

Chapter 368

Violet

"Good," Lady Mona went on. "I'm begging... no, I am telling you that if you did something to him, you have to undo it right now," she said. "Or I swear to the Moon Goddess, I'll —"

"You'll what?" Kylan growled. "Run to the mountains and beg them to heal him?"

Lady Mona licked her lips uncomfortably as a frown appeared on the king's face. He tapped his finger on his chin as if he were in deep thought.

"Neither I nor my people did this," Kylan said firmly. "And I won't take the blame for something I didn't do."

I had a proud moment when I heard him finally stand up for himself. I knew he carried immense guilt over what happened to Kayden and tried to cope by bottling everything up whenever it involved Lady Mona, but this was not okay.

Even Lady Mona seemed shocked by him. Kylan's jaw locked, and the king's favorite mistress trembled with fury. It lasted until the King finally clasped his hands together to break the silence.

"Wonderful!" he said. "Now that we know the Crown Prince didn't do this, we can all rest easy and see to the situation tomorrow. There are still some preparations left for Kaelis's howl."

"A howl?" Lady Mona cried out. "Do you really not care for your son anymore? If it was Kylan lying there —"

The King cut her off with an exaggerated yawn, stretching his arms lazily

while his mouth was wide open. Then he waved her off with his hands.

"Daddy, Kaelis can't have her howl!" Kahlia blurted. "Our brother almost died today."

"Come on, Kahlia," Kylan said, sighing. "Since we're all being honest today, you never gave a shit about Kayden. You just wanted to use this as an excuse to stop Kaelis's big day because you can't stand her."

Kahlia's face turned red with shame. The King hummed under his breath and turned toward the door before exiting the room as if nothing had happened.

My mind blanked for a second as I took in the tension still hanging in the air. This Lyperian family dynamic was so twisted, so cold, that it almost made my family look sane.

Yes, the Bloodroses.

Kylan gave me a light nudge. My brow lifted in confusion. He flicked his eyes toward the side of the room, and I followed his gaze to the small cage resting on a nearby table.

Thorne's cage.

He hadn't even crossed my mind until now. Perhaps because he was so quiet. He slept inside the cage, his small body barely moving.

Kylan wanted me to check for Aelius's mark to see whether he had been able to keep his promise.

A cross, in case sealing Baelor inside the raven wouldn't hold a second time, and a circle if it would.

"I want to do a prayer for our brother's health," Kylan said suddenly, his tone softening.

He moved closer to Kayden's bedside and placed his hand gently on his forehead. "Kahlia, Khaedric?" he called.

The two met their brother's gaze and walked over. They didn't seem all too excited, but ended up laying their hands over his.

Lady Mona watched him like a hawk while the queen stepped back, keeping her distance.

For some reason, Cecilia hadn't followed the King out of the room, but she clearly refused to take part in this.

While everyone's focus stayed on Kylan, I quietly stepped toward the black cage. I felt an uncomfortable pit in my stomach looking at Thorne. I hated that thing. I really did.

I tried not to make any noise as my fingers slipped through the narrow bars, brushing softly over the raven's feathers. Strangely enough, he didn't stir. He didn't do anything. It was as if his stillness mirrored Kayden, and the two were somehow connected.

Kylan's voice filled the room as he murmured a prayer.

Meanwhile, I let my fingertip trace carefully over the raven's head, searching for a mark. I squinted as I moved the fur, and there it was.

A faint circle.

A quiet gasp escaped me. Aelius had managed to do it.

My heart hammered with excitement as I took a step back, but when I

turned around, everything froze.

Queen Cecilia was staring right at me, her eyes sharp and suspicious. Her lips curved into an exaggerated smile, and I forced one back.

Would she be onto us?

"—so Moon Goddess, I beg you, hear my plea and heal our brother."

Kylan's prayer had ended. His tone sounded so warm, and yet I couldn't tell if he truly meant it. He looked up, meeting my eyes. I gave him a small nod.

"You should all get some rest now," Kylan said. "I know that's what I'll be doing."

His body tensed, and I could clearly see he didn't want to be here for a second longer, which was understandable. The only reason he had been summoned here was so Lady Mona could bully him into admitting his involvement.

Kylan started walking toward the door, and as he did, Cecilia brushed past us with an angry expression on her face.

Everything happened too fast, but the next thing we heard was a loud smack, followed by several gasps. Her hand connected with Lady Mona's cheek so hard the sound echoed through the room.

Lady Mona stumbled back, falling to the floor.

"Morn!" Kahlia and Khaedric cried, rushing to her side. It was one of the first times I had actually seen any emotion on that guy's face.

Lady Mona clutched her face. She breathed hard, her eyes wide with

shock.

"You can cry to the king about it, and I will tell him that you have brought this upon yourself," Cecilia breathed. She bent as far as she could, her dress restricting her, and gripped Lady Mona's chin until the woman had no choice but to look up at her.

"How dare you raise your voice to your future King, how dare you accuse my son of your own failures," she hissed. "You forget your place, Mona. You should thank the Moon Goddess that I have spared you after all the years you poisoned this family. I have learned to live with it for the king's sake, and I endured it, but I warn both you and those brats, do not start with my children. They are off limits."

"Your Majesty—" Kylan began, stepping forward.

Cecilia didn't even glance at him. Her voice turned louder. "If you ever so much as breathe an accusation against him again," she continued coldly, "I will make sure the next time you kneel will be to beg for your life," she said. "And you will beg, and beg...and when you are done begging, you will still be executed, and it will be by my hand. That is not a threat, but a promise."

The queen's words landed so hard it surely surprised all of us. No one moved, and no one spoke.

The fear on Lady Mona's face was evident, and that same fear reflected on her children's faces as well. Whatever fire she had just moments ago was gone. She looked small and helpless.

Cecilia released her chin and straightened. She brushed her hands together as if she had just touched something far beneath her, then smoothed her dress.

She turned with a proud smile on her lips and took a soft breath as she walked away.

Kylan, who was just as stunned, tugged my hand and we walked after her. The door closed behind us with a thud.

"What was that?" I whispered.

"I don't know."

He let go of my hand to go after the queen. "Hey!" he called out.

It was such a strange way to address the queen, but I supposed it worked for him. For her as well, because Cecilia stopped and turned, lifting her brow.

"Yes?"

The two looked at each other. Her eyes fluttered as she waited for Kylan to speak.

"I...appreciate that," Kylan said awkwardly. The words came out stiff, like he didn't know how to express it. Considering the past those two shared, it wasn't all that surprising.

Cecilia's expression softened. "She came for my son," she replied. "What else could I have done?"

Her smile lingered for a second longer before she turned and walked away. Kylan sighed beside me as we waited until her footsteps disappeared.


I glanced around at the guards lining the walls and leaned in closer. "Do you think all of this has something to do with...you know."

Commented [Ma1]:

I didn't have to finish my sentence for Kylan to understand. We started walking again, hand in hand.

"I don't know."

I frowned. "So any guesses on when your brother will wake up from hibernation?"

Kylan let out a breath. "No." 



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