



Chapter 226

Kylan

"I don't think you have bad intentions toward Violet," Fergus spoke. "But her situation is too complicated for someone like you to truly understand."

Dylan and I locked eyes, and I knew we were thinking the same thing. I did understand, and at the moment, the only one in the room who didn't was Nate.

Fergus squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head, like the next words that would come out of his mouth would hurt. "The king doesn't want her here."

"But I do," I said simply. "I want her here."

Fergus frowned.

"I don't just want to protect her from the king, Alpha Fergus," I spoke. "I want to make her life better. I want her to feel like she belongs, and I don't ever want to let go of her."

His eyebrows pulled together.

"You might think I'm just another Lyperian stuck with his mate, but that's not it," I made it clear. This was not the situation of the king and my mother. "She is Violet...my Violet, and I want to build a life with her here in Lyperia, and I want her to grow and thrive by my side."

"A queen...cannot thrive here," Fergus breathed in slowly. "She wants to be a healer just like her mother. She has a bright future ahead."

"And she still does," I said without hesitation. "She can still do all of that, and I would never take her dream away from her. Ever."

And I meant every word of it. I wanted Violet to be great, to do great, and change the world if that's what she wanted.

"And the mistresses?" Dylan asked. "What are you going to do about that?"

He held my gaze, and I knew one wrong word could send us backward again.

"It will just be me and Violet. I give you both my word."

I didn't know how yet, but I would find a way. It would be hard, maybe even impossible by Lyperian standards, because that meant breaking a law that had been in place for centuries. But I had promised her, and now I had promised them, and I would keep that promise. Even if it costs me everything.

"Yeah, right," Fergus clicked his tongue. "You, Violet...and no mark."

He was a hard man to please. "You ask me to accept this bond of yours," he spat the last words, "but your future is secure while hers isn't. You claim to be serious about her, but my daughter remains unmarked."

My breath caught. I knew what that mark stood for, especially at the Bloodrose.

"Here in Lyperia," I began gently, "we have a mating ceremony for that. It's an important tradition, and I do plan to go through it with Violet—"

"No, no, that's not it," Fergus shook his head. "At the Bloodrose, we mark what we claim to protect, and we do not wait. And since you've



made it clear Violet isn't going anywhere..."

He cleared his throat.

"It would be good for you to do the same. Sooner rather than later..."

A small smile appeared on my lips. We were finally getting somewhere. Accepting it would be the first step.

"Would that make you feel better?" I wondered. "If I marked her?"

Fergus hummed in response. "Your father is Elyx Lythoria." His mouth twitched as he pronounced the name. His voice was loud and clear, showing that he didn't care about badmouthing the king in his own kingdom. "A man known for..."

He had never finished his sentence because he couldn't, but I knew what he wanted to say. He was a known witch-hater. A monster.

"So yes," Fergus added. "It would make me feel better!"

I felt the beast stir within me and knew he was having a great time.

'Won't you look at that?' It growled in a mocking tone. 'Who would've thought the swamp king would start making sense before you would?'

'Shut up.'

My thoughts drifted to Violet, and that delicious-looking spot on her neck that always looked way too tempting.

I wanted to mark her. Fuck, I wanted to. That beast inside me wanted it too, practically begging for it whenever I would get too close, but I wouldn't fall for it.



Right now, Violet was vulnerable, and with the right push, even the slightest push, she would've said yes in a heartbeat. I didn't want that.

It just wouldn't be fair to lock her into something before she knew for sure that was what she wanted.

I knew I would mark her one day, and Violet and I would have more than enough time together. I had given her my word to love only her, and that had to be enough for now.

The day I would mark my Violet would be the day I looked her in the eye and knew she truly wanted it.

"I'll consider it," I said eventually. "And I hope you'll also consider talking to Violet. Give her the apology she deserves. Because I can tell you care about her. She cares for you, too."

"I will apologize," Fergus mumbled rather quickly.

I blinked, unsure if I heard him right. "Huh?"

"We'll apologize," Dylan said beside him, his voice stronger. "It's the only right thing to do. I know that now."

I stared at them, stunned, as a smile slowly grew on my face.

"I never wanted to hurt Violet," Dylan continued. "Dad never wanted that either. He just never had to experience anything like...this. You've got to understand that we are from a small pack, and just wanted to keep Violet safe. But he went about it the wrong way. Has been for years."

He looked at his father and gave him a quick slap on the back. Fergus gave a small, tired nod.



Dylan's eyes softened as he looked at him.

I could tell he was probably thinking about a few things. Like how his dad had started keeping his distance from Violet, ever since Dylan had once threatened to hurt her.

A dark memory from his childhood that he had shared in the woods.

"My father never told me he loved me. His father never told him. And I've never told my own son," Fergus shared, looking at Dylan. "That's just the sad way it's always been in the Bloodrose family.

I might not be good at showing it...but you don't know how much I love both of my children, which includes Violet."

For a moment, Dylan didn't move. Then I noticed a tiny change as his lips curled, just a little. It wasn't a full smile, but it was close.

He didn't say anything. Just reached out and gave his dad another strong pat on the back.

That was enough for them.

"I am not the best at showing emotions. It doesn't come easy for me, but seeing the look on Violet's face will be worth it," I shared. "So please, I'm asking you to do that."

Fergus responded with a simple bob of his head, his eyes locking onto mine. "I will do that, but I want to ask you a few things as well."

Curious, I held his gaze.

"You say showing emotions is difficult for you," Fergus began. "But you're doing a great job. And I want to ask you to continue doing just that.



I want to ask you to be better to her than I have ever been."

He looked down for a second, like he needed to gather himself before going on.

"Violet is the last piece I have of my sister, Claire. She grew up in the Bloodrose village, and I've always been scared to let her go. It took everything in me just to agree to let her go to Starlight. She's been isolated for so long...and that's why I need you to remember this."

His eyes lifted again. "She doesn't always listen. She doesn't always say the right things. She gets overwhelmed and scared and insecure. And when that happens, please don't get upset with her." I could hear the slightest crack in his voice.

"Do not raise your voice at her. Talk to her the way you just talked to me. Be patient. She needs that because she's still learning."

For a second, I thought I had imagined it, but a single tear rolled down Alpha Fergus' cheek, right onto his lap.

"Dad?" Dylan called out to him, worried. "Are you crying?"

"Crying?" Fergus sighed. "Please do not be ridiculous..."

He looked away fast and let out a sharp huff. "I suppose I just got wood in my eye from carving so hard."

Nate and I both frowned at each other. Yes, definitely crying.

The man had emotion?

Violet would love to hear about this.



Even I thought I would die before seeing Fergus Hastings tear up. He cleared his throat multiple times.

"Watching you both...the way you stand behind her, no matter what anyone thinks...it brings back memories of her parents. It's really special."

Her parents?

"Claire and Greg?" I asked carefully, testing the waters.

Fergus gave a dry laugh and wiped at his wood-filled eye. "Yes, Claire and Greg. And uh...yes."

He looked away again and exhaled.

I think I got it. He meant both sets of parents—Claire and Greg, who Violet had always said were so in sync, and Adelaide and Alaric, who had stayed together no matter what.

"I just wanted her to live an easy life," he spoke, barely above a whisper. "I promised my sister I would let her live an easy life, and I always thought I was doing that...but yesterday, I said a lot of hurtful things. Things I never meant to say."

He ran a hand down his face. "When she called me Fergus instead of Dad, my heart shattered into a million pieces, and I haven't closed an eye ever since."

His voice trembled. "I stayed because I want to be her dad again. And I don't want to ruin what my son has already started to mend with his sister."

Hearing Alpha Fergus say all of that in under a minute felt more



meaningful than the dozen or so sentences Nate said I had managed to get out. It didn't feel like I was talking to Violet's enemy anymore, but to her father. A man full of regret, who still had a lot to learn.

All I wanted was for us to move forward, so Violet could move forward too. She deserved that.

I couldn't help but think that maybe it was time for Violet to tell Fergus everything she knew. It was her choice, of course, but it might help him understand and accept things more easily.

"The elf is looking good, Nate," Fergus said out of nowhere.

"Really?" Nate smiled, concentrating on his work. He smiled proudly, like he had just been praised by the king of wood carving. "Thank you, Alpha Fergus!"

I let out a quiet chuckle. Then Fergus turned to me. "Do you already know what you're going to make, son?"

Son?

I froze. We all did, and looked at him like we had misheard, but he was staring straight at me. He looked calm and unbothered, as if he hadn't just dropped a word I had never expected to hear from him in a thousand years.

"I'll leave the carving to you," I said with a smile.

Fergus shrugged his shoulders. "Violet likes sunflower carvings, doesn't she, Dylan?"

Dylan grinned. "Yes. She loves those."



I didn't hesitate to pick up my tools. If my Violet loved sunflowers, sunflowers she would get. She did seem like the sunflower type. Bright, warm, and beautiful. It still surprised me how there was so much more to learn about her.

"I have misjudged you, son," Fergus acknowledged, smiling faintly. "You are nothing like your father at all. You will make a great king, and an even better ally to my Dylan...and you will have the whole Bloodrose behind you."

"I'm just happy to have made a start," I said. "For Violet."

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