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JASMINE'S POV 1

Once it was nighttime and almost time for the first ritual of the Halo festival, I was up in Loren's quarters.

I saw him repeatedly eye me at his work.

He dropped his glasses and turned to me when he couldn't take it anymore.

"Alright." He said. "What's it?"

I shook my head. "Nothing."

"You've been staring into that wall for a while now." He said. "You better tell me what it is."

I knew he wouldn't ask again.

So I sighed and gave in. "I was just thinking about today. I met someone else. I think she is a member of the royal family, too."

He frowned and looked closely at me. "Yes?"

"She kept asking me who I was, and then she dug her nails into my chin." I explained.



That place still hurt, and it was slightly bruised.

"And what did you do?" He asked me.

"I ran," I said. "I didn't mean to buy everything; you just told me to run. She has black hair and is probably a bit older than the Queen."

He sighed and folded his arms on the table. "I believe that would be the Queen's elder sister."

I blinked. "No wonder she looked so familiar. I kept on wondering where I had seen her before."

"That would be Princess Cherry," He said.

"If she is the elder sister, why isn't she Queen?" I asked.

He shrugged. "It's the royal family. There are always strings of drama popping here and there. Trust me, you don't want to get involved, so stay away from them for these three days."

Was he looking out for me?

In the past few weeks, I have been staying with Loren, and I have noticed that he is a kind person.

He just seemed hard on the outside.



"Moreover." He said. "It's almost time for the hunt. You should go."

"I heard that they kill an animal," I said.

"Ah, the sacred white elk. They have a close bond with our wolves. It must be hunted, and its horns must be presented by an Alpha who will be declared the winner of the hunt." He said.

I shuddered.

I was angry at the thought that they would kill such an innocent animal.

"I think I'll pass." I said it in all earnest. Then I turned to him. "What about you? Are you not going?"

He put his glasses on. "When they start bringing in the dead bodies and half-dead ones, I'll be busy. So no point."

I felt sick.

They were going to kill each other.

Then I thought of Alpha Xaden, and my heart raced. I didn't want anything to happen to him.

I knew he hated me, but still, he had been there



for me when no one else had.

I made a silent prayer to the goddess and decided that I would take a swim in my secret magic lake. 1

As I descended the stairs on my way out, I saw the other servants.

It was Lisa and the other girls.

I tried to smile at them, but they glared at me.

No one. No one had spoken to me.

They all kept away from me, and I could see their hate towards me in their hearts.

"Something disgusting is in our presence." Lisa said it aloud.

The other girls laughed, and I felt a sting in my heart.

"Come on, girls. We do not want it to stain our pure blood." Lisa said.

They all laughed and followed her out.

It was hard to believe that they were the identical girls. I had begged Alpha Xaden not to



punish me.

But what did I expect?

That one act of righteousness would make them forgive me for the sins of my father.

I sighed and turned away.

Then I saw the other girl, Mya.

The one who had run out of the room that night was assigned to clean rooms with Lisa and me.

She stared at me.

As if she wanted to say something.

"Mya!" Lisa barked.

Whatever she wanted to say, she kept it to herself and ran off to be with the other girls.

When most of the wolves had gone to watch the hunt, I went out to my lake. 3

I tossed off my clothes, then bent down to learn the new trick I had learned to take off my chains.

It took a while for me to undo it, but swimming



with the chains by my ankles only made it hard for me.

Sometimes, it felt cumbersome, like some weight was pulling me back, and I couldn't swim well.

So whenever I undid my chains, I would swim and return to them when I returned home.

Home. What indeed was home to me? Did I even have a home?

The pack back home had been the only sanctuary I had witnessed, but it was different here.

I was aware I was caged and trapped once again.

But this time, it felt highly different.

It felt exhilarating.

I sighed as I slowly took off my clothes and stepped in, naked.

No one would miss me tonight.

There were hardly any more duties, and I had finished the ones assigned to me.

I still had no idea how to read my work schedule.

It seemed like a jumble. Literacy was harder than she had anticipated

Also, most of the pack members would be at the arena, watching and waiting for who would appear with the elk's horns.

I sighed as I bathed and gently put the magic water over my lips.

In almost an instant, I was healed.

I smiled as I swam in the lake, enjoying the peace and serenity.

Then I rose up in the water, and under the moonlight, I ran my fingers through my wet hair as I looked up into the halo moon.

Then I felt something.

I felt a sudden presence.

I froze, and without thinking or being aware of my nudity, I turned around and saw Alpha Xaden.