

Chapter 42

Violet

As we sat around the dinner table, I tried my hardest to disappear into the chair. Sitting here felt like a nightmare I couldn't wake up from, and all I wanted was to get away.

If I glanced to my left, there was Kylan's brother, Kayden, grinning at as if he knew everything about me—if I looked straight ahead, there was Kylan, glaring at me as if I had ruined his day.

To the right was even worse. There was Chrystal, shooting me death stares. If those stares could kill, I'd be dead a hundred times over by now.

With nowhere to look, I settled for Nate, who sat beside his sister. He shot me a small, reassuring smile followed by a wink.

At the head of the table sat the king, who looked around with a smirk. "It's nice to have everyone here," his voice dominated the table. His energy was dark and intimidating, it almost felt like he was sucking all the air out of the room.

Clarence and Dad mumbled something in response, clearly not really feeling this so-called gathering.

Family day was supposed to be normal, but somehow the day had ended with me sitting at the table with not only Kylan, but also the king of Lyperia. All of this was just messed up.

"Mates?" the king asked, focusing on Trinity and Dylan.

Clarence straightened up. "Yes, Your Majesty."

The king rubbed his chin, looking at the two. "Well, I hope it'll be a great union," he said. "After all, mate bonds are all about alliances, aren't they? Strengthening ties between packs, making sure you have someone powerful by your side."

"They love each other. That's most important to me," Dad's jaw twitched. He sounded irritated, and his response surprised me.

I had always seen him as the kind to care more about alliances than anything.

The king clicked his tongue. "When it comes to mates, love is not the most important thing—those two are completely separated," he stated. "What truly matters is how powerful you are. That's where real strength lies."

My eyes shifted slowly to Kylan, who was looking down at the table, his face tensed. It was exactly as he had said that night in the woods. The king was a heartless man who had neglected his mate, Kylan's mom, for his true love, using her only for power—and hearing this, I had no reason to doubt his words.

"When Kylan graduates, I want him to mate Chrystal," he spoke, breaking the silence just as the topic had closed.

The words felt like a knife through my chest. I couldn't understand why because it wasn't supposed to bother me—yet it did. The thought of Kylan being bound to someone else, someone who was good enough for him, especially Chrystal, stung in a way I hadn't expected.

"She's of noble blood, they've been friends for years—she's Beta Jack's daughter, so it's only fitting."

Chrystal smiled, brushing her hair behind her ear, like she'd just been crowned queen already.

Kylan, on the other hand, clenched his jaw, his expression even more tense than before. He didn't bother to hide his dismay.

His brother, Kayden, let out a laugh as he gave Kylan a playful nudge. For some reason, this whole situation seemed amusing to him.

"And you?"

I spun my head, meeting the king's sharp eyes which were locked onto mine. My heart thumped in my chest as I was unsure whether to look away or hold his gaze, terrified I would somehow offend him with either choice.

"Have you found your mate?" he asked more clearly this time.

I quickly shook my head, too afraid to speak. I was certain even the smallest word would make me sound like an idiot.

A familiar chuckle across the table made me shift my attention again. It was Kylan, his lips curled into a smug smirk. That little smirk of his irritated me to the fullest. It was disgusting, especially considering he was the one who refused to break our bond.

"I was still talking to you," the king snarled.

I snapped my attention back to him, my body tense. Just thinking about Kylan dealing with this man his whole life made me almost feel sorry for him. Almost...

His coldness, his rudeness—it all made sense now. The apple really didn't fall far from the tree.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty," I managed to get out, earning a small smile.

The king eyed Dad. "This is your..."

"Daughter," he answered quickly.

"Daughter," the king repeated, turning back to me. "What's your name, child?"

I opened my mouth to answer, but Dad interrupted again. "I heard the prince and my children are all on the Elite Team. That's great, isn't it?"

Relief washed over me as I realized Dad had started a conversation with the man he despised, all to shift his attention away from me.

The king's eyes brightened a bit.

"Oh, really?" Kayden spoke up for the first time. He still had that grin on his face as he pointed around the table, circling his finger in the air, though his eyes stayed locked on me. "So, you are all Kylan's friends?"

"No," Kylan said bluntly at the same moment I responded, "Yes."

Then he glared at me. I didn't know what possessed me to call him my friend, but what I did know was that I had reached the ultimate level of humiliation. My cheeks turned red as Chrystal smirked beside him, continuing to eat her food as if this was the most entertaining thing she'd seen all day.

"J-Just Dylan," Kylan quickly clarified. "I barely know her."

So now he barely knew me?

It was the first words he had spoken at the table, and it was all to distance himself from me. It hurt, but he wasn't wrong. After everything that had happened between us, there was no chance we could ever be friends.

We were never friends, we were mates. I was the mate he was embarrassed of, and that was that.

"We're friends," Nate jumped in, smiling warmly.

"She's only a freshman, but from what I've heard, she's on her way to becoming one of the best healers this academy has ever seen, Your Majesty."

I smiled back at Nate, grateful for his attempt to save me from the awkwardness. The king raised an eyebrow, clearly surprised.

"A Bloodrose will be a Bloodrose. They've always been good healers," Nate's dad, Jack, praised.

The king grunted slightly, then looked at me again. "Child, if you graduate from Starlight and want to leave that tiny village of yours, the doors of Lyperia will be open to you," he wiped his mouth with a napkin. "Our doors are always open for good healers."

The offer caught me off guard, especially since I wanted nothing more than to remain in our 'tiny village,' even if I was treated like crap at times. I wouldn't trade any of that just to see Kylan grumpy face every single day.

By the time I graduated, he would have already accepted my rejection or either rejected me himself, and I wouldn't even think about him anymore.

"T-Thank you, Your Majesty," I stammered, feeling everyone's eyes on me.

"We appreciate the offer," Dad spoke. "But my daughter doesn't travel. It's probably safer for her back home."

"Ah yes, like it was for your sister—Claire," the king remarked casually, taking a bite of his food as if he hadn't just dropped the nastiest bomb possible on the table.