

Chapter 13

Violet

We had been walking for what felt like forever, but truly it had only been about twenty minutes.

No one was talking, the silence was killing me, my legs were numb—and I couldn't see anything. The only thing I could hear was the sound of our footsteps touching the leaves.

The box needed to be delivered all the way across the river, and we weren't allowed to shift unless we were in danger. There were no shortcuts, no tricks—it was just a long, boring path.

Kylan and Dylan walked ahead, not giving a damn about anyone but themselves while Nate was kind enough to stay beside me. Still, I struggled to keep up with his pace. Why did I have to do this with three men with ridiculously long legs while I was, well...short.

Kylan suddenly looked back at me, his eyes scanning me up and down—and I just knew some rubbish was about to leave his mouth.

"Cardio, Four-eyes," he spoke. "You can't always rely on your wolf."

Pissed, I waited until he turned his head before mimicking his words. I had never relied on my wolf, not once. He didn't know what he was talking about.

Nate released a soft laugh.

"Yes, sorry," I whispered to him, "he's your prince and all, but he's really getting on my nerves."

"Don't apologize," he smiled. Then, without any warning, he lifted my backpack from my shoulders and carried it in his hand.

The second the weight left my shoulders, I felt an instant relief. I glanced down at my legs, noticing I was moving much faster.

"You really didn't have to do that."

Nate shrugged. "I don't mind. This is nothing for me," he said. "You should see what Kylan makes me carry back home."

"Yes, but your back—"

"I got it, beautiful," he cut me off, winking.

I chuckled. "Thanks."

Nate was one of those people who was just naturally a good person. He didn't have to prove himself to anyone, yet he did.

We kept walking for a while longer until, out of nowhere, Kylan stopped and brought his hand to his head. "Ky, are you alright?" Nate asked, concerned.

Kylan turned to us with an annoyed expression. "In case you were wondering what this box does. It talks."

That's all he said before he began walking again as if nothing happened, leaving us with many questions.

"What do you mean it talks?" Dylan asked.

"It messes with your head, wants you to open the box," Kylan explained, aggravated. "It doesn't matter, just keep walking."

I felt a shiver down my spine, wondering what the box might've said to him that triggered him that much. He seemed different, uneasy and stressed.

"Change of plans," Dylan announced, snatching the box from Kylan's hand. "We'll take turns holding the box until we reach the river."

I waited for Kylan's reaction, but he didn't say a word. Why wasn't he arguing? That's what he was best at. One thing was clear—whatever that box had whispered to him to make him back down without a fight was something very serious.

My anxiety grew, realizing taking turns meant mine would be coming up soon.

I hated voices. I used to hear them in my nightmares all the time, and to this day, I was still traumatized.

"You're going pale," Nate teased, bumping my shoulder. "Do you know something we don't?"

"No!" I blurted out, my eyes widening. "I-I'm just not a big fan of talking boxes."

Nate laughed. "Relax, you'll be fine."

We walked in silence again, but it was quickly interrupted by Dylan, who held his head the same way Kylan did and placed the box on the ground. Whatever that thing was, it had affected him too.

His face was tense, almost terrified.

"I need a break," Dylan suddenly announced. He dropped the box on the ground before walking off toward a nearby pond.

I hesitated, wondering if I should check on him, but decided not to. What would I tell him? We barely spoke.

Bloodrose men were known for their big brains, and their physical strength, but mentally? They weren't exactly the most stable.

"I'll go check on our strategist," Nate said, dropping the backpacks to the ground. "I'll be back later!" he said, then hurried after Dylan.

I was glad he was the one to do it, and not me—but there was only one problem.

I was alone, with Kylan.

I could feel his eyes burning into my skin. As I looked at him, he stared at me with an expression I couldn't read.

Was he angry?

Annoyed?

I didn't know, and I didn't care. All I knew was that I needed space from him.

Without saying another word, I slipped behind a nearby tree, trying to create some distance. When I heard footsteps approaching, I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, knowing they belonged to him. Kylan.

"Why are you following me?" I threw back the same words he'd asked me the night we found out we were mates.

Kylan chuckled, stepping closer. It seemed like the effect of the box had disappeared, and he was back to his usual, annoying self.

His face was close—too close. I nervously held my breath, staring into those dark eyes, and this time I could see everything down to the dark swirl of his pupils.

Was he going to kiss me again?

Would I allow him?

"I'm the team leader, and you're an immature and reckless mess," my eyes moved to his lips as they moved. "It's my job to follow you."

I opened my mouth to say something, anything—but stopped when I felt his warm breath against my neck. Gently, his hands slid to my shoulders, and then he froze as if he was testing my reaction. I didn't move a muscle.

This time he grabbed my shoulders more firmly, and inhaled deeply, his face still close to my neck. "That smell is driving me insane."

Those words were whispered so quietly they were not supposed to reach my ears, yet they did. I struggled to control every inch of my body, torn between the urge to push him away or pull him closer, just to feel his lips on mine.

His eyes locked onto mine again, but he didn't say a word. Neither of us did.

I waited—hoping for the impact of his lips. As he leaned in, I thought it was finally going to happen, but instead, his lips just grazed my cheek for a small second.

Desperate, I leaned in, but this time he pulled back. He shook his head, caressing my face with a gentle touch.

"You're making it difficult for me," he murmured.

"What?"

"Difficult," he repeated, pulling me by my waist, his eyes intense. "Stop flirting with Nate. I don't like it."

It finally clicked. That's what his problem was. The whole time, I hadn't even realized it. I wasn't flirting with Nate, but Kylan had clearly decided otherwise.

"I'm not yours," I stated. "I can do what I want, and for the record, I wasn't flirting with Nate."

Kylan scoffed, clearly not believing a word I'd just said. Why would it bother him anyway? It's not like he wanted me.

"It's called being polite," I shot back. "Something I know you're unfamiliar with."

Kylan chuckled, turning his head slightly with a smirk. "Do you know what I'm familiar with?"

"What?"

His hand slid along my waist, a bit more possessively. A tingling sensation spread to my body, and I had myself for it.

He stared into my eyes. "Should I just take you right here in these woods, against this tree, and show you?"

I swallowed hard, taking in his words.

"Do you think that will satisfy me? You? The both of us?"

It wasn't a statement—it was a question. And I feared that if I answered truthfully, both of our clothes would be off within seconds.