

Chapter 453

Violet

The Veil was dark.

Endless black stretched out in every direction with no one in sight. I didn't know how I ended up there, but I stood at the center, and my heart pounded against my chest.

Something was wrong...

I could feel it in my bones. The Veil had never been a happy place, but the darkness was different from usual. It almost felt...empty.

Those were my thoughts until I heard a low and sinister laughter coming from every corner. The hairs on my skin prickled as I whipped my head around, searching the darkness.

"Mom?" My voice cracked. "Dad?"

The laughter stopped, and the silence returned. That was somehow worse. It felt like a warning.

A warning before the cold hit me, a wind so cold that shouldn't have existed, even in this place brushing against my arms, my neck, my face. I shivered.

"Hello?"

Nothing...

I waited for a moment because I knew I would hear it again. And then I did.

"Violet?"

Adelaide...

"Mom?" My pulse quickened as I spun in circles, but I still couldn't see anything. The laughter returned, much closer now. So close I could almost feel it against my ear.

No, not again...

I squeezed my eyes shut and focused on my breathing. In and out, Violet. This is not real. None of this is real, and when you open your eyes again, you'll find yourself in those safe arms.

Slowly, I opened my eyes, watching the darkness appear again. And it was still dark, but different. Someone was watching me. I could feel it.

"We need you, Violet."

Mom?

I braced myself. I knew what came next because it was always the same. A single breath left me as everything collapsed. The ground cracked beneath my feet and split wide open. I looked down, and there was nothing but endless white below me, swallowing everything in its path, including me. The light was bright and blinding, but I didn't scream anymore like I had the first time. I had already gotten used to it.

I just kept falling and falling, until...

~

My eyes flew open, chest aching as I shot upright in bed. My hands gripped the sheets so tightly that it hurt, and I could feel the sweat cling to my skin.

It took me a second to remember where I was, but then I did.

I was in Kylan's room. Kylan's bed, and I was safe. Jumpie was still in her cage, Thorne in his, and everything was okay.

I let myself fall back against the mattress, immediately turning to look at him. He was still peacefully asleep. His lips were in the smallest pout, his nose scrunched a little with every breath, and one arm was stretched beneath me. A small sigh left him as his hand squeezed around my waist again, as it had never left.

It was just a dream.

That dream.

I have been getting it for the past month now. Every few nights, it would always be the same. The Veil, the laughter, followed by that voice calling my name, and then the fall. It was strange.

I knew it was a risk to try to contact Mom and Dad through the Veil. They had warned me about that. Told me to be careful, not to reach too often. But without knowing what was going on, without a single message from Aelius in two months, I was going insane.

He told me to wait and not come until he called for me, so I waited. But my patience was wearing thin, and I couldn't take it anymore.

The last thing I wanted was to make a mistake, but all of it was really pushing me toward it.

I really hoped Mom and Dad were okay.

My eyes searched Kylan again, watching him sleep for a moment. I shifted closer, wrapping my arm around his waist and resting my head on his chest, a small smile tugging at my lips.



I had managed to wake up a bit later for once, and that was definitely an accomplishment.

But even with the lack of sleep, this was the one thing that kept me grounded. Him...us...this bond. Just waking up next to him every morning, even though we shouldn't because we weren't allowed to. Even when everything else felt uncertain.

I hadn't told him about the dreams. We didn't talk about that stuff at all anymore. Not the Veil, Baelor, or anything bad for that matter. It was like this silent agreement between all of us.

If we didn't speak it out loud, maybe it wouldn't be real, and we could pretend for a little longer that things were normal.

A soft sound slipped past his lips, and I placed my hand flat on his chest, feeling his heartbeat steady beneath my palm. It had been even stronger lately, but that was a good thing.

Kylan stirred, his eyes fluttering open. We would soon have to get ready anyway, so I didn't mind waking him. He rubbed at his face with one hand while the other pulled me closer. A yawn came out, followed by a sleepy smile that spread across his face.

He looked down at me with well-rested brown eyes. "Pup."

"Hey," I said softly, nudging him with my head. "You're awake."

"Yes," he groaned. "By the way, you gotta stop looking at me in the morning like a creep."

I laughed, the tension from the dream finally releasing from my chest. "I'm not...I didn't," a breath left me instead, completely giving up on the words.



"Yes, you were."

Kylan sat up straight, pulling me with him in one smooth motion. His arm stayed around my waist as we settled against the headboard, his gaze searching mine.

"Ready for training today?"

Today...

Right, today would be the day.

We had gotten the day off to practice Elite shifting with shifting specialist Jane. The woman who had known Adelaide longer than I had been alive. It made the whole thing feel heavier somehow, and I just didn't want to look stupid in front of her.

"I can't say I'm ready, but at least Lumia will be pleased," I said. "I haven't let her out in a few days."

'Finally,' Lumia purred. 'A few days too many!'

It wasn't often, but sometimes Kylan and I would go past the gates to run through the Common Lands. He had encouraged it so I wouldn't forget what it felt like. It wasn't the shifting anymore that made me nervous, but the part where I would have to shift in front of everyone. What if I lost control?

"Usually, the first Elite shifting session isn't actually shifting," Kylan said, rubbing his eyes. "Just a talk. Getting on the same page with Lumia and trying to understand her better," he explained. "And you don't ever have to shift if you don't want to. It's always a choice."

'Damn it,' Lumia muttered.



I laughed quietly to myself. She really was desperate to stretch her paws.

Just a talk...

I would've loved to be a fly on the wall last year when Kyran had a heart-to-heart with Valerius. Though I suppose it would be much different now.

My thoughts were interrupted by Kyran, who had climbed out of bed, and my eyes were stuck on his abs. He stretched his arms before walking over to the cages near the window. Then he tapped on the bars gently, and both Thorne and Jumpie stirred awake.

As he opened both cages, Thorne blinked up at him with big eyes, calm as ever. Jumpie chittered and immediately changed cages, scrambling onto Thorne's back.

"My girl is getting too big," Kyran spoke softly, rubbing Jumpie's chin.

I giggled, watching him. The Crown Prince of Lyperia, who could've been king by now, was talking to a squirrel like she was his child.

It was something.

"Thorne has been so calm lately," I said, watching them. "You wouldn't even think he'd have half the devil sealed inside him. That he'd be so... anything but possessed."

Kyran chuckled lightly. "Well, he was also calm after you sealed him."

I shrugged. "Yes, but still."

Kyran scratched the back of his neck. Through the bond, I felt something shift. There was this sudden irritation, and it didn't come from me.

Had I overstepped? No, of course not. It was just a simple question.

"What would it look like in your eyes?" he asked curiously. "Someone... possessed."

He whispered the last words like he didn't want to hear himself, and I felt a hint of unease. Not odd, since we were undeniably thinking the same.

The first thing that came to mind was red eyes, glowing hair, and a voice so dark it couldn't be right. Basically, that thing we saw that day. Kian.

But I didn't say that. I shook my head instead and got up from the bed. Walking past him, I grabbed his hand, lacing our fingers together.

"Where are we going?"

"Shower."

His whole demeanor changed. "Sure. Whatever you say!" he said, a bit too happy.

I rolled my eyes and pulled him along.

~

There was no telling how long we had stayed in the shower, but it was long enough to make us speed-walk through the woods just to make it to Jane's class in time.

Well...

I was speed-walking, but Kylan didn't care much.

I tugged at his arm, practically dragging him forward while his free hand stayed casually in his pocket. Completely unbothered and relaxed, as if we weren't about to be late to the most important training session of the week.

I was suddenly getting flashbacks. First Rochwall, now Jane...

"This is your fault, by the way," I said through gritted teeth. "I asked you what time it was, and you said we had ten more minutes."

"Best extra ten minutes of your life." He laughed. "And how is this my fault? Who was the one screaming, begging me not to sto—"

I slapped my hand over his mouth before he could finish, my cheeks burning as I whipped my head around to check if anyone was nearby. "Keep your voice down!"

He scoffed against my palm, and I pulled my hand away.

"Are you afraid the ants and termites might hear you?" he chuckled.

I gave him a deadpan look. "I just don't want to get scolded," I muttered, picking up the pace again. "You know I hate scoldings."

A hum escaped him. "You do."

Before I could take another step, he grabbed my arm and twisted me around before throwing me over his shoulder.

"Kylan!?" I squealed, gripping the back of his shirt. "What are you doing?"

"You think you're running, but it's my walking speed. Not your fault, but you're too short," he said simply. "We'll never make it in time. We're already late. I can't save us from a scolding, but perhaps a bigger scolding."

Too short?

He started walking like this was completely normal. Like carrying his



mate through the woods like a sack of potatoes was just another morning.

I bounced against his shoulder with every step, my face in a slight pout while trying not to laugh. All of this was over nothing, but moments like these made it feel as though nothing had changed between us. Because it hadn't.

We were still the same.

"I still hate you," I mumbled.

"No, you don't."

I really didn't.