

Chapter 204

Violet

His mouth twitched, and his eyes dropped to mine for a moment. I knew he wanted to argue, probably say something dramatic like, he disrespected my mate, the woman I love, which means now I will have to kill him. I knew how badly he wanted to act, but I didn't give him the chance.

"Please, for me?" I asked.

Kylan let out a dissatisfied huff. "For you," he finally agreed.

It could have to do with the fact that I had yet to see Chrystal—praise the Moon Goddess—but maybe Lyperia wasn't that bad after all.

Not because the people were kind, because most of them weren't. Also not because the palace was beautiful, and not even because the Moon Goddess wanted me here.

It was because of him.

Because Kylan was here.

And in this moment, I couldn't even imagine what my life would've looked like if I had been mated to that Aevanorin bastard brother instead.

As time passed, even more people came up to greet us, including the King of Elarin, who wasn't at all what I expected. Unlike Elyx and Tavi, he was a kindhearted man, and so were his sons.

Just when I let my shoulders drop and thought the whole thing was over, another trumpet blasted through the room. I let out a loud groan while



Kylan patted my back.

"Sorry," he said, laughing quietly. "We're almost finished."

A voice rang out. "The fourteenth mistress, Lady Ophelira, and the king's daughter, Princess Kaelyn."

"Is this a joke?" I mumbled. Because it had to be. There was no way we had to greet Kylan's thousandth mothers, right?

I looked toward the entrance and saw a woman I had never seen before. Her hair was copper, straight, shiny, and falling past her waist. She wore a beautiful green dress, simple but elegant, because she was the kind of beautiful that didn't need to draw attention.

But I didn't focus on her for long. Beside her was the cutest little girl I had ever seen.

I gaped at Kylan, whose expression had suddenly changed. He looked more alive, his face lit up.

"Kylan!" the little girl shouted. She let go of her mother's hand and ran toward him at full speed, leaving the guests cooing and laughing. Before she could trip over her yellow dress, Kylan bent down with open arms.

He picked her up with ease, spinning her in the air as he held her close, then pressed a kiss to her cheek.

I pouted, my heart melting at the sight. Seeing Kylan being this soft, genuinely happy, always did something to me.

Lady Ophelira greeted me with a curtsy, and I nodded back with a big, warm smile. I was too focused on the way Kylan looked holding that little girl. His eyes, his grin, the way he treasured her like she was his entire

world.

It was simply too adorable for words.

"This," he said, looking at me, "is Kaelyn. She's three years old, my favorite, and very smart." He poked her cheek.

Kaelyn held onto Kylan's shoulder and looked at me with curious, big green eyes. "Are you Violet?"

I bopped my head.

"Do you like my brother?"

It caught me off guard in the sweetest way. She was so well-spoken, confident, and sweet.

"She asked you a question," Kylan pushed, playfully.

"I do like your brother," I said softly, smiling at her. "A lot."

"Good," Kylan chuckled. Those safe brown eyes stared at me like I had said the only thing that felt right. Like anything else would've been strange—which made sense, considering all that had happened just before.

Kaelyn shifted a little in his arms, then tilted her head toward him. "Do you like her too?" she asked.

Kylan and I looked at each other again. He blinked, like the question caught him off guard, but then his expression changed. There was no hesitation anymore. "I love her."

He had said it again...



Although I had heard it before, I could still barely breathe. I smiled so hard my cheeks ached, and he noticed. He laughed softly like he couldn't help it.

"What about me?" Kaelyn sulked.

Kylan pressed another kiss to Kaelyn's cheek that made her giggle and squirm. It didn't matter how scary he could be when it came to protecting people, or how sharp his tongue could get because this was the real him too.

"Is she a princess?" Kaelyn moved on to her next question. I couldn't believe I was being interrogated by a three-year-old.

"No, I'm not," I laughed and shook my head, tickling her side. She giggled, squeezing her arms tighter around Kylan.

Well, I was. But there wasn't really a point in explaining to a three-year-old that I was supposed to be the future high priestess and the queen of the Common Lands, but her daddy fucked it all up, now was there?

Now I found myself wondering—where were the last nobles of the Common Lands? As distant as they were, they were technically still family. Due to their status, it would make sense for them to be around here somewhere, but I hadn't seen them.

Kylan hadn't mentioned them. Maybe it was because, over the years, they had all let go of a title that no longer meant anything. Or maybe they were simply too far removed, and he hadn't thought it was worth mentioning.

I was about to follow that thought any deeper when I felt a small tug on my dress. "I want to go to you now, Violet," Kaelyn blinked up at me.



Kylan barely had time to react. She was already climbing out of his arms and launching herself at me. I grabbed Kaelyn, and she rested her head on my shoulder. "Violet," she sang. "Mommy said you're like my big sister now, and we protect each other."

My heart swelled. I glanced at Ophelira, who had stood back gracefully. She met my eyes with a shy smile, unsure whether she had overstepped.

"Thank you," Kylan and I showed our gratitude at the same time.

"You've always been very kind to us, Prince Kylan," her lips curled as she dipped her head. "I'm just repaying that kindness."

I shifted Kaelyn on my hip as she tugged at my curls, giggling. As cute and as wise as she was, she was still a three-year-old. And right now, she was ruining the hair I'd tried so hard to protect.

"What do you think?" I laughed, struggling, "how does motherhood suit me?"

There was no answer, so I looked up. Kylan's eyes were fixed on me. They were soft, unreadable, as if his mind had wandered far away.

"Well?" I asked.

"I think..." Kylan sighed with a smile but still didn't say anything.

I waited, until Ophelira's laugh cut through the silence. "The two of you are too adorable."

"Come here, Kaelyn," she said. "I'm sure your brothers and sisters will also want to greet Violet."

"Bleh!" Kaelyn held me tighter. She stuck her tongue out, and I could've



sworn I felt a small line of spit on my cheek. "They stink!"

Yep, definitely one of Kylan's sisters.

Ophelira shot me a tired look, and one last warm smile as she carefully pulled Kaelyn from my arms. She whimpered in dismay but did not make a scene, and the two stepped away.

"She's too cute," I muttered, glancing up.

That was definitely a mistake, because the Bloodroses were still there, standing in the exact same spots. Even Dylan and Fergus hadn't shifted an inch.

Were they really not going to greet me?

Acknowledge me, even now?

Their energy felt too heavy, too suffocating, so I pulled my gaze away and looked back at Kylan.

"You never answered my question."

His face changed, curious at first, but there was a flicker of nervousness. "What question?"

What was his problem?

"Does motherhood suit me, or—"

My words were cut off by another trumpet, and I flinched again. Kylan's hand was already at my back before the sound even faded, and I leaned into his touch.

It felt like there was no end in sight as more mistresses came forward,



each accompanied by their own children—Kylan's siblings. Some were quiet, some cheerful, most dressed to impress, but none of them were shy. Just another Lyperian habit, I supposed.

This time the seventh mistress, Lady Isolde, came up with her two children. It was the girl, Katerina, the one Kylan adored, and another boy who appeared to be around her age.

Just like Kaelyn had done, Katerina ran to him with wide arms, and once again, Kylan didn't hesitate. This time he even stepped off the platform to hug both children, pulled them in close, and kissed their foreheads.

He always pretended like his time in Lyperia had been that bad. Like every Lyperian was that bad, and he was incapable of loving, but I could tell he loved them very much.

Sure, I had noticed he didn't treat all the mistresses and his siblings the same. Some were met with real smiles and gentle words, while others got a bit less. But a few, especially Lady Isolde and Lady Ophelira, seemed to bring out the real Kylan.

"You like her," I said quietly as Lady Isolde walked away, "and the fourteenth. I can tell."

Kylan chuckled. "They never treated me differently. Not once. They used to check up on me when no one else would. How could I not?"

My heart softened. I hadn't known that about him. He never told me, but I could see it now. He gave respect to those who had shown it to him.

The greetings continued, and it became clear as day that Kylan absolutely hated the mistresses who had revealed themselves after the seventh. I could understand why. They were colder, more stiff, not as welcoming,



and wary of me. They had been here for a long time, felt entitled, maybe even threatened.

And as they revealed themselves, my chest began to ache with each passing minute. It was all because of one simple thing.

After some time, I knew there was only one more mistress left, and as happy as I seemed, I definitely hadn't forgotten about him.

Kayden...

I felt the sweat prickle behind my neck and had to fight to stay calm. I didn't want to drive myself insane, but most of all, I didn't want Kylan to notice.

But of course, he did.

"Are you alright?" he asked. He reached for something in his pocket and gently dabbed my forehead.

I was sure I was sweating.

I couldn't tell him the reason I was shaking in my heels right now. Because to do that, I would have to tell him about Kayden.

And even though I should have, and the past I had seen with my own eyes had shown me I should, there were too many reasons not to.

Kylan believed I was smart enough to know when to hide my eyes...

He had just told me he loved me, and I didn't want him to take it back...

He had just threatened to kill the son of another king to protect me...

But most of all, I was already in too deep. And telling him now, after



everything, would only make matters worse... 1

"I'm okay. Just tired."

"I know," Kylan said. "It's just Lady Mona now."

Yes.

That was the problem.

The moment the sound of the trumpet hit once more, my stomach dropped. Even the crowd around us began to stir, and murmurs filled the room as people gathered closer. Of course they were curious. Everyone wanted to see how the king's favorite mistress, Lady Mona—who I still hadn't seen, by the way—would greet the crown prince's mate.

"The first mistress, Lady Mona, and the king's children. Prince Kayden —"

I didn't hear the rest.

My ears were ringing, my skin suddenly cold.

The massive doors opened, and everything else faded into a blur. I had been curious about Lady Mona, of course I had. But when I looked up, it wasn't her I was staring at.

It was him...

Kayden...

He sat in his wheelchair, arms relaxed as his brother pushed him. One brow was slightly raised, and that same crooked smirk, the one I remembered far too well, was plastered on his face.



My heart slammed against my chest, loud and hard. His eyes were on me, and I could tell he had no intention of looking away.

My breathing stuttered. Especially when I felt Kylan's gaze on the side of my face. He didn't say my name. He didn't need to.

Because I had a good idea he wasn't fooled anymore.

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