

The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 61

There was a crash, a turbulence like a rushing wind, and then darkness. After the darkness came blinding light.

I woke up in a hospital room with someone clutching my hands. The room was stifling. The hand holding mine was unwelcome and the light hurt my eyes. I pulled my hand from the ones holding me but they held me tighter.

“You are awake.” I’d never seen Valens look as relieved as he did then. “Oh goddess –“ He paused and changed the direction of the conversation. “I’ll get the doctor.” He pressed a button on a strange looking device, still holding me.

A man came in wearing a white coat, a woman in blue scrubs following behind him. They gave me water that wasn’t plain water and the doctor checked my vitals.

“How do you feel?” He asked as he wrote something down on his file.

“Like I got hit by a truck,” I answered and I suppose I was right. I did get hit by a truck.

Before the darkness, I’d been trying to get out of a car because I suspected the driver and then from nowhere, a truck rammed into the vehicle. I’d already taken off my seatbelt and was about to step out of the car. I fell out of it instead when the car flipped midair.

I saw blood. I felt pain. I saw Bethel and then I felt rage but they were all short lived. Darkness welcomed me with open arms and I embraced it like a child seeking comfort.

“What is your name?” The doctor asked as if we were friends and merely having a chit-chat. He had a sign-song voice that irritated my ears.

“Denise,” I said, managing to pull my hand from Valens’ hard grip. The look of horror on their faces would make me laugh if I wasn’t in so much pain.

“Ah, and –“ The doctor masked his shock and tried to act neutral but I interrupted him.

“My memory isn’t faulty. I’m Aysel. My parents are dead. My best friend is Celeste. I am twenty years old and from the Redville pack. My mate left my pack vulnerable to an attack and the former Alpha tried to kill me.

“Aysel –“

“You are Doctor Conrad. You’ve worked at this hospital for as long as I’ve been alive,” I continued but the doctor waved me off with a strained chuckle.

“Yes, I see you have your memories intact but we will have to monitor you further. “ He wrote in his note pad again. “Can you feel your whole body?” I nodded. “Can you feel this?” He poked and prodded each part of my body until Valens yelled at him. “Lift your right hand for me.” I complied with his request, doing the same for my left hand and then my legs.

It was hard to move my body because I was in so much pain but the doctor had to make sure I was totally fine before he let me be.

“We still need to conduct a CT scan to make sure everything is okay internally. Although I’m sure your wolf has worked really hard and done her job.” He gave me a friendly smile that bordered on patronizing.

“Wouldn’t the scan affect the baby, though? I’m pregnant,” I told the doctor in case no one had told him yet.

The silence that followed my words had me reaching for my stomach as if I could feel my baby reassure me that they were still there. My stomach hurt but every part of my body hurt at that point. It was as flat as ever but my little bean still had to be in there. Five weeks was too early to show, after all.

“The first trimester is usually the most dangerous during pregnancy. The baby, still an embryo –“

“Give us a minute, Doctor.” Valens’ cold voice cut through the doctor’s rambling. The doctor and his nurse excused us and I just – I just stared straight ahead.

“Little moon, will you look at me?” He brushed invisible hair strands off my forehead.

I felt cold suddenly. Cold and tired and miserable. I touched my stomach again. It felt knotted but I didn’t want to believe I didn’t have a child in there anymore.

“I’ve been cursed with bad luck.” I turned to him. “My parents died, my pack turned against me and for a long time, I wanted to die too.”

“Aysel.” His voice was stern but I ignored him.

“I was supposed to find my mate and be happy. It was the only way I hoped to find happiness but first I got Lucien and then I got you.” I laughed. I laughed loud and long while tears spilt from the corners of my eyes.

“I failed to protect you.”

“Is it just that? Did you only fail to protect me?” I asked, turning away with a tear stained face.

“And our child.” He looked away.

“Valens, look at me.” He turned to me. My tears fell faster when I saw his reddened eyes. “Let me tell you how I felt when I took the pregnancy test in our bathroom.”

My mind went back to the day Celeste unexpected arrived with the tests. How many days had passed since then?

I recalled how I had reacted and an overwhelming sense of guilt made my heart freeze. Had I reacted wrongly? Did my baby leave because I wasn’t as excited as I should have been when I discovered the pregnancy?

“I was scared, shocked and confused. I was happy too, but not as much as I was scared. I’ve never been around children before. I wouldn’t know how to raise one.”

Maybe if I'd been happier, if the child felt my joy, they would have stayed. Maybe they left because they didn't think I had any love to give them. Memories of my mother were a blur but I remembered she believed everything had a consciousness. She'd tell me not to be mean to my dolls because it would hurt them. What if my child who the doctor called just an embryo already had a consciousness of it's own and decided I wasn't worth it?

"We only had a few hours but – but they were good hours." I tried to gather my thoughts. They were flying around the place, haywire and confusing. The vices gripping my heart and squeezing it made me rub my chest. It felt constricted and it had me gasping for breath.

"You're okay, love," he said, taking my hand in his. "I'm here now."

"I am not okay!" I screamed, pulling my hand from his. "Where were you in the first place!?" I took a stuttered breath, wiping tears off my face in a hurry.

I shouldn't do this. It wasn't his fault that we lost our child. If I'd been a little smarter and realized on time that I was being taken to a different location than the pack house, if I had enough presence of mind to realize we were being followed, if I had kept my seat belt on, maybe I wouldn't be in this position. Maybe I wouldn't have lost my little bean. Then again, if he trusted me, if he had just asked, if he hadn't left me and my pack to fend for ourselves against outside attacks, if he'd been a good Alpha, we wouldn't be sitting here.

My mate, the person that was supposed to be in my corner all the time, didn't trust me. My Alpha left me vulnerable, opened me and my pack to attacks without thinking.

"I am sorry," he apologized, wiping my tears.

"I was so sick and everybody thought it was because of the wolf's bane. I was scared and I thought - I started to entertain bad thoughts because I was just so tired. You left. You shut me out and I had to deal with everything alone. Then I took the test. I was scared. I wasn't sure how to feel and maybe the child knew and they hated me for it but then I listened to you ramble about the baby and I felt better. I felt I could do it. I hadn't planned for a child but I was determined to be a good mother."

And I failed.

I poured out my heart. Everything that I'd bottled up. I poured it all out until all I had left was the bone crushing and heart wrenching pain that accompanied the loss of something I didn't know I treasured so much.

I wanted to be nicer. He'd lost a child too. The little bean was ours and we never got to name them. It wasn't the time to remind him of how badly he'd failed me. I should talk about how awful he'd been to me another time but my mouth would not stop moving and the words that came from them were like daggers aimed at him.

I should grieve my little bean and pray for the goddess' comfort but I couldn't even bear to utter her name. She too had failed me. She and Valens.

He abandoned me. He abandoned us. He was the Alpha that deserted his pack and the little bean was pack. Or would have been.

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I spent a week in the hospital before the doctor declared I was free to go. After the first three days, I already felt good enough to leave the pack hospital but the doctor insisted I had to be monitored and Valens backed him up.

“What about Bethel?” I asked when a nurse helped me zip up my dress.

I was happy to be finally rid of the ugly hospital gown almost as much as I was happy to be leaving the stale hospital room. It was decorated with flowers and different gifts from my many well wishers and people Celeste called my ‘fans,’ but the area around the hospital was depressing and the people that came to see me looked at me as if I’d they were staring at a corpse. A part of me had certainly died but I was tired of the pitiful glances, the silence, the way people tiptoed around me as if I was a volcano waiting to erupt.

“He – ah – “ Valens paused, watching me as if thinking of whether or not he had to lie to me.

“You can tell me if he’s dead.” I didn’t care for Bethel but people acted as if the mere mention of anything related to death would trigger me. Sure, I wept like a baby when a stranger in the hospital died but, well, that was the past.

“I am sorry if you had other plans for him.” He looked at me and I looked away. Sometimes, I couldn’t bear to look at him. “I have Xavier in the dungeons. I assumed you may want to decide his punishment.”

“Kill him. Torture him. I don’t care what you do to him as long as I never have to see his face again.”

I’d never done anything to that man but he decide to hate me, a child, for the actions of my parents which I had no hand in. He’d tortured me for too long and I wished him the illest of luck but I wouldn’t have a hand in anything that had to do with him, punishment or not.

“Very well.” He flipped the cover of his tablet and stood just as we heard a knock on the door.

Clover poked her head in and the expression on Valens’ face turned from cautious to annoyed.

“What do you want?” He demanded of her when she stepped into the room.

“I thought it would be the right thing to apologize to Aysel. To both of you.” She clasped her hands in front of her and bowed her head in a show of meekness.

“You can apologize another time.” I shook my head at Valens.

“Excuse us.” I faced him. He looked ready to protest. Another time, he would have shut off my request but those times had passed.

“You have five minute.” He picked up his car keys and a folder from work since he’d converted my hospital ward to his makeshift office, refusing to leave for anything other than a shower and change of clothes.

“Why are you apologizing?” I asked when Valens shut the door behind him. “Are you done trying to ruin my relationship?”

“It was never about ruining your relationship,” she said, finally raising her head. Well, she could have fooled me! “You know I sent Valens those pictures. I did it because I didn’t trust you.” Of all the people I needed to trust me, I didn’t think Clover would be one of them. I honestly couldn’t care less about her trust.

“I have known Valens since I was two years old –“

“What is this? A history lesson?” I cut her off, irritation prickling my skin. “I don’t care how long you’ve known him or loved him. Apologize and go.” I snapped at her.

“I just want you to understand where I’m coming from.”

“Where you’re coming from doesn’t matter to me. It’s where you ended up that caused this mess in the first place.”

“No, I won’t take the blame for that.” She raised her chin.

“My only fault here is trying to protect Valens and hurting you in the process. I can’t apologize for looking out for a friend but my actions indirectly hurt you and I am sorry for that.”

“You can keep protecting your friend. Frankly, I don’t care anymore.” I grabbed my iPad from the table.

Throughout the week that the hospital held me captive, I’d discovered loads of games that I liked to play. They were the only distraction I had in this ward with visitors trooping in and Valens suffocating me.

“He has been betrayed a lot of times. When he asked me to befriend Lucien to find out if anything was going on between you two –“

“He asked you to what?” I cut her off, amazed.

“Yes, he asked me to befriend Lucien to gather information about the kind of relationship you had with him. He changed his mind after a while but I already started to suspect you.” This was news to me. Enraging news. I knew he didn’t trust me but I never knew how much he mistrusted me.

“I felt he was turning a blind eye on purpose so I befriended Lucien anyway. I put up with that assh*le’s arrogance because I had to find out the truth about you. I didn’t want my friend to trust the wrong person again like he has done in the past.” She paused, as if expecting me to see reasons with her but all I saw was red.

“Valens chose to believe you couldn’t betray him so he stopped paying attention to Lucien completely but I wouldn’t give up.” She took a stuttered breath and wiped tears from the corners of her eyes. “Lucien started bragging about getting back with you and then an unknown number

sent me those pictures. I sent them to Valens immediately to warn him.

I didn't stop to think that the pictures could be fabricated. I didn't send them to him to ruin your relationship. I wasn't thinking of that. I was simply trying to protect a friend. I never expected it to take this turn."

If I suspected Levi was unfaithful to Celeste, of course I would want to investigate. I would want to protect my friend from falling further for the wrong person but I believe I would have been more meticulous not to cause problems were there wasn't any.

"What are you apologizing for?" I asked, unable to curtail the impatience in my tone.

"My good intentions backfired and I ended up creating a big mess for you two. I am sorry." She bowed her head again, clasping her hands in front of her.

"I think if your intentions were pure, they wouldn't have backfired," I started. "If you cared about Valens, you wouldn't have sent him such callous pictures because you knew how he would react and you knew they'd hurt him. If you wanted to protect Valens, you would have confronted me first. You would have hit me, insulted me, called me a bitch and whatnot. I know that's what I would have done if my best friend was involved."

"I apologize, really. I took things the wrong way." She twiddled her thumb.

“You took things the way you thought they would favor you.” She raised her head. “What? You think I am blind because I chose not to say anything? I know you want Valens. You were betrothed to him at a point, after all. I came into the picture and there was no chance for you to be his ‘lucky clover’ anymore so you devised a way to erase me.”

“It’s nothing like that. My feelings for Valens are platonic. What are you saying?” She looked scandalized at my words.

“I am saying you sent him those pictures with a smile on your face, not caring that he would be hurt because you already planned how you would comfort him,” I snapped.

“Aysel, I’m really sorry I sent him those pictures without investigating but what you’re saying isn’t true. I understand if you feel the need to lash out but please, don’t misunderstand my feelings for your mate.” She raised her head and looked on the verge of tears.

Even her sad face looked like something crafted by the goddess. She looked like a pitiful girl who had been wronged and I felt my heart move in sympathy for her.

“You don’t have to apologize to me,” I said, all the anger draining from me and leaving me empty.

“I do. If you already see me as a home wrecker that is out to steal your mate –“

“You don’t have to apologize to me because I’m not angry at you. Whether you sent those pictures to ruin our

relationship or not, I don't have the energy to care anymore."

"Thank you. I hope you will forgive Valens for – "

"My issue with him has nothing to do with you. I long since got over his inability to trust me." I wasn't lying. I had resigned myself already. But – "Valens – he – When Redville needed an Alpha, when I needed an Alpha, when my baby needed an Alpha, he wasn't there. He is the Alpha that abandoned his pack. The Alpha that failed to put his pack first. The selfish Alpha. That selfishness cost me too much."

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"Are you hungry?" Valens asked when we got to the penthouse.

It was exactly how I left it before going to the hospital. It felt so surreal to know that some things remained the same while my life had changed forever.

"No," I answered Valens' question, getting into bed. I burrowed my face into a pillow and closed my eyes, blocking out everything. "Turn off the lights," I muttered. "All of them," I added when he left one light on. He turned it off and the place became pitch black.

"You should have lunch before you sleep off."

"I am not sleeping off," I muttered, turning my face.

“Okay.” There was silence after that but it didn’t last as long as I would like. “Do you need anything?” I needed him to leave me alone but I wouldn’t say that.

“Who trained you?” I raised my head from the pillow. “In combat, that is.”

“The head of my father’s knights. Why do you ask?” He perched on the bed and I got the wild feeling that he was afraid of me. No, he was uncertain. Not afraid.

“Was he cursed along with you?” I asked but what I meant was ‘Is he still alive?’

“No. He died protecting my mother.” He looked away and I felt his grief.

“Who took over from him? Who would have – Who is supposed to – Who will train the next generation?” I turned away too. If I had the baby, who would have trained them?

“The king’s knights have no leader now as I haven’t appointed one. The highest in rank manages them for now. When it’s time, I will choose a leader and he will train our children.”

“Will they agree to train me?”

He looked at me as if he couldn’t believe I would ever think of that. “Why would you want him to train you? You have me and Jabari.”

So far, they’d been the ones training me but I knew I wasn’t anywhere close to where I would have been if someone

dedicated to training me actually did. A lot of times, Valens had too much work to do so he couldn't make it to our training and a few times Jabari too could not make it. On such days, I would simply do a little exercise and go back to being a couch potato. A trainer would have no other job than training me.

"For the times you and Jabari have other things to do. I'm nowhere near where I can be. So far, I've only learnt defence. I'm tired of it."

"If that's the case, we can –" I cut him off.

"I don't want to train with you anymore," I said, looking him square in the eye so he knew I meant it.

"Little moon –"

"What? You can decide to leave tomorrow and I'd be without a trainer. I don't want a repeat of the past," I sneered at him.

"There will be no repeat of the past."

Weren't things easier said than done? Who could tell when someone else conspired against me and he chose to believe them instead of me? He would punish my pack for my mistakes. He'd leave us to the wild wolves when he felt he needed a break.

"I shouldn't have left you." He sighed, pushing his hair out of his face. "I made a mistake and I apologize, really."

“You didn’t just leave me, Valens. You left Redville. You left my pack. What did you think would happen to a pack with a deserter Alpha!” I was screaming again, crying.

Tears spilt from the corners of my eyes despite my efforts at keeping my emotions at bay. I was angry. Bitter. I didn’t want to be, but the more I thought about what I lost because my Alpha left, the angrier I became.

“I left because I feared my wolf’s reaction. I was angry enough to forget my duties. It’s not an excuse but I promise it will never happen again.”

“Of course, it’s not an excuse. I think you did. An Alpha doesn’t just ‘forget’ his duties! I think you remembered what abandoning your pack could cause but you didn’t care. You thought, ‘let them rot,’ and took off without a backwards glance. You didn’t just forget about your duty. You subconsciously wanted to punish me! Well, congrats, you succeeded.” I wiped angry tears from my eyes. “And don’t even try to deny it.”

“Don’t say that. Don’t even think that. I had to get my wolf under control and it was the best way. I should have trusted you enough to know you would not desecrate our bond and I apologize for my lack of faith but I never wanted to punish you.”

I let him hug me as my emotions spiralled out of control. I let him hug me because I didn’t have the strength to fight his hold. I couldn’t get over the overwhelming sense of being let down, being betrayed, abandoned. The knowledge of what could have been if things had gone a certain way,

the thought that I could be walking a different path if my mate trusted me or if my Alpha never neglected his duties haunted me

When I'd cried until I was red in the face, breathless and tired, when I could not string two sentences together without hiccups, I pulled away from him and wiped my face. He tried to take my hand but I moved away from him.

"I don't want to stay here anymore." I looked around the room in the penthouse suite of the pack house.

It had seemed like an upgrade from the basement, something I thought would be the starting point of something new in my life. It was the start of something new, alright. It just wasn't the brand of newness I expected or hoped for.

"If you're uncomfortable with the pack house, we can buy a house today and move tomorrow," he said, pulling out his phone, probably to make a call to get things moving. "We were to pick out a new home after our mating ceremony." I winced at the reminder.

The Mating Ceremony.

It felt like ages ago when I stood with him on that platform to announce we would be having a ceremony. I'd been ecstatic. Things were finally falling in place at that point but now they'd fallen apart and I couldn't think of where I was expected to start from.

"I want a big house," I blurted out.

I waited for him to berate me, to look at me like an extravagant person out to waste his money. Maybe he would think I wanted a big house to hide my lovers or some other bullshit. I wanted a big house because it was the only way I could think of avoiding him.

I'd told him severally to leave me alone. I needed a breather. I needed space but he didn't seem to understand. He felt if he was everywhere, I would have no choice but to put everything behind me and pretend I didn't hate seeing his face. He was everywhere I turned but in a bigger house, he wouldn't be so much in my space. Or so I hoped.

"If you want a bigger house, you can get a bigger house. I'll let Jabari know." He stood up and walked out to the terrace to make a call. I flopped back into bed, rubbing my eyes.

The penthouse that once felt large now felt too small. I closed my tired eyes, trying to rest them because they were tired from all the crying I'd done.

I felt my stomach while I lay down. It was flat but unlike before, I couldn't expect it to grow bigger with time. It would remain flat because there wasn't a child in there anymore. It sucked and I wanted to bury my face in the pillow and cry some more.

"I told her she'd get a house today so we better get a house today." I listened for Valens' voice. It was hard not to hear him because his voice had been steadily rising the longer he was on the call. "I don't care if it's hard to do as long as it's doable. Call my accountant. We are buying a house tomorrow."

There was silence as he listened to the other person at the end of the call. He was too far away for me to pick up what the other person was saying but it made him pace.

“She wants a big house so that wouldn’t do.” More silence. “A mansion, yes.” Silence stretched after that. “Don’t ask me if I am settling in Redville. She wants a mansion so she should get one.”

He stopped pacing for a second. “You are getting on my nerves.” His voice went cold. “What I plan for the future is none of your business. I am buying a house! I am giving you till ten p.m to come up with something.

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“The renovations have just been completed. It has nine rooms and a pool.” She shook with excitement as she showed us the house. From my reaction, she could tell I was impressed and we were very likely going to take it. It was everything we asked for.

The first house we saw was nice but it just wasn’t big enough for what I wanted. It was in a gated community with similar-looking houses. I frowned the minute we drove past the gates. Everything went to shit when Valens found an unassuming spot. He poked at it a bit and uncovered rotten wood. The caretaker looked stunned, ashamed and terrified all at once when we left.

“The renovators added a nice movie theatre, a recreation room and even an indoor jacuzzi. It’s brilliant, I tell you.” The agent showing us the place couldn’t stop gushing.

“Do you like it?” Valens asked me.

I looked around the place. Truly, it was magnificent. The place was large and stunning with enough land surrounding it. We’d have our private woods, rather than the public woods behind the pack house and the nonsense the gated community had shown us.

“It’s beautiful,” I said and the agent beamed at me.

“You have fine taste, my dear Luna,” the woman said. She turned to Valens. “How would you like to pay? I have the paperwork here with me.” And indeed she did.

“Are we – are we buying it already?” I asked, looking from the woman to Valens.

“Do you have any reservations?” Valens asked while the agent’s face fell.

“Security here is top notch. The gates cannot be accessed –“

I didn’t have anything against the house particularly. I was just surprised one could buy a house just like that.

“I wasn’t asking you,” Valens glared at the woman who had shifted back into sales mood, highlighting everything we would gain from buying the house. Of course, she wouldn’t mention the downsides. It would take hours to clean the freaking place. I wanted a big house but he was getting a

ginormous one! “If you don’t like it, there are still two others we can look at.”

There wasn’t anything I wanted that I couldn’t find in this house. Really, all I wanted was space and it had an abundance of it, both outside and inside.

“It’s fine.” I shrugged.

“You know what? We must have a look at the other house first,” he said to me. To the agent, he said, “I will have my accountant and attorney contact you if we decide to buy it. You can send the deed to my office then.” And so we were off again.

The next two houses were actually great. They were definitely not as big as the other but they came close. Unfortunately, they were on the outskirts of the pack so we were back to the second house.

“We should grab a late lunch. It’s almost four and you haven’t eaten since breakfast,” Valens said, breaking the silence in the car.

I hadn’t? I didn’t notice. Sometime during the hours of house hunting, I’d drifted to my own world. I completely ignored what was going on around me. It led Valens to the conclusion that one of the house agents had offended me.

“We are close to the oracle, aren’t we?” I said rather than reply to him.

“Yes.” His eyes darted to me before going back to the road. “Are you upset that we will not be able to move today as I promised?” He asked, his eyes fixed ahead.

I did not actually expect we would get a house so soon. I knew when he promised yesterday that we would move into a new house today that he would be putting a lot of people under duress and we still would not be able to make it.

“I want to see the oracle,” I said instead.

If there was one thing I’d lost faith in over the years, it was the Moon Goddess. It was blasphemous to even have such a thought but I couldn’t help it. She’d failed me repeatedly over the years. Life continued to worsen for me but she never intervened no matter how much I prayed.

I used to pray a lot as a child because my mother encouraged it but the habit slowly faded away as the tears rolled by. I didn’t have enough time to sleep and the more chores piled on my plate, the less I found myself praying. When I first noticed myself drifting away from her, I’d been ashamed of myself. I saw it as the reason she’d abandoned me but it turned out I just wasn’t important to her.

“Do you have a request?” Valens asked.

“Why does it matter? If you’re tired of driving me, say so. I can easily find my way from here.” I snapped.

“I never said I was tired,” he answered, then he sighed. “You have become difficult.” I ignored him. What was I even supposed to say to that?

I wasn't difficult. I was just having a hard time holding a conversation with him when he reminded me too much of that I'd lost. Sometimes I wanted to be grateful for all he did to help me these days but most times I reminded myself that he was only trying to clear his conscience.

"Maybe I have always been difficult but you never noticed because you only wanted to see me as an unfaithful mate." I rolled my eyes, looking out the window.

"No, you are being difficult to hurt me like I hurt you. Is that it?" Was this payback?

"You don't like people arguing with you so I'm just going to keep my mouth shut." I leaned back into my seat and blocked off his words.

He said something but I didn't hear him because I wasn't listening. I'd been pulled back into my mind, sifting through all that had happened within the last week. I imagined how things would have been but I soon got tired and slept off while he drove.

He tapped me awake while I slept. The minute I opened my eyes, a violent fear seized me. My seatbelt wasn't on me and for a second, I felt myself falling out of the car as it flipped. My mouth opened in a scream that lodged in my throat.

"You are fine. I am here." I felt a hand brushing my hair and another rubbing my thighs.

"Why did you take off my seatbelt!" I choked out when I came back to the present.

“We’ve arrived.” I looked around and noticed we’d parked. I got out of the car and closed the door behind me with hands that quivered.

“Doctor Conrad recommended a therapist. We should see him tomorrow.” I paid him no mind as I marched into the goddess’ shrine.

There were a few people around but I walked past them and into the oracle’s inner room. I met her sitting stiff as a board behind a desk, her eyes closed. Once I walked in, she opened them and her white eyes pierced me, seeming to see into my soul.

“Aysel. The goddess will speak to you directly today.”

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Preparing to hear from the goddess was a lot of work. It intrigued me at first but after three hours of cleaning and meditation, I soon lost my intrigue. I had to be ‘clean’ both in my mind and body hence the washing and meditation. I had to empty my mind of everything that disturbed me, which was easier said than done.

Everyone in the room excused me so I sat alone in the room, trying to clear my mind enough to accommodate the divine words of a goddess.

“Aysel.” I heard the voice. It was more intimate than my wolf’s and at first, I assumed I was conjuring it but it called

again. “Aysel, my child.” I was so startled that I opened my eyes. “My child, it has been tough, hasn’t it?”

“Is it – is it really the goddess?” I could have hallucinated her.

I felt as if she wasn’t really there because when I looked around, I saw nobody. Her voice was too calm, too human. It sounded intimate, like the voice of a mother, rather than a divine being. Yet, I felt the presence of something ethereal in the room. The curtains in the air-conditioned room billowed softly as if there was wind in the room.

“I have watched you grow from the minute I placed you in Miriam’s womb,” the soft voice whispered to me. Goosebumps rose on my skin as I felt a cool breeze on the nape of my neck.

“You knew my mother?” I asked, surprised but not completely.

My mother taught me that the goddess knew us all. She knew us by name, appearance and everything else. She was the only one who knew the exact minute we’d been conceived and she watched us grow in the bellies of the people she chose to carry us.

“Of course, I knew Miriam. She was a dedicated servant of mine.” The goddess’ soft voice calmed as she seemed to reminisce. “She was to be my oracle until she fell in love with your father and her priorities changed. Nevertheless, she never failed to serve me the way she could,” her voice whispered in my mind. It wrapped around me and

embraced me. The softness of the voice, the warmth and tenderness made me feel comfortable, safe even.

“She served you faithfully yet you let her die like a chicken. You let your loyal servant die a dishonorable death?” I looked down at my hands because they were shaking.

“How well did you know your mother?” The goddess asked, her voice carrying a tinge of humor.

“I was eight when she died. I cannot even remember her face anymore.”

“Let me tell you about her.” The voice seemed to drift far away and before I knew it, all the joints in my body stiffened and I was transported to a world that wasn't mine. My soul seemed to leave my body, landing at a scene where a woman was kneeling.

The minute I saw her, I recognized her as my mother; the woman whose face I had forgotten. Once I saw her, it felt as if I had never actually forgotten her, as if her face had been stamped into my memory from the day I was born.

“I cannot be your sacred oracle. I am sorry my goddess, but I failed your test. I love someone else more than I love you. I thought I could resist something as strong as the mate bond to prove my loyalty but I failed.” She shivered where she knelt.

“You have seen what will be in his future yet you choose to be with him?” The voice that replied my mother was the same one that had wrapped around me a few minutes ago.

“Yes. He has damnation in his future but my wolf yearns for him. I am sorry,” my mother said, bowing further in what I assumed to be shame.

My mother loved my father. She loved him so much that even when he hurt her, she smiled like he embraced her. Her love for him was strong but I didn't think that she would have chosen to love him if she knew he would bring about her damnation. Apparently, I was wrong.

My parents loved each other. My mother was a quiet woman and although my father was abrasive and short-tempered, he always treated my mother well from what I remembered. There were only a few squabbles in my house and they started when my father started plotting to steal the Alpha position.

I remembered my mother supported him and followed the path he chose for our family with humility. Sometimes she tried pointing out the errors in his plans but he always shunned her. She never advised him to give up his dreams of ruling Redville even though she knew it would end in disaster.

“You will never speak of your vision to anyone,” the goddess said and my mother nodded. “If you try to alter the future you have seen, I will strike you deaf and visit your family with a plague worse than death.” My mother nodded again. She raised her head and I saw tears glisten in her eyes.

My heart hurt just from seeing the tears gathered in her eyes. She had known all along but she didn't even have the

room to do anything. I couldn't imagine how much it would have tortured her to know she was heading in the way of damnation without any power to stop it. She knew she wouldn't last long if she chose my father but she still chose him. She chose him and she died with him when she could have lived a sacred life as an oracle.

"You will not be the first to chose a mate bond over the position of an oracle." The goddess' soft voice came with a tinge of resignation. "I am disappointed but also not surprised. You have served me faithfully, Miriam, but now you must serve your mate." With that, I felt something like a hook in my abdomen and it wrenched me back into my body.

"Your mother served me faithfully but ultimately, she chose worldly pleasures over sanctity," the goddess said to me.

"You – how could you do that to her?" My hands shook as I looked down at them. Tears splattered against my palms. "What was her reward for serving you!?" I exploded.

"Her rewards was serving me." The atmosphere around me turned frosty. "Miriam was a dedicated servant so I allowed her enjoy some perks."

What perks had my mother enjoyed? From all I could see, she had faithfully served a goddess who deserted her because she chose her fate. The goddess had the power to alter the future, to guide my father away from the path that ended in destruction. She could have done that much for my mother, her servant.

“Tampering with the future is tricky and often cataclysmic. The more deities interfere in the lives of mortals, the less free will your kind have. The best I could do was advise your father but he never listened. I cannot rewrite the future.”

“Then what can you do?” My words were a taunt.

“I allowed your mother see the future because she was special to me. I wanted to save her from disaster, but it was in her future. I could not change it. If someone had tried to tamper with her life before it was her time, I would have saved her like I have saved you numerous times.”

I nodded as if I understood but I really didn't. “And my baby?” I raised my head as if she was standing there and I could see her, look into her eyes and show her I was desperate.

“My child,” Sadness tinged the voice and I could imagine an old lady with white hair sitting on a throne, head bent. “I chose to speak to you today because I can see you struggling with bitterness. You have come this far and you deserve to know why.”