

CHAPTER 28

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28 Ava: Omega? (I) I'm walking to the bus stop after my evening class, my mind still focused on the lecture. The streetlights flicker overhead, casting long shadows that seem to shift and dance in the corners of my vision. An uneasy feeling prickles at the back of my neck, but I push it aside, chalking it up to my overactive imagination. Then, without warning, a searing pain explodes at the base of my skull. A strangled yell tears from my throat as my knees buckle, and I crumple to the pavement. Spots dance before my eyes, and for a disorienting moment, the world tilts on its axis. Ava! Ava, listen to me! Selene's frantic voice cuts through the haze of agony. Get up! You have to run! A rough hand grips my arm, hauling me upright with a savage jerk. The potent scent of shifter slams into me- musky, feral, and utterly alien. My heart stutters in my chest as a car screeches to a halt beside us. Fight, Ava! Fight! Selene's command echoes through my mind, her urgency lending me a burst of adrenaline-fueled strength. 1/7 28 Avt: Omega? (1) I thrash against my assailant's hold, kicking and clawing with everything I have. A guttural snarl rumbles in my ear as he wrestles me toward the waiting vehicle. My nails find purchase, scoring deep gouges along his cheek, but he doesn't relent. The backseat door flies open, and I'm shoved inside with brutal force. My head cracks against the opposite window, and stars explode across my vision. Rough hands pin me down, the weight of a body trapping me against the cracked leather seats. "Get off me!" I scream, bucking wildly. "Let me go!" Hot, rancid breath washes over my face as my assailant leans in close, his features twisted into a savage leer. "Calm down, little wolf," he growls, his voice a deep, grating rasp. "You'll be fine. We'll be mating you soon." Bile rises in my throat as he buries his face in the crook of my neck, inhaling deeply. Revulsion churns in my gut, and I renew my struggles with frantic desperation. "She's unmated, all right," he pants, his words muffled against my skin. "A rogue wolf, free for the taking. 217 28 Ava Omega? (1) What are you doing, walking alone at night? Waiting for us to take you?" "Of course she was," the driver says, and I can hear the leer in his voice. I thrash and buck beneath the weight of my assailant, my heart thundering in my ears. Every ounce of my training screams at me to fight, to claw and bite and scratch until I'm free, but he's just too strong. His bulk pins me down, rendering my struggles futile. Selene whimpers in the back of my mind. I'm coming, Ava. Hold on! I'll be okay. I'm unsure if Selene can even hear my thoughts over the roaring panic in my head. I'll survive until I can get away. Just get to me as fast as you can. The driver lets out a guttural groan, his eyes flicking to the rearview mirror. "Can you smell that? She's about to go into heat." He drags in a deep breath, his nostrils flaring. "Goddamn, that scent is driving me crazy. I f@cking knew she wasn't human. I told you, didn't I?" Heat? That doesn't make sense. Female shifters don't go into heat until they're mated. At least-that's what I was told. 3/7 28 Ava: Omega? (1) Since I ran away, I'm learning that my pack education might not be that great, honestly. In White Peak, it was r

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are to see a shifter among humans. Here-well, Cedarwood didn't have many before, but lately they're everywhere, and they fit in just fine... Something Alpha Renard always said was impossible. I can feel the man's slimy tongue licking along the crescent at my neck, causing it to burn. The urge to vomit is strong, and I jerk my head away, only for his teeth to bite into me in punishment. Stupid shifters. They have to be rogues; they smell wrong. Wild. And they're so f@cking horny they'd abduct a potential mate right off the street. Though, Todd wasn't any better. Being in a pack doesn't mean you're a civilized shifter, either. I cringe as unwanted memories crowd my brain; I don't want to go through that again. Or worse. I try to formulate a plan, my mind racing even as the brute on top of me nuzzles the crook of my neck with disturbing tenderness. Play dead? No, they'd never let their guard down. Scream? The driver seems just as unhinged as my captor; he'd probably join in on the fun. 4/7 28 Ava: Omoga? (1) My only hope is to wait for an opportunity, to bide my time until they make a mistake. I force my body to go limp, feigning defeat as a whimper escapes my lips. The man chuckles darkly, mistaking my deception for fear as he noses along my jaw. "That's it, little wolf," he rumbles, his hot breath fanning over my skin. "Just relax and let it happen. You'll enjoy it soon enough. Submit to your alphas." Alpha? Please. They're not even betas. I guess rogue wolves get a little delusional. I swallow back a wave of nausea, fighting to keep my expression blank even as his calloused hands roam over my body in a mockery of a lover's caress. Rage simmers beneath my skin, scorching through my veins with every touch, but I can't let it show. Not yet. Just hold on, Ava. I'm coming. His fingers tangle in my hair, yanking my head back to expose the long column of my throat. I let out a whimper, praying it sounds convincing as his lips touch my crescent scar again. "I can smell her so strongly right here," he growls, licking at it again. Fire burns, almost as if my scar is rejecting his touch. 57 28 Ava: Omega? (1) "Are you calm now, little mate?" I nod frantically, praying he believes that I've been sufficiently subdued by his "alpha" aura. "I'm calm. I'm sorry. I won't fight." "Of course you won't," he croons, and I can see the wild in his eyes. Selene, these guys are weird. Is this what feral wolves are like? The silence in my head has me unnerved, even as the shifter's painful grip eases into something like a lover's embrace. Both of them talk to me every so often, telling me how wonderful our lives are going to be, and how we're going to create our own pack. My skin crawls as my kidnapper nuzzles against me, and my brain blanks whenever he ki*s'es me. All I can taste is stale cigarettes, but I lay limp, waiting for my chance. They've already let their guard down. If I can keep this up... Selene? I ask urgently, but it's still quiet.

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