

Chapter 43

Zeke watched Jared's house from the woods. He had known Ava would come here from when he followed her scent that morning and heard her conversation with Jared

Jared had looked right at him that morning, as he had last night. Did he know what was going on here? Was he going to use Ava to hurt him? Not once had Jared asked why he had been at his party that first night. And he had stood in this spot in the woods so many times that Jared would have known he had been there the moment he had gone for a run into the woods,

And last night, being on Ava's balcony had been the riskiest thing he had done. He had crossed into Jared's territory without an invitation Jared would have sensed him or caught his scent. But it had been a full day, and there hadn't been any retaliation.

He didn't trust that snake as far as he could throw him, Jared knew something, he had a bad feeling that snake was about to do something messed up.

Why else would he have Ava alone in his house? Where were his Beta, Gamma, and all the other useless beings that hung around him all the time?

“Let’s kill him,” Shadow growled.

That was always Shadow’s answer for everything, but the fact that he agreed with the psychopath this time had him turning and heading back to his house. He would not be pulled into mining everything when he finally had an answer.

He’d had the chance to do it earlier. He should have just said the words and rejected her, but they’d stuck in his throat like a lump

He’d felt all her rage before he had even entered the training center. He’d willed his feet to run in the opposite direction, but he’d gone to her instead. Why was she affecting him so strongly now? Was it that kiss? Was he strengthening their bond every time he touched her? Heil followed her scent and the pull of their bond and found her injuring her fragile hands on the punching bag. The smell of her blood and then the need to soothe her had consumed him.

He’d held her, drawing comfort from her scent while she took comfort from him. Ava hadn’t pulled back. For once, they had allowed things to just happen.

She fit perfectly in his arms. And she smelled so fucking good,

He couldn’t even blame Shadow for holding her like that because the wolf was too busy pacing and plotting revenge. Shadow hadn’t been

himself since Ava entered into their enemy's territory. That moment in that little office had been all him. He'd wanted Ava in his arms.

'She should be with us,' Shadow snarled.

"She can take care of herself," he snapped loudly as he entered his house through the back door

It was true. Ava had some quite surprising skills with the weapons. A part of him wondered what had happened in her life to warrant such an expert mastery of deadly weapons. Had she been mistreated? Had she had to use those skills to defend herself?

He forced himself to stop thinking about that. He didn't want to know anything about Ava. He wanted to reject her and send her off on her way, wherever she came from. It didn't matter that sparring with her had brought some excitement that he had been missing. It had been... fun. And he hadn't done anything fun since his father started piling all the Alpha duties on him. Her skill was a bonus. If he were to judge, he would say the last time he had fought anyone who was even a bit challenging was in his third year. At the evaluations that had turned to shit the moment Jared had opened his mouths.

He pulled his thoughts away from that, too, because that wasn't something he liked to remember.

"Zeke, we need to talk."

He'd already gone past the lounge when he heard Derek's voice. He'd successfully avoided talking to his pack members since the day he had

linked them to come and pick him and Ava up when she stormed out of the hospital. He knew he couldn't hold off any more. They had too many questions since the day they had chained him up in silver, and if he didn't give them a believable explanation, they would report this to his father at the next call.

He sighed as he walked back into the lounge and dropped himself onto a sofa.

“You can't keep us out like this, Zeke,” M Myles started. “We're more than your friends, we're brothers. Tell us what's happening.”

“It's nothing to be worried about. I have Shadow under control now,”

“Is that why you keep stalking the human?”

He looked over at Derek. He hadn't expected them to be so direct.

“I've sorted that situation out.”

Or he would, as soon as he said the words. Then he wouldn't want to rip the coach's throat out for trying to enforce the academy rules.

“Really! It was her scent that was all over you the night we missed the meeting with the vampire prince. It was because of her you almost snapped my neck,” Derek said quietly

He looked away from them at the reminder of what he had done but remained quiet. There was nothing he could say to make up for that. Derek and Myles were more important to him than Ava would ever be,

so he would fix that unwanted situation. The moment he broke this curse by saying those words, it wouldn't rule him anymore.

“Is the your new girlfriend” Myles asked. “Is that why Claire has been targeting her?”

“Of course not. She's human.”

His father would be angrier to hear he had been fraternizing with a human than that he'd made no progress with the vampires.

“So, we won't have to bring the chains out again to stop you from hurting anyone! You've only just healed from that, Zeke. That was a lot of silver,” Myles said with worry in his eyes.

“I won't ask you to do that to me again.”

“Shit. Zeke, if you ever need us to do it, we will That's not what we mean. But can we at least have a conversation about this,” Derek said, rubbing his face with a tired sigh. “Are you screwing her or not? That's the only reason Claire would even think of ruining her perceived chances with you. Just give us anything so we can make sense of this.”

The closer he looked at his friends, the more he noticed how tired they looked. Had they been staying up, too? Had he scared them so much that they were worried what he would do if they fell asleep? The way he was worried about what Shadow would do if he slept?

“Can you just trust me on this one! I need a line more time, and then I'll tell you everything.”

“I don’t know if we have time. Your father is calling on Saturday, but we haven’t even met the vampires yet.”

“Arrange that. We’ll have something to tell the Alpha before he calls,” he said as he stood up.

The quicker he said those words, the better it would be for everybody.

He left his pack and walked straight up the stairs, ignoring the Omegas standing with their heads down just outside the lounge. Why they did that was beyond him, but he had grown tired of telling all their assigned Omegas that he didn’t need them. They would realize it themselves before long.

And then he started pacing his room as he had done all the other nights. It was even more important that he stayed up now because Shadow didn’t like what he had planned, and he didn’t trust that ugly beast any more than he trusted Jared.

Tomorrow. He would reject Ava in the morning and would finally be free. Nothing would stop him.