



Chapter 319

Violet

Little Violet's laughter was so loud we could hear it through the wind, but I could hardly believe it was really me. Sure, life with mom and dad around was much better, but even then, I barely remembered ever being happy.

But that laugh...

It was pure joy.

"Let's go," I said softly, breaking into a smile. I took a big step forward, but just as I was about to take the second one, I felt Kylan's hand around my wrist, stopping me.

I looked into his eyes, and this time they weren't as playful as before. His expression was serious. "Wait, Violet," he drew in a breath. "We can't just go and...you know that if you shed one single tear—"

"It's over," I finished for him. I swallowed, thinking about not wanting this to end just yet. I wouldn't leave without at least one bit of knowledge about something that could help us, and that's why I was so confident in my words.

At the end of the day, I was someone with a heart and feelings, so I couldn't promise I wouldn't end up bawling, but not until we got some answers.

I looked deeply into Kylan's eyes. "Do you trust me?"

"Of course I trust you," he said without hesitation. His grip softened before he released my wrist, a faint smile curling at his lips.



"Violet is doing fine," Trinity's voice cut in. "I think it's him we should be worrying about."

I followed her eyes until they landed on Dylan. He had still not moved an inch, and his body went stiff. It was like he wasn't even there, and I couldn't help but wonder what was on his mind.

"I knew this would happen," Trinity sighed. "He just can't stop thinking about the past, and I don't know if that feeling will ever fade."

My chest clenched with unease. It sucked seeing him like that, so quiet and fragile...especially knowing how much he regretted the past. But now, in this timeline, we actually kind of got along, so there was no need for that.

Trinity didn't move to comfort him and crossed her arms. "Sometimes he likes to get left alone," she murmured, reading my mind. "He says he doesn't like feeling pitied."

I gave a small shrug. "Yes. He's indeed like that," I agreed softly.

"Well," Kylan said, standing straight, "he's getting pitied today, because he's not ruining this mission by crying."

I could barely respond before he had already made his way over to Dylan and gave his shoulders a light push.

Trinity let out a low chuckle. "Dylan is so soft, but he doesn't really cry easily," she said, shaking her head. "He's...interesting."

I chuckled with her because her description was spot on. It was exactly like that, and another family thing.

"I suggest we follow the sound of laughter, and go to..." Kylan



announced, grabbing everyone's attention. We all looked at him, waiting for him to continue, but he seemed unsure. "The girl?"

I nodded with a brief smile. He could've said Violet, but he called me the girl.

"Then we watch her from a distance, scan our surroundings," he said. "See if anything happens."

The group started walking, and his warm hand had found its way into mine again. Trinity walked beside Dylan.

"This is another day, I assume?" Kylan asked as we moved through the brush. He pushed away a few low branches for me as we continued to follow the sound.

"Yes," I said, scanning the familiar trees. "I can't remember which one, but it's not the same day."

"We don't know how long we have," Dylan said. "So I say we approach her instead."

Trinity frowned. "How come?"

I swallowed, my heart skipping. The laughter was louder now. It was already strange enough that it was my laughter, but hearing them talk about me...the younger me, felt surreal. Maybe that's why I didn't really know what to say.

Who was the younger Violet?

"Well," Dylan began, chuckling, "little Violet has always been very naive, a bit of a blabbermouth, desperate for any kind of connection, and definitely not the sharpest tool in the shed—"

"Wow," I muttered. "Thank you."

"But—" he continued. "She has the most beautiful heart in this whole swamp. A kind heart. She wants to see the good in every person, and trusts too easily, even when she shouldn't, so she'll talk."

Kylan hummed. "I see."

Dylan nodded. "Nobody really talked to her back then. So if we talk to her, try to be her friend, she'll open up to us in less than five minutes."

I felt my cheeks burn, hearing him speak. There were gentler ways to say little Violet didn't get it, but he went for the easy one.

Kylan raised his brow. "Is that true?"

"I guess," I mumbled.

"Then," he said, smirking, "after everything Dylan just said, I suppose you wouldn't be smart enough to put two and two together and recognize yourself?"

My mouth dropped open as I elbowed him.

"It's just a question," Kylan fluttered. He just shrugged, pretending innocence.

I rolled my eyes and let out a sigh. I could argue all I want, but little Violet was exactly the way he described. Desperate for anything...

"Dylan has a point," I gave in. "More than anything, I just wanted friends. So, no...I wouldn't look that far."

We slowed our steps as the laughter grew louder and hid behind a tree.



My heart raced as I leaned forward to peek.

And then I saw her...

Or me.

A small seven-year-old girl with uneven pigtails and a pink dress stood with her back turned to us. I recognized the dress. It was the one Mom had sewn for me herself. I could still remember how proud she had looked the day she finished it, and how proud I had been to wear it.

It was one of my best and earliest memories...

I watched as Violet let out a squeal, holding something that seemed like a squirrel in her hands. "Fly!" she laughed, spinning in circles.

I couldn't help but laugh too as her pigtails swung through the air. The hair...my hair. The pigtails were completely uneven, one drooping lower than the other.

It was Dad's work.

I used to give him step-by-step instructions, and he would always mess it up, but his smile would be so wide when he was done that I never had the heart to tell him. They say children are the most honest, but I could never tell him the truth.

Seeing it now made my chest ache. I should've told him...

"So you were playing by yourself?" Trinity whispered, leaning closer. "You were so cute."

I beamed, unable to hide my smile. "You think?"



"Yes," Trinity nodded. "Right, Kylan?"

I turned to look at Kylan, expecting him to tease me, but his expression was softer than expected. His eyebrows were drawn, eyes narrowed, like he wasn't sure what to think.

In that moment, I wondered if he had also realized how young I had been when everything started to go wrong. Had it been like that for him too?

He took a breath. "We need to get the information and leave. I was thinking, in order to protect the past, maybe one person should go and _"

"Hey, you!" Dylan suddenly called out, stepping from behind the tree.

Kylan let out a sigh. "Never mind."

Little me spun around at the sound, her eyes bright and curious. "Yes?"

The smile that stretched across her face was one I couldn't describe. She just looked...happy.

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