

## Chapter 7

The lust in their eyes was deeper than the depths of the Atlantic and they made no attempt to hide it. Dark eyes swirling with blackened strings portraying love when in actuality they all wanted the flesh and not the feelings.

His hand came down hard on her ass and the yelp that left her lips had my jaw clenching tighter.

"You have to meet them," Iliana rasped out. Her hoarse voice was shaking and she took careful steps out into the large room; she was limping as though each step hurt her.

I had to meet the alphas. I shouldn't be staring - I knew that was what she meant. But I couldn't stop looking at Liv and wondering if I should intervene.

"And do what? You alone up against a room full of alphas?" Trixy spat.

"They're gonna - they're using her,"

"Look around, Hazel. You're all being used! it's the fait of the game, you're nothin more than puppets to them and us wolves your faithful servants who in the minds of these alphas are no match to their power,"

The alphas looked at Iliana and practically salivated. They could smell it on her; that another wolf of power had been with her and it only made her more attractive to them for the simple reason of dominance. If a girl is craved by a male then she must be something special and of course if others want her then she must be worthy to fight for. When that male was an alpha...or a king, they needed to assert their dominance over said male by taking the girl. I hated the way they were looking at her. She was

hurt, vulnerable, and they enjoyed the weakened girl that strutted in front of them - holding her head high through the pain. 1

Come on, Hazel, you have to partake.

"If they touch her I will kill them!"

"They won't, they respect the rules."

Determined - and fearful of going home without a claim - I stepped out into the room and walked closer to the Alphas who stood separated in different corners. The girls were gently dragging their hands gracefully over their arms, some even went as far as to lick a part of the alphas skin to leave her scent.

There was no other way out but with one of them on my arm and seeing what I had to choose between I could tell immediately that I would be better off alone.

Despite my better judgment telling me to not to - I turned and look at Liv. Her hips were swaying over his lap, his hand still entangled in her curly hair pulling her head back. I squeezed my eyes shut and turned away. Hide the fear, quench it quickly.

Some of the Alpha's were playing cards, one had a cigar in his mouth and blew out tiny clouds as he bet against the other alpha. The smell of smoke and gin mixed in the air of this sophisticated establishment but if I looked closer - if I really tried and see this for what it was - it was no more fancy than a whore house where the girls begged for a touch to gain a decent dime. The men knew that they held the power even if there were rules set in place that they were obliged to follow. They knew what this night meant to us girls and how they would need no physical advantage to get our attention. No girl wanted to go home alone, un-claimed and

ashamed - the men knew this, they knew they didn't have to try until the Hunt and that was when they would shine.

It was like the metaphor of 'falling in love' only there was no love involved and it was more of a tackle to the ground with a big sweaty wolf hovering over you with pride.

Pride.

Was there anything less sexy on a man than when he was so full of himself that he left no room for another name to be uttered?

But this was the dream, the joy and the hope that we had to look forward to.

A gust of wind blew in and lifted my dress, I could pull it down and keep it plastered to my skin but I saw the lust in their shadowing eyes when my flesh was exposed to them. It was fun, to have power, us girls don't usually get to experience it and I felt my stomach clenching at the realization that this would probably be the first and last time that any of us did.

One of the girls jumped up on the edge of the table, she took the cigar from his mouth and wrapped her lips around it. I was fascinated by the way he watched her, how his eyes cast a subtle glance on tip of her foot before gliding up her legs and then passing for a moment at her chest and watching it rise - and fall.

He watched her cheeks pull in when she took a drag - he dragged his tongue over his lips when the smoke left and her tongue gracefully moved over the mouthpiece on the cigar.

Men, they were such simple creatures at the core and still we bowed to

them for some reason. I heard that the most powerful of our kind have many times sought to be advised by their wives but they would never admit it themselves. God forbid an Alpha ever seek consult from the Luna.

My lips pressed together as the edges pull up in a laugh but I would look crazy if I started laughing all by my lonesome- and this wasn't a time for a giggle. Besides, my prospects would severely decrease if they thought I was a mental case.

One of the Alphas by the wall caught my eye, I recognized him, he's watching the girls pass by but wasn't showing interest in any of them. What was his name again? It's right there, on the tip of my tongue - come on Hazel, think...

"Alpha Emmanuel," I greeted and grabbed a champagne flout from the table. His eyes glimmered and the side of his mouth pulled up.

"Hazel —"

I smiled and raised the glass to my lips. I remembered my teachers words when I turned sixteen and was forced to join the diligence class with the other girls my age.

'A girl with poise and class walks gently into the room, she lets her eyes glaze over the men and subtly, but importantly, ignores the women. She never moves faster than him, she sips - not gulps- and she always smiles' - ugh, it's like I was back in the classroom and it was all just coming back to me like ptsd. My teachers awfully calm voice burning those words into our heads and I was hearing her voice louder than ever right now. But there he was, like a fresh breath and a mute button to my thoughts.

"You remember," I said with the hint of a smile but let my eyes do most of the talking. I looked into his eyes, then down at his lips, and up back up



to his eyes- alternating between the two and then down at the sparkling drink in my glass and I smiled like I'd seen something beautiful in the bubble filled liquid.

If Mrs. Smith were here she would've be proud of me. But honestly I just don't want to go back empty handed. Even though there aren't any severe consequents for coming back unmated, it wasn't exactly optimal either. I didn't want to be an embarrassment and I sure didn't want to bring shame upon my family.

Just as the rim moves from my lips and I'm about to lower the glass I felt the pressure from underneath it- Emanuel pressed two fingers under the foot of the glass, rising it and pressing it against my lips. The bubbles tickled my throat but the alcohol soothed my senses. Perhaps I should try to have at least ten more glasses before the Hunt.

"You're a hard one to forget,"

My braid fell over my shoulder and I caught his eyes with a deep gaze.

"Is it my eyes? I've heard a lot about my eyes," I mused. My almond shape was said to be a mirror to the soul- not mine but the person looking into them. Some have even said they look like the eyes of a siren, the kind you drown in and eventually loose yourself to because you looked for to long.

"Not your eyes," he bit down on his lip and pulled my braid between his fingers.

"My lips then?" I asked. He stepped closer and moved his head from side to side. He put my braid behind my back and I decided to try again because he stumped me. "If it isn't my eyes or my lips, it has to be my breast." I dragged my fingers across my chest and watched as his

desiring eyes followed. I narrowed my eyes and playfully scowled but he laughed and his hand lowered to my waist.

"It's your personality, Hazel, the one you've hid away to deal with this... Hunt."

No, don't say things like that- we're supposed to be detached and he's pulling on real strings.

I giggled and shrugged a shoulder.

"That isn't an answer I'm used to hearing."

"Drop your head," his eyes narrowed and his jaw clenched. I stared in confusion and noticed the small fangs to his face when his muscles moved in a grimace.

"I'm sorry?"

My eyes flickered behind him for a second when I heard the struggling groans and I saw Liv- her dress had been torn open and he's pulling down his pants and positioning her on top of him. I gasped, my feet moved but before I got anywhere two arms grabbed my shoulders and spun me around.

Emanuel's hand moved to the back of my head- he pulled me down and pressed my face against his chest but the sounds still rang loud in my ears.

"Don't interfere," he warned in a seething whisper.