

Chapter 122

Adelaide

Alaric stared at me with a calm smile on his face. “If this is the length I have to go to talk to you,” he said, “then no, I don’t get tired of myself, Addy.”

I gasped in disbelief as his lips curled even more, and he kept staring at me like I was the only thing that mattered to him in that moment.

“No guards—not even one?” I asked, raising an eyebrow as I quickly scanned my surroundings. He went from a dozen to two, to none. Quite the achievement.

He shook his head. “I got my voice back because of you,” he said, tapping my thigh for a second. “Told the king enough is enough.”

I fluttered my eyes, surprised by the confidence in his tone. Even though I had encouraged him to do it, he had done something I had struggled with my entire life—rebel against his overbearing parent.

Every time I thought I could see right through the guy, there was something new to unpack.

“Why did you follow me?” I asked, crossing my arms. The question came with attitude, but it was only because I didn’t know what else to say. I knew why he followed me—I just wanted to hear it again and again to convince myself I wasn’t going crazy.

“I told you, Addy,” he clicked his tongue nonchalantly. “You’re my mate, and it’s my job to protect you and keep an eye on you.”

I let out a small laugh. “You’re unbelievable,” I called him out, though the tiny smile tugging at my lips exposed my true feelings.

Yes, it was overwhelming—but I liked the attention he was giving me.

“I need to know where we stand.”

Alaric was getting bolder by the second. My heart skipped a beat, but this time I kept my face neutral. “And what makes you think we stand anywhere?”

His eyes locked onto mine. “I know the kind of person you are, and I know you wouldn’t have broken things off with James if you didn’t feel something for me.”

An uncomfortable feeling settled in my stomach. He didn’t know anything about me. He didn’t know what kind of monster I had been preparing to bring back to please Mom.

But now things were different—and I could make up for it. I could be his mate, whatever that meant, and protect him the same way he was willing to protect me.

I took a deep breath, forcing myself to speak up. “I’ve been thinking…” I started, my voice quiet. Opening up had never been my strong suit because it wasn’t something I was familiar with. I was good at a lot of things, but openly showing any emotion other than anger wasn’t one of them.

“You’ve been thinking?” Alaric gave me a hand, his expression hopeful since he had already heard everything. All he needed was for me to confirm it.

“If you truly believe this Moon Goddess of yours made us mates…then I’m willing to explore whatever this is.”

His smile widened, and he beamed like a little kid in a candy store.

“But,” I quickly added, holding up a finger, “you are definitely not chewing my neck.”

His face changed to genuine surprise, and I couldn’t believe he would ever think I would allow him to dig those fangs into my skin.

“But I need to mark you, Addy,” he said, his voice almost pleading. “I need to be fully connected to you—that’s part of it.”

He scooted closer, and my pulse quickened.

Wasn’t me saying yes enough already? What more did he want from me?

“I just want all of you—”

I chuckled uncomfortably, creating a bit of space between us. “Calm down, virgin boy,” I said, trying to ease the tension with a joke. It always worked.

His face flushed slightly as he let out a laugh. Perhaps he wasn’t taking me seriously, perhaps he thought I was joking—but I wasn’t. I wasn’t about to walk around with that ridiculous mark on my neck.

Not when this bond was already confusing enough.

I didn’t know a person could flip this quickly, but doubts suddenly crept in again. It hit me that this wasn’t just some random werewolf I was dealing with—but the future Alpha King.

What would it mean for me?

What had I signed up for?

Was this even…legal?

“So,” I said, clearing my throat, “what happens after we finish school?”

Alaric laughed softly. His blue eyes were warm and locked onto mine as he reached for my hands, holding them gently. “Then I’ll take you back home, and you’ll become the future queen, my Luna.”

A Luna witch?

Yeah right…I’m sure the werewolves would be happy.

He made everything sound so easy, it almost made me feel bad for him. Alaric was an optimistic person because he probably hadn’t experienced the outside world as much—but I doubted it would go as smoothly.

Witches and werewolves weren’t exactly known to be the best of friends. Not to mention, just weeks ago, I was plotting to feed this guy darkness. He had no idea what storm was waiting for us—waiting for him.

“I don’t think your dad will like me very much,” I muttered, thinking of the Alpha King and what his reaction would be. Then I thought of Mom, who often spoke about her hatred for the Alpha King and how that bloodline had supposedly been plotting against us for years.

She would be furious. She would see it as the ultimate betrayal because that’s what it was. I would be betraying her, my people—and everything I stood for.

The so-called “good of the witches.”

“Aren’t you betrothed to someone?”

A long breath escaped from Alaric’s lips, confirming my question—but he didn’t let go of my hand. He squeezed it tighter. “I will keep you by my side, Addy—no matter what.”

“As what?” I questioned, narrowing my eyes. “A mistress?”

He grew an uncomfortable expression as if he didn’t know how to answer. I pulled my hands away. “I know how your friend Lixie runs things back home—but I won’t be a part of it,” I made it clear. “I will never become anyone’s mistress. I’m way better than that…too intelligent for that.”

My chest tightened at the humiliating thought. I wasn’t about to give up everything—my life, my title as future High Priestess—to share a man who was supposedly my mate with some other woman.

“Addy, I said I would make you my queen, not my mistress,” Alaric’s jaw twitched as he reached for my hands again. “I will put you beside me on the throne, and no one is going to stop me. The Moon Goddess chose you. You’re the one I want.”

“And what do you think the king will say about that?” I asked further. I didn’t even know what I was doing. Did I really need the reassurance, or was I just trying to self-sabotage so I wouldn’t have to deal with all of this?

“I don’t care what the king will say,” he said without hesitation. “I only care about you—us.”

Once again, he was so blinded by the idea of having me as his mate. He was so sure of everything.

As I gazed into his eyes, all I could see was determination. He wasn’t just making promises to make me feel better—he believed them. He wasn’t joking about keeping me by his side.

He was really prepared to fight for me while I never asked him to. I wasn’t even sure if I deserved him.

“That thing you did with your eyes the other time—”

“Not now,” I said quickly, not wanting our moment to end. I had given him the cold shoulder multiple times, but that never stopped him. He was looking past the walls I had built to protect myself, and it scared me how much I wanted him to keep looking.

I wanted him to know me.

A shiver went through me as he rested his warm hand gently against my cheek. He smiled shyly, leaning a bit closer. So close I could feel his breath brushing my skin.

His blue eyes flickered from my eyes to my lips.

“Can I kiss you, or are you going to run away again?” he whispered.

I chuckled at the serious tone and shook my head. He must’ve been really thrown off the last time. “No running this time.”

“Good.”

That was all that was needed for him to close the gap between us, and before I knew it, his soft lips were pressed against mine. Barely seconds had passed before I felt my eyes threatening to glow, but this time I knew better than to let it happen—knowing what was at stake.

Control it, Addy—control it.

I pulled him closer, deepening the kiss as I fought the urge away—and then, just like that, it was gone.

I did it.

Once I pulled back, a big smile spread across my face. Satisfied and out of breath, I rested my forehead against his.

I didn’t know how I did it, but it worked. I had managed to kiss him without feeding him any darkness. It was possible.

Alaric laughed under his breath, brushing his thumb across my cheek. “Now that I finally have you,” he said, his voice soft, “I’ll never let go of you.”

“You don’t know that,” I whispered, unsure. Aelius…Dad…it wouldn’t be the first time someone had left me, bailed on me. It had happened to me once—it could happen again.

“No,” Alaric wrapped his arm around me, pulling me closer. Without thinking about it too much, I leaned my head against his shoulder.

“I do know that,” he said, brushing his lips against my temple. “The love I have for you is too big for me to ever let go of you.”

“What?”

“I said I love you, Adelaide,” he said without a single stutter.

Love…

It felt as if my heart stopped beating for a second, but then it started pounding harder than ever before.

No one had ever said that to me before, and I had never heard it said to someone else either. The word was foreign to my ears, and I didn’t know how to respond.

We didn’t know each other for that long, and now he suddenly loved me. The worst thing was that I loved him too. As strange as it was, even without understanding love, I felt it for him—or at least something close to it.

I smiled, leaning into his touch. Then I said the only thing I could think of. “Thank you for loving me.”