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ONYX

"That as*hole!" I pushed the clothes into my luggage, not even looking at what I was taking with me.

I was so close! So close...

I wanted to cry and break things at the same time. The stunt Zion pulled was unbelievable! How could he? How is anyone still making deals with him? They really should know better! He was the biggest scammer of them all. Worse than those people who call you on the phone and tell you that you are entitled to insurance money.

The worst thing was that he had just depleted my chances of survival tenfold.

If not more...

"Calm down!" Filin tried to reassure me for

the one-hundredth time. "It's not that bad. If Zion wanted to kill you, you wouldn't wake up after taking that potion. Clearly, he has other plans for you."

"And what plans are those, may I ask?" I angrily blew a strand of unruly hair off my face and glared at the owl, who immediately turned away from me. This could only mean one thing. The damn sack of feathers knew something about the said plans.

"Filin," I cooed, slowly getting closer to the future nugget, "if you knew anything important, you would tell me, right?"

"Of course!" he replied without hesitation, and that's how I knew he was lying. "We are a team, Onyx. I am on your side because you are on mine."

Liar. Honestly, there was no use making a deal with this bird. He was the same as his master – a selfish manipulator.

That's why I didn't feel sorry for him anymore.

"Good," I sneered at him, crossing my hands over my chest and arching my brow. "Because if I ever found out that you knew and didn't tell me— Let's just say it's possible, I would be in the mood for Peri Peri Owl."

"You know what? This is why people consider you a villain. Because of phrases like that!" the grumpy bird muttered under his breath, and... surprisingly, it got me thinking.

Obviously, after my main plan failed, I needed a new one. So, not going to the seven days of the Moon Goddess Gala was no longer an option anymore. I would be in attendance, and if I remember correctly, this was when Conrad announced that Onyx was pregnant with her fake baby. This was also when Melody appeared for the first time in the story, and Onyx was after her immediately because she realised that the omega and Ruhn were mates.

The thought of it all felt sour, but I brushed

it away quickly. I wasn't going there. Ruhn would soon find his mate, and I was happy for him. I **really** was.

The story was already different. Zion wasn't in the picture yet. He came much later in the story when they started working together. . So, technically, maybe it wasn't the worst thing that he was my plus one? Especially if Filin was right and he wasn't planning to kill me. It seemed like too much work for him. And he could get rid of me much faster if he wanted to.

This led me to the one and only logical conclusion – he bought the fact that I knew information that he wasn't aware of and really wanted to employ me for the Shadows.

A snort sounded in my mind, but I ignored it and blocked that annoying wolf to avoid listening to more of her sarcastic comments about me. It got easier over time, and she couldn't take over any of my limbs anymore. At least I managed to

master that control thing fast, and it made me a little bit proud of myself. Although, it was sad that our relationship was still as bad. In my books, wolves and their people were always... like a team.

We certainly did not have that. I still did not know what my wolf's name was, but the names she had for me... my ears were turning red sometimes.

Never mind.

I had to concentrate on the new plan. If I had to be in society, then maybe it was a good chance to work on Onyx's reputation. Everyone had a certain opinion about her as this vile hysterical person who was spoilt rotten and didn't know better. She was jealous and petty, and cruel... and wasn't afraid to demonstrate all those qualities in public.

So, this was what I was NOT going to be.

It was time for the world to see the new Onyx – well-behaved, kind, with a healthy

life balance, self-controlled and intelligent. With good taste. And impeccable manners. And **modest**, of course.

Yes, it was time for everyone to get to know this version.

With that in mind, I threw everything out of my luggage and started planning my future looks with more consideration. It was a shame that I was so limited in colours, but there wasn't time for a new shopping trip, and I already blew the first one. I heard the designer was visiting my house, but this was back when I was unwell, and they sent him away. However, he probably wanted to make me buy those tacky dresses he was forced to make by Conrad in the first place. So, maybe it was for the best that we didn't meet.

Anyway, I could work with whatever life threw at me.

It was bizarre that we had to move to the palace for the next week, considering that

our house was not that far away, but apparently, it was a great honour to be invited, and only the highest-ranking families had the pleasure. Sadly, Conrad was a prominent Alpha, and he must have been doing something right since we all received our own rooms in the Summer Dawn Court. It was quite far away from the main building, but we would be staying in the palace for the duration of the Gala. I remembered that Onyx was boasting about this in the book to help make Melody feel insignificant. Just one more thing to add to the list of things not to try.

If I played my cards correctly this time, then by the end of the Gala, I would have an improved reputation; Zion would check that the information I gave him about the younger prince was correct, and Ruhn would see I wasn't following him because I would be with another guy the whole time. And also... he would find his mate.

I was convinced more and more every minute that everything was for the better.

This plan was riskier than the one before because it required staying close to my potential murderer, but if it worked, I would be done with everything. I would be free.

Just the thought of that made me smile and go on.

The palace glimmered in the rays of the blazing sun just like the last time, the moonstone columns creating an iridescent glow around us. The Summer Dawn Court was the smallest set of buildings and probably also the oldest. It didn't have that modern look to it the main palace did, but it was also white and shimmering, with a small private garden that I fell in love with instantly.

"What, they didn't have a shabbier place?"

My brother snorted as our omegas brought our bags for us "Dibs on the left house!" He pointed at the second biggest building here, and I rolled my eyes. What was he? Five?

"As you wish. I am just surprised you are not taking the biggest building!" I jabbed him slightly.

"Only because you know who is going to take that one," Cesarre chuckled and moved in the direction of his chosen house, clearly talking about our biological Dad. I was about to stroll towards my own future residence when Conrad suddenly appeared in my way.

"You are taking that one, Onyx," he smiled at me, pointing at the biggest building, and I felt a shiver run down my spine. What was he up to again?

"Are you sure... Dad?" I stared at him through my lashes, but he only nodded confidently.

"Of course," he grinned at me. "You are going to be the star of this event, and you will have more guests than any of us."

"And guests come bearing gifts!" We heard a familiar voice, and my head snapped in

Zion's direction. He was there with a few men, including the one who brought Filin to me. Each of his servants was holding a box with a black ribbon on top of it, and I... I didn't know what I was supposed to do with all that.

"Ah, Zion!" Conrad greeted him by patting his shoulders as if they were good old friends. "Happy to see you here again."

Our eyes locked, and I bit my lip.

"I came as soon as I found out you were here," the warlock said, and his lips curled into a little smirk as he observed my reaction.

"That was very fast," I blurted out. But it was the truth. We literally just arrived. His people were terrifyingly quick to inform him.

"I am not the one to waste time," Zion stepped forward and was right next to me now. "We have a lot to do and a lot to discuss, Onyx."

"It's just—" I was desperately looking for an excuse, and anything would do at this point. However, Fake Dad pushed me off the cliff once again. The man had no shame!

"Nyxie, take Zion to your little house and show him around," he smiled charmingly. Like any father who would send their daughter away with a leader of an organisation of thieves and assassins would. NOT.

However, it made no difference to me. We would be spending time together anyway since I was now officially his partner for the Gala. We might as well get it over with.

I gestured for him to follow me and entered the biggest house of the Summer Dawn Court. It was clean and bright inside, ready for the gala guests. All the furniture was elegant and in cream tones, and I found it relaxing after Onyx's room at the Tynan mansion. The vases were filled with bouquets of fresh summer flowers and the aroma was dancing in the air, making me

reminiscent of running in a meadow as a child.

I closed my eyes just for a moment and when I opened them, I found Zion observing me. His gaze was so intense that it immediately made me uncomfortable.

His men were already placing the boxes on the cream sofa and a little table right next to it without asking for my permission. Then each of them left us abruptly without asking for his. They knew what they had to do beforehand.

Silver walked in as soon as they were gone. "Onyx, there is a man who is waiting to see you," she mumbled when Zion's eyes sparked red.

"Another time!" he replied for me, and I nodded at Silver, giving her a little soft smile. There was no point in making a scene now.

"I'll be fine," I added to reassure my friend, but I still saw that nervous glint in her eyes.

The door closed, but at the same time, Filin flew in through the window; for some reason, it made me feel calmer. At least we weren't completely alone.

Zion walked around the room as if he was interested in my surroundings for real, and then, after a while, our eyes finally locked.

"You are angry with me," he commented and took a little figuring from one of the purely decorative tables.

"No," I lied through my teeth.

"You are angry," he repeated, insisting, but I decided not to answer anything to that. He waited some more and continued, "Onyx, I did you a favour; trust me. Now I owe you, and you can use this for something better than not going to some party."

Yeah, easy for him to say. That party could be lethal in my case. Or at least lead to my death.

"Trust me," he stepped closer and I could

smell his cologne now, "one day you are going to need something bigger from me, and you will be happy I did this for you."

"Can we at least try to be honest with each other?" I raised my brow, and he bent lower so that I could feel his breath on my skin.

"I would like that very much, Onyx," his voice was unexpectedly soft, barely a whisper. I had to swallow the lump that formed in my throat before I could go on.

"You didn't do it for me," I distanced myself, and he frowned slightly, but quickly regained his composure. "You did it for you."

"Maybe." His response was more than I expected. At least he was admitting it partially. "But we could both benefit from that."

"You want me to work for you?" I asked bluntly, and the smile that started to form on his lips dropped.

Zion hesitated before replying but then our eyes locked. "I am thinking about it. A lot will depend on how reliable your information is."

That brought me back to the question of what would happen if my information wasn't reliable, but yet again, I preferred not to make my thoughts clear to him. I knew the order of events, so maybe I wouldn't have to find out.

"I don't want to take part in too many events of the Gala," I confessed, letting out a sigh of frustration. "I am not in a good place now and this isn't helping."

"Very well," the Scorpion agreed unexpectedly. "We'll take it one event at a time and see how it goes. But we absolutely have to appear at today's mixer together."

One little event in the royal garden wouldn't hurt. It was better than going to a huge ball and embarrassing myself in front of everyone.

"Fine," I accepted, and Zion gave me a feline, understanding smile.

"Then I will come for you at six," he informed me and went for the exit.

We walked out of my house together and were at the cute little porch when Zion turned to face me and took my hand, bringing it to his lips. "Don't be late, Onyx," he purred without breaking eye contact with me.

I felt that something was wrong almost instantly after his lips touched my fingers, and then I saw him...



Marion Artwood

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Hi, sorry there wasn't a chapter on Sunday. My daughter got sick at the worst of times and I spent the last days under her watchful eye on the sofa, not allowed to work.

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