

## Chapter 353

Violet

Everything happened all at once.

My eyes were on Nate's back as he shifted first, his bones snapping and reforming with a loud crack before a Lycan pushed out of him with a sharp growl.

Lian followed, pushing out a Lycan with deadly eyes, and then Dylan and Trinity shifted into wolves. It was like they all knew what to do without even thinking about it.

My gaze shifted to the side, and Kylan was next. One second, his eyes were on me, and the next, his bones shifted, body lengthened, and fur tore through.

Valerius came through with a sound so deep it shook my own chest. He wasn't just big...he was massive, towering over everyone in the circle. His fur was pitch black, and his bright, purple eyes glowed like they had been waiting to finally be unleashed.

He had been hungry for it.

He stood on two limbs, rising so high above me that for a moment I wasn't even looking at his face, but just one thick, fur-covered leg. That was how huge he was.

He was terrifying and beautiful at the same time. Too big, too strong, too much...but still Kylan. I could feel it.

When I heard the cries of the ravens get closer, I knew it was my turn to act, and fast.

Don't think, Violet.

Just do it...

I closed my eyes and tried to concentrate, focusing on finding that pull inside my body, but even as I squeezed my eyes tighter, nothing happened. It had been far too long.

'Lumia,' I tried to connect. 'Come on!'

I heard a loud, amused chuckle within me.

'I have been thinking,' she hummed. 'And I don't think I feel like getting involved after all. I don't know if you deserve me.'

She was rebelling. But now was definitely not the moment.

'What? Why?'

'You are a little miss know-it-all,' she said. 'You did not need me, remember?'

I opened my eyes, and my heart raced as the ravens neared closer and closer. 'Lumia, please!' I begged. 'Whatever the issue, we will discuss it later, but please don't bail on me now when I need you the most!'

She scoffed. 'I don't want you to say it. I want you to feel it so you know that you cannot just use me like some tool to switch on whenever things get hard.'

But why now?

Why in the middle of this?

My chest ached. 'Lumia...please. I need you,' I pleaded. 'Not because I

want to use you, but because you're me, and we're in this together.  
Please.'

I felt my breathing grow heavier as I waited for her answer. The ground trembled when Valerius took a single step forward.

Lumia hummed. 'Sorry, I'm busy at the moment, but maybe later. Just use those eyes you love so much, Witchey.'

"W-What?" I spoke out loud.

Before I could think about it too much, another voice entered my head.

'After all these centuries, my Lumia is just as stubborn.'

Valerius...

My breath caught. I couldn't quite explain it, and maybe it was the calmness in his voice, but he sounded so warm and patient. I felt protected just by hearing him.

My heart stopped for a moment as Valerius's huge shadow moved in front of me, blocking out everything else.

I looked up at those purple eyes. His presence should have scared me, but it didn't. This was Valerius...my Valerius, and he would protect me.

The Lycan bent down slowly, like he had all the time in the world. I had only just now noticed the ravens flying at us from every side, but he swatted them away with one swing of his arms, watching them fall to the ground. He was not threatened in the slightest.

Valerius slid one arm under my legs and the other behind my back. Before I could even react to what he was doing, he had already lifted me from the floor, bridal style.

Suddenly, I was high in the air. As I looked up at him, all I could do was stare, and everything else faded. The roars of the others, the ravens, the shadow beast, all of it. I was too mesmerized, shocked, gone...

He was beautiful...

"Wow," I breathed.

Those warm, caring eyes I knew so well looked down at me, only now they were purple. But the effect was the same.

'We need your eyes, my Dove.'

Right, my eyes.

I quickly got back to my senses, pulled myself together, and let the energy flow through my body. I squeezed my eyes shut, and when I opened them again, the glow appeared.

'Good girl.' Valerius praised.

He carried me to Aelius, Varius, and Jason, who stood in a line. Then he lowered me so gently, I could hardly feel my weight hitting the ground.

They gave me a quick look, their eyes glowing like mine, except Jason's. None of them reacted to Valerius's size or presence, not even a little, and simply focused ahead again, observing the situation.

From here, I could finally see everything clearly. Mom and Dad were fighting off ravens near the shield, pushing away every bird that dared come close to the children.

My friends were fighting too. They all leapt into the air, taking down the ravens at once, and they didn't seem to struggle. They were strong, but I knew Baelor was not trying to overpower them. He was wearing them

down, draining every drop of strength until he could reach the shield and take Little Violet.

The large shadow beast, even bigger than Valerius, didn't move and neither did Esther or Baelor or whoever the hell that thing was. They just waited...

What was it planning to do with that shadow beast?

And why were we just standing here?

They needed help. Our help.

I wasn't sure about the shadow beast, but with these eyes, I could at least take down the ravens within seconds. We all could.

I balled my fist as I stepped forward, ready to run straight into the chaos. Just as I was about to take another one, Valerius growled behind me and Aelius stopped me with a hand.

"Don't."

"Not our battle," Aelius scolded, cutting me off.

Not our battle?

I furrowed my brows, ready to lose my cool. "Look," Aelius nodded ahead. I followed his gaze and found Esther staring back at us with a smirk that made my stomach twist. It was like she had all the time in the world.

"You want to learn how to beat Baelor? Then you'll do it my way," Aelius stated. "We need your strength. This is your battle."

My head spun a little, as if my body couldn't decide whether to obey or

just do whatever it felt like doing. There were ravens everywhere, screams, flashes, and yet he made it sound so simple.

Valerius growled behind me. I shifted my eyes to him and saw his were fixed on the beast in the distance.

"They are all exhausting themselves," I whispered, looking at my friends again. "There is no end to the ravens, and if this continues, they will..."

"If that's the fate nature has decided for them, then there is nothing else you can do—" Aelius began, but Varius cut him off.

"Nature rarely traps us without carving another path," Varius stated. "If your friends are really in danger, we will all protect them as if they are our own."

I gave him a surprised nod. He had barely spoken, and the one thing he did say was something that brought me back to the present. That was his way, and it was slightly different from Aelius.

One believed in fate, and the other in bending it.

"Baelor will send the shadow beast soon. I can feel it," Jason called out. "He'll use it to weaken us before the real fight. It will not be easy!"

'My Dove?'

Valerius's voice slipped into my mind. My head snapped back to look up at him. The sight of the thing Kylan referred to as a beast was new, strange even, yet it didn't scare me at all. It felt almost natural, as if it had always been this way.

'Yes?'

"The shadow beast has three weak points. The tail, the eyes, and the horns," Valerius explained. "Do not waste time on anything else. You must go for the kill, or none of you will have the strength left to face Baelor."

I stared at him, stunned. "How do you know that?"

"I know everything, my Dove," he chuckled. "This is not the first time I faced one of Baelor's beasts."

My mouth parted.

What did he mean?

"And you should never have doubted Lumia," he added. "She has more than enough experience."

I felt a soft sigh from Lumia and felt completely lost. How was that even possible?

Before I could ask, Valerius released a roar loud enough to send shivers through me. I whipped my head forward again, snapping my eyes from the giant shadow beast to Esther, who was still waiting and smirking.

"Prepare," Aelius said calmly.

There he goes again...

Only this time there was no countdown.

Esther lifted her hand and pointed forward, just like she had done earlier with the ravens.

The giant shadow beast let out a loud, deep rumble and moved toward us. First slow, then faster and faster, pounding the earth with each step. The

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whole ground shook as it charged straight for us.

Only one thing went through my mind.

Tail, eyes, horns...

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