

Chapter 186

Kylan

After leaving the dining hall, there was one more thing to do—one more person I had to pay a visit.

Kahlia.

Calling Violet 'Wolfie' in front of me didn't sit right with me at all.

I was a man of my word. I said I would deal with her for that little nickname she threw at Violet, and I meant it. No one would ever be calling her Wolfie again.

Only I was allowed to give Puppy a nickname.

My steps were steady as I made my way through the east wing, which was also known as Lady Mona's wing. Even though the king had sworn he wasn't playing favorites, she and her children had the best part of the palace, almost comparable to the queen and her children.


Lady Mona's influence was big in the east wing, and everyone here, including the guards, were appointed by her, and loyal to her. Judging by the occasional glances from the guards, even with the respectful bows, I could already guess she would soon hear about this.

Her favorite stepson daring to step into the east wing. Her wing.

Actually, I didn't have any time for this.

I had to check on Violet, see if she was still holding up. I had to know everything.

If she was still walking around with the queen, if so, what she had told her. If she was alone right now, or perhaps already been thrown into a room with some Lyperian freak.

I sighed and kept walking, almost nearing Kahlia's room. Then I heard it. That sound I had been trying to avoid for four years already. The quiet squeak of wheels. 

"Fuck," I muttered under my breath.

Not now.

I turned fast, hoping I could slip away before —

"Kylan!"

Too late...

A deep sigh came from within me as I turned back slowly and saw him. Kayden.

His usual maid, Clara or Callie, I think, pushed his chair like always. Same maid, same cheerful greeting, that same...smile.

When did he not smile, and what was there to even smile about?

Kayden looked better than the last time. Probably the healthiest I had seen him in years. He looked more alive, less ghost-like, more like a person, yet there was something that would never change. That chair I had put him in.

He squinted his eyes, as if that way he could take a better look at me. "So good to see you."

"Yes," I nodded, keeping a solid few feet between us. "You too."

Then it went silent.

It wasn't him. It was me. It had always been like this between us. I couldn't look at him for long without feeling the weight of my own guilt, and it didn't help that we looked so much alike. Same eyes, nose, lips, same damn everything. If someone saw us from behind, they wouldn't be able to tell us apart.

Except one of us was still standing.

He tilted his head. "You didn't come to greet me."

I let out a quiet chuckle. "And you missed lunch."

A crooked smile reached his lips. "My bad."

He kept staring at me, and I had a good feeling why. He wanted to know what I was doing in the east wing, but Kayden being Kayden, tried to remain as composed as he could.

"You need something else?"

"Oh. I saw Violet!"

My body tensed. "Where is she?"

"Looked like she was going in to meet Madam Renata," he said, sucking his teeth. "And she seemed pretty nervous."

"That doesn't sound good."

"Not really," Kayden shrugged.

Madam Renata was an old fossil not many liked being around. She had become one of Lady Mona's people and was the Chief of Staff who had probably traumatized every one of my sisters, promising to make them 'proper ladies' or whatever that was supposed to mean. I remembered when we were younger, my sisters Kaelis and Kiora used to force me to keep them hidden in my room, and because we were inseparable around that time, I let them.

That was all before the queen had turned them against me.

"You should go save your girl," Kayden suggested.

"I don't think she needs saving."

He let out a chuckle. "You don't know that. Maybe she does."

It went silent again, but not for long this time.

"I can see why you love her," Kayden said. "Why you fell for her. She's just..." He used his hands, making a big gesture. "Glowing with beauty, and is certainly a sight."

I felt an uncomfortable pit in my stomach. I didn't like him talking about her. I didn't know why, but I just didn't.

He looked at me sideways. "Are you not going to deny it this time?"

I didn't answer.

What was there to deny?

I loved her.

I was in love with Violet.

Everyone seemed to know it. Everyone but her, because I couldn't bring myself to say it.

'I love you, but I can't be with you.'

I wouldn't be able to bear the sight of her staring at me with those wide, soft puppy eyes, waiting for me to explain why I couldn't be with her the way she wanted to.

"Were you on your way to see her?" Kayden interrogated.

"No."

"Then what are you doing here?" He raised his brows. "In the...east wing."

I took a breath, thinking about what to say, and whether it was even smart to tell Kayden I was headed to visit his little sister.

Fuck it.

"Kahlia crossed the line," I said. "She talked about Violet. I need to make sure she doesn't do it again."

Kayden's brows pulled together. "What did she say?"

"Called her...Wolfie."

He let out a quiet sigh and let his eyes drop to the floor. The tiniest smile tugged at his lips, and then he looked up.

"She is the crown prince's mate. We can't have that, of course."

"Right. I'm glad we're on the same page."

Kayden's expression changed, suddenly looking a bit more serious. "We are on the same page," he said, "but Kahlia is still our sister. And if you don't mind, I'd like to talk to her for you instead. Make sure something like this doesn't happen again."

I looked at him for a second, hating how much I pitied him at times. I didn't want him to go soft on her, and didn't plan to agree to it, but my guilt won once again. (1)

"That would be great," I forced out. "Thanks."

"Yes, no problem. You should go to Violet."

I waited until Kayden rolled by in his wheelchair, then reached out to pat his shoulder as he passed, hearing a hum in response.

"Oh, by the way," I said, making him turn back around.

"You've put on some more weight," I told him. "Got a little more color in your face. Good for you."

"You noticed," Kayden stretched his arms. He beamed with happiness, like he had been waiting for me to acknowledge it all along.

"So what's the big plan?"

"The big plan?"

He looked up at the ceiling, as if the answer might be hiding up there, then dropped his gaze back to me.

"I guess you could say I'm walking the path of being reborn," he said simply. Like that explained everything. (1)

He gave his maid a glance, and she turned his chair, pushing him off down the hall.

Confused, I stood there a second longer, watching him disappear.

Then I let out a quiet chuckle. I knew Kayden was interesting, but that was just...odd. Even for him.

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