

Chapter 216

Violet

I heard Kylan shift behind me, then the soft sound of his feet hitting the marble floor as he got out of bed.

"They won't," he said, his voice steady.

I glanced over my shoulder, letting my eyes rest on his half-dressed body. "They will."

I scoffed and turned back to the window, pressing my forehead to the cool glass.

"Of course they will."

"They care about you," Kylan said. "Fergus. Dylan. They might not be the best at showing it, but they do."

I let out a slow breath. That's what I used to believe. It's what I had wanted to believe. But those two had already made their decision. They came here prepared for war.

"I don't know what exactly Fergus's deal is," Kylan said as I heard him stepping closer, "but I do know this. The Bloodrose hate Lycans. They hate Lyperia, everything about it. If they came here willingly, then it means something. They didn't show up just to cause trouble. They came because of you. They care. They're just really bad at showing it."

Still...I wish they hadn't come. Just like I had wished, Fergus hadn't shown up at school, telling me to break the bond with Kylan like it meant nothing. I hadn't expected him to drive all that way back then, and I definitely hadn't expected him to stay as long as he did.

But deep down, I had always held onto a little hope...

"He's only being careful," I mumbled. "Because he doesn't want my secret getting out. If the truth ever came out, that the Bloodrose has been hiding an eye-glowing freak, he knows it could ruin everything."

I felt Kylan behind me. Two strong arms wrapped around my waist, pulling me gently back against him. His lips brushed my neck.

"Maybe," he said. "But he also doesn't want his daughter left unmarked, not unless he's sure I'll stay with her and the crown will protect her."

I didn't answer right away. I just leaned into him and let myself rest against his chest.

It made me think...

At the Bloodrose, it was rare to stay unmarked after finding your mate. It just happened. Fast. No waiting, no second thoughts, and sometimes not even a real celebration. You marked, and that was it. Simple. Clear.

Not like this—where I had to wait for a ceremony that might not even happen. Nothing was certain, and all I had were his words. I believed in them, but that was because I knew Kylan's heart and intentions.

"I'm not saying he's right," Kylan murmured. "Because he's not. He's treated you terribly. But I think there's more going on than he's showing. I don't think he'll leave you like this."

He kissed my cheek.

"Wow. You just know everything, don't you?" I said dryly.

"Yes," he said, with a teasing tone I couldn't miss.

I laughed. It was funny how sure of himself he sounded. He was starting to remind me of Aelius, only Kylan's predictions didn't make much sense.

"Right now, Fergus is acting like Elyx," Kylan went on. "But he's not evil. Just stupid."

I turned in his arms and wrapped my hands around his neck, staring into his warm eyes.

"Want to bet he's already started packing?"

Kylan let out a low laugh. "You really think so?"

A smirk tugged at my lips. "You'll see."

There was a flicker of mischief in his eyes.

"And what do I get if I'm right?" he asked.

I slapped his shoulder playfully and turned away—just in time to hear three sharp knocks at the door. Well, I guess that was our cue.

A smile reached my lips as I looked back over my shoulder at Kylan. "I'll personally get on my knees to thank you."

I only meant to give him a deep bow and admit I was wrong, but the look on his face told me he took it very differently. His whole body tensed, jaw tight, and his eyes suddenly burned with something wild.

"Vi!" a voice called from the other side of the door.

It was Trinity.

"Your Highness!" came another voice, this one teasing. Definitely Nate. He only ever used that title to mock Kylan. Was that a sign he was feeling

better after yesterday?

Kylan didn't budge. He ignored the knocks completely. His eyes stayed locked on mine, and now I saw it clearly—he looked starved. Whatever he had pictured in his head when I said those words, it had lit a fire in him.

He grinned. "You—" he growled, then lunged at me.

I let out a squeal and ran, laughing as I ran across the room. We probably looked ridiculous, and even through all of it, the knocking kept going, louder and more impatient.

Kylan caught me from behind and lifted me up like I weighed nothing. I laughed in his arms as he leaned close, his voice low in my ear. "Wait, what did you say?" he whispered.

"I can't remember," I said, clearly lying.

He chuckled. "No, something about getting on your knees?"

I giggled again, his arms still wrapped around me. The knocking hadn't stopped.

"Really soundproof," I commented.

Kylan rolled his eyes. "Yes, from the outside. Not from the inside."

"As fun as this is," I said with a smile, "we should probably get ready before they break the door down."

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By the time we finally stepped out of the room, the first thing we saw

were the two guards on either side of the door, and then the two unimpressed faces waiting for us.

Trinity was leaning against the wall with her arms crossed, shaking her head slowly. She didn't look happy. Nate stood beside her, hands tucked into the pockets of his long coat. It made sense. They had been waiting a while.

Kylan and I looked at each other and tried not to laugh. We had just taken a shower together. It had taken way longer than it needed to, but he touched me first, so technically, it wasn't really my fault.

"Unreal," Trinity said, tapping an invisible watch on her wrist. It was the second time she had done that. Nate let out a small laugh and looked down.

"You're in a great mood today," Trinity said, now looking straight at Kylan and raising one eyebrow.

"What are you talking about?" Kylan rolled his shoulders. "I'm always in a good mood," he said with a sigh.

He said it so seriously, with such a straight face, that Trinity let out a snort. Even Nate couldn't hold it in and burst into full-on laughter.

It was the first time today I really looked at him.

His face didn't seem so tense. His shoulders weren't slouched like they were yesterday, and there was color back in his skin. For now, he seemed okay.

That made something inside me relax, too...

Because I knew how heavy his heart could get, how dark his thoughts

could turn, and what Lunarix could do to him. We had all seen it. Even Trinity had been quick to notice something was off.

Today seemed like one of his better days. And for that, I was thankful.

I gave him a small smile, and he nodded back.

"Hey," Kylan stepped in closer, brushing his fingers under my chin before tilting my face toward him. He gazed into my eyes for a second, then pecked my lips softly. "I'll see you later?" he breathed against them.

My cheeks flushed. "I'm not going anywhere."

Kylan shot me one last look, looking me up and down. Then he turned and walked off with Nate by his side.

I watched him all the way until he disappeared down the hall, and then I just stood there, still feeling his warm lips against mine.

"My man is so perfect," I whispered to no one in particular, and I meant every word. 

"Yes, yes, we all know," Trinity bumped her shoulder into mine. "Where the hell were you yesterday?" she asked. "What were you guys even doing?"

We started walking. "Probably the same thing you and Dylan ended up doing."

Trinity side-eyed me. "Really?"

I gave a little shrug. "Only, I bet Fergus Hastings hasn't walked in on—"

Her hand clamped over my mouth so fast I nearly choked. "Violet, ew,

shut up!" she gagged. "I heard about that from Dylan, and even he was weirded out."

I pulled back, eyes wide. "By us?!"

She lightly smacked the back of my head. "No, silly. By his dad!"

I went quiet.

Even Dylan, loyal like a lapdog, was weirded out? That was new.

"Personally," Trinity began as we moved down the hall, "I would've dragged him across that greenhouse. Dad or not. But that's just me."

A soft laugh slipped from my lips. "Did you hear anything about them leaving?" I asked. "Dad...Fergus said he might go."

Trinity cleared her throat, and I knew she had no intention of lying to me.

"Dylan's staying. But apparently, Fergus and the rest have already started packing."

We were getting closer to Madam Renata's room now. My chest tightened.

Of course, they were leaving.

See? I knew it. Even after everything...even after Kylan's words, I still had that tiny bit of hope. I had told myself I wanted him to go—but what I really wanted was something else entirely.

I wanted him to stay. To admit that he hadn't been a good father, to say he was sorry, to look me in the eye and tell me I was worth staying for. To finally be a father. The father I deserved.

Instead...he was running again.

"Good," I muttered. "He should go."

I felt Trinity's eyes burn into the side of my face.

She knew I was lying.

"Violet..." she spoke in a low tone.

Luckily enough, we had already stopped in front of Madam Renata's door. This time my pulse quickened as I thought about what that woman might've planned for me.

I was finally getting on her good side, then walked out at the feast to get walked in on by...Fergus.

"Do you think she'll be pissed at me?" I asked quietly. "For yesterday?"

"She said she would deal with you herself today." Trinity didn't even blink. She tilted her head. "So yes. Probably."

I inhaled a deep, full breath. Tried to brace myself for the scolding, the lectures, the disappointment. But I had made a choice, and now I had to face the consequences. That was the way of life.

Trinity reached for the handle, but just as she was about to open the door, she froze. There was a noise on the other side.

Laughter.

Loud laughter.

Madam Renata's laughter...

I glanced at Trinity. "What the..."

She raised an eyebrow at me. Neither of us moved. Then, she pushed open the door.

The moment I saw what was happening in front of me, I really wished she hadn't. Because there he was.

Sitting in his chair, arms draped casually as if he had been waiting for my arrival all along, and worst of all, laughing with Madam Renata and the two elegant-looking girls from yesterday.

Kayden...



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