

Chapter 423

Violet

Minutes had passed, but not a lot had changed, and with nowhere to go, I could already tell that this would be a long night. My eyes had been scanning the room for a while now, as if the box might just suddenly appear.

This was bad news.

Very bad.

My eyes snapped to Kylan, who leaned against the wall. He was possibly thinking of our next move, but if the king would throw out these accusations with solid proof, would there even be a next move?

King Elyx was out for blood.

But I was a Hastings...

I doubted he could actually send me to prison island for something as silly as magic, which isn't even prohibited in most places. Still, he could push hard enough to ban me from ever visiting Lyperia or being with Kylan. Use the law to force an end to the mate bond so he could finally get what he wanted.

No...

If he wanted to do that, he would've done it a long time ago.

Why was my mind already jumping to the worst possibility?

"I-I don't understand," I stammered, finally finding my voice after what



felt like an eternity. "Why would someone just...get in and take it? Is it even allowed?"

Kylan let out a huff, then ran a hand through his hair. "I want to say it's the king," he began, his voice tight. "No one else would have the authority to enter our room while we were gone..."

"But?"

A chuckle escaped him. "But then there's Kayden," he said, his eyes moving to the raven who had climbed back to its cage. "And he wanted Thorne back really badly."

My stomach twisted. If anyone would've known about the existence of the box, it would have to be Kayden, who was in the mountains with Varius, but there was no way he could possibly get it to open, right? He did not know the words.

"Do you think they're in on this together?"

"Not exactly," Kylan said. "I think Kayden might've opened a small door by telling Camille," he continued. "But the king...we know he has been collecting evidence for a while now."

I frowned, trying to follow his thinking as he paced for a moment before stopping again. "For some crazy reason," he added, "I don't think Kayden would ever hurt you."

I fluttered my eyes. A few days ago, I would've shared those same thoughts, but Kayden had made it very obvious I wasn't his favorite person at the moment.

Kylan nodded toward the raven. "Kayden just wants Thorne back," he said. "But the king? The king might be after something bigger."

His eyes moved back to me. "And the king likes to reason."

I tilted my head slightly. "Meaning?"

Kylan sighed deeply. "He likes having leverage," he said. "He lets people do whatever they want and simply watches. Then, when the moment is right, he uses it against them. That's just who he is."

My head began spinning. "Then what does he want?"

Kylan frowned. "At first I thought he had done this to get to me, and would offer to drop all charges if I complete the ceremony with Camille."

I stared at him. "But you don't think that's it anymore."

"No," Kylan said immediately, shaking his head. "He wouldn't have gone through all of this for just a ceremony. There is a bigger picture."

His jaw locked. "I think it has to do with you."

My heart skipped. "M-Me?"

Kylan looked down for a moment before speaking again. "I've been thinking about my the queen's words," he said quietly. "About the picture of Alaric the king supposedly keeps hidden."

I furrowed my brows, listening.

"And the way he talks about Adelaide," Kylan went on. "His...strange obsession with her."

He exhaled slowly. "It's like he still hasn't been able to fully let go of the past, and I'm not sure yet," he said. "But I think he's planning to manipulate you into doing something dangerous."



A chill ran through me, and my throat felt dry. We all knew the king was insane, but what level of terrible was Kylan exactly talking about? Would it really be that bad that he felt the need to arrest everyone just to make me agree to it?

What could he possibly want from me?

Kylan's eyes shifted as he stared into mine, and I knew he could see the fear in them. It was so strong it felt impossible to hide.

He took small steps forward until he was close enough to close the distance between us. "Violet," he whispered, taking my hand. His grip felt warm, steady, and safe, but his eyes were worried.

"I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow."

Don't say it...

"But I'll be honest with you." His voice dropped low. The odds are not in our favor. "The Lyperian court will be scary. It's no joke, but it's important you understand something."

His eyes held mine, and it felt as if my heart would beat out of my chest. "Whatever the king asks of you...you cannot do it."

My lips quivered. "Kylan..."

"No." His hands tightened around mine. "Even if he threatens everyone, even if he threatens all of us or this whole damn kingdom...you can't do it."

I felt a pit in my stomach. "But Nate," I whispered. "Lian...Sora..."

The dungeons flashed through my mind.

Varius, and all the witches from the mountains. Dear Goddess...

Would he have arrested those innocent children as well?

Kylan shook his head slowly. "We will find another way to fix all of this," he said, squeezing both of my hands.

I wanted to believe him.

I really did.

"Kylan..." I whispered, my voice small. "What if there isn't another way?"

What if the king would ask me to use my eyes for whatever reason he had in mind? After seeing Nate getting dragged away, Kaelis running after him, the king announcing everything like their punishments were already decided...

It was easy for Kylan to say not to do anything, but lives were actually at stake, and if I could save all those people by somehow sacrificing myself, I would do so in a heartbeat.

Maybe I can try to reach Varius, I said as the thought came to me. We had done it once before in the mountains. "He is in the dungeons now. He might know what the king wants. He might know why the box is gone."

"You can't," Kylan exhaled.

"Why not?"

"The dungeons are designed to block that kind of connection," he explained. "Magic, mind links, anything like that. Nothing gets through those walls."



Of course it was.

My mind kept racing, and I didn't know what to do. I was locked in this room until the supposed trial, had no way to check up on my friends or to explain myself to Fergus...nothing.

Suddenly something clicked, and I lifted my head. "Kylan!"

He looked at me.

"I have to remain here," I said. "But you don't!"

His brows pulled together. "What are you saying?"

"You can go to the dungeons," I continued. "You can find Varius, and ask him what he knows. He might know why the box is missing, and what the king is planning."

Kylan didn't answer right away. He just looked at me like I had lost my mind. "Good idea, Pup," he said with a lazy chuckle. "Maybe I can also bring him some blankets, and a nice book."

I rolled my eyes at his sarcasm and slapped his chest. "Yes, you can't just go to the dungeons...I know," I said, a tired breath escaping me.

All I wanted was to be prepared for the trial or to hopefully stop it before it could take place. I needed to be prepared. We were losing it over a missing box, and hadn't even addressed Chrystal yet. Elyx knew.

Everything felt like it could go wrong at any moment, and I didn't want to walk into this trial not knowing anything. Kylan watched me for a moment, then his expression shifted.

"What about Adelaide?" he asked.



"What about her?"

He looked hopeful. "No one understands the king better than your parents," he said. "They might know what he's after...they might know what it takes to stop whatever he's planning."

"That's..." I tilted my head. "Not the worst idea."

"Can you connect to the Veil?" he asked.

Instead of answering right away, I decided to ask the one who always seemed to have the answers nowadays.

'Lumia?'

She stirred inside me. 'The prince isn't completely wrong,' she said. 'It could work, but we don't know the state of the Veil right now. After everything that happened last night...you really shouldn't...'

"Let's do it," I said.

I had already made up my mind the moment she said it could work. We would deal with the risks later.

Lumia let out a long yawn. 'As impulsive as Alaric, stubborn like Adelaide ...a Hastings,' she mumbled dryly. 'Pick a struggle.'

'Good luck, Violet.'

