

Chapter 446

Day 3

Violet

I walked beside Kylan through the halls early in the morning. It was the same route, same silence, but today felt different.

I barely slept last night. The only thing I could do was toss, turn, and think about everything that could go wrong. Today was my turn. Today was everyone's turn. Lian, Sora, Dylan, Trinity...and Nate.

My stomach twisted just thinking about it.

I glanced at Kylan. His pace was confident and steady. Thorne sat on his shoulder, his eyes darting around just as calmly.

I almost felt bad for the raven. Having to sit through another day in that courtroom.

A nervous breath escaped me. "It will all be okay," I said to Kylan, though I was mostly trying to convince myself. "Kaelis has a plan."

Kylan gave me a chuckle. He had told me all about yesterday. About Kiara, the queen, and Kaelis, who had asked him to trust her. To not do anything reckless.

Of course, I trusted her.

I was going to be optimistic. I had to be.

Before I knew it, we were standing in front of the doors again. The guards pulled them open, and we walked inside.

The room was empty, and the king was surprisingly not present. It was just us, and a few more guards who were already inside.



Kylan and I shared a look and started walking toward our usual spot when a guard stepped in front of us.

"The royal mate will have to sit there today." He gestured toward a different row of seats.

Kylan let out a scoff and pushed me behind him. Then he stepped in front of him, his eyes hardened.

"Kylan..." I said softly. He had been tense lately, rightfully so, but I didn't want him to start something. Not today.

A breath slipped past Kylan's lips. He just grabbed my hand and brushed right past the guard, leading me to exactly where I had been sitting the past two days.

I leaned closer to him once we sat. "Was that a smart thing to do?"

He looked at me, his shoulders shrugging. "Well, I'm not letting you sit alone."

Over the next few minutes, the room began to fill. More and more people poured in until it was even more packed than the previous days. Everyone wanted to see how this would end. The Bloodroses were there too, of course. Fergus, Sonya...

My eyes landed on the familiar woman standing quietly in the back with a reserved expression, her bun tight as always.

Madam Renata?

She must've been here for Lian and Sora. No wonder she felt responsible for them. She had assigned them to me and seemed fond of them. She must be blaming me as well...

Would the king call her up as a witness?

Would he force her to tell lies, the same way he did True?

My eyes fell on Fergus. He was talking to a man I didn't recognize. Five other men stood behind them, their faces serious and intimidating.

"Who is that?" I whispered.

Kylan followed my gaze. "Vincent Kai and his sons."

"Kai? Lian's family..."

I could see the resemblance now. The dark hair, dark eyes, but especially that serious gaze that rarely seemed to soften.

My chest tightened. I had nearly ruined that girl's life. Hers and Sora's.

They would come out okay...

I had hope, but that didn't change anything. They had to spend several nights inside a dungeon because of me. They could've told on me by now. Speak in front of the Lyperians, and say Kayden killed me to protect my identity. But they didn't...

When all of this would be over, I owed them both a huge apology.

The doors opened again, and the same murmurs of the past days returned. People whispered as the accused entered, one by one.

Lady Mona, Cecilia, and Jack. Varius, The witches...Lian, Sora, Dylan, and Trinity...

I looked at Kylan, and one glance already told me we shared the same thought. Nate wasn't here.

"Why is he not here yet?" I asked, worried.

Kylan breathed, but no words came out.

I kept my eyes on the situation, noticing how the ones who had already been tried over the past days were seated on one side while Lian, Sora,



Dylan, and Trinity on the other.

All four eyes looked at me, and when Trinity was first to shoot me a warm smile, I returned it.

My heart ached just seeing them there. Sitting on those benches like criminals when all they ever did was stand by me.

Protect me. Be my friends.

Sora looked tired, almost lifeless. Her usual brightness was completely gone, and her green eyes were dull. I had never seen her like that before, and it made my chest hurt even more.

Madam Renata pushed through the crowd until she reached the front. Her eyes landed on the girls, and a sad smile appeared on her face. She looked like a mother watching her children suffer and not being able to do anything about it.

"Sora is stronger than she looks," Kylan said quietly beside me. "She'll get through this."

"I know," I gulped. "But why isn't Kaelis here yet?"

"Probably still searching for a dress," Kylan said. "But she'll be here. She promised."

I nodded, forcing a smile before squeezing his hand tighter in response.

Suddenly, the doors swung open, and Kayden rushed in. Both Kylan and I looked in his direction at the same time. His fists were balled, and he looked angry, seconds away from exploding. His cold eyes scanned around the room frantically before finding a spot near the wall.

I knew Kylan said their conversation yesterday had been intense, but he seemed even more off than usual.

Something was wrong...



Before I could think about it too much, the doors opened again, and I understood exactly why Kayden looked the way he did.

It was the king who had walked out, with a woman on his arm. Not just any woman, but Camille...

She had made her long-awaited return.

A coy smile was plastered on her perfectly red lips, and her arm was locked with his like she belonged there. She wore a deep white dress, the fabric dragging slightly on the floor behind her. Her hair was pinned up elegantly, and she had made quite the statement.

She looked ready.

Ready for a ceremony.

Everyone in the room held its breath, eyeing the king and the mysterious woman he was with. These people didn't care for a maid, so they didn't know her. Even if they did, I doubt they would recognize her. She looked... different.

There were still so many questions in my mind. Where had she been this entire time, and why was she doing this?

Had she even mentioned to the king that she was also there when Chrystal died?

Kylan went still beside me. He had not moved, and seconds had already passed. He was probably holding himself back from jumping down and stopping this before it could happen.

I nudged his side, my eyes still following the king and Camille as they walked.

"So, Kaelis's plan?"

"Yes?" He asked, his voice tight.



"Is the solution to the whole ceremony thing part of that or..."

"No," Kylan said. "Kayden is...he will be the one to stop it."

My brows knitted. He kept saying that, but I still had no idea what any of that meant. "What—"

"Silence!"

The king's voice echoed through the room, and everyone went quiet. He stood at the bench, Camille standing several steps away from him. She brushed a loose strand behind her ear, her gaze sweeping over the crowd.

The silence stretched for a moment, and so did that awful smile I hated so much. The king's smile.

"Welcome to the final day of trial," he announced. "Today you will learn the fate of the accused, and when justice has been served..."

He nodded his head. "We will celebrate with a special ceremony. One that will unite the kingdom."



Comments



Support



Share

Commented [Ma1]: