

Chapter 464

Kylan

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Two months ago

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I had walked so far I didn't recognize where I was anymore, and ended up at a small clearing between the trees.

There was no one in the woods, and nothing but silence as I looked up at the blood moon. It was massive, larger than the average moon, and burned a deep red. It was...breathtaking.

If only the reason behind it wasn't so terrifying.

When I was a little boy, Mom used to tell me the blood moon was the Moon Goddess crying. She would pull me close and warn me to stay inside. To stay away from the darkness that crawled out during nights like this. The king used to laugh at her. I used to ask her how she knew, but she never answered.

Now I think she might've been right...

This was the moon that held ancient power. Power strong enough to transfer something that dark from one vessel to another.

It wasn't our moon.

It was Baelor's...

I took a breath.

Was I scared?

Fuck yes! Who wouldn't be?

Though I certainly didn't want to leave Violet alone, I wasn't scared of dying. I had accepted that possibility a long time ago. Everyone died.

What terrified me was feeling that same thing again. That thing I had felt when the smallest piece of Baelor had touched my body for just a few seconds. A feeling only Violet could relate to.

She had experienced it.

I had felt so much power that I wouldn't even know what to do with his. So much darkness I could hardly breathe. And power like that?

It wasn't supposed to be normal.

Now I was about to take all of it inside me...

I looked down at Thorne, who was still in my hands, still and calm. Actually, way too calm for what was about to happen to him. His button-like eyes, as dark as the night, met mine, but there was not much behind them.

Would he have already accepted his fate?

I felt bad for him. This small creature who had once been manipulated by the High Priestess Gloria to stand behind Baelor, to be her eyes and ears.

He didn't ask for this, and didn't choose this. Yet, here he was, being used again. Only this time it was by me.

'What will happen to him after?' I asked Valerius.

He let out a deep laugh, but I supposed he was allowed to.

Why was I warming up to a raven?

'He will live,' Valerius said. 'The raven was never sent to be a vessel. He was sent to be a weapon,' he explained. 'You will do him a favor. Once the transfer is complete, Thorne will be free of the burden.'

I stroked Thorne's feathers gently. 'Thorne is one special raven...so you mustn't lose him.'

One special raven...

He had carried this thing inside him for so long.

At least one of us would be able to rest.

'You must understand,' Valerius continued. 'What enters you tonight will not leave. Not without consequence.'

I gulped.

'This is not a cage you can unlock whenever you please,' he said. 'Once Baelor is inside, he becomes part of us.'

I thought about that for a moment. 'That was not something small.

Part of us...

'I understand.'

'Do you?'

I didn't answer him because I wasn't sure if I did. My thoughts drifted to Violet, and a faint smile touched my lips. If there was one thing I knew for certain, it was that I would keep her safe. The mark I had just placed

on her neck carried more promises than I could count. Keeping her in the dark was never meant to be one of them, but protecting her always would be.

A shiver ran through me. What would she think if she knew what I was about to do?

I knew she would try to stop me, and possibly succeed. But what would happen now?

Would she absolutely hate me for not telling her?

Or would she understand that I was doing this for her? For us?

That I was ready to fight beside her so she wouldn't ever have to do it alone...

'I wonder if she'll be able to feel him right away,' I said quietly. 'Through the bond?'

We had been much more open to each other lately. It was because we could feel everything. Every emotion, whether we wanted to or not. And I couldn't help but worry...

Would she sense this darkness the second it entered me?

Valerius hummed. 'She will not notice right away because she won't be looking for it,' he said. 'But I don't know how long we'll be able to hide it from Lumia. She is ancient like me, and she will know something is wrong eventually.'

I swallowed hard. 'Should I just tell Violet tomorrow?'

'No.' The answer came fast.

'Her reaction will be the same whether you tell her today or tomorrow,' Valerius explained. 'No matter what, we will all feel pain, and that is the truth,' he said. 'What you can control is when we will feel the pain. It is better to wait and let the shadow settle inside you first. There is still a lot you need to learn, and if you get too emotional tomorrow, who knows what will happen?'

He was right.

I was going to tell her. I had to, but just not now.

No matter what, Violet would have a lot of feelings about this. About me taking in the very thing that haunted her nightmares, killed her parents... used to scare her more than anything in this world.

What if we would get into an argument tomorrow, and I could not contain him?

I could lose control until there was nothing left of me except Baelor walking around in my body, wearing my face and hurting her.

My hands started shaking against Thorne's feathers. I pressed down harder to make it stop.

'You're hesitating,' Valerius observed.

'I'm not—'

'You are,' he argued, though his voice remained calm. 'And I am here to tell you that Kylan Lythoria of Lyperia does not hesitate.'

I clenched my jaw. 'I have watched you grow,' he went on. 'I know your strength, what you are capable of, and I know you can contain him.'

A few more breaths escaped me. He was doing the same thing he had



done during the crown battle, and that hadn't ended well for either of us.

But things were different this time...

Right?

'I will help you,' Valerius promised. 'Every single day, I will help you keep Baelor locked away. I will protect your body as I have done your whole life. You will not do this alone.'

I could hear he meant it, and I started feeling a bit more at ease, though that uncomfortable feeling never really left.

My eyes drifted from Thorne to the moon, and I could feel it. It was almost time.

The red light was getting brighter, shadows shifting closer to the center.

'The moon is near the earth's shadow,' Valerius said. 'If you are going to do this, it must be now.'

I looked up at the moon again, feeling the energy in the air shifting. It was changing and building toward something unexplainable.

This time I didn't hesitate, and lifted Thorne in both hands, raising him toward the sky. My heart pounded so loudly I could hear it in my ears, but even that wasn't enough to make me stop.

I had to...

I looked into Thorne's eyes as the moon aligned and reached the center of the earth's shadow. That was when Thorne's eyes changed and turned a bright red.

That same blinding shade as the moon above us. I felt his energy before I

could see it. Something strong and ancient. Thorne let out a screech and opened his beak wide, letting a shadow pour out of him.

My eyes widened as the shadow moved like smoke, forcing its way toward my face, toward my mouth. All it took was the smallest gasp for it to seize its chance and rush inside of me.

“Mine.”

A deep voice rumbled through the sky, so deep I felt it in my bones.

It was him.

Baelor...