



## Chapter 277

Violet

In a split second, I snapped my head toward him. I felt my heart beating out of my chest and felt sick to my stomach. I wanted to ask him, demand the truth right then and there, but the words wouldn't come.

Kylan took a slow breath. "You know, don't you?"

My voice trembled. "Yes."

No...

What had he done?

What price had he paid?

"I hope you know," Kylan spoke, "there is no version of this life where your safety comes second to mine. Ever."

I was seething with anger. I didn't agree with a word he had just said. Taking blows was nothing new to me and was something I had been doing my whole life. What was one more if it meant protecting him for once? I was supposed to take the blame for the Veil, Kian, Baelor...all of it.

Because I had set everything in motion. Me, my stubbornness, my selfishness.

"What's done is done...and it cannot be turned again," Kylan stated. There was this steady look in his eyes, ordering me not to question him.

What did he mean by that?

Did the two already go to the stone?



Since when did we do things without discussing? It was he who was so against it, so what was he thinking?

"I guess I was wrong about you knowing me," I blurted. "Because if you did, you would understand I would never let you do this."

His hand brushed gently through my hair, but it only irritated me even more. He gave me a gentle tug, forcing me to look up at his eyes. "I know you wouldn't," he spoke with a sad smile. "And that's why I did it."

The words landed harder than I expected...because they made sense. The king agreeing to it so quickly meant the price he had to pay could never be good.

"What was it?" I wondered. "What did he want from you?"

Something he had sworn he wouldn't do...

What could it be?

Kylan's lips parted, but nothing came out. He released his grip from my hair, and his eyes softened. "Violet, do you trust me?"

My mind was screaming for answers, but my heart knew not to question him or his ways. Kylan making a deal with the king was already shocking enough, so if he asked me to trust him, that's the least I could do. I didn't agree, but I would trust him.

Kylan's plans always turned out fine, so whatever he had planned this time...I just had to believe in him.

"I trust you," I spoke just above a whisper.

"Good." Kylan exhaled. "Then I'm asking you to trust me and not to ask



any further. I'm the crown prince, we are in Lyperia...This is the best way, Violet."

A gulp escaped me. I was just so tired of people always stepping in, while I stood there feeling useless. All I ever wanted was to help, and I really tried ...but no matter what I tried, it never worked. It was never good enough.

But this time would be the last.

I would make sure that this would never happen again.

I followed the king with my eyes, but just before he reached the path, Kayden moved back. He took the handles of his own chair, nudging Camille aside, and slowly turned himself.

My jaw locked because this didn't come as a surprise. He would take a life for me, and the life would be taken tomorrow. That's what Varius had said.

Well, I didn't know what life he wanted to take because other than that Thorne thing, I couldn't think of anyone here Kayden would want to kill for me.

Kylan and I shared a glance, and then my gaze shifted to Kayden. His eyes locked with mine, colder than I had ever seen them. They weren't teasing, they weren't smug...they were sharp and flat.

And in that moment, I couldn't help but think...

Were those really the eyes of the one who would take a life for me? Because if I didn't know any better, I would say the boy who was so desperate to be near me despised me now.

"That old man sure is something, isn't he..." Kylan muttered, glaring



just as hard.

I knew there was a part of him that didn't trust Varius, and that that was the reason he didn't want us listening to him, but everything Varius had said was coming true. The king's help came with a price...something he had sworn he wouldn't do.

Kayden was still here...

The hardest thing was that all these things were going on, and we were just forced to let it happen. Because no matter what, it would always come back to this. We were in the middle of something much bigger than us, something we couldn't stop...not yet.

Varius appeared again, his stick tapping against the ground as he moved. Thorne was back on his shoulder this time, and I doubted that thing would ever leave again. Varius made his way to Kayden and then placed a hand on his shoulder.

Kayden's sharp gaze tore away from us, his expression softening instantly as he turned to Varius. A sincere smile reached his lips as Varius patted him over the head.

I looked at Kyran, and he looked back at me. I didn't need words to understand the meaning behind his eyes. He was tired of this game, tired of Kayden, but for now, we simply had no choice but to play along.

"Violet?" He called out my name.

"Yes?"

"I know you have many questions," Kyran said. "But we will discuss all of it later."

"Yes," I nodded. I did have a lot of questions, particularly about the stone. Would Varius know?

Of course, he knew.

He knew everything, and so did Thorne.

Kylan brushed his hand against mine. "Let's see where we can be useful," he suggested, resting his hand at the small of my back. "I think there's still a lot that needs to be done."

I nodded. "Yes."

~

As time passed, I ended up helping the groups carry supplies, food, blankets, and anything the families in the huts might need.

Kylan spent more time with the witches, most likely trying to redeem his family's name as far as he could.

They had taken a liking toward him. The witches had started to call for him, asking for help, asking questions. I knew Kylan never liked attention, but he gave it anyway, even when I could tell he would rather not talk at all.

I hadn't seen Kayden since Varius had taken him back into his tent. I suspected Varius was keeping him occupied to keep him away from us while he still could, and I was grateful for it.

By the time the sky darkened, I tried to push my thoughts aside and joined Kylan as we spent time with the children. Though it was still too hard to think about anything other than what was waiting for us, their laughter helped.





Even then, every so often, my eyes still flicked up to the clouds, wondering if the weather would turn. The weather looked decent, and I was certain it had to do with Kylan and I not attempting to leave.

Instead, we accepted our fate and would just see where the night would take us.

"You still have your bracelet!" A little girl blinked up at him. Kylan lifted his arm, showing her proudly, then shot me a wink.

"This bracelet right here," he knelt in front of her. More curious children surrounded him, anticipating his next words. Even some of the nearby elders slowed in their steps, curious about what the crown prince was about to say.

"This is the second most special bracelet I've ever received," he said.

I let out a soft laugh at the way the girl's mouth dropped into a pout. "And the first?" she demanded.

Kylan tilted his head toward me, and my eyes dropped to my own wrist, where the bracelet I had given him, the one that had once been his, still rested. My cheeks flushed as the children gasped and squealed.

"Can I have a bracelet?" one of them blurted out. "Or no, can I have your squirrel?"

Jumpie buried herself against Kylan's neck, flicking her tail. Kylan chuckled, scanning the group of eager faces.

"Does your Lycan sleep when you sleep," one boy questioned, tilting his head, "or is he awake when you're asleep?"

Kylan fluttered his eyes, confused. I did the same because what kind of



question was that? He shook his head slowly.

A small boy shot his hand up. "Can we visit the palace?" he asked, his eyes full of hope. "Mommy said the king doesn't want us there because he hates us!"

Kylan hummed as he patted the boy's head. "He was here today, wasn't he?" he said. It wasn't like Kylan to avoid the truth about something so hard, but maybe he didn't want to break the boy's small hope.

But there was only one truth, and that was that the king hated witches.

A small tug at my sleeve made me glance down. I looked at a pair of hazel eyes that belonged to a little girl who could be no older than seven, as she motioned with her hand for both me and Kylan to lean closer. It was one of the children who had been keeping to herself the whole time, just quietly observing.

She tried speaking again, her dark, long locks covering her mouth.

Kylan tilted his head. "You need to speak up. I can't hear you."

She waved again, and this time both of us crouched down until we were at her height. "I want to ask something," she whispered, so quietly only we could hear.

"What is it?" Kylan asked gently.

She took a small breath, then started talking.

"Will you and your friends take turns digging the hole tomorrow?"

My brows furrowed. "What hole?"



She leaned in even closer, like it was a secret she shouldn't be telling. "For the body, Kian will force you and your friends to bury."

Everything went silent. My eyes shot to Kylan's, his just as wide as mine.

"What friends?" Kylan asked, his voice sharper now.

The girl didn't answer this time. She just lifted a tiny hand and pointed toward the mountain path. Kylan and I both turned, and that's when we saw figures appearing, one by one.

Nate, Sora, Lian, Trinity, Dylan...and at the very back, Camille.

Kylan and I locked eyes, neither of us saying a word. Because we both knew they weren't supposed to be here. They had already gone down, where they were supposed to be safe and protected.

What were they doing here?

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