

Chapter 198

Zeke studied his mate sitting across from him on the grass in the quad.

He'd heard trickles of her thoughts the whole morning because she was like a pup who still needed to learn to control her strengths. It would take a while for her to get the hang of her new capabilities and to figure out why Derek and Myles could hear her, too.

He hoped to the Goddess that she wasn't somehow linked to his father because that would suck. He didn't want anything to do with that asshole after he'd tried to kill Ava. When all this shit was done, he was going home and reclaiming his rightful place one way or another.

If they got out of this alive.

He'd felt Ava's pain along with her thoughts, and it was fucking killing him. Should they drop the whole thing?

He was no stranger to doing bad things for the good of the pack. He'd been trained to do that before he even shifted. After Shadow arrived, the decisions had been life or death ones. If they chose to trust the

councilors and lived to die another day, he could pick the five students for them. He could carry that burden himself to spare Ava.

But how could they trust the councilors when the Council guards had surrounded them since they'd gone home after that fiasco yesterday? Even now, they were all around the Quad. It was like they knew something was up. Somebody had told them something.

Or it could be because they realized how quickly things could go wrong and had doubled their security. He had no idea how many of them he had killed, but it happened quickly. Faster than the last time he'd been that enraged. It felt different, but he didn't know what that meant for them.

Could Andrei have been right? Was it because of the bond? Would they have a better chance if they took the time to learn about their bond?

He pushed that thought away because it was ridiculous. Andrei, Iulia and Diego had been on the Council for decades. If they wanted to defeat Mr. Hansson, they would have made a move by now. The three of them were very strong individually, but as a team, he imagined they were unstoppable, especially if they had secret abilities like Andrei being able to eat solid food. They just loved this shit; there wasn't an ounce of compassion in their bodies. The stories he had heard about them were worse than anything Shadow had ever done.

'Zeke?'

Ava's gentle voice in his head made him meet her uncertain gaze

‘How are you so confident that we can do this? How are you not freaking out?’

He was freaking out; he just knew how to channel his emotions better. Another thing he wished he had time to teach her.

“Because I know my monster, and he will wipe everyone out first before he lets them harm me or you. I trust him with our lives.”

He did. But he also knew he was just one wolf against an army. They wouldn’t win unless Mr. Patrick came through for them.

He moved to sit behind Ava and put his arms around her.

“We will let Fate decide this one, Ava. Whatever is meant to be will be. Mr. Patrick was right about your dad; there is nowhere else he’d rather be than fighting at your side. He had already made his choice. He’s the strongest wolf here besides us, and he taught you everything you know. Have faith in him, too.’

‘I know I just keep thinking about what Mr. Hanson said. Our bond threatens him so much that he had to do that yesterday to rule it out. He said our bond enhances us. Maybe that’s why I feel inclined to believe the councilors. If we learn more about that, who knows what we can do in the future.

He thought of the rage he’d felt before he’d slaughtered the guards. Of the bite on Andrei’s shoulder that hadn’t healed and had been the one to confirm to them what he and Ava had been hiding. Jared, after the mock evaluations, had been down for days. And there was the fact that he and

Ava had that mental link that had saved him in Isolation. Maybe that was what had strengthened enough to shield their minds from Mr. Patrick after Nyx had claimed him. Something was different; he couldn't deny that.

But he couldn't trust the Council, especially when they'd taken Ava to 'just hang out'.

"We'll trust Fate," he repeated, kissing the top of her head. "Just think of what we'll be able to do when all of this is over, especially now that I can tell you every single thing I want to do to you without being overheard."

As he'd expected, her anxiety was replaced with something else, but he knew that distraction was only temporary.

Derek, Myles, Samantha and Julie walked up towards them with trays full of food and the guards eyes trained on them. They'd been keeping track of all their interaction.

"These two insisted I on bringing your lunch," Derek said with an eye roll as he placed his tray on the grass.

"It's our duty to hold up our pack." Samantha said to him as she placed the tray in front of Ava and then Julie placed hers beside him,

The Omegas had been more confident since they had chosen to give their loyalty to Ava. And he wasn't imagining that; they had somehow bonded with his mate. There was no longer any fear in the air when they were in his house, not like the first days when having them around him

had pissed him off. It was almost as if they were in their pack and not just Omegas chosen for them by the academy.

“Thank you,” he said as he reached for a sandwich.

He kept his other hand around Ava, unable to release her, just in case this was the last meal they would have together. He wanted the heat of her body to anchor him, to keep Shadow from reacting to the danger he felt all around them.

Samantha and Julie didn’t walk away like he had thought they would. They sat a little distance away from them with their lunch and started eating quietly. They kept their gazes lowered and didn’t talk, following the rules like Omegas were supposed to do in this shitty place.

And if Hansson ordered them to throw themselves into the forest, they would do that, too. If they went along with Hansson’s plans, how many Omegas would meet this fate?

“Alpha Ezekiel Alpha Ava.”

He looked up at the vampire prince, who had been sitting on the other side of the quad with a few of his entourage, likely gauging the situation with the guards before he approached them.

“Prince Gideon,” he said with a nod.

The vampire sat without being invited, as if that was something they did all the time. It seemed like forever since his biggest worry was that one of his father’s spies would report him.

“I heard you were in a little bit of trouble yesterday.”

Had his people been close when he'd killed the guards? Or they had seen him when he'd woken up from his forced slumber and then watched the mess that had unfolded.

“Everything is fine,” he lied.

“That's great to hear. I guess I'll see you around.”

And then Gideon held out his hand for a handshake. Thought unexpected, he didn't skip a beat and took the vampire's hand.

“I'll be around if you need me,” Gideon said before he stood up.

Could he sense the coming war? He wouldn't ask anyone else to fight against the Council, but if they needed Gideon, would he come through?

“Eat up. It's time,” Derek said when the vampires walked away.