

Chapter 46

Ava POV (Present Time)

Two weeks. That's how long it's been since we last saw Brandon and the last time I saw my mate, Atlas. The whole castle was on high alert. Snatched right from under our noses. Brandon is a fighter and, with his wolf, extremely strong, so how was something like this even made possible? Samael and Jasmine checked the security cameras but found nothing. No break-ins, nothing.

Harmon wasn't herself. She spends most of her time scouring trees in other states, not returning any of our phone calls or answering any links from Samael, even though I feel like he knows where she is and isn't telling anyone. I didn't even know when I would see her again until she popped up here in the castle, clawing at her chest.

"He's gone. He's gone," is all she kept saying. Her wolf, out of the two of them in this situation, was the most responsive, even though she was hurt as well. She told us how they were jumping through trees in the east of England when she felt the bomb between her and Brandon's wolf break. I just snapped with no words or anything. She thought she was feeling him and his frustration until it was just gone. He was dead. That much was certain. None of us, other than my dad and Samael, knew the pain of a mate bond breaking, so there was not much most of us could have said.

I still had plans to hunt down Brandon's killer, and something tells me I was not the only one, because in the next 2 days, we felt Harmon's ties to the pack break. Her room was cleaned out, and there were letters for all of us. In them, she stated that the heartbreak was too much for her and that she needed some time away from the pack. In Samael's letter, she told them she was going back to the Amazon, but we all knew better. I've known Harmon for years.

We know what revenge looks like. Dad and Jessica spent most of their time with Samael and Jasmine. I didn't mind being alone, though I wished I had someone to talk to. Well, I did, but he didn't want me. Why didn't he want me? He saved my life, so that must have meant something.

Ugh. This is why I didn't want to deal with all of this mate shit, and why I never wanted a mate, I think to myself as I head back to my room. I smiled briefly at Jessica, whom I passed on the way there. She tries to talk to me sometimes, but honestly, I don't need another mother. I had one already, and she died saving my life. Just another thing that seems to be my fault.

Another week passed. No word from Harmon. Samael and Jasmine left on a tip with someone who swore they saw Brandon walking in the streets. They believe it's an imposter using his face, as we have seen it happen before with my mate and the demon Xavier. Dad is left in charge of the castle while they are gone, but he handles everything here like it is second nature to him. Courtesy of being from a royal family, I suppose, even though I haven't met his parents yet. One day, he always says,

I head to one of the abandoned buildings in the forest on the castle grounds. It's where I'm able to practice my magic without fear of hurting someone. I removed Mom's necklace and placed it in my pocket. At once, I could feel my energy rush through my body, enveloping me in a golden light. I opened my mom's spell book, testing out some of her locating spells. I had hair from Brandon's brush as I performed the spell, being lifted into the air with the map, and it circled me, trailing my flow of energy until it stopped, and a portal opened.

I saw a man bent down over what seemed to be a four-year-old girl's body, feeding from it. This wasn't Brandon. Where the hell did I just open a portal too? Before I could step through to kill this foul creature, a woman with red hair and purple eyes stepped in front of the opened portal, cocked her head to the side, and smirked. She snapped her fingers, and at once, the portal closed instantly. She felt familiar. Was she encouraging that man or creature, whatever the hell he was, to feed and kill that child? I couldn't abide by that. I tried the spell again, but by the time I had opened it back up, they were both gone, and the child was left there on the street, dead.

I stepped through the portal, making sure no one was around, and did a tracing spell over her body to see if I could see a trail on where they went, but it didn't work. After doing another spell to locate the girl's family, I closed the portal behind me so no one could get through and carried her body to her home. I found it strange that the family didn't even question what happened. They were just happy I found her and returned her since she had been missing since earlier that morning. I left and returned home. My powers were feeling a bit drained as I kept doing all of these other spells to locate Brandon's body, but they were all failing.

I put my necklace back on and went back to my room in the castle, only to be questioned by my dad about why I left the grounds.

"If someone can come on these grounds and take one of its members, why the hell would you think it was safe to just portal to another fucking country?" he said in an angry tone. Jessica was rubbing his back, looking sympathetically at me, and I knew she was the only reason he was not blowing up like I knew he could. I had wanted to tell him about the little girl and her death, as well as the stuff with her strange family, but he wouldn't let me get a word in. He was frustrated. Harmon gone. Brandon died. Harmon was also like a daughter to him. When he calmed down, I finally spoke.

"I thought I could find Brandon's body. I was wrong. I didn't find anything. I'm sorry, dad," I told him. I couldn't bring myself to tell him what happened. It was a little much, and I needed time to process it.

"Keep your necklace on unless you need to use your powers, Ava; the next time I find that you have left the ground, I'm getting another witch to bind that necklace to your body," he said. I looked at him in horror. That was the worst punishment, and my wolf growled at the last idea. She was also against it and even upset that he would even suggest it, but Dad growled and made her submit. I looked at him in anger and stormed off to my room.

Great. Dad is upset with me now. One more thing to add to my already messed-up life. My thoughts drifted to my partner after I had gotten into bed. I didn't want these thoughts, but my wolf missed her mate, and I could feel her calling to him. I fell asleep and ended up dreaming about him.

He was in what looked like a gym, working out, with music in his ears. He wore a white t-shirt and some blue basketball shorts. His black hair was tousled, probably from not being able to sleep. I wanted to touch him, but I could only watch. Even though he looked exactly like Xavier, I didn't see him as Xavier. I saw him as Atlas. My wolf called out to him once again, and he stopped working out, turning around and looking directly at me.

My eyes widened. I knew I was dreaming. As a dreamwalker, I have more control over knowing when I am dreaming and what I can do. My subconscious allows me to do things that my heart most desires, so why am I here?

"Ava?" he said in his deep voice, which made me feel like jelly. I smiled and nodded, taking steps toward him until I almost reached him. He has an orange glow around him. His face was displaying numerous emotions until it settled on one. Anger.

"Get out of my dreams, Ava," he said, and at once I felt an invisible force pushing me from him and onto the ground. He reached out to me, but before he could touch me, I woke up. Did I just walk into my mate's dreams, and even more, he saw me, which only meant one thing? He was a dreamwalker too. What sort of mate did the goddess pair me with? What creature was he? What is his deal with me-that he even pushes me away in his own dreams?

As I recall, I saved his life, and he saved mine. I guess in his mind, we're equals now. I should just forget about him. I have enough bullshit to deal with already, though my wolf tells me it will be harder than I thought. I'll show her, though. Brandon. The goal is to find Brandon's body. Harmon needed some sort of peace, and I was going to give that to her if it was the last thing I did.