

Chapter 384

Violet

I dropped to my knees beside Kayden and pressed two fingers to his neck.
"He's still breathing."

A relieved sound came from Sora's throat, and she hugged the chopping board to her chest. "That's good," she breathed. "It means I'm not a killer."

My eyes traveled back to Kayden. He seemed just as peaceful as he did during his beauty sleep. He looked way better like this. Lying quiet and still. There was no annoying and demanding voice telling me what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

But this wasn't part of the plan.

It wasn't part of Sora's plan either, and obviously not Kayden's.

That was the thing.

Kayden worked smart and calculated. He wouldn't have dragged Trinity or Lian into that elevator because he knew they would've fought back differently. But Sora...

"What do we do now?" Sora asked, her breath hitching.

I looked around the empty palace kitchen. "Are you sure no one will come here today?" I asked.

"Yes. They moved everything to the west wing kitchens. That part was true."

I closed my eyes, trying to think. What would Kylan do in this situation?

No...

What would Violet do in this situation. I couldn't bother him with this when he already had enough on his plate.

I opened my eyes and scanned my surroundings until they landed on a thick rope hanging near a rack.

Perfect.

I lifted my head toward Sora. "Grab the rope."

Sora fluttered her eyes. "What are we—"

"First," I said, cutting her off as I reached for Kayden's wrist, "we tie him up."

I looked down at his unconscious face. "Because if he wakes up like this... he might strangle us both."

We didn't waste any more time after that. Sora grabbed the rope, and together, we rolled him onto his side. Then we each dragged him by his feet across the kitchen floor, all the way to the pantry.

My palms burned, my arms shook, but adrenaline kept me moving.

Inside, it was dark but spacious. Shelves lined the walls, stacked with jars and crates of supplies. In the center stood a thick wooden pole.

Sora and I glanced at each other, dragged him over there, and sat him up against the pole. I almost felt bad as his head fell to the side and his hair covered his face.

"Let's tie him before he wakes up," I suggested, feeling a lump in my throat. My fingers fumbled as I took the rope from Sora and wrapped him

carefully, making sure he wouldn't be able to move if he woke up.

When we were done, we stepped back and looked at him. He basically looked like some horrible piece of art, but it worked.

"D-Do you think he'll be able to shift again?" Sora questioned.

It was something I hadn't even thought about yet. I was too occupied with other things, such as the red streaks in his hair, that the thought hadn't even crossed my mind.

"No...I don't think so," I said hesitantly, shaking my head. "At least not for now. He can barely walk as it is."

"Should we call Kylan?"

I sighed, rubbing my face. "We'll get to it...eventually."

Our eyes met, and in that instant it was clear we were thinking the same thing. A thought that had been circling my mind more and more lately.

What now?

"Lian told me you have this gift where you can...make people forget?"

I looked back at Kayden. The idea tempted me more than anything, and I had thought about it myself, but that would be too much of a risk.

"I don't know the rules of my powers yet," I explained. "I don't even know if that's something I can do without making things worse or if I'll be able to do the sealing after that. I don't want to mess this up even more than we already have."

"You're right," Sora pouted. "I shouldn't have done this. I'm so sorry."

"Don't be," I said right away. "You saved us."

And I meant it.

This gave us some more time before the Howl, because if there was one thing Kayden had made clear, it was that he wouldn't stop looking for Thorne.

"Lady Mona must be looking for him by now, right?" Sora asked, her voice shaking. "And why is he even walking around unattended anyway?"

I let out a tired breath. "Trust me. I'm wondering the same thing."

I shook it off and patted Sora's back. "Come on. We still need to check the rooms before Madam Renata notices we're not where we're supposed to be."

"Right."

She glanced over her shoulder, eyes darting around the pantry. "Are we really just leaving him here? Like this?"

"Unsupervised?" I asked. "Yes. I think not drawing too much attention might be the best way."

I knew that if Kayden somehow escaped, he wouldn't run to the king to tell on us. That kind of move wouldn't benefit him right now because he was playing a bigger game. He would just get up again and bother someone else.

We both turned to leave, but then Sora stopped in her steps. Her gaze landed on a stack of folded cloths on a nearby shelf, and she walked toward it. She grabbed two of them and headed back to Kayden.

"This won't do," she said.

Sora wrapped one cloth around his eyes, tying it tight enough that he wouldn't be able to see a thing. Then she made a ball out of the second one and forced his mouth open before pressing it inside.

He couldn't see and couldn't scream.

There was something calm about the way she did it that made me realize something. Even sweet, nervous Sora had a darker side to her. She just hid it better than most.

She stood and walked back to me. "Let's go."

Together, we stepped out of the pantry and pulled the door shut behind us. There was no lock, no plan, just hope and no time to dwell on it.

Not long after, we reached our destination and moved through the palace as if nothing had happened, checking room after room like Madam Renata had instructed. By now, the halls weren't nearly as empty anymore, and the preparations for the Howl were in full motion.

The palace grew louder, servants rushed past, outsiders had already started arriving, and Sora and I smiled and welcomed them when we needed to. Played our parts.

By the time we reached the last room we had to check, I heard warm, familiar laughter behind the door, and the nerves buried deep inside me loosened all at once.

I looked at Sora. "That's Kylan."

Her eyes widened, and we both picked up our pace. Then I pushed the door open.

