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Phoenix: 1

After the rogue attack on the southern border, Sebastian had to go on an official visit for two weeks.

I was paying regular visits to Luna Tamia first thing in the morning. Not because I wanted to do it.

Because I wanted them to let their guard down before I started playing my game in the palace. Just yesterday, I was passing by Tina, who tried to avoid me when we were face-to-face.

Maybe she was scared of the chaos I created in the Blood Stone pack. It was not an easy thing to swap the crimes of two prominent female figures of the pack and get them punished in place of each other.

I couldn't wait to meet Amora again and go back into the past. I still couldn't decide on the third place I needed to visit.

When it came down to Sebastian, I still wasn't sure about him. Why did he say that he was in love just because I had perfect... assets?

Who speaks of a woman like that? A woman who used to be his wife, and now he was telling me

that he loved her!

What kind of dense skull did he needed just to understand that there was a difference between lust and love.

Urgh!

To forget that conversation, I kept myself busier than usual. Daily drills, training, and patrols. All of this was taking up most of the time, making me exhausted enough to fall asleep in a blink at night.

Hunter was taking care of the palace in the King's absence, and honestly, half of the time it was hilarious.

Luna Tamia loved piling the most ridiculous tasks on his shoulders.

One day, she wanted him to trim the roses in her garden because the royal gardener didn't arrive that day. The next day, she wanted to make sure that her little rabbits got warm milk. 1

Once when I visited her in the office before starting my day, Beta Hunter was already there. She was asking him to check if the drapes matched her new gown.

Watching the Royal Beta running around for not-so-royal errands was enough to make me bite my lips just to stop from laughing out loud.

"Go ahead. Laugh!" he said, rolling his eyes when he walked past me. We were right outside Luna Tamia's office.

I placed my fingers on my lips to hide the smile. He looked cute, balancing swatches of fabric in his arms.

"I'm sorry, Beta," I called out after him, but he had turned the corner.

In the last few days, Luna Tamia had gotten less bitter with me because I didn't challenge her after that incident.

I made my way into her office to say good morning and to ask for her permission to start my day, when I spotted Tina sitting on the sofa, showing something on her tablet to Tamia.

When she saw me, she moved her gaze away and locked it on her screen.

"Good morning, Luna," I bowed to her, lower than necessary, "Hope you have a great day ahead," I pasted a fake smile on my face.

Her office space always seemed to suffocate me.

Ignoring me, Tina leaned towards Tamia and said in a honey-glazed voice, "I really want to decorate the new quarters the way I like. Sebi doesn't even want to change its color scheme," she said with a pout, "You know how much I

adore interior designing."

They brushed me off like I wasn't even there.

Luna Tamia's arm slipped around Tina's shoulders, pulling her in, "Of course, my love. You can do whatever you want with that space. After all, you'll be the one living there in the future."

I lowered my eyes, giving the impression that I wasn't paying attention.

Thankfully, it didn't take long before Luna Tamia's attention swung to me, "Phoenix," she waved her hand nonchalantly, "Dear. Would you help Tina with the furniture selection and all? You're so good with this kind of stuff!"

Really? How did she know?

She didn't want my help. She wanted to remind me of my place. No matter what designation I hold here, I would always be treated as a slave.

She then turned to Tina, "Sweetheart. I'm sure, Phoenix will help you..." Tina parted her lips, maybe to argue, but Luna Tamia's elbow nudged her ribs before a word came out, "Don't be silly," she went on quickly, "We both know we can rely on Phoenix. Everything she does turns out perfect."

I dipped my head just enough to show respect,
"Yes, Luna. I'll help her," I assured her too calmly.

"I want the walls soft cream, not white," Tina said, walking beside me, "The older paint is wearing off, and the furniture placed there is getting worn out and shabby."

A maid opened the door of the same room that was mine two years ago.

I tried to control my erratic heartbeat.

Not aware of what Tina was saying, I started inspecting the room. They didn't try to reconstruct it but just fixed it in patches.

It seemed more like a part of the servant quarters than the royal ones. Every moment I spent there replayed in my mind.

The torture.

The disrespect.

The abuse.

I twisted my neck a little to eye the woman who told me once that Sebastian would never look at me again the same way.

What if I do the same to your face? I asked her silently, twirling a hair strand around my finger.

Once I go back in the past, I can throw that stuff on her face!

"Phoenix! Hey... Are you even listening?" she asked me, her voice gradually rising. She was looking at me as if I had broken some Royal rule of not worshipping her.

She was watching me too closely, with that curious edge, but the doubt underneath was hard to miss.

"I'm listening, Tina," I said, walking to the exact spot where she threw that chemical on my face, "I've noted down all your instructions," I said without looking at her, "Soft cream walls, A huge mirror on this wall. And some furniture with plum and ivory with gold accents." 1

The coldness in her eyes was replaced with excitement, "Excellent, Phoenix. I can't wait to see the end result," She clapped her hands in sheer joy.