

Chapter 187

Ava sat very still next to Zeke in the lounge. Her gaze followed Andrei, who was walking around lifting little trinkets to inspect and putting them back down as if he couldn't sense how on edge they were.

Myles and Derek stood behind them as if they were still officially Zeke's Beta and Gamma. But they didn't have to be there. They had nothing to do with any of this.

She looked away from Andrei to look at Alpha Diego and saw that he was in some sort of staring match with Zeke. The war of wills was impressive to watch. Zeke said her wolf would never submit to anyone, but she hadn't thought they could withstand the glare of a wolf that old. Zeke wasn't backing down and she knew it was because he was still angry that Alpha Diego had taken her to their house.

Samantha and Julie walked in with trays full of sandwiches and salad bowls. The plates and cutlery rattled together as the wolves trembled. She didn't know who had told them they had come home for lunch, but the two of them had decided they needed to follow to do their duties. And now they were stuck here, too.

She had told them to leave, but Alpha Diego asked for lunch, and it would have been considered the height of disrespect if they had refused to serve a Council member. The Omegas didn't want to take that chance.

"That smells delicious," Andrei drawled.

She stood quickly and stopped between the councilors and the Omegas. Her breathing quickened as she met the compelling gaze. Samantha and Julie would not meet the same fate as Emily, not while she was still breathing.

Andrei cocked his head to the side.

"How will you do your job if you can't let go of a couple of Omegas?" he mused.

The fear from the wolves behind her increased, and she heard something fall over on one of the trays. Still, they waited behind her instead of leaving the room, as if they would accept whatever fate was decided for them. Their fear played havoc with her senses, and something stirred inside her.

And she knew then that whether it was Samantha, Julie or anyone else, whether she liked them or not, she would still stand in front of them to try to protect them. She would never be able to pick five of them to slaughter for the Council's insane cause.

Zeke had been right.

"You will not touch them," she growled.

“But how will you stop me, Ava? You’re just a kid who can’t even control her wolf yet,” Andrei stated.

He was right. But her fists were still clenched, and something was bolstering her confidence. It was the same thing that had always got her into fights she couldn’t win before, and she knew now that it had been her wolf all along.

“And you’re an old man who should know better,” she said.

“Ouch,” Alpha Diego said

“Let everyone else leave. This doesn’t concern them.”

“It concerns everyone,” Andrej said. “And you’re being very inhospitable for someone who had a drink with us the other day.”

The growl from Zeke was not surprising. He had been holding his anger in since she found him to tell him of their lunch guests.

“Fine, fine,” Andrei said. “The Omegas can leave. But they should put the food on the coffee table because that’s what smells delicious.”

Samantha and Julie did as they were told straight away and left the room. Seconds later, the front door closed, and they were gone.

“So, Andrei said as he picked up a plate and napkin and put a sandwich on it. “Sit down, Ava”

She sat beside Zeke and put her hand over his fist to calm him down. And then she watched as Andrei took a big bite of the sandwich.

Vampires didn't eat solid food; everyone knew that. So, how the hell?

"Delicious," Andrei said as he wiped his mouth and met her gaze again. "I'll tell you my secrets if you tell me yours."

"We have no secrets."

"Really?" Andrei said as he unbuttoned the top buttons of his shirt and then pulled it down over one shoulder.

The shoulder that Shadow had nicked.

He had a dressing over it that he pulled off, revealing the slight damage that Shadow's fang had made. It was supposed to have healed by now

"I haven't come across anything like this in a long time," Alpha Diego said, looking at her and then Zeke. "Now more than ever, you need to stop playing your little games and just listen to us. You have made him curious already, but this..."

He pointed at Andrei's shoulder.

"You need to keep that away from him."

She frowned. Were they not there on Mr. Hansson's behalf? She had been sure they had come to make them pick their five students and get that over and done with.

“I don’t know what you mean,” Ava muttered.

“Then I’ll be blunt.” Andrei said. “Your mate bond pisses him off. If he finds out you’re true mates, then there won’t be anyone in this school that will stop him from killing you two and your packs. Your bond is a threat to him.”

“I still don’t know what you mean,” she lied, “but why would he care about that?”

“Because you can do things like this,” Andrei said, pulling his shirt down again, “Among other things”

“And why do you care what he does to us.” Zeke growled.

“We’re not monsters, Ezekiel,” Alpha Diego said.

She couldn’t help the snort that came out of her mouth before she slapped her hand over it.

“See, it’s things like that you need to stop,” Andrei said. “Those two behind you are shitting themselves, but you two can’t feel an ounce of fear. You openly challenge us. You shield yourselves from us. You can’t be compelled or commanded. You silenced the beasts in the forest with one little growl. Stop.”

“I don’t feel comfortable talking about any of this,” she said.

What if Mr. Hansson was spying on them now? Then he would know all these things anyway.

“Mr. Hansson is a little bit busy right now. You can speak freely,” Alpha Diego said.

“Busy, how?”

There were times when he wasn’t as all-seeing as they assumed? Was that why he hadn’t figured them out yet?

“I’m not now or ever going to speak freely with you.” Zeke said. “Stay away from my mate.”

“Now that I understand the nature of your relationship, I can see I made a grave error in judgment,” Alpha Diego said. “But you need to trust us. Stop sending your Gamma to sneak around. Stop having secret meetings. Pick five students to give him, and then he will go away, and you’ll be free to be kids again while you learn your new roles. No one else needs to die.”

“You’re still not giving us a reason to trust you,”” Ava pointed out.

Alpha Diego sat back and held her gaze. She was sure he wasn’t going to say anything else when he spoke.

“My parents were the only true mates that I’ve ever known in my life. They were unstoppable together. I always thought there was nothing in this world that could hurt them. But a little Fae came and killed them because he couldn’t stand not being the strongest,” Alpha Diego said.

Two old wolves had been killed. Ava felt her hope disappear as she heard that because what chance did she and Zeke have?

“I know you don’t trust me, but I like you two, and I do think when all of this unpleasantness is over, we can actually get along.”

They both stilled, and she could tell they were mind-linking.

“Trust us,” Andrei said, and they both stood and left.