

## Chapter 405

Violet

As I let out a breath, I felt the energy move through me in steady waves. It traveled through our joined hands and began spreading.

A sense of relief washed over me as a barrier formed.

From Dylan to Trinity.

From Kylan to Nate and Lian.

Everyone's eyes but Sora's lit up, each of them holding a fragment of my power. My breath caught in surprise. I had not even known if it would work. I had never done it before, yet it felt exactly like it had in the past. Somehow, I just knew. I trusted my eyes enough to believe they would not fail me when I needed them most.

"How did you do that?" Dylan whispered.

Kylan chuckled in surprise, looking as the shield stood. I couldn't help it, and a chuckle slipped from my own lips. There was still a long way to go, but it started off great.

"Because she's incredible," Kylan said, shaking his head slightly.

Heat rushed to my face, and my cheeks burned. I hated and loved it all at once. It wasn't the time to call me incredible, not yet. To be honest, I didn't even know how I was going to open a portal, but hearing it from him boosted my confidence.

I stepped back, carefully pulling myself out of the shield without breaking it. "You'll have to stay like that," I said. "If you let go, it won't hold."

My eyes landed on Dylan. “How much longer?”

No words left his mouth. He stared into my glowing eyes, and I couldn’t tell if he was impressed or worried.

“How—”

“Five minutes,” he said, snapping out of it. “Now four.”

I nodded and shifted my attention to Sora. “In five minutes,” I told her, “you’ll open the cage and grab Thorne.”

Her breath caught, but she nodded anyway.

My gaze dropped to the ring still on my finger, and I slowly slid it off.

I hadn’t forgotten about the greenhouse and Thorne’s blinding red eyes. How Dylan and I had discovered it would stop every single time the ring came close enough.

My brows raised as I rolled it between my fingers, then I looked at Kylan.

“I haven’t had the chance to tell you, but this ring...”

“What is it?” he asked, urging me to continue.

“When Dylan and I went to the greenhouse earlier,” I went on, “Thorne’s eyes were glowing red, but there’s something about the ring that somehow stopped it.”

His brows pulled together as he went into deep thought. “You think the ring is some kind of protection,” Kylan concluded. “And now you want to give it to Sora because you believe it’ll keep her safe.”

“Yes.”

I walked over to Sora, who looked at me with wide eyes. "Oh no, I can't," she said, shaking her head. "I-I'm not even allowed to touch that ring and—"

Before she could say something else, I grabbed her hand and forced the ring into her palms, then squeezed her fingers tight around it. "I really don't care for the Lyperian rules for now," I said with a light chuckle. "And believe me, neither does Kylan."

She glanced at Kylan, who gave her a shrug, his look questioning whether this was the moment for that.

"You hold Thorne in one hand," I instructed. "And you point the ring at him with the other. It should calm him. It's just a guess, but it might work."

Sora's lips curled into a hopeful smile.

"And it might not," I added. "It might make things worse for all of us."

As soon as those words left my mouth, her smile faltered. I hated that it did, but I wouldn't lie to her.

I stepped back to my place. "There's one thing you all need to understand," I said.

My eyes moved across all of them. Trinity, Lian, Nate, then settled on Dylan. I looked at him for a moment longer before my gaze lingered on Kylan. He knew what was coming.

"If you see me get tired," I continued, "if my knees buckle, if I throw up, if anything happens...do not break the barrier under any circumstances."

I knew what I was asking, and that it wasn't something small, but the words had to be said. Unfortunately, these were all people who would do

something stupid to save me.

Kylan had done it when he allowed himself to be Baelor's vessel to save me.

Nate had done it when he kept his mouth shut about what happened to his sister, just to keep my identity safe.

Sora whacked Kayden over the head. Trinity said if we were going down, it would be together. Lian, Dylan, all of them...

But not today.

"I don't care how bad it looks," I added. "I don't care how scared you get."

A small breath came from Kylan's lips.

"I know what I have to do," I said softly. "And I won't have anyone risking their lives for me any more than they already have. We'll do what needs to be done," I finished. "And I'll do what I was meant to do."

Kylan's brows drew together, and he seemed caught off guard. "I thought we were all on the same page," he said. "You can do this. There's no need to talk like that because you will do it and everything will be fine." 

I knew what he was trying to do.

When he said he would give his life for me, the words came easily, but the moment I turned it around and even hinted at doing the same, he didn't want to hear it.

I swallowed. "You're right," I said quietly.

My gaze shifted to Dylan.

“Two minutes,” he muttered before I could ask.

“Two,” I repeated, facing forward again.

My thoughts started racing as I replayed everything we had done, every risk we had taken, and how it somehow had not killed us yet. For now, everything had worked in our favor, and it made me wonder if this was how it always felt right before something irreversible happened.

Perhaps this was it.

There was a heavy silence, allowing me to close my eyes. I had found it strange when Aelius did the same, wondering how anyone in that situation could remain so calm and simply wait. Now I understood. There was nothing more we could do.

The only sound around me was the raven, losing its mind.

I knew I had to keep it together and couldn't let anger take over. If anger was what had healed Kayden, and what Baelor fed on, then I was determined not to give him so much as a spark.

Please...

Moon Goddess, just let this go smoothly. Just this once...

Not just for me, but also for my parents.

Adelaide's face flashed through my mind, and then Alaric's. They had been holding the Veil together for all those years.

I couldn't let it be for nothing.

My heart started pounding harder as I wondered when those long two minutes would finally be over.

I opened my eyes and, by chance, met Nate's gaze.

He gave me a small, reassuring smile. I returned it without thinking. Even after everything, after the shock of finding his mate and nearly rejecting Kaelis, he was still pushing himself to make me feel better.

A sudden rush of cold air swept through me.

"Did you feel that?" I asked.

Before anyone could answer, the ground beneath our feet started to tremble, the cage rattled at its strongest, and Thorne let out a deep, distorted sound.

We all looked up at the same time, noticing the sky above us had changed. Dark clouds moved over our heads, lightning flashing through them as if it wanted to prepare us for something.

I locked eyes with Sora, watching as she slid the ring onto her finger before moving to the cage as instructed. Slowly, she held out her hand, and the ring responded with a soft white glow. With her other hand, she reached for the cloth.

She pulled it away in one swift motion, so fast we caught a glimpse just in time of Thorne's red eyes turning black. The raven let out a weak, broken sound, his body slumping.

Sora opened the cage, her arm trembling as she held the ring toward him.

Both her hands shook as she used the one with the ring to keep it pointed at him and her free hand to reach inside. A breath escaped her as she wrapped her hand around Thorne's body, pinning his wings to his sides.

She gritted her teeth as she backed away from the cage, and I was certain her arms must have been hurting from how far she had stretched them. Anything to make sure he wouldn't get too close or look away from the ring.

But she didn't complain. She must've realized that we were well past the point of stopping now.

Out of nowhere, my ears filled with whispers. There were dozens, maybe hundreds, yet somehow it was the same voice, breaking through and pressing in from every direction.

'I'm going to take back what's mine.'

'You can't stop me.'

'I will make sure you die here.'

'The Veil will open today.'

My pulse quickened.

'Failure of a granddaughter. Look at what they've done to my granddaughter.'

A lump formed in my throat.

Gloria?

There was too much to process. Too much I couldn't process because my mind could barely keep up as a shadow tore through the barrier.

Baelor...

Sora yelped, her fingers digging into Thorne's feathers. She squeezed the

side of his head, forcing his beak open. Her head turned away as the raven forced out another cry, and the whispers from before turned into dark laughter.

My pulse thundered in my ears, leaving no room for doubt. As I focused, the laughter faded away, and only one thing went through my mind.

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