

Chapter Seven

Ayla

"I'll do it," I heard Xander say.

"Absolutely not!" I yelled, standing up. I'm not allowing anyone to give up their lives for me. It's hard enough knowing my life isn't my own, and I'm not going to do that to anyone else. f**k, I wish I hadn't dragged Nate into all of this. He's too good of a man to be dragged down by me.

"Ayla, this is my choice. And I'm choosing to protect you with my life," he defended.

"At what cost? I won't allow you to give up a chance to have a family. And if it means I ght this war alone, then I will." I cried. I could never ask that of anyone.

"Why the hell would you ask that of anyone?" I yelled at the moon goddess. The other goddess didn't even bother to show up.

"Ayla, it's you win or everyone dies. Sometimes you have to make sacrifices for the greater good. I know this isn't what you want to hear, but in this war, you will need people who you trust with absolution." She answered. I opped back down and cried into my hands again. No one is giving me a choice. But then again, when I did have a choice, I chose wrong. I was selsh when it came to Nate and now he is going down with me. I could have just rejected him and he could be living a happy life with someone else. Someone who isn't a fucken mess. Someone who isn't about to mess everything up and get everyone killed.

"You don't have to answer right now, but you need to consider it. The lives of not just us but humans depend on you to win this." She said as she kneeled in front of me again.

"Why me? Why would you ask all of this from me? I'm a nobody. Nothing." I sobbed, trying to understand everything that was happening. The goddess took my cheeks in her hands so I would look at her.

"Ayla, I have watched you your entire life and you are far from a nobody. You are always thinking of others. And that's why this is so hard for you. You don't want anyone to die for you. You believe you are this burden to those around you, but you are the light. If this wasn't dicult, I'd be worried," her voice calm, almost soothing.

"Why would my mother keep me from my father?" I mumbled as she wiped away my tears.

"She didn't want you to go through any of this. She was hoping that keeping you away would stop your fate. But all it did was give you more questions. She loved you so much, Ayla. You and your father. She didn't want to give either of you up," the goddess answered.

"I don't understand. Why would she claim another if she loved my dad?" I questioned.

"Those are answers you will soon nd out. But, Ayla, you need to consider what I told you. A war in the water will be your downfall if you don't have an army to protect you."

"But I already trust Xander with my life. Why would I need to claim him? None of this makes sense," I said in despair. My head was pounding and I suspect I needed sleep. All of this has been weighing heavily on me. Emotionally, and mentally, I'm exhausted.

"Soulmates aren't just for lovers. Xander will forever be tied to you, Ayla. He will protect you with his life, even without your claim. But if you were to claim him and the others, they would never be able to betray you. It would kill them. You may trust him, but this is a life or death situation. If he had a claim of his own, he would no longer put your life above everyone else's. And right now, you need loyalty, Ayla. Are you able to trust he will always protect you, no matter who is involved?" She asked me.

"I trust him with my life. And when this is all over, I want him to be happy." I told her.

"And what if this is never over? This war could go on for years. Are you willing to chance him falling in love and pushing his loyalty to you to the side?" She questioned. I bit my lip, not knowing how to answer that question.

"You don't have to say anything right now. But you need to think long and hard about what I told you. I need to leave you now. Find your mother's claim and follow the trail she has left for you. everything will be made clear, soon." I didn't get a chance to say anything as a bright light consumed the goddess. When the light was gone, so was she. I let out a sigh as I leaned back into the throne, throwing an arm over my eyes. Saying I was stressed would have been an understatement. How was I going to get through this? And with no one I care about dying.

"We will protect them as much as they protect us," my wolf said.

"Oh, now you are a part of this?" I scoffed.

"I'm sorry, Ayla. There's things I won't be able to answer. I answer to the goddess." she whined. I sighed. She was in this regardless and both of us are answering to a higher power. And right now, all we have is each other.

"Baby?" Nate called out.

"I just need a moment," I murmured. I felt him rest his hands on my thighs, giving them a squeeze.

"None of us are going anywhere, baby." he said. I moved my arm and opened one of my eyes. Nate was kneeling in front of me where the goddess was, moments ago. Xander was standing behind him. My stomach twisted painfully with guilt as I looked at him.

"Ayla, sweetie, let's get back to the palace. You need to rest after everything you've been through." Queen Laura said as she approached us. She took one of my hands in hers. I gave her a nod. Nate helped me to stand and wrapped an arm around my waist before kissing my temple.

"Whatever you decide, you always have my support."