

## Chapter 73

“I’ve never said that out loud, have I?” She buried her face into a pillow when I asked that. I could see the tip of her ears turning red even though she hid her face from me.

I felt incredibly foolish now that I thought of how I reacted when I saw those pictures. I should have been furious but not at her. How could she cheat on me when she reacted like this to me? How could I not have seen? A lot of things would have been different if I had the foresight, the knowledge I had now.

‘Love her,’ the oracle had said and it turned out that I didn’t have to try hard to love her. I didn’t even have to try. She was my curse breaker. My mate. By every standard, she was my savior.

I was nearing the three-month-mark in Redville; the one that brought that itch that could only be scratched when I moved to a new land. I hadn’t hit the mark yet but I knew without a doubt that the itch was gone forever. I would never have the urge to leave this pack behind. I would never have an itch to wander again because my curse was broken. Completely.

“Don’t suffocate yourself,” I teased when she did not raise her head from the pillow after a long time.

I had messed up big time and I knew it. I f\*\*\*\*d up royally. I didn’t want to dwell on how badly I messed things up because when I did, my eyes reddened. I’d lost a child. My firstborn. A seed I’d looked forward

to planting for years but failed. A seed that when it finally took root to germinate, I left and it withered. It died.

“You’ve never said that to me before,” she said, finally raising her head from the pillow. “It’s – it’s sudden.”

“It’s not sudden. It is something I have dwelled on in the past but not fully.”

How could I not love her? She was beautiful and kind. She fit with me like she was specially tailored just for me. We complemented each other in ways I didn’t know people could complement each other.

I always assumed I would never work with a mate who was not a hundred percent submissive. A part of me was relieved to be mated to an omega but Aysel showed me I did not know the half of what I needed. She was submissive but she showed me it was impossible to be a hundred percent submissive. She showed me I didn’t need someone to agree with me all the time.

I’d become used to it. No one questioned me. Not even my Beta. I’d assumed I needed that respect, that absolute deference, but when she looked at me with fire in her eyes sometimes, I felt proud.

She was everything I needed, much more than I wanted or thought I needed.

“Aysel, you broke my curse,” I reminded her.

“I know but it’s not like it was a conscious decision or you know – I didn’t actually have to do anything to break your curse.” She spread her palms as if she was showing me something, and then shrugged her shoulders.

“That’s it, isn’t it?” I asked. “Your existence alone was more than enough to break my curse. It could also have something to do with your magic.” She looked away from me after that.

I knew she was hiding something from me. I was not blind to the signs. I wanted her to tell me everything, to bare herself to me, but I knew it would take time. I had done nothing yet to make her trust me again.

I hurt her by not believing her. I left. I was the Alpha that abandoned his pack.

“Yeah,” she shrugged, settling into bed. “I think I’m going to go back to sleep.” Disappointment almost choked me but I swallowed it down.

“Right. Have a good night.” I turned off the lamp next to me.

It was morning already but her nightmare cut her sleep short. I understood she may be tired. I, on the other hand, had a backlog of work waiting for me. I should get ready for work but I stayed in bed ruminating on what just happened.

I told her I loved her. I didn’t get a response. But what had I expected?

‘What were you expecting? That she would say she loves you too?’ Zino mocked me. I closed my eyes and pretended to sleep but I could not hide from my wolf. The mutt laughed at me, dancing around my mind to annoy me.

“Valens?” I heard a small voice call in the quiet, unlit room.

“Little moon.” I turned to the only person capable of lighting my night.

“Maybe – someday,” she paused to take a loud, deep breath. “Someday, I will be able to say that back to you,” she said and I smiled, my heart lifting. That was enough to settle the unrest in my heart.

“It’s okay, little moon. I understand.” I pressed a kiss to her forehead.

“I don’t hate you,” she said. “I think – I did for a while. When you told me I had to earn my place by your side as if – as if I wasn’t worthy, I hated you a bit. I won’t lie. It hurt and I didn’t want you.”

“I am sorry.” I apologized. “I did not mean that.”

If, just a few weeks ago, I had the foresight I had now, things would have progressed differently. I had searched for a mate for a century, long enough to come up with numerous traits I felt my mate had to possess. I approached her with arrogance rather than love. I lacked the knowledge I now had.

“No, no you did,” she took another breath pause. “You are an Alpha and the prince. I wasn’t what you expected. It’s okay to have preferences.”

How could I get her to understand that I did not have preferences past a curse breaker? How could I get her to understand that I cared for her? I’d had to deal with things the hard way for years and it stopped occurring to me that there was an easy way.

She was weak, yes. She had to be strong, yes. I tried to make her strong in the way I knew but I failed. It was the wrong way but I did not know it then.

“You are my preference. Everything about you is everything I have needed and will ever need,” I protested vehemently. Silence greeted my words.

“Right,” she said after a long pause. More silence followed that but I waited for her to continue because I sensed she had more to say. “I hated you when you left and I hated you when we lost the baby.” Another pause. “I didn’t mean to hate you.” Yet another pause. “I just – I’m sorry I blamed you for the baby.”

“No, I should never have left. If I stayed, they would have not dared to enter my pack. I failed you and our child.” I looked away, my eyes growing heavy, my heart heavier.

“Let’s blame Skylar and her gang. They caused this.”

Oh, that bitch. I should have dealt with her more sternly. It was my duty to protect my pack. It was my duty to protect my family. I let a bitch like Skylar come too close when I could have snuffed her from the start.

It reminded me of Lucien and Xavier who I still kept in the dungeons. The thought of them made me angry. I may strangle them if I got too close and Jabari wasn't done extracting information from them. But I had to pay them a visit sooner rather than later.

I stayed in bed with my mate until her breathing evened out. I crept out of bed not to wake her, then got ready to visit the office. I would make my home my office soon so I didn't have to shuffle back and forth but I needed to make sure Aysel was fully settled in before I did that because then people would start dropping off work here. She needed to be settled in first.

I had just grabbed my keys when my phone rang and Clover's name flashed on the screen.