

## Chapter 37

Zeke didn't give a shit that the Omegas sitting in the common room downstairs were all startled when he crashed the doors open and marched in. Claire's scent was all over the place. He wrinkled his nose and followed it down the hallway in Ava's room. He had finally managed to push Shadow back where he belonged while he had been distracted with Ava, but now the beast was howling to be let out again.

What was she even doing here? Was she trying to take her vendetta outside the training center? He growled at the thought but then realized he should have expected this. This was Claire. She had always been a calculating bitch; this was not beyond her.

He opened the door, but he had already sensed that Claire had left, and not too long ago if her scent was this strong. Shadow wanted to go and hunt, but he had regained enough strength to shove him back so hard that, with the silver still in his system, Shadow wouldn't come out again soon. The fact that it was Ava who had calmed the beast down enough for him again proved his point. The human was a weakness that he couldn't afford.

Shadow's earlier words came back to his mind.

She's yours, too...

It was this bond; he knew that. Caring so much for a stranger's well-being was ridiculous, and it felt like the longer star stayed, the stronger the bond became. He was being compelled to give a shit, and that was bullshit. He would do better without Ava in his life.

He stepped over some toiletries on the floor and walked further into the room to the window. The larch was broken, but Claire and her minions hadn't come through the window. They had blatantly walked in through the front door, which incant they were planning to come back again through the window, Claire seemed to have destroyed everything. The bedding was ripped, and Ava's stuff was all over the floor. And on the wall, Claire had used her cherry lipstick to leave a message.

'Human trash. You don't belong here. Go home before you die.'

He had been afraid something like this would happen when he discovered her room was on the ground floor, Shadow's protective instincts went into overdrive again; he had to clench his fists a few times,

"What the..."

He turned to watch Ava walk in with Derek and Myles behind her.

"I told you to stay in the car."

Ava completely ignored him as she walked over to her bed and picked a few ruined clothes from the floor. He didn't bother looking at his

packmates, but he could feel their scrutiny. He was acting out of character, but he wasn't ready to explain all of this yet—not until he found a way to get out of it

“Who would even do this?”

And then her gaze stopped at the message on the wall. The blue eyes turned ice-cold when she read it. He hated that Claire had been there, but what she wrote was true. Ava didn't belong here. She did need to go home before someone killed her.

“Someone selling the truth,” he answered.

Ava looked directly at him, and her gaze changed from ice to fire. Blue fire. No one had ever dared to look at him like that before. Her gaze singed every part of him, and he found himself wondering what it would take to break Ava, to make her submit to him and use all that fire in a more productive, satisfying way. Her lips twitched, and she raised her head, and he found her defiance exciting him just as much as it excited Shadow,

With a stubborn set to her jaw, Ava walked past Derek and Myles while holding up the ridiculous sweatpants that the infirmary had given her. She wrenched the door open and looked directly at him.

“Please leave. I need to clean,” she said

“You're not safe here. They broke the lock on your window,” he stated.

“That's my problem to deal with,” Ava said.

His packmates were looking at him as if they had never seen him before, and that was the only thing that stopped him from arguing with her and telling her she was fucking insane. She needed to stop being stubborn for once and go somewhere safer for the night.

But he couldn't risk saying anything that would give him away

'Take her!' Shadow growled.

'We'll watch her room.' he promised.

He would protect Ava himself if that was the only way he would keep his sanity.

He inclined his head to his packmates and they filed out of the room, both of them looking Ava as they did so. He took his time strolling towards her just to make sure Derek and Myles were walking out of the building.

Ava held his gaze, but she seemed to lose her nerves the closer he got to her. She looked down, and her heart started beating quickly again. The little human was all talk. Ava was terrified of him, and rightly so. He could still scent her blood on her even though somebody had washed off most of it, and that was playing with his head more than Shadow was right now. Last night, it had been enough for him to lose his head and kiss her.

"I warned you this would happen, Ava. You should leave," he said, stopping just an inch from her.

“I don’t see how you expect me to make that happen,” Ava said without looking up at him. “The dean won’t even see me now. I’m stuck here”

That wasn’t an option, no matter what Shadow said. Her being here was dangerous for everyone. He would have to get involved after all and see the dean himself. Maybe he could get rid of her and promise Shadow they would find her after graduation. It was the best solution he could offer that beast. A temporary separation while he sorted all the other shit Shadow wanted her alive, so he would have to agree

Until they were on the same page, he wouldn’t touch her.

Everything in his body screamed at him for even thinking that, but it had to be done. Ava was his only bargaining chip with Shadow.

Ava chewed on her lip. Did she even know she did that when she was nervous! Did she know what it did to him? He wanted to bite that lip. He wanted to bite her all over.

His ears picked up the main door closing and sensed Derek and Myles getting into the car. Far enough that they wouldn’t hear him. His body stirred, even after the little pep talk he’d given himself. Something in him wouldn’t allow him to let Ava go without one more touch, one more kiss. Just enough to allow him to keep his distance for a while.

He lowered his hand to hers, which was tightly gripping the door handle, and loosened her fingers. Then he closed her door. Ava’s heart rate increased, so she knew what was coming. Maybe she was as drawn to him as he was to her, even though she was human.

She didn't protest when he brought his hand to her hair and released it from its braid. Her breath hitched, tempting him to push more buttons to see how much of herself she would give. But he held himself back. A taste was all he needed.

When he finally tilted her face up and met that blue gaze, it sucked him in until he was lost in it. He didn't know if he moved first, but his lips were on hers, taking everything she gave him as he backed her up against the door. And then her body was pressed against his when he lifted her for better access. She didn't resist him, didn't push him away. And through all the wild emotions ravaging his body, what he noticed the most was Shadow's satisfaction. The beast had never been so content.

It was enough to make him pull back and look down at the face of the human who had caused this.

Ava's cheeks were flushed, and her breathing was as ragged as his own. Her eyes promised things that he knew he could never have.

And the fact that he wanted that, craved that, made him set her down and walk out of her room without another word.