

## Chapter 132

Adelaide

I fluttered my eyes open, feeling the bright morning sun stream through the small window. Nothing from yesterday was a blur—I remembered it all very clearly.

Mom and Esther, Baelor, fleeing to the cave...

A weak sigh escaped my lips. It was officially graduation day, and I couldn't help but wonder what our friends were doing at the moment.

Would they be searching for us?

Would that old man, Principal Sterling, have forced them to focus on graduation instead?

They must be so confused right now.

We had all worked so hard for four years to get to this point—only for it to be ruined by some God of the Underworld, and none of them even knew.

But I didn't care...

He was safe. Alaric was safe, and that was all that mattered—

My breath hitched, and my head turned in less than a split second. "Alaric?"

I patted the empty spot beside me, then sat up straight, scanning the room. My eyes landed on a small note on the nightstand.

"No..." I reached for it with shaky hands, expecting to read something horrible—like Alaric being stupid enough to think he could handle Baelor on his own.

'I borrowed that handsome man of yours to help me with the berries. Brought you something clean to wear. —Angela'

Reading the note, I let out a long, relieved breath. Angela was one of the elders of Bloodstone Haven. Other than her mouth that couldn't stay shut for a second, I knew she meant no harm. Alaric would be in good hands with her.

As mentioned, a neatly folded pile of clean clothes was laid out on a chair. I managed to get myself out of the tight dress that was still around my body and got out of bed to inspect the clothes.

A beige shirt, beige pants, and sandals. Pretty simple, as expected. Here in Bloodstone Haven, no one cared about the latest fashion or any of that ridiculous stuff. They kept themselves busy with gaining knowledge, learning to control their powers, and working on their inner selves.

And right now, that's exactly what I had to focus on.

I needed to get to the temple where I knew Grandpa Aelius would be and find out what he meant last night. All he had said was that a choice would have to be made in the future—and that I had to be prepared.

I slid my feet into the sandals and made my way outside, where I was instantly met with loud noises. Unlike last night, the village was alive.

There were people, families, children laughing and chasing one another. Everywhere I looked, people were working, living—smiling...just as I remembered it.

Even as I walked through the village, I was met with warm smiles. No one stared at me strangely, no one whispered behind my back or questioned what I was doing here—because there was no need for that.

Despite me being the granddaughter of the head of Bloodstone, they had never treated me differently.

These were my people...

They were not like those ungrateful witches back home, who Mom wanted me to fight for. Those witches who had always looked at me like I was some kind of spoiled, stuck-up brat.

It felt good to be back...

I walked further, making my way to the path that would eventually lead to the temple. As I passed by a couple of elders, they all made sure to pat my head one by one.

'Stay strong, child of blood.'

'You will face the biggest challenge yet.'

'You are closer to the end than you think.'

'The past is not done with you yet.'

It wasn't unusual. They had done it before, but this time, I couldn't help but pay a bit more attention to their words—and to be honest, they terrified me. Still, I nodded politely at every single one who touched my head.

A while later, the temple came into view. It wasn't big or over the top—just a stone, but it was special to us. I stepped toward the entrance and noticed Aelius already sitting inside, his back turned to me.

He was quiet. Too quiet. And for a moment, I hesitated. Should I interrupt him?

"Come, Adelaide," Grandpa Aelius said calmly, not bothering to turn around.

I swallowed, stepping fully inside. Then I made my way to the plaid mat that had been laid out on the opposite side of him and sat down. Aelius' eyes glowed as he slowly raised his head, but then they faded back to normal.

"Alaric is—"

"I know," he said. "You will see him again very soon."

I fluttered my eyes at him, unsure of what to say. Since Aelius was always this cryptic, it was hard to tell whether he was speaking from a vision or simply guessing what would happen next.

"You told me something big was coming."

Grandpa Aelius nodded. "I did say that."

"And I know it has to do with Mom?" I squinted my eyes, trying to get something out of him, but all I got was a chuckle and a shake of his head.

"You don't know anything, child."

"Then you have to tell me," I pressed. "And I know this is not the way we do things around here, but if it's important enough for you to tell me to prepare myself—I need to know what it is."

Aelius exhaled. "Years from now, a choice will have to be made—and I am here to help you prepare for that choice."

I gulped, already receiving more than I had hoped for. Aelius could see everything, yet he would never get involved in conflicts.

Even though he knew his child would die, and then their child, and so on—he let it happen. Even when Mom made us leave Bloodstone after Dad passed, he never stepped in.

As the Soothsayer, that was his destiny. He was meant to stay neutral, to guide but not interfere.

But now, he was willing to prepare me—breaking a rule for me—which could only mean one thing. It was serious.

"Why are you helping me?"

Aelius took a breath. "Because Baelor isn't just your problem—he's a threat to everyone. Your mother has already freed him from the Underworld, and it might be quiet now, but he is just waiting for the right time to attack."

Which meant he was waiting for his vessel...

Grandpa Aelius gazed at me for a while. "Have you studied the Veil?"

I frowned, recognizing the word from a book I had once read while trying to find ways to stop Baelor. "It's a realm used to lock away the powerful and the living who are a threat to the balance of nature," I recalled.

"Indeed," Aelius nodded. "Someone like Baelor...you can't kill him, but you can restrain him."

"However," I began, "only a select few sages can create the portal...that's why I stopped studying the Veil."

Aelius chuckled softly. "The ability to create a Veil has been in our blood for a long time, Adelaide," he explained. "But you are right. It requires incredible strength and power to perform the ritual and keep the Veil intact."

A hopeful feeling reached my heart, listening to Aelius' words. Both Mom and Baelor were too powerful to be destroyed, and I finally understood what Aelius was getting at. If I had the ability to open such a portal, to create a Veil—I could lock them away.

"Is that the choice I'll have to make? To lock Mom and Baelor into the Veil? Because if it is... then I've already decided," I spoke, having made up my mind. "What do I need to do to perform such a ritual?"

Aelius' eyes shifted to the necklace around my neck—the one Alaric had given me. "To open your Veil, you'll need something extremely powerful, something personal, something close to your heart."

I brushed my fingers over the green gemstone. "Like this?"

"Indeed," Aelius confirmed, and those words were enough for me.

Suddenly, the air felt tense again. His expression remained calm, but for some reason, I could tell whatever he was about to say next would be no good.

"The choice you'll have to make," Aelius began, "will be a sacrifice."