



Chapter 211

Violet

The feast was in full swing.

People laughed, talked, and clinked glasses. Every few minutes, a new dish showed up at the table, and servants worked way too hard to keep up. All the tenseness from before had been replaced, but my mind still wasn't in it.

I was still trying to give it a place, that Chrystal had knelt to kiss my shoe in front of everyone.

And even though Kylan didn't formally disown her or say anything directly, the message had been loud and clear.

He made his choice.

He picked me.

I should've felt happy.

I should've been proud.

But...I wasn't. Not fully.

Sure, it felt great and all, but Chrystal was still here. Still seated at the royal table, and even if it was at the far end, it had pissed me off.

This table was supposed to be for family, and the king had already decided that Beta Jack would be his family. Chrystal even being allowed to sit here said a whole lot.

And if there was one thing I knew about Chrystal, it was that she didn't



give up easy. She had this unhealthy obsession with Kylan, and would stop at nothing to get him.

All her life, she had believed she had the right to him because no one ever told her she didn't, and not even I could stop that.

Starlight was Starlight, but now that I had embarrassed her in her home, I couldn't help but wonder what her next move would be.

A warm brush at my hand pulled me out of my thoughts. It was Kylan. I looked up at a pair of concerned, brown eyes.

"You okay?" he whispered.

I nodded. "Are you?"

He gave a short chuckle but didn't answer. An exhausted breath left his lips. "I want you to know that you are the only one for me," he said. "No one will ever change my mind. But with the council sitting right there—"

"I know," I said softly, cutting him off.

I did know, and I wasn't mad at him.

There were just some things out of control, and I could understand that for now, but if he really did intend on keeping me here, there were definitely some changes that would need to be made long term.

For starters, I didn't want any mistress. Not a first, second, third—none. Just like he wasn't willing to share, I wasn't willing to share either.

But once again, now wasn't the time.

I felt a light tap on my back and turned to look at Dylan, his face blank as



usual. What was it now?

Trinity was too busy talking to Kaelis and Kiora. She definitely seemed to be enjoying herself more than Dylan. That much was clear.

My eyes drifted to Dylan's plate, and I frowned. He hadn't touched his food at all. He hadn't even taken a single bite.

Kylan had poured his whole damn heart out during that speech, he had just put himself on the line yet again, and Dylan still didn't budge. He just didn't care about any of that because his mind had already been made up.

He didn't want me here.

I brought a cup to my lips to satisfy my dry throat.

"Dad wants to talk to you later."

I nearly spit out my drink.

Fergus?

"If he wants to talk," I said, wiping my mouth, "then why isn't he here?"

"You know why." Dylan glanced around like he didn't want to say the words too loud. "He is right outside, and if you want to, you can go outside right now and hear what he has to say," he mumbled. "We don't belong here, Violet. You don't belong here."

I fluttered my eyelids.

Excuse me?

What was he even doing here then?



It obviously wasn't for support. Sure, it had started off that way when he made his somewhat cool entrance. But now?

I wasn't even sure what he was trying to pull.

No one forced him to be here. Even Nate had already left a short while after his mom did because he didn't want to be here, so what was he still doing here?

"What are you doing here, Dylan?" I asked bluntly.

Dylan jerked his chin back, like I had offended him. "What am I doing here?" he breathed, his eyes shifting to Trinity.

And that's when it hit me.

It wasn't about me.

It was never about me.

He was afraid.

Afraid that Trinity, the only one able to keep up with his shit, might choose me over him if he kept acting like this. An incapable brother.

He didn't care that Kylan had defended me publicly.

He didn't care that I was happy for once after everything I had to experience at the Bloodrose, which he had also been part of.

This was about his fear of being left behind.

Kylan rested his arms on the table and eased forward. His eyes locked with Dylan's, and the tension between them was thick enough to cut with a knife.



"Is he bothering you?" Kylan asked.

"No," I said quickly.

Dylan raised an eyebrow. "Is he bothering you?"

"No!" I said again.

"Good," they both muttered at the same time, almost under their breath. I sighed and rolled my eyes. I would give Kylan a pass, but what was Dylan's problem?

What was he, five?

"And be careful with the food, Violet," Dylan said quietly. "Lyperians have a history of poison—"

He didn't even finish the sentence.

But I knew. I knew exactly what he meant.

He was talking about Kayden.

He was talking about how Kylan poisoned his own brother.

I felt Kylan stiffen next to me. His expression didn't change much because he already seemed pissed.

"Be careful with your brother, Violet," Kylan said. "One day he might stick a knife in your back or cut your throat while you sleep."

Dylan's eyes widened, his nostrils flared, but he had brought this on himself. Kylan had genuinely tried to be civil with him, despite everything.



I felt hopeless as both of them leaned back in their seats, not saying another word.

Just like that, I was right in the middle between two men who weren't fond of each other, but only one of them expected me to pick a side.

Just when I thought the night had gone from good to bad and stayed bad ... it somehow got worse.

Loud squeals came from the table. Kiora was yelling, and Kaelis jumped up from her chair.

"A rat!" someone called out.

Even the king jumped up like he had seen death itself. My brain went numb as I just sat there and let my shoulders drop.

I didn't even bother to stand up because I knew exactly what, or who, it was—and it definitely wasn't a rat.

A small, fluffy thing launched itself onto the table. Jumper.

She dodged a few dishes she didn't like, stole a few she did like, and released a squeak as she ran straight toward Kylan.

Squeals filled the room again, this time from the other tables.

Kylan calmly whistled and extended his arm right before Jumper jumped straight into it. Her little cheeks were too big for her small frame and had been stuffed full of whatever she had just stolen.

"You can all relax," Kylan announced, petting her like a proud dad. "It's just my pet squirrel."



Every sound disappeared, and almost everyone wore the same look of disgust. Kylan didn't care.

He was smiling, scratching under Jumpie's chin as she swayed her tail from side to side. The two of them were adorable. I'm sure she had missed him all day.

"Hah!" the king laughed, clapping his hands once. "How fitting! A Bloodrose mate, and an outside squirrel to go with it!"

By now, it didn't surprise me how half the room burst into laughter over something that wasn't even that funny. It was funny to the king, though, because he had just insulted the Bloodrose.

I looked at Kylan and Jumpie with a tired smile. Of all the things to bring peace to both of us this night, it had to be her.

"We can do two things," he said, reaching across the table for a few berries.

"Yes?"

He offered one to Jumpie, and she immediately stuffed it into her already fat cheek. I couldn't help but laugh, seeing her tiny claws gripping his finger like he was her whole world.

Kylan looked at me again. "We can sit here and wait for the dance they're going to try and force on us later."

I froze. "D-Dance?"

"Or you can wait until Madam Renata introduces you to those poor girls."

He glanced toward the far end of the room, where Madam Renata sat



with the girls who looked like they were about to faint from stress—my ladies-in-waiting. Especially after the whole Chrystal situation, they kept sneaking glances at me. But seriously, I wasn't a monster.

"Or stay here with..."

I followed his gaze and saw exactly who he meant. The king was having a conversation with Chrystal, and she laughed a bit too much. Queen Cecilia took a sip and rolled her eyes at her.

No, not an option.

Kylan leaned in a little. "Or we can escape. Right now. No more Renata. Just us."

I didn't even need a second to think.

"Yes," I said. "Let's go."

I glanced to my right. Dylan was too caught up with Trinity to notice. Good for them.

Kylan and I pushed our chairs back slowly.

Jumpie climbed right up his arm and rested proudly on his shoulder like she was part of the plan, too.

No one noticed us. They were too busy focusing on King Elyx, who was telling a story so loud everyone could hear. Something about a war, a vampire, and his fourth mistress.

Soon enough, Kylan and I slipped through a back door and found ourselves somewhere in the hallway, away from the feast.



"That wasn't too hard," Kylan smiled, taking my hand in his.

"No," I agreed. "Now, where are we going?"

"Somewhere we can be alone."

"To continue our...talk?"

Kylan chuckled. "Sure."

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