

Chapter 53

I slept on the couch that night. She was so stiff when I touched her and she reacted so violently that I feared she was having a panic attack. I knew how terrible those could be because I experienced them during the early days of my curse so I didn't want to aggravate her.

"Aysel, will you at least tell me goodbye? I'm off to work," I asked my mate who had the covers over her head.

Normally, I would leave silently because she was always asleep when I went to work, but I knew she was awake today. The few times she was ever awake when I left for work, she always saw me off to the door and gave me a kiss. I didn't know how much I treasured that simple gesture until I lost it.

I went through everything that happened between us recently and I couldn't find any reason for her to start acting like this. She even threw her phone into the toilet. I would admit that I was pissed when I saw the phone in the toilet because we just got it and it cost me a lot of money. Money didn't matter but I would prefer not to be wasteful.

"Aysel?" I called, louder this time.

She made a show of stirring awake, stretching and then yawning loudly, then she sat upright and her eyes were clear as day despite how she rubbed them.

"Are you leaving?" She made her voice smaller but it sounded nothing like that of someone just waking up.

“What is happening, little moon?” We were just starting to overcome our initial misunderstanding and now she wouldn’t even look me in the eye.

“I – Is it possible to postpone our Mating Ceremony?” That soft tone. That soft tone!

I heard a ringing in my ears then my wolf snarled in rejection of the meaning behind her words.

“What do you mean?” My words came out controlled despite the anger and uncertainty flooding my veins. It was just the other days she was smiling, excited about the ceremony. What changed?

“Think about it. It’s a little too close and it’s stressing me out.” She swung her legs out of bed, letting out another fake yawn.

“Why? We have contacted an elite event planner. You do not have to do anything but give orders and they will be met.” She stood and stretched again before speed-walking to the bathroom.

“Just consider it. I have to pee.” I watched in amazement as the door closed in my face.

I grabbed my things and walked out of the suite. I made numerous excuses for her recent behavior as I drove to work. Maybe she had developed cold feet. Maybe she was really stressed about the ceremony. I would get the event planner to contact me directly rather than bother her. Maybe I should send her some chocolate for the off chance she was on her period. Clover told me girls liked that.

Once I got to the office, I was buried in work. I had quarterly budgets from at least ten packs to review. Redville elders were still sending me petitions to know why I had slashed their budget in half but I wouldn’t tell them it was part of their punishment for being cruel to my mate. They should figure it out themselves.

My door opened and my heart lifted as I raised my head from perusing a badly constructed spreadsheet. There was only one person that barged

into my office like that. I couldn't fight off the scowl on my face when I saw Clover, rather than my mate, saunter into my office.

"Have you lost your manners?" She rushed in as if she had a right to my office.

Clover had developed wings lately. She was my best friend. She'd sacrificed a lot for me a good number of times but it didn't mean she had the right or privilege to disrespect my boundaries. I still hadn't forgiven her for the insulting words she spoke against my mate the other day. Imagine calling my mate loose!

"I'm sorry but you have to listen to this." She rushed over and played a recording from her phone for me to hear.

A voice I loathed echoed through her phone's speakers and my hands itches to reach into the phone to strangle the owner of the voice.

"I think I'll have Aysel back very soon." The boy's voice said through the phone. He sounded nervous but there was gloating in his tone.

"Why do you say that? She is mated to the Alpha. I don't think she would want to be with you." I heard Clover's voice from the speaker.

"She made a mistake mating with Valens. I am her true mate. I'm sure she realizes that now and will call off the Mating Ceremony soon. Aysel and I understand each other." The recording cut off at the end of that daringly boastful sentence.

"I told you I do not wish to hear any more of this boy's fantasies." The stylus pen in my hand snapped. Zino raged to the forefront at the audacity of the little rat.

"Aren't you curious about that boastful tone?" Clover sank into a seat. "I met him today and he was all smiles and confidence. I don't like this, Valens."

"Clover – "

“I don’t want you to get hurt. I don’t trust this mate of yours!” She exclaimed, red in the face.

It seemed my control over my people had waned. I did not think Clover would ever dare raise her voice at me in this life or the next, or that she would cut me off mid speech.

“I – I am sorry, Alpha. I did not mean to disrespect you.” She lowered her eyes, her wolf sensible enough to know when she had overstepped her boundaries

“What happens with my mate is my business. I have told you what this boy says is nothing of my business anymore. I have Aysel and he does not. It is a disrespect to my mate, your Luna, to continue to suspect her.”

“I meant no disrespect, Alpha.” She kept her eyes on her thighs and to my astonishment, tears fell from her eyes.

“Why are you crying!?” I demanded, annoyed by her sudden theatrics.

“I – I don’t know how to say this without angering you further but your mate is not as pure as you want her to be. I know she must have wriggled her way under your skin and you are protective of her but her damsel in distress attitude is just a ploy to set off your protective instinct – “

“Enough.” When I spoke, my words were calmer than I felt. A turbulence raged inside of me at the blatant disrespect to my mate and me. “Another person, I would have dealt with harshly if they dared speak about my mate as brazenly as you have just done.” I pushed out of my seat to placate my wolf who was clawing to get out.

‘I want to teach this bitch a lesson. How dare she insult my Luna to my face? How dare she insult me like this?’

“Get out of my office.” She stood slowly. “Zino wants to tear you apart and if I ever hear a bad word about my mate from your filthy mouth again, I would let him without a second thought.”

Fear.

I could smell it on her as she hastened her exit from my office. It calmed my wolf a bit but her parting words ruined my mood for the rest of the day.

“She is deceiving you and you’re turning a blind eye on purpose because you are afraid of the truth.” She closed the door behind her in a rush as she dashed out.

I sank into my seat, my hands clasping my head. I wanted to trust Aysel. I didn’t want Clover’s words to mean anything but –

It would explain Aysel’s strange behavior and her sudden request to postpone the Mating Ceremony. I didn’t want to believe it but I had reason to. I picked up my phone to call her but I paused. My fingers dug into my palm as I clenched my hand into a fist.

She purposely broke her phone.

What if she didn’t want me? What if the warmth I felt from her these days was just a way to distract me from her real intentions? I shook out that stupid thought from my head. I would believe in Aysel. She was my mate, after all.

It was darn near impossible to go back to work after that. I kept checking my phone for a message from my mate but it never came. Her phone was broken, I knew, but still –

My phone pinged with a message and I grabbed it immediately. It was my personal number so only those closest to me had it. I was expecting a text from my mate but the text I got was not from my mate but it certainly contained pictures of my mate.

My mate and her lover.

My claws extended. Hair covered my arms as a sudden shift overtook me. I was an Alpha. I controlled my wolf, not the other way around. I

never had sudden shifts but Zino was taking charge in the split second it took me to charge out of my office.

I ran into Jabari as I tore out of my office.

“What – Alpha, where are you going!?”

“Cancel the Mating Ceremony.”

Away. I was going far away because if I stayed – if I stayed, I would have more blood on my hands than I wanted.