



Chapter 318

Violet

Dylan sighed, looking away. "You ran away after I made fun of you for sleeping with your lights on," he began. "Uncle Greg and I went to look for you, you came back home after some time...apologized and then..." He trailed off, blinking.

"I don't really know what happened in those weeks. I believe the next thing I remember is waking up and Dad telling me that Aunt Claire and Uncle Greg were gone...and that you would be my sister."

Kylan and I shared a look. "Do you think his memory has also been erased beyond that point for a reason?" I wondered.

Kylan shrugged. "Could be."

My thoughts drifted to Adelaide and how she had erased everyone's memories before stepping into the Veil. It was powerful magic, done effortlessly. Could she have done the same from within the Veil?

Trinity cleared her throat and looked at Dylan. "So you remember the nightmares about the raven, but not really what happened before or after that?"

Dylan eyed her with a smirk. "Wait...am I allowed to talk again?"

Trinity smacked his arm. "Just answer the question."

He chuckled under his breath, rubbing his arm. "I can't remember."

"Anyway," Trinity continued, crossing her legs. "It's pretty clear to me that if your memories have been erased, whoever did it did a poor job,



and is probably not someone very experienced."

Dylan frowned. "Or maybe it's just been a long time."

Trinity shook her head. "That isn't it, Dylan. Your mind is sharp," she reminded him. "You once told me about what you had for breakfast, lunch, and dinner on your fifth birthday up to the tiniest detail. Snacks included."

Dylan's cheeks turned red instantly, and he rubbed his neck, embarrassed. Despite the situation, I couldn't help but crack a laugh, and I knew Kylan, who loved making fun of him, couldn't help it either.

She had a point, though. Dylan remembered everything...except that. He remembered enough about my nightmares to tell me it was about a red-eyed bird, but that's where it ended.

"We don't have long," Kylan said, looking at the clock. Several minutes had already passed. "I suggest we open the box and find out."

My eyes went to Dylan. He still looked unconvinced and seemed like he was seconds away from stopping all of this. At the same time, I could tell he was holding back.

He was like Kylan. He thought he had to protect me to make up for something, and when he couldn't anymore, he fell apart. It wasn't that he was against me. He just cared so much that it became too heavy. Not for me, but for him...

Blood or not, a Hastings was still a Hastings, and that's why I understood him. Deep down, they all worried too much about each other and could go too far once they dropped their coldness and tried to show they cared. That was their way of loving.



Mom and Uncle Ewan were different, but that was just them.

"Do you want to come with us, Dylan?" I asked before I could think about it too much.

"What?" Kylan and Trinity said together, their heads snapping toward me.

Dylan's eyes lit up instantly. "Yes!" he said. "I mean...can I?"

He pretty much looked like a kid waiting for permission to join an adventure. In my case, it wasn't that I wanted to go inside the box, but I had to.

"Can he?" I asked Kylan.

"It is your memories." He gave a nonchalant shrug. "He can come with us—"

Trinity groaned so loudly that it filled the room. She dropped her forehead onto the table with a thud. "Dear Goddess," she muttered. "When I asked for a glimpse of the man he used to be, this was not what I meant."

I chuckled, glancing at Dylan, who was still buzzing with excitement. Meanwhile, Kylan had already stood up to grab the box.

Dylan looked at Trinity, who immediately shook her head. "Don't look at me, I'm not joining you." She raised her hands. "You know I will always support you, Vi, but someone does have to stay here, and I'm not a big fan of magical boxes."

"It's okay," I laughed, grabbing her hand across the table. I gave her a light squeeze, telling her not to worry. I wasn't exactly the biggest fan of



magical boxes either.

Kylan returned to the table and set the box down in the center. There were only seconds left on the clock. It was almost time.

I placed my hand on the box, and the symbols began to glow. The box shook under my palm, just like before. Kylan rested his hands beside mine, but Dylan, who was still unfamiliar with the box, hesitated for half a second before doing the same.

The moment he planted his hand on the box, it began to shake aggressively, even more than the first time. "What the hell—" he muttered, startled.

Before I could respond, another hand landed gently on top of mine. I looked up, startled, and met Trinity's eyes.

"I can't let you go alone with these two. Go," she said. Her eyes were steady, as was her voice. "Before I change my mind."

A warm feeling reached my chest. She didn't need to come with us, not when her loyalty had already spoken louder than anything more ever could, and I didn't fully understand why, but it made me love her even more. Somehow, she always had my back.

I swallowed and glanced toward the clock as it struck midnight. My heart thudded in my chest as I took a breath and spoke the words.

"I call," I whispered. "I claim...I open."

I closed my eyes as a blinding white light burst through the room, and everything around us vanished.

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When I opened my eyes, the first thing I noticed was the sunlight filtering through the trees. The fresh scent of pine hit my nose, and that's when I knew I was back home again.

The Bloodrose.

My heart filled with excitement as I looked around, breathing it in. No matter how much I complained about home, it was still home. My home. And I liked it here...

My breath suddenly hitched as I remembered that I didn't come alone. I turned around and let out a relieved breath when I saw them. Kylan, Trinity, and Dylan...right behind me.

Although someone was supposed to stay behind, I felt more relieved to know we had come as a group. For some reason, it felt safer...

Kylan made a sound as he wrinkled his nose and covered it with his hand. "You grew up here?" he muttered.

I rolled my eyes, chuckling. "Yes, I did."

Most people had this reaction upon smelling the Bloodrose swamps, but it was understandable. I actually had the same reaction when I entered Lyperia for the first time and saw all those ridiculously dressed people.

"Come on," Trinity burst into laughter, giving Kylan a playful shove. "Don't say that to her. Be nice."

"This is me being nice," Kylan grinned. I knew what he was trying to do. He was trying to keep the mood alive, make sure I wouldn't somehow burst into tears.

The two went back and forth, but my attention had already shifted to



Dylan. He had taken a few steps forward and was silent as he stared ahead. It almost seemed like he had turned to stone.

"Dylan?" I asked quietly. "Are you okay?"

He didn't answer right away. He waited for a second before he shook his head and lifted his hand, pointing toward the river. "Don't you hear that?"

"What?"

Then I heard it. A sound that almost made me turn to stone as well. It was a laugh.

A child's laughter...

My laughter...



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