

Chapter 244

Violet

I still held his gaze.

Even when everything in me wanted to look away, I didn't. My chin was lifted, and my hands calm at my sides, but the anger bubbling in my chest was hard to hide.

Because the longer I looked at him, the more everything came back. And this time, all of it.

I thought of my parents, and the day they were surrounded, helpless. I thought of how the Alpha King struck, and no one lifted a single hand to stop it. He had been there, betrayed them. He had seen it. Let it happen until it was already too late.

Even back then, he had that same unbothered, detached look on his face like he did right now.

Like none of it mattered.

All that talk about an unfamiliar face?

My name is Violet, and he was the one who gave it to me.

He released a loud scoff. So loud, my muscles tensed at the sound. For a second, I wondered what he would say. If he would try to belittle me, cut me off, or call this a waste of time. But instead, he leaned back lazily and waved his hand in the air as if I was a fly that was supposed to be swatted away.

"Hmm. Now I remember," he said, a weak smile appearing on his lips.

Then he motioned again with yet another dismissive flick of his wrist. "Proceed."

Of course he remembered me now. But only because he had to. He didn't want to embarrass himself again like he did at the feast.

But he didn't remember me the way I wanted him to. His ego wouldn't allow him. Getting through to this man felt almost impossible. I figured that although it would not be much better, I would have better luck with the other members of the council. So I just decided right then and there that I wasn't going to speak to him. Not now.

My eyes found Kylan. He sat back, relaxed in his chair. He blinked slowly like this was just another meeting. There wasn't a hint of worry on his face. He believed in me.

Suddenly, Lurnia yawned from within.

'Speak, Violet!' she screeched.

I stiffened at her sharp tone. My breath hitched, and then I turned my gaze back to those at the council. Most of their eyes were squinted, waiting for me to speak.

'And for the love of our Goddess, please do not cry, and do not speak in that whiny, whispery tone you always use,' she spat. 'You know who we are now. Scream if you have to!'

When had I ever used a whiny, whispery tone?

'Speak!'

"It has come to my attention that there are witches in the mountains who are suffering," I said, my voice ringing through the chamber before

I even realized I had it in me.

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught Kylan give me a small, reassuring nod, urging me to continue.

"Elders. Children. Families," I repeated, my voice louder now. "Most of them are sick, starving, and scared. They don't know—"

"And how would you know?" the king suddenly cut in.

My gaze snapped to him so fast, my eyes almost lit up on instinct. Anything to silence him at this point.

He was the last person who should be interrupting me, or better yet, ask me any questions at all. I stared right into those cold eyes of his. "I know because I've seen it," I said tightly. "With my own two eyes."

His mouth opened a little, like he was shocked I didn't fall apart. He thought he could humiliate me, but now that he saw it wouldn't work, he was already moving on to his next target.

His eyes shifted to Kylan beside him. "Did you—"

"She's speaking," Kylan said simply, cutting him off. "Focus on her."

A low growl came from the king as he sank back into his chair. His arms folded across his chest, and he almost seemed like a child scolded in front of his peers. No matter what, this king just wouldn't stop embarrassing himself.

With Kylan backing me, I held my ground and continued. "I was interested in the state of the people in the kingdom I would one day help rule alongside Kylan," I said. "And after what I saw in those mountains...I wasn't impressed."

I wasn't a complete idiot. I had quickly figured out that these people probably didn't give a damn about the witches. They didn't care yesterday, and they wouldn't care today. But one thing Lyperians did care about was pride. They truly believed their kingdom was the best, so the smartest way to get what I wanted was to make them believe it wasn't.

It seemed to have worked because the whole room went silent. Every face was frozen in fear.

"There are two Lyperias," I said, looking at the council. "One where people eat well and sleep safely, and one where they're left with nothing. You can act like the second one isn't there, but it is."

I looked around, scanning some more faces around me. Some were curious, others blank, but as my eyes met Beta Jack's, he gave me an encouraging smile. So did Nate, who was beside him, mirroring his expression.

I returned it with a tiny one of my own before turning forward again.

"I've always heard beautiful stories about Lyperia, and about how it's a place that protected all its people," I spoke in a gentle tone.

Of course, most of the things I had heard weren't all that great, but that wasn't the point right now.

"And if that is so, then why do the witches that I have seen in the mountain not match that image?" I asked. "I am asking you to please not make me change my mind about Lyperia. Please do not make me embarrassed to one day be your queen."

The silence returned.

It was just too quiet, to the point I was beginning to wonder whether I

had overstepped.

While the initial plan sounded great in my head,

I couldn't tell if I had just made a powerful point or completely ruined my chance at being taken seriously.

The only sound I could hear was a soft chuckle from within. Lumia.

'Now it's getting exciting.'

Not now, Lumia.

'Keep working because you're almost there,' she said. 'You are almost worth my time again.'

"So!" Kylan's voice broke through the uncomfortable silence. He leaned forward slightly, his eyes meeting mine. "What do you propose, Violet?"

He had given me the push I needed again, and this time, I was ready to show up with my demands.

All eyes were on me again. Waiting.

I took a slow and steady breath. "I propose we gather all the supplies we can. Medicine, food, water, blankets, anything useful, and take it up to the mountains first thing in the morning," I suggested. "We make it a group effort, show them that this kingdom still stands for something and does care for them."

Soft whispers filled the room, but I did not let it shake me. "Of course there's more we should be doing," I added. "So much more has to be done, but we need to start somewhere. These people need help now, and this feels like the right thing to do."

A man sitting near the back raised his hand, clearing his throat. His grey hair was slicked back neatly, and he sat straight with perfect posture. Despite his strict appearance, there was a friendly air about this one.

It was already something that he had raised his hand. Someone with manners.

"Yes?" I frowned.

"I have a question for you, Miss Violet," he said.

"Are you aware that the witches in those mountains are Baelor worshippers?"

The second that name left his lips, I heard a chair scrape. My eyes went straight to the person I already knew it would be. Elyx.

His fingers clutched the armrest beside him, and his face lost all its color. That name hit him hard. After everything he did, it didn't surprise me one bit.

Good.

It was supposed to hit him.

I turned back to the man. "Yes, I'm aware," I said calmly. "But so are all of you at this very moment, sir."

The man's brows furrowed. "How are we...Baelor worshippers?" he questioned. "Please enlighten me."

I stepped a bit closer, hoping I wouldn't mess this one up. "Baelor is here, around us, in us, and every decision we make," I explained, hoping it made sense. "I believe the good comes from the Moon Goddess...but

the bad?" I looked around slowly, meeting as many eyes as I could. "The bad comes from him...Baelor."

I paused to give them a moment to think about it. Or maybe to give myself a moment to think about whatever I was about to say next.

"You have the chance today to choose what side you're on," I stated, speaking louder. "You can close your eyes and do nothing, but that choice would be Baelor's influence. So I'm asking you...I'm begging you not to listen to him today," I said. "Make the right decision, and do not let your fear for these people mess with your judgment."

Several council members scribbled words down on their paper while others just sat and listened. I glanced around, breathing through my nose. Even until now, my hands did not tremble. I felt okay. Perfect.

"Thank you, Violet!"

Kylan rose to his feet. His eyes locked on mine, and a warm smile spread across his face. I knew there was nothing I could ever do to take back lying to him, but in that moment, I knew I had made him truly proud.

"Thank you for your words," he said. "You may step back now. The council will vote on this, and we'll call you back soon."

I blinked up at him, surprised that it was already over. I felt more at ease than I thought I would, and for a moment, I almost wished they would ask me to say more. It felt good to speak. It felt good to be heard. But maybe it helped knowing that, in a week, I probably wouldn't see any of them for a long time.

"Thank you for your time, council," I said politely, before turning my gaze to the king. He was still pale and sat stiff in his chair, but this time

he was glaring at me like he wished I would drop dead right there.

I met his dead stare with a smile. "I also thank you...Your..."

Something in me pulled back.

No, not Your Majesty.

He hadn't done anything for me. Elyx tilted his head, and I could already guess he feared I might disrespect him by not acknowledging him. I watched him closely and lifted my chin.

"Thank you...Your Highness."

Kylan chuckled in response. The king let out a short grunt. His eyes shot open, stunned. His teeth locked together, and the side of his face twitched from how hard his jaw was clenched.

Satisfied, I turned around with a smile tugging at my lips and walked toward the doors. I couldn't believe it. I didn't trip, didn't shake, didn't cry...I just did it.

Beta Jack was already waiting on one side of the door, holding it open for me, while Nate held the other open. Jack's eyes lit up as I walked past, and he gave me a quick smile. "Good job, Violet," he whispered.

And he actually meant it.

I could tell by the warmth behind his voice and the way his smile reached his eyes. There was no trace of mockery, just sincerity. It was still hard to understand how a man like him, who carried himself with so much respect and kindness, exists in the middle of all this mess. Be stuck in this place with an idiot for a king...a daughter like Chrystal.

At least not everything here was rotten.

As soon as I stepped out of the room, and the door closed, I could already feel her stir inside me. Lumia.

She was more active than she had been in a long time.

‘So you were capable. Just lazy,’ she spoke. ‘I respect that, and with that respect comes a whole lot more of me, Violet...’

I didn’t answer, just smiled. There was nothing left to do but wait, and hope for the best.

The council will say...

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