

## Chapter 76

He stepped forward and took my hands in his. I looked down at them to see sparks of fire that made me snatch them back.

Magic was something I struggled with. There were no mentors, no guides, nothing. I had to work my way through it. I'd spent the last few days getting used to the feeling of something more than b\*\*\*d coursing through my veins and noting triggers that made me lose control of that feeling.

“Are you trying to burn yourself?” I exclaimed. My magic wouldn't hurt me but it could hurt him.

“I'm not trying to hurt myself. I'm trying to get to you.” He took my hands again but I snatched them back.

“What did Clover say?” I asked, taking a seat.

“She has an idea of Skylar's whereabouts. She is likely at B\*\*\*d River pack.” He sank into his set, moving the things in his desk to the side.

“She wouldn't give me the full details because –“ He broke off and I got the feeling he was hiding things from me.

“She could be in her mum's pack but the chances of that are slim.”

Skylar was too smart to be in such an obvious place. “If she's going to be anywhere, it'd be the last place anyone can think of.” And what was the last place anyone would ever think of searching for her? It could be close or she could do something as daring as lurking around Redville.

“We have trackers on the way to the three Blood River packs. It’s a lead we must look into.”

‘Don’t be suspicious, Aysel. There’s no need to be suspicious.’ I chanted in my head. He didn’t want Clover. She was the one forcing herself on him.

‘But he has the power to make her stop,’ a sly voice intruded on my thoughts. ‘It’s not like with you and Lucien. You could not shake Lucien off but he can send her away.’

“Is that all she said? It doesn’t explain why you reek of her,” I said, my tone bland but he raised his brows. He looked at me as if he heard the words I didn’t say.

“She mentioned some elders who are diehard fans of the former Alpha. They are plotting something. I’ve asked Jabari to look into that. We’ve also launched a search for Strauss and his mate.”

“She didn’t have anything tangible to say then.” These were things that were easily known. I’d expected her to have valuable information.

“Skylar bought Andrew over. Andrew has been one of my loyal followers for decades. I want to know what she could have offered him to get him to betray me,” he said.

“Andrew the driver?” I asked and he nodded in response. “He said he’d been asked to take me to the airport to greet you as a surprise.”

“We can deduce that that was a lie. Skylar bought him over. He was to kidnap you but she changed her mind and decided to do it herself.” Somehow, that just didn’t sound like what Skylar would do.

Skylar’s tactic was to bully people into doing what she wanted. Her bargain was to do her bidding or get hurt. She was always confident on

her hold over a person; enough that when she ordered them to do something, she expected total compliance.

She'd asked me to poison Valens. Then, he'd been nothing more than a scary, imposing figure to me. He certainly had more power than Skylar but when she asked me to do something so daring, she'd had the upper hand. She'd been the more imposing figure to me then. She knew I dared not disobey her so she didn't have another person also try to poison Valens or even poison him herself. Because she didn't work that way.

"Clover told you all this?" I asked Valens and he nodded. "And you trust her to be telling the truth?" I watched him closely.

He'd once told me he didn't trust me and that the only people he trusted were Jabari and Clover. Did he still trust Clover that much?

He remained silent for a long time, refusing to give an answer.

"You told me once that she's been through hell for you. She has had decades to prove her loyalty to you. Tell me, Valens, do you still trust her so much that you'd believe everything that comes out of her mouth?"

He leaned back into his seat, his hands going to ruffle his hair. Then he pursed his lips before speaking. "Yes, I have known Clover for a long time. She's had decades to prove her loyalty. I have never seen what jealousy can do to her but I trust her not to lie to me."

"What if I said she's lying? Would you believe me or would that just be me speaking out of jealousy?" I asked.

"I—" he paused. "Why do you think she is lying?" He asked.

"Because I know Skylar and I know she would not give someone a job and then do it herself at the end of the day. I've known Skylar since we were kids and I've been her target all my life so believe me when I say I know how evil she can be and how smart she is."

“You don’t think there’s a possibility she did it? Who else would want to kidnap you if not herself and her family?” He mused.

“Clover,” I answered his rhetoric question. He looked at me for a while. He blinked and then I laughed. “You don’t believe me.”

“She was not on Redville soil when that happened,” he reminded me.

“I know that but did you ever wonder if Andrew wasn’t ‘bought’ over? Maybe he was working with someone he trusted.” His phone rang before he could answer.

“He’s dead,” I heard Jabari’s voice from the other end of the call. “He was making progress but the bastard decided to die!” Jabari sounded seriously upset over the phone. “What am I supposed to do now? We’re now at a dead end.”

“Let’s focus on finding the she-wolf first and preventing any impending attacks.” He ended the call. He looked seriously pissed when the call ended. He pinched the bridge of his nose and I reckon if I wasn’t there, he would have punched something.

“Dead men tell no tales,” I said, ending a long stretch of silence. “They certainly cannot expose who sent them in the first place.”

“You really believe it was Clover?” He asked, leaning forward in his seat.

“It wasn’t Skylar,” I said, confident. “Skylar is more likely to send someone to stab me to death.”

“Why does she hate you so much? She seems to have a personal vendetta against you.”

“Lucien,” I replied without pause. I’d had enough time to think on it. Long enough to come up with an answer. Skylar hated me before she had any reason to or so it seemed.

She wanted Lucien. Even as kids, she wanted him. She may have wanted him as a friend then but he paid her no mind. Lucien barely had friends while we were growing up, none as close to him as Celeste and I. We were our own group even before the incident with my parents. We were best friends who were possessive of each other. We had other friends but they could be reduced to acquaintances.

Skylar wanted to be a part of that friend group. She was never friendly with me if my memory was to be believed but she wasn't hostile either. She wanted to be a part of their friend group because of Lucien who only had time for me.

"She had a crush on him since forever and he was only ever close to me."

"She wants you dead because of a boy?" His nostrils wrinkled as if the thought disgusted him too much.

"No. If she wants to kill me now, it's because she wants to kill you too," I told him. "You humiliated her dad and destroyed the small chance she had of succeeding him. Like you said, your enemies would come after me to get to you. Skylar is one of such enemies that I'm all too familiar with."

"I haven't taken her as seriously as I should have," he mused. "My enemy, huh?" He shook his head then dialed someone.

"Skylar will be hunted," he said once the person he called picked up. "Ten million for her head."

"Are you sure you want to do that?" Jabari asked. "We haven't placed a bounty on anyone in decades."

"She's pesky," he answered.

“Placing a bounty on her will be giving her importance. She could very well become the head of the rebellion against you.”

“Two birds, one stone. I can have her head or use her to draw my enemies under one umbrella. They would be easier to wipe out that way. Ten million. Make the announcement tonight.” He ended the call.

“I think I should pay Lucien a visit,” I said.