Chapter 181

Violet

What was up with all the long faces?

"Huh?" I furrowed, turning to look at Kylan. His whole face had changed as well, and the smile from earlier had shifted back to that tight expression he wore when we drove closer to the palace.

I knew something was completely off when he suddenly took my hand again and pulled me closer. Wondering what all the hype was about, I followed his gaze.

Only then did I see a woman walking toward us.

She was surrounded by a few others, some of them looking like maids, the others probably her ladies-in-waiting. She wore a beautiful dark blue dress that touched the ground and moved like water with each step she took.

Her brown hair was pinned up in a perfect bun, and sitting on top of it was the biggest crown I had ever seen.

It didn't take a genius to know who she was.

And yes, even I—the village girl—had already figured it out.

She was the king's Luna.

The queen of Lyperia.

And above all...Kylan's mom.

She didn't smile. She didn't wave. She just walked forward, graceful and

proud, like she owned the place. And she did.

My heart nearly jumped out of my chest as she walked closer. As if Kylan's hand wasn't already enough, I almost squeezed the life out of it. I didn't know much about the queen, but I knew she hated him, which meant there could be a possibility she hated me too.

Not to forget, Kylan's bonus 'mothers' and siblings weren't exactly excited to see her either.

After what felt like an eternity, she finally stopped in front of us. My breath caught as I waited for her to do something. For a moment, I wondered if maybe she would at least hug Kylan or say she was happy to see him. But there was nothing...

She just looked at him like he was anyone else. Her gaze was so cold, hateful and distant. Not even Luna Sonya looked at me like that.

"Your Majesty," Kylan mumbled.

I looked at him in shock. That was it? That was how he greeted his own mother, and the greeting he received in return?

"Kylan," the queen let out a short, soft sound, as if saying his name was already too much effort.

Then her eyes snapped to me.

This time, I could see it clearly. Her eyes weren't like Kylan's at all. Hers were as green as emeralds, and as strong as they could be. There was no sparkle, only fight.

I had seen that look before. They were like Adelaide's right before she had entered the Veil.

This was clearly a woman who had gone through a lot, more than I could even imagine.

She cleared her throat.

Right...

I was supposed to say something. Or at least bow...anything.

I almost dipped into a curtsy but stopped halfway. Was the crown prince's mate supposed to bow to his mother?

No, that didn't feel right.

"I—I, uh..." I stammered, trying to find the words, but nothing came out. I was stupid enough to stick out my hand, but quickly pulled it back.

I was so busy thinking about Lyperia and Lyperians that I had forgotten to ask him how I should greet his mother. I barely even knew the woman. I didn't even know her name. How could I? Kylan didn't talk about her.

All I knew was that she was his mother, the one who hated him. King Elyx's second choice, who had been embarrassed by him over and over again, and then once more by her son when he had eliminated Kayden from the Battle for the Crown. That's the only information I had.

"Y-Your—"

I stopped talking as she lifted her hand and touched my cheek with the back of her index finger. My body froze, and suddenly, I didn't know how to breathe at all anymore.

"Don't be afraid," she said gently.

She took a slow breath in through her nose, and I followed her lead. My chest loosened a little, and the tight feeling started to fade. I wasn't anywhere near feeling at ease, but I finally felt like I could function again.

"You are the girl," she said. "Violet."

I nodded, slowly. "Yes."

My voice was still a bit shaky as she looked into my eyes. It felt like I was being looked through, not just at. I had way too much to hide, but for some reason, it felt like this woman could see everything behind my eyes.

Everything I had done. Everything I was afraid of.

Not even Aelius had made me feel this way.

"Where is your family, Violet?"

I opened my mouth, trying to form a sentence. Yet, there was still nothing.

"They're still on their way," Kylan stepped in quickly. "It'll probably take a few hours."

The queen let out a dry chuckle as she rolled her eyes. Then she looked at her son. Something about the way she looked at him made me anxious. She looked disgusted, disappointed, resentful.

She leaned in closer. "They are not here, and yet you let her come here?" she whispered, so only we could hear.

Kylan didn't say anything at first. His jaw moved a little, but he kept quiet, like he was afraid of saying the wrong thing. I felt for him. I really did.

He must've been feeling that same suffocating pressure I always had around Fergus.

"I think we're good," he spoke, looking around. "There's nothing to fear. I don't see the king anywhere—"

"Yes, of course he isn't here," she cut him off. "And if I were him, I would not have been here either."

I didn't fully understand what that meant, but Kylan did. Whatever those words meant, they hit him hard. So hard, his grip on my hand loosened.

The queen, who had noticed, gently took my hand out of Kylan's. She rubbed it softly before giving me a soft smile. Even through that smile, her eyes were still as sharp as they could be.

"Go greet the king and show your respects, Kylan," she said, not tearing her gaze from mine. "I'll take the girl until her family gets here."

A strange feeling settled over me, and I wasn't sure if I felt safe or threatened. She was a harsh woman, but she didn't seem that bad. At least, not yet.

"Come with me, my flower," she gave my hand the slightest tug. "I'll take you under my wing, and I'll take care of you, Violet."

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