



Chapter 325

Violet

"Violet," I said softly, leaning closer. Kylan's eyes were locked on mine, but he still held on to Little Violet. "You said Thorne is preparing...right? Do you know what for? What are Baelor and Gloria planning?"

Little Violet blinked slowly, her breathing uneven. "Baelor..." she whispered. "He wants to open the gate."

"The gate?" Kylan repeated. "What gate?"

"The one Mommy talks about when she thinks I'm asleep," she said. "The ghost with the black hair keeps the monsters in. I see her too sometimes when I pretend to sleep, but she is not scary," she rambled. "She always touches my hair and sings to me, b-but I haven't seen her lately."

The girl with the black hair...

That had to be Adelaide.

Kylan met my gaze, and I felt a flutter in my chest. There were just so many things I couldn't remember anymore, such as Adelaide showing herself to me before. That wasn't something I ever wanted to forget.

"If you're not going to cry, you need to focus, Violet," Kylan reminded me. "Try to ask her about Baelor, but don't push her."

I gave him a nod, turning my attention back on little me. "And Thorne's daddy?" I asked. "Do you see him?"

"No." She shook her head. "But I can feel his shadow. Thorne says that



when the gate opens, his mommy and daddy will be free, and he'll be free ...and I'll be free too."

I looked at Kylan, my heart beating faster. "Free from what?" I asked the little girl. But she didn't answer. She only stared ahead, this time not even making as much as a blink.

"Free from what, Violet?"

Her small face shifted as a deep sigh escaped from her lips. "Free from myself," she breathed. "I'll offer myself and my friends to Baelor so everyone we love will be safe."

Everything about that shattered my heart. Because she wasn't scared when she said it, but almost sounded proud, like she didn't know any better.

"What friends, Violet?"

"Thorne said he also has other worthy friends to play games with," she answered, "but his daddy likes me the most."

My throat felt dry, and for a moment I didn't know what to ask anymore. What was she even talking about?

"Could that be the game?" Kylan's voice cut through the silence.

My lips parted. "Is that the game you wanted to play with us, Violet? The game Thorne taught you?"

"Yes," Little Violet nodded eagerly. "The two of your hearts are so good and so perfect to feed darkness, it makes me happy!" She began to giggle. "Thorne says one of my friends has one of the darkest souls he has ever seen, but his daddy is willing to try all options. The more



options, the better. That's what his daddy always says."

My heart stumbled. None of this made sense. She feared Thorne, but she also seemed to like him. It was as if his darkness had confused her little mind, because this wasn't her. This wasn't us.

"What are the names of the other friends, Violet?" I asked in a rush. I just wanted an explanation for all of this. Was I really evil?

"Violet!"

A voice called from below. It was Dad.

I shook Little Violet gently. "Come on, give me the names!"

"Please don't hurt me!" she whimpered, trembling.

"Violet!" Kylan warned. "Don't push her."

"I'm not—" I began, but my breath caught as Dad's voice came again.

"Violet!" he called out. "Everything okay up there?"

Little Violet's eyes darted. "Kylan," she whispered nervously, and it seemed as if my feet had turned to stone. I didn't dare look at Kylan. "And Kayden...but they'll be stronger as Kian. They are Kian."

I heard Dad's footsteps on the stairs. I knew it was him because he would always give me just enough time so I could hide whatever mischief I was up to, so Mom wouldn't scold me.

Kylan moved quickly. He pushed me back gently, and then Little Violet's trance broke. It didn't take long before a bright smile spread across her face. It was like it had been there all along.



Someone moved behind me, and I knew it was Dad. "A 'yes, Dad' would've been great, princess," he let out an exhausted breath.

I felt this warm feeling in my heart again as I turned to look at him, and stared straight into his soft eyes.

He shot me and Kylan a kind smile as Little Violet ran to him and hugged his legs. "I'm sorry. I didn't hear you, Daddy!" she beamed. "We were just playing dollhouse!"

While she gushed, my head spun with several haunted thoughts. Gloria, Thorne, Baelor, Kylan, Kayden, Kian...

It was all too much.

"I was just going to ask your friends if they'd like to stay for lunch," Dad said. His smile was warm, so warm that I just didn't have the heart to decline. How amazing would that be? Lunch with Dad...

Little me looked up at him eagerly. "What are you making, Daddy?"

He squinted his eyes slightly as his gaze flicked from her to me. "I was thinking...crispy chicken sandwiches," he said slowly.

My chest ached, but I didn't know whether it was from happiness or sadness. I couldn't move, couldn't breathe, and even as Little Violet cheered, spinning around in small circles, Dad's eyes hadn't left mine. Not once.

If anything, the small curve of his lips told me everything I didn't want to know.

He knew...



He recognized me...

Would he have recognized Dylan as well?

The crispy chicken sandwich was just a test. Who was I even trying to fool? Dad had raised me, tucked me in, brushed my hair, and stayed with me whenever I was sick. I was his everything. Of course, he would know. Of course, he would see through me.

"So," he said softly, still smiling, "will you stay?"

My mouth went dry. "That is...I..."

A firm hand pressed gently against my back. It was Kylan. "Thank you for your offer," he said, his tone polite but guarded, "but we've got what we came for, and we should get going."

Dad responded with a warm chuckle, while little me was already pouting. "Aw, can't they stay, Daddy?" The little girl tugged his arm. "Just for sandwiches?"

"We'll have to invite them another time, princess," Dad said, still smiling, but now his focus was on Kylan.

"So, the two of you must be mates then."

Kylan's arm tightened around me, pulling me closer. My heart skipped as the air between them seemed to change, and suddenly it seemed tense. I knew what Kylan's issue was, and it wasn't with Dad, but what we had learned about the box.

He feared I might get too attached to the past and be unable to return to the present. Dad's smile softened as his gaze shifted to me. "Isn't our Moon Goddess incredible?" he said, sounding almost amazed. "She



works in mysterious ways that none of us can understand, yet she always has a reason."

I looked up at Kylan with a curious glance. The muscle in his jaw twitched as he looked at Dad.

"She is incredible," I managed to whisper, though I wasn't sure if I believed it in the moment. If she were that incredible, then why was she putting me through all of this?

"Daddy," little me said suddenly, "can I go feed the mommy squirrel and her children after lunch again?"

"Sure, princess," Dad murmured, moving her behind him. Little Violet was glued to his legs as he took several steps forward until he stood in front of Kylan.

The two looked at each other for a while before Dad finally started speaking. "You remind me of an old friend of mine," he said. "Or at least ...the version he used to be."

Would he mean Elyx?

"Really?" Kylan asked, his tone oblivious.

"Yes," Dad chuckled. "I used to watch his boy sometimes when he was still in diapers. I haven't seen him in years, but he had this look in his eyes..." He paused, searching Kylan's face. "...a look I knew would never change, and I'd recognize anywhere."

I felt a squeeze in my chest at the way he said it. It didn't sound like a coincidence. He knew exactly what he was saying and was dropping very clear hints that he knew who we were. Not only me, but Kylan as well.

Commented [Ma1]:



"I don't know what you're talking about, but we should really go now,"
Kylan excused us with a soft smile. He wrapped his hand around mine
and began to lead me toward the stairs.

Before we could pass, Dad reached out and placed a hand on Kylan's
shoulder. Kylan froze instantly, his gaze snapping toward him. His eyes
were hard, cold, but protective.

Dad's eyes, on the other hand, were soft. Sad, almost. "Did you really
find what you were looking for?" he asked quietly. "Or do you need more
answers?"

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