

The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 31

Not everyone's mate takes them to the sparing ground and arms them with knives but mine had to be special.

"If I came at you with a knife, is this how you'd defend yourself?" I kept my mouth shut to keep myself from drooling.

If anyone came at me with a knife, they wouldn't have such a magnificent chest on full display to distract me.

"What was that?" His brow raised.

"What?"

"What is it you said about my chest?" My eyes darted to his face in time to catch a flash of a smirk which made my heart sink. I took a step back, burying my face in my palms when I realized I'd said the words out loud. Mortification made me burn from the inside out.

"Am I distracting you?" His voice was thicker; perhaps from holding laughter or something else.

"Oh no, it's just –" I took another step backwards and tripped on thin air. I flayed about for a second before strong arms caught me and pulled me to a magnificent, sweaty chest.

"Fv- vvck." He exclaimed and let me go almost immediately. I steadied and then realized I'd let my knife fall to his feet.

“Oh my god. Oh my god.” I felt my gaze blur as panic slammed into me. He was bleeding and he had a knife stuck on his foot. A knife I dropped.

“I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry.” I bent down to take out the knife with shaky hands but he leaned forward and yanked it out.

“I’m bleeding.” His words had a foreign emotion in them. He raised the blade with shaky hands and I assumed he was shaking with anger which made me take another step back.

“I swear I didn’t mean it.” I could feel hysteria setting in, making me want to run. “I would never willingly hurt you.” Believe me! I wanted to scream and plead with him.

“It’s not healed yet,” he said again in that strange voice that sounded neutral but was filled with something I could not decipher.

“It’ll heal. I can – I can get the doctor if you want me to.” I’d do anything at this point. The injury was not so deep but it would still take a few minutes to heal but from the look of things, he wanted it to heal immediately.

With all the things that had happened between us, we were only now making progress. It almost ruined our relationship before it even started but in the last week, I could feel him begin to accept me even though he didn’t say the words. I felt the change in him but I went and did something wrong again. He would surely say I did it on purpose, hellbent on ruining his life.

“It has been a long time since I felt pain.” I quietened when he handed me the knife. “It has been a long time since I had an injury that didn’t heal in a few seconds.” I retrieved the knife from him with shaky hands.

“What are you saying?” I asked when I still could not make sense of his words or mood.

“I did something terrible in vengeance and I earned myself a curse. Immortality. I didn’t just get immortality, I got immunity. I could not be hurt so I could not be killed. I’ve had to live out my curse but you’ve hurt me.”

“I didn’t mean to?” I apologized and asked at the same time.

“No, you didn’t mean to. Just the same way you didn’t mean to break my curse.” His words stung but I may have read the wrong meaning into them because his tone still remained neutral. “Thank you.” I stilled.

“For hurting you?” I asked incredulously.

“For breaking my curse.” His hands wrapped around my waist and pulled me into a soft and light k!ss. It was the sweetest k!ss we ever shared and it made my head spin in the three seconds it lasted.

After that, he made me run around the track field and took me to a boxing ring while I was dying to catch my breath. I could only throw weak, feeble punches so we focused on my posture that day.

It continued to the next day and then the next week. I had a day interval between every two days to let my body rest before going back into the same routine.

Training consumed my time these days. I trained mornings and evenings. In the morning, Valens woke me up at the crack of dawn and made me do push-ups and in the evening, Jabari took over my training.

One evening, while I warmed up for training, Valens walked in and my heart leapt into my throat. He had taken off his tie, popping open the first two buttons on his shirt and rolling the sleeves of his shirt. I couldn't explain why but I felt he looked undeniably sexy this way. I had only seen him during training this week and he missed it this morning and I missed him.

He climbed into bed late every night when I was already far too gone into sleep. I always knew the time he climbed into bed because my body gravitated towards his and I think he did the same because we would somehow be entangled with each other before long.

Unfortunately, he slipped out before my eyes blinked open every morning and I only got to see him for the short one hour sessions we had to train in the mornings.

"Is Jabari not coming?" I asked when he stopped before me.

"Would you prefer him to?" He asked in a light tone with an undercurrent of something sharp.

“No,” I answered truthfully then acting on Artemis’ courage and the longing I felt for him all week, I stepped closer to him. Placing my hands on his shoulders, I raised myself on my tiptoes and placed a kiss on his lips. A kiss which should have been light if his lips didn’t take mine in ravenous hunger, his hand dropping below my waist as he grabbed me and squished me to himself.

“You missed me.” He declared when we broke apart. I chuckled under my breath at that.

“I missed you,” I admitted because I had.

Maybe because he had a domineering presence that made it hard to breathe around him or maybe it was the fact that we were mates, but he somehow made my breath short and my body felt his absence all the time.

“There is no way for you to contact me when I’m not with you.” His voice took on an irritated edge. “Come along.” He took my hand and pulled me with him. My shorter legs found it hard to keep up with his long strides so I broke into a semi-jog to keep up with his pace.

We got into his new car which stank of money. It was a gift from the alpha of a wealthy pack. A ‘congratulations on finding your mate. I’m making my existence known so I’m invited to the mating ceremony’ kind of gift. Although the note with the car came with only hearty congratulations, the intentions were clear.

I’d received a beautiful diamond set from the Luna of a neighbouring pack with a note that read: ‘Congratulations

on finding your mate, Luna Aysel. I hope you will wear these diamonds at your Mating Ceremony as I'd like to see them on you on such a special occasion.' Sneaky yet direct.

Valens had the diamonds returned the very day I opened it. "No idiot clothes my mate but me. I can afford to adorn you in diamonds myself!" The gift seemed to be an insult to his pride somehow and he'd told Jabari to make sure whoever sent it never stepped feet into Redville pack.

At the mall, he pulled me to a store. He pointed out a phone which the people had on display and the workers fell over themselves to get it for him. We got it, got a sim and they set everything up there. When we were about to leave, I spied the bill for just a single phone and I screamed out loud.

"What is it?" His eyes darted around.

"Is that the price of the phone?" I asked, transfixed.

"What else did we buy?" He sounded annoyed so I knew that I had to drop it. I looked at the small phone in my hand. It was nice and slender but it cost an arm and a leg.

"That's - that's a lot of money," I said to myself.

"I am the king of werewolves. There is nothing like too much money to me."

I thanked him for the umpteenth time as we walked out, his words playing in my head.

He could only claim his father's throne when he broke his curse. The throne of the alpha king sat collecting dust for years.

King. He called himself king.

With these thoughts in my mind, I walked out of the store but bumped into a large chest. When I looked up, I counted six stocky men before us.

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The men carried the scent of the Alpha Pack but I had never set eyes on them before then. Valens came up behind me and the men echoed their greetings in loud, cheery voices that were far divorced from their scary, domineering builds.

“Alpha! Luna!” The largest man in the group echoed, then he stepped forward and on instinct, I stepped backwards, leaning into Valens. “A hug?” The big man asked.

“I thought we all agreed on not hugging strangers?” Jabari stepped out from the mall. I frowned when I realized I'd been so caught up with Valens that I barely paid attention to Jabari materializing at different places around the mall, almost as if he was following us. Or me.

“The Luna is no stranger.” The big man took a step forward and I pressed into Valens. He casually moved me to his side, his hand draped around my shoulders and his actions plainly telling the newcomer to back off.

“I see how it is.” The man chortled before taking a step back so that he fell in step with the other men who looked on with small smiles on their lips.

“Is there trouble? Why are you here?” Valens asked the men without a trace of familiarity in his voice.

“Why are we here!?” The big man chortled. He had a loud, deep voice and he spoke very loudly, as in, people were actually pausing to look at us not because the alpha and omega were together but because he was pulling attention with his loudness. “Are we not to see our Luna? It’s not enough to hear about her. We had to see her too but you wouldn’t even let me have a hug.” The big man almost pouted.

“He doesn’t like others touching her,” Jabari said. The men shared a look and snickered amongst themselves.

“Who are they?” I asked when the snickering threatened to turn into full-blown laughter.

“They are the keepers of my throne,” Valens said and the men stopped laughing. “They are from home.” The men had a sombre look on their faces in a split second.

I didn’t think home would be a pretty place for them considering the ruination the witch who cursed Valens left things in. Some people said those in the kingdom were frozen after the prince’s curse, others said the land became dry and hard to cultivate so the people suffered thirst and hunger but others believed the kingdom never existed so it

was hard to know what to believe; what was fact and what was a fairytale.

“How is home?” Jabari asked the men.

“It echoes now,” one man from the six answered.

Whatever things the kingdom echoed seemed to be an awful and miserable thing because the men became even more sombre.

“But it will be filled soon. The prince has found his curse breaker!” The big man exclaimed, filled with positivity while the other men looked about as if the world was about to collapse on their heads.

“The Sacred Knights are not supposed to leave the kingdom.” Valens reminded them.

“It’s just six of us. There are hundreds back home and we haven’t had to fend off anyone for close to a decade now,” another of the men replied. “We have guarded your throne for over a century. The only thing we ask is to witness your mating ceremony.”

“What are you carrying?” Jabari asked. I looked at the man he spoke to and noticed he carried something in a velvet box with him. Valens growled, his hand dropping from my shoulder.

“Is that what I think it is?” He stepped forward and the men shuffled to block the one holding the box.

“We come bearing a present for our Luna.” The big and

boisterous man spoke but this time, his words were tight and his eyes uncomfortable.

“Get out of my way, Ewan.” Valens took another step forward. I tugged at his sleeve when his anger started to suffocate us in the open space. He paused, looked down at me before grabbing my hand then he stalked forward, pulling me along. “What the f**k were you thinking travelling with my mother’s crown?” He hissed at them.

“The – the oracle spoke to us,” Ewan replied.

“The – ” I tugged at his sleeve again when he almost crushed my palm in his.

“Maybe we should see the oracle.” I inputted before he started to clench his fists again. He glared at me, making me flinch.

“Fine, we will see the oracle.”

I’d never been to see the past or present oracle because I never had reason to. The goddess never had anything to say to me or about me so there was no reason to consult with her spokesperson. It didn’t mean I didn’t know where the oracle’s shrine was located; right in the middle of the pack lands.

It took hours to get to the middle of the pack lands during which Valens’ brooded and occasionally cursed underneath his breath.

“Why is this such a big deal?” I asked when he cursed for the hundredth time and almost hit the car before us.

“You wouldn’t understand,” he answered in a dismissive tone. I turned away from him, hurt with my wolf angry. “How can I understand when you never say anything?” I muttered to myself but he heard me.

“What did you say?” He demanded, taking his eyes off the road long enough to kill us. He hadn’t been a reckless driver on the way to the mall but now he wanted to kill everyone on the road as he drove.

“I’m not ready to die, Valens. Please keep your eyes on the road!” He didn’t like it when I talked back at him or displayed even the tiniest bit of insubordination but he had to understand that I couldn’t afford to be docile all the time. ‘Afford’ because I knew what it’d cost me if I kept quiet all the time. He’d plough through me without looking back.

“What is –” His eyes returned to the road. “What did you say?”

“I said it’s impossible to understand anything if you don’t tell me anything,” I explained, making sure my voice didn’t leak with the frustration I felt. He was worked up already and I didn’t want to make things worse but in the past few days, I’d begun to wonder why my mate still remained a mystery to everyone including me.

“Why should I tell you anything?” My heart prickled at his harsh words.

‘You have to understand! You have to understand he’s never had a companion and he doesn’t know how to relate to you.’ My wolf rushed to defend her mate.

‘He’s not like this with Clover.’ I reminded my wolf which earned me a snarl but before I could get anything out, we arrived at the sacred shrine of Redville’s oracle.

The place was small and painted white but when we entered, I realized it was actually large and the insides were predominantly gold with a bit of red hue splashed about.

“I’ve expected you for a while, Prince Valens.” A quiet voice called from somewhere in the dimly lit room which we entered.

“Selene,” Valens called in greeting and a young lady walked out. I watched her in shock as I’d expected an old lady with white hair. She wore white baggy jeans and a white shirt, her thick hair pulled into a high bun.

She was young, about my age, but she carried herself with an air of agedness, something even Clover and Valens did not have.

She had a soft glow about her smallish body and an aura of power, a soft, effeminate power that could only be from the Moon Goddess.

“My Sacred Knights are here with my mother’s crown on your orders.” He spoke to her in a calm voice that did not hide his irritation.

“I give no orders, my prince, merely suggestions that the goddess whispers to me.” Even her voice had the soft glow of power infused into it.

“What use is this suggestion then? You realize what could happen if that crown falls into the wrong hands, don’t you?”

“The goddess has not told me the use yet and be calm about it. The crown knows its owner. It cannot be lost.” She turned to me finally and I was caught in the magnitude of her aura.

Where there should have been eyes, there were moons and I knew they could not see anything that the goddess did not allow her see. “Luna Aysel.” She whispered my name but before I replied, tears streamed down her cheeks.

“Ah –” I took Valens’ hand. I’d never been to an oracle but I knew it was not usual for the mouthpiece of the goddess to cry.

“The pain –” The tears fell faster as she whispered in a hoarse voice. “The pain, Luna Aysel, the pain. I am so sorry. For everything.”

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“What pain?” Valens demanded but the oracle did nothing more than cry, tears streaming down her face faster.

I felt I knew what she was talking about but the more she cried, the more I doubted I understood this lady.

I'd been through hell and back in Redville. There were days when I did nothing but cry from the beginning of the day till the end. I'd gone days without food, been broken in every way a person could be broken. Mentally and emotionally, I'd been traumatized. There was little cause for living and I'd found no use for my life. On many days, I wanted out.

It was a sad story, one that spoke of my weakness. I'd lost every bit of strength over the years. Teenage rebellion went out of me, childhood curiosity died early in my life.

If he knew all this about me, if he knew that my weakness extended past the physical, how would he take it?

"I see it," the oracle whispered. "I feel it." She flinched as if someone struck her, making me wonder if she was reliving one of my run-ins with Lucien or the Alpha. If so, why?

Why would the goddess show her my pain and humiliation when she never stepped in to save me? Why would the goddess care enough to show them to her when she never answered all my supplications and prayers to be rescued? She'd given me Lucien as a mate when she knew he would not love a person like me and now she paired me with Valens as if she too wanted to punish me for my parent's sins.

"You have to be good to her." The oracle wiped her face with a white handkerchief she pulled out of her pocket. "Alpha Valens - " She shook her head and cut herself off but I wished she would proceed because I wanted to hear what she had to say about our relationship.

“Are you trying to distract me from the reason I am here?” Valens growled all of a sudden. “What makes you think I won’t be good to my mate?”

“I am a seer. The things you have done and the things you will do – goddess forgive you.” My mate seemed to freeze when he heard that.

“What do you mean?” I was the one who asked, shaken up by my mate’s stiffness. Did he even feel guilt for what he had done?

“You have to know each other.” Her words were mere mumbo-jumbo to me. They should have had more significance to me but I’d come here with scepticism in my heart and I was finding it hard to let go of it. “You will have a good life only if you understand each other,” she concluded.

“Thank you,” I said to her when Valens watched her like a hawk accessing its prey.

“Thank the goddess. I haven’t done anything.” She turned to Valens with her moon-eyes. “You have denied your people a Luna for a long time. The crown is a right of the Luna Queen which the goddess forbids you from depriving her.”

“It is my mother’s crown. She was killed wearing that crown. It has her blood on it. Do you know how I feel seeing it?” His words were coiled tight and I knew the only reason he kept his tone levelled was his respect for the authority which the girl represented.

“The Luna’s crown belongs to the living. Your mother has had her turn with it. Your mate must have hers. It is the only way for your kingdom to progress.” Her words had more meaning to them than met the eye. “The past is the past.”

“The past can never be the past,” Valens made a vow.

“Do you wonder why you wandered for so long before finding your mate when the other oracles told you that you would find her soon?” The oracle suddenly asked.

“Because the goddess likes playing games?” Without meaning to, I elbowed his side like I used to do with Celeste when she started saying things that weren’t to be said.

I missed Celeste but I hadn’t seen her since the day at the mall and I knew without a doubt that she was avoiding me.

“You are sworn to vengeance and the goddess does not support it.”

“The goddess supported me and my people getting cursed for over a century and I deserved the curse because I want to avenge my parents’ murder?”

Once again, I found myself lost in their conversation. The people that killed his parent must be dead by now so how did he plan to avenge his parents?

I did notice something we seemed to share, something more than a mating bond; our distrust of someone who was supposed to protect and serve us justice. The goddess failed me and I think she failed him too.

Why let a prince believed to be blessed by the goddess get cursed by a witch? She could have done something, warned him or even slain the witch before she uttered her curse but she let her curse him and she let him suffer for all these years. The more I thought about it, the more my wolf got angry on our mate's behalf.

“She didn't support it and those people felt her wrath. You have not let things go but you must if you don't want to sabotage your life by yourself,” the oracle concluded.

She asked about the mating ceremony and I had no date. It was my duty to fix the date for my mating and organize the event but my mate still hadn't said anything regarding it.

“You will wear the crown on the day of the ceremony and I think – I think it will help because it is what the goddess wants.”

We went back to the pack house that night with Valens in an obviously bad mood.

His anger filled the car as he drove with one hand on the steering and his sleeve rolled up. I didn't know something so simple could be so sexy but with every day that passed, I noticed the deepening attraction I felt towards Valens. It made the simple things that he did make my heart beat faster.

He didn't spend that night in bed, leaving me alone to toss and turn in bed throughout the night. When I asked him where he was going when he was leaving, he muttered a single word before leaving.

At three in the morning, unable to sleep, I left the room to run in the woods close to the pack house and of course, I just had to run into the last person I wanted to see.

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“Just listen to me even if it’s for one minute.” He grabbed my hand as I turned to leave. “I know I’ve hurt you but I have so much on my chest that I want to say to you.”

“Why should I care that you have so much on your mind? How is it my place to help you get things off your chest?” I pulled my hand from Lucien’s grasp, grateful for the things Valens had taught me. Before then, I always found it hard to get out of Lucien’s grip but now I did it with ease.

As he spoke, I assessed his obvious physical weak points. I pictured how I would go for them if he did anything funny. I didn’t have the strength to take him down but Valens told me I had speed and I trusted him. I could deliver a swift attack before he knew it.

“For old times sake? We were best friends. Doesn’t that count for something?” I scoffed at him. At three a.m on a night I found it difficult to sleep, the last thing I needed was to take a trip down bitter memory lanes with a man that ruined me.

“It didn’t count for anything when you abandoned me. It didn’t count for anything when you and your gang humiliated me. It didn’t count for anything when you rejected me and it didn’t count for anything when you stuck

your tongue down my throat without my permission!”
Despite the cold night wind, I felt myself get hot with anger.

“I messed up,” he admitted with a suspicious hitch in his voice.

“Yeah, you did,” I answered without a shred of remorse. I’d cried for this man. Groveled at his feet for him to have just a bit of the love I had for him. In return, he rejected me and made me unworthy of being with him. Then he doubled back and tried to ruin my second chance.

“Is there no way to fix it? Come on, Ay-babe, you always had a soft heart. Let’s fix this. You and I –”

“For the countless times you shattered my heart, do you still think it could remain soft?” I laughed out loud at that, the wind carrying my voice and making it sound malevolent in the night. “You have no idea how hard my heart has become and in the middle of the rock I now call my heart lays profound hatred for you. I hate you and nothing you say or do now can change it.”

“Love can thaw your heart,” he replied confidently.

My mind drifted to Valens at that point. What would he be doing at this time of the night? Why wasn’t he with me? When did he suddenly matter so much that I couldn’t sleep without him next to me?

The oracle put him in a strange mood or maybe it was seeing a crown that reminded him so much of his mother’s death. If it brought back such bad memories for him then I

wouldn't wear it. Our mating ceremony should be special, not tainted with the blood and gore of his past.

"Aysel, are you listening to me?" Lucien patted my shoulders to draw me back to the present and out of my thoughts.

"I don't want your stinking scent on me." I shrugged him off. "And no, I wasn't listening to you. I was too busy thinking of my mate." I didn't know why I added the last part but it felt good to feel the air around him turn tense.

Lucien put me through hell and though I wasn't a vengeful person, he brought out the worst in me. He made out with Skylar the day he rejected me, right in plain view of everybody, her body gyrating on his while I watched with tears blurring my vision.

"It's three a.m in the morning and you're not in bed with your mate," he started in a quiet voice. "If you choose me, you'll never spend a night alone in bed." His voice went low as if he still believed he could seduce me.

Honestly, Lucien must be delusional. What girl in her right mind would choose a debased beta over an Alpha Prince? Especially if that Alpha Prince was Valens who rivalled all other men in looks? He'd need serious black magic to make a girl choose him over Valens but I didn't tell him that. I knew he was desperate and he would try black magic if I dared suggest it.

"I'd rather spend ten thousand nights alone in bed than to spend a second in bed with you," I snarled. He staggered back as if the words physically hurt him.

“I love you,” he said in a wretched voice as if he’d spoken the magic words and knew they didn’t carry their usual magic.

What I’d have given a few months ago to hear him say those words to me! What I’d have given to not be rejected and ridiculed by the person I trusted most in the world. Alas, I couldn’t do anything about that now.

“Stop.”

“Stop what?” He asked.

“Stop loving me. As much as I like seeing you miserable, I know it will get old fast. I’m mated already and even if I wasn’t, I don’t love you. There’s nothing on the face of this earth that will make me love you now. I found a second chance. Maybe you will too.”

“I don’t want a second chance! I want you!” He suddenly exclaimed, his voice ricocheting in the dark and quiet space, startling me.

“It’s too late for that now,” I reminded him. I could not go back to being with him when I already mated with Valens.

“I told you there’s a loophole. We can – we can –” I cringed at his lack of tact.

The loophole was s*x and even that was too late now. Our bond couldn’t be reawakened. It completely died the moment Valens sank his fangs into me when I could feel

him in my womb. I was bound to Valens now and there was no way to break that bond.

“Even after everything you put me through, I still feel sympathy for you when I shouldn’t.” I laughed before turning away from him, blocking out the rest of his words.

It didn’t matter what he had to say. It didn’t matter if I got closure or not. It didn’t matter that he’d never been sorry for what he did – never cared about how he hurt me until he realized he could lose me. And then he lost me.

Lucien didn’t matter to me anymore. Now he was nothing but a pesky fly that disturbed me, buzzing in my ears, saying things I didn’t want to hear. I shed a tear for him then. A lone tear. For what we were and could have been and how he ruined everything.

The pack had an office, a towering building that stood higher than all the buildings in the pack and at the top of this building sat the Alpha’s office. My mate’s office.

I took the elevator, smoothing down my light dress, nervous as I made my way up to his floor.

I knew without a doubt that he was in the office. There was more work than usual these days and I knew without a Luna, he had to take care of most things himself so he worked even harder.

He was watching the door when I came in, in tune to my proximity the way I was in tune to his. The minute I got into the office building, I knew he was in it.

“What are you doing here?” He asked once I shut the door behind me.

“I could ask you the same thing.” My wolf’s irritation slipped into my tone.

“Aysel,” he called in a warning tone.

“Valens.” I mimicked his sternness. I watched his eyebrows crease, saw that his eyes did not have a hint of sleep in them and frowned at that.

“I know you don’t like it when people tell you what to do,” I started.

“Yet I get the feeling you’re about to tell me off for working into the night.”

“Don’t interrupt me.” I took a shaky breath before adding, “Please.” He leaned back into his chair. “You heard what the oracle said.” He opened his mouth to disparage the oracle but cut himself off. “We should get to know each other so I’m laying it out here for you to know that I don’t like you spending your nights somewhere other than in bed with me.”

“I rule over forty packs and I don’t need sleep. Get some rest, Sagira. You don’t have anything to prove here.”

“I’m not interested in whether or not you need sleep. I need sleep and I can’t get it in bed alone while you slave away. If you’re going to stay here then I’m staying here with you.”

“You’re welcome to join me, little moon.

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“What can I help with?” I asked as I took the seat opposite his. Rather than reply, he walked around his desk and buried his face in my neck. His breath tickled my skin until he froze.

I knew without a doubt that he had scented Lucien on me with the way he froze and slowly withdrew. He went back into his seat without a word, anger pouring from his skin and filling the room.

“Lucien was my best friend,” I started when he dove into his work.

“I don’t care.” His quiet words were little more than snarls.

“You do. You’re jealous of him.” I challenged which I shouldn’t have.

I jerked out of my seat when things on his desk went crashing down with a sweep of his hand. Ink rapidly spread across the screen of his system as it lay on the ground.

“You’re mine.” He pushed the desk out of the way as if it was made from plastic and not high-quality wood.

“I’m yours,” I answered in a small voice, taking steps back as he advanced upon me.

“I shouldn’t have to be jealous of another man.” My back hit the wall and his hand came up to cage me. “You shouldn’t smell like any man but me.” I nodded in agreement.

“Did you moan his name while he shoved his tongue down your throat or did he put his d!ck in you this time?” His anger scorched my face. Or maybe it was my anger because I raised my hand, my wolf taking over me in a moment of stupidity.

“Are you trying to hit me?” The anger in his voice came out tinged with surprise.

“I – I’m sorry. My wolf got the better of me,” I apologized, ashamed and afraid. I never thought I’d raise my hand against my mate in my life. “There’s nothing between Lucien and I. If you listened for a single minute rather than fly off into a jealous rage, you’d understand that!”

“Explain it to me then. I don’t want to believe that you’d be unfaithful but your interaction with him is suspicious. Why do you have his scent on you by this time of the night?” His expression was unreadable. He raised his hand and I flinched but he only tucked my hair behind my ear. “I hate it when you do that.”

“It’s –” I took in a deep breath as I prepared myself to bare it all to him. He’d seen my body and sooner or later, he’d hear my story. I’d rather he heard it from my mouth. “I – I’m not a fan favourite in this pack,” I started, taking in a deep breath.

“I noticed,” he whispered, urging me to continue with his rapt attention.

“My parents – the former alpha hated my parents and when they died, he transferred that hatred to me and everyone

else followed suit.” I didn’t have the heart to tell him why Xavier hated my parents.

King Thomas and Luna Valencia were betrayed in the worst way possible: by a trusted companion who wanted their seat. Unlike my parents, the people who killed Valens’ parents actually succeeded because they had many supporters and aid from mages.

After Valens dealt with his parents’ murder, he went for the witches that aided them. I didn’t know how many he cut down but his rage was enough to destroy what little of his kingdom after the initial battle for power.

“Lucien is Celeste’s brother. They’re the former Beta’s children and while everyone else hated me and made me a pariah, they stuck with me.” I took in a deep breath as memories of all Celeste and Lucien suffered because of me surfaced.

Although Lucien was the future Beta, he wasn’t violent or a bully. His father said it was because he chose to hang out with girls. He’d been a pretty boy but he was forced to change to defend me. I’d never forget the first day I saw him break a boy’s nose; the day I realized the depth of his strength.

He, Celeste and I had been walking back from school one day as we were all in middle school then. Out of nowhere, two boys ambushed us on the road. They called us names and even called Lucien the F-word. I continued walking with my head down to avoid further aggression while Lucien and Celeste warned them off.

But one of the boys grabbed me and shoved me to the ground. Before I could stand, I heard the breaking of bones. With one swift punch, Lucien had one boy down.

I stood up and watched in horror as the other boy made a run for it but Lucien was too fast, tackling him to the ground and beating him to a pulp. He'd have committed his first murder at twelve if some adults didn't walk by then. He broke his fists on that boy because he touched me. I'd never forget.

After that, he came to apologize to me. 'You looked at me like you look at the bullies,' he'd said to me that day and I wondered if he'd exaggerated a bit.

"Lucien stood up for me. He was my best friend. We did everything together right from childhood. I loved him as an innocent child and it - things changed." I stopped myself from making the mistake of telling my mate that I'd once loved Lucien in a non-platonic way. He was growling before I caught myself.

"Well, in high school, he was ready to date and the girl he liked didn't like me so our friendship started to fall apart. Then we turned eighteen and found out we were mates. He didn't want to be with me as a friend so it made sense that I wasn't worthy of being his mate then. He - he rejected me and forbade me from telling anyone."

I left out the part that once I noticed we were mates, I planned a big gesture to get with him. I didn't mention how I'd been so excited, how Celeste had been so excited, for me to ask Lucien out.

Since I knew we were mated, he did too but he didn't say anything. It never occurred to me that he'd hate me to the point of rejecting me so I assumed he didn't know how to approach me after abandoning me for Skylar. Life wasn't that simple, unfortunately.

"Well, it's been almost two years since then. He rejected me, he made it clear that I wasn't worth being with him and then he treated me worse than everyone else. It hurt worse coming from him but what could I do?" I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't love Lucien. I hate him more than anyone else in this pack. No one treated me well before but he made everything worse. He broke my trust and then he rejected me. I can never trust him again." I emphasized my point, saying the things I felt about Lucien out in the open.

Words could not explain the hatred I had for that man. Even Skylar hadn't hurt me as much as he did. Skylar hated me right from our childhood so I wasn't surprised about the way she treated me but Lucien's switch came like a harsh blow. It affected my relationship with Celeste because I kept expecting her to switch up on me like he did so I distanced myself from her.

"It doesn't explain why you were kissing him or why you're always together in dark, secluded places," Valens said in a soft voice that did not conceal his anger.

"I told you already but you're hellbent on not believing me. He kissed me and Jabari walked in before I could do anything. He's the one that always finds me and drags me to

secluded places. Believe me, I want nothing to do with my former abuser.

He says he loves me now but it's only because I moved on and left him behind. He has always been possessive but it doesn't matter. Even if I never met you, I wouldn't go back to a man that hurt me like Lucien did."

He said nothing after that. I waited and waited for him to say something but he didn't so I escaped the cages of his arms and took a seat on the couch in his large office.

"Your silence is making me nervous," I admitted when I took a seat.

"He'll have to be dealt with for touching what's mine." He took a seat beside me, drawing me into his laps. "Him and everyone else that dared to hurt you in the past." He vowed. "You can't punish a whole pack."

"Have you not heard my story, little moon? What is Redville compared to the packs I have razed to the ground in one night?" I shuddered at the cold menace in his tone.

"I don't want my pack destroyed," I whined when he dropped his head on my shoulder.

"I know. That's why I'm only punishing them."