

Chapter 28

Monday was even worse than anything she could have imagined.

Being shoved against walls by supernatural beings was a lot like being hit by a car, she imagined. By the time lunch rolled around, she was already bruised and in pain, even though Jared's cream had worked wonders on her previous bruises.

Emily joined her as she had done most lunchtimes now.

"I thought you would look worse than that today."—

Sundays were the only days the Omegas got off to catch up on their own things. Since she had hung out with Jared the whole weekend, she hadn't come to the dining hall and hadn't seen Emily since Friday's training.

"I would have if Jared hadn't helped me," she said between bites of her food.

Emily tensed and then quickly looked around. What had she done wrong now?

“It’s Alpha or Mr. Anderson,” Emily whispered urgently. “You can’t refer to the future Alphas by their name. You need to understand the rules, Ava.”

Seriously? “Do they want me to call him Master, too,” she snorted.

Emily clearly didn’t get the sarcasm because she tensed more and still looked worried.

“Read the rules,” Emily said again.

“The rule book is like a million pages. How am I supposed to read and remember all of that?”

“You’ve broken so many so far, but you’ve been lucky that the only consequences are detentions. I’m scared for you, Ava. Rule-breaking can have life-changing consequences.”

Life-changing? She stopped chewing to pay more attention to Emily.

“Like what? Expulsion? Suspension?”

Emily shook her head with a frown but didn’t expand on it. She had flipped through the rule book on her tablet a few times, but she had not found anywhere that listed the consequences of breaking the rules. What would they do to her?

“Try not to get too many detentions, too. After a certain point, they take you as a repeat offender and send you in.”

“Take me in where?” she asked, her eyes wide.

She liked detention. It was the only place she felt safe.

Again, Emily didn't answer that question as she started eating.

“Just use their proper titles and keep your head down. Don't befriend them; it's not our place,” she advised. “Memorize the rule book.”

Was she really breaking the rules by hanging out with Jared? How messed up was that? That explained the hostile looks she had received from the Omegas who had been at his house.

“If you keep your head down, Coach Baxter might go easy on you this week. I don't know why you insist on looking people in the eye, but that's probably why he kept putting you in matches.”

“He put me in all the matches because he's a sadistic bastard who gets off on that shit,” she pointed out.

And then the whole room got quiet. Ava sucked in a breath and didn't dare look around, but she could tell by the way Emily looked down with her face paling until it was paper-white that all the sensitive ears in the room heard what she had said. Was that another rule broken?

“Well, well, well,” a voice said as the girl came to stand next to her table. “If it isn't the homeless vermin that's contaminating our school.”

It was the model and her two friends. Ezekiel's girlfriend. She looked down at her food quickly, Emily's warnings playing in her head. Had she broken a more serious rule?

"Humans are so weak and pathetic. I don't know how you made it here, but you won't make it out. I'll see you in training."

She didn't respond as the girl and her friends walked past her and out of the dining hall. She watched their retreating backs before she looked back at Emily.

"What did I do?" she whispered.

Emily shook her head and then picked up her tray as she stood.

"Read the rules," she whispered before she left her alone.

No one spoke to her as they set up the training room; it seemed as if they were going out of their way to avoid her. By the time the rest of her class filed in, her stomach was in knots. They all sneered and laughed as they looked in her direction more than usual, so she knew they had heard about what she said.

When Coach Baxter walked in, more students filed in behind him. Ezekiel came in last but he didn't even look in her direction.

"We are doing something different today," the coach said. "Since you all failed to impress me last week, I've moved the weapons testing to next week. This week, you'll be fighting against the Intermediate level. I'll pick one of you to come to the middle, and one of them will step

forward to spar with you. And trust me, I may get off on this just a little bit.”

Damn it. He’d heard.

She kept her head down as Emily had suggested. She’d found a spot behind everyone else, hidden by their height, and breathed deeply to keep her heart calm. But she could feel all the gazes on her at the coach’s words. She wasn’t surprised. that someone had snitched.

“Ava!”

She flinched when his voice boomed across the hall.

“Step forward.”

How had she even thought this week would be better? She shuffled to the middle of the room and waited for her opponent. It felt like forever, standing there, the whole class watching her. There was so much excitement in the training hall that she knew what was coming would hurt.

When her opponent finally stood on the mat, she lifted her gaze and saw the sneer on Ezekiel’s girlfriend’s face.

“Claire, thank you for volunteering.”

There was no volunteering. It was obvious that this was preplanned. There was so much coldness in the girl’s green gaze that she wondered if this was just about what she said at lunchtime.

The whistle blew, and she didn't even have a chance to move. Claire had her on her back instantly with a spear she felt through her whole body. She heard a crack, and it hurt so much that she knew something was broken. She could do nothing but try to protect her head when the punches started.

The coach didn't even try to stop the match, even when she tapped, even when she screamed. He was punishing her to appease his ego. Her classmates cheered every blow.

With tears in her eyes, she saw Ezekiel leave the room.

She didn't know why that made her angry, but the rage built up in her core. It was as if it had a life of its own inside her, and all she had to do was let it out to stop the girl who was decorating the mat with her blood. It washed through her, so familiar that she felt tingles through her body. Claire's blows didn't even hurt anymore, possibly because of shock. The rage gave her confidence as she looked the girl in the eye and snarled.

She snarled.

Claire stopped the punches and snarled back. Then she raised her fist again.

“Human scum,” Claire spat out as she caught the side of her head.

And then everything went dark.