

Chapter 136

Adelaide

Like every morning, I knelt by the creek in the woods, scrubbing the wooden bowls from the temple. It wasn't because we had to, but because we wanted to.

From giving us a place to stay to help me strengthen my powers—Grandpa Aelius had done so much for us, and I guess this was our way of repaying him.

Usually, it was just me and Alaric, but for the past five months, it had changed into the three of us.

A smile crossed my face, hearing Violet's soft giggles behind me. I turned my head to see Alaric lying on the grass with Violet on his chest. He was tickling her belly as she squealed in delight.

That was one of the best things about her—her laugh.

It always brought smiles to many people's faces as it rang through Bloodstone, and everyone knew it belonged to Violet—the brightest baby around.

She rarely fussed, was always happy, babbled too much, always watching the world as if she already had things to say—but most of all, she was so, so loved by her daddy.

I let the bowl slip from my hands and just watched them.

Alaric and Violet were inseparable. He cherished her in a way that melted my heart every single day, even now as I stared at the two. Violet let out another squeal, trying to grab her daddy's nose.

I chuckled softly and went back to cleaning.

“We really made a beautiful baby, didn't we?” Alaric said, his voice full of pride.

I snorted, shaking my head. It was something he said every day, so I already knew what was coming next.

“And the best thing? She looks just like me!”

An exaggerated gasp escaped from my lips before I flicked some water at him, making him yelp. He quickly covered Violet's head, shielding her from the impact.

“See?” he said, pressing a kiss to her forehead. “Daddy just keeps protecting you.”

And he was right.

That was all he had been doing since the moment she was born—protecting, watching over us, making sure we were safe.

Yet, there was only so much he could protect her from...

I sighed, rinsing off the last bowl. “I heard wolves can get quite rebellious after their first shift.”

Alaric chuckled. “That's true. Believe it or not, after my first shift, I got scolded quite a lot for causing all kinds of trouble.”

Alaric, the good kid?

Seriously?

“Then I bet you won't be able to protect her that much after...” I trailed off, not really knowing what to say.

What point was there in finishing that sentence if we would not be there to experience it?

My smile faded as I stared at my reflection in the water. It was something I had been doing quite a lot lately because I didn't know for how much longer I would be able to do that.

It wouldn't be long before we would be nothing more than simple names.

Adelaide and Alaric...

It was hard—living every day knowing something would happen but not knowing when...what...

Even harder than that was lying to Alaric so he would not stress too much.

He already worried so much about Violet, and I didn't want him to worry about whether she would be alright—because I knew she would.

The only thing I told him about was that she had the so-called ‘Eyes of Adelaide’ because he had the right to know, but that was it.

Alaric shifted beside me, adjusting Violet in his arms. “Do you know how old we'll be by then?” he asked.

I shook my head. “Tell me.”

“We'll be like forty!”

“Really?” I said, trying to sound interested, but I wasn't. Turning forty inside that Veil without my daughter—my everything—by my side, was the last thing I wanted to think about.

The only thing giving me peace was knowing she would be loved. That's what Aelius said, and I believed him.

Looking at that little sunshine in Alaric's arms, how could she not be loved?

Then there was that thing about her ending up with the one the Moon Goddess chose for her or perhaps someone else.

Our little girl would have quite the life.

I sighed. “Alaric, she'll have a mate one day—”

“Never,” he cut me off instantly before sitting up straight, holding Violet protectively against his chest.

His eyes were wide, jaw tightened, and I raised a brow at him as I waited for him to continue.

“No man will ever be good enough for my Violet,” he stated.

“I'm with you on that, but what can we do about a mate?” I huffed, shaking my head. “We will have to accept that, right?”

“No.”

I couldn't help but smile. This was the same man who had basically stalked me and tried to convince me that his Moon Goddess decided we were mates. But when it came to his own daughter, he suddenly had his own rules.

“Violet is still a princess, and she's special,” he said, his voice firm. “She carries the blood of the Moon Goddess, and I'm sure she'll understand that Violet doesn't need a mate. She needs her dad—and that's it.”

There was a pause as I gathered my thoughts. How could I ever tell this man that he would have to let her go at one point?

“I get what you're saying,” I began. “But you can't protect her forever.”

Alaric let out a chuckle. “Yes, I can,” he said. “She has your eyes, Addy—and I'm sure there are people who might want to use her for their own gain. That's why I will be the one to protect her... forever.”

Our eyes locked, and I could tell there was no changing his mind. Whatever would happen, he truly didn't deserve this.

Neither of us did, including Violet.

We were supposed to be a family...

“Alaric, Adelaide!” A voice called out. We both turned our heads to see a little boy running toward us. It was Jason, Angela's son. “Come quick!”

Alaric stood immediately, still holding Violet while I followed.

“What is it?” he asked, worried.

Jason panted, placing his tiny hands on his knees to catch his breath. “It's...my mom!” he managed to get out. “Some outsiders found their way into the caves...they're threatening to hurt her if...if...”

“Show me!” I said quickly.

Jason nodded, and we made our way back through the woods. Outsiders? How would they even get in, and how would they even know where to go?

There were no outsiders allowed in Bloodstone, and now one of them was threatening to hurt Angela. My eyes narrowed as I walked faster, determined to stop whoever thought they had the right.

As we got closer, I heard a voice coming from the village square. It was Grandpa Aelius.

“I will take you to them—but let her go. Don't make me use my eyes on you.”

“No, old man,” another voice responded. “Don't make me hurt this woman.”

That was...

Alaric and I both froze. I watched as he tightened his grip around Violet. “Is that...”

I swallowed hard. I recognized that voice instantly.

“Yes,” I whispered.

It was Elyx...

“We have no time, Adelaide,” Jason tugged my sleeve. “Come on!”

We picked up our pace again, and as we stepped closer, I felt my chest tighten. It was really him. In the center of the village stood Elyx, holding a sharp object against Angela's neck.

He wasn't alone. They were all here.

James, Jane, Greg...and Claire.

It was really her.

They were surrounded by the villagers. Aelius stood in front of Elyx, trying to calm him down—though I knew he could end this in an instant if he truly wanted to. Not many matched Aelius' strength, and not many knew what he was capable of, but I did. It was just that it was against his nature to use his powers.

Just as we were about to exit the woods, I stuck out my hand, stopping Alaric and Jason from walking any further before they revealed themselves.

“Bring them here, now!” Elyx growled. “Or I swear to the Moon Goddess—this woman will die!”

Alaric rocked Violet in his arms, watching as his best friend threatened to hurt the woman who had delivered our daughter.

It might've been Elyx, but he wasn't the same anymore. His face was harder, his eyes colder—like the friend I once knew had disappeared. Everyone else still looked the same, and from the look in their eyes, I could tell they definitely didn't stand behind any of his tactics.

How did they find us anyway?

I had anticipated this moment many times—the day I would finally see my friends again. Unfortunately, all that excitement had vanished when Aelius told me they would end up betraying me—yet a part of me still hoped he was mistaken.

“Come on,” I let out a breath. I stepped forward with Alaric and Jason following behind, and as we walked through the rustling leaves, all heads turned toward us.

As we got closer, I didn't dare look at the others, so I only focused on Elyx. His eyes locked on mine, and his grip on Angela loosened slightly. Then his gaze softened just a tiny bit. He looked from me to Alaric, and his expression softened even more.

“Al,” he whispered in disbelief.

Despite everything, I couldn't help but smile at the one who had always managed to make my day at Starlight a bit brighter, even through his sometimes unbearable attitude.

“What happened to the guy who said he didn't fight girls?” I teased, just like I used to. “Are we really attacking old ladies now?”

Elyx chuckled with a hum before he dropped the sharp wood from his hand and released Angela without saying another word. The woman immediately ran into her children's arms.

Somehow, I still didn't have the courage to look at the others because I wouldn't know what to say, how to act—how to even begin to explain myself...or if I should, knowing what they would do to me.

“Won't you look at that,” Elyx spoke, surprised. “It turns out Claire was right. The two...three...of you really are alive.”