



## Chapter 222

Violet

We had been up the same exhausting path for what felt like forever. At some point, the palace vanished behind us. Now there was nothing...just green, endless green in every direction.

It was freezing, the air had turned colder, but I didn't have time to care. I was too focused on pushing him.


Kayden...

My chest literally burned. I was wheezing, dragging my feet, just like I had during my first miserable weeks during Elite. And Kayden? He was just in his own world.

He hadn't stopped talking since we left the palace. Even now, he kept going. Laughing, rambling, sharing stories about his childhood, useless facts about trees, and something about his maid, the one who usually pushed him up here instead of me.

I was just so tired of hearing his voice...

The one I really wanted was Kylan. He was the only one I longed for.

I didn't care about Kayden's memories or any of these mountain trees. I mean...I did, but just not right now, and not with him. 

I wanted answers.

What was he going to do with the information about my eyes? Where were we even going? What was at the end of this trail?



The last question I had already asked, but Kayden just wouldn't say. Just kept smiling and promising it would lead to 'somewhere nice.'

I was too tired for mystery. Too tired to guess what he was planning, even though I knew he had brought me here for a reason. He was definitely up to something.

"Are you okay?" Kayden asked suddenly, glancing over his shoulder.

What kind of him to ask after hearing me dying in his ear. "I would use the remote, but it doesn't really work up here," Kayden smiled, like that was supposed to make everything okay.

I was supposed to say screw you, and these mountains, but for some reason, as much as I was complaining, I just didn't want to do that. I had to find out what he knew, and I had to do it today.

"Great!" I gasped, my voice sounding two seconds away from death.

My arms were shaking, my dress was sticking to my back, and my thighs were burning like hell. The second Kayden continued to talk, I just wanted to cry, because this guy just didn't know how to shut up.

"That one only blooms once a year," he said, nodding at a plant.

"I know that already. I'm a Blood—"

"You can always tell we're close to the ridge when the wind gets this quiet. It's nice, right?"

"Yes!" I breathed. "Very nice!"

If only his voice could get this quiet.



And he just kept going and going. Either he completely lacked basic social awareness, or he just didn't care. Maybe both.

"Are you sure you're okay, Lettie?" Kayden asked, tilting his head. "I heard you were on the Elite team, but from the way you're wheezing back there..."

"Oh, so you have been hearing me die back here!" I stopped dead in my tracks, releasing a loud breath. Not giving a damn anymore, I turned around his chair so he could take a good look at me.

Kayden fluttered his eyelids. "Yes?" he said, trying to sound innocent. "That's why I'm checking up on you every so often."

I felt my eye twitch in anger and decided I'd had it with him. Ready to tell him off, I let go of the handle and planted my hands on my hips. But just as I did, the chair started to roll forward.

In a split second, Kayden's smile dropped. His eyes went big, and his face looked like he had just seen a ghost as he went past me.

"Lettie!"

I turned in shock, but all I could see was his back as the chair kept going down the trail.

It had all happened so fast.

"Kayden—"

I gasped, running forward, and grabbed the handles just in time. I could feel my heartbeat in my ears.

Dear Goddess, I had almost killed the king's favorite son...



"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" I squeaked, apologizing.

I spun him back in the right direction, but Kayden's eyes stayed on me. Even with that terrified look on his face, there was still a small smirk on his lips.

"What...what was that?" he said. "That push alone would get you a life sentence. Throw in that attitude of yours, and we're talking execution!"

I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. I laughed so hard my whole body shook, just like it had earlier in the garden, and I hated it. I hated that I couldn't keep it in...again.

How could I, when it was just too hard not to laugh at this guy? Everything about him was hilarious, except there was a part of me that knew better. The part that remembered what he had allegedly done to his sister, and how he kept making those off comments about my eyes.

Kayden raised a brow, waving his finger in the air. "Do not kill me yet, Lettie."

That only made me laugh harder, and for a second, I forgot the purpose of agreeing to this hike...or just how much I had hated it.

"I'm not trying to kill you," I cackled, wiping a tear from under my eye. As I tried to control my laughter, I caught the way he was staring at me... just watching me.

Kayden had a gentle smile on his face, and his eyes narrowed a little, like he was trying to figure me out.

'So this is what she does like, and that's what she doesn't like...'

"Your smile is so beautiful, Violet..." he chuckled softly. "Too beautiful."



Was he flirting with me?

And just like that, my laughter died. No, he wasn't supposed to be doing this, and I wasn't supposed to entertain him.

When Kylan told me those things, my heart would melt. With Kayden, my heart froze, because it didn't do anything to me.

Sure, I felt uncomfortable at times, but strangely enough, he could make me laugh. It had always been hard for me to laugh around other people, and yet he had done it twice today. But it was really just the idea of him carrying out my secret that made me highly uncomfortable.

I didn't say another word after that, just kept pushing the wheelchair and focused on the path ahead.

"Did that make you feel uncomfortable?" Kayden asked quietly after a while.

"Uncomfortable?"

"When I called you beautiful," he said, his voice softer now. "Did that make you uncomfortable?"

I didn't answer right away. I didn't even know how to answer. At first, I was going to deny it. But what would be the point in denying it if he had seen it himself, right?

"Yes," I confirmed. "It did make me feel uncomfortable."

Nate had said it plenty of times before, and I didn't mind it at all. It wasn't the word itself, but the way he looked at me while he said it. He was Kylan's brother, and unless he didn't want Kylan to kill him, it would be better for him to behave.





Kayden sighed. "Okay...then I'll just have to call you ugly from now on."

I didn't respond, but a soft chuckle slipped out of me anyway. The chuckle was so quiet he probably didn't hear it.

"Where are we going?"

I knew I had asked him already, but maybe if I tried again, he would actually give me a real answer this time.

"The mo—" he started.

"And do not say mountains," I warned quickly.

He snorted. "We're going to your people, Violet."

I frowned, confused.

My people?

"...Who are my people?"

Kayden didn't even wait to respond. "I mean the witches," he said. "Although I suppose we do have a few of your other people among us...the ones who rule over the children of blood, the ancient ones?"

His words came out so smoothly, like he had been waiting for me to ask, so he could talk to me about it. My hands froze on the wheelchair for just a second.

Was he saying I was one of them? A child of blood? How did we go from witches to children of blood?

What else did he know?



There was just something about the way he said it, so casually, like it wasn't a big deal, that made my stomach twist.

"No regular witch has eyes that glow like that," he mumbled. "And you're not denying it either...but you never denied being a witch either," he added.

Then he snapped his head to look at me, his eyes squinting like he was trying to figure me out on the spot. "Half werewolf," he mumbled. "Quarter witch...quarter child of blood?"

His guess made my skin itch, but I didn't answer. I just kept pushing the wheelchair. Kayden seemed to be very interested in these kinds of topics, which were like a taboo to most Lyperians.

It made me wonder how much he knew about the children of blood. He knew enough about the glowing eyes. Did he study them in books?

Just how much did he know, and had he just crossed the line where keeping it to myself just wouldn't be an option anymore?

"I heard your dad's name was Greg," Kayden said. "And your mom's Claire."

I swallowed hard.

"And for some reason," he went on, "I don't think your dad ever got up to any broomstick-riding with a witch...which means you're adopted. Obviously."

I watched him tap his chin with his fingers. "I'm curious who your real parents are...Though I suppose you wouldn't know."

I blinked, stunned.



How did he even know all of this?

Who had told him? Who had given him the names of my parents? And how much more did he know?

"What do you want from me, Kayden?" I asked, my voice low.

He didn't turn this time. He just looked out at the trees, his voice calm. "I want to show you that I respect your kind," he said. "That I accept your kind. And that I will keep your secret."

A dry laugh came from my lips. I couldn't help it.

Was he serious?

Kayden looked over his shoulder. "I will keep your secrets, Violet," he stated. "And you'll keep mine. That's the kind of bond I wish to have with you."

I didn't know what to say after that. Everything about Kayden felt off. He was saying one thing, then did another. If he was so insistent on keeping my secrets, then why would he make all these jokes about glowing eyes?

What was his purpose for visiting the witches in the mountains? Did he think I was interested, that he was the one doing me a favor? Because I was...adopted?

Did he know that I only went along with it because I felt forced?

Pressured to just go along with it, out of fear of him exposing my secret, while I didn't know any of his?

So yes, I was skeptical.

"I don't know any of your secrets," I said slowly.





Kayden shrugged. "My secret is that I know your secret."

I gave a dry laugh, pushing his back with one hand. "No. Your secret!"

"Oh, uh..." He started humming like he was seriously thinking about it. I narrowed my eyes, waiting. Was he actually going to tell me something real?

Because at this point, he was full of bullshit.

He exhaled. "I'm going to change my name soon."

Change his...

"Change your name?"

"Yeah," he said, nodding. "I feel like it."

I stared at the back of his head. Was he playing with me?

"Why?" I wondered.

"I already told you, because I feel like it," he said simply. "I want to be more than just Kayden. I will be more than just Kayden." 2

He turned a little, his eyes glinting as they locked on mine. "Just you wait and see, Lettie."

I frowned, still pushing the chair. I wanted to make something out of it, but I couldn't because none of his words were making sense.

"Who will you be?" I asked softly.

I observed him as he looked up at the sky, then down at his lap, then ahead again. "I won't tell you...yet," he answered. "But when the time



gets there, you'll be the first one to know."

Who would even say something like that?

It was like every answer he gave led to more questions. But instead of feeling frustrated by these answers, I felt oddly pulled in. I didn't trust him, but part of me wanted to understand him.

A part of me pitied him, thinking he had created this fantasy out of desperation. 'A name change.'

"Look!" he exclaimed, his voice full of excitement. "We're here!"

I followed Kayden's fingers with my eyes. Up ahead was a little village, tucked between the trees. The houses looked warm and wooden, resting on bright green fields. And behind them were even more mountains.

Whatever we were looking at completely took my breath away. It looked beautiful, peaceful... but hidden in the middle of nowhere.

"This is it, Lettie," Kayden breathed. "This is where they've dumped your people."

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