

Chapter 138

Adelaide

Everything stopped.

My breath hitched as I turned to Elyx. Was he serious? My eyes shifted to everyone in the room, but no one dared to say a word—not even James.

It had always been like that.

Back in the day, he might've been the leader of the Elite Team—but even then, no one dared to go against Elyx.

Mostly because he was too stubborn and too full of himself.

"I don't know why the two of you fled," Elyx continued. "I assume it has something to do with your mother, who has been harassing us for years. But Alaric has a duty to his people, and they need him."

I took a small breath.

Mom...so she had been looking for me.

I wanted to ask about her, about Esther—but now was certainly not the time. Not when he was trying to take Alaric away from me.

Alaric let out a soft chuckle. "Then you've wasted your years looking for me for nothing because I'm not going anywhere—"

"Your father is sick, Alaric!" Elyx snapped.

My stomach twisted, watching the shocked look on Alaric's face. Whatever that look meant, I really hoped he wasn't considering going back.

"And as the King of Lyperia, I have come here to take you home, the future Alpha king."

Alaric blinked. "You're king?"

I narrowed my eyes a bit, observing my old friend. That explained why Elyx had been so stiff and formal. Somehow it all made sense.

Alaric gasped slightly. "That means your father..."

"We are not talking about my father, Alaric."

Alaric exhaled. "Right...we're here to talk about mine," he said. "What does he have? Is there no cure?"

Elyx rolled his eyes, looking at James as if he were too exhausted to explain.

James shook his head. "No, Alaric—there's no 'cure.' He's mentally ill. He's ruining your family's name, executing anyone who looks at him the wrong way. It's been like that ever since you left...without a word."

Alaric's body tensed. The outside world was close to being one huge mess, one threat after another.

A pit formed in my stomach as I realized the harsh truth—they weren't here for me...

They had only come for Alaric, and I was just the leftover concern.

"I came here looking for you, Addy," Claire shifted uncomfortably, as if she had been reading my mind. I gave her a small smile. Of course she did—and I had not doubted her for a second.

"I've been trying to convince them that the two of you were still alive for years," she admitted. "It wasn't until things got worse that they finally decided to believe me."

I gulped hard as Aelius' words ran through my head. Old friends would return, betray me—and since it looked like none of them gave a rat's ass about me, I was starting to believe it could really be true.

Claire continued. "Almost everyone thought you were dead. Some even said you kidnapped Alaric because you didn't want him to marry—"

"What about my mom?" I asked. "What did she tell you?"

At this point, it looked like none of them fully trusted me, so I knew I had to be very careful with my words.

"Nothing," Claire responded quickly, meeting my gaze. "I-I mean, there was a big search because everyone said you had kidnapped Alaric, and your mom told them you hurt her and Esther... that you paralyzed them, Alaric, and ran away."

Of course, she did.

"Ridiculous!" Alaric shouted. "Addy didn't 'kidnap' me. Her mom, she..." he stopped speaking, releasing a breath.

He stared at me with blue, concerned eyes—as if he wanted to know why I wasn't defending myself, but I knew he wouldn't understand. He was one of them. I was a witch—I didn't even know if it would matter.

"Addy, come on," he said, desperately. "We trust them, right?"

Trust...right.

Now that Alaric had made it clear I was keeping something from them, I had no choice but to speak. Lying would probably just make things worse, especially since I could tell they hadn't been completely honest either.

"I need to tell you guys something," I confessed, nervously. "But first, I need you to promise me that you will listen. Do not interrupt me, do not walk out on me, do not call me a liar—just listen."

"I promise," James spoke first. "Whatever you have to say, we will listen—Addy."

Jane hummed. "Me too."

"Same for us," Greg nudged Claire.

My eyes turned to the only one who hadn't said a word—Elyx. He folded his arms and held his head high. "Speak," he snarled. "And then I'll decide for myself whether I want to leave or not."

"Fine," I sighed softly, not in the mood to argue with him. Then, I told them everything. About my glowing eyes, my purpose at Starlight, Mom's plans, Baelor, and why we had to run.

There was only one thing I hadn't told them—and that was the Veil.

By the time I finished, the room was so silent, you could hear a pin drop.

James, Jane, and Greg stared at the ground, avoiding my eyes. Claire swallowed uncomfortably, and Elyx hadn't stopped glaring at me ever since I started talking.

"The decision we made wasn't easy," Alaric told them. "But I hope you can understand why we left."

"Understand?" Elyx said coldly. "The only thing I understand is that Adelaide is a manipulative piece of mold."

Claire shook her head. "Elyx—"

"No," he stopped her, raising his hand. "She used James to get to me, then used me to get to Alaric—and now she's holding him hostage when he wouldn't have to be stuck here in this mess if she hadn't done this in the first place."

"No—" I tried, only for him to hold out his hand once again.

"All you do is use people, then play the victim, and now you're doing it again."

"I don't—"

"Yes, you do," he stated. "Have you even apologized to James? Jane?"

I turned to James and Jane, my chest tightening as I met their eyes. Both of them looked down, clearly avoiding my gaze—but I couldn't blame them. I wasn't afraid to admit my faults, and in this situation, I was the guilty one.

"James, Jane..." I swallowed the lump in my throat. "I am so sorry."

The words felt useless compared to everything that had happened, but I meant them with every part of me.

James shook his head as he let out a chortle. "You're a few years too late, Addy."

"No, we're not doing this!" Alaric interrupted. "I'm not coming back home, and if all of you have come here into our space to disrespect Addy, then I think you should go—all of you!"

He had never spoken to any of them like that, especially not Elyx—but the anger in his eyes showed that this was nothing. He had so much more to say but had been holding himself back for the sake of Violet.

Elyx looked flustered, caught off guard, and somehow even angrier than before.

"Alaric, it's okay!" I reassured him, placing my hand on his knee. "I did owe them an apology, he's right."

I glanced between him and Elyx, who both stared at each other with tense expressions. "There's no need for any of this."

"You're right," Elyx hummed. "I didn't have to do this, but I came here as a friend, and I came here on behalf of your people," he said, his tone filled with frustration. "Do you even remember them? Your family? Your kingdom? The people you abandoned to live in this...this—"

He gestured at the hut, his nose wrinkling in disgust before another scoff escaped his lips. "You've changed—and not for the better."

"Well, then I suppose that makes two of us," Alaric shot back.

He exhaled, looking around at the group as he steadied Violet on his lap. "Listen, I'm happy to see you—all of you. But this is my family now."

The room fell silent, and the tension was thick as everyone eyed Elyx, anticipating his next move.

The last thing I expected was for a smile to appear on his lips, but it did. It looked too easy, too practiced—but it was a smile.

"I understand," he said casually, like he hadn't just been pushing him seconds ago. "I made a suggestion, and you don't want it. That's fine."

I didn't believe him...

"All that matters is that you..." he then shifted his gaze to me. "Both of you are safe and sound. I might not agree with your choices, but we didn't come here to fight."

Liar...

I watched his body language, noticing the tightness in his jaw that just wouldn't fade away.

After dealing with Elyx for years—I knew exactly how his brain worked. He called me manipulative, but he was the best at it.

He wasn't stupid. Elyx had sensed that Alaric's decision was final, that there was no convincing him or forcing him—and he knew when to retreat.

"I know you didn't use anyone, Adelaide," he added, like he was trying to rebuild something between us. "But you have to understand—this is all very confusing to me. One moment, I think my friends are dead, and the next, you're telling me our old professor is half-witch, Alaric is some kind of vessel that you had to prepare with your glowing eyes, and your mother has been planning to bring back the King of the Underworld, who I believed was a myth, for years."

I said nothing, just let him speak.

"I just want things to go back to the way they used to be—even if it means keeping the secret that the two of you are still alive," Elyx spoke with a heavy breath. "And maybe now that we know where you are, we can visit more often."

Alaric, who was still as naive as ever, smiled back. His smile was sincere, warm, and filled with the love he had always carried for his best friend.

No matter how much time had passed, that was one thing Alaric just couldn't change. He could only see the good in people.

"As long as you understand, you are welcome to visit whenever you want," Alaric said without hesitation.

My fists clenched as I turned to the others, who had barely said a word. It was just Elyx, Elyx, Elyx...as if he had somehow become their spokesperson.

"Right, Addy?" Alaric's voice pulled me back from my thoughts.

I unclenched my fists, forcing a smile. "Right," I responded. "You can visit anytime, Lixie—all of you."

But I saw right through him.

Even if Aelius hadn't warned me, I would've known. He was up to something, and the others knew it too.

They weren't as good at putting on a front as Elyx, which is why I knew that, whatever it was, they didn't agree with him at all.

I also knew it had something to do with Alaric because everything seemed less tensed up until the point he had said he had no intention of going back.

Whatever it was, I couldn't fight against it. I couldn't stop it. I couldn't go against the rules of nature.

All I could do now was wait and wonder...