

## Chapter 97

Kylan

I looked at the king, waiting for him to speak up as his expression changed about ten times within ten seconds.

We both knew he was lying. He didn't care about her being a werewolf because he knew she was from the royal bloodline, and that wouldn't be the first in our family. Yes, she was a witch—but only half, and that was not enough to hate her the way he did—which meant all that mattered to the king was that she was half hers...Adelaide.

What was it with that woman?

"If you're so determined to keep her," The king said after a long pause, "she can stay as one of your mistresses."

This time, I froze for a moment, clenching my fists in anger. Mistresses? The audacity of him to make such a statement, especially after he had torn everything apart to make Mom his mate, all while keeping the woman he truly loved by his side.

He had only tolerated Mom out of greed because he didn't want to lose her while he could've taken her as his mistress instead of giving her the life she didn't deserve.

"The bond is strong, isn't it?" he said, his eyes narrowing. "Stronger than you'd like to admit. You love her, even though you don't want to—it's not by choice."

My jaw clenched, refusing to respond.

Love? I didn't love her...I cared.

"You have years before the ceremony, which means you can still make the right choice. I know what you're going through because I went through the same thing," he continued, his voice softening surprisingly. "You think you love her, but you'll eventually find someone you truly love, so will she—and by that time, it will already be too late. Don't let history repeat itself, Kylan."

I scoffed.

Now he had me.

"After years of neglecting Mom, your mate, you've suddenly decided to care about history not repeating itself?" I laughed, bitterly. I usually just let the king be crazy because I didn't want to get into it with him—but this one was going a bit too far.

His gaze hardened again, and I knew I'd struck a nerve. Good.

"I told you the girl...you can't be with her—you have to be with Chrystal," he said. "You can't get too close to this kind of trash, you can't."

What kind of trash?

Why wouldn't he just speak up and tell me the truth?

"I've raised you better than this, Kylan," the king pointed a finger at my face. "Fighting this hard for someone who has no value to this kingdom goes against everything you were ever taught."

And he was right.

Helping anyone who wasn't Lyperian was out of character for me. My entire life, I had been told to put Lyperia first, to see anyone outside of it as less important. But with Puppy...it was different. I felt responsible for her. The beast inside me felt responsible for her.

I had to protect her, for both of our sakes. As long as I could prevent her from crumbling, she would prevent me from turning weak.

"I'm going to ask you one last time, Kylan," the king said, his tone almost sounding like a warning. "Will you keep the girl by your side despite me advising you not to?"

"I will," I said, my voice steady.

I took a quick breath, expecting an outburst—but then his lips curled in an unexpected turn. "In that case, when the time comes, Chrystal will be your first mistress," he decided on the spot. "We're not going to turn everything upside down with Beta Jack and the others just because you're feeling charitable."

Chrystal?

Over my dead body.

Frustrated, I drew in a breath. Of course, I knew the king would push Chrystal onto me as soon as Puppy was out of the picture. The only thing he cared for was maintaining alliances and keeping Puppy from the throne.

"Beta Jack seemed perfectly fine to me," I shrugged. "You heard him. The Moon Goddess has chosen and we do not question her decision—"

"He's the Beta, Kylan," the king spoke through gritted teeth, turning to me sharply. "He has a duty to this kingdom, unlike you. Beta Jack is an honorable man, something you'd do well to remember."

A chuckle escaped my lips at yet another attempt to make me feel small.

"I may not be able to touch the girl by law," he said, his tone firm. "But I am the king, and I request that she come to me."

My brows furrowed at his predictable words. I knew he would do this.

"Law this, law that—you should've cared about the law when you poisoned your own brother!" He then hissed in a low tone. A sharp feeling twisted in my gut, and this time I couldn't hide it. My eyes widened as I glanced at him, but I quickly looked away. He cleared his throat loudly, trying to cover up his outburst.

No matter the conversation, it always seemed to lead back to Kayden. The king knew exactly how to hit me where it hurt, constantly bringing up my past mistakes. He liked to remind me of how much I had messed up, always bringing up Kayden to make sure I knew how much of a monster he thought I was—but the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

He was the one who had pushed me to it.

"You will request a leave and report back home for royal duties with your 'mate,'" he continued, spitting out the last word. "Since you care about the law so much, you should know that an official visit is mandatory."

Once again, too predictable...

"Let's see how long she'll really stick around," he said, smirking, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction. "Because if I can't break the bond, and you can't break the bond—that means she will have to break it."

I chuckled, shaking my head as I looked down. The idea of Violet sitting on the throne really got to him. It triggered something in him to the point he started acting like a completely different person. Since he couldn't go against the law, he had resorted to this. Weakness and immaturity—the same things he used to punish me for.

He would drag us to Lyperia, test her, push her until she couldn't take it anymore—but there was one thing he didn't know.

What Puppy lacked in physical strength, she made up for in mental strength.

She didn't realize this, and often cried, but her resilience was her biggest strength—and that's why I wasn't worried. Maybe he would get to her at first, but just as quickly, she would get over it.

That's the thing that made her who she is.

I stopped in my tracks as the king paused abruptly.

"Alpha Fergus," he said, trying to sound overly friendly. "I see we've crossed paths again."

Realizing what was happening, my head snapped up, my eyes immediately locking onto Puppy as she stood beside Fergus.

Fergus' face was tense, his body stiff like he was holding himself back from saying something he shouldn't—but Violet carried a small smile on her lips.

I felt relieved, knowing their conversation went well—because if it hadn't, I would've known. Not because I could feel it, but because I could read her like a book.

She wasn't very good at hiding her emotions, which I suppose was one of the unfortunate traits of being half-witch.

"What a pleasant surprise," the king opened his arms, his words exaggerated and dripping with mockery. "I was just talking about planning an official visit to welcome our..." He gestured toward Violet with a tight smile. "...new addition to the Lyperian family."

The smile on Violet's face vanished, replaced with the thing she always did whenever she got nervous. Bite her lip.

Looking down at her hand, I saw her hesitate for a moment before she tried to pull it back. But I didn't let her. I reached out, taking her hand in mine, offering a reassuring squeeze.

She looked up at me, surprised, and I gave her a small, calm smile.

We didn't need words to understand each other. I was there for her, no matter what—and the king couldn't hurt her, not while I was around.

Alpha Fergus, who had been watching the interaction, did an attempt to change his expression to something warmer—though the effort didn't quite reach his eyes.

If there was one thing those two had in common, it was their drive to keep us apart. Fergus wanted to protect Violet, to shield her from herself and from those he didn't trust, while the king wanted to protect the chaos he believed Violet would bring to Lyperia.

But in the end, there was nothing they could do about it.

"In that case," Fergus sighed, showing his teeth. "I suggest we find a room so we can discuss the details."