

Chapter 236

Kylan

I let out a surprised laugh, even if I didn't mean to. I didn't know what was funnier, that she had called herself a failing mother, or that she thought she might still have something to offer after I had already ruined everything.

She was the woman who gave birth to me. My mother, and not just mine, but Lyperia's mother. I had always been desperate for her love, and I still was. I remembered how relieved I had felt when I saw her standing with Violet at the feast. Even more when I bumped into her in the halls and she didn't look at me with that same coldness I had learned to get used to.

I understood why she was angry, and I accepted it. She had every right to be. For so long, I had wished she would forgive me.

But now that she was here, standing in front of me, I wasn't quite sure if I even liked the sound of what she was saying.

She acknowledged something, and it meant I had to face something I wasn't ready for, something I wasn't even focused on at the moment. Her actually trying.

For so long, I had convinced myself that perhaps I didn't need her. That she had already made her choice and didn't want to be my mother anymore. What right did she even think she had, trying to show up and reach for pieces of me I hadn't wanted anyone to touch?

She was trying to be what I thought I didn't need anymore, and maybe that scared me more than I wanted to admit.

The Queen released a soft scoff and rolled her eyes. She must've seen the

doubt on my face. "Or don't tell me," she gave me a small shrug. "That's up to you."

It wasn't just that I didn't want to tell her. I knew exactly how it would play out if I did. The moment she heard about Kayden, or that Mona brought him to the witches, she would act on impulse, drag the king into it to make a statement, and I had no idea what that would mean for Violet.

The queen leaned forward with a teasing little smirk and gave my back a gentle pat. A shiver ran down my spine at the motherly touch that had once felt so familiar. When she was done, she stepped back, like she wasn't planning to press me further.

"Why are you here anyway?" I couldn't help but wonder. "Did the king do something?"

I hated the way I said it. Like it was supposed to be something normal, while it wasn't. But unfortunately, this was the way things were.

"T-The king?" Her brows lifted slightly, but then she touched her chest and burst out in laughter. "I've been dealing with that man for years, Kylan. Even before you were born. I don't need the towers for that anymore!"

See? She said it like it was supposed to be something normal.

I huffed and looked down, rubbing my jaw to hide the smile that threatened to creep onto my face. It was no use. The queen didn't miss a thing.

"It's that sister of yours, Kaelis," she mumbled, waving her hand. "We've started planning her First Howl, and with all the ridiculous things she's asking for, it's clear she's the king's daughter!"

Well, that was Kaelis.

She definitely loved the good things in life. Lavish gowns, the most expensive jewelry and perfumes, and the king claimed to have a 'soft spot' for her, though he claimed to have a soft spot for everyone. Kaelis and Kiora got showered with more than they ever needed, but they weren't like Kahlia.

None of my sisters were like Kahlia, not even Lady Mona's other daughters.

Kaelis and Kiora still had a softness to them, a real heart. They loved the people, they loved giving, and even though we were not on speaking terms, that was something I had to respect them for.

"What does she want?" I asked. It felt strange to be having a normal conversation with the queen, especially after everything, but in a weird way, it helped. Just talking. It pulled me a little further out of my own head and gave me some time to breathe.

"She says I should invite the daughters of all nobles to witness her special night because the Moon Goddess came to her in a dream and gave her some interesting information," the Queen sighed. "Told her she would meet her mate, and that his name..."

The queen bit her lip, stopping mid-sentence. Curious, I tilted my head. "His name?"

"I..." She let out a long hum. "Don't think it's necessary to share since the dream was probably nothing more than just a dream, and you won't know him anyway."

I blinked slowly, then let out a soft sigh under my breath. "It's a big

night," I admitted. "So... just spoil her. Give her what she wants."

The Queen shot me a smirk. "Big brother to the rescue, vouching for her just like old times. That's how it's always been, hasn't it?"

I didn't answer, but the corner of my mouth twitched into a slight smile. I knew Kaelis probably wouldn't care, but deep down I did, and I really wanted them to be at her happiest.

I wanted everyone I cared about to be happy, including...

Dragging my hands over my face, I let out a slow breath. Including Violet ...

Everything I said, did, or pushed back against was because I didn't want her to ever hurt herself—not now, not later. I just wanted to protect her, to keep her safe and happy. But she lied to me...

So maybe I wasn't doing such a good job after all.

"Are you thinking about my little flower again?" the queen asked softly.

I looked into her warm eyes as she called her by that nickname. It was not easy for the queen to warm up to someone, but it seemed like Violet didn't have to do much. "I noticed you've taken a liking to Violet," I pointed out.

"I have," she nodded, folding her arms over her gown.

I squinted at her. "But why?"

"Just because," she said with a small shrug and a quiet breath. "My little flower might seem weak, and maybe she even thinks she is. But if you look closer, you'll see she's not." She smiled gently. "She's been

through a lot. I can see it in her eyes. But she's still standing, and if she were really weak, she wouldn't be here... in Lyperia, a place that challenges even us. All she needs is for us to continue to believe in her."

I looked down for a second, jaw tight as my thoughts tangled again. The queen had described her so perfectly, but that didn't take away from the fact that I was still angry. Angry and disappointed because she had done the one thing I couldn't stand for.

"I was really proud when I saw you stand up for her," she said after a quiet moment. "I wish someone would've done the same for me... and I know she will remember it for the rest of her life—"

"She lied to me," I swallowed. "I love her so much, I try to be there for her... but she still lied to me."

I watched as the queen's face softened instantly, a slight frown tugging at her brow.

I didn't want to open up to her, and I hated how easily it came out, yet I didn't know how to stop. Because even though their situations were nothing alike, if anyone knew what it felt like to be disappointed by the one you love, it was her.

She stepped a little closer, like she wasn't sure if she should ask further, but did anyway.

"What did she lie to you about?"

This was the moment she expected me to explain. Except I couldn't, and I wouldn't. I didn't want her to start seeing Violet any differently. Violet was still the same amazing, lovable, clumsy sunshine I'd fallen for. That part hadn't changed. I stared past the queen for a moment.

"I shouldn't have said that. Just forget I said anything."

"No," she said softly. "Don't stop now."

I looked into her eyes, and this time I didn't see the Queen. I saw a mother who wanted to listen to her son.

"I just never thought she could lie to me," I said quietly. "But she did. And I walked away because I didn't want to argue with her. I didn't want to snap... or lose my patience. But I just feel like her heart is too good sometimes... and because of that, I can't get through to her."

I drew in a sharp breath. "How can I protect her, trust her again, if she won't let me in?"

The queen didn't say anything. I didn't expect her to say anything, and didn't even know if I wanted it. I just wanted to let it all out.

"I assume you don't want to tell me what this is about?" she noted. "But that's okay, because the answer remains the same."

Her posture was relaxed, her head raised high.

"I don't know what Violet lied to you about. I don't know how bad it was, but what I do know is that even now, you're still trying to protect her, and that says everything."

I listened to her words. "You have every right to be upset. You're loyal, Kylan. Honest, protective, and when someone like you gets hurt, it's easy to want to pull back," she said. "To punish or distance yourself, but Violet is not your enemy, and she arrived with more doubt than certainty."

I didn't interrupt her yet.

"If she has made mistakes, it's not because she doesn't love you. It's because she's trying to figure out how to live in a place where she was never supposed to survive, and sometimes, people lie just to protect themselves, even when they don't want to. You're still figuring each other out, right?"

I gave her a weak nod.

"You say you love her? Then please meet her where she is, and not where you wish she would be." 1

I stood there in silence, her words cutting deeper than I ever thought they would. She didn't know all the details, and I kept that in mind, but some of the things she said were right. I was still disappointed, and I had every right to be, but at the same time, I was still figuring her out, and Violet needed me. Even at this very moment, she still needed me.

"Thank you," I whispered.

There was no hesitation in me as I walked past the queen and headed out of the tower.

"Kylan!" she called out behind me.

I stopped and looked back. Her lips curled into a soft smile. "I think you and I have a lot more to talk about," she said. "There's so much to heal, much we have both tried to forget, but when you're ready, you can come and find me."

I was still unsure of what to say, or even how I felt, or if I would be ready for that. For now, I just gave a quiet nod and kept walking. All I wanted was to check up on Violet.

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By the time I made it back to the room, I drew in a long breath as I stood in front of the door. Despite everything, stepping out for a bit and going to the tower turned out to be the right decision for the both of us.

Whether it was the queen's words or the air in the tower, I felt calm now.

I stepped in and closed the door behind me, frowning as my eyes scanned the room. I'd expected to see Violet, but she wasn't there.

Or so I thought, until I heard it. Soft, muffled sobs coming from behind the bathroom door. My stomach dropped.

I walked over to the door. I didn't bother knocking. I just opened it and caught her standing in front of the mirror.

Our eyes met through the glass for a second before she quickly looked away, wiping at her face.

But I had already seen it. Her eyes were red and puffy, and the sight was heartbreaking.

"I wasn't crying," she said, still rubbing at her face. Her voice sounded heavy, and I knew she was just trying to stay strong. Trying to keep her promise not to cry.

"This is so embarrassing," she scoffed through her tears, clearly not meant for me to hear.

It was not. She wasn't crying because she was weak. It was the kind of crying that came from regret, from knowing she hurt someone she never wanted to hurt. She never meant to hurt me...

I thought about stepping closer, about pulling her into my arms, but maybe she needed space. Everything that had just happened was still too

much for both of us.

Even so, there was one more thing I had to say.

"Violet."

I rested my hand against the wall. She let out a quiet hum in response, her back still turned to me. That was okay. I just needed her to hear me.

"I know it probably hurt when I walked out, but I just needed a moment," I explained softly. "I will not leave you, Violet. I need you to know that I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere, and the mountain thing... we will figure it out, together."

I slowly backed away and shut the bathroom door, letting her have the space she needed, but I wasn't leaving.



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