Chapter 244: Taste Of Your Medicine

"Maverick!" Aria shouted, wishing she could somehow get inside that cage and drag him to his feet herself.

There was a look in Rhydian's eyes she hadn't seen before. A primal savagery had entered his gaze, as if the dragon within him had finally awakened and was now peering through the man.

She didn't like it one bit.

A cackle came from behind her.

"Just one hit and the professor is down already."

Aria didn't have to turn around to know who it was.

Karen.

"Perhaps Maverick Nightshade isn't as powerful as he thinks he is."

Brittney whirled around. "Say that to his face when he gets out of there and let's see if he doesn't shut that mouth of yours permanently."

Karen gave a derisive laugh. "Yes, with the powers he conveniently can't use at the moment."

"I don't need powers to knock the teeth out of your mouth right now," Variant said.

Karen's brows shot up.

"Oops. I'm scared." She pressed a hand dramatically against her chest before her mouth curved into a smug smile. "Except you can't touch me, can you?"

Variant scowled at her.

Karen leaned back in her seat, thoroughly pleased with herself. "Beasts aren't allowed to touch the humans tonight. Remember?"

Variant’s hands balled into fists. Of all the humans who had died since arriving at Bestiaris, why couldn’t Karen have been among them?

"Maybe we shouldn’t insult their Alpha while we’re sitting in the middle of their section," Liv murmured cautiously.

Karen shot her a hostile glare.

"You don’t tell me what to do. You follow my lead."

Liv withdrew at once, her expression going blank. Why had she even bothered?

Aria ignored the exchange behind her, all her attention fixed on the fight. Her heart was racing now. Rhydian had reached Maverick and grabbed a fistful of his hair, hauling him up from the floor, but before he could get him fully upright, Maverick’s fist shot out and caught him squarely across the face.

Rhydian staggered back.

Maverick was only halfway to his feet when the dragon recovered. Rhydian lunged forward and returned the favor with a brutal punch to the jaw. The impact snapped Maverick’s head sideways, and unlike Rhydian, he went down, landing hard on his ass.

"Ouch."

Some members of Therion winced on behalf of their Alpha. Maverick gave his head a hard shake, trying to clear the dizziness. Apparently, Rhydian’s fists packed one hell of a punch.

The dragon advanced as Maverick pushed himself upright, his footing noticeably less certain than before. Rhydian was almost upon him when Maverick suddenly lowered his body and drove his shoulder into Rhydian’s midsection.

The dragon was ripped clean off his feet, and they crashed to the floor together. Therion found its voice again as Maverick landed on top. He wasted no time, raining quick punches across Rhydian’s face.

Rhydian absorbed the first few hits before catching Maverick around the waist. Aria barely had time to realize what he was doing before, with a violent twist of his body, Rhydian reversed their positions. Maverick’s back hit the floor.

Now Rhydian was on top, his fist came down. Maverick threw both forearms over his face, taking the brunt of the blow against them. At least he was protecting his face. Aria had threatened to leave him if he returned with permanently crooked teeth, after all.

Unfortunately, Rhydian seemed to realize he wasn't getting a clean shot there. He changed targets, driving his fist into Maverick's side instead. A grunt was punched from him. Rhydian struck the same spot again, and Maverick's body jerked beneath him.

"Goddammit!" Aria shoved a hand into her hair and tugged at the roots. She was going to lose her fucking mind. Why couldn't one of those idiots just give up? Did they intend to keep going until one of them died?

It was at that moment Karen chose to open her mouth again.

"Would you look at that? Your boyfriend's getting his ass handed to him."

"I think it's high time you left."

Dimitri had finally had enough. Until now, he had dismissed the human as an ordinary troublemaker looking for attention, but she was beginning to grate on his last nerve. Worse, they were surrounded by Therion beasts whose patience was wearing considerably thinner than his own.

Karen turned on him. "What do you mean, leave? When Rhydian was losing, all of you were mocking him. Can't take a taste of your own medicine?"

"I think we should just go, Karen." Fatima reached for her arm, attempting to placate her.

Karen ripped herself free.

"I have the right to sit wherever I want. I also have freedom of speech, and I'll say whatever the hell I want, especially when it's the truth."

"Karen," Olivia warned.

But Karen wasn't finished.

"Professor Maverick is losing, and honestly, who's surprised after he got himself entangled with the likes of Aria?" Her eyes slid toward Aria with deliberate contempt. "A tramp like her wouldn't know the first thing about making a man better. If anything, that stench of poverty she carries around is probably dragging him down with her. No wonder Maverick Nightshade is going to lose tonight—"

And that did it. Aria snapped.

Maybe it was the fear already eating her alive, or having to stand there and watch two men she cared about beat each other bloody while Karen picked at her from behind. Or perhaps she had simply reached the limit of how much bullshit she was willing to swallow in one night.

Whatever it was, Aria turned.

She moved so fast that not even Brittney or the others realized what she was doing until it was too late. One second Karen was sneering, and the next Aria launched herself at her.

The impact knocked Karen backward with a startled scream. Her chair toppled as Aria crashed into her, sending both of them sprawling between the seats. Karen’s popcorn went flying, scattering everywhere as nearby Therion beasts scrambled out of the way.

"Aria!"