

Chapter 145

Adelaide

All heads turned at once, but I didn't crumble. I pushed the knife against Claire's neck as she walked with me, trusting me completely.

"Claire," Greg gasped. He, of course, had no idea what was going on, and a part of me hoped that he was smart enough to know that I would never, ever hurt her.

The Alpha King barely even glanced at her. His eyes were only on me. "That's one out of the three," he mumbled.

I dragged Claire with me into the center of the square, making my way beside Aelius. My eyes flickered to my people, my friends, mom—who smirked like everything was going exactly as she had planned—I stared at basically anyone but Angela's detached head.

"You are going to let the villagers go," I demanded, "or I'll slit her throat."

The Alpha King cackled loudly. "Then do it!"

"What? No!" Elyx cut in quickly. "She is a Bloodrose!"

After those words had left the king's mouth, my friends, who had already looked uneasy, now looked sick to their stomachs—and so was I. What was loyalty even these days?

The king pursed his lips, shrugging his shoulders like he had forgotten that small, important detail. "Alright," he sighed, waving his hand dismissively. "The villagers can go."

I let out a soft sigh of relief, then looked at Aelius. "Do it, Grandpa," I told him. "This is not their battle. I'll take it from here."

Aelius' eyes locked on mine. If he truly wished to, he and the temple elders could end this within seconds. Even the Children of Blood were strong enough to fight against them, but that wasn't the way of Bloodstone Haven.

I could see the regret behind Aelius' eyes. The anger even. He had just lost Angela. I knew he was pissed—but I didn't want him to break his beliefs over this.

"Please!" I whispered. "Get them out of here while you still can."

Aelius' gaze softened as he looked at me, and in that moment, my heart sank. I realized I might never see him again. He was probably memorizing my face, knowing this could be the last time.

At one point, his gaze sharpened, and he turned to the crowd. "Everyone—come quickly!"

The villagers did not wait a second and quickly rose to their feet. I turned away, unable to watch as Angela's children cried out, refusing to leave her side, only to be pulled away by the others.

They moved quickly, and Aelius was the last to leave, giving them instructions until the very end.

With the villagers gone, the square felt so much emptier now.

The sound of laughter reached my ears, and there was only one person with that hideous laugh—Mom. I tried not to pay too much attention as she watched the scene unfold with amusement, making me believe that things were still going her way.

I brought my lips closer to Claire's ear. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," she whispered.

I inhaled a sharp breath, glaring at the Alpha King. "And now you will let my daughter and Alaric go!"

At that moment, the door creaked open, and Alaric stepped out—holding Violet protectively in his arms.

His face was calm, same as his eyes—but I could feel the tension in his body. This could go either way, and we were all just hoping for the best.

The Alpha King sneered. "So this is where my coward son has been hiding."

Alaric took another step forward but stopped once his people threatened to attack. "Dad... Your Majesty, this is your granddaughter," he spoke, defeated.

"In any other world," the king continued, "I might have been pleased to meet my grandchild. But I don't wish to be anywhere near this demon."

Elyx cleared his throat. "No one else has to get hurt. From king to king—we can talk about this —"

"Shut up, boy," the Alpha King sneered. "You are no king! You are weak, powerless, and you shall do as I say."

Elyx swallowed hard, his fists clenching. His pride was hit, and it had to be embarrassing—being dismissed like that in front of everyone. In front of his very own people.

He was a king, but the Alpha King spoke to him like he was nothing, like he had no power at all.

"I ripped your father into shreds so you could become my puppet. I gave you power, I gave you status—and yet you still act like a fool."

A knot formed in my stomach. The Alpha King had killed Elyx's father. He had apparently agreed to it—and in the end, he was still being controlled. Elyx was just as pathetic.

The king turned his cold gaze back to me. "The Bloodrose Alpha is a reasonable man," he stated. "He will understand that sacrifices must be made to eliminate evil."

My chest tightened, and panic took over as I realized where this was headed. The Alpha King didn't care about Claire.

She was never any real leverage.

"Don't get too close to the demons. You know how to kill them!" he shouted, and I knew he was referring to me and Alaric—possibly even Violet. Everything moved in slow motion as he lifted his hand. "Arrows!"

No...

I dropped the knife in my hands and pushed Claire behind me.

"Alaric, run!"

Alaric reacted instantly. He turned and ran as arrows began flying into the air.

"Follow him!" The Alpha King's voice rang through the square right before a pack of wolves sprinted away.

I had no time to breathe as another wave of arrows flew toward me. One headed straight in my direction. My body tensed—frozen in place, thinking there was no way I could dodge it in time.

But before it could reach me—Claire moved. She stepped in front of me, spreading her arms. The moment felt like an eternity, until I heard it. The sound of the arrow meeting her flesh.

The baby...

"Claire!?" Greg shouted in a gut-wrenching scream. He struggled to get to her, but James and Jane held him back.

It was already too late. She had collapsed into my arms, and we both sank to the ground.

I clenched my teeth, forcing my eyes to glow as I gathered every bit of strength to create a barrier around Claire and me. It wasn't time yet. Baelor wasn't here yet. I wasn't strong enough—but I had no choice.

The arrows kept flying, but none of them could reach us. This was all my fault. If only I had done this before.

Claire breathed softly in my arms, the arrow still inside her lower stomach. It was just the kingdom attacking. The coven didn't interfere, and neither did the Lyperians—because, despite each having their own agendas, this was not what they wanted.

I guessed the Lyperians were just waiting on Elyx's instructions, but the coven's silence only meant one thing. Mom had ordered them to save their energy for Baelor.

Something bigger was coming...

I met Elyx's eyes through the chaos. He looked terrified. The color drained from his skin as he looked at the glowing eyes he had never seen before. We just stared at each other as arrow after arrow reached the barrier.

He must've thought I was a monster, but that didn't stop me from giving him one desperate look that said a whole lot.

'I know you don't give a shit about me, but if you really care about Alaric or Claire—do something.'

Elyx closed his eyes for a second, shaking his head, but when he opened them, they were sharp and sure. He turned to his warriors. "Defend the witch!"

The Lyperians hesitated, looking confused.

"I said defend her!" he barked.

This time, they listened. The Lycans moved around the barrier, circling us. More warriors from both sides shifted, and the arrows finally stopped. Now, it was the Lycans against the werewolves, preventing them from breaking through the shield.

Greg had broken through the barrier, while Elyx, James, and Jane joined the other Lycans.

"Claire, no—no—no!" Greg dropped to his knees beside Claire and grabbed her from my grip. Tears fell down his cheeks as he hugged her limp body tightly. "Please don't leave me!"

She was still breathing—just barely, but she was alive. Since the arrow was meant for me, it had to be poisonous, but she could make it out of this.

However, the pup...

For the pup, it was already too late.

Just as I was about to give up, a deep howl blasted through the square, and a big, dark wolf appeared. As soon as I looked into those red eyes filled with rage and fury, I regained the strength to fight again.

It was Alaric.