



## Chapter 324

### Violet

The walls were painted lavender, covered in hand-drawn flowers and stars I had made with Mom and Dad's help, and paper butterflies hung from the ceiling. I told Dad I wanted them, and he had hung them not even twenty-four hours later because that was Greg.

There were far too many toys, but the highlight was the dollhouse in the corner. The one Dad had also built by hand. He had even decorated it down to the ribbons, the tiny wooden furniture, and even my name, which was carved into the roof.

It was all memories I had tried so hard to forget. Not me, but all of us. That's why my chest ached as I took it all in.

"You're doing great," Kylan whispered, his hand pressing gently against my back. I took a shaky breath and turned toward him. Anything to avoid facing these memories, no matter how good it felt to be here.

"I don't know how much longer I can do this," I whispered back. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Kylan reassured with a smile. "I couldn't have done what you're doing right now. You're doing great."

He stepped toward the little version of me, who was kneeling by the dollhouse with her back turned. I heard myself hum as I was busy rearranging the furniture. "This is Poppy. My favorite doll."

A small breath escaped me.

Poppy...



"Didn't you want to show us your room?" Kylan asked softly as he knelt beside her.

"Yes," the little girl responded. "And you've seen it, right?"

A flustered chuckle came from Kylan as he patted her head. "Aren't you an odd one?" he mumbled. "Are we not getting a room tour?"

"Room tour?" a voice chirped. She shifted her gaze toward me. "I don't think this friend needs a tour."

What does she mean?

"An odd one," Kylan muttered again. "What are you doing with this dollhouse?"

Little Violet's eyes were fixed on the dollhouse again. "Nothing," she smiled.

"What about that game you wanted to play with us?"

She hummed, moving a tiny doll from one room to the next. "I don't feel like playing a game anymore," she said. "But we can play dollhouse if you want?"

She batted her lashes at Kylan, waiting for an answer. "W-What?" Kylan said, startled. "Why?"

His voice was gentle, but the impatience slipped through. He was getting annoyed by her...or me.

"Because you said I shouldn't run my mouth to everyone and that I should use my brains," she replied sweetly, still smiling like she hadn't just called him out. "I guess I'm just following your advice."



Kylan exhaled, his head turning slightly toward me. What could I do about it? Little Violet was right. He did tell her to watch her words.

"She said Poppy is her favorite doll, right?"

"Yes," I frowned.

Why?

"Hey, kid," Kylan exhaled, reaching out to pat her head. "I'm sorry for what I'm going to do right now," he said. "But we're in a bit of a rush here."

My stomach filled with unease. "What are you going to do?"

He didn't look at me. "Listen, Violet," he began.

Little Violet looked up at him, blinking. "I'm going to ask you a few questions—"

"Stop," I cut in, moving quickly. I didn't know what he was planning, but if it involved breaking Poppy in half, I didn't want to hear it, and neither did she. I pushed him aside and dropped to my knees in front of her.

Little Violet blinked between us, startled. Today's Violet would've definitely needed a kick in the butt, but this Violet was different. At this age, I had been unpredictable and emotional. One wrong word, one flicker of fear, and I would've burst into tears, and if that happened...we would be thrown out before getting anything useful.

I promised Dad not to hurt her...

I didn't even know what I was doing, but it was as if my hand moved on its own as I rested my palm against her forehead. Little Violet took one



breath, and then her eyes went glossy as if she was in some sort of trance.

No, no, no...

What was this?

Just as I was about to pull back my hand, Kylan wrapped his hand around my wrist. "Wait, don't," he whispered, chuckling. "Did you do that?"

I looked from Kylan's wrist to my hand that was still pressed against the younger girl's forehead. "I don't know," I breathed. "I don't know..."

"Ask her," Kylan urged softly. "Ask her about the raven."

I didn't have much to lose, so I just went for it and leaned closer, thinking it probably wouldn't be of that much help anyway. "A raven visits you in your dreams, right?"

Little Violet's lips parted. "Yes..."

My eyes darted toward Kylan, who appeared to be just as shocked. I still had no idea what I was doing, or how...my eyes weren't even glowing, and yet...she was answering me. It was working.

"Does the raven have a name?"

Her small body began to tremble. "I'm not allowed to say," she whispered. "I'm not supposed to run my mouth and have to use my brains."

I glared at Kylan, who rolled his shoulders.

"But I really want to!" she continued.

I leaned closer, brushing my thumb over her forehead. "You can tell

me," I encouraged. "You can trust me."

"Thorne..." her voice trembled. "Thorne...Thorne..."

Kylan and I shared a glance. The sound of that name alone made the air in the room feel colder than it already was.

"Do Mommy and Daddy know?"

"No, not everything," little me shook her head. "I don't want to worry them because I know they'll worry if I tell them what he wants. They'll want to help me, and they'll die, and I'm scared!"

"And what is it that Thorne wants?"

Her breath hitched as she spoke. "He needs a vessel for his master."

I closed my eyes, breathing through the chill that ran down my spine. The words sounded terrifying, but this wasn't new information. We already knew that much, but we needed more.

"Don't push yourself," Kylan said. I couldn't tell which version of me he was talking to, but I supposed both, since this was difficult for both of us.

"Is Thorne a bird or a person?" I asked further.

Her answer came in a trembling whisper. "Not just a bird," she swallowed. "A monster, a beast, a wolf...whatever he decides to be..."

My stomach twisted.

"Can Thorne shift into...all of that?"

"Yes," she said quickly, "only during the full moon when his master has his vessel, but not every full moon. It changes every year."



My brows furrowed. "Not every full moon?"

I turned my gaze to Kylan, then turned back to Little Violet.

Little Violet's eyes flickered. "I think it's the seventh moon this year..."

"July..." Kylan spoke. "When is your birthday?" he asked me.

I gulped. "March 16th..."

And if we were two months past my eighth birthday in this timeline, it meant whatever was going to happen would almost take place. Was this how Mom and Dad lost their lives?

We already knew Baelor needed a vessel, but what vessel did Baelor find in the past for Thorne to shift into whatever he did?

"Ask her about our time," Kylan urged.

"A-And what about in eleven years?" I stumbled over my words.

"Eleven years?" she mumbled, then began counting softly under her breath. "One, two, three, four...five..."

Kylan leaned forward. "What is she doing?"

"I don't know," I whispered back.

She winced softly, her face uneasy. "March?"

My heart nearly beat out of my chest. March. The next full moon would be few days from now, which meant...

"Kaelis's first howl..." Kylan whispered to himself.



I felt my head spin. Was it all connected? Kayden being reborn as Kian, the coming full moon, Thorne...

"Thorne is recharging," little Violet said suddenly. "Preparing for something big."

"What is it?"

"I don't know," she drew in a sharp breath. "But it is big. His Mommy and Daddy have big plans for him."

"What is it?" I pressed, my voice sharper than before.

"Maybe we should chill for now," Kylan tried. "You're scaring...you."

I was scaring myself?

He was just about to threaten me with my favorite doll.

I hesitated for a moment, looking at the small, trembling body in front of me. But I couldn't stop. Not now...

I knew my limit and knew I could take just a bit more.

"Who is Thorne's Daddy, Violet? Is it Baelor?" I questioned. "And who is his Mommy?"

This time, her body began to shake violently. Kylan grabbed her shoulder, steadying her. "I'm not allowed—"

"You love talking," I blurted, losing my patience. "Speak!"

Her head lifted slowly, and she looked straight ahead. "Thorne's Mommy and Daddy are so mean."



My breath caught as I waited for her to continue.

"Thorne's Mommy pushed him out the Veil so he can play with me," she whispered. "But two grandpas, and a friend stopped by once, and they did something...to make sure evil could never find me."

"What friend, and what old man?"

"I don't know their names, but they wore capes, and my friend brought me candy."

My mind immediately went to the two grandpas I knew wearing capes.

"Was his name Varius?" I asked her.

"I don't know," she replied.

"Aelius?" I pressed.

"I don't know."

"Can you tell me your friend's name?"

"I don't know!"

"Who is Thorne's mommy?" I asked again, my voice unsteady. "Do you know that? I need a name, Violet."

"I'm scared!" Little Violet whimpered. Kylan's hand was still on her shoulder as he shook his head. "You don't have to be scared, Violet, because you will always be protected," he said to her. "You do not ever have to fear."

As soon as those words came from his mouth, Little Violet took several breaths. My eyes met Kylan's, and for a moment, I didn't know what to



say.

It wasn't just what he said, but how he'd said it. It was so calm, and protective, and I believed every word of it. He had calmed both of us. Me, and the little girl I used to be.

Words like that didn't come easy for Kylan, and that's how I always knew he meant them. I threw him a soft smile, wondering if he had any idea what those words meant to me, and how deeply he affected me sometimes.

"Grandma Gloria..." Little Violet's lips quivered. "Her name is Grandma Gloria."

My smile faded instantly. Kylan and I shared an uncomfortable look, not saying a word, but we both knew. That name changed everything. I could hear my pulse pounding in my ears as the name echoed over and over in my mind...Gloria.

Grandma Gloria...

If my grandmother, Gloria, was part of this, then whatever we had just uncovered was far darker than either of us could imagine.



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