

Chapter 234

Violet

Kylan's body stiffened. His hand slipped off the door handle, and his eyes went big as he turned around all the way.

"What did you just say?" he asked, stunned.

I gulped, knowing it was not exactly what he wanted to hear, but he was the one who told me not to lie to him again. My heart was beating out of my chest, but I held his gaze.

"You told me to be honest with you," I said, my voice steady. "So I'm being honest."

Even as the words left me, my mind was spinning. I didn't want to go against Kylan, and I didn't want to provoke him or turn this into something ugly. As a matter of fact, it had always been hard for me to be open about what I wanted, and what I believed in. I had spent most of my life watering myself down so I wouldn't scare anyone off.

But Kylan had told me to be real...

So I was being real, and yes, I was shitting myself.

Kylan looked down at his balled fist, then slowly opened it. "My hand," he said, "could be wrapped around Kayden's throat at this very second."

Then he looked up. "But instead, you want to talk about getting help for Baelor's followers who have been...waiting on you to save them...with your glowing eyes."

The words stung. I looked down at the floor for a second, because that's

where I wanted to be. I just wanted to disappear and tell him that I didn't want to have this conversation. But I knew that would not be an option because I knew how it would end.

I would end up going to the mountains with Kayden anyway, and it would turn into an even bigger thing. Something beyond repair.

My head shot up, and I forced myself to move. It was only one step, but I managed.

"Just like you, I don't trust Kayden. Not even a little," I told him. "He keeps talking about being reborn, getting a new name, acting like he's some chosen peacekeeper," I paused to breathe. "But at the same time, I know what I saw with my own two eyes, Kylan. I saw elders who can't walk. People with wounds no one's tending to, and they need help."

Kylan let out a defeated chuckle.

"And if I can see past Kayden's insane performance and still care about the witches in the mountains, then so can you."

A sigh left Kylan's lips, and he fluttered his eyes as if he was trying to keep himself from fainting. His brows pulled together. "I'm sorry, Kayden is what?"

"Yes, I still had to tell you about that as well," I spoke, exhausted. "He says he's going to die and be reborn as Kian, and that Kian is some divine savior who wants world peace and harmony and —"

"Okay, okay—stop!" he said, lifting a hand. "I need you to stop."

The corner of his eye twitched. "Because the more you tell me," he said, his voice low, "the more I believe we shouldn't touch those things in the mountains and should leave every last one of them, including Kayden, to

their fate."

My face dropped, and I didn't even try to hide it. When he said 'those things' what and who exactly was he referring to?

"I'm a witch," I whispered, broken. "Am I a 'thing' too?"

Kylan's face twisted with regret.

"Violet—"

"Is that really how you talk about people living on Lyperian soil? People who were raised to follow that awful being, just like you were raised to chase after a thousand mistresses?" My voice rose. "Aren't they Lyperian too?"

I didn't even see how he moved so fast, but in the next second, Kylan was in front of me, holding my arms. His grip was gentle but firm, and his eyes were still filled with regret as he made me look at him.

"That's not what I meant, Violet," he said. "Yes, you're a witch, and I accept that, just like I accept that they are my people. But you don't follow Baelor, and you're not like them."

"Then what are you saying?"

"I'm just saying we don't know what Kayden has been up to," he went on, "and if anything he's saying is even remotely true."

His eyes bored into mine. "Kayden is the King's golden boy, and he knows how much I care about you, how much it would break me if something happened to you," he said. "Has it ever crossed your mind that this could all be a setup? That the King is the one who told him everything about you, just so he could eventually lock you away for

deceiving the crown with witchcraft?"

"It has crossed my mind, but I highly doubt that," I looked up at him. "Kayden told me the King didn't even want him there," I mentioned. "That Lady Mona took him up there in secret to soften his pain."

"And you believe him?"

"I do," I stated, confident. "I saw his eyes, Kylan. The hatred in them. The rage, and Kayden is...it is certainly not the King's puppet."

We stared at each other. Neither of us spoke, but neither of us was ready to back down. His grip on my arms stayed firm, but I held it together. "I'm not asking you to trust Kayden," I insisted. "I'm asking you to help these people."

Kylan released a huff as he let go of me. His hands moved up to rub his temples. "Tell me something," he breathed. "If I tell you I'm against it, and ask you not to go back to those mountains...will that change anything between us?"

"It would," I responded without hesitation. "Because I'm going to help those people, no matter what, and you already know that. If you ask me to walk away from them, then you're asking me to be someone I'm not."

Kylan nodded like he had expected that. He took a step back, eyes dropping to the ground before he started pacing for a few seconds.

"What do you want to do about it?"

The question caught me off guard. Not because I didn't have an answer, but because he was asking, listening, and that had to mean something.

It made me think that perhaps I could get the hang of this.

Communicating...

"I just want to go to the mountains discreetly, bring them some medicine, food, basic supplies—and no glowing eyes," I explained. "And if you really don't trust it, we can bring Nate, Dylan, Trinity. We go up, we help them, and we leave. That's it."

Kylan didn't say anything right away. His eyes were fixed on the ground. Then they flicked up, sharp and serious. "Not Nate," he said. "I don't want him seeing you around those witches."

"Fine," I said quickly. "Not Nate."

That would probably be for the best anyway. The most important thing was that he was listening.

"I'll take care of the supplies, and we'll do it your way," Kylan gave in. "But after that, I'll deal with Kayden in my own way."

He meant every word, that much was clear. He wasn't on board with the plan, but this was his way of a compromise, just enough to keep the peace, even if it killed him inside.

Kylan turned and walked back toward the door again.

My breath caught. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going for a walk."

"Then I can come with you!" I offered quickly.

He stopped in his steps.

"We could maybe look for the others—"

"No," he spoke firmly.

I blinked, stunned. "Well...maybe you can tell me about your day with Fergus," I added, trying to sound perhaps a bit too casual. "I'm sure we got a lot to discuss and—"

"No," he said again. His tone was a bit softer, but the message remained the same. I wasn't welcome. "I just need to take a walk...alone."

"I get it..." I gasped softly, shifting in place. "Are you angry with me because I want to help the witches?"

He let out a short, tired chuckle in response, and faced me once more. "No, Violet," he said. "I'm not angry. I just need a little time because I do not want to argue with you," Kylan explained. "Just like you, I am also learning how to hear things I don't like without letting it change the way I feel about you. I need my space for now, but that doesn't mean I don't love you anymore."

He explained it calmly and respectfully, but the ache in my heart was still there. "Okay," I whispered.

"I'll be back later. I promise," Kylan said.

I gave him a small smile. Had I gone too far? Pushed him too far?

"Don't do that, Violet," Kylan smiled softly. He made his way over toward me, and his fingers gently tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. "Don't overthink or blame yourself for having an opinion. I asked you for honesty."

His touch lingered, tracing down the side of my face. Then his forehead rested against mine. "Remember when I said you already have the most important requirement to be queen?"

I did.

I remembered every word...

"I still feel the same way," he whispered. "You care for people. And you have a good heart, Violet."

He pulled back, just enough to let those brown eyes look at me. Then he held my cheeks and pressed a soft kiss to my lips. Maybe it was to comfort me. Maybe it was to remind himself that he still loved me, and that the feeling hadn't gone anywhere.

That it was still real...

I watched as he walked away again, and this time he really walked out the door. It was difficult trying to believe him. That I hadn't ruined everything for speaking up, when it really felt like that.

And although I really wanted to chase him, follow him out of that door and apologize for my beliefs, I decided not to.

Because Kylan was right.

He deserved space, and I needed to respect that. Even if it hurt.

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