## Chapter 581

Violet

As I pushed the door open, the first thing I saw was everyone already stretching.

The team was spread across the mats, in their usual clusters. Kaelis, Lian and Sora went off to the side where Trinity was already sitting. I smiled, watching her. She had been offered a spot on the team by both commanders, and she had still kind of turned it down.

"Good to see you two are still alive!" Mandy called out. "We were waiting to hear the stories, but we couldn't find you or the commanders!" she said. "We had to hear from Dylan, and you already know he can't tell a story to save his life."

Dylan gave her a light push as they all laughed at him. I took that as an opportunity to hide behind Nate and Kylan. I was already on edge as it was.

I heard Cassian's voice and Nate firing something back at him, but I wasn't really listening. My eyes were already moving across the room, scanning for someone I couldn't find. There was no commander yet.

Good. Because I hadn't decided how I wanted to do this. At first I had thought about opening with it, getting the news out of the way first thing. But the more I stood here, the more I couldn't picture it.

How was anyone supposed to train or focus after hearing that I was the one thing they had most likely been taught to hate?

Then you would've thought the princess title would've saved it, but just as they had been taught to hate witches, they had been taught that the Alpha King was completely crazy, so that wouldn't make it any better.

A nudge got me out of my thoughts. "You okay?" Kylan asked, quiet enough that only I could hear it. I bobbed my head.

"I'm fine...I think."

Finally, the doors opened, and Commander Rochwall came walking in. Jane was beside him, like she usually was whenever we had late-night training.

"My children!" he greeted, smiling brightly like he hadn't seen us in years. That was a greeting that would never change.

A surprised breath escaped me as another figure came walking in behind him. My gaze traveled up until it stopped at Commander Jorn's pale eyes. There was this excitement I couldn't even understand myself.

My feet were moving before I could even think about it, and I rushed across the mats until I was standing right in front of him. I looked up with wide eyes, and then they went back to normal again.

I had run all the way over here, and now what?

It was the same as when he woke up, and the same as when we all went back to Starlight together. I got to him, and then I just stood there like I had forgotten why I came, because I still didn't know how to greet my...cousin.

Jorn sighed, and a brief smile crossed his face. He reached out and squeezed my shoulder, making me laugh. Just when I had gathered the courage to maybe try saying something, he walked past me. I had no choice but to watch him go as he joined Rochwall and Jane.

Weird cousin... But regardless, he was my family. At least he hadn't come in yelling this time.

"Today we'll be doing conditioning," Rochwall announced. "Spread out."

Groans spread through the room first, but everyone did as they were told right after. Everyone except me.

I took a breath and walked over to where Rochwall, Jorn and Jane were standing. All three of them looked at me, shooting me gentle smiles. The kind you give someone when you can't help but pity them.

Or maybe they were just curious... After everything that happened at Bloodstone Haven these past few days, I wouldn't blame them.

"Yes?" Rochwall asked. "I want to talk to the team before training ends," I said. "I'm going to tell them the truth. All of it." I swallowed. " I'm going to need a lot of help after that. I'm actually hoping you'll all help me too."

For a moment, none of them said anything. They glanced at each other and exchanged chuckles, while I stood there in anticipation. " She's like her mom," Jane exhaled, smiling.

"Yes," Rochwall agreed. "She just...decides."

A confused sound slipped past my lips. I had heard I was like Mom. I had heard I was like Dad. And I was determined to save them so we could all get to the bottom of this. What was the truth?

The silence stretched long enough that I started to wonder if I should just walk away and pretend I never said it. Jorn shrugged his shoulders. "I already almost died once," he said lazily. "What's a second time?"

Rochwall burst out laughing. Jorn put a hand on my back and pushed me toward the mats. "Now go," he said, "before I make you do extra laps for standing around."

I released an uncomfortable laugh and jogged back to the group, quickly finding my way to Kylan, who had saved me a spot.

He started interrogating me as soon as I sat down. "Any idea why Jorn isn't screaming today?" he asked, leaning in.

I pursed my lips. "Not that I know of." He really did seem softer today, and it wasn't just me. Kylan and I shared a look, one that was quickly broken by the sound of Rochwall's voice leading us into training.

And while the commanders might've been soft today, training definitely wasn't. By the end of it, we had done laps, drills, and whatever else they could come up with until my lungs were on fire and my legs had turned to jelly.

I collapsed straight onto the mat, my chest heaving as I stared up at the ceiling. If I had to choose between Elite training and Aelius's training, it would definitely be the latter. Something I actually enjoyed doing.

If this was supposed to convince Trinity, or anyone else, to join the team, then it was doing the exact opposite.

"You did so well the last time. You know what your problem is? Consistency," Kylan said, crouching over me with a grin. "It's looking more and more like I'm going to have to teach you all over again."

I opened my mouth to fire something back, but all that came out was a cough.

Exhausted, I lifted a finger, asking for a moment. "Yes," I finally breathed. "I'll definitely need to learn how to run. For when I'm chasing Gloria and Kian?"

Kylan let out a laugh, noting the sarcasm. I was heavily convinced that for at least that part, the only thing I would need was my eyes.

"Before you all leave," Rochwall called out over the room, "there's something Violet would like to share with the team."

I lifted a brow. Huh? Then it clicked that there was, in fact, something.

As always, Cassian was quick to react. "What?" he spat. "Did she finally realize Elite isn't for her?" Chuckles spread through the room while I rolled my eyes in annoyance.

And underneath that annoyance was an insecurity. Something that made me want to shrink.

"No," Kylan said, like he could smell the fear on me. He extended his hand, and I let him pull me up until I stood face to face with him.

"You're not backing down," he said. "You'll do your thing, and I

already told you exactly what I'll do if anyone decides to get funny about it." He tapped my back. "Come on. Let's go."

I let him steer me toward the corner where Lian, Sora, and Kaelis were sitting. One by one, everyone followed, even the commanders. Kaelis scanned everyone with her eyes, her head tilting as one brow lifted slowly. I waited until everyone had gathered.

But when they did, I felt cornered. It was the whole team, and all their eyes were fixed on me at once. Rochwall and Jorn joined in, somehow making it a little easier to breathe.

I opened my mouth, then closed it again. Did I need to ease into this? Work my way up to it, soften it somehow, or just...

I let out a breath. "I'm half witch."

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