

Chapter 302

Violet

I walked around Kayden's room in the forbidden East Wing. At a single glance, you could tell his favorite color. The color of blood...

The dark red hit me right away. It was in the curtains, the bedding, even the rugs. It felt suffocating. Thorne was locked in a cage in the corner, his head lowered as if he were asleep.

I felt Kayden's eyes on me as I made my way to the large window. The view was almost like Kylan's, and it was peaceful, but not enough to calm me. "Do you look out these windows too?" I asked, curious.

After all, that was one of his hobbies. Spying on people from the windows.

Kayden let out an amused laugh. I turned and stepped closer. "Where is Camille?"

Her name stuck in my mouth like poison. I wasn't fond of her, and everything about her rubbed me the wrong way, even when I tried not to let it.

"She had a family thing," Kayden explained. "She said it was important, so I let her go for the day."

A family thing, right? I could just imagine her now, parading in silk, probably picking out her ceremony dress. I scoffed under my breath.

"You don't need to worry about her," Kayden tried to reassure me. "She doesn't talk. Ever."

I almost pitied him. He had no idea what he was dragging behind him.



She did talk, and a lot.

"So," I sighed, trying to focus on what I was really here for. "You said you were going to explain your side?"

Kayden let out a breath and laughed softly. His eyes dropped to his lap, but when he looked up again a wide smile spread across his face. His eyes were full of life.

"I did it because I fucking hated that thing for how she treated you and others," he said. His tone was bright, but his words were cold. "And when she said she would tell your secret, our secret, I just couldn't take it anymore, and I did what I had to do because someone had to do it."

I blinked at him.

Okay, maybe he really is insane.

Kayden leaned forward, smiling bigger with every word. "If you hadn't had your eyes closed, I would've just found a way to snap her neck...I don't want you to see me this violent," he said. "But when I saw that your eyes were closed, I took the chance to make her suffer the same way she made you suffer...would make you suffer."

A chill ran over my skin. He was still smiling, and every detail brought him joy.

He was enjoying all of it.

"Oh, don't give me that look," Kayden said, rolling his eyes. "You wanted her dead, too. You hated her. We all hated her, and I killed her for you."

I waited for an impact, but nothing came.



Again...

That was when it hit me. The real reason why I had agreed to go with him. It wasn't because I felt threatened by him, no, it was because I wanted to make myself believe that I was better than him.

I wanted him to say the bad things, to admit them, so I could convince myself I wasn't the bad one. That maybe the necklace would soften me like I thought the ring had done. But it wasn't working...

There wasn't a part of me that felt Kayden had said anything wrong, because he hadn't...yet.

My eyes flicked to Thorne in the corner, and I couldn't help but wonder if he had some part in all of this. Kayden's behavior.

"This is me speaking. Thorne is just another useless raven now," Kayden read my mind. "Do not focus on the raven, but focus on me, and the truth."

I turned back to him. "I'm not going to stand here and say I didn't hate her..." I breathed. "But I didn't ask you to kill her, and especially not in front of Nate."

I tried once more to feel something. Guilt, anger, anything. But all I felt was an ache when Nate's name was spoken...

"You didn't ask me to kill her," Kayden said, leaning back casually, "but she asked for it when she threatened you!"

He threw his head back with a laugh. "And come on, with a sister like that? Nate should've saved himself and choked her back when they still shared a womb. He is crying over a monster!"



My lips parted, but no words could come out until I took one deep breath. "She might've been a monster to us, but she was his sister—"

"Sister that didn't give a damn about him. I ultimately saved him, too," Kayden grinned. He rolled closer. "Lettie...Violet."

He drew a breath and reached for my hand. I had already decided for myself that it would be cold, but his skin was surprisingly warm. "Listen to me."

Kayden smiled up at me as I looked down at him. "Would you look at Kylan the way you're looking at me right now, if he had killed her?"

The answer came without hesitation.

No...

I would've never blamed Kylan, but it was so easy to blame Kayden for something I knew would happen.

"I know you're trying to force yourself to feel bad," Kayden said, his voice softer, "but you don't have to, because this is who we are."

He closed his eyes and opened them again, his gaze darker now. "Our kind can only depend on ourselves, and one day, you'll see that's just the way it is."

His fingers tightened around mine.

Our kind?

"The witches learned you were a hybrid," he continued. "They never judged you and kept your secret. They knew you didn't want to use your eyes to heal them, but they never turned on you because that's family."



I swallowed, my thoughts racing. Once again, I was trying to find some lies in his words, but there were none.

"But shifters," Kayden added, "once they know you're a hybrid, they'll pull every string to see you hanged for it, and being a hybrid isn't even illegal!"

My mind turned over his words again and again.

"You don't need to grieve for the ones who never gave a shit about you," Kayden said. "Because that's the truth. Most of them would never shed a tear if you died. You only have your true kind, and that's why you need to embrace your other half...your darker half."

His hand rose little by little until it reached my necklace. Before I could react, he ripped it off.

I gasped and clutched at my bare neck.

"You got rid of the ring," Kayden said. "Praise our Lord Baelor—"

Our Lord Baelor?

"—And now you want to hide behind this necklace," he swung it around in the air. "But if you use the stone to hide your true self instead of embracing yourself, you will never be the savior you were meant to be," he said. "Didn't it feel good when that magic came from your hands? Did you not feel powerful?"

I felt a knot in my stomach as the memory rushed back. The hot feeling, the glow, the rush of strength that wasn't mine but somehow was. I did feel powerful.

"I'll teach you," Kayden offered. "I'll show you how to embrace your



dark side so you don't have to be useless anymore. You and I...we can both be there for each other, and follow Baelor's path...Kian's path."

Useless?

Baelor's path?

Kian's path?

Goosebumps spread across my skin. If he was trying to somehow get me on his side, it really wasn't working. I glared into his eyes and ripped the necklace from his hand.

"Thanks for the talk," I breathed. "I'm leaving now."

I turned, reaching for the door, but before I could touch it, his hand wrapped around my wrist.

"Let go!" I turned back.

"Wait," Kayden said, his tone desperate. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to freak you out. I just want to talk because it's almost time!"

Time for what?

"Let go of me," I snapped.

Instead, he tugged me closer, refusing to let go. "No, I said I'm sorry!" he hissed. "I'm not done talking!"

My blood boiled. My pulse throbbed in my ears, and my eyes felt strange. It was just the way it always was right before the glow.

"I'm asking you very kindly," I said, "to let go of me."



Kayden's worried expression vanished, and a smirk appeared. "Or what? You're going to push me?" His smile widened. "Or use your eyes on me? Yes, please!"

He tried pulling me closer. "Do it. Show yourself."

I shut my eyes tight. Then I suddenly heard the sound of the door unlocking. My eyes flew open, and in a blur, I was shoved out into the hallway, but right before that, I could just catch a glimpse of Kylan's figure.

It was the last thing I saw before the door slammed behind me and locked with a click, shutting me out.

He was inside now.

Alone with Kayden.

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