

The Cursed Alpha's Mate Chapter 71

A part of me knew I was asleep when my heart started to race. The incident was three weeks past but still my body froze and a familiar pain seemed to slam into me. I was hyperventilating and trying to get myself to wake up but the more I tried, the more I slipped deeper into the nightmare.

“Wake up, Sagira,” I heard a voice that sounded around me as if it was coming from a room lined with speakers. “I am here,” the voice continued. “I’ve got you.” The last words were spoken in a quiet voice that seemed choked with emotions.

I felt a hand gently combing through my hair as I started to regain consciousness. My head was in someone’s thighs. The room was dark and then cold lips pressed against my cheeks, my forehead, my eyelids.

My eyes snapped open and I bolted upright with a gasp, my hands flying to my chest and then every other part of my body as if taking inventory.

“You’re fine.” Firm hands gently pried my fingers from my hair when I gripped them hard. “I am here.” I turned to Valens as he pulled me back to him, wiping tears from underneath my eyes. “I am here, little moon. I’ve got you.” Tears fell faster from my eyes as my heart raced from my throat.

He held me for however long it took my heart to calm again. His fingers combed through my knotted hair while his other

hand rubbed my back and he whispered reassurances into my ear.

The last time I had such a dream had been in the hospital the day after I woke up. I'd pushed everything to the back of my mind after that to avoid the pitiful gazes Celeste and the others kept giving me after I got settled but the memories of the accident which I thought I'd buried, crept up on me while I slept.

"I am fine now." I pushed away from Valens' chest to look up at him. His expression was mostly guarded but a flicker of worry crossed his eyes as I looked at him. "I'm fine now, really." I tried to roll to my side and pretend to go back to sleep but he caught me before I turned.

"You do not have to lie to me." He held my hand, running his thumb on my outer palm. "You should not have to pretend to be fine."

I didn't know what to say to him. For some reason, I didn't want to admit I'd dreamt of the crash, and once again, it had rattled me to my core. It felt as if it was happening over again and this time, I knew what was coming but I still could not prevent it.

"Don't pretend with me." He pressed a k!ss to my cheek when I didn't say anything. He turned my f ace to k!ss my other cheek but I turned and his l!ps grazed mine. He pulled away with the speed of light. "I did not mean to do that. I know you do not -" I pushed up to my elbows and silenced him with a k!ss.

He closed his eyes and I followed suit as I looped my hands around his neck to k!ss him deeper. Pressing his palms into the bed, he held us upright while I explored the inner crevices of his mouth, svcking on his tongue and tasting his mint toothpaste. I k!ssed him fast and hard as if it was our first time and I feared interruption.

I pulled away with a gasp, trying to catch my breath. I took in a big huff of breath and attacked his l!ps again with fervid urgency. Then I bit his l!ps and he hissed.

“Oh my goddess, I am so sorry.” My hands fell from around him as I pulled away, a bit of my senses returning. I’d been k!ssing him as if chased by my nightmare.

“It’s alright,” he gave me a wolfish grin and his eyes glowed red. “Let’s take things a bit slower.” Placing a hand on my shoulder, he pushed me to my back, following my slow descent until my back hit the bed. “Let me take away your nightmares even if it’s for this night alone.”

His voice was low, his tone sultry and his eyes blazing, seizing my attention and making my heart pick up speed again. My throat dried, my skin heated and my eyes fluttered half-closed when he k!ssed my throat, his warm hand snaking into my nightdress.

“V – Valens –“ I choked out his name when his l!ps trailed down my throat, k!ssing down to between my bre*asts.

“Hmm?” He murmured, lifting his head for a second with a smirk on his l!ps.

“Ohh, ah – nothing.” I closed my eyes at the pleasure-pain from his tweaking my n!pples. “Fvck,” I whispered when I felt his tongue against my n!pple. He abandoned that n!pple for the cool air to harden while he moved to the next but I cupped that bre*ast myself, rolling the bud between my thumb and index finger.

“Oh –“ My hands were pulled to the top of my head and secured there.

“Let me do the worshipping, little moon.” He placed a chaste k!ss on my l!ps with his eyes twinkling. It occurred to me then that he was enjoying this.

I cried out when he took my bre*ast in his mouth and fondled the other one, kneading it softly. My bre*asts were more sensitive than I remembered so it felt like a jolt of electricity passed through me when he did that.

“Oh goddess,” I moaned when he continued to svck hard, heat traveling to my core with every firm suckle. In time, I was reduced to a mumbling mess, crying out his name. He released that bre*ast and promptly attacked the other.

I mumbled his name, cried it, moaned it, and sometimes screamed it. He k!ssed down my ch3st, to my stomach, his tongue encircling my belly button before he k!ssed lower. His hands gripped my waist, holding me down to the bed as he went down.

I froze when his tongue l!cked my cl!t, then my h!ps bucked but his hands held me still. With my hands now free, I tried to force his face out of my inner th!ghs which he’d moved to

inhaling and kissing but he would not be deterred. When I felt his tongue lick my opening again, my whole body spasmed. He went at it with fervor, holding my legs as I writhed in bed with pleasure. I felt release building up in my guts before my whole body froze. Then I tipped over the edge.

He didn't stop going until my body stopped shaking, his tongue did wicked things to my cl!t while I rode the waves of orga*sm. He only raised his head when I calmed, a wicked glint in his eyes, lips glistening.

"I love your taste." He kissed me and I tasted myself in his lips. "I want to eat you for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, every day of my life," he declared.

My muscles started to loosen, my spirit lightened and I felt as if I was floating on a heavenly cloud.

"Li -" He cut himself off. My eyes fluttered shut as my body tingled. "You - Are you glowing?" I never thought I'd hear Valens sound so afraid.

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I had one word in my mind. Fvck.

The way he stumbled to get out of the bed made me scramble upright. His eyes were blown wide when he looked at me.

Looking down at my hands, I saw they were shiny. It wasn't sweat or an outer manifestation of inner radiance. It was light. My skin had a coat of light all around it.

I asked the goddess for magic because I didn't expect her to give it to me. It was also because I wanted something my mother had lost and it was the first thing that came to my mind. I didn't pause to consider how Valens would react to me having magic.

"I have something to tell you," I said to him. He nodded, his eyes fixated on me while he kept his distance.

"You definitely have something to tell me," he replied.

The light on my skin intensified when I opened my mouth to blurt things out to him. It started as a soft glow but as I watched, the soft glow brightened and brightened, turning me into a gigantic lightbulb. I closed my eyes against the burning glare of the light.

My eyes opened when I felt a sharp prick on my side but I snapped it shut when light almost blinded me. I felt another prick. Then another, and another, until it felt like every inch of my skin was being pierced. The stings went deeper, moving past my skin to puncture my internal organs.

"Hey, hey, breathe," I cracked open my eyes a fraction through the mild pain and major discomfort of what felt like laying on a bed of little thorns. Valens was holding me, his expression taut.

Taking his advice, my lungs stretched in a breath that promptly seized when it aggravated the stings. My mouth opened in a gasp that my instincts tried to curtail to avoid the pierces of pain.

My body went lax almost as if I was boneless. I sagged into Valens' arms, losing control of every part of my body. I could not even keep my eyes closed. They opened but I saw nothing past the blinding light surrounding me.

"Stay with me," Valens' voice called. In that state, his voice sounded strange and from another room. "I am calling a doctor. Stay with me, little moon."

I had no control over any part of my body. Something slithered through me; a snake of light torching my insides and pushing pinpricks of pain into my system. I wanted to tell Valens not to bother calling a doctor. I wanted to tell him that this would stop as suddenly as it had come. But I lacked control over my mouth to help speak the words.

Just like a shift, I knew what to expect with this. Even during our first shifts, we could tell how to go about it. We knew what to let go of and what to hold on to for a successful first shift. This was due to our wolves. It may be our first shift but our wolves had ingrained knowledge of life past that they used to guide us through a shift. It was the same with the spread of light through my body.

I knew from the first glance that it was the birth of magic; the one the goddess promised me. I'd been waiting for it ever since, not knowing how it would manifest but once I saw the glow on my skin, it felt almost natural for magic to

awaken like this. It was as if my body was born prepared to accommodate the energy dancing softly through me, piercing into me via the pinpricks. Like the knowledge of a first shift, my body knew what to do.

“Aysel? Little moon, please say something.” Valens sounded distraught. I’d never heard him sound so broken before.

The glow around me dimmed. The pins pricking into me from everywhere slowly died down, one after the other. With the same stillness before an orga*sm, my body stopped and I bolted upright.

“Ow!” I held my forehead which had smacked into Valens’ jaw when I suddenly sat upright.

“Goddess! What is happening, Sagira?” Valens pulled me back to him, pushing my face into his neck and burying his face in mine. “Don’t do that –“ He pulled away, holding me at arm’s length as his eyes roamed and assessed my body. “What just happened to you?” It interested me that his eyes were red, bloodshot as if he was intoxicated- or had been crying.

“Magic.” I pulled the bedcovers around me, covering my n*kedness.

“What do you mean magic? There are no witches left,” he said, his brows furrowed and his eyes looking stunned. “There are no witches left,” he repeated in a bid to assure himself.

There should be no witches left because he actively hunted them down and the goddess aided him without him knowing. There should be no witches yet here I was, humming with magic.

“It’s a gift,” I told him. “A gift from the goddess.” I could feel him pulling away even though he was still on the bed with me, kneeling. “You are pulling away from me,” I said without thought, my wolf mirroring the despair I read on his face.

“I – no.” He pushed his hand into his hair, pushing the overgrown strands back. “I’m not pulling away from you, Sagira, but –“ He cut himself off, sitting back, his legs underneath him. “Why would the goddess give you magic? Of all things?” He drew out his words. What I heard was ‘Why would you ask for magic of all things?’

“She –“ I paused. I’d resigned myself to never telling him about my mother, or identifying with the person that cursed him to wander for so many years.

I pushed the thought to the back of my mind but a part of me had agreed that there was no reason for him to know because it would serve no purpose besides from putting a wedge between a relationship we were still trying to build. Yet I realized now that there was no way I could explain away my sudden magical gift. There was no way I could hide it either. From the foreign hum in my body, the new energy coursing through me, I knew it could be volatile.

“My mother ah – She had latent magic.” I watched him carefully, noting the smallest detail in his demeanor. He

froze when I mentioned my mother being a magician. “She served the goddess faithfully. In return, the goddess gave me her magic for me to feel closer to her and as an apology for – for our child.” My hand went to my stomach. His eyes followed the gesture and they softened. But his posture remained stiff.

“What was your mother’s name?” My heart beat faster. Did he suspect? Had he made the connection? Should I lie?

“Miriam,” I blurted out. My mouth supplied the truth before I could think of a lie. Would he recognize the name? His face turned pensive for a minute as he mulled over the name. Did he have a directory of my great-grandmother’s family names?

“Did you know her?” I asked when the silence and his pensive gaze stretched for too long.

“How could I have known your mother? I was cursed a hundred and four years ago.”

Right!

My mother should not have existed at that time. Except she had. I didn’t want to tell him this but I may have aroused his suspicion with that last question.

“You’re right. I’m being silly.”

“You are not silly,” he reprimanded automatically. Then he sighed. “This is a lot for me to take in.”

“I know.” Silence stretched after than. The hum in my veins grew louder but he could not hear them. Only I felt the changes happening in my body.

“I need a run.” He got out of bed, pushing his hair back again. His jeans hung low on his hips as he stood, his mind distracted. “I have to wrap my head around this.”

“I understand.” The door closed before I got the words out. I fell back into bed. Tears fell from my eyes and dripped into my ears.

I hadn't expected him to be thrilled about a magical mate. He hated being reminded of his past. I asked for magic and made myself a constant reminder of his tragedy. I chose to identify with the very people he hated.

Maybe he was right. I wanted to punish him the way I felt he had punished me. I'd never even thought of that! Could I have asked for magic just to spite him?

“I am sorry.” He came back into the room and I wiped my eyes frantically. He was gone less than two minutes.

“You've been apologizing a lot frequently.” I smiled, desperate to lighten the mood. “You aren't going for a run anymore?”

“I am apologizing because I keep hurting you.” He got into bed with me. “I am not going on a run. I don't want you to ever feel like I am pulling away from you or abandoning you.”

“It’s okay if you need space to work through things,” I said even though I was secretly glad that he came back. For a second there, it felt as if I had run him off. I hated the sight of him turning his back on me. The feeling sucked.

“No, no space.” He leaned into me. “I – I don’t like magic but it shouldn’t matter if you are blessed with magic. You are my mate and I love you. Magic shouldn’t –“

“You – you what?” My heart raced from my throat, my hands trembling.

“I have never said that out loud, have I?” His smile was sheepish when he raised his head to mine.

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“I’ve never said that out loud, have I?” She buried her face into a pillow when I asked that. I could see the tip of her ears turning red even though she hid her face from me.

I felt incredibly foolish now that I thought of how I reacted when I saw those pictures. I should have been furious but not at her. How could she cheat on me when she reacted like this to me? How could I not have seen? A lot of things would have been different if I had the foresight, the knowledge I had now.

‘Love her,’ the oracle had said and it turned out that I didn’t have to try hard to love her. I didn’t even have to try. She was my curse breaker. My mate. By every standard, she was my savior.

I was nearing the three-month-mark in Redville; the one that brought that itch that could only be scratched when I moved to a new land. I hadn't hit the mark yet but I knew without a doubt that the itch was gone forever. I would never have the urge to leave this pack behind. I would never have an itch to wander again because my curse was broken. Completely.

"Don't suffocate yourself," I teased when she did not raise her head from the pillow after a long time.

I had messed up big time and I knew it. I f****d up royally. I didn't want to dwell on how badly I messed things up because when I did, my eyes reddened. I'd lost a child. My firstborn. A seed I'd looked forward to planting for years but failed. A seed that when it finally took root to germinate, I left and it withered. It died.

"You've never said that to me before," she said, finally raising her head from the pillow. "It's – it's sudden."

"It's not sudden. It is something I have dwelled on in the past but not fully."

How could I not love her? She was beautiful and kind. She fit with me like she was specially tailored just for me. We complemented each other in ways I didn't know people could complement each other.

I always assumed I would never work with a mate who was not a hundred percent submissive. A part of me was relieved to be mated to an omega but Aysel showed me I did not know the half of what I needed. She was submissive but she

showed me it was impossible to be a hundred percent submissive. She showed me I didn't need someone to agree with me all the time.

I'd become used to it. No one questioned me. Not even my Beta. I'd assumed I needed that respect, that absolute deference, but when she looked at me with fire in her eyes sometimes, I felt proud.

She was everything I needed, much more than I wanted or thought I needed.

"Aysel, you broke my curse," I reminded her.

"I know but it's not like it was a conscious decision or you know - I didn't actually have to do anything to break your curse." She spread her palms as if she was showing me something, and then shrugged her shoulders.

"That's it, isn't it?" I asked. "Your existence alone was more than enough to break my curse. It could also have something to do with your magic." She looked away from me after that.

I knew she was hiding something from me. I was not blind to the signs. I wanted her to tell me everything, to bare herself to me, but I knew it would take time. I had done nothing yet to make her trust me again.

I hurt her by not believing her. I left. I was the Alpha that abandoned his pack.

“Yeah,” she shrugged, settling into bed. “I think I’m going to go back to sleep.” Disappointment almost choked me but I swallowed it down.

“Right. Have a good night.” I turned off the lamp next to me.

It was morning already but her nightmare cut her sleep short. I understood she may be tired. I, on the other hand, had a backlog of work waiting for me. I should get ready for work but I stayed in bed ruminating on what just happened.

I told her I loved her. I didn’t get a response. But what had I expected?

‘What were you expecting? That she would say she loves you too?’ Zino mocked me. I closed my eyes and pretended to sleep but I could not hide from my wolf. The mutt laughed at me, dancing around my mind to annoy me.

“Valens?” I heard a small voice call in the quiet, unlit room.

“Little moon.” I turned to the only person capable of lighting my night.

“Maybe – someday,” she paused to take a loud, deep breath. “Someday, I will be able to say that back to you,” she said and I smiled, my heart lifting. That was enough to settle the unrest in my heart.

“It’s okay, little moon. I understand.” I pressed a kiss to her forehead.

“I don’t hate you,” she said. “I think – I did for a while. When you told me I had to earn my place by your side as if – as if I wasn’t worthy, I hated you a bit. I won’t lie. It hurt and I didn’t want you.”

“I am sorry.” I apologized. “I did not mean that.”

If, just a few weeks ago, I had the foresight I had now, things would have progressed differently. I had searched for a mate for a century, long enough to come up with numerous traits I felt my mate had to possess. I approached her with arrogance rather than love. I lacked the knowledge I now had.

“No, no you did,” she took another breath pause. “You are an Alpha and the prince. I wasn’t what you expected. It’s okay to have preferences.”

How could I get her to understand that I did not have preferences past a curse breaker? How could I get her to understand that I cared for her? I’d had to deal with things the hard way for years and it stopped occurring to me that there was an easy way.

She was weak, yes. She had to be strong, yes. I tried to make her strong in the way I knew but I failed. It was the wrong way but I did not know it then.

“You are my preference. Everything about you is everything I have needed and will ever need,” I protested vehemently. Silence greeted my words.

“Right,” she said after a long pause. More silence followed that but I waited for her to continue because I sensed she had more to say. “I hated you when you left and I hated you when we lost the baby.” Another pause. “I didn’t mean to hate you.” Yet another pause. “I just – I’m sorry I blamed you for the baby.”

“No, I should never have left. If I stayed, they would have not dared to enter my pack. I failed you and our child.” I looked away, my eyes growing heavy, my heart heavier.

“Let’s blame Skylar and her gang. They caused this.”

Oh, that b!tch. I should have dealt with her more sternly. It was my duty to protect my pack. It was my duty to protect my family. I let a b!tch like Skylar come too close when I could have snuffed her from the start.

It reminded me of Lucien and Xavier who I still kept in the dungeons. The thought of them made me angry. I may strangle them if I got too close and Jabari wasn’t done extracting information from them. But I had to pay them a visit sooner rather than later.

I stayed in bed with my mate until her breathing evened out. I crept out of bed not to wake her, then got ready to visit the office. I would make my home my office soon so I didn’t have to shuffle back and forth but I needed to make sure Aysel was fully settled in before I did that because then people would start dropping off work here. She needed to be settled in first.

I had just grabbed my keys when my phone rang and Clover's name flashed on the screen.

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Valens was acting weird and my powers were going wonky. I didn't know if the two had a correlation but I feared they might. I'd almost set his papers on fire this morning and yesterday, I went as stiff as a board mid-conversation that he feared I'd died.

I stared at the television screen without really seeing anything. I was bored out of my mind. Valens had to drop by the office, leaving me alone in the house. All alone, there was nothing for me to do besides eat and watch irrelevant shows. I picked up my phone a hundred times but everyone I knew was busy.

As someone who never had free time in the past, I had no idea what to do with the multitude I had now. To make things worse, we moved to this place which was detached from the rest of the pack. I could not access other places easily because it was an impossibly long walk from everyone else.

Just as I was thinking of how important it was for me to learn to drive, I heard a beep from the tablet beside me. It alerted me whenever someone got close to the gate which only happened when Valens was coming.

I grabbed it in excitement but before I could unlock it, I got another sound that indicated someone rang the doorbell.

Valens wouldn't ring the doorbell and the only other person who had come here unannounced was Clover. My smile fell.

Pulling up the camera at the gate, I saw Jabari peering into it and waving. I laughed at the gesture and let him in, walking out of the house to meet him at the door.

"Luna Aysel," he said once he stepped out of his car. "This is a nice house." He did a quick glance of the building looming behind us then looked back at the distance he drove to get here.

"Wait till you see the movie room," I answered, playing along. "Thank you for picking it out." I still remembered the call Valens placed across to him and how much of a chewing out he received while we searched for a new home.

"No need to thank me. I have an obligation to serve." He smiled once again but this time, his lips were tight and his eyes had lost their mirth. "It was either that or listen to Valens bitch," he added. I laughed but his eyes – they still had no mirth.

"Right. Are you coming in or what?" I half-turned, motioning to the door.

"I am yet to apologize." His words stopped me. "Valens told me what happened." He looked down at his shoes. "I am deeply sorry for failing as your Beta."

This apology had weighed him down, I could tell. It was one I expected since the incidence but a part of me had been hiding from the world so I hadn't seen him.

No one else knew about the baby. That knowledge was between Valens, the doctors, and I. And now, the Beta. With the way his eyes dropped to my stomach, I knew that he knew.

“It’s alright.” I swallowed, feeling a familiar lump in my throat.

I felt better on some days while other days, the incident felt raw and fresh again. Today was one of the days when I felt in between. It was still fresh but a part of me had come to terms with it.

“It is okay if you hate me. I could not keep you or the child safe.”

“It’s alright, really. The only people I’m going to blame from henceforth are those that took my child from me. I am not going to pass the blame anymore. Skylar and Bethel and Lucien and Zavier. Those are their names. Those are the people that did this to me.”

“We have Zavier and Lucien. You can suggest – artful ways for me to make them regret their existence,” he offered.

“Skylar is still missing?” I asked. “Can we go inside? I’m not big on standing these days.”

“Yes. The she-wolf is surprisingly good at evading my trackers.” We walked inside while he spoke. “Valens actually asked me to bring you to the office. He has a lot of work and can’t make it back soon. He doesn’t like you being alone here so I’m your driver and chaperone.”

“Alright, let me grab my phone and shoes.” I dashed in and grabbed my things in excitement. I hadn’t known what I’d been missing until now. I wasn’t just bored. I was missing Valens. I’d become too used to his presence that his absence pricked me.

“You’re excited.” Jabari laughed when I rushed back out, almost running.

“I’ve been bored,” I defended as we drove out of the compound.

We’d chosen a house so far from the pack that it felt like like a long trip to the office. Jabari played music until halfway through the journey when he killed the music to speak. He didn’t immediately speak when he turned off the music so I gave him time. I felt him struggling to get the words out.

“What is it?” I asked in a tone I hoped was soothing.

“Celeste is my mate,” he blurted out, his face reddening.

“Congrats!” I cheered but he didn’t reply me. I looked at his big hand on the wheel and sighed. “Does she know this?” It was impossible for her not to know so I rephrased my question. “Have you spoken to her?”

“She’s avoiding me,” he said, his hands squeezing the wheel. “And now I’m avoiding her in return.”

“You think she’d reject you?”

“I know she will,” he stressed his words. “I haven’t done anything to her but she hates my guts.” The distress in his voice painted his face. “It’s like she took one look at me and decided I am the worst thing on earth.”

“Her past isn’t the rosiest,” I admitted to him.

I had no business telling her business but they needed an intervention. Celeste did not like men. She wasn’t a lesbian but she didn’t like men. The man who put Celeste off most men had a build like Jabari. He wasn’t nearly as built as the Beta but he too had been big in a bodybuilder way. She gravitated towards the slightly effeminate guys now but after Levi, she may just hate men after all.

“You look like someone who hurt her in the past,” I told him. “Don’t avoid her. You’d gain nothing from that. I will speak to her about it but everything is ultimately up to you.”

“I wish she’d talk to me. I haven’t had the time to celebrate the end of my curse. It doesn’t feel like the curse has been broken. It feels as if I’ve been cursed anew,” he paused for a second before sighing. “It hurts too much to dwell on.”

“You both will be fine. I am sorry it isn’t rosy and loving like you must have imagined but the Moon Goddess knows why she paired you together.”

“You think so?” He sounded hopeful.

My heart broke for him because I knew what it meant to find your mate and not receive a kiss and a hug with a

promise of a brighter future together. I experienced it twice.

“Celeste needs to heal. I think you can help her heal.” He nodded silently. He kept nodding for a while. Then we got to the office and he parked.

“It may take a while but it will be worth everything at the end. You’ll get through this.” I patted his shoulder in reassurance.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” I said, getting out of the car.

I raced through the office lobby to avoid the people shouting greetings at me. It was unfortunate that I met two familiar girls in the elevator going up.

“Hi, Luna!” Emma and her friend echoed once I got into the elevator. “You look good today!” She exclaimed.

“You look like you’ve been having a good time.” Clarissa added. She touched my hair, then she sniffed it. “I love your shampoo. What is it called?” I looked away, feeling my skin heat. I’d run out of shampoo so I used Valens’ now.

“It’s not – “ the elevator stopped for someone to get in. Surprise, surprise, it was Clover. She took one look at me and the other girls before storming off, not bothering to hide her anger.

Just seeing her face made my stomach turn. My excitement dimmed and my fists clenched. Valens wasn’t the only one

who worked here but I had a gut feeling she had come to see him.

“She couldn’t even greet,” Clarissa said, annoyance in her voice.

“How disrespectful.” I had nothing to say to them. My mind was flying over the place and I couldn’t get it to calm down.

The girls got off the elevator and I managed to respond to their farewells. I got to Valens’ office still in a dazed state. He was waiting for me at the door with a smile on his face.

“Should I be jealous of my Beta now?” He asked. In reply, I asked a question of my own.

“Have you seen Clover recently?” The smile on his face fell.

“Ah, about her. There’s something she told me.” I couldn’t fight the scowl on my face.

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“Clover, what is it you want, really?” I’d known this girl since childhood. She had never undermined my authority like this before.

“Valens, are you going to treat me like this because of – because of some –“

“Pick your next words carefully,” my wolf growled. “They’d determine whether you keep your head or not.”

“I know that she’s your mate but I’m your friend. Doesn’t that count for anything? I bore your curse with you. I stood with you when no other woman would and now you’re threatening to banish me?”

“You didn’t break my curse,” I reminded her.

“I would if I could!” I pulled the phone from my ear when she yelled, peeping to see my mate still sleeping. “You know I wanted to be your lucky clover but it’s not my fault and you know I tried. We tried everything,” she emphasized the last word.

My heart pricked at the words that were little more than accusations. Yes, I tried everything in the early days of my curse. I was desperate to be free of the spirit of a wanderer. I didn’t want to be the cursed prince. I tried everything suggested and Clover was by my side through it all. We always assumed we would be mated so it was natural to think she’d be my curse breaker.

“Clover, what is it you want?”

“Not to be tossed aside like a used rag by my best friend who I sacrificed my life for,” she yelled.

There it was. The price for her loyalty. Her sacrifice. I knew this day would come. When she would demand to be repaid but I still didn’t have an idea how she could be repaid.

“You’re not my mate,” I told her. “And my mate does not want you near me.”

“I was with you when you had no mate. I’m not trying to be your mate, Vee. I just want to be your friend. I need a friend. I need a friend, Valens!”

“I cannot be your friend now. Maybe in the future.”

“So that’s it? You used me all my life and now you’re done with me? You can’t be friends with me anymore because I made one mistake trying to protect you?”

“Clover –“

“I was raped because of you!” She screamed. “I was beaten, bruised, kidnapped numerous times because of you. I have a body decorated with scars because of you. Every whip that ever touched my back was because of you –“

“That’s enough.” I stopped her. “I am not ungrateful. I understand the magnitude of your sacrifice for me but I will not displease my mate to repay you.”

“She comes into your life and none of the rest of us matter,” she laughed.

“I’ve entertained you for long enough. You don’t have a reason for calling me and it shows.”

“Right. I must be a fool. Despite your lack of interest in my friendship, I still consider you a friend. I know you’re trying to get information out of Andrew and I think I might be able to help.”

“Jabari is in charge of Andrew and everything relating to my mate’s kidnapping. If you have anything that may help,

tell it to him.” I ended the call and turned off my phone for extra measures.

What she had to say plagued me all the way to work. When I got to my office, I saw she’d left numerous calls on my work line. Rather than get into work so I could get back home quick, I dwelt on how best to handle Clover.

She’d sacrificed a lot for me. She’d been forced to go from a dainty omega to a warrior. I stole her youth. Like she said, I’d used her and now I was letting her go. I had to consider my relationship with my mate first.

My phone rang when I powered it on.

“Clover called. She’s not saying anything to anyone but you and she claims she has valuable information,” Jabari said immediately I picked his call.

“If she’s hoarding it then it must be valuable to her. How do I know it will help me in any way?”

“I can’t believe I am about to say this.” I heard Jabari sigh. “We have no leads. We don’t know where Skylar is or who bought Andrew; bastard still won’t wake. The faster we act, the better. If Clover says she knows something, then we need to hear it.”

“I am sure you have ways of getting information out of her,” I said, unrelenting.

“I am not going to torture our friend,” Jabari’s voice went grave. “It’s Clover, man. You know she has a high resistance to pain.”

Again, I was reminded of the suffering I put her through. The suffering my people had to endure while sharing my curse with me. Sometimes I still heard Clover’s screams echo in my mind from the first time she’d been taken and tortured by a group of Alphas. They took her because of me. I’d found her less than twenty-four hours later but the damage had already been done.

“I know she has a crush on you. I know the part she played in creating this mess but she is not our enemy.”

“My mate doesn’t like her,” I informed him.

“I know that. Let’s just find out what she wants. We can work things from there. Maybe she’d be happy to go back home now that our curse is broken.”

“My curse is broken. We are not sure when the others will.”

“It has already. I found my mate. I’m sending Clover in tomorrow by ten.” He ended the call before I could completely process all that information.

I grinned. Then I laughed. I had only one person to thank for this. I picked up my phone and dialed her but she didn’t pick up. She had a bad habit of leaving her phone everywhere but on her. On that note, I packed up my work with me and went back home.

The next day, I didn't have the luxury of working from home. The pack elders had scheduled a meeting, another Alpha was visiting, I didn't get to complete half the workload I took home with me the previous day so now I had an even larger backlog of work.

Work was hectic. The pack elders were talking nonsense. Some of them were still loyal to Xavier and it showed. Alpha Trenton from Blue Moon pack needed protection from ongoing rogue attacks.

I just finished with Trenton when Clover sauntered into my office with a winning smile.

"Hi, Vee." She took a seat without asking.

I watched her without saying a word. When had we become so casual? We used to have boundaries; she knocked before coming into my office and she certainly would not have taken a seat without being invited to a few months ago. When did those boundaries cease to exist? She came into my office with the confidence of a favorite mistress.

"You have twenty-five minutes to say what you have to say."

"A few weeks ago, you'd have asked about me but now I don't matter anymore, do I?" I'm just the filthy ex your mate doesn't want you around."

"We never dated," I reminded her.

“Right. I’m just the filthy whore you used to satisfy your urges before your virgin princess arrived.” She snorted. “I can’t say I blame you. Who would choose a used car over a brand new, untouched one?” I already told myself I would let her vent so I ignored her provocative words.

‘How dare she compare my mate to a car?’ Zino was ranting. ‘The nerve of this b!tch!’

“But I don’t understand why she’s so threatened by me. It’s not as if I can take you from her.” She smiled. “Or is there a possibility I can take you from her?”

“You have wasted ten minutes of the twenty-five minutes and you are getting on my nerves. If you have anything to say, it’s best you say it now or I’d have to extract it from you.”

“Pain doesn’t faze me.”

“You have been protected from my wrath. Perhaps you want a taste of a new level of pain?”

“Don’t threaten me, Vee. Your mate is in danger and I’m the only one that can help you or don’t you want to protect her? You lost a child already. Imagine if you lost her.” I saw red.

When the blood cleared from my eyes, Clover was wedged between me and my desk, my claws creeping to her throat. I withdrew them, leashing my wolf.

‘Let me f**k her up.’ Zino raged. ‘She threatened my mate!’

“I like it when you get angry,” she breathed in a low voice. “It’s like old times again, isn’t it? You get so angry that no one else can calm you down. No one except me. Do you want to take out your anger on me like before?” I stepped away from her, surprised at her reaction.

Even Zino went quiet at her unexpected reaction to our anger. “Will you release your seed in me like you used to? Now that you are fertile again, your seed can take plant in my womb. I promise I’d keep it. I’d protect our pup with my life, Vee. Not like the b!tch you call –“ Her words died. “You –“ She coughed. “You are choking me.”

“What do you know about the kidnapping?”

“I – It’s Skylar. It’s starting to hurt, Vee –“

“That’s Alpha to you. Where. Is. Skylar?”

“I don’t know that but I suspect she will be at Blood River. That was her mum’s pack.” I let her go and then I called Jabari.

“Send trackers to Blood River pack.” I paused when he asked which of the Blood River packs. “All three of them.”

“Right, I’m on that.” I could hear cars honk from the other end of the call so I knew he was driving.

“Pick up Aysel. She’s alone at home. She must be bored.”

“You couldn’t have called earlier? I just drove past that area,” he complained. “Right, I’m going back. Don’t kill Clover –“ I ended the call.

“As for you,” I turned to the girl, “To repay you for the last century, I will be lenient with you one last time. Go to the pack house and stay there. I will decide your punishment for the slurs against my mate. One more step out of line and I will slit your throat myself without an ounce of remorse.” Her eyes fell to her shoes, head bent.

The haze of red never fully cleared from my eyes. My wolf never quietened. My claws kept extending every now and again. I paced my office to keep my wolf contained.

“Andrew was working with Skylar. She arranged for him to kidnap Aysel but changed her mind at the last minute because she feared he was loyal to you. You shouldn’t trust him and you should keep your eyes peeled for Elders Bane and Maxwell. And you really need to find Strauss and his wife.”

“How do you know all these?” I demanded.

“I was foolish enough to love you. I infiltrated their circle and risked my life just to help you but you don’t need me anymore. I am sure your mate can act as your informant in the future.”

“Thank you.” I owed her that much. “Now get out of my office.”

I tried to get back to work after that but I could not. Clover had taken to crying outside of my office. She was far enough for me not to bother about but my skin still pricked from having her in the same building as me.

An hour later and she was still crying. Exasperation made me slam my system shut but just as I stood to throw her out of the building, I felt a calmness only the presence of my mate could bring. And Clover finally stopped crying.

When my mate walked in, she smelt strongly of Jabari. I understood they'd been in the car together for long and they must have hugged. My wolf was still not settled and the scent of another man on her unsettled him more. I tried to tell the mutt that it was her Beta but he wasn't listening.

I made a joke of it to lighten the mood but she looked at me – she looked at me with disgust in her eyes. Disgust and betrayal.

If I could smell Jabari on her, she could certainly smell Clover on me.

“Have you seen Clover recently?” Her tone held accusation, her eyes held fire and her fingertips were literally on fire.