

Chapter 433

Kylan

Varius's eyes bore into mine. "There is no clear timeframe," he said. "It could be months...years...decades, but it will happen."

None of that helped at the moment.

"That is why you must do it," he added. "And you must promise me." His eyes held mine. "For the world, for her."

I thought of Aelius. Back in the caves, he had once told me to worry about my own fate. Was this what he had been talking about?

Because he must have seen this too. I let out an exhausted huff and just accepted whatever he was saying. "Sure. I promise," I nodded. "And I also promise to get you out of here. All of you."

Varius's lips curled into a small smile. "Do you think they do not deserve the fate that meets them?" he asked.

I squinted. "No," I said immediately. "Of course not."

What was he even asking me?

If I thought they were innocent in all of this?

His gaze stayed on me. "And what about the girl?" he asked. "Do you believe she deserves the fate you have chosen for her?"

My brows pulled together as I tried to make sense of his words. "What girl?"

Varius took a slow breath. He wasn't surprised I didn't understand. "You



will see.”

See what?

“When the time comes,” Varius went on, tightening his grip around the bars, “you must remember that it was both you, and the king who brought life to the Lyperian stone.”

I gave him a look. “You need to be more clear—”

“If you wish to save the witches,” he continued, “you must remember that.”

Before I could ask any more questions, I heard fast footsteps, and then Kayden returned. I stepped back as he approached, looking at the metal goblet in his hand.

“Drink,” he ordered, pushing it through the bars. “I need you to stay healthy.”

Varius looked at the cup now in his weak hand, then back at him. “I am already as good as dead—”

“You can’t die!” Kayden raised his voice, sounding desperate. “I-I mean, you have been here for decades. You are immortal!”

A chuckle escaped me. The way he said it was like he actually believed it. Like it wasn’t even up for discussion.

I looked at both of them. This whole thing seemed one-sided, and with one more person confirming the obvious, that Kayden didn’t have good intentions, I could perfectly understand why.

“I need to go,” I announced, my voice hoarse. I had stayed long enough. I was still busy processing everything I had just heard, and watching the



two interact any longer would make my skin crawl.

Varius gave me a nod. "Go. Your friends need you."

I had already turned to walk away. My ears filled with the sound of rattling and shouts again as I moved through the narrow space. My eyes stayed to the left as I eyed every passing cell, searching for a familiar face.

"Kylan!"

As soon as I heard my name being called, I stopped. I turned to the right and was instantly met with a pair of worried eyes.

Beta Jack..

He looked tired. The best way to describe it was like something had been pulling the strength out of him since yesterday and hadn't stopped. His eyes were dark and heavy, and I could tell he hadn't slept at all.

Jack stood close to the bars. Perhaps he had been hopeful that if he stayed there long enough, the door might open. Someone might walk in and tell him the king had made a mistake.

Unfortunately, it wouldn't be like that.

He wasn't alone. Lian and Sora were with him.

Lian sat on the ground, leaned against the wall, all the way in the back. Sora's head rested against her shoulder, and despite everything, she was fast asleep.

My eyes lingered on all of them for a moment. I swallowed and stepped closer. "I will get you out—"

"How is Violet doing?" Lian cut me off. "How are you doing?"



She wasn't talking about how bad she had it or what would happen to her. Just how everyone else was doing.

"Good," I said. There was no reason to worry them more than they already were.

She let out a soft chuckle of relief. "That's great," she said softly. "Sora will be happy to hear that when she wakes up."

She glanced down at the girl resting against her.

"She's been worrying about the two of you. We both have."

"Well...tell her we're doing good," I repeated. There was a sense of guilt, because I had judged her all this time. For being weak, annoying, yet here she was.

Still thinking about everyone else.

Jack's voice pulled me back. "True and the others—"

"I haven't seen them!"

"And Nate?" Jack asked. "I don't know what the king is doing...but you need to check on my son!"

His eyes almost popped out, his nose pushed through the bars. That's how desperate he was.

"Kaelis has been keeping me updated, but I need to hear it from you." His voice lowered. "I need to know my boy is holding on. He's in the back."

I froze, just thinking about that one name. "Kaelis?" I repeated under my breath.



Suddenly everything made sense. Kayden's words, his strange tone. She must have gone to him for help, to find a way down here, not wanting to leave Nate alone.

I looked around the place. She shouldn't have, and she wasn't supposed to be in a dangerous place like this. That was ridiculous.

"Should I be worried?" Jack asked. "I heard the charges, and..."

His words faltered. Since he knew what had happened, he must have also known how serious all of this was. "If this is all just a way to get to me, the king should punish me and let my son go."

It wasn't. It was much deeper than that.

"I cannot accept that Prince Kayden has been walking around freely, while he should be—"

"I'll go and check on him," I told Jack, not allowing him to finish that sentence. I knew he was right. It should have been Kayden. But hearing it out loud didn't make it any easier.

I turned away from the cells and continued walking. The further I walked, the quieter it became. The darker it became.

The shouting faded, the rattling slowed, and I didn't need to walk far. Then I saw her on the ground.

Kaelis.

My jaw tensed as I looked at my sister. Her dress was dirty at the edges, her hair had fallen loose, her eyes were closed, but her hand...

One of her arms stretched through the bars, and as I walked closer, I saw it connected with another hand.



Nate's.

She had her hand wrapped tightly around his. He also had his eyes closed, but I knew he wasn't asleep. There was no chance.

My focus shifted back to Kaelis, and I lowered myself in front of her. Gently, I reached out and brushed her hair away from her face, moving the strands aside so I could see her properly.

But the moment my fingers touched her, her eyes fluttered open, and she slowly blinked up at me.

"Kylan?" Her lips parted. "What are you doing here?"

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