

6 | The Golden Cage

ONYX

My eyes went wide, and for a second there, I forgot my ability to speak.

"Honey, don't you think you need to thank Alpha Zion for such a generous gift?" Conrad placed his hand on my shoulder and squeezed it harder than was necessary.

"Oh," I still couldn't form any words. I knew one thing, though, I wasn't accepting that! No! No way in hell!

Twee- twoo... The bird made a noise and looked right at me with its eyes glowing red.

A chill went down my spine. The owl, Zion Valore sent me a snow-white owl, and this didn't mean anything good. Usually, people he was about to kill were getting this owl as gift days before they were done. It wasn't even a real owl! It was a demon trapped in an owl's body! It was his best spy! The oracle of death!

God, what did I do to deserve this? He was sending it to people he planned to get rid of to find out more about them. The only one to survive this bird was Melody, but only because he fell in love with her. Which definitely wasn't the case here!

I swallowed.

His man was watching me. The bird was watching me. When its eyes were red, it meant that Zion himself was watching me. He could control this damn owl. Why was Conrad so calm about glowing eyes, for God's sake? This wasn't normal!

"This is too generous!" I mumbled in the meantime.

"Indeed!" Conrad agreed. He was happy beyond belief, probably thinking he found a new suitor to sell me to in case I wasn't pregnant with Ruhn's baby.

"I cannot accept this!" I said, and my fake father's expression stiffened. The man who brought the gift opened his mouth in shock. Probably not too many people dared to refuse gifts from Zion. But I wasn't suicidal, so...

Soon Melody would arrive, and everyone would go crazy about her! Zion would be busy trying to destroy Ruhn and get her, while I hoped that I would be able to not take part in any of that mess. Then they all would forget about me, and maybe I could leave this place and live on my own.

Somewhere.

Somehow...

"What do you mean you can't accept this?!" Conrad gritted his teeth, throwing daggers at me with his eyes. "Do you even know who Zion Valore is?!"

"Of course I do," I nodded with a very serious expression on my face. "That's exactly why I can't possibly accept the gift!" I didn't know where I was going with it, but I had to come up with something and blurted out the first thing on my mind. Again. "I am not worthy!"

Silence. Heavy silence as everyone in the room stared at me, an owl with red eyes included.

"Honey, don't be silly!" Conrad squeezes my shoulder again. It hurt like hell, but I tried to keep my composure.

"I am not, Daddy. How can I be? This is obviously a magical owl, so it means it's expensive. I just can't." This time, his fingers went into my flesh so hard, I winced from the pain. The owl inched visibly.

"Tell Alpha Zion Onyx was happy to receive the gift, and she really appreciates it!" The father of the Year said and closed the dispute. The damn owl was mine now. Until the day Zion killed me!

"Yes, I am so grateful," I squealed. "He shouldn't have."

He really, REALLY shouldn't have!

The man who brought the questionable gift bowed and left, leaving the three of us alone.

Conrad turned to face me, a vein protruding on his forehead. He obviously saw through my little trick.

"What was that right now?!" He growled menacingly, and I felt so small in comparison. If that man wanted to kill me, I would be so dead!

"Nothing," I replied hesitantly. "I just... wanted to show some respect to the great Zion Valore--"

"Are you stupid?!" He yanked me towards himself. "Do you know how lucky you are someone like him is interested in you?! Especially considering your circumstances! He is a foreigner! His country's standards are much lower than ours. He may take you as his Luna if you are lucky!"

That was highly unlikely. Mostly because Zion wasn't even a lycan or a werewolf. He was a warlock, as far as I knew. He masterfully pretended to be a wolf and used it for his gain. So, being his Luna wasn't an option. And God forbid being his wife!

Honestly, with such options, life in solitude seemed like the best way out!

"How did you meet him?" Conrad seemed inclined to interrogate me.

"In the palace," I decided that the minimum of information would be the best. He could catch me on lies later, so partial truth it was.

"And?" He raised his brow at me. "How did it happen?"

"Well, technically... Ruhn introduced us." Well, it wasn't exactly a lie.

"Hmm." My fake father scratched his chin. "I thought he threw you out?"

"He kind of did," I was choosing every word cautiously as if my life depended on it. No, not because. It absolutely did. "But then he decided to see me out."

"In person?"

"In person," I confirmed.

"Well, well, well, Onyx. You are not such a disappointment after all!" Conrad praised me, and I tried to stretch a smile. Staying in his good graces was crucial. "Good job!"

"Uhm, thanks." I lowered my head, remembering that Alphas loved submission. "May I go now?"

"Yes, ne!" He waved me off, and I rushed to escape when I heard his voice again. "Onyx, wait!"

I paused and turned slowly to face him. "You forgot your bird," he pointed at the cage, and the owl's eyes gleamed again.

I didn't forget the damn bird. In fact, I left it there on purpose. I accepted it; there was no way for it to live in my room, right?

"Actually, can it stay here?" I asked innocently. "So that we could all enjoy it? Together?"

My voice trembled, and Conrad looked at me as if I was insane.

"Take it to your room!" he ordered. "What if Zion visits us? How will you explain it?"

"That it's a family pet now, and we all love it so much--" I bit my tongue. He wasn't buying any of it, and I knew I had to stop. "Fine!" I sighed and went to grab the cage, which was golden, by the way.

Silver met me next to the stair with her eyes slightly wide.

"Onyx, when did you manage to meet Zion Valore?" She started whispering as I got close. "Do you have any idea who he is? They say terrible things about him! They say that he is a mon--"

I managed to close her mouth with my hand before she said something that could potentially add her to the Scorpion's list of people to kill. He didn't need much these days.

I gestured at the bird and tried to explain to her not to talk, but the pink-haired omega didn't get my lousy attempts.

"The bird is pretty, though," she smiled reassuringly. "Let's hope it's just a nice gift."

"Yeah, let's," I clenched my lips. Now I couldn't even speak freely. Everything I said would be heard by that little demon and passed to Zion. What kind of torture was that?

"Do we let it out of its cage?" Silver asked, eyeing the owl. She was definitely an animal person and seemed too sweet to live in the Tynan house.

I wanted to get a cat once, but then I started dating Jer, and he was a feline in his own right. Selsh, lazy and cute. So, I threw that idea out of the bin.

"No," I said firmly. "I feel like he really likes his cage." The bird made a protesting sound, but I ignored it. At least he had to pretend too!

Back in my room, I looked for a place to put the cage. In all honesty, the walk-in closet would be the best place. There was only one problem - I wasn't that cruel. I did not want the demon bird anywhere near me but just imagined him in this tight close space alone gave me an uncomfortable feeling. I couldn't do that.

So, I placed it on my balcony. There it would have fresh air and can watch what was going on in the garden. It wouldn't be too boring.

Yes, this was my best option for now.

I changed into a comfortable set of black silk pyjamas, and yes, Onyx's nightwear was all black. Did this family know that there were other colours in the world? Silver left to do some chores. She said that Conrad ordered her to cook a special menu for me. Something that will be good for the potential baby. Ugh. He was really serious about all that.

For the first time since I arrived here, I was left alone and in peace. I could finally assess my own situation and think about what to do next.

So, to recap, I died in my world and woke up as the hated character in my own book. I set the timer off my own death by two possible scenarios, and on top of that, something tried to kill me yesterday. My family are all villains and apparently, I was being abused on a regular basis. Not too bad, though, they still had to keep my pretty face.

I looked in the mirror again. Onyx's beauty was undeniable. However, it was absolutely useless.

I needed a plan. A good plan that would keep me alive and preferably give me a comfortable life.

First thing first, I had to look for ways to leave this house and family. But that shouldn't include a contract marriage or being sold. I had written too many books about that to desire such a destiny. Not to mention that although it was a book, it didn't mean that a character like me would have her happy ending.

Seriously! How unfair that was that I couldn't be someone like Melody! Then it would be so great! Everything was practically falling into her arms.

Oh well... That wasn't meant to be.

I needed independence. From my father and from anyone else. I needed the means to exist. Also known as money. It was interesting how much Onyx had on her account. Everything was more complicated because of this pack life. Lone wolves were frowned upon. That meant that I had to be quite rich to get away with it.

However, sadly, that wasn't even my biggest problem. My biggest problem was definitely my survival. I was now on both - Ruhn's and Zion's radars, and this did not promise me anything good. I needed to avoid the two of them at all costs. At least until Melody arrived. Then they would be too busy with their rivalry to pay much attention to me. I wouldn't do anything to their beloved this time; hence there wouldn't be a reason for Ruhn to kill me. Problem solved.

The one-night stand baby plan was off. Luckily, I did drink that tea he gave me, so he had to be sure I didn't take any part in drugging him and was a victim myself.

Theoretically speaking, he wasn't supposed to even remember my name by the end of the week.

As for Zion, if I managed to keep him away until the female lead enters the story, he would lose interest in killing some random insolent girl. He'd be busy trying to kill Ruhn instead. Then I could return him the owl, saying it missed him badly, and come back to ending the money for my own happy ending without all that mess.

I also couldn't make any more mistakes. I had to remember everything I could about the book, the events and Onyx's life to avoid future dangerous situations.

"Good luck with that! You are going to need it!" The voice in my head chuckled darkly, making me freeze with horror. Just how weird was hearing voices in my head?

I waited for a second, but the voice didn't add anything.

"Hello?" I tried to communicate. "Are you there?"

Silence.

Only that I could feel something shifting inside me. Whatever it was, I wasn't alone!

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A week had passed, and I spent it in my room, planning, plotting, and trying to jog my own memory to remember more. If staying alive had a more or less good plan in the works, getting rich proved to be a problem.

It turned out that Onyx did not have a bank account of her own. Conrad wanted her as dependent on him as possible. I could sell a few pieces of her jewellery, but it wouldn't last me long. I had to get a job.

At first, I considered writing books here too, but I discarded that idea rather quickly. I was good at writing fantasy romance, and now I lived in a world full of werewolves and other magical creatures. How unusual my writing here would be? And also, I had to be honest with myself, I would have to start from scratch, and it could be years until I saw some actual money. Years which I didn't have. Not to mention, there was also a chance that I wouldn't earn anything at all.

This just... wasn't an option at the moment.

I had written down neatly everything I knew was supposed to happen and looked at it for the one-hundredth time. There had to be something that could help me here. I didn't have many other skills, and I doubted Conrad would allow me to go to a university to get them. He was growing Onyx to be a Luna to someone important. Nothing less and nothing more.

However, there just had to be something I could do. I just didn't see it yet.

"Onyx, you have a guest," Silver walked into my room with a slightly pale face.

"I am not interested to see anyone," I brushed her off. During the past week, a few people who claimed to be Onyx's friends visited her. Some she-wolves from the pack and some daughters of Alphas from other packs. All Onyx's besties. But just looking at them, I knew they weren't friends at all. They were vultures who felt that something had changed. I bet everyone saw the Lycan Prince leaving with Onyx, so they wanted the dirty details. Or possibly to see me down. Wolves were predators, after all, and they could feel weakness from afar.

So, now I was declining everyone. At least until I figured out what to do next.

Because, in all honesty, I didn't know what I was doing. Was there an option to get back to my world? Was it even possible? Everything here seemed too complicated!

"I am afraid you can't decline that one," Silver looked at me with some kind of pity in her eyes, and I knew I was doomed.

NOTE: Sorry for the delay, guys. The whole family has got a bad cold. Alpha Island: My Enemy Mate will be updated on time this week, with the Emerald Seer in the second half of the week. Please, don't forget to help me with chapter titles.