

Chapter 184

After dinner, Zeke found Ava sitting with her feet in the pool, looking completely lost.

Her guilt had been weighing on him all day, and he knew it wasn't just about the students she had been forced to kill. She was also thinking of the ones she had to choose as a sacrifice.

He pulled the legs of his sweats up and sat next to her. She didn't even look at him.

What had they discussed at that house? He was still a little paranoid because he knew whatever the Council was trying to achieve was no good for them as mates.

"Are you okay?" he asked

"Yeah," she said.

Lies, of course. He'd already seen that her training didn't go so well. The coach had made her sit it out because everyone was too scared to

spar with her. But they were out in the open, so they couldn't discuss things like before.

"I'll train with you tomorrow. We need to focus your mind so you get familiar with your wolf."

They needed to shut themselves away in the basement and talk things through, but Ava still thought she wasn't strong enough to fight.

"I don't think that's necessary."

Because she expected to do as she was told like a good little lamb. Yes, he got that part.

He shook his head and looked out to the woods. As usual, no one was there because they wouldn't dare trespass in Shadow's woods. The sun was setting, and there had been a slight chill in the air since the Council arrived. Maybe Mr. Hansson was really an air Fac. But what made an air fac weaker would possibly make an earth Fae stronger, so there was no room for guesswork.

"Let's swim," he said, whipping his shirt off.

"Now?" Ava asked, but her eyes were glued to his chest.

At least that hadn't changed.

"Well, we're still technically on our honeymoon," he said as he stood. "And now might be all we have."

When he lowered his sweats, Ava looked away, and he saw her cheeks color as if she wasn't the same wolf who'd been insatiable during her heat.

"You're a wolf. You're going to have to get used to seeing people naked," he grinned.

Or not. He didn't want her exposing herself to anyone else, even though wolves didn't usually care about that.

He dove into the water and swam to the surface to look at his mate. Her mood wasn't as dark as before, so maybe they both needed this. Things were too intense, not allowing them room to breathe

"Come. Take your clothes off, Ava."

Ava bit her lip as she looked at the house and then back at him. He'd already told Myles and Derek to go out and try to find more information so they had the house to themselves,

Ava stood and slowly, so slowly, peeled her shorts and T-shirt from her body. At that moment, he forgot all the shit that was going on and concentrated on his mate as she lowered herself into the water. He caught her gaze as he waded in the water in front of her. She looked unsure and a little scared.

"Are you still mad at me?" she whispered.

"Not at you," he answered as he reached her and then caged her against the side of the pool.

“I can’t lose you or Dad,” she whispered

He kissed her before she could say anymore. He hated that they weren’t free to express themselves and that they were not mentally connected. But he would still choose her every time despite everything

He took his time kissing away her worries even though he had already lost his mind with his need for her the moment he’d touched her lips. Maybe Ava didn’t yet realize the depth he would go to just to keep her safe. If they weren’t linked so completely, he would already have gone after the Head of the Council himself.

Hea rushed through his body as his mate wrapped herself around him.

And then he felt it.

That prickling. That uneasy feeling. And then the rush of wind.

He lifted his head from Ava’s and set her aside before he jumped out of the water and shifted. Shadow’s paws thudded on the paved poolside as he lunged towards the lounge chairs on the side of the pool.

But Andrei Dalca sped out of the way before his jaws could clamp around his neck.

His mate was naked! Andrew has no right to be anywhere near her. He shared Shadow’s rage as his eyes tracked the vampire to the other side of the pool. He didn’t care that the vampire’s strength was beyond anything he had fought before as the bloodlust took him over.

“Whoa, easy there, big guy.” Andrei said. “I didn’t realize I was dropping in at the wrong time.”

He was on him in one leap. He caught the vampire off guard and took a nip of his arm before Andrei zipped away again.

“Oh, you bastard! That’s my favorite shirt!”

He lowered his head, and his hackles raised. The scent of the vampire’s blood brought a red haze over his vision as he locked in on his prey. His lips curled, and a growl came from deep within him as he prepared to unleash his fury on the councilor. He couldn’t control it. There had been too much shit that had happened, and he had been forced to hold all of it in.

And then he felt a wet hand on his flank. Ava’s scent wrapped around him and cooled some of his anger,

“Shh. Calm down, Zeke,” Ava whispered as she touched him.

From the corner of his eye, he saw she had hastily thrown her T-shirt but her legs were still bare.

“Don’t make things worse,” she whispered again.

He sensed her fear but knew she wasn’t afraid of Shadow. She was afraid of the consequences of his actions. She was scared for her father.

He swore to himself as he leaned into her and let her soothe him. If anything happened to her father because of him, he knew their relationship would never be the same, bond or no bond.

Shadow retreated after promising he would get the vampire next time, allowing him to shift back. He was still full of rage and had no outlet for it. Ava came into his arms as if she could sense it, and he buried his nose in the crook of her shoulder.

It was only after he was calm enough to release her that he remembered that the vampire was still there. Watching them.

Andrei had a look on his face as if something had dawned on him, and he found himself praying to the Moon Goddess that he hadn't just given away the nature of their bond.

Andrei's shirt was red where his blood had seeped through, but the vampire didn't look concerned.

"It has been a long time since anyone has made me bleed," Andrei said.

There was no grin on his face.

"And I've never seen anyone calm down a demon wolf caught in a rage," the vampire mused. "When it happened at your mock evaluations. I thought it was just a coincidence."

"What are you doing here?" he growled at the vampire.

Andrei seemed to pull himself back from whatever he was thinking, and the grin returned to his face.

“I was just coming to check on my favorite students,” he said.

And that was a lie. He didn’t know how he could sense that, but the vampire had come for a completely different reason. To speak to his mate?

He pulled Ava back to his side.

“I will make sure I tell you next time before I drop in. Imagine if I had been a few seconds later.”

He growled, and the vampire grinned before he disappeared.

“He’s figured it out,” Ava whispered.