

Chapter 463

Kylan

I regret marking you...

Those words had been in my head all night. They followed me into my sleep, haunted my dreams, and when I woke up this morning...they were still there.

They were taunting me...

Yesterday shouldn't have happened.

I didn't regret not telling her about it.

I didn't regret protecting her.

But I did regret those words...

The truth would've come out one day, and I was going to tell her myself. I know she was only trying to gain her trust, but why did Lumia have to interfere?

A sigh left me as I stared at the ceiling, my back leaned against the wall. It was something I used to do when I first came to Starlight, when I didn't have the high towers Mom insisted on.

My jaw tightened as I replayed everything for the thousandth time. I remembered every word. Every look, and every tear that fell down her cheek. Even her sobs as I walked away.

I regret marking you...

Good job, Kylan.

A huff escaped me. Of course Valerius had scolded me right after, and rightfully so. A mate bond was not something to joke about.

The most awful thing is that I meant it. In that moment, I meant every single word but regretted it right after. The thing that had pushed me to it was the anger, the hurt, and the frustration of being accused of something I had been hating myself for for months.

It all came pouring out, and I let it. I had never wanted to hurt her, to make her feel the same way I had felt at that moment, but when she compared me to Kian, to the king...something just snapped.

Truthfully, that mark was the best thing I had ever done. It was the one thing I would never take back, not even if the Moon Goddess herself demanded it.

I could still feel her, even now. She was still hurting, and it broke me. She hadn't blocked me completely, but she had put up something between us. Almost like a curtain.

Thin enough for me to sense her, but thick enough to remind me that she didn't want me close.

Knowing I had done that to her felt suffocating. Last night I even thought I was going to die. I genuinely believed my heart would stop beating because the ache was too much to bear. And that bond was so beautiful, but I hated that it could do...this.

I woke from my thoughts as a small weight pressed against my leg and looked down just in time to see Jumpie climbing up. While her tiny paws gripped the fabric of my jacket, I felt another presence land on my shoulder.

It was Thorne. His feathers brushed against my neck as he leaned in



closer. We had been getting along well, but he had changed a lot ever since that night.

That night I let him in...

Jumpie chirped, bumping her head against my chest as if she were trying to push me off the floor.

A weak chuckle escaped me. "Go to her?"

Jumpie bopped her small head. I exhaled slowly, dragging my fingers through her fur. "She told me she didn't want to talk to me ever again," I said. "I have to respect that."

Jumpie stared up at me with those big, innocent eyes like she couldn't understand. Trust me, there was nothing more I wanted than to run to her dorm, knock on her door, and beg on my knees for forgiveness for ever saying those words to her.

But what would that say?

It would tell her, once again, that what she wanted didn't count. That her boundaries didn't matter because I decided they shouldn't. It was what she believed, but none of that was true. That wasn't why I did what I did.

But Violet was still pissed, making her own conclusions, and trying to get through to her while she still saw me as the villain who lied to her face and played her for a fool would only make this worse.

A sharp ache shot through my head. I winced and pressed my hand to my temple, squeezing my eyes shut.

'You should've walked away when I told you to,' Valerius said.

I let out a breath. 'I know.'

He did warn me. Right before things escalated, right before I opened my mouth and let those words slip out, Valerius had told me to step away. To leave, and let her calm down before I said something I couldn't take back.

I didn't listen.

'I am controlling him for you for now. As long as you don't fully know how to control him yet, he'll continue to feed off of anger,' Valerius went on.

'The next time you get too emotional...I might not succeed in holding him down.'

Him...

Baelor.

'I know,' I repeated.

That was the thing Violet didn't understand. The part she couldn't see because I never let her.

These past two months had been absolute hell for me. Every smile, every laugh, and every moment we shared was real. Every second I spent with her made me forget about the ticking time bomb inside my body.

Because I was fighting, every single day. I was fighting to keep that thing locked away until I knew how to control it. Valerius helped, and I knew he would never let anything happen to us, but still...

It was exhausting, draining, and I was glad I did it. I was glad that she wouldn't ever have to do that to match whatever would become of Kayden. I would do that for her.

'I wish she knew I didn't just wake up one day and decide to hurt her,' I

shared. I had been sharing a lot of things with Valerius lately. 'It's just... the fact that she could even think otherwise...'

It really got to me.

'You did the right thing,' Valerius replied. He was also still in pain. I could hear and feel it. He was trying to keep it together because at least one of us should to keep that thing locked away. 'They will understand... eventually.'

Perhaps...

I did what Varius told me to do. I made a choice to protect her, and I knew in my heart that she would've done the same thing if the roles were reversed.

I shook my head slowly.

No...

It wasn't up to me to decide what she would do. It wasn't my place to assume I knew her choices better than she did. That was how we ended up here in the first place.

'Can I ask you for advice?'

'Ask.'

I hated not knowing what move to make next. This whole time, I had been taught to make decisions, but this wasn't something easy.

This was Violet, and one wrong step could cost me everything.

'I want to ask...what now?'

A soft growl rumbled through him. 'We wait,' he decided. 'Violet is feisty, and Lumia is whispering things in her ear. She is still angry, so if you push, she'll only push back harder.'

I let his words sink in for a moment. 'So I should let her come to me?' I questioned. 'After she's calm—'

'No.'

I frowned. 'Then what?'

'Disappearing will only confirm what she already thinks,' Valerius explained. 'That you're hiding, guilty, and that everything she accused you of is true.'

He had a point. Violet had a soft heart, one that would begin to crumble once her anger faded. I doubted she would come to me, but if I didn't reach out as soon as she calmed down, she would start to break, and by then, it would be so much harder to reach her.

'You will want to apologize for what you said to her, but she will want to apologize too. Everything will be alright, Crown Prince.'

I stared at the ceiling again, processing everything he said.

'I didn't want to hurt them,' I whispered. 'That's the one thing I said that night. That I didn't want to hurt them...'

Valerius was silent for a moment. 'Do you remember what I told you that night? Why the old Soothsayer was right, and it had to be this way?'

Of course I remembered. I remembered it all, including every word he had said that led up to it.

I closed my eyes, thinking back to that night...

~

Two months ago

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'This blood moon will be your only chance,' Valerius stated. 'There will be no other chance after this.'

It was already far past midnight as I walked deep into the woods, leaving Starlight behind me. I needed to be far enough away that no one would sense what I was about to do.

So she wouldn't find out what I was about to do...

"Remember. It will be your decision," Valerius said. "I believe this is the right way. But you should know you are not obligated to do this —"

"I will do this."

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