

Chapter 546

Kylan

Neither of us said much as we walked back from the bus. We hadn't said much on the way there, and there was even less to say on the way back.

Violet was up front, leading the way to Bloodstone Haven. I trailed behind her, dragging a full cart with all our belongings.

Her shoulders rolled as a quiet sigh escaped her, and my eyes burned into her back. I kept waiting for her to start.

To turn around and finally let me have it, tell me exactly how selfish I'd been, how I never once thought about what it would do to her if I'd gone through with it.

I would have taken it.

Every word.

But she didn't. She carried the same calmness as before and just kept walking, like today had been an ordinary day. It wasn't like her.

That was the part that twisted something inside me. An odd, restless feeling that I couldn't quite name. It almost scared me.

A low chuckle slipped out of me before I could stop it. As soon as Violet glanced back over her shoulder, I held my breath.

"What's funny?" she asked, one brow raised. Her lips pursed, and she gave a slight shake of her head as she waited for me to answer.

"It's just..." I let out a breath and picked up my pace until I was walking beside her instead of behind. Her blue eyes glanced from me to the cart. She reached over and tried to take the handle out of my grip, but I quickly pulled away, keeping it out of her reach.

"I just figured now that everything's calmed down, this is the part where you finally yell at me," I said, answering her earlier question. "Call me an idiot."

Violet's eyelids fluttered as her gaze drifted. "Have I ever really yelled at you?"

"No, not really," I laughed under my breath. "But I would understand it if you did."

She nodded slowly, like she was weighing my words and deciding what to do with them.

"You are an idiot, by the way," she said, her voice so soft I could hardly feel offended. I let out a dry laugh.

"But since you brought it up..." she began, her blue eyes narrowing as they met mine. "You moved on your own...Again," she said. "You didn't talk to me, didn't talk to anyone, you just decided. It could have gone so wrong. Do you understand that?"

I opened my mouth to speak, then closed it again when I noticed she wasn't done talking. Talking over her would only make her feel like I didn't want to hear what she had to say. I did.

"When Baelor was pulling his other half in, there was a second where I couldn't feel you at all. Like you were already gone." She sucked in a

breath and kept going.

"You made a deal to sacrifice yourself, and I never asked you to," she said. "Also, nothing came of it in the end. You broke your end of the deal, cheated Baelor out of what he was promised, and we're lucky he let that one slide."

My mouth opened again, but when I caught her nostrils flare, I knew she wasn't finished. So I closed it again and let her keep going.

"I hope you know Jorn almost died because of me." Her voice cracked at that one word. Me.

Something in my chest broke apart at the sound of it. I looked at her, at those watery eyes fighting so hard not to spill over. She blinked fast enough to hide them.

"I was the one who told everyone to guard you," she went on. "I put every single one of them in those positions, and while I was out there doing that, you were making deals behind my back, and then he threw himself in front of me, and now he's—"

"You and Trinity did well," I interrupted. "He's going to make it."

"Yes." She spat, swallowing right after. "But he could have not made it, and then what?"

Then what...

I didn't have an answer. So I stayed quiet. I let go of every stubborn thought rattling around inside my head. Now I had to think about more than just myself. The others mattered too. They all probably thought the same thing. Violet was just brave enough to say it.

It was true that I could've stopped the pain inside my head by allowing Valerius to take over, but I didn't. I didn't because I thought we would be on the losing end. That I could lose Violet, so I made a decision in a split second to make a deal with the devil.

I never liked making decisions in split seconds, but when it came to protecting Violet, it was different.

The truth was I had told myself the whole way here that I had done the right thing. That trading myself was the smart move, the only move, and I'd do it again without a second thought.

Maybe that was still true, but I also had to admit that I had been so busy talking myself into believing it that I never once stopped to think about what it would do to the people left standing.

"You would have survived the hit anyway," I told her. "The one Jorm took? It wouldn't have done to you what it did to him. Baelor told me that himself, that—"

"Oh, wonderful!" Violet's head whipped around. "Let's make me feel worse, why don't we?" she said sarcastically. "And please, let's not tell anyone else that little detail, ever." She closed her eyes, and then they shot open again. "Or please do, in case someone wants to jump in front of me again!"

She shot me a look. "I don't care what Baelor did or didn't say. I don't care about his side deals or his promises. I care whether or not you are actually hearing me right now. That's it."

I huffed out a breath. My mind pulled back to the moment Baelor had been negotiating.

His words were clear. Now that he was part of me, he was part of her too. That's what came with the mate bond.

As long as I let my eyes bleed red, no harm would come to her. His first choice vessel. As long as he lived inside me, our souls were one, and her end would be mine, mine would be his. He enjoyed watching us.

Valerius let out a low laugh somewhere in my chest, and I snapped out of my thoughts. 'What?'

'She's got Lumia's fire burning through her,' he said. There was almost something fond in his tone. 'We both know you're sorry, brat. Please just apologize, and don't let them kill us.'

I let out a defeated breath. "I'm sorry," I said. My words were sincere. "I moved on my own, did the wrong thing, and people got hurt for it. I'm sorry."

Violet let out a shaky breath. "You should be," she said. Even through all of this, she had never lost her calm. It was amazing.

She suddenly stopped walking and stepped in front of me so fast I nearly ran the cart into her. Her hands went flat against my chest as she gave me a slight push.

"Stop protecting me," she demanded. "I've told you this already. I don't need you to die for me. I need you here...Alive. Don't you get it?"

Her eyes were tired and frightened as she looked up at me. "Sometimes it feels like I'm talking, but you're not really listening."

