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ONYX

Conrad had that crazy smile stretched over his face that was now fading when he saw me. A part of me was happy that he found me like this accidentally because, boy, did I not look good!

"What the—" he muttered when he saw me almost falling off the bed that I tried to climb up on so hard. "Onyx, my girl, are you all right?"

Did I look all right to him? I was dying! Well, not really, but I had to look like I was.

On a good note, if he walked a bit closer, I could throw up all over him to seal the deal and prove my point. The potion was working perfectly, and there was no chance

He was next to me in no time, cupping my chin to make me look at him and his face twitched when he saw the dark circles and

black veins popping everywhere.

"Daddy," I whined, letting tears stream down my face. "I think something is wrong with me! I don't feel too good!"

"My little girl!" he mumbled, and now I almost threw up for real. He never spoke to me like that.

Not unless he had an audience...

My whole body went rigid at the thought. Now that I was thinking about it, why was he here? Knowing my fake Dad, there could only be a few reasons, and I did not like any of them.

"Daddy, I think I need a healer," I decided to still go on with my plan. This opportunity couldn't be wasted. Luckily, I did not need to pretend much because I felt terrible. Still, it was probably better than real colloidal silver poisoning. Those were deadly for wolves.

"Damn it!" Conrad growled. "The timing

couldn't have been worse. The Moon Goddess Gala is tomorrow, and we have a very important guest here today. He wanted to see you—"

I started coughing just to make him stop talking. Whomever, the guest was, I did not want to meet them. There was literally no one good to Onyx in this world, and I did not want to test my luck.

"A healer—" I whispered, pretending to be on the verge of dying. *Come on, Conrad! Don't you want to save your investment?*

"Yes, yes, of course," he finally came out of his daze and started looking for his phone in his pockets. "I will call our family healer straightaway. We need you back on your feet as soon as possible!"

Thank God. Any healer would put me on bed rest for weeks after prescribing a detoxifying tonic. I did my research on this well, and there shouldn't be any hiccups.

"Can I help?" A familiar voice cut through

my dreams of being free soon, and I would have gasped if I still had strength.

Zion stood, leaning over the doorway, with his lips curled into a smirk, and I lost the last bits of self-control I had. I gasped loudly, locking eyes with him. What was he doing? Why was he here?

A gruesome thought visited my mind. Shame that it came so late.

Did he poison me?

Was it a potion I was promised, or did he decide to kill me off after all for insulting him?

I was so naïve! Zion was a villain! Of course, I couldn't trust him! It was so stupid of me to rely on him!

Idiot! I was an idiot!

"W-why?" I pushed the words out of my dry throat, the sound broken and hurt.

His face changed, and that grin

disappeared as if he didn't expect this.

"Zion, my friend. I am afraid we will have to postpone everything," Conrad was scrolling through his phone in search of the right number. "Onyx is not feeling well. I have to call a healer."

"You poisoned me!" I whispered with my lips almost numb, and the warlock's brows went up momentarily. He strode towards me and gestured for my fake father to move out of the way.

"She has a fever," he announced, even though we both knew that I was actually cold, and not hot, at the moment. But it was probably a part of the game he was playing. "Conrad, I can help her, but it would be best if you leave us alone."

"No!" I clung to fake Dad, grasping the edge of his jacket as if my life depended on it. And it did. "Don't leave me."

He stared at me, puzzled, but when Zion carefully took my hand into his and

methodically removed each finger, releasing Conrad, he hesitated about what to do next. Clearly, he wanted to please the warlock more than to protect his own daughter.

"She'll be fine," Zion assured him with a smile that creeped me out more. "I have made my intentions clear. Nothing will happen with your little girl while she is under my protection."

The words sealed my fate because fake Dad patted my head lightly and said, "You are in good hands, Sweetheart."

He left quickly and made sure to close the door while I tried to stare at him like that cat from Shrek, forgetting that this man had no soul.

"That was quite some show!" Zion brushed a strand of hair off my face.

"What are you doing?" I demanded. However, my voice sounded weak and croaked. "I thought we had a deal?"

"We do have a deal, but you need to read the contracts more carefully next time," the warlock remarked, but noticing my glare, he took his hand off my face. "The Shadows always get paid upfront."

"I gave you the information," I reminded him.

"Yes, but I can't check it until the Gala," he responded without delay.

"And how is that my problem?" I narrowed my eyes at him. If he was going to kill me now, nothing would change his mind anyway.

"This is exactly how," he gestured at me with an unnaturally calm facial expression, although I could swear the corner of his lips rose upward. "I get half of your service for now, and you get half of my service."

"What do you mean?" I liked this less and less.

"I mean that I gave you the right potion, and

you are welcome," Zion sneered at me and started looking for something in his jacket. "Now it's time to miraculously heal you so that you can go to the Gala with me. There, if the information you gave me is confirmed, I will owe you another half a favour."

My lips parted from shock, and the warlock used the moment to quickly bring a little bottle to my mouth.

"Drink it," he said in an unquestionable tone.

Once again, I was facing two choices I did not like. Drink and be healed, or not drink and face Zion's wrath.

I really wanted to get back at him for tricking me and break the damn bottle, but I had to be wise. I couldn't do this. So, I chose the lesser of two evils and swallowed the liquid, which was surprisingly sweet this time.

"I worked on the taste for you," Zion gave me an understanding smile, seeing my

confusion. "I hope you like it."

"Delicious!" I threw the bottle back at him, and he chuckled at that too.

For about a minute, none of us said anything. I could feel how I was getting better rapidly and gritted my teeth.

"The whole point of me seeking you out for that potion in the first place was that I didn't want to go to that Gala!" I informed him while waves of rage rippled through me. It was harder and harder to control my temper.

"I don't know what the reason for that is, but whatever it is, I can help you." Zion seemed pleased with how everything was turning out. "As I have already told your father, as long as you are under my protection, nothing is going to happen to you."

Too bad he was fifty per cent of my reasoning for trying to avoid the celebrations.

"Look," I sighed, trying to find the correct words. "It's personal. I just need to sit this one out. Do you understand?"

"I do, but unfortunately, this is something I can't help you with. You agreed to work for me, and this is your task. I need a date for the Gala, and you are coming with me." His tone took no objections. "But do not worry, while we are there, we are going to have a great time."

He stood up and, without saying anything else, went for the door.

"Why is it so important I go with you?" I couldn't help but ask him. Surely, he could have checked the information without my presence.

Zion halted at the door and then turned to give me one last glance. "I have to find something out, and I feel like only you can help me."

That was a very vague response, and I wanted to call him out on that, but he had

already opened the door and met my fake father in the hall.

I heard what they talked about by some miracle.

"Someone poisoned your daughter, Conrad," the shameless warlock announced. "I am afraid she will have to stay close to me at all times at the Gala."

"Of course!" Fake Dad seemed to be happy at this turn of events, and I rolled my eyes. "She is all yours."

Seriously? Who in their right mind would say something like this?

"Very well," Zion nodded in approval. "By the way, there is one more thing I need you to do for your daughter and me—"

I wanted to listen some more, but Zion only smirked at me and closed the door shut.

"You are so screwed!" Fillin commented, helpful as always.