

Chapter 96

Can we even do that? Can we yield?" Ava asked again as she paced Zeke's dressing room floor.

Her anxiety levels were through the roof, and she didn't think even Zeke could get her out of this.

What the hell was happening today? She'd expected her day to be over by now. She'd expected to be recovering in the infirmary by now or Zeke's bed, where she usually woke up after something like this. But here she was, about to fight expert fighters—Zeke's equals who were probably as ruthless as he was.

"It's against the rules. You invalidate all your progress for the term and get a day in isolation." Zeke said quietly,

She whirled around to face him, horror filling every part of her. Even Jared warned her about Isolation and how it broke someone. Zeke seemed to have come out unscathed, but she knew how much pain he had been in. How could someone like her survive that? And why would anyone do that to themselves on purpose?

“Is that vampire crazy? Does he have a history of doing such messed up things?”

“He is from Prince Gideon’s nest, and I don’t know why the fuck he was told to do that,” Zeke growled.

Only then did she see how he was clenching and unclenching his fists.

“If the prince sent him, maybe it’s a good thing I didn’t drink that blood.”

Was she now being put in the middle of whatever vendetta the vampires had against Zeke the way she had been placed between him and Jared?

“I should have known better than to trust anyone,” Zeke growled.

There were cheers in the arena, which meant the current matches would all be over soon. Derek and Myles were fighting, but none of them had seemed worried about their ability to progress. Would that mean all four of them would be fighting the last matches at the same time?

Would that mean there would be no one to help her when she was being beaten and broken in the ring?

The door opened, and Derek rushed in. He was bloody and breathless, but it looked like none of the blood was his. How was she expected to fight such powerful students? Myles came in behind him in the same state, and their gazes landed on her briefly before they looked at Derek.

“Gideon is in his dressing room.” Derek said.

Zeke was up like a shot.

“Myles, watch her,” he growled before leaving the room.

And then it was just her and the wolf that didn't like her, though it looked like his gaze was more curious than cold.

“I need to wash all this blood off,” Myles said. “Stay here. Don't open the door to anyone.”

She could only nod. Where would she go anyway? She couldn't avoid going into the ring when the penalty would be isolation.

The shower had just started running when there was a very faint knock on the door. She knew Myles would probably still hear it, so she stayed where she was. The knock came again, a little more insistently. No one knew she was in there; she was supposed to be in her usual dressing room, so whoever it was not looking for her.

“Ava Morgan,” a voice said from the other side of the door.

With her eyes widening, she rushed to the door to open it and saw Mr. Patrick on the other side.

“Quick, they'll be back soon,” he said as he rushed further down the hall and threw a door open.

Maybe she was stupid to mindlessly follow him when she knew she couldn't trust anyone here, but she found herself in another dressing room with the door closed.

“The Council have their eyes here,” he said quickly. “They’ve already started testing you and your pack. I’m still unclear whether it’s as friend or foe, but both are equally dangerous. Keep your head down. Take this just before your match. Put it in a water bottle,”

She looked down at the little bottle in her hand, her mind reeling at the rapidly fired instructions. What was happening here! This was the Council’s doing? What was the purpose of having her fight at a level she would never be able to attain even if she continued to train for the rest of her life?

“I don’t understand. What do they want from me?” she asked.

“What they always want from their exceptional students,” he answered as he walked to the door. “Please, Ava, find me when we can talk.”

“Sir,” she started, going after him.

But when she walked out of the room, he was gone, and Zeke and Derek were walking down from the other end of the hallway.

What are you doing? It’s not safe for you to be alone.” Zeke said as he rushed towards her

She hid the little bottle in her palm as she met him at his dressing room door.

“I needed some air,” she lied.

Myles had just come out of the shower when they walked in, and he glared at her.

“I told you to stay put,” he said

The coldness was back in his gaze now.

“I’m not a dog to do as you tell me,” she snapped as she walked over to the fridge to grab some water.

Before long, it was time to head back to the arena, and Ava managed to pour the contents of the bottle from Mr. Patrick into her water. She realized how stupid it was only after she had downed it all. The vampire might have given her tainted blood, so why had she easily trusted Mr. Patrick? It felt like she had swallowed a vial of poison as it burned its way down her throat, and almost instantly, she started to feel a little dizzy.

It was too late to do anything about it. If she survived this, she would know better than to ever accept any suspicious vials again.

The coach called her name first, as usual, and she stepped into the ring. She had to hold onto the ropes as her vision started to blur.

And then they called Derek’s name. And then Myles, When they called two more winners from the advanced levels to wait in the other rings,

she realized her fear had come true. All the people she could rely on were going to be fighting at the same time.

The coach started rattling out the names of the expert fighters, and at the fifth name, her opponent, the coach paused.

She looked over at Coach Baxter and saw the glee on his face as he said the last name.

“Alpha Ezekiel Michelson.”

She would have heard a pin drop in the arena if her head wasn't swimming so much. Zeke stepped in, larger than life, but she could see two of him. And then three.

The whistle blew. And that was the last thing she remembered before retching her guts out on the ring mat and then passing out in her own vomit.