

Constellations

Saskia Scheenhauer

(2021)

Some would miss theirs by days.

Some by weeks.

Some by months and years.

But they always found theirs.

They always found their ones.

But I had been told I had missed mine by centuries. I would never find mine. I had been told all my life they were sorry, there was nothing they could do. It wasn't fair though; they didn't understand. They never would.

They would go home. They would enter and there, waiting for them, would be their one. The person destined to be theirs, the one to be their opposite, the one to be their equal. The person who would be everything.

The one thing I didn't account for was to be haunted by the ghost of my one.

*

I couldn't believe her. How could my sister do this to me, on my birthday of all days? Did Luna not understand? I stumbled as I rushed down the hall, to get further away from the waiting heartbreak—further away from the jealousy that would consume me. It was always someone else who would revel in the love of their one.

Tears tumbled over my cheeks, causing my eyes to become swollen and red. Normally, I would care; what were puffy eyes to the joy of finding the one?

Nothing.

I slowed to a halt.

Of course.

In my rush to escape, I had paid no attention to where I was going. I was lost. Sinking to the floor, despair overwhelms me, bringing a new wave of tears.

*

'What's a pretty little thing like you doing hiding in the dark?' a voice said.

Frightening me out of my anguish, I searched for the owner. Searching the hall was difficult, even with the glow of the full moon. Paintings, sculptures, decorative pieces. But

the ornate halls didn't distract from the fact there appeared to be no owner to the voice.

Maybe the stress was causing me to imagine it.

Releasing a shuddering breath, I muttered, 'Great, one more problem.'

A deep chuckle filled the air. 'I'm not sure if I would describe myself as a problem, love, but then I have been called worse.'

Turning towards the voice, I noticed a distinct luminous figure. Gasping, I staggered backwards hoping to escape. Stumbling, my back hits the wall. The figure advanced. The glowing blue features became more distinctive, and it was apparent the voice belonged to a young man.

A dead man.

A ghost.

*

I recognised him. His name was Azazel Verlice, the founder of the Verlice crime family. A man feared by all. Yet here he was, haunting me. Was it not enough that the party meant to celebrate my coming of age was ruined by the finding of a one, and now I was being followed by the ghost of a crime boss? I didn't know much about him. Any information was hidden from me by my parents. I suppose it was their way of protecting me. But now, I was unprepared.

As if finding my fear amusing, he cocked an eyebrow, lips twitching. 'Would you like me to give you a minute, love? I suppose I have all night to answer whatever silly questions you have.'

'I have one question, you pompous arse. How do I get rid of you?' I asked, hoping to catch him off-guard.

His eyebrows shot up and his lips curled into an amused smirk. 'I can answer many questions, but why or how I'm here aren't part of that, and I can't tell you how to get rid of me. Though I suppose my being here has something to do with you, right? Summon an evil spirit, rid yourself of the one who made you cry. Right?' he asked.

Indignation bubbled within me. 'How dare you blame me for your sorry presence. I'm not some precious princess who needs a knight in shining armour to save her from hurt feelings. It's not my fault you're here. In fact, why don't you find someone else to bother? I've already had a terrible night, and I don't need your help to make it any worse.'

The smirk stretched even wider. 'Well, love, I've never thought of myself as a knight in shining armour, though the thought is amusing. And now we've ruled out the possibility of you summoning me, we can enjoy each other's company and find out why I'm here, alright?'

My jaw dropped in shock. ‘You think I’m going to help you? Why would I? I don’t know you. You don’t know me. It would be best if we parted ways forever. I just want to be left in peace.’

As if noticing my resignation in my last words, he knelt in front of me and offered an awkward smile. ‘Rough night?’

I nodded, confirming his suspicion.

‘Wanna talk about it? I always find the best way to solve a problem is to get a second opinion. And who better than a complete stranger. I’m Azazel.’

‘Nyx, and you’re going to think I’m pathetic. Everyone else does. Plus, it’s not your problem. It’s no one’s but mine.’

As I answered, I noticed a figure looming, a servant perhaps. That wasn’t important. More important was the look of confusion her face displayed. As if I was talking to her. Didn’t she see him? Before I could think further on the subject, I was distracted by Azazel’s reply.

‘Trust me, I’ve met more pathetic people than you.’

‘Fine,’ I conceded, confessing to him the horrible night I have had, and the utter humiliation with being upstaged by my younger sister finding her one.

‘Doesn’t seem that bad, love,’ he replied, amused by what he thought was the jealousy of a teenager, though I suppose it was. But it wasn’t that simple. I don’t want to be jealous, but I suppose I am. Who wouldn’t be?

‘No need to be jealous, love. You’ll find yours one day. Just because your sister found hers first doesn’t mean anything.’

I scoffed. Of course, he wouldn’t understand. No one did. ‘No, I won’t.’

‘What do you mean? Of course, you’ll meet them. Everyone has somebody.’ His tone was astonished.

‘I mean I won’t meet my one. Ever. I was told I missed my one by centuries. There’s no finding them. They’re dead.’ I was frustrated he didn’t grasp the concept, that he didn’t understand the grief that I felt. The tears from earlier threatened to return. I turned away; I couldn’t face the humiliation of someone else’s pity.

Not again.

A small noise escaped him, so small, I might have missed it had it not been followed by the humourless laughter. ‘We’re really two peas in a pod, aren’t we, love?’

I stared, confused. What could he possibly mean? He had been dead hundreds of years, but surely, he had found his one. Hadn’t he?

‘Never found my one either, love. Was told I’d be long dead by the time she was ever born. I suppose you were told there was nothing they could do.’

How could he have never found his one? I was told that it was rare, never seen before. He flopped down next to me tilting his translucent head against the wall.

‘You know what’s even better. I never got to feel the attraction that would allow me to find my one. Instead, I was stuck with some god-awful reminder I would never meet her. A lousy tattoo. A constellation of all things.’

His words were drowned out by the sound of my world collapsing around me. A constellation? Was it possible? No, he couldn’t possibly be. But I had to know for sure. ‘This tattoo, is it on your right shoulder blade spanning the length of your back?’ I asked, panicked.

He blinked. ‘How did you know?’ he asked, his voice rising.

‘I know because I have the same one. I think I’m your one.’

His eyes widen with surprise. The expression was quickly masked by one of happiness. He leapt to his feet and paced.

‘My one? No—it’s not possible. They said I would never meet you, my one. But everything makes sense. The connection, the tattoo. Is it possible are you really my one?’ he said, his words painted by desperation, as if it physically pained him to consider the notion.

Turning to face me, he sighed. ‘No matter what, it seems we were meant to find each other. It was destined, written in the stars. I can’t lose you, I won’t. I’ve just found you after being alone for so many centuries. I can’t do it again. I can’t be without you. I need you.’

Scared by the desperation evident in his voice, I rose to my feet and inch away. ‘How could you lose me? We’ve just met; how could you need me?’ I said, my voice wavered.

He inched closer, trying to close the distance that separated us. ‘Don’t you see, love, I’ve been waiting for years, centuries, and now you’re here with me after all this time. I can’t allow you to leave me. I couldn’t bare it. You don’t understand, you’ve only had eighteen years alone, but I—I’ve been alone for so long I can’t bare it. I need you,’ he pleaded.

What did he mean together forever? The desperation that was now evident in him scared me. I had to get away. I retreated down the hall. ‘I’m sorry Azazel, I am but— you’re scaring me. I can’t do this.’ Anger and distress ignite in his eyes.

I ran.

As I made my escape, I turned to find him following, and I tripped and was sent flying. Glass shattered, and I fell into our eternity.