

Chapter 17

Violet

It was his turn.

However, the defeated look on his face showed that he was nowhere near ready. I could tell that speaking about whatever he was holding back was difficult for him.

His jaw clenched, fists tightened, eyes were narrowed. Judging by his reaction, it had to be something far worse than Dylan's resentment or Nate's addiction.

What could it be?

We were on a roll, and I didn't want to lose it—so I leaned over the fire and grabbed the box from Nate.

"I'll go."

Surprisingly, Kylan's lips curled into a small, grateful smile. It was so quick that if I hadn't been looking closely, I might've missed it.

Compared to holding a knife to your sister's throat, taking Lunaris multiple times a day, and whatever the hell Kylan had going on—mine didn't seem as big.

I had buried it, pretended like it wasn't there—but it wasn't something scandalous.

"My glasses," I said, tapping on the frame. "They're not for eyesight. They're for something else. Dylan knows about it."

"Since I was a child, I heard voices, had these visions, nightmares. Dark, terrifying visions. Sometimes they predict the future, sometimes they don't. But whenever they come, they're powerful," I spoke casually. "When I was younger, they'd cause things to happen—windows would break, objects would fly, strange things would happen all around me."

I was waiting for it to get more difficult, but I went through everything without a stutter. "The pack elders tried everything when I was little. They brought in exorcists because they thought I was possessed by some dark spirit, prayed to the Moon Goddess—all of that, but nothing worked. The visions never went away."

Nate covered his mouth, chuckling. "Exorcists?"

"Yes," I smiled back, touching the frames of my glasses. "These glasses were a gift from my mom. They shield me from the voices, and the nightmares. Without them, I'm afraid my powers could spiral out of control, and...I don't even want to imagine what could happen."

"I like your glasses," Nate complimented. "They suit you."

His words made my lips curl into a wide smile. No one had ever said they liked my glasses. "I thought these glasses would make me less of a freak," I added. "But whenever people tease me, they somehow always bring up my glasses."

I gave Kylan a side-eye, and his expression softened. He glanced away, as if he couldn't bear to look at me.

I couldn't help but wonder if the weight of his teasing was finally sinking in. I sure hoped so, because those last words were definitely a jab at him.

I didn't want to wear those round glasses, I didn't want to be called 'Four-eyes,' and I definitely didn't want to get bullied because of it.

"I suppose I'll have to come up with a different nickname," Kylan spoke softly. His tone surprised me. There was no mocking, no coldness...

Kylan didn't look like the annoying, arrogant, and unapproachable heir to the Lycan throne. He looked vulnerable, understanding—and I definitely liked him better this way.

The only question was for how long it would last.

We had to be realistic here—he had no choice but to be vulnerable.

Huffing, I stared down at the unchanged box in my hands. It still hadn't changed colors.

"Is there something else?" Dylan asked. "Maybe a fear of yours or..."

"A fear?" I tilted my head, thinking deeply. "I guess I'm afraid of not being loved. I want someone to love me unconditionally, but I come with so much baggage that I doubt anyone could ever truly love me."

"I'll love you unconditionally, and I'll carry ten of your backpacks if you need me to," Nate jumped in.

His words had me confused for a second, and judging by the strange looks Dylan and Kylan shot him, they were just as puzzled.

"A-As a friend of course," Nate quickly added, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Yes, I know!" I chuckled, giving Nate a fist bump. Just then, the box shifted colors again.

Kylan clenched his jaw. I remembered what he'd said before about me flirting with Nate. His reactions confused me—he hated me, mocked me, and yet acted like I was doing something wrong with every friendly gesture I made.

I just couldn't understand him.

I rolled my eyes, handing him the box and watched as his face tightened. I bet that would humble him.

"Your turn," I spat.

He nearly hissed, glaring at me as I placed the box in his hands. Still, I could see the determination in his eyes. I had challenged him to reveal his darkest secret, and he wasn't going to back down.

"I had to battle for my claim to the throne," Kylan began. "There are over twenty of us—my father has many mistresses. My mom is the queen, but I'm the only son she ever had. She's the king's mate, but not his favorite."

We all stayed silent, not daring to interrupt as he continued.

"All my life, my biggest competition has been my brother, Kayden. His mom is the king's first love. He's always overshadowed me. We were born on the same day—but the day I was born, the king wasn't there. He was with the woman he loved...and with Kayden."

All I could focus on was the fury in his eyes as he spoke. Kylan wasn't born angry. It was the years of feeling unwanted, second best, and constantly being compared to his brother that had shaped him.

It turned out even a golden boy, a prince like Kylan, didn't have a perfect life.

"He's never cared for me," Kylan let out a low, frustrated chuckle as his grip tightened around the box. I couldn't help but wonder where this left Nate since the two of them were so close.

Since Nate's dad was the king's Beta, Kylan must've held on to the hope that the king would one day acknowledge him, give him the attention he craved—but he didn't.

"I ended up winning the Heir Battle," Kylan said, "but it wasn't a fair fight. I cheated."

I listened, letting his words sink in. I never imagined Kylan admitting to something like this. It was hard to believe.

"Kayden was trained by the king. No matter how hard I worked, no matter how hard any of us worked—he was always just a bit better, stronger, faster, the king had prepared him for the battle all his life—and I knew I couldn't beat him."

Kylan's expression hardened. "So, I poisoned him. Before the final battle."