

## Chapter 193

Violet

"Violet!"

I sat up straight. My heart beat out of my chest, and my eyes flew open so wide I thought they might fall out of my face. "What?"

I was so exhausted...too exhausted.

Where am I?

Who am I?

My hands searched the empty sheets next to me as I sat there, confused. My eyes traveled through the room. The bed was huge, way too big for one person. And the floor looked so polished it seemed like no one had walked on them at all.

Then it hit me.

I was in Lyperia, in the palace, in Kylan's bed.

Suddenly, everything from yesterday came rushing back at once. Kayden, the king, Uncle Fergus, Kylan's hand in mine only to let go of me the very next second, and I hadn't seen him since.

The knocks came again. I blinked up at the big clock above the double doors. It was five in the morning. The exact time Madam Renata had warned me about yesterday.

'You'll be up by five, breakfast by six, and if you're late, you'll go hungry.'

Breakfast didn't sound too bad because at least that way I would be able

to see Kylan. Hopefully...

A sigh came out as I touched the empty space next to me again, and my fingers curled into the soft sheets. It was clear he had been in here, but I had never noticed. Just like I hadn't even noticed him leaving again.

Did he sleep at all?

Was Renata serious about us not seeing each other until the feast? That was still hours from now.

"Violet!" The knocking got louder. This time I could put a name to the voice. It was Trinity.

"Unless you want that woman to come in here and scrub you clean herself, I'd really open that door if I were you!"

That woman meaning Madam Renata of course.

I let out a relieved breath, thanking the moon it was Trinity. She had been my saving grace, and if it weren't because of her, I wouldn't have even been in bed before midnight yesterday.

That woman had had quite the schedule with etiquette class, Lyperian history, fittings. However, every time Renata started going off again, Trinity would make it very difficult by throwing her little snarky comments.

"Thank you for teaching her the proper way. I don't think any of us would've survived breakfast without knowing the fork angle."

"You're really passionate about the rules. I wish I had that kind of free time."

After a few of those remarks, Madam Renata, who looked the slightest bit embarrassed, had toned it down a bit.

"Come in!"

The doors flew open at once, and I came to the conclusion that the guards had been standing there the whole time, waiting for my permission to open the door.

Trinity revealed herself with a loud huff, standing in the middle of the doorway with a folded, pink dress in her arms and an angry frown on her face. I bit down on my bottom lip and gave her a sheepish smile.

"Good morning?"

"It's not a good morning, Vi," Trinity sighed loud and dramatic, shutting the door behind her. "Not even Starlight lets us get up this early."

She dropped the dress on a nearby chair and sat down on the edge of the bed, but then she jumped back up. "Never mind," she fake gagged, clutching her stomach.

I blinked at her. "We didn't..."

She raised a brow, waiting.

I shook my head. "He's not even here," I mumbled under my breath.

At least one of us looked good and well rested. Trinity looked like she had gotten a full ten hours of sleep, while that was certainly not the case. I wondered if she already regretted agreeing to being a lady in waiting.

"We have an hour to get you ready. That means a bath, this dress, and then you have breakfast with —"

"Kylan?"

My tone was hopeful.

"No?" Trinity spoke, confused as she looked around the room. "No. Apparently, breakfast is with the queen in the garden. Her request."

Cecilia?

Well, that meant I definitely wouldn't be seeing Kylan anytime soon because there was no way he would voluntarily sit with his mother. Yet, I was relieved that it was her and not anyone else.

Queen Cecilia was a lot, but compared to the others she was my better option. Breakfast I could do.

I climbed out of bed and stretched. "Just give me a minute."

Shortly after, I made myself ready for the day. As the hot water ran over my skin, I tried to tell myself not to get too used to this level of luxury. Same like the room, the bathroom was decorated in perfectly golden, and spacious. There was a large shower, a bathtub, even golden towels.

It made me wonder how Kylan had felt when he first made the switch from Starlight to Lyperia. Everything here was so overwhelming it didn't even seem real.

Soon enough, I was standing in front of the mirror while Trinity helped with my dress. It was a beautiful, soft pink gown, fitted at the waist and flowing perfectly around my legs, with short sleeves that fell just off the shoulder. Though the shower should've awoken me, I was still half asleep, listening to her rant about Madam Renata, like she had been doing for a while now.

"She wanted to send ten maids to your room to bathe you, ten!" Trinity exclaimed. "But don't worry, I told her that wouldn't happen!"

"T-Ten?" I repeated, my eyes wide. "They still do that nowadays?"

"Right?" Trinity grumbled. "I'm pretty sure they taught you how to bathe yourself at the Bloodrose..."

The Bloodrose...

After that, I didn't hear anything else as her voice faded out. I wondered what they were doing right now. I was sure Uncle Ewan would be fine, drowning in the luxury, but what about the others?

Were they thinking of me at all? Because they didn't seem all that happy to see me yesterday.

"Okay, enough about Madam Renata," I said, forcing a smile as I changed the subject. "You and Dylan talk, right?"

Trinity moved her fingers to the back of my dress, skillfully tugging on the corset strings.

"Sometimes. Why?"

I tried my hardest to breathe through the sharp pain. "Did he say anything about how the Bloodroses feel? I don't know, I just—" I paused, watching her in the mirror. "I feel like they were kind of standoffish yesterday, don't you think?"

They always were, but yesterday even more than usual. Trinity gave me a gentle smile, one that didn't quite reach her eyes.

"I don't want to get between you and the Bloodroses," she said carefully.

"Trust me," I muttered, "there's nothing to get in between of, and you're one of us now so you might as well get used to it."

Besides, that damage had already been done a long time ago...

Trinity didn't say anything for a second.

"Well..." she breathed, tying a bow at the back of my dress.

"I can't speak for Alpha Fergus and the others... but Dylan...I guess he's just trying to see where you stand."

"Where I stand?" I repeated, confused.

She gave a little shrug, brushing my hair over my shoulder.

"Loose or braid?"

"Braid," I responded. "Now keep talking."

"I mean, you told us that this whole thing between you and Kylan is fake, and I think that gave Dylan a sense of relief. But..." She exhaled. "He isn't stupid, and he clearly sees what's going on here."

I froze for a second as I stared at her through the mirror.

"Yes, and?" I retorted. "I already told you...it's just until I learn how to control my—"

My voice trailed off before I could finish. I wanted to talk about my eyes, but then I thought of my other problem. Kayden...

I shook my head. I couldn't talk about it. Not now. Not with Trinity. She had so much on her mind already, I didn't want to burden her with any more of my issues or make her lie to Dylan, who would also lose his shit



if he found out.

"Dylan thinks Kylan loves you too."

I let out a surprised laugh while Trinity was focused on braiding my hair. Was he serious?

"He said Kylan is used to getting everything," she went on. "And that's how he knows he'll never let you go, and Dylan just doesn't want that kind of life for you."

"What life?"

"Stuck in this palace, isolated. You would have to give up your dream, compete with other women, carry the burden of being half...

you know—"

"And he thinks Kylan would rather let me go through all of that than letting me go because... he loves me," the words barely left my mouth.

"I'm not too sure about that," I whispered right away.

Because even though he looked at me with those rare soft eyes and held me like I was the last thing he'd ever touch, I started to wonder if I could ever make him feel the way he did when he talked about his first love.

That kind of love, whatever it was, only came once in a lifetime. It was kind of like the love I had for him.

Yesterday, I had really thought for a second that he would actually confess, but I was wrong.

"If you and Dylan are worried about Kylan trying to manipulate me into

staying here or playing house with a dozen other mistresses," I chuckled, tugging at the corset, "trust me, you've got nothing to worry about."

Trinity laughed, but it didn't quite reach her eyes. It was the kind of laugh people gave when they didn't agree, but didn't want to argue either.

"We should go," she said after a moment. "I wouldn't want to make the queen of Lyperia wait."

"Yes," I agreed. "That's not a good idea."

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We left immediately, making our way through the royal gardens, led by one of the queen's ladies who had been waiting for us. As we walked, I instantly took in every tiny detail of the garden. It smelled like grass and fresh flowers. Along the path were roses, daisies, violets...

Flowers were a big thing for us at the Bloodrose, and walking through this area made me think of home. Everything was green, quiet, the kind of place that made you want to meditate.

The only thing we could hear were our steps and the birds above. I looked up at the sky, my lips curling.

It was so strange to think about the amount of people that probably lived here at court, including the other mistresses, and Kylan's siblings I hadn't met yet. The ones I had seen seemed to disappear just as quickly. This palace was so big, people could hide in it forever.

I wasn't sure if I liked the palace, but I liked it here. I had hoped to stroll through it with Kylan, but being here with Trinity felt just as meaningful.

"This feels great," I said, looking at her. "Us walking together? It almost



feels like a date.”

Trinity giggled. “Yes, but don’t get used to it.”

She was right. Madam Renata had already made clear that more girls would stay by my side, just like Trinity. Except they would be her choices, not mine.

And that meant they could be anyone...

From a distance, I already saw Queen Cecilia sitting at a table along the path. There were other tables too, filled with the same women she’d been walking with when I first met her. But at her table, two girls were seated around her, and even from where I stood, it was clear they all looked alike.

Were they her daughters?

Kylan’s full sisters?

If they were, he had never told me anything about them, and I didn’t know what I was walking into.

Or maybe they were just cousins? Perhaps more of her ladies?

My chest tightened for a second, and I quickly turned to Trinity for reassurance.

“You’ll stay with me, right?”

She shot me a smile, immediately locking her arms with mine.

“If you think I’d ever bail on you again after Ch...” a breath escaped from her lips, replaced by a bigger smile. “Always.”