



## Chapter 435

### Violet

There were guards in every corner. They stood between the rows, near the entrances, behind the council seats, and there were way too many of them for this to be anything close to normal.

I was seated at the side of the room, under strict surveillance. Many council members had already entered, but it wasn't just them.

There were nobles, elders. The mistresses had come as well, laughing and joking around like this was some sort of feast rather than what it actually was.

My fingers curled against the fabric of my dress as I searched the room again. I was starting to get anxious now, and Kylan still hadn't returned.

And the longer he stayed gone, the more that feeling doubled.

Even the Bloodrose had come. Fergus, Sonya, all of them. They were supposed to leave today and shouldn't have been here at all, and yet they stood among the others, pulled into this mess.

As if it couldn't get any worse, I had already seen Fergus nearly lose his patience with one of the guards when they tried to stop him from moving closer to me. It was Sonya who had managed to calm him down and ground him before things could escalate.

The last thing I needed was for the Alpha of the Bloodrose to end up in the dungeons. That would start a war on the spot.

My gaze lifted until it found the king, who sat above all of us. He looked untouchable as he stared down over the entire room, a small smirk plastered on his lips. This was exactly where he wanted to be. 1



A chill ran through me. I knew today would not be the day of my trial. But he had put me here on purpose, where I could see everything, just so he could watch and wonder how long it would take before I finally broke.

Who would he bring in first?

The witches?

Varius?

The doors opened before I could think any further, and two figures stepped inside. A relieved gasp escaped me. This time it was Kylan.

And Kayden.

Heads turned as attention shifted to the prince who could suddenly walk again.

Kylan's eyes searched the room the second he entered, scanning quickly until they found mine, and when they did, he released a relieved breath as well. He moved straight toward me, while Kayden, on the other hand, turned away and headed toward Lady Mona and his siblings.

As Kylan passed Fergus, I saw him lean in briefly, whispering something and giving him a pat on the shoulder before continuing. I caught the way Fergus's expression shifted. He was still tense, but less explosive.

My eyes flickered upward again, just in time to see the king watching them. He followed Kylan's every move until he reached me and sat down beside me.

As expected, Thorne was still perched on his shoulder.

"What did my dad say?" I asked, barely giving him time to settle.



"What did the king say?" he asked at the same time.

A small breath left me. "My mom was right," I confirmed. "It went exactly how she thought it would. He said he knows about me, that he has been protecting me, and that I need to open the box."

I swallowed, steadying myself before continuing.

"I obviously told him I wouldn't do it, and until then he's just going to make me sit here and watch everything unfold for three days," I added quietly. "Until I give in."

Kylan's eyes immediately traveled to the king, and something dark flashed across his face. He was angry. Pissed.

I reached for him, placing my hand on his shoulder and turning him slightly back toward me.

"How is everyone?" I asked eagerly. "Did you see Varius? Nate...Lian, Sora?"

That was what mattered.

Kylan gave me a single nod. I couldn't tell if it was meant to reassure me, but something in my stomach tightened instead. It was just a nod, nothing more, and that's why I knew they were not okay at all.

"Actually, no!" I changed my mind, shaking my head. "Don't tell me yet. Not now."

If I heard too much, I didn't know if I would be able to sit here and stay still. The most important thing for now was to remain calm. I could not show any sign of stress and give the king what he wanted.

Kylan opened his mouth to say something when suddenly three heavy



strikes rang through the room. The king slammed a hard object against the bench. It seemed he would be playing judge today, and every day that followed. The council was only there as spectators.

Every voice in the room instantly died as every head turned in the same direction. I hadn't blinked once, and my body stiffened as the king placed his hands on the bench and slowly rose from his seat.

"It's starting," Kylan said, stating the obvious.

The only sound left was the king's slow footsteps as he began pacing back and forth, his hands behind his back like he had all the time in the world.

His gaze moved across the room, lingering on faces. I bet he was counting each row so he would see who had shown up to witness this moment.

I had lost track of time and didn't know how long it lasted, but when his eyes landed on me, I stopped fidgeting. Instead of looking away, I crossed my arms and leaned just enough to make it clear I wasn't impressed.

My heart was beating a little too fast, and when he turned back to the crowd again, a breath I didn't know I was holding slipped past my lips.

"This kingdom," he began, "is something the Lythorias have built with pride, discipline, and with a clear vision."

He chuckled. "And yet...slowly, over time, something has begun to rot."

The crowd whispered at his words.

"It is not just the kingdom itself," he continued, raising his voice louder, "but the people within it!"



"The people in court, the people outside of it...people closest to me."

He lifted a hand and pressed it to his chest, his jaw tightening like the situation actually hurt him.

"As king, it is my duty to protect what remains of this kingdom," he said. "Even when that means facing truths I would rather ignore."

Kylan scoffed quietly beside me, and the crowd went wild again. They whispered amongst themselves, exchanged glances while the king continued.

"I have been collecting evidence for quite some time now. Evidence against acts that go against everything this kingdom stands for."

His eyes hardened. "And after careful consideration, I have decided that a three-day trial will be held. If the accused truly believe themselves to be innocent," he opened his arms, "then they will be given the opportunity to defend themselves."

All of this made me sick to my stomach. He was doing this, putting everyone through this for one simple purpose, and it made me sick. It hadn't even started, yet he expected me to sit through this disaster for three days.

Maybe I would crumble.

"The first two individuals I will call forward are not strangers to me."

The room held its breath, and so did I.

"It pains me to do this...as they are among those closest to me."

My heart dropped. Would he really start with them?



"But these accusations are serious," he added. "And what kind of king would I be if I did not act?"

Two doors opened at the same time. One on the left and one on the right. Then they both walked in from each side.

The queen, and Beta Jack.

The room erupted into louder murmurs, expressions filled with disbelief, curiosity, pure shock.

Lady Mona covered her mouth in amusement and nudged Kayden's shoulder. He released a chuckle but quickly lowered his gaze as if he didn't want it to show.

"Mom..." Kylan muttered under his breath.

I glanced at him. He didn't even seem to realize he had said it. Not the queen, not Cecilia...but Mom.

His mom was getting publicly humiliated.

Cecilia walked forward first. Her head was held high, and she seemed quite unshaken considering the situation she had been dragged into.

The only time her eyes changed, for less than a split second, was when they fell on Jack.

Beta Jack didn't walk as freely as she did.

He was being held by two guards on either side. They weren't rough, still showing respect to their Beta, but it was still embarrassing. It had only been a short while since he was sent down to the dungeons, but his clothes were wrinkled and stained, his face pale and exhaustion visible in every step he took.



He barely held himself together.

If this was the state of him, Beta Jack...then what about the others?

Both Cecilia and Jack reached the center of the room and turned forward at the same time.

"Beta Jack," the king pronounced, his voice calm, "and Queen Cecilia."

The two waited patiently.

"I bring forth accusations against both of you," the king announced. "Adultery."

This time, the crowd didn't bother hiding it at all, and exaggerated breaths slipped from nearly everyone.

"And in the case of the queen," he squinted his eyes, "there are additional charges."

Cecilia responded with a light chuckle and a roll of her eyes. "Enlighten me," she dared.

"How about you enlighten me," the king replied, "about how you have been lying to all of us, and have been hiding your true identity all this time...witch."

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