

Chapter 185

Kylan

A pair of eyes, darker than my own, bored into mine.

The king and I had been staring at each other for a while now, waiting for whoever was going to speak first. I knew he was waiting for an apology, but I could promise him that he would be waiting a long time.

By now, he should've known that I do not apologize.

"What?" I grumbled. "You're finally going to tell everyone what I did to your golden boy?"

The king clenched his fist. It looked like I had hit another nerve. Good.

"But wait, you won't do that," I pushed, arms still crossed. "Because then you would have to admit that this system Lyperia built is falling apart, and that your heir has...issues."

His eyes widened before he looked down and rubbed between his brows like my words gave him a headache. After some time, he lifted his head again.

"Get up."

"No, thank you. I'm good with sitting."

The king began waving his hand, like he was tired of the whole thing. "Come on, son," he huffed. "Just get up before I drag you from that chair and I end up looking like the tyrant."

He is the tyrant.

This time I stood. I stepped right in front of him, letting him look into my eyes, showing him we were pretty much the same. Back when I was a little boy, his looming figure would've scared me, standing over me like he was just waiting to snap while I tried not to tremble.

But now? It didn't move me at all.

"Don't forget who you're talking to," he said, voice sharp. "I will kill you right here, right now."

"Then do it. We both know how much you hate me."

I knew he wasn't playing around. He actually was capable of killing me. The king was the strongest man in the kingdom, and I had seen him in battle. Never a serious one, but enough to know what he was capable of.

Still, he wouldn't kill me.

The king loved to act like he was this perfect family man that could do no wrong, but it was just for show.

While inside these walls, most had a pretty good idea of what he could be like. Outside of the palace walls, he smiled and gave speeches and touched people's hands like he cared. They ate it up and believed every word.

Killing his heir would not suit this facade, of course.

The king let out a low hum, a fake smile plastered on his lips. "You think I despise you? You think I hate you—"

"Yes," I cut him off. "That's exactly what I think."

There were many reasons for him to hate me. I was Queen Cecilia's son. I

wasn't Kayden. I didn't bow down and nod my head like his loyal lapdog.

The king shook his head. "I have many reasons to hate you, but I don't. You're my heir, and my son."

I responded with a laugh because there were just no words for those ridiculous words.

"If I didn't want you on that throne, believe me, I would've made sure you wouldn't be anywhere near it," he said. "Yes, you always had a... mind of your own, but if you refuse to let go of the girl, you can at least respect the Lyperian ways—"

"Respect?"

A laugh escaped as I felt something inside me snap. "The same way you've respected my mother?" I paused, breathing through my nose. "You've always favored Lady Mona, your second and third mistresses, and those brats, while the queen, me, and my siblings have suffered under this so-called Lyperian way—"

"Suffered?" the king spat. "You've had a good life. Look at that maid from earlier. As far as I can remember, you never had to lick water off the table."

"Barely," I mumbled, holding his gaze.

He clicked his tongue and released another huff, making it clear he was done with these accusations. "You can believe what you want, but I do not want that girl or those dirty Bloodroses here," he stated. "You will have at least five mistresses by the end of these two weeks, and if you and the girl can't take it, then you should get it over with, reject her, and send her on her way."

I clenched my teeth. "And why don't you want her here again?" I asked, trying not to let the rage get to me.

I still wanted to hear it from his mouth. I wanted him to admit it.

Admit Violet, the one he had named, reminded him of Adelaide.

Admit seeing the Bloodroses made him think of Claire and Greg, two people who gave their lives protecting the daughter of the woman he betrayed.

Admit that Violet's presence brought him back to that past he tried so hard to bury. The one where he even had his own father murdered just to steal the crown.

Or maybe it was just his hatred for witches. That deep disgust that had never really made much sense, no matter how many times I tried to understand it.

Which one is it?

The king looked nervous. Just for a second, but then he recovered himself again.

"The werewolf girl—"

"Violet," I said. "You know her name. Use it."

"The girl is not right for you," he said, ignoring my request. "She'll deceive you, use you, destroy you. Sooner or later, she'll be the reason everything falls apart."

"How can she do that," I stated, "when you already have?"

He didn't like that. I saw it. The king took several steps back, then began pacing back and forth.

He was seconds away from throwing whatever was left on the table again. The silence stretched too long before he decided to answer.

"You and I both know this is nothing more than some way to get at me," he said slowly. "We both know you'll never mark her, never love her unless you force yourself—"

"See, that's where you're wrong."

There was something about Violet that nothing and no one could ever change again, and that was my love for her. I didn't force myself to love her. I didn't force her to look at me like I was worth a damn. And I didn't force how perfect her hand fit into mine.

It was like she had always belonged there. With me.

"You should know that I do love her."

The color drained from the king's face. He looked shocked, betrayed, like I had just driven a dagger through his heart. His mouth hung half-open, as if he wanted to speak but had forgotten how to form the words.

"S-Son," he finally got out, "you can't. Y-You don't know what she is!"

"Then tell me!" I raised my voice, taking a step closer. "Tell me so I can decide for myself whether I want her to stay by my side or not!"

But he didn't. He just stared at me with that cold, cold gaze.

"She won't survive this place," he growled.

"She doesn't need to survive this place," I retorted, "because I'm not letting this place touch her like it touched the queen. I won't allow it."

His eyes snapped back to mine, but I knew he would still be too much of a coward to say something.

Because if he admitted that Violet was a witch, that meant he would have to face the questions that would follow after. Those that would be connected to him too.

He would have to admit that the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

He was a monster, and I was a monster. We were both monsters, and we might as well hold hands and be monsters together.

I exhaled deeply before straightening up. "If that was all," I said, calm as ever, "you'll have to excuse me."

Then I turned my back on him and walked out of the dining hall without looking back.



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