



Chapter 557

Violet

After some time, we finally reached the temples and lingered near the entrance. I peeked inside, hoping to see Jorm awake by now, but unfortunately, he was still asleep.

Some kind of green herb paste smeared across one side of his face and down his neck, covering where the wound had spread yesterday. At least he wasn't screaming anymore, so that counted for something.

"So the one who just won't die lives," Varius muttered. I tilted my head slightly, tempted to ask what he meant, but quickly decided against it. He must've seen something. At least Varius saying he 'won't die' didn't exactly sound like a bad thing.

The rest of them were gathered around him. Jason, Dylan, Nate, and Trinity, who had joined them.

My eyes swept the temple once more. "Where's Sterling and Rochwall?" I wondered.

"Your commander is escorting your principal back to Starlight with the body," Aelius explained. "Your principal found what he came for in that palace and left the scroll in our hands. His work here is done, and he did wonderfully."

It took a moment for the others to notice us, but when they did, their eyes went straight to Varius. He walked through the temple as if he had been there all along, barely acknowledging anyone except Jorm on the ground. That was just Varius.

Trinity's eyes widened in surprise, and a smile quickly spread across her face. "Varius!"

Even Dylan and Nate seemed just as excited, while Jason looked up from



whatever he was doing and greeted him with a respectful nod.

"So you are Kylan's teacher?" Nate said, grinning.

"I'm glad it's you," Dylan added, releasing a sigh. "I believe you'd know what to do."

Aelius let out a low grunt, as if Dylan had somehow personally offended him. Whatever it was, it didn't look like he agreed with Dylan's words.

Varius, on the other hand, simply ignored them. His eyes stayed on Jorn as he stepped closer to Jason. Ever since we entered Bloodstone Haven, he had been focused and hadn't tried to make any small talk.

"What is it you're doing to him?" he asked.

"Keeping him calm, mostly," Jason said, still working on Jorn. "I still want to look into a few things about the shadow wound while I have him here," he explained further. "Our powers are great, but we shouldn't be relying on them forever."

"I agree." Varius nodded.

Jason shot him a surprised smile. "Do you?" he asked. "Then you also agree that we should be working toward an actual antidote?"

Varius pressed his lips together, shrugging his shoulders and showing he was willing to listen. Jason went on. "I drew some of his blood too. He gave me permission." He glanced at Jorn, spreading the thick layer on his face. "He said he wanted to help everyone...however he could."

"So he's okay?" I asked.

"As healthy and as stubborn as ever," Jason let out a chuckle. "He had quite a lot to say about the whole thing, actually," he continued. "Complained the entire time I was drawing his blood...compared me to a vampire."



I couldn't help but laugh at that, and even Kyran couldn't hide his. It sounded exactly like something Jorn would say, and that was enough to tell me he was really okay.

Jason truly was amazing.

The one Aelius had trusted with Bloodstone Haven...

But so was Jorn. Yesterday I had been kneeling in the dirt, trying to keep him alive while being so sure I was about to lose him. Now, looking at him, I didn't know why. Commander Jorn was a fighter.

As my eyes glanced at him once more, I slowly realized just how much I admired him. His body had already been through so much, more than anyone's should be able to take. Yet, he was letting Jason draw his blood, do whatever, all so it might help someone else down the line.

He looked like a cold man, but that was the kind of person he was.

"So what happens now?" Nate asked, breaking the brief moment of silence. His eyes were on Varius. "Now that you're here?"

Varius tilted his head. "I had rather expected to walk in here and have all of you tell me what happens now," he said. "I had expected all of you to be prepared."

I turned to look at Aelius and saw him letting out a slow breath through his nose. His jaw locked like he was physically trying to hold himself back from saying something. But he lasted about two seconds.

"We have discussed this already." His gaze sharpened. "The villagers will work on their eyes. I will take the rest of them and show them the proper way a wolf fights a witch, since apparently no one has bothered to teach them," he said. His eyes softened as they found mine. "And Violet can walk me through her plan while we do it." He gestured vaguely. "You will take the crown prince."



My lips parted as I looked up at Kylan. He was already looking down at me with a smirk on his lips, and I knew exactly what it was for. He could tell I was close to panicking again and wanted to see how I would get myself out of this one.

At least...if that was what it was, he wasn't wrong.

My hand grew sweaty in his palm, Grandpa's words going through my mind.

Her plan...

What plan?

I didn't have one yet. He had so much confidence in me, and I couldn't bring myself to tell him that maybe he'd made a mistake putting it all on me.

"I think I should take the girl," Varius stated.

"So she can observe the prince's first lesson," Varius went on, unbothered. "And then come to her plan in peace, without you forcing her to think while she isn't ready to think—"

"She has no choice but to think," Aelius said flatly. "You cannot walk in here and accuse me of not being prepared, then ask me to give her more time when there is none. Unfortunately, she will have to grow up and learn to carry the pressure of what is coming—"

"But she cannot think clearly until she has seen with her own eyes that the boy will be fine and will be giving it his all," Varius argued, a strained smile at his lips. "Both her strength and her weakness come from the same place, and that is love." He shot me a glance, then shifted his eyes to Aelius again. "Let him be the strength she holds onto—"

"Strength?" Aelius scoffed. I glanced around the room, wondering if everyone else felt as uncomfortable as I did, and quickly saw that I wasn't.



the only one. At least Jason could pretend not to care by keeping his focus on Jorm, but unfortunately, the rest of us couldn't.

Aelius didn't get like this. Varius didn't get like this. I didn't even know either of them could raise their voice.

I wasn't even sure if this was about me anymore.

"Told you," Kylan whispered.

"Violet is stronger than that," Aelius said. "Her biggest strength comes from Bloodstone Haven, her mother, my granddaughter, Adelaide, and not —"

"And you decide that for the girl?"

My eyes glanced back and forth between the two, and I held onto Kylan. "The girl is Violet," Aelius spat, his voice rising even more, "she is also my granddaughter, and her name is Violet."

A loud sigh came from Varius, his brown eyes staring at me. "Very well then," he said. "Let us ask your granddaughter, Violet."

He had said it in a way that I feared might offend Aelius even more. With Aelius's eyes now on me too, I pressed my body closer to Kylan. "It's okay," he murmured. "Just be honest."

I bit down on my lip nervously as every eye in the temple turned to me. Even Jason looked over this time. My pulse quickened, and my mouth opened and closed without anything useful coming out. I hated this. All of it.

"Well, Violet," Aelius pressed. "The burden was placed in your hands, and so the choice must be

