

Chapter 188

Violet

Still confused by all that had just gone down, my eyes stayed fixed on our intertwined fingers. It had been a while now since Kylan had saved me from that evil woman, and I still had no clue where he was taking me.

I didn't care. I was just glad he had managed to get me out of there.

My lips curled as I looked up at his back, thinking about the way he had commanded that room. There was just something attractive about the way he dominated the space, and the people in it.

Did they like him?

No, probably not. But they had no choice except to respect him, and he seemed well aware of that.

After walking for a while, the hallway changed. It was bigger now, with more guards, at least twelve, lined up along the sides. As soon as they saw him, every one of them bowed deeply.

"Your Highness," they greeted as we passed. At the end of the hall was a massive door that looked different from the rest. It was taller, heavier, and made of darker gold.

The two guards standing by the door quickly stepped aside, their heads still bowed. Kylan let go of my hand and placed his on the door handle instead, then turned to one of the guards.

"If anyone asks if we're in here —"

"I haven't seen a thing, Your Highness," the guard said right away.

Kylan gave a satisfied nod. "Good."

Growing up in this suffocating palace, I could only imagine how many times he had used that line. I probably would've done the same.

The door creaked as he pushed it open, and he gently pulled me inside. Only then did it hit me that we were in his space. His bedroom.

My eyes widened in amazement as I took in the size of the room. It was huge, way bigger than his dorm back at Starlight, and even that had been impressive to me.

"Wow."

Kylan chuckled softly behind me but didn't say anything. I didn't know how many girls he had let inside this room, aside from his first love, Chrystal, and knowing him, probably half of Lyperia, but I knew I was most likely not the only one to have made that comment.

The floors were white and polished, and the walls had the deep navy of the Lyperian color, with gold details. In the center stood his bed, massive enough to let the whole palace sleep on it if he wanted to. Even his sheets were eye catching and smooth, with golden silk that made them shine.

This really was nothing like the Bloodrose.

"Your suitcases are probably over there," Kylan nudged his head toward one of the closed doors. "I asked them to unpack for you."

I forced a big smile. "You let them go through my stuff?"

I had expected Kylan to say something back, knowing he was the type who just felt the need to react to everything. However, he didn't. His face seemed a little off, like his thoughts were somewhere far away. And I

wanted to help him with those thoughts, but only if he would let me in.

"Where is our little Jumpy Pie?" I wondered, looking around.

Kylan pointed a weak finger to the same closed door. "Probably somewhere between your clothes."

Still, nothing.

Not even a word about how terrible that already terrible nickname was.

"How did it go with the king?" I asked, carefully.

Kylan gave me a simple look that said enough. How do you think?

Right. Dumb question.

He let out a deep sigh. "I'm sorry I couldn't get to you sooner."

"It's okay. It literally wasn't that long. Barely an hour."

"Long enough," he said, stepping in closer. He was right. It felt like two hours. Maybe if he hadn't left at all, I would've never...

Kayden's smirk rushed back into my mind. Even though I wasn't sure if he had actually seen me or not, I knew I had to tell Kylan about his brother. It was the only fair thing to do. I didn't want to lie to him, and if Kayden had seen something, then Kylan deserved the chance to decide what it meant.

He knew Kayden better than I did.

I opened my mouth. "I—"

"A lot has happened in the past hour, but at least your eyes didn't start

glowing," Kylan spoke before I could. "It's a good thing you're smarter than that, because with everything going on, it would've been too much, even for me." 2

I blinked, my words caught in my throat.

Nope. I absolutely could not tell him. Not after that.

Giving it a second thought, maybe he didn't have to know about it after all. My pride kept me still. I couldn't admit to him that I wasn't as smart as he thought, just like I couldn't burden him with any more while I wasn't even certain Kayden had seen anything in the first place.

"Sorry. You were going to say something?"

I panicked. "I...I..."

Say anything, Violet...

Just say something...

"Your mom is nice," I blurted.

Really, Violet?

Your mom is nice?

Nice might've been a stretch. She wasn't that bad, but she wasn't exactly nice either. Queen Cecilia was a bit too honest, but compared to Madam Renata, she was much more bearable.

Kylan raised his brow for a second, but then cracked a smile. "Nice to you," he muttered under his breath. "Did she say anything about me?"

I hesitated, thinking back. "No," I shook my head. "Not really."

Kylan let out a low hum. I couldn't tell if he was glad she hadn't said anything or disappointed. Either way, he didn't seem all that happy.

"Thank you for saving me from that woman."

I said it lightly, almost like a joke to cheer him up, but I caught the slightest flicker in his expression. His face shifted, but it was not the look I wanted.

"Inside this palace," he said quietly, "you do not ever wait for anyone to save you."

I fluttered my eyes. "What?"

"Why didn't you stick up for yourself?" he asked. "Like I know you can?"

I looked at him, surprised by the sudden softness in his voice. He took my hands in his, holding them gently, like they were something fragile.

"Like you did with Commander Jorn," he added, smiling now. "That was something."

I shrugged, lowering my gaze a bit. "Well...she wasn't lying. I am a placeholder, am I not?"

After a long, awkward silence, I finally met his apologetic eyes again. I wanted him to say no. I wanted him to shut that down right away. But he didn't, and that was okay.

He didn't owe me anything.

"And you didn't like it when I did it back then," I reminded him. He had clearly spoken against it.

"Because you almost lost control of your eyes," Kyran defended. "But I think you're good now, right?"

"Yes," I bopped my head once. "Perfect."

I wished I could tell him about what had happened in the hallway, because I hated lying. I really did. Technically, I hadn't done anything wrong. I followed Aelius's instructions.

The problem was, I had done it in the middle of the palace like a complete idiot.

"It's not that I don't want to talk back," I mumbled. "I just don't know how far I can go with these people."

In my defense, I had heard horrible, horrible stories about the Lyperians, and Madam Renata in particular.

Kyran gave me a small, crooked smile. "Please," he said. "By any means, do not spare the people of Lyperia."

His strange words of encouragement made me laugh out loud. I looked down at his larger hands in mine and started tracing my finger around his.

Kyran gave them a small tug, then pulled me closer until I was tucked against his chest.

