

18 | Territorial Issues

ONYX

"You look... mesmerising," Zion was polite as always, waiting for me at the bottom of the staircase while I descended as gracefully as I could. I had to wear high heels for tonight again, and they were already slowly killing my feet. However, Silver gave me some training before this, and now at least, I could walk in them if it wasn't too much walking, of course. I would probably have to confess to the omega soon because the look she gave me when I asked her was that of shock and suspicion. I could only get away with so much... And it wasn't like I could confine all my secrets to the demon owl who couldn't be trusted.

"Why, thank you," I nervously tried to smile. Knowing that I would be spending the whole evening with this world's most dangerous man took its toll on me. So many things could go wrong today that I was

tempted to beg Alpha Seth, Ruhn's brother, to challenge him for the heir title ASAP. Especially if he could do that today. That would be great. For me.

Once this was done, it would be over for Zion and me just as it's over now for Ruhn and me. The Scorpion would owe me, and I would ask him not to kill me and leave me alone. It all was working out so perfectly in my head. I draped my hand over Zion's since he offered, and we left the house. Neither of us was saying anything on the way. and I was able to calm down a bit. It was a simple business affair. I just had to stay there for an hour or so, and then I would find an excuse to leave. What could go wrong?

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Apparently, a lot could go wrong; the moment the two of us walked through the pompous flower arch of the main palace garden, we got the attention of pretty much everyone who was gathered there.

I bit my lip nervously because this wasn't what I was used to. I spent most of my days reading or writing books in my little apartment or going out to the movies with Jeremy and Mal. Just the memory of how that as*hole used to call her by her full name, Malwina, in front of me all the time to pretend that there was some sort of distance between them made my mood go down. As if it wasn't gloomy already. Remembering my past life never brought me joy, but a part of me still wanted to go back.

Not that it was important now. I got off track completely. My gaze fell on a group of girls who looked relatively familiar, and after thinking some more, I recognised them as Onyx's friends. Each of them had a popular social media account, and I found so much useful information there about the local elite's lifestyle. I felt like I knew them all, which was a good thing in my situation.

However, something felt wrong because their staring was far from friendly. Did Onyx

even have any real friends?

Whom was I kidding, though? I knew the answer to that question. Zion was not letting my hand out of his grasp. He even placed his free palm on top of mine, gently tapping his fingers over it, his scorpion ring gleaming in the sunlight.

"Would you like a drink, Onyx?" He asked as any gentleman probably would. He was playing his part well, and there was even a little smile on the corners of his lips.

"Yes, please," I muttered nervously, still hoping that it would be a brief and forgettable evening.

"I will have to quickly deal with something on the way, and then I'll be right back," he promised, and I nodded in response.

"Really, take your time," I snorted, and his smile faded slightly. However, to my relief, it did not prevent him from walking away. The moment he was gone, Filin appeared out of nowhere and landed on my shoulder.

"This party is boring!" he whispered into my ear, and I rolled my eyes, saying nothing and pretending that birds were not talking to me.

"Onyx, speak to me!" The damn owl called me again, and I leisurely walked to a big rose bush, bending slightly as if I wanted to see the beautiful clusters of flowers.

"It's good that the party is boring," I told him, barely moving my lips. "Boring is quiet. Quiet is what we need. Quiet means no trouble. And now, if you excuse me, I cannot be seen talking to a bird. Go catch yourself a mouse or something!"

"No can do!" Filin sighed and this was when I realised Zion had ordered him to watch me. From the corner of my eyes, I found the warlock in the crowd, and our eyes locked immediately. I choked on the air when I saw who he was talking to. Didn't they ignore each other just recently? Could we go back to that stage?

Ruhn slowly turned, following Zion's gaze and found me too, eyes sparking that dangerous shade of red.

"My oh my, Onyx! Aren't you the centre of attention today?" A voice right next to me broke my trance, and I turned to see the group of influencer girls with not-so-friendly smiles on their pretty faces.

"Kalani," I smiled as wide as I could, remembering just one and one name only in that crowd. The reason for that was, of course, the fact that Kalani was in the book too. The beauty who was welcomed into wolf society quickly became Melody's one and only true friend. To the point that she was killed sacrificing herself for the main lead. It was one of the most tragic scenes, and every reader was a big fan of Kalani's because it was hard not to like this selfless and confident woman with the purest heart. Onyx had nothing to do with her death, as she was killed in a scene where Melody was supposed to be kidnapped by religious fanatics who wanted to get their hands on

the special wolf.

So, I didn't know if I could save her, and that ... that made me sad.

"That's a stunning dress!" One of the girls interjected with a smirk that could be read in many ways.

"So not you, though," another one chimes in. "What happened? Where are your usual black gowns?"

"I decided to switch it up a bit," I smiled innocently and heard Filin letting out a noise that sounded ridiculously similar to a snort.

"Well, it suits you," Kalani added quickly as if to close the subject, but another young woman added her five cents.

"Yes, a makeover was badly needed!" She scoffed at me and I felt something dark and ugly stir inside of me; something that was harder and harder to control.

"You should know," I retorted, letting out a little laugh which erased the smirk from my opponent's face.

Another group of women joined us, and I quickly found myself in their tight circle. As if they did not want me to get out...

"What a beautiful dress!" Some blonde pressed her lips so tight that all the blood was drained from them.

"Th-thank you," I tried not to lose my confidence, but it was really hard when placed on the spot like that.

"And my favourite colour, too," the girl went on, narrowing her eyes. Something was off, I could feel it in the air. "My favourite colour."

"Oh, really?" I petted Filin a bit to calm down, he was my emotional support owl right now, and I could finally see his value.

"Yes, this is exactly why I chose that dress at Marko Bottega boutique for the Gala!"

the blonde pointed her index finger at me angrily. "That was supposed to be my dress."

"Oh, really?" I didn't know what to say to that. Would she let it go if I told her I had no idea and received it as a gift?

"Yes!" She did not seem like the type to give up or withdraw her accusations. "I was told that the dress was reserved for a princess. Are you assuming yourself a princess now, Onyx? After everyone knows you were thrown out of Ruhn's bedroom in the morning?"

My fists clenched on their own as something really feral called for me to take some action. I knew that the wolf was furious to be treated that way.

"Remind me your name again?" I asked, purely to be polite, but she took it as another insult to her face.

"You thought that a pink dress would be enough for us to forget who you truly are,

Onyx?" she hissed. "Everyone knows you are rotten inside! Thanks to the Moon Goddess, the lycan prince has no interest in you! And the fact that you came here with Zion Valorre will not help you either! You are a bed toy for him at best!"

Damn it. I tried to be good for a whole five minutes, and this was the result? I knew very well I couldn't let it go. The moment I did, I would be done in this society. Not to mention that Conrad, who was watching me from one of the far corners of the garden now, would never let me forget the humiliation.

"Since you haven't introduced yourself, I'll call you Becca," I interrupted the angry speech, and my accuser was taken aback at once. "So, Becca, I did not buy this dress; I was given it. What happened to it prior was none of my concern. Express your dissatisfaction to the boutique and not to me. If it was your order and they gave it to someone else, then they probably don't think of you as a person with enough

importance."

"There's the real Onyx we all know!" The girl gritted her teeth, each word laced with spite.

"You hardly know me," I chuckled softly. "Although it surprises me how you spread rumours of the royal family members, tainting Ruhn Brynmore's name as if it was nothing."

Now they all got quiet. Ruhn wasn't one to mess with. They all knew that.

However, the blonde was persistent.

"I am not tainting anything! Contrarily, I am cleaning it!" she insisted, annoying me even more.

"You are spreading rumours," I corrected her as we drilled each other's skulls with our gazes. "Why don't we ask him what he thinks about it?" I got bold and... stupid, pointing at the Lycan Prince, who was looking at us already. Shoot!

That gesture, however, moderated the arrogance of that girl.

"Whatever!" she huffed, turning on her heels. "Everyone knows your worth now!"

"And what is it exactly?" Zion strolled in the centre of the circle without any kind of trouble. The women stepped aside as if... they were made to. "What price do you put on my- dear Onyx?" he sneered, and there was nothing good in that sneer. Everyone felt it the same as I did. That suffocating aura of dominance and power.

None of them said a word. It was Kalani who finally was the one to speak up to de-escalate the matter.

"Onyx is priceless, of course," she said softly, moving the other woman away from the Scorpion. "Excuse us. It's just women fighting over a dress. You shouldn't concern yourself with it, and Jessica is done here. Aren't you done, Jessica?"

The blonde nodded. By now, she could

probably feel it too. The darkness circulating in the air. If there was someone who had more rumours around him than me, it was Zion. Followed closely by Ruhn.

The she-wolves dissolved into the air as if they were never there. Only Kalani did not leave too far, secretly keeping an eye on Zion and me. I couldn't tell, though, if she was concerned or if that was simple curiosity.

"You make friends fast," Zion teased me, eyes lingering over my face.

"Those are... friends with history," I had to admit. Not that it was any of his business. Nevertheless, it occurred to me that I could thank him while I was at it. "Thanks," I said, not adding anything else to it.

"That's okay," the Scorpion's lips curled softly. "You will owe me one."

Dang it. He wasn't serious, was he? I had to fix it fast.

"Fine!" I tilted my head playfully. "When a group of women circles you and accuses you of god knows what, I'll make them leave too."

He did not comment on that, but I could tell that he appreciated my sarcasm by the glint in his eyes.

"What did you talk to Ruhn about?" I asked, biting my lip. Just why did I do that? I didn't care! I really didn't...

"We have some... territorial issues," he told me but did not elaborate, which was for the best.

"So, any news on Seth?" I decided to change the subject. We were working, after all. "Is he doing it today?"

"You tell me, Onyx," Zion smirked. "You are the one selling me this information."

"I just know that he is going to do it soon," I reminded him, pretending to look around.

"Why don't I go to him and try to feel where he is at?" Zion suggested and stayed right next to me. As if he expected something from me. This went on for quite some time.

"Yes, seems like a good idea!" I tried to give him a hint that it was time to go.

"Can you point me in Prince Seth's direction?" the warlock arched his brow at me, and I gulped. I knew so many things about the characters, but I had absolutely no idea how they looked until I met them. I did not know which man at this mixer was Seth.

And Onyx was supposed to know that...