

Chapter 26

“Be careful with Valens,” Clover said once she pulled into a parking spot.

“Why? What do you mean?” The ride had been silent until she turned up the radio halfway to our destination.

“He is complicated.” As if I didn’t know that already. “He is not someone you question.” I frowned at that. It wasn’t as if I didn’t think or know that even.

“I never questioned him,” I said to which she smiled.

“Not directly but when I told you he wanted to see you this morning, you asked ‘what for?’ Valens isn’t a man you ask to explain himself.”

I’d only asked on reflex. He’d never sought me out for anything before so I didn’t expect him to send his former lover to me out of the blue.

“I didn’t mean it that way.” I was actually questioning her but I didn’t add that part.

“And he’s also not someone you argue with.”

“That’s unavoidable, isn’t it? We can’t live together forever without an argument.”

“Oh, you’re argumentative.” She grinned as she said that. “Valens likes it when people agree with him but I think I agree with you here. You can’t always submit.”

A shiver raced through my spine. I couldn't always submit, I agreed, but I was supposed to. An omega had to submit and Valens told me point blank that he expected me to stand up to everyone but him.

"I'd like to watch you guys together." She got out of the car as I processed her words.

My wolf was naturally suspicious of Clover considering the relationship I was sure she had with my mate. They were too casual for them not to have been intimate at some point.

I got out of her car just as Celeste pulled up in her black car. She slammed the car door shut and took down her shades before I yelled her name.

"Celeste." She turned with a small frown on her face. The frown morphed into a beaming smile as she raced towards me.

"Aysel! I haven't seen you in ages."

"Hello." Clover came to stand beside me right as Celeste got close. "You must be Celeste."

"Clover?" My friend called her name with a slight hitch that went almost unnoticeable but I didn't miss the awe on her face as she stared at Clover.

"In the flesh." She beamed at my best friend. Celeste made a small sound at the back of her throat that made Clover's smile widen. This was the closest we'd ever come to seeing a celebrity face to face so I understood Celeste's excitement.

"What are you doing here?" I asked my friend to stop her from embarrassing herself.

"I was supposed to meet up with Levi but he cancelled last minute. How about you?" She took glimpses at Clover while she spoke to me.

“I came to buy a few things.”

“Few things? We’re here to burn some –“

“Calories.” I cut Clover off before she exposed me. What reason could I give for the alpha to give me his card to buy clothes and lingerie?

“Calories?” Celeste looked me up and down. I didn’t have enough fat in my body to burn so I understood where she was coming from.

“Me. Aysel was nice enough to escort me but I need to be more active these days.” Clover cut in.

“Oh no. You’re perfect like this. You don’t have to burn anything!” Celeste praised Clover’s body and her general person as we walked into the mall. She kept a long, steady string of praises until she suddenly asked a question that made me stumble.

“Are you and the prince together?” She asked but the question wasn’t directed at me. It was directed at Clover.

“Oh, no. That’s all a misunderstanding.” Clover laughed, waving her off.

“No?” My friend sounded disappointed. I followed silently beside them while my wolf growled. “But you’d look so good together!”

“Let’s go here.” I pointed at a random store to save myself the torture of Celeste telling Clover that she’d look good with my mate.

Goodness gracious, when would it end? When would I become worthy of being claimed publicly? When would Valens decide I was worth claiming before the world?

“You want to – you want to go into that store?” My skin turned crimson when I looked at the store I supposedly wanted to go into. I would never be able to live this down!

It was an adult store.

“Let’s go into this one.” Clover intertwined our elbows and pulled me towards the store beside the one I first pointed at. “They sell really nice bracelets.”

“Yeah, really nice and freaking expensive bracelets!” Celeste pulled me back. “We can’t afford them.”

“I have my ways. Trust me.” Clover pulled us into the store. I walked around with the girls, feeling left out as they gushed about this and that when all I saw were simple bracelets worth as much as a thousand. Why in the goddess’ name they were so expensive, I couldn’t say.

“Here, this will look really good on you.” Clover signaled a worker over to put a rose gold bracelet on my wrist. It was one of the least expensive things in the store but it still cost too much.

“He – I never planned to buy a bracelet,” I said pointedly to Clover. I was supposed to be getting a new wardrobe. I didn’t think that included expensive jewelry. I didn’t want to add gold-digging tendencies to my list of faults in Valens’ sight

“It fits you. You should buy it.” Celeste nodded her head vigorously to show that she agreed with the decision. I had no choice but to buy it.

“Look at this. It’s perfect for a man,” Celeste exclaimed. It was a simple, masculine ring. “You should get this for Valens.” It would be a good idea but I didn’t have the money and I didn’t want to get him gifts using his money.

“Oh wow.” Clover gasped, picking up the ring on display with reverence. “It looks like the perfect size for him too.”

“Va- Alpha Valens isn’t a man that likes jewelry.”

“How would you know?” Celeste asked. “Clover knows what the Alpha likes. They’ve been together for a long time.” I opened my mouth on a snarl but snapped it shut.

“I’m not with Valens.” Clover let out a light laugh.

“Why not? You’re his lucky clover.”

“I’m just Clover. Valens already found someone great for him.”

“You’re the perfect person for him.”

“I am not with Valens.” Her voice lost the light playfulness, becoming stern. Celeste apologized and never mention Valens again.

I didn’t miss the fact that the ring Celeste suggested followed Clover to checkout.

“How are things with Levi?” I asked my friend. Her big smile faded off her face in an instant, her mood turning sour.

“This is the second time he’s pulled out of a hangout at the last minute for no valid reason.” She pouted. “I no longer believe he is my mate.”

“You feel your mate close?” Clover piped into our conversation. “Maybe he is one of the men from my pack,” she continued when Celeste nodded. My best friend and I burst into laughter.

“Oh –“ I started

“Hell no!” Celeste finished.

“Celeste hates muscled men.” All the men in the Alpha Pack came in varying sizes of thick muscles, Jabari being the king of the thickly muscled men.

“I’m not looking for a mate that can bench press someone ten times my weight, neither do I want to be with a domineering one.”

“Every woman with her taste then.” Clover laughed. “But the men in my pack are good men. You’d be lucky to have one of them as your mate.

“Yeah, no. I think I’ll pass. I’ll have to leave now, Ay-babe.” Celeste gave me a hug. “I was going to wander aimlessly through the mall until I saw you. You always make my day.” She kissed my cheek and let go with a smile. “I have to get back to the hospital now. See you guys later.” She waved at us before rushing out of the mall.

“Your friend is great,” Clover commented. She didn’t even know the extent of how true that statement was.

We walked through the mall then, picking up piles of shopping bags, putting a huge dent in Valens’ account. The more I tried to stop Clover from reeking my mate, the more she reminded me he was a prince. He inherited a massive fortune and after a hundred years, his acquired assets surpassed his inheritance.

“I think – lingerie – “ my skin burned when I pulled Clover to a lingerie shop.

“Oh, yes! Lingerie! We saved the best for last. Come one, let’s get you some sexy red lingerie.” My heart slammed with Artemis’ rage.

Whatever Clover did, Artemis found a problem with. Personally, I found her agreeable, a bit authoritative but considering her life experience, it was understandable and she was far better than Astrid. Clover was a nice girl and she genuinely cared about me but Artemis couldn’t see past her jealousy.

“I’m so hungry. I’ll go secure a space for us to eat. Wait on this queue while I get us something to eat before I collapse.” She left the mall with hunger dragging her feet.

I stayed in the queue for checkout until it got to my turn then I found myself in trouble.

“Thief! How did you get the Prince’s card!” The cashier exclaimed when I handed her Valens’ card. The minute she took over from the other person that was behind the counter a few minutes ago, I knew there would be a problem.

Sasha the cashier was one of Skylar’s minions from high school. Her life lost its relevance when we graduated but it seemed she still felt the need to bully me. In a few minutes, I found myself surrounded. Someone called the police while others rained insults on me and prevented me from leaving the store.