

Chapter 120

Adelaide

"I'm here to keep an eye on my mate," Alaric whispered back, leaning back in his chair like he owned the place. "I need to protect you."

Protect me from what? He was the one who needed the protection.

"If you hate me that much, just pretend like I'm not here," he shot me a bold wink, and that's when I knew this guy was going to be a big problem.

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That night at the dorm, I paced back and forth in the kitchen—thinking about the boy who was messing with my head.

What was he on about, talking about how he had to keep his eyes on his mate? He had completely lost it.

I bit my nails, trying to come up with the best solution to get rid of my not-so-little problem—but I didn't know what to do anymore. I was trying to protect him, to keep him safe from me—but he was like a plague. He was unavoidable, always came back.

Yet, a part of me was happy to see him, happy to see that he was ready to fight for me.

No one ever had.

Not even Grandpa Aelius when Mom made me leave our home.

A huff left my lips as I slammed my hand against my face. He wasn't supposed to matter, not like this.

"Is it the Alpha Prince?" Claire asked, stretching her legs on the couch. She had been watching me for a while now, eating her cup noodles—but I didn't care. As observant as she was, I knew she would ask, and maybe I wanted her to.

I gave her a look before joining her on the couch. She curled her legs up to make space, then rested them on my lap.

"He says I'm his mate."

Her eyes widened slightly, but she didn't look shocked. It was not quite the reaction I expected or was looking for.

I chuckled, trying to make it seem like all of this was insane. "Crazy, isn't it?"

Claire pursed her lips. "I actually don't think it's that's crazy."

"I'm sorry, what?"

She shrugged. "You look at him the same way I look at Greg," she pointed out. "And he looks at you the same way Greg looks at me—so no, I don't think it's crazy."

I didn't know what to say because deep down, I knew she was right. It made me wonder if it was just her who had noticed.

"B-But I don't worship the Moon Goddess," I stammered, trying to convince both of us. "It's impossible."

It wasn't the Moon Goddess.

It had to be Baelor. Why would some Goddess I shared no connection with, 'mate' me with a werewolf prince?

Claire chuckled. "Doesn't matter, silly."

"What do you mean, Claire?"

My eyes didn't leave hers as she placed down her noodles and dug her legs deeper into my lap to scoot closer. "Did I ever tell you why the Hastings and the Bloodrose have one of the best teachings in healing?" she asked.

I frowned, confused by the sudden change in topic. "No, I think you haven't."

"It's because our bloodline, deep in history, is connected to the Vampires," she explained, starting one of her usual lectures.

I listened attentively. "What?"

"Centuries ago, the tension between the werewolves and the vampires ran high," Claire began. "Lord Anton, one of our ancestors, was mated to a vampire of noble blood," she explained. "The Moon Goddess paired them because she believed her heart was pure enough to match his and prevent a war."

Pure...

Was my heart pure?

"I read that this type of bond is incredibly rare. It's not like the usual mate bond—it's much deeper," Claire added. "The issue with this bond is that it affects us more than it would affect you, because we feel emotions like love, pain, and rejection much stronger than you do."

Her voice softened. "Although, for witches, once they're in love—they love deeply, but once they're done—they're done."

At times like these, I appreciated Claire always having her nose in the books. She had more knowledge about witches than the witches themselves.

Claire leaned closer, her tone serious. "But if the love isn't mutual, it's the shifter who pays the price. Rejection doesn't just hurt us—it ruins us."

Like it did with Jane...

What did I do to that poor girl?

"Okay, so me being Alaric's mate is possible?" I interrupted just before Claire could open her mouth again.

Claire nodded. "It is possible."

All the things she said made sense.

If this was really the Moon Goddess' doing, and we were really mates—she had done this to prevent Baelor from taking him as a vessel. Maybe that Goddess of theirs was real, and had chosen me to stop him.

Baelor was the God of the underworld, and if he was really responsible for our connection—I wouldn't be feeling the way I did. I would definitely would not want to protect Alaric.

What if I could keep Alaric close instead of pushing him away?

What if I could learn to control myself, control my eyes around him, love him, and protect him from evil at the same time?

"Do you realize what this means?" Claire asked. I could tell she was trying to read me. "Being mated to the Alpha Prince isn't nothing—especially as a witch. People will talk—"

"Since when have I ever cared about people's opinions?" I commented, sharply.

"That's true," Claire said, mumbling. "But do you care about him?"

"I do," I replied immediately. It was hard to admit, but I was done lying to myself.

"We care about each other, and that's all that matters to me. I can handle myself. I can handle the stares, the judgment, and the whispers—but I can't handle being away from him."

Claire studied me for a moment, her expression worried. "So what are you going to do about James?"

A feeling of guilt washed over me. What was I going to do about James? He had been kind to me, very accepting, had a good heart—but we didn't belong together.

He was Jane's...

"James is James," I said softly. "He'll get over it."

I hoped he would, at least.