

Chapter 43

Somehow, I'd forgotten my own birthday which wasn't all that surprising because I always did. Celeste was the only person who always remembered but this year, she had too much burdening her.

"Oh – I didn't know you knew," I laughed, touching the chain around my neck. "Thank you." Turning to him, I rose to my tiptoes. Supported by my hands on his shoulders, I placed a kiss on his chin.

"We have a dinner reservation for seven." He offered me his open palm and I stared at it in confusion.

"So – uh why am I here so early then? You said to come with an appetite." He dropped his hand, sticking them into his pockets.

"Let's go." He grabbed his key and proceeded to walk out the door.

"Oh okay." It was only when we got to the elevator that it occurred to me that he may have wanted me to take his hand when he stretched it out to me.

Ah.

We rode the elevator down in silence. When we walked out, people automatically stepped out of our way. I wanted to take his hand then but I didn't know how to because his hands were still stuck deeply into his pockets.

He opened the car door for me and I thanked him. The silence continued. He opened the door for me when he parked and I thanked him again when I got out of the car.

"Where are we?" I asked, staring at the building before me.

“We’ll see.” The building had glass windows through which I could see mannequins with pretty dresses so I knew what it was. I just didn’t understand what was going on yet.

He locked his car and before he could stick his hands into his pockets, I grabbed his left hand. I waited, breathing paused, for his reaction but he seemed to stiffen along with me. Then he laced our fingers and started forward. I let out a breath of relief.

“You don’t have to be so afraid of me,” he said to which my reply was a nod. “I could never hurt you.”

Yes, he’d said that numerous times. I knew that to an extent. His wolf would not allow him to hurt me physically but I feared there were other ways he could hurt me without even knowing it.

“Maybe you’ll never hit me,” I murmured. “But you can’t say you’d never hurt me.” I finished.

“I can tell you I would never hurt you on purpose.”

“You don’t trust me, Valens. It’ll take little for you to hurt me.”

I wished we could put the past behind us. We hadn’t gotten off on a good foot but it had been weeks now yet I still felt a wedge between us. There was no love, barely any affection and I felt like any small move could snap the little bond we had managed to form.

I was walking on eggshells around my mate and it got tiring sometimes.

A man and woman walking out of the building stopped his response. They were flushed and fidgety and I didn’t blame them. My remark had dropped the air around Valens and made himself even more threatening.

“Welcome, Alpha, Luna.” They gave jerky bows.

“Is the dress ready?” He asked them and their heads bobbed almost in unison.

“And we have every other thing arranged,” the woman added.

“Good.” He squeezed my hand and we walked ahead of the people, entering a grand building.

The place sparkled from top to bottom, made out of glass that glimmered. I could see my face reflected back at me from every angle.

Belle.

The establishment was named Belle and they had a makeup section which we came in through after we passed the reception and waiting area which were all empty.

“Did you ask them not to allow others in?” I whispered to him when we passed an empty waiting area.

The place was enormous. The waiting area was large and it made no sense for such a big place to be so empty. There wasn't a single person in here that wasn't staff.

I'd heard of Belle but I'd never thought I'd walk in here. They opened last year and took the place by storm. They catered to anything that concerned female beauty and they were high-priced.

“Just for the afternoon.” He nodded at the man that approached us. “I do not like to wait so I made sure they would not keep us waiting.” He gave the man a pointed look.

“Good day, Alpha, Luna. If you'll come this way, we have the dress ready.” The man led the way to a room where a mannequin with a stunning red dress stood in the middle.

“Wow.”

It may be because it was placed strategically in the middle of the room, the only bright color in a monochrome colored room, or the fact that it was stoned and radiated all the lights around or it could be a combination of both. Whatever it was, it made my mouth fall open. The

dress was dazzling. It was something I'd dreamt of wearing as a child but lost all hope of owning after what my parents did.

"Do you like it?" I registered Valens question from a distant part of my brain and I nodded. "Try it on."

Two ladies led me to the changing room. They helped me out of my clothes and into the figure-hugging red dress. The cinched waist gave an illusion of fuller hips and a thinner waist.

I'd never been in love with a dress but I fell in love then.

When I stepped into the room with Valens and the designer, my eyes sought out Valens' first. His eyes were trained on me once the door opened and they flashed with satisfaction when I came in, then they darkened with possessiveness.

"You look good in red." Memories of the last night made me shiver. He may have realized where my mind went to because he smirked.

I protested when I had to take off my dress but I had to have my hair and makeup done. We didn't have a lot of time because our reservation was in a few hours and the people knew. I felt bad for them when they had to work extra hard, flitting around the place to get my hair done while someone did my pedicure and another did my manicure.

They had to be extra gentle too because the man doing my fingernails had filed my skin, making me hiss in pain. My head was up as my hair was being washed then so I couldn't see Valens. He didn't say anything either but we all felt the threat in the suddenly chilly air.

By six-thirty, while doing my makeup, Valens started to tap his feet. My hair shone now, better than it had ever been in all my life. The stylist tried her best to work fast but I was indecisive about what I wanted. The last time a professional did my hair, I was eight and my mother chose the hairstyle.

The feet tapping startled the makeup artist so she messed up my eyeliner.

“Calm down,” I told her but my words had no effect on her.

I knew Valens could be intimidating. I had firsthand experience of that intimidation but he was merely sitting and saying nothing. He only commented when the hair or nail was done and he didn't even criticize their work but oh well. It wasn't every day a conqueror walked into a beauty shop and waited for their mate to get a makeover.

“Do you like bronzed looks?” She whispered as she dabbed foundation into my skin. I didn't know what a bronzed look meant so I refused it.

She spent a lot of time pushing different products into my skin. I got more amazed every time because the more she went, the smoother my skin looked, my pores seeming to disappear. Then she was done with that part and my nose looked smaller.

“It's seven o'clock.” The girl jumped at Valens' sudden words.

“Oh – oh –” The girl looked at my unfinished makeup and I feared she would cry.

Goodness, this brought back too many bitter memories. I'd met a lot of intimidating people who liked to flex their authority on me and I'd just breakdown. It was awful and I didn't want anyone to feel that way because of me.

“Eight is a better time for dinner,” I murmured but he heard me.

He gave me an uninterpretable look before he answered, “It is not.”

“It is,” I countered.

“Do you want to argue with me on that?” No. No, I didn't. He didn't like being argued with and I didn't want to waste the time I was trying to buy so I didn't say anything.

“Would you like a bold lip?” The girl muttered, holding up three shades of red lipstick. I shook my head.

I wasn't used to makeup and although I could see the makeup she'd applied on my face and it looked soft, I still felt it was too much and I didn't want to risk looking like a clown.

A nude lipstick later and everything was in place. I got into my dress and the shoes Valens personally picked out. They were beautiful heels and they were comfortable too – like four inches.

The hairstylist let my hair down, styled it and we were set to leave.

There were a few times when I felt beautiful but that day – that day I felt like a queen. Adorned with diamonds and my hands clasped in Valens' I grinned all the way to the restaurant.