Chapter 262

Violet

I blinked a few times, hoping it would somehow make her forget what she had asked me in the first place, but it didn't. Trinity was as sharp as ever.

"The Varius guy," she said again, her tone growing slightly impatient. " What did he want from you just now?"

I pursed my lips, shaking my head quickly. "Nothing. He was just saying goodbye."

My heart had not changed. I still didn't want to trouble her with my problems. I didn't even know how to deal with the warning myself, and my thoughts were scattered. The last thing I wanted was to for Trinity to have to deal with that as well.

"I can tell something is going on, Violet," Trinity said softly. She let out a breath and paused, giving me space to answer, but the sadness in her eyes stung. "If you would rather not tell me, that's alright. I understand ..."

Before she could say more, I grabbed her arm and pulled her closer. My voice dropped to a whisper as I glanced around to make sure no one was listening. "I met my dad in the Veil last night, and he gave me a message from Adelaide."

"You what?" Her eyes went wide. "'The Alpha Prince?" Her voice almost cracked. "Violet, this is huge! What was it like? What is he like?"

A smile tugged at my lips as the best memories filled my head. Dad. My dad.

"He was amazing. Kind, warm, familiar...and I look just like him."

Trinity leaned in, taking in every word. Her lips curled into a wide smile, and I tell she was truly happy for me. I ended up telling her about the moments I shared with Alaric, which seemed to make her day even more as if she had been the one inside the Veil herself, but then came the part I didn't want to face. Adelaide's warning, and Baelor...

I swallowed hard. The memory of the dark one pushed its way back, but I shoved it down. I didn't want him here. Not now. Not ever.

"What was the message?" Trinity asked eagerly. I wanted to avoid it again, but when I saw that same look in her eyes, I knew I owed her the truth. I know she would've told me.

"Adelaide wasn't that clear. She just told me not to betray...him," I whispered. "And I know it's about Kayden."

I searched her eyes for something, anything, but at first there was nothing. Then her gaze shifted, darkening. "But isn't Varius with Kayden? Why would he warn you?"

I let out a short breath. "That's what I'm trying to figure out," I murmured. He had been helping Kayden for so long, and even if he thought I was some kind of savior to these people, I doubted he would betray Kayden just for me. Varius didn't seem like the type.

I wasn't sure Thorne would even allow it. Then again, Thorne wasn't there when Varius gave me the warning. What if Varius warned me, then regretted it because Thorne had never told him to say anything?

Silence settled between us, and it was clear we were both thinking about the same situation. The mood had sunk low, and Trinity seemed worried,

just like I had feared. In a moment like this, I almost wished Kaelis and Sora, the two babblers, would show up just to break whatever this was.

"Either way, I'm glad I could help the witches today," I finally said, filling the quiet. I kept telling myself I was happy, and I truly was, but part of me wondered if I was being selfish. Would I still have gone to those mountains if Adelaide had warned me before the council, and was I doing this for the right reasons?

Was this the selfishness Aelius' spoke of?

Well, messing things up was nothing new for me, and something deep down told me this would end the same way. Whatever her words meant, Adelaide had already said it was too late.

Now it was only a disaster waiting to happen, and there was nothing I could do about it.

"I'm proud of you, Violet," Trinity said suddenly. I felt her gaze on me as I looked ahead, refusing to acknowledge her words. Whenever Kylan said it, I just took it, but for some reason, accepting it from Trinity was a bit harder.

Proud?

Proud of what?

"I will always stand beside you, and I will always listen, even if it does hurt me a little that you feel like you can't share everything with me, and I don't know if it's because of Dylan—"

"That's not it!" I cut in immediately. "I trust you, you're my best friend—and I care for you with all my heart, and that's why I want to protect yours."

These were the kind of conversation that made me feel uncomfortable, but somehow it felt necessary. Her feelings mattered, and now I had once again realized that I had been selfish, deciding what was best for her without asking.

I had left her in the dark and convinced myself she was fine with it, only because she never said otherwise. I never meant to hurt her feelings.

Our eyes met, and Trinity smiled gently at me.

"I appreciate that you want to protect me," she said, "but I'll share every pain with you, just like I'll share every joy. That's the kind of friend I want to be to you, Violet."

Her words hit deep. She wasn't angry or blaming me. She was reminding me of what we were, and I knew it was up to me not to hold back anymore. She wanted to know everything, so I would give her everything.

I closed my eyes, drew in a breath, and when I opened them, I let it out. "I saw Bae... inside the Veil."

Trinity's smile slipped, and her brows knitted. "You what?"

I opened my mouth, trying to speak again, but that name just refused to leave my mouth again. "Ba—"

A hand touched my shoulder before I could finish. I turned my head just enough to see Kaelis, and almost instantly she slipped behind me, using my back as her shield.

"No, no, no," she whispered, her voice shaking.

I didn't even got the time to ask because moments later, the group came to a sudden halt.

Everyone stopped walking, and one by one, heads began to bow. What was happening?

Trinity and I shared a confused look.

Then a voice rang out, loud and clear. "Where is Violet Hastings?"

Me...?

The crowd parted, creating a clear path, and I didn't have to look far to see the person who had finally grown some balls to say my name. It was him...

King Elyx.

Kayden was at his side, and the moment his eyes met mine, he wasn't like he had been this morning. He was all smiles, too happy.

Behind them, Queen Cecilia appeared, her gaze sweeping over the crowd as if searching for something...or someone. Probably Kaelis, who had long disappeared.

But it was the king's smirk I couldn't look away from. I didn't want to pretend I was anything special, but that was the smirk of a man who had climbed these mountains in the hopes of seeing me. He looked right at me, like he had been waiting for this.

I swallowed hard and glanced around. I didn't want to face him or talk to him. Not here, not now. Where was Kylan?

The king drew in a breath. "Vi—"

"Violet, there you are!"

Kylan's voice cut through before the king could even finish. He stepped out from the crowd, and relief washed over me. Fergus and Dylan walked with him, standing at his side. Seeing the three of them together eased something inside me, making it easier to breathe. If anyone had told me before that I would feel safe because of Fergus Hastings, I would have laughed it off. Yet here he was...

Kylan's eyes swept over me quickly, like he had been worried something might have happened, as if he needed to make sure I was really there.

I just stared at him, caught off guard by this whole situation, and as his smile finally appeared, Kayden's vanished. The king's remained, and then he spoke.

"Who knew the mountains would host such a touching reunion?"

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