

Chapter 154

Violet

"You tell me," I answered. "You are the Lyperian."

Nate sighed and looked at a still-tense Dylan with a teasing look. "She's getting smart now."

He tried to involve him, but other than a low hum, Dylan didn't have much of a reaction.

"Actually, I don't know," I responded in all honesty. "We should be receiving a message soon. Could be anytime now, I think."

Those were my hopes. I just wanted to get it over with—and quick.

"If all goes well, I might have to address you as Your Highness!"

"No—"

"Do you want a water, Your Highness?" Nate offered, mocking a bow.

"Your Highness?" I repeated, laughing. "I'm not..."

My words faltered because technically, he was right. I was a princess, but ...of what? The common lands? A place no one had ruled for ages?

It's not like anyone knew, for that matter. I couldn't exactly shout it from the rooftop.

"You know what," I changed my mind, "maybe I do need that water."

"Great," Nate placed his hands on my shoulders. He gave them a squeeze, but all I could look at were those red eyes. He was in a really,

really bad place.

“One water coming right up!”

Then he turned and walked off like everything was fine. But nothing felt fine.

“Do you think Nate is okay?” I asked Dylan, not really caring whether he would respond to me or not.

Surprisingly, he did. “He’s clearly been through a lot,” he said with a sigh. “Don’t worry. I’m keeping an eye on him.”

“Good,” I nodded. “I think we both should.”

Of course Dylan had already been keeping an eye on him. He had also been there that night when Nate spoke openly about his Lunaris addiction. He knew how serious it was.

“Chrystal and the other girls got a temporary suspension,” I said, locking my gaze on the floor. It was clear no one knew what she had done to me, but Dylan knew. I specifically asked Trinity to tell him because it was his right to know.

“And I know there’s nothing I can do about this whole...Nate thing, but since I’m somewhat involved, I can’t help but feel guilty.”

“I figured as much when I couldn’t find her. And it’s a good thing she’s not here,” Dylan said, his tone aggravated. “It’s not your fault, Violet,” he whispered. “Even if she were here and I had twisted her neck, it still wouldn’t be your fault.”

I looked up, shocked. “You would’ve...what?”

Our conversation was cut short by one of the sophomore guys who had suddenly moved in front of us.

“Your eyes have the most beautiful shade of blue I’ve ever seen, Violet.”

“Oh really?” I said with a small smile.

My cheeks warmed, and I reached up to tuck my hair behind my ear—only to realize there were none, because my ponytail was way too tight, so I just ended up looking like an idiot.

“Has no one ever told you before?”

“No...” I squeezed my eyes shut, trying to refresh my memories. “No, I don’t think so.”

“They really are,” one of the other guys joined. “Staring into your eyes is like staring into the endless sky right before the Moon Goddess speaks.”

“Oh wow,” I responded, trying to make sense out of it. Clearly, I couldn’t, because those words didn’t even make sense.

Even Dylan managed to let out a snort at that horrendous attempt at poetry.

“That’s too kind of you,” I said, still a little flustered. “Thank you.”

“You know, back then,” the first guy spoke, tapping his finger in the air, “I really wanted to pick you to join my team, but I was too afraid your beauty might distract me.”

At this point, Dylan released a chortle, and I couldn’t blame him. This was getting ridiculous. So ridiculous I wouldn’t even entertain this anymore.

Thankfully, Nate returned just in time and handed me a water bottle. I gave him a look, silently begging him to help me get out of this—but he just shrugged like it wasn't his problem.

Just as I was about to look at Dylan for a hand, someone cleared his throat. I didn't even need to face him to know who it was—but I did.

It was Kylan, and he was standing right in front of us. His face looked calm on the outside, but I knew him better than that. Those eyes I had been studying for a while now betrayed him.

He was mad. Like, really mad. Furious, pissed.

He might've fooled everyone else with that blank expression, but not me—because I could tell he was ready to rip those guys apart.

"Why are we talking and not stretching?" he asked, loud and sharp. Sure, that was his problem.

It didn't take much for the boys to step away without argument. The corner of Kylan's lip twitched for a second, revealing he felt satisfied.

Nonchalantly, I raised the water bottle toward Nate and gave him a nod. "Thanks," I said before taking a long sip. Anything not to experience the exchange between these three.

Kylan, Dylan, and Nate...

Kylan looked between the two of them. I had no idea how this was going to go, and by now the bottle was almost emptied.

"Nate," Kylan said eventually.

"Kylan," Nate replied.

Kylan turned to Dylan. "Dylan."

Dylan gave a small nod of acknowledgment. "Kylan."

I couldn't help myself anymore and choked on my water. "Are we just going to say everyone's names?" I asked, dramatically waving the bottle in the air.

The three of them chuckled, and just like that, the tension was broken.

Nate reached out, trying to pull both of them into a hug, but they weren't having it and pushed him away. It wasn't the first time.

I smiled to myself, relieved that they were back to normal. Somehow, this whole weird exchange between them made me feel better.

Everything was peaceful until the door burst open, followed by three loud claps.

I froze as those claps echoed through the training hall, and I knew exactly what time it was.

Commander Jorn...

"Give me twenty laps, now! Go-go-go!"

No one argued, no one waited or hesitated. Everyone started running circles around the training hall. While running, Kylan gave me a look, then pulled my shirt, urging me to stay close.

"This week will be the ultimate test," Commander Jorn shouted. "We have been inside for too long, have not shifted, have not gone on any excursions—and that's not on me. And if it isn't on you either, it's on your teammate!"

Yes, it was directed toward me. I knew he meant me.

“There will be no time for weakness, no time for crying, and no time for complaints. I don’t care about your scratched knee, your sore arms, your awful condition, or the royal mate you bagged.”

Yes, definitely for me...

As if things weren’t bad enough, he looked straight at me. “You are going to give it your all!”

I sighed, picking up my speed as I tried to keep up with Kylan.

“Don’t let him get to you, Puppy,” Kylan whispered in between Jorn’s rant. “We’ve trained for this. You’re ready. You can do this.”

We had trained for this, but I wasn’t sure Kylan realized just how deeply this man had it out for me, hated me—or how far he was willing to go to see me fall.

But Kylan believed in me, and for now, that belief would have to be enough to prove him right...



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