



Chapter 509

Violet

I clutched Kylan's arm as we walked through Bloodstone Haven. I didn't want to feel anything, so my eyes had been locked on the back of Aelius's cloak, but it didn't change much. I felt the village and its people around us anyway.

The same way I did before. Their eyes peeked out from behind cabins and trees, their steps slowed, and they whispered.

It was the same routine I had gotten used to.

The only difference this time was that we had come in the morning. The light was brighter than it normally was when I visited, and the village felt quieter.

Perhaps the children of blood were night people.

My head slowly turned to look at Kylan, and he was already staring at me. A smile pulled at my mouth, and I couldn't help it. He did the same. When he let out a quiet chuckle, my cheeks warmed, and I looked back down at the path, shaking my head at myself.

I could not seem to stop doing that.

It had been like this since the moment I had woken up next to him. Ever since yesterday, I had not been able to stop blushing. He hadn't done anything he didn't do before, but it was different. We both had something to prove, both got what we wanted, but ultimately, it was his heart that had reached me the most.

Sure, also his tongue that reached places I didn't even know were possible. A short puff came out of me. I should have been thinking about

other things.

The trip tomorrow. The abandoned palace and what might be waiting for us across those bridges. There was a long list of things sitting in my head that I should have been focused on. Instead, I kept thinking about Kylan's magical skills.

A small laugh slipped out of me, and I looked behind me to hide it. I stared right at Trinity. She was walking in the center of Dylan and Nate. And no surprise, the two were at it again.

"No cabin today, then?" Kylan asked. "Or temple?"

I snapped my head forward again, noticing he was right. We had skipped both paths and were headed further into the village. Trees were closing in around us, and our surroundings turned green.

Aelius began mumbling. "I thought it would be good to switch things up a bit," he said. "But nothing is ever good enough for the spoiled prince of Lyperia."

That was definitely meant to reach Kylan's ears. He let out a chuckle beside me.

"The best thing about your grandfather, Pup," he whispered, leaning down so only I could hear, "is that he is always in the best mood!"

I bumped my shoulder against his side and snorted into my hand.

"You love pushing him," I whispered back. "Don't even pretend you don't."

Kylan pulled an offended face that almost made me laugh out loud. "Excuse me?" he argued. "When have I ever?"

The funniest part was that he wasn't even joking. He seemed genuinely confused.

"Sit," Aelius instructed, his tone flat.

We had already stopped without me even noticing. A small clearing opened up around us, surrounded by moss-covered rocks and the quiet sound of the woods.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Dylan take off his jacket before laying it down on the ground. Then he nodded at Trinity to sit on it.

"Thank you, babe!" she said brightly.

Kylan scoffed and took off his own. He shot me a glance and laid it down with a small smirk. I watched the gesture, and a small smile curled onto my lips. That was sweet.

Just as I was about to sit down, he sank down on the jacket himself and looked up at me with one brow raised. "Oh. Did you think I did that for you?"

"No?"

Embarrassed, I folded my arms. Kylan responded with a laugh under his breath. Suddenly, he reached up and pulled me down by the arm. Then he scooted over and allowed me to sit on the jacket instead.

"Yes, Kylan," I said sarcastically, shooting him a playful glare. "Really funny."

He grinned, holding my gaze. And for a moment, it felt like we were back in his room again. Just the two of us as I stared into those trusted brown eyes. I liked him like this the most. Joking, teasing, doing whatever had to be done to get me flustered.

When a short and unexpected laugh broke through the quiet, I spun my head toward the source. It was Aelius.

He had been watching us with a warm smile. One I had barely seen spread across his old face unless it was for Adelaide. Could it be that this reminded him of them? Mom and Dad?

After Nate had settled as well, all the attention was on Aelius.

"Well?" he said finally. "I take it you did not come all the way out here just for my company."

"You're right." I shared a quick look with Kylan. "We came to tell you something."

Aelius's brows lifted. He rested both hands on his knees and waited.

I took a small breath. "First, I want you to know I won the race."

A proud smile appeared at the corner of his lips. One he could not quite hide. But he did not seem too surprised with the news of my victory.

"And we are leaving Starlight tomorrow."

He tilted his head slightly. "Are you now?"

The way he said it was enough confirmation for me that he already knew more than he was letting on.

"Yes," I said. "The prize is to escort our principal, Sterling, to the abandoned palace. He has to retrieve something there, and we are going with him."

Aelius's eyes flickered. He stared down at the dark grass between his knees for a long moment, like he had been pulled deep into his own

thoughts.

This time, we all exchanged glances among each other, wondering what the issue could be.

"Are you going to share what is going on in your head?" Dylan asked bluntly. "Or do we have to guess? Because we do not exactly have all day."

"Dylan!" Trinity hissed, smacking his arm.

Aelius hummed. "That mouth of yours has been too quiet for too long, hasn't it," he muttered.

He let out a small and defeated sigh.

"Not that I expected much, seeing as Trinity and Nate appear to be the only two with manners around here."

I smacked my lips together and let my eyes dart everywhere except at him. When have I ever disrespected him? Except for the one time I saved his life when he told me not to...

But I am not sure that counts.

Aelius raised his head. "I do not know what he is after, but I believe Theron Sterling has remembered your parents."

The whole forest went quiet around me, and the only thing I could hear was the wind.

It turned out Kylan might've been right.

I had not even known Sterling's first name until just now. I had been a student in his school for a while now, and I had never heard anyone use it. And now Grandpa Aelius was saying it like he was familiar with it.

"You knew," Kylan concluded.

"I felt it yesterday," Aelius answered. "I felt it happen, but I did not know who it was. I only knew that someone who used to know your parents had remembered them again."

A chill went down my spine.

"Will there be more?" Kylan asked.

"There will be." Aelius nodded once. "The spell is thinning. The Marrowrose is doing what the Marrowrose was built to do...people will remember."

Trinity leaned forward. "Is that going to be a problem for Violet?" she asked, worried. Dylan's jaw tensed beside her.

Aelius let out a slow breath.

"Not yet," he said. "There are not many aware of her existence. And as long as her mother and father are still present in this world, and as long as the rumors of the past can be turned around in time...she will be okay."

"Do you mean the rumors about the spell?" I asked carefully. "About the Alpha King—"

"No, not that rumor," Aelius interrupted. "I mean the story that has been told about Adelaide and Prince Alaric after they went missing. The one that names your mother as the witch who took him. That is the one that needs to be undone."

I swallowed.

I wasn't too worried. Once Mom and Dad would finally be free, they would tell everyone the truth and everything would be fine again. Right?

It was not like she had committed a crime by taking Dad with her. It was not like they could ever sentence her or worse, drag her to Prison Island.

We would be fine.

“What about Sterling?” Dylan spoke up. “Can we trust him?”

