



### Chapter 503

Violet

Cassian opened and closed his mouth twice, nothing coming out either time. His face went red, which was definitely a first for him, and Wes chuckled under his breath.

"Huh?" Kylan spoke, surprised. "You do got it."

Cassian still had not said anything. I gave him the opportunity, but he didn't take it, so I turned to face the crowd. One person in particular, who was clearly enjoying all of this. Jorn.

A wicked grin pulled at his mouth.

"Commander Jorn?"

"Hastings?"

"Did you, at any point, tell us that there was no kicking allowed in this race?"

Jorn waited for a few seconds, then shook his head slowly. "No...no."

"Oh." I let out a breath. "Well, then there is no need for all of this."

I dropped both my hands down to my sides and turned back to Cassian. "You pushed me first, by the way," I said, my gaze sharp. "But I'm not hearing you talk about that."

I let out a small scoff. Cassian's eyes pierced through mine, and the two of us glared at each other. There was no doubt we were sharing the same thoughts about wanting to kill each other at this very moment.



"You heard Commander. The race was fair," I told him. "But if this is really about your ego and not about the race, I would be happy to redo the whole thing so you can stop crying about it," I continued. "Though someone should probably heal your poor knee first."

I folded my arms across my chest. "You'll first have to find someone, of course, because I'm not touching you."

A wave of laughter rolled across the crowd, and Cassian's eyes twitched at the corners.

Lumia hummed. "Today is a good day to be inside you!"

My eyes shut for a second. I had not wanted any of this and had no interest in picking a fight with my teammate. But he was the one who had had it out for me, even before I stepped onto his trail.

And if I wouldn't have, he would have kept going and going. I knew this dance. I had done it with Chrystal for almost an entire semester, and we all know how that ended. I couldn't let people like this win the first round, or I'd end up losing every single one after until it had reached a point of no return.

A stick tapped the ground three times, instantly grabbing everyone's attention. It was Principal Sterling.

"This race has ended." His lips curved into a soft smile like he was trying to keep the peace. "Violet Hastings is the rightful winner. She and Team Kylan will be escorting me on the trip ahead, and that is final," he declared. "Now everyone, please make your way back inside!"

After the principal's words, students started heading toward the gates at once. As I turned, Wes lifted his free hand off Cassian's back and gave me a small thumbs up. Then he winced as Cassian shifted his weight against



him.

I watched as they hobbled off toward one of the commanders, his squad following closely behind.

The five of us stayed where we were.

"Vi!" Nate said dramatically. "What in the world has gotten into you today?"

Kylan stepped closer and laid both hands on my shoulders from behind. He turned my face toward him gently with one finger.

"Are your eyes—"

I shook my head. "My eyes are doing great," I reassured. "These are not my eyes...just me."

Back during Elite training when I had lost my cool, or basically any other time, I had blamed my eyes. It wasn't even blaming because it was true that I couldn't control my emotions, but this time was different.

"He has been an ass for a while now, and I was getting tired of his crap."

Kylan looked down at me, then tilted his head to the side. A laugh escaped him.

"He is a senior," Nate said. "Before you know it, we'll be rid of him for good. I never liked that guy. You all know how good my judgment is when it comes to character."

"Yes, but you also did not like Dylan," I chuckled.

Nate let out a huff. "True."



Dylan's head snapped to Nate. "You really did not like me?" he said, looking genuinely worried. "I thought you were joking."

Trinity giggled and rubbed his shoulder. Jorn suddenly appeared in the circle, head bobbing as he swung his boots into the grass.

"Well done, Hastings."

"Thank you, Co—"

"I think I get it now," he cut me off. "I think I get it..."

That was all he said before he walked past us. It was like he knew something we didn't, though I wasn't quite sure what. His actions had left all of us confused.

I turned my head and Kylan was already looking at me with the same question on his face.

"Uuh..." he scratched his head. "I think he gets it now."

A laugh came out of me, and I pushed him in his side. A second later, Rochwall came jogging toward us.

"Children," he said, smiling. He came to a stop in front of me. "Violet. I am very proud of you. For winning the race, for standing up for yourself and I know your pa..." He took a deep breath. "I'm just so happy for you."

"Thank you," I said, my voice rushed. I did not waste another second on small talk. "When are we leaving?"

"Two days," he answered. "Principal Sterling will fill you in on the rest of the details himself, but I can tell you you'll be leaving in two days."

Two days...



The five of us exchanged a single shared look across the group. None of us had to say it out loud, but the silent agreement was enough.

We were going to Aelius tomorrow. We had no choice.

“You know what, Commander,” Trinity spoke after an awkward silence. She turned to Rochwall with a bright smile. “I have been meaning to tell you for a while. You really are the most handsome commander this school has by far!”

Rochwall's eyebrows lifted. Trinity's gaze shifted to Jane, who stood at a distance, then back at Rochwall.

“The Moon Goddess has blessed you, Commander,” she said. “She has blessed all of us, really. She made sure all the good-looking ones stuck together. Have you noticed that?”

Rochwall frowned, and a small chuckle came out of him.

Dylan facepalmed beside her while I laughed into my hand. It was something only Trinity could say. To a commander, right in his face with zero shame.

Rochwall pointed his finger at her. “Trinity Richard,” he pronounced. “We've met before. The first Elite Team dinner, right?”

Trinity nodded.

“I was thinking...I have met your father a few times. He is one strong Alpha, and your mother is just...” he made a big gesture with his hands. “It is strange to me, actually, that you have not been called up to the Elite Team.”

Trinity shook her head. “Oh, I don't—“



"It is strange!" Dylan jumped in. "She is an amazing warrior, even better healer. Fast, strong, kind, caring, smart. Have you seen her grades—"

"Okay, Dylan," she laughed awkwardly.

I knew what she was thinking. That she didn't want to have anything to do with this team and would rather spend her time elsewhere, but they were right.

Rochwall's mouth tugged up at the corner.

"Dylan is very difficult, so coming from him, it must mean something," he said. "I think I may need to sneak you onto the list for this trip, then. So you can keep an eye on Dylan?"

"Keep an eye...what?" Dylan blinked. "What about Kylan and Nate? Violet?"

Rochwall went on, ignoring him. "I also believe Violet could use a girlfriend," he said.

There was this look behind his eyes.

"And a bit of woman power on a trip like this never hurts. I have learned the hard way how often Jane and...her friends have had to talk the rest of us out of doing something stupid, and..."

A sigh left him and his words faltered. A small soft smile reached my lips, and he met my eyes for a second.

He didn't have to say it out loud. I knew who he was talking about. Adelaide, Claire, Jane, and the amazing bond they shared...

"Commander Rochwall, have you heard Nate's mate will be joining us soon?" Trinity began. "You must know Kaelis, right?"



Once again, she had lifted the mood. I shot her an appreciative nod.

Nate's eyes lit up at the word mate. That was all that was needed before he began rambling about Kaelis.

Meanwhile, my attention had shifted elsewhere.

My eyes had caught Sterling, who walked slowly toward the Starlight gates. He was by himself this time, no assistant in sight.

I nudged Kylan's hand with mine, and his eyes followed my direction. He held my hand, and we stepped away from the others without a word.

Then we started walking toward the gates Sterling had just passed through.

"What are you going to ask him?" Kylan asked after several seconds had passed. I was sure he also had his ideas, but wanted to check whether we were on the same page.

"Anything that might be of help to Aelius."

He hummed in response.

"I always thought Aelius saw everything, knew everything...but Principal Sterling is so mysterious I doubt even Aelius knows what he is up to," I shared.

Kylan glanced at me as we walked.

"This random trip to the abandoned kingdom just doesn't make sense, and I need to know if this trip is sightseeing for him, or if it has a real purpose."