

## CHAPTER 9

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"Keep an eye on the rest of them, in case they try to pull anything else." 14:38 1/8 9 Lucas: Gala (V) I end the call before he can respond and shove the phone back into my pocket, my jaw clenched so tight it aches. The Blackwood Pack has gone too far this time. I don't know what they did to Ava, but whatever it was, it caused me to react to her on the most primal level. My wolf paces in my mind, a caged animal, furious that I let her leave. She's not our fated. You don't scent that on her, I snap at him, but he just howls, refusing to communicate with me. It's the first time we have been so divided, and I blame her. That s@xy little distraction in her oversized, thick black frames. Wolves don't need glasses; the few who wear them are for fashion. I can only assume that she tried to go for a defenseless appeal. And it had worked, damn it. I drag my hand through my hair and take a deep breath, trying to clear my head. I need to find out what they did to cause Ava's pheromones to affect me with such intensity. I need to understand why my wolf reacts to her as if she is my mate, And then I'm going to make the Blackwood Pack pay for what they've done tonight. 2/8 <9 Lucas: Gala (V) I prow through the garden and find that I can't help following Ava's scent to the front of the building, where it disappears. The lingering aroma of her unique fragrance clings to my skin, a maddening reminder of our encounter. I can still smell her all over me, and electricity hums beneath my skin as desire rises through the anger. A snarl rips from my throat and I turn away, stalking to my car. There's no way I can remain at the gala with the smell of her all over me, not when every inhale sends my senses reeling and my body aching for more. I slide into the driver's seat and slam the door, flexing my hands around the steering wheel. That enticing mix of orange, honey, and vanilla lingers in the enclosed space, and I draw in a lungful of it, my wolf howling in my mind. He wants to chase her, to claim her, but I force him back. She's not our fated mate. The squeal of my tires as I peel out of the parking lot helps take the edge off the frenetic energy warring between us. I need to get away from here, away from the memories of her soft skin and the way she felt pressed against me. I need to clear my head and figure out what the hell just happened. 3/8 9 Lucas: Gala (V) As I speed down the dark highway, my mind races with questions, but one keeps repeating-how do I make sure it never happens again? My knuckles are white from the pressure of my grip, and my molars grind as I fight off a growl. I won't let them get away with this. Whatever game they're playing, I'll find out. And when I do, they'll pay for it. \*\*\* I pace the hotel room like a caged wolf, my skin crawling with a restless energy I can't seem to dispel. Every nerve is alight, hyper-aware of the lingering scent of her that clings to me-a maddening reminder of the tempting little blonde in the garden. Ava. Her name is a growl in my mind, one that has my wolf stirring with an unquenchable hunger. I can still taste her on my tongue, can still feel the warmth of her body pressed against mine, soft curves molding to hard planes. The memory alone is enough to have desire simmering low in my gut, an aching need that demands to be sated. With a snarl of frustration, I sweep my arm across the ve 9 Lucas: Gala (V) dresser, sending the lamp crashing to the floor in a satisfying shatter of glass and ceramic. It's not enough to ease the tumult raging inside me. I turn on the chair next, upending it with a vicious kick. Still, the tension winds tighter, coiling like a spring ready to snap. What did they do to me? What kind of f@cked up magic did the Blackwood Pack use to make me react to Ava like a mate? I've never felt anything like it before, an all-consuming need to claim and possess, to mark her as mine in the most primal way. And she had responded. I could smell her arousal, could see it in the way she arched into my touch, whimpering with want. It had taken every ounce of willpower not to rip that little black dress from her body and take her right there in the garden. The image has me groaning, fisting my hands in my hair as I fight against the visceral pull. This isn't me. I don't lose control like this. But that girl...that tiny slip of a thing with her wide blue eyes and those goddamn glasses...she had awoken something in me I didn't even know existed. The knock at the door is a welcome interruption from the torment of my thoughts. I yank it open, ready to 1-30 5/9 9 Lucas: Gala (V) unleash the maelstrom of rage on whoever dares disturb me, only to find Kellan standing there. He takes one look at the destroyed room and arches a brow. "Everything okay, man?" "What the f@ck do you think?" I growl, stepping back to let him enter. "You didn't warn me that I was stalking Ava Grey." Kellan shrugs, kicking the broken lamp out of his path. "I told you the Blackwoods brought two daughters. I didn't realize you wouldn't recognize the younger one, or that it would be a problem for you." A humorless bark of laughter escapes me. "A problem? That's putting it mildly." Bracing my hands on the back of the overturned chair, I fight for control. I can't let Kellan see how shaken I am, how deeply Ava has affected me. As my second, as my friend, he would sense the weakness and try to exploit it. That's just how we operate. When I'm certain I have myself under control once more, I turn to face him. "Report. 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