

Chapter 497

Violet

If someone would have told me yesterday that today would be like this, I would have laughed in their face.

Yesterday I had drunk a strange tea on the floor of Nate's room, saw Kian, stood in a cabin in Bloodstone Haven, and learned that Mom allowed a flower to grow that was slowly draining her powers.

But today was the funniest part.

Because today I was supposed to race three Lycans through the woods in front of the entire academy in a race I had neither prepared for nor even cared about until Aelius had said that cryptic thing last night that had not left my mind since.

My eyes glanced at the clock as I paced back and forth in Kylan's room.

5:30 PM

Just thirty more minutes before we would start the race. I was already in my Elite gear, which was required to make the shift easier. My hair was in a single braid Trinity had made for me, though I suppose it didn't matter much.

After all, it was supposed to be Lumia who would be stealing the show.

The pacing didn't do much. It only made me think even more about what I was about to do, and what I was doing it for.

What if I was making a whole thing out of nothing? What if Aelius had been talking about something completely different, and we had just decided to make it about the race because all hope was lost and we needed something to grab onto?



For all we knew, Lumia would run for her life, lose to three Lycans, and it would all be for nothing.

But who cared?

I was going to embarrass myself anyway.

A small chuckle came from the direction of the desk. I stopped pacing and snapped my head over to Kylan, who was leaning back against the front of his desk, watching me with that soft smile I usually would have appreciated on his face.

However, today I did not appreciate it.

"Nothing about this is funny," I told him, folding my arms.

He pushed off the desk and walked toward me.

"It is a little funny," he said. "Watching you be this nervous over winning a race you swore yesterday you did not care about."

When he stood in front of me, I sulked and dropped my head against his shoulder. Then I bumped it against him a few times. I lifted my head to look into his deep brown eyes.

"Do you really think Aelius's words were about this race?" I asked. "About the mission?"

"I do," Kylan replied. "I'm sure of it."

It had been the only thing we had talked about on the way back to Starlight last night. There was so much that was said, but we were stuck on the race and the secret mission that would come with it.

We all were.

Dylan, Nate, and even Trinity, who wasn't on our Elite team.



They hadn't found anything in the library, but the three of them had also gotten a really good laugh out of the fact that I was suddenly semi-motivated to win.

'Why are you like this?' Lumia said lazily in my head. 'I can go for a walk and beat these Lycans for you, Witchey. Easily.'

Easily?

That was the thing. Everyone claimed Lumia was so amazing, which she was, but I highly doubted the commanders had set this up to be a simple race.

If so, they would've never invited the entire school to come and watch. There was just something about all of this that had left a bad taste in my mouth from the very beginning.

"You know there's a catch, right?" I said out loud. "They won't just...let us run."

Kylan tilted his head and reached up to touch my arm. "Catch or no catch, Violet or Lumia, you could win this in a landslide," he encouraged. "Lumia is fast. You are smarter than the other three, and while they are driven only by pride, you have an actual reason. A purpose to win."

'Tell her, crown prince,' Lumia purred.

'Stop!'

I felt my cheeks glow. "You really think I can win by a landslide?" I asked him.

He showed me his teeth in a small, hesitant grin.

"Maybe not a landslide," he said. "It will probably be a close call," he now claimed. "But you could win."

'Oh,' Lumia muttered, annoyed. 'Is he saying we could win? Who does he



think we are?'

I huffed, blowing a few loose strands free from my braid in the process.

"Pup?" Kylan cupped my cheeks in both his hands, then kissed the tip of my nose.

I looked up into his eyes. They were just so calm and confident. He was looking at me like he had already decided I was going to be fine, and maybe that was the thing that made me even more nervous.

"What?" I asked. My voice came out rough, but a small smile tugged at my lips.

"If it makes you feel any better," he said, "you can tell yourself the whole time that it will be Lumia running this race." He raised his brow and gave a nod. He sounded so cute and sure of himself, like I hadn't already thought about that earlier.

I let out a laugh and slapped his chest. "That's what I've been trying to tell myself, but it doesn't make it any easier," I admitted. "Well...except for the part where I don't have to run on my two legs, of course."

Another laugh escaped me, and Kylan couldn't help but join in. "It might be a bit too soon for that," he agreed. "But I'm sure that one day..."

The door, which had been slightly ajar the whole time, suddenly burst all the way open. Someone appeared in the doorway.

It was Nate.

He had one hand pressed to his stomach like he had been laughing all the way down the hall. Kylan and I pulled away from each other and both shot him a questioning look at the same time.

"I just got the worst news," Nate said, catching his breath. "We are screwed."



"Huh?" I lifted a single brow.

"Cassian just told me that Rochwall told him that the first part of the race is going to be run on two legs," he informed us. "The second half is for the wolves."

It took me a beat to understand the sentence. My body froze, and my head started spinning as the nightmare we had been laughing about just seconds ago had suddenly become reality.

Two legs first...

Wolves second...

All three were taller than me, combat majors who had been training their whole lives and were definitely faster than me in human form. By a lot.

Kylan let out the smallest breath beside me and shook his head in disbelief. "I guess that day will be today, Pup."

I ignored Kylan's words. Of course I hadn't expected to win, but there was something deep down that made me believe that maybe...maybe I could somehow magically win this thing.

But now?

I thought of something to say, but could only get one word out.

"Shit..."

'Yes, shit,' Lumia said in my head. 'We are finished...and so is Lumen.'