



Chapter 558

Violet

My eyes darted back and forth between them.

I could either go with Aelius and start building the plan I didn't have or go with Varius and watch over Kylan while he faced Baelor again for the first time.

Both of them were important to me, but I could only do one, and I couldn't do the other at the moment.

"Well?" Aelius pressed.

"Well..."

The words wouldn't leave my mouth because I already knew my answer. To be honest, I'd known from the moment I was asked, and now all I could do was hope he would understand why.

My throat had gone dry. I swallowed, but it went down wrong, sending me into a coughing fit. A chuckle escaped Kylan as he gave me a few pats on the back.

Aelius watching me the whole time didn't make the situation any better. A barely visible frown appeared on his face. "So you have made your decision," he said. "I see."

His eyes weren't angry. There wasn't even disappointment in them. It was more the look of someone who had already seen it coming and wasn't too surprised by the outcome. Perhaps this told him something about the kind of leader I was going to be, and I wasn't sure whether that was a good thing.

I dropped my gaze to the ground and let out a slow, relieved breath. Half relieved because the other part of me really hoped I hadn't chosen wrong.



"The rest of you may come with me," Aelius said, turning away from me, "if you are ready to do some real work."

Ready to do some real work...

It sounded strange in my ears, or maybe that was what I wanted to make myself believe.

"Jason." Aelius called out his name as the others stood up. "Your duties have grown heavier now. You cannot afford to—"

"I know," Jason said, taking his eyes off Jorn for a moment. As Trinity passed, he reached out and grabbed her hand to hold her back. She raised her brow at him before shrugging herself loose from his grip, and he shot her an apologetic smile.

I watched her glance over at Dylan, who looked at the situation with a confused expression.

"I want to keep Trinity here," Jason announced. "She's got more potential than she knows what to do with, and she would be far more valuable here rather than swinging at witches with the rest of them." 1

Aelius let out a long sigh. "I agree," he said. "The girl's got a lot of potential."

Then he walked out of the temple. As he passed Varius, the two held each other's gaze. It was long and intense, but no words were needed to understand the mood between them. There really was something going on between those two.

Dylan and Nate followed after him, and then it was just us. Me, Kylan, Jason, and Trinity, with Varius near the entrance. And of course, Jorn.

"Aelius...he'll get over it," Jason said, wiping his hands on a cloth. He looked over at me. "At the end of the day, he knows you chose what was right for you."



I gave him a brief nod. If anyone knew Aelius, it had to be him. "I think he also just wants to spend some time with you," Trinity added. "But I understand why you feel like you need to be with Kylan right now."

I nodded again, then looked up at Kylan. His brows pulled together, like he was trying to understand the anxious look on my face. It was everything all at once, especially not knowing what was actually about to happen to him. With Baelor.

"Master Varius. You should take the north temple," Jason told him. "That one is the best for sealing off dark energy." He squinted his eyes a little. "Just in case anything goes wrong?"

A cold shiver ran down my spine as Varius gave him a simple shrug. He wasn't denying it.

With that one simple gesture, Varius turned and walked out.

A few seconds passed, and when Kylan and I still hadn't moved an inch, Jason cleared his throat.

"I believe that means the two of you are supposed to follow him."

"Yes!" Kylan and I said at the exact same time.

Trinity shook her head. "The two of you are so..." She burst out laughing. I joined her, though mine came out a bit more flustered. My cheeks burned as I shoved Kylan's back to get him moving, and we stepped out of the temple together.

Varius was already ahead of us, moving slow but determined, his stick tapping against the stone.

As we walked, I couldn't shake the picture of that look on Aelius's face. Was Jason right, and would he really get over it?

On top of everything else, he had been the one who was supposed to start



training my eyes. I supposed that was gone now too, at least for today.

It slowly began to hit me that I had walked away from my grandfather, from the plan I didn't have, and from the training I desperately needed. All in one decision.

"You're thinking about something," Kylan said. "Tell me."

I glanced up at him. "Do you think I made the right call?" I asked, not even attempting to go back and forth. "Choosing to come with you instead."

Kylan breathed out through his nose. "Only you know that, Pup," he concluded after a few seconds. "Nobody else gets to decide whether it was right. Just you." He took my hand, lacing his fingers through mine before giving it a squeeze.

"Just do me one favor."

"Yes?"

"Don't do the thing you always do."

I frowned up at him. "What thing?"

He glanced sideways at me, the corner of his lips curving. "Overthink."

I opened my mouth to argue, and then closed it. I was doing exactly that. Only when it had gotten darker around us did I realize that we had stepped into a new temple.

The air was much different here. It felt more tense, cooler, heavier. Varius was already waiting for us in the center. He had leaned his cane against the stone, and his eyes were already on us as if we had made him wait too long.

I noticed a tight smile form on Kylan's lips. He was nervous. It was the way his shoulders tensed, his eyes kept flicking around the temple like he



wanted to run out.

He rarely got nervous, or if he did, he hardly ever showed it. But this time, he did. However, I couldn't blame him. This wasn't nothing.

He was about to try and reach the thing that had been sitting inside him this whole time, after betraying it. I bet it even got Lumia nervous. There was no purr, no snarky little comment...nothing.

"I'm really glad to see you again," Kylan said to Varius. "I mean it." His voice unexpectedly shook as he said it.

Varius's mouth went tight, but he never said anything back.

"And I'm glad you managed to bring all the witches with you," Kylan went on, filling the silence. "The Lyperian stone too, I'm assuming? You wouldn't have left that behind." He wiped his palms against the front of his shirt. "Right?"

And now Kylan, who wasn't much of a talker to begin with, was rambling. Getting this many words out of him at once usually took...well, something.

There was no doubt in my mind anymore. I had made the right choice being here with him. He needed me.

"So where were you, actually?" Kylan went on. "Is there a reason the journey took this long? Because I could've used you a while ago, if I'm being honest—"

"We can talk after the ten days," Varius said, his tone flat. "Or perhaps in the afterlife."

The what?

"Right now, it is not important."

Varius was still as fun as ever...

He stepped forward, closing the distance until he stood right in front of Kylan. Then he looked up into his eyes. A nervous breath slipped past Kylan's lips as he stared back at him.

Suddenly, without warning, Varius let his eyes glow. A startled sound escaped Kylan's lips, but before he could turn his head to look away, Varius had stopped him.

"Push through it," he said. "Keep looking into my eyes. Do not turn away."

His eyes were so bright in the dark temple that I had to lift a hand to shield my own. Kylan groaned. "What are you doing?"

"I am looking," Varius said calmly, "at how deeply Baelor is buried inside you. So that I know exactly where you must reach to find him."

Kylan let out a strained chuckle. "Then you're going to be looking for a while," he gritted out. "He's probably buried himself as deep as he can go," he said. "I'd imagine he's not too eager to talk to me. Not after I went back on our deal."

My stomach twisted at his words. I knew I had made the right decision back then, bringing Kylan back. I also knew none of this was my fault. But still, he was the one who had to dig him out now.

"And?" I stepped closer, unable to hide my eagerness. "Can you feel him? Baelor?"

Varius made a low sound in his throat, the glow draining from his eyes. "It is a bigger mess than I thought...but I believe I know what he wants."

"And that is?" I wondered, tilting my head.

"An apology," Varius stated. "But not from you...from your wolves."

