

116 116- Green Shell, Emerald

Phoenix: 1

His face was still swollen, maybe because he stayed awake or because he had been crying. Or maybe both.

How did I feel after seeing him like this?

Worst. 1

It was the worst ever feeling in the world to see your best friend breaking up before your eyes, and you couldn't do anything about it.

You couldn't hug him, couldn't talk to him like a normal person. He might be pissed at me, but I couldn't forget how he treated me for the last two years.

Before I could say something, his hand grabbed mine a little roughly and pulled me back inside the hospital.

"Jai," I tried to protest, but he didn't stop. He wasn't even listening.

He didn't stop before his clinic door. Instead, he dragged me down a quieter corridor and pushed open the door of a small, dim room.

Two narrow beds were shoved against the wall, and the smell of medicine mixed with old wood

filled the room.

A kind of place no one would even think to look for us.

Jai shut the door behind him and I heard a sharp click when he turned the lock. Without a word, he pulled me down to sit on the floor with him.

Eh. Cold tiles made me gasp when it touched my ass. He fished for something in his pocket and I noticed how his hand was trembling.

"Jai!"

He seemed to go deaf.

"Here. Hold it," he said to me

I looked down when he pressed something cold into my palms. A small green colored shell that was smooth and pale.

Why was he giving it to me?

I tried to watch his face through the dim light, and that was when I noticed the wild look.

His eyes were red, and his jaw was clenched. He seemed desperate or maybe frantic. He never behaved in such an odd way.

"Emerald... the Emerald is missing," he whispered, staring at me like I was supposed to understand, "When you find it, give it to its owner." 1

"B...but Jai..." my lips parted in confusion, "I don't understand, what are you trying to ..." I trailed off when he cut in.

"Shh," His fingers pressed against my lips, silencing me, "No arguments today... I know your plans... I know what you're going to do tomorrow...day after tomorrow..." 1

For the first time, I felt fear engulfing my heart. What was he saying?

Or was it Brian's death that had made him do crazy things? None of it made sense.

I placed my hand gently on his arm, "Jai..."

"Phoenix... There is one last thing I need to do on Blood Moon night. That will be the last favor for you. Consider it as my last gift. The Alpha King will leave this pack after the Blood Moon Night. Go with him," his voice cracked as his tears spilled over. 1

I felt my heart sinking. My friend seemed to be in pain. A lot of pain.

"N...never... never come back, Phoenix. Never return to this pack."

Never return? Was he one of those who didn't want me in this pack anymore?

Confusion burned through me, "Alpha Blake... he has already asked me to leave the pack."

He let out a bitter, broken laugh, "It's a blessing in disguise. Until today, I have tried to keep you safe. Now the responsibility shifts to the King." 1

Goddess. What crap was he uttering?

I knelt before him and held his shoulders, "I'm going there as a head warrior. To keep him safe. Not to be protected by the king."

He shook his head and wiped his face with the back of his hand. His sharp gaze darted to mine, "No, Phoenix. Don't you understand? You're gradually moving towards what's written for you. The Moon Goddess is slowly cutting away the ones who are poison to you. None of them deserves you. Including me. None of us deserves your loyalty or your trust." 1

His shoulders started shaking again, and the sound of his broken crying filled the small room. 1

Was he the same Jai who used to tell me that he had gotten full warrior training before he was appointed to be a doctor?

My chest squeezed at his painful cries. I couldn't take it anymore.

He had been my only friend, the only one who ever stood by me. I couldn't think any further and pulled him into a hug.

Like a baby, he clung to me, crying harder,

muttering words I couldn't make out.

My thoughts spun wild. What was the matter with him? Why was he crying?

Why couldn't he fight for me, for my room, or for my place in the pack?

"Jai," I whispered worriedly against his shoulder, "What's the matter? Are you alright?" My hand started stroking his head, "Let me take you to your room."

He jerked back so suddenly that I almost stumbled, "No... we can't be seen together... You... you go back... where you belong... with the Alpha King."

I stared at him, stunned. Did I hear him correctly?

Did he say *back to Alpha King*?

Did he know I ran from the Royal Palace?

It was like he read my mind. His hands held me gently by my shoulders, "Listen, Phoe. I know what's going on in that pretty head of yours. You need to learn something today. Not every question has an answer. Not every time will someone stand up for you. From now on, you're on your own. You have to move forward. Forget everyone and everything related to this pack.

Even me."

1

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My throat tightened as I started shaking my head unconsciously.

He went on, his voice had gotten firm now, "I tried to keep you safe until now. But no more. Destiny is sending you back to the Alpha King." 2

That pulled me out of my haze. My eyes searched his face.

He repeated it. *Back to Alpha King.*

His expression changed when he realized that he had said too much. 1

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