

## Chapter 22

Violet

With a frustrated pout, I sat at the table across from Trinity and Dylan who couldn't keep their hands to themselves.

They were in their only little world and only had eyes for each other. It was like I wasn't even there.

The whole time I thought I was doing myself a favor by bringing Trinity, but instead, I had basically brought Dylan a plus one.

How did we miss this?

How did I miss this?

I should've known it was him when she mentioned her mate's dinner thing. Trinity had never told me that her mate was on the Elite Team, and I had never told her I was a Hastings. We spoke about every little stupid detail—except for the real important stuff.

If we had talked about it, we would've figured this out much sooner.

Then I wouldn't have shown up to this dinner at all, and I wouldn't be stuck sitting beside him—Kylan.

Unfortunately it was the only available seat near that annoyingly cute couple. Kylan had no reaction when I sat down next to him, and hadn't said a single word to me. Truthfully, I would rather have him roast me like he used to than this suffocating silence.

I turned to him, and for a split second, I caught him looking at me. But the moment our eyes met, he slowly turned his head away—focusing on something else instead.

Was he just looking at me?

"Where's your boyfriend?" I asked, testing the waters.

Kylan immediately raised an eyebrow, clearly confused. "Boyfriend?"

"Nate," I clarified, unable to hold back my laughter.

Even Kylan couldn't resist a chuckle. "He's in his room. Wasn't feeling well."

"Ah, okay."

My mind immediately jumped to the Lunarix pills Nate had been taking. He had said it himself—a few pills a month had turned into a few pills a day. We had all promised never to bring it up again, but how could he expect me not to worry? Was that why he wasn't here tonight?

"Why?" Kylan reopened the conversation which had already ended. "Are you upset that you can't flirt with him today?"

I scoffed, then released a small laugh. Who knew Kylan could crack jokes like that. Once again, I had never flirted with Nate.

I glanced at Kylan, slowly studying his face. There was something softer there, almost...human?

He didn't look like the cold, distant Lycan prince who seemed to live to make my life miserable.

"Why are you being nice?" I blurted.

"Nice?" Kylan spoke with an eye roll. "I don't remember being particularly nice."

"Yes—but you're not being a complete asshole either."

There was also that other thing. "And you have yet to call me four-eyes," I pointed out.

Kylan narrowed his eyes as if I had just told him something complicated. "I'm not being nice," he corrected me softly. "Believe it or not, I know when to stop calling people something that's sensitive."

My eyes flickered in surprise. That wasn't the kind of response I'd expected from him at all. It was almost considerate.

"Aw, you have feelings," I teased, pursing my lips.

I tried laughing it off, but it wasn't funny. It was confusing.

At midnight he had started acting a bit normal, by morning he had completely shut down again—and now he seemed like someone I could talk to.

None of it made sense.

Did I want this change?

Could I trust it or was it one of his silly games?

"Food's here!" Rochwall clapped his hands before I could dwell too much on it. The next minute everyone at the table began to pass dishes around.

Soon we were all eating. Throughout dinner, I kept stealing glances at Kylan. He was deep in conversation with some of the guys, and hadn't looked in my direction ever since.

Meanwhile, I awkwardly pricked my food with a fork. I really wished Nate were there to keep me company or at least make me feel less out of place. Nate was the type of person to pick on small things, like how uncomfortable I was getting, and find a way to make me laugh.

As I heard a scoff beside me, I glanced at Kylan again. He stared straight ahead, his expression filled with disgust. Curious, I followed his gaze to see what had caught his attention.

It was Dylan and Trinity, one second away from needing a room. Their faces were practically glued together as they made out heavily.

Kylan and I could agree on one thing. It was disgusting.

"Hey, bro!" Kylan called out, throwing a fry to the side of Dylan's face.

He finally pulled back and looked at us with a flustered smile. Trinity giggled, wiping her lip gloss off his lips.

"Would you mind keeping your tongue in your mouth while I'm eating?" Kylan chuckled, somehow making fun out the situation.

Dylan grew a sheepish look, and Trinity giggled, burying her head into his neck.

I couldn't help but laugh too. They looked cute, there was no denying that.

The two balanced each other out perfectly. Dylan had always been too serious, too uptight and introverted while Trinity let a bit more loose and was the life of the party. It was a match made in heaven.

"Speech from the captain!" Rochwall suddenly announced.

All heads turned to Kylan, but he shook his head. "No," he muttered. "No speech, please."

The others didn't really care, because they began chanting his name. "Speech! Speech!"

Kylan looked uncomfortable, but he shove back his chair either way, and slowly stood up. "A speech?" He sighed in frustration. "If there would be nominations, none of you would've nominated me—so I'm not going to thank anybody."

I nearly cackled under my breath. Of course, he would start his speech like that. I hadn't expected anything less.

"But," he continued, "I will say that I do believe I deserve to be captain."

This time I almost had to cover my mouth to keep myself from laughing out loud. He was so full of himself, I could hardly believe it.

"I'll do my best to lead this team, even if some of you think I shouldn't be your captain," Kylan added with a smirk. "We've got a strong group, and I know we'll prove ourselves in the missions ahead. With me as your captain, we'll succeed."

Despite his arrogance, the speech was kind of going somewhere. Still, his words were more self-centered than inspiring. He had spoken like a true prince.

Kylan gazed to me for a second before he looked around the table again. "I'm glad all the new recruits made it," he spoke. "You've all earned your spots."

He glanced at me again for a second time when he spoke about 'all' and it caught me off guard.

"There's not one person sitting at this table who isn't worthy of this team," he finished.

Everyone around the table cheered, but all I could do was stare at him in shock. Had he just indirectly included me in his speech? He didn't say 'all but Violet,' he spoke about everyone at this table.

I watched as he sat back down, avoiding my gaze. He casually returned to his conversation with the guys, acting like nothing had happened.

It was just me and my plate again, and it stayed that way until dinner was over. By the time we were finished, it was already starting to get late.

"Alright, now we really got to wrap things up!" Rochwall said. "You all need to be back in your dorms before curfew, and if you won't make it—it's your own responsibility."

Some began laughing while the other half groaned out loud.

"You're the one who suggested this dinner!" One of the girls called out.

"Yes, and now I'm giving you twenty minutes to get back to your dorms—let's go!" he clapped his hands.

People began gathering their belongings, including me. I had yet to receive a strike, and I wished for it to remain that way.

As everyone started to leave one by one, I looked back at Kylan, who was still in the middle of a conversation and clearly unbothered.

"Come on," Trinity said, her arm wrapped around Dylan.

Oh, so she did remember me? The one who brought her along?

I followed the two to the exit, trying to follow their conversation. "Nice of you guys to include me," I joked as we reached outside. Being the third wheel was not for me.

Dylan turned, laughing warmly. "Next time, I'll make sure to save you a seat next to us," he teased.

"Sure."

Dylan suddenly pulled me into a tight hug, and I immediately leaned into him. "I mean it—I'm sorry," he murmured into my ear. "I'm just—"

"In love?" I finished for him with a small grin.

Trinity who had overhead looked at us with flushed cheeks while Dylan looked down at the ground, a bit embarrassed.

"I think I'll stay over at Dylan's tonight," Trinity announced.

"Why?"

The two exchanged a smirk, and I immediately regretted asking. "Never mind—I don't want to know," I changed my mind, scrunching my face in disgust.

During our first week, almost everyone had been obsessed with curfew, but now, as I looked around campus, it was clear that less people gave a damn. They all started living on the edge, testing the waters.

Not me, though.

I couldn't afford to get a strike on my record for something as simple as missing curfew.

Not when I was the freak whose glasses could slip off and end up causing two strikes for disturbance.

"Do you want me to walk you back?" Dylan offered. "It's dark."

"I'll survive," I replied. "Besides, curfew, remember? We can't both miss it."

Dylan hesitated. "Are you sure?"

I nodded. "Yeah, go. I'll be fine."

Trinity gave me a quick wave. "Okay, girl. I'll see you tomorrow!"

"Don't get caught!" I yelled after her as they walked away, arms wrapped around each other.

Trinity glanced back for a second. "Don't worry about us!"

A smile tugged at my lips as I watched them disappear. As much as I was disgusted, and maybe a bit jealous—I did really like seeing them together. But standing there alone, I couldn't help feeling a little lonely. Everyone seemed to be finding their place, finding people to connect with—while I still struggled to fit in.

Even the girls on the Elite Team bonded easily, and the new recruits had already formed their own group. They weren't unfriendly, not at all—but somehow, I was still on the outside, not really part of their circle.

As I puffed out some air, I caught sight of Kylan walking past as he left the restaurant. He moved with his usual confidence, not acknowledging me...as usual.

He wore the same leather jacket he always did, over his neat clothes, like he didn't care about mixing those two styles. It looked good on him, though.

I felt the sudden urge to speak up, to break the silence that always seemed to hang between us.

"Kylan, wait!"