

## Chapter 197

Violet

I stood motionless.

Kayden turned halfway in his chair, his eyes steady on mine. It was almost like looking at Kylan. They had the same eyes, the same jawline, the same dark hair that fell to their neck, half pulled up into a bun.

One of the few differences was their gazes. Kylan usually wore a stone-cold expression, while Kayden had a slight look of mischief in his eyes. Also, he was bound to a wheelchair.

His skin looked paler than Kylan's, but now that I could see him clearly, he actually looked healthier than he did when I had seen him at Starlight.

His eyes bore into mine, waiting for an answer. But his smile was weak and calm, like he already knew I didn't have one.

I suddenly felt like a little kid caught sneaking into a room she wasn't allowed in. I had no idea I wasn't, but his question made me believe I wasn't too far off.

"The East Wing?" I asked, trying to play dumb.

He let out a low chuckle. "Yes. The first mistress' wing. The East Wing."

A chill ran down my spine. So this was Lady Mona's place.

I looked around now, noticing the details I had missed before. Everything was cleaner here. The air much colder, the silence much more suffocating.

"I got lost," I said quickly, tucking a piece of hair behind my ear. "The palace is...huge."

Kayden gave a slow nod, like he didn't even care in the first place. I wasn't really in the mood for small talk. There was only one thing on my mind, and that was the truth.

Did he see me or not?

"So what are you doing here?"

"Me?" He tilted his head. "I live here."

Right. Of course.

Stupid question.

A grin appeared on Kayden's face. "I told you we would meet again...in Lyperia."

Then it hit me.

He did say that.

He had said it after dinner during Family Day. That day he had stared at me from across the table for an hour straight, and afterward he had approached me. He had said that we would meet again, but I had brushed it off, thinking there was no way Kylan would ever take me here.

Kayden turned back toward the window, folding his hands in his lap. "Come."

I tried to take a step, but my feet stayed glued to the floor as I hesitated. Kayden was so confusing. He didn't seem that bad, not at all. But not

knowing whether he had seen my eyes or not was driving me crazy.

"Join me."

This time, I slowly walked forward. I could hear the sound of my own footsteps on the floor. They were a bit too loud for the silence, but I kept going until I stood beside him.

Now that I had a clear view from the large window, it took my breath away. I could see everything. The long driveway, the fountain, every single guard, every car lined near the entrance, staff moving in and out of the doors—everything.

If one wanted to get a clear view of what was happening outside, this was the perfect spot.

I felt Kayden's eyes on me, and my heart skipped a beat. Was he waiting to say something? Perhaps see something, like for my eyes to glow again?

Deep down, I knew there was no way I could leave this place without finding out what he knew. But how was I even supposed to ask?

'Beautiful view. By the way, did you see my eyes glow?'

"Are you here often?"

I settled for a simple question.

"Yes," he responded. "I was also here when you arrived because I wanted to see you. You looked so nervous, holding onto Kylan like your life depended on it," he let out a little laugh. "I'm not sure about a few of the mistresses, but the younger ones seemed to love you, and I know the people will love you too!"

Okay, so he spied on me, and for some reason sounded a bit too proud to share that. Totally not creepy at all.

Kayden stared back out of the window.

"You know I used to run through that whole area when I was little?" he pointed to the road below us. "My mom had to chase me down half the time, and Dad used to help her."

I let out a quiet, awkward laugh.

Dad...

Kylan referred to him as the king, Kayden as Dad.

Before I could react, Kayden shifted slightly in his chair and pointed his finger to the left. "We've got another window all the way in the back."

"Really?" I asked, trying to follow where he was going with this conversation. He was just saying anything that came to mind. You know what? Maybe he was a weirdo.

He was not like Kylan at all. He wasn't cold, but not exactly warm either. Just...different, and appeared to be in his own world.

"Yes," he said. "That one looks over the gardens."

"And I saw you looking at the violets," he rambled. "I had them growing before you and I even met. Took some convincing to get Dad to agree, but eventually, he gave in. We've been doing violets for four years now."

He stared at me with a proud grin. Kayden was doing most of the talking, but that was fine. I wasn't much of a talker to begin with, and in order to know whether what I was hiding was at risk, I had to find out more about

him.

Four years?

He must've been sixteen then. I knew Kylan was that age when he got appointed as crown prince, so that must've been right around when he lost the ability to walk.

"Violets...what a coincidence," I said slowly.

"Yes," he replied, watching me carefully.

"And what made you choose violets?"

He pursed his lips, like he was thinking carefully. Then, a soft smile appeared on his face. "I'll tell you one day."

I pushed a smile in return. "Then I'll hold you to it."

Kayden's eyes sparkled. I could see it clearly now. He was excited someone was actually listening. He seemed happy just to have someone, and he didn't want to waste a single second of it.

He didn't seem like the type who was used to being alone. He wanted attention, maybe even needed it. And in a strange way, I recognized that look. Because after Mom and Dad died, I had done the same.

I felt bad for him. It was almost as if he were still that sixteen-year-old boy, stuck in time because no one besides the king and probably his mom gave him the same attention he used to get.

What if I really was overreacting?

What if I had made a villain out of someone who just craved attention,

just because I thought he had seen my eyes? If he had seen them, he seemed like the type who would've said it already.

"What's your verdict?" he suddenly asked, catching me off guard. He studied me with his eyes.

"Verdict?"

"Yes," he rested his arm on the rest and leaned slightly forward. "Do you think I'm handsome or not?"

"L..." I stared at him, stunned. A blush crept up my face.

"For what it's worth," he spoke. "I think not even the violets in the garden can beat your beauty, and those are of the best quality. But you are the most beautiful Violet I have ever seen in my life."

There was no stutter, no hesitation, no shame. None of that as those words left his mouth while he looked right at me.

My cheeks warmed so fast I had to look away, and I couldn't help but compare. Kylan and Kayden were both bold, but not in the same way. Kylan threw out a few words here and there, which made me anticipate his compliments, but Kayden...

He seemed like the type to just say whatever was on his mind, and didn't care what I would say back.

But I didn't want to know what he thought of my beauty, and I did not seek his validation. All I wanted to know—no, all I had to know—was if he saw what happened that day. If he had seen my eyes glow.

"What is your dream, Violet?"



I looked up. His eyes were still locked on mine.

I swallowed, the question surprising me. Why would he even ask me that?

Until now, I had always given the same answer. I wanted to be a healer, like Claire. Now both Claire and Adelaide. I wanted to make the world a better place, be useful, and care for others in a way not many had cared for me.

But lately, that dream felt blurry. There was so much shit going on, that there was only one right answer for that question.

"I just...want to be happy."

Kayden hummed, as if he understood. He didn't tear his gaze away, just kept staring at me with fluttering eyelids.

"Are you not going to ask me about my dream?"

"Oh..." I frowned. I hadn't even planned to.

Just as I opened my mouth to speak, he released a breath. "Alright, alright—if you insist!"

What?

"My dream is to walk again," Kayden spoke with a simple bop of his head. "That's all I dream of...to move my legs again."

After those last words, I caught that sparkle in his eye dim just a little. So there was sadness behind all of those smiles. It made me wonder if he was only covering it up just so he wouldn't burden anyone with his pain. If he was either good at hiding it, or he had truly made peace with it all.

I couldn't say I didn't have it easier than Kayden, but maybe we weren't so different from each other...

Kayden stared out of the window once more, but this time his smile had fully faded. I glanced at his side, and for a moment, I saw that little boy I had seen through Adelaide's eyes.

The one with the sweet voice and curious eyes who had said one thing that had stuck with me. 'I like walking.'

Then I thought of Kylan, and the story he had told us in the woods. He really didn't do it on purpose, and it wasn't his fault, but it had still happened. Only it hadn't been Kylan who had taken that light away. It was the king...

How could it be that I could see that man was an asshole, Kylan could see it too, but Kayden couldn't?

How?

"He told you, did he not?"

My jaw was stuck. I couldn't say anything. My palms were sweaty as I wiped them on my dress, unsure of where this was going.

"I can see many things through people's eyes, and I can see that he told you."

Still, I didn't speak.

Kylan is my brother, and I've always wanted the best for him." Kayden let out a slow breath. "I'm not angry with him. Don't worry."

I nodded, but more to myself than to him. I needed to hear that. I knew I



hadn't come here to fix family issues, but it did feel like a relief, knowing he still had love for his brother despite everything that had happened.

Kayden had gone through so much. Both Kylan and Kayden, yet Kayden didn't look angry. If anything, he looked peaceful.

As if he had flipped a switch, he turned his head to look at me, and his smirk was back. "However..." he said, "I can't say I'm not a bit jealous."

I raised my eyebrows. "Jealous how?"

His smirk widened. "Jealous that he got mated to a witch with very special eyes."

No...

For a split second, everything went still. My breath hitched, my heart stuttered, and the space suddenly shrank around me.

He had seen my eyes.



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