

Chapter 307

Violet

When the bright light faded, I was no longer in the bathroom.

Instead, I found myself in the woods. My feet pressed against the grass, everything was too quiet, and as I looked around, there was not even a bird in sight. It was the kind of silence that made me question what I was even doing here.

I felt a chill down my spine, and my heart thudded against my chest. I didn't know what this place was, but at the same time...I did. The trees, the moss, the faintly golden sky above. It all looked so familiar...

Turning slowly, I took it all in, until it hit me so hard I nearly forgot how to breathe.

This was the Bloodrose...

But what was I doing here?

How did I get here?

Before I could understand why or how, a little girl ran past me, her long blonde hair swaying side to side. She looked so small, adorable, and was probably no older than seven.

Then a voice followed.

"Violet!"

Once again, I turned around, and my heart skipped. I recognized that voice because how could I not?



From behind the trees appeared a boy, not much older than the girl. His hair was slightly darker than mine, and his face flushed with worry as he darted his eyes around.

Dylan...

My breath caught. He was so small, so young, but it was really him. My brother. Which meant the girl was...

Me?

I followed Dylan's eyes as he called out my name several times more, but his gaze never found mine. I could see him, but he couldn't see me. But then again, I doubted it was the adult Violet he was looking for.

I wanted to scream, grab him and tell him I was here, but I couldn't. A shaky smile tugged at my lips as a figure appeared beside him. A man reached down and took Dylan's hand.

It really was him.

Dad...

Greg...

"Don't worry," he spoke gently, squeezing Dylan's hand. "She'll find her way back to us. She always does."

My heart shattered as those words left his lips. I did, Dad...I found my way back to you. A breath came from my lips as a single tear slid down my cheek. Quickly, I closed my eyes and brushed it away with the back of my hand, but when I opened them again, everything was gone.

The woods, all of it.



I was back in the bathroom.

"No...no, not now!"

The box was still in my hand, but the symbols had stopped glowing. I shook the box, desperate, but it was of no use.

Panic rushed through me as I lifted the box higher. "I call, I claim, I open." I whispered.

Nothing...

"I call, I claim, I open!"

But yet again, nothing happened. I had a pretty good guess it had to do with the time. It was already past midnight, so my chance was gone, which made sense considering the memory Dylan told me about, but there was still a lot that didn't.

How had I come out of it, and why did I see Dylan?

With a defeated sigh, I shoved the box back into the woven bag and tiptoed my way back into the room, focusing on the sounds of Kylan's breath, who was still fast asleep.

I crouched down and slid the bag under the bed before slipping under the covers. Soon after, my head found its way to Kylan's chest, and I wrapped my arms around him.

I looked at him for a moment, fighting the urge to shake him awake, pour everything out, and tell him about the box. But I couldn't wake him. Not now. Stealing this moment of rest from him while he barely got any just felt wrong.



"Tomorrow," I whispered, pressing a kiss to his chest. A long sigh escaped me, and I closed my eyes, pulling him closer.

~

The next morning, the sun pushed through the curtains. I had seen the exact moment it had happened, because I hadn't closed an eye. All night long, I had just lain there, waiting and thinking. Waiting for Kylan to wake up, and thinking about all that had happened, what was still to come, the box, and...him.

And Nate...

Always Nate. His face kept appearing in my head, whether I wanted it or not.

He had also appeared in Kylan's dream, and I was sure it was the same for him...

My finger traced soft circles on Kylan's chest, and he stirred a few times before his eyelids fluttered open. A yawn came out, and when his gaze landed on me, he looked a little confused.

"Morning!" I said quickly.

"Good morning?" he muttered, his voice still rough from sleep. He sat up slowly, blinking. "Was I asleep?"

I couldn't help but giggle. "Yes. That's usually what happens at night."

His question wasn't even that funny, but he had slept so long it felt like he had somehow resurrected from the dead. I pressed a kiss to his cheek, and as I pulled away, he shot me an unimpressed look.



"I'm serious," he said. "Were you able to get some sleep?"

No.

Not even a little.

"Yes," I nodded instead. "But I have to tell you something. I tried the box again last night," I blurted. "And it opened—"

"It what?" He cut me off. "How? When?" His frown deepened. "Without me?"

For a second, my thoughts went to when he had visited Nate without me. If he was allowed to do things on his own, so was I.

"Do you have some time?" I asked. "I thought maybe we could have breakfast together, and I'll tell you everything then."

His frown softened, and he nodded. "I have time."

~

We got ready in silence, and soon we were sitting in the garden, eating our breakfast. The tables were already full, and it felt strange that almost everyone had chosen to eat at the same time.

From a distance, I spotted Trinity sitting with Dylan, and a little further off, Sora and Lian together. No one sat at the same table, as if invisible lines had been drawn between us all.

I had spent time with each of them over the past few days, including the days at Madam Renata's, but being together as one group seemed like something we silently agreed not to do.



I sat across from Kylan, sinking my teeth into my second crispy chicken sandwich. Kylan leaned over with a small, amused smile, wiping the crumbs away with his thumb. My cheeks burned as I swallowed.

I had just finished telling him about the box, and he sat there the way he always did. Quiet, thoughtful, and listening to every word while already trying to come up with a solution or conclusion.

His brow furrowed. "So you spoke to Dylan right before you opened the box," he recalled. "Did you think about him as well?"

I dropped the sandwich, going into deep thoughts. "I might have...but I'm not sure," I replied. At that time, there were many things on my mind.

Kylan squinted. "I think Varius gave it to you because he wants you to know something," he said. "And I think what you saw was a memory... but you said the little girl ran past, so I don't think it's yours."

"Dylan's?" I wondered.

Kylan shook his head slightly. "I don't know yet," he spoke just above a whisper. A weak, and reassuring smile appeared on his lips. "But we'll figure it out. Maybe we can try again tonight."

Despite the hours of sleep, he still looked so tired. It had to be the weight of everything. The thing with Kayden and whatever the hell that was yesterday, the situation with Nate, Chrystal...perhaps even Camille, although he didn't seem to be worried about that.

And now here I was, piling the box onto his shoulders. Again.

I slipped my hand across the table and placed it on top of his. His eyes widened before he smiled at me, flustered.

"You haven't taken a bite," I teased softly. "You've got to eat."

He looked me up and down, smirking. "I'll eat tonight," he said. At least he hadn't lost his charm or his way of dodging topics.

I brought my hand to my cheek to hide the blush, though from the sound of his chuckle, I was sure it hadn't helped much. "I need to know how you're doing," I said, trying to stay serious. "I'm worried about you."

"No, don't worry about me. I need to know how you are doing," Kylan sighed. His gaze dropped to my empty finger.

I blinked for a second. This morning was the first time I hadn't thought about the ring or the fear of losing control. Not once.

I hadn't even been thinking about the necklace the king had given me, the one Kylan refused to let me wear.

"Good...I think?" I answered, still surprised.

"You seem to be doing great without it," he commented, running a hand through his hair.

He was right, I was...

Until I was forced to think back to Chrystal's death, how I actually didn't give a fuck, and how I somehow felt the need to blame that on a ring instead of accepting that it was just my heart, or the lack of it.

"You do not need the ring or a necklace. You've managed to open the box, Violet," Kylan continued. "And I want you to know that you're doing great, and I'm so proud of you."

My lips parted, but no words came out. Why was he being...weird?



He squeezed my hand. "And I want to apologize for taking it from your neck yesterday...But I only did it because you can clearly do without it. You're doing so great."

His words warmed me, but as I studied his face, I was able to see through him. Kylan was broken.

A lump formed in my throat as his words replayed inside my head. Great? I wasn't doing 'great' at all.

We had just buried a body, his best friend's sister's body, Kayden was still insane, the Veil would open and we didn't know when or how, the mistress situation, everything was going to shit, I hadn't closed an eye because I was scared of the devil, and I was eating a crispy chicken sandwich because I didn't know what else to do.

The only thing was that I was better at hiding it at the moment, but we were both broken.

"I lied to you. We're both not doing great, Kylan," I stated. His eyes shot up in surprise. "We're both not fully here, distracted, all over the place." I drew a breath. "And I think it's because we're both still hurting for Nate."

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