

Chapter 62

I spent a week in the hospital before the doctor declared I was free to go. After the first three days, I already felt good enough to leave the pack hospital but the doctor insisted I had to be monitored and Valens backed him up.

“What about Bethel?” I asked when a nurse helped me zip up my dress.

I was happy to be finally rid of the ugly hospital gown almost as much as I was happy to be leaving the stale hospital room. It was decorated with flowers and different gifts from my many well wishers and people Celeste called my ‘fans,’ but the area around the hospital was depressing and the people that came to see me looked at me as if I’d they were staring at a corpse. A part of me had certainly died but I was tired of the pitiful glances, the silence, the way people tiptoed around me as if I was a volcano waiting to erupt.

“He – ah – “ Valens paused, watching me as if thinking of whether or not he had to lie to me.

“You can tell me if he’s dead.” I didn’t care for Bethel but people acted as if the mere mention of anything related to death would trigger me. Sure, I wept like a baby when a stranger in the hospital died but, well, that was the past.

“I am sorry if you had other plans for him.” He looked at me and I looked away. Sometimes, I couldn’t bear to look at him. “I have Xavier in the dungeons. I assumed you may want to decide his punishment.”

“Kill him. Torture him. I don’t care what you do to him as long as I never have to see his face again.”

I’d never done anything to that man but he decide to hate me, a child, for the actions of my parents which I had no hand in. He’d tortured me for too long and I wished him the best of luck but I wouldn’t have a hand in anything that had to do with him, punishment or not.

“Very well.” He flipped the cover of his tablet and stood just as we heard a knock on the door.

Clover poked her head in and the expression on Valens’ face turned from cautious to annoyed.

“What do you want?” He demanded of her when she stepped into the room.

“I thought it would be the right thing to apologize to Aysel. To both of you.” She clasped her hands in front of her and bowed her head in a show of meekness.

“You can apologize another time.” I shook my head at Valens.

“Excuse us.” I faced him. He looked ready to protest. Another time, he would have shut off my request but those times had passed.

“You have five minute.” He picked up his car keys and a folder from work since he’d converted my hospital ward to his makeshift office, refusing to leave for anything other than a shower and change of clothes.

“Why are you apologizing?” I asked when Valens shut the door behind him. “Are you done trying to ruin my relationship?”

“It was never about ruining your relationship,” she said, finally raising her head. Well, she could have fooled me! “You know I sent Valens those pictures. I did it because I didn’t trust you.” Of all the people I

needed to trust me, I didn't think Clover would be one of them. I honestly couldn't care less about her trust.

"I have known Valens since I was two years old –"

"What is this? A history lesson?" I cut her off, irritation prickling my skin. "I don't care how long you've known him or loved him. Apologize and go." I snapped at her.

"I just want you to understand where I'm coming from."

"Where you're coming from doesn't matter to me. It's where you ended up that caused this mess in the first place."

"No, I won't take the blame for that." She raised her chin. "My only fault here is trying to protect Valens and hurting you in the process. I can't apologize for looking out for a friend but my actions indirectly hurt you and I am sorry for that."

"You can keep protecting your friend. Frankly, I don't care anymore." I grabbed my iPad from the table.

Throughout the week that the hospital held me captive, I'd discovered loads of games that I liked to play. They were the only distraction I had in this ward with visitors trooping in and Valens suffocating me.

"He has been betrayed a lot of times. When he asked me to befriend Lucien to find out if anything was going on between you two –"

"He asked you to what?" I cut her off, amazed.

"Yes, he asked me to befriend Lucien to gather information about the kind of relationship you had with him. He changed his mind after a while but I already started to suspect you." This was news to me. Enraging news. I knew he didn't trust me but I never knew how much he mistrusted me.

“I felt he was turning a blind eye on purpose so I befriended Lucien anyway. I put up with that asshole’s arrogance because I had to find out the truth about you. I didn’t want my friend to trust the wrong person again like he has done in the past.” She paused, as if expecting me to see reasons with her but all I saw was red.

“Valens chose to believe you couldn’t betray him so he stopped paying attention to Lucien completely but I wouldn’t give up.” She took a stuttered breath and wiped tears from the corners of her eyes. “Lucien started bragging about getting back with you and then an unknown number sent me those pictures. I sent them to Valens immediately to warn him.

I didn’t stop to think that the pictures could be fabricated. I didn’t send them to him to ruin your relationship. I wasn’t thinking of that. I was simply trying to protect a friend. I never expected it to take this turn.”

If I suspected Levi was unfaithful to Celeste, of course I would want to investigate. I would want to protect my friend from falling further for the wrong person but I believe I would have been more meticulous not to cause problems were there wasn’t any.

“What are you apologizing for?” I asked, unable to curtail the impatience in my tone.

“My good intentions backfired and I ended up creating a big mess for you two. I am sorry.” She bowed her head again, clasping her hands in front of her.

“I think if your intentions were pure, they wouldn’t have backfired,” I started. “If you cared about Valens, you wouldn’t have sent him such callous pictures because you knew how he would react and you knew they’d hurt him. If you wanted to protect Valens, you would have confronted me first. You would have hit me, insulted me, called me a

bitch and whatnot. I know that's what I would have done if my best friend was involved."

"I apologize, really. I took things the wrong way." She twiddled her thumb.

"You took things the way you thought they would favor you." She raised her head. "What? You think I am blind because I chose not to say anything? I know you want Valens. You were betrothed to him at a point, after all. I came into the picture and there was no chance for you to be his 'lucky clover' anymore so you devised a way to erase me."

"It's nothing like that. My feelings for Valens are platonic. What are you saying?" She looked scandalized at my words.

"I am saying you sent him those pictures with a smile on your face, not caring that he would be hurt because you already planned how you would comfort him," I snapped.

"Aysel, I'm really sorry I sent him those pictures without investigating but what you're saying isn't true. I understand if you feel the need to lash out but please, don't misunderstand my feelings for your mate." She raised her head and looked on the verge of tears.

Even her sad face looked like something crafted by the goddess. She looked like a pitiful girl who had been wronged and I felt my heart move in sympathy for her.

"You don't have to apologize to me," I said, all the anger draining from me and leaving me empty.

"I do. If you already see me as a home wrecker that is out to steal your mate –"

“You don’t have to apologize to me because I’m not angry at you. Whether you sent those pictures to ruin our relationship or not, I don’t have the energy to care anymore.”

“Thank you. I hope you will forgive Valens for – “

“My issue with him has nothing to do with you. I long since got over his inability to trust me.” I wasn’t lying. I had resigned myself already. But – “Valens – he – When Redville needed an Alpha, when I needed an Alpha, when my baby needed an Alpha, he wasn’t there. He is the Alpha that abandoned his pack. The Alpha that failed to put his pack first. The selfish Alpha. That selfishness cost me too much.”