

104 104- Everyone Needs To Pay

Phoenix: 1

Kiara's eyes were on the pendant. Even from this distance, I could see disbelief on her face.

She looked up into my eyes as if asking me what the actual fu*ck.

She mumbled something under her breath, and the nominees who were standing closer to her turned to look at her.

She again said something and this time pointed toward me. The elderly member of the council stopped the announcement midway.

"Is there a problem?" he asked into the mic, and Kiara moved to him, whispering something. Her eyes stayed on me.

Following her gaze, other pack members were also now looking in my direction.

"What is it?" Jai at last turned his head towards me, "Why are they looking at you?"

I shrugged, bringing fake concern to my face, "I dunno. Ask her!"

Jai's eyes caught sight of the pendant, "Wh... what's her pendant doing with you?" he said through gritted teeth, "Hand it over to me so

that I can take it to her."

His eyes then glazed back. He was receiving a mind link.

"What happened?" I asked him when I felt his jaw tighten.

"It's Kiara," he said with a heavy sigh, "She is asking you to return the necklace."

I blinked at him in fake confusion, "Wh...what? B...but why?" I asked him without breaking eye contact.

Confidence. I needed confidence to tackle it.

Jai seemed annoyed when he ran a hand through his hair, "Because it belongs to her," he muttered patiently.

Before I could say anything, I saw Alpha Blake standing from his seat and walking towards us. Jai and I left our seats too.

People present there had started whispering to each other.

Alpha Blake leaned in so only I could hear him, "Phoenix," he said gently, You're wearing Kiara's necklace. She's been looking for it since last night. You need to return it."

I tilted my head and clutched the necklace between my fingers, "B...but why?" I asked him,

trying to act all innocent, "She was the one who gave it to me."

Alpha Blake stared at me for a second, as if trying to figure out whether I was lying or just confused.

Her hatred for me wasn't a secret...

I glanced at the stage where Kiara was glaring at me like she wanted to rip the necklace off my neck herself. Contestants around her were whispering now, glancing between us.

Jai took a long sigh and then moved his head towards Alpha Blake, "Phoe. I don't think you should make it more complicated than it already is," he snapped, trying to keep his voice down, "Just give it back."

"Back?" I gave a stubborn look first to my friend and then to my alpha, "Do you think I stole it? Are you calling me a thief?"

"Urgh!" Alpha Blake gritted his teeth, "Why don't you understand? Return it, and then we can talk about it later, Phoe. It's a pack issue and can easily be solved later."

My head shook before I could stop it, "No!" I hadn't realized that Jai had held my hand, "Calling me a thief in front of an audience and then assuring me that you'll solve it later? How typical, Alpha Blake."

"Phoenix!" Alpha Blake's gaze held a warning when he saw me settle back into my seat.

At this point, I didn't care. I had nothing to lose.

"Alpha. If she thinks I stole it, then she needs to prove it! Okay!" I retorted.

Alpha Blake seemed to send a mindlink. Maybe to Kiara.

"What the hell is going on here?" Luna Tamia stepped down from the stage, "We don't have time for such drama. Get done with the ceremony." Her voice boomed in the hall.

King Sebastian was looking at me, but right now, I didn't have time for this. I needed to focus on the issue at hand.

"I sent a mindlink to Kiara, but she says she wouldn't take the oath without this necklace," Alpha Blake told me, and then spread his palm before my eyes, "Place it here, Phoenix. I promise. If Kiara was the one who gave it to you, then you'll get it back."

I moved my head side to side, "Why? Why always me, Alpha? Because I'm an easy target for your bullying?" 1

The odd thing was, Jai wasn't taking my side today. Thank Goddess, I was mentally prepared for it.

"Phoenix!" Alpha Blake's tone dropped cold, controlled, and full of warning, "You're crossing the line!" his voice was low, almost like a growl.

But I didn't enter this game to lose. I started it to take my revenge. And this was just the first step.

"I'm asking you again," Luna Tamia's voice was shrill enough to make me flinch, "Can anyone tell me what is going on there?" Her eyes were on us.

"Can somebody make this bitch quiet. Her voice is causing me a headache," I whispered to Jai. If it were some normal situation, we both would have laughed secretly.

However, there was nothing normal in my life lately.

Just then, I noticed Sebastian King slowly getting up from his Royal chair.

Kiara walked up to Luna Tamia and bowed. She then said something to her. Luna Tamia's focus moved to my collarbone, where she could see the pendant, "Is it yours, girl?" her voice echoed from the stage, trying her best to be respectful, maybe because of the king.

"Yes, ma'am," I said before bowing to her.

Now, there were raised voices in the hall.

Everyone was talking about Kiara and her attachment to the necklace.

Luna Raya bent closer and whispered something in Beta Brian's ear. I could see anger brewing in their eyes, too.

"Silence!" Beta Hunter's voice cut through the air like a whip. All the voices froze mid-conversation.

He took a step forward, his eyes still locked on me, "The King asks you to come to his chamber right now."

Then his eyes scanned the crowd before he made another announcement, "The rest of you... Stay here and wait for the ceremony."

Kiara followed him when he got off the stage. Her cold eyes burned into mine. I wish I could show her my middle finger.

Too late, Kiara.

The game has started, and everyone needs to pay. 2