

## The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 51

Something tickled my nose and my eyes opened slowly as if in a trance. It took me a good ten minutes to figure out where I was. I was in bed in the basement of the pack house where I once stayed but I had no recollection of how I got here.

I cast my mind back to try to remember if I came here to get anything but the only thing I could remember was the text I received from Celeste. I groaned at the pain that exploded in my mind when I tried to force myself to remember. There was a mental barrier that no matter how much I pushed, I could not get through.

‘Artemis?’ I called my wolf but she still seemed to be asleep.

I was tired and groggy when I came out of the pack house basement. A man greeted me as I passed but my head felt as if someone was banging drums inside. My feet were shaky and my vision blurry but I managed to get into the elevator and move to the penthouse.

My legs carried me to the bathroom because for some reason, my skin crawled. I felt dirty as if I fell into a gutter. I sniffed myself to check if I had really fallen into a gutter and to my surprise, I perceived Lucien's scent on me.

The scent was faint which meant I must have met him hours ago but I couldn't remember meeting him today. I concluded I must have picked up the scent from Celeste who may have been around him before she came to see me.

My mind would not settle with that explanation because I didn't smell like Celeste at all so why Lucien? There was also a foreign scent on me. It was faint too but it bothered me.

"What the hell happened to me?" I asked out loud in the empty suite. Echoing silence answered me.

The feeling of dirt clinging to me made me scrub my skin in the bathroom. I used the flowery bath scent and I spent a long time in the shower but I could not wash away the feeling crawling all over me.

I scrubbed my skin until it turned red and I smelt too much like flowers for my liking but the feeling did not go away. In the end, I decided to use Valens' body wash. The smell reminded me of him and calmed me instantly. After my bath, I dried myself and wrapped myself in his robe.

I heard a knock on the door. Octavia came in when I opened it. She had a small, uncertain smile on her face when she entered.

"The Alpha didn't send me but you were absent at dinner. I felt you may still be sick so I brought you dinner. I hope I'm not being too forward." She set the food on the table.

"Thank you. You're very thoughtful." I hadn't eaten dinner. "I'm a bit disoriented today and I can't figure out why," I said as I started to eat.

She sat on the floor with her legs crossed underneath her and it made me frown.

“Why are you seating on the floor?” I asked and she waved off my concern with a small chuckle.

“I like seating on the floor. It’s more comfortable and this way, I don’t have to worry about staining the Alpha’s expensive furniture.” She laughed, the sound free and lighthearted.

“I don’t want you seating on the floor. It makes me uncomfortable.” She tried brushing off my concern until I fixed her with a stern look. She scrambled up to a seat in record time.

I was slowly getting the hang of Valens’ ferocious glare. I patted myself on the back because it wasn’t an easy thing to learn. His glare was enough to make a lesser man piss his p\*nts.

“Have you eaten?” I asked Octavia halfway into wolfing down my dinner. She shrugged, her smile fixed.

“I haven’t yet but I’m not very hungry.” She couldn’t look at me after she said that. I wouldn’t have been suspicious if she didn’t suddenly find interest in something invisible on the ground.

“What did you have for lunch?” I paused my eating to stare at her so as not to miss any of her movement.

“I had fish and chips.” Nothing suspicious about having fish and chips for lunch but she acted like someone that had something to hide so I figured she had something to hide.

“What did you have for breakfast?” She shrugged again. “And did you have up to ten chips for lunch?” She shrugged again. “Octavia are you starving yourself?!”

“What? No, of course not!” She exclaimed but she crossed her fingers just before she said that. I’d never met a more obvious liar.

She wore baggy clothes so I couldn’t really see what she was like underneath them but she was certainly smallish. She didn’t look like someone who had any weight that she could afford to lose.

“Octavia- “ She flew to her feet as if something in the seat stung her.

“Luna, I just remembered I have duties to attend to.” She ran to the door before I could stop her and then she disappeared.

We weren’t close enough for me to be all up in her business but as her Luna, it was my duty to ensure her safety. I didn’t need to be her friend to help her. Unfortunately, once I stood to follow her, my stomach lurched and I had to run to the bathroom.

“What is in the goddess’ name is this?” The sudden movement made me lightheaded. I didn’t think much about my stomach’s reaction when I rushed to throw up. What threw me off was the trickling of dark blood down my nose when I finished throwing up.

Wolf’s bane.

It was the first thing that came to my mind when I saw my reflection in the mirror. I'd never seen anyone bleed black blood from their nose but I remembered a movie about a man poisoned with wolf's bane.

Our system rejects wolf's bane and tries to get it out in anyway possible. When consumed, wolf's bane is vomited as a black substance but when inhaled, it had to be taken out of the bloodstream.

"Oh goddess." I sat on the floor of the bathroom, letting the poisonous substance leak out of my nostrils.

I'd been drugged. The realization hit me like a smack of bricks to the face. I'd somehow gotten wolf's bane into my system and my body was pushing it out. But who drugged me? When? Why? How?

I thought back to the text I received from Celeste. I'd gone to meet her but I knew now that I didn't meet up with her. I didn't see her but I'd seen Lucien because I smelt like him when I returned. The other foreign smell on me must have been wolf's bane.

Oh goddess.

The pieces were coming together but I didn't want it to mean what I thought it meant. I didn't want to believe Lucien would drug me. For what?

I picked up my phone but I didn't know who to call. My first thought was Valens but I paused. Then I thought of Celeste

and decided against it. What if she was in on his plan too? What was his plan?

The earlier feeling of disgust slammed harder into me and I shivered. What did he do to me? Why couldn't I remember? My stomach lurched again. My wolf stirred weakly but she did not wake.

I pulled up the text Celeste sent to me, wondering if I could get any clue from it but it only showed 'Message deleted.' The message from Celeste was gone. Hysteria rose to clog my throat. My eyes smarted. More blood dripped from my nostrils.

"What happened to me?" I staggered to my feet when my stomach lurched again but there was nothing inside. I had nothing more in my stomach to vomit so I just retched and retched, the black blood dripping into my open mouth.

I sat back down with my back against the wall when the retching stopped. Grabbing my phone, I made to call Valens. I didn't know what was happening to me but I needed my mate. Just as I swiped to unlock the device, a message came in.

I opened the message and my heart stopped. The message was from an unknown number and it contained five pictures. Five pictures that destroyed me.

Anger. Horror. Disgust. They flooded into me at once.

How could he?

Lucien hated me but how could he?

Disgust crawled all over my skin like a thousand bugs running about.

I deleted the pictures because they hurt to see. It hurt even worse knowing they existed.

Another message came in just as I hit the delete button.

‘Cancel the ceremony if you don’t want the world to see you for the slvt that you are.’

## **The Cursed Alpha’s Mate Chapter 52**

I heard movement at the entrance and quickly scrambled up. I didn’t know what to do or how to proceed. My first instinct was to hide.

To hide from Valens. To hide from the world. To hide from the reality setting in. I wanted to somehow hide from myself too. I wanted to hide from the disgust crawling on my skin. I wanted to hide from the anger consuming me. I just wanted to disappear.

I also wanted to sleep. I wanted to close my eyes and open them to see none of this actually happened. I wanted to sleep and wake up to see all of this had been a terrible nightmare and not the reality I was about to face.

Who would I tell? How would I bring it up?

I didn’t even have the complete details. I could not say for certain how it happened or why it happened but it

happened. Those pictures were proof of the violation. Proof of the lack of empathy, the wickedness, with which I'd been treated.

"Sagira?" I heard Valens' footstep approach and suddenly I was scared.

I wasn't properly dressed. I didn't want him to see my body. I felt dirty even though I knew I had done nothing wrong. I wasn't the dirty one; Lucien was. Lucien and Skylar and whoever else helped with their wicked scheme.

"I'm having a bath," I yelled as I scrambled about the bathroom.

Thankfully, my nose had stopped bleeding by now. I flushed the wad of tissue I'd used to catch the blood and then I took off the robe that had a bit of the black blood on it, burying it underneath the pile of dirty clothes. I wanted to hide every evidence of what happened.

I wanted to pretend.

The bathroom door's handle jiggled and a violent fear struck me. I flew at it and locked it from inside, preventing Valens from entering. From seeing me.

Bile rose in my throat when I thought of his eyes on me. Would he look at me the way Lucien looked at me in the pictures the unknown number sent me? Would he look at me like a piece of meat rather than as a human with feelings and emotions?



“What are you doing?” He sounded surprised that I wouldn’t let him into the bathroom with me.

“I – I –“ My voice cracked and tears stung my eyes. “I’ll be right out.”

Memories of how he looked at me in the throes of passion arose then. I used to like it when Valens looked at me like that. I loved the look on his face when he was delirious with lust but when my mind pulled up these images now, my skin crawl. It made me feel filthy and I wished I wouldn’t recall them at a time like this.

“What are you hiding?” His sounded the same but I couldn’t help but hear suspicion in his voice and a violent shiver wracked down my spine.

Had they sent him the pictures? Was that why he was back earlier than usual?

“I’m not hiding anything.” I walked away from the door and turned on the water, pretending to start my bath.

I got under the shower before I realized I’d turned it on scalding hot. It didn’t matter though. In fact, I loved the way it scalded my skin and took away the crawling sensation.

“Why won’t you let me in?” I closed my eyes and ears against Valens’ questions. I didn’t want to hear the confusion in them. I didn’t want to hear anything! “Aysel,” he called and his voice had a familiar authority that I ignored.

He waited outside the door for a while but I said nothing, did nothing, merely standing underneath the spray of hot water. After a few minutes, I heard his footsteps patter away and I let out a breath that I didn't know I'd been holding. I sagged against a wall, letting the hot water mix with my tears.

Time became irrelevant then. I stayed under the shower until my skin wrinkled, forgetting that time was passing. Valens came back to knock on the bathroom door, drawing me to the present.

“You have been in there for over an hour, Sagira.” His voice was soft and it made my heart break. “Did anything happen?” He asked but I hadn't the mind to reply him.

I couldn't tell him. He wouldn't believe me. He'd always been suspicious of my relationship with Lucien and now he had pictorial proof that I was unfaithful. It didn't matter that in the pictures, I looked loopy as hell. No, an outsider would look at them and think I was delirious from pleasure. That was the angle the picture captured.

Lucien had his hands all over me and I was in nothing but my underwear, my eyes droopy because I had been drugged. It looked that way to me because I knew that was what happened but it would look like a really passionate picture to someone else.

“I'm fine,” I called back, desperate for him not to notice anything was off but he must have noticed already. “I'm coming out now.” I turned off the shower but I didn't have the zeal to get out of the bathroom.

My phone lay discarded on the bathroom floor and I remembered the day Valens and I went to get it. How he had smiled, how he held my hands and how perfect the day felt. It was as if – we were like a couple in love that day. I took the phone and dropped it into the toilet.

“I am giving you one minute, little wolf,” Valens’ voice called me back to the present. “You have one minute to get out here or else I will break down this door.” His words were calm but I knew he wasn’t joking. There was an undercurrent of frustration in his words that made me move into action.

I grabbed a towel and wrapped it securely around my chest. It was the biggest towel we owned and it fell mid-calves but it still felt too small. I opened the door before Valens had reason to break it.

He took one look at me and asked, “What’s wrong?”

I didn’t know what gave me away. It could be my puffy eyes or reddened skin or maybe it was the way I curved into myself to avoid his gaze, but he he could tell that something was wrong. It could also be the fact that I’d spent over an hour in the bathroom and refused to greet him with enthusiasm like I did these days.

“Nothing is wrong. I’m just tired.” I wished he wouldn’t look at me but he kept his gaze fixed on me as I emerged from the bathroom. I made to sidestep him but he grabbed my bicep and my heart lurched to the bottom of my stomach.

“Calm down. What is it!?” He let me go after my violent reaction to his touch.

“I’m just tired.” I walked towards the bed with him following behind me. “I’m fine really.” I turned to give him a smile but it made him recoil. The smile fell from my lips.

“Did I do anything wrong?” He asked in a soft voice. My eyes stung at the way he spoke.

No, he hadn’t done anything wrong but everything was wrong and I needed to get dressed without his eyes on me. I took out clothes from the closet we shared. A big joggers and an oversized hoodie.

“You’re going to wear that in this weather?” He asked me but I only shrugged. “Where are you going?” He asked, exasperation leaking into his tone when I took the clothes and proceeded back into the bathroom to get changed.

“I want to get dressed.” I closed the bathroom door and locked it behind me. My hands shook as I dressed and a lone tear fell from my eye.

When I emerged, he had a foreign look on his face and his hands on his waist.

“I – “ He paused, his lips pursing. “I am sorry.” My eyes widened at the unexpectedness of his apology. I’d never heard him apologize before and I knew it wasn’t something he did often considering how his face contorted when he apologized.

“For what?” I asked.

“For whatever thing I have done that’s making you avoid me.”

“I’m not avoiding you.” I was avoiding having to face the reality of what happened to me.

“I tried to reach you countless times today but you ignored my calls and texts. Now, you cannot bear to look at me. I am uncertain of what I have done but whatever it is, I apologize.”

“I am just tired,” I brushed off his apology. Did he owe me an apology or did I owe him one? “I misplaced my phone again so I did not get any of your messages.”

“Aysel –“

“Goodnight, Valens.” I turned my back on him as I went to bed.

In bed, I lay as still as possible, pretending to be asleep as he went about his night time activities. I was awake while he showered. I was awake when he ordered his dinner and I was awake when it arrived and he ate it. I was awake when he powered up his system and I was awake while he worked. I was awake when he got into bed and tried to cuddle me.

“I know you are awake, little moon.” He put his hand around my waist and I froze.

“Please – please don’t touch me.”

## The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 53

I slept on the couch that night. She was so stiff when I touched her and she reacted so violently that I feared she was having a panic attack. I knew how terrible those could be because I experienced them during the early days of my curse so I didn't want to aggravate her.

"Aysel, will you at least tell me goodbye? I'm off to work," I asked my mate who had the covers over her head.

Normally, I would leave silently because she was always asleep when I went to work, but I knew she was awake today. The few times she was ever awake when I left for work, she always saw me off to the door and gave me a kiss. I didn't know how much I treasured that simple gesture until I lost it.

I went through everything that happened between us recently and I couldn't find any reason for her to start acting like this. She even threw her phone into the toilet. I would admit that I was pissed when I saw the phone in the toilet because we just got it and it cost me a lot of money. Money didn't matter but I would prefer not to be wasteful.

"Aysel?" I called, louder this time.

She made a show of stirring awake, stretching and then yawning loudly, then she sat upright and her eyes were clear as day despite how she rubbed them.

"Are you leaving?" She made her voice smaller but it sounded nothing like that of someone just waking up.

“What is happening, little moon?” We were just starting to overcome our initial misunderstanding and now she wouldn’t even look me in the eye.

“I – Is it possible to postpone our Mating Ceremony?” That soft tone. That soft tone!

I heard a ringing in my ears then my wolf snarled in rejection of the meaning behind her words.

“What do you mean?” My words came out controlled despite the anger and uncertainty flooding my veins. It was just the other days she was smiling, excited about the ceremony. What changed?

“Think about it. It’s a little too close and it’s stressing me out.” She swung her legs out of bed, letting out another fake yawn.

“Why? We have contacted an elite event planner. You do not have to do anything but give orders and they will be met.” She stood and stretched again before speed-walking to the bathroom.

“Just consider it. I have to pee.” I watched in amazement as the door closed in my face.

I grabbed my things and walked out of the suite. I made numerous excuses for her recent behavior as I drove to work. Maybe she had developed cold feet. Maybe she was really stressed about the ceremony. I would get the event planner to contact me directly rather than bother her.

Maybe I should send her some chocolate for the off chance she was on her period. Clover told me girls liked that.

Once I got to the office, I was buried in work. I had quarterly budgets from at least ten packs to review. Redville elders were still sending me petitions to know why I had slashed their budget in half but I wouldn't tell them it was part of their punishment for being cruel to my mate. They should figure it out themselves.

My door opened and my heart lifted as I raised my head from perusing a badly constructed spreadsheet. There was only one person that barged into my office like that. I couldn't fight off the scowl on my face when I saw Clover, rather than my mate, saunter into my office.

"Have you lost your manners?" She rushed in as if she had a right to my office.

Clover had developed wings lately. She was my best friend. She'd sacrificed a lot for me a good number of times but it didn't mean she had the right or privilege to disrespect my boundaries. I still hadn't forgiven her for the insulting words she spoke against my mate the other day. Imagine calling my mate loose!

"I'm sorry but you have to listen to this." She rushed over and played a recording from her phone for me to hear.

A voice I loathed echoed through her phone's speakers and my hands itches to reach into the phone to strangle the owner of the voice.



“I think I’ll have Aysel back very soon.” The boy’s voice said through the phone. He sounded nervous but there was gloating in his tone.

“Why do you say that? She is mated to the Alpha. I don’t think she would want to be with you.” I heard Clover’s voice from the speaker.

“She made a mistake mating with Valens. I am her true mate. I’m sure she realizes that now and will call off the Mating Ceremony soon. Aysel and I understand each other.” The recording cut off at the end of that daringly boastful sentence.

“I told you I do not wish to hear any more of this boy’s fantasies.” The stylus pen in my hand snapped. Zino raged to the forefront at the audacity of the little rat.

“Aren’t you curious about that boastful tone?” Clover sank into a seat. “I met him today and he was all smiles and confidence. I don’t like this, Valens.”

“Clover –“

“I don’t want you to get hurt. I don’t trust this mate of yours!” She exclaimed, red in the face.

It seemed my control over my people had waned. I did not think Clover would ever dare raise her voice at me in this life or the next, or that she would cut me off mid speech.

“I – I am sorry, Alpha. I did not mean to disrespect you.” She lowered her eyes, her wolf sensible enough to know when she had overstepped her boundaries

“What happens with my mate is my business. I have told you what this boy says is nothing of my business anymore. I have Aysel and he does not. It is a disrespect to my mate, your Luna, to continue to suspect her.”

“I meant no disrespect, Alpha.” She kept her eyes on her thighs and to my astonishment, tears fell from her eyes.

“Why are you crying!?” I demanded, annoyed by her sudden theatrics.

“I – I don’t know how to say this without angering you further but your mate is not as pure as you want her to be. I know she must have wriggled her way under your skin and you are protective of her but her damsel in distress attitude is just a ploy to set off your protective instinct –“

“Enough.” When I spoke, my words were calmer than I felt. A turbulence raged inside of me at the blatant disrespect to my mate and me. “Another person, I would have dealt with harshly if they dared speak about my mate as brazenly as you have just done.” I pushed out of my seat to placate my wolf who was clawing to get out.

‘I want to teach this b!tch a lesson. How dare she insult my Luna to my face? How dare she insult me like this?’

“Get out of my office.” She stood slowly. “Zino wants to tear you apart and if I ever hear a bad word about my mate from

your filthy mouth again, I would let him without a second thought.”

Fear.

I could smell it on her as she hastened her exit from my office. It calmed my wolf a bit but her parting words ruined my mood for the rest of the day.

“She is deceiving you and you’re turning a blind eye on purpose because you are afraid of the truth.” She closed the door behind her in a rush as she dashed out.

I sank into my seat, my hands clasping my head. I wanted to trust Aysel. I didn’t want Clover’s words to mean anything but –

It would explain Aysel’s strange behavior and her sudden request to postpone the Mating Ceremony. I didn’t want to believe it but I had reason to. I picked up my phone to call her but I paused. My fingers dug into my palm as I clenched my hand into a fist.

She purposely broke her phone.

What if she didn’t want me? What if the warmth I felt from her these days was just a way to distract me from her real intentions? I shook out that stupid thought from my head. I would believe in Aysel. She was my mate, after all.

It was darn near impossible to go back to work after that. I kept checking my phone for a message from my mate but it never came. Her phone was broken, I knew, but still –

My phone pinged with a message and I grabbed it immediately. It was my personal number so only those closest to me had it. I was expecting a text from my mate but the text I got was not from my mate but it certainly contained pictures of my mate.

My mate and her lover.

My claws extended. Hair covered my arms as a sudden shift overtook me. I was an Alpha. I controlled my wolf, not the other way around. I never had sudden shifts but Zino was taking charge in the split second it took me to charge out of my office.

I ran into Jabari as I tore out of my office.

“What – Alpha, where are you going!?”

“Cancel the Mating Ceremony.”

Away. I was going far away because if I stayed – if I stayed, I would have more blood on my hands than I wanted.

## **The Cursed Alpha’s Mate Chapter 54**

I prepared myself to bare it all. I stood in front of a mirror and I prepared what I would say to Valens and how I would say it. All the time I looked in the mirror, all I could see was Lucien’s hand all over my body and all I felt was a thousand bugs crawling all over my skin.

“I have no idea what happened but I woke up and I was in the basement and then –“ I wiped the tears from my cheeks as I forced myself to look into the mirror. “And then there were pictures and I know I didn’t – I didn’t consent to them.” My hands went through the mirror and it came down in a cascade of broken glass that dug into my fist.

“You son of a bitch!” I screamed, feeling numb all over as I gripped my head. My wolf still slept and I could only imagine how much wolf’s bane I had ingested.

I wanted to kill Lucien. I never felt such a violent urge before, never wanted anything as much as I wanted to see his lifeless body then. The minute the thought entered my head, my mind seized on it flashing countless pictures of him bloody and battered.

Just as he used to do to me.

How would he like to be held down and lashed? How would he like to wake up in an abandoned building, groggy and confused, only to find himself naked and the whole world watching?

Because that was how I felt.

I felt as if the whole world was watching me. As if I’d been striped naked in my sleep and paraded in a market square with people pointing hands at me and others sneering.

It was the reason I didn’t step out of the penthouse today. I wasn’t ready to face the world. I just wanted Valens to return so he could make sense of things for me. I regretted

throwing my phone into the toilet then because there was no way to reach him.

I was restless throughout the day and I took at least ten showers. Someone knocked on the door in the morning and the person returned in the afternoon but I did not open the door. I paced around all day, bathed and plotted murder. Sometimes I paused to think of how Valens would react and other times, I thought of how differently I could have handled things.

I should have gone to him immediately I saw those pictures. I should have let him see the signs of wolf's bane poisoning and the threat that accompanied the message but I hadn't been thinking straight and I wasn't even now.

Morning gave way to afternoon and then early evening came. My wolf came awake slowly, disoriented like a human having a hangover.

'Something terrible happened.' Her voice was quiet and subdued, lacking in her usual exuberance

'It was Lucien. We are going to kill Lucien.' Of all the thoughts that ran through my mind throughout the day, that was the only one that stuck.

He'd wronged me once, twice and then a hundred times. How much longer must I wait before he completely annihilated me? Before he got out a pistol and declared I could not live if I didn't chose to live with him?

'It was Lucien and Skylar and their douche bag lackey, Bethel.' Artemis sounded too tired to rage but I sensed and

felt the anger in her voice because it was mine too. Then she calmed and her emotions changed. 'I couldn't protect you. I am sorry.'

Why should my wolf be sorry that Lucien was a piece of shit? We did nothing wrong but we'd been wronged in the worst way and those bastards would not go free.

'I feel very strange.' I told my wolf.

'Is it as if something is missing?' She asked, yawning.

'No but when you mention that now, it does feel as if something is missing but that wasn't what I meant.' I felt very strange but I could not explain the novel and foreign feeling fluttering in my guts. 'Maybe I'm just tired.' I brushed off the weird feeling I had been getting for over a week now.

'Where is Zino?' Artemis curled up.

'He's gone to work.'

'What do you mean? You didn't tell him!?' She leapt up but before I could answer, someone came knocking on the door again. I sighed, not in the mood to entertain anyone.

I ignored the knocking but it did not stop. Whoever was at the door seemed to be in a hurry so I stood and went to chase them away but I heard Celeste's voice from the other side of the door.

Hotness spread from the pit of my stomach, up to my chest and then throughout my body. It scorched me from the

inside out and made my hands shiver. What the fvck did she want with me? I pulled the door open with force and she jumped back.

“Oh, you are alright.” She came into the penthouse as if she couldn’t see that I didn’t want her anywhere near me.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” I left the door slightly ajar as I turned to face her.

“Jabari called and he sounded frantic so I feared something terrible had happened.” She looked me up and down.

“Where is the Alpha?” The minute she asked me that question, unexplainable dread bloomed in my chest. Yes, something was missing just as Artemis noted. It felt as if Valens and I were too far apart, as if the strings of our mate bond was stretched thin.

“He’s at work. Where else would he be?” My voice was snarky. “Why are you here?” My words were biting enough to get her to step back.

“Jabari asked me to check up on you.” She eyed me slowly as if I was someone else who she couldn’t recognize. “Are you alright?”

“Since when are you chums with the Beta?” I asked, suspicious of her. Of her involvement in the incident. Of the whole world.

Celeste and I had been friends since our childhood. She’s been my backbone for many years and I knew she loved me.



She loved me and I loved her but I got a text from her and ended up in the basement with missing memories.

“I’m not chums with him. I hate that guy but he keeps pestering me. I just clocked in for my shift at work when he called me to check up on you and it sounded urgent so I rushed here. He mentioned something about the Alpha.” My heart dived down to my stomach.

“What exactly did he say?” The urgency in my tone, my wide eyes and the way I suddenly stepped closer to her made her step back again.

“He sounded out of breath so I’m not really sure but he said something along the lines of ‘find the Luna. I have to find the Alpha’ or something like that.”

“Give me your phone. I have to make a call.” I stretched out my hand and I realized for the first time, how contagious Valens’ authoritative behavior could be.

“I lost my phone yesterday and found it semi-destroyed under my bed this morning so you have to hold it a certain way for it to work.” She slanted the phone and held it out to me.

The phone looked battered. Ink covered a large part of the screen and the clear parts didn’t work properly.

“When last did you see Lucien?” I demanded, furiously trying to type in Valens’ number. It was one of four numbers that I had managed to memorize in my lifetime.

The first two being my parents' and the third being Celeste's number.

"I'm not speaking to that idiot anymore." She squared her shoulders, flipping her blonde hair behind her. "If it's not working, then it's better to use voice commands." I told her Valens' number and she used voice command. The call was on speaker so I heard when the dry monotonous voice said the number could not be reached.

Whatever thing Celeste saw on my face made her rush to grab a hold of me. She led me to a seat and felt my neck and forehead.

"What is happening?" Her panicked voice pierced into my panicked mind. "Aysel, look at me." I fought the darkness pulling me to focus on her. "Babe, come on, talk to me. Why are you crying? What's happening?"

He'd seen the pictures.

There was no doubt in my mind. He'd seen them and now he was gone. I choked back a sob. Fvck! I wanted to carve out Lucien's heart!

A swift knock sounded on the door and Jabari pushed in. He had sweat covering him from head to toe and his clothes were equally soaked.

"Where is he?" I asked, sitting up straight when he rushed in.

"Gone." One word. One shattering word.

## The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 55

"I need to know exactly what happened," Jabari said, fully entering the room. Celeste's eyes whipped from Jabari to me as she tried to follow the conversation.

"I - I don't know. He must have gotten the pictures." I wrung my fingers together.

"What pictures?" Celeste asked.

I imagined the first person I would ever tell about the pictures would be my mate but it turned out he'd fled the pack. I'd expected him to be angry. I expected him to feel betrayed, to be murderous. What I hadn't factored in was the possibility of him hating me so much that he couldn't stand to be in the same room as me long enough for a confrontation.

"How do I get in touch with him?" I asked Jabari, dodging Celeste's question. "There has been a terrible misunderstanding and I need to clear things up fast."

"I have a link with him as his Beta but he has shut me out." Jabari pursed his lips, hands on his hips. He didn't look the least bit pleased. "He also asked me to cancel the Mating Ceremony before he left."

"Oh." I sagged into my seat, all the energy zapping out of me, leaving me too stunned to speak.

"That good for nothing piece of poop!" Celeste exploded out of nowhere, startling me. Jabari and I turned to her with

matching expressions of shock, horror, disbelieve and everything in between. “What does he mean by cancel the Mating Ceremony after he announced it?”

“Careful, that’s the Alpha you are talking about,” Jabari’s tone was hard as granite as he cautioned Celeste but his face – he looked like he was staring at a cute child.

“Well he can svck my big toe. If anyone is to cancel the Ceremony, it should be Aysel. He left her when she obviously isn’t at a good place. What an Alpha he is!” She flipped her hair behind her shoulders, shot Jabari a wilting glare before turning to me with a calm look. “Have you had dinner?”

“I – what?” The force of her outburst and sudden change in attitude left me speechless.

It was always a sight to behold when Celeste got defensive and all her protectiveness came out full force. Her small voice and average stature would not intimidate anyone but she carried so much fire that when she got angry, she acted like a dragon ready to breathe fire. She spoke with the confidence of a warrior wolf and challenged anyone irrespective of size.

“I know you haven’t had dinner. You have lost a bit of weight and there’s not a drop of color on your skin.” She turned to Jabari with a pointed glare. He looked from me to her at an obvious loss. “Well? Will you get her dinner or have you seized being her Beta because her mate got cold feet?”

I wanted to tell her not to take out her anger on Jabari who was doing more than I expected, but I didn't want to aggravate her further. The aura around her screamed danger, like a cornered animal about to lash out with all of their might.

“Ah – Yes, I will get someone to send dinner to her.” He turned briskly and left the suite, closing the door softly behind him.

My friend let out a breath and I chuckled at the relief that flooded her face. She'd even managed to fool me! I sobered up quickly when I remembered my life was quite literally falling apart right in front of me and I was partially to be blamed.

No, I wouldn't take any of the blame. I had been framed. Lucien and his cohorts would take all the blame because they caused this.

“Will you tell me what's happening?” I looked at my friend and she genuinely looked like she believed that I would not tell her.

“Did you send me a text to meet you at the Old Home yesterday?” I asked her instead.

It was too soon. The wound still too raw to poke at but if I sat quiet for even a second longer, the top would gloss over and it would be as if everything was fine while I rotted inside.

“No, I told you I lost my phone. I don’t know how it happened but I must have thrown it while I was sleeping.” Her brows furrowed like they did when she was confused. “Why would I even ask you to meet up at the Old Home? That place has been abandoned for decades; since my father was a boy. It’s just fortunate it never collapsed on us when we were younger.”

“Someone texted me with your phone and I thought you needed me.”

“What – I – I don’t understand.” She pulled away. Well, that made two of us.

I too would like to know more. I was as confused as she was and the only person who would give me answers was the last person I wanted to see in this world. Not breathing anyway. I didn’t want to see Lucien if he could still move.

“I got to the Old Home but that’s all I can remember. Artemis tells me it was Lucien and his gang. I woke up in the basement and I was bleeding black blood from my nose.” I paused.

I took a shaky breath to force myself to continue. It was this part – this knowledge that I could never fully wrap my head around. It was the wickedness that I never expected would be done to me. It wasn’t something I could open my mouth and make myself say. Because it hurt. It made my heart beat faster, my palms sweat and my eyes sting.

Celeste had a hand over her mouth and her eyes blown to twice their normal sizes. They reddened in a second.

“I can’t remember what happened but – but someone sent me pictures. And – I was naked with Lucien all over me.”

“No!” The horror in her voice reflected the horror in my guts. “He – he –“ Even she couldn’t say the words and I felt a bit better knowing I wasn’t overreacting. It was foolish to even think I may be overreacting in the first place.

“They sent the pictures and asked me to cancel my Ceremony and – I – I was so scared. I didn’t know what to do.”

“I am so sorry that happened to you.” She grabbed my hand. “That boy.” She whispered to herself.

“I should have told Valens, shouldn’t I?” I laughed at myself but not because I found anything funny about my situation.

“You were scared,” she reminded me.

I was more than scared. I was confused. Hurt. Betrayed.

“I should have told him but what if he didn’t believe me?” I asked, continuing without waiting for a reply. “I deleted the pictures, threw my phone into the toilet and tried to pretend nothing happened. I tried to block out reality but it seems I can’t outrun my bad luck. He must have seen the pictures and – and now – he’s somewhere thinking I cheated on him with someone I can’t even stand,” I rambled.

I stared vacantly into the distance.

“What do I do, Celeste? I have no idea what I’m supposed to do now.”

“First, you’ll eat then you’ll have Lucien and his gang locked up and then we’ll find your mate and everything will be back to normal.” So easy.

It sounded so simple. As if I could take three steps and those three things would be achieved but I knew better.

My stomach was in knots so I didn’t know if I would even be able to eat. I didn’t think I had the power to lock anyone up now that the Alpha seemed to have rejected me and where would I find Valens?

Someone knocked on the door and Celeste rose. She took her hands from mine and I felt the loss of warmth and a sudden biting cold that had nothing to do with the weather in the room.

She returned with a tray of food that she set before me. “Octavia sends her greetings.” I nodded absentmindedly. “You can’t stare at the food. You have to eat it.” Right. I had to eat to survive.

Nothing on the tray looked appetizing. In fact, the aroma from the food made me nauseous.

“I’m not really feeling this meal.”

“Oh ho!” Celeste exclaimed, pointing a finger at me as if she’d caught me doing something wrong. “Octavia said to tell you that she can bring you whatever you want if you



don't like this food. I didn't understand at first but it seems you've been rejecting your food." She looked at me like a disapproving mother would look at their erring child. "You have to eat something. You haven't eaten all day."

In the end, the only way to get Celeste to stop pestering me to eat was to actually eat. I kept telling her that the food wasn't going down well because my stomach was in knots but she wouldn't hear of it until I had eaten at least half of my plate.

I drank a glass of water and my stomach turned. Celeste watched as I rushed to the bathroom to throw up everything I'd just had. She held my hair while I threw up and sat with me on the bathroom floor while I cried.

"Get some rest. I will stay with you tonight and first thing tomorrow, we'll go to the hospital."