

## Chapter 30

Zeke parked his car on the driveway and gripped the wheel tightly. He could feel the change coming as Ava's scent overwhelmed him again. The heat of her mouth, the little whimpers she'd made as he'd tasted her, how responsive she had been to his touch, the way she had molded her body to his as he had urgently ground himself against her.

He had been so close to marking her.

He groaned and closed his eyes. And then the scent of Ava's blood hit him all over again; it was so strong in the confines of his car that his rage returned. He'd been fighting that constantly since he first saw Ava unconscious at the Training Centre.

So many strong emotions were raging inside him that he didn't think he could hold Shadow back this time.

Pain. Rage. This inexplicable bond to Ava, calling for him constantly, pulling him towards her, making him want to be with her all the time.

The whole time he waited outside the infirmary, his senses had been tuned to her beating heart, and Shadow had thrashed inside him. He'd

wanted to stay there to make sure Ava was okay, and at the same time, he'd wanted to find Claire and rip her head clean off her body.

Today, he had been tortured on a level he had never experienced before.

Claire had known. Somehow, she had known that he was drawn to Ava. How else could he explain that look she had given him before she had felled Ava, slamming her to the ground? That glint in her eyes as she used all her strength on Ava's fragile body?

His claws extended again as he thought of his girlfriend—his ex-girlfriend. He could never be with her again after what she did, and after what he did, kissing Ava like that. How could he want anyone else now?

He could still taste Ava on his lips. He hadn't planned on doing that, but after seeing her walk out of the hospital on her own, he had needed to. Needed to touch her. To taste her. To fill himself with her scent, just to reassure himself that she was okay.

'Go back to her,' Shadow commanded.

He couldn't. No matter what feelings Ava dug up in him, he still couldn't.

Shadow snarled at him, which turned into a growl when the unwelcome stench of vampire hit his nose. Shadow had found someone else to take his anger out on. A growl left his lips as he looked in his rearview mirror. Now was not the time for this shit! Shadow was ready to take over and rip everyone's throats out; he couldn't attend to any official pack business now.

He saw the vampires coming up his driveway and fought the shift. His face tightened as his deadly teeth elongated, but he gripped the wheel as if his life depended on it. It did depend on it. He pushed as hard as possible, but Shadow wouldn't let go of him.

'Derek! Myles!' he said through the pack link. 'We have company.'

He couldn't leave the car. The moment he did, it would be a bloodbath, and everything would be over. He would never be Alpha and take his revenge.

Derek and Myles came out of the house quickly, dressed only in their pajama bottoms and ready to shift in an instant. "We mean-no-harm," Gideon called out, his palms raised as he stopped a distance away. "We had a meeting, but you didn't turn up. I was under the impression our negotiations were time-sensitive."

Shit. The vampire prince was right. He was supposed to have met with him after training to try to reach an agreement that suited everyone. But Ava... He had been unable to move or think until he saw that she was okay.

'Zeke!

Derek's shouting in his head brought him back to the present. But Shadow was also in there, growling at him to find Claire. Ordering him to go and take care of Ava. Ordering him to kill all the vampires and everyone who stood in his way. His beast wanted to go hunting.

‘Not now, Derek. Tell them I’ll find them.’

He cut the pack link so he could concentrate on calming himself down. He was in no state of mind for delicate negotiations, no matter how urgent.

He didn’t know how long he sat there gripping the wheel, but the vampires were gone when Derek knocked on his window.

He took a last calming breath and watched his claws retract as he finally muzzled the beast. When he left his car, Derek sniffed the air briefly before he looked at him pointedly.

“Seriously? You blew the meeting off because you were with a girl? They have one of ours; we need this information.”

He slammed the car door and walked into the house, Derek and Myles hot on his heels. He knew exactly what was at stake. The vampires had a wolf in their ranks now, a female from his pack who’d gone and mated a vampire. His father thought this was the greatest insult to their pack and wanted blood. It had already caused too many rules to be broken during the break.

If the Council got involved, it wouldn’t end well for anybody.

But he could still smell Ava’s blood; he couldn’t think about that.

“What’s really going on here, Zeke? You pace your room all night; you’re not fucking sleeping, and then you bite people’s heads off all day,” Myles said.

He trusted them with his life. He trusted they would always have his back. But on something like this? He couldn't.

“Which girl has you wound up like this? I can't believe you're going to get us into trouble with your father over a piece of-” He had Derek by the neck against the wall before he could finish that sentence.

“Say it,” he growled. “Finish your fucking sentence!”

“Zeke, man, he can't breathe,” Myles said with a hint of fear.

It brought him back to his senses, and he quickly let his friend go. He watched Derek wheeze as he bent over to get deeper breaths in and felt like the biggest dick to ever walk the planet. Exactly like his father.

He took a step back and then another, but he could never take back what he had just done.

“Fuck. I'm sorry,” he whispered.

He didn't wait for their response as he turned and took the stairs two at a time until he had locked himself in his room. ‘You can't stop me, Zeke. I will have anybody who stands in my way?’

He ignored Shadow and started pacing again. The sun was already rising, so he knew there would be no sleep again. How could he sleep when he could hear Shadow's thoughts? No one was safe here—not until he had Ava, not until she herself to him and had Shadow's mark.