

43 Cain

Eve 1

Every time I closed my eyes, I saw him—his face hovering over mine. Each time I drifted too far, I felt his fingers inside me, his tongue...

What had I done? The Lycan King? What had I been thinking?

I was spiraling by the time the door knocked. My heart lodged in my throat as I went to answer it. On the other side was Agnes. My pulse was jumping as I greeted her first.

"Good morning," I said, my voice shaky.

She must have detected the pheromones last night. They were always so strong. But if she had, she did not show it.

"The King invited you for dinner in the dining room," she said.

"Alright," I replied before closing the door.

There was no way I was going to face him after what happened just last night. I could still feel his hands on my skin. His lips on my...

I shook away the memories that were far too ingrained in my mind. I was not going. I could not face him.

I sat back down, the sinking feeling in my gut growing worse. I would stay in my room.

My legs were trembling beneath me; I was sure I could not stand. The room felt smaller, the air thick with regret and shame. Every time I closed my eyes, I could still feel his touch, still hear his whispered words that had left me so powerless.

I wanted to disappear, to hide from the consequences of my actions.

But then, a flicker of anger sparked inside me, cutting through the shame.

Why should I let him think he had any power over me? Why should I cower in my room, letting him believe I was too ashamed—too afraid to face him?

No.

I was stronger than this. He didn't deserve the satisfaction of thinking he had won the round, of knowing I was hiding away, unable to meet his gaze.

The night had meant nothing to me—nothing at all. He needed to know that.

With a deep breath, I stood up, my resolve hardening.

I couldn't stay hidden. I wouldn't give him that victory. I would face him, look him in the eye,

and show him that last night had no effect on me. That I was not the woman he thought he had conquered.

Moving to the wardrobe, I pulled out a simple but stylish black dress—something that made me feel powerful and confident. My hands shook slightly as I dressed, but I forced myself to steady them.

This was my choice. I would face him, not as a woman who was ashamed, but as a woman in control of herself.

Taking a final breath, I stepped out of my room and headed towards the elevator. Each step felt like walking through a storm, my nerves screaming at me to turn back, but I pushed through, determined.

The sound of the elevator doors closing around me echoed the rapid beating of my heart. My pulse pounded in my ears, louder with every floor we passed on the way down.

I couldn't let him see any fear. He would never know how much I was unraveling inside.

The elevator dinged softly as it reached the dining floor. I squared my shoulders, smoothing the fabric of my dress one last time before stepping out into the hall. Every fiber of my being tensed as I approached the door, but I

kept moving forward.

I wasn't ashamed. I wasn't afraid.

And I was going to prove it.

The door automatically opened, and I walked into the dining room.

I noticed him first at the head of the long table, dressed in his signature black suit, with cuffs embellished with silver pins. But he was not alone.

On one side was the familiar blond man, and on the other side was the green-eyed woman—Felicia Stravos. With her was a child with striking eyes.

I made my way there without letting it show how nervous I was. My back was straight, my head forward, and my movements as graceful as I could manage.

The same blond man who had pulled me out of a cell not too long ago stood and pulled a chair out for me.

"Thanks," I said as I sat.

"Good morning," I greeted out of courtesy. From the corner of my eye, I noticed the child watching me intently.

I was promptly served food that would probably taste like sawdust with the anxiety eating me

alive. Despite that, I had to feign normalcy, so I took a bite.

"How was your night, Red?"

Felicia scoffed but said nothing else.

"It was alright," I said, keeping my tone as neutral as I could manage.

"That's good news. How did you like the Lunar Gala?"

"It was alright," I replied.

"Um..."

Silence.

The door swung open with a loud creak, drawing the attention of everyone in the room.

My heart skipped a beat as I turned to see who had entered.

A man stood there—tall and imposing, like the very embodiment of darkness—wearing a black leather jacket that clung to his muscular frame. His presence was electric, almost suffocating, as if the air itself bowed to him.

His face was adorned with intricate tattoos, dark lines that curled and weaved around sharp features, with piercings glinting on his brow and nose. But beneath the rough exterior, he exuded power—raw, undeniable power that made the

room tense with his arrival.

Two men flanked him, equally intimidating, though they paled in comparison to the man in the center.

He strode forward with a confidence that made Hades' presence at the table seem a little less commanding, as though the power of their intimidation fought for dominance.

The room fell into a heavy silence, thick with uncertainty.

Felicia's eyes widened, a flicker of recognition crossing her face, though she said nothing.

The blond man beside me stiffened, his jaw clenching as he glanced towards Hades, awaiting his reaction. The child with Felicia seemed fascinated, her green eyes locked on the newcomer, her small fingers gripping the edge of the table as if sensing the tension in the air.

Hades didn't stand, but his grip on the silverware tightened ever so slightly. His gaze darkened as he looked at the man, a slow, dangerous smile curling his lips.

"I wasn't expecting you, Cain."

Cain.

The name rang through my head, sending a shiver down my spine.

I had heard whispers about him before. A man of darkness, a figure spoken of in hushed tones by those who feared him. He was known for being ruthless, a king in his own right, though not bound by any formal title.

His power came from the shadows—rumored connections to the underworld, a man who controlled things from behind the scenes.

Cain Stravos was the illegitimate first son of the former Stravos Patriarch. He was Hades' half-brother.

He stopped at the foot of the table, his eyes scanning the room, lingering for a second longer on me. His expression was unreadable, though there was a glint of amusement in his gaze, as if he found something in this room particularly entertaining.

"Surprises keep things interesting," Cain said, his voice deep and smooth, yet carrying an edge of danger.

He looked at Hades, his lips twitching as if holding back a smirk.

"I thought I'd join you for breakfast. Hope that's not a problem."

Hades' smile faltered ever so slightly, though he masked it well.

"Not at all" he said, gesturing toward an empty

seat. "But you usually don't make casual visits."

Cain's eyes flicked toward me again, then back to Hades.

"Consider it a change of pace."

My stomach twisted, the air around me suddenly feeling too thick to breathe.

I could feel the weight of Cain's gaze as he turned to me.

"And here I thought I would finally see the princess of Silverpine."

He sauntered towards me, his steps unhurried and deliberate.

Cain reached out, gently taking my hand in his. His touch was light but firm, as if testing boundaries.

Before I could pull away, he brushed a slow, deliberate kiss across my knuckles.

"Lovely to finally meet the blessed twin."