

Chapter 247

Violet

I bit into the Lyperian donut Nate just couldn't stop gushing about for the past few hours, the sugar melting across my tongue.

"And?" Nate asked eagerly.

I stared at him with a flustered look, humming in annoyance. My cheeks were still stuffed full, and I hadn't even swallowed yet. "Give me a second!"

After Nate had made it very clear that going back to embroidery was definitely not an option, we had decided to spend the rest of the afternoon together. The girls had joined us later with all kinds of questions about the council meeting, and Nate had shown us every corner of the palace.

He had introduced us to a couple of the chefs he seemed unusually close with, and even insisted we stop by some of the mistresses and their siblings. After that, we had dinner, and then we all parted ways, though Nate was kind enough to escort me back to my room.

"You are right," I licked my lips once my mouth was finally empty. "It is really sweet."

"Told you," Nate grinned. "Just like you."

My eyes went wide, and I quickly wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. His words made me cringe in a way I couldn't even explain. "You just can't stop flirting with me, can you?"

Nate didn't bother answering. He smiled at me like he had me right where he wanted me. I knew he wasn't serious. He just enjoyed teasing



me. That hadn't changed at all.

"Did you speak with Fergus already?" he asked suddenly.

I let out a small laugh, surprised at the way he addressed Fergus. The two must have gotten really close during their trip for him to call him by his first name.

"Not yet." I shook my head. I figured Fergus not having left was proof enough that all had gone well, but the thought of talking to him still made my stomach turn. The rush from earlier was gone. I had given enough speeches for one day, and I really couldn't manage another, especially since we had quite a few things to discuss.

"Give it some time," Nate encouraged, his tone softer now. "Let it happen naturally. It's hard for some people to admit fault, and when they finally do, apologizing can be even harder."

I let his words sink in. Nate was spot on. Apologizing did not come easily to that man, and one day wouldn't be enough to make it any easier.

"I'm sure when he hears about what you did today at the council, he'll be proud of you," Nate continued. "And I know for a fact that when the word spreads, he'll be the first one to join you tomorrow."

"Maybe," I mumbled. Though in my head, I was already scoffing at the idea. Fergus, who didn't give a damn about the witches, proud of me? We would see if he had really changed.

"You seem to know what you're talking about," I noted, looking at Nate. "Do you have someone in your family like that?"

Nate nodded before my sentence was even finished.

"Chrystal," I guessed.



He released a chortle. "Does Chrystal strike you as the type of person who could ever think she's in the wrong?"

I laughed, shaking my head. Good point. It was definitely not her.

For a moment, my mind flickered to Beta Jack, but I was pretty convinced it could also not be him. Other than his direct link with the king, that man seemed perfect.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Anything," Nate replied without hesitation.

"Have you ever argued with Beta Jack before?"

The question was personal, but it was something I had been curious about. Beta Jack didn't even seem like the type to raise his voice. My thoughts had been confirmed by Nate, who burst out laughing.

"Argued with Beta Jack?" He almost choked as he tried to swallow the last bite of his donut. "Never!"

"Never?" I lifted my brows.

"Never," he said again, still grinning. A second later, that grin shifted into a sad chuckle. "That man is so good it gets rather annoying sometimes," Nate chuckled softly.

Annoying...

My thoughts immediately went to Nate and his struggles with Lunaris. He seemed to respect his dad so much to the point he didn't want to burden him with any of his problems.

"Did I ever tell you my dad has mistresses?" Nate asked out of nowhere.



My eyes narrowed in surprise. "Beta...Jack?"

"Yes," Nate chuckled. "Beta Jack."

I gave a puzzled gaze, trying to picture it. I was sure True must've had other qualities, but she didn't seem to be the warmest. Still, Jack struck me as the loyal type. But at the end of the day, a Lyperian with a mistress was no more surprising than a fork found in the kitchen, so it wasn't completely unexpected.

"Do you want to know why he took them in?" Nate smiled. "It's not because he was pressured by the king or the court. It's for another reason."

"Well?"

"One was abused, one was abandoned, and the other was in danger," Nate explained. "They came to him, and he helped them, took in their children, and gave them a good life because that is who Dad is. He's a good man."

I felt my lips pull into a pout without even realizing it. "He really is a good person."

"The best," Nate agreed, his voice full of pride. "The kind of person you do not want to disappoint."

"Have you ever felt like you disappointed him?" I asked quietly. Nate's eyes softened, but before he could answer, I let out a deep sigh.

"Because I've felt like that about a million times," I shared. "Like I've disappointed my parents."

And it wasn't just one set. My mind jumped to Adelaide and Alaric, then to Claire and Greg, and even Fergus and Sonya. I had done nothing to



make them proud, but I knew I wasn't extraordinary by any means, so I wasn't about to play a victim either. I just accepted it as it was. I never wanted to let anyone down, yet I always felt like I had.

Maybe the idea of Fergus and Sonya not having too many expectations was a good thing after all. While Jack was great, I was starting to doubt whether I would actually want to have a parent close to perfection. I could only imagine the immense pressure Nate must be under.

"Do you ever wish he was just...not Beta Jack?"

Nate blinked, surprised, as the question had clearly caught him off guard. "L...I think—" he started, but nothing came out. "I think..."

I shot him a curious glance, waiting for his answer. But before he could, the sound of heels running across the marble floors echoed down the hall.

"Wait." Nate's eyes went wide. Panic flickered across his face as he suddenly grabbed me by the waist and pulled me behind one of the large columns. He pressed me so close against him that no one could see, even if they wanted to.

"What—?"

"Shhh," he whispered, covering my mouth with his hand.

That's when it finally hit me what he was doing. Nate was hiding from someone. The steps grew louder, quicker, until a girl came running into view, smiling brightly.

Kaelis.

She stopped halfway, as if she hadn't found what she came looking for, and glanced around with a confused frown. Her smile slowly faltered as she hummed in surprise.



She must've heard his voice and come looking right away. Kaelis, who seemed to think so highly of him.

I glanced up at Nate, who was watching her with intense eyes, his brows slightly drawn. It was hard to tell what was going on inside that head of his, but I was sure he must have had his reasons.

Kaelis rested her hand on her hip and let out a quiet huff, a few strands of her long, dark hair swaying in the air. She gave a small shrug and walked away, that same bright smile returning to her lips.

I was about to step away when Nate pulled me back. "Wait," he whispered. We didn't move until her footsteps had faded completely, then stepped out from our hiding spot. Nate started walking right away, and I hurried after him.

"I think she has a crush on you!" I said playfully, nudging his shoulder.

His jaw twitched. "Oh, really? Thanks for pointing out the obvious, Violet."

I couldn't help but laugh under my breath. Mainly because Nate didn't sound like his happy self. There was a hint of irritation in his voice.

"Not interested?" I teased.

He rolled his eyes and chuckled, like he was asking if I was insane.

"She's kind," I shrugged.

"She is," he agreed.

"And gorgeous."

"She is," he said again, sighing. "And hopefully she will one day find a



mate who will tell her all those things.”

I pulled a face. “Ouch.”

Nate shifted his eyes to me. “Kaelis and I grew up together. She just depends on me a lot, and because she’s inside all day and we hadn’t seen each other in a while, she doesn’t know any better,” he explained. “She’s like a little sister to me. Someone I’ll always protect and cheer on.”

I listened to Nate’s caring words because he did care. Just not in the way she might have hoped, but he was right. She was at that age where she would find her mate any time now, and since he had always been tight with Kylan, it was no wonder he saw her as nothing more than his little sister.

We walked the rest of the way in silence until we stopped at my door. As always, the guards stood in position, looking like they hadn’t moved an inch all day.

“Thank you, Nate,” I released a breath. “For walking me back, and for spending time with me today. I appreciate it.”

“Always, Vivi,” Nate smiled.

“I guess I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“You will,” he said with a nod. “Bright and early.”

We shared a quick hug before I entered the empty room, the door clicking shut behind me.

A smile tugged at my lips as I leaned against the door for a moment. Today was one of the good days, and deep down, I didn’t want it to be over.



I still couldn't believe I had actually set aside my fear, stood in front of the council, and given that speech. The whole thing kept replaying in my head.

The one thing that would make this day better was Kylan, and I couldn't wait for him to get back. From the moment he had left, I had thought about texting him a few times too many, but decided against it. He was probably still working hard, so I decided to pass the time as best I could and wait.

I just relaxed, waited, read a book, and tried to stay awake, but by the time the clock hit ten, my eyes were growing heavy, and I finally let them close.

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"Violet."

I turned right away, but there was nothing...only darkness. Endless, pitch black darkness pressing in from every direction. My body stiffened, and my eyes flicked around, desperate to find something...anything.

Where am I?

What's happening?

Wait...

Why am I inside the Veil?

"Violet!"

This time it was louder and closer. My head snapped toward the sound, my heart stopped, and my breath caught in my throat. From the shadows, two glowing red eyes cut through the dark. They were supposed to terrify



me, but they didn't.

They felt...familiar.

"It's really you, my beautiful Violet," the voice said with warmth. "Your mom has been trying to reach you for a long time."

No...It couldn't be.

My pulse sped up. That voice...

No, it couldn't be him.

I sucked in a shaky breath. "Who are you?"

"I don't have much time," he said in a rush, though I could still hear joy in his voice. "But your mom has a message for you. It's important. You need to see it."

"Who are you?" I asked again, even though deep down...I already knew. That voice, those eyes. The way it felt was too familiar.

A sigh followed. "I think you know who I am, Princess."

The red glow faded, replaced by a piercing blue that mirrored my own. Slowly, a tall, blonde figure stepped out of the black. The figure wasn't quite there, yet it was. It almost seemed like a ghost.

I could feel my pulse in my throat and hear the sound of my fast, shaky breaths.

Alaric?