

## Chapter 9

Renee POV

Aaron was staring at my finger. My lips parted as my heartbeat picked up wildly. Why was it that whenever he looked at me like this, my attraction for him rose to crazy heights?

When he lifted his gaze to my face, to my eyes and then dropped to my lips, the world faded around me. He swallowed thickly, and I saw how his Adam's apple bobbed.

"Yes, this is perfect!" the jeweler, snapping our thoughts. "Your finger looks so delicate in this beautiful ring."

I blushed. "I was just— You can choose another one," I blabbered.

But Aaron said to him, "Please pack this and bill it on our account."

"Sure, thank you!" The jeweler was more ecstatic than either of us.

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As we got up and walked towards the exit, my stomach growled. Aaron's brows furrowed. "Are you hungry?"

"It's fine. Just drop me at school. I'll—"

He grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the shop. "We are going to have breakfast. Even, I didn't eat." However, just as we came out of the shop, cameras flashed, blinding me, surprising me. What the hell was happening? Immediately, Aaron pulled me to his chest and wrapped his arms around me as if protecting me. I buried my face in his chest, my mind a mess of confusion.

"Oh, my goddess! They are so cute," said someone, flashing the camera again.

And then I realized that someone had tipped the press about us. Along with them were a few enthusiastic pack members. Shit. If Vicky saw this, she would go ballistic. What would Aaron do in that case? Would he reject me just after we bought the ring? I was sure he would do it because all this was overwhelming. I mean, both of us hadn't come to terms with the fact that we were getting married, and then someone tipped the press about it. The constant fear of rejection gnawed at my soul, and I



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hated it.

"Master Aaron!" one of them shouted. "Please, can we have a picture of you two kissing?"

I shuddered at the thought, burying my face deeper in his chest. He would never kiss me, for he resented me so much. I clutched his shirt with my hands as my wolf whimpered inside.

Aaron didn't reply to them, but he chuckled. "You guys are pretty sneaky. How did you know we were here?" I knew that his joking demeanor was only a façade. On the inside, he was enraged.

"Oh, please Master Aaron," the reporter pleaded. "Just one kiss. For us!"

"Let's go," I muttered, refusing to be embarrassed by Aaron's denial. The thought was like a knife in my heart. "Please." My chin quivered as another barrage of tears threatened to spill out. I moved away from him and spun to leave. "We're not doing this!"

An audible gasp from some was heard.

"Aaahh!" a man rasped. "It seems the bride and the groom are not in love."

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"Yikes!" a girl yelped.

"No way!"

"What?!"

A young girl said, "Wha—what just happened?"

Some fell silent, the shock leaving them momentarily speechless.

An old woman exclaimed, "Oh my goddess! This is not what I expected."

I was about to step away from the crowd when Aaron pulled me sharply towards him. Before I knew it, he cupped my cheeks and pressed his lips to mine. I was taken by surprise. This was our first kiss. I had imagined it a million times and here it was. In front of so many spectators. The kiss felt like I was standing at the edge of a quiet sea, when suddenly, a warm wave rushed up and curled around my ankles before I had time to react. A flood of unexpected warmth left me breathless, yet I felt anchored. The entire world faded around me as I gave in to the sensation of the feel of his lips against mine.



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His lips were so soft and firm. He angled his face so that he could take my lips. He nibbled the lower one and sucked it sweetly, gently. His chest rose and fell when the kiss turned deeper. I opened my lips for him, wanting to feel him urgently. He took the opportunity and delved his tongue into my mouth. Our kiss turned frantic as Aaron tried to dominate me. He swept his tongue around my mouth to explore me, and I reveled in it.

I curled my hands around his neck, pressing my body against his. His hands traveled to my back and settled on my hips. He squeezed them a little as he sucked the air from me, leaving me breathless. Suddenly, he pulled away and rested his forehead on mine. We were both out of breath, gasping for air, our chests heaving and our hearts pounding in our chests.

"Oh, my goddess! They both look so lovely!" a girl shouted from the crowd.

"Just perfect for each other!" another one exclaimed.

It was then I realized that the cameras had gone wild, flashing everywhere.

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"Let's go," he murmured. Grabbing my wrist, Aaron steered me through the crowd and didn't stop until we were alone in an elevator of the mall that led to a rooftop restaurant.

Awkwardness blanketed me when Aaron opened the door for me and I walked in. The place was empty because it was still early in the morning. The server who attended to us was surprised and thrilled. It's not always that the future heir of the Oak Pride pack came to your restaurant. He guided us to a private booth at the end of the restaurant.

"What would you like to have?" he asked, serving us the menu.

Aaron didn't even look at the menu and said, "Pancakes with maple syrup, braised chicken and pineapple juice." He ordered my favorite and I couldn't help grinning.

"Ah, sure!" the server said and disappeared.

Aaron relaxed in his chair, but my mind was still on the kiss. "What is it you wanted to tell me, Venus?" he asked.

My eyes snapped to him as I processed his words.



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His lips curved up. "You said in the morning that you wanted to say something."

Oh, that. Why did he look so cool after the kiss? Like it was just a show. While here I was, a hot mess. As if understanding my predicament, he said, "Don't worry about the kiss. If I didn't kiss you, it would have caused negative publicity."

And that soured my mood. I clenched my teeth and looked away. Okay, so I better lay the rules before I lost my mind and snapped at him. "Aaron, I know you are marrying me under family pressure, but so am I. It's not that only you are compromising. I am also compromising a great deal here. We didn't ask for this marriage, but now that it's happening, I want you to pay attention to me. I can't live in constant fear you will go to Vicky at every given opportunity. You can't embarrass me."

Aaron's brows furrowed. He leaned forward. "Venus, you know Vicky is my mate. How can I give myself to you when she is around? But I'll marry you."

My jaw dropped. I knew it. Anger exploded in my chest. Before I burst up crying, I got up and walked out of the restaurant.