

## Chapter 442

Violet

The crowd gasped as all attention shifted to him. Kayden took a step forward. Meanwhile, the king smirked, his hand lifting to stop the guards.

"Ah," he said, his eyes gleaming as they shifted between the two. "It almost reminds me of the battle for the throne!"

A loud scoff came from Kayden, and this time he took more steps until he stood beside Varius, who still knelt on the ground. Kayden's eyes softened as he looked down at him, but Varius didn't return the look.

His eyes were hard and cold...full of hatred.

"What is he doing?" I whispered.

A short chuckle came from Kylan. "Considering he's the one who possibly gave them the order to cast the spell..." he said quietly, his voice low, controlled. "He might be trying to save them because he still needs them."

That must've been it.

The more I watched everything go down, the more convinced I was that the king and Kayden must've been working together.

Kayden was desperate.

So desperate that he was done staying in the background, and had took it upon himself to speak up.

And it made me think...



"I can't help but wonder," I said, my voice low near Kylan's ear, "if he struck a deal with the king. If all of this, even the witches, was to scare me into opening that box...and if their deal fell apart."

Kylan let out a breath. "Could be," he agreed. "But what could those two possibly have in common?"

I closed my eyes for a moment, trying to come up with a solid explanation. "For starters," I said, "they're both evil."

A soft, broken laugh escaped my lips, but when I looked at Kylan, he didn't laugh with me. The look in his eyes changed as something had just clicked into place.

I was just about to ask what it was before Kayden spoke again.

"Your Majesty...dad," he began. "We went through all this effort to give these people aid," he continued, gesturing toward the witches. "Lyperians nearly broke their backs to make that happen, and now you're telling me it was all for nothing?"

The king tilted his head. "Are you trying to protect them?" he asked, almost pouting.

Kayden rubbed his neck, chuckling. He must've thought the king was on his side, but I could already tell he wasn't.

"I am just trying to do the right thing," Kayden nodded.

The king's lips pursed. "They say you are my favorite, and I often believe it must be because of this. I have always admired this about you," he said. "Your strength...your willingness to stand up for what you believe in."

A faint smile appeared on Kayden's face.



“Even if those beliefs are wrong.”

Then it faded. Quiet and muffled laughter spread through the room as the king made fun of him.

“I mean, look at you!” He said. “You still came to court today, with these ...red streaks in your hair, sticking up for these people, even after yesterday’s...embarrassment,” he went on. “When my queen called out the Lady Mona for witchcraft.”

This time, the laughter was louder, and it didn’t stop. Kayden turned in circles, his eyes going from surprise to anger as the crowd mocked him. He took in the laughter, the looks people were giving him now.

And for the first time, he looked like he couldn’t handle it. He looked lost.

Kylan went still beside me, and just as on the first day, just watched it all play out.

The king had just publicly humiliated him the same way he had humiliated Lady Mona, and it made me doubt my own theory. Would he really have gone this far if Kayden had something against him?

“After all the conversations we’ve had all this time...” Kayden said, his teeth gritted, “is this what it has come to?”

The king hummed, squeezing his eyes together. “I’m afraid I do not understand where you’re going with this,” he said. “You need to speak clearly.”

Kayden let out a short chortle. He trapped his chin between two fingers, rubbing it slowly as if he hadn’t quite figured out yet what was happening.

“Okay,” he breathed, his shoulders shifting in the process. He gave the king a bow, though he kept his head up. “I thought we had an



understanding, but I must have been mistaken. Forgive me, Your Majesty."

He turned and walked out without looking back, the laughter still following him. Kylan and I shot each other puzzled looks, still trying to make sense of everything that had just happened.

"You'll have to excuse Prince Kayden. I do not know what he is talking about," The King scoffed with a smile. "He must still be recovering from that fall. I heard it was a pretty hard one."

A proud smile appeared on his face as there was more laughter, and then he lifted both hands in the air. "That's it for today!" he announced. "Guards, take the prisoners back to their cells!"

"That's it for today!" he announced. "Guards, take the prisoners back to their cells!"

This time it had really ended.

People began to leave, and guards moved quickly, stepping in to collect the witches again.

My eyes followed them. They followed him. Various.

He was dragged along with the others, his steps slower than the other. My breath hitched as he looked back, his gaze lifting until it found mine.

Despite everything, despite how weak he looked, he managed to give me one last smile. My heart ached as I returned it, even though it felt wrong to smile in a moment like this.

I had so much faith that he would hold on. He had to.

After he had left, my eyes found Fergus's, and I didn't have much of a



choice. He wanted me to see him.

"Violet!"

"Dad..." I whispered, my voice barely above a whisper.

He called out my name, but nothing much came after that. He was being guided out by Uncle Ewan, and perhaps that was a good thing. He was still furious, and I really didn't want him to do something he would regret.

"This was not how I imagined today would go," Kylan muttered beside me. I barely nodded, still trying to process everything that had happened the second day.

Same as yesterday, I waited for a guard to escort me out, to remind me exactly where I stood in all of this. As a prisoner.

When some seconds had passed, and no one came, I took it upon myself to rise to my feet again. Kylan, who hadn't let go of my hand, stood with me.

"Not you!"

A knot formed in my stomach as I heard the king's voice, and my eyes immediately turned in his direction. A soft, frustrated growl left Kylan as he pulled me behind his back.

"You can stay, Violet."