

Chapter 21

Violet

She leaned closer, her breath hot against my ear. “Stay away from Kylan, or your fate will be even worse than the last girl who tried taking him from me.”

Then she straightened, and walked away without another word.

I drew in a long breath, trying to shake off the encounter before heading back to the dorm. Giving things like that attention would only make it worse for me.

~

Trinity didn’t come back until late in the afternoon, carrying two large shopping bags. “I went a bit crazy again,” she called out as she threw them on the couch.

I laughed. “What did you buy this time?”

“Oh, you know, just the essentials,” she smirked. “A dress for me, a dress for you, heels, jewelry, and some other stuff. Nothing much.”

I raised a brow, grateful but also surprised. Trinity’s Dad spoiled her rotten, and she was able to buy anything she wanted. Technically, I was well off too, Uncle gave me an allowance—but I’d never dare ask for more. Certainly not to buy designer clothes.

“Thank you so much for coming with me tonight.”

Trinity waved me off, pulling out one of the dresses with her free hand. “Sure, no problem,” she said. “This dinner better be amazing because I canceled my plans for this.”

“What plans?” I asked, feeling a bit of guilt.

She lifted her shoulders, still unpacking the bags. “Oh, nothing much—my mate had this dinner thing, and he thought we could spend some more time together, like actually talk about our future for once.”

“Trin—”

“He was very understanding when I told him my socially awkward roommate needed me,” Trinity explained quickly. “He said his little sister is the same, but honestly, I think he might be a bit socially awkward himself.”

I rolled my eyes, pretending to be offended even though I knew she was right. “Really? Thanks a lot.”

As she bent down to grab something else from her bag, I noticed a faint bite mark on her neck. It was covered with foundation, but I could still see it clearly. I smiled to myself, thinking how lucky she was. Her mate wasn’t wasting any time marking his territory.

“So, were you in class and then went shopping, or were you with your mate all day?” I asked, curious.

Trinity looked up, putting a finger in front of her lips. She then giggled, tossing a dress at me. “Anyway, we’ve got three hours until the dinner, and these clothes aren’t going to put themselves on. So, come on!”

Her energy was contagious, and even with everything on my mind, I couldn’t help but smile. This dinner might not have been my first choice for the evening, but at least Trinity was there to keep things fun.

I got dressed and looked at my reflection, turning slowly. The velvet dress Trinity had bought fit me perfectly, hugging my body in all the right places. It was knee-length, a deep shade of red—but gorgeous.

“I actually like this dress. It looks good,” I admitted.

“Yes!” Trinity cheered, adjusting her own dress. It was also velvet, but then in blue. “I love the confidence!”

After we were finished, Trinity started doing my hair and makeup, just like she had done for the Starlight Festival. She curled my hair into beautiful waves.

“So,” she said after a while, “how was last night?”

“How was what?” I played dumb, knowing exactly what she was referring to.

“You know,” she threw back her head. “Spending time with Kylan in the woods. How was it?”

I sighed, annoyed by the question. “It wasn’t just me. Nate was there, and my brother too—”

“Wait, you’ve got a brother that goes to this school?”

I nodded. “Yeah. Did I never mention it?”

Trinity shook her head, curling another section of my hair. “We get along so well, but we barely know anything about each other,” she noted. “But don’t try to change the subject. I can see that glow on your face, so I know something happened.”

I sighed, knowing there was no way out of this conversation. We’d made a pact not to ever talk about the secrets we shared—but there was also this other thing that happened.

“He told me to stop flirting with Nate—but I wasn’t,” I said, thinking about everything that had happened.

“Wait, seriously?”

“Yeah,” I nodded, biting my lip. “And when I told him I wasn’t his and could do what I wanted, he...”

My cheeks flushed, thinking about the way he hovered over me, pulled me in, wrapped his firm fingers against my waist. I didn’t want my body to react, but it did—and I had felt things I had never felt before.

“He what?” Trinity asked eagerly.

I scoffed, trying to act unaffected. “He got all possessive and was like, ‘Should I just take you right here in these woods?’” I mimicked his deep voice, hoping to hide how flustered I really was.

Luckily, it worked, because Trinity burst out laughing. “Is this guy serious?”

“Very,” I mumbled. “But don’t worry—he’s made it very clear how much he despises me, and I hate him too.”

“Hate?” Trinity pursed her lips, her tone teasing.

I paused, feeling a strange knot in my stomach. Was it hate?

He frustrated me, confused me, and pushed every one of my buttons, but hate? That felt like a word I was throwing around too easily. The truth was, I wasn’t sure what I felt.

“How do you feel about seeing him tonight?”

I hesitated, not wanting to admit that the thought of seeing Kylan made my heart beat faster. “I want him to stay as far away from me as possible,” I spoke just above a whisper. The more I tried to convince myself of my hatred for him, the more I realized my feelings were far more complicated than that.

Ever since his confession, I began seeing a different side of Kylan. He wasn’t just cold and distant—he was scared. Scared of having a mate chosen by the Moon Goddess, due to his awful childhood. If the Moon Goddess hadn’t chosen his mother, there wouldn’t have been a rivalry with his brother. Now that he’d found his mate, there were so many things he had to consider.

I wasn’t a Lycan, I wasn’t from a big, powerful pack, and I wasn’t of noble blood.

He couldn’t help it because it was the way he was raised. His whole life had been shaped by rivalry and expectations. I could resent him for how he treated me, for how cold he could be, but I couldn’t bring myself to truly hate him. Not after knowing what he’d been through.

~

By the time we were finally ready, it was almost eight. I glanced at the time as we walked through campus, heading toward the restaurant.

“Okay, if I could run in these heels, I definitely would, because we’re really late!” I panicked, checking the time on my phone again.

Trinity sighed dramatically. “Relax. Trust me, nobody’s going to shed tears because we’re a few minutes late.”

I knew she was right, but I still wanted to get there before anyone else to avoid making a big entrance. Unfortunately, it was already too late for that.

“Look, we’re already here!” Trinity said, pointing toward the restaurant in sight. She had done her research, and according to her, it was one of the most expensive spots on campus.

She had mentioned many affluent shifters went there, and getting a reservation was difficult—unless you were someone like Rochwall. An Elite alumn.

As we approached, the door got opened for us and the second we stepped in we were greeted by the sound of a piano.

The place was stunning. It had marble floors, chandeliers—and everything else that screamed luxury. It was the kind of place where I imagined one meal would cost as much as my monthly allowance.

“Would you like me to take your jackets?” a man at the entrance asked.

“No, thank you,” Trinity and I said in unison.

Trinity nudged me playfully. “I really want to know what Professor Hotwall is earning to afford all of this.”

I chuckled at the nickname she’d come up with for Rochwall. We made our way over to the host stand, where a man greeted us with a smile. “Reservation for James Rochwall?” I asked.

He nodded. “Right this way.”

Trinity and I linked arms as we followed him through the restaurant, passing the rich-looking guests.

“Why does this place smell like my mate?” Trinity whispered jokingly.

“Must be a good piece of meat,” I teased.

“That must be it!” she gasped. “I’ve been bouncing on his so much that it’s all I can smell.”

I fluttered my eyes, surprised. “What?”

Trinity gave me an innocent look. “What?”

We both burst into giggles as the man led us up the stairs to a private balcony. “Here you go,” he said politely, opening the door. “Please enjoy your evening.”

I stepped in first, Trinity right behind me. A few were already seated, while others stood, chatting. My eyes instantly landed on Kylan, who was leaning back in his chair—eyeing me like we had unfinished business. His eyes inspected me from head to toe, and I instantly hugged my arms around my waist, feeling insecure.

Why did he have to look so good?

He wore a crisp white shirt, his dark hair was slicked back, and those dark eyes? They were so beautiful, I could just get lost in them.

Wait...beautiful?

A smirk appeared on Kylan’s lips, and I felt a rush of embarrassment. I’d been practically eating him up with my eyes, and he knew it.

Quickly, I tore my gaze away and scanned the group. For some reason, I felt relieved that Kylan didn’t seem to have brought a plus one with him.

So much for hating him

“Violet,” Rochwall approached me, his arm linked with a beautiful brunette I didn’t recognize. “It’s so good to see you!”

The woman smiled and nodded, shaking my hand. “Jane, his wife—nice to meet you.”

I blinked in surprise. I had no idea he was married—but then again, why would he be single with that face?

There was something different about him tonight. Maybe he’d already had a few drinks, because this version of Rochwall was far more cheerful and laid-back than that grumpy man I’d seen in the library earlier.

I stepped aside to make room for Trinity. “By the way, this is my friend—Trinity.”

Rochwall smiled warmly at her. “Ah, I’ve heard good things about you from the teachers. I’m also an old friend of your dad’s.”

“Really?” Trinity began, but suddenly stopped mid-sentence. Her eyes widened, and she took a deep breath, like she was smelling something in the air.

Just then, the door opened, and Dylan stepped in. I hadn’t seen Nate yet, but now that Dylan and I were hopefully starting to get along, I already felt a bit more at ease.

“Nice timing,” I said, gesturing to him. “This is my brother, D—”

“Dylan?” Trinity whispered.

Dylan looked at her in shock. “Trinity?”

His cheeks flushed, and a small chuckle left his lips as Trinity flew into his embrace. “What are you doing here, babe?”

I stood frozen, as the realization hit me. She did meet my brother, better yet—the two were extremely close.

“W-Wait,” I stammered, my voice trembling with disbelief. “My brother is your mate?”