



Chapter 413

Violet

I stood in front of the bathroom mirror, gazing at my reflection. The blue eyes, which had been glowing too much lately, now stared back at me. For the first time in a long while, there were no bags under my eyes.

Nothing to show the lack of sleep or the exhaustion that came with it.

I had slept.

Like a baby actually.

There had been no nightmares, no screaming, shadows, and even Thorne, or I supposed, just the raven now, had stayed quiet.

I drew in a slow breath, adjusting the belt of the blue shirtdress wrapped around my waist. There was, of course, that one thing we still had to deal with, Camille, but other than that, everything still felt unreal.

We were actually going to do something normal today. Walk through the city, see people, explore, and eat.

It was almost unfortunate that this was happening right before we left for Starlight.

I smiled at my reflection, and it wasn't forced. It came so naturally that it had me doubting myself.

Last night felt like three different lifetimes packed into one.

Sealing Baelor, almost dying...

My fingers drifted to the side of my neck, to the spot where fangs had



brushed my skin.

Almost getting marked...

A slow breath escaped me. "I'm sure he'll really do it next time, right?" I murmured to the girl in the mirror, staring into her hopeful eyes.

Our talk went great, and I had no doubt he would. At least I knew I had done my part and wouldn't ask any further. Still, there was something so vulnerable about wanting to be marked, offering yourself so openly, and being told not yet.

A knock made me pull my fingers away, and then Kylan's head peeked through the door. "Ready?"

I turned, and my eyes automatically traced their way from the ground up. He looked unfairly good today. When my eyes finally reached his face, I noticed the raven perched on his shoulder.

"Uh..."

Kylan followed my look and sighed lightly. "I can't leave him here," he explained. "He's kind of my responsibility now."

He reached up and patted Thorne gently, who leaned into his touch. It seemed like the two were already starting to warm up to each other.

"Sure," I breathed.

I walked over to him and leaned closer to press a quick kiss to his lips. He smiled faintly against my mouth, and for a second I just stood there, wishing for the moment to never end.

This felt scarily normal.



But for how long?

"I don't know if I'm ready to ask Fergus to tag along," I admitted, my teeth clenching. "What if he says no?"

My arms locked with Kylan's, who gave a shrug. "Then he says no."

I rolled my eyes but couldn't hold back a smile. "You're so helpful."

He smirked. "I know."

We walked out together, Thorne shifting on his shoulder as we headed down the hall toward the wing quarters where the Bloodrose would be staying.

The closer we got, the more my stomach tightened because I knew this could go both ways. After everything I had learned, I still had no idea what he truly thought of me, and that frightened me.

What if he just simply didn't want anything from me?

What if he agreed but it felt forced?

What if...

"Stop overthinking," Kylan chuckled. "You're doing the right thing. I've seen the way he looks at you. He loves you."

I exhaled. "We'll see."

We followed the sound of voices into the inner courtyard, and when we spotted the Bloodroses, I almost lost the ability to breathe. It still felt like I was walking into a crowd of strangers, and I didn't know if that was something that would change any time soon.



They were my people, but I had to be realistic. Too much had happened over the years to be fixed in a matter of days, no matter how hard I tried.

I let my eyes drift around the courtyard, searching for Dylan or just anyone who could make this a bit less uncomfortable. Even Uncle Ewan would do.

As odd as he could be, he was always the first to crack a joke or make something feel less heavy, but he wasn't here, of course.

Kylan nudged me gently.

I knew why.

He wanted me to suck it up and do the talking.

He leaned in closer, his lips brushing my ear. "You know," he whispered. "Strategically speaking, this would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the King to wipe out the Bloodrose in one go."

I choked on a laugh, quickly pressing my lips together to hide it. "Stop it!" I hissed under my breath, pinching his side.

I pulled myself together right before my lips curled into an uneasy smile.

"I'm looking for, uh..."

A few stepped aside, making space as Fergus walked through.

"I suppose you might be looking for me," he said, smiling.

He stepped forward, his arms almost stretching to pull me into an embrace. I let go of Kylan and moved toward him too, but then we both stopped, like something invisible held us in place.



An embarrassed chuckle escaped me, and I glanced down briefly, unsure what to do with my hands now.

Fergus cleared his throat. "Crown Prince."

Then his eyes returned to me. "To what do I owe the visit?"

My lips parted, but the only thing that came out was a sigh. Fergus looked behind him, and seconds later the others resumed talking, turning back to their own conversations. I was certain I had his glare to thank for that.

A warm feeling rose in my chest. He had redirected the attention on purpose because he knew not a lot would've come out if he hadn't.

I took a breath. "Are you leaving tomorrow?" I asked.

He bopped his head once. "We are."

I nodded. "Well...we're going to the city today and I was wondering if maybe...if perhaps you wanted to...come with us?"

It didn't come out as smoothly as I had hoped. My heart was beating way too fast, but at least I had managed to ask him.

Why was this harder than sealing a god?

"You don't have to," I added quickly. "If you don't want to..."

"No, I want to."

I blinked. "Really?"

He smiled wider this time. "Yes," he said.

"I would love to bring Mom and Dylan. We have...some exciting news to share."



Exciting news?

I nodded quickly. "Yes. Of course!"

Relief washed through me, and before this conversation could turn even more stiff, Kylan stepped in.

"We'll be waiting out front. We'll leave in an hour."

"I'll be there," Fergus said, his tone light. So light it startled me because it was too uncommon.

"Great," I said quickly. Then I turned a bit too abruptly and started walking away, hearing Kylan's footsteps beside me in seconds.

"I almost wanted to gouge my eyes out watching that," he muttered. "That was the most awkward thing I've ever seen."

I shot him a glare, and he rested his hand on top of my head. "But," he added, "I'm still proud of you, Pup."

"Thanks," I mumbled.

After some time, we stepped toward the front of the palace and were met with the morning air. It was still hard to believe that Fergus had said yes, but it was a good start to the day.

My mind went to Kaelis.

If there was anyone who wouldn't be having a good day, it was probably her.

"By the way," I said, glancing at Kylan, "will you talk to Kaelis?"

He stopped playing with the raven on his shoulder, and a frown appeared.



"Who?" he asked, looking around like he was checking if I meant someone else. When he realized I wasn't, he looked down at himself.

"Me? Why would I?"

I stared at him.

Was he serious?

"She's your sister," I told him. "I didn't want to overwhelm her, but you are her brother. You should talk to her."

He scrunched his face. "I'm still confused why the Moon Goddess paired those two," he said calmly. "But I'm sure they'll figure out how to deal with the rejection."

"The what?" I blurted.

"The rejection," Kyran said simply. "They obviously can't be together. I mean, Nate? With my little sister?"

He laughed under his breath like the idea was absurd.

I frowned. "Because of the...you know?"

Lunaris...

Kyran shook his head, his smile fading. "That's not it," he said. "I would never condemn him for something he's trying to overcome."

"Good," I said. "I feel the same—"

"But," Kyran continued, "you know Nate. He's a great guy, but have we all magically forgotten what he's been up to at Starlight?"

I nodded slowly, my mouth parting slightly.



The girls.

Right...

Nate and his habits.

Kylan's expression shifted. "I made a mistake once."

I looked at him.

"In the beginning," he continued, "I led you on because I was being stupid, not sure what I wanted. I kept you close, but I didn't commit, and to this day it still bothers me to think I hurt you in any way."

He didn't look at me when he said it. He just stared ahead, his jaw tightened. "I don't want that to happen to Nate and Kaelis," he went on. "I don't want him to repeat my mistake, and I don't want her to go through the same pain I let you go through. It was wrong and should've never happened."

"And that's why you want him to reject her..."

I couldn't help but think about it.

The beginning.

Our beginning.

I had never felt that confused, that angry, or that uncertain about anything until I tried to reject him and he refused to let me, all while saying he did not want me.

We had survived it, but it had hurt back then, and I supposed that at the end of the day, an instant rejection was much cleaner than false hope.



Also much cleaner than being accepted only to get your heart ripped apart later.

I knew Nate, and I knew he wasn't careless with people's hearts. This had to be even more sensitive, considering she was Kylan's sister, the princess of Lyperia.

The memory from last night replayed in my head. He had almost done it. He had almost rejected her. The only thing holding him back was the decency not to embarrass her any more in public.

Would he have rejected her by now?

Kylan looked around, clearly wanting to drop the topic. I followed as his gaze drifted upward until it stopped at one of the palace windows.

"Kayden..."

