

Chapter 2

“Aysel.” I curled away from the person touching me.

I didn't want to open my eyes. I refused to awaken to a world that hated me. The only thing I wanted was to sleep the sleep of death to join my parents in the world after. I didn't deserve any of the pain and suffering that awaited me in the world of the living.

“Aysel, wake up.” My eyes fluttered open when the person shaking me refused to relent. “You have five minutes to eat before Monica comes barging in.” Celeste pushed a tray of food to me.

“I'm not hungry.” I sat up in my dark room, wiping caked blood off my lips. “What time is it?” I didn't know how long I'd succumbed to the darkness.

“It's morning.” Celeste brushed aside my question with haste, pushing the tray of food to me again. “The Feast of the Moon continues today. You have a lot of work waiting for you so you better eat now before you collapse doing your duties.”

It'll be unfortunate to faint while working today yet my stomach was a tight knot that wanted nothing in it.

I staggered to my feet to change my clothes. The Feast of the Moon was a sacred and revered event held once a year. It would be folly to ruin it by showing up in a bloody dress whether I was an irrelevant omega or a powerful alpha.

Celeste sucked in a sharp breath when I took off my clothes with my back to her. There was no need to look into a mirror; I knew what she

saw and I didn't have a mirror. I felt the sting of Bethel's belt on my back as if it happened a few minutes ago.

My teeth gnashed as I pulled on a clean black shirt, the stiff material of the cloth brushing against open injuries.

"I'll talk to him," my best friend vowed. I turned to her with a sharp glare.

"Don't you dare."

Celeste didn't understand what I went through in this pack. As the beta's daughter, everyone loved and adored her. She had pretty strawberry blonde hair and large, expressive hazel eyes. She was a beta, like her parents. Her parents never tried usurping the alpha. The only blemish on her person was her friendship with me.

She had an idealistic view of the world, believing that things could be better. She wanted to help me but every time she interferes, things got worse.

"He can't do this to you! You're battered!" Her soft voice rose in a shriek.

"He can and you won't say anything about it." She meant well but she had this disconnection from my reality that sometimes made it hard to converse with her.

She didn't know what a whip felt like. She didn't know what being an orphan felt like. She would never understand what it meant to go to bed with a biting stomach and tearful eyes after a long day of rigorous work. I wouldn't wish my worst enemy to experience the things I experienced but when she made it seem as if I didn't try enough, as if I hadn't tried too much, I wished she would leave me alone.

Who would I tell what Skylar and her gang did to me? The Alpha lost his Luna because of my family. The Beta hated me. Who else could I turn to? Who would listen to my cries if I cried to them? My parents

betrayed Redville pack and it was my fate to suffer the consequences of their actions.

“Aysel, please.” She walked up to me and took my hands in hers, her big eyes filling. “Let me help you.” I pulled my hands from her, turning to face a wall,

I needed all the help anyone could offer me but Celeste had tried enough. I couldn’t ask her to keep trying. If she confronted her brother about what he did to me, he would come back with Bethel and two belts.

“Aysel.” Monica rapped on my door. “Get out here. No one keeps you around to sleep.” She yelled from outside.

“I’m coming,” I yelled back, tying my hair.

“Who are you yelling at?” Monica bellowed.

“Celeste –“

“I can’t handle Lucien but I can handle Monica.” She squared her shoulders before marching out of the cold and damp corner I slept in. She was a good friend. I didn’t know how I would have survived all these years without her. She was the only one to stick with me through the years after my pack wrote me off.

I didn’t get to eat that day but I got to leave my room. I had only the Moon Goddess to thank for that. She made the Feast of the Moon, an annual celebration to give thanks and make merry amongst packs. For the next week, there would be a lot of food to cook, halls to mop and champagne to serve. Redville would need all the hands she could get so no one kept me locked up for long.

The other omegas complained about all the work they had to do this period but not me. They had rooms with beds to sleep on. I had nothing of that comfort. My bed didn’t qualify as a bed anymore. My room didn’t have any lighting and darkness scared me. No matter how many

clothes I piled on myself, I could never escape the cold of the damp room.

Working took my mind off the many things that could be fixed in my life. When I worked, I put in all my effort, all my energy and strength so that when I finished, I went to the darkness of my room with pains all over my body and fell asleep in the blink of an eye.

“I just want to grab a quick snack! Goddess, you’re clingy!” Skylar’s soprano called right outside the kitchen as I scrubbed the pans used this morning.

My heart leapt to my throat, my hands freezing in the murky water I used in a scrubbing the pans. My mouth went dry and my eyes flew all over the place, jumping from the window near me and an open, empty cupboard beside me, looking for a way to get out or get lost.

She couldn’t see me!

Before I knew it, tears flowed down my cheeks with my hands shaking in the water.

Her feet drew nearer and in a last minute of desperation, I darted into the open cupboard, pulling it close behind me.

Breathing turned difficult. Sweat congregated atop of my brows as I hid inside the dark cupboard, flinching when her footsteps got into the kitchen. I didn’t dare breathe for fear of my breathing being loud enough to put me.

I rubbed my hands at the back of my neck, my skin heating. Tight spaces terrified me. They made me dizzy, made my hands tingle and my legs lock. The small, dark cupboard closed in on me causing full-body tremors.

I clutched my knees to my cheek, closing my eyes and rocking back and forth in the little space the cupboard afforded me. My lips quivered,

salty tears falling into my open mouth. I gasped but pressed a hand to my mouth when the movement in the kitchen seized for a second.

My brain focused on her movements, forcing me to hold my breath to listen to her prance around the kitchen. At that time, she stopped before the cupboard I hid inside. I forced my knuckles into my mouth to stop a whimper of fear.

“What is that awful smell?” She snickered. My eyes tightened, my body stopping the jerky, rocking rhythm. “Too good to answer?” She was talking to me but I couldn’t answer. I couldn’t bring myself to remove the hand I stuck into my mouth to keep silent – to hide from her.

“Have fun in your new cell.” My hands wrenched out of my mouth in a split second.

“Skylar, please –“. A gasp escaped my lips. Her response came as a derisive chuckle.

“It’s cozy, isn’t it?” She laughed. Her footsteps grew faint as I pushed at the cupboard door bolted from outside.

“Skylar! Skylar, please!” I pushed at the door, the world swimming around me, the darkness rushing to consume me. “Please don’t do this to me.” Small spaces terrified me. Oh goddess, please. “Skylar, please, don’t leave me! Don’t lock me in.” I screamed for her but even as I screamed, as the world closed in around me, I knew she already left me in the small cupboard space.

I gasped many more times, my head swelling.

“Skylar!”

I positioned my shoulder against the wood of the cupboard door, banging against it with all the strength in my tired body while screaming her name until the door broke. I dove out of the cupboard, my chest heaving, only to see meet Alpha Xavier stirring a cup of coffee.