

Chapter 148

Adelaide

I ran through the woods, my heart pounding in my chest as I tried to get to Violet. Every few steps, my eyes glowed, lighting up the path Alaric had carved out ahead of me.

My legs were so numb I could barely feel them, my head was spinning, but I couldn't—wouldn't —stop.

I had to find her...

I had to find my Violet...

After failing to keep Claire safe and failing to lock Baelor away the first time, not failing Violet was the least I could do.

A warmth spread through me as I finally reached the den I had seen through Alaric's eyes.

Right in front of it stood a rare white fox with bright eyes, guarding my daughter—the same one I had seen through Alaric's eyes. I didn't know what it was doing here, how it had gotten here—but I was grateful.

"Violet!" I gasped, running toward the entrance. The white fox moved aside as I fell to my knees and crawled into the den.

And there she was...

My Violet.

She was wrapped inside a blanket, her tiny hands reaching for the air as giggles filled the small space. As always, she looked so peaceful, so happy—like nothing had happened.

Tears burned in my eyes as I scooped her into my arms. For a moment, I forgot about my aching body, and all I could do was pull her in closer.

"Mommy's here now," I whispered against her head. "I will protect you."

Violet babbled in response, her fingers gripping my shirt. I watched as the white fox circled the den once more, then it ran away.

A small laugh of disbelief escaped my lips, and I looked up.

"I don't even believe in you," I muttered, "but if you were the one who sent the fox...thank you, Moon Goddess."

Then I looked down at Violet.

"We need to get you out of here," I said, locking my finger between her tiny hands. I still had to find Baelor, which meant I had to get her to Aelius as quickly as possible.

"But don't worry. You're fine," I spoke, staring into her big eyes. They looked so harmless, so innocent—until they suddenly started to glow. It was a deep, unnatural silver—the same as my own eyes.

It was the glow...

That wasn't supposed to happen. At least not for a few more years.

"No, no—please don't do that," I whispered, trying to stop it, but it was already too late. Everything around us started getting dark, and that same dark energy from before had returned.

It was Baelor...

I held Violet tighter and forced myself to my feet. I wanted to fight against Baelor, but not like this—not with her.

I couldn't protect Violet and lock Baelor away at the same time, but one was definitely more important than the other—and that was Violet.

As soon as I stepped out of the den, I was immediately met with the dark shadow. One would think it would appear weaker since the other half was already inside the Veil, but that was not the case.

The shadow appeared larger, stronger, more aggressive than before. The ground beneath us began shaking as Baelor lunged straight for Violet, whose eyes were still glowing.

It must've sensed her immense power. She was part of me, but also part of Alaric. That thing couldn't possibly want to take control of Violet. She was still a baby...right?

I had to do something, and I had to do it now.

"No!" I yelled. My eyes glowed again, and I fought through the pain that tore through my body. Once again, I created a barrier, and this time I didn't care what it cost me. If I had to die, I would die saving Violet.

Baelor slammed against the barrier over and over—my nose started to bleed again, but I refused to back down.

"Addy!"

Shocked, I tore my gaze toward the source of the sound and saw a small figure appear, shielding his eyes from the wind.

It was little Jason.

He had been with Aelius before, which could only mean one thing. He must've been here for a reason. It felt like everything was falling into place.

The Moon Goddess must've been helping me again.

"Jason—quick!" I called out.

He sprinted to the barrier and found his way in. "Aelius sent me," he said, breathless. "He said you needed my help!"

"Yes, I do!"

"What is that black thing?" he shouted above the noise. "How do we stop it? How do we protect Violet?"

My heart shattered. Despite everything, Jason was still figuring out a way to help Violet and me. That poor boy had just seen his mother get executed, yet he was braver than I could've ever been.

I didn't deserve his kindness.

Both of us flinched as Baelor slammed against the barrier once more, and this time, he had managed to create a crack. It wouldn't take much longer.

"You need to take her to him," I said, pressing Violet into his arms. Moments later, her eyes turned blue again. "Run, and don't look back. I'll hold off that thing!"

Jason's eyes darted between me and Violet. "Your nose...it's bleeding."

"I'm fine," I lied. "Just go!"

"I can't!" Jason shook his head. "I can't leave you here!"

"Yes, you can, and you will!" I told him. "You have to...for Violet."

As if on cue, Violet let out a small whimper. It was the first hint of fear I had ever seen on her since the day she was born, and maybe it was because she knew she was about to part from her mom.

"Now go!" I commanded.

I gave Jason a small push, urging him to go, and he took off, holding Violet tightly. The moment he ran, Baelor tried to go after them. I dropped the barrier and quickly held him back with one hand while attempting to use the other to open the Veil.

I thought of Violet, Alaric, everything I had lost—but then, I saw it.

The Veil...

It was weak, flickering, but it was there, and it was open.

I let go of Baelor, and he instantly charged at me with full force, but I pushed him toward the Veil. A loud screech filled the air as the Veil pulled him in.

I was almost there...almost done.

But my body couldn't take it anymore...

A groan left my lips, my knees buckled, but before I could think about giving up—a fox appeared beside me.

It was the same white fox with the glowing eyes, and this time, those glowing eyes were directed at Baelor—helping me.

This time, I had no doubt. This wasn't just any fox. The only one powerful enough to do this was the spirit of the Moon Goddess.

Together, we combined our energy, and I felt myself growing stronger and stronger until Baelor let out a roar.

The Veil pulled him in...

We had done it...

The white fox gave me one last look before it ran off into the woods, disappearing from my sight.

I had really done it. Baelor was inside the Veil—but it wasn't over yet. Placing my hands on my knees, I took deep breaths, staring at the flickering portal.

It wouldn't hold for much longer, and I still had to get inside. I had hoped for one more moment with my Violet. I wanted to hold her, kiss her, tell her how loved she was—but time wouldn't allow it.

I had to get inside that Veil.

"Adelaide."

My whole body froze. I recognized that voice because—how could I ever forget the voice of the woman who was stupid enough to follow Mom?

Slowly, I turned around.

It was Esther...

"You..." I took a step back. "What are you doing here?"

Esther stepped forward, her dark eyes locked onto mine.

"Stay back!" I yelled.

She lifted her hands in surrender, but there was something in her expression—almost as if she was impressed.

"That thing?" She pointed at the Veil. "How did someone your age manage to open a Veil?"

I swallowed hard. "What do you want?"

Now, I had truly reached my limit. I didn't have the energy to pull her inside the Veil, but I didn't have the energy to fight her either. I only had the strength for one more thing, and that was to lock myself inside that Veil.

If she attacked now, I wouldn't stand a chance. But why wasn't she attacking?

Something was off.

For starters, I couldn't sense her power anymore, and Esther was a powerful woman. It didn't make sense.

"Wait," I gasped. "She took it from you, didn't she?"

Esther lifted her brows. "You look exhausted, child—"

"You failed," I said, my voice clearer this time. "You failed Gloria, so she took your powers."

Esther ignored my words, extending her hand toward me.

"Come. Let me help you—"

"Never," I clenched my jaw. Where was she when I needed her help all those years ago?

"Everyone is inside that Veil, and there is nothing you can do about it."

Her smile faltered for a brief second, but then she quickly replaced it with what was supposed to be a friendly smile. It just didn't quite reach her eyes.

"Don't tell me you've abandoned that baby of yours as well," she spoke, gulping.

Her words hit me like a dagger because, although it felt like it, that wasn't the case.

However, this was a sign that Esther had no idea about Violet's whereabouts—probably didn't even know her name—and I could use that to my advantage.

"She's inside the Veil," I said, feeling a lump in my throat. "And you will not be able to get to her."

Esther's eyes widened, her jaw twitched.

"But you still got some fire left in you," she noted. "You can still undo it."

I looked back at the flickering Veil and could feel the pull slip away. If I didn't go now, I would never make it.

It was time...

"Come." Esther stepped forward, stretching out her hand. "You don't have to go inside that thing, Addy. I will help you bring back your daughter."

She took several steps forward again, and I glanced behind me. First, I looked at the flickering Veil, but then I let my gaze drop to the edge of the cliff.

"Never," I whispered.

I tried to make my eyes glow again, but it wasn't working.

No, not now...

Esther walked toward me, and I quickly stepped back, dangerously close to the edge of the cliff.

Her smile had vanished, and I watched her pull a pocket knife from her pocket.

"I'm not going to ask you again," she hissed.

Her voice was no longer kind, no longer gentle. It was deep, filled with anger.

"Come here, you wolf's slut!"

She ran toward me, but I stumbled backward—and slipped.

A scream tore from my throat, though I wasn't sure if it came from me or from Esther, who stood at the edge of the cliff watching me fall.

"No!" she shouted, reaching for me—but it was too late.

The fall was endless, like I was sinking into the darkness. It was so deep I couldn't even see Esther anymore, and I was just waiting for the impact to hit me.

I had lost, and it was over...

No.

This could not be the end.

I had to pull through. I had to get inside that Veil and control it—for Violet's sake.

Alaric was counting on me.

I squeezed my eyes shut, focusing and pleading to the Moon Goddess.

Please, Moon Goddess. I know I'm not worthy, but I need your help. One last time.

Maybe this was it. Maybe fate had already decided, and after so many screwed-up chances, I just couldn't escape it anymore.

Still, I opened my eyes, hoping that my prayers would somehow be answered.

~End of Adelaide~