

## Chapter 35

“What can I help with?” I asked as I took the seat opposite his. Rather than reply, he walked around his desk and buried his face in my neck. His breath tickled my skin until he froze.

I knew without a doubt that he had scented Lucien on me with the way he froze and slowly withdrew. He went back into his seat without a word, anger pouring from his skin and filling the room.

“Lucien was my best friend,” I started when he dove into his work.

“I don’t care.” His quiet words were little more than snarls.

“You do. You’re jealous of him.” I challenged which I shouldn’t have.

I jerked out of my seat when things on his desk went crashing down with a sweep of his hand. Ink rapidly spread across the screen of his system as it lay on the ground.

“You’re mine.” He pushed the desk out of the way as if it was made from plastic and not high-quality wood.

“I’m yours,” I answered in a small voice, taking steps back as he advanced upon me.

“I shouldn’t have to be jealous of another man.” My back hit the wall and his hand came up to cage me. “You shouldn’t smell like any man but me.” I nodded in agreement.

“Did you moan his name while he shoved his tongue down your throat or did he put his dick in you this time?” His anger scorched my face. Or maybe it was my anger because I raised my hand, my wolf taking over me in a moment of stupidity.

“Are you trying to hit me?” The anger in his voice came out tinged with surprise.

“I – I’m sorry. My wolf got the better of me,” I apologized, ashamed and afraid. I never thought I’d raise my hand against my mate in my life.

“There’s nothing between Lucien and I. If you listened for a single minute rather than fly off into a jealous rage, you’d understand that!”

“Explain it to me then. I don’t want to believe that you’d be unfaithful but your interaction with him is suspicious. Why do you have his scent on you by this time of the night?” His expression was unreadable. He raised his hand and I flinched but he only tucked my hair behind my ear. “I hate it when you do that.”

“It’s –” I took in a deep breath as I prepared myself to bare it all to him. He’d seen my body and sooner or later, he’d hear my story. I’d rather he heard it from my mouth. “I – I’m not a fan favorite in this pack,” I started, taking in a deep breath.

“I noticed,” he whispered, urging me to continue with his rapt attention.

“My parents – the former alpha hated my parents and when they died, he transferred that hatred to me and everyone else followed suit.” I didn’t have the heart to tell him why Zavier hated my parents.

King Thomas and Luna Valencia were betrayed in the worst way possible: by a trusted companion who wanted their seat. Unlike my parents, the people who killed Valens’ parents actually succeeded because they had many supporters and aid from mages.

After Valens dealt with his parents’ murder, he went for the witches that aided them. I didn’t know how many he cut down but his rage was enough to destroy what little of his kingdom after the initial battle for power.

“Lucien is Celeste’s brother. They’re the former Beta’s children and while everyone else hated me and made me a pariah, they stuck with

me.” I took in a deep breath as memories of all Celeste and Lucien suffered because of me surfaced.

Although Lucien was the future Beta, he wasn’t violent or a bully. His father said it was because he chose to hang out with girls. He’d been a pretty boy but he was forced to change to defend me. I’d never forget the first day I saw him break a boy’s nose; the day I realized the depth of his strength.

He, Celeste and I had been walking back from school one day as we were all in middle school then. Out of nowhere, two boys ambushed us on the road. They called us names and even called Lucien the F-word. I continued walking with my head down to avoid further aggression while Lucien and Celeste warned them off.

But one of the boys grabbed me and shoved me to the ground. Before I could stand, I heard the breaking of bones. With one swift punch, Lucien had one boy down.

I stood up and watched in horror as the other boy made a run for it but Lucien was too fast, tackling him to the ground and beating him to a pulp. He’d have committed his first murder at twelve if some adults didn’t walk by then. He broke his fists on that boy because he touched me. I’d never forget.

After that, he came to apologize to me. ‘You looked at me like you look at the bullies,’ he’d said to me that day and I wondered if he’d exaggerated a bit.

“Lucien stood up for me. He was my best friend. We did everything together right from childhood. I loved him as an innocent child and it – things changed.” I stopped myself from making the mistake of telling my mate that I’d once loved Lucien in a non-platonic way. He was growling before I caught myself.

“Well, in high school, he was ready to date and the girl he liked didn’t like me so our friendship started to fall apart. Then we turned eighteen and found out we were mates. He didn’t want to be with me as a friend so it made sense that I wasn’t worthy of being his mate then. He – he rejected me and forbade me from telling anyone.”

I left out the part that once I noticed we were mates, I planned a big gesture to get with him. I didn’t mention how I’d been so excited, how Celeste had been so excited, for me to ask Lucien out.

Since I knew we were mated, he did too but he didn’t say anything. It never occurred to me that he’d hate me to the point of rejecting me so I assumed he didn’t know how to approach me after abandoning me for Skylar. Life wasn’t that simple, unfortunately.

“Well, it’s been almost two years since then. He rejected me, he made it clear that I wasn’t worth being with him and then he treated me worse than everyone else. It hurt worse coming from him but what could I do?” I shrugged my shoulders. “I don’t love Lucien. I hate him more than anyone else in this pack. No one treated me well before but he made everything worse. He broke my trust and then he rejected me. I can never trust him again.” I emphasized my point, saying the things I felt about Lucien out in the open.

Words could not explain the hatred I had for that man. Even Skylar hadn’t hurt me as much as he did. Skylar hated me right from our childhood so I wasn’t surprised about the way she treated me but Lucien’s switch came like a harsh blow. It affected my relationship with Celeste because I kept expecting her to switch up on me like he did so I distanced myself from her.

“It doesn’t explain why you were kissing him or why you’re always together in dark, secluded places,” Valens said in a soft voice that did not conceal his anger.

“I told you already but you’re hellbent on not believing me. He kissed me and Jabari walked in before I could do anything. He’s the one that always finds me and drags me to secluded places. Believe me, I want nothing to do with my former abuser.

He says he loves me now but it’s only because I moved on and left him behind. He has always been possessive but it doesn’t matter. Even if I never met you, I wouldn’t go back to a man that hurt me like Lucien did.”

He said nothing after that. I waited and waited for him to say something but he didn’t so I escaped the cages of his arms and took a seat on the couch in his large office.

“Your silence is making me nervous,” I admitted when I took a seat.

“He’ll have to be dealt with for touching what’s mine.” He took a seat beside me, drawing me into his laps. “Him and everyone else that dared to hurt you in the past.” He vowed.

“You can’t punish a whole pack.”

“Have you not heard my story, little moon? What is Redville compared to the packs I have razed to the ground in one night?” I shuddered at the cold menace in his tone.

“I don’t want my pack destroyed,” I whined when he dropped his head on my shoulder.

“I know. That’s why I’m only punishing them.”