Chapter 403

Violet

We had barely left when I heard the howls echoed through the air. The Lyperian lycans cried with joy, and it felt as if the entire kingdom had awakened. This was supposed to be the most beautiful part, but unfortunately, it didn't go as planned.

Kylan's grip was still as firm as we walked, the others close behind us. We were almost at the greenhouse, and I knew I had to stay focused, but I couldn't help it...

I couldn't help but look back at Nate.

His eyes were locked on Kylan's back. He had no problem keeping up with our steps, but it was like he wasn't even there. He looked unfocused, hollow, and his mind was clearly still on Kaelis and how he had handled the situation.

"Where's Prince Kayden?" Sora asked, her voice shaking.

"You don't have to worry about that," Kylan said without looking back. " The queen's got it handled."

Sora squeezed herself between Dylan and Lian. In her mind, she believed that if anything happened, those two would protect her. And they would, without a doubt.

Kylan and Nate locked eyes. Nate's lips parted, but Kylan quickly shook his head. "Not now," he said softly.

His hand squeezed mine just a little harder. Leaving Kaelis in the state she was in couldn't have been easy for him either. Especially after everything they had just fixed between them.

The greenhouse came into view. A sound followed that sent shivers down my spine, harsh rustling and metal rattling, before the piercing cry of a raven cut through the air.

Thorne.

We all froze in our tracks. The noise returned, this time more piercing. It sounded like claws scraping against something, and if this continued at this rate, I feared he might actually be able to free himself.

This time I didn't wait. I let go of Kylan's hand and rushed inside, my breath quickening as I moved toward the back and shoved aside the pots that had been stacked to hide the cage.

The dark cloth covering it shifted, and the sound underneath grew louder, like he knew I was there.

My heart stammered as I reached out, but then someone yanked me back.

"Don't touch it," Kylan warned. "We need you."

His hand caught my wrist just in time, leaving me no choice but to look at the cage shaking violently.

He was right. Whatever Thorne was becoming or doing at that moment, it wasn't safe for me to touch him.

The rest stood behind us, packed into the narrow space, and no one dared to speak. Everyone's attention was on the restless raven inside the rattling cage.

"Maybe he's just hungry," Trinity muttered after a while.

A chuckle left Kylan right before his eyes fixed on Dylan.

"How long?"

"About twenty minutes," he answered.

Twenty minutes...

A knot formed in my stomach. We could only hope Cecilia could keep Kayden busy for that long. Because if he got free before then...

No matter what anyone said, it was just really hard to believe that someone brave enough to take on all of us had nothing in reserve.

"What do we do until then?" Lian asked.

"We wait," Kylan decided. "However long Baelor chooses to keep us here, and then we move."

Baelor...

I looked at him, my heart still racing. "I saw—"

"The shadow?" he cut in. "So did we."

My brows pulled together. If they had also seen the shadow, why did the celebration continue like nothing was wrong? How could something like that fly through the night and no one give a damn?

"It didn't look like anyone else saw," Dylan said quietly. "It circled around us. Just us."

"But I didn't see anything," Sora frowned.

It wasn't hard to figure out what was going on. For some unexplainable reason, only those who had gone through the box could had seen the shadow. Sora hadn't been with us, so she couldn't see it.

I could get behind that explanation, but it still didn't explain the voices.

"I heard them," I breathed, feeling all eyes turn to me.

"My parents. Adelaide and Alaric," I said. "In the woods. It felt like my mind was...somewhere else," I explained. "Like it was stuck inside the Veil. They were fighting against something, and they couldn't hold it much longer."

"Did you talk to them?" Kylan asked, his eyes serious.

"No," I shook my head. "They were speaking to each other, but it was as if they sensed I was there. It's hard to explain..."

I could hardly finish my words before cold air rolled through the greenhouse. It felt wrong.

Then a deep voice whispered, "Thorne."

We all tensed. We had all heard it this time, except for Sora, whose body had been the only one that hadn't stiffened.

"It's freezing in here, isn't it?" she said, wrapping her arms around herself.

Suddenly, the roof began to shake violently, causing the plants to go wild and the pots to clink together. I knew Sora had heard it at least this time because she immediately hid herself behind Dylan.

There was a presence of something dark and massive outside, and it could only be him.

Baelor.

"I think that's our cue," Nate forced a nervous smile, pushing himself

forward. He grabbed the cage through the cloth and pulled it close. "He doesn't want us here much longer, and if we don't leave now, that thing will tear this place apart to get to the raven."

He shared a look with Kylan, and that was enough.

"Go. I'll stay at the back," I said, giving Kylan's shoulder a squeeze. The two of them moved to the front as we left the greenhouse. Everyone scanned their surroundings as we all lived with the same fear. The fear of something flying at us at any second.

Kylan looked over his shoulder and gave me a nod. He probably didn't like what I was doing, but he didn't make a big deal out of it either because he knew it was the right thing. If Baelor showed himself again, it would fall to me to act immediately, and as frightening as that was, I knew my role.

Trinity slowed down until she was walking beside me.

"You probably shouldn't stand that close to me," I told her. "We don't know when he'll come back."

She responded with a chuckle. "You still don't get it, do you?" she said, squinting.

"What?"

She looked around us until her eyes settled back on me.

"We're a team, Violet," she stated. "If you're going down, I'm going down with you. You know that—"

"But I don't want that," I said back.

I didn't want to carry the burden of...simply being a burden. I wasn't even

sure what the hell I was doing, and I had already dragged her into it far too much.

"I don't care," Trinity shrugged. "There are a lot of things in life we don't want. We deal with them anyway."

My lips curled into a small, grateful smile. Trinity was one of a kind, and there was just no stopping her. I could beg her not to have my back, and she would still have it.

I never thought I'd get to this point.

Using my eyes after being told my entire life to pretend like my powers didn't exist.

I was untrained, sloppy, still figuring everything out as I went, but I knew I could do it. And more than that, I knew I hadto.

Choice had left the room a long time ago.

I had failed Claire and Greg when they needed me the most, but I wouldn't fail Adelaide and Alaric. I was determined not to fail anyone ever again.

Our path opened into an empty field, and we came to a stop. It was dark, with nothing but grass and the full moon above us. We formed a circle, and Nate carefully set the cage down in the center, the cloth still twitching.

"There won't be anyone here tonight," Kylan called out. "Everyone's heading deeper into the forest."

"Are you certain that not shifting and fighting is the best course of action, and the best way to protect Violet?" Dylan asked, looking down at the moving cage.

It went quiet.

A bit too quiet, and when I looked around the circle, I saw all their eyes on me. They were waiting for me to speak.

"No one is shifting," I met their eyes. "I only need you to guard me, but I will be able to do it. I can do it. I will seal him," I said, determined. "I trust my eyes more than anything, and you guys can count on me."

I felt even more at ease as I looked around the group, met with reassuring smiles.

Kylan chuckled. "I don't think anyone ever doubted you, Violet. We know what you can do."

My heart fluttered. It wasn't the words, but the way he said them. Feeling supported mattered so much more to me than feeling powerful or special ever could.

It wasn't just Kylan, but all of them.

Still, I could not deny that his support mattered the most.

We gazed into each other's eyes, and the rest of the world faded for a moment.

The field, the cage, everything...

All of it blurred until there was only him.

The one who always managed to see past everything I pretended to be and straight into the parts I tried to hide.

Dylan cleared his throat, drawing everyone's attention. "So...I hate to bring this up now, especially while we've all been avoiding it," he said. "

But with you using your eyes, will there be a crack in the Veil?"

My stomach flipped, eyes widening as Adelaide's voice filled my head once more.

She had said the Veil was cracking, and it had already done so every time I had used my eyes in the present. The answer was very obvious, and I had already accepted it.

A small, but calm smile pulled at my lips.

"It will."

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