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Tina was standing there giggling when they placed the spoon handle in her mouth, "Don't let it fall, Tina!" 1

Kiara called out from her seat. Everyone was cheering for Tina until Raya raised her hands to make the announcement, "The rule is that whatever is there on the spoon should not spill, and Tina will carry it to the finishing line, which is just thirty steps away."

She pointed to the finishing line where they had placed a ribbon to set the mark.

"And the item I choose for her is ..." Raya thought for a moment with a playful smile playing on her lips, "Maple syrup!"

Tina groaned, rolling her eyes, "She hates maple syrup!" someone said from the crowd. Luna Raya poured some syrup on her spoon and then said loudly, "Ready. Steady. Go!"

Tina started walking, taking small steps towards the finishing line. Though I never liked her but right now I couldn't contain my excitement like the rest of them.

"Kiara couldn't win because she couldn't manage honey on her spoon," Someone tried to tease Kiara, but she took the jibe good-naturedly.

"Go Tina go!" They all started chanting.

At one point, Tina seemed to stumble in the midway.

"There is another rule," a warrior told me, "If your man comes and carries you to the finishing line, then that's also okay."

The syrup was about to be dropped to the ground, but Tina quickly brought one hand to scoop it onto her palm.

"I think she'll call King Sebastian," someone screamed from the crowd, and everyone cheered.

Tina's eyes glazed back. She was mindlinking Sebastian.

Yeah. The same Sebastian who told me just last night that he could ditch his important schedule for me.

The smile on my face dimmed a little because the sight of Sebastian holding Tina...

I wish I could run away, but now it was not possible.

Too late!

They all had started hooting, Tina was standing awkwardly, collecting the maple syrup on her palms.

Due to controlling her laughter, the metal spoon was slipping from her mouth.

However, with each passing minute, the laughter died down. Everyone thought Sebastian would come running, but there was no sign of him.

Tina's face had grown red, maybe due to the insult she was facing.

One minute, she was about to give up, and the next moment Beta Hunter came inside. I had never seen him this furious.

He went to Tina and whispered something. He then stepped back and nodded politely at Luna Raya.

Tina took out the spoon and then walked off the track. She almost threw the spoon aside and took her seat next to Raya.

A maid quickly brought a basin and a face towel. Another one poured water to get Tina's hands washed.

Tina's face didn't express any emotion. She dried her hands and sat there with a poker face. Beta Hunter didn't leave and stood behind Tina.

"Phoenix!" Luna Raya called my name, "You're next."

"Me?" I pointed my finger towards my chest, "I thought I was invited here as a spectator."

But now they all were shouting.

"Phoenix!"

"Phoenix!"

I threw my hands up in the air and got up from my seat. They all started clapping.

"What to choose for her?" Someone shouted from the crowd. Luna Raya pressed the bridge of her nose while thinking.

"Salt?" she asked the crowd that went wild.

Now I knew why she chose that.

The losing party had to eat or drink whatever was there on the spoon.

Doesn't matter, Phoenix.

You can do it!

I secretly gave a thumbs-up to myself.

Like a true warrior, I walked to the track and held the spoon. Luna Raya was placing salt on it. For a moment, my eyes darted to Beta Hunter, who didn't seem to enjoy this.

Smiling to myself, I was about to take the spoon into my mouth when a stern female voice cut through the air, "What has she gotten?"

Uh-huh. Luna Tamia.

What was she doing here?

"She has gotten salt!" Tina informed her in that fake sweet voice.

"Uh. That's kind of dull!" She then turned to the crowd, "Don't you want some thrill here?"

They all chanted a *Yes!*

Luna Tamia strode over to me, and I didn't miss the smug smile on her face.

They all were in this together.

I ran a gaze over the royal seats where Tina didn't look uninterested anymore.

They all were waiting eagerly, what Luna Tamia was about to do.

Luna got closer and took a look at my spoon that was filled with salt. She started murmuring something in a language that I had never heard.

The spell reminded me of that unfortunate night when I caught her red-handed, doing something evil.

I lost my beautiful hair because of that.

"How can she hold the spoon with that mask?" someone asked Luna Raya too loudly. Luna Raya didn't respond.

She was more interested in what Luna Tamia was about to do.

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Luna Tamia hovered her hand over my spoon, her fingers twitching slightly as the murmurs from her lips grew heavier, and darker.

My eyes stayed fixed on the salt.

Very slowly, grain after grain, the white crystals of salt began to darken. First, it was pale pink and then it became deeper rust.

I felt like my heartbeat could stop any moment as the salt on the spoon turned blood red as if someone soaked it in blood.

And then...

A flash of light shot from her palm and struck the spoon. It glittered, and for a split second the silver surface lightened up before vanishing completely.

Whatever was on the spoon was no more salt. It was deep, fine red powder.

Gasps rippled through the crowd, and someone from the back shouted, "Goddess. That's red chili powder!" 1

A few warriors leaned forward to get a better look. There were whispers among the crowd. Everyone was impressed that the Royal Luna was so talented.

"So you thought I'd spare you with just salt?" She whispered and stepped back, her eyes never

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leaving mine, "Now show us what a great warrior you are... one who never backs down from a challenge until she sees it through."

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