

Chapter 144

Adelaide

No...

"Mom!" Jason cried out.

There were screams, shouts, sounds of horror which I could hear all through my blurred vision, and the loud ringing in my ears.

Angela...

She was gone...torn apart like she was nothing.

"If they are not here within a minute—more heads will roll," the Alpha King spoke without remorse. "Maybe I'll take two this time."

My grip around Violet tightened even more. He would kill every single one of them if he had to, and there was nothing I could do about it—because I had to protect my little girl.

It was a selfish thought, one I would end up hating myself for—but now was not the time.

Grandpa Aelius balled his fist, but he didn't look shocked. He must've known her fate. Angela was not just some villager to him, she was someone he held close to his heart.

"I will kill everyone if I have to," the Alpha King announced again. "But you can stop this, save your people—by giving me the three I came for!"

"Addy?" Alaric's voice was hoarse, strained. "What are we going to do now?"

He said a few more things, but I couldn't hear him. I purposely ignored him, only focusing on the ringing in my ears.

Angela was gone...

And her children, poor Jason...

His screams still echoed in my head.

I cursed under my breath, watching her head on the floor—the poor woman's eyes still wide open. This was all my fault.

"Addy, we have to do something!"

I squeezed my eyes shut, pressing my chin against the top of Violet's head. She was still so quiet, so calm and soft. I wished I could stay like this forever.

"Adelaide—I'm talking to you!"

I wanted to tell him to shut up. I wanted to tell him to stop asking me questions I didn't have the answer to, and to figure it out himself.

For him to stop pushing me, to stop making me choose while I had already decided to protect my daughter, to stop playing the hero for once and back me up.

I was so close to doing so, but then I felt a soft hand on my wrist.

Claire...

"You're okay," she smiled, nodding. "It's okay."

The warmth of her touch calmed me down, and the ringing in my ears disappeared.

I was okay...

"I'm sorry," Alaric snapped. "But I can't just sit here and watch him kill our people."

"No!" I grabbed his arm, stopping him. "Please don't."

He turned to me sharply, his eyes burning with frustration. Alaric was strong, fast, way more powerful than the average wolf—but he wasn't invincible. If he rushed out there, Mom would either try something or the king would kill him.

I didn't know exactly what would happen, but I did know that if either one of them got their hands on him, I wouldn't be able to stop them this time.

He belonged inside the Veil with me.

"I can take him, Addy—all of them!"

"No, you can't."

"So what?" Alaric spat. "Are we just going to let him kill everyone? Did you not see how he... Angela..."

I saw...

I saw it from the moment he entered the village. The king was taken over by complete madness.

No wonder Elyx had made the deal. He had most likely wished for Alaric to come back alive and let his father abdicate to save the kingdom from complete ruin.

"I'll go," Claire suddenly said.

I turned to her, confused. "What?"

"I'll go and try to talk him out of it," she nodded. "He won't hurt me."

"Claire, you're pregnant!" I nearly shouted.

"Exactly."

Before I could protest, she gently pulled Violet from my arms and placed her in Alaric's.

"She'll be safer with you," Claire told him. "Addy, you will come with me, threaten to kill me unless they let Alaric and the villagers go—and it'll give him enough time to take Violet someplace safe."

I watched as she pulled out a pocket knife, and pushed it into my hands.

"This might work," Alaric sighed, relieved. However, I was still unsure.

"I don't know if I can do this, Claire," I swallowed hard. How could I ever hold a knife against my pregnant best friend?

What if the baby would get hurt?

"Yes, you can!" Claire encouraged, her gaze determined. She grabbed my face between her hands, forcing me to look into those blue eyes that suddenly didn't appear as soft anymore.

"You are Adelaide," she whispered. "You don't get nervous, you don't get scared, you always have your shit together—and I don't ever want to see you like this again!"

I fluttered my eyes at her, taken aback. I couldn't believe it was Claire speaking to me like that because it used to be the other way around.

She used to be the one who needed reassurance, not me.

Things had clearly changed. This time she was the one holding me up.

"These people are ruthless, Addy," Claire stated. "And I know you need to wait until you can sense Baelor or whatever—but the king is not afraid to kill everyone."

I was well aware.

I had just seen it with my own eyes.

"She is right, Addy," Alaric added, brushing his hand against mine. "You can save these people. I believe in you."

I nodded slowly, gripping the knife with more force. They were right, I could save these people and I would do whatever I could to protect them...my people.

What kind of example would I be for Violet, what kind of stories would she later grow up to hear about her coward mother if I wouldn't even try?

"Get up," I told Claire.

She did as told, and I placed the knife against the back of Claire's neck. "Are you ready?" I asked, just to make sure.

"I'm ready," Claire breathed. "Go. I'll be fine."

"This is not the end," Alaric spoke, a sad smile plastered across his face. "It can't be."

I gave him a nod, then reached for the door—bracing myself. With one last look at Alaric and Violet, I pushed it open.

Then we stepped outside.