

Chapter 125

Zeke stood in the doorway long after Ava and her dad had driven off.

He'd been in hell the past few nights, but when he had seen her again. When that smile appeared on her lips, the pain ravaging his body and mind stopped instantly. Something deep inside him clicked into place.

She was his. She'd accepted that.

Then his father opened his mouth and ruined everything.

No, he couldn't even blame his father for this. This was on him. He had taken too long to tell her the truth because he'd known this would be her reaction.

He tried to keep his mind from going back to the dark place he'd lived in for the past few days. Though it had hurt to watch her walk away, he knew that if he could just get her to talk to him, she would believe him. She was his mate. But even if she didn't, if it took her some time to understand, she would have no choice when he got her out of this place, when it would be just the two of them against the world.

He heard cars driving up the driveway and stiffened. His father never came to the house on the first day of the weekend. This was more of a political move for him; he stayed in the restricted area and strengthened his ties with his allies while showing his enemies the strength of his pack. Then, on Saturdays, he saw one or two of his teachers before they came to his house for a quick meeting, and then he would be gone before lunch.

Derek came in first, and then Myles. They met his gaze but didn't say anything. He hadn't seen them since he ordered them to leave him alone, so he knew they were worried about what would happen now—rightly so.

His Beta and Gamma opened both sides of the heavy front doors and stood beside them. His father always liked to make an entrance like he was royalty.

The man himself walked in, and on his arm was the young woman he had chosen as the next Luna of the Blood Moon pack.

His fists clenched as he held Shadow at bay.

“What is the meaning of this?” Alpha Ezra growled.

He didn't even wait for Derek and Myle's fathers to walk in behind them before he started laying into him. Zeke shook his head and walked into the living room. Ava's scent still lingered in the air, he knew his father would catch it when he walked in if he hadn't already.

“The human was in this house?” Alpha Ezra growled.

He turned to face his father as he marched into the room.

“Yes. She lives here,” he answered calmly.

“It’s bad enough that the Council allowed a human here, but you’ve dared to disrespect the whole pack by having her under your roof. I want her out of here. Ezekiel.”

“She’s staying.”

He didn’t even blink an eye as he defied that order. And it was an order. He felt his father’s Alpha tone roll uselessly through the room. Ezra’s eyes glowed blue as his wolf reacted to being defied. The other wolves felt it and lowered their gazes, but he kept his eyes on his father. He knew better than all of them how dangerous this man could be

“I warned you. Ezek-“

“And now I’m warning you. Don’t give me ultimatums, father.”

He also knew how dangerous Shadow was.

The silence in the room was deafening. He had never openly defied his father. He always controlled himself and did what he was told. The perfect son, the perfect warrior, all with the promise that he would become the Alpha, and any retribution on Jared and his pack would be legal. But he wasn’t likely to become the Alpha now, not when he intended to take his mate and run from the academy.

He'd expected that to sting a little, but he didn't care about that anymore. All he wanted to do was explain things to Ava and prove he meant what he said.

"Maybe we should sit down and discuss things calmly," Beta Lawrance suggested. "Then we can catch up before we go and settle down."

Derek's father was always the voice of reason. If he became the Alpha one day, he would be better suited in the role than Alpha Ezra.

His father must have realized he wouldn't win this one, so he readily took up his Beta's suggestion to save face and led the Midnight Pack's Alpha's daughter to one of the seats. He didn't even remember her name, but she was as strong as he had expected for a future Luna. She would make a fine one, one day Just not with him.

"We'll go and get some drinks," Derek said.

"Don't you have Omegas for that?" Alpha Ezra snarled.

"It's... Parents' Weekend. They're with their families," Derek answered.

It was the same bullshit every Parents' Weekend like Alpha Ezra didn't remember the rules of the academy anymore.

"They are Omegas, they should know their roles. When important guests visit..."

“Don’t concern yourself with what happens in my house, Father,” he said as he chose the seat opposite him. “Let’s discuss whatever you need to discuss so Derek and Myles can spend time with their fathers.”

His father wouldn’t see that as a dig at his parenting skills.

“What have you done about the vampires?”

Oh, so his father was digging right in. He’d expected this talk just before he left the next day, not right off the bat.

“I’ve become allies with them. I told them the wolf can stay with her true mate, and I’d back them up.”

A huge vein popped out at the side of Alpha Ezra’s head. His eyes glowed again, and his fist clenched in his lap. It was clear his father was on the verge of shifting.

“You did what?”

“I know you heard me. Father. As future Alpha, it was my prerogative to find a peaceful solution, and I did.”

“And what did you gain in exchange for this fucking crazy gesture?”

A vial of blood for his human mate. It was probably better he skipped that revelation. There was no telling what his father would do while he was here, and Gideon’s father was likely also visiting his son. The Council’s rules could only protect them so much. Ezra would find a way to use his people if he had to.

And Ezra could get to Ava, too. It was why he'd needed to mark her before his father came.

Derek and Myles came in with trays of drinks just as he stood to leave. It was Ava who needed his protection now. His Beta and Gamma would be fine with their fathers there.

“Where are you going, you disrespectful child? You haven't answered my question or even said a word to your mate.”

He eyed the woman who had kept her gaze down the whole time even though she had Alpha blood herself. Ava would have looked everyone in the eye by now.

“What's your name?” he asked.

The woman's brow rose in surprise before she answered, “Sierra”

“I'm sorry for your wasted journey, Sierra. I can't be your mate.”

His father rose to his feet before he had finished speaking and had him by the neck against the wall.

“Have you lost your fucking mind! I've been negotiating this for months!” Ezra shouted, squeezing his throat. “It's that human, isn't it? I was told what you did in front of the whole school. I've told you I want nothing to do with that human. You know I don't make these threats lightly.”

Zeke reached for his father's fingers and pulled them away with no effort.

“And I don't make my threats lightly, either. If you do anything to her, if you even look at her, I will end you,” he growled, his voice deeper as Shadow let his intentions be known.

He watched in satisfaction as his father briefly lowered his eyes, but he knew this was temporary. He had started the war now. His father would come for him with everything he had. It was time to find his mate and mark her once and for all.