

Chapter 320

Violet

Dylan froze, but no words left his mouth. He just stood there with his mouth open, not knowing what to say or what to do.

He had seemed so sure of himself, stepping forward, but I guess talking to Violet from the past, especially for him, was easier said than done.

"Yes, sir?" little me said, tilting her head in curiosity. She shifted her weight, eager for an answer.

Dylan stammered. "L..."

He kept blinking, but nothing came. I wondered if he felt the same as I did. It felt as if someone was squeezing my heart, and I didn't really know what to do with it. I didn't know how to feel looking at...me.

Yet, something told me I could probably do a bit more than Dylan. I stepped out from behind the tree, feeling Kylan and Trinity right behind me. A pair of blue eyes, identical to mine, stared right back at me as Little Violet widened her eyes before she showed me a big, toothy grin.

"H-Hi!"

Her hand lifted in a shy wave.

Had I always been this awkward?

Taking a slow breath, I moved closer, gently pushing a still speechless Dylan to the side. Then I knelt in front of her and reached out to take her small hands in mine.



The moment my fingers brushed over her knuckles, there was nothing more that I wanted than to protect her because I knew what was coming. I knew that smile wouldn't last.

I looked into her eyes...my eyes — and for a moment, the world around us faded. I saw innocence there...wonder, and a kind of happiness I couldn't remember ever feeling again until now.

"Hi," I let go of her hand to twirl my finger around one of her uneven braids. "What's your name?" I asked carefully, though I already knew.

The girl's eyes sparkled as if she had been waiting for someone to ask for her name all along.

"My name is Violet Hastings," she said proudly. "And I turned eight years old two months ago! My dad's name is Greg, and my mom's name is Claire, but she isn't here right now!"

Too much information...

She paused for half a second, then continued.

"Oh, and my grandpa is the Alpha of the Bloodrose! He isn't here right now, but he's old, so he'll probably die soon, and then my uncle Fergus will take over."

She gave a firm, confident nod, clearly very pleased with herself. "Do you want to know more?" she asked, giving my hand a slight tug. "Or...Or would you like to be my friend, and play with me...please?"

Was she serious?

Was I serious?



Several chuckles came from behind. I knew it was Trinity, Dylan, Kylan—all three of them. My cheeks flushed instantly.

Did I really just say all that out loud? With no sense of danger, no filter at all? What was even going on in my head back then?

The longer I watched myself, the more torn I felt. Part of me wanted to hug her and tell her to never beg anyone for friendship, and the other part wanted to tell her to stop talking before she got herself in worse.

I guess that was also enough for me to realize that I wasn't much better at this than Dylan. My words were caught in my throat, my chest tightened, and seeing myself like this, so desperate, left me completely speechless.

It was strange. She was right there, I was right there, and yet it felt like looking at someone I had once known but could never truly reach again. If anyone knew how to talk to her, it would have to be me, but I couldn't. This wasn't the same Violet.

"Violet..."

The voice made both of us turn. I glanced over my shoulder at Kylan, but little Violet did the same. He wasn't talking to me...his eyes were fixed on her.

"Yes?"

Kylan took a slow breath, clearly unsure of how to handle a child version of me. "Don't go running your mouth to people you don't know," he said, his tone as firm as possible. "Not everyone has good intentions... you need to use your brains and stop trusting everyone. It'll get you hurt."

I suppose the scolding wasn't meant for me, but I still winced because it



felt like it did. Dylan groaned beside him. "Shouldn't have done that," he muttered.

And I knew why he'd said that...

Little Violet blinked, her eyes widening before they started to glisten. I could see the tears building and slowly began to count down the seconds.

There might've been some missing pieces, but throughout my childhood, my sensitive heart had always remained. I remembered this feeling...How I used to cry over the smallest things.

I had always been sensitive, easily hurt, even when no one meant to. That was also the thing that scared me the most when Fergus told me he would take care of me after my parents passed. Living with the uncle who had always been cold, and whose voice alone could make me shrink.

Her lips began to tremble, and I felt my own throat tighten in sympathy.

Kylan's eyes darted toward me in panic, silently begging for help. Or maybe he felt guilty for making 'me' cry, I wasn't sure.

I could only shrug helplessly, and before either of us could say anything, Trinity stepped forward and scooped the little girl into her arms. "Oh no, no, no," she said softly, rocking her gently. "Don't cry, please don't cry!"

Little Violet let out a single sniff against her shoulder.

"We're not bad people," Trinity cooed, still rocking her. "We're your friends!"

Little Violet wiped her eyes. "Really?" She looked up. I just couldn't believe that was me. It wasn't as if I was five or anything, but eight...so why was I like that?



A breath escaped my lips. It probably wasn't good to think like that because at the end of the day, I was still a child, right? And I was still as sensitive at eighteen, but I just didn't like seeing myself cry. It felt... embarrassing?

"Congrats. You're worse than Dylan," Trinity glared at Kylan. "I'll do the talking."

He let out a grunt and turned his head the other way. I reached out and brushed my fingers along his arm.

"So, what do you want to play?" she then asked Little Violet.

Her face lit up again, the tears drying almost instantly. "We can go to my home and play a game!" she said eagerly. Then she leaned forward, cupping her hand beside her mouth as she lowered her voice to a whisper. "But I can't tell you what game...or else he'll hear us."

He?

Who is he?

The way she said it made me believe that something was seriously off. All four of us exchanged glances, and even Kylan was suddenly alert again.

"Who?" I frowned.

Little Violet looked around as if to make sure no one else was listening, then she leaned closer again, "The shadow."

Her words brought the chills straight to my spine. We all stared at one another, trying to see if anyone had made sense of her words, but they were still so unclear. It would make sense for the shadow to be Baelor, but we just had to hear it from her...my mouth.



"What shadow?" Kylan asked.

Little Violet's lips trembled as she whispered again, "The shadow with those scary eyes —"

"Violet!"

A loud voice filled the area, and my heart skipped immediately. I knew that voice...

"Violet!"

My body stiffened, and I felt a lump rise in my throat. My breath hitched as I heard the voice over and over, closer this time.

"Violet!"

Dad...

I wanted to cry again, just like last time, but I couldn't. Not now. Not when Little Violet had all the answers.

Kylan reached over and took my hand, squeezing tightly. As soon as I looked up at him, his eyes were soft with understanding. The look said everything. Cry if you must, it's okay.

"I'm here, Daddy!" Little Violet called, her voice bright. "With my new friends!"

Then he appeared through the trees, breathless, and with worry written all over his face. His steps quickened until he broke into a sprint, closing the distance in seconds.

He didn't even glance at me, but I felt the chill as he brushed past. My

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eyes followed him as he went straight to Little Violet, pulling her out of Trinity's arms and holding her tight against his chest.

"What did Mom tell you about speaking to strangers?" he scolded gently, his voice trembling with frustration. "How many times do we have to tell you, Violet?"

Well...I really was a piece of work, wasn't I?

"But these aren't strangers, Daddy! I've already felt their hearts, and all four of them are good people!" Little Violet said with a pout, her tone stubborn. "They're my friends!"

She had felt our hearts...

What did she mean by that?

Dad looked up, his eyes meeting mine for the first time. His throat bobbed, and neither of us moved. There was confusion in his gaze, maybe suspicion...or just surprise. Still, something about it felt strange, like he was looking right through me. What if he could sense something familiar, but just couldn't tell what?

It suddenly became harder to breathe, and the only thing holding me together was Kylan's hand, which was still wrapped around mine.

Would he really not recognize me?

Dad tore his eyes away and looked around at the others instead, his expression hardening.

"What is your business here?"