

Chapter 426

Violet

Nate...

He had already been through so much. The Lunaris, the expectations, losing his sister, and now this.

The more I thought about it, the more it just felt wrong. The king hadn't just picked random names to throw into the dungeons. He had chosen carefully.

It was all people I cared about, but Nate was the one person Kylan and I both cared about. He knew that.

I lifted my head again just as I noticed Alaric and Adelaide whispering amongst themselves, exchanging glances. I caught Alaric shaking his head at her.

Something was not right. My brows pulled together.

"What?" I asked. "What is it?"

Adelaide turned back to me immediately, her smile warm. "Nothing, Sunshine," she said softly. "We're just so happy you're here."

She reached forward and gave me a gentle push on the shoulder. "And let's not talk about sacrifices," she added lightly. "Let's definitely not talk about sacrifices."

I knew there was something deeper behind those words, but it was frustrating not knowing what. Adelaide continued speaking.

"It's cruel of Elyx to keep your friends and the witches in the dungeons," she said. "And that poor man..."

"Varius?"

Adelaide froze for a second. It had become clear she had said something she wasn't supposed to. My eyes narrowed slightly. "I never told you about the witches." The thought hit me. "But that means you saw them... right? In the dungeons?"

Adelaide squeezed her eyes shut briefly, but a second too late, as I had already seen the unexpected tears forming in her eyes.

What was she so worried about?

Before I could ask more, Alaric stepped forward.

"The only thing that matters right now," he said firmly, "is that you know you're innocent in all of this."

Innocent...

Something about that word just felt wrong. I didn't want to do it, but my mind flashed to Chrystal and how we had buried her like she was nothing.

Then to Claire and Greg, and how they had given their lives to protect me, and it was all because I had chosen not to listen to Aelius.

The word innocent didn't sit comfortably with those memories.

"Claire and Greg...your mom and dad..." Adelaide sighed. "They loved you until the very end."

My face flushed suddenly. There it was again. It was like she was reading

my mind.

I looked down, unsure where to place my hands, unsure what to say.

"They were strong," Adelaide continued. "They knew the risk when I asked them to care for you, and if they had to make that decision again... they would do the same."

She gave me a nod. "Because that's what parents do."

My throat tightened.

"And about the girl..."

My eyes widened, my heart skipped. Chrystal. She was talking about Chrystal.

"That wasn't your fault either."

I swallowed hard, wanting to argue. But I didn't. I didn't want to interrupt her or stop listening to that soothing voice.

"The actions of that dark and possessed soul," Adelaide said, her voice tight with anger, "the prince who has lost his mind...don't define any of you."

I exhaled slowly.

Well...at least she confirmed Kayden is evil.

"Should I be worried about him?" I asked. "Kayden?"

She looked back at Alaric, then exhaled as she turned once more. "That boy," she said, "he is just like his father...uses people, used you to get what he wanted."

An angry frown appeared on her face. "He knows a lot more than you think, and knew what it took in order for you to heal him."

Yes, he knew a lot, but so did she. And something in the way she said it sent a chill through me. It seemed strange that Kayden knew how to heal himself with my anger, though the more I thought about it, the less strange it felt.

My eyes pierced through hers. "It's Gloria, wasn't it?" I asked carefully. "She has been telling him what to do, and how to do it all along."

Her eyes moved past me for a moment. She didn't say yes, didn't say no, and she didn't have to.

"When I sealed Baelor, she —"

"She can't hurt you anymore," Alaric said. "Your mom took care of that."

"How?"

Adelaide drew in a long breath. "That doesn't matter," she said. "What does matter is that I have seen several ways how this could end..."

"Good or bad?"

She shook her head. She wasn't allowed to say, but I could see it in her eyes. There were possibly more bad endings than good ones.

"Whatever path you choose, Violet...know your parents will never despise you." Her throat bobbed. "But if you choose not to set your personal feelings aside, and instead give Elyx what he wants because you think it'll benefit you...then as your mother, I would be very disappointed. Do you understand?"

Her eyes grew serious. "I want you...to do the right thing."

Was that one of the futures she had seen?

The one where I chose not to do the right thing?

"Heavenly Goddess, Addy!" Alaric exclaimed, laughing. He made his way over to me and pulled me into his chest. "You're scaring our daughter."

"What?" Adelaide's face shifted to worry. "I-I didn't mean to!"

"Your mom gets like this sometimes. She used to do it to me all the time, and still does to this very day," Alaric said, pressing a kiss to my head. "But it's only because she loves us. She means well."

I looked at Adelaide.

Her eyes were soft now, all that seriousness from a moment ago fading into something warm again.

"I know you mean well," I said, my lips curling. She had always been there for me, since the day I was born. She was inside this very veil because she meant well.

Adelaide chuckled and glanced down for a second. "Kylan is like that too," she said. "He wants the best for you."

He did.

Even when Kylan pushed too hard when I sucked at training, he meant well.

Alaric hummed. "I suppose that's why you haven't been marked yet," he said casually. "But that's good. Perfect, actually. There's no rush!"

My cheeks instantly flushed, and I stared at him. Why were we suddenly talking about a mark?

Adelaide burst out laughing and covered her mouth, causing Alaric to furrow his brow.

“Did I say something wrong?”

She rolled her eyes and placed her hands on her hips. “Oh, there’s no rush?” she said. “You used to beg to mark me every single day. But now that it’s about your own daughter, the rules have magically changed.”

Alaric immediately released me and scratched the back of his head. I couldn’t stop laughing.

“Don’t listen to your mother,” he said defensively. “She doesn’t know what she’s talking about.”

Adelaide cleared her throat loudly, and Alaric almost winced.

“Sometimes,” he corrected. “She sometimes doesn’t know what she’s talking about.”

I giggled again. Watching them like this felt so natural, so comfortable, and even though I had received so much love from Claire and Greg, it sucked that this had been taken away from us.

This here in front of me...

It was exactly the dynamic I had seen through Adelaide’s memories. And because I had already seen everything, I knew she was speaking the truth.

I tilted my head, eyeing Alaric. “So you’re not a big fan of Kylan?” I asked curiously.

"What? No," he said. "I'm his biggest fan!"

His lips curled into a wide grin, so tight I couldn't tell whether it was real or pretend. "I trust your judgment. If you love him, I love him, princess. He's great!"

He looked a fool, but it was heartwarming. It was almost hilarious to see how he was definitely trying to stay on my good side.

A short laugh escaped me. "Okay."

"You should go back now," Adelaide said, though her voice didn't sound all that convincing. How could I leave her here?

My heart dropped. "Already?"

"Yes. I don't want you to hurt your eyes like last time."

I gasped softly. "You saw that?"

She nodded. "That's what happens when we overuse our eyes," she explained gently. "It can be dangerous."

I bobbed my head, trying my best not to cry. Because if I did, it would upset them, and I didn't want that. But the thought of leaving them again made my chest ache.

"I don't want to go," I whispered.

Adelaide's expression softened. "I don't want to let you go either," she admitted. "But you have to."

She took a slow breath. "The situation in the Veil might have changed," she said. "But it will always be dangerous for you."

Her eyes held mine. "So unless it's absolutely necessary...you mustn't come here again."

I felt a lump in my throat, knowing I would have to come up with a thousand excuses just to hold them again.

"And last time we were able to connect because the Veil already had cracks," she continued. "But it's different now, Violet."

My heart felt like it was breaking all over again.

Adelaide reached forward and took both of my hands.

"If you ever need guidance," she smiled faintly, "if you really need to hear my voice, you can ask the Moon Oracle whose howl is strong enough to reach through the portal."

"Wait, what?"

Confusion rushed through me. "Kaelis?"

Adelaide's eyes widened slightly. "You don't know?"

"Know what?"

Adelaide shook her head. "Nothing," she said. "It's not important right now."

Then she opened her arms. "Come here."

I stepped forward instantly and hugged her again. It didn't take long for Alaric to join us, wrapping both of us in his arms.

I couldn't help myself, and tears slipped down my cheeks. But they were warm and happy tears

Because as odd as this situation was, for the first time in years, we were able to hold each other like a family.

"I will miss you," I whispered.

Alaric squeezed us tighter. "Seeing you, my princess, gave me so much strength," he sighed. "Both of us."

Adelaide laughed through her tears. "We love you so much, and we're always thinking about you. You are in our thoughts and in our hearts, Violet," she whispered. "Always."

Slowly we pulled apart and all stepped back.

None of us wanted to turn away, so we began walking backward instead, keeping our eyes on each other the entire time.

Their hands found each other's, smiles reaching their faces as I walked back further. Seeing that somehow made it easier. I knew I was leaving them with smiles and happy memories.


Adelaide called out to me. "Violet!"

"Yes?"

"Please be very careful of that boy, and do not let him near that raven!" Her tone grew serious again. "What he has shown you so far is not even a fraction of what that monster is capable of...so you and Kylan need to be careful. Do you understand?"

My heart skipped. Once again, there was something deeper behind her words. A warning she couldn't fully explain.

"We will be careful!"

Alaric's eyes began glowing red again, and the might spread through the Veil. The world began pulling away as the same cold air that had brought me here brushed against my skin. Their figures blurred, and then everything went dark. 

I let out a sharp breath and gasped as my eyes flew open. I was back in the room, back in Kylan's arms.

When I looked up, I saw a pair of worried brown eyes above me. He was leaning over me, his face full of concern.

"Violet?"

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