

CHAPTER 30

30 Ava: Omega? (III) I groan as searing pain lances through my ribs, fairly certain that at least a few are broken from the impact. Gasping for air, I blink through the haze of confusion, trying to make sense of the chaos surrounding me. Derek is slumped over the steering wheel, a grotesque trickle of blood oozing from his hairline. In the backseat, Jeremy lies crumpled in a disturbing, bloody mess, unmoving and alarmingly still. For one hysterical second, I muse that this is precisely why seatbelts exist. Should've worn a seatbelt, Jeremy. I grit my teeth against a wave of pain as I claw my way into the passenger seat. My shaking hands fumble with the door handle, but the door remains stubbornly jammed. Peering through the cracked windshield, I realize this side of the car has collided with a tree. A few inches of trunk are all that's blocking my door from opening. Adrenaline courses through my veins as I muster what little strength remains and kick the door with everything I have. Before I can kick again, the door 14:51 1/7 30 Ava: Omega? (i))))) flies off. I don't stop to question my luck. As I tumble out of the wrecked vehicle, gasping for fresh air, a strong hand suddenly grips my arm, yanking me upright. I whirl around, my heart pounding, only to find myself face-to-face with a stranger—a tall, imposing man with chestnut hair and piercing green eyes. His gaze sweeps over me, assessing, before he speaks in a deep, authoritative tone. "Are you injured?" I sway into him, my battered body screaming in protest as I fight to remain upright. A dizzying wave of nausea washes over me, and I squeeze my eyes shut, willing the world to stop spinning. That's when the scent hits me—ocean fresh, with a woodsy scent lingering just beneath, along with something that can only belong to one of my kind. A shifter. My eyes fly open, locking onto the stranger's intense gaze, and I instinctively flinch away from him. A mistake. My legs buckle beneath me, and I brace myself for the unforgiving impact of the ground. But instead of hitting the hard earth, I find myself enveloped in a 14:51 2/7 30 Ava: Omega? (III) strong embrace, cradled against a broad chest. The stranger—no, the shifter—has swept me into his arms with an ease that belies his impressive stature. I tense, every fiber of my being screaming at me to fight, to flee, but I'm utterly powerless against his hold. His chiseled features are set in a grim line as he studies me intently. "Are you injured?" he rumbles, his deep voice laced with concern. my I open my mouth to respond, but the words catch in throat. The events of the past few hours have left me reeling, and I can't seem to find my voice amidst the chaos. He frowns, his brow furrowing as he takes in my silence. "We need to get you to safety," he declares, his tone brooking no argument. Panic seizes me, and I struggle feebly against his iron grip. I can't go with him! But my efforts are futile. He merely tightens his hold, cradling me closer to his chest as if I weigh no more than a child. "Easy now," he murmurs, his voice low and soothing. 3/7 30 Ava: Omega? (III) "I'm not going to hurt you. Rowan, take care of the rogues," he orders over his shoulder as he strides away from the scene of the accident, carrying me with ease. I struggle against the waves of pain crashing over me. "Who are you?" I rasp out, my voice hoarse. "What's going on?" His green eyes find mine, calm yet intense. "I am Alpha Clayton Shadowpine of the Aspen Pack. And you are?" I hesitate, unsure if I should give my real name. I feel safe for the immediate moment, but I know my future is now even more uncertain. Selene remains silent in my mind. "Ava," I finally say. "Well, Ava, you're safe now." His tone leaves no room for argument as he continues walking, heading deeper into the trees. "Those rogues won't be a problem anymore." I shiver, the adrenaline ebbing and leaving me chilled in the crisp evening air. "Are you cold?" the alpha asks. "No, just—" I shudder as another tremor wracks through me, my teeth chattering uncontrollably. 14:51 30 Ava: Omega? (III) C

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layton tightens his hold, pulling me closer against his solid frame as we approach a sleek black SUV. His presence is both comforting and unsettling—a paradox that leaves me reeling. Part of me wants to burrow deeper into his warmth, to soak in the reassurance of his strength, to lean on an alpha. It's been so long since I've been in a pack, and I guess somewhere deep inside, something's been craving it. Another part remains wary, a voice in the back of my mind whispering that I can trust no one, especially not another shifter. He shifts me effortlessly in his arms, freeing one hand to retrieve a set of keys from his pocket. With a deft flick of his wrist, he unlocks the SUV, and the rear door swings open silently. "Here, let me get you inside where it's warm," he murmurs, his deep voice a low rumble that vibrates against my cheek. I tense as he moves to deposit me in the backseat, my fingers instinctively curling into the fabric of his shirt. A strangled noise escapes my throat—a silent plea for 14:61 517 30 Ava: Omega? (III) him to wait, to give me a moment longer before he pulls away. Clayton pauses, his sharp gaze assessing me with a penetrating intensity that leaves me feeling stripped bare. His nostrils flare ever so slightly, and I know he's scenting me, picking up the nuances of my fear and uncertainty. "You're safe, Ava," he says, his voice a gentle rumble. "I won't let anyone hurt you." I swallow hard, forcing myself to loosen my grip on his shirt. Slowly, carefully, he lowers me onto the plush leather seat, his movements measured and controlled. As soon as I'm settled, he shrugs off his jacket and dr@pes it over me like a blanket, cocooning me in its warmth and the lingering traces of his woodsy scent. "Thank you," I whisper, clutching the jacket tighter around me. It's a small comfort, but one I cling to nonetheless. Clayton gives a solemn nod, his expression inscrutable. "We'll get you looked at by our healers," he says, his tone leaving no room for argument. "And then we can figure out what to do next." 30 Ava: Omega? (III) A flicker of unease stirs within me at his words. What does he mean by "figure out what to do next"? Is he implying that I'll be staying with his pack? The thought is terrifying. Before I can voice my concerns, the sound of approaching footsteps draws my attention. I tense instinctively, my heart rate spiking as a tall, lean figure emerges from the shadows. Comment 2 View All > A Leave the first comment for this chapter Vote 11 1 Fandom Swipe left to continue > Send Gift 31 Ava: Omoga? (IV) 31 Ava:

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