

Chapter 514

Violet

Jorn growled in response.

"This is official business, Commander," he said in return, his voice sharp. "Not a family vacation."

As those words left his mouth, his eyes were on me. He didn't need to take off his sunglasses for me to notice. Even after the race, nothing had changed. It seemed like he was still out to get me.

My eyes darted everywhere. I did not know where to look, so I let them fall on Sterling instead, who had finally caught up to the rest of them.

"Principal!" Nate greeted. "Looking strong and healthy this morning."

"Oh. Thank you, Nate." He answered politely, but his eyes were on the bus.

"Are you ready to go?" Nate asked further.

"Sure," he answered, his gaze moving over to the rest of us. "The bus came right on time. We have a long journey ahead of us, so we had better get going. Bags go in the compartment on the side."

His stick tapped against the ground, and then he was off again, walking toward the bus. Dylan let out a small sound under his breath. "He seems to be in a rush."

He really was. I had seen Sterling move at multiple paces, but definitely not this one. I couldn't help but wonder what more it could be about the palace that got him so excited.



Kylan and I shared a look. He shrugged at me and I shrugged back. "Let's go."

We all moved toward the compartment on the side of the bus. As everyone loaded their bags, Kylan reached for mine without saying anything. Then we all climbed the steps and entered the bus. The bus driver greeted us with a brief nod of acknowledgment.

My eyes scanned the interior of the bus. It was nice, but probably too big for such a small group. There were two rows of wide leather seats, small tables, and the windows that had looked black from outside were see-through from in here.

"You can sit wherever," Sterling announced. "I'm sure you are all old enough to figure it out."

Sterling settled into one of the rows in the back while Jorn followed him. Nate sat a few rows back on the other side with Dylan sliding in next to him. Trinity behind them.

"I'm going to sit with Trin. Okay?" I turned to Kylan.

He was already nodding his head before I had finished. "Yes, you should," he agreed.

Suddenly, I heard Rochwall's voice. "Actually..."

I spun my head to look at him. He stood there with a soft expression on his face. Nothing new.

"I thought I might borrow you for the ride," he said. "There are a few things I would like to talk to you about."

Talk to me?



Would it be about my parents?

Would he try to convince me again to take back the Common Lands, not knowing the rightful heir would soon return?

What could it be?

"I'm sure Violet would love to," Kylan spoke for me. Only then did I realize I hadn't given my answer yet. He lowered himself a bit so he could reach my ear. "Don't worry. I will keep Trinity company."

Kylan gave my shoulder one last squeeze before he stepped past me and made his way to the back of the bus. My eyes were still on him. As he reached her, Trinity said something that I couldn't fully understand.

But the smile on her lips told me that those two would be just fine.

Rochwall let out a soft sigh beside me. I turned and looked at his face. His smile stretched from ear to ear, and I couldn't imagine that simply agreeing to sit beside him was enough to make him this happy.

"We should sit," he bobbed his head.

"Yes, of course."

My body went stiff. My movements were slightly awkward as I lowered myself into the nearest window seat. Rochwall sat down beside me, letting out a puff.

Not long after, the engine started and the bus drove away. With it, the Starlight gates began to disappear.

My eyes carefully moved over to Rochwall, who was already staring at me. "I think we both know what today really is," he chuckled. "So let us talk about it properly."

My hands tightened in my lap, and the nerves had come back. For a split second, I wondered if he knew more than he was letting on. If he had somehow figured out more about what we had been doing.

I sucked my bottom lip in to prevent myself from panicking.

"You are going to visit your dad's home," he whispered softly. "That's huge!"

As his words settled in, I could finally breathe again. I had been worrying over nothing. I could feel the excitement in Rochwall's voice. This moment meant a lot to him.

A relieved laugh slipped out of me. "It's crazy, isn't it?"

Rochwall dragged a hand through his full head of short curls and nodded. "When I told you to get back what was yours...I could never have imagined this opportunity would come along so soon," he said. "I hoped for it...quite literally prayed to the moon goddess for you to win that race."

I stared at him.

"You did?"

He turned to face me more directly, his brows knitting. "Of course I did!" Rochwall looked at me as if I was crazy. "Who else has business within those walls, Violet?"

Well, I suppose I was the princess...

Princess of nothing, but the princess regardless.

"If there is anyone who deserves this, it is you," he said. "I wish I could be the one to take you there myself one day, but getting inside that palace

is nearly impossible. You really need to treasure this moment, Violet."

Treasure this moment...

Perhaps that was the worst part about all of this. It would have been a moment to treasure had it not been for the fact that Mom and Dad were stuck inside that cave, losing their powers, and I needed to find a clue as soon as possible before they were both done for.

"Have you ever been before?"

A smile tugged at his mouth. "I used to go there during school breaks," Rochwall explained.

A sad expression appeared, and the excitement from before faded from his face with his next words.

"Although he had your mom at the academy, whenever he was at the palace, he was lonely all the time. You know Kylan's situation. A title like that can do that to a person," he said. "So he always invited us to visit him there."

"Did Mom not visit?"

He chuckled and shook his head. "Your mom refused most of the time. Maybe it was because of fear, or maybe because she didn't want to disappoint her mother...who knows."

A chill ran through me as he spoke of Gloria, making me roll my shoulders back.

"And Elyx?" I asked curiously. "They were close right? But were they really?" I spoke without a pause. "Did he visit?"

"Indeed," he said. "As are the villagers, and I promise you, Child of Blood. The next time you come here, I will introduce you to every single person in Bloodstone Haven. Properly."

"Finally," I breathed out.

His smile grew gentler. "And during the trip," he said, "if you ever feel lost, close your eyes and picture this cabin, this moment, and your dad's book you stole."

My eyes widened, and my cheeks flushed in embarrassment. At least I now knew who it had belonged to.

A mocking chortle came from Kylan.

"What is right here, where you are standing, is what you are fighting for. Do not forget it."

After speaking those final words, he walked off toward the others.

A smile worked its way onto my face as he approached Trinity first. She was definitely his favorite out of the four of them.

"So...you might have some more family at school, huh?" Kylan said.

I turned to him. "Looks like it."

"Unfortunately, I doubt we can figure that out without something more to go on."

"Exactly," I shrugged. "We would basically have to look at every student...probably blonde, who was at the race."

Kylan's brow lifted. "How do you know it would be blonde?"

Commented [Ma1]: