

Chapter 208

Zeke walked up the road to the Infirmary with his arm around Ava.

Everything still felt so surreal. He sensed the numbness all around him as everyone came to terms with the fact that they all could have died. Alpha Roland walked by Ava's side, holding onto her hand. They hadn't let go of each other since they had finally left the mess they had made at the Administration block to go home. He didn't mind it, really he didn't, but he wanted his mate all to himself.

That morning, he had little hope that they would win, but now all he wanted to do was bury himself in his mate and forget about Hansson and the Council.

With a sigh, he looked at the three councilors walking ahead of them. For some reason, they, too, had decided to recuperate at his house like they didn't have a whole fucking mansion over at the guest houses. But they were still waiting for transport so they could leave and check on their families, so he didn't say anything.

He still didn't like the three of them, but Ava seemed happy that Andrei wasn't dead. Why, though, was beyond him. They were still part of the Council. They had kept Hansson in power for all these years.

“Ask them.”

“You ask them.”

He let out another breath and tried to ignore the whispers. Samantha and Julie had installed themselves back in his house, too. They had been whispering the whole time, trying to get the guts to come up to Ava to ask something. Ava would say yes to whatever it was because she was soft. They were going to have to work on that.

He looked back, and the Omegas lowered their heads. They were walking between Derek and Myles, where they had instilled themselves after his Beta and Gamma had protected them during the battle.

And behind the four of them was Jared.

The cowardly Alpha lowered his head when he saw him looking but continued to limp behind them. He tried not to get pissed off that Jared was walking so close like he was a part of them. Jared had saved Myles' life. How would he deal with that? He still hated the guy, but now he owed him.

‘Stop it.’

He looked down at his mate innocently.

‘I haven’t done anything.’

‘You’re looking at him as if he’s something disgusting under your shoe,’ Ava said in his head.

Derek and Myles snorted. He would have to start teaching his mate how to keep their conversations private. They had time now.

When they reached the Infirmary, everyone at the academy had already lined up on both sides of the road and formed a path through the car park. They moved to give them room to join them, and they all silently waited. The mood was somber. Though the sun still shone, it felt like a dark cloud had settled over the academy.

The Council soldiers had left when they realized their leader was dead, so there were none of them anywhere.

Moments later, he saw the procession coming from the bottom of the road. Everyone stood in silence and lowered their heads in respect as it passed. Twenty. They had lost twenty people, including the kid Hansson had thrown into the forest. He and Ava had gone in to retrieve his body. Everyone was still a little scared of the forest even though it had been purged of all the evil.

When the last body was carried in, he kissed the top of Ava’s head. Her guilt was killing him. They would have lost more than that if they hadn’t killed Hansson. Hansson had been a madman who’d let power get to his head; he would never have stopped.

He wiped her tears and then took her hand to lead her away.

“We’ll find a way to honor those we’ve lost. And then we’ll make sure their deaths won’t be in vain,” he promised her.

“You’ll make a good Alpha,” Alpha Roland said to him.

It didn’t matter to him anymore. What he wanted to be was a good mate.

They walked quietly to the assembly hall, and instead of sitting in the Alpha section, Ava led him to the Omegas. Samantha and Julie looked thrilled, and the rest of their entourage followed. Alpha Roland sat next to Ava as if he was never going to let her out of his sight again, and no surprise there, the three councilors sat in front of them.

Andrei turned and smiled at Ava before returning his attention to his mates—or his boyfriend and girlfriend—whatever the hell their relationship was.

When the dean walked onto the stage, he looked like he had lost fifty pounds in a day. He’d never seen the dean look so lost.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he started. “I never thought I would ever have to make a speech like this, but... Today, we lost twenty of our Phoenix Academy family. They were our friends and colleagues and gave their lives fighting to save everyone else. I give you my word that they will be given the respect they deserve for fighting so bravely, whether they were Omega or Alpha, witch or vampire.”

The dean looked at the councilors as if unsure how much he could say. Everything was still uncertain, but Iulia, Diego and Andrei were still

very much a part of the system that had tried to kill them in the first place.

“Tonight, I will write a statement to explain what happened to your parents and guardians, but I have decided that we will end the semester here. I’ve already arranged transport to leave in the morning, and your phones will be returned tonight. We all need to go home and grieve. Process. And perhaps when we return next semester, we can all adapt to a new way of doing things.”

He said this last part while looking directly at Ava.

“I’m truly sorry for what happened today,” the dean continued. “But I’m also proud of all of you because you came together and worked together as a family. There will be someone to talk to in the administration block to help you come to terms with today’s events, and I hope you’ll be able to speak to someone when you go home, too. And when we return, I hope our minds will be refreshed and ready to continue our studies.”

The dean nodded and then walked off the stage, but the students remained quiet in their seats a while longer. Zeke knew a little about how the Council worked because of his training as an Alpha, but he was willing to bet most of these students had never seen its brutal side until this semester.

“Come on, let’s go home. I haven’t slept properly for days,” Alpha Roland said as he stood.

And then the whole entourage stood.

Zeke sighed and stood to follow them as they all started to head back to his house.

Mr. Patrick appeared in front of them as they were turning into his driveway.

“For fuck’s sake, what is it now? Are you coming for a sleepover, too?” he asked.

Mr. Patrick laughed.

“No. I’ve come to say goodbye,” he answered. “I’ve tidied up what I can, but I’m ready to leave this place.”

“Will you come back next semester?” Ava asked.

“I don’t know. Probably not.”

Ava released him to hug the Fae.

“Thank you,” he said over Ava’s head. “Both of you.”

When he released her, he shook Roland’s hand and then looked at the councilors.

“I know you’re eager to see if your loved ones woke up as well when Oskar died. I can give you a lift.”

Yes. Please.

He watched another round of hugs as if Ava had become attached to them.

“You will never know how grateful we are to you, little one,” Andrei said. “We’ll meet again.”

“No,” he growled.

Diego smiled and looked at him.

“We will meet again, Ezekiel,” he said. “You and Ava are the first fated wolves since my parents. I think you will be the ones looking for me first.”

Over his dead body.

The four of them smiled and then disappeared, and he could finally breathe again. But Alpha Roland walked to the door and let himself in like he owned the place. He sighed again and followed.