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Phoenix: 1

Standing on the stage next to the other contestants, I thought of the way King Sebastian's guard not only saved me but also declared that the king would surely announce a house arrest for Kiara and Beta Brian.

I couldn't bring myself to strike back at Beta Brian. Attacking your Alpha or Beta wasn't allowed, or one could face serious consequences. I made a mental note to talk to Alpha Blake and tell him that I wouldn't tolerate any mistreatment from any of the pack member in future, no matter how mighty he was.

House arrest punishment was expected for Kiara, but I never had the idea that Beta Brian could get in trouble because of me.

I never got any negative vibes from him, but today it felt like he had been harboring this hatred against me in his heart. It was shocking.

Who else from this pack kept hiding this hatred for me?

As expected, Kiara was not in the crowd. Beta Brian was.

My warrior friends seemed confused but not

surprised. I didn't think they would cheer for me because their loyalty belonged to their pack and their Alpha.

I didn't blame them.

Alpha Blake was right. This Royal position was not for me, and I needed to resign from it after six months.

No one could step back from a Royal position without serving at least for six months. If one were to do it, then his pack would be blacklisted from the Royal ally list.

They started calling out the names one by one, handing out those shiny badges like it was some kind of high school award ceremony or something.

My palms had gotten sweaty, but I wanted to keep my chin up.

"Phoenix," The announcer called, and I felt grumbling inside my chest.

Why didn't Sebastian ask me if I wanted this position or not?

I walked up, trying not to trip on the stupid long carpet. King Sebastian was standing there with a proud grin like we were besties or something.

"Congratulations," he said, pinning the badge on my shirt, right above my chest. He was happier

than my pack members.

"Thanks," I mumbled with a small smile.

The elderly council member spoke into the mic again, "I request the Alpha King to step forward and announce the position of Royal head warrior."

Oh, damn.

I think I knew what was about to happen. Panic crawled up my spine as I whipped my head around, searching for a way out.

Sebastian King stepped up to the mic, all confident, and ran a gaze over the crowd, "And now," his deep, se*xy voice echoed in the hall, "the Royal Head warrior is..."

Please don't say my name. Please don't say my name.

"It's Phoenix Black!"

I closed my eyes for a second.

Great! Just great!

The crowd went wild. Even most of my pack members got up, cheering and clapping.

It was contagious. How could I stop myself from being happy? I just stole Kiara's dream.

I stole her moment.

Keep it up, Phoenix.

Sebastian hadn't moved from his spot.

What else was left to say? I thought to myself.

And then... boom... he dropped the next bomb.

"I just changed a rule, and soon it will be on the papers. I'm happy to announce that all Royal warriors, including the Head Warrior, will serve in the palace for at least five years. Resign before that and get blacklisted," he tossed the mic aside, and I didn't miss the smug look on his face.

I heard gasps from the audience. I swear, even I forgot to breathe for a second.

You, asshole! I cursed under my breath. What was he doing here?

Five fu*cking years! Seriously?

"You've got to be kidding me."

The other contestants standing beside me were beaming when they heard the announcement. I glanced over the crowd and instantly caught Alpha Blake and Beta Brian's faces.

Their faces were like they had seen a ghost. Jai was sitting right next to his brother, and he looked displeased. 2

I didn't know what was the matter with him. He was supposed to be happy for me.

"All selected Royal warriors are requested to go to their pack's Alpha and Beta for blessings," the council member announced.

We all got down to head towards our alphas.

I made my way towards Alpha Blake first. He stood up from his seat as I walked over. His face was unreadable, "Congrats," he said flatly, giving my hand a firm shake.

No smile. No warmth.

Then I turned to Beta Brian. Like Alpha Blake, he didn't try to hide the fact that he wasn't happy. He looked at me as if I were some nasty shit he could not bear to get closer to.

I would have preferred to keep a safe distance from him, but right now it was a compulsion to offer him my respect.

I forced a polite smile and reached out to shake his hand, "I ... I need your blessing, Beta Brian."

Instead of shaking my hand, his hands shot straight to my neck.

"What the..." I choked out, grabbing his wrists.

"You wh*ore!" he snarled, "After keeping my brother's bed warm, you're dreaming of becoming a warrior? A head warrior? You shitty two-faced bitch!" 2

"Brian!" Alpha Blake barked, trying to pry him off me.

Jai shoved at his brother, "Brian. Don't do it here." 1

Don't do it here? What is that supposed to mean?

His brother was choking me and hurling insults in front of half the kingdom, and that was all he had to say?

Brian's grip only tightened, his face twisted with pure madness, "I should've finished you the day you stepped into this pack with this face," his spit hit my cheek.

I felt my lungs burning, and I dug my nails into his wrists, but he was too strong.

"Phoenix!" Sebastian roared.

In the next heartbeat, Brian was yanked so hard I stumbled to the ground, gasping for air. This was the second time he attacked me today, and this time, it was in the presence of the Lycan King.

Before Brian could react, Sebastian's Lycan surfaced. His aura burst out in a violent wave, swirling through the huge hall like a storm. 1

It seemed to hit everyone like a punch. That day in his office, I had thought that his Lycan had just come out to show off his power.

But today?

Today, its aura was more dangerous. It dropped everyone, present there, to their knees, heads bowed instinctively under the sheer weight of it.

Like last time, I didn't feel it.

Even the air around me seemed heavier, thicker, like it was also bowing to him.

His claws shot out and drove into Brian's neck.

I gasped in shock and covered my mouth. Brian's eyes went wide. His mouth opened, but only a choked sound came out. Blood spilled down his chest as Sebastian's beast leaned closer and growled, "You dare to touch what's mine?"

Mine? What did he mean? He seemed delusional.

"Sebastian..." My voice shook, but the Lycan didn't look at me. The rage had made him go berserk. 1

"Sebi!" I saw Luna Tamia coming down the stage and going to Sebastian. Her steps faltered under the crushing weight of his aura, "Stop it!" she tried to pull him away.

Brian was clawing helplessly at the king's arm, but it was useless. His Lycan seemed to go crazy.

"You. Are. Done!" Sebastian's Lycan growled. His

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voice vibrated with raw dominance. He didn't leave Brian's neck until his body went limp and he collapsed to the floor. 5

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