

Chapter 9 - Silver Chest Beta

Zara's POV

It never occurred to me that a mating ritual could be so demanding.

My head spun, my dress felt like it had gained some extra weight every time we met someone new, and my shoes were now genuinely hurting my feet.

After tonight, I doubted that I would remember half of these wolves' names or even their faces. Levi and I have been meeting and greeting so many ranks that their faces have begun to blend.

I sighed as a lone wolf, maybe 6'7", with green eyes, dark brown hair, and a sharp nose, came from the back of the hall and grinned broadly. He appeared determined to come over and introduce himself.

"Evening," he said when he got to us, his deep voice chiming in my ears. "My name is Beta Ronan Dangers. I am from the Midnight Moon Pack. My Alpha, Alpha Nicolas Dalton, and I would like to wish you two a very happy and fulfilled life."

Levi reached out and shook the wolf's hand. I returned the favor with a modest but genuine smile.

"Nice to meet you, beta," Levi replied. "It pleases me to see another Beta rank in attendance at the ceremony."

With a chuckle from Beta Ronan, the two betas soon found themselves debating various aspects of the beta role.

"Would you please excuse me?" I said. "I really should go powder my nose."

Levi turned to face me, his eyes full of concern.

"Would you like me to go with you?" He asked.

"No, I am alright. I can find my way to the ladies' room." I said, smiling. "I'll be right back. You continue to mingle with the other ranks and enjoy yourself."

Without allowing Levi to speak again, I stood up on my tiptoes, kissed his cheek, and turned away.

As soon as I was outside the hall, I released a breath I did not realize I was holding and made my way to the ladies' room. I breathed a sigh of relief when I realized the restroom was empty. I removed my shoes, applied pressure to my swollen and painful feet, and proceeded with doing my business. I was done in no time, and after cooling myself with a cold, damp towel, I felt much better.

"That feels much better," I murmured as I examined my reaction in the mirror. "We can get back to normal in just a few hours."

After adjusting my dress and giving myself a self-satisfied wink, I made my way towards the door.

As soon as I stepped out of the bathroom, the same scent of vanilla and honey hit my nose.

"Mate!" Kaya let out a howl. "He is near! Find our mate!"

My eyes went to the hall's entrance and then followed the hallway as it led outside.

Should I head back to Levi or follow the scent?

Before I could think it through, I was standing at the exit leading to the outside gardens. Opening the door might reveal the owner of the intoxicated smell.

What could possibly go wrong?

He could simply reject me, and then it would all be over.

I felt depressed thinking about it.

"Or claim you," Kaya said, listening in on my thoughts. "Wouldn't that be great? I can't wait to meet him!"

"Or that?" I hopefully replied.

As I pushed the door open, I felt my heart race in my chest and took a deep breath.

The cool breeze greeted me with the scents of various owners, but it could not mask the smell of vanilla and honey.

My eyes shifted to the moon as it hung close to the horizon.

"Let me find him." I prayed in silence to the goddess. "Tell me who the intoxicated scent belongs to, please."

I stepped forward, drawn forward by his scent, and yelled in fear when the door behind me slammed.

"Dammit, Zara," I snarled at myself. "Stop worrying so bloody much!"

I inhaled deeply, forced my heart to slow down, and followed the scent back toward the gardens. The farther I followed the scent, the stronger it got. It was affecting my body and mind in ways that were exclusive to mated wolves.

"Focus!" I scolded myself.

I took a deep breath and tasted the sweet flavor swirling around my tongue and filling my lungs. It was a cool, comforting taste that took my worries away.

"Heavenly," I muttered under my breath. "The scent is incredibly lovely and delicious. I can't wait to have the owner on my lips."

"I guess you are referring to me." I stopped in my tracks when the familiar voice behind me slurred.

"I had faith that you would realize your mistake and approach me. I am incredibly irresistible to she-wolves."

I slowly spun around to see Noah standing a few feet away from me, holding a bottle of whiskey.

He staggered forward, hardly able to maintain his balance.

"Alpha Noah," I whispered, my throat running dry. "Is there anything that I can assist you with?"

"Ha!" he exclaimed, tossing his head back and making a hyena-like sound. "Now you want to assist me. That is ironic, isn't it? Given that you have just taken your beta as your mate, don't you think it is a little late now?"

"I don't know," I said. "What appears to be the problem?"

"The problem?" He said, holding the bottle in his hand and pointing with his index finger. "I will tell you what the problem is—it is you!"

"And what did I do?" I asked, keeping myself dumb. "I only mated with my chosen mate, just as you chose to do."

"Liar!" He slurred. "When you made your introduction a year ago, you were not truthful about who you really were."

"So what?" I challenged. "At that point, you had already expressed your disinterest in me. I was not worthy of being your mate. And why does my name have anything to do with being mated to my beta?"

"All of it!" He snarled. "I ought to be the Silverado Pack's next Alpha. Not that weakling of a beta of yours! The Alpha title is unworthy of him."

Is it the main purpose of all of this? Power? Money? A lust for greed?

Is Noah trying to become the leader of a silver-blessed pack?

What was he going to do if he managed to get his hands on that title?

I dismissed the idea with a shake of my head.

He would not have had complete control, even if he had accepted me as his mate and taken the Alpha title of the pack.

Compared to Noah, Levi is a better choice because the Silverado Pack will obey his commands. After all, the only specific bloodlines and descendants of the moon goddess herself could rule the pack.

"Well, I am sorry things did not turn out the way you wanted," I said as I turned to go. "If you would excuse me, this conversation is over!"

Noah grabbed me by the hair and yanked me back.

"I will tell you when it is over," he roared.

I fought against his grip, attempting to free myself, but his grip on my hair was too powerful.

"Release me!" I screamed, hearing my dress rip. If I had to shift and the dress got ruined because of someone like Noah, I would be furious and disappointed.

Just then, an overpowering aura enveloped my surroundings, sucking up all the oxygen, and a startling roar echoed from behind us.

A second later, the scent of vanilla and honey filled my nostrils.

"Mate!" Kaya gave a purr. "He came! He came to rescue us from the grasp of Alpha Noah's claws."

Abruptly, Noah released his grip on my hair and let out a painful cry. The bottle of whiskey shattered on the ground into millions of pieces.

I quickly turned over and witnessed a massive, dark beast with a silver chest seize Noah's arm, yanking him against the packhouse wall.

"F*ck!" I gasped in disbelief. "Is that my mate?"
