

Chapter 251

Violet

Kylan's hand was around mine as we made our way to the base of the mountain. It was too early, and after that thing ran toward me in the Veil last night, I wasn't even sure if I would still be able to sleep, but after falling asleep in Kylan's arms, and spending the night on the balcony I was well rested. Jumpie was curled against Kylan's shoulder sitting comfortably as always.

Behind us, I could hear the steady footsteps of Nate, Trinity, Lian, and Sora. I couldn't quite hear what they were talking about because I was too focused on the supplies being shifted from cart to cart.

I glanced around, taking in the sight. The court was alive, and people were everywhere. Carrying heavy bags, moving crates, loading carts, unloading others. Jumpie chittered softly at the sight of a cart full of food, and Kylan automatically reached up to tap her tiny head, warning her to behave. I lifted my brows. "Are all these people coming with us?"

Kylan glanced at me, his eyes confused. "That's what you wanted, right?"

I nodded slowly. It was.

The nod came out more hesitant than anything else, and I felt a lump in my throat as last night's shadow came back to me. This was supposed to be a good day, only I couldn't help but worry that pushing myself to do the right thing would only lead to me doing the wrong thing.

I hadn't seen Kayden around, and honestly, I didn't feel like seeing him either. Not after hearing Adelaide's voice warn me not to betray 'him.'

If 'him' was indeed Kayden, then what did today mean?

"These are the first two groups," Kylan said. "Throughout the day we will move as much as we can up and down the mountains so we can help



as many people as possible. Aid, supplies, whatever they need. We will stay out all day."

"By foot?" I asked, surprised.

"Yes," Kylan confirmed. "I think scaring these witches by making a bunch of wolves and Lycans shift and stomp around is not the smartest thing."

I chuckled at the thought, remembering how everyone first looked at me when I was there. An unfamiliar face. Kylan was right, they would see it as a threat before they saw it as help.

A sharp, amused laugh curled inside my head, and I didn't need to wonder who it belonged to.

'All of this is an excuse because you refuse to let me out,' Lumia sang. 'And the prince doesn't want to embarrass you, so he came with some kind of lame story to protect your honor.'

I rolled my eyes before I could stop myself. Why was she in our business anyway?

"Are you rolling your eyes at me?"

I turned my head instantly to Kylan who had started speaking, my eyes wide. "No!" I said quickly. "It wasn't rolling my eyes at you."

"Then who is it for?" he wondered.

"It's just..." I took a breath and shook my head. "It's nothing."

'Tell him,' Lumia hummed in the back of my mind. 'And while we're at it, tell him he'll have to carry you because there's no way those fragile legs of yours will be able to walk these mountains for a second time this week.'

I kept quiet, biting back the smile that was tugging at my lips. I wasn't



sure whether she was working with me or plotting against me, and I wasn't all that certain about answering yet either. What I did know was that I wasn't about to just do everything she told me to do, because at the moment, while I had earned her time, she was testing me to see how far she could go. Typically Lumia.

We were halfway up the path when the sound of a familiar laugh wiped the smile right off my face. My feet froze. I knew that laugh, and by now, I had heard it many times before.

Kayden...

My heart thudded hard against my ribs, and I felt like I was about to faint. He had not given me a real reason to fear him, but after yesterday, I feared what I would do to him.

'Don't betray him.'

"No..." I whispered.

Kylan gave my hand a gentle tug to make me move again. "You do not need to worry about anything, pup," he said, his voice calm and steady. He must've recognized his brother's laugh as well.

Then why wasn't he freaking out?

I looked up at him, inspecting his face.

"I have it all under control," he added, "and everything will be just fine."

I wanted to believe him. I wanted to believe that look in his eyes, but a part of me wondered if even he believed it. It was the same as yesterday when he tried so hard to calm me by hiding his own fears.

But when it came to his brother, I knew he had them, because those two had quite the past, and he certainly wasn't his favorite brother.

I suddenly felt a warm presence beside me, and a shoulder brushed mine.



It was Trinity.

"Hey," she whispered. Only it wasn't meant for me, but for Kylan.

He glanced at her, his eyes urging her to speak.

"I hope you understand that your brother Kayden can't go with us," Trinity wasted no time. "It's not that I have anything against him, but I just get these weird vibes around him, and I don't want him around Vi—"

Trinity stopped talking, and I looked at Kylan just in time to see why. His eyes were sharp, jaw clenched, but he didn't answer. Even Jumpie froze like she could feel the shift in his mood. The calm front he kept was gone. He said he had it under control, but did he really?

As I looked ahead, Kayden was already waving his hand in the air, his grand smile too impossible to miss even if we wanted to. I could see a group of people, including a few of the king's mistresses, and quite a few faces I didn't recognize—yet somehow, he stood out more than all of them combined.

The one who wouldn't leave me alone.

And as we drew closer, Kayden's grin only widened. "Lettie and Kylan," he greeted brightly. "Good morning!"

His eyes then slid to Trinity. "And Trin!" He looked around. "Where is your mate?"

Trinity folded her arms, looking unimpressed. Kylan had informed me that Dylan would be going with the Bloodroses in the third group, and although the news that Fergus and the Bloodroses would be joining came as a surprise to everyone, I was sure Trinity felt like it was none of his business.

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Kayden released a chortle and pointed his finger toward his maid beside him. "Isn't she funny?" he laughed. "I think I'm in love."

The girl let out a laugh that was far too forceful to be natural. As Kayden turned again, he raised his hand once more to greet the others who had finally caught up to us. Nate, Lian, and Sora.

"You know you do not have to do this," Kylan's tone shifted as he addressed Kayden. "I do not want you to wear yourself out by going up and down these mountains, and I'm not sure the king would appreciate it either."

I felt a knot in my stomach at the tension.

I knew exactly what Kylan was doing, and so did Kayden. This wasn't about concern. They both knew he had been going to the mountains for years, and that Kayden's whole plan, from the start, had been about one thing. Pushing me to use my eyes.

Kayden let out a sigh. "I know," he shrugged, "but I want to help the witches. And it is always fun spending time with you, brother."



"I see," Kylan hummed like he didn't quite believe him. "How nice of you, Kayden."

"It's no pro—"

"Of you to be joining me with the third group," Kylan finished.

My head snapped toward him. What?



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