

Corey paced back and forth, her hands shaking as she called Madison's phone. It wasn't unusual for the blonde to not come home but— between her nightmare, the voicemail she'd left the night before, and Queenie having been attacked— she'd been panicking. She hadn't slept; not since she woke up covered in sweat, unable to breathe.

"Come on, Mads," Corey muttered. She focused on her cellphone, her free hand flying upward to clasp against the top of her head. "Just answer the god damn phone." She listened to the trill of the line for what felt like the millionth time as she looked up at her bedroom ceiling. She could feel her whole body tremble, having no control over her nerves.

*"You've reached Madison Montgomery. I can't come to the phone right now— and, frankly, there's a high probability that I just don't want to. Leave a message; I'll either get back to you or I won't."* Madison's chipper voice fluttered through the room. It set Corey's teeth on edge, how the blonde could sound so cheerful and happy when she was nowhere to be found.

"Fuck, this can't be happening." The redhead's empty chest rattled as the sound echoed off the stark-white walls around her. Her bottom lip trembled as her mind traveled to a dark place. The nagging thought that her nightmare was real crept up on her.

"Miss Corey?" Nan's voice was full of concern and urgency; it caught Corey off-guard. She jumped, her grip on her phone tightening as she turned around to find the younger girl standing in her doorway. "I—I can't hear her." The redhead's lip trembled.

"N-no..." Corey tried to hold her emotions in, to keep herself together, but she unraveled in an instant. "Don't you *dare* fuck with me right now, Nan." Her lip curled upward in a snarl. She knew the young witch could hear her thoughts. They didn't even have to say the blonde's name to know what one another was thinking. *Madison was dead.*

"You think so too!" Nan's eyes grew wide, the immediate realization of the situation taking over. "You think someone killed her!" Corey opened her mouth to speak but she couldn't find the strength. Her jaw trembled as the tears threatened to break the dam. She pursed her lips, taking in a deep breath through her nose.

"Call the Council, and don't talk about this to anyone else until they get here." The words that managed to escape her throat were hoarse, as if she hadn't had a sip of water

in years. The young witch nodded feverishly and turned on her heels to take off in search of the nearest house phone.

As soon as Nan was out of sight, Corey flung her phone against the wall in anger. It bounced off, landing face down on the floor before skidding underneath her bed. Her knees buckled beneath her. Every emotion she'd kept bottled up poured out of her as her kneecaps connected with the solid wood floor. The sound of bone cracking against wood echoed as her hands covered her face.

She curled forward, her fingers grabbing and yanking at the hair against the back of her head as she let out a painful wail. Her arms shook as her head tilted backwards, her fists clenching so hard around the curls at the base of her neck that her knuckles turned to marble. She sobbed; her brow contorted into a frown as her lips turned downward.

She knew that she had been loud enough to wake the dead, but in the moment, she didn't have a care in the world. She struggled to take in a breath as she sobbed, feeling her tears splash against her knees before she even realized she was crying. Her body rocked as she coughed out through her tears, her shoulders falling limp. She was a rag doll, clattering against herself in a mess of limbs.

She let her forehead rest against her knees as she sat back on her feet. Her eyes squeezed shut as her shoulders bobbed up and down. She felt empty, like her heart had been ripped out right in front of her face and there was nothing she could do to stop it. Her cries escaped her throat in hiccups, her empty ribcage tightening one notch of the belt at a time.

She rolled backwards, her hands sliding down until her arms wrapped around her center. She leaned back, her head bouncing hard as it connected with the edge of the black wooden trunk at the foot of her bed. She didn't care about having a bump on the head, she couldn't feel the physical pain caused by her surroundings. She was too busy being consumed by the ever-growing pain inside of her.

Madison was dead, she knew that for a fact. Fiona had killed an innocent witch in her hunger for immortality and it was her fault— or, at least, she blamed herself. She knew, deep down, that Fiona would do anything to maintain her Supremacy. There had to be a reason for her rapidly growing powers, and yet she never stepped forward and made herself known as the next Supreme because she didn't *want* to.

Her hesitation killed Madison; her denial; her incompetence; *her*. How many other witches would die at Fiona's hand before she finally stepped forward and claimed the throne?