



Chapter 288

Violet

"Don't Lyperians work with a ceremony or something like that?" Trinity asked. I could tell by her face that she was trying to piece things together for me.

"Well, yes," I shrugged. "But...does Kylan strike you as the traditional type?"

Her lips pursed. "No?"

Exactly. I didn't answer, but my mind wouldn't stop spinning. He was nowhere near the type, and he had already claimed me in name, so why didn't he want to mark me?

At first, it didn't really bother me. Maybe hearing all those comments about me being unmarked had started to get to me, but that wasn't the only reason. I just wanted to feel even closer to him, all of him.

"Last night when we..." I sighed, fumbling for words. "He said, I should just mark you."

Trinity chortled, almost dropping the mirror. Her lips were pressed together like she was trying not to burst into laughter. I gave her a serious look.

"Well then," she grinned, "ask him why he hasn't."

"Ask?" My voice cracked in disbelief. It was a simple solution, one I could've come up with myself, and it made so much sense.

"I can do it for you if you want me to," she offered. "But that would be a



very uncomfortable conversation."

I squinted, picturing how that conversation would play out. Kylan hated being told what to do, and Trinity hated being brushed off.

"No, I can do it," I told her. "I mean, I will."

Eventually...

We had only talked about it once before, back when we weren't even together. He had only mentioned it to make sure I knew I didn't need a mark for the ceremony. But last night made me think he truly wanted it.

"What changed for you after Dylan marked you?"

Despite the anger she felt for him, a warm smile spread across her face. "People always talk about the bond, but you can't really understand it until it happens to you," she explained. "When Dylan marked me...it was like a switch flipped inside me."

"How so?"

A dreamy look appeared on her face. "I loved him from the moment I knew he was mine," she stated. "But after the mark, everything felt so much deeper. I can feel him...his mood, his pain, even when he's not nearby."

A breath slipped past her lips. "I know that even though we're not on good terms at the moment, he's hurting right now, but his love for me will never change."

She then shook her head with a chuckle. "But being so connected to someone isn't always as fun as it sounds."



I took a moment to really think about her words. Sometimes I hated the way Kylan could read me so well, see inside my head, but that didn't mean I didn't want him there. Everything she said sounded beautiful, safe.

"I feel a lot stronger, more alive," she added softly. "Mentally and physically, I feel more connected to Emilia, and I wouldn't want it any other way."

She felt more connected to her wolf...

For some reason, I couldn't help but wonder if marking would solve more than we realized. Such as the problems between him and Valerius, me and Lumia...

Perhaps that way I would finally have the strength to face whatever was coming. Lumia would be more willing, more able, to help me.

Now I knew what had to happen, and I was certain Kylan would agree.

I wrapped my arms around Trinity's waist and pulled her into a hug. "Thank you for telling me," I said gratefully. "And don't worry. I'm sure everything will be just fine between you and Dylan."

"I know," Trinity answered, though her smile seemed a bit doubtful. Still, I knew the two would be just fine. Dylan loved her too much and would be stupid to mess this up. Even if he did, I would interfere and tell him to wake up.

Not because it was my place or because I was a Bloodrose, but because Trinity deserved the best.

By the time we reached the center of the village, the uncomfortable lump in my throat had returned, and the laughter from before was gone. All of



it.

Suddenly, everything felt too real again. We were heading down the mountain with no idea of what waited for us, only a darkness we couldn't escape, and there was nothing we could do to change it. Fate had already been decided.

Kayden would take a life...for me. Yet no matter how much I fought to make sense of it, I couldn't find a clear answer to that prophecy.

"Well, your Prince is here," Trinity muttered.

I followed her gaze and saw Kylan walking toward me. Despite everything, a small and reassuring smile tugged at his lips. One that was just meant for me.

Would he be just as nervous about today?

"I'll go take back the mirror," Trinity announced. "I'll be quick!"

As soon as she left, Kylan reached me, and I stepped right into his embrace. The warmth of his arms was instant, comforting, and for a second, I almost let myself believe nothing else existed but him.

Wouldn't that just be perfect?

Me, him, and silence?

It wasn't long before I felt his soft lips press against my head. "Are you okay?" he asked, worry in his voice.

I had heard his question, but my mind was elsewhere. I looked past his shoulder, seeing the others at the cart. They filled it with the bags they came with, preparing to leave. Several villagers surrounded them.



My breath hitched as my eyes landed on Kayden. He was slouched in his chair, with Camille by his side. His hand was lifted, and Thorne sat on his finger while he looked up at the raven with a wide and genuine smile.

What was his deal?

That boy right there. He didn't look like someone who was about to kill anytime soon.

"Violet, are you okay?" Kylan asked, his voice firmer this time.

I nodded and pulled back to meet his eyes. As I looked into them, the thought of the mark returned, but I pushed it to the back of my mind. This was not the time. "I'm okay."

"You don't look like it," Kylan chuckled, pressing another kiss to my head. "We should have a serious talk later...if we get the chance."

If we get the chance?

I guessed he meant we would first have to see who his brother decided to execute, if he actually would, and then go from there.

Totally normal, right?

But I also knew it was a talk that needed to happen. There were still many things we weren't able to discuss about the king, the stone, the Veil..

A chuckle broke through behind us, and we both turned around at the same time.

It was Varius.

He balanced on his stick as he stepped closer, holding a woven bag in his



free hand. "So the two of you are leaving..."

Kylan and I shared a glance, and he wasted no time, securing his arm over my shoulder. He pulled me close in that way he always did when he thought I might need protecting. He still didn't seem to be able to fully trust Varius.

"Thank you for allowing us to stay," I smiled back.

Varius shook his head. "No, thank you."

His gaze shifted to Kylan. "And you for what you've done. It couldn't have been easy...but sometimes we must pay the heavy price."

My head shot up to look at Kylan, and I felt a sharp sensation in my chest. Heavy price?

What could the price possibly be? I wanted to believe it couldn't be as bad as it sounded, because if it was, knowing him, he wouldn't have cared about Thorne and would've told me everything right away. Right?

Kylan's throat bobbed, his gaze dropping to the ground. It was a rare sight, seeing him this nervous.

"Royal Mate!" Varius called out. My eyes snapped back to his, and all I could see in them was a softness. Those weren't the same cold eyes of the man I had first met, who didn't know how to help his people.

"You are something, Violet." My name rolled off his tongue. "Something we can be proud of. And don't forget, you will always have my full support, which means you'll have the support of the mountain witches."

I blinked, trying to solve the meaning behind those words. He had said it like there was more he couldn't say aloud due to Thorne.



The full support of the mountain witches...

Before I could analyze his words any further, he pushed the woven bag into my hands, and I accepted it carefully. The bag was heavier than I expected.

"I'm not sure if we'll ever meet again," Varius spoke, "but if we do happen to cross paths one day, I want to make sure it happens in a way that isn't too invasive for you."

Curious, I peeked inside the bag and gasped. At the bottom was a bronze box, engraved with strange symbols. It wasn't completely identical, but it resembled the one from the Elite challenge, the one we had used to connect with the witches.

I felt Kyran shift behind me as he leaned his head over my shoulder for a closer look. The box...

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