

Chapter 127

Adelaide

Who am I?

What am I?

Where am I headed?

Those were all the questions I couldn't help but ask myself as I looked into the mirror. My face, my hair, even my body—they all looked the same, but I knew damn well that I wasn't the same cruel person I had been four years ago.

I sighed, straightening my tight black dress with my hands, then brushed through my curled hair. I looked perfect—like the kind of girl who had it all together...but deep inside, I was a mess.

The graduation party was in a while, and I still hadn't figured out what would happen tomorrow.

"Addy!" Claire entered my room, holding up two purses. "Blue or pink?" she asked, spinning around in her white dress.

Claire looked stunning, as always. Her blonde hair was in an elegant bun, and her dress made her look more like a fairy than a werewolf. But it wasn't just her looks that made her stunning—it was everything about her. She was kind, funny, and, besides Alaric, had one of the purest hearts I had ever seen.

If there was one other person I truly didn't deserve, it was her—the girl who had become my sister.

I felt my chest tighten, and before I could stop myself, tears filled my eyes. "Blue," I whispered, my voice cracking.

"Wait..." Claire frowned, tilting her head. "Are you crying?"

"No," I sniffed, quickly turning away to hide my face. I had always seen crying as a weakness, an embarrassment, especially in front of others—but I just couldn't help myself.

With no further questions asked, Claire stepped forward and immediately wrapped her arms around me from behind. "You're going to make me cry," she sulked, leaning her head against my shoulder.

"I'm sorry," I choked out, sobbing. "I know it's stupid—but you're one of the most important people to me, and I'm just going to miss you so much."

Claire laughed. "So it turns out the witch does have feelings?"

"Of course I do," I smiled through my tears, turning around.

Claire wiped one of my tears with her thumb. "I'll miss you too," she said. "But you're going back to the kingdom with Alaric, and it's not far from the Bloodrose, so we'll see each other all the time."

I let out a sigh. "Right."

Hearing those words from her mouth only made it worse. She didn't know the truth—none of them did. I had been lying to everyone...

The man I loved, my friends, my own mom, mostly myself—and I hated it.

Claire placed her hands on my shoulders, looking me straight in the eyes. "I know it's scary," she began. "But you'll be fine. You are a good person, Addy. One of the best I know."

A good person?

I released a chuckle of disbelief. "No, don't call me that," I whispered. "I'm not a good person... I'm not..."

My chest rose as I tried to catch my breath. Here she was, thinking I was this 'good person,' while I had been playing pretend for years.

"If you only knew what I'm capable of," I muttered to myself. Claire, who was as alert as always, shot me a curious glance.

"What do you mean, Addy?" she said gently.

For a moment, I stared into her blue eyes that were as beautiful as the ocean. Throughout the years, Claire had stuck with me through thick and thin—and deep down, I knew she wouldn't judge me if I were to tell her the truth, ask her for the wisdom she always seemed to have, but then there was this small part of me that feared she would despise me.

I feared they all would because the thing Mom expected of me was monstrous. Other than Greg, I had used everyone. I had used her, James, Elyx, Alaric—and even Jane.

How could I even begin to explain that?

"Addy, are you okay?" Claire's voice pulled me from my thoughts. If there was one thing about her, it was her ability to observe others, and while I always managed to hide it from her—I could tell she knew something was off. "Come on, talk to me."

I really wanted to so badly, and I had wanted to do that for a while now—however, I really didn't want to ruin her night.

"I..."

Before I could finish, there was a knock on the door.

"Open it," I encouraged her, finding a perfect opening to end this conversation. "I mean, it's probably Greg!"

"Yes, probably!" Claire's face lit up. She walked out of my room, and I followed right behind. "I hope he likes my dress!"

"I'm sure he will," I rolled my eyes, grinning. It had been years, and she still had no idea that Greg was completely head over heels for her.

Claire pulled open the door, revealing Greg. He gasped as soon as he saw her, then threw his arms around her waist. "You look...wow," he said, looking her up and down.

"Really?" Claire beamed, shifting nervously. Greg responded by pressing his lips against hers.

"The Moon Goddess was way too generous when she matched me to you," Greg told her.

I stifled a laugh, covering my mouth with my hand. Not even Alaric was this corny, but even then—just watching them brought a smile to my face.

Claire and Greg were the kind of couple everyone admired because they just fit. It was as simple as that.

"You're looking great too, Addy," Greg glanced over her shoulders, giving me a quick thumbs up.

"Thanks," I nodded, smiling.

Claire looked at me. "Are you coming with us?"

I shook my head. "You go ahead. Alaric should be here soon."

"Then I'll see you later?"

"Later," I promised.

Greg took her hand, and the two of them walked out together, closing the door behind them. It suddenly felt lonely in the already more than half-empty dorm room—but I suppose I just had to get used to it.

That's what my life would look like after tomorrow...lonely.

I leaned back against the wall, letting out a long breath. It was hard to believe, and even harder to accept, that this was my last night at Starlight.

So much had happened in four years—too much to even process—but now that it had really started to kick in, I decided not to think about the past or the future. Not now.

That meant no Baelor, no Mom, and no lies I had been carrying for years. Just for one night, I wanted to forget it all and enjoy what little time I had left here.

Seeing Claire and Greg just now made me want to appreciate all the time I had left with Alaric.

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Some time had already passed when another knock reached the door. My heart made a quick jump, and a bright smile spread across my face.

It had to be Alaric.

I rushed to the door, almost tripping over my own feet as I pulled it open—but the moment my eyes landed on him, my breath hitched. All the excitement I had felt just moments earlier completely vanished.

No...

"I didn't even know it was possible, but you look even more beautiful tonight," Alaric said softly, gazing at me with his warm, bright eyes. He stepped closer, reaching for my hand, and I let him—but I was too startled to respond...to move.

No, no, please no...

He was wearing the same royal blue suit from my vision...that vision.

The one where Baelor entered his body.

My stomach turned, my heart raced, and my fingers felt numb.

How was this even possible?

How could this be happening already?

It wasn't even time yet. This could only mean that Mom had to be around here somewhere, but she had never given me a heads up.

I swallowed hard, every nerve in my body screaming at me to run.

We needed to get out of here...now.

"Ads?" Alaric called out.

I snapped my head up, meeting his eyes. "We got to go."

Not giving him any time to react, I squeezed his hand and pulled him with me, dragging him through the mostly empty halls.

"Yes," Alaric chuckled. "To the party—obviously!"

His confusion only made me move faster. There was no time to explain, and he wouldn't understand. Not now.

"Alaric, you need to listen to me," I said, my voice clear.

"Yes, ma'am," Alaric laughed lightly.

He didn't get it, and it wasn't his fault. It was all because of me...

"We don't have time for jokes—I need to get you out of this place before she gets here," I snapped, my tone sharper.

"Who?" Alaric asked, sounding more serious.

I shoved him and pulled him behind the corner as a group of giggling girls passed through. Their dresses revealed they were on their way to the party—the one we wouldn't make it to.

"Adelaide?" Alaric breathed nervously. "What's going on? Who are you talking about?"

I looked at him for a split second. His blue eyes were filled with confusion, and his jaw was clenched. He hadn't called me by my first name in years.

"Adelaide," he repeated. "Who are you talking about?"

"Not now!" I said, dragging his hand again as the group finally passed. We didn't get far because he pulled it free before refusing to take another step.

I reached for his hand one more time, but he yanked it away.

"Alaric, we don't have time for this!" I hissed, frustrated. "We have to leave—now!"

"No!" he said, making me flinch. This was the first time he had ever raised his voice at me, and I was sure he must've been thinking I had completely lost it.

"Adelaide," he said, shaking his head. "I'm not taking another step before you tell me what's going on, right now!"

"Alaric—"

"Speak!"

I froze, my throat tightening. Alaric was a man of his word, and I knew he wasn't kidding around. He really wouldn't be taking another step.

It was over...

This was it...

I had no choice but to tell him, to explain everything and beg for his forgiveness before it was too late.

"I..."

"You what?" he spat.

"I—" I started, but just as I was about to speak, a familiar frame appeared behind Alaric.

It was Mom...and right behind her was Esther.

"Sweetheart, you've served your mother well," she said coldly, her lips curling into a wicked smile.

My entire body froze as all I could do was watch a confused Alaric turn to face her.

"What?" he gasped, but before he could even process what was happening, Mom stuck out her hand, pressing it to his forehead—and then, in a matter of seconds, he collapsed against her.

"Mom, no!"

I took a step forward, but when Esther's eyes locked on mine and she shook her head as a warning—I knew not to push it.

"But now it's time for Mommy to take it from here."