

And Then There Were Four (Lilith Carrie)

Chapter 192

Chapter 192: Battles & Balder

Cassie.

The sounds of battle echoed around me within the stadium. My eyes couldn't look away from the massacre happening in front of me, and as much as I wanted to tell them to stop because this was more than brutal, I knew I couldn't. There had to have been at least fifty people on those training fields, wallowing around on the grass greener than anything I'd ever seen. Blood coated their skin as they spared each other.

Odin called these games, but in reality, it was nothing but brutal force. I couldn't understand why things weren't just done normally. Then again, I was in Asgard and Nordic traditions was the only way to go here.

■"Cassie!" A voice called out to me, causing me to look down the walkway to see Sansa walking toward me with a smile and a bounce within her step. "I figured that I'd find you out here. I just was hoping that she would have waited for me."

Raising a brow in amusement, I stared at her for a moment as she sat next to me. The clothed awning protected us from the sun, the fabric billowing gently in the morning breeze. "Girl, this shit started like an hour ago. We would have been late."

"There is nothing wrong with being fashionably late," she remarked with a smirk that made my eyes roll before I turned my gaze back out onto the field.

I had awoken early this morning ready to get the first trials over with so I could return to normal life, and no matter how much I would have rather be doing anything else right now. I knew that wasn't possible. Odin wanted me here.

I was the prize these men fought for and being present was important to remind them of that.

Or at least that was what I was told.

"I can't believe they find this entertaining... this is barbaric."

Sansa's laughter floated around me as she nodded in agreement. "Yeah, but this is Asgard. You should have seen the games a few years ago. One of the poor guys lost an arm."

Snapping my attention to her with my jaw dropped, I tried to wrap my head around what she had said. "Are you fucking kidding me?"

"Nope," she muttered. "They take this shit seriously here."

Of course, I had grown up around training and whatnot, but this was far more violence than was needed. They called it sparring and it was anything but that. Blood was being spilled and men were getting hurt one after another and everyone seemed to act like that was perfectly acceptable.

"It's disgusting," I replied, trying to keep a smile on my face but I had no doubt that my disgust in this was shining through.

"Girl, you think this is bad? They haven't even gotten to The Hunt' yet. That's when shit gets really interesting."

I didn't even want to ask what the hell that was, but I had a feeling that was the last event that Freya had tried telling me about before. I had given suggestions to small things I wanted to be added to these games but in the end, Odin said they would stick to being traditional with only minor changes.

On top of that, I was only just informed of the final task requirements this morning. The final task was I would have to entertain the last three contestants individually in the days leading up to the main event. "Oh, by the way... thanks for filling me in on my hosting responsibilities."

"Hosting?" My gaze fell to her once more, taking in the confused expression on her face hidden behind her furrowed brows. "What are you talking about?"

"Freya told me that Odin wants me to entertain the last three contestants in the days leading up to the hunt or whatever you want to call it. I'm not sure why, but I'm not looking forward to it."

By the way, Sansa opened and closed her mouth, I could tell she was taken aback and confused as to what I was talking about. I began to wonder if this was something they had just made up for this particular situation. "You didn't know, did you?"

"No," she replied softly. "Honestly, I didn't. But I will admit that even though I'm surprised... I'm intrigued as to how that's going to go."

"What do you mean?"

With a smile, she shook her head as she looked back onto the field. "You're not exactly the easiest person to get along with Cassie."

"Excuse me?" I replied with shock as my eyes widened and my mouth dropped open.

"Yes, I am."

Chuckling she gave me a 'who are you lying to' expression as she looked me up and down. "Is that so? Because last time I checked, you had a thing for running people off."

Her words were harsh but she was accurate so I couldn't fault her forthat.

"I suppose you're right," I mumbled under my breath, causing her to laugh again.

"Have you seen any of them today?"

My mind instantly went to Silas and my heart dropped. "No."

I had an amazing evening with him that completely took me by surprise, and since then, he had gone back to avoiding me again. Something that annoyed me like no other. I was tired of being avoided, and as much as I wanted to hunt him down and yell at him for acting this way again-I knew that it would do no good.

Looking out on the field, I searched for the two bodies I knew would be present today. Lucas and Finnick were both participating and as much as both men had recently irritated me, I was deeply concerned about either getting hurt.

"Are you looking forthem?" Sansa asked me, causing me to sigh as I slowly nodded my head.

"Yes, but of course, I can't see shit out there. Every one of them all seem to blur together. This entire thing is exhausting."

Falling back into the lush pillow-lined chair I was reclining in, I felt like giving up on all of this. My heart and mind had been pushed to the point of breaking lately, and as much as I wanted to keep going, I didn't know how.

I needed a reprieve, and when I thought about walking out of the arena, the flash of white and black I had been searching for appeared before me like a solution. Lucas and Finnick prepared to spar against their opponents and my heart almost stopped.

"Oh my God, there they are."

My response caught Sansa's attention, and she looked in the direction I was. She chuckled. "Oh, wow, I suppose they aren't playing with opponents this year."

"What are you talking about?" I asked as I turned to look at her. "What's wrong with them?"

She raised her brows with a sigh as she pointed toward Lucas and the man he was fighting. An enormous man that stood at least a foot taller than Lucas with black and red markings all over his skin, and hair that had been buzzed to his scalp. "That's Soren. He is the future Alpha of a bear clan from Earth. They hail from the Russian territories and are known for being ruthless."

Russian... bears? You had to be fucking kidding me.

"He looks like he eats people like Lucas for breakfast!" The gasped response from me caused Sansa to laugh again as she nodded.

"Yeah, he is known to be a killer. Not sure why he isn't matched with someone in his category though. I wouldn't have thought Lucas would be ranked up there with them yet."

Again, my heart sank. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, they are ranked by skill and size. As you can see... Soren towers over Lucas in a lot of factors. Hopefully, he will be able to hold him off," she replied in a tone that sounded as if she didn't think Lucas stood a chance.

Lucas and I hadn't really spoken in the past two weeks but it didn't mean I didn't think about him often. I had just respected his wishes to let him focus on this competition and try to win me-as he called it-properly. "We have to do something."

Sansa's eyes darted in my direction as she scoffed with amusement. 'Are you fucking serious? There is nothing we can do, Cassie. It's the best of three so all we can do is just pray he wins or doesn't lose the next two."

Fuck my life... as much as I believed in Lucas, there was no way he could beat this guy.

"What about the person Finnick is with? Wait... Sansa, that's your brother!" His white hair had been pulled back into a tight bun on his head as he stood topless in front of none other than Bronn, Sansa's brother.

"Oh, for fuck sake... Bronn is about to get his ass handed to him."

I was slightly surprised by Sansa's response to her brother facing Finnick. He seemed like a very strong and intelligent character but Sansa would know him better. "Are you serious? He is way bigger than Finnick."

"That doesn't mean shit in this situation," she sighed. "Finnick is... well I told you. He is the Fae prince."

"Yeah, yeah I know. That doesn't mean shit though. Come on... you can't honestly think Bronn would lose so easily."

Our conversation continued for a moment before a deep bellow of laughter sounded from behind us, and as I looked up I spotted a man I didn't recognize taking up a seat on the concrete benches. "You ladies have interesting conversations."

I furrowed as I took in his deep brown eyes, and shoulder-length brown and gray hair. He didn't look like the others with his attire and seemed to definitely have enough of the traditional brown furs and linen attire that the Nordic communities used to wear.

"I'm sorry, who are you?"

He stared at me for a moment before a smile crossed his lips. "Balder... your uncle."

Balder... I had been learning about the gods more and more with my time here and if I remember correctly, Balder was supposed to be dead. "Aren't you supposed to be dead? Like you're allergic to Mistletoe or something..."

More laughter erupted from the man as he held his belly and bellowed, causing the attention of others to land on us as embarrassment rushed to my cheeks. "Oh my God, it isn't that funny. Will you stop people from looking at us!"

"You, dear niece, worry too much about what people will think of you. As for those stories written in books... all lies-well, mostly all lies. Since I'm sitting here in front of you it's obvious that I'm not dead."

Rolling my eyes, I frowned looking at Sansa for rebuttal but instead she sat there quietly with her eyes wide as if she was in shock of the man before us. It was clear she knew something and I would have to pick her brain on later, but for now, I'd have to deal with this man myself.

"Fair enough... so what did you find amusing about my opinion on her brother and Finnick? Seeing as that's why you initially laughed."

He took a moment as his eyes scanned out toward the field. "Prince Finnick is a dangerous man, Castor. You should be able to sense that when you're around him. He has bathed in the blood of many men far bigger than her brother, and all without breaking a sweat."

As my eyes turned back to where Finnick was sparring with Bronn, I watched him move faster than my eyes could follow and quickly toss Bronn from the ring. My eyes widened at the display as the referee called the match won, and Finnick walked off into the crowd of men like it was nothing.

On the other hand... Lucas seemed to not be in good shape as Soren found victory in his win over Lucas. My heart broke knowing Lucas had lost but I knew he had two more chances to win. If he lost next time he would be faced with being cast out before the next round. "Shit..."

"Yes, your mate didn't seem to favor too well out there, Castor. "

Spinning around to glare at Balder, I took note of the smirk upon his face. "Stop calling me that. My name is Cassie."

"You may call yourself whatever you want, but to me, you will always be Castor. Now, piece of advice from one blacksheep to another... in order to win, you often need to make deals with those who are capable of winning."

I had no clue what he was on about but before I could ask, he stood and departed from where Sansa and I sat. My eyes drifted to Sansa as I gave her a 'what the fuck' kind of glare that caused her to shrug and gesture towards Balder's retreating figure.

"Don't look at me like that! Do you know who that was?!" she gasped with astonishment.

"Baldar, duh. Who cares? He is just another god."

Mouth agape, she shook her head at me. "Cassie he isn't just another god. He is the son of Odin and Frigg... he is the embodiment of immortality. Why do you think there are so many stories about him? They say the gods didn't like him? No, bitch. They envied him because he was Odin's favorite."

What she was saying didn't make any sense to me. 'If that was the case, why aren't any of Odin's children... like Baldar, his so-called favorite-taking the job of heir?"

She stared at me blankly, shaking her head with astonishment. "You really haven't studied enough, have you? I mean all those books-"

"Oh my God, Sansa. No, I haven't. I'm sorry I'm still working on it. Now, will you just tell me what the hell I'm missing?"

Crossing her arms over her chest, she shook her head and groaned. "Baldar is the reason you are the heir. He had Odin promise that none of his children would ever succeed him as they were all blinded by power and greed and would never deserve the throne. Rumor has it Baldar is a seer, which is rare. Men are rarely ever seers, and if he has shown himself to you after being in hiding for centuries... well, he must have seen something in your future."