



Chapter 228

Violet

"Who are all these people?"

My chest moved up and down as I looked around the room. My eyes stopped on a little girl lying on a bed near the end of the tent. She looked no older than ten, and her cough was much too rough for someone so small.

The sight of her made something crack inside me. Something I didn't know was still breakable.

"Why are they here," I said softly, "and not in the city where they —"

"Can get the proper care they need?" Kayden finished for me. My eyes widened as they snapped to him. Kayden exhaled hard through his nose, folding his arms like he was trying to hold something in.

"They are witches, Violet," he spoke. "This is what happens to them here in Lyperia."

Yes, but why did he care?

I turned my eyes to Varius, who had walked over to the girl who was coughing. He moved slowly, like he was hurting too. When he got to her, he held his hand just above her forehead. His eyes lit up white for a moment, but it only lasted a second.

It didn't last...

The light vanished quickly, like it had taken too much out of him.

It was so severe, his hands shook as he pulled it back.

"The Lyperian stone in these mountains used to be powerful," Kayden spoke. "But now that it has been extinguished, it messes with the air."



Makes it hard for witches to stay healthy."

I glanced at him. "What happened to it?"

"They stopped making it," he said calmly. "It was too strong, and it gave witches power...

real power. The kind that scared people. So the king shut it down."

King Elyx...

I couldn't help but wonder if it was because of me. If he carried that much shame, maybe he wanted to erase everything that had ever tried to protect me.

Or maybe it had nothing to do with me at all.

Maybe he just liked watching witches suffer because that's how much he hated Adelaide.

"I didn't know," I whispered. "Kylan never told me."

"That's because Kylan doesn't know," Kayden's voice was sharp. "And if he did, he wouldn't care."

My jaw clenched.

That wasn't true.

Kylan would be the first person to do something for these people. He would've fought to move them, or at least come with a solution.

I didn't know what Kayden thought he was doing, but it wasn't working.

My eyes drifted back to the people on the beds, but not for too long because I had forced myself to tear my gaze away.

I took a deep breath to calm myself down, to not let my anger take over.



Seeing them like this.

It actually hurt.

"This is what happens when you're born like this," Kayden added. "I thought you could relate...because this is what happens when no one wants you."

I didn't answer.

I couldn't.

My throat went dry. Varius hunched over slightly, his breathing uneven. He had already used his eyes a few times, and he looked exhausted, yet calm. Like he was used to it. Like all of this had become his normal.

"Varius has been keeping them alive," Kayden breathed. "But he's getting weaker. Every glow takes more out of him than it gives."

My hands balled into fists, and I looked down, biting the inside of my cheek. This could've been Aelius.

"How long has he been doing this?"

Kayden shrugged beside me. "Longer than he should have."

My chest burned with sadness. My eyes squinted as I looked around again. There were too many of them, and some looked like they were on the edge of slipping away.

"Can't he move them?" I suggested. "Somewhere better? Somewhere safer?"

The raven made a sound from Kayden's shoulder, and its dark eyes locked on mine. I didn't know what Thorne was thinking, but the raven was probably judging me.

"There's nowhere to go for the dark witches," Kayden answered. "Not



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"There's nowhere to go for the dark witches," Kayden answered. "Not here, not in the Common Lands either. Your people are hurting, and this isn't the only place like this, Violet. This is just the one we're standing in."

My heart dropped, and once again, I didn't have the words to answer.

It wasn't just shock, but I was also trying to gather my thoughts. Yes, this was bad—but I really couldn't understand why Kayden was in it. What happened to the witches didn't seem like it had anything to do with him, and also didn't explain him knowing every little detail about me.

My lips parted before I could stop them. "Why would you care?" I wondered. "You're a Ly—"

But I didn't finish.

Because...was he?

He couldn't shift. He couldn't run, or fight, or even walk. He was the king's son, a Lyperian, but his body didn't move like his siblings.

I turned to Kayden, expecting him to look offended, but he was just... quiet. There was not even a smirk on his lips.



"I used to be," he said with a sad chuckle. "I was born in the palace, raised by the king's favorite, raised to be the king's favorite, trained to be the best. But in the end, none of it mattered. The day my legs stopped working was the day I lost my purpose."

In some strange way, his words touched me, and I didn't understand how he kept that kind of pain hidden behind that smirk of his.

"People say the king cared for me," Kayden went on. "But when my mother begged him to seek help from the witches to heal me, his so-called favorite, he said that if she did...I was no longer worthy of being called his son."

"Kayden..."

"Now you know...that's how much the same king everyone claims favored me over my siblings actually loves me."

He didn't meet my eyes. His hand rested lightly on Thorne, who was still on his shoulder. "I dreamt of Thorne telling me to come to the mountains," he confessed. "My mother ignored the king's wishes for the first time in her life. She brought me here in secret. Varius had said he couldn't fix me...but he lightened the pain, and has been doing so for years."

"And Lady Mona knows?"

Kayden slowly lifted his index finger to his mouth as if to tell me that this was also one of our little secrets.

"I'm not one of them," Kayden said. "But this place...this is where I spent four years in peace. Where I learned these people aren't monsters. Where Thorne showed me that a Violet would come...to save those I care



about."

I looked back at him slowly, taking in every word.

"I know what it's like to live in a broken body," he said. "And it might be too late for me, but it's not too late for them. You can still help them, Violet. Your people."

My eyes dropped to the ground. All of this was too much, and I hadn't even taken a single step since we entered the tent.

When I raised my head again, I caught Varius glancing at us with a blank expression. He still looked exhausted.

"Why doesn't he speak to me?"

The words left me before I could stop them.

Kayden released a sigh. "Because he already knows everything there is to know about you. That's his job," he answered. "And now you can do yours."

My job?

I didn't even know what that was supposed to be.

"Which is?" I asked cautiously.

Kayden gave me a nod. "You can take away their pain, Violet. Try to heal them with your...eyes."

I stiffened.

My eyes?



I had healed before. Without glowing, and it worked perfectly fine. Why did it have to be my eyes this time?

What if healing them with my eyes triggered something dangerous or even worse, messed with the portal?

I didn't even know what these people were capable of, and at the end of the day...they were still dark witches.

This decision was too big, too dangerous, and it was something I should probably discuss with Kylan, no matter what agreement about 'secrets' I had made with Kayden.

No, not should—but needed to.

Maybe there was another way, like a stronger medicine from the city or a different kind of healer.

I breathed in slowly. "Can I...think about it?"

Kayden pulled a cheeky grin. "Sure. Varius already said you would say something like that."

I looked at Varius again, and the man was still watching me. I flinched as Thorne suddenly made a sharp and angry sound.

"Bad, ungrateful raven," Kayden scolded. "Don't do that!"

The bird didn't seem to care, and flapped its wings once more before flying straight back to Varius, landing gently on his shoulder.

I stared at it.

Thorne...



There was just something about the way that thing moved, and looked at me. I had seen that thing before, I was sure of it. I just didn't know where.

"We should head back," Kayden decided. "I'll let you sleep on it."

I forced myself to look around again. All eyes were still on me, just begging, pleading, hoping for me to stay and do something. The Violet they had supposedly been waiting for.

But as much as I wanted to help them, I couldn't let Kayden and that Aelius cosplayer manipulate me into doing something that might work against me. I just couldn't...

My stomach twisted with guilt. "Sure," I said quietly.

But sleep on it?

How could I even close an eye, knowing these people were waiting for someone to save them? Too bad for them that it had to be me. The joke was on them because I couldn't even save myself.

Kayden turned away from the tent, and just as I was about to follow him, my eyes met Varius's one last time.

He was definitely an interesting one...

The old man had supposedly expected me to leave, but his brown eyes held no judgment. They were calm, steady...trusting and understanding.

Thorne made another sound, causing me to snap out of my thoughts as I turned and slipped out of the tent to catch up to Kayden.

When I did, it didn't take long before we were back on the path that led back to the palace. As I gripped Kayden's wheelchair, pushing it carefully



along the trail, I couldn't help but look over my shoulder again.

The village was barely visible now, but my heart still felt heavy.

Though I wasn't sure I was the right person, the Violet they had been waiting for, I did know that something had to happen. They had a child suffering, while the children in the palace ate off silver plates and never knew of pain or hunger.

"I know you're thinking of telling Kylan," Kayden said suddenly, breaking the silence. "And I want you to. I give you permission to share our secret."

My hands tightened on the chair handles. It wasn't just the words. It was the way he said it, like he got to decide that for me.

Annoyance flared in me as Kayden glanced back with a bright, sarcastic smile. "He'll say something like..." His voice shifted as he mockingly deepened it. "'I can't promise you I'll do something right now, but I will do something about it. You have my word.'"

He then laughed under his breath like he had said the funniest thing in the world. My blood was close to boiling, and I got the sudden urge to just let go of that chair.

How dare he talk about Kylan that way?

Kayden kept talking. "And when he says that, you'll think back to this moment and hate me even more."

I responded with a dry chuckle because he was right about one thing. I would tell Kylan about everything. About the moment he saw my eyes, the mountains, the people...



Kayden would eat his words. Just wait and see.

I looked down at Kayden. He was more confusing than I ever thought he would be.

He helped to keep me safe, but not without messing with my head. He knew things about me, but wouldn't exactly explain how. He wasn't kind, but he wasn't cruel either.

I didn't know what to do with someone like him.

"You said it's too late for you," I asked loudly. "Tell me why."

It was quiet for a second, but then Kayden hummed. His lips curled into a small smile.

"I have another destiny," he shared confidently. "Thorne told me I will die, and I have accepted that...and one day...I'll be reborn as Kian."

Those words gave me the serious creeps. Die and be reborn? Was he insane?

"And...why Kian?" I asked after a pause. "What does it mean?"

"It means the ancient one," Kayden spoke with a spark in his voice. "Or the one who endures. The one who keeps going...even when everything says he shouldn't."

Somehow, something about that confused me even more.

"It's not just a name," Kayden explained further. "It's a reminder. Of who I used to be, and who I still have to become."

"Really?" I answered. "Tell me...who will you become?"



"It's too much to explain," an amused breath slipped from Kayden's lips.
"But since you asked so kindly, I will tell you a bit of what I'm allowed to share."



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