



Chapter 526

Kylan

I focused on the sound of the cane tapping against the marble floor as I followed Sterling in silence.

Still at a steady pace, he was a few steps ahead of me at all times. He did not glance at any of the doors we passed. It had already become clear to me that wherever the old man was headed, he had picked the route a long time before today.

What was he up to?

What did he truly want from this place?

My eyes drifted to the guards posted along the walls. The warriors of the inner packs stood there like statues, with their backs straight and eyes forward.

The place was beautiful, from the citadel to the palace. I couldn't deny it. I was genuinely happy for Violet. She finally got to see where Alaric used to live, the place she would have grown up in if life had gone the way it should have.

But that did not take away from the rest of it.

Something was off about this place, and it had been off since the moment we stepped off the bus. I only hadn't been able to put my finger on it. I tried to give it the benefit of the doubt. Convince myself that it might have to do with this place being empty for decades, but at some point even I stopped believing that.

There was a darkness here.



I hissed through my teeth as pain hit the back of my skull. My hand immediately came up to clutch the side of my head. The headache hadn't fully disappeared since the fog. It had eased enough for me to make my way to the palace, but the second I set foot inside, it started to come back again.

"Try to breathe, Kylan," Valerius's voice came through.

"I'm trying!"

He had been quiet, focused on doing his best to keep the demon inside my body under control. Because of Valerius, the half of Baelor inside me had behaved for as long as it could. But ever since sensing its other half, it had grown more restless, making it harder for Valerius to keep it in check.

Baelor was awake, and eager to make himself known.

Even more reason to get back to Bloodstone Haven and learn from this 'teacher'. I had always controlled everything myself, and having to rely too much on Valerius wasn't something I wanted.

"How are you doing these days?"

My hand pulled away from my head, and I looked up. "What?"

Sterling's cane tapped slower as he looked back at me over his shoulder, a small half-smile curling at the corners of his lips. "How are you doing?"

I knitted my brows, trying to read the look behind his eyes. Something told me that question didn't just come out of nowhere. The old man knew what he was asking.

There was only one reason he would be looking at me like that. Only one thing he could be talking about. Baelor...right?



I shook my head, dismissing the thought. There was no way he could've known. For all I knew, he was asking about Violet.

I held his gaze for a moment, my eyes hardening. "I am holding on."

Sterling hummed. "Good." He let out a small sigh and turned again. "Violet will be alright," he said. "I trust Commander Jorm will take good care of her...not that she'll need his help. She's a tough one, isn't she?"

A chuckle left me. "Yes."

He got that one right. She had been quite something from the beginning.

"You must be wondering where we are headed."

Just as we were about to round the corner, I quickened my pace and caught up. "I am," I admitted. I wasn't planning on asking. I knew what Sterling could be like. He reminded me a bit of Aelius, so I wasn't going to push. My plan was to observe, but if he was going to offer me an opening, I wasn't about to waste it. "I can't help but wonder," I whispered. "What it is you believe is still left to retrieve in a place like this."

Sterling smiled. "I have always been interested in seeing the throne room again," he said softly. His eyes swept over the guards. "I would like to pay my respects to the one and only, true and fallen Alpha King."

"That is it?" I asked.

Sterling looked up at me, smiling. "That is all there is to it." Then he shot me a small wink and kept walking.

True...

Sterling could not possibly believe that. The man was odd, but no fool.



After being so neutral in our conversations, there was just no way he had made himself believe that Eamon had been a good man.

We stopped in front of a large door leading to the throne room. I had not been inside this one before, but it reminded me of home. The carved wood, golden handles in the middle.

Two guards stood on either side of it, both of their eyes looking forward instead of at us. There wasn't even a movement when Sterling reached the doors. Their eyes were empty...almost like there was no one in there. Was this even normal?

Despite holding his cane, Sterling pushed the door open with ease. "You go first," he said. I went, he followed, then closed the door behind us again.

The ceiling was the first thing my eyes went to. It was high, made out of gold, and the giant crystal chandelier reflected on the floor, which almost looked like it was made out of glass. The edges were the same shade of purple we had also seen on the flag.

A purple carpet of the same shade ran down the middle of it, all the way to the back of the room where a crystal throne that looked like it had been carved out of ice sat.

A slight smile curved my lips.

Violet's throne. At least I liked to think it was because she had every right to one day sit on it.

The sound of a tap pulled me from my thoughts. I turned my head and saw that Sterling had already wandered to the other side of the room.

His cane tapped against the wall as he moved from one spot to the next.



Each time, he would tap once, then press his ear against the stone. After a moment, he'd move on and do the same again, slowly making his way around the entire room.

"What are you—"

A groan cut me off before I could finish, and my hand went to my head. I felt a pressure against my skull again, harder than it had hit me at any point before.

My fist curled, and a breath escaped me.

Why was he active now?

We were in a sacred room. There were no woods, no Kian, I could not sense his other half, so there was no reason for him to be acting this way.

'Breathe, Kylan,' Valerius murmured. 'Do not lose control. Breathe.'

"Are you alright, Young Prince?"

Sterling's calm voice broke through the chaos inside my head. He was still busy checking the wall.

I did not bother answering him.

I was clearly not alright.

"We can talk freely in here," Sterling said. "They will not be listening to us in this room."

I closed my eyes, only to open one and look at him. "Who?"

"Whoever is not supposed to be listening," Sterling said. "For starters... those... 'guards' who are clearly under some spell."



So there was something off about them. I had been wondering when Sterling was going to drop the act, and it seemed now was the time.

"They think I've come here to pray to the Moon Goddess for the fallen king's soul. A prayer lasts around ten minutes," Sterling told me in a rush. "So that is all we have to find what we are looking for."

I forced my eyes all the way open.

"What is it we are looking for?" I asked. "Is that why you wanted me to come with you?"

He stopped moving and turned his head to look at me from across the throne room. His expression had turned serious. The smile he had been wearing was gone.

"There is a scroll in this room, Young Prince."

His voice had dropped lower.

"Hidden by King Eamon's own hand and sealed in his own blood," he said. "Locked away the year his son was born, in case anything ever happened to him, and waiting to be claimed by him," he went on.

"Him?" I questioned through gritted teeth.

"The next Alpha King of the Common Lands, or rather, the one who will sit on his throne the day he returns. The father of your mate...Alaric."

