

Chapter 65

Before Derek even parked the car. Ava had sunk into this depression that she couldn't understand. She felt like the further they had driven away from the main buildings, the bigger the gaping hole in her heart became.

The tears were back on her face as she walked into the house.

“Are you in pain?” Derek asked quietly.

She shook her head.

Her body still hurt, but her mind was stuck in this terrible place, she couldn't register the pain unless she paid attention to it. She forgot about the conversation she intended to have with the wolves as she forced her stiff body to move up the stairs.

“This is your room.”

She looked back at the Beta, who appeared to have followed her up at her pace. She had been heading straight for Ezekiel's room without thinking, but of course, that wasn't allowed here.

With a nod, she walked back towards him and through the door he held open. The room was much bigger than she had expected, but it was nothing like Ezekiel's and probably the other wolves. A double bed, a wardrobe and a chest of drawers. It was enough.

"Thank you," she whispered,

Then the gingerly lay down without even checking to see if he was gone.

"There's some food..."

She couldn't even stomach the thought of food. She just wanted to curl up p there and cry. It felt like the whole world was on her shoulders. And she couldn't handle it. It was too much.

"I'm fine. Thank you," she answered without lifting her head.

"If you're not in pain, then... What is it? What's happening?"

How could she explain that when she didn't know herself? Her mood had worsened so quickly she felt crippled by it.

"I don't know," she answered.

"Do you remember when you wake up on Monday! You could see something or feel something."

Monday? They had told her she had slept for three days. But even that thought failed to bring her out of this hole. She didn't answer him and heard him quietly cursing behind her before he asked more questions.

She didn't know when he left or even if he left. Every once in a while, she would hear voices, but her gaze was stuck outside her window, watching the world settle down for the night as the sun set.

And then it was pitch black.

Darkness so heavy she couldn't see through it. She couldn't even tell where her window was anymore when she was sure there had been some light from the moon. The darkness pressed into her as it had in the forest, and it felt like icy tentacles probing her skin.

She sat up quickly even though her body protested, and felt her way out of the room. She opened the door, and the light from the hallway seemed so bright that she had to turn away. The light pierced through the darkness in her room—her empty room. The inky blackness had disappeared. The moonlight shone through her window as if it hadn't just disappeared moment ago.

She couldn't sleep in here.

At the end of the hall. Ezekiel's door remained shut. Without another thought, she slowly made her way there and pushed it open. The room was still empty, and the sight cleaved her heart in two. She didn't know how she ended up curled on Ezekiel's bed and why she hugged one of his shirts as she tried to pull herself out of the hole. Nothing was working. She was stuck like this. Trapped and sinking lower.

The only thing that worked, marginally, was daydreaming about the beach again. Zeke was there, and he told her to breathe. He told her he

was okay, and maybe that was what her guilty conscience wanted to hear because she decided to stay there in that imaginary place for as long as she could. There was still a hole in her brain, but everything felt better there.

“I don’t know why you’re here.” Zeke said after a few moments of watching the peaceful waves. “But I’m so happy you are.”

This Zeke was definitely imaginary. The real Zeke was never happy to see her. She was an inconvenience to him. She drew her knees and lay her head on them as she studied the enigma beside her. For a moment, she wondered if he was dead. Was that the reason he wasn’t with his pack? She raised her hand slowly to his face and felt disappointment when her hand went through him. He was just a figment of her imagination.

“I’ll be home soon. Don’t cry.”

Was she crying again? But what was she supposed to do? Everything was just at a standstill, and her mind felt fractured. She needed help.

She wanted to believe her imaginary Zeke, so she stayed, but it seemed even the imaginary Zeke didn’t want to stick around, either. He disappeared, and slowly, the peaceful beach faded, too. He was gone. He was dead. She was sure that was why his friends were so angry and upset.

The pillow was soaked when she opened her eyes, but she didn’t care. She buried her face and sobbed. Her heart, her mind... She couldn’t take the pain anymore.

Then she felt a hand on her back.

She drew a shaky breath as she felt the sparks at the contact. There was only one person who could do that.

When she quickly turned around, it was Ezekiel kneeling on the bed behind her. Something came over her and pulled her out of her heavy thoughts as she propelled herself into his arms. His cologne wrapped itself around her as she held him tightly.

He was alive. He wasn't dead.

His arms went around her just as tight, and his nose went to her neck, breathing deeply as he took in her scent. Maybe it was a stupid thing to do, but she let him. She let him lie down and pull her down on top of him. She let him bring his lips to hers in a hard, demanding kiss. She let him carry her away on this cloud, washing away the pain she had been so deep in only moments before.

His kiss brought with it the whirlwind of emotions that it always did, and thankfully, none of them were the dark, heavy ones that had trapped her for so long. His tongue stroked the life back into her as his hands did. She moaned—a loud moan that would have made her feel embarrassed if she had been in her right mind. Whatever Ezekiel was doing was taking her away, creating an otherworldly experience she wanted to get lost in

But he stopped.

Despite her protests and obvious willingness to take this all the way, he stopped. He was just as breathless as she was when he pulled away and looked into her eyes. He didn't speak. He just looked. And she didn't shy away from his gaze. She had so much to ask him, but nothing came out of her mouth. All that mattered now was that he was home.

And that the hole in her heart was gone.

She fought sleep for as long as possible, but it inevitably won.