

Chapter 185

Ava looked into Zeke's eyes. She already knew what he wanted to say.

He'd sat her on a bench and sat on the floor in front of her. His chest was still bare; he'd only hastily put his sweats back on before he'd grabbed her hand and led her to the basement.

He was pissed off, and this time she was sure she was the reason. Had he wanted her to let him hurt Andrei?

"I'm going to tell you something you have probably figured out yourself by now," Zeke started. "Your wolf will never bow to anyone. Not your professors, instructors or coaches. Not the dean. Not the Council and certainly not Mr. Hansson. You will never submit. Your wolf would die before she allows that to happen."

She looked away from his eyes to her hands on her bare lap.

She already knew that. There had always been something in her that had refused to submit to anyone. Until Zeke came along, and she'd offered him her neck before she even realized what she was.

“I will never forgive myself if my father died.”

“You will never forgive yourself if you willingly killed other students.”

“I don’t know them,” she mumbled.

“And that makes it okay?” Zeke asked incredulously.

He came to his knees and took her hands in his.

“We agreed we would fight,” he said.

“That was before I found out my dad was still here,” she said.

“Because you think he would have been safe if he’d gone home? They don’t work like that, Ava. They’re monsters. They would have still gone after your pack just for fun.”

“But you still want us to fight them so they kill our packs, anyway,” she snarled.

“I want you to try everything possible before we fucking give up. We had a plan,” Zeke insisted.

“And it won’t help us. We had one advantage. They didn’t know we are true mates, and that’s gone. We aren’t strong enough!”

His fingers came under her chin, forcing her to look back into his eyes.

“We don’t know that. But we’re monsters, too. If we work together. Not just us, everybody. We still have that advantage. We aren’t the only ones tired of this shit,” he said.

Who would help them? Nobody wanted to be in the same room as her, so she doubted they would get involved. Besides that, she didn’t want anyone else risking their lives.

“Why don’t we go for a run and clear our minds,” Zeke suggested,

“You want me to me to shift?”

Zeke nodded and took her hands again.

“Maybe I can introduce myself to your wolf properly.”

“I don’t know how to do that. It just happened,” she protested. “And I don’t know if she’ll want...”

If her wolf would want to run with her mate. That was so messed up. How was she expected to help with this plan if she didn’t know what was wrong with her wolf?

“Well, she let you touch Shadow a few times, so she must trust us to some extent,” Zeke said. “I think that’s what we need to work on.”

She would try anything at this point. Her wolf, as unreliable as it was, was all she had. She sighed and nodded, immediately sensing Zeke’s relief.

“One more thing.” Zeke said as he helped her to her feet.

“What?”

“Don’t hang out with them again. I think they’re trying to break our bond, but I will never let that happen.” His eyes flashed red as he looked down at her.

She had no idea if that was the Council’s plan, but she agreed. If Andrei had realized the truth, she didn’t want to be around them, anyway.

“Okay,” she whispered.

Zeke kissed her lips before he led her back up the stairs. Myles and Derek were coming in through the front door when they walked out of the basement. Zeke looked at them, and they shook their heads, making him swear under his breath before he took her out to the back.

“Focus your mind,” he instructed as they sat on the lawn in front of the woods, “Don’t think of anything. Just listen to my voice,”

She had done this for days without even a tiny flicker. But she closed her eyes and did as she was asked.

“Listen to the wind in the trees,” Zeke whispered. “Reach out with your senses and hear all those little critters getting ready to go down for the night. Imagine you’re in there with them. Free. Not afraid of shit. Your paws crushing the dry leaves and twigs underneath them.”

She let out a breath and imagined all of that. And then, like in the morning, the sound hit her so hard that she covered her ears and opened her eyes.

“It’s okay.” Zeke said, gently prying her hands away. “You have to let it happen to train yourself to focus it. We can hear more than the others, and if you let your wolf guide you, you will be able to pick up sounds miles away. You can see better. Smell better. Hunt better.”

He put her hands on her lap and held them there.

“Try again.”

She closed her eyes, and this time, the noise was instant. She winced but she could still feel the weight of Zeke’s hands holding hers down, stopping her from covering her ears again. It was too much. It was grating on her nerves and banging around in her head, causing pain.

“There’s a deer not too far from here. She can sense us, so she’s going to run soon.” Zeke whispered. “Do you hear her?”

At least, she thought he whispered. It sounded like he was shouting.

She didn’t hear anything other than the jumble. She was about to give up when she had a moment of clarity and heard the rustling of hooves in the leaves on the ground. She knew she hadn’t done that herself. Her wolf? Was it coming out?

The noise returned, and this time, she pulled her hands from Zeke’s and covered her ears again until everything was silent.

“Did you sense her?” Zeke asked

“Maybe. I don’t know.”

“Okay, I know what you need.” Zeke said as he stood up and pulled his sweats down without warning.

She shrieked and looked away.

“Here?” she asked.

“I think you need to get used to doing it in odd places,” Zeke chuckled.

“But no, that’s not what I mean. I want to introduce you to Shadow properly. He’ll take you for a run, so get on his back, and we’ll go to the lake. Make sure you hang on.”

Get on that huge thing? She was about to protest, but Zeke shifted so quickly that she had to crane her neck more to look up at the wolf standing in front of her.

She had touched it for the second time today and knew he would never hurt her, but her heart still skipped a bit at the sheer size and the aura of danger coming from him. She stood slowly and held her hand up, and Shadow lowered his head so she could reach his muzzle. The giant wolf wagged its tail and whined like a puppy before it licked her face.

She chuckled as she wiped it off and then watched Shadow lower to his stomach so she could climb onto him.

Shadow stood, and the distance to the ground made her dizzy, so she clutched onto his fur and closed her eyes. But when he started moving, she couldn't help opening them. Shadow started running slowly and then faster and faster. She felt the wind in her hair as the trees whipped past. Her wolf had run into the woods when she had shifted, but she had been freaking out too much to enjoy it.

But now she let her mind clear and focused on this feeling. Nothing else mattered except here and now.

Eventually, they reached the lake, and Shadow lowered so she could get off. She was still exhilarated when Zeke shifted back and immediately reached for the hem of her T-shirt.