

Chapter 399

Violet

No...

My lashes fluttered as my mind scrambled to come up with an excuse.

"I d-don't," I stuttered. "I'm not—"

I stopped myself and took a slow breath, then let it out.

Cecilia had a gentle, apologetic smile on her face, and that's when I accepted my fate. There was no point in denying it. She wasn't just randomly making accusations.

"It's okay," she said softly. "I won't ever judge you for being...that. I am not that kind of person."

A warm sensation filled my chest. I felt exposed and strangely relieved at the same time. It was the dangerous secret I had been guarding with my life, but the queen's reaction wasn't as bad as I expected.

Kylan hummed. "How long?" he asked. "How long have you known?"

Cecilia tilted her head as if she were creating a timeline. "That's a good question," she said. "But you should be asking yourselves why no one else has figured it out yet."

A small smile curved her lips. "The two of you haven't been...that subtle."

We hadn't?

"Your father loved to talk," she breathed. "About his academy days, especially his best friend, the Alpha Prince who abandoned the Alpha



King for the witch...a child of blood both hated more than anyone." She let out a quiet chuckle. "He told that story endlessly. How she betrayed him, manipulated everyone..."

Her eyes drifted away for a moment. "I heard it every single day," she said. "How much I reminded him of her, and how furious it made him. I used to vent to my Ladies until one day they stopped remembering the details."

She looked back at me. "But I did remember. I remember everything, and I found it strange that they couldn't. Still, I let it go."

My throat tightened. "The witch," I asked carefully. "Was her name... Adelaide?"

I whispered the name I rarely said out loud.

"That's her," Cecilia nodded. "I knew something was wrong when I found the pictures in his safe," she said. "Two of them...a man and a woman, hidden away but kept close to his heart."

My breath caught.

Pictures of my parents?

After all he had done, why would Elyx keep them?

What kind of sick, fucking obsession was that?

"From the first time I laid my eyes on you," Cecilia went on, "I knew you weren't born a Bloodrose, and that you belonged to those people whose faces I used to look at every single day."

She chuckled softly, shaking her head. "And watching how Kylan always tried to protect you, how you voiced your concerns for the mountain



witches and felt the need to help them." Her gaze flicked between us. "It made it obvious."

She inhaled slowly. "Even so," she said, knitting her brows, "it's not a crime to care for your people, so there's not much you could do. But you should have buried that dangerous part of yourself better. Like I did."

Her eyes met mine, her gaze serious now. "That is what keeps you safe, and..."

Her words faltered, and her eyes softened. There was no need to finish the sentence because I already knew what she would say.

And what would have prevented all of this.

Just how much did she know?

The fact that neither Baelor nor my identity had shocked her both came as a surprise.

I glanced at Kylan, hoping to read his reaction. He had gone very quiet. His eyes narrowed on the queen, and I wondered what went through his mind.

"What dangerous part of yourself did you have to bury?" he asked.

While I was just relieved to know the queen accepted me, Kylan was more focused on the important questions. I had been so focused on my own relief that I overlooked it.

He squinted slightly, and Cecilia held his gaze without blinking. It was almost like the two of them were communicating with their eyes, and I felt like an intruder in their conversation.

Cecilia broke the eye contact and shifted her attention to me. Her smile



was soft. "Please," she gestured gently, her hands lifting with grace. "Tell me. What can I do for the two of you?"

I hummed under my breath and looked at Kylan. I wasn't leading this, but simply following him. The next step would be up to him.

"There's no time to explain everything," Kylan said. "But past midnight, we need to take care of something. A life or death situation, and it's important that Kayden doesn't interfere. At all."

Life or death...

Hearing it out loud made it feel even more terrifying.

Cecilia nodded once. "You want me to stop him," she said calmly, "so you and your friends can prevent Baelor from using your brother as a vessel."

Kylan and I both snapped our heads to shoot each other a look, then stared at her. I couldn't remember ever discussing that part with her, and judging by his reaction, he didn't remember it either.

He drew in a breath. "You seem to know a lot more than I thought."

Her lips trembled. "A good guess, I suppose," she replied.

"Sure," Kylan said suspiciously.

Cecilia rested her hand against the front of her gown, grounding herself. "Please tell me," she asked, "why did you come to me now?"

A breath escaped Kylan as he scanned the garden. His eyes landed on Trinity, who was wrapped around Dylan in a tight hug. The two shared a laugh, and it was good to see that despite everything, they were still able to make the best of their night.



Kylan looked back at Cecilia. "Someone asked who could stop him at this point," he said. "And I know the king won't...but I do have a queen for a mother," he continued, sounding hopeful. "And I'm trusting her to keep her word and have my back from now on."

Cecilia's lips curled as she lowered her gaze.

"That," she said quietly, "is a very wise decision."

She slowly lifted her head again and nodded at the two of us like she had just come to a realization. Perhaps the realization of the one who would one day succeed her having witch blood running through her veins.

Who knew?

I couldn't imagine that it wouldn't worry her at least a little bit.

"Just as you trust me with that task," she began, "I trust you enough to leave the fate of the world in your hands."

Her eyes moved between us. "You both seem to know exactly what you're doing."

Kylan gave her the briefest smile as Cecilia reached out and took my hand. Her grip was warm and firm. "Now, please," she said, her free arm gesturing around us.

"You still have time before midnight," she said. "There is nothing you can do until then, so you might as well enjoy yourselves. At least for a little while."

I glanced around the garden again. It truly looked beautiful, and a lot of people seemed to be having a good time. I spotted three of Kylan's younger sisters spinning in clumsy circles while holding hands, laughing so hard they nearly tripped over their own feet.



A smile instantly tugged at my lips. It felt great to see them having fun. We had been tense all night, and it didn't do us any good.

Yes, all of this was very serious, but still...

If the world really was going to end by Baelor's hand, perhaps Kayden's, I wanted to be able to say I enjoyed my last moments with Kylan, even just a little.

Kylan and I looked at each other, and both shrugged our shoulders.

Because why not.

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