

Chapter 334

Violet

I stood, a loud scraping noise filling the room as I pushed my chair back.

What were they even doing here?

Was Kylan here to take me away again like he always did?

A smile appeared as I took one step toward him, but before I could even take another one, three bodies rushed past me. Trinity, Sora, and Lian all threw themselves onto Nate at once, nearly knocking Kylan off balance.

Nate let out a warm, soft laugh, while Kylan, who was a bit less impressed, stumbled a little to the side with a scoff. I covered my mouth and chuckled at him.

Kaelis, who had been watching everything unfold, lifted a brow. "Hah... interesting," she muttered.

"What is?" I asked.

But I didn't get a reply. Kylan had already stepped in and slid his arm around my waist. He pulled me so close I had to force myself to let out a small breath.

He hummed before kissing a hard kiss against my cheek, making me chuckle. "Has she been bothering you?" he asked, narrowing his eyes at his sister.

Kaelis snorted in dismay. "That's funny. I just asked her the same."

"What? If you're bothering her?" Kylan challenged back.

Kaelis pressed her lips together, giving up. I bit my cheek to keep myself from laughing and gave Kylan's chest a light slap. "Be nice to your sister," I hissed.

But Kaelis wasn't even paying attention anymore. Her arms were crossed, and her eyes were back on Nate like she was trying to figure out why all three girls were stuck to him like honey.

She bit her lips, then sighed. "Nate seems to be...really popular, huh?"

"Why would you care?" Kylan asked bluntly.

If Kylan's hands hadn't been wrapped so tightly around my waist and I could actually use my hand, I would've facepalmed. He really had no clue, and I never bothered telling him either, because apparently, the thought of his sister liking his best friend just wasn't an option to him.

Kaelis took a huge breath, then covered her nerves with a bright smile and flicked her attention back to Kylan.

"I hope you've practiced your dance moves," she said.

"Dance...moves?" Kylan repeated.

"Yes. The brother-sister dance? Kingdom tradition?" Kaelis tipped her head back, groaning. "Trust me, I don't want to do it any more than you do. But I only have one brother—"

"Nineteen," Kylan was quick to correct.

Kaelis shot him a sarcastic, irritated look. "Just try not to step on my toes."

"As long as you don't step on mine," Kylan retorted, using the same tone.

The brother-sister dynamic almost made me want to laugh. The two got under each other's skin...clearly, but at the same time, they kind of tried, no matter what had happened between them. It made me wonder if this was the result of drifting apart from each other or if it had always been like this, even when they used to be close.

"I need Violet for a moment, so this..." Kylan gestured to the dishes on the table. "This food testing thing is over."

Kaelis gasped like she just couldn't accept it. "Says who?" she demanded.

"Me," he said dryly. "With permission from Madam Renata, since you always seem to seek her validation."

Kaelis' face fell instantly.

"And," he added, "Kiora just came back."

At the mention of Kiora's name, her face lit up again. Without another word, she spun around and rushed to the door. Before she exited, she paused, lingering for a moment as her eyes drifted to Nate.

He was still surrounded by Trinity, Sora, and Lian, his attention on them while poor Kaelis waited for his acknowledgment. When she realized she wasn't going to get it, a sad smile touched her lips before she walked out.

I looked up at Kylan. His eyes were squinted as he observed Kaelis until the very last second.

"She seemed a bit off, didn't she?"

I let out a quiet laugh. "You think?"

"Yes," he said. "I guess it's because she feels like the attention has been

taken off of her because they're all surrounding Nate."

I released a deep sigh. He was almost there. Almost... 

"I had overestimated you," I muttered under my breath.

He hummed. "What did you say?"

"Nothing."

I rose onto my tiptoes to give him a peck on the lips, but he pulled me closer and deepened it. Flustered, I pushed him away, because while he probably didn't care that there were others in the room, I did.

"Do I disgust you?" Kylan joked, chuckling under his breath.

"Yes," I played along. "What are you doing here?"

The vibe had shifted, and his expression changed. It was serious, heavy, and it left an uncomfortable lump in my throat.

"Is it about the First Howl?" I whispered. "Did you find something out —"

"It isn't that," he cut in.

I gulped. "The mistress thing? Are you here to tell me about what happens during the royal ceremony, because if that's it, Kaelis already told me —"

"No," he said. "Nate thinks Jack knows that he's involved with... whatever happened to —"

My mouth closed on its own. Jack knew something had happened to Chrystal...

"And Nate is planning on telling him the truth," Kylan continued. "All of it, including—"

"That I'm a witch?" I finished for him.

Kylan nodded and looked down for a second before meeting my eyes again. "Only if you're okay with it, of course," he said. "True has been asking questions, and we can only focus on so much. There's too much we still need to figure out with too little time. So I agree with him..."

I let Kylan's words sink in.

Jack was a clever man, and I had already kept in mind that someone like him would eventually notice something about Nate's involvement. Even if he was one of the king's people, I didn't believe Beta Jack was a bad man.

Nate trusted him enough to tell him...

Kylan trusted him enough to stand beside him...

Beta Jack had always shown kindness to me, even when it had become clear that his daughter wouldn't be wearing a crown. Based on everything I had heard, everyone else seemed to agree. He was a fair man.

I looked up at Kylan and said the words clearly.

"He should tell him."

Kylan didn't look even a little surprised. He probably already knew I'd agree, but he wanted to make sure I got to choose.

A small smile tugged at his lips as he nodded. "Nate still wants to talk to you himself."

Of course he would've. I expected nothing more from Nate, who had always been so appreciative of my feelings and our friendship, even when I didn't deserve him.

My attention was back on my friends. Trinity was pretending to kiss Nate's cheek without actually touching him, and said something about how she would actually do it if she wasn't wearing any lip gloss, while Sora and Lian laughed at her.

My heart softened.

They all seemed to be fine with each other, and it was because this had been the right moment and the right approach. Yes, they didn't show up at his doorstep to explain themselves, and that was because they didn't have to.

I was sure that's the last thing Nate wanted. Trinity had been right to send Dylan toward the right path while not going herself. Hopefully, from now on, we can all build a stronger friendship.

I exhaled slowly.

"I should probably tell them too," I whispered. "Since what we've done involves them as well."

Minus Kayden...

Just thinking his name was enough to send a chill through me. I forced it away, though I wasn't able to do it fully.

"What's on your mind?" Kylan asked.

I looked up at him.

"I trust them."

He raised a brow. "Even the one with the—" he lifted both hands and made a little bob around his shoulders.

"Sora?" I chuckled. "Yes, including her."

"Okay." Kylan raised his brows. I knew he wasn't the biggest fan of her, but I really did trust her. All of them.

"They must have a lot of questions, even Nate," I said. "But none of them pushed me for answers, even though they do deserve to know the truth, all of it. Same as Trin and Dylan."

Kylan narrowed his eyes slightly. "What are you saying?"

I looked him straight in the eyes. "I'm saying we should all talk...and I'll tell them everything. All of it."

His expression grew more focused.

"Something tells me..." I whispered, "Things are about to get harder, and we're going to need all the help we can get."

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