

Chapter 47

Ava took a quick shower in the ensuite. Her bruises and cuts from training had already healed. She forgot to ask Jared about his cream the other night, but surely the effects should have started to fade by now!

She had no time to worry about it as she went to her wardrobe. The only clothes Claire hadn't ruined were already in the wash and not suitable for a party, Jared knew her situation. Had he not thought of this? She felt a little bit ungrateful for thinking he was selfish; he probably had a lot on mind, too.

She was about to pull her old sweats and T-shirt from the bottom of the laundry basket when she remembered the shopping bags she had found with her suitcase on her first night. She pulled them from the bottom of her wardrobe and emptied the contents on her bed.

Her eyes widened

Jared had bought her clothes, and not the off-the-rack ones she was used to. The labels made her eyes bulge out, and just thinking of how much he had spent made her eyes water.

He was insane! Who bought so much for complete strangers. Most of it wasn't her style, but she would probably never have anything this nice in her wardrobe again. Her pack, her whole community, was in the middle of nowhere. There was nothing like this in their territory in New Mexico, Where would she wear it?

Ava picked up line slinky dresses that she knew she would never wear, at least not with people she wasn't comfortable with. Hut Goddess, Hary were so pretty! They even had a few pairs of shoes to match. She rubbed her hand over the expensive material as she put them to the side. The jeans were more her style, but even they showed their quality. They would probably last her whole life if she was careful with them.

So she changed into jeans and a T-shirt that was a bit too figure-hugging for her liking and then quickly brushed her hair.

By the time she had pulled her old trainers on and made her way downstairs, there were more people around that she had seen at the first party. They looked at her as she walked past but none of them spoke to her. Was this really her party? Or had Jared just wanted an excuse to throw one? She felt like she was under a microscope as she looked around for Jared, and that felt as uncomfortable as the first day she had arrived.

When she didn't find Jared, she went to the kitchen to find something to eat and drink before she went to the lounge. She would stay only long enough to eat and then go back to her room.

Would she be safe there?

Worry ate away at her brain as the paranoia returned. There were so many people here, but none were her friends. If anyone attacked her, who would step in? Maybe she was better off going back to her dorm, just for tonight. She could block the window again with a wardrobe and use another to block her door. But how long could she do that for? Claire had looked deranged, and the fact that she knew Ezekiel was cheating on her made her extremely dangerous.

Her heart squeezed. She would try to remember the look on Claire's face the next time Ezekiel tried to kiss her. She would walk away and not give in to whatever madness happened to her body when Ezekiel was too close. She had survived for almost twenty years without any of those feelings weighing her down; she could survive another twenty.

"There you are. Why are you hiding in here? Come out to the back."

Jared looked very happy today, and she didn't want to dampen his mood. She gave him a little smile as she stood and started to follow.

"I thought you'd wear one of those sexy dresses I bought for you. They're more suitable for one of my parties," Jared said as he walked ahead of her. "Wear one next time, okay?"

Again, that sounded like an order. Her whole body reacted to being told what to do, as it always did, but she let it go. She wasn't likely to live with Jared that long. The repairs to her dorm had to be finished by now, so once she went back, she wouldn't need to be around for his parties again.

Like the last time, there was some wildness going on that only supernatural beings could get away with. She was sure such excess would be fatal to a human like her. She followed Jared to some garden chairs on a decked area at the back of the yard, just near the woods but with a perfect view of what was happening.

She blushed as she looked away and put her food on the table.

“Don’t be such a prude. Ava,” Jared laughed. “It’s natural.”

Maybe where he came from. Or maybe in her park, too. She had never interacted with any of them like this, so perhaps even her pack acted like this at some point.

“At least have a beer today. Shall I get you one?”

She wanted to say no but didn’t want him to start badgering her. A beer was easy enough to get rid of or to hold all night and pretend to drink.

“Sure.”

The music was deafening, it seemed even louder than the last time. But even with that noise, she heard the rustling in the woods behind her. Jared was already in the house when she jumped up from her seat and saw the huge grey wolf leaping through the trees and lunging at her.

Her mind was still working to register what was happening when the wolf’s huge jaws clamped around her middle as it took her down. By the time she thought to scream, she could already smell her blood, and the pain that shot through her was unlike anything she had ever felt before.

The wolf tightened its jaws as it shook her around, damaging her insides. It threw her a distance away and prepared to lunge again. She knew it would go for a fatal bite this time. The scream had died in her throat, but as she looked at the evil in the wolf's eyes when it lowered itself to lunge at her again, she knew those cold blue eyes belonged to Claire.

She whispered an apology to her family. She hadn't tried hard enough to escape, and now it was too late,

Then she heard a familiar growl but he was too late.

Her eyes fluttered closed just as a huge black thing shot out of the woods and grabbed the grey wolf by her throat.