

## 141 141- Caught Off Guard

Phoenix: 1

I knew it was too soon to challenge a witch, but I couldn't help it. My initial plan was to settle here first and then start showing my true colors to these evil women.

I couldn't resist the temptation. Up till now, no one must have put her in her place.

I kept looking into her eyes, patting my back silently for holding her gaze. There was rage brewing in those icy blue orbs.

Her arms were folded on her chest, while her ass was perched against the desk. She was showing me how calm she was, but the only thing giving her away was a nerve twitching in her jaw.

She at last closed her eyes and released a low chuckle, "Interesting..." she straightened and started walking towards me, "Ms. Phoenix..." she stopped at an arm's length from me, "I know you're a brave girl," there was calmness in her voice but the real strom could be brewing under it, "That's why you became the royal warrior..." she gestured to me, "But, my dear..." she took one more step to reach closer, "I must say... You are playing with fire."

*Right now, I need to pretend that I am calm when I am not.*

**Nope!**

All the past torture she inflicted on me started coming back in small fragments.

I nodded slowly, curling my fists at my sides, nails pressing into palms.

"Yeah. Maybe I am, Luna," my voice was softer than I wanted it to be. It took every ounce of willpower not to step back, "The thing is..." I moved my tongue to my inner cheek, "I. Am. Not. Afraid. Of. Burning." 2

Her lips curved, not into a smile but something sinister. She tilted her head, studying me as if I were a worthless creature she could easily crush.

"Whoa!" Her eyes never left mine, "You are brave."

She raised one hand slowly, her long fingers hovering close to my face. My heart thumped against my ribs. For a second, I thought she would strike me.

Instead, she lightly tapped the side of my chin with her index finger, then drew back.

"You will learn, Phoenix," she muttered, "You're a very intelligent girl. Everybody does... You see?"

She cocked her head to one side, "I'm a very easy-to-please person. They all learned eventually. You will too."

The way she was speaking it sounded more like a spell to me. Suddenly, I wanted to get out of this room.

I exhaled hard and realized that my legs were shaky.

"Thank you, Luna," I looked down, "I hope we both learn and grow together..." I said with that innocent smile, making her chuckle.

"No, Phoenix," she at last decided to walk away, "I've already grown and come a long way. You need to follow palace rules, or you can get yourself in trouble."

She was again leaning over that desk when she gave that low laugh that made the hair on my arms stand.

"Trouble?" I didn't dare to cock up a brow. It was dangerous to challenge a Lycan lady who was also a fu\*cking witch.

"Yeah, trouble," this time her smile was not that evil, "We give punishments when someone insists on breaking our rules... like..." she paused, thinking for a moment.

"Like burning the person?" This time I asked her

boldly, "Or burning a particular body part?"

She curved down her lips and shrugged, "Yeah... that too, but..."

I cut her in, "Like shaving her head?"

This time...

For the first time, I found Luna Tamia's mouth hung open, "Wh...what?" A flicker of panic crossed her face.

Her face had gotten pale, and I noticed a faint shiver in her hand.

Thank Goddess, she couldn't see my smile due to the mask.

Before she could utter another word, the door flew open and Sebastian came inside, "Granma? Phoenix?"

I took a sigh of relief at the interruption, but she seemed irritated.

"Sweetheart," Pasting a big smile on her face, she hugged him and kissed his cheek.

"Were you stopping Phoenix from talking to me?" he asked her casually, coming to me and hugging me as well.

For me, this was unexpected.

He never showed me this side in front of his Granma.

She cracked up when she heard him, "And why would I do that, silly?"

For the first time, I saw a genuine smile on her face.

"Hey," he pressed a kiss on my head, "You're so busy with all this shit," he complained and then pulled me to him with one arm, "Granma. Is your meeting with Phoenix done? I need to talk to her about a few things."

"Sure, Sebi. We were just chatting about random things," she went back to her seat and slid a file towards her.

He looked down sideways to have a better look at my face, "What random things?"

Luna Tamia didn't speak, and I realized he was talking to me, "Umm... just casual..." I nodded at Luna Tamia, "Like... fire... burnt marks..."

He seemed to go stiff beside me.

"Granma?" he gave a questioning look to her, and she started chewing her lower lip.

"Yeah. It's the usual lecture, son. Don't worry," she placed her reading glasses over her nose, "I asked her not to play with fire. Now, if you two excuse me, I've work to do."

*Well played, Luna. I thought with a smile.*

*For how long are you willing to keep playing this game, Tamia*

As soon as we were out of the room, he wrapped his arms around me from behind. Two Lycan guards were standing there with lowered heads, acting as if they were nothing but statues.

"I missed you," he breathed near my ear. With a smile, I turned in his arms to face him and threw my arms around his neck, "Me too."

Before he could manage to speak again, I held his tie, "Someone around here told me that you had a wife... is it true?"

His smile froze, and he faltered, caught off guard.

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