

## Chapter 74

Ava was hungry, so she rushed to the dining hall for lunch, hoping Ezekiel wasn't there. She didn't want another repeat of what had happened in the morning. Though people had mostly left her alone, she seemed to have been branded as Ezekiel's property.

Her heart fluttered stupidly at the thought, but she pushed it aside. She wasn't property. She belonged to no one,

Besides, Claire mentioned that Ezekiel's pack wouldn't allow him to be with a human, so if anything did happen with him, she would be nothing but his plaything. Not that she was trying to be his Luna or his plaything.

Thinking about that brought her thoughts back to Claire again, and with that, all her guilt came flooding back.

What had she done? Ezekiel would never have had to do that if she hadn't been so weak. And now the most fearsome people in their community were coming to ask her about that. How would they do it? Could they sense it if she lied? Did they use magic to read minds? Were they like Mr. Patrick?

Would they know she had been in the restricted forest?

“Hey.”

She looked up to see the young vampire walking beside her. Max. She hadn't seen him since he had offered her his blood before Claire beat crap out of her. She had been open to friendships back then, but she was over that now. She couldn't trust anyone here.

“Hi,” she answered

“You were out most of last week. Are you feeling better?” Max asked.

“I'm fine, thanks.”

“The offer of my blood still stands. You could have got rid of the bug a lot quicker.”

“I was fine without it. Thank you.”

The vampire walked silently with her for a while despite her subtle attempt to push him away.

“Have I done something wrong?” he asked.

“No. I just have a lot on my mind. I'll see you around, okay?”

She didn't wait for an answer as she quickened her step. Max had been friendly to her from the beginning, but so had Emily and Jared.

She had left the classroom first to try and beat the lunch rush, but since all the students were faster than her, she'd expected to find more people heading to the dining hall already. They seemed to be taking their time today, which was great for her. She could just grab a sandwich and sit outside somewhere to eat it. Something quick in case she was called into the meeting with the Council before she could eat anything.

“Little Red.”

She tensed when she heard that voice behind her and then walked even faster.

“Ava, stop,” Jared sighed.

She didn't obey him. Would he be accused of breaking the rules if the Alpha in question was an asshole?

“For fuck's sake, human, stop and listen to me. I was a dick to you, I know that, but you need to hear what I have to say, or you'll end up dead like Claire.”

She stopped and turned back to look at Jared. How did he know Claire was dead? The dean had said she was missing, not that they suspected she dead. Had he seen something? Or was the now just bring paranoid about everything?

Jared stopped in front of her. He didn't have the easy smile on his face that he had used to suck her in, and he looked tired. But that wasn't her concern anymore.

“Look, I know you probably feel safer here with a maniac like Zeke watching your back, but you need to know he’s dangerous, especially after being in isolation for long. He won’t be the same. I don’t know why he’s fixated on you, but you have to get out of that situation before it’s too late.”

Isolation? Was that what they called it? Ezekiel had been gone the whole week. There were some hazy things in her mind that she was still trying to figure out, but she had somehow known he had been in pain. And it must have been terrible because his pack had been worried about him even though they had refused to tell her where he’d been.

What happened in isolation? Was this what Emily had warned her about? She didn’t want to think they tortured students here, but from everything she had seen...

She brought her attention back to the wolf still talking to her.

“And you care, all of a sudden, Alpha Anderson?” she asked. “You knew Claire was in the woods but led me right to her. And then your whole pack watched while she tried to kill me.”

“Is that what he told you?” Jared said with a snort. “I didn’t know she was there, and Zeke knows damn well why. But if you want to believe him, then go right ahead. I tried my best. I can’t save someone who doesn’t want to be saved.”

“I don’t need anyone to save me, especially not you, Alpha Anderson,” she said through gritted teeth, looking him directly in the eye even

though he had warned her not to. “And I know exactly who I can trust here. Me.”

“Well, if you’re all you have to depend on. then good luck, Little Red.”

She watched Jared turn to walk away, and then he stopped because right in front of him was a very angry Alpha.

Ezekiel’s eyes were glowing red as he stood there like his wolf was about to emerge, but he didn’t look like he was struggling to control it. He seemed perfectly calm as he regarded Jared How long had he been standing there?

Jared took a step back from him. They were both Alphas, but it was clear who the stronger one was.

“Didn’t you get my message. Jared?” Ezekiel asked. “I thought I made it very clear.”

“You can’t do that. She’s not even-“

“I can,” Ezekiel said. “Besides, I’m sure there are other things you’d much rather be doing with your limited time.”

Jared turned away from Ezekiel and walked past her towards the dining hall. She had never seen a wolf look ill before, but Jared looked like he would throw up.

When she looked back at Ezekiel, his eyes were not glowing anymore, but they were burning right through her. Jared was right; something had

changed in Ezekiel since he came back. But she knew something had changed in her, too. Something that connected her to this dangerous Alpha who had run into the forest to save her from the darkness.

The Alpha who had become her monster the moment he killed for her.

He had avoided her in the beginning, but now... Now every time she looked at him, she could see how much he wanted her, and it scared the shit out of her. Maybe more than the fact that she had turned him into a murderer.

She turned to walk away from him and was surprised he didn't follow. But she could feel his gaze on her until she walked into the dining hall.