

Chapter 504

Violet

"Principal Sterling!" Kylan called out to him.

Thorne and Jumpie, who had followed us, ran off while we finally caught up with him. He turned onto the courtyard path leading to his tower. I stepped to his right while Kylan moved to his left.

"Kylan Lythoria, and his Royal Mate," Sterling greeted, his eyes warm. "The rightful winner."

I looked down at him, matching his warmth. The man was so short that the top of his head barely reached the middle of my chest.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"We were hoping we could talk with you, Sir," Kylan said.

I bit my bottom lip, mentally preparing for him to tell us to leave him alone.

The man let out a small hum. "Sure," he said. We turned again, the tower right in front of us. "Let's go to my office," he suggested.

Just like that?

That was easier than I had expected.

I didn't know why I would even think he would send us away when he had always been too happy to see Kylan. Even through Adelaide's eyes, he had always been kind.

He looked like a good man, and I didn't doubt that whatever he wanted from the abandoned palace, his intentions were probably good. But I still needed to know what we were walking into. Anything Sterling was willing to share could be the difference between us walking into

from the abandoned palace, his intentions were probably good. But I still needed to know what we were walking into. Anything Sterling was willing to share could be the difference between us walking into something Aelius could prepare us for and walking into it blind.

Moments later, the three of us were sitting in his office. Sterling settled behind his desk. Kylan and I sat across from him.

My eyes wandered around the office. I quickly noticed that while the rest of Starlight had been renovated over the years, his tower had stayed exactly as it was. The walls were old stone, the ceiling had wooden beams, and it was way colder here. So cold that a small shiver ran down my arms.

It couldn't be healthy for him to stay in here. My eyes carefully found his again, and the smile was still there. Still as soft. I let out a sigh and gave him a smile in return.

"I am very excited that the two of you will be accompanying me on this journey," Sterling began, folding his hands on top of the desk. "I had been wondering whether you would be the one to win it, Royal Mate."

Had he?

"And I must say...you must be truly blessed."

I chuckled and shook my head. "I don't think so. Just lucky," I said. "Really lucky."

Sterling tilted his head to the side. "With such a wolf...lucky indeed."

As always, I began overthinking. It was the way he had said it that made me wonder if he knew more about it. Either about me or Lumia.



I forced my breathing to stay even. Kylan cleared his throat next to me.

"Sir, with all due respect," he started, "we were also wondering why you would be making this trip to the abandoned palace in the first place," he said. "It is a place that everyone has long forgotten about."

Sterling raised a single brow. "Explain."

"I mean...an Alpha King slaughtering nearly his entire bloodline inside that palace?" Kylan shrugged. "That can't be worth visiting now, right?"

An uncomfortable chuckle escaped me. That was obviously not what had happened, and we both knew that. He was just confronting him, watching him, pushing to see how Sterling would react. If he would give us a real answer or wave us off.

"You are right, Crown Prince," Sterling clasped his hands together over the desk. His eyes narrowed slightly. "It is one of the darkest places we have within the Common Lands, in fact." He closed his eyes for a long moment.

"But something has come back to me as of late," he went on, his eyes still shut. "And there is something important I have to retrieve from there...just in case."

A chill ran down the back of my neck. I had the urge to ask him what it was, but when Kylan lightly kicked the foot of my chair, I stayed quiet.

His eyes opened, and he looked at Kylan first. Then me.

"Anyhow," Sterling exhaled. "The royal elders have granted me permission to go about my business there. They also warned me that there might be quite a few rogues around the palace. Possibly even inside it, but we'll see."



"And that is why you need us to go with you," I concluded.

Sterling gave me a small nod.

As a silence followed, I pictured the palace inside my head. I tried to because there wasn't a lot I actually knew about it.

Just the spooky stories that had floated around before I had learned the truth. The whispers about the souls of those the Alpha King had murdered supposedly still roaming the palace, trapped between the walls.

I suppose every Lycan and Werewolf kid had heard a hundred different versions of that story growing up.

The one thing I did not have to imagine was the citadel and the palace sitting right in the center of the Common Lands.

The only way to get there was by long stone bridges across the water, and aside from them being heavily guarded, no one dared crossing them anymore.

I had seen the bridges a few times in my life, including the trip when I first came to Starlight. I had stared at them for a while but never thought much of them.

Sterling's voice pulled me from my thoughts. "And how are you doing, Crown Prince?" He shifted in his chair. "How are things back home?"

I caught what he was doing right away. He was steering the conversation away.

Kylan let out a low chuckle. "Since you know some people, I am sure you have heard all about what is going on with...Elyx."



I felt the small drop in his voice before he finished the sentence. That man was certainly not his father, not the king, but he still had to give him something. So he gave him a name. Elyx.

He hated talking about this. I could tell by the way his nose scrunched. He avoided it at all costs, even with me, and I let him. Out of instinct, I reached over and rubbed his shoulder.

A sad smile pulled at Sterling's mouth. "I have heard some interesting things," he admitted. "About both the former king and your brother."

I couldn't help but wonder...what had he heard?

Sterling carried a lot of secrets with him and was as much of a puzzle as Grandpa Aelius.

He lowered his gaze. "When the former king receives his punishment and the news officially reaches everyone, which will be soon enough," he said, "you will have a hard time, Crown Prince...But you can count on your mate to stand by your side."

His gaze flicked to me, then back to Kylan.

"And so will I."

The news about Elyx still wasn't fully out yet, though rumors were already running through the school. Several students were children of some high officials in Iyperia and knew something was off.

The rumors didn't just end with the king because the same went for Kian.

The queen had been ruling quietly for a while now, but there was only so long that could last.



"It is such a pity," Sterling said with a small shake of his head. "Elyx used to be such a good kid. A true and honest warrior, and one of the most hopeful students Starlight has ever had."

He really thought a lot of him. I knew how much the principal worshipped Lyperia and how proud he had been of his Lyperian roots, so it must have gotten to him as well.

"Don't worry. We are all doing fine," Kylan reassured him. He stretched his arms. "And...people change, and a crime is a crime. Hopefully justice will be served. I do not want him spared."

Kylan's voice was steady. He had meant every word of it. Sterling didn't answer much. He leaned his elbow on the desk and rested his chin against his fingers.

"Is there something else you wish to ask me?"



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