



Chapter 272

Kylan

I waited for an answer, and could quickly tell that there wasn't going to be one.

Violet tried to smile through my words, but I saw a tiny falter in her eyes. I knew her too well to know it did bother her. She would hold onto it for a while, think it over, and because we talked about all of this, she would end up telling me—just not now. And that was fine. As long as she wouldn't use her eyes for them, I could live with that.

"The only thing that bothers me," she sighed, "is that your hands are empty and you aren't doing anything."

I chuckled, nudging her shoulder lightly.

"Now come on," she grinned and tugged my hand again, pulling me toward one of the huts. I gave a surprised hum. From the outside, it didn't look like much, but inside it was full of crates, folded blankets, herbs, and many other things.

Such as Trinity, who had Dylan pressed up against the wall, kissing him like her life depended on it. Violet and I both let out a groan at the same time and looked the other way.

"I was away for less than a second!" Violet complained.

Trinity smirked, casually pulling back and wiping her lips like she hadn't just been caught. Dylan gave me a sheepish grin before somehow even finding the nerve to glance at me. "Ah, look," he furrowed. "The prince who put it all in action finally decided to help!"



I let out a breath, focusing on Violet instead. "So what are we doing?" I asked.

Violet brushed her fingers over one of the stacked crates. "Unloading and organizing," she explained. "Everything needs to be moved and sorted into storage before nightfall."

Trinity raised a brow. "So you're really staying here until nightfall?"

Violet handed me one of the crates, guiding me to the wooden table in the center with her to put it on the table. Then she joined me. "It's what my father-in-law ordered, isn't it?"

She unboxed several boxes of supplies, looking completely unbothered. "But I don't mind," she added. "I actually like being here...around these people that don't seem to judge me."

I wanted to believe her, and maybe she really did mean it. But once again, all I could think about was how quickly kindness like hers could be taken advantage of.

Dylan chuckled, lifting his brow. "With that raven still flying around?"

Trinity slapped his shoulder with a huff. "Don't ruin it."

But I shook my head. "No, he's right," I stated. "And Violet has already done enough. If she doesn't want to stay here with all the groups, she won't. It's up to her, and not the king."

"And I'm saying I don't mind being here," Violet argued, as stubborn as ever.

"Then I'm not leaving either," Dylan shrugged. "I'm going wherever you're going, Violet."

Trinity giggled, wrapping her arms around his waist and lifting her head to smile at him. "That's not it. Your daddy just scolded you for letting Violet out of your sight, and now you are just doing what he told you to do."

I looked over at Violet, fearing she might misunderstand Fergus's intentions in trying to look out for her. But she didn't. She let out a soft laugh. "I hadn't expected anything different from Dad," she said, her tone understanding.

Her eyes shifted to Dylan. "And you, Dylan!"

Dylan froze on the spot. His lips parted, but he didn't argue, knowing he would lose. I knew Violet hated the way they protected her, but I guess seeing signs that Fergus had changed eased things a little.

"Don't worry," Violet said. "I know you're only trying to look out for everyone."

"That's right," a voice came from the doorway.

All heads instantly turned, and it was Varius. He stood with a slight smirk, raising his stick just a bit to point at Dylan. "One day, when they speak of heroes, his name will be the one they whisper."

It seemed that the old man was back to his riddles again. I didn't know what it was about Varius, but whenever he was around, there was an air that shifted. Violet instantly stopped what she was doing and rushed to his side.

"Varius," she slipped her arm through his. "You seem tired. You should rest," she said gently, almost scolding.

The interactions between the two confused me, and I bet Violet felt the



same way I did. There was no clear sense of whether this man was good or bad. Or maybe he was just like her grandpa, Aelius, someone who didn't interfere too much in other people's affairs.

Varius's mouth tugged into a smile, and his eyes were locked on mine. "Do not worry about me, Royal Mate," he said. "I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be."

It went silent until Trinity released the loudest sigh. She must've sensed the tension. "Alright, Dylan and I will..." she looked at him. "Get some more crates!"

She pushed Dylan toward the door, but his eyes stayed fixed on Varius. Still, he didn't put up a fight and, as expected, simply followed Trinity.

The door creaked shut behind them, leaving us alone with Varius. He slipped his arm free from Violet's grip and leaned against the wall to rest. I could hear his breathing. It was loud, uneven, and, believe it or not, I felt for him.

The old man was worn down, at his limit. But at the same time, something hit me. Violet's eyes, the Lyperian stone...it wasn't just for the witches, but for him as well.

"Crown prince," he spoke between breaths, eyeing me. I hardened my eyes, hoping he would not see the sympathy I had felt for him.

"Our conversation in the cavern didn't go quite as planned."

I cracked a short laugh. "You think?"

My harsh tone was unnecessary, and I didn't mean to give him the coldest shoulder, but my blood was still running hot. Even now, all I could think about was Kayden and what he was plotting.



What was the reason for him finally showing his true face?

What did he want from Violet?

"Kayden's thing is Kayden's thing," Varius said, as if he had been reading my mind. "My thing is the safety of those witches, and if there has been any disrespect from my side, then please forgive me. That had not been my intent."

Violet and I exchanged glances. The apology caught me off guard. It felt strange to hear him apologize, and truthfully, I didn't want him to. I still didn't trust him, but he hadn't done anything yet that was worth apologizing for.

"You should've smacked him across the face...Kayden," I told Varius. "For throwing a bone of one of your people like it's nothing."

Varius breathed through his nose and closed his eyes for a moment. "I am sure your brother didn't mean to." He opened his eyes again. "He is complicated...both his heart and his mind," he said. "But that confused boy I met years ago has also become very unpredictable, and I do not wish to push him."

I clenched my jaw, biting back my anger. If there was one thing I was done with, it was considering Kayden in every step I took. Maybe he was this way because even before that unfortunate day, everyone always kept defending him, making excuses for him, but I didn't want to hear it anymore. I had already let him get away with manipulating Violet, taking advantage of her good heart, dragging her to these mountains, pitting us against each other.

I was serious when I told Violet I would take care of him in my way.



There would be no more pity, no more mercy. When this was finished, he would learn the hard way.

"Is that all?" I snarled. "If so, you can go back to your...tent."

Violet's hand brushed my arm. "Kylan..." she whispered.

"I am not telling you this to defend your brother," Varius said, lifting his head. He stepped forward. "I am telling you this because I need the two of you to listen to me very carefully."

Violet's eyes found mine, and she looked worried.

What was he even getting at?

"There are ears everywhere," Varius continued, his voice dropping, "even in one's own head."

He looked directly at Violet, and she lowered her eyes. I squinted as I looked between the two, wondering what all of that was about.

"That's why I must tell you this way," Varius said softly. His eyes were serious, his voice desperate. "And I must be careful because he who we all fear is everywhere."

He scanned the room with his eyes, and a chill went through my body. Not from fear, but anger. What was going on here?

"I am not supposed to say too much, because that is the way of nature," Varius said, swallowing. "I am not supposed to betray Thorne, since he is the one who promised us you. But I am also not supposed to betray a child of blood, who I see as a child of my own, and that is you, Violet."

Violet grabbed his hand. "What do you mean?"



"I mean that things will happen. Things you cannot change...but it is up to you to decide how they will happen."

I narrowed my eyes, studying him. Varius spoke like he was on Violet's side, but I couldn't help but wonder if he was leading us in circles on purpose. "We're done hearing it," I spoke, pulling Violet back. "We don't want another half-baked warning, or more of your cryptic shit."

A defeated chuckle came from Varius's lips. "Neither do I," he shook his head. "And that's why I've decided to tell you what you need to know... tell you what I know...and if Thorne or nature ever finds out what I've done, I'll accept whatever judgment they see fit."

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