

## Chapter 178

“So, has she rejected you?”

Zeke glanced sideways at the Alpha walking beside him and then back at the pavement. He felt juiced up on Mr. Patrick’s magic and didn’t want to say anything wrong, but he had no idea why Alpha Diego had offered to get him for his meeting.

He didn’t respond.

“I mean. I was sure she was going to rip you apart,” Alpha Diego continued. “How did you manage to mate her in the first place? Was it because she hadn’t shifted yet?”

His fists clenched, but again, he said nothing

“Do you think the mark will start to fade now?”

Zeke started to walk a little faster even though where they were going was a lot worse than enduring this mind fuck. He knew there was no chance of the bond being broken because Ava was his true mate, but what if...

“This is why I’ve never marked anyone.” Alpha Diego continued, keeping up with him easily.

The councilor talked to him as if they were friends instead of a prison guard and prisoner.

“Wolves like you, me and Ava were not meant to have mates,” he continued. “Our fates don’t allow it.”

“And what is my fate?” he asked as they approached the Administration building.

I guess that depends on you. I hope you make the right choice, kid,”

His steps slowed as he glanced at the councilor again with a frown. He wasn’t imagining this. He didn’t sense any threat or lies from the Alpha like he was indeed being friendly. But he knew that was impossible. Alpha Diego probably felt they had made their point; the next move was his

“And what would the right choice be?”

“Anything that keeps you alive.”

He was going to ask more questions when he sensed Ava approaching. He turned back and saw the other two councilors approaching him and his mate following like a lost lamb.

He didn't sense any fear even though she was walking with two of the strongest people at this school. Mr. Patrick's protection was working, but hopefully not too well. He didn't want to make Mr. Hansson suspicious.

"Ah, there you are," Iulia said with a smile.

"One big happy family." Andrei added.

Something was not right with this picture. The Council didn't treat any of its soldiers like this, which meant whatever decision they had to make was not what they were expecting. He looked back at Ava, and she shrugged.

"Shall we go in?" Alpha Diego said.

Andrei gestured for Ava to walk past them, and when she did, he and Iulia shared a look he couldn't decipher. It was a quick one, but it made him worry.

He turned to walk with Ava up the steps of the building, and the guards opened the door. He looked back at the councilors. Inside the building, they were not holding hands, and their smiles were gone. It was back to business as usual.

When the next set of guards opened the doors to the inner offices, he felt the sickly magic from the Head of the Council hit him in the face. How anyone else could stand to be in the same building was beyond him, but it felt worse today. Stronger somehow. As if the president was done playing games.

The magic rolled over his skin and wrapped itself around him. His heartbeat elevated, and Shadow growled from behind his magically reinforced wall. Ava gasped next to him as if the magic was doing the same to her. She stepped back, but Andrei was behind her, blocking her.

“Move, Ava,” the vampire said quietly.

He felt a little anxiety from the vampire, but it disappeared quickly.

Would walking away from this have dire consequences?

Zeke took his mate’s hand and felt both their heartbeats start calming down. He looked back at the vampire standing way too close to his mate, and Andrei stepped back without a word. No smile, no smart comeback. But he was too busy trying to protect himself from the invasive magic to think about that.

He looked back at his mate and saw her eyes glow red briefly. They had to remember what they talked about. They had to shield themselves, and that meant keeping focused. Letting their wolves do what they did best, which was protecting them. Even though Ava’s wolf was temperamental, she always protected her.

Ava let out a breath and then started moving, keeping her hand in his. He squeezed it gently as he walked beside her. And then, sooner than he was ready, they were being let into the dean’s office.

The dean was not sitting at the front desk as he had expected. Penelope herself was in her chair, typing away. She looked up briefly when he and

Ava walked in, met Ava's gaze, and then resumed her work as if this was a normal day.

Alpha Diego walked straight to the door and opened it without knocking. He looked at Ava and squeezed her hand again. And then he let her go and walked in first.

Mr. Hansson sat behind the dean's huge desk, looking through some paperwork. He didn't say anything even when the door closed behind the Council members. He looked like a regular human doing a tedious office job.

Until he looked up and showed all his darkness in those purple eyes.

"Oh, good! You're here," Mr. Hansson said. "Forgive me for pulling you out of your classes. An excellent academic career is important for all our future leaders. I won't take up too much of your time."

And then, the man stood and straightened his suit before he walked around the desk. Zeke pulled Ava to stand behind him even though he was outnumbered

Mr. Hansson noticed, and then a slow smile formed on his lips.

"I thought she rejected you," he said. "Mate bonds are so ridiculously fickle. At least they are easy to break."

He felt the cold seep into his bones, and his beast became more alert. No one was breaking his bond with Ava.

“Shall we go?” Mr. Hansson said.

He didn’t know what the Head of the Council meant until he found himself standing quite a distance outside the academy’s massive main gates, right at the boundary to the forest. Right where the forest ran unchecked with no clear boundary. Ava gasped and moved closer to him. Their shock made his mental shield slip a little, and the dark magic immediately started probing.

Shadow growled in his head at the intrusion, even as they both worked to protect themselves again.

Mr. Hansson was still standing in front of him, watching him, when he was fully protected again

“Intriguing,” he said.

And then the Fae turned back to look down the road at the gates that stood proudly in the distance.

There was a reason no one was allowed outside the gates without a pass. If someone, student or staff, did not have the magical clearance, they wouldn’t make it far down the road. Unless they were a demon wolf. His last escape plan would have had him and Ava running down the main road to the end of the forest, but it had still been a long shot. The road was long, and he had never been in the forest for a long time.

He felt the magic of the forest start to press against him and looked back at the Council members. They didn’t look affected by the magic even though they were standing so close to it.

“Do you know why this campus is my favorite?” Mr. Hansson started.  
“It’s not just because I send all the future leaders here. And it’s not just because the security is so impenetrable.”

He looked up at the forest—the impenetrable security—before he turned back to them.

“It’s because this forest has exceeded my expectations. It’s like having my eyes and ears constantly on the academy.”

And then the magic snapped in around him, gripping him like a vice.