

Chapter 22

Nicola's POV

Rivers and I are three sheets into the wind seated at the bar and I'm laughing so hard at his latest story, I'm almost in tears. I hear the chair next to me slide across the floor which a slight screech as someone deposit themselves down into it. When I look over, I almost jump out of my seat in excitement.

"Cameron!" I say as I stumble off the stool and throw my arms around his neck.

"Hey Nic." He says with a chuckle. "Gamma." I feel him nod. "Looks like you both are having a good time."

I can hear the ping of jealousy in his voice but I ignore it.

"So I've heard a special announcement is going to be made soon." He says to the both of us, before looking towards the stage in anticipation.

"Damn. I need to leave for a bit, I'll be back though." He scrambles a little like he's already late before he quickly stands up. He walks out the ball room and I turn to see Cameron giving me a death glare.

"What the fuck?" He says and I can tell he's hurt.

"What?"

"You ignore me all night and I find you drunk, all buddy buddy with the gamma?" His voice is accusing.

"I was not ignoring you." I scoff. I haven't seen him at all tonight.

"Where the hell is your mate anyway?" He snaps and I look down at my feet causing him to growl in anger.

Our conversation is quickly interrupted by Kane's booming voice and the room goes silent as all eyes shift to look at the Beta.

"As you all know, tonight is a special night." He pauses to look across the crowd. "What you don't know is the magnitude of tonight and impact it has on the future of the werewolf kingdom."

Behind him, Zander steps out on stage and Freya prances around in excitement. He looks so regal and powerful, and the whole room seems to notice too as the air completely shifts. His suit is all black and fits him as if it were tailor made, which it probably was. I can hear the lustful whispers of the other females in the room and I immediately want to stand up and stake my claim on him, but I watch patiently as he scans the crowd.

"Good evening." His deep voice calls out to the hundreds whose eyes are now on him.

Something in his tone makes him sound different, like he's no longer holding himself back, and it's sexy as hell.

"First I would like to say thank you for coming here tonight and I hope you've all been enjoying yourselves." His eyes seem to find mine and linger for a few seconds.

Shit.

"Tonight is a big night for all of us and I'd like to start by telling you why. 80 years ago we were under attack and our people were oppressed, beaten, hunted, and killed. An alpha, as you now know as the king, stepped up in hopes of bringing power back into the werewolves species and defeating the Fae." His words grow stronger as his dominance seems to flow throughout the room with each breath. It's easy to tell that everyone in the room is hanging on his every word, eager for the what's about to unveil.

"Then shortly after the war was won he disappeared, and for that I am sorry. I know you are looking for that same alpha to be the man he once was and step up to lead his people. I know some of you have heard whispers on attacks happening throughout our packs and what the future might hold for us, but I'm here to soothe your fears. I've dutifully carried out my role all these years in the shadows, with the help of my incredibly loyal Beta and Gamma, but I won't be doing it any longer.

Instead, I'll be leading next to my people, exactly where I belong and should have been all this time. Whatever the Fae has in store for us, we will be ready, we will overcome, and we. will. win."

The room bursts into a roar of cheers and shouts as Zander finishes his speech. No one questions if he's who he says, because there's nothing to question. The power that rolls off of him is unmatched and I realize that I've only ever felt a fraction of it all this time. My wolf is going crazy in my head for our mate and I can't help the stupid grin that grows across my face as I watch him bask in the glory.

Moments later he walks off the platform and into the crowd. Multiple alphas approach him and shake his hand as others huddle in conversation over what just happened.

"So that dance?" I hear a familiar voice say and I turn to see Alex.

"Um-" I start to stammer but he swiftly grabs my hand.

"Just one dance darling. Plus, it seems as though your gamma is no where to be seen." His movements are fluid and experienced as he flows us across the dance floor before I can come up with another excuse.

He truly is a good dancer, but my focus seems to be on the conversations around me. Women whisper to each other as they swoon over Zander and it's making my wolf feel incredibly possessive.

"He's unmated! I wonder if I have a chance."

"I don't even care if he has a mate or not, the things I would do to that man."

"I'm guaranteed to be in his bed by the end of the night, trust me."

I clench my teeth together as I hear comment after comment from women practically orgasming over my mate.

"Odd really, I feel like you can do much better than the gamma, even if he's the highest ranking one." Alex says, breaking me out of my ease dropping. I look at him in confusion and he raises an eyebrow at my obvious lack of focus. "Rivers?" He elaborates, slightly amused.

"Oh." I clear my throat, trying to hide the embarrassed.

"You're not with him are you?" He asks, but I can tell he already knows the answer.

"No." I reply simply.

Goddess could this get any worse? Here I am, in a rage from other females fawning over my mate, while I'm dancing in the arms of another alpha. The hypocrisy isn't lost on me but it also feels like there's not much else I can do at this point. The song starts to come to an end and I'm praying I can slip away to find Zander after this supposedly 'one dance'.

As I try to step away from Alex, his hand tightens around my waist preventing me from escaping. "You look absolutely stunning." He whispers, staring down at me.

"Oh- thanks..." I trail and he chuckles at my awkwardness.

He leans in for a kiss and I immediately freeze in panic. A hand quickly gets shoved in between the two of us and I look to see Rivers with irritation in his eyes at the man's boldness.

"I'll take it from here." He says and Alex immediately releases me.

He doesn't say anything as he steps back but continues to maintain eye contact as he walks across the room. Right before he's lost in the crowd, he grins and gives me a wink that chills my blood.

"Come on." Rivers says in a gentle voice as he takes my hand.

I try to find my mate in the sea of people but he is no where to be seen. My shoulders slump as I continue to be led by Rivers until we are back at the bar. He hands me another drink, which I gladly accept, before cringing slightly. "I'm sorry I left you for so long."

"It's okay." I murmur as I proceed to take a sip.

I can feel the hair on the back of my neck stand up and I look around to meet Zander's intense gaze. He looks between Rivers and I with question in his eyes and it's then I realize just how close we're sitting

next to each other. Zander maintains eye contact with me, a hint of apprehensiveness behind mask of calm, as a woman comes from the side to approach him. I can feel the same emotion simmer in my blood as she lightly touches his arm and steps closer to say something in his ear. My wolf is pressuring me to take action, but I don't. Instead I place my trust in him and watch to see the next move.

Chapter Comments



