

## Chapter 218

Violet

I felt the hairs on my neck rise as I looked at Kayden. What was he doing here?

My heart jumped into my throat. Everything in me just stopped.

All the focus was on him, and no one had even noticed us come in.

Madam Renata, the maids, those two girls from yesterday...

But I knew he saw me. He looked for just a second, then acted like he hadn't.

Everyone else swooned over him. Smiles, giggles, and stares like he had just fallen out of the sky. No one could look away.

As I looked at him, I got why people fell for his charm. The way he talked, that light in his eyes. If I hadn't been freaking out about the fact that he had seen my eyes or that he had injured his sister last night, I probably would've fallen for it too.

Just like at family day.

Trinity and I glanced at each other, then watched as he whispered something that made them all burst out laughing, like he had told the world's funniest joke. Even Madam Renata laughed.

Given everything, I had definitely expected her to be angrier. Not this...

"Hello?" Trinity called out. She cleared her throat, loud enough to be heard.

All their heads snapped toward us.

The maids dipped their heads right away. The two girls did a quick curtsy. Madam Renata smiled so wide it had to hurt. It was nothing like the angry look I thought we'd get for missing half the feast last night.

"Ah, you're here!" she said, like nothing had happened.

I let out an awkward laugh. "I'm here..."

Physically, but definitely not more than that, because all I could see was him.

Kayden.

He was staring at me too, and this time he didn't even try to make it less obvious. He just sat there, leaned back with that smirk tugging at the corner of his lips. His eyes were alive, almost amused. Like he had been waiting on me for hours.

"Good morning, Lettie!" he waved. There was something I didn't like about that nickname. I didn't even know the guy well enough for him to call me that.

"Mom appointed Lian and Sora as your ladies," he said, pointing toward the two girls, "So I just wanted to come and check in on them. See how they're doing."

Well, hopefully he didn't hurt them like he had hurt his sister. That had been on my mind since yesterday.

All of this was suddenly starting to make sense. Kayden's presence, Madam Renata's strange behavior. She was known as one of Lady Mona's people, so of course, she liked him.

If he even got Madam Renata swooning like that, did that mean this would be my life from now on?

Was this how it would always be?

Mona's people watching my every move, while Kayden got to walk in freely and run everything as he wished?

I finally took a moment to look at the two girls. The one on the left had long, straight, dark, silky hair and a tight smile. The other had shorter hair that fell just above her shoulders and a calmer smile.

The girl with the bob stepped forward.

"Hi, Trinity!" she said first, then looked at me. "And it's really nice to meet you, Your Highness."

"Violet..." I said quietly, correcting her. I tried to keep my focus, but my eyes were already darting back to Kayden, who had just winked at one of the maids.

"It's good to see you, too, Trinity," Kayden said, finally acknowledging her. "We've met at Starlight before. I remember I liked you."

Trinity raised her brows at him, a small smile curling on her lips. "Mhm."

Okay.

She did not like him.

An uncomfortable silence followed right after, as everyone was just staring at each other, waiting for someone to speak, but there was only one thing I wanted to know.

Kayden blinked, then slapped his knee like something had just clicked. "Ah, right, you're wondering what I'm still doing here!"

Well, yes.

I squeezed my eyes. At least he was self-aware, but somehow that made it even worse.

"Do I tell her?" Kayden looked at Madam Renata, that smug little smirk never leaving his lips,

"Or do you want to tell her?"

Madam Renata practically beamed, her entire face lighting up with excitement.

Trinity raised a brow. "That we getting into trouble for last night? Me, for failing to keep a close eye on Violet, and Violet, for missing half the feast?"

The woman giggled before waving her hand like we were being silly. "Don't you worry about that! It's not a big deal, and I'm sure the two of you must've been tired."

I looked at Kayden. He leaned back further in his chair, lips curved into a proud smile. Too proud. It didn't take a genius to see it. He had planted that in her head. I didn't know how the hell he did it, but all I knew was that he had done something like that before.

He had done it last night, when he kept his entire family in check, Lady Mona included.

And here he was again, doing things for me I never asked him to do. All I needed him to do was keep his mouth shut about what he had seen that

day in the hallway. Other than that, I never expected him to do something.

Trinity narrowed her eyes. "So...we're not in trouble?"

Madam Renata shook her head so fast I thought it might actually fall off.

"No, no, not at all!" she said. "The prince actually suggested, since you and your friend worked so hard preparing for the feast, you both deserve a break today!"

Trinity snorted. "Really?"

Madam Renata nodded eagerly. "Yes! And he suggested the ladies spend a little time getting to know one another, while he shows Violet around the mountains. He spends quite a lot of time up there!"

Ah. There it is.

I knew there was a catch.

Trinity folded her arms. "Nice suggestion. But I came here for Violet. So I'll stay with Violet."

Her answer didn't come as a surprise. She had been extra protective lately. Trinity brought her lips to my ear. "I don't like the way he's looking at you."

Neither did I.

My arms were folded, and when my eyes met Kayden's again, his gaze burned straight through me. There was something so intense in his eyes, it made me swallow my breath.

It was too intense, too confident, too possessive — just too many things.

Madam Renata started again, “The prince —”

But Kayden held up a finger and shushed her, actually managing to shut her up.

He didn’t take his eyes off me. “Do you not wish to spend more time with me, Violet?” he asked.

He was so direct, my heart skipped. Kayden had his way of making people feel nervous, and everything inside me froze again. I couldn’t tell if I was angry, nervous, or just uncomfortable. Because a part of me knew exactly why he wanted to spend more time with me.

Apart from the fact that he seemed to have some weird obsession with me, I knew what he was after. He most likely had questions about my eyes.

I opened my mouth, but no words came out.

Because the truth was...I didn’t know what I wanted.

There was a strange part of me that actually wanted to talk to him, explain some part to him, just understand his intentions, and make sure he really wouldn’t tell anyone.

Kayden let out a long sigh, blowing the air out through puffed cheeks. Then he shook his head slowly, looking deeply disappointed by my response. “And here I thought you would glow of exci —”

“I’ll go!” I said quickly, too quickly.

Kayden’s smile widened as he raised his hands.

It was almost as if he was saying, See? Fixed it.



Like this had all been a game to him from the beginning. My tension, my fear, all of it was just part of his fun.

It was that simple word that left his mouth, and the way his brows creased as he said it. Glow...

He was teasing me, itching to bring up what he saw. Holding it in his mouth to do whatever he wanted with it later. That was the part that made it ten times more difficult. Was it a good obsession or a bad obsession?

Though I suppose all obsessions could be viewed as something bad.

And somehow, I was supposed to believe that I could trust him...

"What? You'll go?" Trinity hissed into my ear. "I'm going with you!"

"No, it's okay," I reassured her. "Kayden is... okay."

Clearly, not!

He wasn't okay. Not even close. But what choice did I have? Kylan didn't want me around him, and I didn't want to be either, but at the same time, I needed to figure him out. I needed to know what he was doing here. What more did he know? What could he want from me?

So I pulled on my best smile and addressed Madam Renata. "Thank you for giving me the day off and for not making a big deal out of the feast, Madam."

"Sure, sure," Madam Renata sighed. It had to be bothering her, but she sure did a good job of not showing it.


My eyes shifted to the two girls beside her. My ladies.

"I feel very honored to meet you, Lian and Sora," I said.

They both curtsied, one after the other.

"And I am very excited to spend some time with you, Violet," Kayden joined in. I felt Trinity's stare burning a hole in the side of my head, and I knew what she was thinking.

She must've been so confused right now. Honestly, I didn't blame her.

Because I was, too. 



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