

## Chapter 214

Violet

Yes, I called him by his name because that's what he made himself to me. Not Alpha Fergus, not Uncle Fergus, not dad...just Fergus.

Surprisingly, it seemed to get to him. The greenhouse went quiet, and the only thing I could hear was breathing. That was how tense it got. Just saying his name, Fergus, was like it had drained the life out of him. His shoulders dropped. His mouth opened, but no words came out. Just air.

I really thought that was the end of it. Then he opened his mouth again.

"I am your father, and you will address me as such!" Fergus barked, his voice shaking with anger.

"Well, be a better one!" I snapped, stepping forward.

"I didn't have to keep you, Violet. But I did," Fergus said, his tone harsh.

"I didn't do all that for someone I didn't care about!"

"Care?" I chuckled in full disbelief.

"Yes, care!" he shot back. "I could've dumped you at the orphanage!"

"Then why didn't you!" I shouted, my voice cracking. "At least then I would've known I was unwanted from the start, instead of growing up in a house where I was reminded of it every single day instead of being blamed for being born different—"

Before I could finish, the door burst open, loud and hard.

I snapped my head to the doorway, heart stuttering in my chest, and



there he was.

Kylan.

It was like he had never left, and from the look on his face, I knew he had heard everything. Jumpie sat on his shoulder, her tail twitching as she mirrored his expression.

The door shut behind him as he walked further.

"Are you okay?" Kylan placed a gentle hand against my stomach to guide me back, and I let him. My hands were still balled into the sides of my dress as I tried to breathe through it all.

Kylan had probably done whatever he could to stop my eyes from glowing, and I was grateful, because while I had yet to feel anything, I didn't know how much longer I could keep listening to all of this without losing it like I never had before.

Now they stood there, face to face, almost nose to nose, and because they were two of the most stubborn men, I knew neither of them would back down.

"I've really tried," Kylan began. "I've tried to stay out of it. Out of respect for Violet. For the Bloodrose. But it's hard to respect a pack that treats one of their own, one of their best, like trash."

"Watch your words, kid," Fergus gritted out, though his mind seemed to be elsewhere. Probably still stuck on the title he used to hold, the one I just took from him.

"I've been watching my words," Kylan said. "But it's not every day you meet a father who can go toe-to-toe with the king. I think that earns me the right to speak up."



Fergus growled, "Speak."

His eyes were already narrow, ready for war. But Kylan didn't flinch.

"You don't deserve her," he said flatly. "Not her time. Not her words. Not even this conversation. And that's why I've decided to step in and end it."

Fergus scoffed, but Kylan did not let him speak.

"You claim to be the Alpha of the Bloodrose and Violet's father, yet you act like neither."

I felt the urge to jump in. This wasn't Kylan's battle, and as the future king of Lyperia, I didn't want him getting dragged into a fight with the Bloodrose because of me. Fergus looked like he might snap, and that's when I intervened.

"It's okay, Kylan—"

"No, it's not okay!" Kylan spoke. "I know you think this might be normal. But it shouldn't be."

Fergus' nostrils flared.

"And then you want to talk about understanding her?" Kylan said. "How can you understand her when you don't even see her?"

I forgot how to breathe for a second. That was the one question I had been asking myself all my life, and now Kylan had asked it for me.

"I see her," he stated. "And I see what you do to her—how her confidence cracks the second all of you are around," he looked him dead in the eye. "You think knowing she likes crispy chicken means you know her? You don't."



"And no matter what you or your son or your people believe," his tone softened. "I will protect her, I do respect her, and I do love her."

Love...

I could hear him say all that.

Fergus's brows creased. His gaze flicked to me, and for one second, I thought it might soften.

But then he stubbornly shook his head like it was impossible for someone to love me.

"You are worrying about what I will do to her," Kylan continued. "But you need to worry about what you have done to her."

After those words left his mouth, Fergus suddenly looked much smaller. Maybe it was the calmness Kylan had said it with. It came out like a statement, one no one could argue with.

"I don't want to disrespect you, Alpha Fergus," he added after a moment of silence. "But I do believe we should continue this conversation when you are ready to show some emotion, maybe listen. And if you are not willing to meet us halfway, I think it would be best for you and your people to leave Lyperia."

"I've been protecting her, and I'll keep doing it," Kylan said, glancing at me before turning his eyes back to Fergus, who just kept glaring at him.

See?

Speaking to Fergus Hastings was like speaking to a fucking robot. That man had no emotion.



Kylan turned slowly, his hand finding its place on my back once again. For a moment, our eyes met. He stared into mine with a look that said he wished he could take all of this away, even if he knew he couldn't.

"Come on, Violet," he said softly. "You don't need to hear any more of this."

And he was right. I didn't.

I had heard enough.

Anywhere would have been better than standing in front of Fergus another second longer. Even that horrible feast.

Kylan led the way, Jumpie still sitting on his shoulder, but just as he reached for the doorknob, a voice cut through.

"I wasn't done talking. Don't you dare walk away from me, Violet Hastings."

We both stopped. I looked back over my shoulder. He stood there, still, but something had drained out of him. He looked pale. Hollow. Like he was trying to hold on to something that had already slipped through his hands.

"Don't make me take the first ride back home."

Those words didn't surprise me at all, as it was typical Fergus. I had no hopes for a better version of him. I never did.

That was the thing about Fergus. He had shown me who he was over and over again, and eventually, I just knew when to stop waiting for him to be someone else.



I wouldn't beg him to stay or ask him what he meant because it wouldn't matter. If Fergus said he would take the first ride home, he would do that.

He wasn't bluffing.

I felt Kylan's eyes on me, just waiting for me to say something, but when I didn't, he took it upon himself. "I've heard the stories. How people look up to you. How you're the kind of Alpha who puts his people first," he said, glancing at Fergus.

"But now I'm wondering...if that's true, then why does your own daughter feel like she's never come first? Is she not one of your people?"

Fergus looked him straight in the eyes. There was no growl this time, no yelling. Just an uncomfortable silence, like he didn't know what to say.

I didn't even know what to say, because even though Kylan's question was spot on, I feared we already knew the answer. I had never been one of his people.

"If you are the kind of Alpha they say you are, then you should maybe start by being a good father," Kylan noted. "And don't you dare walk away when your daughter needs you." 2

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