

Eternally Damned: Chapter 22

Alexander

“Jeez, you two really need to soundproof this house. So much for getting sleep,” Dottie grumbles, dark bags under her eyes as she makes herself a three-tier sandwich.

How does such a little person eat so much?

I should be asleep, but after the worst night of my life and the best sex of my life, I cannot sleep. I have too much on my mind.

Like how distraught Maven will be when she wakes up tonight. It’s a burden I can hardly bare, her heartache.

I snort and gather the coffee from the cabinet and scoop it into the maker. “Maybe don’t listen,” I sass, liking this new banter between me and Dottie.

“Maybe don’t roar like a beast and I wouldn’t. I can’t help I can hear, Alexander,” she rolls her eyes.

She pushes her tower of a sandwich to the side, grabs another plate, and begins to make another.

“Surely, you can’t eat two three-tier sandwiches.” I gape as she slathers it with mayo and mustard, pickles, lettuce and tomato with slices of chicken. When the first layer is done, she begins the next.

“Want to make a bet?”

I lift a brow, knowing I’m about to be fooled, but I want to witness this. “What’s on the table?”

“I want to learn how to fight and use the library as research to figure out who I am.”

My face softens, the humor fleeting for a moment. "Dottie, you don't need to bet to do that. This is your home."

"Then make me a part of the coven," she states, nearly dislocating her jaw to take a bite of her sandwich. "I want to be."

I take her wrist and force her hand in the air, flashing a fang. "You sure? Once this is done, it can't be undone."

"I'm sure. I want to be a part of this family."

I prick my finger, a bead of blood coming to the surface and then do the same to hers. She gasps. This isn't enough blood to bind us like what happened to my mother, but it will allow us to connect, to have that feeling of safety. I'll know if she's in danger and I'll be able to protect her.

"Repeat after me, then."

"Don't I need to finish my breakfast first?"

Two monster sandwiches for breakfast. What in the world does this girl eat in a day?

"No, no bet is necessary when I want you here, Dottie. I, Dottie..."

"Kitse," she finishes.

I've heard that name before. I've read it. I think. It tickles something in the back of my mind.

"Dottie Kitse, do you promise to pledge your life, your loyalty, and your blood to the Monreaux Coven? And do you swear your allegiance to me, your Master? In times of peril, in times of love, of sanctuary, do you give me this oath?" I can't believe I'm doing this over a chicken sandwich. If father were here, he'd be livid.

"Yes," she breathes, tears forming in her eyes.

I swipe my finger across her lip, then do the same with hers. Her blood settles in mine and that emptiness I felt about not having a coven slowly becomes smaller. She isn't vampire, but she's family now.

"Oh, wow," she says, her red hue becoming brighter, flickering like flames and her eyes glow a bright orange for a second before settling down. "It feels right," she whispers. "Thank you... Master Monreaux."

"Don't call me that unless others are around or we are in a meeting. It feels... well, honestly, it doesn't feel right. I don't feel like a leader just yet. It's hard imagining I'm taking my father's place."

Dottie offers me half of her sandwich. "Eat. It will make you feel better."

I smirk, lifting the heavy concoction into my hands. "Thanks. Don't mind if I do." I'm so happy vampires can eat food. Granted, I need to be sated with blood in order to do so, which I am. I took so much from Maven this morning.

It would have killed a human.

It's a good thing she's mine and I can take as much as I want.

Suddenly, Dottie drops her sandwich and runs out the front door, the two wolves Anwyll and Aziel chase after her. I keep my pace lazy, eating the sandwich Dottie made which is delicious.

"Who are you?" Dottie shouts across the field.

No one is there, I can't see them.

But I hear them.

The ragged breaths.

The stumbling footsteps.

More than one.

There are several.

“Get inside,” I bark at Dottie.

“No way in hell, Master.”

Stubborn freaking woman.

The wolves flank her sides, and I keep a close eye on them, not trusting them at all, but I can't rip their throats out either.

I'm a vampire caught between a rock and a hard place.

“What's going on?” Maven's sleepy voice has me holding out an arm so she can't go outside.

“I don't know. They heard something and someone is here.” I didn't hear it. I should have, but I wasn't focused on a new threat. I guess that's where I need to change. Things are different now. I have people here, a mate, children on the way. I need to be more astute to my surroundings.

I need to learn how to be a coven master and the only person that can teach me, is me.

Maven's eyes swirl that gorgeous gold that takes my breath away. Her brows pinch and cute wrinkles form between them. “They are afraid. I can see it.” Maven's hand grips mine. “Don't harm them.”

“I won't unless they change my mind.” It's the only answer I can think of to say. I have to protect what is mine.

This estate, these people, Maven.

All mine.

And I have a feeling her magic and us being beloveds are going to bring new challenges we never thought we would have to face.

“Is it Brenden?” her voice trembles. I can hear herself holding back the urge to cry at the sound of his name.

“Impossible. He’s in a coma by now. I don’t know where he is.” Now that I think of it, how was he able to vanish with magic?

What if I created a new monster by turning him?

“There has to be a way to find out.” She runs through the living room and to the library and when she returns, she’s flipping through the pages of her spell book. “A location spell... something. I can’t rest until I know where he is.”

“Master Monreaux,” Anwyll calls me by my title to get my attention. He doesn’t even seem annoyed he has to.

The irritation I feel about these werewolves grows by the second. Surely, they couldn’t have been forced to commit genocide? To eradicate a species.

“They are here,” Aziel finishes, and Maven walks out on the deck.

My brave little witch.

It’s so fucking sexy when she shows how strong she is, but it’s my turn.

“Maven, is it possible for you to create a UV barrier shield around me?” I ask, needing to go outside, hating that I can’t.

Her spell book flips to a certain page and Maven nods. Her hands swirl and her eyes spark. Lavendar smoke breathes between her palms and then she eases it against my chest. It engulfs me.

And it itches.

I don’t like it. I glance at the wolves and sneer. If it weren’t for them, I could walk in the sun.

“You don’t have much time. I’m too new. The barrier is weak, Lex. I’m sorry.” She sounds so guilty not being able to meet her expectations, but she’s soared by mine.

“Don’t ever apologize. This is more than enough.”

“Oh, I remember there’s a section somewhere that tells me how to fix your daylight problem. I can’t... remember...” she flips through the pages, her tongue sticking out, and I’ve nearly forgotten the new threat on the property, “...The page.”

“No rush. I have what I need thanks to you.” I bend down, take her hand, kiss the knuckles, and scrape my fangs over her skin.

Dropping her hand, I jog down the porch steps and stand in front of my wolf guardians. I nearly choke when that phrase comes to mind, but it’s true. They have been nothing but loyal since the spell broke.

I can feel the sun on my skin. It’s bearable. Warm. My skin doesn’t ache, but I can tell the shield won’t last.

A figure stops up ahead along with a dozen others, and I forget about the sun issue.

We’re outnumbered.

The wolves change into their beasts, borrowed clothes ripping, bodies growing, and their skin morphing to slate gray.

Suddenly, the dozen or so people across the field are standing in front of me. The wolves growl, threatening and Maven is at my side, the sky darkening with clouds, the temperature drops, and snow begins to fall around us.

Frigid tempers call for frigid temperatures.

Dottie and her link. Electricity bolts in Dottie’s hand and Maven uses it to build her strength.

The sun isn’t so hot now that it’s blocked, but my thoughts come to a complete halt when I see who is standing in front of me.

“Father?” I choke, staring at him unblinking. He can’t be real.

He looks the same as the day he disappeared. His clothes are new, dirty in some spots as if he fell on the ground. There's a haunted expression in his eyes, deep purple circles under his lashes, frown lines along his mouth.

Iridescent rivers fill his eyes, and they overflow, flooding his cheeks. He studies my features, but it's obvious which twin I am because of skin tone. "Alexander?" My name a bubble in his throat, and I remember the last time I heard him call for me.

In the dark.

Under attack.

Telling me to go after my brother.

"You're dead." I press the heels of my hands to my eyes and bend in half, pressing my elbows against my knees. "You're dead. You're dead. You're dead," I chant, my chest breaking all over again like it did in the year 1900. I can't believe this is happening. I am mentally unable to.

The pain will kill me.

Did the wolf bite mess with my mind after all? Am I hallucinating?

I open my eyes to see him, and he kneels, disregarding the wolves behind me. He's crying too. His hands cup my face, his eyes darting over every line as if it's the first time he has seen me.

He feels real.

He sounds real.

I place my hand on top of his and break when I feel him.

"You're real." The words are unstable and broken as the years of missing him burst free.

“My son,” his voice cracks. “My son. You survived.” He gathers me in his arms, squeezing me so tight my bones crack. His hand buries in my hair as he holds my head to his chest.

I’m a child all over again, just a teenage vampire needing his father and I weep, gripping his shirt as we fall into relief.

“It’s you. You’re here. How?” I lick my lips, the salty flavor causing me to wince. “How? Atreyu said—”

“He’s alive?” he stands, looking over my shoulder to see if he sees my twin but all he sees are the two dogs, I mean people, we took in. “Wolves,” he sneers and launches himself at the one I considered an enemy until recently, but Maven lifts her hand, freezing him in the air.

Gently, she sets him down on his feet. “Wolves that were put under a spell by a Brenden Hall. He came to collect a debt your father owed.”

My father’s face loses its color, his hair in a mess of spikes from running his fingers through it. “He came back?”

“We have a lot to talk about,” I nod, wiping my face.

It’s a miracle.

“Where’s Atreyu,” he asks again, eyeing the werewolves with crimson irises. “Who are these people?”

“We got bit by wolves. We made it to the tombs. Atreyu is still asleep.”

“My son.” The words are garbled with regret as he pounds his chest. “My son!” he raises his voice, knees buckling until he falls. “He’ll never wake.” He is full of doubt as he screams, the kind of agony that’s ripped from the chest. “He’ll be gone. Finally, I made it back and he’s gone. I can’t live in this world without both of you,” he says to me, lifting his head to look at me through pearly tears.

“That’s not true,” I begin to explain. “There’s hope. I’m here. I was bit. I fell into a coma and for 121 years, I laid in that coffin, but Maven—” I reach for her, stretching out my arm and she cradles herself at my side “—Maven is my beloved. Father, meet Maven Wildes.” I put emphasis on her last name and immediately his eyes round, forcing one last tear that’s been threatening to spill over to finally fall down his cheek.

Father stands on shaky legs, wiping his hands on his pants. “Wildes,” he says her name in a hushed tone. “You’re related to Sarah.”

“I am,” Maven says.

“You opened the portal again.” He looks at her in awe. “I don’t understand how. It took a sacrifice to close it before.”

A sacrifice...

My chest begins to ache as I put the pieces together.

Mother.

In order for the portal to open and close, someone must die. There has to be a way around that. We have to see what the portal holds, where it goes, if it truly goes anywhere.

Maven’s breath hitches. “My Pa sacrificed himself to end the contract Brenden had. The warlock wanted me. He knew I’d exist. He wanted a Wildes as a mate, but Pa stopped that.” She glances away and stares at the space where he died. “He must have completed the spell when I tried to open the portal and failed. His blood must have soaked through the ground. It’s the only thing I can think of. I tried. I heard your voices, but I wasn’t strong enough.”

“I’ve been speaking to that damn portal for 121 years, coming up empty,” Father explains. “I’m thankful to be home and to you for bringing my son to life and for bringing me back. I’m so fucking happy to see you, Alexander.” His forehead is against

mine, his hand holding mine so tight, I think he has broken a few bones. "Forever in my blood, son. Forever."

I'll heal.

The temporary pain is worth knowing my father is alive after all this time.

He lets me go and takes a step away, a haunted expression of guilt crossing his face. "I'm sorry for what you had to lose due to my father's heartache. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to go see Atreyu." Father keeps a wide berth of the wolves, untrusting like me, but listens to what Maven said about them.

Father is forgiving, but it will take a while to forget the bloodshed they caused.

And what they took from us.

In a blur, he's gone.

"You look good, Lexy."

I whip my head around to see Uncle Luca and Greyson, flanking the sides of a tall woman with white hair and violet eyes.

Rarity.

I take a slow step forward, but the barrier breaks and the sun begins to sear me. I scream and Rarity dashes to my side. She carries me into the house, Greyson and Uncle Luca peering down at me.

"You've always found a way to get into trouble that I can't figure out." Greyson rubs his chin with a sly smile.

Maven is at my side, pushing her wrist into my mouth and I drink, the burns healing.

"How is it that you can't walk in the sun?" Uncle Luca is perplexed, watching the burns fade on my arms and neck.

“It’s the side effect of waking up from the venom.” Maven begins to flip through the book again. “But it also means, anyone who pledges themselves to the coven is immune to the venom.”

“Rarity.” I sit up and take her in. She grew up to be beautiful. Even though she has such different features, she looks just like mother. I hate I’ve missed her grow up. All the small moments, the long nights of her crying, teaching her everything about vampire life, it was taken from me. “I’ve missed you.” I only got to hold her a few times, singing lullabies, reading the Monreaux history book to her in the library to get her to sleep.

I loved her so much. I had so much planned for her. I wanted to protect her, to be the brother she looked up to, but now there’s a stranger in front of me. She’s a woman.

And she probably doesn’t need me anymore, not like I need her.

I haul her into my arms regardless and she meets the hug with the same force. “I’ve missed you too,” she whispers. When she pulls away, her eyes shine like crystals. “I know we don’t have much, but I remember what you gave me in the time you held me. I loved it when you held me and read that boring book.”

I’m stunned. “That’s impossible for you to remember. You were hours old.”

“I remember everything I see, Lexy. And I’ve missed you so damn much. I love you.”

I needed to hear that. I needed to know my family still needs me. “I love you too, baby sister.” I push a white strand of hair behind her ear. “I guess you’re no longer a baby.” I frown when guilt and sorrow wrap around me.

She buries her head in my shoulder and squeezes me tight again, crying as I hold her. I stare up at the ceiling and blink the emotion away, or try to, but the happiness, the relief, it won’t stop. It’s all bombarding me.

Letting go of her, of father, of Luca and Greyson, it isn’t an option. I refuse to live through that again.

Stretching out my arm, yet keeping Rarity tucked to my side, I offer Luca and Greyson to join in. Without question and with huge grins, they engulf me and Rarity.

“Vampire hug!” Uncle Luca shouts, always fun-loving and happy, but I hear the vibrato. He’s feeling this moment too.

“I’ve missed all of you so much. Where have you been?” I ask, unsure if I truly want to know.

“We’ve been on another side of the veil I can’t explain. Even after all these years. We tried so hard to come back home, but the portal was impossible to open without a Wildes, that’s what a mage told us,” Luca explains, leaning away to speak.

“A mage?” I gasp. “Wait, mother? Is she alive too?” I know better than to ask that. She’s dead, but like the young vampire I am when it comes to mother, a small flicker of hope remains in my heart for her to live.

“No. It’s her blood that closed the portal so the wolves couldn’t come into the portal. She sacrificed herself.” He solidifies my fear and while the affirmation hurts, it feels good to truly know.

“Introduce us, Lexy. Who are the new people?” Greyson tucks his hands in his pockets, a muscle ticking in his jaw as he stares at the wolves.

If the wolves make it a full night with vampires who want revenge, they might just survive to live a full life.

“You tell me.” I look behind him to see eleven others waiting uncomfortably. Men and women combined.

“They are our friends.” Uncle Luca holds out his arm. “Luna is fae. Reuel is an elf. Everyone else is a vampire from a gypsy coven that travels through portals, their witch died, leaving them stuck in the in between like us.”

There are other portals? I want to know more, but later.

“The tall bulky one is Amory, then it’s Finnick, Gullivere, Amberella, Zaffre, Alastair, Alaric, Tala, and Drayce is the one with the Viking haircut.”

I stand and realize I’m about to be a Master to more than a few people. My coven is growing. “I’m Alexander Monreaux. Master of this coven.”

They all kneel and Drayce thumps his chest. I notice a bit of wild, untamed warrior in him. He has long dark blonde hair, shaved on the side and a braid. I bet he’s been around for a while.

The elf catches my eyes too. He’s got dark brown skin, the color of the night with irises of snow and pointy ears with multiple rings.

“Before you pledge your allegiance, let me introduce you. This is my beloved, Maven Wildes.” They all look at her as if she’s not real. “She’s pregnant and she’s to be protected at all costs. This is her familiar, Dottie. We aren’t sure what she is yet, but she’s powerful and joined my coven this morning.”

Drayce’s eyes widen, taking in the red image of her creature around her. “Gods, I’ve never seen anything like her.”

Dottie blushes under the assessment.

“Don’t make her feel uncomfortable.” I stand in front of her, so she doesn’t feel attacked. I move on. “That’s Whiskey, Pa’s familiar. He’s ours now. And then there are the werewolves.”

The vampires hiss but the fae and elf remain unbothered as they stand to the side.

The wolves drop to their knees and bend their neck, a gesture of submission.

“They were bound by a spell from a warlock that’s now broken. I turned Brenden Hall and forced their bite. He’s in a coma now, somewhere. It broke the spell. This is Anwyll and Aziel.”

A few vampires look skeptically but some have pity and sympathy on their faces.

“Now that the portal is open, we expect more will come and this new power you hold here will be challenged. A Wildes magic is rare, and people will want it,” the fae, Luna, states in a hypnotized tone, her eyes clouded as if she’s blind. “This won’t be the last of us, but many will be enemies.”

“But a sacrifice is needed to open and close it. It should be closed now, right?” Maven asks, jumping her sights from me to the fae.

Luna shakes her head and her voice is soothing, a tint of harmony in her tone, reminding me of a harp playing in the distance. “It requires sacrifice to open. The portal closes when the witch who is bound to it dies.”

That’s new information. All this time, the rumor was that Sarah closed it. She did, only in death.

“Oh boy,” Maven mumbles, bending down to scratch Whiskey’s head.

I clear my throat to change the subject. We can’t worry about the portal right now. Too many good things are happening to stress about what ifs. “Well, until then, let’s celebrate,” I announce. “To being alive. To having my family back.”

“Aye, I love a good party. Where’s the fucking ale?” Drayce gets to his feet and smiles.

My father has disappeared, but I know where he is. While I’m hurt this is hitting him all at once, I’m thankful he’s home. My family has returned. New hope has arrived.

It’s time to start over.

We are no longer damned.

I’m going to rebuild.

A Wildes love is the power, the force of change, the hope we need.

They are the magic.