

Chapter 165

Ava sank lock into her seat hiding away from the purple gaze she saw in her nightmares every night. It felt like he could look into her soul. She couldn't see the stage, but somehow, she knew their attention was still on her.

From the tension she felt around her, she realized the Omegas could sense they were in the presence of evil even though their gazes lowered. Her heart was pounding, but she knew that for the first time, hers was not the only one.

She felt some pressure in her head, and then the icy fingers probed at her, the same icy fingers she felt in Isolation and the forest. She could almost feel the thick molasses feeling all over her body as the dark magic tried to work its way in. She sat still, afraid to even breathe.

“Good morning, students.”

The dean's voice rang loudly in the silent room, starting her. And with that, she realized her head had become a little foggy, as if she had been on the verge of being trapped in a spell.

She had to think about something else. Focus on something else like she did in Isolation. But she couldn't think straight. It was as if something was snatching things out of her head, and incomplete thoughts were jumbled inside her.

“This semester, we have seen several changes in our academy that are guaranteed to bring out the best in each and every one of you,” the dean said. “Most of you have done the academy proud, while others still need to learn the values of our school.”

Focus.

She needed to focus before she gave anything away.

The dean's words just floated around her head as she tried to remember the beach and her imaginary Zeke. Would he come to her aid here? Would it work the same?

She looked over at the Alpha section to try to see Zeke, but she couldn't find him. Instead, it was Claire's cold gaze she met. She lost her focus again. Staring into those lifeless eyes

“As we prepare for the real evaluations at the end of the semester, I am honored to welcome our guests, Councilors Luca, Dalca and Lupei, and our esteemed President, Mr. Hansson.”

Again, the dean's words pulled her out of the fog. The magic in the air was not allowing her to focus, What were they looking for? She hadn't felt this the first time she met the councilors.

The dean's words whirled around in her head again. He'd said Mr. Hansson. Not Alpha or King. Not even the High Priest. Just Mr.

She would have the man who ran the whole show would want the world to know his role. But she couldn't even tell what he was.

"The president has kindly taken time out of his busy schedule to ensure we reach our full potential. To this end, we will see some changes in some of our schedules in the areas that need improvement."

Her hands went to her temples as the pressure increased again. What were they trying to do? Mash her brain? The probing had stopped, but it felt like the icy fingers were just squeezing her insides now. Her heart felt like it was going to explode.

"Please welcome our President to the stage."

There was a short silence, and then a gentle, silky-smooth voice filled the room.

"Thank you for the warm welcome, Dean Russell," Mr. Hansson said.

The voice washed over her, and just like that, the pressure eased. The fog disappeared. The sickly feeling against her skin felt like a gentle caress. Her heartbeat relaxed to its normal rhythm. Something in his voice made her want to listen to him. It made her want to believe he was as gentle as his voice suggested. It is like a vampire's allure but not so blatant. Her hands lowered from her temples, and she sat straighter in her seat to look around at the students in front of her, compelled by a force she couldn't understand.

She looked at the stage and found all four pairs of eyes on her. They were so openly curious, eyeing her like a piece of candy. If she hadn't felt so calm, she would have shrunk back in her seat in fear.

The three Council members were still as beautiful as she remembered, but the Head of the Council held all her attention this time.

“I called this assembly to assure you that you have nothing in worry about. You just have to do as I ask.”

It felt like he was talking only to her because he was looking only at her.

“The Council has decided that we will assess all our academies in a similar manner, just to make sure you are all getting the quality of education and training that you deserve as the future leaders of our community.”

And then he smiled again, but she felt no fear this time.

“I look forward to seeing what you can do.”

And then he turned away. She felt bereft as he walked to sit with the others until he turned his gaze back to her.

She didn't even hear what the dean said afterwards as that purple gaze stayed on hers. She had never felt the weight of a gaze as much as she felt this one.

Someone stood up in her line of vision, blocking the President from her. Her senses returned to her as if someone had slapped her up the head with them. She sucked in a breath as she fell back into her seat.

What the hell was that?

How did he do that?

How had he made her lose herself entirely in him? Was that how easy it would be for him to make her do what he wanted?

She felt the vibrations in the chair and looked beside her to see Emily trembling like a leaf. Not just Emily but all the Omegas. Her whole section sat gripping their chairs or their hands clasped together on their laps, shitting themselves. They were terrified. They looked like they were stuck in that for that had tried to catch her.

She looked at the Alpha section to try to find Zeke again and found all of them looking in their direction, studying the Omegas as if they had not been subjected to the same thing by the Council. They had not been targeted. But she had. And among all the Omegas, she was the only one with her head raised. And she had looked directly into the Council members' eyes in front of the whole student body without any thought of the consequences

That was surely going to have her sent to Isolation faster than anything.

As the room started to clear, she realized that even though she couldn't see them anymore, the Council members were still paying attention to her. And she'd had her thoughts unshielded.

She stood quickly, eager to leave their presence. But Emily remained seated, as did the other Omegas. She saw Samantha and Julie a few rows down, also in the same state. Was that magic supposed to make them stay here? Did the Council have plans for them?

“Emily,” she hissed.

The wolf tilted her head up but did not meet her gaze.

“Let’s go,” she hissed again.

She didn’t want to be left alone with the Council, and though she wasn’t so fond of Emily, she didn’t want her to stay there either.

Emily stood quickly and rushed past her to the back exit, but the others stayed seated.

“Samantha, Julie. Everyone, come on,” she whispered again.

The other students were leaving quietly, so she knew her whisper might as well have been a shout from the rooftop. The Omegas got up and did as she asked. All of them in unison. She stood in the spot, frozen for a moment as she watched them file out the back door after Emily.

She knew she had not commanded them, not like when she had-

And she still wasn’t shielding her thoughts. Shit

She looked back at the stage and found the four of them smiling as they watched the Omega exodus. And she knew without a doubt she had just

been set up. It felt like she had so far been giving them everything they wanted. She slipped out of the hall without another thought, trying hard to shield her mind.