

Chapter 209

“How is this even fair? When I came to the academy, I was squashed under someone’s armpit in a small plane for a whole freaking day,” Ava said. “And you travelled alone in this huge private jet. You even drove yourself from the airport.”

Zeke grinned as he sipped on a beer.

“I wasn’t alone. I had Derek and Myles.”

Ava looked at all the empty seats and rolled her eyes.

“Yes, you had two other people. That makes it so much better,” she said sarcastically.

“You know, I liked you better when you used to tremble in fear when you spoke to me. This new you is just too mouthy for me.”

She threw a magazine at him and watched him throw his head back and laugh.

The sight of it took her breath away. She hadn't seen Zeke laugh many times, but now they had no darkness hanging over their heads. They could laugh and hang out like a normal couple. She could feel the absence of the burden that had been lifted from their shoulders as if it had been a tangible weight, and she could sense the same in her mate.

They hadn't been alone since the battle. She sensed Zeke's frustration, but they had the rest of their lives to be together. With Nyx's help, she'd sensed her father's emotions more and knew he had only been putting on a brave face for her. She wouldn't leave his side until he and his wolf were soothed.

Zeke stopped laughing and met her gaze. He bit his bottom lip, and his eyes flashed. They were red in his human form, thankfully. She didn't know when she would get used to the fact that their eyes had changed color.

Zeke's eyes flicked between red and amber, and she could feel how quickly his frustration and need filled him again. The sound of her father clearing his throat brought her back down to earth.

"We'll be home soon. Try to keep it together until I'm not stuck on a plane with you two," Alpha Roland said.

He was sitting across the aisle from them and looking through a tablet at the news.

"They're not even talking about Hansson anywhere," her father said. "I hope they're not trying to cover it up because I'm sure everyone can sense it by now."

“Can they do that?” she asked with a frown.

“They’ve gotten away with a lot of shit in the past,” Alpha Roland said as he threw the tablet to the seat beside him. “Let’s not talk about him. I just want to get home and see the boys.”

She smiled as she sat back in her seat and found Zeke’s gaze still on her.

“We’re going to have to find out more about our bond,” Zeke said. “I can’t help thinking that Diego knows something because he was so confident we will look for him.”

“Worry about graduating and taking your place as Alpha. Whatever happens, you’ll be safe if you’re the one in charge,” Alpha Roland said.

“I’m already in charge,” Zeke smirked.

“I mean officially. Has your ego always been that big?”

“Always,” Zeke answered.

She smiled, listening to the banter a little longer until she started thinking about what happened after this. Zeke was going to graduate and then take over the responsibilities of the Alpha. And she would still have three more years to do until she graduated. She didn’t want to be far from him; she didn’t think that was even possible, but she didn’t want to give up on getting a degree, either.

“What’s wrong?” Zeke asked.

She faked a smile.

“Nothing,” she lied.

They had the whole extended break to worry about things like that. She just wanted to enjoy being alive first.

Zeke didn’t push her for an answer even though he probably knew she had lied to him. But by the time they landed at the small private airfield where she had caught the plane the first time, she had pushed all of that out of her mind.

Their big seven–seater car was already waiting for them when they stepped off the plane. She rushed into Caleb’s open arms first. Her big brother squeezed her tightly as he picked her up and twirled her.

“You had us worried, kiddo,” Caleb said when he put her down. “I see there’ve been some... changes. You couldn’t call to tell us what was going on?”

“It was complicated,” she said.

“What could be so complicated that you couldn’t tell us you shifted? That’s huge,” Nate said as he pushed their big brother out of the way and picked her up in a hug, too.

The twins, Nick and Alex, hugged her last, one after the other. And because she was still the smallest, they picked her up, too.

When she finally turned to introduce Zeke, Caleb and Nate were already sizing him up. She was sure they could already tell Zeke's wolf was more dominant, but her brothers were like her father. They were strong white wolves, too. And it didn't matter to them how strong Zeke was; they would protect her to the death if they had to.

"We said no boys," Nate said, still looking at Zeke.

"I'm not a boy," Zeke answered. He looked at them warily as if he hadn't considered that he would have to win over her brothers.

Their father looked from his boys to Zeke as he carried some bags to the car and grinned, but he didn't offer any help.

"Um, guys, this is Zeke. Ezekiel Michelson, and he's my..."

She mumbled the last part as she turned away to follow her father. Having four overprotective brothers was no joke, but she was sure Zeke could handle himself.

"Your what?" Nick asked.

"Let's get home. We've had a long journey, and I'm starving," she called back.

"You're always starving," Alex said as he closed the passenger side door and opened the front for her.

She sighed and got into the front. When she'd put her seatbelt on and turned, she saw Zeke sitting between Caleb and Nate and her twin

brothers behind him. They looked at him as if he had committed a crime, and they would be his judges. No, his executioners.

“Welcome to New Mexico, Alpha Ezekiel,” her father chuckled before he started the car.

The private jets made good time because they didn’t have to stop to pick up or drop off anyone like the last time, so the sun was still high in the sky. Though feeling slightly sorry for Zeke, she opened the window and breathed deeply.

Home. She’d thought she’d never see this place again.

When her dad turned into the road that would take them deep into the forest they called home, she couldn’t stop the tears from flowing down her cheeks. Many people in her pack had made her life miserable here, but it was still home.

Her father took her hand to comfort her but kept his eyes on the bumpy road.

“Welcome back home, sweetheart,” he said.

There was a crowd waiting outside their house. Ava had no idea what Alpha Roland had told them when he had made Caleb their Alpha, and she wasn’t sure how much her brothers knew. But when they all got out of the car, they welcomed him home warmly.

When they looked at her, she didn't miss the subtle sniffs. And when Zeke came to stand beside her and took her hand, they didn't hide their shock, either.

Her father's Beta was the first to come to her with a smile, He had always been part of the family, so she welcomed his embrace.

"Welcome home, Ava."

"Now come on, they made food," Nate said, already walking to the house.

She didn't know what her life would be like now, but she knew one thing. She looked up at Zeke and smiled.

She would always have Ezekiel Michelson.