

Chapter 191

Violet

Fergus looked around slowly, his expression as stony as ever. His eyes swept over the palace grounds, taking in every little detail. That was just what he did, always preparing for some imaginary attack, like someone was out to get him.

Only this time, I couldn't say for sure it was imaginary.

He shook his head with a look of disgust, loudly sucking his teeth. Sonya didn't react much. She always went along with whatever Fergus had planned for her. That was...her.

It was strange seeing faces I hadn't seen in a while. Family, a good number of Bloodroses, elders. Just like Sonya, they all followed whatever vibe Uncle Fergus was giving off. That was the power he had over them.

Fergus stood with his arms folded across his chest, looking like an idiot, so everyone else just did the same, mirroring his stance perfectly. It was like they had all been coached to act like they didn't give a damn.

They stood united.

Despite growing up around them, it was hard not to compare how different they looked from the Lyperians I had seen so far. The Lyperians wore rich colors, soft silk, shiny things that made them stand out. The Bloodroses definitely didn't.

We were taught to wear quiet colors. Gray, beige, soft green maybe. Nothing bright. Nothing bold. And if it hadn't been for Trinity, I would have barely worn anything colorful.

That was just how we were raised.

'Soft colors keep us grounded. Loud ones make you a target.'

At times, I felt like that was the first thing the Bloodroses were taught as soon as they came from the womb. I knew Mom...Claire...used to roll her eyes and shake her head whenever Sonya tried telling me that, but after she was gone, even I started to believe it for a while.

Sonya locked her hand around Fergus' arm, and then they started walking again.

Even as Fergus moved, the repulsed expression remained on his face, but when his eyes met mine, they softened for just a second.

It wasn't because he was happy to see me, no.

He pitied me.

He pitied us.

The Bloodroses.

Because while this bond between Kylan and me might've meant something to the rest, I knew how Uncle felt about it, and it wasn't only because he knew about where I had come from.

The Bloodroses saw too much power as a curse. We were closed people. Private. We tended to keep to ourselves for a reason, and now we had been dragged into the center of the very thing we had been warned to stay away from.

The literal lion's den.

A court of Lycans.

And yes, it was a place full of wolves, but not our kind.

I felt Kylan's fingers graze mine again, and saw that as an invitation to grab his hand, so I did. I held it tightly.

His shoulder brushed closer against mine. "I'm not going to tell you to —"

"Breathe," I finished. "I know."

Our eyes met, and he smiled briefly. "Want me to banish him?"

I gasped and giggled, bumping his shoulder. The laughter was cut short the moment I saw Dylan glaring at both of us, his arms crossed just like Fergus' had been, and his eyes narrowed.

He had heard him. Every word.

And that look in his eyes told me, he wasn't amused.

"We can leave," Dylan said, voice sharp. "But not without Violet. We'll be taking her with us."

What?

My body barely got the time to tense before Trinity opened her mouth. "Loosen up, babe," she grinned, leaning into him. "It's just a joke."

"Yes, babe," Kylan mocked, his voice dry. "It's just a joke."

With that being said, now felt like the right time to let go of the thoughts I had earlier. Kylan didn't have time to argue with me, but somehow, he had plenty of energy left for Dylan.

I glanced between the two of them, the tension so sharp it could've been cut with a knife. From the corner of my eye, I caught Nate eyeing them with a smirk, like he wanted something to go down.

When Nate's eyes flicked to mine, I couldn't help but laugh under my breath, especially when he gave me a shrug, like he was asking who was going to win.

If there was anyone who could turn a shitty situation for the better, it was him. I covered my mouth to laugh, but as soon as Uncle Fergus stood in front of us, Sonya beside him, it suddenly wasn't as funny anymore.

Behind them stood the Bloodroses, silent and still with their arms crossed. Fergus let go of Sonya and stepped forward, right into Kylan's space.

His eyes didn't go to me, or even Dylan. No.

Only Kylan.

I could hear a sharp breath as his gaze dropped to our intertwined hands. Kylan didn't flinch. He only squeezed it tighter, as if he were sending a message.

Violet was yours, and now she's mine.

But let's make one thing clear. I didn't belong to anyone.

Uncle Fergus never claimed me. But neither did Kylan. And I knew Dylan was trying to make amends and had really jumped into this overprotective brother role, but he didn't owe me either.

All of this was for nothing.

Sonya gave me a small smile. "You look good, Violet."

"Thanks..." I said quietly.

I wanted to say Mom, but the word caught in my throat. It felt strange now. A bit too heavy. How many moms could one person have?

I knew Kylan had fifteen, but those were the Lyperian ways. Sonya had always tried her best, but she had barely raised me.

"I hope the trip wasn't too rough, Alpha Fergus," Kylan said. "I can imagine the change in environment might've been a lot for all of you."

Fergus let out a low scoff, his lips pulling into a slight frown. "The only thing that was a lot were those overdone residences."

"Yes," Kylan said with a nod. "That's Lyperia for you. The people here are very well accommodated. Though I suppose if you're used to swamps, everything else must feel a little...unfamiliar?"

Seriously?

I elbowed him in the side. It wasn't hard, but it was enough for him to feel it. Kylan had like a love-hate relationship with Lyperia. He was allowed to talk bad about the kingdom, but only him.

I kind of got it though, because I was the same with the Bloodroses. I also understood the tension, and I knew Fergus had it out for him, but Kylan wasn't exactly helping. I didn't need the two most stubborn men I knew poking each other like this.

A voice suddenly broke through the tension. "I wouldn't mind living in one of those houses. I'll gladly make the move!"

I felt myself smile, seeing a tall blonde figure step forward from behind him, a big grin plastered across his face.

It was Uncle Ewan.

He was Fergus' cousin. We weren't close, not at all, but I had always thought he was okay. He wasn't like the rest of the Bloodroses, and while it might've been too much at times, he at least had a personality.

He was less bitter, less broken.

"Your Highness!" He stepped forward, extending his hand. "I'm afraid we haven't met before, or at least not that you can remember. I'm Beta Ewan."

Kylan shook his hand, firm and polite. "It's a pleasure—"

"I should say," Ewan cut in cheerfully, "it's an honor that soon we'll be calling each other family, Your Highness."

Kylan's brows lifted slightly. "Yes—"

But before he could even finish, Ewan yanked him forward into a sudden hug. Kylan, who was not the biggest fan of physical affection, tensed as Ewan slapped him hard on the back. Not once. Not twice. But three times.

"Oh," Kylan muttered. "Okay."

Ewan gave one last slap before he pulled back with a proud grin. Then he turned his eyes on me.

"Come here, sweetheart!"

I barely had time to brace before he was hugging me too, lifting me right

off the ground. "Good to see you, Uncle," I managed to get out.

When he set me down, he held my shoulders and bent a little. His eyes met mine with a proud, wide smile. So wide I worried his teeth might fall out.

"You've done your pack proud, little girl," he said. "They all said you would end up a nobody. Useless. Markless. A rogue. That your gift would be a waste." His smile grew with each word, while each one landed like a blow to my chest. "I've never opened my mouth, but I knew. I always knew the Moon Goddess had something big planned for you."

I stared at him, wide-eyed. "Ah...really?"

How was I even supposed to respond to that? I knew what people had said about me, but was it really necessary to call me out like that in front of everyone?

"I see," Trinity said. "I'm sure your silence meant the world while she was struggling."

Ewan scratched his neck awkwardly, laughing a little too loudly. "Y-Yes."

I shot Trinity a grateful smile. Kylan was quiet, and I knew he was pissed. He had been overprotective lately, and knowing him, he was most likely imagining everything I had been through, the parts I didn't like to talk about.

I wanted to tell him it was okay. That it had happened a long time ago, and I had moved on. It was the sad truth.

"Welcome to Lyperia!"

Everyone turned their heads to look at the figure that stood at the

balcony.

It was him.

King Elyx.

Seconds later, guards bowed down, and the maids as well. Even from a distance, King Elyx dominated the space with his head held high. Beta Jack stood by his side.

The blue and gold robe on his shoulders made him look more like a statue than a real king. It looked cold and uncomfortable. His crown was on his head like it had always been there, but I knew the truth.

I knew how far that man had gone for that crown. How far he had made his children go for that crown.

King Elyx barely moved, but somehow it still felt like he was taking up all the space around him.


Now that I really looked at him, he didn't seem like the same man from dinner. He didn't even seem like a man at all.

I had been so nervous to see him, but he looked like the boy I had seen through Adelaide's eyes. Young, reckless, pathetic.

Kylan's grip around my hand tightened to the point I almost winced. He hadn't said a word, but his actions were clear. He wanted to protect me, but he didn't have to, because the king hadn't even looked at me once.

Not even a glance.

How could he after what he had done to my parents?

"Please," the king called out, gesturing with his hands, "come inside. And do let us know if the marble flooring is too hard for bare feet!" 

I glanced at the Bloodroses. Every single one of them wore shoes. So who was he talking about?

This was really going to be something...



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