

Chapter 374

Kylan

The smallest breath escaped Violet.

My Violet...

She looked tired because she had been holding too much together for too long. She had come from the Bloodrose to become a healer, and her life had taken a turn way too fast.

She found out she was a witch, the crown prince's mate, one of the few who was able to stop Baclor.

None of us would blame her for simply being tired, and she had to know that.

I gave her a small, calming smile, hoping she would be honest with herself. She let out a soft chuckle and shook her head like she herself couldn't believe what she was about to say.

"I can seal him," she said. "I really don't doubt that."

She hesitated as her gaze flicked to Dylan for just a split second before it turned back to me. "But it's too easy for me to lose control because..." she trailed off, taking a deep breath. "I do get frustrated if things don't go my way, and I don't know how to control it."

I listened without interrupting.

It turned out me and Pup were much more alike than I thought. I knew that feeling all too well.

It was unfortunate how much pressure she carried without anyone preparing her for it, and how much she blamed herself. Violet must've been feeling like she had to be perfect just to be allowed to stand here, while I never wanted her to be. I just needed her to be happy.

Still, I was relieved.

Relieved she said it now, and not in the middle of the fight when it would already be too late. That honesty alone probably saved us more than she realized.

"Okay," I accepted. No one said anything because everyone accepted it.

If she couldn't fight, then she couldn't fight. End of the story. I wasn't going to push her into something that would break her further. I would rather watch the world burn than force her.

I closed my eyes, leaning back in my chair. There had to be another way, and that other way would be the only way.

"What if," I said, opening my eyes again, "we can seal Baelor without going into battle at all?"

The table went quiet, and the looks I received were even more shocking than the ones I had gotten when I told them about Kayden.

"What if we make it a one-minute job?" I continued. "No fight, no chaos, no...ruining my sister's howl."

Trinity blinked. "Is that even possible?"

"I want to believe it is," I replied.

In this situation, all we could do was remain positive, and I hated

positivity, but right now it felt like a shield against reality.

My eyes shifted to Dylan. "You like thinking," I shrugged. "You've probably already come up with a plan."

Dylan straightened. "That is not true."

A frown appeared on his face, and it seemed as if my words had offended him.

I raised a brow. "So you're telling me you don't have a plan right now?"

He scratched the back of his neck. "I'm not saying that," he mumbled under his breath. "I do have a plan."

There it is.

"The only reason everything went to hell last time," Dylan explained, "was because of the shadow beast and the thousand ravens Thorne unleashed. If we take that part out, we actually don't need to fight. There is no reason for us to shift if we take him down the easy way."

I rolled back my shoulders, grateful it was actually going somewhere. He seemed to know what he was talking about, which was quite something considering the situation.

"To do that," he continued, "we steal the raven."

My brow lifted. "Steal the...raven?"

"We'll need Thorne to seal Baelor anyway, and you just told us that right now Thorne is asleep," Dylan said confidently. "We don't know for sure, but since he's calm, it's safe to assume Baelor's shadow isn't inside him anymore. But the shadow will have to come back to him somehow, and I

figure it will be tomorrow during the full moon.”

He glanced around the table. “We won’t have to look for Baelor because if we have the raven, the shadow will come to us. All we need to do is find the exact moment it happens and seal him then.”

Everyone had listened without interruption, and no one had called him insane yet. That was a good sign.

Dylan’s plan wasn’t that bad, and it could actually work.

Nate snorted. “Man, you’re such a geek,” he said, ruffling his hair. “Our geek.”

“I’m not a geek,” Dylan rumbled. “It’s just common sense.”

“But what do we do with the raven after?” Nate asked.

“I already have a pet squirrel. My dorm can handle a raven too,” I said with a shrug. “I’ll take him back to Starlight. Teach him some manners, and make sure he doesn’t try anything stupid ever again.”

Violet tilted her head. “With Esther around?”

“I’m not worried about Esther,” I said, waving my hand dismissively. Even after seeing all she could do, she was still not a threat to me. She had no magic, no high priestess, no support.

She was nothing.

A nobody...

“I agree with everything His Highness said,” Lian showed her loyalty. She had been doing that quite a lot.

"Even though the other half of Baelor is still inside the Veil, I'd say that's a problem for another day. We don't know when the Veil will open again, but what we do know is that taking down half of Baelor is much better than fighting all of him."

I exhaled slowly. I would've wished to jump inside that Veil myself and take care of everything evil, but that just wasn't realistic. At least we had a plan now and could actually work with it.

Sora swallowed hard, her fingers still twisting in her lap. "If you take Prince Kayden's raven..." Her voice dropped. "He'll kill us. Like he killed ..."

She stopped herself and glanced at Nate instead, her eyes wide and uneasy.

Nate's eyes were kind, and I knew he felt sorry for her. He was way softer than I was and could probably relate to her pain, while I wanted her to either get out or stop whining. This was not a crying matter.

"Everyone knows Kayden is stupid," I said flatly, "but even he has limits, and without that raven, he's got nothing. Four years of his life, thrown away."

Knowing Kayden, it could go both ways. He would pretend not to care or care a bit too much, but it wouldn't be anything I couldn't handle.

Lian tilted her head. "How exactly are you planning to steal it?"

I couldn't hold back a chuckle. "I'm the Crown Prince," I declared. "I walk in, I take the raven, and I walk out."

That part was something I didn't worry about at all. Snatching it from his hands would be one thing, but this way there would be no one who would

dare to stop me.

My thoughts shifted quickly, and my eyes landed on Dylan. "Any idea what time we need to be ready tomorrow?"

"I'll find out and tell you first thing in the morning."

"Good," I said, looking around the table. "Then it's settled. Does everyone agree?"

They exchanged glances and nodded at each other. Violet looked at me. "Do you really think you can just...walk in and take Thorne from Kayden because you're the Crown Prince?"

"Yes, I do think that," I said without missing a beat. "And you're coming with me."

A yawn escaped me as I stood, slamming an arm around her shoulder and pulling her up with me. Like a chain reaction, everyone else rose too.

We waited as everyone walked past. Sora was first and patted Violet's arm. "I'll pray to the Moon Goddess tonight," she pouted. "Tell her to take it easy on you."

Lian chuckled softly. "What she said."

Nate pinched Violet's cheek. "Me too, Vivi."

Trinity squeezed her hand. "Get some sleep."

"I will," Violet promised. I hoped seeing she had everyone's full support would make her feel at least a bit better.

Dylan took a breath as he looked at her. Neither of them spoke because

there was too much to say. It was almost like me with the queen.

He drew in a slow breath and looked at her again. Neither of them spoke. I suppose both minds were full of everything they couldn't say, too many thoughts that didn't know how to become words.

It was the same feeling I had when I stood before the queen.

"I never said you were weak," Dylan tried explaining himself.

"I know," Violet smiled. "Just ignore my outburst."

He shook his head. "No. I never want you thinking I would ever see you that way," he said. "And if something bothers you, you do have the right to tell me. I hope you know that."

He leaned in and kissed her cheek. "Get some rest."

We watched as he walked off with Trinity, and when the library emptied, it was just the two of us. I immediately stepped in front of Violet, kissing the top of her head again and again until I heard the sound of laughter that I loved so much.

I pulled back, holding her face between my hands to see the joy in her eyes. "It's okay. I'm so proud of you."

She was so brave, and I would tell her again and again.

The truth was that I didn't know how the Moon Goddess had trusted me with someone like her, but I knew one thing for sure. I would spend the rest of my life proving I deserved her.

"Why would you be proud?" she asked, genuinely surprised. "I just took a step backward by saying I won't be able to fight, and now we'll have to

take a gamble because I couldn't just push through it," she said, frustrated. "That doesn't feel like something to be proud of."

I smiled like a fool, taking in her words, but there was nothing she could say that would ever change my mind.

"You're wasting breath," I stated. "I will always be proud."

My thumbs brushed over her cheeks without thinking. If only I could smooth away every doubt she carried. "You don't have to prove anything, Pup."

I leaned down and kissed the top of her nose. "Not to me."

She stared at me with those soft eyes, and I knew she was trying to decide if I was serious. I hadn't even realized how badly she needed to hear that, but now that I was aware, I would make sure there wouldn't be a single day without me telling her.

"Anyway, I think we've got a raven to steal," I announced, wrapping my arm around her waist.

She glanced up at me. "Are we really taking Thorne...now?"

"We are," I hummed.

I guided her toward the door, keeping her close. "That's unless you want to wait until Kayden wakes up."