

Chapter 257

Violet

Varius stared at me, not a word leaving his lips. But I could see the disappointment in his eyes.

A strange feeling of guilt came over me. For years, these people had been waiting for a Violet. Someone they believed would save them and make them strong again.

Now they had me...

The girl who wouldn't use her eyes and was nothing without them.

Maybe Varius and the witches had placed too high expectations on someone they didn't even know.

"You must feel responsible for these people," I whispered, my eyes drifting around the room, "and in a strange way, so do I. That's why I want to help them," I said. "I know you're worried, but they will be fine. I will make sure they'll be fine. You have to trust me."

I thought he would speak against me, but he gave me a small nod instead. "I have another opinion," he shared, "but I do not wish to upset you, so I will not speak on it."

My throat felt dry. I knew that if he spoke, he would bother me about my eyes again, so a part of me was relieved because I did not know if I was ready to hear it. I think the thing that scared me the most was speaking against someone who already knew so much about the future.

It was hard to tell whether what he was saying was the truth or just his truth. It was hard to guess anything with Varius.

"Where are you from?" I wondered.

Varius smiled as if he had already expected that question. "Originally from your land," he answered. "The Common Lands."

My heart stopped for a second.

The Common Lands...

Did that mean he might have heard about Aelius?

"And Thorne?" I asked further. "Where is he from?"

Thorne shifted on his shoulder while Varius ignored my question. This time, he didn't respond, and his silence told me enough. He wouldn't bother answering anyway.

"The Soothsayers follow the word of nature," I went on softly, "and these people follow Baelor. Who do you follow?"

"I follow Thorne, and so do these people," Varius stated clearly.

I swallowed hard, my gaze drifting to the bird. He sat so still, as if listening to every word. Varius's strange reply unsettled me. Who even followed a raven?

"And who does Thorne follow?" I asked.

Varius's eyes lifted to mine, and for a moment, we simply looked at each other. He hadn't forced his way into my mind this time, but once again, I knew better than to ask anything more.

"How old are you?" I tried this time.

"Old," he said.

A hopeless breath left me. I was supposed to be helping these people, yet here I was interrogating a man who was even more mysterious than Aelius. I knew it was foolish, but I could not stop myself. I was too curious about him.

"And how old is Thorne?" I asked.

Varius tilted his head. "Old."

I almost let out a laugh, but it came out as a huff instead. Of course, that was his answer.

"Thorne feels very comfortable around you and Kayden," I noted, remembering how easily the raven had rested on Kayden's shoulder. At some point, Kayden even scolded him, and he actually listened. "And you called him Kian last time," I said, narrowing my eyes. "Why?"

"Because that is what Thorne calls him," Varius stated.

I gave him a long look, hoping the truth would show on his face. Because there was just no way all of these people listened to a raven. One Kayden scolded on top of that. "Thorne has also shown him everything about me there is to know."

Varius let out a low chuckle. "Well, that is Thorne's job." His hand rose to stroke the raven's head, and Thorne leaned into it. I was distracted by Kaelis and Trinity, who stood up to grab another bundle from one of the carts.

"It looks like your friends could use a hand," Varius spoke.

He started walking toward them, and without thinking, I followed. It just felt wrong to let him walk away. Like if I didn't stay close, I would miss something important.

They stopped beside a frail-looking woman lying on one of the beds. The woman gasped the moment her eyes landed on me, but I caught Varius giving her a small shake of his head. "The Royal Mate," he nodded, though it felt like that wasn't all he meant.

Maybe she had been waiting for me to rescue her as well.

Kaelis looked behind her, her eyes meeting mine. "Here you are," she said brightly as she set the bundle down.

Trinity was already bent beside the woman, touching her forehead with a focused look. "Hopefully your fever isn't too high," she murmured. "We're here to help. You'll be okay now."

The woman smiled weakly. "Thank you," she whispered.

Kaelis turned her head toward Varius, and her eyes softened. "You must've had a really hard time taking care of these people."

She surprised me by reaching out and gently taking his hand. Varius leaned on his stick to get a better look at her. "I don't know what happened or where it went wrong," she said softly, "but as the Princess of Typeria, I feel so embarrassed that it has taken this long."

Varius rubbed her hand with his thumb, his face calm. "Do not carry that weight, brave child," he told her. "You should not bear the sins of your people alone."

Kaelis nodded with a hum before shooting him a grateful smile. Meanwhile, Trinity had moved lower, her hands pressing into the woman's leg.

"I don't think one day is enough," Trinity spoke. "I don't even think these mountains are enough. Typeria is so huge. Can't they just stay

there?"

The woman let out a sigh. "If only it were that easy, child."

Varius's lips curled in agreement.

"Well, we got more than enough space back home," Trinity announced. "If Lyperia will not do anything for you, I'm sure my dad will."

And knowing Trinity, she probably meant it. If Grandpa Aelius would let me, I would probably do the same. I would take them to him and ask him to take care of them.

What was even the point in staying here and dealing with all this mistreatment?

"Can I ask you something, sir—" Kaelis began.

"Varius," he corrected.

She smiled. "Varius." Her gaze flicked to Thorne, and she reached out her hand carefully. I tensed, convinced the raven might do something to her.

However, Thorne didn't. He leaned forward and brushed his face against her hand. It was good to know he at least liked her.

"This raven?" Kaelis's eyes lit up. "What does he do?"

Varius let out a low laugh. "Thorne carries much knowledge," he explained. "He whispers things... about everyone."

"Did he whisper something about me?" Kaelis asked, her voice filled with excitement. There was not much more she had to do because Varius

had already given her a nod.

"If you want to know," he whispered, closing his eyes for a moment. Then he spoke again. "Your howl will shake the mountains... but nothing will grow where you planted it."

Kaelis froze, her smile fading. "It must be about my first howl," she then gasped, her eyes wide.

First howl?

What was that?

A hand flew to her chest. "Wait, is that good or bad?"

Varius's lips curved into a smile that gave nothing away, and he turned his head toward Trinity instead. She met his gaze with steady eyes, and I could not see any tension in her body.

Yet, for some reason, a shiver ran through mine. What was he going to tell her?

"There will be no hunger in you for power," Varius finally said. "That is why it will come to you freely."

Trinity tilted her head. "Sounds great," she mumbled nonchalantly. Something in her tone made me sigh in relief. She was so composed and unbothered. Even now.

Kaelis's bright eyes darted to me. "What about Violet—"


I quickly shook my head, holding up my hand. "Oh no. I really don't want to know," I stated, but that didn't stop Varius. This time, his gaze locked on me, but the look he gave me was different from what he gave the

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others.

And truthfully, I didn't even want to hear the words that would come out of his mouth.

"Fate was sealed the moment you stood before the council," Varius spoke. "You will never touch, yet blood will mark you. You will never strike, yet betrayal will wound deeper than any blade." 

I felt lightheaded, and the word betrayal went straight through me.

What fate had been set the day I stood before the council? And most importantly, was that what Adelaide meant when she said it was too late?



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