

Chapter 538

Violet

A cold sensation ran down my spine as I repeated those words inside my head.

We will lose our mate.

No, no, no...

My stomach dropped as I watched Kylan's fingers squeeze harder. The red in Kian's eyes had already begun to flicker.

I doubted the two were suddenly working together, so it was hard to tell if this was Kylan's doing or Baelor's. Both had their reasons.

Baelor would want to be whole again. And knowing Kylan, he would want to make sure Kian would never be able to hurt anyone again. And knowing Kylan, he would want to do his part in making sure Kian would never be able to hurt anyone again. 1

Especially after he had been forced to watch all of it on his knees, unable to do anything.

Maybe I was wrong, and they were working together. Some kind of understanding, like the one they supposedly already had today.

High-pitched laughter rolled through the woods, and my head snapped toward the source.

Gloria.

She still hadn't moved from her spot and didn't seem like she was



even going to attempt to help Kian. Not too crazy, considering that woman only cared about herself. A grin was plastered across her face.

She seemed delighted. Her hands rubbed together. I could tell all she wanted was to see how far this would go, if Kylan would actually succeed.

And then...

Then what?

I looked down at my hand, still pressed to Jorn's wound. My fingers were so numb I could barely feel them anymore, but the cut had shrunk significantly. Jorn's breathing appeared to be a lot calmer as well.

He wasn't out of the clear yet, but he was doing much better. Jason's technique was working.

"He's stable for now," I announced in a hurry. "But you need to get him back to the bus," I continued. "Trinity, the second you're on there, you start again. Don't wait."

Trinity's head shot up. "Where are you going? I can't—"

"You can." I met her eyes. "You're Trinity. You've got this." She stared at me for a second longer. Then she let out a loud, short hum. I pulled my hand back and pushed myself to my feet.

"Where are you..." Dylan's words trailed off as he looked at Kylan.

"If I don't do this," I said, backing away. "I might lose him for good."

I didn't wait for any response. I turned and started running, fully aware I had nothing else to rely on. There was nothing left in me. No glow, no strength, nothing.

But I wasn't going to let him do this.

I was smart enough to stay at a distance, like Sterling, who stood on the opposite side of me and stopped a few feet behind Kylan. I had no idea who I was dealing with at this point.

If it was fully Kylan, fully Baelor, or something in between like Kian.

"Kylan!"

I waited for a response, but there was nothing. Just the wind brushing past me. Kylan's hand lifted higher, Kian's body still hanging in the air.

My breath caught as I gave it another try. "Baelor?"

It took a while before he responded, but then his shoulder lifted. It was a small, lazy shrug, just enough to acknowledge my existence.

"Step closer." His voice came out low and calm. It was meant only for whoever stood near enough to hear it. "I will not hurt you."

A lump formed in my throat, and a loud breath slipped past my lips. My eyes darted to Sterling. He shot me a brief smile. He didn't tell me to go, but he didn't tell me not to either.

When I figured that was all I was going to get, I took a few steps forward.

"I know what you want," I said carefully. "You want to be whole again, and you want to rule. You've wanted that from the beginning, and you finally found a way to do it." I pulled in a breath. "And I am standing here anyway...asking you to please stop."

Something close to a laugh came out of him. "Stop?" he repeated. "When destruction is the only thing I have ever wanted?" His fingers squeezed harder around Kian's throat, and Kian's mouth opened wider, more smoke spilling out. "When that other disrespectful, disobeying half of me is right here...in my hand."

He looked at me over his shoulder. As soon as those red eyes found mine, I felt weak in the knees. The only thing keeping me sane was knowing Kylan was somewhere deep inside.

"Why would I stop," he continued, "when the boy himself told me he would give me anything I wanted...as long as I gave him my word to let no harm come to you or your loved ones, take care of that vile priestess who dared to poison my plans, and help you get your parents back."

Mom and Dad?

My mouth opened, but nothing came out. I thought back to the bridge. Kylan on his knees, breaking apart while I was begging him to hold on.

Would that have been the moment he made a deal with Baelor? All this time, he had been negotiating, and this was what he had put on the table.

Himself.

A terrible feeling spread through my chest. He had been weak, in pain, but the only thing he thought about was keeping us safe. He had never intended to get back on that bus. He was willing to give Baelor whatever he wanted, asking for nothing in return except that we walked away from this alive, and that I would be reunited with my parents.

My eyes started to burn, and I made no attempt to stop it.

Kylan...

I had spent all this time thinking I was the one protecting him today. Standing in front of him, throwing my body over his...and he had already given up so much more.

"He told me to go easy on you." Baelor's head tilted slightly. "I am the devil, and he asks for kindness. Can you imagine?"

A strange chuckle came from him. His red eyes narrowed. "Had I chosen your body instead of his...I would have made you strong." He whispered the last part. "So very strong...but he made me promise not to."

A shiver crawled up my neck. He had even thought that far ahead, considering what it might do to me if it ever got out.

"The two of you came to me with respect," Baelor went on. "Despite the past, despite everything...you still showed me respect. Nobody has done that in a very long time. So I will offer you the same." His fingers loosened around Kian's throat. "I can give the boy back to you...right now," he offered. "We forget the deal ever happened."

My pulse stumbled. "But understand this." His voice dropped. "If I do...there is no telling I will help you again when you come asking... and you will come asking."

I did not have to think about my decision. It would always be Kylan. All I ever wanted was for him to be okay.

"There is one more thing," Baelor said. The corner of his lips curled into a nonchalant smirk. "I know where your parents are. Adelaide and Alaric."

All of a sudden, everything around me stopped.

"I can have them out today." His fingers tightened again. Kian's mouth stretched wider, more smoke pouring free. "Once I am whole, strength will not be a problem."

He tilted his face toward the black shadow and parted his lips as if he were going to breathe it in, daring me to accept the deal.

Mom and Dad?

Today?

There would be no more speculating, no more struggle. He could get to them, and that would be it.

All it would cost was...him.

Baelor hummed. "It is your call—"

"It will always be Kylan." I pulled in a breath. "Always."

An amused chuckle left him. Though I knew for a fact it wasn't the



answer he wanted, he still enjoyed it. "So be it."

His hand opened. The shadow rushed back into Kian, and a second later, his body hit the dirt with a heavy thud. His eyes stayed closed, and he was unconscious.

Gasping, I looked behind me, all the way to where Gloria stood. Her brows pulled together in confusion. It was like she couldn't work out what had just happened. Neither could I.

Her fingers swirled through the air, and in the blink of an eye, Kian, Gloria, and the witches were gone.

A deep sigh escaped me as I turned in a slow circle. It seemed like the others had also made their way back to the bus, leaving just me and Sterling.

I made myself look at those red eyes one more time. Baelor's eyes...

He held my gaze, but there was nothing behind it. No hate, anger, or anything else that made me want to run away this time.

"You remind me of your mother," he murmured. "How interesting you are going to be...Adelaide's daughter."

The red in his eyes faded until all that remained were the deep, familiar brown eyes I had been longing for. They were tired, but they were his.

My mate.

His knees gave out, and I didn't think. I just ran.



"Kylan!"