

## Chapter 116

Zeke crashed through the front door and looked around. All the curtains were drawn, so it was dark inside. There were only two people in this house, all alone like a couple of lovers.

He growled as he followed Ava's scent up the stairs.

She was supposed to be in his bed sleeping, not hanging out with his enemy.

“Ava!”

His voice was low, on the verge of shifting. It didn't matter now what he did to Jared. Once he and Ava left the academy, he would likely never be allowed to return. He would never graduate to be officially recognized as the Alpha.

But he would be Alpha anyway. He and Shadow agreed on that

When he reached the top of the stairs, his steps faltered when he saw his mate coming out of the master bedroom. And she was terrified. Her heart was beating so fast and so loud that he had to tune it out to

concentrate. It felt like he had been transported back to when Ava had hidden in her room in fear.

Why would she be scared now? Just a couple of hours ago, she'd kissed him publicly like she was claiming him. She had melted in his arms. The scent of her arousal had turned him inside out, and had there not been all the other scents and heartbeats of the people around him, he would have completely lost his head. She had been ready to go all the way,

“What are you doing here, Ava?”

“Am I a prisoner in your home?” she asked.

What?

“No. Why would you-“

“Then I can go anywhere I wish,” Ava added.

“Of course you can, but only with me. It's not safe! You're not safe-“

“Not safe from who?”

He watched the stubborn tilt of her chin and the sudden anger in her eyes as she remained in front of Jared's bedroom door. How the hell had things gone so wrong since this morning?

“What lies has that bastard been feeding you!” he growled.

“Are you going to kill him when you become Alpha?” Ava asked.

It was a truth universally known that Jared would die by his hands. There was no need to hide or lie about it.

But by the way Ava sucked in her breath and took a step back, he knew that wasn't what she wanted to hear.

“Did he tell you why he's going to die. Ava?” he growled. “Did he tell you why everyone knows he's going to die, but no one is even going to try to stop me?”

“How can they stop you? You're...”

“I'm what?”

Ava looked away and put her hand on the door handle behind her.

“This is Jared's house. I think you should at least respect that and leave. I'll speak to you later.”

“Are you being serious right now?” he growled.

What was this? And why did those words hurt so much? Shadow whimpered and retreated, leaving him to deal with the pain on his own. Was she actually choosing Jared over him?

“Yes,” Ava answered. “Go home”

And then she walked back into the bedroom. Another man's bedroom. Jared hadn't even had the balls to come out and face him.

He was not having that! He ignored her suggestion and marched down the hallway until he shoved the door open. He was ready to end Jared for whatever he said to his mate to make her so cold towards him, to make her scared of him again.

But the moment he walked in, startling Ava in the process, he saw the asshole on the bed looking half dead. He stopped dead in his tracks to look at the wolf on the bed. He was pale and sweaty, and there was the stench of infection in the air, like all the rot he had inside had come to the surface.

Jared groaned and then opened his eyes, and for the first time since he had known him, he saw fear in them. There was none of the arrogance that usually tested his control. None of the misplaced confidence. He was a man who knew his time was up,

“I didn’t ask her to come.” Jared whispered

What the hell was wrong with him? Those looked like the wounds from their very short, very unsatisfying match, but he should have healed by now.

“Leave him alone.” Ava said, standing between him and the bed.

“You’ve done enough to him already.”

She was still scared but brave enough to defend the wolf. It was an admirable quality, but not when she was protecting Jared.

“Let’s go home, Ava. You need to rest,” he commanded.

“Jared has no one to take care of him. I’m going to stay a while.”

At least she didn’t say she wasn’t ever coming back, but her words still hurt. He looked over her to the wolf still looking at him from the bed. He to think he did fight anyone who couldn’t fight back because he was a man of honor, but the truth was he preferred the rush of the hunt his prey gave a good light. Not when they were already on their deathbed. Killing Jared now would be like squashing a useless bug. That bastard needed to heal so he could kill him properly.

But there were other people who could take care of Jared. He had a pack, and he had Omegas assigned to him. It wouldn’t be his mate who would nurse his enemy back to health.

“Shift and heal,” he told Jared.

“I can’t. My wolf is gone.”

He frowned, Was it his bite that had done that to him? He was supposed to mark Ava tonight. Would she end up the same way?

He’d had a tight grip on Shadow for years, but the few times he attacked didn’t end well for his opponents. The vampires during the summer break, for example, and the few rogues that had dared to stray over the boundaries of his pack lands. Then there was Claire, who he’d left in Jared’s backyard, and Jared’s Beta in the woods. He’d left those two alive, but he hadn’t seen them since. Did his bite do the same to them? Or was Jared just really messed up beforehand?

Shadow pushed forward and repeated the command.

“Shift and heal.”

He was not and would never be Jared’s Alpha, but he could command anyone.

“No.” Jared groaned, but his body didn’t listen to him.

“What are you doing?” Ava screamed as she rushed over to the bed.

But before she could get to him, Jared’s grey wolf filled the bed. His whimpers were full of pain as he put his head down and closed his eyes. The wounds looked a lot worse in this form. Shit. He’d been intent on killing Jared in that ring, but he hadn’t realized he had done that much damage. “He will heal quicker like this,” he stated.

At least, he hoped that was true. There was still no sign of that happening. As an Alpha, even such a weak one, Jared was supposed to heal quicker than other wolves.

“Now, let’s go home.”

“I can’t leave him like this,” Ava protested, and then she gently put her hand on Jared’s head, petting him as if to comfort him.

He growled. He felt Shadow unfurl inside him, ready to put a stop to this bullshit.

But before his beast could make that decision for both of them, he strode forward and picked Ava up.

“What the hell are you doing?!” she screamed.

He slung her over his shoulder, ignoring her struggles as he walked down the stairs. There was no way in hell his mate would stay here. It was time the two of them had this talk.