

Chapter 309

Violet

Kaelis hummed a tune the entire way down the path, her face showing not a single worry. I looked at her from the corner of my eye. She looked so calm, happy. Her braid swung behind her while she balanced the big, heavy pot in her hands.

I guess one could say I was the complete opposite. My chest felt tight, and my mind was a mess.

Because while for Kaelis this was nothing more than a visit to a sick friend, it was different for me. I knew this talk could go both ways. It could either heal something or shatter it beyond repair, and that was okay, but I needed something to happen. Anything, so I could move on.

I really wished Kylan would've come so he could've done the same. Sometimes pain was necessary to move on, but I would lie if I said it wouldn't be my dream to heal something.

The more we walked, the more my mind went to Nate.

What would he say when he saw me?

Would he even look at me?

The image of his face when we last saw each other kept flashing through my mind, and as always, it was followed by an ache. I could never forget that disappointed look in his eyes as he had parted from us without saying a word.

"You walk this path like you've done it a hundred times before," I said to Kaelis.



She grinned, glancing over her shoulder. "Of course I have!" she said. "Before he left for Starlight, I used to visit him at least once a week. It's practically my home as well!"

I nodded, taking in her words. There was no doubt she must've been exaggerating since that was what she was good at, but her words sounded warm and positive.

"Whenever I had a bad day," Kaelis continued, "he always knew how to cheer me up. So I just want to do the same now."

That was how I knew him, too. He had been doing that from the day I met him. Cheer me up.

"That's so nice of you," I said, managing a small smile.

Kaelis smiled back, her eyes glimmering. "I really hope he'll enjoy the soup. I worked really hard on it."

I looked at the pot again, noticing how her arms barely shook despite the weight. It was just like on the mountains. Whenever Kaelis wanted something, she just seemed to have so much energy that literally nothing could stop her.

"There it is!" she said suddenly.

I followed her gaze and saw a large white estate at the end of the path. It was framed by a gate that stood open, and it actually looked quite peaceful and lonely at once.

It wasn't far from the palace. The Wyrnsbane estate was close enough to walk, but far enough to feel like another world. A quieter world.

"Kaelis."



"Yes?"

"If Nate says he doesn't want to be bothered and wants to be left alone until he...recovers, you've got to accept that."

I kind of expected her to take it the wrong way. Maybe a frown or an argument since she seemed to have a lot to say to Kylan, but her smile remained.

"I know that," she accepted, lifting the pot a little higher in her arms. "But Nate has never rejected me before, so I'm not worried."

I sighed softly, unsure whether to envy her optimism or feel for her positivity. Life wouldn't always be great, and that was just the way it was.

She huffed a bit as she adjusted her grip on the pot. I had offered to help her earlier, but she laughed in my face and said she might as well let an ant carry it with her. Whatever that was supposed to mean.

Still, she had said it with not a single hint of malice, and somehow that made it sound less bad. She was just that oblivious, and her mouth kind of reminded me of Kylan's. Both just said whatever, whenever.

As we neared the gate, I felt my pulse quicken. Every step closer made my stomach turn.

Was I ready for this?

Was he ready for this?

I stopped in my steps without realizing it. Kaelis was a few steps ahead when she turned. "Aren't you coming?"

Before I could answer, another voice called out.



"Princess Kaelis!"

We both turned our heads at the same time, and from between the bushes, a woman appeared. She looked tall, elegant, and wore a flowing white dress. Her dark hair was twisted into a bun, and her presence had a kind of grace that didn't even make me wonder too much about who she might be.

It was surely one of Nate's mothers.

Kaelis smiled and gave a polite bow, holding tightly onto the heavy pot. "It's so good to see you!"

The woman's face lit up. She rushed toward Kaelis and wrapped her in a brief hug, patting her back warmly. I stood behind them, unsure of what to do. My fingers fidgeted against my dress as I waited awkwardly for the moment to pass.

There was just one thing that would never be comfortable to me, and that was meeting new people. I absolutely hated it.

As soon as the woman's eyes found mine, I straightened myself and forced a polite smile.

"That's the royal mate," Kaelis said cheerfully, nodding her head toward me. "She's a Bloodrose. Doesn't she look like one?"

What?

"I know who she is," the woman said softly. "Nate has told us a lot about her."

The woman reached for my hands with a gentle grip. She didn't say a word, just looked at me, searching, studying, as if trying to see whether



whatever Nate had said about me was true. If he had said anything at all, I only hoped it wasn't after his sister had died.

Just as I opened my mouth to greet her, Kaelis opened hers. "Is Nate in?" she asked. "I heard he hasn't been feeling well, so I made him his favorite soup."

The woman blinked, her attention snapping back to Kaelis. "Yes, he's in, but you might want to —"

"Great, thank you!" Kaelis said. She had already continued walking, and I followed closely behind, my eyes working overtime to take in the overwhelmingly big estate.

We stopped in front of two large doors. Kaelis adjusted her grip on the pot, then pushed one open with her shoulder. "Can we —"

"Yes, we can walk in," Kaelis said. "Everyone does. That's the best thing about this place."

The hall was right in front of us, decorated with blue and gold. Just by the Lyperian colors, it was very obvious that this was Beta Jack's house. I gasped as I looked at the high ceiling above us.

Nate might've been humble, but the house he grew up in certainly wasn't.

"Wow..." I breathed.

Kaelis didn't seem nearly as impressed because why would she? She spun a circle with the pot and looked around. "Nate!" she called out, her voice loud and cheerful. "It's me!"

She had said it so simply, as if he had been expecting her. Still in awe, I followed her deeper inside, trying to take it all in. It was beautiful, but



quiet. No maids, no guards, no servants moving around...nothing.

Was it always like this here?

Kaelis set the pot down on a nearby table before stretching her arms. "Nate!" she called again, frowning slightly. "Natey-Baby!"

The name almost made me laugh, but I bit my tongue. I knew for a fact that Nate would hate it and kick us out right away if he wasn't already planning on doing that. My smile faltered as I suddenly came back to my senses and realized we were intruding.

"Maybe we should—" I began, but Kaelis lifted her hand to shut me up, her brows drawing together.

"That's taking longer than usual," she muttered. "Nate!"

I sighed softly. She really was fearless.

"Maybe he's busy," I tried gently.

"He isn't at the palace. Busy with what?" she asked, looking genuinely puzzled. "Nate!"

With one last call, a door flew open somewhere upstairs. Then there were footsteps, hurried and uneven.

We both stared as Nate came rushing down the stairs, one hand quickly buttoning his shirt while the other ran through his hair. His eyes stayed down.

"I'm here!" he said breathlessly.

When he reached the bottom step and finally lifted his head, his eyes



found mine...and he froze. The expression on his face was quite something. It went from shock to confusion, and then to something that looked like anger.

He took a breath. "Vivi..."



Comments



Support



Share