

9. Best For Last

3026 Words

Savvy looked at him in shock, and his grasp on her became tighter. Elene cleared her throat again, bringing them both out of their daze.

"Kai!" She hissed. "We need to go. Now! Everyone is watching."

"Right," he conceded, nally letting her go. Savannah straightened her dress, and the realisation of how they might look dawned on her, also considering most people present were aware that he was their king. Not to mention that she was about to become unmasked as well.

"Excuse me," Kai took her hand and bowed to kiss it, however, she snatched it back before his lips could touch it. A soft growl left his chest, and she wondered what he was thinking. His level of deception was really beyond anything she could comprehend, and all that she wanted at this moment was to slap him. Then slap him again. And more, if it were possible.

But, of course, she couldn't. Too many eyes, too many witnesses. At least he helped her nalise a decision she had been pondering.

There was no way she was leaving humiliated. She would make him and his mean sister regret the day they decided to do this to her. She would win the stupid Luna Trials and get those wishes from her 'groom-to-be'. Then she would get her alliance and reject him, making it impossible to hold it against her, her brother, or her kingdom in any way.

"You are excused, Your Majesty." She lled her words with as much venom as she could muster and turned on her heels to walk toward what looked like a queue of women.

"Please, over here." A girl in a black dress and a mask gestured for her to stand toward the back. Savannah recognised Elene's assistant. "I am sorry, you have the last turn ..."

"That's ne." Savvy cut her off with the sweetest smile she contained in her arsenal. "In the West, we save the best for last."

She was fuming, and even Athena was unsettled inside her.

"Are you okay?" Kyle mind-linked her. She knew he had seen everything and was probably wondering what was going on. They had known each other since they were kids, and he could sense when she was troubled.

"Peachy," she replied sarcastically. "I am going all in. You and Zara need to nd out everything you can about every single contender. So, keep your eyes open now that they will be revealed."

"Fine," he said quietly and closed the link, knowing it was better not to contradict her when she was in such a state.

"Together again," a girl next to her remarked as she smiled brightly. Savannah looked at her in an effort to recognise her. "It's Astrid," the girl whispered. "I'm placed in the room next to yours."

"Oh, right!" Savvy chuckled. "You are another lucky contender."

"At least I am in good company," Astrid replied, giggling, but then, the sound of a loud bell interrupted them. They watched as Elene froze like a statue of some ancient queen at the top of a staircase leading to a throne which was now taken because King Kai was sitting in it and staring at her with his piercing blue eyes.

Savannah pretended not to notice and stood behind Astrid, hidden from his gaze.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" For once, Elene's voice sounded truly sweet, as if she loved the people gathered before her, not the contenders, of course, but the northerners present in the hall. "It's time to begin! The Luna Trials are about to start, and you are present during an historical event which will lead to the appointment of the new Luna of The North!"

They all cheered loudly, and Savvy could decipher one phrase voiced all around her, by Fenrir's will. She almost forgot that the northerners often preferred the wolf warrior god to the Moon Goddess, who was worshipped more in the West. Of course, she was respected everywhere, but it was considered that Fenrir was the patron of these lands.

The photographers and cameramen stood between Elene and the contenders, lming everything from different angles.

"Our rst contender!" The princess made a gesture, and a familiar brunette in a red dress came up to the bottom of the stairs and curtsied as if this were the Middle Ages.

Savvy rolled her eyes. For some reason, she remembered how that woman was touching Kai moments before she snatched him away and that memory was particularly unpleasant. Nevertheless, she quickly brushed it to the farthest corner of her mind, where Athena then obliterated it. This was war, with no strings attached.

"It's time to reveal who we all are," Elene commanded, as she turned to her brother, who was sitting on a throne behind her. A throne! Savvy scoffed. She had never seen Gideon sit on a throne. They didn't even have one.

Well, technically, they did, but it was in a museum, and no one in their right mind would be sitting on that old thing anyway. She liked the north less and less.

Kai slowly removed his mask. For the rst time today, she noticed that his beard was now a barely well-trimmed stubble. It was something she had missed during their dance because she was mad at him. She hated to admit it, but he looked even better than he did before.

His eyes grazed quickly over hers, still, once again, she pretended to look at someone else in the crowd. Elene followed his example by removing her mask, and so did all the northerners in the room, nishing off the motion with a round of applause.

Show-offs.

"The Luna of the North can't be an ordinary woman." Elene was working the cameras with her dazzling smile, giving them the show of their lives. "She must be beautiful and have perfect lineage. While all our contenders have these, there are other qualities we value more. The rst of them is wit."

The word echoed through the room, and Savvy tensed. She had a photographic memory and remembered everything she had ever learned. Nonetheless, what if the education system in the north was different from the west, and they would start quizzing her about something she didn't know in the rst place? This could be a potential disaster.

"Contender One," Elene raised her chin with a facial expression full of self-importance. "I want you to solve a riddle. Each contender will have one."

Savvy couldn't hold back a snort and a few girls in front of her turned to see who could be so disrespectful. Astrid quickly stood in front of her, covering Savannah and giving her a moment to gather herself. She gave Savannah a wink and continued watching the show.

This girl was starting to grow on Savvy.

In the meantime, Elene continued, "Name a thing that is lighter than what it is made of and more of it is hidden than is seen."

Savvy furrowed her eyebrows. What was this? Year 1 of primary school?

"An iceberg!" the brunette beamed, and Savannah had to use all her inner strength not to make any more sounds.

"Excellent!" Elene praised her. There was no denying that this girl was Elene's favourite by the way she looked at her, as if she already won and this was all just a formality. Consequently, all the other contenders received an utterly degrading glare which could only be translated as - bow in the presence of the gods, Sheep.

The princess gestured for the contender to go up the stairs and stand at her side.

"Penelope Summerstern, daughter of the North!" Elene announced although it was apparent that everyone here knew who the woman was. "Our rst contender for the title of The Luna of The North!"

When everyone was done with their applause, another woman stepped forward, wearing a navy dress with rhinestones that sparkled as if she was wearing the night sky. Savvy sniffed discreetly and recognised that person as Brigit, the white werewolf.

The funniest thing, judging by the face that Elene was now making, was that it didn't appear to be Brigit's turn. Some other girl in golden attire had tried to step forward too, but Brigit growled at her, and the poor soul quickly gave up.

"Some things never change," Kyle told Savvy via the mind-link. She smirked at her friend. Brigit was ... something. She was one of the least wanted contenders here but decided to x that as soon as possible. With force.

This was going to be fun!

Regardless, there wasn't much that Elene could do about it, so she sighed with annoyance and said, "Only one colour, but not one size. Stuck at the bottom, yet easily ies. Present in the sun, but not in rain. Doing no harm and feeling no pain. What is it?"

If looks could kill, the she-bear would be done.

Brigit stood there quietly. Everyone here knew that if she couldn't solve the riddle, she would be eliminated. She wouldn't even get to take her mask off. Although, that was probably for the best. The rules were similar for the women who couldn't enter the ball because they arrived dressed in the wrong colours.

The werewolf was clenching her sts, and Savvy wished she could tell her the answer mentally, but they weren't from the same pack nor were they related in any way, so that wasn't an option.

They heard a few giggles here and there. Everyone could now sense that she was a bear and bears weren't liked much in the North because of the constant wars between their packs in the past.

Suddenly, Brigit lifted her head and with a slight smirk on her lips answered, "Shadow."

"Someone came prepared!" Kyle pointed out.

"I wish it was us!" Savvy replied.

"Very well," Elene pursed her lips. "Our second contender! Brigit Borg, daughter of Alpha Borg of the White Claw clan. A white werewolf."

The last words were said with spite, and the wave of murmurs that went through the crowds of guests conrmed Savannah's suspicions. There was no applause this time, but Brigit did not seem to mind as she took her rightful place on the stairs.

The next two girls had riddles that were so easy a child could answer them. They were also northerners like Penelope, but one of them was a werewolf and not a lycan. By the way they behaved, it could be concluded that they were there primarily to support Penelope than to win for themselves. Celia, an edgy-looking lycaness with short wavy hair, and Inga, a blonde with two long braids to her front, both looked ready to defend their future Luna's honour and even stood at either side of Penelope yet a few steps behind her so as to make her stand out. Even their dresses were a dull shade of blue with nothing extraordinary about them. The perfect background for their queen.

A girl with long, straight, auburn hair was next, and she was also successful. Savvy wondered who she was until she heard the words, "Autumn Bern, the fox Alpha's daughter from the eastern Ruby Hill pack."

Now, this was interesting. Foxes were common enemies after the recent attacks. Although eastern foxes weren't actively participating in the war, they were denitely under suspicion, and King Kai allowed one straight into his own house ... This was ... peculiar.

One by one, the girls gave Elene their answers, as Savvy got bored. Their riddles were nothing special.

"Mavis Redfeather," Savannah heard a name that made her curious, and looked at yet another woman taking off her mask. She had long wavy hair that was dark at the top and was gradually turning into bright red by the ends in the best ombre effect Savvy had ever seen. "From the Silver Skies ock."

She was a bird shifter from Zara's old ock, one who could be problematic since they all hated her.

However, the next name put Savvy into a state of real shock.

"Nayara Knight, daughter of Alpha Ramina Knight." Her eyes immediately met the eyes of the werewolf, who had once given her asylum in her territory when Savannah was running away from her traitor mate. If Zack had managed to capture her then, her life would have had a whole different outcome. She had reached the werewolves' territory, and Naya was the rst person she met. Their acquaintance was short but very eventful. Especially considering they ended up ghting side by side in the bloodiest battle of their lives right after they met.

"Did you know that she would be here?" Savvy shot a glance at Kyle.

"I had no idea," he shrugged. "I'll try to nd out why we didn't know."

Here was the confusion, had Naya known about the Luna Trials, why wouldn't she inform her or Gideon. They were in the alliance after all. Naya's mother was one of the most loyal Alphas to her brother.

A girl with perfect pink locks wearing a perfect doll dress with lots of golden sequins walked to Elene. She didn't look any older than eighteen and Savvy was wondering if it was a mistake that she was here in the rst place. These weren't the times when women had to secure a marriage early. Then again, there was a possibility of getting married to a lycan king. A lot of Alphas probably wanted to seize this opportunity.

"I have lakes with no water, mountains with no stone, and cities with no buildings. What am I?" Elene asked gracefully, and the girl in front of her nervously played with the frills of her dress. She began dgeting more and more.

Savvy decided to take back her statement on children being able to solve those riddles. That child clearly wasn't able to.

The girl turned to the remaining contenders and looked at the woman in her thirties that arrived with her. Panic was evident on her face, but then, all of a sudden, it brightened, and she found the strength to face Elene again.

"It's a map!" she announced loudly and even clapped her hands together.

It was obvious that her assistant gave her the answer via their mind-link. In spite of this, the northern princess ignored all that and gestured for her to take off her mask.

"Petra Biernat, the Alpha's daughter from the Blue Forest pack." She made the necessary announcement.

"Don't you worry," Kyle chuckled in Savvy's mind. "If you need my help, I am at your service."

"Oh, yeah, Kyle," Savannah snickered. "How many of these did you solve?"

A sly grin appeared on his face, and she chose not to react this time.

Astrid was next, and she gave her answer quickly. She was introduced without any problems. Even though Elene made a face as if she ate a lemon when she showed her a place to stand.

It was Savvy's turn next, and for the rst time, she allowed herself to meet Kai's blue eyes.

He was watching her just as she expected, his facial expression was unreadable.

The northern king looked handsome without a mask, and without his beard.

Not that she would ever let him know.

She wasn't mad anymore. Now she was calm and concentrated. Moreover, she was ready for anything.

Savannah stepped forward and bowed her head slightly. She wasn't curtsying before Elene. They were equals. So, this simple form of respect was enough.

The northern princess did not like that, but, luckily for her, she had already prepared her revenge. It was evidently written all over her face as she gestured for two guards to bring in a table into the room.

They placed it in front of Savvy and put an old golden weighing scale on top of it.

Of course, she wasn't going to make it simple for her. After all, the whole event was created to humiliate her.

"Elene, what is the meaning of this?" To her surprise, Kai interrupted the event.

"Just another riddle, brother," the princess giggled, "and since it's our last one, I thought that doing something special would be nice. So, I brought in some props."

Savvy was watching her like a hawk when she walked to the table and placed nine old coins on it one by one.

"There are nine coins on the table," Elene smirked, "but one of them is fake. The fake coin is slightly lighter than the rest. Our contender can weigh the coins two times, and no more. Then, she has to tell us which coin is fake. Good luck!"

Giving her one last sneer, the northern princess walked back to her brother and toward the throne. Her face changed as she looked at the king, and for a second there, Savannah suspected they were speaking via mind-link.

However, this was not her main concern at the moment. She took the coins into her hands and sadly realised that there was no way to determine the fake in that way. She would have to use the weights, but she could only use them twice, so she had to use them accurately.

Savvy walked around the table to bid some time when she had an idea. All the coins were in her hands. She was about to place the rst of them onto the golden cup that rested on the scales when she heard the king's voice.

"Wait!"