

Chapter 110

Adelaide

I had slept peacefully, knowing today was the day I would get a bit closer to my goal.

By now, the feeling of James' arm around my shoulder was already something I had gotten used to. We walked through the cafeteria toward the special room where Elyx would apparently have his lunch.

The area was in the center of the cafeteria, surrounded by glass windows so everyone could see them. Even though I had only interacted with Elyx for a few minutes, I read him well enough to assume it was so he could make a point about being above the rest.

Students' eyes were glued to us as we stepped closer. I ignored the looks, but James glared at those around us.

"We don't have to do this," he whispered beside me.

"Why not?"

"I went a few times, and these people aren't your people," he said quietly, like he was trying to save me from embarrassment. "This isn't your thing."

"Says who?" I shot back with a smirk. "Calm your tits, Jimmy. We just met—you don't even know me."

He responded with a low chuckle. "Jimmy?"

I patted his chest. "Yeah, Jimmy."

As we finally reached the door, two guards immediately stepped in front of us, blocking our way. More students started whispering.

"Who is the girl?" one of the guards rudely asked James, his question triggering something deep within me.

I opened my mouth to snap back, but before I could say a word, a fist bumped loudly against the glass. It was Elyx.

"Let her through," he instructed. "She's with me, she's cool!"

The two guards gave each other a nod and stepped aside, letting us in. A satisfied smile reached my lips.

The moment we entered, Elyx pulled me into a hug. It was warm, welcoming, and completely unexpected.

Hugs weren't really my thing, and for a second, I froze, unsure of how to react. Then I figured it was probably best not to upset him, so I wrapped my arms around him.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the others at the table watching me. Just by one glance, I could tell these students were also of royal status. They were dressed in expensive-looking clothes and had the same air of arrogance, if not worse, than Elyx's.

My stomach sank as I quickly realized Alaric wasn't there.

Was he even coming? If not, all of this was for nothing. Of course, I didn't want to sit with these people I had absolutely nothing in common with.

James moved away from me to greet a few people at the table he seemed to know.

"Is this one of your future mistresses, Elyx?" a guy at the table yelled, making the others laugh.

Irritation bubbled up inside me.

Really?

"That's funny," I forced a smile. "I was just about to ask him the same thing about you."

The laughter around the table stopped, and the guy looked offended. The only one appreciating my sense of humor was Elyx, who held his stomach as he laughed loudly.

"I told you this one has a big mouth," he warned. "Everyone, this is Adelaide, the witch," he then said loud enough for everyone to hear.

"Come on, take a seat."

He led me to a chair near the head of the table where he sat. James sat beside me, but the seat between Elyx and me remained empty.

"I respect her," Elyx called out, leaning back in his chair. "And she's James' girl, so all of you will respect her too!"

There we go again—James' girl.

The others at the table nodded and went back to their conversations.

Elyx snapped his fingers, and two women immediately stepped forward to prepare a plate for me. My jaw dropped in disbelief at how much power he had to make people move with a single snap.

The way he abused his power was insane, ridiculous—and they all just sat there and did nothing.

"Are you okay?" James whispered beside me.

I gave him a look. "Does it look like I'm not?"

He smirked, looking amused. He loved it whenever I spoke back to him. I had already concluded that back in the woods. It was a way to keep him excited, satisfied. His own little, crazy fantasy of controlling a feisty witch with an attitude—because that was all I was to him. A fetish.

I tore my gaze away from his as the door opened again, and this time I felt my breath catch.

It was him.

Alaric.

The moment he walked in, I felt it again—that same strange feeling I'd had yesterday. I couldn't tell if it was excitement because he was the one I was after, or if I was just losing my mind.

Our eyes locked instantly. A small flicker of surprise reached him before he shot me a weak smile. For some reason, the corner of his lips trembled, as if he was afraid. With a face like that, he had nothing to fear.

My face flushed before I could stop it, and I quickly looked down at my plate.

What the hell was that? I wasn't supposed to feel flustered. I was supposed to be in control. I wasn't here to swoon over some prince.

I heard the voices around the table greeting him and his footsteps growing louder until the empty chair beside me got pulled back.

My stomach flipped, realizing that seat was meant for him—the chair between me and Elyx.

It was exactly where I needed him to be.

This was my chance—this was what I wanted. But why was I so nervous?

"Alaric. I almost thought you weren't coming," Elyx greeted him. Meanwhile, my eyes stayed fixed on my plate.

"When have I ever let you down?" Alaric replied calmly.

My heartbeat quickened. This was the first time I had heard him speak, and it was not at all what I expected. He sounded kind, polite, soft-spoken—definitely nothing like the image of a cold, arrogant prince I had already built in my head.

Perhaps I was wrong...

"James, good to see you," Alaric said. I felt a faint brush of his hand over my shoulder as he reached over to pat James.

James laughed. "You too."

Curious, I tried to lift my head, but I couldn't.

What was happening to me?

I thought I had it all planned out, and now I was stuck—unsure of what to do. I had to get it together, and quickly.

I silently begged him to ask who I was, to start the conversation so I didn't have to. Or maybe for James or Elyx to introduce me to him.

Unfortunately, Elyx was too busy with some girl who appeared to be sitting on his lap, and James seemed to be chatting with the guy beside him.

I had to do it myself.

Nerves went through me as I forced myself to look up. A breath escaped from my lips as I managed the first part, but then came the second. Slowly and cautiously, I turned my head to glance sideways. As I did, my gaze met a pair of piercing blue eyes, and I froze.

He was staring right at me.

Both of us lifted our brows in a split second, and then we looked down, releasing an awkward chuckle at the same time.

What was this?

Alaric cleared his throat. "So, you're new here?"

He was talking to me...