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Phoenix: 1

Kamila's mouth hung open in shock as she looked at me with wide eyes. She hadn't changed a bit.

Still that young, beautiful girl who used to offer me chocolates. Who used to force-feed me when I was at my lowest.

"Hi, Kamila," I tried to smile, but my lips were trembling so badly that it almost hurt.

She stumbled back a few steps in disbelief, and I took it as a chance to enter. The room was small but neat. At the table sat Delis, with a cup of coffee halfway to his mouth. When his gaze landed on me, he froze.

"L...Luna?" Slowly, he set the cup down and rose to his feet.

"Hello, Delis," I whispered, my voice heavy with emotion, "I didn't know I'd find you here." 1

Shock flickered across his face. Both of them looked at me as if they had seen a ghost.

I wanted to say more. I wanted to tell them how long I'd waited for this moment, but a lump swelled in my throat, not letting me speak.



We stood there in awkward silence, waiting for the other to speak. At last, Kamila took the initiative.

"We saw you, Luna," Kamila at last found her shaking voice, "We wanted to come to you, but..." she gestured towards me with a faint smile, her eyes were damp, "Look at you. You've changed."

She turned and placed her palm on Delis' arm, "Do you see, Delis? She's a head warrior now. Not the girl we once knew who used to cry endlessly."

A chuckle escaped my lips when I heard the choice of her words.

Delis slowly nodded, still staring at me in disbelief, "We always knew you'd do something different... something big... but we never imagined that you'd come back to us like this, stronger than before."

They both were watching me with pride, and I didn't know how to tell them that I'd changed from head to toe.

Inside out.

"Y...you are wearing this mask," Kamila pointed towards my face, "Is it because... You want to avoid the sun?"

They asked me the same question that was on



everyone's mind in the palace.

"You risked your life when you decided to come back, Luna," Delis said before dipping his head, "How long do you think you can manage with a mask? One day, they'll expect you to take it off."

With a sigh, I shook my head, "They won't, Delis. Don't worry," there was sincerity on his face, "The face they remember is long gone," I said softly.

They both looked at me with part curiosity and part suspicion.

I looked down and then slowly raised my hand to peel the mask off my face.

Kamila's hands flew to her mouth as she gasped. Delis flinched and turned his face away, as if the sight of me had burned him. But I didn't miss his clenched jaw.

For a few moments, there was silence in the room.

Kamila's voice trembled like a baby, "What happened to you? Who... who could do this? You were..." she swallowed hard, her hand was clutching her throat, "You were the most beautiful girl I had ever seen..." tears started sliding down as she tried to recover from the shock, "When you left the palace, I told Delis over and over, *she has the most beautiful face*







*I've ever seen. And now..." she sobbed.*

Delis at last turned back to me, and I was taken aback by his red-rimmed eyes, "Tell us the truth, Luna. Who did this to you? Was it someone from the Blood Stone pack?"

I wiped the corners of my eyes with my thumb, "No, Delis. It wasn't Blood Stone."

They both kept staring at me, waiting.

"It was Tina," I whispered, "She did this before I left that room. I don't know what it was..."

Kamila walked towards me, her eyes were filled with tears, "I'm so sorry... for what they did to you, Luna."

I chuckled and put back my mask, "Hey, you two!" I waved my hand carelessly, "Stop calling me, Luna. I'm a head warrior now."

Kamila quickly wiped her face, and I found it cute that more tears were sliding down her face.

"I always hated that bitch," She remarked angrily.

"Me too!" Delis chimed in, "I can't wait to help you with revenge."

I was too tired to laugh. These two had already predicted it two years back that I would return for my revenge.

I inhaled lots of Oxygen to keep my emotions





under control, "Now don't be stupid," I ran a hand through my hair, "I'm not involving any of you in my revenge plan."

They tried to argue, but I raised my hand, "I need to get out of here. David is waiting outside, and I don't want to give him the impression that I know you people."

I then turned to Kamila, forcing a smile I didn't feel, "And one more thing. No more chits in my bedroom. Okay? Don't worry. This time, they can't even touch a single hair on me."

She bit her lip and looked over her shoulder, "Delis..."

He threw his arm around her shoulders and drew her against him, "We know you don't need us. But we won't stop protecting you, Luna. You will always be our Luna."

My breath caught in my throat, "No," I whispered, shaking my head, "You don't understand, if you stay close, you'll only ..."

"Please, Luna," Kamila's chin was trembling, "Don't," she said softly, "We left you alone last time, but not this time."

Before I could find the words to push these amazing people back, they both dropped to their knees on the floor, their heads bent low.





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The unexpected sight knocked the wind out of me. I felt burning in my throat, and I looked aside, hoping to shake it off.

That was when I caught my reflection in the mirror that was hanging on the wall. But it wasn't my face that was staring back. A white wolf was watching me instead. 1

"Hello, Aurora," she spoke in my head, "I'm Aria, your wolf." 2

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