

Chapter 180

Violet

I gulped quietly, then looked down at the bracelet on my wrist. My fingers brushed over the little Lycan charm as I took a deep breath, trying to ease my nerves.

It now started to kick in that my people weren't here yet, and the thought of going in there without them made my stomach twist. There were a few more hours left before they would arrive, and who knew what these Lyperians would try to do during that time?

Is that why they sent them by car? So they could delay them and torture me?

Would Chrystal be there?

Breathe, Violet...Breathe.

I closed my eyes, taking another deep breath. Then I heard the sound of loud howls, and my eyes flew open again. Just like that, I was back to square one. Looking out the window once more, I spotted the open field near the palace.

Dozens of Lyperians were running across it, and they were all in their shifted forms.

They were massive, powerful, and fast enough to run across with such speed it was hard to even follow them with my eyes. People were right about them. Lycans, Lyperians in particular, were living weapons.

I had no doubt that if one of them came charging at me, it would be over.



"Incredible," I whispered.

Kylan glanced at the field like it was nothing. "They're just messing around," he said. "This isn't real training."

Just messing around?

"They're so—" I shook my head, trying to find the right word. "Big."

Kylan smiled, but it didn't quite reach his eyes. "That's what people say about us."

I noticed the change in his tone. He wasn't really paying attention anymore and looked just as nervous. And if he was nervous...what did that mean for me?

There wasn't much time to think, as the car already drove past the gates. I sat up straighter, trying to look at least a bit presentable.

From up close, the palace was even bigger than I thought. Especially the towers. They were so tall it almost looked like they could touch the clouds.

Mesmerized, I followed one of them with my eyes, then looked to the front again, and that's when I saw them.

A crowd.

It was around thirty people, maybe even more, waiting for our arrival. There were women dressed in beautiful gowns, young men and girls around my age, a bunch of children. All of them stood in neat rows in front of the palace, waving their hands like they had been practicing it every day.

Their smiles were so wide, I was sure their faces must've hurt.



"Tell me," I looked at Kylan. "Which one of them are you related to?"

Kylan sighed. "All of them."

Okay, definitely not a big deal...

Just all...thirty of them...

My hands felt sweaty and weird, my mind numb. I wasn't sure if it was the long ride, the crowd, or the fact that I had no idea what to expect now that we were actually here.

Probably all of it...

Kylan was already out of the car, and a second later, the door opened. A hand reached out, and I looked at it, instantly recognizing it as his.

"Please, dear Moon Goddess, do not let me mess this up," I whispered a quick prayer, then accepted the hand.

Once I made my way out of the car, the first thing I noticed were even more guards, lined up in armor, their heads bowed low.

The second thing I noticed was the crowd again, and especially the women in beautiful gowns. After waving for what seemed like forever, they stood still now. I really couldn't keep my eyes away from their dresses.

They were too beautiful. Long, flowy, all kinds of colors and fabrics. Meanwhile, I was wearing a blue top. Not even a proper shirt—a top!

"Well," I glanced up at Kylan. "Is this what you meant on the plane when you made that little comment about what I'm wearing?"



Kylan laughed softly beside me. "I think you look just fine. There's no need for all of that," he tried to reassure me. "Come."

He placed a hand gently on my back, guiding me forward. As we walked, I glanced from Kylan to the crowd in front of us. Since he was related to all of them, they were probably his aunts and cousins, maybe a few siblings.

My stomach felt like it was flipping, even though I tried to tell myself that it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't like Elyx was standing there. That would've been way worse.

Even worse than Kylan's family, who now began whispering, pointing, and staring at me, and were not even trying to hide it.

Since they were looking at me, I looked right back at them, getting a better look at their faces.

A few of them, especially the older ones, definitely looked like Kylan. The same eyes, same cheekbones, undeniably his siblings.

"Ky!" A girl, maybe around ten or eleven, suddenly jumped up and down. "You're back!"

I smiled softly as the cutest girl, with the highest pigtails and the pinkest dress I had ever seen in my life, couldn't hold it in anymore. She ran forward and threw herself straight into his arms, as Kylan released my hand in the process.

Kylan lifted her off the ground and spun her around. "Katerina!" he greeted, cheerfully. "You've gotten so big!"

Hah, who would've thought?

Kylan wasn't only good with squirrels, but children as well.



He let out a playful groan, like she weighed much more than he could handle, then set her back down. "You," he said, touching the tip of her nose, "need to stop growing!"

"I know," Katerina beamed proudly. "I might even get as tall as you someday!"

One of the women, her mom I assumed, covered her mouth with a napkin as she reacted with a high-pitched laugh. "She's been talking about your return for quite some time now, Prince Kylan."

Kylan looked down at the little girl, then ruffled her hair. "Is that so?"

I stood there, watching the two with a warm feeling in my chest. Kylan looked like a completely different version of himself. Even softer than he had ever been with me.

"Who is she?" the girl, Katerina, suddenly turned to me. She gave a cute little curtsy, one that looked better than I ever could. "Is this our new sister?"

Kylan placed a hand on her shoulder. "Yes," he said, looking back at me. "This is..."

He turned back to the group instead and raised his voice. "Everyone, this is Violet!"

Before I could even blink, they all closed in, as if they had been waiting for him to say those words. People were hugging Kylan, and then me. Some of them touched my clothes, my hair, my shoulders, and even my face.

I was sure poor Jumper had already nuzzled herself into Kylan's pocket.



Everyone was talking at the same time, way too fast for me to understand what they were saying, so I just kept nodding and smiling like I knew what was going on.

"And these —" I finally attempted to raise my voice over the noise. "And these are all your cousins?"

"Cousins?" Kylan laughed. "No, they're not here yet."

"Then who are they?"

Kylan spoke through the noise. "A few of my mothers, the fourth to seventh mistresses, and a few of my siblings!"

I fluttered my eyelids.

A few...of his what now?

I didn't even know how to process it. I just stared at him.

I knew there were dozens of them, but seeing them in flesh and blood?

Siblings. Mistresses?

The fourth to seventh? Then where the hell were the first to third?

I thought I was at least mentally prepared for Lyperia. Clearly, I wasn't.

"There's more?" I worried, just as one woman hugged Kylan tightly and another one pinched his cheek like he was a little boy.

"Yes," he managed to say between all the greetings, "but they're probably inside, preparing for the feast tonight."

"Oh, okay," I nodded.



Then I frowned.

Wait, feast?

He had never said anything about a feast.

“What fe—”

I could barely finish my question as the crowd around us suddenly pulled back. Everyone stepped away, bowed their heads, and walked back to their original positions.

Then we were met with a sudden, heavy silence.



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