

## 21 | Quinn

### ONYX

I imagined so many times how this would happen—how I would meet my best creation and what she would be like. But this... this wasn't it.

Melody was always special to me. I put as much of myself inside of her as was possible. She was my first. To me, she was imperfectly perfect in every way and still the one I used as a mould to shape all my other female leads. They were all different in many ways, but, on the inside, they always had at least some of her qualities – honesty, sincerity, bravery, loyalty, empathy, confidence, intelligence and so on. I could talk about her for hours even now.

And here she was, plastered all over the ground at my feet and gazing up at Ruhn.

A lump formed in my throat without me realising it.

Was this it?

This wasn't how they were supposed to meet. He was supposed to save her from a dangerous situation and recognise her as his mate. He never wanted a mate, but facing her like that, she became irresistible to him over time as their bond got stronger the longer they knew each other. It probably did help that a few other men wanted her as well, and since Ruhn was an Alpha, he was possessive and did not like to share what was his.

She clung to his hand, trying to get up, and the gentleman that he was – sometimes – he snapped out of his daze and helped her. Melody smiled at him and placed her second palm on top of his.

In the book, the first time they touched, they knew for sure who they were to each other. It changed both their lives forever and was magical, even if Ruhn did not know how to handle it at first. It was still history in the making. The future king and his queen.

And I... For some reason, I couldn't watch it.  
I did not want to watch it.

It was too much for me, and I did not know  
why. I couldn't explain it...

I should have been happy to witness my  
favourite couple meeting each other for the  
first time ever, but... I wasn't.

Ruhn looked at me with his brows furrowed,  
and I grasped Zion tighter, turning to face  
him.

"Take me away from here," I muttered and  
noticed how his eyes widened in surprise  
just for a second, but, as always, he  
regained composure quickly.

"My pleasure," the Scorpion said as he  
pulled me away, and, for once, I was happy  
he was here tonight.

A growl thundered behind our backs, and I  
sped up because I really did not want to  
hear Ruhn claiming Melody as his mate.  
And it wasn't because I wasn't happy for

them. Of course I was.

I created them.

For each other.

A fated couple.

They were perfect! So **perfect!** And I was **S**  
**O** happy for them.

It's just that I did not want to see them  
holding hands and kissing. And looking at  
each other with eyes full of love and lust...  
or worse.

It would be weird, right? And not because I  
did not wish them well. Of course I did. I did  
wish them well. I hoped they would get  
married soon and have dozens of pups.  
That was what I planned for them in that  
sequel that never happened—many pups.

And I would be happy for them too!

It's just... It was like watching your own  
children kiss. Yes! That was what was  
wrong with all this! It was strange to see my

kids falling in love with each other.

I felt slightly better after realising why it all bothered me so much. Now, I could think straight again.

I walked for some time with Zion until I got out of my trance and noticed that we were far away from where the party. His heavy gaze was on me the whole time, and I swallowed nervously, liking the situation less and less. What was he up to?

"Tell me, Onyx," he said as I tried to slip my hand away from his, but he only tightened his grip on it. "What kind of relationship do you have with the Lycan Prince?"

"You'll have to be more specific!" I snorted awkwardly, trying to play it cool. "There are so many of them. And that's just in our country."

Something shifted in his gaze, and I found myself pinned to one of the many white columns in the garden. It was large enough to hide us both from anyone observing and

a chill slithered down my spine.

"I am not in the mood for jokes, Onyx," Zion towered over me, not a glimpse of the playful man I saw in him before. "What was that in the tent right now?"

I almost opened my mouth to answer, but a sudden thought hit me. Filin was definitely the one to call him after his unsuccessful attempt to distract Ruhn, and God knows what that owl nugget told him. It was best not to risk it and avoid answering at all. I had to play it safe.

"You saw everything," I shrugged my shoulders. "You literally came at the most action-packed moment."

"Action-packed—" Zion tasted the words on his tongue, and I could tell he did not like them. "And how often, may I ask you, you are getting action with that—" he did not finish the phrase, but the frown on his face did it for him. For some reason, Zion absolutely hated Ruhn. Already. It was

obvious to me now.

Was that why he helped me in the first place?

Although a better question would be – was he helping me at all? Or did he simply seize the opportunity that presented itself to him?

“Maybe he was checking if there was something in my eye,” I arched my brow, reminding him of what he had done earlier, but even this reply did not get him to step away.

“This is not how the Shadows operate,” he cut me off, and something inside of me snapped.

I was so tired. The last few days were the hardest in both my lives, and slowly I was starting to have enough of all of this.

“Well, it’s great, then, that I am not a member!” I said firmly, and although not a muscle flinched on his face, I knew he did not expect that.

"That's not for you to decide," Zion clenched his lips tight. "You **have** signed the contract."

"Yes, but, sadly, you did not perform your end of the deal!" I placed my hands on his chest, trying to push him away, but the warlock did not move an inch.

"I did give you the potion," he insisted, cutting the distance between us and pressing me into the cold stone, his hands on both sides of me.

"Yeah, but you also nullified its effect, sabotaging me! Excuse me, but that is not how a deal should be made!" I lifted my chin higher to demonstrate my determination to him. It was scary, but something inside of me was giving me the strength that I was always missing, so I did not budge.

"It doesn't matter. The deal was still fulfilled!" It did not look like he was going to give up.

"You know what," I folded my hands over my chest, barely able to squeeze them in between our bodies, yet not resting until it was done. "I don't think so, and there is nothing you can do about it, Big Bad Scorpion!"

He was taken aback by my blatant response. I could bet no one spoke to him like that. Ever. I was literally making history here.

"You'd be surprised what I can do," his eyes got a shade darker. An ominous sign for sure.

"Not to me," I dared him, which was probably stupid, but I couldn't stop myself. The stress of the last few days was finally catching up with me. "I have nothing to lose and no one I care about! What can you possibly do to me?"

"Onyx, don't tempt me," he smirked darkly, the light in the garden lamps blinking with his every word. "I can do many things to

you!"

"And yet nothing that will make me hold up my end of the deal since I didn't get anything." I held my ground.

Zion was glaring at me, but I held his gaze. I was the one in the right here.

"Very well," he looked down on me. "Tell me one thing that you want, and I will give it to you."

My lips curled involuntarily. Did I just win this little sparring match with the book's notorious villain? And it still did not look like he was going to kill me. Moreover, he waited for my response patiently.

"It just so happens that I do not need anything," I shrugged, and his lips pressed tighter together.

He leaned forward so that our faces almost touched and breathed out, "**Now**, Onyx. You don't need anything **now**. But you will one day."

"And, until that day, I am free." A sly victorious smile stretched over my face. "So, excuse me now—"

"Your hands are covered in blood!" Zion took both my palms into his own, and, for the first time, I noticed the red stains near my nails.

Oh, God! It was Ruhn's blood from when I pierced him with my claws! How bad was it? I felt horrible about it and was so angry with my wolf for doing that to him.

"That's why you reek of him," the Scorpion muttered, pulling me to the nearest fountain. "We need to clean that before anyone else notices. Hurting a member of the royal family will not end well for you, Onyx."

He got a perfectly ironed white handkerchief out of the pocket of his three-piece suit and helped me to wipe the blood off. Then I washed off the rest in the fountain, and only when I was done, I felt

relieved.

Our eyes met again, and I blurted out quickly, "The handkerchief doesn't count as a favour!"

"As you wish," Zion agreed, tucking it back into his pocket. "I don't mind because I know that you will come to me either way."

"What makes you think so?" I asked, hoping for an honest answer for once.

"You were born to be—" he paused, choosing the right words. "You would have enjoyed joining the Shadows."

Yeah, because it's every girl's dream to be a member of the league of assassins.

No, thanks.

"Let's see about that!" I rolled my eyes. "And until that day, goodbye, Zion."

I stood up and went in the direction of the lights and the music, shocked that I managed to pull through this. Maybe this

day wasn't so bad after all.

Filin appeared out of nowhere and landed on my shoulder. By now, I was already used to it.

"You did well," he admitted. "But don't think that it's over."

"Don't forget that soon he'll be busy!" I reminded the bird, biting my lip. Both Zion and Ruhn met Melody today. Soon they both would fall for her and would barely remember my name. I would make sure of that. The plot of the story was already changing slightly, but it was unlikely that this would affect the main events. Ruhn and Melody were still mates, and Zion would still be the final obstacle in their way. I just hoped that someone else would be helping him. I did not want anything to do with any of them.

I found my way back to the mixer but quickly realised that it was nothing special. Just a bunch of pretentious people talking

to each other.

I had already fulfilled my daughterly duty, and looking at Conrad chatting with his Alpha friends, he did not care about me anymore. I came with Zion; I was seen with Ruhn. Mission accomplished. Which was great because now I could finally leave.

My gaze searched for Ruhn and Melody, but they were gone. A scene painted itself in my mind. Their first kiss was during the Gala but away from the guests. Ruhn had shown her the little secret garden on the outskirts of the Palace. Something told me this was where they went, and my mood became sour for some reason.

I turned on my heels, ready to go home, when a glass of wine was splashed all over my beautiful dress.

It took me a few good moments to register what happened and notice Jessica's smug face.

"Oh, dear!" she giggled, covering her mouth.

"I am so sorry! You appeared out of nowhere, Nixie!" All our other "friends" were watching the show silently. No one rushed to my side, and most of them looked like they believed I deserved that. They probably couldn't forgive that someone like me dared to touch their beloved Crown Prince tonight.

The anger rose inside of me, but, for the first time, I decided not to fight it. I was too tired of playing the good girl. The pink dress that made everyone love Melody just did not work on me. My reputation was still horrible, and I could feel the hate in the eyes of the observers who enjoyed my humiliation.

"Sure, Becca!" I used the name that annoyed her so much last time. "We are friends, aren't we? We'd never be angry with each other!"

With that, I pushed her into the small fountain behind her and watched her shocked expression and attempts to get

out.

If they all thought that I was evil, I could at least have fun sometimes in the process.

"Sorry, dear!" I narrowed my eyes at her as a warning. "Spasms again!"

I was leaving the party with my head held high, when I heard the dark chuckle of my wolf.

*"All right. My name is Quinn, Impostor."*



Marion Artwood

"

By show of hands, who thinks that Melody is evil?

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