

## Chapter 109

Adelaide

I had expected him to look away, but he didn't. The eye contact didn't faze him. He smiled faintly, but something about that smile sent a shiver down my spine.

The smile was meant for me—he was staring right at me.

Someone like that...what did Mom want with him?

Our eye contact was broken by one of the guards tapping his shoulder, and then he disappeared.

"Your Highness, Prince Alaric is waiting," one of what I assumed to be Elyx's guards called out from the side.

Elyx nodded and made his way toward me again.

I quickly scanned the situation. If even the Lycan prince had to be told that Alaric was waiting for him, it meant getting close to Alaric wasn't going to be easy. Not at all.

"Hey!" Elyx stuck out his hand, and I took it. "I had a good laugh today, Adelaide."

What did he mean by that?

James slammed his arm over my shoulder, pulling me closer. "Apparently, she's been dying to meet you," he said, his tone overly dramatic.

Elyx raised a brow, his lips twitching into a smirk.

"Well, not dying," I glared at James. "Just curious."

"It's about the same," Elyx replied cockily. "You should join us for lunch sometime, Adelaide. I give you permission to sit at my table."

He released a low chuckle, placed his hand on my shoulder, then turned and made his way out of the training grounds.

"I don't like that," Alaric said.

I looked at him. "Don't like what?"

"People staring at my girl," he responded as we also made our way out, walking the campus grounds.

I glanced at him, smirking. "Who said I was your girl?"

He opened his mouth to say something, but decided against it, pulling me closer instead.

"Just kidding," I sang, playfully slapping his chest. James grinned, though I could tell my words had caught him off guard. I didn't have anything against the guy, but I would need him for a while longer, so keeping him happy wasn't a bad idea.

The only downside was that I didn't want him to get too attached, but it was already too late for that.

As we walked further, a group of girls stared at us from a distance. Their arms were crossed as they whispered amongst themselves.

One girl, in particular, stood out. She had curly brown hair and a curious gaze that felt uncomfortably focused on me. Her expression wasn't cold, but almost sad, as if someone had done something to her.

Someone like...

"Who is that?" I asked, looking at James.

James released a sigh. "No one."

"Then why is she on the verge of crying?"

He let out another sigh. "Can you keep a secret?"

"I can keep a secret," I shrugged. "I don't really have friends, so I wouldn't know who to tell."

He laughed at my words, then his face turned serious again. "Her name is Jane," he said. "She used to be my mate...until she wasn't...because I rejected her."

I stayed quiet for a second, then let out a chortle, covering my mouth with my hand. "Don't tell me you ditched that poor girl?" I gaped. "You shifters and your mates...now some girl has to live with a broken heart while you..." I shook my head disapprovingly.

It was only because I needed him, but I definitely didn't stand behind taking another woman's man when there were plenty out there, and I could get anyone I wanted.

"Someone once told me you feel like shit once the bond gets broken," I said. "So how come you're still managing?"

"Because I turned it off. I don't believe in that crap," he stated, his voice suddenly cold. "Just the idea of being tied down to someone without having a choice sounds a bit suffocating, doesn't it?"

"It does," I agreed.

"I don't want someone because I have to—I want someone because I choose to. Not the Moon Goddess, but me."

I shrugged, understanding. "Makes sense."

He seemed to be passionate about it, and since it wasn't really my thing, I wasn't going to argue with him about it. I let just enough time pass before moving on to the next subject—something of importance.

"What's the deal with that Alaric guy?" I asked. "You know him too?"

As his name left my mouth, the image of his perfectly sculpted face immediately appeared in my thoughts, and I forced myself not to think about it.

That annoying smile of his? Someone should smack it off. Maybe I should.

"Alaric?" James said. "He's complicated. Very closed off, always guarded, always surrounded—"

"Why?"

"Well," James began, scratching the back of his neck, "he's the son of the Alpha King. The man who rules over every pack."

"But Elyx is a Lycan prince, and you seem close to him," I squinted my eyes, trying to unravel more.

"Yes," James chuckled. "Elyx's dad is the king of one kingdom. Alaric's dad is the king of all werewolves. It's like comparing apples to oranges."

I nodded, taking in the information. Getting close to Alaric certainly wasn't going to be as simple as fucking him behind a tree at a bonfire or sparring in a circle.

But I had managed to break through to Elyx, and I knew if I really tried, I could do the same with Alaric.

Elyx said he respected me, and maybe I could use that to my advantage.

"What was that lunch thing about?" I asked.

James rolled his shoulders. "Just the cafeteria," he sighed. "Elyx and the other royals don't usually eat there, but there's one day when they have a special table, special cooks—basically, it's a big deal for everyone to see them."

I shot him a curious glance. If Elyx would be there, maybe Alaric would be too.

"When is it?" I asked, trying my best not to sound too desperate.

"Tomorrow," James said.

"Great, then we'll be there tomorrow!"

James opened his mouth to protest, but before he could get a word out, I lifted a brow and gave him a sharp look. He wasn't going to ruin this for me. He wasn't going to ruin the one thing he was good for.

"Yes, sure," James said quickly, hopefully realizing it was better not to test me.

"Good," I smiled, leaning my head against his shoulder. "Then it's settled."