

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 3

He stomped towards me and I instinctively crumbled in on myself. I kept my gaze on the man with black hair. The guy he was spotting had just stood up and was looking towards us as well. He had black hair as well and seemed to be of Eastern Asian descent.

“Yo,” he called out to the man steaming in front of me. “This the b***h, Max?”

“Excuse me?” I bristled. “I don’t even know you!”

“He knows all he needs to know,” The taller man, Max, hissed. “That you’re a weak little wolfless girl who somehow managed to swindle her way into the Academy.”

“And I know everything I need to know about you,” I threw back at him.

“You’re a big bully,” I continued. “Who, clearly, is insecure in his own place so much so that he has to put other people down.” I curved my lips into a smirk. “And not someone I’d like to spend my time giving a s**t about.”

“Oh s**t,” Someone whispered behind me. I looked back at the crowd that had formed around me. All of the surrounding wolves looked scared shitless. I turned back around and looked at my bully.

“So you scare everyone here?” I stood up straight. “What are you some sort of prince?”

The Max guy glared down at me. His body seemed to dwarf mine entirely. “I’m Maximus Wolfham. The heir to the Wolfham line,” he spat.

Wolfham. Wolfham. Wolfham.

Why was that name so familiar to me?

“Oh,” I said under my breath. Add it to my tally of “oh”s. This man was one of the potential suitors my mom had picked for me. He was the heir to the next greatest wolf house.

And he was looking at me like I pissed in his cheerios.

“Oh,” he mocked me. He pushed past me, banging his shoulder against mine. I felt the same shiver of electricity surge through me as it did when he ran me over yesterday.

“I meant what I said yesterday, human,” Maximus threw over his shoulder. There was that word again. “Stay out of my f*****g way.”

I followed him across the gym. He stopped in a group of people and turned around to face me. His friends were chatting besides him, but he was too busy staring daggers at me. I groaned.

So much for staying under the radar, I thought.

“Quiet, quiet, quiet!” A voice boomed across the gym. A man, clearly the coach from the way he was dressed, emerged from the office besides the gym. “That’s enough chit chat. We’re timing the run today. Give me a warmup lap then Maximus and Petyr will lead the stretches.”

Without a second command, the entire group took off down the track. I followed them, lingering towards the back of the group. Petyr must’ve been the Eastern Asian man being spotted by Maximus as the two took the lead. I struggled to keep up.

My breath was catching in my throat as I looked across the track and saw Maximus and Petyr looking back at me with stone cold gazes. Great, I thought to myself. Another enemy.

Petyr was handsome as well. But he was no Maximus. Even with how rude he was to me, I couldn’t help but find him incredibly attractive.

We rounded out the warmup lap towards the end of the group then broke into lines for stretching. I wound up being the woman with long black hair whom I’d run into earlier in the day.

She made sure to remind me that she didn’t like me by almost body checking me every time we turned around.

When stretching was done, we formed a semicircle around the coach. He stood at the front, clipboard in hand. He scribbled something in pen then sighed before tucking the clipboard under his arm.

“Right, so I’m Coach Wells,” he sighed. It was if he was completely bored. “We’re doing the run today. For you first-years. It’s twenty laps around the track in under forty-five minutes.”

Twenty laps? Ten miles? In under forty-five minutes???

I felt my stomach bile rise up to my throat.

I ran in high school.

I was a decent short distance runner. The mile was my bread and butter. I’d never run more than five miles let alone ten. I looked around to see if anyone else looked panicked. No one seemed phased. I turned back to Coach. He caught my eye and saw the panic on my face.

“Now, if you don’t get twenty,” he said. “Ya won’t get kicked out. But you will have to take supplementary training until you can pass. The ideal is twenty but if you can get fifteen, you won’t have to do supplementary training. Shoot for twenty. Be fine with above fifteen. Got it?”

Everyone around me nodded. Fifteen. I could do fifteen laps. That was seven and a half miles. Only two and a half more than my max. Entirely achievable.

Coach had everyone line up on the track. It was wide enough that we were in lines of three. In front of me was a woman with white-blond hair and shiny purple eyes. In front of her was a woman I hadn't met yet. The blond-haired woman slowly turned around and gave me a half smile before whispering a good luck under her breath. With that, Coach's whistle went off and we were off.

Everyone in front of me took off at breakneck pace. I stuttered to start, shocked by the fact that someone had actually been nice to me. I tried to keep up but felt my lungs straining so I returned to the same rhythm I'd learned in high school.

Right, left, right, left.

It was easy falling back into the mechanics of running. It had been my escape in high school. In track, there was no orphans or parentless kids. It was you and the red track. You were measured by how fast you could go. And I could go fast.

I was peeling around my tenth lap as coach yelled ten minutes left. I pushed my legs harder. Five laps in ten minutes. It wasn't undoable. I felt my legs beginning to die as I went harder and harder. I hit the corner of my fourteenth lap and broke into a sprint. I had no clue how much time was left but I knew I had to prove myself.

I flew by the crowd of finished wolves, pumping my arms and legs harder. Sweat dripped down the back of my neck as I repeated my mantra.

Prove it. Prove it. Prove to them you are worthy of being here!

I crossed the midway point of the lap when my soul was crushed. Coach's whistle blew across the track and burned into my ears.

"Time up!" he shouted. "Smith!" he called my human last name and I stopped, keeled over, choking on my lungs. "You're in supplementary!"

I walked back across the track and stood next to the woman with the white-blond hair. She gave me a small, sad smile.

"That was really impressive," she said quietly. "Normally wolfless don't make it past ten laps."

"Thanks," I choked out. "Did anyone else miss it?"

She bit her lip and it immediately answered my question. Great. I groaned and slumped down to the ground.

A foot kicked at my heel and swiped it out from under me, causing me to topple over. I glared up at my assailant. It was, of course, Maximus.

“Only one this year to not finish the run,” he taunted. “And she’s wolfless. You can’t tell me it isn’t because of that.”

I pushed myself up and stood with my chest proud. “I’m wolfless but I still was close enough to almost beat your stupid run.”

“Almost,” Maximus repeated me with a smug smirk. “As in didn’t.” He chuckled and turned away from me.

“God,” I hissed. “I hate him.”

“He certainly doesn’t like you,” The blonde girl mused.

I groaned and ran a hand over my face. “Thanks,” I said. Maybe it’s because he knows you’re the Luna heir? The tiny voice in the back of my head said.