

17 | Can't Catch A Break

Ruhn's glare was burning through my skull, and I wanted to disappear. Zion noticed him too. I saw the corners of his lips rising upwards as he took my hand in his and brought it to his lips for a very long kiss. It was so long that I tried to free myself from his grasp, but he stepped in front of me before I had a chance, completely covering me from the lycan prince's view. He bent lower, and now it looked like we were doing God knows what. Judging by the warlock's satisfied facial expression, it was exactly what he wanted.

"I would have asked for a tour of the garden, but you have other guests at the moment," he explained with a shrug and only then released my hand. "Be ready on time for the mixer."

"Is that necessary?" I wasn't above begging him not to attend, but the smirk on his lips told me that this was non-negotiable.

"Let's see if your information is correct, shall we?" he reminded me of my promise to him. And yes, Ruhn's brother was supposed to challenge him soon. But I wasn't sure about the day. I had written the book years ago, and such details were hard to remember now. It could be any day, really. Was Zion going to drag me to every event to wait and see?

"What if it's not today?" I tried my luck, just in case.

"What if it is?" He chuckled, and the sound rumbled through his chest. "We can't miss it, and there is only one way to check."

"Fine!" I groaned, but he didn't give any reaction to that.

"Always a pleasure, Onyx." Zion gave me a curt nod and left, passing the Lycan prince on his way out.

"Highness," he greeted him, and granted he used a part of his title, it was still disrespectful. Although, he probably knew

he would be able to get away with it.

However, Ruhn did not seem bothered. His garnet eyes were still on me, making me bite my lip nervously. He was still far away, and I prayed that he wasn't coming to see me.

"You can't have a break with these two, can you?" Filin whispered to me, and I jabbed him with my elbow, but the little demon flew to the top of a nearby column, knowing very well I couldn't reach him there. Of course I would have gotten him eventually, but I couldn't ignore the fact that the lycan was already dangerously close. He stopped right in front of my porch and looked at me from the bottom. However, his gaze still made me feel small and insignificant in comparison. Just what kind of aura did this guy have?

"You are here," he stated the obvious, and there was no point in making up an excuse.

"I am," I agreed, smoothing the creases of

my dress. How was I supposed to explain to him why I broke my own word? Knowing Ruhn, he would never believe me. He was probably here because he was angry with me in the first place. That thought made me panic, And I blurted out in one go, "I'm so sorry about this, and I swear I will not disturb you! I will not cause any trouble, and I will do everything in my power to ensure that you and I don't meet each other and that all our interactions are limited to a minimum."

He opened his mouth to say something, but I quickly added. "I'll stay out of your way! I promise! I have no interest in you anymore and wish you to meet someone wonderful. Someone who will make you happy. And I know that's not me. In no world would it ever be me...."

My voice broke slightly when I said that, and Ruhn's eyes gleamed red as his lips pressed into a thin line. We stayed staring at each other like this when a cruel smirk curled his lips.

"Why should I believe you?" he arched his brow at me. "You already promised not to come, and yet here you are. With Zion Valore. Or should I call him Chad?"

"And what's the problem here exactly?" Now it was my turn to quirk my brow up. "As far as I remember, you want nothing to do with me. Isn't this good for you, then? That I am with someone else?"

"So, you **are** together!" The prince gritted his perfect white teeth.

"He is my plus one, but—"

"But what?" Ruhn stepped onto the stairs. "Do you really like him? Did you forgive him for deceiving you? Are you that easy to sway?"

He was stepping over boundaries, and now he had moved closer to me, stopping just two steps lower so that we were finally the same height.

"Excuse me," I exhaled through my nostrils,

feeling how the blood was starting to boil in my veins, "what difference does it make to you exactly? You don't want anything to do with me, and now, I am out of your way. Why won't you be happy about it and play the game where you and I both pretend that we don't know each other? It would be a win-win kind of situation."

"Is it that easy for you? Is it easy to pretend that nothing happened between us when I tasted every inch of your body and explored every curve with my tongue?" He took another step, and now he was higher than me again. And close... so close!

The worst thing was that I remembered what he did with his tongue and— it was the worst moment to relive that memory as my cheeks flushed immediately.

I had to remind myself that this was probably just a stupid test of his. And he was hours away from meeting his mate. The one who was destined for him. Not me.

If I gave in to this now and said something stupid, it would backfire on me tomorrow when Ruhn's paranoia would start again after he becomes head over heels about his beloved Melody. I couldn't risk my future for this. This man wasn't for me. He was... forbidden. And I had no place in his story.

"I told you already that I don't remember that night!" I lied. Partially.

It was for the best. A white lie to free us both from this... misalliance.

However, he looked as if I had just slapped him. It was harder to go on than I could imagine, but I knew it had to be done.

"Ruhn," his name had a bittersweet taste on my tongue, "I spent years chasing you and made a fool out of myself more than once. I think I am done with that. I grew up, and I see things differently now. And if anything, that night helped me to see how much you really detest me. It was a much needed eye-opener."

His expression changed, and his lips parted, but I knew it meant nothing. I couldn't be weak. I couldn't set myself up right before the love of his life entered the picture.

"I thought you didn't remember that night," he taunted me, a frown evident on his face.

"I remember the aftermath," I pointed out, and his frown deepened.

"And I feel like you are lying again," the lycan in front of me smirked, and I did not like it. It was as if something had snapped inside of him. "Every word you say is a lie!"

I should have anticipated that getting bold with him wouldn't end well for me. Then again, as long as he didn't want to kill me, I was fine.

Only why did it feel so... so... I couldn't even name that feeling. But somehow, it was worse than seeing Jeremy and Mal together.

"I am not—" I wanted to protest, but he raised his hand to stop me.

"I know that Zion arrived in the capital on the same day we slept together," Ruhn cut off my pathetic attempt to explain myself. "You couldn't have met him before. He isn't your Chad. I bet Chad doesn't even exist!"

Taken aback, I didn't know how to reply to that. I could, however, tell that he was furious.

"Chad is real!" I stood my ground, crossing my hands over my chest. It wasn't like it was a lie. It's just that Chad existed in a different world. That was it.

"Very well, Onyx," he seemed angrier and angrier with me by the minute. "Keep playing your games! I knew I couldn't have trusted you anyway!"

for some reason, that stunned me more than it should have, but of course, I couldn't say a word. I had already said too much.

Ruhn clicked his fingers, and his beta Enzo appeared from behind the fence that guarded the Summer Dawn Court with quite a few boxes with a familiar logo. I would have gasped if I had the strength, but it was clear as day that these were dresses from Marko Bortegga boutique.

"What is this?" I mumbled as Enzo placed all the boxes at my feet.

"My sister found out that you chose the dresses and refused to accept any of them," Ruhn informed me dryly. "They are all yours now."

"You should have just returned them then!" Now I was the one feeling angry. I knew that Onyx was not liked, but she wasn't contagious. His sister could have at least looked at the gowns.

"Does it look like I have time for things like this?" Ruhn was already walking away, and for once, I decided not to stop him.

I looked at the boxes for a few good

minutes before deciding to take them inside. I was still furious about how my attempt to help Ruhn was accepted by his sibling. Yes, my reputation wasn't perfect. But come on!

I was pacing around the living room and looking at the boxes when I accidentally saw myself in one of the mirrors. My long hair was in perfect waves, and a tight black dress with a wine-red leather pattern hugged all my curves perfectly. However, there was a but. It all looked way too sexy and dark. It was a look worthy of a dark queen or a... villainess.

A villain. This was how people saw me. This was how Ruhn and his family saw me.

And it was time to change that!

I started opening the boxes one by one, looking for that one dress. If the Princess refused all the dresses, that one had to be here somewhere too. And sure enough, I soon found it. The pink beauty that would

have made the original Onyx puke on the spot because of how cute, innocent and light it was.

This dress was not made for me. However, in the book, it helped Melody and brought her luck. And I... boy, I needed all the luck I could get!

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"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Silver asked me again when we were done with my makeup. "This is so not you, and I can only imagine what your father would say the moment he sees you. It's not—"

"It's not very Tynan, I know," I chuckled nervously as I glanced over at myself again. The dress fit me like a glove, and I saw myself wearing pink, or anything lighter than medium grey, for that matter, for the first time since I arrived in this world. It looked like I barely had any makeup on. Silver worked hard to reach that effect. My hair had been pinned up on both sides of

my head by crescent hairpins, and the rest of my locks fell freely onto my back and shoulders.

"You look so innocent," Silver summed up, looking me up and down.

"Conrad would hate it!" I chuckled, knowing that I shouldn't. But the stress was getting to me.

Tonight, I was going to change the game. I was going to change people's perception of Onyx. I plan to live a long life in this world, and the reputation of a villainess just wasn't what I was looking for. It would end today!