



## Chapter 248

Violet

It was him.

It could only be him.

I sucked in a breath as I stared at the tall figure, waiting for him to disappear, but he didn't. There was a smile plastered across his face which I couldn't fully tell if it was warm or sad, maybe both.

All I knew was that this was him, and there was no question about it.

I drew in a shaky breath. "Alaric?" My voice was barely above a whisper. A relieved breath came from his lips, and he nodded once, his eyes never leaving mine.

"Dad?"

He exhaled, then broke into a wide, almost disbelieving smile. "Yes, I'm your dad," he nodded again. "We have met before."

The flashes returned from another dream, the one I had in Starlight, where I found myself in the same place. Back then, a voice told me I wasn't supposed to be there. Then I remembered him holding me as a baby through Adelaide's eyes.

We had met before, and that's why he felt so safe and familiar.

"I know," I whispered back. The moment he stepped closer, it felt like the ground had disappeared beneath me. My heart started beating fast as I stood in place. I had imagined this moment several times, and now that it was here, I didn't know what to do with it.



I couldn't even touch him. My fingers would pass right through.

"If only I could hold you," Alaric said with a quiet laugh. "Look at you. The little princess I once held in my arms is suddenly all grown up." His voice was filled with admiration, and his eyes glowed with pride. "I don't understand."

I couldn't say anything because I didn't understand either. I didn't understand why I had to grow up without him, miss him my whole life, and now find myself unable to hold him, just as I didn't understand why I was inside the Veil. My eyes grew watery, but I held myself together.

This was not supposed to be a sad moment.

Alaric stared at me with a slight tilt of his head, studying me like a father memorizing his child for the first time.

"You have my eyes."

"I know," I breathed, my lips curling.

"And my smile."

"I know."

He touched his golden locks, then lifted his chin toward me. "Hair?"

"I know...I t-think I...I have your face!"

He grinned. "And you stutter as well, I see?"

"Only when I get nervous," I admitted, trying to keep the smile on my lips. "But I'm working on it."

A warm and genuine laugh filled the air, and I think it must have been the



most beautiful sound I had ever heard in my life. My dad.

My thoughts had been so consumed with Adelaide, Adelaide, Adelaide, that I hadn't realized until now just how much I had missed him. The kind, and brave prince I had only seen through her eyes was now standing right in front of me, in this strange Veil.

My dad...

My lips began to quiver, but I told myself to stay strong.

Alaric chuckled softly. "Don't cry," he said, his voice breaking just a little. "Or else you'll make me cry, princess."

I swallowed hard, but my eyes were already stinging. His own began to glisten as well, and then a tear slid down his cheek. One he quickly covered with a wide smile, but he didn't wipe it away. He just let it happen.

"You look so...young?" I said, unsure if I had meant it as a compliment or something else.

Alaric grinned and touched his face. "I wish I could say it's because of my stress-free lifestyle, but I'm in here so..." he joked. "Although I suppose the Veil does have its perks," he added with a shrug.

I bopped my head in understanding, and a laugh slipped from my lips before I could stop it. His spirit hadn't changed at all. It was the same goofy answer I would have expected from Alaric. Actually, the same thing I would've said.

We were just alike, not only in face but in personality as well, and the longer he just stood there, staring at me with those warm eyes, the more my heart ached. For him.



"You look like a ghost," I blurted. "Are you...dead?"

Alaric's bright laughter filled the dark space as he hunched over with a hand on his stomach. "No, princess, I'm not dead!" he said. "I can tell you have Adelaide's bluntness!"

I smiled faintly, trying to understand. Then why did he look like this?

I had no chance to ask further as his eyes suddenly shifted, like he had just remembered something urgent. "It's because I'm not really here!" he said quickly. "I mean, I am, but also not. I'm on another level while you're on the level of...I actually don't know what level this is, but Adelaide spoke to me, and I haven't heard my Adelaide's voice in ages, but—"

"You even ramble like I do," I cut in, my smile widening.

He took a deep breath, and his expression grew awkward. "You're right." His shoulders slumped. "I'm sorry, but we do not have much time," he said. "Adelaide..." His eyes squeezed shut for a moment.

"I mean, your mom!" His lips curled into a wide grin. "She has a message for you, and it's important. Come!"

He extended his hand, and I stepped forward, hesitant. What would even happen if he touched me? Could he even touch me?

The last time Adelaide's hand had reached for my forehead inside the Veil, I had lost her almost immediately after. I wasn't ready to say goodbye yet. All I wanted was just a little longer with him, even if it was only a minute.

He seemed to feel the same. His smile faded, and his gaze dropped to his hand as he lowered it. "My princess," his voice caught as he swallowed. "



My beautiful Violet."

"I wish we had more time," we both spoke at the same time.

He looked up at me in shock, as if he hadn't expected I would ever want to spend more time with him. How could I not? He was my dad.

"There's so much I want to ask you, princess." He smiled sadly, his blue eyes staring into mine. "And there's so much I still need to tell you."

"Please," I begged. "Please."

But before I could ask for more, his body flickered in quick flashes, and I did not know how much longer we would have. Shocked, he looked down at his own hands, his lips slightly parted.

"Princess, I need to deliver this message, and you must listen," he said, his voice steady. "I love you more than words could ever explain, and I will always be the proudest dad alive. You are my whole universe, the reason I've been holding on all these years."

His words came faster as came the flickers. "Your dad loves you with all his heart, and I never wanted to abandon you, Violet. You are everything to me — everything!"

"No." I stepped forward quickly, a lump forming in my throat. "Please don't go now."

His face softened with guilt. It was clear he wanted nothing more than to grant my request but knew he couldn't. One more tear slid down his cheek before a sad smile appeared. "I'll always be with you, Princess. Always, Violet."

"But how?"





Alaric leaned forward, bringing his hand just a few inches from my forehead. A ringing filled my ears, and dizziness swept over me.

His gaze met mine with an apologetic smile. "You have found me once, and you will find me again, Violet. Remember, Lumen and Lumia will always be linked in spirit, no matter the distance."

Lumen?

Who is Lumen?

And then everything turned black again, but it wasn't silent.

"I am sorry, Grandpa, but I have to show her, or the Veil won't hold much longer."

My chest clenched. I knew that voice too well to mistake it. This time, it was her.

"Mom?" My voice cracked. There was no answer. Only a circle of light appeared in the darkness, so bright that I lifted my hand above my brow to shield my eyes. Suddenly, a cold wind brushed against me, sending a chill down my spine.

I couldn't see much, but the image inside the light was of an empty field. A raven with red eyes let out a piercing cry that made my heart jump. It circled around a limp silhouette that floated in the air, a thick black smoke spinning around it.

The raven cried out again, louder this time, and the ground began to shake, and then everything went black again.

My pulse pounded in my ears, and every muscle in my body locked. My heart slammed against my ribs, but I couldn't move, couldn't breathe.



"Whatever you do, do not betray him," Adelaide's voice broke through, her tone filled with fear. She was not just asking but pleading like her life depended on it. It really was Adelaide, yet her voice lacked its usual strength, and she sounded so terrified.

Who is him?

Could it be Kayden? Why would I ever betray Kayden?

"Do not betray him, Violet!"

Or was it Kylan?

"Do not...it's already too late." Her voice fell, defeated. "The night has crowned its king, and soon he will come for all of us."

Who? Who was she talking about?

Just like that, the only source of light in this dark space had disappeared. I didn't understand anything of what had just happened or what the message was even supposed to be.

Where would I go from here?

"Mom?" I called out. I spun, searching for anything, any sign for her, but all I could see was emptiness.

"Dad?"

I turned once more, and then something appeared. A black shadow tore through the dark, rushing straight for me at an incredible speed. Its eyes burned red, locking on me like it had been waiting all along and a deep, low laugh rumbled through the Veil.

Baelor...



I let out a loud scream, throwing my hand over my eyes like that could somehow stop it from reaching me, and my body began shaking.

Come on, wake up, Violet.

Wake up.

~

"Violet!"

I woke with a scream, my body jerking up from the bed until I was sitting straight. Two strong arms wrapped around me as I struggled to catch my breath.

"I'm here," Kylan's voice whispered in my ear. He had returned.

I clung to him without thinking, my fingers twisting into his shirt as if letting go would send me back into the Veil.

"Look at me," Kylan said, his voice full of worry. He lifted my chin with his finger, meeting my frightened eyes. In a rush, I glanced down at my hand, but the ring was still there.

Then why did I end up inside the Veil?

Was any of it even real?

"I'm here," Kylan murmured again, resting his face against my hair. "You're okay."

I took slow breaths, pressing my hand to his chest to feel the steady beat of his heart, thinking it could be enough to calm me down. It should have been, but Adelaide's words and the image of that dark shadow with red eyes, the sight of Baelor, clung to my mind. He had been so close.





"What did you see, Violet?" Kylan whispered.

I lifted my gaze to look up at him, my breathing still uneven. His eyes searched mine like he was trying to understand what had happened to me. I couldn't understand it myself.

"Tell me, Violet."

My throat felt dry, but the words still came. "The night has crowned its king," I said, repeating Adelaide's warning, "and soon he will come for all of us."