

Chapter 21 - Desire to see me

Zara's POV

Nicolas stayed with us just before dusk, promising to see me soon. He went back through the tunnels in the same way he came. Our farewell was tearful, and as I watched him go, I felt both heartbroken and cold.

"Cheer up, old girl," Levi linked, as we made our way back to the pack house.

It was time for us to get ready for dinner.

"It is really difficult," I said sadly. "It feels as though my heart would burst into two pieces at any moment. I am starting to miss him already. And Kaya's adding to the pain. All she wants to do is follow Nic back to his pack."

"I think I understand," Levi said. "The bond is making it unbearable to be apart."

"Yes," I replied. "And it is even more difficult to accept the fact that he visited me in these conditions. It would have been just as simple for him to ignore and reject me."

Nic and I have not formally accepted each other as mates yet, but based on our behavior, it appeared that he was interested and would make the move shortly.

"He is a great guy," Levi stated. "I hope that one day I will meet someone who is equally understanding."

That warmed my heart and made me smile. Compared to his icy and distant demeanor, Nic was very different.

"I hope so too," I answered.

I just prayed that the moon goddess would bless Levi with someone equally special, someone who would love and accept him for who he is. He deserves to be loved.

"I wonder why Alpha wants to see you after dinner," Levi blurted, stopping at the edge of the forest.

"I am not sure what it is about," I replied, as I went behind the tree, shifted back to human form, and put on some clothes. "I was hoping you could shed some light on what he wanted to talk about."

"I do not know what it is about," he said, as he emerged from behind the tree and held his shirt. "Alpha didn't tell me anything."

"Well, it seems important, whatever it is," I remarked as I made my way to the pack house.

Upon entering, Levi and I made our way to our new Alpha Quarters on the top floor. He opened the front door for us, held it open, and let me go in ahead of him.

I put my handbag down on the little table by the door and made my way to my room.

The massive Alpha Quarters included a large living area, kitchen, dining area, master bedroom, and four guest rooms, all of which had private bathrooms.

Levi and I occupied different rooms. I slept in the master bedroom, and he slept in one of the guestrooms.

"I will see you in a bit," I said, as I walked away down the hallway and toward my room.

"Do not take too long," Levi called behind me. "We have dinner scheduled in thirty minutes, and we need to be on time. Your father is addressing the pack."

I stopped dead in my tracks and gave Levi another glance.

"What about?" I asked. "He made no mention of anything to me."

"My father just linked me," Levi stated. "I suppose it has to do with the Red Howl Pack."

With a comprehension-filled nod, I spun around and hurried to my room.

After a quick shower and change of clothes, I was ready and waiting for Levi in the foyer.

"You need to get a move on," I yelled down the hallway. "We are going to be late if we do not get to the dining hall in five minutes."

"I will be there in a moment," he called back.

I sat down at the dining room table, rolling my eyes and letting out a sigh.

These days, Levi would take his precious time. He aspired to be flawless when he stood beside me. He took great pride in his role as

a stand-in alpha.

"Come on," Levi chirped, snatching the front door keys and heading toward the door. "We're going to be late!"

Shaking my head, I stood up, grabbed my handbag, and trailed behind Levi.

When we got there, the dining hall was completely packed, and we had to go past a good number of tables before we could find ours.

Beta John had already stepped onto the little platform to speak to the pack. His expression hardened the instant he noticed us slinking inside.

"Your father seems extremely pissed," I linked Levi, taking a seat next to Mother.

Levi casually raised his wrist to check the time. He intentionally did that.

"It cannot be our fault," he stated, glancing in my direction. "We arrived on schedule with an extra thirty seconds to spare."

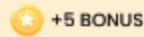
That made me laugh. That would really get under Beta John's skin. He detested seeing people arrive late.

"Your father is going to murder you," I linked him.

"I doubt that," he replied. "Technically speaking, I am now his Alpha."

"And he just adores that concept?" I chuckled.

"Well, he doesn't really have a choice, does he?" Levi said



thoughtfully. "After all, my future Luna was the one who selected me as her mate."

"Ladies and gentlemen," Beta John bellowed over the microphone, and my attention turned to him. "Please, could we have your attention? Your Alpha wishes to address the pack."

Beta John turned to face us, his light blue eyes as icy as always.

For a brief moment, he held my gaze, making me shudder in my chair.

I could feel Kaya growling inside my head, not liking the way Beta John was attempting to scare me. It brought the bitch out of her.

"It would be wise for you to inform your father of his intentions," Kaya hissed angrily. "Alternatively, I will! I am sick and tired of his immature strategies! He ought to receive discipline and lose his rank!"

"I guess he is just upset because I did not accept Alpha Noah's proposal," I said, trying to calm her down. "Stop taking it personally. I am not. If he knew what was going on, he would understand."

"I do not think so," Kaya answered. Her feelings for Beta John have never been strong. "The Beta will not listen. If he finds out, he will throw you to the dogs. Something about him is just off... I have zero faith in him. He appears to be power-hungry."

"He is the Pack's beta, my father's friend, and Levi's father," I told her. "Trusting him does not require me to like him. He has, after all, supported my father for many years, and I do not see why I should not be able to trust him if my father does. Beta John is just a traditionalist. That is it! Please ignore him. I'll find a way to put him in his place."

I was surrounded by gasps of surprise, and I quickly turned back to the stage, where my father was standing and speaking into the microphone.

"Settle down," my father said, finding my gaze. He gave me a nod and indicated that everything was fine.

"We have started implementing additional safety measures already," he said. "All pack members will participate in all planned training sessions and drills in the interim. The schedules include the elderly, omegas, and all pups. Are we clear?"

The pack members started whispering to each other, and Beta John moved forward.


"Your Alpha has asked you to respond!" With a roar, he silenced the dining room. "This is to keep you safe! This is not a drill! We are at war, people!"

Beta John trembled like a leaf in anger; he appeared to be on the verge of losing control of his wolf.

With a casual gait, my father approached Beta John and put his hand on his shoulder, and Beta John instantly became calmer. He moved aside, giving my dad another opportunity to speak to the pack.

"Beta John will relay the schedules to you," my dad went on. His eyes were sweeping across each member of his pack.

My father developed a reputation over the years as one of the most honorable and well-respected Alphas out there, and his pack reciprocated this reputation by remaining loyal to and supporting him.

 +5 BONUS

"I count on every one of you," my father said. "This is to safeguard this pack's future as well as that of Luna and her mate."

I shivered in my chair when the pack answered in unison, leaving no doubt that they would stick around and fight for what was right. Levi took my hand and gave it a small squeeze.

"Everything will be alright," he whispered. "You will be safe here!"

However, I could never have predicted the reason behind my father's intense desire to see me.



Comments



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Chapter 22 - Animal instincts

Nicolas POV

"You are running late!" Ronan lashed out when he saw Ray come out of the tunnel and into the cave.

"Someone seems really nervous," Ray remarked, as I shifted back to being human.

I looked back at Ronan and watched him briskly as he paced up and down.

Has anything occurred during my absence?

"Your father is furious at you," Ronan hissed. "He is waiting on you in his office,"

I cocked my head to one side and squinted. It has been a while since I have seen Ronan behave like this.

"Tell him I will be there shortly," I said composedly as I picked up my pants off the ground.

"He is itching to see you now," Ronan growled. "He is so angry that he is threatening to take control of the pack."

"Your father rocked Ronan's boat again," Ray chirped. "No wonder he isn't a happy camper."

My father had the ability to get under Ronan's skin and rattle his little world. I never understood why he took everything my father said personally. I was given the Alpha position by the old wolf eight years

ago, and he could not take it back from me unless I voluntarily gave it to him or he challenged me to a duel.

"Perhaps he inquired about my whereabouts from Ronan," I answered.

"And he could not provide him with a direct response!" Ray remarked, a little sorry for Ronan.

"Remind me to take him out on a hunt later tonight," I said. "Perhaps that would lift his spirits."

"I think you will need to schedule an entire weekend to get Ronan to smile again," Ray snorted.

I glanced back at Ronan and teased, "Maybe even a week."

Ray laughed, and I glanced back at Ronan.

"My dad can tolerate a little bit more time," I uttered, reaching for my shirt. "I am going to shower first. It was a lengthy run, and I can not meet with him in this state, both in appearance and scent."

Ronan sighed in irritation. He was aware that when it came to personal hygiene, I would not compromise.

Meeting people when I smelled sweaty was something I never enjoyed doing. I still had an image to project, one that I was taught to uphold by my father.

Ronan's eyes glanced over.

It seems that he caved and was mind-linking my father to inform him of my return.

I drew my shoes in closer, undid the laces, and put them on.

"Your father has given you fifteen minutes to come present yourself, or..."

"He will come find me on his own and give me a whooping," I interrupted Ronan with a laugh. "I know."

I was accustomed to my father's empty threats; he was more bark than bite.

I was not afraid of the old dog like Ronan was. I knew how to respectfully handle my old man.

"Yes," Ronan snarled. "Will you please hurry up?"

"Calm down before you hurt yourself," I said, teasingly.

"Don't tell me to calm down," he snapped. "I have been busting my ass off the whole afternoon, doing my best to hide your whereabouts."
"

"Wow!" Ray gasped. "Ronan really has his panties in a twist!"

Though I wanted to laugh at Ray's comment, I maintained my composure. I reach out for the truck keys instead.

"You seemed stressed," I told Ronan. "You are aware of its detrimental effects on your health. It looks like the Beta roll is too much pressure for you, so I will set up a meeting with the doctor to get you checked out."

"Don't you dare!" With a growl, Ronan shoved the keys into my hand

and held my gaze. "I can perform my duties as a beta with great competence. It is you..."

"Ronan," I said, my tone hardening. He had never delved into my character before, and I was not going to allow it now. I was still his Alpha, and he would obey my commands and judgments.

Ronan averted his eyes and took a deep breath.

"You can't keep doing this to me," he muttered. "You are aware that your father gets upset with you when he cannot locate you or when you willfully refuse to comply with his requests! Now see, you are going to be late once more and—"

"Before my time runs out, I will be in his office," I interrupted and made my way out. "You know that I always do."

Ronan sighed and rolled his eyes.

"You never f*cking listen to me," he muttered under his breath. "You follow your own stubborn head. Bloody Alpha blood. There are moments when I wish you were not so damn stubborn."

"I heard that!" I shot him a retort. "Besides, where will the fun be in that?"

Once outside, I opened the truck's doors and climbed inside, but Ronan stopped and hesitantly got in.

"What is the matter with him now?" Annoyed, Ray inquired.

"He seemed to be worried about something else," I replied.

Was Ronan trying to find a way to make me angry before I reached

my father? Or was there something else causing him distress?

"Whatever it is," Ray uttered in a grave tone. "Has him very worried, or maybe even afraid?"

"Does he fear the consequences of discovering what is troubling him, or..."

Ray added, "Your reaction," to round out my ideas.

Ronan only behaved in this way when he was unsure of how to break the news to me.

Was a decision made without my consent?

Was there an attack on us?

Did someone get hurt?

"He would have alerted you if there had been a rogue attack," Ray claimed. "This seems like something different to me. Something more profound..."

"I agree," I replied, returning my focus to Ronan.

"Will you not be coming?" I shouted above the engine's purr.

"No," he answered. "Because of your tardiness, I do not want to be the one told to wipe blood off the walls of the packhouse when your father lets loose his beast!"

I gave him a sidelong glance. He could be so dramatic some days. Did he honestly believe that I would bleed to death?

The worst that could happen is a couple of small scrapes here and

there, and even those would heal before any blood hit the floor.

"Come on, Beta," I called out, growing irritated. "Driving is far quicker than running in wolf form, not to mention that you do not want me to be late and that you are now wasting my time. Would you like to be the cause of my bloodshed?"

With a noticeable sigh, Ronan shook his head, hurried over, and climbed into the truck.

I loved it when I had Ronan by the balls.

Before Ronan could buckle up, I took off, and after driving for three minutes, I pulled up in front of the packhouse.

I threw the keys to one of the guards and walked carelessly toward my quarters, knowing that he would have it parked.

Even though it was the coldest and fastest shower I have had in a while, the chilly water did nothing more than dance on my warm skin and did not clear my mind of my filthy thoughts.


My thoughts have strayed back to Zara, which made my c*ck feel painful and hard when I got out of the shower.

I could not get her out of my head; I wanted to taste her so badly.

"This is going to be fun," Ray grinned. "You do not need much to get your c*ck up and hard these days."

"Not helping, Ray," I growled, hastily drying myself and putting on my clothes.

"Try thinking of something else," he advised.

 +5 BONUS

"Such as what?" I asked, pulling my hair back into a man bun.

"I have no idea. Try focusing on hunting." He said.

"All right," I replied as I inhaled deeply, closed my eyes, and concentrated on my animal instincts inside of me.

But it never occurred to me that the mate bond would have an impact on something as basic as my imagination.



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