

Chapter 415

Violet

The city of Lyperia was nothing like the palace.

I had seen glimpses before on our first day here, and when Kaelis dragged me to her dress fitting, but it felt great to see it again.

Now I could actually feel it.

Experience it.

The tall buildings, ones you could not see in the Common Lands, stretched so high I had to tilt my head back just to see the top. There were so many of them, all different shapes and sizes, that my eyes didn't know where to settle.

Lyperian City had everything.

The biggest malls, endless rows of shops I had never seen before or even heard of, cars moving nonstop, and strangely enough, there was barely any green in sight.

There was such a huge contrast from the area surrounding the palace.

If the land around the palace felt like something from a dream, the city felt like something from the future.

This was the Lyperia that Kylan used to brag about at Starlight, and I could finally understand why. Though it would never beat my love for nature.

There were people everywhere. So many that the guards were surrounded on all sides as we walked together in a group, close enough that it almost

felt suffocating.

Everyone wanted to see him.

Their crown prince.

Hands waved, children sat on their parents' shoulders and pointed excitedly.

It got to the point where it all felt a little too overwhelming, and I tightened my hold on Kylan's arm without thinking. As incredible as it was, I had no idea what I would do if the crowd swallowed me up.

Kylan glanced down at me with an amused smile, Thorne still on his shoulder. "Scared?"

"Kind of," I admitted, not even having the energy to lie about it. "You're popular," I said. "And now I feel bad for dragging you into this when you can't even breathe without someone almost fainting."

A small chuckle escaped him. "I already told you the first day," he said. "They're not here for me. They're here for you."

"For me?"

He leaned slightly closer so only I could hear him.

"This," he gestured to the crowd, "is exactly why everyone tends to stay inside the palace and get on each other's nerves, instead of coming down here."

Fergus cleared his throat behind us. "May I give my opinion?"

Kylan glanced over his shoulder. "Sure."

Fergus tightened his grip around Sonya's hand and walked a little closer so he wouldn't have to raise his voice over the noise of the city. "I think," he suggested calmly, "it would be good for the people of Lyperia to see you more often. It would be great for all the royals to build closer bonds with the people. They seem to adore you, yet everything here feels so... distant."

Even though it was coming from a Bloodrose, he wasn't entirely wrong. It was the one thing that caught my attention as well. People reached out to shake hands, but there was no way they could see past the guards.

"I know you'll do things differently than the current king," he said. "You might want to start with this."

I watched Kylan carefully, fearing he might take offense to Fergus's words. He didn't. His expression shifted into that focused look he got when something meaningful truly reached him.

"Perhaps you're right," he said. Fergus turned his attention to Nate next, and that's when he started becoming his boring self. Basically Dylan's dad, who could not stop talking about anything other than politics and strategies.

"Is he always like that?" Kylan whispered.

"Yes. Better get used to it."

An uncomfortable smile curled on Nate's lips, making me wonder if he regretted walking with us. I glanced back as far as I could without tripping over my own feet.

Kaelis was walking between Trinity and Dylan, tucked between them like a third partner in their relationship, but the two didn't seem to mind her presence.

If anything, Trinity looked protective. She had her arms wrapped around her, and I couldn't help but smile. I could already picture what she was probably whispering to her right then.

'That's his loss. You're beautiful, amazing, and there is someone else out there for you.'

I knew it would be something along those lines because she had done it for me too, but unfortunately Kaelis wasn't that easy to convince. No matter what, I just couldn't see her giving up Nate so easily.

I released a breath and looked up at Kylan.

"Where are we going next?"

"I'm taking you to the flower garden first," he said. "It'll be quieter there and give you enough space to talk to your dad."

"A flower garden?" My face lit up instantly. "Really?"

So there was green after all.

He gave a small nod.

"I'm interested in seeing what herbs they grow here," I added enthusiastically. "I heard Lyperia has some rare medicinal roots that don't survive in colder climates and—"

"That's great, Pup," Kylan chuckled. "You should tell your dad."

I narrowed my eyes at him as he poked fun at me. Kylan could listen to me ramble all day, but if there was something he genuinely wasn't interested in, it had to be herbs.

"Anyway," I laughed, slipping away from his arm and moving backward

so I could squeeze between Sonya and Fergus. Two people who would listen.

Nate, who I had just saved from Fergus, exhaled in visible relief and shot me a grateful look. Then he moved beside Kylan.

"Kylan just told me he's taking us to the flower garden!" I announced.

Fergus's eyes widened immediately. "That's great!" he said. "Did you know Lyperia has some rare flowers that wouldn't survive on the Common Lands—"

"I know!" I said, excited. "I was just telling him!"

Kylan glanced back at us in disbelief. "You really are all the same," he said with a soft smile.

"Of course we are," Fergus acknowledged, pulling me closer. "That's my daughter."

My heart softened. It took some time for me to fully take in his words, and before I could, Fergus began talking again. The slightest smile tugged at Kylan's lips as he looked at us, and in that moment, I realized what he was trying to do.

He was helping in his own way, trying to make sure our talk later would not feel as awkward as our previous interactions, which had made him want to 'gouge' his eyes out.

Maybe I really was a true Bloodrose...

Maybe if I walked into that conversation later still holding on to that feeling, knowing I was a true Bloodrose, then I could tell him everything. I could open my heart and share my thoughts with him, just as a daughter speaking to her father.

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"You shouldn't have started," Sonya whispered beside me.

I smiled at Sonya as Fergus continued rambling about the flower garden.

"I know."

I kept looking into those eyes that once scared me so much, but now they weren't judging me. It was not really Sonya I had been afraid of. It was more the fear of looking too closely and finding the hatred I had always believed she felt for me.

The deeper I looked, the more I heard it.

Her heartbeat.

It was good news.

Amazing news.

Yet somehow that scared me more than anything, because life just couldn't be this good without taking something in return. There was just no way.

I swallowed back my thoughts. "I'm okay."