

Chapter 520

Violet

I did not regret a single second of being here.

That was the first thought that came to me as we finally passed the bridge. I couldn't believe we were really here. The lands of the Alpha Kingdom. The land Dad once called home.

I tipped my head back and looked up at the tall trees that looked older than all of us combined. One odd thing was that ground wasn't as green as the rest of the Common Lands. It was darker.

"There really is no life here," Nate commented, his voice soft.

Kylan shot me an apologetic look. "I fear you might be right," he added.

And right as he said it, a small gust of wind cut through the trees. Leaves flew into the air, leaving a trail beyond the open gates of the Citadel.

Rochwall had once told me to reclaim the kingdom. Now I was waiting for Dad to do so, but I could already tell that he would have his work cut out for him.

Those from the nearby packs had done their best to keep things together. Even if they had been quiet themselves whenever we caught glimpses of them from the bridge.

Half their homes had been shuttered. The other half were lit only by a single lantern at the door, and no one had stood behind any of them to greet us as we passed. Though some eyes had been on Kylan.

Either way, whatever was left of this kingdom did not really live here anymore. It was still heavily protected, and there were people keeping watch at nearly every corner. I highly doubted that even if Jorn hadn't told us the rules, we could get away with anything.

That would certainly make things difficult, in case we needed to sneak away. If we did, we would surely end up on prison island and eventually keep Elyx company. Kind of strange, considering this was my home.

"Don't worry," Kylan whispered beside me. He read my mind, just from a single glance. "We'll find a way."

A laugh slipped out of me.

"I love your spirit!"

Dylan had walked back a few steps until he was right beside us. Nate and Trinity followed, falling in close behind him, and the five of us were together again.

"So that is a no on sneaking off, I suppose?"

He was talking about the watching eyes. He must have noticed too.

"Don't worry," I said, making fun of the situation. "Kylan will find a way."

Kylan scoffed a laugh. Up ahead, Sterling was deep in conversation with one of the guards who had stepped out of his post to meet him. The guard gestured with one hand toward the path that led further in, and Sterling gave him a small nod before taking his first few steps forward.

The rest of us started walking too. Glancing over my shoulder, my eyes fell on Rochwall, who was still behind us. We hadn't even fully entered yet, but he was already looking around with a soft smile on his face. Perhaps bittersweet.

It had become clear to me that he was remembering his past visit to the lands. Maybe even the walks he used to take with Dad.

It hit me in a place I had not been ready to be hit in. I would be bringing him back, and make sure they could do that again. I was sure of it.



My head turned forward before he could see me looking, and we were walking through the gate now. Or maybe tunnel might have been the right word. The stone was so thick, it sure looked like it.

Lumina was so quiet in the back of my head I almost forgot she was there until I felt her purring weakly.

'Lumen.'

My eyes widened.

'Can you feel him? Is he around here?'

A sigh filled me.

'I can feel him... she said. So can you. He has been here before.'

No shit.

Of course I knew he had been here at some point.

"Hey," Nate called out. "What was that just now, before the bridge?"

It didn't take long for Kylan to answer him. Still cautious of Rochwall, who was right behind us, he lowered his voice. Then he started telling him about what he had felt during the fog while all of them listened attentively. But barely any of those words made it back to me because I was somewhere else.

My eyes were on the large square that had opened up in front of us. A sound of awe escaped my throat. It looked beautiful, almost magical.

The ground here was all stone, and the houses were a beautiful shade of cream. Unfortunately, it was hard to tell now with the paint peeling away. It was kind of sad to see them all empty.

The thing that had caught my attention the most was the large fountain in the middle of the empty square. As we walked around it, I noticed that



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The thing that had caught my attention the most was the large fountain in the middle of the empty square. As we walked around it, I noticed that there was no water in it anymore, which made sense.

There were just dry leaves now, stuck at the bottom, and a lot of coins. Too many to count.

In the middle of the fountain stood a stone statue. It was one of a large wolf who was howling while a tall woman in a long robe stood right behind it, resting a hand on the top of its head.

Suddenly, a deep sigh came from beside me.

"Quite something, isn't it?"

It was Rochwall. He had caught up, and the chatter from the others died down all at once.

"This one was built centuries ago, right after a new king took the throne." Rochwall began explaining without me having to ask. There was enthusiasm in his voice. "It was meant to symbolize the love the Moon Goddess has for our royal family. She chose them herself."

"Well, it is beautiful!" Trinity breathed.



"It is." Rochwall's lips curved, his eyes set on me.

A sense of pride hit me. One I wasn't even sure if I was supposed to feel. Not because I didn't feel connected to this place, but because they had done all of that just for a monster to sit on the throne.

My evil grandfather.

'King' Eamon.

A warm hand wrapped around mine, and I looked at Kylan with a warm smile. A familiar laugh came from all the way ahead, and my head turned to look in that direction. It was Sterling, together with the person who had been guiding us.

Sterling was still moving fast, still on a mission to retrieve whatever he had been wanting.

"I...really want to see that old man shift," I whispered, shaking my head.

Kylan shook his too, but not in agreement.

"Trust me, you do not," he said with a chuckle. "Because if he does...it means we're in big trouble."

"Okay," I exhaled. "Then maybe not today."

The further we walked, the fewer guards remained on watch. Yet the feeling of being watched never really went away. If anything, it doubled.

When Kylan's hand tightened around mine, I knew he'd felt it too. Maybe it was nothing. Maybe it was just the narrow path we were walking.

Because as soon as we stepped back into the open, I could breathe again.



This time we passed what must once have been the shops. Empty market stalls still lined the streets, as if people had simply left without taking anything with them.

Would the inside of the houses be like that too?

I wondered what had been going through these people's minds when they were told what they were supposed to believe.

A wave of sadness settled over me, and I tried to picture how it must have looked before. People carrying baskets. Vendors calling out prices. Maybe even surprised glances at the sight of a princess walking these streets with her Lycan Prince mate.

There had been a whole world here once. People had lived their entire lives in this square.

"Hey." A soft voice spoke beside me. Rochwall took the lead and pointed at one of the shops across from us.

There was a wooden board hanging above its door. The paint on it had almost worn off completely, but I was still able to make out the shape of a loaf of bread.

"Violet. Me and your..."

His words faltered, and his lips pressed together. He was obviously eager to talk, but didn't know how far he could go. I tilted my head up at him with a small smile.

"We all know about...you know," Kylan spoke for me. "So you can speak freely."

Dylan made a sound of agreement behind us.



"We would love to hear about it, actually," he said.

Rochwall let out a small laugh and shook his head, looking slightly embarrassed.

"Ah," he puffed. "So you all know what kind of an asshole I used to be?"

A laugh slipped out of me.

"Pretty much."

He took a deep breath.

"Whenever we came to visit, your dad used to take me and Jane to that shop," he said softly. "Alaric would walk us all the way out here for one specific bread from one specific baker." He went on. "The old lady never let him pay for it, and Alaric refused to leave without paying...so in the end, he always won."

A soft ache pulled at my chest. He just kept getting better and better.

"I think you might get tired of hearing this," Rochwall told me. His eyes sparkled, or perhaps they just got watery because it brought back memories. "But...your dad was a really, really amazing prince and he truly had a great heart, Violet."

His voice cracked at the end. So yes, definitely emotional.

I let out a long breath and felt the ache in my chest return. My head turned to look at the others, no words needed. In that moment, they all knew what I was planning to do.

Enough was enough.



How much more pain should he experience?

Trinity gave me a small, supportive nod. Dylan tilted his chin as if urging me to speak up. Nate's lips curved into a serious smile.

But I looked at Kylan the longest. He held my gaze with a calm expression.

"It's your call," he said. "Might help us a bit with the sneaking out part," he chuckled lightly.

He could really help us.

All of this was going on while Rochwall was eyeing us, his eyes still watery. He lifted a brow at me. I could see a small flicker of confusion set in on his face, and I held his gaze for a while as we kept walking.

"He..." I breathed, my voice shaky. "He is an amazing person, James." The words finally got out.

Rochwall stopped walking, his eyes desperate as if there was a small part of him that had been hoping for this all along. His mouth fell open, his breath caught.

"I-Is?"

"Yes...is...because he is still alive, out of the Veil." I waited for a few seconds so he could process it. He stood frozen in place.

"They both are...and we are going to bring them home."