

Chapter 513

Violet

It was bright and early in the morning when we stood at the gathering point, just outside the gates. We were waiting for Commander Jorm and Sterling to arrive.

Jorn's message yesterday had been clear. We would leave in the morning, in our Elite gear, with a small backpack of essentials in case we ended up staying the night.

And the gloves...

According to him, we could absolutely not forget the gloves. Even Trinity had received a spare uniform.

I glanced to the side and watched her direct Dylan, who was holding her pocket mirror at the exact angle she needed to twist her hair into a bun. Nate stood just behind him, mocking both of them.

A small smile pulled at my lips. I had not slept well last night, and it wasn't because of a nightmare.

I had been overwhelmed by everything. By Kian, the cave, the trip itself. Especially at night, the thought of where I would actually be going occupied my mind.

But standing here now, watching them treat the morning like any other morning, the weight of it eased a little. If anything, I felt ready for whatever waited for us out there. Though I had to admit, the thought of having Aelius's support also helped by a lot.

My eyes shifted to my hands as Kylan gave my wrist a slow tug. His fingers worked carefully at the strap of my glove. "Is it tight enough



now?"

His gaze lifted to mine. He was not as relaxed as the others. He was tense underneath it all. I could feel it through the bond, and I knew Kylan. I knew that he had probably already thought of a million different ways to give me protection I had not asked him for.

I flexed my fingers inside the glove and tested the grip. But before I could even answer him, he was already onto something else.

"If anything starts to feel off out there," he began, reaching for my other hand, "you tell me. I do not care if we are in the middle of something. You tell me."

A small laugh slipped out of me.

"Yes, Captain."

His mouth twitched. "I'm serious, Violet."

"Yes, Kylan." I let out a soft breath. "I can take care of myself. I promise."

"I know you can," he said. "But I am still going to worry about you. You should know that by now."

A small laugh slipped out of me. I did know that.

I lifted my free hand and cupped his cheek, feeling his warm skin against my palm. My head pressed against his for a few seconds, and when I pulled back, his brown eyes stared back at me. A frown was on his face.

"Please worry about yourself," I sighed. Then I gave his cheek a light slap and pulled back. "Just make sure you come back in one piece because our babies need their dad."



Kylan looked perplexed. "Our babies?"

"Jumpie? Thorne?" I huffed, bothered that I even had to explain. But when I did, a smug grin spread across his face.

"Well, they also need their mom," he chuckled. His grin softened into a gentler smile as he let out a small laugh under his breath. "How about we both look out for each other and make sure to return in one piece to take care of...our babies?"

I could feel him cringe as he said it, but it didn't stop it from warming my heart. It was kind of cute. I snorted, pretending not to be affected while I clearly was. My cheeks flushed, but so did his.

Our moment was cut short by the sound of a massive bus pulling up just outside the gate.

"Watch out," Kylan warned, pulling me a small step back from the road.

It was a white vehicle with the Starlight emblem. A purple star crossed by a golden lightning bolt.

The windows were tinted, and I could not see inside, but judging from the location and the time it arrived, I could already guess what it was for.

"So...was anything mentioned about a bus?" Nate asked. The others gathered closer around us as we all stared.

My eyes fluttered. "No...definitely not."

I had read the email three or four times last night. There had been nothing in it about transportation. I had been picturing some kind of long hike, but not this.

Dylan cleared his throat. "Makes sense," he said. "The abandoned palace

is not that close, so our options were either running or this," he continued. "And since anything can happen on the trip, I suppose Principal Sterling would want us to preserve our energy."

"Yes, that!" a voice cut in from behind us. "But also because a bunch of spoiled brats like you wouldn't be able to go on for that long anyway."

All four of our heads turned at the same time.

"Of course he'd say something like that," I muttered.

It was Commander Jorm.

His strides were confident as he carried three heavy-looking backpacks like they weighed nothing at all. He was also in his gear, dark sunglasses covering his eyes though the weather wasn't at its best, so it wasn't really necessary.

He had not come alone.

Principal Sterling walked just behind him. He moved faster than I had ever seen him, the stick still in his hands. Strangely enough, he was by himself this time. There was no assistant with him.

But what surprised me more than that wasn't Sterling without his assistant, but the third figure behind him that I had not expected to see at all.

A soft gasp escaped me.

"Rochwall?" I whispered.

He was also in his gear, a backpack slung over his shoulder. Trinity moved closer beside me. "Looks like he will be joining us after all."



I swallowed, and a small smile pulled at the corner of my mouth. Of course he would not have missed the chance to visit Dad's place. I was certain he felt like he had to make amends somehow, and this was his chance to do it.

A sense of comfort settled in me at the sight of him. I had not even known I had been hoping he would be on this trip until he was standing right there in front of me. What I did know was that I trusted him. Fully.

Regardless of what he had done in the past.

"Take it easy on the kids today, Commander," Rochwall scolded as soon as he stepped closer. "There is no need for all of this. We are outside the Starlight gates now."

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