

Chapter 541

Violet

Time went by, and by the end of it, everyone knew everything. Rochwall spoke about his past with the Elite Team, Kylan about what happened in Lyperia, Nate about his sister and Sterling about everything but the scroll in his hands.

I spoke too. They knew about my identity, Bloodstone Haven, Mom, Dad, who they were, what happened to them, and what Gloria had been doing with them all this time. Baelor and what he was, going all the way back to the beginning.

Even Chrystal and the trial had been brought up at some point, and just like that—everyone, mostly Jorm, was up to date.

I also told them about my suspicions about the cave, and what might've been above our heads this entire time.

The other thing we hadn't touched in depth

was that thing living inside Kylan. Though after the fight, that part had already become very clear.

Jorm took it the hardest. He didn't say much. Not that he could have, with the state he was in, but I watched his face the whole way through and could see his confusion. As I continued practicing Jason's technique on him, his eyes kept moving from me and Kylan, to Nate, Rochwall, Sterling, until at one point he just closed his eyes and let out a long breath through his nose.

"Of course you're a witch," he muttered without opening his eyes. "Explains that whole light show you had going on out there."



A feeling of shame crept in. My gaze lowered to his shadow wound, my hands still working on it. That feeling I felt was the one I had carried around Starlight when I had first found out. Though the hatred wasn't half as bad as it was toward vampires, the majority of wolves still hated witches, so it was just a matter of waiting for the day somebody would look at me and see the thing they had been raised to hate.

But then something awoke in me.

No...

It shouldn't be like this, and I had nothing to be embarrassed about.

My gaze sharpened as I looked back up. I gave his side a nudge with two fingers, making Jorm hiss before his eyes shot open and locked onto mine.

"Is that a problem for you, Commander?"

A weak chuckle came out of him. "Problem?" he rasped. "Hastings, you've had the whole world in your hands this entire time, and you let me scream at you in training for months." He exhaled. "You should've done something with those eyes and killed me on day one for underestimating you."

A smile grew on my lips before I could stop it. Here I was, thinking he was perhaps scared or disgusted by me, when that wasn't the case at all.

"Which makes me wonder," he went on, "how you haven't gotten sick of His Highness over there yet." He tipped his chin weakly toward Kylan, who rolled his eyes. "Sure, I haven't been good to you," Jorm admitted. "But...before all of...this, he wasn't any better. He's been on your case since day one," he said. "Personally, I would've fried him on day one, but that's just me."



A breathy laugh escaped him before he winced. "Now, seeing the thought of him walking around with the devil inside him..." He let out another weak chuckle. "That's something I still don't know what to think about."

A pained groan followed, and his eyes squeezed shut.

"Don't worry." I let out a breath. "Kylan is still Kylan..."

Kylan let out a low chuckle beside me. The truth was that if I weren't currently keeping Jorm alive, that really might've been the next step. I glared at Kylan, and this time another chuckle came out of him, though much more nervous this time.

I knew there was still much more that had to be said. Even Sterling, who had proposed all of this, was yet to tell us about the scroll. But it went quiet anyway.

So quiet I was now starting to notice the bus rocking back and forth as Dylan drove over an uneven road.

So quiet everything that had happened with Baelor came rushing back.

It will always be Kylan. Always.

I hadn't thought twice about saving him, and I didn't regret it. But sitting here made me realize a lot of things. Baelor had offered me my parents, and I had told him no.

He'd made it clear how that worked. There is no telling I will help you again when you come asking.

According to him, I would be asking.

So what if the decision I had made had caused the door I needed to shut to



close?

'Violet.' Kylan's voice slipped into my mind. I stopped rubbing my palms together for just a split second as his voice came through. The tone was desperate.

'I meant what I said. I won't break my promise. We'll get them back...You have my word.'

My throat tightened. I pressed my lips together, rubbing them against each other as I tried to steady myself. I wanted to believe him. More than anything, I wanted to. But after everything we'd seen, promises didn't feel as simple anymore.

Still...I couldn't let go of hope.

I gave a small nod, one meant only for him. Then I felt his warm hand settle against my back.

"How are you feeling, Kylan?" Rochwall glanced over.

Kylan opened his mouth to answer, but Nate was first. "Don't bother," he cut in. "He's going to say he's fine...that's what he always says."

A smile tugged at my lips. Nate knew him too well, but they'd grown up together, so it was only natural he would know that.

"Yep." Nate breathed when Kylan didn't respond. He flashed me a thin smile. "Don't worry, Violet," he said. "It might take another decade, but you might get an apology letter out of him someday."

A scoff slipped past Kylan's lips. Nate's joke was there, but it didn't quite reach his eyes.



He was angry, even if he was hiding it behind a smile. I understood why. As his future Beta, it was hard to be responsible for someone who refused to let you in on any of his crazy plans.

The thing was, Kylan always meant well. His heart was in the right place, even if the way he went about things drove everyone insane. He carried more than he let on, still kept most of his thoughts to himself, and always wanted to be there for others.

Poor Nate didn't even know about Kylan's plan to make a deal with the devil and hand himself over completely. Maybe if he did later, he would be the one to talk some sense into him.

The road beneath us changed, and I glanced out of the window. The trees were starting to look familiar and seemed much thicker, meaning we were getting closer to Bloodstone Haven.

Sterling let out a soft sigh and looked out too.

I watched him from the corner of my eye.

Was he finally going to say something?

"The scroll..." Sterling started. Everyone turned to him. "Since my memories returned, I held onto the hope that Adelaide and Alaric would come back one day," he said. "And now that it's been confirmed, I know that coming here was the right thing to do. It was worth it."

He finally turned his head, and his eyes found mine. It was still crazy to think that this old man had once gone to Bloodstone Haven to ask about my parents. The only reason he'd forgotten about them was because he'd been forced to. He had never judged Mom.

Something warm settled in my chest. He lifted the scroll and gave it a



small wave.

"Think about today," he went on. "We were not attacked by rogues or strangers..." His voice dropped. "We were attacked by our own kind. Shifters, under a spell," he said. "And they were forced to raise their claws against their friends who never wronged them."

I thought of those amber eyes on the bridge. They'd looked hungry for a fight. Snarling, growling, and whether it had something to do with Gloria's realm or not, none of them had actually gone for the kill.

At one point, Rochwall and Jorn kept pushing them away, and still none of them pushed harder. It was a horrible thing to know that they hadn't wanted to be there any more than we did. The inner packs who had been the most loyal to the Citadel.

"This scroll names the rightful Alpha King of the Common Lands." Sterling squeezed the paper in his hand. "I do not simply believe these wolves were under a spell. I've been thinking that it must be something far stronger than that."

He looked around at us. "Have any of you heard of the High Command?"

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