

## Chapter 57

‘Are we still doing this?’ Zino asked for the tenth time that morning.

‘Yes, we are still doing this,’ I snarled at the mutt.

‘She is our mate. We have to forgive her,’ he piped up but I ignored him. Now more than ever, I wanted to silence the voice in my head.

The voice in my head had been my companion since I was a child, had grown and developed with me until my body had the capacity to let it out. Zino and I were best friends and more than best friends, we were one; two parts of a whole.

‘Are you listening to yourself? She cheated on us.’ My wolf went silent at that.

Betrayal was not an easy thing to get over and for a man like me, it was downright unforgivable. With the shitty hand I’d been dealt once again, I wanted to curse the goddess. I had so many questions and only she could give me answers but for over a century, she chose to be silent about the betrayal and bad luck I encountered at every turn in my life.

I’d prayed and waited for a mate for over a century. Not only did it take her an unnecessarily long time to heed my prayers, but she also gave me a mate that was still attached to her ex.

‘What if she didn’t cheat?’ Zino asked in an uncharacteristically subdued voice.

‘Is this a joke?’ He must be joking.

We'd seen the pictures and although I broke my phone in anger after I saw them, one glance was enough to burn them into my memory for a lifetime. Pictures of my mate looking high on pleasure in the arms of a man that wasn't me.

'Zino do you remember how you reacted when we saw those pictures?' He'd been murderous.

Rage like I had never known swept through me from head to toe. It took a second for me to revert back into a being of legend, the man I was at the initial stage of my curse; unable to control my thirst for b\*\*\*d and the need to punish any and every one that dared cross my path.

I saw those pictures and I saw red. The red of blood. If I didn't have the self-control to restrain my wolf and get out of Redville, if I had given into my primal instincts to destroy everything that had a link to my latest betrayal, Redville would have fallen. They would have fallen in their numbers. In thousands.

'I am an instinctual being but thankfully you have better sense than me.' My wolf sighed and I felt his restlessness. 'Those pictures do not add up. She hates Lucien,' he argued.

I had no substantial proof that she hated Lucien. In fact, all the evidence I had pointed to the negative. She'd been caught kissing him and I personally walked in on him confessing his love to her without her protesting. The icing on the cake had to be her sudden need to postpone our mating ceremony.

'She has scars that he inflicted on her and I'm not even talking about the scars on her back,' he reminded me. 'If you were in her shoes, would you choose someone who rejected and hurt you over an Alpha Prince?'

She hardly spoke of her scars and I never bothered her. I too would rather not discuss mine. She'd been bullied severely after her parents'

death and the scars on her back, she told me, were mostly the doings of the past Alpha who hated her for reasons unknown.

‘How do I explain the pictures? Like I said, pictures do not lie!’ My teeth gnashed, my nails dug into my palms and drew b\*\*\*d. The metallic scent permeated the whole room and a bit of b\*\*\*d dripped to the rug underneath me.

‘Only she can explain the pictures.’

The phone beside me started to ring. I knew no one else in this world could have gotten my number as fast as Jabari.

“Where are you?” I demanded once I picked up the phone. “I am waiting right at the borders of Red Moon’s pack and you haven’t drawn up a battle strategy yet.”

“Hello to you too.” His voice was low. “What the f\*\*k are you doing?” I pulled the phone away from my ear to make sure I was connected to my Beta and not some vulgar impostor.

“Jabari –“ I paused when I heard someone knocking on my door.

The hotel service here wasn’t the best but I made sure none of their employees would dare disclose my identity to the world, not if they didn’t want me to slit their throats. I told them I didn’t need any room service so who the hell was at my door? I took a deep breath and scented Clover.

“Hey, Val. It’s me.” She knocked again.

“Is that Clover in your room?” Jabari hissed at me from the phone while I walked over to open the door for Clover.

“Yes. When are you coming?” I asked.

It was strange to be asking my Beta when he would be joining me as we always travelled and conquered together. When I took down my first

rogue at fourteen, Jabari had been by my side. Our parents used to joke that he was my shadow because he took his duties seriously.

“I am not coming,” he hissed into the phone. He had been doing a lot of hissing on this call which was unlike him. He never stepped a foot out of line, never insulted me and certainly never hissed at me even if he was my best friend and I would easily let all these slides if they happened.

“I am giving you three hours to settle your business there and get on the road.”

“Valens you left Redville without an Alpha. I know you hate these folks but your mate is here!” I pulled the phone from my ear at the sudden exclamation.

“Don’t raise your voice at me.” I was wrong. I would never let disrespect slide.

“I have served you faithfully all my life.” His tone was resigned when he spoke after ten seconds of silence. “I have conquered alongside you. You are my Alpha, my best friend and brother but my duties to you have ended. I have found a Luna and her protection is the only thing I live for now.”

“You cannot be serious.” Clover was rummaging through a drawer so I figured the noise may have distorted Jabari’s words.

“You told me to protect her with my life and that is what I plan to do. You left her and her pack without an Alpha,” he reminded me.

“I am not a fool. Alpha Zavier will return soon to reclaim his pack. He never travelled far after I banished him.”

“And you are okay with that? You told me he hated her before. What do you think he would do to her when he returns?”

I would admit I never factored that in but I hadn’t taken much into consideration when I left Redville.

“What do you want me to do?” My bloody hands pushed into my hair despite how I tried to keep them out. “She cheated on me.”

“I have Lucien Strauss in custody. The former Alpha’s children are missing but I have assigned trackers to find them. None of you will tell me what happened but she mentioned pictures and being m0lested.”

“What the f\*\*k do you mean by m0lested?” My hand dropped from my hair. Zino snarled and I saw a familiar red taint my vision.

“That’s something you should discuss with your mate because I don’t know. She told Celeste but the girl wouldn’t disclose any information to me no matter how much I threaten her.”

“Threaten her. Torture her! Someone needs to speak, darn it!”

“No, I won’t do that!” He exclaimed yet again. “Get yourself on the next flight here. Run. Do anything. I don’t care but get back here. She’s seriously sick. The doctor says it’s possible she may be having an allergic reaction to wolf’s bane but his prescriptions aren’t working. We can’t get a second opinion until tomorrow.”

“Put her on the phone,” I demanded.

“She’s asleep –“ The phone was wrenched away from my hand before Jabari completed his sentence.

“What are you doing? You can’t seriously be thinking of forgiving someone who betrayed you in the worst way possible!” Clover tucked my phone into her top. My anger turned to bewilderment at such an act.

“Did you just put my phone in your bra?” Even Zino was too stunned to speak.

“I’m sorry.” She didn’t look sorry. “You are my Alpha and it’s your duty to protect me and not the other way round but you are also my friend and someone needs to protect you.”

What in the goddess' name did she think she could protect me from when I could snap her neck faster than she could blink!?

“You may be protective of her because she broke your curse but if your curse is broken and you cut ties with her, then there is every possibility that you can get a second chance mate.” She paused and took in a deep breath for a long-winded speech that I had to interrupt.

The Clover standing before me was not the same one I remembered from my years as an ordinary prince and my early years of conquering.

“The pictures you sent to me –“ I cut off her speech. “How did you get those pictures?”