

Chapter 139

Adelaide

My eyes were closed, hands in my lap, as I sat in the temple, trying to concentrate. As always, I didn't get very far with Violet giggling beside me, interrupting my peace.

She was always like this, and it didn't matter with who—even with my friends who she had only seen a few times. She was just a happy baby.

A month had passed since the others started visiting Bloodstone Haven. Every Monday, around the same time, they would come and visit, just like I knew they would today. We would catch up, talk, and they even bonded with Violet. In some ways, it almost felt like old times—even with Elyx, though deep down, I knew better.

I just knew he was up to something, and because of that, I lived every day in anxiety—not knowing when all of this happiness would end. One thing I did conclude was that it had something to do with Baclor. Otherwise, there would've been no point in Aelius teaching me about the Veil.

Some things still didn't make sense to me. I had been thinking about it and couldn't come up with a reason as to why Elyx, who was so set on getting Alaric back home, would set him up with the very vessel that was the very reason why he couldn't return.

There were a lot of things I didn't understand, but I had decided for my own sake that I would not resent them. Just like I hadn't resented them for caring a bit more for Alaric who was one of their own.

I knew they were not bad people, and whatever they were planning—they must've had their reasons.

Maybe they were even better than me because I still hadn't told Alaric that our friends would betray us. I had definitely thought about it a few times, but ultimately decided that this would be the best way to protect his heart.

A loud squeal from Violet snapped me out of my thoughts. My eyes flew open, and I turned my head toward the entrance of the cave.

It was Aelius.

Violet started wriggling on her blanket, kicking her little legs in the air.

Aelius tapped his hands on his thighs, smiling. "You love Grandpa the most, don't you?"

I watched as Violet attempted to crawl toward him, but she failed—so she rolled instead, determined to get to her grandfather. Aelius shook his head in amusement as a smile crept onto my face.

It was rare to see him like this, so soft and playful.

Before Violet could roll any further, he stepped forward and scooped her up. Then he settled on the plaid and placed her on his lap. I was quite sure that stupid grin was still on my face, but how could it not?

Just the sight of them made me beam.

"What is it?" Aelius asked, noticing my stare.

"Nothing," I said, reaching out for his hand.

"It's just good to see the two of you together, Grandpa." I squeezed it for a second.

His smile softened, but I wasn't done talking. "You've been spending a lot of time with her lately," I noted. "And it's worrying me."

Aelius' smile vanished. He hadn't said much about my friends, their weekly visits, or what they meant—but he didn't need to. He had already told me enough when he said they would betray me.

I took a breath before looking at him with desperate eyes. I knew I couldn't change anything, but it wouldn't hurt to try...again.

"You always say nothing is set in stone, right?"

Aelius clicked his tongue. "When I say that, I mean the way it happens can change—but that does not mean it won't happen. There is no running from destiny, Adelaide."

I nodded slowly, processing his words.

No running from destiny...

I hated those words because, up until now, they were always proven to be right.

"Where is your golden prince?" Aelius asked, referring to Alaric. It was never just his name—always the silliest nicknames.

'The wolf.'

'The shifter.'

'The sensitive one.'

'The moon boy.'

"He's helping Angela with something, I believe."

Aelius nodded, looking like he was in deep thought. It was silent for a moment before he finally spoke again. "You still haven't told him about your friends."

It wasn't a question—it was an observation. I shook my head. "What would be the point if it's going to happen either way?"

He didn't argue because he knew I was right...

Still, my chest hurt thinking about it. Claire's supposed betrayal hit the hardest. I loved her like a sister, and I knew she loved me back—that's why I knew whatever they were planning must've been inevitable.

"Grandpa," I asked, "what do you think of Claire?"

Aelius looked at me carefully, his expression unreadable. He hummed for a moment, then tilted his head. "Your friend has one of the purest hearts I have ever felt."

I nodded, agreeing. "I think so too."

Even though I wasn't the best at feeling energies, I knew he was speaking the truth. That was what Claire was known for—her pure heart.

Aelius exhaled. "Tomorrow will be a full moon."

"And?" I raised a brow. "You should tell Alaric. What does that have to do with me?"

"Nothing," Aelius responded, rolling back his shoulders. Considering the circumstances, such as being a werewolf in this village, Alaric didn't have a lot of opportunities to shift. However, during the full moon, he would often do so—and a lot of the curious villagers would come out and watch.

It didn't bother him. If there was something Alaric was proud of, it was his wolf—and he loved showing it off.

"You should go, Adelaide," Grandpa Aelius spoke. "The Lyperian nuisance has come with your people...and he's brought company."

They were here.

I let out a laugh as I raised myself from the floor. "Grandpa!" I complained. "Enough with the nicknames!"

Aelius responded with a shrug, making me laugh even harder.

"Wait!" I stopped abruptly. "What company?"

Clearly debating whether to say more, he pressed his lips together.

"Grandpa?"

"Do you know one of the best things about young children visiting Bloodstone Haven?"

I frowned, unimpressed by the sudden change of subject. "What?"

"They always forget."

I eyed him suspiciously. "What does that mean?"

He let out a small sigh. "Go."

I rolled my eyes, taking Violet from his arms. She gripped my shirt as I held her close, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. "Are you ready to see everyone?" I cooed.

"Are you ready to see everyone?" Aelius whispered. I was certain it wasn't meant for my ears, but it did reach me.

Strange man.

"I'll talk to you later, Grandpa," I greeted, positioning Violet on my hip.

I had barely taken my first step before Aelius called out to me. "Adelaide."

"Yes?" I hummed, turning back around.

Grandpa opened his mouth to say something, but there were no words. Just soft breaths.

"Nothing," he said. "It's nothing."

"Okay?"

He was acting strange, but then again, that was nothing new. The only way to have a conversation with Aelius was not to think too much about his words—so I would try not to.

"Okay," I repeated, then exited the temple with a small shrug.

Holding Violet in my arms, I walked through the familiar path in the woods toward the village square where we always met. By now, even the villagers knew my friends and had no problem opening the caves for them.

At times, I felt guilty knowing that all of this was bound to go wrong one day—but like Aelius said, I couldn't change my destiny.

From a distance, I could already hear Alaric's voice. I glanced down at Violet and smiled, tickling her tummy. "Looks like Daddy is already here."

She babbled something in response, as if she understood.

As I got closer, I spotted the group.

"Hey!" Jane greeted enthusiastically.

"There you are!" Claire rested a hand on her growing belly, beaming at me.

James immediately jogged over, his hand reaching for Violet. "There's my girl!" he grinned, stroking her tiny head. "And she's finally growing hair!"

"Finally!" I repeated sarcastically. Apparently, Violet's hair had become the highlight of his visits, but I didn't mind. Going back and forth with James, teasing him—it all reminded me of old days.

My eyes moved past James, landing on Alaric. He was kneeling, mouth moving as he focused on something—or someone. Elyx stood in front of him, but Alaric wasn't speaking to him. Greg blocked my view, making it hard to see.

"Addy," Alaric called, waving me over. "You need to see this."

Curious, I stepped forward.

"Elyx brought two of his many children this time," Alaric continued, grinning. "And they look just like him!"

I chuckled, thinking back to Aelius's words. The young children, were here—and they would forget. Clever.

I turned to Elyx. "You brought your boys?"

Elyx nodded proudly. "Yes."

Greg finally stepped aside, and now I could see them clearly. Two little boys stood in front of Elyx. One clung to his leg, hiding his face, while the other looked around with curious eyes.

"This is Kayden," Elyx motioned to the shy one. Then he nodded toward the other. "And this is Kylan."

A warm smile spread across my face.

Elyx's expression softened as he looked at me. "I thought it was only right for you to meet them—you know...since you named them and all."