

## Chapter 34

“Just listen to me even if it’s for one minute.” He grabbed my hand as I turned to leave. “I know I’ve hurt you but I have so much on my chest that I want to say to you.”

“Why should I care that you have so much on your mind? How is it my place to help you get things off your chest?” I pulled my hand from Lucien’s grasp, grateful for the things Valens had taught me. Before then, I always found it hard to get out of Lucien’s grip but now I did it with ease.

As he spoke, I assessed his obvious physical weak points. I pictured how I would go for them if he did anything funny. I didn’t have the strength to take him down but Valens told me I had speed and I trusted him. I could deliver a swift attack before he knew it.

“For old times sake? We were best friends. Doesn’t that count for something?” I scoffed at him. At three a.m. on a night I found it difficult to sleep, the last thing I needed was to take a trip down bitter memory lanes with a man that ruined me.

“It didn’t count for anything when you abandoned me. It didn’t count for anything when you and your gang humiliated me. It didn’t count for anything when you rejected me and it didn’t count for anything when you stuck your tongue down my throat without my permission!” Despite the cold night wind, I felt myself get hot with anger.

“I messed up,” he admitted with a suspicious hitch in his voice.

“Yeah, you did,” I answered without a shred of remorse. I’d cried for this man. Groveled at his feet for him to have just a bit of the love I had

for him. In return, he rejected me and made me unworthy of being with him. Then he doubled back and tried to ruin my second chance.

“Is there no way to fix it? Come on, Ay-babe, you always had a soft heart. Let’s fix this. You and I –”

“For the countless times you shattered my heart, do you still think it could remain soft?” I laughed out loud at that, the wind carrying my voice and making it sound malevolent in the night. “You have no idea how hard my heart has become and in the middle of the rock I now call my heart lays profound hatred for you. I hate you and nothing you say or do now can change it.”

“Love can thaw your heart,” he replied confidently.

My mind drifted to Valens at that point. What would he be doing at this time of the night? Why wasn’t he with me? When did he suddenly matter so much that I couldn’t sleep without him next to me?

The oracle put him in a strange mood or maybe it was seeing a crown that reminded him so much of his mother’s death. If it brought back such bad memories for him then I wouldn’t wear it. Our mating ceremony should be special, not tainted with the blood and gore of his past.

“Aysel, are you listening to me?” Lucien patted my shoulders to draw me back to the present and out of my thoughts.

“I don’t want your stinking scent on me.” I shrugged him off. “And no, I wasn’t listening to you. I was too busy thinking of my mate.” I didn’t know why I added the last part but it felt good to feel the air around him turn tense.

Lucien put me through hell and though I wasn’t a vengeful person, he brought out the worst in me. He made out with Skylar the day he rejected me, right in plain view of everybody, her body gyrating on his while I watched with tears blurring my vision.

“It’s three a.m. in the morning and you’re not in bed with your mate,” he started in a quiet voice. “If you choose me, you’ll never spend a night alone in bed.” His voice went low as if he still believed he could seduce me.

Honestly, Lucien must be delusional. What girl in her right mind would choose a debased beta over an Alpha Prince? Especially if that Alpha Prince was Valens who rivalled all other men in looks? He’d need serious black magic to make a girl choose him over Valens but I didn’t tell him that. I knew he was desperate and he would try black magic if I dared suggest it.

“I’d rather spend ten thousand nights alone in bed than to spend a second in bed with you,” I snarled. He staggered back as if the words physically hurt him.

“I love you,” he said in a wretched voice as if he’d spoken the magic words and knew they didn’t carry their usual magic.

What I’d have given a few months ago to hear him say those words to me! What I’d have given to not be rejected and ridiculed by the person I trusted most in the world. Alas, I couldn’t do anything about that now.

“Stop.”

“Stop what?” He asked.

“Stop loving me. As much as I like seeing you miserable, I know it will get old fast. I’m mated already and even if I wasn’t, I don’t love you. There’s nothing on the face of this earth that will make me love you now. I found a second chance. Maybe you will too.”

“I don’t want a second chance! I want you!” He suddenly exclaimed, his voice ricocheting in the dark and quiet space, startling me.

“It’s too late for that now,” I reminded him. I could not go back to being with him when I already mated with Valens.

“I told you there’s a loophole. We can – we can –” I cringed at his lack of tact.

The loophole was sex and even that was too late now. Our bond couldn’t be reawakened. It completely died the moment Valens sank his fangs into me when I could feel him in my womb. I was bound to Valens now and there was no way to break that bond.

“Even after everything you put me through, I still feel sympathy for you when I shouldn’t.” I laughed before turning away from him, blocking out the rest of his words.

It didn’t matter what he had to say. It didn’t matter if I got closure or not. It didn’t matter that he’d never been sorry for what he did – never cared about how he hurt me until he realized he could lose me. And then he lost me.

Lucien didn’t matter to me anymore. Now he was nothing but a pesky fly that disturbed me, buzzing in my ears, saying things I didn’t want to hear. I shed a tear for him then. A lone tear. For what we were and could have been and how he ruined everything.

The pack had an office, a towering building that stood higher than all the buildings in the pack and at the top of this building sat the Alpha’s office. My mate’s office.

I took the elevator, smoothing down my light dress, nervous as I made my way up to his floor.

I knew without a doubt that he was in the office. There was more work than usual these days and I knew without a Luna, he had to take care of most things himself so he worked even harder.

He was watching the door when I came in, in tune to my proximity the way I was in tune to his. The minute I got into the office building, I knew he was in it.

“What are you doing here?” He asked once I shut the door behind me.

“I could ask you the same thing.” My wolf’s irritation slipped into my tone.

“Aysel,” he called in a warning tone.

“Valens.” I mimicked his sternness. I watched his eyebrows crease, saw that his eyes did not have a hint of sleep in them and frowned at that.

“I know you don’t like it when people tell you what to do,” I started.

“Yet I get the feeling you’re about to tell me off for working into the night.”

“Don’t interrupt me.” I took a shaky breath before adding, “Please.” He leaned back into his chair. “You heard what the oracle said.” He opened his mouth to disparage the oracle but cut himself off. “We should get to know each other so I’m laying it out here for you to know that I don’t like you spending your nights somewhere other than in bed with me.”

“I rule over forty packs and I don’t need sleep. Get some rest, Sagira. You don’t have anything to prove here.”

“I’m not interested in whether or not you need sleep. I need sleep and I can’t get it in bed alone while you slave away. If you’re going to stay here then I’m staying here with you.”

“You’re welcome to join me, little moon.”