

Chapter 502

Violet

Voices filled the clearing as we both passed the line. They were roars in a way I had never heard come out of Starlight before.

The Lycan was right beside us, head tipping toward us. In that moment, I realized that the winner had not been declared yet. It was too close of a race. I felt Lumia getting exhausted, which was no surprise. She had worked too hard. I truly hoped it was enough.

Commander Jorn moved in front of us, clapping his hands while shaking his head in disbelief. Sienna and I both shifted back, our gear making it take only seconds.

After the shift, the real exhaustion started to set in. Sienna and I exchanged glances and smiled at each other. I rested my hands on my knees, trying to catch my breath as the screams from the crowd slowly faded into the background.

"Close!" Jorn called out.

Still calming down, I lifted my head to look at him. He had a wide grin on his face.

"Very close, but there can only be one winner, and that is..."

I closed my eyes.

Why?

Because I had messed it all up. I didn't see Kylan, Nate, Dylan, or Trinity, which meant I must've failed, and—



'Congratulations, Witchey.' Lumia spoke.

"Hastings!"

The whole world seemed to stop for half a second.

My eyes shot open, and the sound of the cheers reached my ears. Some were chanting my name when they hadn't done that earlier.

I looked from Jorn to Rochwall, who had joined him, bobbing his head.

"L...I won?"

I only gave them half a second to respond, and when they didn't, my gaze met Sienna's.

Both her hands were on her hips, her chest rising and falling. Even so, she still managed to give me a sincere smile.

"Congratulations, Hastings!" she said. "You did amazing out there." Her brows pulled together. "Honestly...I did not even know you could do that."

Neither did I.

I opened my mouth to tell her that, but did not get to say a single word as two hands closed around my waist before I was suddenly lifted off the ground. It was Kylan.

I let out a giggle as he spun us around. My hands grabbed at his shoulders, legs swung out behind me before burying my head in his shoulder.

"Of course you won." He chuckled into the side of my hair. His voice was calm. "I knew you could do it."



He set me back down on my feet but did not let go. He still had both his hands on my waist and his forehead pressed against mine. His eyes locked on mine like he was making sure I was actually still in there.

"You won, Pup."

"I know!" I gasped, feeling relief wash over me.

I didn't care much about winning, but I did care about getting to my parents. And now, I was finally a step closer.

I felt two hands ruffle my hair, a third kneading my shoulder, and knew exactly who they belonged to.

As I pulled back from Kylan and turned around, three faces smiled at me. Dylan, Nate, and Trinity.

"That was insane, Vivi!" Nate praised. "I think now the whole school knows not to underestimate you."

"What he said," Trinity added, nudging his shoulder.

Dylan gave a shrug, his lips curling with the smile he failed to hide.

"That was...not bad."

I looked past him at Jorn, who was standing right behind him.

He had stopped clapping and was now rubbing his chin between his fingers, eyes narrowed. There was no telling whether his thoughts were positive or negative since he was the one who had rigged me into this competition, but it didn't matter anymore.

I won.



Rochwall walked up behind him and pushed his shoulder. He mumbled something in his ear, and the two walked away.

They made their way to Sienna and offered her a hand. She shook each of theirs in return.

A few feet past them, Principal Sterling stood alone. Leaning on his walking stick, he smiled when he caught me looking his way.

A small grateful smile pulled at my mouth before I looked down. What I really wanted to do was run toward him and ask him the questions that were on my mind.

When would we be leaving, what was his business at the abandoned palace...why now?

"Are you okay?"

Kylan's warm body pressed up behind me, and he pressed a kiss against the side of my cheek.

I came back from wherever I had gone in my head and placed my hands on his so he could hold me tighter.

"I'm...still dreaming," I said, chuckling at Trinity, who stood in front of me.

"Just don't forget about us when you're famous," she said, looking over her shoulder at the crowd behind us.

Anxiety hit me as I saw what was happening.

People were pointing at me. They had done it before, but that was only because I was Kylan's mate.



This was different.

This was my achievement.

The next few minutes were filled with congratulations from my other team members, and I had to admit...it felt good.

Maybe it sounded strange, but hearing them say they hadn't thought I could win felt good too.

Not Mandy, though. According to her, she had called it all along.

"I suppose this is it!" Jorn called out. "It was a nice little break from classes, but you're all expected back soon, and—"

"I want a rematch!"

I rolled my eyes before my head had even fully turned. There was only one voice as irritating as nails on a chalkboard, and judging by everyone else's reactions, we all knew who it belonged to.

"Here he goes," Trinity muttered.

It was Cassian.

He came limping out of the trees, one arm slung over Wes's shoulder for support. The embarrassed look on Wes's face suggested he was already regretting agreeing to do it.

A few more figures came out of the trees behind them. Commanders who had also been in the woods, most likely supervising the race.

So Jorn had not been bluffing about more eyes than you can guess.

With Cassian's arrival, it was dead silent again.



"What does he want?" Kyran exhaled.

My shoulders shrugged. "Who knows."

Cassian raised the hand that was not on Wes and pointed it at me.

"I want this competition declared invalid," Cassian announced. "And I want her to admit that she cheated," he went on.

When a mix of mocking laughter, murmurs, and whispers broke out, my blood began to boil.

"She purposely injured my knee out there while she knew it was bad. She took me out on purpose, and that while I'm the most valuable on this team—"

"That's enough, Cassian." Kyran let out an annoyed sound through his teeth, and the low voice made me fear that he wouldn't just leave it at a scolding.

He let go of me and lifted his foot. But before Kyran could take a step, I stuck out a hand and stopped him.

"No," I whispered. "I got it."

I closed a bit of the distance between Cassian and me on my own. Then I spoke with a clear volume, making sure everyone could hear me.

"So you are telling everyone here that you are the most valuable on this entire team, Cassian. The best of all of us," I gestured to everyone. "Yet...

one light kick to the knee from a 5'3 royal leech, a healer, a freshman, was enough to put you to the ground for the rest of the race?"

