

Chapter 408

Violet

We stepped back into the celebration like nothing had happened. A small group of people who hadn't gone to the woods still lingered. Among them were Cecilia and Kayden.

The two of them were still standing where we had left them. Kayden had his arms crossed in front of Cecilia, while she stood with her back to us.

His eyes slowly shifted until they landed on us, but for some reason they didn't hold the same intensity that had scared me earlier. I was sure it had something to do with the certainty that Baelor had been sealed away for now. When his jaw moved slightly, Cecilia turned and looked at us too.

"What do you think they were talking about?" I asked Kylan.

He released a sigh. "Those two don't have anything to talk about, Violet," he replied.

Cecilia's eyes met Kylan's, and he gave her a small nod. She stepped aside, and as soon as she did, Kayden didn't hesitate to push past her and stride toward us. Cecilia slipped into the crowd and quickly disappeared.

I had a feeling I knew where she was headed, and I figured that, just like Nate, she was going to look for Kaelis.

"Get behind me," Kylan exhaled, his gaze still fixed on Kayden. He nudged me a step behind him, his grip on the cage still steady.

I braced myself, waiting for that awful feeling to rise under my skin, but it didn't. Not even when he stopped in front of us.

His lips curled into a crooked grin as his dark eyes scanned us like he had

all the time in the world. Me, the cage, Kylan...

"Congratulations," he said lightly. "The two of you seem to have gotten what you wanted."

"Yes," Kylan replied calmly. "We did."

Kayden's eyes hardened, and his fingers reached for the cage. "Too bad," he said. "But it's not too late to undo it and serve our lord. You do not know who you are challenging. All you need to do is give me back Thorne. We still have a chance to..."

"What?"

Exactly.

What?

Kylan and I glanced at each other briefly before he burst out laughing right in his face. I couldn't blame him. It was funny.

But Kayden couldn't laugh about it. His expression only darkened further, and the fingers that had reached out were now balled into a fist. His eyes twitched slightly.

"Are you actually insane?" Kylan huffed, controlling his laughter. "After all you've done, do you really expect me to give you back that raven? Did you hit your head?"

Kayden tilted his head. "No," he said slowly. "My brother poisoned me, and it must've changed me."

Silence stretched as the two of them held each other's gaze.

"I've been poisoned," he said. "I kept my mouth shut about it because I

have plans for us. All of us. I have suffered, been gagged in a pantry by a... a commoner! But I accepted it because I am still able to see the bigger picture," Kayden spat. "We can still release Baelor, open the Veil, and..."

"No," Kylan stated. "It's over, Kayden."

Kayden's jaw locked. He dragged a hand over his face, pressing his fingers hard against his eyes like he was physically holding himself together. Then he released a frustrated groan.

"Okay," he sighed. "Okay, okay, I'll back off for now and let you sleep on it."

He stepped forward, right past us. As he did, he leaned in just enough that his mouth was near my ear. Close enough that his breath brushed my skin.

"Don't do this, Lettie, please. Don't be a traitor," he whispered. "Don't jump for people who wouldn't jump for you if they knew what you really are."

My stomach tightened.

"You've angered Baelor, and angering Baelor means angering Kian," he continued softly. "And both are people you do not want to anger."

His voice dropped. "But Kian isn't here yet. There is still a chance."

Kayden bumped his shoulder deliberately against mine and kept walking. Kylan's body tensed beside me, and I felt the shift in his stance. His brows drew together, hand tightened around the cage as he was one breath away from lunging.

"Don't," I said quickly, reaching for his arm. I rubbed his shoulder gently and looked up at him. "Let it go."

Our eyes locked. His were dark and furious.

"He's not going to be able to do anything," I said, doing my best to convince him. "Not now."

Kylan's jaw stayed tight for a moment longer, but he finally exhaled. His shoulders lowered, and the darkness in his eyes dimmed. I was finally getting through to him.

"His words are just words," I added. "That's what he's been doing forever. Talking, threatening, trying to get in our heads."

"Yes," Kylan said. "But for how much longer will his words be just words?"

That made me pause for a moment.

He was not someone to be underestimated, and it had already happened before. Right before he killed Chrystal.

Kayden was dramatic and loud, but at the same time also quiet and patient in a strange way. This was the same guy who had waited for years for this moment.

That part unsettled me.

Kylan released a sigh, and I matched the sound that came from his lips, wrapping my arms around him.

"My hair is probably a mess," I chuckled. "I almost collapsed just minutes ago, you still haven't kept any of your promises, and your mind is still on Kayden," I said. "Please, please, at least until morning, can we focus on something else?"

A smirk appeared on Kylan's lips. "Whatever you say."

I tilted my head. "Let's just go back to our room, and..."

Before I could finish, I felt Lumia stir inside me.

I felt it immediately, and the guilt followed.

She was so desperate to get out, but respectful enough not to force it.

She had supported me through everything tonight and kept me calm when I could have lost control. I couldn't have done any of the things I had done without her.

After what happened in the past, I had sworn I wouldn't shift for a while, but I couldn't let her fall like this either.

"No, actually..." I said slowly.

Kylan glanced down at me. "We should go for a run."

He blinked. "Huh?"

'Huh?' Lumia said in my head at the same time.

I laughed and nodded. "Yes. A run!"

"I thought you didn't want to," Kylan said.

"That was before I sealed a god of the underworld," I replied casually. "I think I can do just about anything now."

The words still felt strange in my mouth. I had done that. Me.

The fear of losing control while shifting felt so much smaller now. It wasn't completely gone, but it was manageable.

Kylan still looked puzzled.

His brows were slightly drawn together as he studied me carefully, like he was trying to decide whether I was overestimating myself or genuinely fine.

"And your eyes?" he asked cautiously.

"I can control them," I said confidently.

'Good answer!' Lumia agreed. 'Don't let him ruin this for me or Valerius!'

Kylan held my gaze for a moment longer before letting out a surprised laugh. "If you say so."

I grabbed his hand without giving him time to change his mind, then dragged him with me toward the woods, cage and all. 

"Come on."