to slow as she tossed it to the side—toss was an understatement.

Cole scrunched his brows in confusion. That wasn’t where her teammates were and yet the ball was zipping fast on its way out of the court.

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Just as it was about to get off and be ruled out of bounds, a hand stopped it at the right moment, sending a loud echo from the collision. Cole's team froze, seemingly caught in a daze by the sudden aggression.

Crysta had caught the ball mid-dash and from the looks of it, she'd expected it to go exactly where she received it, intercepting it at top speed.

With how fast she was already going, she easily closed the gap in the other court, getting past a dazed Jason—who hadn't yet caught up with what was happening—and making it to the hoop. By the time the delta was making the basket, Cole's feet were just hitting the ground.

The buzzer went off, adding two points to the Sirius team. Crysta let out a joyous cheer and rushed back to her side of the court. Her shout seemed to get the crowd out of their daze before... and let out a roar of applause.

"THE SIRIUS TEAM HAS DONE IT AGAIN. THEY ARE JUST STUFFED FULL OF SURPRISES THIS YEAR FOLKS," the commentator screamed into the microphone.

'Damn... they got a point off our team... while I was stuck in mid-air.'

Losing the aerial battle hadn't necessarily meant losing possession of the ball. It had meant losing the chance to make the first basket and Cole hadn't even seen it coming. The nearly two-meter distance between his feet and the ground had proved too great of a distance for him to make a recovery.

"The Sirius team this year is simply full of surprises," the king laughed out loud.

Jason jogged to their side of the court and picked up the ball, "Let's get the next one."

He said as he threw the ball towards Cole.

Chapter 489 A Need For Speed

The ride to the Great Arena was a long and stressful one for an impatient Seeker. Whitney knew that... Beatrice knew that... But that didn't prepare them for just how long they were going to sit there. Lyra had tried—on multiple occasions—to lighten the mood with some form of small talk.

Asking random questions about this and that. How Whitney and Beatrice came to know each other. It was soon apparent that the young-looking Beatrice was actually an entire generation older than Whitney and that the two had become acquainted through Beatrice's late daughter, Madeline's deceased mother.

This group of travellers had already had two stops to restock on supplies and some to relieve themselves and stretch their muscles.

Peter wiped his brow and sighed in the passenger seat. This action earned a twitch from Trevor's eyebrows, "You're not even driving!"

"Yeah, about that. Thank you, Trevor. I don't think I would have made this drive," Peter admitted.

"No kidding! You're tired from sitting. What do you think I'm going through?" Trevor whined.

"Well... you're probably feeling alright. Don't you train for this sort of thing?" Peter asked.

This was true.

“Hmph!!! I see milk only gets you a lazier body,” Trevor huffed.

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“Hey, take that back. What’s your deal? You’re probably getting paid a lot of money for this, aren’t you?” Peter argued.

“Well, obviously I get...” the hunter stopped talking for a few seconds, paying attention to the eerie silence of the woods that surrounded them, then completed in a more serious tone, “...get paid for this exact sort of thing. Buckle your seatbelts.”

Trevor’s hand flew to the gear lever and the hum of the vehicle changed. They were cruising across the asphalt much faster than the normal speed limit.

Trevor’s eyes flew to the side and driving mirrors with a look of concern, “What is it, Trevor?”

“We are being followed. I thought this trip would be dangerous... but this is next-level. Bloody alphas!” Trevor cursed, flooring the accelerator and switching to a higher gear.

“You don’t think they can keep up with the car, do you?” Peter asked, fastening his seatbelt and turning to the females in the back to ensure they had done the same.

He gave his girlfriend’s hand a squeeze and an assuring smile.

“How did they know where to find me?” Beatrice mumbled to herself.

“Let’s not push the blame around. Rogues are always looking for another victim to sink their teeth into,” Trevor said, his voice raised with a shaken amount of urgency.

As the car sped across the asphalt, the rushing sound of running wolves became incredibly clear along with the hostile feral growls coming from the forest surrounding them.

“How is it that they can keep up?” Peter squealed, turning to look out the window for some sign of their locations.

“They are probably high-ranking rogues. We can only hope that they aren’t among the generals. This will get really complicated if we go up against one of those freaks of nature,” Trevor replied calmly, pushing his foot even harder on the accelerator as they tore through the forest’s road.

As it so happened, against his liking, the road began to wind through the woods and he found that he had to break to keep the car from skidding off the asphalt with the sharp winding turns.

This, in turn, slowed their speed considerably, making the journey even more excruciating. At this rate, there was simply no way they could escape the hunting rogues.

Trevor’s passengers went silent, allowing him to focus solely on the task of keeping them alive and getting them through this tight situation. To this, he was grateful. There was nothing easy about saving a panicking group of civilians.

During his training, he even had to learn how to calm down such a panicking crowd... and it wasn't the easiest thing to do.

After a few minutes, Trevor had gotten used to the pattern of the swerving road and was able to keep the car moving at the fastest possible speed without causing an accident.

The only problem was:

The rogues had now gone silent.

And this silence only made him more anxious. Where were they? Had they stopped chasing them down?

As though answering his questions, the car jerked to the right suddenly, forcing the hunter to spin the wheel and floor the accelerator in the hopes of regaining control of the swerving car.

One of the rogues had rammed into the car.

Just as he was about to regain the car's balance on the road, another large creature rammed into it on the other side. This time, the car spun a whole one-eighty, facing the opposite direction from which they had come.

Trevor was not willing to drive backwards, but what choice did he have? He wanted to shake the rogues off their tail... and there wasn't much time to think about this.

On the other hand, his instincts flared with suspicions of being led back into a trap. His brows furrowed with unbridled frustration, "These mutts are getting on my nerves."

Trevor stepped on the accelerator and brought the car to an abrupt halt, drifting through a neat arc that let the car turn completely on the narrow road, facing the direction in which they should have been going. The smell of burnt rubber filled the air and a deep sense of urgency and danger gripped his nerves.

They had to move. His nerves screamed in agony as an oppressive dark aura locked on the black car.

As the hunter placed his foot on the accelerator again, he noticed something from the corner of his eye. A tinge of red rushed towards the car at an alarming speed. At a speed far greater than that of any wolf he had ever seen... well, any wolf that wasn't Katie or Lina Sirius.

What made this worse, however, was the killing intent behind the creature that was attacking them and the way it bowed its massive head close to the ground as it came closer to the car.

'Since when do wolves trust their skulls like bulls...'

The tires of the powerful truck spun in place, puffing a great amount of smoke and sulphur from the friction...

If only this hadn't caused a slight delay, Trevor thought, maybe then they could have got away.

A moment of inertia held them in place. While only momentous, it was enough for the wolf that was already barreling towards them at top speed.

The large charging wolf collided with the car, throwing them clean off the road and crashing through the woods on their right.

“Hold on to something,” he screamed as the car continued to tumble through the forest. As it turned out, the right side of the road, was a slope steeper than he would have liked... and the car just kept on rolling till it came to a stop in a relatively flat clearing with a scattering of a few trees.

A pair of red eyes stood at the edge of the road, staring down at the car that had just crashed down. Surprisingly, the car was not as mangled as it should have been. Courtesy of it being issued for the hunter’s mission.

This armoured vehicle had managed to keep intact despite the terrible tumble it had been put through. The wolf shook its head, trying to dismiss the pain that rhythmically pulsed through its skull.

Trevor groaned as he struggled to keep himself conscious. The fact that he was upside down, held up by a seatbelt didn’t help with the dizziness that ravaged his mind.

The feral growl that made it to his ears was the only thing that kept him from completely banishing his urge to succumb to his subconscious need to pass out. The hunter pressed the red button on his seatbelt and shielded his head as he dropped to the roof of the car.

His other hand flew to the dashboard and slammed it, allowing a long chain with two short steel scythes attached to the ends to tumble out with a metallic clang.

Careful not to cut anything or anyone, Trevor crawled out of the shattered window, ignoring the pain from the cuts he got from the shattered glass. He had a mission to fulfil. Protecting the people in that car... and that’s what he wanted to do.

Looking up the slope, he locked eyes with a pair of red eyes... ‘Ugh, were-mushrooms...’ he cursed, before pulling on the chains and holding onto the sickles by their handles.

In his hands, they looked like two short scythes with a silver chain joining them together. He kept his eyes on the wolf as he strained his ears for another presence. Something was not right about all this... Wasn’t there supposed to be at least a dozen wolves chasing them?

He finally tore his eyes off the wolf for a second and glanced to his right before looking back up.

There was nothing. The alpha rogue hadn’t taken a step towards them... which he found odd, ‘Damn it, what is it?’ Somehow, not being attacked felt even more dangerous than being attacked.

He tore his eyes to the left this time... for another split second.

There was nothing.

His nerves were getting the better of him and he was starting to feel nervous and afraid. ‘I’m a hunter... I shouldn’t be afraid. I trained for this... I earned my gift once I learned what made Katie so special. I know I can never measure up to that prodigy but I’m still special enough to get one gift.’

As he stared at the rogue ahead of him, he noticed something. Another source of his fear.

Normally the rogue would have attacked by now and he wouldn't have to think so much... but this one was standing still. And as he looked closer, he noticed that it wasn't looking at him either.

It looked tense... tenses than he'd ever seen a rogue. Not to mention, a rogue of this much power, no less. From the sheer size and murderous aura that rolled off this creature, he could it was at least a rogue general.

And it was staring behind him.

Trevor knew what was behind him... a car, right?

But as he slowly turned his head back, he nearly forgot about the rogue he was defending against and dropped to the ground, crawling away from the car. A strong sense of fear instinctively gripped every fibre of his being.

'I thought the car had stopped rolling abruptly...'

Indeed the car had stopped abruptly... and not simply because it had collided with a tree. But because it had crashed into the largest white wolf he'd ever seen... a wolf so large, that it seemed bigger than the armoured truck itself.

The wolf had a black patch on its back... and it seemed to be stirring awake from a seemingly deep slumber.

'We're trapped...' Trevor gulped... as the wolf lifted its large bear-like head and fluffed its white rounded ears, it stared up at the top of the slope with deep incandescent blue sapphires.

Chapter 490 Panic Mode Again

The colossal wolf regarded Trevor for a moment before turning to a 'more formidable foe.'

What could the hunter do against it... after crushing an armoured truck into it, the wolf looked unfazed. The steel scythes suddenly felt harmless. Trevor had also fallen onto his backside as he backed away, which only made him look less of a threat.

Fortunately, the white wolf didn't look interested in him. The white wonder stared up at the rogue intently, paying the hunter almost no attention whatsoever. The wolf didn't seem to fear the rogue either but it also made no attempt to attack or assert dominance.

Trevor wanted to ask which royal this was... but the words wouldn't leave his throat out of fear. At this point, drawing the wolf's attention felt like a taboo.

It took Trevor a few moments to get his senses and rationality back. And when he did, he turned to face the slope behind him once more. The rogue looked even less inclined to attack them now... no matter how angered it appeared.

'How was it one rogue?' Trevor's thoughts roared through his mind. He kept waiting for at least two more to show up but it never happened.

For the moment, they were protected by the large wolf. The rogue placed one paw forward and froze watching the white wolf for a reaction. After a seemingly difficult internal debate, the large black wolf retreated and vanished over the slope and out of sight.

Trevor let out a breath he didn't know he had been holding in. If it had come down to it, he didn't know if he would be able to fight against the rogue.

From what he knew of alphas, it wasn't supposed to be capable of bulldozing an armoured truck clear off the road.

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The sound of soft groans and grunts snapped the dazed hunter out of his thoughts. There were other people in the car he ought to have tended to. But there was the matter of the white wolf blocking on side of the...

A problem which was solved the moment he turned to face the creature.

The abnormally large creature was now resting further away from the car, curled up like a ball, its white tail swishing comfortably as it watched the hunter and his group of humans.

For some reason, Trevor was certain it wouldn't attack.

Without wasting any more time, he worked on getting his companions out of the car. A few seatbelts had to be cut to get them out and thanks to the first aid kit he had, he was able to clean and dress their wounds.

Fortunately, no one had any serious injuries. Whitney took longer to stir and Beatrice seemed to space out often with a bewildered expression. Trevor could only imagine her life was currently flashing before her eyes and gave her shoulder a squeeze. "Here, take some water," he handed her a bottle of water.

"Trevor, what attacked us? More importantly..." Peter jerked his chin in the white wolf's direction, gesturing to their current furry company.

"Well... That my friend is the guardian the rogue was afraid of. He... or she is the reason the rogue chasing us didn't make sure we were dead," Trevor sighed.

"That wolf... is a royal, right?" Peter asked, uncertain himself.

Trevor paused in his job as a field medic and regarded the large wolf for a moment, "What can I tell you, Peter? I'm just as surprised and ignorant as you are right now. Until today, I was sure werewolves didn't have the strength to tip an armoured truck but here were are.

We crashed... and there he was. A two-meter werewolf-at least- that stopped a rolling car without sustaining any injury.

I would say we interfered with his slumber but he wasn't even injured after our car crushed right into him. He barely looked bothered."

"She?"

"I don't care anymore, Peter," Trevor chuckled.

Peter remained silent for a moment, trying to get over the fact that they were in the presence of an anomaly. Disregarding the power of the wolf's presence was next to impossible but Peter figured he had to do something.

"What now, Trevor?"

"Well... I don't think we can get any signal from here... and walking definitely won't do. I need to do a little thinking..." Trevor stopped talking when a flurry of movement caught his eye.

He turned in time to see the white wolf walking towards them. On its four legs, it was much taller and more intimidating. Perhaps if the wolf had bared its teeth and threatened to eat them alive, they would have run.

But the wolf did no such thing. Even then, the hunter had his chained scythes ready to slice and dice any piece of white or black that came near him... regardless of how friendly his shaky self thought that creature was.

"Let him through," a hoarse voice ordered.

The tired shaken Seeker stood up on shaky legs only to be helped up by Lyla, "He's not our enemy." She continued.

"And what makes you say that? Have you ever seen a wolf the size of two bears before?" Trevor asked, unwilling to believe in her riddles much more. Now that he thought of it, he didn't have any idea what he was risking his life for exactly.

"What do you even have to tell the king that's so important?" Trevor asked.

"I know the location of the Rogue King and the fact that he got the power to spread the curse once more," she summarised, "And I need to get that information to the king before it's too late. Hell, I'm already nearly two years late. If we are to get out of here, we'll need all the help we can get, so stand aside Trevor."

Trevor's mouth was open for a moment before he closed it and stepped aside to allow the wolf by him. 'And they trusted only me?!' he wanted to scream at the higher-ups for giving him such a dangerous mission with no backup.

Peter helped his Whitney up and moved away from the car, following Beatrice's lead and the five of the watched the colossal wolf roll their car back to its upright position like it was nothing before returning to its former position and sitting comfortably once more.

Trevor sighed and approached the bashed-up car with the hopes of getting it running again. Peter left his girlfriend with the other two ladies and started helping Trevor with the repairs.

"So what's that wolf's deal? It's just going to do the heavy lifting and watch us leave like nothing ever happened?" Peter asked as he checked the engine.

"You tell me, Peter. You just watched him flip a car. I don't know what to think anymore. I thought King Cole and Luna Katie were going to be the last abominations in this sick and twisted world... but noooo, there seem to be more. Have you noticed he hasn't spoken a word?" Trevor let out a bit of what he had bottled up while checking the tires and later, the doors and internal systems of the car.

“Yeah, I’ve noticed. Why won’t he shift back into his human form and address us as a normal royal would? For all we know, we could be staring at the Rogue King,” Peter directed his question to the one person who seemed to know what was going on.

Beatrice.

“That’s probably because he can’t. Don’t try to assume you know the workings of the Supernatural. It’s not always that simple. We struggle with as much as shifting to carnivorous urges to wrestling with watching our mates talking to other females, even though we know they are friends...

You can’t begin to fathom how lucky you are to be born human,” Beatrice replied, approaching the white wolf.

“Don’t mind them. They are just on edge,” the woman spoke to the wolf in a softer tone.

The wolf simply huffed and looked away from her, resting its large head on a patch of grass beside its paws.

“Do I know you from somewhere?” Beatrice asked, ignoring the sudden dismissal.

The wolf remained quiet.

“I’m not sure we’ve met. If we have, then it was never in your wolf form. Your divine energy is more refined and abundant than that of any royal I’ve felt before. And yet I can’t shake the feeling that I’ve met you somewhere,” the woman continued unrelentingly.

This time, she stood still and stared at the wolf, knowing how nagging it must have been to be stared at for so long and so intently.

After a few minutes, the wolf lifted its head with a slight look of exasperation and stood to its full height, towering above the woman.

“Beatrice!” Whitney called with a hint of alarm.

“It’s okay, Whitney.”

Tension filled the air as the wolf regarded the woman with cold eyes for a few seconds. “I won’t back down, you know. You must have a reason for helping us.”

The wolf seemed agitated by this woman’s stubborn nature.

After what felt like an eternity, an ethereal voice swept over the clearing, chilling them all to the bone. The voice came from everywhere and the wolf at the same time, seeming otherworldly, ancient and powerful... with a staccato that enforced every word it said.

“WHAT MATTERS... IS NOT WHO I AM, BUT THE MESSAGE YOU DELIVER. TIME TICKS FORWARD TOWARDS INEVITABLE CHAOS,” with these words, the wolf sat back down and tucked curled into a ball, resting its head on the ground.

Whitney was frozen for a moment. Then turned to the two men, completely forgetting about the white wolf resting behind her, “Trevor, is the car ready?”

“Hmm, well, there doesn’t seem to be much that was destroyed. The Agency’s cars were built like war machines. It’s not so easy to take one down,” the man boasted, giving the bonnet a good smack as he praised the car.

“Then what’s keeping us here? We have to go. We don’t have much time,” Whitney squealed. It seemed she’d gleaned a greater meaning into the words the wolf had... echoed.

“Just like that, she’s back in panic mode. Let’s go, Trevor,” Peter nudged the hunter before guiding Beatrice to the back seat.

Before they could get into the car, Whitney turned to the wolf resting, “What about the rogues? What if they attack us again?”

“YOU HAVE A HUNTER BRAVE ENOUGH TO STAND UP TO ME.”

“Aww, thanks, big guy. I might have misjudged you,” Trevor chuckled before getting serious, “Ms Whitney, have a little faith in me. I got this.”

Whitney sighed before getting into the car as well. The engine roared to life after several attempts and the car was tearing across the asphalt in no time. This time, Trevor was intent on getting them to the Great Arena without incident.

He gripped the steering wheel like his life depended on it... and drove as fast as he could. Deep down, he still doubted his ability to face the rogue if it attacked again.

The murderous intent he’d felt rolling off the black crimson-eyed wolf was more than enough to chill his bones.

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Unbeknownst to the young hunter, a white figure stayed in their shadow the rest of the journey, following them across the road in a seemingly random pattern, always keeping its distance while keeping an eye on them all the same.

The black rogue was no fool to miss this little detail. Whether he liked it or not... the white wolf was following the car, acting as a protector of the very person seated inside.

Someone that should have died in a river two years ago...

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At the centre of the Origin as far South as the world went, a furious king thrust his fist into the ground, sending a shockwave through the field of lotuses in which he was imprisoned and screamed out in a furious rage, his blue eyes flashing with fury...

Fury fueled his rage... cementing his resolve on bringing more pain to the world... and seeing his next plan through.