



Chapter 311

Violet

We sat around the table, the smell of Kaelis's chicken soup filling the air. A big smile was plastered on her face. "You are going to love this, Nate!" she said, scooping big portions into everyone's bowls. "I worked so hard on this!"

She said it with a grin that made it impossible not to smile back.

I looked from Kaelis to Nate. A small smile was on his lips as he looked down at the soup. "You didn't have to do this," he mumbled.

"But I want you to get better," Kaelis said. "I'll get us some drinks!"

She hurried out of the room, shutting the door behind her. My eyes turned to Nate again as he stared down at the bowl in front of him with the spoon in his hand. I could tell he was thinking about something, probably a lot of things, and there was probably so much more he wanted to vent about, but felt like he couldn't.

"Enjoy your meal," I said.

I brought my spoon to my lips and took a bite, feeling the hot soup against my tongue. But the taste was...a little off.

My eyes shot to Nate, and he burst into soft laughter. "Interesting," he chuckled, scrunching his nose.

He grabbed the salt shaker, shaking it in the air with a raised brow. He sprinkled some into his bowl, then reached over to shake a little into mine, and even Kaelis's as well.



I couldn't hold back my laugh. "Why did you do that?"

"Just because," Nate sighed. "It's Kaelis."

He nodded toward the soup while I was still trying to make sense of his words. I think I understood what he meant, because I was the same. But seeing it from the other side made me realize how wrong it really was.

Telling someone a lie just so you wouldn't hurt their feelings. Even if it was something small, like soup. What if one day he didn't want to lie anymore and told her the soup was bad?

How would she feel then?

The door opened again, and Kaelis came back in with three glasses in her hands. "Here you go!" she said brightly, setting them down one by one before sitting again.

"So how are you guys liking the soup?" she asked eagerly. "Is it good?"

I glanced at Nate, waiting for his lead. He looked up at her and gave a warm, genuine smile. "It's really good," he said. "How did you know it's my favorite?"

Kaelis fluttered her eyes. "I just know," she sang.

She took a bite herself and nodded proudly. "It is good!" She beamed. "And guess what? I made plenty enough for everyone!"

"That's great!" Nate and I spoke at the same time.

I giggled as Nate swallowed another spoonful. Kaelis rested her chin in her hands, watching Nate eat. "How are you doing?"



He lifted his gaze and smiled at her. "Already much better because of your soup."

Kaelis shifted in her chair, her cheeks turning slightly pink. "And do you think you'll heal in time to attend my first howl?"

Nate looked flustered. "Is that why you came to check up on me?" he asked. His tone wasn't harsh, but it sounded like he was teasing her. "To see if I would still go to your first howl?"

Kaelis gasped like she had just been accused of something terrible. "No!" she denied. "I came to check on you because I care about you. You know that."

Nate's expression softened. "Yes. I do know that."

A relieved breath came from Kaelis, and she rolled her shoulder back. "Even though I do wish for you to be there," she admitted, "my first priority is for you to recover. You being well matters the most."

She reached for her glass and took a sip. "But," she swallowed before grinning, "I do want you to know there will be a surprise that you definitely don't want to miss."

Nate chuckled, his eyes flicking to me. "A surprise?" he repeated. I shrugged my shoulders, not having a single clue what she was talking about.

Kaelis nodded eagerly. "A very big one."

"Then I guess," he said, a smile tugging at his lips, "I'll have to make sure I recover so I can be there. I wouldn't want to miss your surprise."

Kaelis let out a small squeal of excitement before returning to her soup. It



was clear that this conversation had just turned her whole day around.

I glanced at Nate, and he looked back at me. I wasn't sure he was ready to go to a howl or even felt up to it, but Nate was always Nate...he always thought of others before himself. It was nice to see him smile, though I couldn't help but worry.

He still wasn't fully healed, and it would be a long time before he was.

"Please, take it easy," I whispered.

Nate gave me a nod. "I'll be fine," he whispered back. "I'm happy to see you, Vivi."

I felt the same...

Really...

Suddenly, a voice came from the doorway.

"Son?"

The sound of it sent a chill down my spine. It felt as if my heart stopped, and when we all turned our heads, I froze.

Beta Jack stood there, holding a plastic bag in his hand and wearing that same kind smile as always. The one I had always admired on Nate.

No matter what, Chrystal had been his daughter, and I couldn't help but feel a bit guilty. Would he still be smiling at me if he knew what had happened to his daughter?

What I let happen to his daughter?

"Oh," Kaelis gasped, lighting up instantly. "Jackie!"



Beta Jack laughed warmly, giving both of us a wink before walking over to Nate. He ruffled his hair and pressed a firm kiss to the top of his head. For some reason, it warmed my heart to see that Nate didn't pull back.

He wasn't embarrassed because he loved him just as much as his dad loved him, and physical affection just seemed natural between them.

"How are you feeling?" Jack asked.

"A bit better," Nate mumbled.

"That's good," Jack said. He glanced around the table, which was filled with bowls and glasses. "I didn't know you would have company today."

"Neither did I," Nate replied, lifting his chin toward Kaelis. "Kaelis made me some delicious chicken soup...one big pot."

I laughed softly as Kaelis gave a proud nod, completely missing the tone in Nate's voice.

"I see." Jack chuckled. He placed the plastic bag on the counter. "Well, I'll be heading out again soon, but I wanted to drop off some herbs Fergus and Dylan Hastings gave me," he said. "They said it should help. Vanessa will make you the tea later."

His kind eyes met mine. "Your dad is a good man," he said gently. "He raised good children."

I felt a lump in my throat and looked down at my hands, unsure of what to do with them. His words were so sincere, but all they made me was uncomfortable. If only he knew what his 'good' children had done.

"What are your plans for today, Jackie?" Kaelis asked in a sweet and curious tone. I was glad she had said something because I didn't know



what to say.

I couldn't help but notice how comfortable she was with him, but it made sense. Jack was close to the king and probably the queen, too. Kaelis had known him her whole life.

Jack looked at Nate with a frown. "You didn't tell them?"

"Tell us what?" Kaelis asked, tilting her head.

Nate hesitated, his mouth opening and closing before the words finally came out. "Chrystal's been missing for a few days."



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