

Chapter 119

Adelaide

James had his arm wrapped around my waist as we entered the classroom for Elite training. He always held me close, like he was proud to show me off—but at times like this, I hated it.

Times when Jane couldn't stop glaring at me...

She always had that same look on her face, like she wanted to burn a hole through me—and I couldn't blame her for feeling the way she did. She believed in mates, and she believed he was hers. In her eyes, I took what belonged to hers.

I glanced at James, who was too calm and didn't seem to care or notice. At times, I couldn't help but wonder if it was nothing more than an act.

How was he not longing for her? Falling apart? Wasn't that the way of their Moon Goddess?

Before I could try to understand, Elyx appeared out of nowhere and stole me away from James, pulling me into a tight hug.

“Addy!” he called out.

“Lixie!” I said back, throwing my arms around him.

When I pulled away, I kissed his cheek, and he smiled ear to ear. The longer I spent around him, the more I realized he was so much more than the cocky Lycan prince. Elyx was like a giant teddy bear who loved affection, especially from those close to him.

Sure, he was still annoying and overconfident, but that was not something he could help. It was the way he was raised.

That ‘Lyperian’ edge everyone from that kingdom seemed to have.

I glanced around the room, immediately spotting Claire and Greg in the corner. By now, I had gotten used to the two sucking each other's faces off whenever they had the chance, but James, who hadn't, marched toward them and playfully yanked Greg away.

“As the captain, respectfully—we don't want to see all of this,” he teased, loud enough for everyone to hear.

“It's not our problem that Addy won't kiss you in public,” Claire scoffed, just as loud. She smacked his chest, leading to the two began bickering back and forth.

My lips curled into a smile as I stared at them. Claire had changed since we first met. She was done letting anyone walk over her—and I was proud of her. She wasn't the timid little mouse anymore and actually had a voice nowadays.

The overall group dynamic was good, even better than I had expected. Other than Jane, who always sat in a corner and never joined in, even when we tried to include her, we had all gotten close.

I just couldn't stop feeling really terrible about it. Originally, I had recommended her for the team so she would keep James busy once I wouldn't need him anymore, but now that things had changed—plans had changed—all she was doing here was suffer.

The sound of a cane tapping against the floor pulled my attention, and then the door opened, revealing Principal Sterling.

He had named us his little experiment, and himself the commander of the Elite team. Despite his old age and his cane, I had learned not to judge a book by its cover. I had seen this man in action, and he was a lot stronger than he looked.

“Your Highness,” his eyes squeezed shut as they instantly found Elyx, his favorite student. There was a look of pride, as if seeing Elyx made his whole day. It was no secret he had Lyperian roots, which explained why he always seemed to favor him so much.

I was quite certain that Elyx would've made the team without my input anyway.

“Everyone, take your seats!”

We all made our way to our seats. I went straight to the far back, choosing a spot by myself and far away from James.

During training, I mostly focused on healing techniques from the books Sterling gave me—but during these lessons, some of the knowledge and life lessons he shared were actually interesting, and made me want to listen to him.

“It's such a blessing to see you all sitting here, my little experiment,” the man beamed, almost in a fatherly tone. “Don't tell the other students, but in a sense, I see all of you as my children.”

He looked across the room until his eyes briefly met mine, and he gave me a warm nod.

I adored that old man. I really did.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door, and then it creaked open. My body froze as my eyes landed on the person standing there.

“Ah,” Sterling said. “Our newest addition to the Elite team has arrived.”

No...

My palms started to sweat, my breath hitched.

Never mind my previous thoughts.

I didn't adore this man, not even a little.

Because what the hell was Alaric doing here?

As soon as his blue eyes met mine, I lowered my head to the table. It was easy to blame Sterling, but the harsh truth was that it was all on me. I was the reason he was here.

As the fool who followed Mom's every word, I had been determined to do what she asked me to, and Esther told me she would pull every string to get him here.

His whole ‘I'm not letting you go’ speech wasn't exactly helping either. He was just as determined to be here so he could ‘prove’ me wrong.

“I'm happy to be here, Principal Sterling.”

A chill ran down my spine, hearing that sweet voice that had the ability to calm anyone down.

“I don't think the prince needs any introductions,” Sterling responded. “Please, join us—take a seat wherever you'd like.”

I fumbled with my fingers, my eyes still glued down.

Please not here, please not here...

The sound of footsteps grew closer and closer, until the chair beside me was pulled back.

Well, shit.

Of all the empty seats in this room...

This guy had some nerve. Pissed, I raised my head to glare at him, and as expected, he was already staring at me—smiling like nothing had happened between us.

“What the are you doing here, Alaric?” I hissed, making sure no one could hear us.