

Chapter 366

Violet

Nate let out the deepest sigh I had ever heard from him.

It sounded heavy and complicated. I wasn't sure whether he was sighing because he had been waiting for someone to ask him that question without beating around the bush, or because Kylan had overstepped by asking him.

I lifted my head and immediately looked at Kylan, giving him a look.

Why would you bring it up now?

Kylan noticed and darted his eyes away as if he hadn't asked anything. It was almost like a child trying to hide because he knew he had poked something sensitive.

"If you don't want to tell," Kylan muttered. "I understand—"

"The truth is that I'm not ready to stop," Nate said, cutting him off. "I want to stop. I should stop. But I'm not ready to yet."

Kylan and I both lifted a brow at the exact same time, our eyes meeting for a split second before snapping back to him. Nate was actually talking, and it wasn't because of a box. It was because he wanted to.

"What can I do to make you stop?" Kylan asked.

Nate's hand began brushing through my hair again. "Nothing," he said honestly. "I'll only stop when my heart tells me to stop. I can flush everything down, fake all of it, but I'll just go for it again," he admitted. "Because right now, I have no reason to stop."



My heart sank at his words. I knew how much it took for him to admit things like this. That he wasn't perfect.

He wasn't burying them under sarcasm or jokes, and for that reason, hearing him say it out loud made it feel more real. It wasn't his eyes speaking, but his heart.

"I know it's wrong," Nate continued. "I know I'm hurting you both with my actions, and I know you worry about me." His jaw clenched. "And I would never recommend this to someone else. Ever."

The honesty in his voice made me feel sorry for him. I understood where he was coming from, and I respected it, but at the same time, I cared so much I didn't know whether I wanted to hug him or shake him.

Beg him to stop...for us.

For him.

Kylan tilted his head slightly. "A reason," he said.

"Yes," Nate snorted softly. "Just like how you found your reason for being a little less of an asshole, and that reason is Violet." He glanced at Kylan. "Everyone's got...something."

I laughed before I could stop myself. Kylan seemed completely unfazed, even proud, by Nate referring to him as a little less of an asshole.

"So what you're telling me is that you need a mate," Kylan decided.

Nate laughed, rubbing the back of his neck. "No," he said. "That's not exactly what I meant—"

"Because I can help you find one," Kylan offered eagerly. "Chosen mates are pretty hot nowadays. I can find you one."

I cracked up, pressing my face briefly into Nate's flank. There was nothing Kylan wouldn't do if it meant Nate would make it through this.

"If you don't want a mate yet, I can also just find you a mistress first," Kylan added, his face serious.

My laughter vanished instantly as I glared at him.

I hated that word...mistress.

Mainly because it also reminded me we still had that Carnille situation to deal with.

As soon as Kylan saw the look in my eyes, he released an awkward laugh and raised his hands in defense. "Which I will still change the law for first thing when I'm king."

Nate chuckled. "Nice save."

Kylan exhaled, wiping imaginary sweat from his forehead. "That was close."

A teasing grin appeared on his face, and that's when I knew he was just trying to get to me.

Nate's smile faded as he shook his head. "I wasn't specifically talking about a mate," he said. "To be honest, I think it's the last thing I need right now. Especially in this state."

"Then what do you need?" I wondered.

"I think...I need space."

His words came out hesitant, but the look on his face told me he had already thought about it. Guilt washed over me immediately.

Space...

He had gone through a lot, needed his space, and here I was dragging him into the past, letting him fight the devil, and forcing him into my memories. Even now, he had decided to comfort me. So much for giving him space.

"When Chrystal died," Nate said suddenly, "I didn't know what to do with myself. I blamed myself for being a bad brother, and for not being able to stop it."

The air turned awkward the moment he said her name. Somehow, that surprised me even more than the Lunaris confession. Kylan let out a low hum.

"I barely slept," Nate breathed. "I kept trying to think of good moments, and there were some...but even those turned bad eventually, because she was never actually good to me." His voice wavered. "I thought she was, and I wanted her to be, but she wasn't. Not even in her final moments, and I had been in deep, deep denial until I had lost her."

I stayed silent, the same way he had done. I just listened.

"Everyone except my mom hated her," Nate snorted, a laugh of disbelief escaping him. "The two of you hated her. Her friends hated her. And if she'd gotten a proper burial, no one would've shown up. So I guess she was somehow spared public humiliation, which she definitely would've hated. You know I'm right."

Kylan looked away, and I couldn't say much either.

Nate had a point.

I had hated Chrystal with every bone inside my body, and so did Kylan.

Nate nodded like he already knew. "See?" He opened his palm. "I will always hate Kayden for what he has done to her, though I now understand why it needed to happen," Nate said. "I loved her. I miss her... but I don't know why I loved her or why I'm missing her."

I gently tapped Kylan's arm, and he looked at me with wide eyes.

"Talk to him," I mouthed.

Kylan exhaled, running a hand through his hair as if he was bracing himself. Then he turned back to Nate. "You should mourn your sister however you want," he said carefully. "However it feels right to you. No feeling is wrong because it was your sister, and none of us would ever blame you or look at you weird for mourning her."

Nate stayed quiet but bopped his head as Kylan spoke. His shoulders relaxed just a little, and he released a relieved breath.

"Thank you," he said, his gaze moving between us. "Both of you. I didn't realize how much I needed this."

I swallowed and nodded, agreeing with his words. "I did too," I said. "I know I'll still need time tonight to process everything, but just talking about it already brought me a long way."

Kylan squeezed my hand, then leaned forward and pressed a soft, gentle kiss to my knuckles.

Nate watched us with a wide grin. "You know," he said, "seeing the two of you almost makes me want to have a mate."

"Liar," I said flatly. He couldn't have been more sarcastic. Nate laughed under his breath.

"We shouldn't waste any time," Kylan mentioned. Just like that, the



weight of reality settled back in. "Tomorrow, all of us will get together and focus. No matter what happened today, we can't slow down because we don't have much time."

He was right.

We didn't.

I let out a quiet chuckle. "The world kind of depends on us."

Nate tilted his head. "You," he corrected. "The world depends on you, and whatever those incredible eyes of yours were doing."

My lips parted in surprise. Nate moved a loose strand of my hair so it fell in front of my face. I blew it away, not quite ready to look away from his warm eyes. I really wished everything would work out for him because he deserved it.

Kylan scoffed through his smile.

"You're jealous," Nate smirked.

A crease appeared between Kylan's brows.

"Why would I be jealous?" he asked. "And who would I even be jealous of?"

Nate didn't miss a beat. "Of Violet, of course."

I couldn't hold back a laugh. "You're jealous because you're not the one lying in my lap," Nate added mockingly.

Kylan defended himself as Nate leaned back, clearly enjoying himself. I watched with a smile as the two went back and forth. Nate teasing, and Kylan pretending not to care while very obviously caring. It felt like we



were back at Starlight again.

Then three loud knocks pounded on the door, making us all freeze.

An annoyed breath slipped past Kylan's lips. "Yes?"

"Your Highness," one of the guards called through the door, his tone eager and hurried. "His Majesty requests your presence at once—"

"He can try again tomorrow," Kylan spoke lazily.

"It cannot wait, Your Highness," the guard said urgently. "Your brother, Prince Kayden, appears not to be doing well."

All three of us froze, our eyes snapping to each other at the same time.

Kayden?