

Chapter 128

Adelaide

My vision blurred as I tried to keep up with everything happening around me. It all happened so fast.

One moment, I was trying to escape Starlight with Alaric, and now I was glued to the wall of some secret room beneath the library. Mom and Esther had dragged him here, unconscious, and I had no idea what to do.

Esther had tied Alaric to some pole in the center of the room, while Mom grabbed his limp hand and whispered a few words.

All of this was making me sick. I was so close to running away with him—but I had failed.

Think, Adelaide, think!

I looked around the small room, which looked like it had been prepared for this so-called ritual for a long time. Symbols were painted across the floor, salt had been spread around the center, there were candles, and most importantly, a small wooden table with an open book.

Deciding to bring back Baelor during the party, where the whole school would be present—from freshmen to seniors to the professors—was definitely a calculated decision.

They had always intended to bring back Baelor tonight, and for some reason, Mom simply chose to exclude me.

Did she not trust me?

Did she know I was never fully in?

I squeezed my eyes shut for a second.

No, no, no...this couldn't be happening.

I had to do something about it—and fast.

As I stared at Alaric, I could hear the sound of my own breathing in my ears. I could always use my eyes and fight back—but that wouldn't be smart, not with him here. If I did, it would only feed him darkness, and I couldn't let that happen.

A pain hit my chest, thinking about where to go from here.

He would surely hate me when he woke up...think I'm some kind of monster. He would be furious, and rightfully so, and then, once Mom realized Alaric's body wouldn't be strong enough to hold Baelor, she would hate me too.

I was screwed either way...

A sharp gasp filled the room, breaking my thoughts, and Alaric's pale eyes flew open. He scanned the room in confusion, before his gaze landed on me.

"Miss Esther!" he called, his voice hoarse as his eyes landed on her next.

She tugged the rope, making sure it was secure. Then she got up and released a chuckle before stepping away from him. She made her way to the table, standing beside Mom, who was focused on the open book.

Alaric, who looked the most confused I had ever seen him, followed their every move. "You do whatever you want with me!" he called out, locking his eyes with mine before they softened. "But let her go!"

Mom released a loud and mocking chortle, looking up from her book. I immediately looked down, unable to stare at him any longer. Even now, he could still not see the truth that was right in front of him.

"Who do you think brought you here in the first place?" Mom snarled.

There was an uncomfortable silence, one in which I knew Alaric was slowly trying to process my betrayal.

"Adelaide..." he said in disbelief.

Ashamed, I looked up at him. His eyes searched for an answer, and I could see every emotion behind them. He was devastated, hurting, and it was all my fault.

He was waiting for me to deny it, to tell him it wasn't true—but I couldn't.

"Oh...don't tell me..." Mom sighed dramatically. "You couldn't possibly think my daughter would ever fall for an animal!"

Alaric's jaw tightened, and his confusion turned into determination as he tried to free himself from the ropes. He released a loud growl, and that's when I knew he was trying to shift.

"Don't bother," Mom said dismissively. "You won't be able to."

"What is the meaning of this?" Alaric demanded, frustrated. "Miss Esther?"

Esther didn't answer him. She glanced at Mom and nodded. "We should start soon. The moon is almost in position."

Mom gave her a nod back. "Our dear 'Addy' has been preparing you for this moment for four years," she shared, only making me hate myself even more. "You're ready now, Alaric—to become the vessel for Baelor."

"Baelor?" Alaric furrowed in worry. "The..."

"God of the Underworld?" Mom finished. "Yes."

"No," Alaric growled, his body fighting desperately against the ropes. "Do you even realize what will happen to everyone? Innocent people?"

Seeing him fight back, something I couldn't do—made my chest hurt. Even now, while his life was in danger—he was still thinking about others.

My chest tightened.

What had I done?

"Addy, this isn't you!" Alaric pleaded, his eyes full of panic. "Addy, please! You can't let her do this!"

I shook my head, my mouth opening, yet no words would leave my mouth. I wanted to tell him to stop, to calm down, that there was no way Baelor could even stay inside his body—

but I couldn't even form a sentence.

Mom and Esther connected their hands, then began chanting in an ancient tongue. It was Old Latin, something I couldn't even understand. The spell seemed to be strong, so strong Mom, the High Priestess, couldn't do it on her own.

Now would be the right time to stop this...to do something, but even as I stood there, frozen and helpless, the only thing running through my mind was that I had made the biggest mistake of my life.

I should've told him...

Maybe if I had, he wouldn't be looking at me like that. Like he didn't recognize me at all.

"Addy!" Alaric yelled. "Do something!"

I did do something—I flinched.

"Addy, come on!" he yelled again, even more desperate than before.

By now, the ground began shaking, books tumbled off the shelves, and the sound of Mom and Esther's voices only grew louder. Suddenly, a black shadow appeared, swirling through the air like a tornado.

I could sense its power all through my veins, my bones, and my soul. My heart pounded in my chest at the dark energy I had never felt before.

Something that powerful...that had to be Baelor.

Alaric's blue eyes followed the shadow around in horror. "Addy, please!" he yelled out so loud, his voice cracked. His face was pale, his eyes full of fear.

"If anything between us was real, if you love me as much as I love you, which I know you do—you will do something!"

I closed my eyes, taking in his words.

He loved me, even now...

I never intended to hurt him, I wanted to do something so badly, but what could I do?

"Use your fucking head, you are not like them, Addy!" he continued. "You are a good person—you don't belong with them!"

My eyes shot open in surprise.

A good person?

Claire had told me the same thing, but could I really be the person they thought I was? A good person wouldn't just stand there, making up excuses for why they couldn't fight back.

I clenched my teeth, trying to clear my head. He was right, it was time to use my head.

Enough.