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As I followed Jia, I noticed the oddly quiet corridors. Of course, it was after midnight, but still in the royal palace, there were always maids or guards around.

Jia was glancing back after every few steps, and I found it quite amusing. She was too mature at this age, and I had to give her that.

Maybe being the daughter of a rogue King wasn't a piece of cake.

We reached a narrow hall that was lined with old paintings and half-burnt candles. Hmm. Her parents liked the historical look. Interesting!

Finally, she stopped in front of the heavy wooden door. From inside, I could hear muffled voices... someone was laughing inside. A girly laugh... almost like a kid.

I reached out and caught her arm, "Wait," I whispered, "What if... your father is inside... this isn't the ideal time to..."

I couldn't let Lucien know that I met his mate without his permission.

Jia turned to me, blinking in confusion before letting out a small laugh, "Daddy? Oh no, he's not



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here. Don't worry."

"Why? They are mates. Right?" I pointed out.

She grinned as her voice dropped to a whisper, "My parents never sleep together...Daddy tries to, but Mommy..." She giggled, "Mommy throws him out of the room. Always!"

I blinked at her. Was the child lying again?

So, I was right. Giana was held against her will... and that only meant one thing. Lucien ra*ped her. Maybe Giana didn't want him as her mate. She wanted rejection. But Lucien, being a jerk... he kidnapped her and ...

"Hey... what are you thinking?" Jia's voice brought me back to the present. She glanced down where I was holding her wrist, stopping her from opening the door.

As she reached for the door handle, a deep voice rolled through the hallway, which was low and deep.

"What do you think you two are doing here?"

Shit.

Shit, shit.

Every muscle in my body went stiff. We were caught red-handed.

Jia stood frozen beside me.



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Slowly, we turned and found Lucien standing at the end of the hallway, and I could see his eyes from here. Hard, cold, glowing red with anger.

"D...daddy..." Jia whispered, and I didn't miss the trembling in her voice, "We were just..."

He raised his hand and started walking towards us.

Goddess. I wanted to hide somewhere. Or maybe bury myself under the floor.

"Jia! Go!" His eyes had turned soft while talking to his daughter, but his voice was firm.

Jia gave me a guilty look and tried to speak, "But, Daddy..."

"I said... go to your room, Jia," he said silkily, and the warning was evident there.

"Please go, Jia," I tried to smile with a brave face, "Your daddy is right."

Jia nodded and then left with slumped shoulders. Once she was gone, I swallowed and eyed Lucien, who was now leaning against the wall, watching me closely.

"So, you used my daughter?" My stomach dropped from the accusation, "No," I said quickly, "I didn't..."

Lucien pushed himself off the wall and started

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walking towards me, "You should be ashamed of yourself, Phoenix. You are a liar!"

"Liar! No... I swear..." I breathed, moving backwards, hitting my back against the wall.

"You manipulate a child to reach my mate?" he cocked up a brow, "You manipulated me into believing that you don't belong to Crimson Claw. But your records at Blood Stone say otherwise. So, what should I believe here?"

He was waiting for my answer. I gulped and shook my head, "I didn't lie. I can explain... if you let me..."

He was looking at my face carefully, and at that moment, he didn't look like a brutal and cold-hearted rogue king. The one who burned the entire pack cruelly.

"Your face... seems like I've seen you somewhere... as if... I know you..." He whispered. I raised one shoulder with a small smile, "Of course. I resemble your daughter. She looks like me... don't know why?" I shrugged again with a chuckle.

Before I could speak, I heard laughter from inside and the sound of clapping.

Strange. The rogue Luna... Jia's mom was inside, but she didn't try to come out and ask us what we were doing there.



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Well. If I wanted his trust, I needed to tell him about me.

"Two years back..." I sighed, "I escaped the palace. At that time, the Crimson Claw pack was burned. I wanted a pack that could take me in. If I had told them about my escape, they would have returned me to the king. So, I lied. I told them that I was the last survivor of Crimson Claw. They believed me because my face was disfigured and had marks that were close to burned marks. Everyone bought the story, and I started living there in peace."

After telling my story, I raised my hands, "If you want, you can send your men to the palace or the Blood Stone pack to confirm."

Now I didn't have anything to hide. I was here because of Giana, and I wasn't leaving without talking to her.

Lucien stayed quiet, his eyes searching mine, "You're either very brave or incredibly stupid."

I swallowed again, trying to keep my voice steady, "I'm desperate. There's a difference... my friend... he wanted his sister to..."

"Your friend? Jai Chris?" He chuckled, and it was not a friendly one, "Yeah. He was very dear to my mate, so I brought his dead body here. Ha-ha."

He was laughing like I just told him the best joke.

But the man was sick.

A maniac.

He burned the whole pack down, which included innocent kids and she-wolves. He was keeping an innocent girl against her will. And now he has also brought a dead man from his grave just because his mate loved him.

Sicko!

The sound of the same laughter came from the room. His face softened. He moved past me and turned the handle of the door.

With a speeding heartbeat, I followed him inside.

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