

Chapter 427

Kylan

My fingers moved slowly through Violet's hair, brushing the strands away from her face as she rested against me. I had been sitting there for what felt like forever, watching her breathe, waiting for any sign that she would come back.

Then suddenly she gasped, and her eyes snapped open.

"Violet," I said immediately, pulling her closer.

My arms tightened around her shoulders, and I shook her lightly as if I needed to confirm she was really here again.

As incredible as it was that she could do something like that, step into the Veil her mother created, I absolutely hated watching it happen.

It scared the crap out of me.

Because every time she did it, there was a moment where she simply wasn't here anymore. And I couldn't handle the thought of having no way to reach her.

Violet looked up at me, her lips curling into a smile. Completely out of nowhere, she started laughing.

I frowned slightly and lifted one eyebrow, only to find myself laughing with her a second later.

"I saw them!" she blurted. "Both of them!"

"Who..."



Before I could finish the question, Violet threw her arms around my neck and pulled me into an extremely tight hug. Her head dropped onto my shoulder, and my hands moved up her back.

A small smile tugged at my mouth.

Whatever had just happened in that Veil had clearly made her happy, and that was all I needed to know. Seeing her like this, smiling and laughing in the middle of everything that was currently collapsing around us...felt like the first good thing that had happened since everything went down.

She pulled back suddenly, her eyes wide with excitement. "My parents!" she said breathlessly. "Adelaide and Alaric! I saw them!"

My brows lifted. "You did?"

She nodded quickly.

"Yes! I mean...well, first I thought I messed something up because they were both there and I didn't understand how that was even possible since they're supposed to be on different levels of the Veil, but then my mom started running toward me and she almost tripped and my dad was...wait, that's not important." Her breath hitched. "The king has the box, and he wants to bring them back, oh and she says Kayden is still not up to any good—"

I gently placed a hand over her mouth. "One thing at a time, Pup."

Her cheeks flushed and she laughed softly.

"Oh. Of course," she said, her lips brushing my palm as the words came out muffled.

She took a deep breath, then another. I chuckled, removing my hand.



"Alright," I said. "Try again."

I couldn't help but let out another laugh as Violet composed herself, her head bobbing seriously like she was preparing to deliver an official report. But it was those little things that I couldn't get enough of. The little things I didn't want her ever to change because I loved teasing her about them.

She began talking again, actually taking her time, though the excitement had not disappeared.

"So first when I got there," she said, "they were both there, together, which shouldn't even be possible because the Veil used to keep them separated, but apparently that changed after everything that happened last night. They said I fixed it somehow."

I listened quietly as she continued. She told me about how they had seen everything, fought themselves to keep the Veil intact, and how somehow her actions had stabilized it.

She told me how Adelaide had immediately known why she was there, about the box, the king, Kayden. With every detail she shared, my smile faded a little more. It suddenly wasn't a simple reunion between her and her parents anymore, but something much bigger.

By the time she finished, the room had grown completely quiet again. Mainly because my mind was already moving through everything she had told me.

"So," I said. "The king wants the box...so he can force you to bring them back."

Violet nodded.



"And as long as you refuse," I continued, making sure I understood correctly, "he'll keep tightening the pressure."

"Yes."

All the pieces slowly fell into place. It really did seem like something the king would do. He would probably corner her in the morning, lay out everything he knew, and if she still refused him, he would proceed with the trials and start going after the people around her until she broke and gave him what he wanted.

But I doubted he had any proof about Chrystal. That was likely why he had settled for the Lunaris instead, and of course Beta Jack, using the supposed disloyalty of the Wyrnsbanes.

I wasn't sure what he had against Jack, but it was enough to pile even more suffering onto Nate.

But what about the witches, and Varius?

That was the part I didn't quite understand yet.

Even so, every part of this plan had been thought through so carefully.

And all of this made me wonder...

What if Kayden was not involved this time? What if that sharp smirk on his lips, and Adelaide's warning to watch out for him, keep him away from the raven, had nothing to do with any of this?

The way things were going just didn't look like something Kayden would do.

Violet shifted slightly beside me.



"I still can't read any minds," she said, giving my shoulder a nudge. "So you'll have to tell me what you're thinking."

I reached for her hand and held it between both of mine. When I looked into her eyes, all I could feel was sorry.

She looked tired. Not physically tired, but the kind that came from carrying too many responsibilities all at once. If I could take all of her burdens and stand in the center of all of this instead of her, I would've.

"Violet."

"Yes?"

"No matter what the king says tomorrow...no matter who he threatens to send to prison island, or even execute, no matter what kind of pressure he puts on you," I told her firmly, "do not give in to his game."

Her fingers twitched in my hand before she slowly pulled away.

"So you would let them die?" she exhaled. "The witches...Varius?"

I couldn't speak. Because I already knew how my answer would sound, and it wouldn't sound great.

Would I?

Her eyes searched mine again. "You would let Nate die?"

The same answer sat in my throat, and again, I couldn't say it. It wasn't as if I was afraid of saying it because I had already kept the worst case scenarios in mind, but I didn't want to say it in front of her. I didn't want her to call me a monster.

Violet lowered her gaze slightly.



"I've been thinking about the word sacrifice," she said after a moment. "The word my mom told me not to think about."

She swallowed. "And I keep feeling like she said that because...I might have to...I might make one."

I frowned, her words catching me off guard. I had never thought those words would leave her mouth. The Lyperia visit seemed to have changed her as well.

"I know it would hurt," she continued. "But if the king really wants to use that box to change the timeline...to undo everything my parents ever worked for, including keeping Baelor away..."

She took a slow breath. "I can't allow that to happen."

Her fingers curled slightly in her lap. "Even if it means putting my selfishness aside and sacrificing someone I love for the good of the world."

She looked down, her voice suddenly small.

"I just don't know if that makes me a bad person."

"Never," I immediately shook my head. "You could never be a bad person."

My hand moved to her thigh and rested there. When she didn't look up, I gave her a slight squeeze.

"Hey," I called out softly. "Look at me."

Slowly, she lifted her head.

"I told you I would find a way to fix this," I said, my gaze determined. "



So I will find a way.”

I held her gaze, looking deeply into those blue eyes. “That’s a promise.”

She studied my face for a moment, then nodded.

“A promise...”

“In the meantime,” I went on, “don’t tell anyone about your visit to the Veil or the king’s plan.”

She nodded again.

“We let the trial play out—“

“And you’re not nervous for the queen?” she interrupted.

A laugh escaped me. “Not really.”

She tilted her head, her face confused.

“This is what he does to her,” I explained. “He breaks her...hurts her, pushes her down, yet every single time she comes back stronger...until the cycle repeats itself.”

I exhaled through my nose.

It wasn’t supposed to be this way, yet it was. But I didn’t worry for the queen. If anyone knew how to deal with him, it was her. She had been dealing with him for years.

Though it would soon be the last.

That much I could promise.

Violet suddenly dropped forward dramatically and let her head fall into



my lap, releasing a long groan.

"Going back to the Veil right now sounds very tempting," she muttered.

I chuckled and brushed my fingers through her hair again, slowly untangling the strands as they spread across my lap.

"If you go," I said, "please take me with you."

Violet hummed softly. "I don't know if my dad would like that."

I lifted a brow. "What makes you think so?"

"Nothing," she said quickly. But the way her lips twitched into the slightest smile told me there was definitely something she wasn't saying.

She looked up at me, her eyes calmer now than they had been a few seconds ago.

"Let's just get through tomorrow."

A quiet chuckle left me.

"Let's do that..."