

## Chapter 6: Heart to Heart

Benedict

I watch as Scarlet and Slade help to calm Aisling. Her power is extraordinary.

'Most people have forgotten that she and her brother are pure Alphas. Most people have forgotten her power because she doesn't push it out, just like we don't,' Marrok says, watching with fascination.

'She could have put everyone in this school on their knees,' I say.

'Everyone but us. Did you feel her power?' he says, purring in my head.

'Yeah, I sure did. So did everyone else.'

"Young lady," Principal Rollins growls, stepping toward Sloane. I'm not going to let him get Aisling all riled up again because he's arrogant and stupid.

'I believe the words were "insignificant and unintelligent",' Marrok says. He's obviously enamored with Aisling and her power.

I step forward. "Sloane, why don't you go with Scarlet and Slade. Aisling probably needs some time to cool off," I say, holding her gaze.

She nods, looking around once more, before letting her brother and best friend lead her away.

"Alpha Benedict," Principal Rollins begins ready to argue with me.

"Principal Rollins, the only reason you didn't end up on your knees or your back in complete submission is because Sloane had some level of control over her wolf. I'd suggest that you walk away and leave Sloane



alone for the rest of the day. Otherwise, you and the rest of this school might actually see how much power she truly has. Because as powerful as that display was, it wasn't her full power."

I see the fear in his eyes before he tamps it down. Then he spins on his heels, no doubt to go call Roman Hartwell and tell him that his niece is causing problems again.

"Well, that was fucking nuts," Alpha Jeremy says walking up. He's Alpha to the other two girls who were harassing Sloane.

I turn and look at the two girls from my pack who Aisling had on their knees. I'm furious that they thought they could lie to me.

"Tell me what happened. The truth this time," I growl, pushing my Alpha aura out.

Both girls yip and raise their necks in submission.

"We told her no one would ever want her. We told her that if she found her mate he'd run because he'd be afraid that she'd kill him just like her mother did to her father."

Marrok growls angrily.

"And you think that I approve of you bullying another wolf? Or that you can lie to me about it, hoping to stay out of trouble?" I ask, my voice icy steel.

"No, Alpha."

I glare at them, not releasing them.

"The two of you just earned yourselves eight hour patrols every day after school and on the weekends for the next month," I growl.



“Alpha no! Please! It’s the end of the school year!”

“Perhaps you should have thought of that before you represented me and your pack in such a disgraceful way,” I snarl.

“That’s kind of harsh, don’t you think, Benedict?” Jeremy asks.

I turn and look at him. Unlike me, he isn’t a pure Alpha. So, if Aisling had pushed the full power of her aura out over the student body, he’d have been on his knees too.

“Are you willing to risk Roman and Samara Hartwell finding out that your pack members bullied their niece and you did nothing about it?” I ask, already knowing the answer. Just the fact that he would let this slide is repulsive enough in my book.

He glances at the other two she-wolves whose eyes go wide. “Alpha, no. Please!”

“You’ll survive one month. Our pack won’t survive an attack by the Hartwells,” he growls.

The she-wolves break down in tears. I ignore his pack members and focus on the ones from my pack. “Don’t embarrass me ever again,” I growl before turning and walking away.

The crowd parts for me, letting me through. As soon as I’ve passed them, I lift my nose in the air and find her scent. I don’t know why I feel the need to make sure she’s okay, but I do. I could use the excuse that it’s because two of my pack members were responsible for Aisling’s wrath, but that wouldn’t be the truth. And I’m not the kind of Alpha who hides behind lies.

The reality is, I’m just worried about her.



I find the three of them out by the bleachers that surround the outdoor track and field area.

It isn't until I'm almost to where they're sitting that I realize Sloane is crying. Something inside me twists, hating that this strong woman has been brought to tears.

In my distraction, I didn't realize that I'd been noticed. At least not until I hear the snarl.

"What do you want? Did you come to gloat?" I'm surprised that it's Scarlet who is snarling. It's not her style, not at all. But apparently, she's as protective of Sloane as Sloane is of her and Slade.

I force myself to remain calm, keeping my tone even.

"I wanted to check on Sloane and Aisling," I say, watching as Sloane quickly swipes the tears off her cheeks.

"You don't need to worry about me, Benedict. I'm fine," she says, not turning around to look at me.

"Sloane, or rather, Aisling, I want to apologize for my pack members' behavior. They will be punished for what they did."

She scoffs. "Don't bother. It won't matter anyway."

"It matters to me," I say, stepping forward, only to be stopped when Scarlet and Slade stand shoulder to shoulder in front of Sloane.

"You should leave," Slade growls. He's younger than I am, but his wolf is obviously not happy that his sister is upset. As a pure Alpha, his aura is stronger than most of the ranked members who are my age and he's definitely stronger than any wolf his age. But he's not stronger than me.



"I'm not going anywhere until I know that Sloane and Aisling are okay."

"Don't worry, Benedict. I won't go all psycho and kill anyone today," Sloane says in her usual snarky tone.

"That's not what I meant, Sloane."

It's quiet, and as I watch, both Scarlet and Slade turn to look at Sloane. Whatever she just said in the mind link was not meant for my ears. Both of them press their lips together tightly.

"I don't like it, Sloane," Scarlet says.

"I'll be fine, Scarlet."

Scarlet looks at me and if looks could kill, I'd be lying on the ground bleeding to death.

"Fuck with her, and I swear you'll regret it," she snarls, before wrapping an arm around Slade's shoulders and walking down the bleachers, leaving me and Sloane alone.

I wait until they are out of earshot, then I turn back to Sloane. "Are you okay?"

She stands and turns, looking at me with red-rimmed eyes.

"I'm perfectly fine," she says, sniffing.

"You don't have to lie to me, Sloane."

"What would you like me to say, Benedict? That I'm so fucking sick and tired of everyone blaming me for what my mother did? That I'm fucking tired of hearing other wolves threaten my brother because of who our parents were? That I can't fucking wait for the day that I can leave this



hellhole of a school, but at the same time I'm terrified of leaving Slade here without me to protect him? Is that what you want to hear?" she growls.

"I asked for the truth. Thank you for giving it to me. What can I do to help you?"

She blinks, staring at me like I've grown a second head. "Nothing. You can't do anything to help me."

"Why won't you accept my help, Sloane?"

"Because I shouldn't need it, Benedict! Because Alphas should be insisting that their pack members have basic decency. We should be treating each other as equals, not turning into judgmental bullies. Do you know how lucky they are that I don't turn Aisling loose on them?" she snarls.

"Yes, I do. I know that Aisling could have put every one of the students, the teachers, and Principal Rollins on their knees today if she had wanted to. But she didn't. Even after everything, she chose compassion," I say.

"She chose ME! She's the only one who ever has."

"That's not true. Scarlet chose you. Your brother chose you."

"My brother had no choice," she growls.

"Of course he did and he still does. But he chooses you, time and again. Others may not see you, Sloane, but I do. Others may not remember who you are, but I do. Others may not know that you combat hate with compassion, but I do. I see you, Sloane. I know who you are. And I respect you for the woman and wolf that you are."

"What do you want from me, Benedict?" she asks, sounding exhausted.



"I want you to let me help you."

"You want to help me?" she asks, looking at me like she has zero expectation that I will do whatever I can to help her. She's wrong.

"Yes."

"Protect my brother."

"Done. I set that up yesterday," I say, watching her.

"What? Why?"

"Because it's the right thing to do and because you shouldn't have to take on the world alone, Sloane."


She narrows her eyes. "What's in it for you?"

I smile, watching her carefully. "I get to maintain what little respect you and Aisling have for me."

I watch her blink multiple times, then frown, and for once, watch her completely at a loss for words.

 Cooper author

*Benedict is pretty smooth.*

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