

Eternally Damned: Chapter 15

Maven

“He said for you to get anything?” Dottie asks, running her fingers over an expensive purple Victorian couch. It has a gothic appearance with a black frame and a modern velvet material. It’s gorgeous.

I want it.

“He did and he gave me his card, but I have money too. I don’t need to use his.” I think about how upset he’d get if I didn’t let him buy everything and what he’d do to me.

Maybe I’ll ‘forget’ I had his card.

“To me it sounds like you have double the funds. What all do you need?”

“Have you seen the house? Everything.” Hairs on the back of my neck stand while goosebumps trickle over my body. I turn my head over my shoulder and look around, not noticing anything suspicious. There’s an old woman fumbling through her purse and a kid throwing a tantrum about not being able to use the gumdrop machine. I imagine the gum drops flooding the area, the glass breaking just to get him to quiet down.

The boy has a set of lungs on him.

Suddenly, the gumdrops fall down the swirling slide inside the machine one by one, until they ting out of the metal flap. The kid watches as it bounces on the floor away from him.

Was that me? Did I do that?

Then, the glass breaks and red, yellow, blue, white, and green gumballs fall everywhere. The kid giggles and stuffs as many as he can in his pocket while the

mother screams at someone to clean up the mess while tugging her kid by the arm out the doors.

What all can I do?

Am I liking my grandpa and can only do-little things? Or can I do more?

“Yeah, we will take one of everything in this set and in every color. Do you have beds to match?” Dottie asks the salesperson. “Money isn’t in question. I need kitchen supplies too. Black everything with pops of red.” She turns to me and winks. “Get it? Red? Because, you know.”

I roll my eyes at the bad joke when that feeling of being watched hits me again. I look around the store, nothing but sofas and cabinets in my view but my instincts are telling me to run.

“Oh, and towels. The best, we need everything. Honestly, we are redoing a house, you know, the old Monreaux Estate, and it deserves all the expensive things, so why don’t you just round up those items, throw them in a truck, and I’ll go through it when everything is delivered. For every room.” Dottie takes over the shopping trip, her decision to say ‘the hell with it’ and get everything is a relief.

I hate shopping. I find it stressful. There are so many options and decisions to make.

“Yes, rugs too, but not the ugly rugs with weird patterns. Stick with deep rich colors please. Oh, we need paint.” She snaps her fingers and begins to tell the man all the colors she wants along with black metallic wallpaper. I don’t know what the hell she has planned, but she can have at it.

I’ve never been a decorator. Maybe that’s why Lex told me to come with Dottie. She’s very assertive.

“Yes, chandeliers. Not the large tacky ones. No. We’re better than that. Come on, Randall.” She teases the man, bumping him with her elbow and his cheeks turn a bright shade of red. He smiles behind his fist as he coughs, clearly flustered.

I’m the witch but this woman holds all the power.

“I want the ones where we can adjust the light, let’s stick with black and can we have one red one?” she continues and the more I focus on her, the more I see a hue surrounding her.

The more I focus, an outline of some sorts tries to take shape around her, but I can’t tell what it is. The more I try to see it, the more it blurs. I scrub my eyes and blink, but then the aura is gone.

Am I imagining things?

“Fridge, all that, yes. The big restaurant kind. I have a feeling that house will be full,” she says knowingly. “Big stove too.”

I tune Dottie out when an icicle swims down my spine. Instead of looking around, I sit still, wishing I had a shield of some sorts and that’s when I see a light purple energy project from me. I watch it spread, the diameter getting larger and a warmth takes over me instead.

In the distance, almost as if the voices are in the back of my mind far away, they whisper, *“Is that her? Do we wait? Will she take us?”*

I jump out of my seat and spin around.

“She’s the one. She’s the answer.”

“Tell my sons I love them. I’m here. I’m right here.”

Panic builds in my throat as the voices double, triple, and it gets to a point where I can’t understand what they are saying.

I clutch the sides of my head and want to scream.

“Hey.” Dottie touches my arm and the form surrounding her gets larger, but I still can’t tell what it is. I want to ask, but Dottie is so honest and upfront, she might not know.

I bet my grandpa does. I’ll have to ask him.

“What’s going on? You look pale.” Dottie places her warm hand against my forehead. “You’re freezing, Maven. Are you okay? What is it? Was someone bothering you? Where? You know I’ll pluck their teeth out.” She grips my shoulders and darts her eyes around the room.

“I’m fine. Really. I’m fine. Just suddenly not feeling well is all.”

“Well, I bought everything we need. I put a rush delivery on it all too. I need his card though.”

I hand it over without thinking, placing my hand against my stomach. “Go ahead, I don’t care.”

“Awesome. When they deliver, you can go through it then and see what you like. I figured you’d like that more.”

“What would I do without you?”

“You’ll never have to find out. Best friends for life,” she says, squeezing my arm.

“Okay, Randall, ring us up.” She hands over the shiny new black card Alexander just got in the mail. It took him reinventing himself with forged papers and a new name. Alexander IV. I guess he’ll continue to add roman numerals to his name.

I don’t even want to know the total. I’ll get buyers guilt and go to Big Lots, where I’m used to going, instead of this fancy furniture place.

“She’s going to change everything. The future will be different.”

I press my palms against my forehead and tell myself I’m going crazy. I’m hearing voices now.

“Maven?”

A familiar voice startles me, and I jump, holding a hand to my chest. I look up to see Brenden, a concerned look on his face.

What is he doing here?

“Are you okay? You look like you’ve just seen a ghost.”

Psh.

I’ve seen a ghost and I still didn’t feel like this.

“I’m fine just waiting for my friend,” I say coolly, remembering Alexander’s warning about Brenden. I focus on his aura. I don’t see anything at first which makes me wonder if my powers are on the fritz.

He sits down next to me and that’s when I feel it, that iciness that’s been hanging in the air.

“You sure? You look like you aren’t feeling well.” He lifts his hand, and he brushes my hair over my shoulder.

A flash of him standing in front of an older version of Alexander pops in my head. It’s my head playing tricks on me because Brenden doesn’t look a day over thirty-five years old.

But these days, age doesn’t seem to matter.

I hold my breath, watching as the air around him crackles with energy that makes me feel sick to my stomach. Is that why I’m like this? Because of Brenden? And why didn’t I feel like this before? Why am I so aware now?

There needs to be a manual of witchy bullshit because I’ve already had enough of it.

“So beautiful,” he mutters, more to himself than anything and I scoot over, uncomfortable.

“Please, don’t touch me,” I state, trying to sound brave with a backbone. “I think it’s best if you leave. Alexander is here,” I lie.

Brenden’s laugh is dark, ominous, and evil. My fingertips itch to release power, but I can’t do it in the middle of the store.

Brenden leans in, inhaling while I keep my spine straight and my hands in my lap. “He isn’t here. He is at home. He left you all alone, Maven.” He taps my mating mark, and my skin shocks him in retaliation. “Oh, someone is learning new tricks.”

I grit my teeth together, not knowing how I did that, but thankful it happened.

“Let’s get one thing straight, Maven—” his hand lands on my lap and the frigid temperatures of his power soaks into my bones and my teeth begin to clatter “—I’ll let you be a whore. I’ll let you fuck that vampire, so you can get that cunt ready for me, but make no mistake, you’re mine. I’ve been waiting for you for a long time, and I won’t let a blood sucker take that from me.”

I dart my eyes to him. “Sorry, but he is my mate. I’m his beloved. I’ll never be yours.” I rest my hand on his thigh next, sending a jolt of lightning through his system. It would kill a normal man, but all it does is stun Brenden.

He removes his hand and stands. “Magic is stronger than fate, Maven. Remember that.” He spins on his heel and vanishes, leaving me staring at the space he sat in.

The cushion is still indented.

Dottie is sashaying down the hall, the smile on her face falling when she sees me. The hue around her becomes vivid and bright and the form around her grows taller, bigger, but I still can’t make it out.

“Maven? What happened?”

“I need Le—” the automatic doors open at the same time a loud crack sounds outside accompanied by a flash.

Lex is standing there, soaking wet, water dripping from his angular face. His hair is drenched, and his black shirt is sticking to his body like a second skin.

In the attempt it takes me to inhale, he is at my side, taking my face in his hands as he bores his blue irises into mine. “He was here,” he sneers, displeased, his eyes flashing scarlet. “I smell him.”

“Damn, you knew she needed you?” Dottie asks, her finger twirling a piece of her hair.

“I can feel when she’s in trouble. I got here as quick as I could. Was it Brenden?”

“Sir, I’m sorry. You can’t be in here soaking wet. You’re getting water on our furniture.”

“Oh, fuck your furniture.” Alexander stomps toward the sales associate and grips his neck, staring right into Randall’s eyes. “Did you see the man sitting next to my wife?” Lex says calmly.

Randall relaxes, slumping into Lex’s hold as if he is warm and safe. “No. I saw no one. Just Dottie. She shopped.”

“I’m going to look through your memories. It’s going to feel like a tickle, okay?” Lex’s voice is drenched in silk, it’s so soft and relaxing, I almost forget my troubles.

Randall giggles and sighs, then blushes. “That’s a dirty one.”

Alexander releases him. “I didn’t need to see that. That was...” Alexander shakes his head. “He didn’t see anything. Brenden was smart.”

“Hot security guard contractor guy? Oh, is he a bad guy? Do we not like him?” Dottie throws her hands on her hips and cocks her head, the anger causing her cheeks to burn cherry.

“No,” Alexander bites. “We fucking hate him. Randall, you won’t remember me. You’ll sleep well tonight. You’ll call your friend and have another fun time when you get home.”

“Yes, fun,” Randall says as if he is a robot, dazed.

“You’ll be safe this time, Randall. Won’t you?”

“I’ll be safe.” Randall nods.

“You’ll tell me if you see anything suspicious.”

“Yes. Anything. Everything.”

“This is so cool,” Dottie can’t help but say. “And you felt her? I want a vampy for myself,” she pouts.

Alexander clears his throat. “Randall, you’re going to tell your boss you aren’t feeling well and you’re going to go home once you are done ringing her up, so you get the commission. Okay?”

“Okay,” he sighs happily, and Alexander releases his neck.

“Go on, Randall. It’s alright. You’re great.”

“I’m great.” Randall grins, then spins on his heel and skips away. “I’m great!” he shouts.

“We need to get out of here. We don’t know how many people Brenden has manipulated here.”

“Um, I need to know what that was and how you did it?” Dottie asks.

“I mystified him. It’s a vampire thing.”

“He’s a witch, isn’t he?” I say when the realization hits me like a bag of bricks. “I felt it. His power. It made me feel funny, slow, sluggish, and cold when he touched me.”

“He touched you?” Alexander prowls toward me. “Where? Tell me everything.”

“Not here,” I whisper glancing around to make sure no one is paying attention to us.

“Dottie, meet us back at the estate. I’m taking her home.”

“In the rai—”

But Alexander doesn’t give Dottie time to answer. He has me in his arms and he sprints into the chaos of the storm outside. The more I think about Brenden, the voices, the cold, the stronger the storm gets.

It's me. I'm causing this.

Dottie and I drove nearly an hour away to the best furniture store we knew of, so at vampire speed, we're home in about five minutes.

He sets me down under the Spanish oaks and I get out of his arms slowly, my feet barely keeping me standing as I stare at the manor in front of me.

It's done.

It's really done.

The porch wraps around and there are a few chairs strategically placed and a swing in the corner. The shutters are red and the outside smells of fresh paint since the house has a new coat of white brightening the siding.

"UV protected windows. The inside is bare and empty but renovated."

"Oh my god, Lex." I press my hands against my mouth and stare at my childhood dream home. "It's perfect. How? When? How?" I repeat, slowly walking up the steps.

"Who better than me to renovate? I'm quicker with my abilities and I knew the layout of this house like the back of my hand. Everything is the way it was plus a few upgrades, but I don't want to talk about that right now." He leads me to the new swing, and we sit. He pushes us and the view I have is wild.

The storm wreaks havoc. The dark clouds bloom and roll, lightning flashes through them. The insidious darkness the storm holds shines. Rain comes down in heavy sheets, casting sideways. The sunflowers whip back and forth, drowning in water and assaulted by wind.

Lex takes my hand and I remember to breathe, but the storm doesn't stop.

"What happened at the store?"

I lock my eyes onto the clouds. "I felt someone watching me. I thought it was all in my head, but then I swore I heard voices. They sounded distant like they could see me,

but I couldn't see them. Then I saw Dottie's aura, which I knew nothing about, but I'm starting to piece everything together since no one tells me anything," I say bitterly. "She has something protecting her. It's huge, but I can't tell what it is. And then Brenden sat down, said I didn't look well." I touch the spot where he touched my hair, running my fingers through the soaked strands. "He touched my hair and moved it over my shoulder," I say in a hypnotized state. "He called me beautiful, but then I said you were at the store. He knew I was lying, and he said he'd let me fuck a vampire if it meant..." I swallow the truth.

"If it meant what?" he growls.

I turn my head to see his fangs, the reflection of the sharp white points shining in every jolt of lightning. "If it meant getting my cunt ready for him. That I was his. Magic was stronger than fate and then he was gone." Tears blur my eyes.

Alexander's chest heaves as he takes deep breaths. He stands, gripping the railing so hard I hear the wood crack.

"What does that mean? What does he mean magic is stronger than fate?" I ask.

"I don't know. Nothing is stronger than fate, you hear me?" He cups my jaw and brushes my tears away. "I'll kill him, Beloved. He's signed his death warrant for fucking with my heart," he states, leaving no room for argument.

"I need to know everything. I'm going into this blind, Lex. He is a witch, isn't he? I felt it. I saw his aura and it was black. Why? What else can I do? Why does he want me? Why am I so important? Why am I hearing voices?" I shout question after question, the thunder rolling with every word from my desperation, a plea to understand.

"I'll tell you what I know, beloved, but you're different than any of your kind I've ever met, and he wasn't a witch. He's a warlock. A bad one with evil intentions. I don't know what he wants with you."

"And the voices?"

“I don’t know,” he admits, regret in his tone. His thick black brows furrow. “I wish I knew, but I don’t.”

I take a deep breath and nod, cross my arms, then head inside. I need space to think. As soon as I walk through the door, flames ignite in the fireplace and I’m too angry to appreciate the beauty of our new home.

I have too much on my mind.

I head straight for the library, looking for any kind of answers as to why I am the way I am.

And why I went from no one wanting anything to do with me, to being the wanted witch of the east.

I flip the light on out of habit, expecting it not to work, but it does. It flickers, but after a few seconds, it becomes steady. I throw my hair into a wet bun and grab a book, but my tears blur my vision. I scream, throwing the ancient book across the room and it slams into the shelf, knocking a few to the floor.

They fall onto the floor and one opens, the pages aged, yellow, and fragile. Wiping my cheeks, I sit down and grab the book, the binding glowing when it touches my palms. I gasp, the feeling of home entering my bones.

Flipping the book over, I notice the same engraving from the mausoleum etched in the leather of the book, the W in the middle.

I sniffle, flipping it open to the first page.

The name on it says Sarah Wildes in bold black ink.

“What did you find?” Lex comes from behind me, his hands massaging my neck.

“I don’t know.” My eyes round when I watch Sarah’s name fade and mine replaces it.

“Lex? Lex, look! It’s changing.”

He bends down and we watch as the book begins to write within itself.

The Wildes Grimoire.

Only a Wildes can read it.

This book is protected by:

Maven Wildes.

Coven Witch to the Monceaux's.

The beloved to Alexander Monreaux.

“I always wondered why I’d flip the pages of that book and it was blank. All my father ever said was that no one was to write in it. It was important. That one day, this book would be the reason we lived again. I thought he was crazy, but he was right.”

I flip the pages and laugh, happy tears rolling down my face. “It tells me about auras on the first page,” I chuckle.

Excited, I keep flipping, bypassing spells and warnings.

I stop when a page labeled “Black Magic and its bindings.”

“Seems like we have about a thousand pages to read.”

“You don’t know how relieved I am, but maybe we should invite Pa over? He deserves to see it. He should be able to read it too.”

“I wonder if that book holds any answers for werewolf bites,” he sadly jokes.

But the book listens, flipping pages as if a huge gust of wind blew. It stops abruptly and the page on the right has the drawing of a werewolf and on the left a vampire.

I clear my throat and proudly hold the book out in front of me. “Werewolf venom is toxic to vampires, but does not kill,” I read and Lex scoots closer, listening intently. “It sends our vampire family into a coma and only a beloved can wake them up,” I read, slightly bored because we know that. I skim the page, bypassing how rare it is.

Until I reach the next paragraph. “When a beloved wakes a vampire from a coma, the werewolf venom mutates the vampire. The vampire will be immune to werewolf bites but sacrifices the abilities to feel the sun. To fix that, please see page 576.”

Holy shit. He’ll be able to feel the sun again?

“Immune?” Lex runs his fingers through his hair. “I wonder if you’re immune too? Our children? Will anyone that agrees to be a part of this coven be immune?”

His question has mine long forgotten.

The book stops me from flipping to page 576, listening to my beloved’s questions by flipping to another page. It’s toward the back, 894. “A beloved will be immune to the werewolf venom, their children, and anyone that pledges to their master by taking his or her blood. Immunity can’t be transferred to a changeling when it’s forced. The change has to happen willingly and be needed,” I read. “Wow, this book knows everything. Too bad it doesn’t know why I’m so important.”

The book slips from my hand and shakes on the floor, rumbling the shelf behind it as the pages flick at an alarming rate. The lights flicker and rain beats against the window.

When it stops, the edges of the paper burn and I smack the embers a few times to put them out.

“Maven,

You’ll change everything. You’ll open the door to the paranormal world again, but it isn’t you that causes the ripple in dimensions. It’s the child you’re carrying. Half vampire of the original vampire lineage, half pure elemental witch, your child will be the most powerful and the most feared. People and creatures around will want you dead to make sure that child is not born.

But they must be.

Everything will change, Maven.

Have Alexander take you to the cove. He'll know why.

Count on your familiar, she'll protect you at all costs.

Listen to yourself and you'll change the world.

I never met you, but I love you. Be the witch you were always born to be.

-Sarah Wildes. Previous Coven Witch to the Monceaux's.

And as soon as I read it, the page goes up in flames, vanishing from the book forever.