

Chapter 298

Kylan

I stood in front of the Wyrmsbane estate, staring right at the white stone walls. It was one of the nicest estates in Lyperia, close to the palace, and had always seemed more welcoming than that cage I called home.

The gates were always open, no guards in sight, but strangely enough, this time it didn't seem nearly as welcoming.

It had been a while since I last came here. Too long.

But this time I knew I had to, because I had to see Nate. Talk to him, even if he hated the sight of me or the sound of my voice. He hadn't come in, and I needed to know where his head was at, because mine hadn't been anywhere steady for days.

I knew Jack and True had been looking for Chrystal, but I also knew the issue hadn't gotten nearly as big as it should've, and I was aware Nate had something to do with that.

Sure, I felt like an ass showing up here just to gather some information, but it wasn't only that...I felt sorry.

Not for what had happened, but that it had to be this way. Nate and I had been friends for a long time, Chrystal and I had been friends for a long time, and no matter what he might believe, I really didn't want it to end this way.

I knew from the moment Chrystal learned the truth about Violet that she couldn't stay alive, and the prophecy would be fulfilled.

But asking him to bury his own sister and keep quiet about it? That



wasn't fair. Especially with Kayden threatening to expose him with something that was too sensitive to risk.

I paced in front of those gates for minutes, feeling more guilty with each step. I drew in a long breath and slowly let it out.

If the Moon Goddess ever asked me to pick my worst days, I would have too many to choose from, but nothing would beat this. What I had been carrying these past three days had torn me apart in ways I didn't even know were possible, and the hardest thing was that I knew I couldn't show it, because if I did, Violet would break, and if she would crack, I would hate myself for that.

Between trying to protect her and shoving down every bit of emotion I had left about what happened, I felt like I was breaking into pieces.

It was hard looking for that ring Violet thought she needed, and harder knowing she couldn't face that somewhere deep down, maybe not even that deep, she had wanted Chrystal gone and dead. That wasn't the ring, that was her, and not just her. It was all of us.

No one blamed her for those thoughts...

"Good morning, Your Highness!"

A voice pulled me out of my thoughts. It was one of Nate's mothers. She greeted me with a warm, gentle smile, which I immediately returned. "Good morning."

"Nate is in," she said. "If you wanted to go and see him, or I can get him for you—"

"That won't be necessary," I started, shaking my head.



But it was too late. She was already gone, already running into the house. "Nate!" she called out. "His Highness is here!"

Fuck...

This was the part where I could've turned away, but I didn't. I stayed where I was, though a part of me wished she hadn't said a word, so I wouldn't have to face him. Because facing Nate meant we had to talk about things neither of us wanted to, and I wasn't sure I could.

I took a deep breath, closing my eyes for a second, and when I opened them again, Nate stood in the doorway.

He looked even worse than I thought he would. His hair was a mess, his eyes sunken and red, and there was no spark left in his face at all. I had seen him like this a few times, but this was different.

He wasn't trying to hide it at all. Instead, he looked at me as if he wanted to ask me...can't you see what you have done to me?

I felt a strange sensation in my chest, one I had never known before. The Nate standing there wasn't the Nate I grew up with, the one who laughed a little too loudly and knew how to make everyone smile with just a simple word. This was someone broken, and I didn't know if he could ever be put back together again.

Not this time...

No matter what anyone would say, the words would never be enough.

"Are you going to keep standing there," Nate said flatly, "or are you coming in?"

I exhaled and walked toward him at a steady pace. When I stood before



him, neither of us dared say a word. I looked into his red eyes, waiting for words I did not give, while I waited for his.

The strange thing was that his eyes weren't cold. Just...odd. Like he didn't know how to look at me anymore.

"Well," Nate muttered, stepping aside. I hesitated to step inside for a moment, but then decided against it. After all that had happened, it felt wrong walking into the home where Chrystal had been raised.

"Let's take a walk outside," I suggested. Nate let out an exhausted sigh. Then he closed the door behind him and followed me.

We walked in silence, through the yard and down the path toward the woods. My mind spun with a hundred different ways to start this conversation, but every one of them sounded wrong.

Where could I start?

Where would I start if it were Nate who had let something happen to one of my sisters?

I drew in a long breath. "Do you remember what happened at the river on your eleventh birthday?" I began. "When I slipped, and you practically saved my life?"

Nate's brow shifted slightly, but he didn't answer. I kept going.

"I ran across the stones while you told me not to, I slid, hurt my foot, and I fell in," I chuckled. "The current was too strong, and I couldn't move or breathe. I thought that would be the end, but you..." I paused, meeting his eyes. "You didn't even think and dove in after me."

A small smile appeared on Nate's lips. "I should've let you drown that



day," he muttered.

"You should've," I whispered. "But you didn't."

It wasn't only the river. There had been other times, and only now did I realize what that tightness in my chest really was. It was guilt.

"I told you to let go, but you wouldn't," I continued. "You grabbed my arm and refused to let go, said you would die with me before you would ever let go," I said. "You could've drowned that day because of me, but you fought until you got us both to the shore, because you always have my back."

A soft breath escaped from my lips as the truth hit me. "That's the difference between us, isn't it?" I sighed. "You've always been there for me, while I haven't been there for you at all. Not when you needed me the most, and even after you pulled me out of that river...I didn't even apologize or thank you—"

"No, you didn't," Nate cut me off.

I stopped in my steps and let the apology fall before I could second-guess it. "I'm sorry, Nate," I said. The words came out awkwardly, as if they didn't belong in my mouth, but I meant it. Every word.

"For all of it...I'm sorry."

Nate looked at me, his eyes tired. "What exactly are you sorry for?" he asked. "Because there are so many things you should apologize for, Kylan, and I stopped counting a long time ago."