



Chapter 429

Violet

As soon as the heavy doors slammed shut behind me, reality hit me like a ton of bricks. I was here, without Kylan, on my way to face the king. The best thing would have been to flee, but I knew I had to face this man one way or another, and today would be the day.

A slow breath slipped past me as my eyes moved across the all too familiar room, taking everything in. The seats that had been filled by the council were all empty.

There was not a single noble in sight, and not even a guard.

Just...silence.

The silence was so uncomfortable that even the sound of my own footsteps felt strange. I took a few careful steps forward, my gaze still flickering around.

Where was he?

What did he want from me?

The question barely formed in my mind before I heard footsteps from above that could only come from one person. King Elyx.

My head snapped up toward the staircase, to a pair of polished shoes as he came down.

His steps were calm and controlled, making it clear that he had all the time in the world.

"Violet Hastings."



My heart skipped as his deep voice filled the room. I didn't flinch, but I didn't respond either. I couldn't.

Instead, my eyes slowly traveled upward as he walked down the stairs until I met his cold gaze.

So cold that it almost made me flinch.

The thing that bothered me the most was that smirk on his face, like he had already won before anything had even begun.

I wanted nothing more than to wipe it from his face. I truly hated everything about him, and the more I looked at him, the more I saw it.

Kylan...

The resemblance was undeniable. They had the same build, the same presence, same looks, but that was where it ended.

The one thing Kylan had that the king didn't was a heart. All this man carried was destruction, and that destruction had started with my parents.

So despite everything...I suppose my hatred was far too big to simply fear this man.

"I hope you had a good rest," he said, his chin high. "Because today will be a long day...but it doesn't have to. It all depends on you."

Meaning?

My gaze dropped lower, and I noticed he had his hands behind his back. It was clear he was hiding something, but I couldn't tell what it was.

I drew in a short breath and collected myself as he reached the final step and began walking toward me. I wasn't sure what look I was trying to



give him, but whatever it was, I hoped it would be enough to show him that I wouldn't back down from whatever he had planned.

"Have you lost your tongue?"

As he stood right in front of me, I had to tilt my head back to look at him properly. He was tall, somehow taller than I remembered, though I was sure that had to do with me actually taking the time to look at him.

"I can talk," I said, my voice steady.

He let out a hum before dropping his right hand to his side. Then he revealed his left from behind his back, and this time it was almost enough to make my breath hitch.

It was the box he had stolen.

The box of ashes.

Time seemed to stand still. My heart didn't race, but the feeling was much worse than that. I felt hopeless.

Sure, we were aware he had the box, but seeing it in his hand made everything real in a way it hadn't before. That box didn't belong to him.

Elyx clicked his tongue softly and shook his head. His teeth showed as his lips parted, and there was a look of fake disappointment on his face.

"Do you know this box?" he asked, making it clear that it was his game we were about to be playing. A short laugh escaped me.

Was he serious?

"I have never seen that thing before in my life," I said, playing along.



Elyx laughed, moving his finger in the air as if I had just said something hilarious. "I see why Kylan is into you," he said. "You've got this strange sense of humor. Just like my queen, Cecilia!"

I forced a smile onto my lips. "I'm just answering your question, Your Majesty."

Elyx nodded slowly, pursing his lips. "This," he said, lifting the box slightly, "is the box of ashes. Created by the very first coven during the Age of Undoing."

I raised my brows, pretending to be unaware as he continued. "It became a threat. So the soothsayers took it...and now I have it," he shrugged, spinning the box in his hand. "Only one exists."

"I wasn't aware."

He nodded. "I received a tip from someone—"

"Kayden," I cut in, my jaw locked.

Elyx let out a low chortle. "Very well then. I received a tip from my boy Kayden," he corrected, "and found this in Kylan's room—"

"If you're going to accuse me of whatever you're accusing me of," I interrupted again, "shouldn't you wait until the trial officially begins?"

I knew what he was doing. He was tiring me out with all these stories, just enough to make me feel threatened.

His expression dropped instantly. "Do not interrupt me!"

A strange feeling fluttered through my chest. It still wasn't fear, but awareness. Because this was the real him. He was an idiot, but he was still the king, and he might have needed me to open the box. But I might still



need him to free everyone I cared about.

My brow creased as he burst into laughter like nothing had happened. "You'll have to excuse me," he said, waving his hand slightly. "I'm not used to people talking back to me...but I suppose it doesn't matter. We're family after all."

Family...

I let out a quiet breath through my nose. "Do you always send your family to trial?" I asked.

"Sometimes," he said calmly, "and sometimes you have to make difficult decisions...to get what you want."

My jaw tightened.

There it was...

"You might hate me right now," he continued, "for what I've done to your friends...to the witches...what I will do to my Beta and that boy."

Nate.

His daughter's mate.

"But it doesn't have to be like this."

My stomach tightened as I braced myself for his next words. I couldn't help but wonder how he would say it. 'I know what you are, and you will do as I say.'

"In another world," Elyx went on, "my world...our world."

He lifted his free hand slightly, as if painting the picture in the air. "Your



friends are released, all charges dropped, no trial.”

My fingers curled slightly at my sides. It all sounded too good to be true.

“We get along,” he added. “Kylan won’t have to go through that... mistress ceremony.”

My expression flickered at the mention of the ceremony, causing him to release a chuckle. He knew it did something to me. But those were the least of my concerns. Kylan said he had that part under control, and I trusted him.

“And in return,” Elyx said, trying to make his voice soft, “you’ll do something for me.”

His eyes locked onto mine. “I want to make a deal, Violet.”

“What deal?”

Curious, I held his gaze, even though I already knew, and every part of me was screaming not to entertain this any longer. But I would, because I wanted to hear it from him. The audacity of it.

Elyx smiled. “You do remind me of her,” he said. “Adelaide.”

Something in my eyes must have shifted, because his smile widened.

“But I see him too,” he continued. “Alaric.”

I closed my eyes for a moment, biting back every insult I could come up with in a span of seconds. He caught it.

“There it is,” he murmured, looking satisfied. “And now that we’ve moved past the part where we both pretend not to know that you are a true princess, a witch, a child of blood who I have allowed to walk these



halls out of respect for your parents..."

Respect?

His voice dropped slightly. "We can finally stop pretending."

