

## Chapter 322

Violet

I could hear Dad's soft mumbling as he made tea in the kitchen, and my younger self begging to help. I didn't need to look to know what was happening next door. Little me was probably standing on her tiptoes, reaching for the counter, handing him the sugar tin with both hands, thinking she was really contributing.

There was nothing I wanted more than to run over and take a closer look, but as we sat around the round table, waiting for our tea, my legs just wouldn't move.

It felt strange because this was my house, yet somehow it wasn't, and I didn't want to intrude.

Everything looked exactly as I remembered it. The walls were lined with family pictures and little hand-painted frames I forced Mom and Dad to put up. The Bloodrose scent of pine was still hard to get rid of, and I could still hear every creak of the wooden floor.

After Mom and Dad passed, I hadn't set foot here again. No one did, and now the place was covered in green, with plants crawling up the walls, and grass growing where the path used to be.

Fergus had moved me into the larger house down the lake right away, and I always say that's the place I grew up in, but this...this was home.

This was everything I lost...

"Hey."

Kylan placed his hand on top of mine and caressed my knuckles. As I



looked at him, he leaned his head closer, brushing his mouth against my ear.

"If you want to go back," he whispered. "all you have to do is cry."

Cry...

It's not only all I had to do, but also all I wanted to do.

I smiled faintly. "You don't mean that," I whispered back, although I appreciated the gesture.

He shrugged. "It doesn't matter what I want," Kylan muttered. "And please don't tell me not to protect you. I just don't want to see you like this."

And yet, he knew as well as I did that we were in desperate need of these answers. There was so much more going on, and this wasn't the end of it. If it were, I would've remembered this day, and so would Dylan. All the signs led to something or someone taking these memories away from us, and there had to be a reason for that.

Trinity sighed beside me, looking around. "I think I can understand why the two of you love home so much," she said, smiling. "It's really peaceful here, and it just feels right."

"You think?" Kylan commented. He hadn't made it much of a secret that he wasn't really impressed by the 'swamps' and I wouldn't force him to.

"Yes, I think so," Trinity told him. "I was worried I would have a hard time adjusting here, but I think I could actually do it."

Dylan's lips tugged into a soft smile. "We will have a peaceful life here."



He reached over, gently tucking a curl behind her ear. "But why were you flirting with my uncle?" He lowered his voice. "That's Violet's dad."

The table burst into laughter, while Dylan kept a straight face.

"I was not flirting with your uncle," Trinity hissed, slapping his arm.

Dylan rolled back his eyes. "Can I just say you have the most beautiful eyes?"

Trinity crossed her arms. "Well, did I lie?" she protested. "His eyes are pretty—"

Before she could finish her sentence, the door burst open and the energy in the room changed. We all turned toward the sound, and then it went quiet.

A boy stood in the doorway, not much older than little me, with a bag slung over his shoulder.

His bright, but curious, eyes scanned the room until they landed on us.

"No way..." Trinity whispered.

Kylan let out a low, startled chuckle, and beside me, I could hear Dylan swallow hard. Why? Because the boy standing in the doorway...was him.

I looked at the boy for a moment, thinking about where the time had gone. His stance was still as confident, hair somewhere between a very light brown and dark blond. Nobody was ever quite sure because the shade used to change with every season, and still did.

His eyes suddenly widened. "Uncle Greg!"



"Dylan!" A voice called back.

It wasn't Dad, but me. I heard my own voice, my own laughter, and then two short legs dashed across the room before the younger me ran into my cousin's arms.

Dylan...younger Dylan, smiled. He seemed unbothered, a bit annoyed, but there was a smile.

I spun my head to look at Dylan and Trinity. Dylan stared, frozen in disbelief. But Trinity had a ridiculous grin plastered on her face.

"Keep the interaction to a minimum," Dylan muttered under his breath, glaring at her. "I was a bit more...quick-thinking than Violet."

What?

"Hey, Ugly," Little Dylan greeted with a grin. His brows furrowed in that same stubborn way it still did whenever he made one of his stupid jokes. "Where's your dad?"

"Making us tea," little me answered proudly.

"And who are these people?" he asked, nodding toward us.

"Oh, these are just our new friends!" she said with a quick, dismissive wave of her hand.

Little Dylan was not impressed. "Do your friends have names?"

"What does it matter?" The little girl shot back. "You don't even bother using my name," she snarled, pointing to herself.

I couldn't hide my smile as I watched them, and a few more memories



began to return. Before everything happened, Dylan never treated me badly, but he sure did love teasing me. He had many different names for me, and Violet wasn't one of them.

It never bothered me because I was always looking forward to what kind of creative name he would come up with next.

'Ugly'

'Pipsqueak'

'Clumsy'

'Nerd'

'Scatterbrain'

'Bumblebee'

'Ducky'

There were so many...

"Hey, baby Fergus!"

Dad came back into the room, balancing a stack of cups in one hand and a steaming teapot in the other. His smile was welcoming, and I remembered that Dad was indeed always happy to see him. "What are you doing here?"

Little Dylan tried to nudge the little girl aside to make his way over, but she clung to his arm like glue and looked up to him. He just responded with an unbothered sigh and swung the bag off his shoulder before placing it on the table.



"Mom told me to drop these off for Violet."

"Blueberries!" I watched little me gasp dramatically, opening the bag. "How did Aunt Sonya know I love blueberries?"

The little boy rolled his eyes. "Because you keep telling everyone your business, Blabberbee," he retorted. "Half the pack knows you hate strawberries."

Little Dylan pulled out a chair and glared at our group again. "Anyway. Since I'm here, I'll join you for tea," he announced. He sat down like he owned the place, carrying all the confidence in the world.

His elbows were on the table, chin lifted, and eyes still scanning.

Watching him like that...it almost made me laugh. Dylan had toned it down a bit these days, but even back then, Dylan had always been Dylan.

The young boy flicked his eyes toward Kylan, scanning him from head to toe, even when he couldn't see his bottom. He eyed him with a kind of judgement only he could pull off without shame. "Lycan?" he asked bluntly.

Kylan gave a small nod. The boy wasn't finished yet and kept glancing around the table, studying all of us. His brows furrowed. "All of you?"

Kylan couldn't hide an amused chuckle, and I wasn't surprised. Of course, he found this funny because he could probably not only recognize Dylan, but also a younger version of himself. I bet he was like that, too.

"You're as sharp as your uncle," Kylan acknowledged.

Little Dylan tilted his head. "It's got nothing to do with being sharp," he spat. "You just have that look in your eyes...the one that says you think



you're better than everyone else."

Kylan scoffed under his breath, his lips twitching.

Greg laughed awkwardly, scratching the back of his neck. "Now, now, Dylan—"

But little Dylan was still going and had already turned his attention back to us. "Where are you all from?"

"Aevanor," Kylan answered instantly.

The boy squinted his eyes. "You three look like you're from the common lands," he observed. "But you—" he pointed at Kylan "—you look Lyperian."

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