

Chapter 394

Violet

I went completely still.

My fingers tightened around Kylan's hand before I even realized what I was doing. With each step he took, too many whispers spread.

"It's true!"

"He can really walk..."

"A miracle!"

Even Lady Mona rose from her seat, and for the first time that night, there was a real smile on her face. A proud and victorious smile.

She glanced at the king, who shot her a glance back, an amused smirk displayed on his lips.

And Cecilia...

I didn't miss the way her jaw locked and her lips trembled, though she tried so hard to keep her composure.

"Did someone free him?" I whispered.

"I don't think so," Kylan replied. "He looks...ridiculously strong for someone who was tied and gagged last time I saw him."

I swallowed and looked again. Kayden had a faint smirk on his lips. He looked better than he had that morning.

No, better wasn't even the word. He looked even stronger and healthier,



more so than I thought was possible. It was like the smack on his head hadn't taken him out, but fueled him instead. It made him scarier, more dangerous.

"He must've been blessed by the Moon Goddess," a voice whispered.

My blood nearly boiled, hearing the disrespect. If they only knew what was standing there. One person dared take a step, then another followed, and suddenly the crowd closed in around Kayden.

All were drawn to him like he was the highlight of the evening and not Kaelis, who stood there, forgotten.

The look on her face was heartbreaking. Her eyes darted around, lips parted like she didn't know where to go or what to do. This was exactly the one thing she had been so afraid of. Kayden stealing her moment and ruining her night.

It might not have been much to others, but I knew how much it meant to her. It wasn't the queen's day or the crown prince's day, it was hers.

Nate stayed close to her, thank the Moon Goddess, and Kiora slipped to her other side as Kayden gently pushed people aside to move forward.

His steps were smooth now. There was no wobble or unease. It was odd, considering this morning, and there was simply no explanation for this. Kylan squeezed my hand, and that's when I knew he felt it too.

The feeling of 'what if.'

What if we would fail tonight.

When Kayden finally reached Kaelis, the room went completely quiet. Everyone anticipated what words he would exchange.



Kaelis looked down at his legs first, then slowly lifted her gaze until their eyes met. They were uncomfortable, angry, and I could see so much pain behind them.

"What does he think he's doing?" Kylan said, his voice low. His brows knitted, and before he could think about going over there, I pulled him back.

I knew that look, and I knew that if he went over there now, he wouldn't stop at words. The last thing anyone needed at the moment was to provoke...that thing.

Kayden's chuckle echoed through the ballroom.

"My dear sister," he said. "Congratulations with your howl."

"Kayden..." Kaelis replied quietly. "Thank you. I'm glad to see you're doing well."

He turned away from her with a long sigh and faced the crowd instead. "I know this must come as a surprise to all of you," he said calmly. "But today is not about me. Please respect that...and respect the queen's daughter."

There was a moment of silence before the king laughed, loud and approving. "You heard my son," he said, waving his hand toward the musicians. "Let the night continue."

That's all it took for the music to come back alive again and for the room to fill with the sound of violins. Guests slowly began to move again, conversations restarted, but nothing felt the same anymore.

Kylan scoffed. "So...are we sure this was not another one of your emotionally charged medical miracles?"



I shot him a look. "Of course not!" I defended myself. "I have no idea what the hell is happening!"

My voice came out irritated, and Kylan let out a chuckle. "I know that, Pup," he said. "It was just a joke."

"Well, I'm not laughing."

I exhaled through my nose, forcing myself to calm down. I didn't mean to lash out like that and could always appreciate a good joke, but seeing Kayden there...and the fact that he wasn't even looking at us.

It scared the shit out of me.

My eyes couldn't look away as I felt forced to watch his every move. Lady Mona had already latched onto him, and her hands gripped his arm like she was afraid he would vanish again. People still surrounded them, and I didn't need to hear anything to know that the questions were flying.

It was no surprise the attention-hungry king had left the queen's side and had joined them too. He had found something else to brag about.

Kylan twisted his body so he wouldn't have to look at the queen, who was visibly furious.

I drew in a slow breath. "One of us needs to check on that raven," I said quietly. "For all we know, he has found him and moved him."

Kylan looked at me for a long time, then shrugged because there was nothing else to say.

"You shouldn't leave Kaelis alone now," I told him. "So you wait here, and I'll look."

I stepped away before he could argue.



“Violet, wait...”

I lifted my hand without turning back, hoping he would just trust me. If Kayden had somehow found Thorne, it was better to know now so we knew we had to come up with something else.

I headed toward the doors, my heart beating faster with every step. I had barely reached them when they opened, and almost immediately I felt a presence beside me.

I turned to my left and saw Dylan.

Of course it was.

He didn't say anything at first, just walked beside me and matched my pace like he already knew this wasn't the time for questions.

Only when we were farther down the hall, away from the noise of the ballroom, he decided to ask them anyway. “Where are you going?”

“Nate hid Thorne in the greenhouse,” I said without slowing down. “I need to check if he's still there or if that crazy thing got to him.”

“Good plan,” Dylan said.

We both walked faster. “I thought Sora—” he started.

“She did,” I cut in. “Long story.”

He didn't push it, and we quickened our pace. We passed through the gardens, and I hardly had time to admire how beautiful it had turned out. Lanterns were being lit, lights glowed from the trees. There were flowers everywhere, petals scattered along the paths as servants rushed to finish things up.



It took some time before we reached the greenhouse. As we stepped aside, I immediately inhaled the scent of soil and flowers.

Same as last time, pots were stacked along the walls, and vines climbed wherever they could. It was so busy, I didn't even know where to look. It was indeed a good hiding spot.

Dylan frowned slightly. "Where did he hide it?"

"I don't—"

A sudden, harsh sound cut me off. It wasn't a chirp, but a loud and aggressive screech that sent chills down my spine.

A yelp escaped me, and I flinched so hard I ended up bumping my arm against a nearby table. I looked at Dylan, my eyes widening as he let out a short chuckle. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I blinked.

For some reason, it felt like Thorne was calling out to us. Perhaps he had felt our presence.

To anyone else, it would've just been the sound of any other raven, but we knew what it was. Who it was. Thorne.

My heart was still racing when the sound came again, a bit less aggressive this time. Dylan walked in front as we followed it, and it ended in the back. There was no communication needed as we moved a few large pots aside until we saw it.

The cage.

It was still covered with the cloth. I took a step, immediately reaching out. My fingers had barely reached the fabric before Dylan caught my



wrist.

"Careful," he warned.

My stomach knotted, and I nodded after a hard swallow. Thorne was quiet for now, but that meant nothing at all. It somehow made the situation worse because we didn't know what we would see once we lifted the cloth.

"I'll do it," Dylan said.

He slowly placed his hand under the cloth, his eyes not leaving mine. Anticipation grew as we shared a nod, and then he lifted it.

I wished he hadn't because as soon as he did, a bright light exploded.