

## Chapter 23

Violet

He paused, then turned slowly, raising a brow as if he was wondering why I was stopping him.

My legs moved quickly as I moved in front of him. “I just wanted to say...” I awkwardly looked around, trying to come up with anything. What did I even want to say?

“T-Thank you. For, you know, saying I’m worthy of being on the team.”

Kylan laughed lightly. “We’re not friends, puppy,” he reminded me. “Don’t get it twisted.”

He kept walking, but I wasn’t finished—so I hurried after him. “Well, it was still nice of you. Even if you’re just pretending not to care,” I spoke, frustrated.

Kylan smirked beside me. “Enlighten me please, why would I care?”

I sucked my teeth, bothered by his change of attitude. “So, what? You’re too cool to be nice to people again?”

Kylan glanced at me sideways, his smirk never fading. “Nice isn’t really my thing. You should know that by now, Puppy.”

“And here I thought we were bonding?”

“Bonding? Let’s not get carried away,” Kylan snorted. “And you still haven’t answered my question. Why would I care?”

I rolled my eyes. “Well, because you have a funny way of showing you don’t care,” I hissed. “First, you’re accusing me of flirting with your friend, then you’re letting me on the Elite Team, then suddenly you’re not throwing around insults every five seconds—and now you do—”

“I’m not doing you a favor, I just got bored of them,” Kylan said. “Plus, you’re doing all the work with your reactions. Too easy.”

“E-Easy!” I scoffed, aggravated. He really knew how to get on someone’s nerves. “You think you’re something, don’t you?”

Kylan let out an exhausted breath. “If you say so,” he responded. “It’s not my fault you take the bait every time.”

“That’s because you’re—” I paused, searching for the right word, “unbearable.”

“I’ve been called worse.”

“Shocking,” I muttered.

As I followed him, my frustration grew. He didn’t seem to care at all, which only made me more annoyed. Why was he so hard to talk to? My heart pounded, not just from trying to keep up, but from how irritated I felt. I didn’t even know why I was still talking to him.

“And what’s the deal with this whole ‘Puppy’ thing?” I spoke after a moment of silence. “Could you really not come up with something a bit more creative?”

Kylan hummed. “You’re small, irritating, always rambling,” he lifted his shoulders. “It fits. Seems like a good match.”

I clenched my teeth. His words stung, even though I tried not to let them get to me. It was like he knew me well enough to get under my skin.

He lifted his brow. “Do you want me to keep going?”

I shot him a glare, but he didn’t care. “You seem like someone who follows the rules, a prude, always trying to be proper, wag your tail for other’s approval—”

“I do not!” I gasped, feeling my cheeks glow. If there was one thing I hated it was people making right assumptions, and he seemed to have figured me all out.

“And every time I criticize you, you get all insecure and worked up, like a puppy—my puppy—see?” He let out a low laugh. “It’s cute, actually.”

Cute?

My face burned with both anger and humiliation, mainly because I knew ‘cute’ wasn’t a compliment. Not from Kylan’s mouth.

“I’m not cute, and I’m definitely not your puppy!”

“But you are.”

“No, I’m not!” My voice turned high-pitched. “And referring to werewolves as ‘puppy’ is really offensive, by the way.”

Kylan yawned, not seeming to care at all. “Then don’t be like one.”

“I’m not!” I argued. “You don’t know anything about me.”

“You think?” he sighed. “You’re not that difficult to read. I know everything I need to know.”

“Okay—but if I’m a puppy, then what does that make you?”

He shrugged. “Lycan. Obviously.”

I pressed my lips together, trying hard not to laugh. The fact that he said these things with a straight face just made everything even funnier.

“You are what you are—and you can’t change that.”

“And that is?”

“An obedient little puppy.”

I clenched my fists beside me. “I’m not some obedient little—”

“But you are,” Kylan cut me off. “You’re walking right next to me, aren’t you? Didn’t even notice where we’re going.”

I blinked and looked around, suddenly realizing we were no longer walking or even outside. A gasp escaped my lips as I noticed we were standing right in front of his room.

Kylan crossed his arms, leaning casually against the doorframe. “You’ve been bullshitting so much, you didn’t even notice you’re at my dorm.”

How had I not noticed sooner?

This was a disgrace.

“I—” I started, feeling flustered. “I wasn’t paying attention.”

“Obviously,” Kylan chuckled, amused by all of this. “And, by the way, it’s one minute before curfew.”

“What?” I quickly checked my phone, realizing he was right. I hadn’t even noticed how much time had passed between talking to Trinity and Dylan, and bickering with Kylan.

“I need to get back!”

I turned to leave, but before I could take a step, a warm hand wrapped around my wrist.

“You’re stupid,” Kylan said, pulling me back. I stumbled over, and almost lost my balance. He was standing too close. So close I was too nervous to even take a breath.

We both looked down at my wrist, and he quickly let go. “Strikes are stricter for Elite Team members,” he narrowed his eyes. “Do you really want to risk sneaking back and getting caught?”

I stared at him, my mind racing. “You know what, Kylan. I’ll just sleep here in the halls instead of my cozy bed and get caught anyway,” I snarled. “How about that?”

Kylan didn’t answer right away, his gaze locked on mine before he released a disapproving breath, and let out a deep sigh. He nodded toward his door. “Unless you want a strike this soon—get inside.”

He was right, and I knew he was.

Maybe if I’d make a run for it, Rochwall would vouch for me and explain that we had an Elite Team dinner.

But there was also a chance that the faculty members would question my spot on the Elite Team, especially since I’d just made it.

I hesitated, unsure of what to do as I glanced between Kylan and the door. Everything in me screamed that this was a bad idea—that I should turn around, run back to my dorm, and deal with whatever shit I was going to get in the morning.

But then there was that other part of me that hated disappointing anyone. Esther had gotten me on the team with good faith, and since she was also my RD, I couldn’t let her down. The last thing I needed was to be seen as irresponsible.

I could already imagine that horrendous note.

Strike: Going out past curfew.

Reason: Arguing with the Lycan Prince about whether she is a puppy or not.

No, that was not an option.

“Fine,” I decided. “I’ll go inside.”