



Chapter 554

Violet

"Tell me, Prince." Aelius slowed his pace, allowing us to keep up with him. "What do you know about your mother?"

Kylan blinked, taken aback. "I don't know," he said after a while. "I figured that you were going to tell me just now."

"I will," Aelius exhaled. "But first, I wanted to know what you made of it."

Kylan tilted his head, looking up at the trees. "I don't know," he said. "What is there to say? She's the queen, and a lot has happened." A chuckle came out of him. "She has gotten under my skin more times than I can count, but mostly because she says things and then turns out to be right about them."

I thought about his words as we walked. About Cecilia, and how she had taken one look at me before she decided I was not a 'true wolf.'

Plenty of others had claimed to know that about me, but with her, it had been different. She had actually said it to my face, and she had said it like it was already a proven fact.

Then there was this other strange thing where she was one of the few who hadn't forgotten my parents, even though she had no real tie to them at all.

Almost everyone else's memories had been wiped clean because of Mom's spell, but not hers.



"Have you never once thought that she might be something more?"

"A witch, maybe." Kylan's brows drew together as he looked at him. "But I know she isn't...right?"

Aelius shook his head. "Your mother is definitely not a witch," he said.

"But she is the Moon Oracle..." Kylan finished.

"Was." Aelius gave him a nod. "Before the title began to pass on."

Kylan's face went as blank as mine felt. We waited patiently for him to continue, but when it was taking too long, Kylan spoke up. "So are you going to explain—"

"Patience." Aelius lifted his hand. "Your Moon Goddess does not walk among us and has not for a very long time."

I nodded eagerly, just wanting him to get to the point.

"But she is not silent," he went on. "In every generation, she chooses one voice to speak through. A voice from the same bloodline."

"But I thought that was us?" I jumped in.

"Not quite." He glanced at me. "We follow nature's word, with the Goddess behind us, but that is not the same," he explained. "The Goddess herself moves through an Oracle. It is her last resort. Her final voice in a world she can no longer walk in."

He stopped talking for a moment, giving us time to let it sink in. My eyes drifted to Kylan, and with it came a thought that wouldn't leave.

What if Cecilia had known much more than she had made him



believe? What if she had seen exactly what Kylan was going to do in that battle, to Kayden, all of it, before it ever happened?

What if that was why she had pushed him so hard his whole life, trying to steer him away from it, and all she had ever really done was pressure him until he had made that one decision?

Could that be it?

"You're telling me my mother is the Goddess's voice," Kylan repeated. "Or...was?"

"Correct," Aelius confirmed. "The gift lives in your blood, but the title runs daughter to daughter. Always the oldest," he said. "And now that your sister is of age, it is slowly passing to her."

Kylan lifted a single brow. "Kaelis?" he said, chuckling. "That's impossible. Kaelis is just Kaelis. She has never shown us anything strange. Nothing like—"

"She has, Kylan," I cut in softly. He gave me a look. "She saw her mate in a dream, and knew it was Nate. She'd said the Moon Goddess told her, remember?"

Kylan let out a flustered breath, followed by a quiet laugh. "All this time," he muttered, finally seeming convinced. He didn't look like he planned to argue about it any longer than he had to.

"So what does that make me, then?" he asked further. "A...half Oracle?"

"No," Aelius stated. "Just a boy with Oracle blood running through his veins. Though that blood is very likely the reason you are still



standing here at all."

He stopped in his tracks, and we did the same.

His expression changed as he looked at us, like he wanted to make sure we were listening. He stood so still that the wind brushed against his cloak.

"Baelor is the oldest, hungriest thing this world has ever made," Aelius told us. "He has taken vessels before, prepared them, used them until there is nothing of the person left inside," he went on. "And when the body is empty, he throws it away and moves on to the next."

His eyes stayed locked on Kylan. "Your brother was made into a vessel through ritual, as Baelor had planned for Alaric."

"Your brother is a good vessel," Aelius said. "Alaric was exceptional. The best option Baelor had found in years."

Aelius's gaze locked on mine. "There was a time Baelor believed the perfect vessel would be a good heart, twisted and manipulated until it broke," he told us. "But now the vessel he truly wants is a bonded one. Souls tied together, each carrying a half, so that when he becomes whole again, so are they." His eyes lowered to the ground. "And that, unfortunately, could have been any three of you."

"Kian?"

"Yes."

"But Kian's soul isn't tied to Violet," Kylan said immediately. A confused chuckle slipped out of him as he looked from Aelius to me



and back again. "That doesn't make sense. At all."

I swallowed. The problem was, I didn't know how to argue it either.

Because it should have been simple. My bond was with Kylan. Mate to mate, the pull I felt in my chest whenever he was near, the love I had for him, and the connection Lumia and Valerius shared.

And yet...

I thought about that day in the woods. The way I had felt Kian's emotions wash over me out of nowhere. The regret I could feel through my body. His regret. And I could never quite explain why.

I even thought I must've imagined things, but now I wasn't so sure anymore.

"There's still a lot that doesn't add up," I said carefully. "Let's not forget he had somehow found a way to use me for that twisted ritual of his."

Kylan's jaw locked hard, a muscle twitching.

"Come," Aelius instructed. "Let us keep walking."

We started walking again, and I could tell we were almost back at the hut. Kylan was still tense beside me, and I hated it. But at the same time, I would not lie and tell him Aelius's words didn't make sense. I gave him a slight nudge, intertwining our hands.

Aelius let the silence settle, but not for long before he answered a question neither of us had asked out loud.



"As old and as powerful as Baelor is," he began, "he can lend you his power, but he cannot erase you," he said. "Not unless you surrender to him fully and hand yourself over." His voice dropped. "Your brother doesn't carry Violet's eyes or your Oracle blood, so every single day, a little more of the prince disappears...until there's nothing left but darkness."

I gulped. "So does that mean that Kayden is still somewhere in there? Underneath it all?"

Aelius's brow creased. "Who knows."

Soft lights revealed themselves again as we finally exited the path. "So that Oracle thing...that was the reason why Baelor was willing to negotiate with me?" Kylan drew in a slow breath.

He didn't say it to anyone in particular. I watched something shift behind his eyes. It was like a whole life was rearranging itself in his head. Perhaps everything that had once been done or said when he was younger. Perhaps the reason why his sisters grew up so isolated, and why Cecilia had been so wary.

"Why didn't she ever tell me?" he asked, his voice slightly rough. A small smile tugged at his lips.

"Not even your father knows," Aelius said. "It is not something you simply tell people. It is something they come to learn on their own, and sometimes it is better if they never do. In war, a title like that can become a burden very quickly."

"But you know by telling me this that I'm now going to worry about my sister. Because the war is coming." Kylan released a frustrated



huff. "Why are you telling me this?"

Aelius shrugged, completely unbothered. "Because you would've asked your teacher either way, and there was still some time to talk," he said. "Unless you would prefer my granddaughter fill the silence instead." He glanced at me. "She had quite a lot to say to you—"

"Grandpa!"

He cared an awful lot about the details for someone who had sworn he didn't care. So he was lying, and I made a mental note of that.

Kylan let out a lazy yawn beside me, squeezing my hand in the process. Out of everyone, he cared the least, without a doubt.

Before I knew it, we were back in front of the hut. My hand was still in his as we stood before Aelius, who looked between us like he had all the time in the world.

"Okay," I said, unsure of how to greet him. Although it wasn't like it had been in the beginning, I still tended to think about what to do, what to say to him. How far was too far?

But when he opened one arm and wiggled his fingers, I didn't hesitate for a second and stepped right into him. I let myself melt into his embrace, and closed my eyes to enjoy the moment.

It was just a hug, but it meant so much to me. He meant so much to me.

"Please...just go to sleep." He pulled back and pressed a soft kiss to the top of my head, letting it rest there a moment longer. My lips curved as his hand cupped the back of my head, caressing my hair



gently. When he let go of me, I quickly looked away to hide the flush on my face.

I looked back just in time to follow his gaze to Kylan, who was watching him with a small frown. Aelius gave a soft laugh, stepped closer, and motioned for him to lower his head. Kylan, who seemed too out of it to even realize what was happening, leaned down without thinking twice about it.

A gasp slipped out of me as Aelius unexpectedly pressed a kiss to the side of Kylan's head. What was that?

Kylan flinched in response. A satisfied hum left Aelius before he turned around and walked off like nothing had happened.

Meanwhile, Kylan stayed frozen where he was. His eyes were huge, his face completely stunned. The sight was so funny, it made me burst out laughing.

Just as I was about to open my mouth, Kylan gave me a dismissive wave of his hand. A growl escaped him. "Not a word."

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