

Chapter 343

Violet

The first thing that hit me was the smell.

I recognized it instantly. The damp moss, the muddied earth, the cold air, and when I opened my eyes...it was just as expected.

We were back at the Bloodrose.

Not just that, but it was the exact spot as last time. My body stiffened as I stared ahead, wondering how all of this was even possible. Magic was such a strange thing, yet it was real, and it had led us here.

A small gasp came out as I looked back, and everyone was there. Trinity brushed dirt off her leggings. Dylan looked a little less shaken than before, Lian seemed ready to fight anyone at any moment, Nate lifted a hand to block the bright light, and Kylan...

He stood right beside me before I even processed how he had moved. Our eyes met, and his expression seemed much more calm than the last time.

"I'm fine," I told him before he could ask. I heard a sniff right behind me and turned around just in time to catch Nate lowering his head. I could still see his scrunched face, which he was so obviously trying to hide, and couldn't help but laugh—yes, even in this moment.

"If you cover your nose," I warned playfully, "I'll kill you."

Nate burst into laughter, raising his head. He spread his arms as he walked past us. "I wouldn't dream of it," he said, grinning.

He lifted his chin and took in the surroundings.



"This place is amazing, Violet," he admired. "I can't believe you grew up here."

His words warmed my heart, just like every other thing he would usually say. When it came to the Bloodrose, people usually said the opposite. They said it was too dull, too muddy, too boring.

The Bloodrose wasn't exactly known for romanticizing first impressions, so hearing him say that...

It startled me in the best way.

Trinity stepped forward with a bright smile, nodding at the scenery. "Right? It's beautiful," she said, bumping Dylan's shoulder. "I'm so proud to be the Luna of the Bloodrose someday."

A flush appeared on Dylan's face.

I inhaled slowly. And I was proud that she would be. I loved my home, but if there was something this place needed, it was a bit of Trinity.

My eyes searched for Lian. "What do you think?" I asked. "Do you like it here?"

She looked genuinely flustered, like she hadn't expected to be included. I did it because I appreciated her coming along, and because I knew what it felt like to be the quiet one in a group full of people who had a lot to say.

Her eyes squinted a little as she went into deep thought. "I'm not sure, but I think Sora would've loved it here."

A smile appeared on my lips. Even now, she was thinking of her. It reminded me of my friendship with Trinity and how the two of us had become like one. Lian and Sora were the same kind of pair. Loyal and



interlocked. A bond that couldn't be shaken.

"Do you know who else would love it here?" Kylan cut in. "Baelor, so I suggest we start moving."

That was a classic Kylan response. I couldn't blame him, though. Time was precious. He started walking ahead, and I jogged a few steps to catch up.

"Where are we going?"

"We're finding her," he said. "Or you."

Little Violet...

That was why we were here in the first place.

"We only found her by luck last time," Dylan said behind me. "The swamps are huge, so going to her home makes more sense. Also, it just stopped raining. She's not supposed to be out when it rains."

I felt a smile spread across my face.

He remembered...

Even though we lived in the swamps, Mom and Dad used to panic every time I stepped in a puddle. Whenever I did play in the rain, they would tuck me in bed with soup, herbs, and have the most dramatic faces like the world was ending.

Dylan took the lead up front, then glanced over his shoulder. "Everyone still agreeing to stick to the plan?"

Trinity lifted a brow. "Do you mean the part where we try our absolute



hardest to stop Baelor here, or the part where we threaten Little Violet so her extra eyes will finally show themselves?"

Dylan hummed, "Both."

We kept walking, and my thoughts drifted too loud in my own head. Both ...but what if we weren't able to do either? Sure, I knew all of this was beyond being 'Team Violet' now, and had more to do with Baelor, but what if we failed?

What if I had managed to bring all these people here, only for us to end up like...mom and dad.

I took one wrong step and felt my foot slip.

Before I could hit the mud, a warm hand wrapped around mine and steadied me.

"Oh my..."

My eyes shot up, looking at Kylan. His lips twitched into a teasing smile. "Some things just never change."

An embarrassed breath escaped me. "I suppose not."

I expected him to look away, but he didn't. He kept watching me with those eyes that said, You've changed a little, but please don't change this, and it sent a warm flutter through my heart.

Trinity cleared her throat loudly. "I don't want to pry," she said. "But how did the talk with your dad go, Nate?"

Dylan groaned. "Trin..."



She shrugged. "Only if you want to share!"

Nate laughed quietly. "It's okay, Trin."

He took a breath. "And the talk went...okay. I'm feeling much better. More at peace with everything."

My heart softened at the news. I could definitely tell he was getting there.

Trinity tilted her head. "How much did you tell him?"

Nate cackled. "Enough for him not to completely lose his shit," he mentioned. "So nothing about this."

"And Violet is still here with us and not on Prison Island, so I assume that also went well," Trinity pointed out.

Nate snorted, and I laughed with him. Why did everyone keep talking about Prison Island these days?

"He would've accepted her even if she were a vampire," Nate vouched for Jack. "My dad raised me not to look at people like that. Be kind, treat everyone equally, and all of that."

Trinity pressed a hand to her heart. "I still hate vampires, but that's really beautiful."

Shifters who were accepting of witches were an odd thing, but not completely unheard of. But a shifter of Jack's status being accepting of vampires?

Jack Wyrnsbane really was different...

"We're almost there," Dylan announced.



The words sent a warm shiver down my spine, and I recognized the path in front of me. It was the same walk to the house where Little Violet had invited us the first time. It was the walk to my old home, and every step made something tighten inside me.

It was that awkward, nervous feeling again, like we were intruding. I almost turned around to warn our new 'recruits' that no crying was allowed, but quickly figured that I was the problem.

Nate...

He had already cried an entire lifetime's worth the day he lost his sister.

And Lian? Well, she didn't look like someone who could cry.

Kylan squeezed my hand the way he always did, making me look up at him. "You can do this, and I've got you," he murmured, brushing a strand of hair out of my face. "Always."

My chest warmed. "I know."

I could not let him down.

I couldn't let any of them down.

But even those thoughts didn't stop my mind from spiraling as we reached the door.

How would Dad react this time?

And Little Violet? Had she been waiting on us again?

We reached the door, with Dylan standing in front. He glanced back at each of us like he wanted one last confirmation that we were really doing

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this, and I gave him a firm nod.

Then he turned again and knocked.

Three times.

I held my breath as the door creaked open, and then...it felt as if my heart had suddenly stopped.

Because it wasn't Dad, and it wasn't Little Violet either.

It was a blonde woman with curious blue eyes, and the shocked expression on her face mirrored mine as she stared right back at me. My mouth parted, but no sound came out.

That woman was Mom...



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