

Chapter 432

Kylan

All it took was a single look for me to feel sorry. Varius wasn't supposed to be here, in a place like this, behind bars.

And seeing him like that only made me think of the others, but I had to check up on him first. Violet cared about this man, and that was enough. She cared, so I cared.

"Thorne seems to be doing well," Varius said, nodding slightly at the raven on my shoulder. His voice was collected, basically untouched by everything around him.

I glanced at Thorne before answering.

"I try to do my best and take care of him."

He closed his eyes for a moment and took a slow breath, showing in his own way that that small piece of information mattered to him. Not too odd, considering he had been taking care of Thorne for a long time.

Varius did not look at Kayden and didn't acknowledge him. He seemed to hold some kind of grudge against him, and I honestly couldn't blame the man.

My thoughts drifted to the box he had given to us. The one we had lost. A quiet guilt settled in as I tried to make a connection between the box and the arrests, but I couldn't really find it.

That man could see damn near everything, and he would not have given it to us without a reason, knowing it would lead to this.

It didn't make sense.



"Everything has its reason," Varius whispered, as if he had been reading my mind. If I hadn't known these dungeons were magic-proof, I might have believed he truly was.

His gaze lifted to mine. "Do you understand what I mean?"

I let the words sit for a moment, knowing what he was hinting at. He was only confirming my suspicions.

His eyes turned soft. "How is Violet doing?"

"She is..."

There was no point in lying. Not to him, because he would see right through it.

"She's holding on."

Varius released a laugh that broke halfway through, turning into a bad cough. He looked too weak to be in here. Since the very first word that left his mouth, his shoulders had been tense, breathing uneven, eyes tired.

It didn't take long for me to reach forward, but Kayden moved first. He pushed past me and grabbed onto the metal, his hands wrapping tightly around it.

"Are you okay?" he asked, worried.

Varius' gaze sharpened as his eyes landed on Kayden. "As long as you are standing in front of me," he said, his tone remaining calm, "I will never be okay."

He had said it so calmly, but the impact of the words was enough for Kayden's grip to loosen before he let go completely. Varius must really despise him.



"L...we're working on a plan to get you out," Kayden said, ignoring what had just happened.

Varius shook his head. "No, thank you, young Prince. You've worked hard enough," he replied. "You deserve a break now."

Kayden breathed. "I said I was sorry, Varius."

Varius chuckled. "So am I."

I narrowed my eyes slightly, wondering if there was something more behind those words. Perhaps it had a deeper meaning. There was nothing to be sorry for, which meant he could be sorry for something that hadn't happened yet.

The two of them held each other's gaze for a moment. Varius spoke first.

"I need water."

Kayden's eyes moved between us, his lips parted. He seemed torn, wanting to get the water but reluctant to leave us by ourselves.

Yet, he didn't ignore the request. "S-sure," he said.

He turned quickly, his feet dragging a bit before he forced himself to move faster. Once he was out of my sight, Varius stepped closer to the bars. He wanted to tell me something.

"I can get a medic down here," I suggested. "You don't look—"

"Don't bother," he interrupted. "It would be a waste of time."

My jaw locked.

What?



"I have seen what I have seen," he continued. "And though the sealing has been completed...I am afraid the Veil will not hold."

Everything around me stopped for a moment. "What?" I asked, blinking. He had to be joking.

"Is it Kayden? Is it the king?"

He gave me no response. Of course not.

I let out a frustrated sigh. "So you sent us back for nothing?" I said, aggravated. "Violet almost died for nothing?"

What was the point, if Kayden would just end up succeeding anyway? What was the point of focusing on the king, when the one we should really fear was right here.

Varius shook his head, reaching through the bars to grab my hands. Although the man was weak, his grip was stronger than I expected. "You need to listen to me," he said urgently. "And listen very well, Crown Prince."

I met his eyes.

"Do not lose sight of the raven," he said. "Protect it with all you have."

My brows pulled together.

"During the next eclipse," he continued, "you must go deep into the woods, and look into the raven's red eyes."

I already felt an uncomfortable knot in my stomach. "And accept the better half of Baelor."

I stared at him, tilting my head slightly to see if I had missed something.



"Have you lost your mind?"

"You are strong enough to control it. You can control it," Varius continued. "You carry the bloodline. The oracle's line."

The oracle, what?

"I-I don't understand," I stuttered. He surely wasn't trying to convince me to become a vessel for Baelor, was he?

Was he out of his damn mind?

"The only thing you need to understand for now," Varius said firmly, "is that your brother can never be trusted."

His voice hardened. "His heart is rotten to the core, just like his father's!"

I bobbed my head, agreeing with every word. No lies were being told.

"I have finally seen everything, and all paths lead to the same end," Varius said. "Two brothers, each bearing half of Baelor. One moved by vengeance, the other by love."

A cold chill went down my spine as my mind flashed back to that moment. That moment I didn't even want to think about. Baelor had already entered my body once, and it had scared me.

Not because I had come close to dying, but because I felt so much power within me and wouldn't know what to do with it. Kayden's desires weren't my desires.

I didn't want that. Ever.

"I don't—"



"You can, and you must!" Varius encouraged. "Only you can!"

"Thorne will allow you to control it. The vessel will not control you, you will control the vessel," he said. "It will be different this time."

His grip tightened. "The next eclipse will be your only chance, and if you want to save the world, save Violet...you must do it." His eyes widened. "Someone has to take him down. It will either be you or Violet, and we all know you won't let it be her."

I stared at him, my jaw tense. I didn't know what he was referring to, but he was right about one thing. I would never let it be her.

"You must not tell anyone about this conversation," he continued. "Not even Violet, as she will try to stop you. But you must know that this is the way to protect her."

Silence settled between us, but so did an understanding. I didn't fully grasp what he was asking of me, but if it meant protecting Violet, sparing her from anything as reckless as whatever he had witnessed, I would do it.

Without a single thought.

I drew in a long breath. "When will I face Kayden?"