



Chapter 209

Violet

My eyes stayed locked on the king's, even as Dylan stepped behind the table and Trinity slid over one spot, letting him sit between us.

She had been right.

He came.

But I didn't have time to process it.

Kylan was still standing beside me, stiff as ever. Not a single muscle in him relaxed. If anything, he looked ready to jump across the table the second the king made a wrong move.

"Don't wait now," King Elyx said, his voice loud for everyone to hear. His eyes were sharp, cold, burning with rage. "You have something to say. Speak."

Fuck, I hated this man...

I knew he thought that I was unintelligent, brainless, empty-headed, an idiot. He wanted me to mess up in front of everyone.

But I wasn't going to. Not today.

I lifted my chin. "I want to thank you for welcoming me into your kingdom," I said, steady and clear, "and for all of this."

I gestured around the room to the hall, the lights, the maids, the musicians. Then forced a smile.

"Though, if you had come just a few minutes earlier, you wouldn't have



missed the feast your people worked so hard to prepare...Your Majesty."

I dipped into a curtsy, but my eyes never left his, and that's when I caught his smile drop.

He was furious.

If he could've lunged forward, wrapped his hands around my throat, and humiliated me the way I had just done to him, he would've.

But I was done being humiliated.

I was tired of playing this Lyperian game.

Between Kayden, half the king's mistresses, and their spoiled children, and Elyx himself — I was over it.

"Actually, I have quite a few surprises planned," the king said, his voice tight. "I don't think I've missed anything."

His head bopped in a slow nod, and I didn't even want to know what he had planned. It didn't take long before he turned away and made his way behind the table.

And thank the Moon, he was seated at the far end.

I glanced at Kylan, and he was looking right back at me. He seemed surprised, but I couldn't tell if that was a good thing or a bad thing.

I didn't know what was going through his head. Had I gone too far?

Had I made it worse?

He pulled my hand into his and squeezed it as we sat back down together. I wasted no time. "What does he have planned?" I asked Kylan.



He didn't answer right away. "Who knows," he sighed after a few seconds. Kylan used his arm to gently push me backward so he could get a better look at Dylan.

Dylan, of course, looked right back at him. The two of them locked eyes across the table, shooting lasers at each other, and I was stuck in the middle.

I guess I didn't really know how I felt about Dylan being here. Not yet.

It was a good thing he had opened his mouth for once, but where had he been all this time? I had so much to say to him, yet I held myself back. This wasn't the right time. Not while everyone could see us.

"Turns out you're not a coward after all," Kylan said. Unlike me, he did have the time.

Dylan chuckled. "That's funny," he said. "I thought the same thing about you when I walked in."

"No, Kylan is right!" Trinity pushed her hand over his mouth to shut him up. "I was also starting to doubt whether my Moon Goddess mated me to a coward."

This time, Dylan's eyes softened, and Trinity rubbed his chest to soften the blow. "But now I can see she hasn't."

I let out an awkward little giggle as I looked between them. "Okay," I drew in a sharp breath. "That's enough for now."

Surprisingly, the king chose the perfect moment to interrupt this time. He clapped his hand on the table to get everyone's attention, then stood up once again.



"I'm sure we're all starving to death!" His voice blasted through the room, loud and dramatic. "And at this rate, I might die from hunger before we get to my surprise!"

The whole room broke into laughter like it was the funniest thing they had ever heard. But it wasn't.

He didn't even say anything funny, and somehow they were laughing anyway. This was the reason he kept acting like he owned the world—because everyone kept letting him believe he did.

"I believe it's time for the opening speech!"

I shot Kylan a sharp glance. "I'm not—"

"I know," he said right away, before I could even finish. Kylan rose from his seat, running his hand down his suit to smooth it out. He looked so calm, so unaffected.

I watched closely as he turned slightly to address the crowd. "I want to thank everyone for being here tonight," he started, his voice strong. "The council, my mothers, my siblings, everyone who traveled from far—thank you!"

Then he turned to the right. "And I would also like to thank my father, whom I look up to every single day, and my beautiful mother, who is the heart of this kingdom."

I let out a quiet laugh.

Yes, okay. He was just speaking out of his ass, and actually managed to make it sound like something. He probably had done this a thousand times before, too.



He was so good at it that if I didn't know this family personally, I would've believed every word that left his mouth.

Kylan didn't look up to the king, and certainly didn't address him as 'father'.

Cecilia wasn't the heart of the kingdom. She wouldn't even talk to her son.

"But tonight isn't about me," Kylan said, his eyes turning to me. "It's about her."

Soft sounds of adoration filled the room, but I started to panic.

No, no, don't put attention on me.

Don't you dare put attention on me.

But of course, he reached for my hand. I stared at him, wide-eyed.

"What are you doing?" I whispered.

Kylan just smiled down, reassuring me. Even though all I wanted was to crawl under that table and disappear, I took his hand and stood.

His focus went back to the crowd. "I've often tried not to question the Moon Goddess," he said. "I've done my best to trust her path, even when it didn't make sense. But if I'm honest..."

He paused for a moment. "I was scared. Scared of who she would pair me with. Ever since I understood what it meant."

The last thing I had expected was for Kylan to admit his fears in front of all of these people, but something shifted. "I've actually been preparing



myself for the worst," he said with a soft chuckle.

As he looked at me again, I could feel the warmth in his eyes.

"But then," he said, turning back to the crowd once again, "she gave me Violet."

What?

My heart began beating faster.

"Violet is something special," he went on. "She doesn't care about jewels or titles or who bows when they're supposed to. She cares about doing the right thing. She cares about people...she cared about me."

I looked down for a second. I wasn't used to being talked about like this. Especially not in a room like this, filled with people I didn't know, who probably didn't want me here to begin with.

"I'm sure many of you have your opinions," Kylan continued. "About letting some girl from the swamp into our royal court."

A wave of light laughter came from several guests, and even though I laughed as well, I would definitely kill him for that comment later.

"But tonight," he stated, "I want you to remember how she greeted you. How humble she was. And I want you to judge for yourselves."

He wasn't begging or forcing them to see me. He was just asking, and that meant a lot to me. I didn't know what they would decide, but I knew one thing.

He had just told the entire kingdom to judge for themselves, to look past the swamp.



Kylan kept speaking. "She's soft-spoken," he said. "Gentle. Kind in a way that feels rare these days. And I know that when the time comes for her to take her place beside me on this throne, everyone in this room will learn something from her, and hopefully something about leading with heart."

Wait...

What?

My heart skipped a beat as I began to realize the impact of his words.

Did he just say stay?

Did he just say he expected me to take my place beside him?


We hadn't even discussed it yet.

Kylan didn't pause. "She's a little clumsy and very stubborn," he said with a teasing smile, making a few people chuckle.

"But that's what made me fall in love with her."

Whispers spread across the room again, and I was probably thinking the same thing as everyone else.

Did he just confess his love out in the open?

"She's not just the girl I'm bonded to," Kylan announced. "She is my only love. My first love. And as crown prince, I ask every single one of you here tonight to treat her with the same respect you would treat me. Because Violet Hastings will be my only love." 

I felt my whole body go numb.



His first love...

The clumsy one.

The stubborn one.

The one that wasn't the brightest.

That's when I realized.

It had been me all along.

I wasn't even sure if I wanted to laugh, cry, kiss him, or be offended that I had just been called clumsy in front of the entire kingdom. Probably all four.

But that didn't matter right now.

The only thing that mattered was that I was his first love, just like he was mine.

Our eyes met again, and his gaze locked to mine like the rest of the room didn't exist. Although I tried, I could barely breathe from excitement.

"And now," Kylan smiled, still looking at me, "let's enjoy the feast in honor of the one I love."

As soon as those words left his mouth, servants appeared with platters of food, but Kylan and I were still looking at each other. I only had eyes for him.

Staring into his brown eyes, I felt like I was stuck between two worlds. One where he had just said everything I never expected in a single night, and one where I was still freaking out because he had just said he wanted



me in Lyperia.

Did I even want that?

I had no idea what to say, how to act, or what to do.

"Violet," Kylan took my other hand, and a small chuckle left his lips as he looked down at our fingers. "Now you know it's been you all along."

I felt my lips curl. "Now I know."

Our hands were still linked as we sat back down, and I let my thumb brush over his. I wasn't sure about many things, but I knew one thing. This felt good. Being with Kylan.

"Beautiful, son!"

Loud clapping broke through the calm, and a chair scraped back so harshly it made everyone turn again.

King Elyx...

The king kept clapping and moved to the front of the table. Queen Cecilia shifted her gaze and gave me a worried look, like she knew what was about to happen.

"My son, Crown Prince Kylan!" the king said, flashing a grin, "just gave a wonderful speech. But there's one little thing I wish to correct!"

He opened his arms. "In Lyperia, it is possible and it is allowed to love more than one woman."

"And I should know," he added proudly. "I love fourteen!"

The sound of laughter surrounded him, and his smile grew. He looked



back at Cecilia. "Ah—I'm sorry, I forgot one. Fifteen!"

That little comment sparked even more laughter.

Disgusting.

"Don't get me wrong," Elyx breathed. "I'm very glad Kylan has found someone he loves. That's rare. Beautiful. Really!"

He motioned toward the same door he had entered through. "For the sake of Lyperian policies, I just hope he has space left for one more!"

Soft chatter spread through the room, and the doors opened. I didn't know what to expect, and deep down, I didn't want to know. That's why I did the one thing I knew best. Lower my gaze.

As soon as I did, I heard the clicking sound of heels, and my eyes fell on a long white gown brushing over the floor.

Screw it.

Maybe I did want to know.

My eyes slowly traveled up, and when they reached the face that belonged to the dress, I stopped breathing.

No fucking way...

Elyx turned with open arms like he was introducing a miracle.

"I would like to present," he declared, "the first mistress! Daughter of my loyal beta—Chrystal Wyrmsbane!"

The crowd reacted instantly, a few standing in a show of support. After all, that was their very own Chrystal.



"I'm not surprised," Dylan muttered beside me.

I tuned out his voice and looked to the side, at Kylan, who had completely gone still. One of his hands twitched on the table, while the other squeezed mine so hard it nearly crushed my bones.

I could relate to his anger. I knew she would be pushed as one of the mistresses because Kylan had warned me, but this time Elyx had really taken it too far.

My own gaze dropped to the sharp knife in front of my plate.

One good aim, I thought. That's all it takes. 2

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