

## Chapter 116

Kylan

I held Puppy tightly in my arms, feeling her limp body pressed against mine. Her chest rose with each breath, but her glowing eyes were closed. It had been a while now.

The back of my fingers brushed her cheek. “Pup,” I whispered, worried. She hummed softly in response, but she didn’t open her eyes.

The one responsible, that sick Soothsayer, just sat there and watched me without doing a single thing—like all of this was normal to him.

Pissed, I met Aelius’s gaze. “What did you do to her?”

Aelius took a breath, looking around the cage. His eyes, which had been white before, had already dimmed to their original color. “Let her be,” he spoke. “She’s fine. She’s dreaming.”

“Dreaming?” I spat, narrowing my eyes at him. “You made her like this. She’s not dreaming—what did you do to her?”

“She’s in the Veil,” Aelius raised his voice slightly, as if that explanation made things better.

The Veil?

What the hell was that supposed to mean?

“What is that?” I snarled, glaring at him.

“Time will tell,” Aelius smiled, his voice calm.

I ignored him, my focus returning to Puppy. Her face was peaceful, her plump lips slightly parted. She was so damn stubborn, but so was I for leading her here.

I sighed, caressing my fingers through her hair.

All of this was my mistake—especially trusting this man.

It was all because I knew he would have the answers she had been looking for, but had I known it would end with her being in a deep sleep, I would’ve found her a different way.

Her body stirred slightly in my arms, but her eyes remained shut. “Pup,” I whispered again. In an attempt to calm her down, I bent down and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead. “You’re okay—I’m here.”

Aelius chuckled, grabbing my attention. “You’re so worried about the one you love,” the old man spoke. “You should be worrying about your own fate, young prince.”

I shook my head, refusing to take both baits. “I do not love her,” I said flatly, taking on the thing that bothered me the most.

Aelius chortled, the sound of it getting on my nerves. What was so funny?

“Yes, yes, young prince,” he clicked his tongue. “You’ve traveled all the way here to the one you hate, with the one you don’t love.”

“I do not love her,” I repeated word for word. “And I do not hate you.”

“I would hope not—we’re practically family now,” Aelius said. “The two of you are connected in a way that goes beyond the mate bond. It’s a way neither of you would understand—”

“Good,” I stopped him. “I don’t want to understand. I don’t care.”

Aelius let out a small laugh that quickly grew louder, echoing through the cage. I clenched my jaw, just wishing he would shut up and let me be.

“So, you don’t wish to know your fate?” he showed his rotten teeth.

“No,” I stated, tightening my grip on Puppy. All I wanted was for her to wake up and to take her back to Starlight.

“That’s okay,” Aelius smirked. “Time will tell.”

I looked down at Puppy again, brushing my thumb over her temple. Whatever that Veil thing was she was dreaming about, I just hoped it was worth it—because her grandfather was not the best company.

“How long will she be like this?” I demanded an answer.

“She will wake when she’s ready to wake,” Aelius replied, his tone serious again.

I gritted my teeth, dissatisfied with his reply. “And when is that?”

The old man shrugged. “Could be today, could be tomorrow...could be next month—”

My eyes widened, and if Puppy wasn’t in my arms, I would’ve attacked him. “Stop fucking with me and give me an answer!” I growled, shooting him a cold glare.

My patience was wearing thin, and none of his answers were helping.

Aelius laughed, unbothered. “Calm down, young prince. I put my faith in tonight,” he said. “She has my blood and my eyes—so she is more powerful than the others.”

“The others?” My brows furrowed. “The other children of blood?”

Aelius didn’t bother answering my question.

“Where are they anyway?” I pressed further. “Is this where you live? Out here, all alone?”

“Time will—”

“Shut up!”

I lost my cool, but Aelius didn’t. My words didn’t seem to bother or affect him. All he did was hold my gaze, as if he hadn’t expected anything else but me lashing out.

That old man didn’t threaten me, and I refused to look away—narrowing my own eyes in return.

I didn’t know whether he was trying to frustrate me on purpose, but if he was—he was doing a good job. He was the one who knew everything about Puppy’s blood, her past, and her powers, yet he refused to give anything away and decided to send her to this Veil instead.

Was it even safe?

What if she was all alone and afraid without me to protect her?

I looked down at her, my lips touching her head once again.

“That time of yours better tell fast,” I muttered under my breath. “Because Soothsayer or not, if she doesn’t wake up,” I raised my head, making sure to look him in the eyes as I spoke, “I’ll kill you.”

“I know very well what you’re capable of, young prince,” Aelius said, his gaze piercing as if he could see straight into my soul. “I can see you have done bad things with good intentions.”

My jaw tightened. “Don’t do that.”

“Do what?” Aelius said, his tone mocking.

“Act like you know me.”

“How can I not when you’re presenting yourself like an open book,” Aelius shot me a pitiful smile. “You’re just like your father. Tough on the outside, cold on the inside—act first, regret later.”

I clenched my fist, not even bothering to ask how he knew him. If the king and Violet’s mom were on the same team, it could mean their paths had crossed at some point.

He was wrong about one thing, and that was the part about regret. Someone as heartless as the king wasn’t familiar with the feeling of regret.

I had done things I wasn’t proud of, things that haunted me every now and then—such as paralyzing Kayden, being hard on Nate, Puppy, and maybe even leading on Chrystal. Unlike the king, I knew where I went wrong and was prepared to learn from it.

We were not the same.

“I didn’t come here to be judged by you,” I said, keeping my voice calm.

Aelius chuckled. “Judgment is not my role,” he said, his gaze shifting to Puppy, who was still in my arms. “But guidance...that is something I can offer. Though I doubt you would take it.”

“If you want to guide someone, guide your granddaughter,” I spoke, aggravated. “She’s the one who needs it.”

“And you? What do you need, young prince?”

I frowned, not expecting the question. What did I need? Answers, clarity, for all of this to make sense—but most of all, there was one thing I needed more than anything.

“I need her to wake up,” I said, glancing down at Puppy.

Aelius smiled faintly. “And she will,” he said. “But when she does, she might not be the same. She could be different—stronger, weaker, more guarded. Who knows? Are you ready for that?”

I didn’t answer, couldn’t answer. Instead, I rocked Puppy back and forth. As long as she came back to me, I didn’t care.

Let her be different, stronger, or even weaker—it wouldn’t bother me because I would be there to protect her.

Like always.

If anything, holding her in my arms, unresponsive, had only made one thing clear. It hurt. My heart, that was made of stone, ached—and I wasn’t going to leave her side.

Not now, not ever.