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Phoenix: 1

I ran my hand along the edge of the sword,
testing its balance as the palace security head,
Richard, stood beside me.

There were racks around us that were lined with
spears, blades, and shields.

"Do Lycans really need these to fight?" I asked
him, giving the sword a small swing. "This sword
is heavy... how can anyone move fast with this?"

"We have so many Lycans and werewolves
whose beasts are either weak or absent," he
cleared his throat, "These are best for defense
lines."

I nodded, sliding it back into place, and moved to
a spear, "Can you get its tip checked?" I moved it
between my hands, "This should be lightweight
for throwing..." Thanks to Nicholson, who taught
me well, "The tip looks weaker."

"Sure, ma'am," he nodded at me.

*Ma'am. Nobody ever called me that. Nah! I can't
recall if someone did.*

I was about to ask more about the available

weapons when footsteps approached us.

Sebastian?

I thought in alarm, but then found a Lycan guard stopping a few feet away. He gave me a small bow, "Ma'am! Luna Tamia requests your presence in her office."

Luna Tamia? Was she high?

Did she take me for a maid or a slave?

I pulled my brows together to give him a stern look, "Now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

I looked back at the racks, thinking that Sebastian might get mad at me if I didn't obey his Granma's orders.

Sigh.

I shook my head and looked at the guard, "Tell her, I'm in the middle of something important. I can't come right away."

A flicker of surprise appeared in the guard's eyes, but he quickly masked it, dipping his head again and stepping back before leaving.

I stood there, staring after him. Why was he bowing to me? I wasn't royalty. I was a mere head warrior.

"Stop underestimating yourself, Aurora," my wolf nudged me softly, "You are royalty... if you understand," she said meaningfully, but I ignored that part. 1

I was aware of what she was trying to do.

"Why does Luna Tamia want to see you?" my wolf asked me again, something I too didn't understand.

I was a female, but that didn't make me anyone's errand girl.

I wasn't some attendant or maid who worked under her. She could not summon me whenever she felt like it.

I placed the spear back in its place, "If you want to see me, you need to wait, Luna," I muttered to myself and gave an easy-going smile to Richard, who seemed a little shocked.

"Umm. Ma'am..." he trailed off when I cut him, "It's Phoenix..."

He gave a dry cough, "Sorry?"

"Call me Phoenix, Richard," I ran a hand through my hair that was now reaching below my shoulders. I reminded myself to get a haircut soon.

"You are a head warrior and..."

"I'm a head warrior, and you calling me by my name doesn't change that, Richard. You'll stay a security head, even if I call you Richard. Right?"

He nodded with a hesitant smile, but I could see on his face how uneasy he looked.

I wasn't aware of the reason. Was it because I wanted him to call me by my name, or was it because of Luna Tamia's invitation that I declined?

I was invited to have lunch with Sebastian, but I turned down the offer and decided to have it with my fellow warriors.

It was important to get to know the people I was willing to work with in the future.

I walked into the cafeteria with the rest of the warriors and grabbed a tray. There was an empty spot on the table at the far right, so I went there and sat down.

All the tables were long so that warriors could have group discussions while enjoying their food. Everyone in the room seemed to go quiet, just busy eating.

There was no other sound except the clinking of the spoons against their plates. Was it because of me?

"Are you all quiet because of me?" I smiled, trying to break the silence, "Come on. Last time I checked, my Lycan warriors weren't mute."

That earned a few laughs. Slowly, the stiffness cracked, and voices picked up.

With a heavy sigh, I looked at my tray and thought of Jai, how he used to fight for my protein intake.

Pushing Jai away from my head, I shifted my focus to the warriors sitting near me, "So..." I raised a shoulder, "What's your favorite thing on the menu here?"

"Eggs!" the one sitting in front, didn't take time to say it.

The warrior beside him snorted, "Eggs? Seriously? That's supposed to be for breakfast. It should be meat. That's the only thing worth piling your plate with."

At least they were opening up around me. I didn't have any plans to act like Kiara. I always had this idea that a head warrior was supposed to be friendly enough to banter, mingle, and connect.

I leaned my elbow on the table, giving them both a playful side-eye, "So, one of you likes eggs, the other swears by meat. What's next? Someone's gonna argue lentils? After that, is it soup?"

A few chuckles rippled down the table. One guy at the end raised his spoon like a flag. "Hey, soup keeps you alive after training. You'll thank it when you are sore."

I grinned at that, "Fair point, mister. But let me tell you something... if you want to keep fighting, you need something more than eggs and soup..." I let the words hang in the air.

They were looking at me, waiting.

I chuckled and shook my head, "Balance. You all need balance. Protein, carbs, and yeah...even those boring greens." I tapped my fork against my plate, "Haven't you heard the saying? A warrior who eats like a monster fights like a monster. Your first weapon is your body. Start treating it like one."

They quieted for a second, listening to my every word carefully until one of them raised his hand, "Hey, Head warrior..."

"Phoenix," I corrected him with a nod.

"Yeah... Phoenix... so this monster saying... who said it?"

"Me!" I said without taking a pause.

His eyes widened, and the rest of them laughed at him.

"I would love to skip a meal that has greens in it,"

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the same warrior muttered to others.

"Unless you want me to drag you to the training ground half-dead, yeah... go ahead. Skip your greens," I shot back at him, and they laughed again.

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