

Chapter 397

Violet

Kayden smiled faintly. "The Crown Prince's speech was very...touching."

His gaze drifted through the crowd, lingering just long enough on whoever he could get to make people uncomfortable. "Don't look at my legs!" He let out a chortle. "Look at me!"

I couldn't give a clear explanation as to why, but like puppets, every pair of eyes lifted. Kayden stood with a confidence that wasn't earned and it didn't feel right.

It wasn't respect, it was control.

Forced and wrong.

"As I was saying," Kayden continued, "the Crown Prince's speech was something." He shook his head slowly. "Seeing him care that much...I mean, wow!"

Kayden clapped his hands, pursing his lips. "And I couldn't help but care just as much," he went on. "After all, I care about everything Kylan cares about. We're brothers!"

Laughter rippled through the room, though I was certain everyone was just as confused.

And the king?

He knew this was wrong, did he not?

For some reason, he had stopped Kayden when he was headed toward me, so why wasn't he stopping him now?

"Instead of speaking about the Moon Goddess," Kayden said, waving a dismissive hand, "I thought I'd bring back a special memory."

A grin reached his face. "When we were younger," he began, "Kylan and I fought over a teddy bear."

He shot Kylan a glance. "I found it first, but Kylan kept it...said he could take better care of it." He shrugged. "His words. Not mine."

A few people chuckled.

"And you might be wondering what that has to do with our beautiful sister, Kaelis," he added. The crowd murmured, curious.

"Well." He clasped his hands together. "I was a kid so I threw a tantrum, and snapped Kylan's favorite toy in half to get back at him." He lifted a finger. "There was no reaction so I broke another one, of course, then another."

He sucked in a sharp breath, spreading his hands wide. "But still... nothing!"

Laughter filled the ballroom again, louder this time.

"And then," Kayden said softly, "I touched Kaelis's toy."

His brows knitted. "Yes, I broke that one too...just one, but that was enough."

His lips twitched as he nodded. I glanced at Kylan who was still covering Kaelis. His face had gone pale, jaw tight, eyes dark. He absolutely knew where this was headed. I didn't, but my skin prickled anyway because I knew it couldn't be any good.

"All it took," Kayden continued, "for Kylan to finally do the right thing,

was touching someone he cared about." He smiled at him. "That's all it took for him to give back what was rightfully mine."

Kylan let out a short laugh of disbelief, and shook his head.

"And that taught me something very important," Kayden went on, frowning. "Our crown prince is willing to swallow his pride to protect the ones he loves, and that's really good for all of you...or is it?"

My heart thudded against my chest.

Is this another threat?

Give me back the raven or I'll start hurting those you care about?

The guy who was gagged into the pantry dared making threats? Was he insane?

"Anyhow, I just wanted to congratulate Kaelis on her howl," Kayden said lightly. "And thank her for bringing back a good memory."

There was a moment of silence again as everyone waited for him to continue. Kayden looked around as if he was waiting with us. "Oh," he gaped. "You all thought I had more?"

He shrugged. "No, I'm sorry. That's all."

A feeling of unease hung in the air as a single person clapped. Lady Mona. Then the guests awkwardly joined in, and still no one knew why they were doing it.

Kylan and I locked eyes. The joy that had been on his face while he spoke about Kaelis was long gone. It had now been replaced with something much colder, and if he could've killed Kayden by now, I knew he would've.

As for me...

My thoughts and feelings were all over the place. He had threatened people again, and though he hadn't acted on the threat he'd made that morning, I couldn't shake the fear that this time he might really go through with it.

The king let out a loud laugh. "Guests," he said cheerfully. "After hearing Kayden's interesting story, I find my appetite has suddenly returned."

People nodded among themselves, simply because the words had come from the king's mouth. "There is plenty of food waiting in the gardens," he added, already turning on his heel.

That was everyone's cue.

The room shifted as people began rushing to the door. Cecilia went past me without a word, her focus only on Kaelis as she moved to her side.

Kylan didn't waste any time either and quickly stood beside me. He reached for my hand, pulling me up before wrapping an arm firmly around my waist.

"Come," he said quietly.

We moved with the crowd, and passed Kayden who still stood at the center. A chill crept up my spine as I looked over my shoulder and watched him staring at the floor with the smallest smirk tugging at his lips.

He didn't lift his head, didn't look at us...nothing. He still seemed so confident that he had this one in the bag, and that was ultimately what worried me. Why couldn't he just accept his loss?

Soon we were in the halls again, swallowed by the excited guests who

were all eager to get to the garden. Kylan's grip remained on my waist.

"What the fuck was that?" I whispered.

Kylan gave me a squeeze. "A warning," he said flatly. "He wants me to give back Thorne or he'll start killing the people I care about...one by one."

Though Kylan didn't seem all that threatened, my stomach twisted. "Do you think he'll really do it?" I asked, worried.

We stepped through the large doors into the night and were instantly met with cool air and soft gasps around us as the gardens came into view. For a split second, my eyes flicked to the bright moon above us. The moon we were supposed to worship, though it had brought us nothing but trouble.

"Should we cancel the sealing?" I whispered.

Kylan stopped so suddenly, pulling me back before I could walk into him. His face was hard, and his eyes burning. "And what, Violet?" He spat. "Give him Thorne?"

"No, of course not!" I hissed back.

From the corner of my eye, I already saw the others approaching. Lian and Sora together, Trinity and Dylan with Nate close behind. There was probably so much tension between us, anyone could feel it from across the garden.

"I think my brother is capable of many things," Kylan said. "And I guess we'll just have to find out how far he's willing to go, but we are doing what we discussed."

His jaw locked. "Even if Kayden and I both have to die for it," he said, "Baelor will be sealed."

Chapter 397

The others were closing in on us, the distance between us narrowing.

My lips parted, but no words came out. What was Kylan saying? He had always said he wouldn't let anything happen to me, but what about him?

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