

Chapter 294

Violet

Nate's eyes moved from Chrystal to Kayden to Kylan, over and over again. His jaw clenched so tight I feared he might snap again, but I knew that wasn't the case. I knew he was possibly making his decision, and when he sucked in a breath, I knew it had been made.

"I'm taking my sister back home," Nate decided, his voice steadier than it had been. "I won't say anything...I won't. I will leave it to the Moon Goddess to decide what to do with the guilty."

Then his eyes found mine, cold and tired. "But I won't tell."

Kylan exhaled deeply, and I knew it was because he didn't like his answer. I felt like Nate had the right to decide, but at the same time, I knew Kylan would do anything to protect me, to stop what he saw as a threat. And right now? He saw Nate as the threat.

Kayden laughed. "You'll do what I tell you, Nate. Don't be a fool," he spoke. "Don't let your parents suffer losing another child today—"

Kylan's shoulders stiffened. "You will not—"

"Then what do you expect me to do?" Kayden interrupted, his voice dripping with disapproval. "What do you expect me to do when you can't even keep your house in order?"

Kylan's fist curled at his side. His face was cold, but what surprised me more was that he hadn't been the one to punch Kayden. It was no secret he disliked him with a passion, and I had a good feeling there was just no way he would let him get away with speaking to him like that.



No way...

My stomach knotted as I looked over at Chrystal's lifeless body again. Her skin had already lost its color, her eyes were closed, lips were finally pressed together...

I often wanted her to just shut up, and I guess I've now got what I wanted, right?

I still didn't know how to feel, whether to pity that it had to come to this or feel relief that it was finally over.

Then all of it came back. The way she spoke to me, threatened me, even until her very last breath, tried to kill me not once, but twice...and all I had ever done was try to keep my distance.

It was easy to say that she didn't deserve this, but did I deserve any of this? No...

At first I had been so determined to save her life...but after Kayden was the one to take it, I realized how little I cared anymore.

And that feeling of not caring was only growing...

Was I a bad person?

Kylan pushed himself in front of Nate. "You know what she has done to Violet," he said calmly. "And I think you know I can't let you go. Don't make this hard for me."

I don't think I had ever heard him say it out loud, but he cared for Nate. I could see that.

I could see it in the careful way he spoke with him, and most of all, in his



eyes. He didn't want to do any of this.

Nate's eyes sharpened, and he managed to hold on for long enough until they eventually began to soften. Kylan didn't say much, but he didn't have to. Somehow, they both understood what the other was thinking.

"They will feel it," Nate whispered. "My parents...they will feel her soul is no longer with us."

"What soul?" Kylan retorted, his tone still soft. "You and I both know she didn't have one."

Nate's eyes widened for a second, and I wondered if Kylan had gotten through to him, though I knew the chance was small. Despite what anyone would say or think, despite how he felt about his sister, it was still his sister. His twin...

"This silence," Kayden sighed dramatically.

"It must mean you can get your house in order after all. Only...The view is a bit poor from down here, so I can't see!"

I heard footsteps on the soil, and Lian stepped forward. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but I agree with Prince Kayden," she said, looking at him. "The body needs to be buried, and since we're in public, it needs to be quick."

She didn't hesitate as she walked right up to Kayden. "But let me be clear. It is not because I fear you or the crown prince or her brother, but because I'm here to protect Violet," she stated. "Someone like Chrystal isn't worth the fall, and neither are your pathetic games. I won't go down for her, and I won't go down for you."

"I agree," Trinity mumbled.



A warm feeling stirred in my chest. I had feared their reactions. Her reaction, Sora's reaction. It was the not knowing that terrified me most, the uncertainty of how they would look at me now that they knew what I was, and what I was capable of. But hearing Lian say she was here to protect me...it made me feel.

I didn't know what yet, but it made me feel...something.

How much more were people going to protect me, while I never asked for protection?

Lian stood over Kayden now, meeting his gaze without flinching.

"Very well, then," Kayden hummed. "So it turns out the paper doll might be made of steel after all."

"Yes," Lian replied. "I suggest we all stop wasting time on something that is not going to happen. No one will be going back before we bury that body. The crown prince would let more bodies drop before he sent anyone back, so we'd better start digging."

Kayden responded with a chortle. "Well, don't just stand there, help me up!" he called out. "Camille!"

Camille's head snapped up from behind, and she rushed to Kayden's side. Together with Lian, she worked to get him back in his chair.

Camille...

What would happen to her? If Kylan wouldn't even let Nate carry his sister back to the palace, then there was no doubt he wouldn't give Camille the chance to run to the king.

Would he tell Kayden?



My eyes landed on Kylan, whose eyes had never left Nate's, and then they shifted to Dylan and Trinity. Sora had tucked herself behind Trinity, shielding her eyes from the body on the ground.

The most surprising of it all, even more surprising than Kayden's attack, would really have to be Dylan's mouth. Just like Kylan, I hadn't expected him to be this quiet, but maybe it was because he had recognized himself in Kayden's words.

If he hadn't done it, someone eventually would have...

I hadn't said much either. What could I even say?

I exhaled slowly as it hit me that if anyone had to speak, it would have to be me. For how much longer was I going to stay quiet?

Whether Chrystal had provoked me or not, it was still connected to me. I took a few steady breaths, repeating Varius's words inside my head.

'If you do not speak, you will be spoken for. If you do not act, you will be acted upon.'

Lian was right. It had already been decided that the body would be buried the moment Chrystal died. Not only that, but that little girl had told us herself. The longer we waited, the harder this would get.

I dropped the woven bag, which I still hadn't let go of, from my shoulders and put it down. Then I made my way over to Chrystal's body.

As I reached Chrystal's body, I took another look at her face again, and this time I did not need to swallow. She was dead, that was that, but I still had a life and I wanted to live...

I wanted to live as Violet Hastings, and not some inmate on prison island.



'What was once soft must now be sharpened, and it is time to be a Child of Blood.'

Bending down, I slipped my arms beneath her, but I had no chance to lift her before Kylan's hand rested on mine. I looked into his worried eyes and gave him a quick nod. "We need to bury her."

He squinted, as if he hadn't expected me to say it that coldly. I hadn't either, because just a while ago, this was the same girl I wanted to save. The same girl I said had the right to be taken back home by her brother.

The switch had happened just like that, without warning, but it was a switch that had to be made.

Kylan looked down at Chrystal and lifted her into his arms.

Behind me, Nate let out a choked chuckle of disbelief. One I tried to ignore. He could hate me all he wants, and I would fight every day to make things right, but not now.

I stood with Kylan as he held Chrystal, scanning all of them. Trinity, Dylan, and Sora hiding her face, Kayden back in his chair with his face beaten. Lian and Camille standing behind him.

We had wasted more than enough time...

"Why are we still standing here?" Kylan said. "We need to move."