

## Chapter 83

Celeste fell asleep close to midnight with me hugging her. I was dozing off when a text lit up my phone screen, startling me. I opened it to see a message from Valens.

“When are you coming to bed?” It read. I yawned as I typed out a reply. I’m not. I don’t want her sleeping alone tonight His reply came in a flash.

“What do you mean you are not? What about me?”

‘What about you?’ I stretched as Celeste turned.

You want me sleeping alone?’ Another text followed that. ‘Come to bed.’

‘I can’t. She’s going to wake up soon and I don’t want her crying alone in a strange room.’

‘How am I supposed to sleep?’ I blinked at the text. Then a smile stretched my lips.

‘You close your eyes, babe. And dream of me.’

‘Ok.’ I laughed a little at that reply. ‘Goodnight.’

‘Are you upset?’ I asked, holding back a giggle.

‘No.’

‘Oh, my goodness, you’re mad at me.’ I added a bunch of emojis to the text, hit send, and readjusted myself in bed.

Celeste turned again, her breath hitching as if she was crying in sleep, before evening out again.

I am texting my mate while we are under the same roof. Ridiculous.’ His response had me grinning wider. Another text came in a second later, ‘Come to bed, little moon.’

Celeste g\*\*\*\*d beside me as I made to reply to his text. She turned and the expression on her face was heartbreaking.

“I don’t want him,” she muttered in her sleep, her brows scrunched. Tears leaked out from underneath her eyelids and I considered waking her from her nightmare but thought better of it. She turned again, going into another short round of peaceful sleep.

I sighed, staring up at the ceiling. Celeste was always so happy and helpful. Everybody liked her and she constantly received praises for her looks, her kindness, and her intellect. She was the Beta’s beloved daughter. I was everything that she wasn’t. The outcast, the one without a family, no one’s beloved anything. Because she didn’t have my problems, I foolishly thought she didn’t have problems of her own.

Yes, there was a disconnect between our realities but I’d been wrapped in a delusion all this while. She was constantly there for me and I didn’t know she needed someone to be there for her too.

I thought back to all the years we’d been friends. Despite everything, she remained my best friend. She was pretty and kind enough to have a long list of friends but I realized that she stuck with me. I was her friend while everyone else was her acquaintance. She had the opportunity to make more friends so why hadn’t she?

I thought then that she may have been scared.

Scared of trusting the wrong people and having them hurt her as Mr. Vann did. He had been her favorite teacher. Her family even used to invite him over for dinner sometimes. He was part of the pack and a

respected member at that. He'd also been, in a way, her friend. Then he turned and betrayed her like that.

"I am so sorry, Celeste," I whispered into the darkness of the room.

Had I become self-centered? So, focused on my problems that I didn't consider other people's problems?

I heard footsteps in the house, making me sit up in bed. Why was Valens going about? I grabbed my phone to check the time but a knock sounded on the door. I hurried out of bed and out the door before the quiet knocking woke my friend.

"What are you -" His lips silenced me when I closed the door behind me. His tongue delved into my mouth immediately.

My breath caught, my skin warmed and my heart raced as he kissed me out of nowhere, his hand in my hair.

"Come to bed, Sagira," he said against my neck, kissing down to my chest. "It's impossible to sleep without you beside me."

"Ok- I-I-" I lost my train of thought when he started to caress my thighs. Then I froze when a small sound from inside the room made the haze of lust blinding me dim a bit.

"She's awake." I pushed away from Valens. I'd never seen him scowl so hard as he did then.

"I almost had you," he said, voice tight, his eyes droopy yet decidedly pissed. "I didn't get to spend time with you all day and now I can't even have you in bed at night." If looks could kill, someone would have died from his look.

"I'm not running away or something. I'd stop by your office tomorrow, I promise." I pressed a quick kiss to his cheek and went back into the room.

Celeste was awake, sitting up in bed with her eyes eerily blank. I heard Valens curse before stomping away.

“I’m fine. I’m fine.” She wiped the tears hurriedly from her cheeks when I came in. “Go back to your mate. He needs you.” She smiled at me but her chin quivered and tears still leaked from her eyes.

“At this point, you need me more.” I got into bed with her and she immediately rested her head on my shoulder. “I’m here for you, Celeste. Always.” I gave her a side hug and she shivered.

“What am I going to do?” She wailed, the sudden loudness of her voice startling me. “I’m sorry I’m a mess. I don’t know what to do. I’ve been hiding from him and then – then it felt like he was hiding from me. I’m having too many mixed feelings. I’m scared whatever decision I make will be the wrong one and it ’ll inadvertently ruin my life.”

“There’s no need to be sorry. I’ve cried uglier tears and you still held me.” I hugged her tighter. “I’m not going to let you make a bad decision, okay?” I kissed her forehead. “How about this; You don’t have to see him now. I’ll get his number from Valens and you too can communicate through text and calls if you want. From there, we can determine if you like his person while we get you the help you should have received all those years ago.”

“Will that work?” She asked, sniffing and wiping her cheeks.

“If it doesn’t work, we can always try something else. You don’t have to rush things.

You can take it slow, see what he’s like before you decide whether he is worth it for you.”

“What if after everything I decide he isn’t worth it? What if I never get the memories of Mr. Vann from my head? What if I see the man I hate every time I look at him? Because that is who I see, Aysel.”

“That’s who you see now and it’s understandable but trust me, it’s not who you will always see. It may take time but everything will be better, I promise.”

I sat up with her, staring into the distance, not saying anything. Occasionally, she voiced her fears, and every time, I did my best to reassure her that it was okay to feel the way she felt and that I would help her in any way possible.

I tried texting Valens after that but he didn’t reply. He’d either gone to sleep or was being petty. I suspected the latter to be the case.

I ended up falling asleep before Celeste, my tiredness getting the best of me. I kept waking at every small sound to see her idly staring at the ceiling until she too fell asleep. Only then did I get a peaceful night’s rest.

I woke up early the next morning to make Valens breakfast. It was something I started at the beginning of the week and I found I liked doing it. I felt better knowing he wasn’t always eating takeout, junk, or whatever they were sending him from the pack house. That, and he really liked my cooking and never failed to compliment me.

When he came down to the kitchen, I realized last night wasn’t a joke. He was actually pissed at me. He was sulking when he came down, his face blank. He pressed an absent kiss to my lips when he saw me and ate with a straight face, avoiding all eye contact.

“You’re being petty,” I pointed out when he wouldn’t look at me even while eating. He raised his head and I was taken aback. “Wow, you look awful.” He had dark eyebags around his eyes and his color looked pallid.

“It happens when your mate chooses to spend the night in another bed.” His words were flat.

“I need sleep now and I got zero last night without you in bed with me.”

“I thought you were just horny,” I admitted, bottom lip poking out.

“I was – that!” He sighed in exasperation “But I told you it’s impossible to sleep without you beside me. I meant that.” He pushed his hair away from his face.

“I’m sorry. I’ll do better next time.” I hugged him from behind and I felt him relax.

““Stop by the office by noon,” he said, rinsing out his cup.

“Why?” I asked, going through what I had in my kitchen and what I could make Celeste for breakfast.

“Why do you think?” He gave me a pointed look that made my skin heat.