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Phoenix: 1

Jai walked me back to Kiara's office on his way home. She had shifted my duty to the daytime, and I wanted to convince her that I was fine doing it at night.

That was the only way I could avoid meeting the king.

"You sure you wanna go in alone?" Jai stuffed his hands in his pockets and yawned, "She seemed kinda pissed earlier."

I gave him a half smile, "I'll manage."

Thank Goddess that he didn't throw tantrums when he heard Beta Hunter in the bar. While coming here, I had to convince him that I went to the king last night *only* to heal him. And *nothing* happened.

However, I had left the slap part out of it.

"You sure?" he raised a brow but didn't push it, "Text me if she throws a chair at you."

"Ha ha. Very funny," I muttered and turned towards the door.

Jai walked off down the hallway, humming some

stupid song. I took a breath and fixed my shirt before knocking on the door.

No answer.

I knocked again, louder this time, "Kiara? It's me," When there was still no answer, I creaked it open myself.

She was behind the desk, tapping away on her tablet like I wasn't even there.

"Hey," I walked in slowly, "I just wanted to talk about my shift. I mean, I'm totally okay working at night... for me it's not a big deal," I said with a shrug.

She didn't even look up. "Hah. Really? It's not a big deal?"

"No, Kiara," I placed my palms on the desk and leaned a little, "Night shifts were never a problem. And you know that. I was against the *continuous* night shifts."

Like, come on. Why couldn't she get it through her thick skull that I never ran away from my responsibilities?

"The night shifts are a part of duty, Phoenix," she said casually, her eyes still on the screen.

Okay. Here we go again.

"Kiara, I literally said I was fine with it," I tried to

keep my voice chill even though I was boiling inside.

I didn't want to visit Sebastian King tonight. What did he think of himself? A king?

Ha-ha. I wanted to laugh. Indeed, he was the king of the Velmora kingdom.

Kiara was leaning back in her chair, her arms were crossed, and there was a smugness on her face, "Sweetie," she smiled, "You really think I can't see through you?"

I curved down my lips, "What do you mean, Kiara?"

"Every one of us knows that you are suddenly interested in the king."

What the bulls*hit was she even uttering?

"This has nothing to do with the king, Kiara. I had my night duty, and you moved it to the next day without even asking me, just because the Royals asked you to change it."

"Oh, my Goddess," she stood up, "You're such a bad liar. You're here just to show me that he is calling you against your wishes, you two-faced snake!" Her voice had gotten louder, "Keep acting as if you are distant and 'not interested' but the whole pack knows what you are doing, you stenchy piece of ugly shit!"

I didn't like the sound of it. Three years back, my whole pack turned against me because they thought some a*sshole took away my honor. No one gave me a chance to explain myself.

And now this pack. I have been serving them for the last two years, and look at them.

The words stung, but I kept my face straight. My nails were digging into my palms.

"I've been loyal to this pack since day one," I said, in a clear, no-nonsense voice, "So if you're gonna throw some insults at me, at least come up with something solid and real. I expect better from a head warrior."

Kiara opened her mouth, probably to yell something, but then...

The door opened again, and we both turned.

Jai walked in, leaning against the doorframe. His brows were slightly raised, and there was this annoying smile on his face.

"Wow," he clapped a few times, "You're really something, Kiara."

Kiara's face was twisted in shock, "J... Jai... excuse me... we were just..."

"I could hear you from outside," he walked in casually, "No need to be rude, Kiara, when the whole pack knows Phoenix is the best thing ever happened to this pack."

Kiara's lips parted a little, and I wanted to roll my eyes. Everyone knew his bias towards me. However, like last time, I was sure that I could handle this.

I didn't need him for my problems. Nor did I want him to fight everyone for me.

"Let's be honest, Kiara," Jai went on, "I wish you were half as good as her. Because we all know it was Phoenix who was meant to be sitting in that chair. Not you."

Kiara's face drained of color, "Jai. You are being rude. We were just..."

"Ah. You were just..." Jai paused, "Stop acting like a jealous brat, Kiara, and for once, act as the head warrior for real. Someone our pack can lean on."

He walked over to me, gently taking my hand, "Let's get out of here."

I looked over my shoulder and found Kiara standing frozen at her place, glaring at me.

Once the door clicked shut behind us, I let out the breath I didn't know I was holding.

"Jai!" I called him tiredly, "How many times do I have to remind you that I'm a big girl and I can handle..."

"Shh," he placed his finger on my lips over the mask, "Just tonight. I promise I won't meddle in your affairs. Just this one time. She needed to be called out by someone."

I didn't trust Jai.

I knew he would pull that again. I threw a pointed look at Klara's office door. No night duty meant to pay a visit to the King.

And honestly?

I was dreading the night.

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