

Chapter 166

Violet

“Is he going to say something?”

My attempt to whisper had failed dramatically as the loud words left my mouth. Kylan, who was beside me, didn't answer. He was too focused on the scene in front of us.

We sat inside the cave, around the same fire as last time. Aelius sat across from us, his legs crossed, hands resting on his lap, and eyes closed like he was in some sort of deep sleep.

It had been minutes since he had taken this position, and while I could laugh about it at first, I didn't know how to feel about it anymore.

Was I nervous? Excited? Frustrated?

There was one thing I did know, and that was that I was ready to learn something—anything. I had come here with the right mindset, only for this old man to ignore us like we weren't even present.

I gave Kylan an elbow, forcing him to look at me.

“What?”

“Is he breathing?” I asked, tilting my head to inspect Aelius.

Kylan chuckled softly. Then he pointed a weak finger at Aelius as if to ask me why I wasn't paying attention. Only, I wasn't having it. I had come here to learn from the supposed best, and I was going to do just that.

“Uh...” I started, my voice a bit weaker than my strong mind.



It wasn't even because I had to ask him the question, but because I had no idea how to address him. I could've sworn we had gone over this already, but it was still so confusing to me.

Was I supposed to address him as Grandpa? Aelius? The Soothsayer?

Before I could figure it out, his eyes snapped open. A chill traveled down my spine as his gaze landed right on me.

"Grandpa, Master Aelius, Great Soothsayer," he said, his voice clear. "I answer to all."

My eyes fluttered rapidly as I made my decision on how to approach him. "M-Master Aelius?" I decided.

"Yes, Violet."

"What is it that you'll be teaching me today?"

"Patience," he responded.

I stared at him, waiting for him to explain—but he didn't. It was as if he had expected me to already know what he meant.

"I'm sorry—I don't understand," I said, barely shaking my head.

What about the glowing eyes stuff?

Where was the fire from my hands? That crazy thing Adelaide had done before when she had paralyzed people with just one simple touch on the head?

Where was the real stuff?

Aelius sat up straighter. "Your biggest challenge is your lack of patience."



Then he turned his head toward Kylan. "Isn't that right, young prince?"

Lifting my brows, I turned to Kylan as well, daring him to answer, and it better be the right one at that. I had plenty of patience. I could be very, very patient.

I had been waiting for ages for Kylan to open up to me. I had given Chrystal more than enough time to make my life miserable, I had kept my calm around Commander Jorn until I couldn't any longer...I had even managed not to choke Esther.

Surely Kylan wouldn't agree with this foolery.

"Yes," he said to my dismay.

My mouth literally fell open.

Is he serious?

"I am patient!" I snapped. "Okay, maybe not all the time, but you can't expect me to—"

Aelius lifted one hand, making me shut up immediately. He moved his hands up and down, breathing in slowly, then letting it out just as slowly.

I didn't even notice I was doing the same until I had released that very same breath.

"Good," Aelius noticed. "You look like him," he said. "And you are just like him...the Alpha Prince."

For once my mouth was closed. I didn't know what to say to that. Although I couldn't see the similarities from Adelaide's vision alone, Aelius knew my birth father...Alaric...better than I did. There would be no



point in denying it. I mean, it would not be crazy to think he had probably given me something else other than the color of my hair and the color of my eyes.

“We will sit here in silence,” Aelius instructed, “until I say it’s okay for you to talk.”

I huffed loudly, a few loose strands of hair blowing out of my face in the process. This was ridiculous. What was I going to learn from sitting here in silence?

However, this time I had decided it would be for the best not to complain. I peeked at Kylan. I was sure he had his opinions, but even he wasn’t complaining, and now I was looking like the crazy one.

Aelius folded his hands again, his eyes piercing through mine. “I have a question for you, Violet, and I will give you time to think about it.”

I nodded slowly, already bracing myself. If there was one thing I now knew about Aelius, it was that he sure loved a good riddle.

“What is it you’re hoping to get from this?”

That question...

It was the same one Kylan had asked me not too long ago. I wasn’t stupid—I knew what I wanted. I wanted to control my glowing eyes, to stop feeling like a ticking time bomb. I wanted to feel free and be able to walk away from any situation knowing I would be safe.

That’s what I wanted.

“Why?” I asked instead of answering.



Aelius twisted his neck with his hands, sighing. “Because I’ll be deciding whether to start your lessons or not based on that answer.”

My eyes widened as he continued. “There is a big part of me that knows I should not teach you. But there is another part...a part that understands the best way to contain knowledge is to let it be tested.”

“Why should she be tested?” Kylan asked, suspiciously.

Aelius locked eyes with him. “There’s a basket behind you.”

Out of curiosity, I turned halfway to follow Aelius’ gaze, but he suddenly and loudly clapped his hands—twice. It was so loud, I could hear it echo through the caves. I nearly jumped, instantly turning back around to face him.

“You. Focus!” he barked.

He didn’t sound angry, just strict and exhausted. I did as told, fixing my eyes ahead. Still nosy, I focused on the sound of his voice, wondering whatever it was he had to say to Kylan.

“There are apple trees just a bit farther into the woods,” he spoke calmly and with composure as if he hadn’t just scared the shit out of me. “I need you to fetch me some.”

“What will you need them for?” I heard Kylan ask.

“For eating!” Aelius said brightly like it was the most obvious thing in the world. I could see his rotten teeth out of the corner of my eye as a chortle escaped from deep within. I doubted he could even use them to bite an apple.

I bit my lip, preventing myself from bursting out laughing. I didn’t even



need to see Kylan's face to know how much he was probably holding himself back from grabbing him by the throat again.

Aelius clearly wanted him out of here. Kylan was the type to catch onto things rather quickly, so I knew he was aware as well.

What for? Who knew?

Kylan mumbled something under his breath, and then I heard him get on his feet.

Wait...was he actually going to do it?

I released my teeth from my bottom lip, feeling the nerves run through me as the sound of the cave doors creaked open. A moment later, they shut again, and I knew Kylan was gone.

Unless it was to teach me how to control those glowing eyes, I doubted Aelius and I would have something to talk about. At least it would be quiet

...

—

It was no surprise when minutes had already passed, and nothing had changed. I tried to be patient, while Aelius appeared to be as well. He didn't move an inch as he waited for the answer to his question.

What was it I was hoping to get from this?

The more I waited, the more I began to fear that he would not be satisfied, no matter what. It was almost like he was looking for every damn excuse not to teach me a thing, and I didn't know why.

Weren't we family?



Didn't Kylan say he loved me?

Didn't he want to take care of Adelaide's daughter?

The longer I sat there, the heavier my eyes felt. Due to the silence, I couldn't even make out how long it had been. When would Kylan come back and force this man to teach me something?

I shifted my weight several times, desperate to find the right position until I couldn't take it any longer. I was just about to drop my chin to my chest, just to rest for a second, when a loud clap made me flinch.

Suddenly, I was wide awake again, sitting up straight like nothing had happened, though my heart started pounding in my chest. He really had to stop doing that.

"We are dying to hear your answer," Aelius announced.

My heart instantly froze as I looked around the cave, but no one else was there.

"We?" I asked carefully. "Who is we?"

My hands were already pressing into the ground, ready to lift myself and run out of here. He was doing the same thing he had done when I had first met him downtown, in the tent.

Witches I could take, but ghosts would definitely be where I drew the line.

"Don't be afraid, my child," Aelius chuckled. "When I say we, I mean me and my eyes."

"Oh," I gaped, relieved. A small, awkward chuckle left my mouth.



"Now, why do you want me to teach you?"

I had to think this through, and I could not screw this up. Should I say what I thought he wanted to hear? Or should I say what I really felt?

"I want to learn how to control my eyes," I said, settling for the obvious.

"But why?" he asked again, squinting his eyes.

I swallowed. "Because...because..."

I took a deep breath. "Because I don't want to depend on everyone."

I thought of Kylan, and how I already needed him way too often to calm me down. It was nice, and it felt amazing to know he had that kind of effect on me—but I wanted to be able to do that myself.

Aelius shook his head. "Not good enough. Come back next time," he spoke dryly, waving me off like I was nothing.

"Wait, wait!" I blurted out, panicking. "Next week I can't! I'll be going to Lyperia for—"

"That's correct," he interrupted. "That means you'll have an extra week to think. I'll see you then."

I froze, heart sinking.

No. No, I didn't want to wait. I could not wait.

Eager, I reached forward, wrapping my hand gently around his thin wrist. He looked down at me like if I didn't let go in five seconds, he would blow up the whole cave with me in it.

"Master Aelius," I sang sweetly, letting go of him.



“Why don’t you want to teach me?”

His emotionless eyes softened a little. “Because you are an immature, spoiled kid,” he stated. “You want to learn, but you don’t know how to listen.”

I took in every word.

“And because,” he said, “your steps in your prince’s kingdom may bring great sorrow—and I’m not yet sure whether I can bear to be part of that.”



Comments



Support



Share