

The sun broke over the horizon the next morning. Aria peeked her eyes open. She smiled, remembering the events that took place the night before. She sat up and began making her way down her shady perch. She hit the ground and stood tall. Aria couldn't remember the last time she had felt this happy. She needed to find Fauna and tell her closest friend about what had transpired yesterday. She raised her head up, her nose twitching, trying to find the scent that was Fauna. She inhaled deeply and located it to the left of her and started racing her way towards her friend. Fauna was on the move, Aria could just barley make out her scent moving across the savanna. It was mingled along with another scent that was unmistakably Adam's.

Aria raced in the direction of the two receding scents. She could faintly make out a long, horned figure prancing through the fields. Aria slowed down slightly, she wanted to tell Fauna but didn't want Adam to know about her secret love. He was one of those animals that thought anyone who was romantically involved with another outside of their species was trash. Aria felt a stab of pure anger at Adam's close minded attitude. *Love shouldn't have boundaries* Aria mused.

Shaking the thoughts from her mind, Aria followed the two gazelles as they raced across the plains. Aria had to admit to herself that watching them race was an interesting spectacle. They moved so gracefully easily weaving past some of the other animals in the plains and never managing to run into each other. Aria continued her stalking. Fauna and Adam neared the watering hole located at the farthest south east side of the plains. Aria followed still and slowly approached them. She stood to her hindquarters and cleared her throat allowing Adam and Fauna to know that she was there without startling them. Fauna spun around first and broke out into a wide smile upon seeing her friend.

Aria embraced Fauna in the hugest hug. Adam finally bothered to turn around and he merely glanced in their direction before returning to gulping down water.

"What happened to you yesterday?" Fauna held Aria out at arms length to assess that she was truly okay.

"I figured I'd give you two the time alone. I just wandered around looking for food before returning to my tree-" Aria trailed off trying to convey that there was more to the story then she was currently telling. Luckily Fauna caught on and she turned toward Adam. Placing on hoofed hand upon Adams muscular shoulder interrupting his continued drink from the lake.

"Honey, do you mind giving me a few minutes to talk with Aria in privacy?" she asked sweetly, smiling at Adam, the smile reaching even her eyes.

"Sure, I'll catch up with you back here in about 40 minutes or so. I'll go meet up with some of the guys" Adam never could resist Fauna's orders. Despite how Aria personally felt about him she felt that the two gazelles were meant for each other. Adam turned back away and thundered his way around the watering hole towards the open grassy field before him.

Aria and Fauna watched Adam's fleeting form disappear into the large open field. Fauna twirled around "Okay spill it" she demanded, wasting no time.

Aria delved into the full story about what had happened after she left Fauna and Adam. She told Fauna about how the lion cubs and their two chaperone's had ended up at her tree, how Jake had scolded the younger cubs

and then sent them on their way. She continued on, telling her about how Jake stuck around and how they watched the sunset together. Fauna raised her eyebrows as Aria continued on. Fauna couldn't contain her shocked expression as Aria told her about their hand holding and the attraction she felt for Jake.

"But Aria he's a lion. The animals around here will not let that go un-noticed!" Fauna couldn't hide the shocked tone as she scolded Aria. "What would the lions say if they heard of what Jake did!" Fauna saw her friend wince as she was scolded. "But I am glad you have found someone who makes you feel this good." She smiled at Aria, truly happy that her closest friend had found love.

"I'm so happy to have gotten that off my chest" Aria sighed in relief. They spent the rest of their stolen time going over what Fauna had done when they had split. They laughed and talked about love and hope. All that went away as Adam came walking back up to them, breathing hard and looking angry. His nostrils flared as he stomped his way towards the lake.

Fauna lurched to her feet "What's wrong?" she asked as she ran to meet Adam.

"Those damn lions!" Adam snarled "I met with some friends to go graze out by the rock quarry and a group of them came by and started heckling us. We got into a fight, they jumped us! I'm so fucking tired of the lions acting like they own the savanna, this is not over!" The look that crossed Adam's face was frightening. He looked ready to kill.

Fauna reached carefully out to touch Adam's shoulder. He quickly looked down to her and immediately the hard expression changed and he calmed down looking at Fauna. Aria felt a pit open in the bottom of her stomach. She hoped and prayed that Jake had not been part of the fight.

"I need to leave, I promised a friend I'd meet with them in an hour." Aria hastily mumbled. She turned away from the sight of Fauna trying to coax Adam back from his rage talk and began tending to a cut across his forearm that hadn't been noticeable before. Aria ran on all fours trying to outrun Adam's words of the fight. She felt the first droplet of tears as she fretted over what had gone down.

It took her a few minutes to realize she was at the open field where Jake and she had spent their evening. She sat down in the grass bringing her legs in close and wrapping her arms around them in an awkward huddle. She watched the savanna for any sign of Jake. 30 minutes later and she saw movement at the bottom of the small hill. The straw colored fur gave it away as Jake. She felt her heart beat rapidly as he sauntered towards her. He seemed unscathed and Aria felt herself let out a breath of relief she hadn't realized she'd been holding.

Jake reached the top of the hill and Aria launched herself into his arms. She breathed in the musky, grassy scent of him. She could feel him inhale her scent as well. She purred in pure joy. It was then that she remembered about Adam and the fight. She reluctantly pulled herself from Jake's arms and stepped back.

"I heard there was a fight between the lions and a few of the other animals in the savanna" Aria paid close attention to his face waiting for some sort of reaction. His face was an instant mask of mild shock.

"Yes I had heard there was a fight, but there seems to be some mass confusion as to who started it. The lions are saying it was a gazelle and a few others." He said

"Well I happen to know of the gazelle and his friends, and they say the lions started it" Aria replied.

Jake remained in quiet contemplation for a few seconds before replying "Does it really matter who started the fight? I can tell by your expression you are wondering if I had anything to do with it."

Aria couldn't hide her embarrassment as her cheeks blushed pink "I'm sorry, I'm not sure what to think. I'm just concerned. My friend Fauna is very sweet and I'm worried about how far this tiff between the animals will spread." Aria dropped her head in guilt that she could even think such a thing as Jake being involved.

"Well I want you to know I was not part of that fight." Jake replied grabbing Aria's chin and tilting her face back to his. He leaned in looking into her eyes. Passion burned through him and he brought his mouth closer to hers, watching her reaction and giving her time to pull away if she chose to. Their eyes met and she nodded.

Jake leaned in those last final few centimeters to kiss her. Aria shivered in the anticipation of Jake being so close to her. A million thoughts passed through her mind as he came ever closer.

It was at this moment they heard the shouts emanating from the savanna below.