

Chapter 69

Ava took a deep breath to calm herself. She had chosen to sit with her feet in the pool while she thought of what to tell her family. She didn't want to be to them, but she also didn't want them to know the full forms of what she had gone through. She had tried to go home to them and failed.

And in the process, something had changed. She could feel in the world never be the same again.

Trying to escape had been selfish, and yet she knew she would try again somehow. But she didn't want her family to come and get her, she wanted all the blame to go on her. Maybe then she could plead for the Council to leave them alone, and she could suffer the consequences by herself.

With another breath, she dialed the number. Like the last time she had called, someone picked up straight away.

“Ava?”

She sucked in a breath.

“Hi. Dad,” she said, but the sounded like she was going to cry She cleared her throat.

“What happened?” he asked straight away.

“Nothing”

Everything.

“I’ve been calling everyone I know to find out where you are. If you just hang on a little while longer, I’ll come and get you.”

Tears started running down her face.

“No. Don’t do that, Dad.”

Yes. Yes, please come and get me.

Her tears fell harder, and she wiped them, but she knew her dad’s sensitive hearing would pick the little sounds up.

“I’m fine. I just miss you,” she lied.

“Listen. I’ve had the invitation for the Parent’s Weekend. If I don’t find out where you are before that, I’ll wait for their transport and get you out then. Okay? This is bullshit. I should never have let you go there.”

Was her father finally admitting that she had no wolf? That the newspaper clippings had been wrong, and she was human after all?

“Dad, I don’t want you to go against the Council,” she said firmly..

The Council had somehow contained so much evil in the forests around them. Destroying one Alpha and his pack would be nothing.

“Darlin-“

“No, Dad In’s too dangerous.”

“You’re hurt, Ava. I can tell. I can hear it. You’re hurt, and you’re asking me to do nothing-“

”Dad, listen to me. I know you worry about me, but I’m fine. I’m just homesick. I’ve never been away from you guys before, but I can handle myself. You know that.”

She hoped the Goddess didn’t strike her down for lying, but what other option did she have?

“I do,” Alpha Roland sighed.

“But I haven’t felt right since you left. I keep worrying that I didn’t teach you enough or it’s too much for you there.”

“Of course, you taught me enough. I almost beat an Alpha in weapons training the other day.”

“Really? How long did you last?”

And just like that, she had steered the conversation away from the one causing them both pain. She didn't know how long she spoke to her family. But the longer she stayed on the phone, the better she felt. And the stronger her resolve to escape and get back to them became. She wouldn't go through the forest again, but there had to be a way. There had to be supply vehicles that brought that fresh food and equipment. She would watch for them to make a plan.

After she ended the call, she looked across the yard to the woods beyond. Was Claire watching her now, ready to attack again?

“It's lunchtime. Are you hungry?”

She looked up to see Ezekiel walking towards her, and then he pulled the legs of his sweats up to dangle his legs in the water, too. He was too close. She was so aware of his body that she had to force herself to think of other things so she wouldn't keep embarrassing herself.

“I'll make something later.”

She didn't feel right having the other Omegas make her meals when she knew what they thought about that.

Ezekiel was quiet. She risked a glance at his face and saw he wasn't even paying attention to her. There was something on his mind as his eyes scanned the woods. Was he also wondering when Claire would make her move?

“You haven't told your family what's going on,” he stated.

“They worry,” she answered with a shrug.

“Do they know what this place is?”

“My dad and older brother.”

She kicked her feet around in the water. It was already scorching, and it would have been nice to swim for a while, but she didn’t have a bathing suit. She wasn’t likely to ever go into town again to buy one.

“How many siblings do you have?”

“Four brothers.”

“Human?”

“No, unfortunately.”

Her life would have been a lot easier if her adoptive family had been a simple middle-class human family worrying about everyday things like bills instead of when the next insane wolf would bite her.

“You have a thing against wolves,” Ezekiel said.

He was silent again as they watched the water.

“How are you wolfless?”

She didn't know why he was so chatty today when most of their prior conversations involved threatening her to make her leave. Had he also seen the futility of that plan?

“Adopted.”

Ezekiel nodded and then went silent again. Something about this scene reminded her of her daydream of the beach. She had been sitting next to him, and everything had been so peaceful.

“You can call them anytime, you know,” Ezekiel said after a while

“Thank you. But maybe only on weekends. I don't want to have to explain why I'm living here.”

“They'll know about me soon; you might as well tell them.”

She frowned at the confident tone in his voice. Why would her family know about him? They were so overprotective of her that she knew how that conversation would go.

“No. I'd rather not argue with them about why I'm living with a boy.”

Ezekiel looked at her, and his eyes flickered red and then back.

“I'm twenty-two. I haven't been a boy in a long time,” he growled. “But you will have to tell them about me. Ava, because you're mine now.”

Ezekiel stood up after he said that. Her jaw dropped. What the hell did he mean by that? He thought she would just fall into his bed as he had

threatened? He thought he could just declare she was his, and it would make it true? Her anger started to build up as she watched his retreating back.

“There are wolves in the forest watching you. Come into the house.”

That deflated her anger immediately. She stood and followed him while looking at the woods, but as always, she didn't see or hear anything. The last time a pack had cornered her, she had ended up half-dead, and the last thing she wanted was to repeat that experience.

When she walked in, Ezekiel had taken his shirt off and was in the process of lowering his sweatpants. She turned around quickly.

“You could have warned me!” she shrieked.

“Why? I don't mind you looking,” he chuckled.

“What are you doing!”

“Just going for a run.”

“You just said there are other wolves out there.”

Ezekiel didn't answer. Instead, he grinned at her as he walked back out of the house stark naked. Her eyes were drawn lower to the muscular checks and firm, powerful thighs. She could bounce a coin on him. Why was he so perfect?

But she remembered why he was naked and pulled her eyes away from him. Running into the house, she called out Derek's name. Why had Ezekiel gone out by himself? Damn wolves,