

## Excerpt from *The Chase*

*What a difference a day makes...* And it hadn't been a day. It had been an *evening* in Milan. *Brief moments* of an evening. I didn't care about the consequences to whomever. Through my obsession with Svadishana I became aware of the fact that I was a person. A human being, not an almighty god, with all the baggage that comes with being that. I too – eureka! – had a heart pumping white and red corpuscles through my veins. Blood, not icicles.

Was it love I felt for Svadishana? A woman I'd spoken three whiny words – *Please call me!* – to? Was it more than simple lust and desire? Did I want to possess more than just her body?

Pondering these questions alone was so unlike me. That woman had turned me into an alien even unto my own self. What I felt, my inner voice said, was more than the thrill of the hunt. More than lust, desire, need, passion, the excitement of possession, and subjugation.

Of course all that was part of it. But the basis or the source, the seedbed on which all that sprouted and was growing to full blossom in me, could well be something else.

When I thought of her, saw her image from Milan in my mind, watched how she moved in long smooth strides in YouTube, my brow beaded with sweat. I couldn't pull my gaze away from the few photos I'd fished out of the Internet. Group photos at a family birthday or the authorized biography of her father. Her movements in a YouTube conference clip were springy and powerful even in their smoothness. She exuded strength all over the place, laughing, talking, gesticulating.

A breath-taking beauty. Such beauty that I dared not believe it at times.

And brains to go with it.

In love or not, I knew what I wanted and Svadishana was the answer. I wanted her and would do anything short of suicide to get her. Who knows – perhaps when it came to that as the only means available, I'd really murder too. I didn't in the least care about the consequences, as long as they got me to where I wanted to get to.

Svadishana's arms and knickers and... heart?

*What obsession, Roman. Get back to real.*

No chance. *Real* was Svadishana.

~\*~

The massive door wasn't locked. Alyssa pushed it and we were in the checkerboard marble foyer that could function as a ballroom.

I was in.

Complete with the gatekeepers' and the Lord Chamberlain's stamp of approval.

And I immediately heard soft patters on the carpeted circular wide staircase. The patters hurtled down the spirals from the first or second floor above us.

"Alyssa! You're much earlier than I..."

*Yes?* I recognised the voice.

"I know, I know. Roman was in a hurry to apologize."

I hardly heard Alyssa.

I held my breath, rotating on my waist, then heels, to keep my eyes on her as she skipped down the curved stairs like a filly in the meadows. Svelte. Legs from here to eternity, as I remembered.

Then she slowed down a little, strode smoothly rather than skipped. She had her caramel-coloured curls up carelessly, *masses* of it, with escaped wisps squiggling down her neck and face, a white towel slung around her neck over her wide training bra top. The ends of the towel hung just below each of her breasts. The bra top left her delicious glowy burnished-gold middle naked. She had some light loose matching workout trousers in beige tied with pull-string way below her navel, revealing the beginning of the curves of her hipbones. The string endings dangled, slapping the top of her groin as she put one foot before the other down the stairs.

Watching her descent, I was forced into performing pirouettes to keep my gaze on this magnificent creature floating down to me like a goddess descending from heaven.

"I was still in the middle of my Pilates and yoga when you were announced."

Flawless teeth adorned her megawatt smile through a baby mouth with bee stung lower lip. The bottom lip had a split down the middle. She was barefoot too, I could now tell, as she lunged forward from the bottom step onto the foyer to hug Alyssa, the towel dropping.