



Chapter 339

Kylan

"You must've gone through a lot," Jack spoke, his voice hoarse. "And I am so sorry no one was there for you. Both of you."

A lump formed in my throat, and it took a few seconds for me to react, mainly because I didn't know what to do with something like this. From Violet? Sure. But not with a figure like Jack.

I took a breath, getting used to the feeling, and then I finally gave in. I held him back.

Something cracked open in my chest, and it was a feeling I didn't even know was there. I guess there was still this empty spot waiting to hear those words, and they came from Jack.

"You are a good kid, Kylan. You've always been, and nothing will ever change that."

He patted my back firmly. "I will protect you," he said. "You, Nate... Violet. I will keep this between us, and I will do anything I can to keep you all safe. You have my word."

A sharp breath tore from me before I could stop it. I didn't know what to feel or where to put feelings like that.

Jack pulled back just enough to look me in the eye. "I am not your father," he said, before releasing a scoff. "And thank the Goddess. I do not want to be that man."

It was the first time I'd ever heard him speak that openly...that honestly, about the king whom he had always protected.



"But you deserve the best, and you have always felt like a son to me... someone I want to take care of," Jack continued, his eyes soft. "And the same way I wasn't there for Nate...to know that you were hurting, and I had no idea...it breaks my heart."

I stared at him, the words still trying to settle in my mind.

"You've always been there for me, Jack." A small smile tugged at my lips. His brows lifted, surprised.

He probably didn't understand what I meant. But it was he who cleaned my scraped knees whenever I fell, and scolded me while begging me to be careful. He who wiped my tears when I tried to hide them because the king said a Lythoria must never cry. 1

Him...and Mom. But she wasn't here now.

And that's when it hit me.

His words were kind...so kind, and I didn't want to seem ungrateful. I loved Jack like a father. I didn't want to lose him. But this wasn't supposed to be his burden. More than anything, it was the queen who should have been saying these things. The king...there was no hope left there, but there was someone. Hearing those words from Jack only made me ache for the idea of a family again. People you're supposed to be able to count on, no matter what.

"I'm sorry it had to be this way," I apologized, holding his gaze.

Jack's throat bobbed. "Me too." His hand squeezed my shoulder once. "I'm sorry it had to be this way."

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After we went our separate ways, and the two left for the Wymnsbane estate, I made my way back to the palace.

As I walked, the ring was still clenched in my fist, so tightly I was sure it would leave a mark. I had no plans of letting it out of my hand until it would find its way back on Violet's finger, because if we had to believe Little Violet's words, she would need it soon.

Perhaps to fight against Baelor...

That was all I could think of now. Getting ready to face whatever it was we were supposed to face. Getting answers and closing that chapter before it would even get the chance to cross into this world.

Arriving at the palace, I headed straight to my room and pushed open the door, half-expecting to find Violet still awake. Unfortunately, she hadn't slept much since that shadow, even though I really wanted her to.

"You're back!" Violet gasped, her eyes wide. She wasted no time, scrambling out of bed and throwing her arms around me before the door even shut behind me. A smile reached my lips, one I couldn't fight if I tried.

The most amazing feeling was the feeling of being cared for, and the way her eyes lit up whenever she saw me was something that had gotten to me ever since Starlight.

"You're awake," I chuckled, wrapping my arms around her. I sank my nose into her hair, inhaling the scent of strawberries, and pressed a kiss to the top of her head. I knew she wasn't the biggest fan of strawberries, but I was, and she reminded me of one, and it wasn't just her scent. It was about much more than that. It was the way she could be both sweet and sharp at once, like she was made to keep me on my toes, but I could take



it. I could take it from her.

"How did it go?" she asked, pulling back to look up at me. Her blue eyes were filled with curiosity. "How are you doing? How is Nate doing? Does Jack want to kill me?"

A laugh burst out of me at the last part, and her serious expression only made it worse. "No," I told her. "You get to live another day, Pup."

She narrowed her eyes. "Does he want to kill you?"

Another laugh slipped out of me, and I shook my head. "No."

I grabbed her hand and guided her back to sit on the edge of the bed.

"Well, how did it go?" she asked again, tilting her chin to look at me.

"It went great," I told her. "Better than I expected. Jack...he handled it the way only he can."

And I meant it.

Jack was one of a kind, and exactly the kind of Beta the king needed. I wasn't even sure if there would really be a Lyperia to lead much longer if it wasn't for him.

Violet nodded slowly, letting out a relieved breath. "That's good," she said. "I wish I could just...go up to him and give him a hug, but considering the circumstances..."

I gently opened my hand, hoping to prevent her from overthinking and feeling bad, revealing the ring. It seemed to have worked.

"Our ring!"



She snatched it gently and held it close with the kind of smile that brought the warmest feeling to my chest. "How did you find it?"

I hummed, thinking of the best way to explain. "A strange light led me to it," I said, still trying to understand it myself. Whatever happened, the ring had returned, and that's what we wanted.

Violet let out a soft laugh. "So Little Violet was right..."

"We'll probably need to get it resized," I said. "So it doesn't slip again."

Violet's smile faltered, and her eyes blinked like she had been holding something in.

"What is it?"

She looked up at me with those unsure, soft eyes. "I just...I've been thinking about Adelaide, that little girl, the things she could probably do, the things I could do, and I think...I know I'm ready to find myself without the ring," she swallowed. "I just want to try, but I'll still keep it with me, obviously!"

She waited, watching me anxiously. I believed her fully and knew she could do it, but it was still hard to hear. Because what if something went wrong, and she would blame herself for it?

I guess that's the same worries I had with that friend of hers. What if she couldn't trust her, and she would end up blaming herself?

A weak sigh left my lips as I thought of Nate's words earlier. I could trust her. I trust her.

I took a breath. "If you say you're ready...I think that's a good idea."



Violet's smile brightened instantly. "Good," she whispered, fluttering her eyes. "And now—" she tugged my hand hard and pushed me onto the bed. I let out a surprised chuckle as she suddenly climbed over me, straddling my hips.

Her hands went straight to my jacket and shoved it off my shoulders. "I was thinking..." she spoke softly.

My brows lifted, and my hands instinctively found her hips, my fingers tightening just a little. "I don't know what you've been thinking, but I'm just going with the flow."

"Good," she breathed, leaning down. "Because my idea was to start where we left off before you left."

I huffed a soft laugh. "We definitely finished that," I said, my fingers curling at the back of her head to pull her in closer. "But I don't mind starting again."

Violet made the first move, closing the space between us, and pressed her lips against mine. Our mouths met, slow at first, until her tongue slid against mine.

It was this instant relief of finally touching something I had been aching for, even though I had already had it before. I could never get enough of her. I could never get tired of her.

A soft sigh came from her as her hands curled into mine. Every bit of strain I felt from before left my mind, and all I could feel, all I could think about was her.

I wanted her. I wanted her close in a way that left no room for anything else. That's how badly I craved her.



We only broke apart when breathing became impossible to ignore. Our foreheads rested together, and breaths tangled in the small space between us.

"Thank you, by the way," she breathed, cupping my jaw. "For finding our ring? I love you for that. Thank you."

A tight warmth pulled at my chest. I brushed my thumb along her cheek and met her eyes. There was just something about the way she looked at me that made everything alright. Even the things that didn't seem to make sense at the moment, and only she could do that.

"I love you too."



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