

Chapter 10 Vampire Soup

The room lled with a terrifying aura as Aba's arms began to tremble in rage.

"What does she want with Elena?" He snarled, glaring at Taric as if he were the enemy.

"I don't think she wants her, but someone else does. Elena is the descendant of a primordial vampire. Lenore is too, but Elena controls the shadows. She's also a fairy princess. To be blunt, Elena is the perfect candidate to be my father's mate. Someone weaker than him but strong enough to produce dangerous offspring. My father did the whole deity thing before." He moved his hand over himself. "My mother defected and switched sides. Once I was born, she handed me over to my father. She wanted nothing to do with me. The thing is, my mother was a pain for my father because she was strong. He wants a mate that's easy to handle. Elena would be perfect, but I don't think he knows she exists. I guarantee the nycrops does, though. And Elena would give her an excellent bargaining position."

"Your mother is a fallen goddess?" Lenore asked and Taric shook his head.

"Was. My mother was Eris, the Goddess of Chaos. She switched to the demon side and was killed twenty-two years ago." He smirked as he looked at Lenore. "This would be your family's doing at the Children of the Moon pack."

"Oh." Lenore pursed her lips together, not sure what to say but feeling a bit awkward.

"It's alright." He chuckled as he squeezed her body against his side. "My mother was a b*tch. She only had me because it was the price my father demanded of her. Basically she was an incubator. She was obsessed with a man from the past, and revenge. She had no room for me in her life. Apparently, my father doesn't either. I'm a disappointment to him, but that's a wound for another day."

"I don't really care about your mommy and daddy issues."

"Aba!" Elena elbowed him as he kept his focus on Taric.

"There's only one thing I care about, and that's keeping you safe, Elena."

Elena pursed her lips together. If only that was really true. Sure, he cared about keeping her safe, but it wasn't the only thing he cared about.

"Your father might be the demon king, but even he should know what a bad idea it would be to take her. He would be inviting a war upon him, and he doesn't want that. The deities would be within their rights to take him down. Especially Rogio."

"Not if she came to him of her own free will." Taric could sense the agitation rising in Aba. "You really need to get that under control. Your demon is exceptionally strong. But I guess that's because it's the heart of an original demon's son."

"Forget about all that. What the hell are you talking about? Her own free will—" Aba suddenly stopped, his breath becoming ragged as it suddenly became clear. "You mean force her free will. Like her agreeing in exchange for a hostage."

"I'm betting the nycrops will try to get both Beryl and Elena using the same tactics. For some reason, that old hag is extremely sentimental over Beryl." He then pointed to the tablets he was holding. "We found these tablets underwater. There was a plague centuries ago, one that left a shadow mark on vampires. What's interesting about it is that the plague miraculously ended. It happened at the same time of the culling of the nycrops. Coincidence?" Taric tilted his head, still looking at Aba.

"Why would the nycrops—the demon king."

"My father wanted the vampires to join his side. He offered them the cure if they chose him. Instead, the vampires remained neutral, siding with themselves. Rather than submit to the demons, they chose destruction. They're a very proud species. I knew my father had offered them the cure, but now I understand it more. He wasn't offering them the cure. It would be him calling off the nycrops. He was the one inciting the plague, then pretending to have an antidote." Taric looked down at Lenore. "You might want to take notes about trusting me." He grinned at her and winked, though his smile soon faded as he heard Aba's voice enter his mind.

What do you intend to do with her?

She's my mate, and this is our business.

You're the demon prince. If she stays by your side, it could put her in direct opposition with her family. She's still a vampire and a fairy princess, and you are not a saint. We don't deserve women like them.

With the way the demon kingdom is run today, you're right. But I have a different vision, one that doesn't involve taking over the world. Demons will exist, just like a predator exists. But they'll kill for food and not for fun. We'll maintain a balance. Evil will always exist, even among the purest of creatures. You're right, though. I don't deserve her. Men like us could never deserve these women, but they're who we need. Lenore will keep me on track so that I don't lose my vision. And she'll have someone by her side who will fiercely protect her. No one will treasure her more than me, because no one needs her more than I do. And at some point, we have to cut ourselves a break. How are we supposed to move forward if we are stuck on the mistakes of the past? I want to be different. I'm choosing to be different. I'm going to live in the present and no longer dwell in the past. At least I'm going to try. What about you? You've been given a new life. When will you embrace it?

I may not be Lenore's guardian, but I will unload all kinds of hell upon you if you hurt her. Deception is something demons are good at. Time will show who you really are.

Taric's face grew serious as he studied Aba. Do you remember me?

Aba turned his head to the side, glancing at the entrance behind them, ignoring Taric. "I guess I triggered the alarm. We have company waiting for us."

"They won't come down here. That's the agreement that was made. This whole area belongs to me. Rogio made sure the king complied with his orders." Taric then rubbed his hand over Lenore's shoulder. "Go back with your sister for now. You have a lot to think about."

"I need to speak with my grandfather too. I'm curious about the whole primordial thing. But I'll be back later so we can talk." Lenore gave him a smile as she relished in his warm touch. His hand sent sweet euphoric vibrations through her body. As much as she wanted to be with her mate and get to know him, she had other matters to address. There was also the issue with leaving Elena alone. Maybe they could both stay down there until her parents returned.

If the nycrops was involved, they would have to send for their parents. They would have to put all their family on high alert. Meryl was someone they all wanted dead. Her Great Uncle Levi had been hunting her, along with their other family members. It wasn't just because of all the evil she did before. It was now about Beryl. The whole family would do anything to protect her.

Elena grabbed Aba's hand, "Nora, we'll meet you at the entrance." She saw the appreciative smile her sister gave her as she pulled Aba away.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" Aba mumbled as they began to walk up the stairs.

Elena giggled and looked at him. "Why wouldn't it be?"

"He's the demon prince."

"He's her mate. Who cares about his title? It's Nora's decision. Taric tried to convince her he wasn't good for her. As if she can't make up her own mind." She kept hold of Aba's hand as she led them up the passageway. She was making confident strides until she neared the top. She could hear the voices and found herself hesitating to take another step. They were going to be in trouble. They disobeyed the king's orders. It didn't matter the reason, and this time, her parents weren't there to protect them.

She felt Aba let go of her hand and then his arms moved around her, pulling her back against his chest. He leaned his head down, so that his lips touched her hair. "You're not afraid, are you?" His soft voice teasingly mocked her. "Not my fairy, who uses shadows against her own guardian?" His deep throaty sound sent a shiver down her back. She found herself leaning back into him more as she closed her eyes.

His smoked honey scent made her excited. His strong arms brought her instant security. "You don't have to be afraid with me by your side. I won't let anyone touch you." His voice almost sounded like a purr as his lips brushed over the top of her head.

A silent electricity grew between them as his breath lled her ears like a soft whisper. Her stomach twisted and turned inside of her, the knot in her gut tightening with every passing moment. The air around them thickened as the anticipation reached its boiling point. Seconds stretched on like centuries, until it felt like time had stopped completely, each breath an eternity of agonizing longing. She took in a shuddering breath as she felt his nose against her neck. His lips grazed her skin, leaving a trail of fire in their wake. Elena's heart was pounding so hard, she could feel it in her throat.

"We should go. I'll lead the way." He pulled away from her, stepping in front to take the lead. Elena stood there, bewildered at his actions. She could have sworn there was something between them. An intense desire that she knew he felt too. At least she thought he did. Maybe she wanted it so badly, the whole scenario was made more perverted in her mind. He was just trying to calm her emotions but she wanted it to mean more.

She watched as his back began to get smaller as he ascended the stairs. He seemed completely neutral and unaffected. Damn. It was her. In her mind, she was twisting the whole thing into something more. She shook her head, letting out an exasperated, quiet sigh, before she followed him.

At this point, she would need to confess her feelings to Aba soon. They were only getting stronger, and if he didn't feel the same way, or if he was in a relationship, then she needed to know. She wasn't sure how she would handle a negative response. In either case, pretending there was a chance wasn't healthy either.

Right now, she felt as if she was led on and then brushed off. Why did she suddenly feel like she was going to cry? In this moment, she needed more comfort than she did before. Yet, her source of comfort was the one who made her feel this way.

When she reached the top, Aba was waiting for her by the entrance. His face looked guarded as he stared in front of him. She glanced around him to see a squad of castle guards about one hundred feet from the entrance. They were just standing there, waiting. With a sigh, Elena brushed past Aba and walked out from the catacombs.

"Princess Elena, the king has ordered us to escort you back to the palace." Captain Troy of the castle guards spoke with authority.

"I'm waiting for my sister," Elena said, as Aba moved behind her protectively.

"Our orders are to bring you immediately," Captain Troy said.

"Well, you can bring me immediately after Lenore gets here." Elena knitted her brows together as she stared at the guards in front of her. This didn't make sense. Why just her? What about Lenore?

"You will come with us now," Troy said, taking a step forward.

"If you take another step, it will be your last," Aba growled, as his eyes turned dark. His aura swirled in the air, making the tree branches sway from the pressure.

"That's enough!" A voice yelled, as a squad of familiar soldiers landed on the ground between Elena and the castle guards. "We'll take it from here."

It was Ryan, the leader of the elite royal guards that belonged to her father.

"We have orders—"

"And so do we. The twins are in our care. Inform the king that we will be the ones to bring the young ladies home. Consider this an order from Prince Derek himself." Ryan stood there unwavering as the other elite guards took their stances. It would be suicide for normal castle guards, and they knew it. Captain Troy made a motion with his hand. Slowly, they retreated, going back to inform the king.

"Woo doggie!" Chaz whooped as he slammed his fist into his hand. "That was intense. I thought for a moment we were going to have to rumble against our own."

Elena recognized all of the guards. There was Ryan, the leader, then Sabrina, his chosen mate. To the other side was Enzo, Lenny, and Zach and Tonya, who were also a couple. Then there was the big bulky guard, Chaz, who they saw earlier when they left the castle.

"You okay, Elena?" Ryan asked, as he looked her over quickly.

"Yes, I'm ne."

"Your father ordered that we protect you two above everything. We were watching the borders, but after the whole incident earlier, we've all returned to our interior posts."

"Will you get in trouble for what you did?"

"No, King Alaric will respect our role as Prince Derek's men. Even if he doesn't, our loyalties lie with your parents. Where's Lenore?"

Elena pursed her lips, thinking of how to answer, but luckily she didn't have to.

"I'm right here," Lenore said, stepping out from the catacombs. She held several tablets in her arms. "Who wants to carry these heavy things?" She grinned over at Chaz, who gladly obliged her. "We found old tablets that have information about the last shadow plague. We thought they could be useful."

Lenore walked up next to her sister, hooking her arm with hers. "Who's ready to get yelled at?" She beamed as Elena rolled her eyes.

"Don't worry, backup is on the way," Ryan said, as both women looked up at him. "We've sent word to your parents. We had to. It was your father's orders."

As much as they hated for their parents to way to end their trip early, both ladies felt a sense of relief knowing they were on their way back.

"Come on ladies, follow me," Ryan said, walking in the opposite direction of the castle. The women looked at him in confusion. "What? I said we would escort you two back to the castle. And indeed, we will... the long way." He grinned with a wink.

"Was there another incident?" Elena asked, thinking about how her shadows retreated again.

"There was. Three vampires are now in the innrmary, which is why your grandfather is so upset that you aren't where you're supposed to be. He doesn't want you to be a suspect. Unlike your father, the King rules with logic, not emotions." Ryan paused and glanced back at Elena. "He loves his family, but he has always prioritized the kingdom. You shouldn't take it personally."

"Well, I take it personally." Aba snarled as Chaz grinned over at him.

"Aba, you were about to make cream of vampire soup out of those guards. You know how much trouble that would have caused?" Chaz snickered, shaking his head.

"Touch my princess and the king isn't going to have a kingdom anymore."

He followed behind Elena so closely that she could feel the heat from his body. Every touch and move he made was a bigger deal to her. Perhaps she was imagining things because she wanted it so badly. Maybe her sister nding her mate made her more delusional. She nudged her sister's side, shooting her a smile.

I wonder how dad's going to act when he finds out about your mate?

I guess we're about to find out soon.

How are things with that?

We're going to talk more later...tonight.

I hope it works out the way you want.

You and I need to talk. I can be with him without being marked, but once he marks me, I won't be able to leave. I would have to stay there, which would probably mean that Yang would choose you.

What if Yang still chooses you? What if you have to be sealed in Elysium? Could he join you there? There was no way Yang was going to choose Elena. She controlled the shadows and was the most natural host for Yin. However, with Lenore's mate, this could be a problem.

I don't know.

Lenore's voice was faint in Elena's mind. She could feel how conflicted she was. There was a chance Lenore could be sealed away from her mate for centuries, a cruel torture that she couldn't avoid if she wanted to do her part in uniting the worlds. It was bad enough that the siblings would be separated, but to be torn apart from your mate... that could make you go insane.

Elena held her sister's arm, squeezing it lightly. For now, they had each other to help them through their emotions. However, she felt that this time was soon coming to an end. That was the talk Lenore wanted to have with her. It was about living with her mate. And she should. That was normal, and she was happy for her, even if it would hurt not having her around. She would support her sister and her decisions no matter what.