

113 113- Let's See!

Phoenix: 1

Brian was dead.

The realization made my heart thump painfully against my ribs.

My throat went dry as I stared at him.

He was smiling. I never saw him smiling like this, but right now, he had the gentlest smile on his face.

"Don't be scared of me, Phoenix," he squeezed his lips together.

I swallowed hard, my hand curling at my sides, "I..." My eyes flicked to the table where he had been fiddling.

His fingers were absently brushing over a small glass trinket, like he had all the time in the world.

"I'm sorry," I whispered as guilt clawed my heart, "I'm sorry for what happened, Brian. I"

My voice cracked, but before I could finish, he laughed. It was not a cruel laugh, but it sounded more like he was trying to shake off my guilt.

He shook his head, his lips tugging into a tired smile, "It wasn't your mistake. I was way out of

line, Phoenix. I deserved it."

This sting in my chest deepened.

I felt my eyes burning, as I clutched the edge of the chair near me, "But... how? How are you even here?" My voice dropped to a whisper.

Oh, Goddess. Why am I not scared of him?

"Brian... aren't you..." My voice trailed off, not sure how to say the word.

"Dead?" he finished it for me. His gaze softened, and his eyes glowed with warmth I didn't even witness when he was alive.

He placed the glass piece back on the table and turned towards me fully, "Because Phoenix," he said quietly, "You're a lot stronger than you think. You were made to face things others can't. The Moon Goddess up there," he pointed his index finger upwards, "She has bigger plans for you, sweetheart." 1

Sweetheart? He never called me that. He actually hated it when Jai used such endearments for me. 1

I blinked back the tears threatening to fall as his words wrapped around me.

He smiled again, gentler this time, "Don't blame yourself for my death, Phoenix. It was all part of the plan."

Part of the plan?

I passed him a confused look, but he shook his head, "Patience, my dear. Patience. You'll know everything when the time comes. Trust me. You're not alone."

He got serious and stared at the floor, "Tell Jai that I said hi. Ask him not to stop himself from..." 1

"From?" I asked him with a frown, but his voice stuttered, breaking apart mid-word.

His tone started cutting in and out, sharp one second and then hollow the next. Even his body flickered, his outline distorting, and the edges were blurring.

It felt like the air was slowly swallowing him.

My chest tightened, "Brian?"

He lifted his gaze to me, his features breaking like static across a faulty screen, "I need to go, Phoenix... I mean Aurora," he said with a chuckle, "My time has come." 1

I gasped in surprise. It had been a long time since someone used this name for me. I had almost forgotten who I was.

I wanted to stop him.

"No, Brian. Wait!" I reached out instinctively, but my fingers grasped at nothing. He was already slipping away, piece by piece.

Until there was nothing left, except emptiness.

"Brian!" I screamed, "No... don't go!"

My eyes flew open, and I realized I was still in bed. My chest was heaving, and my face was wet with sweat.

"Phoenix?" Sebastian's concerned voice reached my ears. He was already awake, sitting upright beside me.

His hands gripped my shoulders as he studied my face, "Hey, love. Can you see me? Tell me, what happened? Bad dream?"

I couldn't even answer right away. My throat was burning, and tears wouldn't stop sliding down my cheeks.

He leaned in closer, brushing my hair back from my face, his thumbs working gently to wipe the wetness above my mask.

"You're safe, love," he murmured, "You're safe. Look at me."

I blinked hard as I tried to control my trembling body.

"S... Sebastian..."

He didn't wait, and my body was pulled into a bear-like hug, squeezing me into his chest. I could feel his cheek pressing against my head as he held me.

The warmth of his body was covering me like a shield.

"Shh... It's alright, Phoenix. You're not alone, love," My eyes snapped open.

That was what Brian had said. *You are not alone.*

Did he mean Sebastian?

I closed my eyes and sank into the comfort of his embrace.

I stayed in his arms a little longer. His breathing was enough to calm my nerves. My eyelids felt heavy when I whispered his name.

"Sebastian?"

I felt his body shifting a little under me, "Yes, sweetheart," his fingers were busy brushing through my hair.

The man was still nak*ed and didn't know what his body was doing to me. I snuggled a little more into his hard body, "Can you ask Amora to come see me?"

That must have caught him off guard because he sat up in bed, still holding me. He pinched my chin to raise my face as his gaze dropped to mine, searching my face as if to make sure I meant it, "Are you certain? You really want to see her?"

I gave a small nod.

He exhaled slowly as his mouth curved into a faint smile, "She is very eager to talk to you. If you're ready, I'll send her in."

He leaned down, brushing a quick kiss against the tip of my nose, "I'll have her come by... but first... You need something in your stomach..."

I opened my mouth to say no, but his eyes were already pleading, "Eat a little. For me. Please."

"For you?" I tried to smile, but his eyes were already rolling back to send a mind link.

The great King Sebastian could have ordered me to have food, but here he was.

Requesting me. Pleading with me.

A smirk formed on my lips.

Let's see how long you'll stay, Sebastian. It took Jai two years to reject me, just like everyone else.

1