

## Chapter 29

I turned in the cocoon of warmth around me, trying to burrow into it. It felt safe and comforting, as if it stood between me and something unpleasant. I pushed closer into the heat as it wrapped around me.

“If you keep moving, I’m going to assume you’re trying to get something in you.” The warmth moved but it felt as if it was pulling away.

“Don’t move.” I grabbed the warmth, stopping its escape.

“You’re giving me orders?” Something tickled my cheeks as it pressed against my face.

“You talk too much. Let me sleep.” I turned around to hug the warmth instead of having it hug me. I heard a deep chuckle as my cocoon vibrated. It was so unfamiliar yet familiar and soothing that it made me open my eyes.

The room was dark and the cocoon around me was Valens.

“You’re awake.” The prince’s words were calm as he pulled away from me. I reached out and grabbed his hands to stop him from leaving.

“Sorry,” I apologized when he paused. I let go of his hand when I remembered the embarrassing situation he caught me in.

He wanted me to be stronger but my weakness had forced him to claim me before I made any progress.

“We have a lot to talk about.” His tone was grave as he spoke. He raised his hand and I didn’t know why. I had no reason to fear him but I

flinched, shrinking back from his touch. His hand paused midair, his face contorting into something ugly.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized almost as a reflex when I felt the vibration of his anger.

“Who hurt you? Why do you flinch?” I watched him as he fought to keep his words calm.

“It’s just a misunderstanding. I didn’t mean to flinch.” I winced when his face darkened further.

“You’re telling me that flinching has become a reflex for you?” His words were low and tinged with something dark and deadly. I kept my mouth shut to avoid saying the wrong thing and aggravating the situation.

“When will you learn that when I speak to you, I require a verbal response?” I opened my mouth to speak but he cut me off. “We have a lot to work on but for now, I want to know who hurt you.”

What a question!

It’d be easier to mention who didn’t hurt me. The list of those who hurt me went on and on, from my childhood best friend to the random woman in the mall that pushed me out of her way because she was in a bad mood and looking at me somehow made her mood worsen.

“Are you up, Vee?” I heard Clover’s voice before I saw her. The beauty queen came into the room wearing cargo shorts with a black, sleeveless body-con top.

“We’re in here!” I called, grateful for the distraction from an unpleasant topic.

“Oh, hey, Aysel. How are you now?” She sat on a chair facing the bed.

“What are you doing? Stand up!” Valens snarled at her. She stood at once. I almost did too because his reaction was unexpected. “When I

asked you to follow my luna, what did you think I meant? To watch people harass her?"

"Well, it's not my fault your Luna can't defend herself!" She cried out in exasperation.

"Get. Out." She left before he completed the command. The door closed with a slam which I believed happened because she was fleeing the room.

I watched him after she left. His brow creased and his lips pursed. His body stiffened next to mine and I felt his anger radiate around the room.

I hadn't expected Clover to say that to my face but she wasn't wrong. She didn't have to babysit me because I couldn't stand up to a bunch of nameless people. I had to do better. I'd do better. I mustn't disgrace my mate.

Feeling daring, I put my hand on his chest. He shrugged it off almost immediately, making my heart stutter. It didn't feel good to be dismissed like that but I didn't get to dwell on it as he pulled me into his arms, burying his face in my neck.

"I don't like it when you're angry," I admitted to him, putting my hands in his hair. He stiffened when I did that but relaxed after a few seconds. "It scares me," I finished.

"You're the only person in this world who shouldn't fear me." My skin muffled his words. "It'd destroy me to hurt you." When he raised his head, his eyes were a darker shade of their usual color. "Don't you know that?" He asked.

It wasn't the right time to tell him how many times he'd hurt me. He'd made me feel unworthy of being his mate but I mentioned none of that.

"Ok." He gave me a weird smile when I replied. It wasn't really a smile, just a quick flash of teeth.

“Are you hungry?” My stomach embarrassed me then. It made a loud sound like a starved and dying whale.

I looked down at it, wishing it would stop the horrid noise but it went on for a few more seconds before it calmed. How embarrassing!

“I have my answer.”

I stuck close to him when we stepped out of the penthouse and walked to the kitchen. I hadn’t eaten all day and it was almost eight.

The pack just finished dinner so there were a few people making their way back to their respective rooms. When we entered the kitchen, everyone froze. Some girls were just having their dinner while others put away clean dishes.

“Is there food in this house?” A sense of déjà vu hit me.

“Ah – Alpha –” Some girls stuttered.

Astrid wasn’t in the kitchen. Once her ‘men’ were served, she always left the rest of the work to the girls. I used to be one of the girls.

A number of greetings rang out around the kitchen but no one answered his question.

“I’ll fix you something to eat. What would you like.” The girls seemed to be frozen in shock and I’d worked in the kitchen longer than most of them so I felt I picked up for them.

“I don’t like being ignored.” He looked at the ladies huddled to one corner of the kitchen.

“A – Alpha. Luna.” Alexa rushed forward, baring her neck in deference. A small shiver wracked through her when she stepped forward. “What would you like to have?” She was the only beta in our group so her sense of responsibility must have snapped in place at Astrid’s absence but she still looked visibly shaken up.

“What would you like?” He directed the question at me.

“Ah – anything.” I looked away from him. I didn’t want to come off as indecisive to him but the question was so sudden that I couldn’t think of anything to say.

“Whatever is your specialty. We will wait at the dining.” He took my hand and walked out of the kitchen.

“Your shopping has been returned,” he said to me when we sat at the freshly cleaned dining table.

“Did you threaten them?” I asked.

“I did not have to.” He brushed off my question. “Did you get the lingerie I asked for?” My skin flamed at his words.

“Can we not talk about that at the table?” I looked around furtively but no one lingered in the dining room once we walked in. We were alone but it felt as if he’d taken a speaker and was announcing to the whole world that I purchased red panties to model for him.

“It’s my table and you’re my mate. I can talk about whatever I want to see you in at my table.” He raised a brow at my frown.

His arrogance took me aback. He had every right to be proud, considering his achievements, but I’d never met anyone this arrogant. The people around me still tried to feign modesty every now and again but not him.

“Okay.” I looked away from his to cover my blush.

“Well?” He questioned with a touch of impatience in his tone. I nodded.

“Words,” he reprimanded.

“Yes, I got them,” I answered with a sigh.

“Good. I want to see you in them tonight. Now, to the many things we have to talk about.”

“But –”

Astrid came in with Alexa and two other girls bearing trays.

“Alpha, Luna.” She beamed at both of us as if we were her kids. “Alexa made her best spaghetti stir fry yet.” The girl started to lay down their trays and I remembered Alexa’s famous stir fry included peas which I’d noticed he didn’t like.

“Are you waiting to be invited to my dinner?” He asked when Astrid still lingered around after they laid out the dishes. She walked away with airy laughter.

“I can pick out the peas if you want,” I said once she left. He responded with a blank stare.

“Why would you do that?”

“You don’t like peas?” I answered with a touch of self-consciousness

“I don’t care for peas. What I don’t like is who they remind me of.”