

Chapter 533

Violet

Unharmmed...

But just for today?

It was always going to be one of us. My eyes flicked to Kylan again for half a second, then back to her.

"Then we might have a problem," I said. It would be better to be honest rather than giving her false hope. She wasn't doing that with me either. "That is never going to happen. You will have to kill me first before either me or Kylan will ever join you."

So maybe I did understand her after all with wanting to take our eyes...

I caught the smallest glimpse of Kian. His mouth opened, closed, and then he shook his head once. Just barely, but I noticed it. Maybe that look from before had been regret. Regret that he'd made himself believe I would ever join him.

Either that, or he'd realized that, since his eyes were a match for mine, he would be the one who had to kill me. Kylan too.

'Lumia?' I prepared her.

'Don't make me do this without Valerius.' She let out a low chuckle. 'You are going to need eyes on this demon, Witchey.' She said. 'She is all yours.'

Shit.

I was not ready.

I had barely used my eyes since the palace, and there was no way I would have the upper hand against a woman who had 'dedicated' her life to learning mom's eyes. The High Priestess herself.

Think, Violet...

My gaze cut to Kian, then to Esther. Kian had had Nerok back the last time I saw him, but he had no reason to shift now. Why would he when he could have Baelor's eyes doing the work for him?

Unless he had some crazy way to use both, which Aelius had strongly advised me against. And then we had Esther. She was a wildcard. I had no idea what she would do or if she already had her powers back.

So yes...

We were probably going to die.

No. I couldn't let that happen.

I looked behind me again to get another look at Kylan. He was still too weak, and there was no way for Valerius to come out.

His eyes tried to tell me he was okay, but I could see the wince on his face every other second. Kylan wasn't only fighting the pain but also the urge to step forward and tell Gloria to take him and let the rest of us go.



I could feel how badly he wanted to be beside me right now, and I knew he could feel my fear because yes...I was stillscared. All I wanted was to run to him and press my forehead against his and tell him not to worry. I couldn't.

If I did the selfish thing and gave myself up, Gloria would still take Kylan and his eyes the second she had what she wanted. Neither option was the right answer.

Only one of us could be up here, in front of her. Lead our Elite team. The strongest one, and for now, that had to be me.

I took a breath, closed my eyes, and when I opened them again, my gaze sharpened. "Trinity, Nate, Dylan." My voice came out steadier than I felt. I didn't want any of them to feel my fear. "You guard Kylan. Even if she gets to my eyes, even if I die...guard him. She can't get—"

"We know," Dylan cut me off. He'd done the same thing he had on the bridge. He accepted it and didn't fight back. None of them did because they all knew what was at stake.

They shared a glance, and then their bones started cracking as they shifted with the ease our Elite gear allowed.

Next, I focused on Rochwall and Jorn. "I know it is hard to take orders from someone like me," I said with a light chuckle, my eyes moving to Jorn, "but with all the yelling you have done at me in training about how I will never be as good as you..." I tilted my chin toward the amber eyes waiting for us. "I sure hope you're ready to back it up."

Jorn's eyes burned with determination. He removed his arm from



Kylan, who struggled to keep his balance but managed to do so anyway. "Alright, Hastings," Jorn said. "Today I will show you why I am better than you."

Rochwall let out a humorless laugh. He bumped Jorn's shoulder, and then the two shifted. I watched in amazement as fur pushed through their gear, their shoulders widened, and two Lycans rose. Much bigger than the average. They were huge, but I knew now that didn't mean anything. Lumia was the proof of that.

Both let out roars, ready to attack. I could hear Gloria's laughter through the woods. "This should be interesting."

Sterling was the only one left beside me. He leaned on his cane, remaining unbothered.

"You said you were ready to fight alongside me, and I have heard you are strong."

He rubbed his lips together, accepting the compliment without a word. His lips curved. "I intended to, but now I believe you should take Kylan and go back," he told me. His eyes went to Kylan. It was shocking to hear those words from the same man who had encouraged us to stay together. He could also see the danger.

"She is after your eyes. The most important thing is for you and Kylan to get back safely," he said. A weak chuckle escaped him. "After all... it's because of this old man's desires that we are stuck here—"

"I believe you've come here for a very good reason, and so have I." I nodded at him. I turned to face the front, taking a small step forward.



"I will fight, and you will stay back for now, Principal Sterling," I decided. "Stay back for now. You are our last resort if things go bad."

My eyes went to Kylan without meaning to. "He needs to get off this bridge safely, and so do my friends. All their lives are precious to me," I said. "So in case anything happens to me, that part falls on you."

As I peered over my shoulder, Sterling's mouth curled into the smallest smile. "Your life is precious as well, Hastings."

"It might be," I let out a breath to prepare myself. "But not more precious than those who have saved me too many times. Now it's my turn."

I did not wait for him to answer. My eyes pierced through Gloria's as I lifted my hands slowly and let the power spread through my veins until it reached my eyes. I felt the glow, the light brushing against the trees.

"Not Adelaide, but not bad." Gloria tilted her head, looking almost impressed. She lifted a finger and pointed. Just like that, the wolves lunged.

As the wolves charged, her gaze settled on Kian. "Your brother," she instructed. "I want his eyes. Kill him after."

"No!" I screamed.

My hand stretched toward Kian, and a burst of light shot from my palm.

