

7 | A Warm Goodbye

ONYX

"Who?" I glanced at her pleadingly.

Say it was one of those girls! Please, please, please!

"It's... His Highness Ruhn Brynmor," the omega replied apologetically. As if it was her fault.

Yeah... I couldn't decline that one.

"I'll be down in a minute," I replied, feeling the stress getting to me. Why was he here? What did he want? In the book, he never saw Onyx again until her father announced she was pregnant with his child. So, what the heck?

All right. This was unavoidable, and I simply had to deal with it.

First things first, I needed to change. I had spent the last few days panicking in my pyjamas, and this was no way to greet the Lycan Prince. I went into the walk-in wardrobe and started hectically going through the racks of clothes. I have noticed this before, but now it has become more obvious than ever. Onyx had a terrible wardrobe; it was mostly comprised of black and wine-red dresses that were either too tight or too short or could barely be called clothes at all.

I guess this was to be expected. Onyx was a villain, the girl who tried to drive a wedge between the leads, using all means necessary. Sometimes, her body. So, of course, it was natural for her to dress this way. For a moment there, I hated myself for being so predictable and cliché. I could certainly do better than this.

However, I needed some kind of a solution fast. By some miracle, I managed to find a pale grey dress in this pile of tackiness. At least it wasn't black or red and wasn't too revealing with its short sleeves and a skirt below my knee. I wondered if it got here by mistake, but I wouldn't be questioning my luck. It was elegant, classy, and not memorable, which was the best part. I had to be the grey man, the one whom everyone would forget about very soon. And this was just perfect.

I descended the stairs as gracefully as I could. I wasn't so lucky with shoes. Apparently, Onyx hated herself and only wore ten-inch heels. A shopping trip was a must at this point.

I found Ruhn sitting on the sofa in the living room. He seemed comfortable with his foot on one of his knees, tapping his fingers on the armrest as if he was impatient. Maybe it was a good sign. Whatever he came here to do, he wanted to be done fast and then leave. And I was all in for that option.

"Alpha," I greeted him with a bow of my head and stopped as far away from him as I could. Nervously, I looked back and noticed Silver's head poking out from one of the adjacent rooms. She showed me an okay sign, and I was relieved she was near.

"Onyx," Ruhn gave me an indifferent glance over that made a shiver run up my spine.

I stood without moving and tried not to breathe too loudly. If I remember correctly, before Ruhn met Melody, anything could trigger him into a fit of rage. I definitely wasn't going there.

"I haven't heard anything from you or about you since the last event," he stated plainly. It wasn't a question, and I didn't know what reaction he expected from me.

"Just as I promised," I said, hoping that Conrad wasn't eavesdropping anywhere nearby. I was told he left in the morning, and usually, Silver warned me when he returned.

"You did, didn't you?" He tapped his fingers even more impatiently now. God, was he annoyed with me? What did he want? I kept my word!

I cleared my throat, and his eyes immediately went to me. "Why—" I started speaking, and my voice broke. I had to gather my whole strength for this encounter. "Why are you here, Alpha?"

"For Hell's sake, just call me Ruhn!" He snapped at me. "I think we are past Alpha at this point."

No thanks. I wanted to live too much to call him by his name.

"How could I?" I mumbled, looking down. "It would be disrespectful, and I am definitely not worthy—" Gosh, I hate myself now. But... I wanted to live more.

"Enough!" He stood up and was next to me in a blink of an eye, startling me. "Just do as you're told."

"All right," I squeaked. "Ruhn it is."

He stayed right next to me and drilled me with his eyes for a few awkward minutes while I remembered all my prayers. Was he thinking of killing me now? I swallowed uncomfortably. Technically, if he was, I would be dead already. The Ruhn from the book didn't hesitate.

"I was sure you would contact me," he said all of a sudden, and I looked at him questioningly. Why would he think that? I was very clear; I would disappear from his life.

"I wouldn't dare," I muttered and heard a growl in response.

"Then why the hell did you leave this behind?" He produced the clutch from that night and shook it before my eyes as if it was some kind of proof.

"You didn't throw it away?" I gasped and saw the Lycan's astonished face. Damn, he was hot. The tight-fitting black shirt sat so well on his well-trained body.

"Would you like that more?" He arched his brow at me.

"No, of course not," I shook my head and took the clutch from his hands, brushing my fingers over his accidentally. "I am sorry," I rushed to apologise the second it happened.

Ruhn stared at me for some time but then returned to his seat. Seriously? He wasn't leaving?! What else could we possibly talk about?

"I also heard that there are rumours that you weren't feeling well lately." Our eyes locked.

Ah, so this was what it was all about. I had to give it to him; his hunch was good. He was worried I was faking a pregnancy. Which was exactly the plan of the Tynan family.

But I threw it out to the bin, and I had to make sure he knew that.

"Oh, that..." I chuckled nervously. "I was just tired after... you know."

"That's the thing," he tilted his head to take a better look at me. "I don't know. I don't remember much about that night."

"Neither do I," I sat in the chair opposite of him. "My whole body was so sore for days afterwards. For all that I know, we were competing in gymnastics events!"

He didn't laugh.

And I got slightly offended. It was a good joke...

"That being said," I decided to add at once to try and fix the situation, "I feel great now. Excellent! Better than ever before. So, don't trouble yourself with me and thank you very much for bringing my bag."

"What is your scent?" Ruhn changed the subject so abruptly that my lips parted in surprise. What was that about? He must have seen my shocked expression, so he decided to clarify. "It's all over my room, and I can't get rid of it!"

Oh, that made more sense.

"It's blue tansy," I admitted. I remembered this very well. Onyx had to be special in some ways, and I gave her the scent of the most expensive essential oil in my collection. The little yellow flower was rare, and the price for a little bottle of this scent was ridiculously high. This was also her perfume, and I saw it in my dreams. It led to a few events later on. Events that I planned to avoid.

"Blue tansy," Ruhn looked away and then adjusted the collar of his shirt as if he was struggling to breathe. "Never heard of it."

Well, I guess he wasn't into essential oils!

"It's very... unique," he added, surprising me. Was that a compliment from the psycho prince?

"Thank you, Al—I mean Ruhn. Thank you, Ruhn. You smell very nice too."

Cypress tree and citrus. I remembered that for very different reasons. It was like... that scent was imprinted into me somehow now.

"I need to go!" He stood up, clenching his fists. It was probably very hard for him not to want to kill me. But he was doing his best, and I appreciated it. As my thank-you gift to him, I would do everything to make sure he never saw me again.

"Don't let me hold you back!" I forced an awkward smile onto my lips, but he didn't appreciate it.

Ruhn was already at the door when he stopped and asked without turning to look at me. "Do you have a plus one for The Moon Goddess Birth Gala?"

I shuddered at those words. It was announced a one-week celebration at the Palace, and back in the book, this was when Onyx announced she was pregnant. Soon after, they became engaged, and the death timer was set.

I planned to avoid this event like the plague. Same as all others.

"So?" Ruhn seemed discontent. "Do you have a plus one or not?"

"No, Al... Ruhn." Gosh, it was so hard to call him by his name. Everything in me opposed it.

"I thought so," he breathed out and was about to say something else when I felt the need to interrupt him.

"I am not going," I said plainly, and I managed to shock the lycan once again. But, hey, this was the best course of action.

"What do you mean you are not going?" He looked at me as if I had just hit my head or something. "It's the Gala!"

"It's just one week of partying," I reasoned, shrugging my shoulders.

"Everyone has to go," Ruhn insisted for some reason, confusing me more and more because I was sure this was what he wanted of me in the first place.

"Not everyone." A chuckle escaped me, but I bit my tongue to stop it when our eyes locked again. "I mean, you have to. Except me, but I got to meet with the royal family. But me... I am just no one, really. Not an Alpha of a pack, not an Alpha's heir. I think it's safe to say that if I don't go, no one would pay much attention to that."

His eyes examined my face as if he had seen me for the first time in his life.

"I thought you always enjoyed parties," Ruhn pointed out, his tone so dispassionate that I didn't know how to read this. So, I decided to go with the thing that was the closest to the truth. Onyx, indeed, was a party girl. She loved the attention and soaked in praise and love, even if it was fake. I wasn't interested in any of that. All I wanted was to survive and live a comfortable life away from everyone else.

"I did." I gave him a curt nod. "But parties stopped being fun for me. It's the same thing every time, and when you think about it, it's not fun at all. So, yes, I think I am going to pass on the Gala."

"And there is no different reason for that?" He arched his brow, clearly not trusting me.

"Of course not," I tried my best to reassure him, and he finally stood up. It was working!

"I'll be going," Ruhn didn't seem interested in me anymore. Phew.

"Have a safe journey, Your Highness... Al... Ruhn." Shoot. Why was I so bad at this?

Like the good little hostess I was, we didn't speak while I accompanied him to the door.

"Goodbye, Onyx," the Lycan prince looked at me one last time, and I forced a smile. He turned around without waiting for anything else, and I felt relieved. Finally, I could relax a bit.

"Goodbye," I mimicked him counting the seconds until he was gone. Hopefully, we will never see each other again.

He froze at the door, and I didn't get why. I really needed him gone asap.

Be gone, Ruhn.

Preferably forever.

He angled his head at me, and I didn't understand what was happening until... I realised that my hand was on his butt. And I was freaking squeezing it!

AUTHOR'S NOTE: She was so close!