

Chapter 188

Ava was aware they couldn't trust the councilors. Zeke didn't need to keep telling her that. But what if they were telling the truth?

She had been so preoccupied with the lunch meeting that she didn't mind being forced to sit out the training session again.

"For safety reasons," Coach Henderson murmured before he turned to instruct the rest of the class.

So she sat down for hours and mulled over what they had to do. Even though Alpha Diego had almost commanded her the other day, she could still feel Mr. Patrick's magic in her body, so she still had some forms of protection. At least, she hoped so. The thoughts she was having were dangerous. Because she knew it wasn't just Mr. Hansson they would have to fight, it was the councilors and the guards, too,

"Ava."

She snapped out of her thoughts and saw Douche Dexter standing in front of her, wiping his face. She hadn't even seen that the session was over. After hours of sitting, she was no closer to a solution.

“Hey,” she said warily.

“I...Uh, I know it’s late, but I wanted to apologize for what my dad did. I didn’t ask him to,” he started,

“I know” she said, “It’s fine, don’t worry about it.”

His father was a bigger bully than he was, but she had bigger problems now.

“If you want me to come over to study after dinner or you want to meet in the library, we can do that whenever you’re ready.”

Right. Schoolwork. She had bigger problems than that, too.

“Sure. I’ll let you know.”

Douche Dexter nodded and then walked away to join the rest of the class that was leaving. Could she still call him Douche now?

She stood to leave when Coach Henderson called her to the side.

“I’ve asked the dean if he can set things up for you to train with Ezekiel,” the coach started. “I don’t want to sideline your progress, but I think you’d have more of a challenge training with someone like...”

Someone like herself. She wasn’t offended. She didn’t point out that she had trained with everyone else just fine before she had shifted. She couldn’t make them less afraid of her, so arguing was pointless.

“Sure. Let me know when you do,” she said and then turned to walk away.

“Ava.”

She turned back and saw him watch the door as the last student left.

“I don’t know what’s going on here, but be careful. Emily was murdered, but they’re walking around as if that’s normal. Keep your head down, okay?”

That was surprising. Coach Baxter would have been the first to throw her under the bus.

“I’ll try. Thanks.”

When she left the training room, she didn’t feel as depressed as she had been the other day. But she knew she was still a long way away from anyone putting what she had done behind them.

She went straight to the locker room—no, the new dressing room she had been assigned with her new role—and picked up her bag. She would shower at home. Her father was coming to see her, and she was anxious to know if Mr. Hansson had approached him at all.

“Ava.”

Miss Popularity. Besides Zeke, Derek and Myles, no one else had spoken to her since her shift. She turned to see Jared coming up the hallway with his kit on and his bag slung over his shoulder.

“I’ve told you to keep away,” she said, looking around to see if Andrei would just pop up again out of the blue.

“I know, but I haven’t been able to come near you since that day. I wanted to thank you,” he said as he stopped in front of her. “I know it wasn’t easy. but you saved my life. Again. It’s becoming a habit.”

“Or maybe it should be a sign to you that it’s dangerous to be around me,” she mumbled as she started walking again.

“What do they want?”

Straight to the point.

“Something I don’t know I can give them,” she sighed.

“Are you in danger?”

Yes.

“No. I’m fine. But stay away until it’s all over, okay?”

They walked out of the building, and the first person she saw was Zeke leaning against his car. But he wasn’t alone. Myles and Derek stood with him, and their eyes were on Jared. There was so much hatred and anger that she had to stop.

“I’ll see you around.” Jared mumbled before he turned and walked the other way.

Zeke told her that Jared was going to die by his hands, but he hadn't told her the whole story. Looking at the other two boys, she realized this was much bigger than she had imagined.

"Come, Ava Let's go home."

Zeke smiled at her as if that moment with Jared had been nothing. He opened the passenger-side door, and the other two got into the back.

"It must feel weird not to have detention," Myles said.

And he, too, acted as if nothing had happened. But the three of them had faced death together against Claire and her friends. Hadn't that taught them anything? Surely, right now, the aim was to make sure they all stayed alive?

When they walked into the house, they all dropped their bags in the entryway and headed straight for the basement. Even though they were now aware of how dangerous meeting each other was, Mr. Patrick and her father still insisted. Alpha Roland was waiting at the bottom of the stairs with his arms wide open for her. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath as she tried to imprint this moment into her memory. There was no telling how things would work out. Every hug could be the last.

"What happened at lunchtime?" Mr. Patrick said without a greeting.

They all filed in to sit in their usual spots. Since Mr. Patrick had put the protective spell on them, he couldn't read their minds either, so he had to wait for his answers like everyone else without plucking them from their heads.

“We found out that Andrei can eat solid food, and Mr. Hansson doesn’t always see what is happening” she told him

“Untrustworthy source. They were probably just trying to feed us information to make us reveal our plans. Why else have they been acting so friendly?” Zeke said.

“The councilors have a special bond. They’ve been a pack of sorts since Julia joined the Council,” Mr. Patrick explains,

“Julia wasn’t there today. I think she linked them when their time was up,” Derek said.

“And you’re talking as if you believe what they said. They’re experts at mind games. Always remember that.” Zeke said.

“They didn’t fake that nasty wound on Andrei’s shoulder. You’ve bitten people before, and they’ve healed. So they were right to say your bond changes things,” Derek pointed out.

Except that time with Jared. But she didn’t want to say his name out loud in case that caused problems.

And it was hard to know how true that was when she had never even heard of true mates until Zeke had told her.

“Well, whatever that is, we have to figure it out quickly,” she sighed.

“Does that mean you’re not going to give in without a fight?” her father asked.

“I would never be able to live with myself, she admitted.

Her father smiled and pulled her into a hug again.

“Proud of you, sweetheart. I think we can do this.”

She didn't. The rest of the day had gone so smoothly and calmly that she felt this was that before the storm. Things were about to go very wrong.

But she squeezed her father, kept her mouth shut, and prayed that, for once, her gut was wrong.