

Chapter 574

Kylan

Though I knew I probably shouldn't, I was still stubborn enough to let my eyes travel further, deeper into the cave.

It was nothing like the tunnels back at Bloodstone Haven. The cave walls were covered in dark red crystals. I could hear the faint crackle of a fire somewhere in the distance, and when I looked deeper into the cave, I saw a red light flickering.

I wasn't sure whether it was Baelor, but there was something or someone that didn't want me to stop, so I didn't.

I kept going, but froze when I noticed the men lining the walls. I hadn't expected anyone else to be there.

They sat on the ground, weak and chained, their heads hanging low. When I spotted a few faintly visible crests, my stomach dropped. The Alpha Kingdom?

Those were Eamon's men...

My eyes searched frantically, scanning one after another. If his men were here, then Eamon had to be here too, somewhere. 'You won't find him here,' Baelor breathed. 'Keep going.'

There was something odd in his tone when he said it. Something that sounded almost like excitement, or maybe longing. Strangely enough, I felt it too. I was just as desperate to get to something...

I just didn't know what.

"No!" Suddenly, a scream ripped through the cave, coming from somewhere deeper inside.

Baelor hummed. 'Almost,' he breathed. 'Keep going.'

I let the eyes carry me toward the sound, moving just as fast as I had before. Everything stopped in a flash, and suddenly I was standing at the edge of an open chamber.

The first thing I saw was the woman kneeling on the bare stone. I couldn't see her face, only the long black hair falling all the way down her back.

"Do you want me to beg!" she said, her voice cracking. "Is that what you want from me? Then fine. But please. Please, I am begging you. Just stop this!"

She was pleading with everything she had, but even then, there was something in her that refused to bend. A strength in her voice that sounded almost unbreakable.

As I finally looked up, my eyes fell on a man bound to a massive crystal. His arms were stretched out, his head hanging forward against his chest as it rose and fell weakly.

Though he wasn't moving, I recognized those golden blonde locks that were identical to Violet's.

Alaric...

That meant she had to be...

In one quick motion, the woman turned around.

"I told you to stop!" she snapped through gritted teeth, her brows pulled together in anger. This time, I could finally get a good look at her.

It was really her.

Adelaide...

She looked the same as she had that time she led me to Violet, only a little more mature now. But that wasn't the only difference. Dark circles sat under her eyes, and she looked exhausted. Whatever light Violet had always spoken of was gone, faded down to almost nothing.

I could tell she had been through a lot.

She looked right through me because it wasn't me she was looking at.

"I am talking to you," she said, her voice weak. "Gloria..."

My heart quickened as I turned to look behind me. Then my breath caught in my throat. Gloria stood right in front of me, only a few inches away, though she couldn't see me. Her cold eyes were fixed only on Adelaide, a smirk pulling at the corner of her lips.

She was so close that I flinched back on instinct.

Not once did her eyes settle on me. They passed straight through, just as Adelaide's had.

Even so, standing a breath away from the woman trying to take us down didn't make it any less horrifying. However, Baelor seemed to get a kick out of it.

When his laughter rolled through me once more, I decided I couldn't take it another second, and my eyes flew open. I breathed heavily as I found myself back inside the temple, Varius right in front of me.

My heart slammed against my ribs, so loud I could hear all of it, and I dragged in one ragged breath after another. I tried to slow it down, convince myself that none of it could've been real and that I hadn't just come from the realm and stood a breath away from Gloria.

I didn't know what was wrong with me. I didn't even know why I had reacted that way. Though it looked a lot like fear, the feeling I had was far from it.

I realized the power had drained out of my eyes, and Baelor had pushed himself back down where he belonged. The red was gone, and everything was back to normal.

Yet, I didn't feel weak. Not the way I had expected to. It was the rest of me that was shaking.

"Well," Varius said, watching me with a curious gaze. "It would seem you have done exactly what I told you not to do."

I kept my mouth shut. There wasn't much point arguing it. Perhaps I shouldn't have done that. Or I shouldn't have allowed Baelor to do that.

'Idiot,' Valerius muttered, his voice tired. It was the first thing he had said all day, and I wouldn't argue with him either. I was an idiot.

My mind went back to the realm, and her...

Adelaide.

It was real. I knew everything I saw in there was real because Varius had warned me himself.

"Your eyes are still weak," Varius said. "Far weaker than they need to be for what lies ahead," he added. "We do not have enough days to make them as strong as Kian's, so it will be a risk...one we will simply have to take."

His words got through to me, but I barely heard him. Because my mind was still stuck on that one thing.

"I was inside the realm," I said, looking at him. "Inside the cave. I saw..."

"No."

I blinked at him. "But I saw..."

"No," Varius said again, firmer this time.

"Why?" I pressed. "It could be important..."

"Because it is not mine to know," he stated. "Those are the rules, prince. Not every truth is meant for every set of ears," he explained. "What was shown to you was shown to you. It is yours to carry, and yours to place in the hands of the one who needs it. Not mine."

"Violet?" My voice softened.

If anyone had the right to know, it was her. They were her parents. Her eyes had lit up in a way I couldn't explain when she spoke about getting back her parents, but I had felt her joy.

I knew how hard she had worked to come up with a plan to save not only us, but also the two people she missed the most. But if I had to count the days, and where they were at right now...

Adelaide begging Gloria to stop whatever she was doing, and Alaric barely breathing.

"If I tell her," I addressed slowly, "what state they're really in...it might break her. That might be the thing that shatters her."

Varius was quiet for a moment. "Perhaps," he hummed. "Or perhaps breaking is exactly what she needs." His steady eyes pierced through mine. "Do not decide for her what she can and cannot bear. That is not your choice to make. It is hers."

A weak chuckle escaped me because I had heard it before. She had told me before, and I knew he was right. I couldn't always protect her.

She had spent her whole life being lied to for her own good, kept in the dark by people who thought they were saving her from something. Still, every single time, it had only hurt her worse in the end.

And I wasn't going to do it again...

