

Chapter 8 - Breath of fresh air

Nicolas POV

I was drawn to Zara like a moth to a flame, and I found it merely impossible to move my gaze away and not stare at her.

The pull toward her was strong, even stronger than the one I had with Isabella.

My mind became foggy, causing me to see and think in ways I had never done before. The call was too strong to ignore.

I turned my gaze away to look the other way, just long enough to be able to shake off my dark and evil thoughts. I was already plotting to lure Zara away from her chosen mate and claim her as mine.

Unconcerned about the evil that prowled around, Zara and her Beta were idly strolling about, meeting and greeting their guests. Zara's scent wasn't making it any easier, it was lingering in the air all over the hall.

My gaze returned to her, and I paused on her red lips. They were starting to part a little, a smile slowly gathering on her lips. I almost laughed out loud when she replied to the Alpha in such an honest manner. The once-haughty Alpha became quiet as his eyes grew bigger, and he seemed to get color around his cheeks.

"I hope she did not make fun of the Alpha," chuckled Ray. "The Alpha appears to be upset, possibly even furious."

"If she did, it would not bother me." I laughed. "Perhaps it would keep unwanted Alphas at bay."

Ray gave an eye roll.

"You do not seem to be envious," Ray said.

"No," I shot back, shaking my head. "What makes me worthy of being envious? Zara seems to be in good hands. Furthermore, the moment Beta Levi claimed her as his, the attraction to her would vanish."

My heart quickens at the thought. The idea that Zara would bear her Beta's mark and be in his arms rather than mine did not sit well with me.

I let out a sigh, brushed the gloomy thoughts from my mind, and returned my focus to Ray. I could not help but wonder why he was acting strangely, since he appeared so collected and peaceful.

"I find it surprising that you have not attempted to fight for control and claim Zara yourself," I remarked.

"Perhaps I am simply waiting for the right time to strike," he shot back, raising an ironic eyebrow.

"You wouldn't dare?"

Laughter erupted from where Zara was standing, cutting my warning short, and I voluntarily turned my attention back to her. Her witty remarks were so endearing that I could not get enough of them.

An additional Alpha ushered, and I shook my head at that. Although the comment had escaped me, it was interesting to see the aftermath.

Zara pursed her lips and tried not to laugh, even though her eyes were beaming with pleasure.

"How I wish I could just borrow that naughty mouth of hers for just a minute," I muttered to myself as my c*ck began to twitch. "I can only picture how stunning she would appear with those plump lips encircling my cock."

My own voice echoed in my ears and, startled, I blinked a few times in surprise, "Goddess! Have I really said that aloud?" I then quickly looked around to see if anyone else had heard. With relief, I exhaled—the majority of the guests were either dancing or heading for food.

Ray chuckled, finding me hilarious.

"I can only imagine the sheer joy you will experience when you f*ck that little smartass mouth of hers," Ray said.

"You are not helping the situation, Ray," I growled.

"Technically not the way you want me to help you," he huffed, laughing.

"She knows how to handle an Alpha," Ronan abruptly said, next to me, and I jumped in my seat.

Did Ronan hear my dirty thoughts? I did not see him come back after he went to get some food.

"Just look at her. The Alphas are eating out of her hand," he went on in amazement.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding and focused on Zara.

What Ronan said was true; it seemed like the same Alphas returned for another round—they must see her as a challenge. Beta Levi appeared completely unfazed.

I have made up my mind. Zara was more than just another pretty face. In addition to being intelligent, she also had a fascinating personality, and her incisive comments and reactions were captivating. The Alphas were astounded and dumbfounded by her hilarious comebacks and just could not get enough of her.

I was unable to do either.

Ronan lifted an eyebrow, wiped his mouth, and put the napkin down on the table.

"I think it is our turn to go meet and greet the happy couple," he said.

"You go," I replied. "I'll watch from here."

"Seriously?" Ronan sulked, clearly disappointed. "Are you not at least a little curious?"

"I never said I wasn't," I remarked absentmindedly. "Watching from a distance is simply more interesting and secure. While she has been standing beside her chosen mate, she has been unintentionally searching for me."

"You do know that there is still hope?" Ronan asked. "The two of them have not marked one another yet."

"I know," I uttered while raising the glass to my lips. "However, I promised not to interfere."

"Are you unwilling or unable to interfere?" Ronan growled, his ire visible in his darkening eyes.

"Whatever," I said, setting the glass back on the table. Except for not wanting to draw attention to myself, I was not in the mood to argue with Ronan.

I have been hiding in plain sight while observing Zara's every move. She seemed to have roused the animal within me, and she had become my beautiful prey. I was fortunate enough to be seated among the untamed wolves, which made it harder for Zara to find me.

I averted my eyes or dove under the table whenever she directed her gaze in my direction. She eventually appeared irritated and even frustrated. I was aware that I was causing her pain, but I could not bring myself to include her in my curse.

"All right," Ronan said with a sigh. "I will extend my congratulations to the happy couple on your behalf."

I rolled my eyes. I was already aware of Ronan's plans. He was deliberately doing this. He wanted to go and gather information about Zara, probably to torment me with the information later in the hopes that I would change my mind.

"Fine with me," I said, leaning back in my chair and crossing my arms over my chest. "Enjoy yourself! Take your time!"

I was not going to give him an easy ride on this. When Zara carried on with the mating ritual, she had already made up her mind for the two of us.

"You agree?" Ronan inquired, his eyes brightening.

"Not quite," I replied. "However, I am curious as to why she chose to mate with her Beta, and not an Alpha."

"I will make it my mission to find you the answer, my Alpha," Ronan said, turning on his heels with a cunning smile on his lips as he left our table.

Ronan is now going to use every resource at his disposal to get back to me with an answer. He will be even more deadlier than a bloodhound following a wounded animal's trail.

I shook my head and sighed. This wasn't right. I felt like I was prying into Zara's personal life and stalking her.

"Do not be hard on yourself," Ray mused. "You have every right to be interested in her. She is our second chance mate."

"Why, therefore, do I feel as though I am betraying Isabella's love?" I asked.

I was unable to resist the pull. It made my heart hurt that I could not deny my feelings for the dark-headed girl.

"Because you loved Isabella," Ray replied. "I did too, but Zara is like a breath of fresh air, coming in softly, filling your heart with a different kind of fragrance, and healing your broken heart."

I could not stop thinking about the excruciating pain I had carried around for so long, and it was starting to mess with my head. Isabella has my undying love. My entire universe revolved around her. I am unable to let go. It was as though I was abandoning our love.

"You know, Ronan might be right. Isabella would want you to find happiness once more," Ray remarked. "Go introduce yourself to Zara at the very least."

The idea of touching and kissing a different woman was simply too much for me.

My heart felt as though someone was crushing it in their hands, and my throat tightened. My breath left me gasping.

"I think I need some fresh air," I muttered to myself, jumped to my feet, and hurried out to the hallway.

But I never imagined that stepping outside the ballroom would drastically change my life.
