

Chapter 392

Violet

My arm was sore from shaking too many hands, and the sides of my lips ached from smiling so much. The greetings never seemed to end. Elders, lords, ladies, distant relatives, and people who smiled like they actually enjoyed being here, while we all knew better.

I had to admit the celebration itself was something special. The palace had outdone itself once more. The ballroom glowed under soft lights and lanterns, tables were decorated with flowers and filled with fresh food, and music floated through the room. It was packed.

Even though we had helped plan parts of it, seeing it still made my breath catch. Everyone had poured their whole hearts into it for Kaelis.

"We should take our seats," Kylan whispered after shaking some elder's hand. "I don't want them to bother us again."

His eyes drifted, and I followed his gaze to the back of the room. There was a long table, much like the one from the feast. If not for the single presence that made it feel full, I would have had no issue with it.

The king...

I felt an uncomfortable lump drop into my stomach and swallowed hard.

"Just ignore him," Kylan murmured, calm as ever.

Easy for him to say.

Elyx lifted one hand, a grin forming on his face. There wasn't much we could do as more people began to gather around us, and before I could panic, Kylan took my hand.



We started walking as he pulled me with him toward the table. As we moved, the king pushed himself up from his chair, making my heart stutter.

"What is he doing?"

Kylan glanced sideways. "I...don't know."

The king walked past the table, then stopped right in front of us. A smile spread across his face as he held out his hand. "Violet."

I blinked, confused, but reached for his hand anyway. Kylan tried to pull me back, but before he could, my palm was already in the king's. His hand was as cold as I knew his heart could be, and my fingers tensed.

Then, unexpectedly, he took my other hand too.

I had no choice but to look at him as his eyes locked onto mine. That fabricated smile he carried did not quite reach his eyes, and I couldn't help but wonder...

Was he out to embarrass me again?

"My beautiful daughter-in-law," he said, his voice loud enough for heads to turn.

"Your Majesty."

Kylan let out a chuckle behind me.

"Come, come," the king said, already guiding me forward. "You must join the most important family table. We are family, after all."

He pulled out the chair beside his own. Flustered, I stared at it, then looked at Kylan.



Was this a joke?

Or a trap?

I could still feel eyes on me from every direction and knew pulling back now would be rude. So I took a breath and sat.

"Thank you, Your Majesty," I said quietly.

Kylan took the seat beside me. He leaned forward to shoot the king a glance, then shook his head with a short laugh.

The king glanced at him. "What's wrong?"

"So what. You like her now?" Kylan replied dryly.

The king waved it off, his hand in the air. "I already told you that I have changed my mind," he said. "Since you're hopelessly in love and she clearly isn't going anywhere, I'd better get used to her. She might even be useful one day."

"Useful how?" Kylan asked.

The king ignored him and turned his attention back to me. "Tell me, Violet," he began. "Your stay in Lyperia has almost come to an end. How have you found your stay here? Everything to your liking?"

"S-sure," I stuttered.

"Wonderful!" he said, his tone exaggerated. "Your family seems to have enjoyed themselves too, and they even showed up tonight," he went on, his eyes shifting to the mezzanine.

Alpha Fergus stood with the Bloodroses, same as he had done at the feast. When our eyes met, he gave me a small nod, which I returned. They were



softer this time, but the fact that they still weren't mingling showed they were still on high alert.

That hadn't changed. Probably never would.

It was a Bloodrose thing.

"Though I do wonder why they won't shake my hand," Elyx sighed. "Are the Bloodroses afraid of falling down the stairs?"

He laughed a little too hard at his own joke while Kylan and I shot each other a glance, both not finding it funny. My eyes drifted across the room until they landed on Dylan and Trinity, who were standing near one of the columns, deep in conversation.

All the mistresses and their children were also present and dressed beautifully. At a table farther away sat Lady Mona with her daughters and Khaedric. Their faces were hard, and the clear disdain in the way they watched the king, Kylan, and me made me turn my head until my eyes landed back on the door.

Then it opened, and Nate walked in beside Beta Jack.

Empty-handed.

My heart skipped.

Of course empty-handed, but where was that cage? Where was Thorne?

I felt Kylan glance at me, and when I looked at him, our eyes met. We both thought the same thing.

"Poor Beta Jack," the king exhaled. "No mate, no daughter...Nate."

My stomach tightened.



What was wrong with Nate?

I felt the king's eyes burn into my skin and panicked. My palms dampened against the table, and I resisted the urge to wipe them on my lap. Kylan's hand pushed through my dress as he rested it on my thigh and gave me a squeeze, but it wasn't nearly enough to calm my nerves.

Would he know?

"Don't you feel sorry for the man, Violet?"

"Yes," I said, my voice barely above a whisper. "Very."

The king clicked his tongue. "I have an interesting theory..."

"She doesn't want to hear it," Kylan cut him off. However, it was not enough.

"Like I said," the king tilted his head. "I have an interesting theory," he went on, "I'm starting to think Chrystal might be dead. Buried somewhere."

Suddenly everything in me locked up. All my muscles tensed, and I felt Kylan stiffen at the exact same time because we were both pulled by the same fear. There was no way he didn't know, and no way this was random, but why would he tell us this now?

The sound in the room faded, like someone had pressed their palms over my ears. My heart started pounding so loudly I feared one might hear it over the music.

Was there something he wanted from us, or was he simply being an ass?

I had known there was something off about him. I had felt it from the start, but I couldn't have expected this. Between him and Kayden, I



couldn't even tell who was worse anymore.

"What do you think?" the king asked.

As soon as he spoke to me, the pressure in my ears released and all the sound rushed back. "Huh?" I said, my eyes fluttering as I turned to look into his eyes.

A slight smirk tugged at his lips. He squinted at me for a moment that seemed to last a lifetime. It was like he was testing how much I was willing to confess.

Then, without warning, he slammed both hands down on the table, making me flinch in response.

"Well then," he said brightly, "if you don't know either, there's nothing to be done about it."

My heart skipped.

What?

He gave me a single nod, as if that settled everything. "Oh," he added casually, "has Kylan told you the wonderful news already, by the way?"

"What news?"

I looked between him and Kylan.

Kylan's face changed instantly. The color drained from it, and his jaw tightened. His eyes flicked to mine, then away, then back again. He looked... cornered.

"Well," the king said, showing his teeth, "this is a bit uncomfortable."



I turned fully to Kylan. "What news?"

"I..." Kylan started, then took a breath. The words refused to come out of his mouth, and a cold feeling spread through my stomach.

How bad could it be?

"What news?" I asked again, my voice firmer.

The king sighed, long and dramatic. "Alright. I'll say it."

He leaned back in his chair. "There will be another celebration before you leave for Starlight," he announced. "Several activities, actually, and one of them will be Kylan's royal ceremony with his first mistress."

I frowned. "What?"

It took a moment before it hit me, and when it did, heat rushed to my face and my ears burned. I kept trying to remind myself that this was what Elyx did, and it wasn't Kylan I was angry with, but him.

Kylan covered his hand over mine. "Vi—"

Before he could say anything else, the trumpets blasted through the hall, ending the moment. Kylan let out a frustrated breath and straightened himself while the king smiled widely.

"Finally," he said, already rising from his seat, "that must be our Kaelis."