

Chapter 112

Adelaide

It was the day I was supposed to meet Alaric in the woods. The sun was starting to set, and I stood in front of the mirror in our dorm, getting ready for the night.

This was all I had looked forward to. Classes at Starlight were so easy that I already knew I would fly through those four years without breaking a sweat, so that wasn't any of my concern.

My only focus was Alaric and getting closer to my goal for the good of our people.

"Hey," Claire greeted, shuffling out of her bedroom in a cozy onesie. Her blond hair was tied up in a bun, and her eyes looked tired as she plopped down on the couch.

"Going somewhere?"

I glanced at her through the mirror. "Sneaking out," I said casually.

"To see James?" she guessed, raising a brow.

I just smiled, letting her think whatever she wanted. The less Claire knew, the better.

We had grown close quickly, and if I wasn't with James, I was with her. We shared most of the same classes and spent more time together than I had expected. She was still sweet little Claire, but the more I got to know her, the more I began to realize there was more to her.

She grew more comfortable and could be a bit stubborn at times. She even had an unexpectedly great sense of humor.

Claire leaned back into the couch. "Can I ask you something?"

I smacked my lips, spreading my lip gloss. "Anything."

"I haven't seen you around the other witches—why is that?" she asked, her tone curious.

I shrugged, closing the lip gloss. "They hate me. Perks of being the High Priestess's daughter."

It was good to know we were on the same page about keeping our interactions to a minimum. They were my people, and I cared for them as a whole, but those girls were not of value to me anyway.

Claire chuckled softly. "How could anyone ever hate you? You're one of the best people I know."

I froze, staring at her through the mirror as a smile spread across her lips. I could tell she meant it. Claire was one of a kind, and she just had this spark that made me treasure her.

"Some of the girls said your great-grandfather is a Soothsayer," she said shyly. "Is your dad one too?"

A breath escaped my throat as I joined her on the couch. "He passed away...but he wasn't. Neither was my grandpa. Just my great-grandfather," I told her. "My dad was a child of blood, like me. He carried the blood but didn't have any powers. Not all of us do."

"Child of blood," Claire whispered in awe. "I read a lot about it—it's amazing."

My chest tightened, thinking about the man I missed every day. Dad had passed away from an illness when I was five, but even before then, he and Mom had already been broken up for a long time.

"Do you visit the children of blood sometimes?" Claire wondered. "Your great-grandfather is the head of the village, right?"

"Aelius," I smiled. When Dad was still around, he used to take me to Seerhaven, the home to the children of blood from our district, and his family's home. It was a hidden community in the woods, through the caves.

After Dad's passing, Mom told me we were leaving. We went back to her village, where she took over the role of High Priestess and didn't want me around them anymore. She said I was not like the other children, and Aelius was not to be trusted—so I stopped going.

I knew the latter wasn't true, and every once in a while, I would sneak to Seerhaven to check up on him, but that was it.

"Judging by your smile, he must be a good man," Claire said.

"He is," I stated, looking at her. The two of us had always been close. As one of the few who knew about my eyes, he had taught my parents the way to control them, and through his teachings, Mom had fully mastered how to use them. She made me study the same method for years.

Aelius wasn't nearly as obsessed as Mom had been. Grandpa saw me as more than just my eyes. He saw me as Adelaide—his great-granddaughter.

The hardest part about our relationship was my loyalty. Yes, I was a child of blood, but I was also the High Priestess's daughter, and at the end of the day, it was her who I followed, obeyed.

It was complicated.

"I don't trust easily, but I would trust that man to keep me safe if my life were ever in danger."

"Noted," Claire said with a grin. "Now I know if we ever end up going to war with the vampires, I'll be right there with you, hiding out at your grandpa's."

"Vampires," I rolled my eyes. "Vampires and witches are practically family—so I think I'll be safe."

"Right," Claire said. "You both worship Baelor, the so-called God of the underworld—"

"Who is nothing more than a myth and doesn't exist," I added, chuckling. "Just like the Moon Goddess."

Claire gasped loudly, slamming her hand over her chest as if I had just hurt her. "If the Moon Goddess doesn't exist, then how come I have a mate?"

Her reaction got a laugh out of me. "I don't know," I giggled. "All I know is that I don't worship anyone."

"I know," Claire smiled warmly. Many shifters were sensitive to any kind of disrespect to the Moon Goddess, but Claire just let me be me. That's what made her so admirable.

"Do you have any powers, Addy?"

I gazed into her blue eyes that were just waiting for an answer. Aside from the fact that I kept my eyes a secret, telling her would only scare her off. She was too good, too pure.

"Healing powers, just like you," I lied easily. "That's it."

Claire smiled, nodding. "Anyway, I was thinking...when we have a break, I want you to come back to the Bloodrose with me. It'll be fun."

I chuckled at the thought.

A witch like me had no business visiting the Bloodrose, but she was too naïve, too bright to see that. I would never invite her to the witch village because they would eat her alive—literally.

The fairytale she lived in was adorable, but who was going to tell this poor girl that her family wasn't exactly waiting to see me?

Four years...

I had four more years to open this girl's eyes, to make her strong enough to face reality, the real world—and I would do it.

Gently, I brushed a few strands that had come loose from her bun behind her ear. Her eyes softened as she looked at me.

"Are you going to kiss me now?" Claire asked, blinking.

I smirked. "Do you want me to?"

She pursed her lips teasingly and leaned forward, but I laughed, pushing her back gently. "You can save all of that for Greg," I said, standing up.

Glancing at the clock, I realized I still had some time to go before it would be time to meet Alaric.

"I'm just going to clear my head a bit before heading out," I said. "Don't wait up for me."

Claire smiled lazily. "I won't. Goodnight, Addy!"

"Goodnight," I said, giving her one last look before heading out the door.

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I walked through the empty halls of the Lunar dorm, my mind drifting to Alaric—the stuttering crown prince.

"Unbelievable," I muttered, chuckling at the nickname he had practically given himself. He had definitely surprised me by agreeing to meet up with me, and I had not expected it to be that easy—but first, I would have to see it to believe it.

As I walked further, I saw her again—Esther. She was leaning against the doorframe of her office, watching me with her hawk eyes. My steps slowed as I felt it again—that strong presence of hers.

It had been on my mind for a while, and the more I thought about it, the more it bugged me. It really wasn't normal, not for a regular shifter.

A lump formed in my throat as a sudden thought hit me.

That was because she wasn't a regular shifter.

She had to be the one Mom instructed to keep a close eye on me.

I turned sharply, locking eyes with her once again. "Are you half-witch?" I asked bluntly.