

Chapter 531

Violet

The words hit me hard.

How could he ask me to get away from him while he was in this state?

Jorn stumbled back, and even Rochwall's face had gone pale. Whatever those two weren't aware of yet, I was sure they were now because those red eyes weren't normal.

The bridge was still shaking under our feet. Less aggressively, but nonetheless still shaking.

Sterling did not move. He stood with his hand still pressed against his coat, his expression controlled and focused, as if he knew whatever was waiting for us was worse than what Kylan was experiencing now.

When the bridge shook again, I turned back to Kylan and grabbed his face with both hands. My chest rose so fast I could barely get a word out. His skin was as red as his eyes, burning with heat.

And those eyes...

Underneath it all, he was still in there. He was looking at me with those worried eyes I knew so well.

I shot him a confused glance, unsure of whether I was dealing with Baelor or Kylan. Perhaps both. He seemed to have noticed, and when he pressed his forehead against mine for a brief moment, I knew it



was him.

"Violet."

He breathed out my name, fighting against whatever was happening inside him.

I gasped. "You are okay!"

Kylan shook his head against my hands.

"He said...he said he would not do anything, but I..." He sucked in a hard breath, gritting his teeth. "I do not think he can wait any longer. I do not know how much longer I can hold him."

I couldn't understand him clearly.

Wait for what?

I did not let go of his face, and when the next words came out of his mouth, I only squeezed him harder.

"Step back," he exhaled sharply. "All of you. Now."

I felt an uncomfortable lump in my throat and eyed Dylan for help. His attention had already shifted elsewhere. His arm was wrapped around Trinity, his eyes scanning our surroundings as a sudden mist crept in from both directions at once.

"This is not good," he muttered. Then his voice grew louder. "Hey, we cannot stay here!"

"I know!" Kylan swallowed, his voice strained. He twisted his head away from my grip, glancing at Nate, who was still standing behind



him. Nate had one hand pressed against Kylan's shoulder, and I knew he wouldn't let go of him. His face was set, not showing even a hint of hesitation.

"You too, Nate," Kylan said. "Go, and protect Vi—"

"No." Nate shook his head. A growl left Kylan, like he couldn't believe Nate had decided to speak against him.

Suddenly, the bridge trembled even harder, and the mist slowly thickened into fog. Almost everything was white.

"We are leaving as a team!" Sterling called out from the front. "All of us. Nobody stays behind. So move!"

"Violet," Kylan groaned. "I can't give the shadow whatever it is he wants. You know what that kind of power can do, and have felt it before. I cannot..."

"Shut up!"

I didn't mean to raise my voice at him, but this was going nowhere. And yes, I didn't know what I would do yet. But I knew that if I were to part from him, he would be forced to control something he had never learned how to control before. Kylan had said prior to this that he had used Baelor's eyes for a short while.

Was this the consequence of that brief moment? Baelor just sneaking in and doing whatever?

I pulled in a breath, then dropped my voice so only he could hear.

"I know you think I am scared, and I know you think you have to



protect me," I whispered. "But you should also know that no matter what I said to you or made you believe...I know you would never ever hurt me." I shook my head, my breath heaving.

Something flickered behind Kylan's eyes. Hope. Disbelief. Something ...

"I am not going anywhere. I am never leaving you behind. Do you hear me?"

His red eyes flickered, then softened. I gave his cheek a light slap. "Just this once...you rely on me. Okay?"

I forcefully bobbed my head until I got a single nod in return. One that was barely finished before I let go of his face and pushed myself to my feet.

"We're going. Help him up!" I called out.

Two figures came through the fog as fast as they could. Jorn and Rochwall. They had both snapped out of whatever trance they had been in. Each moved under one of Kylan's arms to hold him up, while Nate stayed behind him for extra support.

"I already knew you and Violet were batshit crazy," Jorn muttered against the side of Kylan's neck. He just couldn't help slipping in a comment, even in the middle of all this. "So I'm not even going to question any of it anymore."

A broken chuckle slipped out of Kylan.

"Don't worry, son," Rochwall said quietly. "You'll be okay."



In full trust that he would, I took a few steps forward and cupped a hand above my eyes, trying to see through the heavy fog.

I couldn't see anything anymore. I could hardly see Dylan and Trinity, and I knew they were close. Sterling was standing alone up there and would need help, just in case.

I turned back to Kylan one more time and waited for a moment. When he was on his third step, I decided to speak up.

"Sterling needs me," I whispered. "I need all of you to watch Kylan... and please don't try to stop me."

Before anyone could protest, I started walking to the front.

"Violet!" Kylan's weak voice reached me from behind.

Trinity's voice came right after. "You need to let her go, Kylan. You know what she is capable of."

I did not turn around. With every step I took, the bridge trembled beneath my boots, but I kept walking. When I heard the tap of a cane ahead, I knew it was Sterling and followed the sound.

"Principal Sterling?"

"Mmh. Hastings?" he hummed, his voice calm.

I walked up beside him and could finally see his face. He was... smiling?

I frowned at him. "I told the others to look after Kylan," I said, giving him an update. "But you must not worry. I came to protect you."



A laugh burst out of him, and he didn't seem to care that it was right in my face. "Well, I am pleased to hear that, Hastings."

My throat bobbed. Not even he believed in me, so how could I believe in myself? I was leading all of us straight into disaster while promising the love of my life that I would keep us safe.

According to my calculations, we were almost across. Somehow, that only made it worse.

"All of this is terrifying," Sterling read from my face. "But I do have to admit it is a little exciting too," he beamed. "It has been a while since this old man has shifted. My knees hurt these days, so I may be a bit rusty."

My heart nearly came to a stop. Kylan had spoken about him with the highest regard time and time again. He had said our principal was the strongest shifter in school, a true warrior, but it could not be, right?

This old man with the cane, who was out of breath, clearly struggling.

"It will be an honor," Sterling chuckled, "to fight alongside the daughter of Alaric and Adelaide."

My eyes widened at him. He had been so secretive all along and had suddenly decided that now would be the right moment to acknowledge my title. It seemed like a lot had happened between him and Kylan in the little time they had spent together.

I shifted my gaze to his coat and the hand still pressed against it.

"What are you protecting under there?" I whispered to myself, secretly hoping he'd answer, and he did.



"Oh, this?" He frowned, rubbing over his coat. "I came here to protect the future of the Common Lands...but I am starting to believe it might protect so much more than that."

My lips parted. Just when I was about to ask him what he meant, a sound tore from his throat.

"For crying out loud!" he complained, lifting his cane through the fog. The tip pointed forward, and I didn't have to squint to look.

And what I saw was enough to send a cold shiver through my body.

"This isn't a fair fight," Sterling murmured. "Is it?"

At last, the fog had thinned just enough at the end of the bridge to let me see through it. Not all of it, but enough for me to see what was going on here.

There was panting, and amber eyes.

Werewolf panting...

Werewolf eyes...

There were dozens of them. Maybe even hundreds. There were too many to count. They stood at a distance, blocking the path we'd have to take and stretched all the way into the distance. I had no idea how far the line went, and I didn't want to know.

When thunder cracked, I flinched and looked up at the dark sky, completely terrified. A pair of eyes had opened through the crack. Larger than anything I had ever seen before.



Not just any eyes, but red eyes. The same shade of red I had seen on Kylan just now.

Kian...

It had to be.

If he was able to project himself like this, control his eyes to this extent...it meant that he had already reached his potential. He was far past what I had thought he had learned.

No wonder Baelor's other half was looking for an escape. This version of Kian could quite literally kill us...

Another cold chill hit me as a high-pitched laugh rippled through the air around us. It came from every direction at once, and I didn't know where to look.

"D-Did you hear that?" I asked, my breath shaking. Sterling's eyes had changed, and his smile had vanished. Okay, he did hear that. I wasn't going crazy.

My legs wobbled as I stepped off the bridge onto the soil.

"Well, well. Two sets of eyes for the price of one. I did not even have to ask."

Every muscle in my body locked up at once. That voice didn't belong to Kian. It carried a cruel edge, one that made my blood run cold, and I knew I had heard it before.

Frantically, I searched the amber eyes, looking for one person. My eyes moved from one glowing pair to the next until they stopped.



At the very center, through the fog, one pair of eyes was different from the rest.

Brown.

"Grandmother wants her eyes back, sweetheart."

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