



## Chapter 496

Violet

My eyes locked on Aelius's hand. I did not hesitate for a second and immediately rushed past. I dropped to my knees on the floor right across from him, my fingers shaking as I pushed the drawing into his hands.

Just as he requested. My eyes squinted as his were still glowing. He laid the drawing flat on his palm, then hovered over it with his other hand.

My breath hitched as I waited, my heart beating against my ribs. I had not really realized how much I had been depending on him knowing what this flower was until I was sitting on this floor with my hands twisted in my lap, waiting for him to say anything at all.

And it was all taking a bit too long. His head tilted slightly while his eyes stayed on the blue rose.

"Did you know I would come tonight?" I asked, curious.

A sound escaped his throat, and the aggressive shush he gave me hit hard enough that I feared saying another word. At least for now.

As I looked back over my shoulder, Jason met my gaze with an amused smile. Kylan leaned against the closed door, brows lifted.

When I heard Aelius make the slightest sound, I turned back around again. He let out a few slow breaths through his nose before humming. It was like he had figured something out, and the hope already lifted in my chest although I knew it shouldn't.

"Do you know where it is?" I tried again.

Jason let out a soft chuckle behind me. "He will speak when he is ready, Violet."



"Yes. Sure."

I placed my hands back in my lap and tried to wait patiently. It was kind of hard to do so, knowing he might hold some answers to something that big that could change everything for me, but I did the best I could.

I felt someone settle on the floor beside me, and knew it was Kylan. My eyes turned to him, and I brought one finger up to his lips to keep him from talking.

His brows furrowed at me for a second before a small smirk reached his lips. He knew exactly what I was doing. Kylan had a habit of interrupting Aelius, demanding things from him, and I really didn't want to take any chances tonight.

Aelius let out one long breath, grabbing our attention again. "They are coming for our eyes," he whispered. "And everyone will."

My heart sank deep in my chest, my head snapping toward Kylan. There was one thought going through my mind, and it was clear he was thinking the same. He had told me that before.

"That is what you told me the first day we met," I told Aelius. "I need to know what it means. I need to know what this flower is...I need to know where I can find more of them so I can find—"

"It is a Marrowrose."

The words came out flat, though a bit tense. I had hoped hearing the name would give me a better idea of what the flower was, but it didn't.

"It is rare, and there are not supposed to be any left, let alone blooming, but Priestess Gloria always has her way," he went on. "It's a flower once grown by ancient witches only, and only for one purpose."

He looked up. "To drain another supernatural of their powers," he said.

"Yes, but also to collect power," Jason added.

I heard footsteps from behind, and he joined us, sitting beside Aelius. His eyes locked on Kylan. "It's like a...wolfsbane, but for our kind, and way more harmful."

The air left my chest.

That couldn't mean any good.

"The good news is that whatever was used was most likely the last seed, which means it will not spread much farther," Jason said. "Also, Aunt Adelaide is so powerful, it won't fully drain her powers."

He let out a sigh. "But the bad news is that the rose is most likely the reason no magic can be used inside the cave, and the only reason Aunt Adelaide is possibly dealing with that rose is because Uncle Alaric—"

Aelius nudged his side, and Jason's words faltered.

"Alaric what?" I asked. My voice came out small, my eyes darting between them. Jason did not answer, and Aelius looked away. "What were you going to say about my dad?"

Jason's lips parted.

"Jason," Aelius said sharply, stopping him. He let out a small scoff. "Do not frighten her when there is not much we can do at the moment."

"I am giving her the truth, Father," Jason argued. "You always gave me the truth. She deserves the truth. We do not get to keep sugarcoating it just because we do not want her to cry on our floor."

"He is right," Kylan jumped in. I turned my head and looked at him. "Whatever you have to say, just say it. She can take it."

My throat went dry, but I managed to nod my head. I doubted it was even about protecting my feelings. Since when did Aelius spare anyone's



feelings?

He had thrown a death prophecy in my face within minutes of meeting me.

I looked back at him. "I have seen that you don't work well under pressure," he said. "A bad trait. One you inherited from your father—"

"And the curiosity from my mother," I cut him off. "Now please...tell me."

Aelius let out a breath. "The flower has changed the way I see things, child."

He blinked his eyes, which were now back to their original color. The glowing white had disappeared, and pale eyes stared back at me.

"A Marrowrose does not just root itself into the soil of nothing. It needs a witch for that, and the only power in this world strong enough to feed a rose of that size and that color..." He let out a breath. "Is your mother?"

I shook my head. "No."

Nothing about it sat right. Adelaide had spent years locked behind a Veil for things she had done to keep the world safe. To keep me safe.

And now Aelius was telling me that she was the one feeding the very thing that kept her locked inside that cave? That didn't make sense.

"I don't believe it," I said. "Why would my mom willingly grow a flower that would take her powers away? Why would she do that to herself?"

"Well," Aelius began. "They are not the only ones who have left the Veil, and then there's also your...father."

He had said the word carefully. "Adelaide would never have given Gloria that consent unless she had a reason."



"And you believe that reason is all the other things that came out of the Veil, and Alaric?" Kylan asked.

"More so Alaric," Jason shared his conclusion.

Kylan frowned. "Then why did she not stop Gloria or the others before any of this?" he asked. "Before they got to either of them. Why not stop her then?"

Aelius cleared his throat. "I believe Adelaide would've taken them on, so that is the part I do not fully understand yet," he said. "I suspect it could be that Alaric had given everything he had to protecting the Veil," he explained. "That he was already drained when Gloria and Kian came for them, and that when the moment came for Adelaide to choose, she had no real choice left to make. So she chose him."

I didn't know why, but I felt my eyes fill up with tears. I glanced sideways at Kylan. I would've done the same for him, and he...he had done something reckless for me.

Though there was still a small difference. She didn't have any time to think this over. She most likely had to decide in a matter of seconds, and chose to listen to her heart.

I had stood at that same crossroads, back during the battle with Baelor. The same Baelor that was now inside Kylan's body.

I turned back to Aelius. "Is that not everything you do not stand for?" I asked quietly. "Choosing for...love?"

His brows drew together.

"You got angry at me when I did it," I explained further. "I stopped the sealing to save you, and you said I was not supposed to make that choice."

Aelius exhaled. "It is out of character for Adelaide to choose love over duty," he said. "But when it comes to the love she carries for your father,



nothing she does is ever out of character. Nothing.”

His gaze shifted to Kylan, and he gave him a slight nudge with his chin. “The crown prince knows all about that.”

I spun to Kylan, and locked my eyes with his. I was reckless. A wildflower, Jason had said. So the decision I had made wasn’t really out of character.

But for Kylan to do what he had done and not tell me about it had been completely out of character.

I saw Kylan’s throat bob. “I do know that,” he said, looking directly into my eyes. Aelius’s words reached something deep within me. So deep that it made me wonder if I should perhaps cut him some slack.

I still didn’t agree with it.

Couldn’t and wouldn’t.

But I could at least try to understand because somehow I did.

My eyes shut for a second, and I put my focus back on Aelius. “So to summarize,” I said, using my hands, “Adelaide allowed those flowers grow on purpose to save my dad so my evil grandmother won’t hurt him.”

Aelius nodded.

“And now they are stuck inside a cave where the flower is draining her, and preventing him or anyone else from shifting, and then what?” I wondered. “What is the plan? What does Gloria do at the end of all of it?”

Destruction?

World domination?

“My eyes can only see what they allow me to see, and I do not have that answer for you, child.”



I felt an uncomfortable pit in my stomach. His words worried me. He had told me more about the flower, and that was great, but what about the location?

"What I can see are words," Aelius said. "And they are telling me that the first to cross does not have to look for what comes next. It will come to her."

"What?"

My eyes shifted to Kylan, but he was already looking back at me.

Did he mean...

"It is late. You should go back for tonight," Aelius said.

"You really need to work on your people skills, Father," Jason chuckled.

Aelius shifted, and got up from the floor with Jason's help. Kylan and I followed quickly. "No, wait." I stopped him, my hands on his chest through his cloak. "What did you say just now?"

"I do not know what it means. But whatever you do tomorrow, child," Aelius huffed out. "Don't lose."



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