

## Chapter 80

“Why do you keep sneaking glances at me?” I asked when I noticed from the corner of eyes that my mate had once again glanced furtively up at me.

“I am not sneaking glances at you,” she defended but there was no missing the guilt in her tone or how she colored.

I closed my laptop and moved it to the side of my desk to give her my full attention. “What do you want to say?” I asked, leaning back into my seat.

“Can we go out for lunch?” She asked. I knew that wasn’t what she wanted to say so I refused to play along.

“Are you bored?” She shook her head. “It’s okay if you don’t want to be here,” I reminded her for the tenth time.

The new house was too big. She wouldn’t admit it because she wanted a big house and a lot of space in the first place, but she was lonely in that house. I was going to ask Octavia to move in with us and the women who would train her but it kept slipping my mind.

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“What’s fun in watching me work?”

“The way you frown and look as if you could hurt someone from a computer screen,” she answered then went somber. “I’ve been shirking my responsibilities.”

“You have,” I answered without missing a beat.

“Valens!” The look on her face was comical when she exclaimed.

“I’m giving you a break because once you start, you have a lifetime of work,” I told her. I knew firsthand how true that was. The minute one takes over an Alpha position or its equivalent, there was no resigning, no breaks, no delegating the responsibility.

“Not a lifetime though,” she looked away.

“We’d have a successor.” I had no idea how to reply to that.

I’d become so used to immortality, wandering, and without a companion that I naturally did not expect help. I’d completely forgotten that I could have a successor, that one day, I would hand over my workload to my child.

“Yeah, and his mate would be the Luna,” I said, my response weak.

“Or her mate.” She held my gaze. “Our daughter could succeed you, right?”

That question had never come up in the days of my father. If an Alpha could not produce a male successor, the title went to another alpha male in his family. If there weren’t any, then the title left his family. There was never an option for women to rule a pack.

“We would have to have the daughter first,” I said, feeling as if I had successfully dodged the question.

“I don’t want what happened with Skylar to happen to our daughter. I don’t want what happened with my father’s mother to repeat itself. The oldest Alpha in our family after you succeeds you,” she said with finality in her tone.

“The most capable of the Alphas in our family succeeds me,” I answered. I’d thought on it a few months ago and decided my successor wouldn’t necessarily be the older alpha or the male alpha. If our

daughter proved more capable to lead the pack than our son, then she would undoubtedly be named my successor.

“Oh, oh, I have an idea!” Her face lit up as she all but jumped in her seat to say what she had on her mind. “We could split the packs under you between all our kids. That way, none of them is overburdened the way you are!” She beamed at me.

The smile on her face was contagious. It made me feel warm. I imagined we already had the kids and they were all alphas which would be impossible since she was an omega. We would have an omega and at least one beta. We may not even birth a child with an alpha wolf.

“It’s a smart idea.” She beamed at me, obviously pleased with herself. “What if we only have one kid?” I asked.

“No, you said you’d give me twins,” she reminded me. She took that promise very seriously. Even when I felt I might have become infertile, she reminded me of that promise. It once felt like something I would not be able to fulfil despite my power but now Bile rose in my throat along with a desperate urge to persecute Zavier and his daughter in the worst way possible.

“Hey,” I heard and felt hands on my shoulders. “You suddenly went green.” I blinked and saw my mate was no longer seated opposite me.

“Valens?”

Maybe I hadn’t lost a child. Maybe I’d lost children. Of course, I couldn’t say that to the one who was hit the hardest.

“I’m fine. I just thought of something.” I squeezed her hand on my shoulder.

“It occurred to you that we may have lost twins, didn’t it?” Her voice was low.

“No,” I lied to spare her. “Are you still interested in lunch?” I pushed my chair back, planning to get out of the seat but she got into my laps before I could stand.

“I think it’s best we spoke about this,” she said.

“It’s too painful for you to talk about,” I reminded her. Talking about the miscarriage had become taboo between us. I could always tell when she remembered the incident because she went quiet and no matter how she tried to hide it, pain reflected on her face.

“I want to share this pain with you. I can see you’re hurting, Vee. I – I hate that it’s taken me this long to realize how much you’re hurting.”

“You do not have to. I am fine, I promise.” I held steadfast to my denial. “It hurts but it is fine.”

“I thought of a few names when I got the positive results,” she said, her voice dropping.

“My mum was named Miriam and I think it’s a pretty name. I also thought of Valencia.” stopped breathing. “I couldn’t think of any suitable masculine names but I’d really like a Valens Junior or Thomas.”

“Stop,” I choked out. “Stop it.” On second thought, I added, “Please.”

“If you glaze over the hurt, you’d be covering a pit with a plastic wrap and that’s dangerous.”

“I said I am fine,” I bit out.

“You waited for over a century to hold them.

You are allowed to be angry, love.”

“Are you purposely trying to make it hurt?” I demanded.

“I’m trying to remind you where it hurts. You shouldn’t have to hide your pain.”

“I am not hiding my pain. I would feel so much better after I have Skylar’s head and disgrace Xavier in the most humiliating way possible.”

“I want that too,” she sighed. “But I know that it wouldn’t make it hurt less. The satisfaction will fade and we would still have lost our firstborn.”

“Aysel, I have work to do.” I tried to remove her from my lap but she hooked her arms around my neck and clung on. “Aysel, really “

“Valens, will you tell me how you feel? I’ve told you how I feel but you won’t say anything.”

“I feel awful, okay? Is that what you want to hear?” I could feel my heart race. “Can I go back to work now?” I felt like adding please’ at the end.

“You can’t just work and work and pretend nothing happened. You have to tell me how you feel,” her voice pitched a tinny bit higher.

“I feel awful!” I snapped, my heart racing faster.

“I was supposed to protect you and I failed. Do you know how many women I have tried to conceive with? For a year, my seed never took root and the first time in over a century that it does, I fail to protect it.” I pushed my hand into my hair, pulling. It was a bad habit I never seemed to leave behind.

“And sometimes – sometimes I wonder how things would have been if I wasn’t me. If I was just a regular man, if I was not the cursed prince, I wonder if I would have loved you differently. And other times, I blame my wolf.

If I did not have a wolf as volatile as Zino, I may have looked at those pictures differently.”

I felt Zino stir. He whined and put his head down but I shut him out.

“You can’t hate your wolf.” Aysel put a hand over her mouth. “You are your wolf.” I didn’t need a reminder of what I learned as a child.

“Sometimes I hate myself. Other times I hate Xavier and everyone in between. It was a mistake I could have avoided but it didn’t and it ended up costing too much.”

“I think we should see a therapist. Together.

Octavia recommended one and -” my phone rang. I’d never been happier to hear my annoying ringtone than I was then.

“It’s Jabari. I have to take this.” I pressed the green button and Jabari’s voice flooded into my ears.

“We have three hunters who claim to be close on Skylar’s tail but I just received news that Alpha Braxton is hiding her.”

“I forgot about that asshole.” This was what I was good at – battle- not talking about things left unsaid. “Raze his pack to the ground latest tonight.” I could have her head and destroy old enemies as I did so.