

Chapter 208

Violet

The trumpets didn't stop, even after he walked in.

King Elyx.

He entered like he was the star of the night, like the whole feast had been planned just to show him off.

The crown on his head still looked too heavy, just like the first time I saw it. His robe too thick for a room that wasn't even cold. A wide, pleased grin was stuck on his face.

Honestly? He looked ridiculous.

He didn't come alone. He brought an entourage. Queen Cecilia walked a few steps behind him. Her face stayed calm, but her eyes gave her away. She looked embarrassed. Like she didn't want to be part of this.

Kiora and Kaelis walked beside her, and their faces didn't look much different from hers.

At the king's side stood Beta Jack, his wife, and Nate.

Nate...

My heart sank the moment I saw him.

His eyes were red and puffy. I didn't need to guess what he had been doing. I already knew.

And it hurt. I wanted to jump off this platform, run to him, grab him, and pull him away.

Chrystal wasn't there.

That was a good thing.

Trinity bumped my shoulder. "Will he execute us if we refuse to stand?" she whispered.

Good question.

Curious, I glanced over at Kylan. His expression hadn't changed. That same small smirk sat on his face, like none of this surprised him.

"Do whatever you want," he said.

I was about to do just that—until I looked around and noticed something.

We were the only ones still sitting.

So I stood up, and Trinity followed. "Well, I don't want to take any chances," she mumbled.

I agreed.

Kylan gently tugged my hand, trying to pull me back down, but I pulled away. I knew he meant well. But a king was still a king—and no matter how much I disliked him for everything he had done, I wasn't going to disrespect him in front of everyone.

The king reached the center of the room and threw his hands up with a laugh. "Thank you, thank you—sit!"

His voice was loud. A little too happy. That look on his face said he was proud of himself for being the last one in.

One by one, people started sitting again. I waited until the very end, then



sat down too.

The king snapped his fingers lightly. "As you can all see, there's been a slight delay," he said with a grin. "In case anyone was wondering. My crown had to be polished."

Laughter filled the room.

He went on. "But since the spotlight is already on me," he said, "I would like to share some news with you all."

My eyes snapped to Kylan, and all I wanted to ask was one thing:

Is this man serious right now?

Kylan let out a sigh, like he was saying, Welcome to my world.

"Lady Rheva?" the king called.

From behind one of the long tables, a blonde woman stood up. She walked toward him gracefully, like every step was rehearsed. Her eyes were full of admiration for the king. And sure, he wasn't ugly or anything—but really? She had to be brainwashed, just like the rest of them.

Because there was no way...

I recognized her.

She was the same mistress who greeted us earlier—the only one, if I remembered right, who didn't have a child with her.

Kylan let out a soft scoff beside me as the woman linked arms with the king and rubbed her cheek against his shoulder, wearing a dreamy expression.

"Yes, Your Majesty," she said, voice high and sweet.

The king smiled down at her and raised her hand into the air before turning to the crowd.

"Tonight, we celebrate many things," he said, grinning wider. "One of them being Lady Rheva blessing Lyperia with my thirty-fourth child!"

The guests broke into applause — and believe it or not, even I clapped a little. I had to admit, that was...kind of impressive.

I glanced at Kylan. "You're getting another sibling, congr—"

But the look on his face shut me up real fast. It was clear he wasn't thrilled.

I stopped clapping, resting my hands on my knees, lips pressed together.

Trinity leaned over, covering her mouth to whisper, "I don't want to be disrespectful, because he is the king...but someone really needs to cut that thing off."

I blinked. "What thing?"

"Vi, are you serious right now?"

And then I got it.

"Oh." I nodded slowly, mouth open. "That thing."

We both watched as Lady Rheva thanked the crowd with her hands clasped and gave a deep curtsy before returning to her seat, eyes still glowing with love.

The king's entourage began to move forward, but Elyx didn't. He just



stood there, both hands stuffed into the sides of his heavy coat like an attention-hungry child.

Beta Jack and his family were the first to reach the table. He wore the same gentle smile he always did as he approached Trinity.

"Miss Richard," he greeted with a small nod.

Then he stepped closer to us and bowed. "Your Highness. The royal mate."

Kylan gave him a weak smile—just enough to be polite. Jack's wife followed behind him, and the moment her eyes landed on me, I knew.

She didn't like me.

There was something sharp in her stare. She didn't say anything, but her face said enough. It was full of quiet judgment.

She was Chrystal's mother. A mother's love ran deep, and maybe she couldn't help it. But still...

I don't know what Chrystal told her.

But did she know her daughter tried to kill me?

Beta Jack reached into his pocket and pulled out a small box. "I brought you a—"

"You can put it on the table with the rest," Kylan cut him off. "You're late. Gift hour is closed."

He waved a hand, brushing him off.

Jack's smile didn't fade, but I could see it—he was surprised. Still, he



kept his composure, didn't argue, and moved on without a word.

I knew Kylan respected him. So this wasn't cruelty. It was pride. A quiet punishment. That was just how Kylan was. And I trusted that he had his reasons.

Then came Nate.

And again, my heart sank.

He looked awful. Tired. Worn down. His hair was damp with sweat, his eyes red and empty, dark circles under them. His whole body looked tense, like he was holding himself together with thread.

Lunaris...

It was written all over him. And I'd be shocked if no one else noticed. This was the worst I had ever seen him.

"Vivi," he said softly, reaching out and taking my hand.

His fingers were cold and shaking. When our eyes met, I couldn't tell what he was trying to say.

The way he said my name—it felt like an apology.

But for what?

For not being here?

For using Lunaris again?

He gave my hand one last rub before walking over to Kylan, giving his shoulder a gentle squeeze. Then he passed by us. And I just sat there, feeling helpless, watching him go.



"Nate looks a little off, doesn't he?" Trinity commented.

"You think?" I mumbled.

She threw me a suspicious glance, like she knew something, but didn't say more.

Maybe she had her own guesses.

But it was not for me to tell.

Queen Cecilia was next.

She stopped in front of Trinity first and gave her a soft smile. A quiet breath slipped out of her. "I just love you," she said, like a mother talking to her favorite niece.

Then her eyes turned to me. She reached out, took both of my hands. Her lips curved into something gentle, but she didn't speak.

She didn't have to.

I could hear the words in her silence.

'My little flower. I feel so, so sorry for you.'

I glanced at Kylan, hoping for support—but he was probably the one who needed it more.

His eyes were lowered to the table. He looked just as tense as he had when Queen Cecilia had come out to greet us. Kylan avoided her gaze, and she avoided his, too.

"We'll talk later," Cecilia said softly, letting go of my hands before walking on.

Kaelis and Kiora followed her, greeting me just as their mother had.

They didn't look at their brother either.

I wished I could fix it...

More greetings came. More people filled the tables. But my eyes drifted back to the king.

He still stood in the center of the room, smacking his lips, only now beginning to notice that the attention had started slipping away from him.

That was when he began to walk toward our table.

Was he going to greet me?

Was he going to ignore me?

I didn't know. But I could feel the whole room shift. Everyone was watching, waiting—just to see what would happen. Waiting to see how the king would greet his future daughter-in-law.

I hated Elyx.

And I had every reason to.

But this moment wasn't about me. It was about saving face. The Bloodroses hadn't shown, and the last thing I needed was for the court to start siding with the king just because I looked small.

So I stood, even though I knew it might go badly.

Kylan tugged on my dress. "What are you —"



But it was already too late.

I dipped into a graceful curtsy. "Your Majesty, I—"

He walked straight past me.

The room filled with hushed whispers, quiet murmurs, and chuckles.

My feet stayed planted, my face flushed hot.

I felt humiliated.

Uneasy...

Maybe this wasn't a good idea.

My hands clenched at my sides. Then I heard the scrape of Kylan's chair being pushed back.

"I'm afraid you didn't hear her, Your Majesty!"

"My sister greeted you, Your Majesty!"

There were two voices at once.

It was Dylan...

He stood at the entrance, eyes locked onto the king's back. My eyes widened. I had no idea where he had come from, or how long he had been standing there. But he was real.

He was here.

The room went dead quiet as everyone stared between the three of them, waiting for something to happen.



Kylan's eyes followed Dylan as he walked closer. The king slowly turned around, and his lips curved in a surprised smirk, until his gaze landed right on me.

"Hmm?" He let out a chuckle. "My bad."



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