

Eternally Damned: Chapter 5

Maven

So much pain.

All the screaming, it hurts my ears.

Kill them. Kill them all! Keep their fangs.

"I can't go. I'll just slow you down. The venom has taken me."

"You can't quit on me. I need you. You hear me?"

"Did mother make it? Sister? Father, Greyson, Uncle Luca?"

So many conversations morph as memories switch quickly.

Death.

Pain.

Torture.

Howls.

I toss and turn in bed, sweat covering my entire body. I feel their will to live, the fear, the grief.

It's all too much.

A man, tall with dark hair and blue eyes takes over my nightmare. He's beautiful. Wide shoulders, muscles I want to explore, and a smile that would send any woman into a sexual frenzy.

"I need you to come home. Come to me, Maven. I need you."

“Why?” I ask, taking a step closer.

“I’ve waited for so long to be set free. Come home.”

“Alexander?” I ask the mirage.

“Save me,” he pleads before he tilts his head back and screams. The veins in his neck protruding and blood coats his entire body. Tears drip down his face, leaving clean glowing lines in the red staining his cheeks. The guttural sound shaking the roots that set my heart.

I jolt awake, gasping for breath as I hold a hand to my chest. My heart beats in wild tandem and I cringe when I feel the sweat coating my skin. I take a minute to gather my thoughts, wondering what the hell just happened.

I lick my lips to wet them and taste the salt of sweat, then toss the comforter off my body. It’s damp, as if I ran a mile in my dreams or was roasted alive.

My imagination is really getting the best of me. It has to be because I went to the Monreaux Estate just a few short hours ago. Whatever happened there definitely scared me and obviously my subconscious is still bothered.

The house shook. I felt it. I heard a roar. A horrible, painful sound that when I think about it, I feel the anguish and tear up.

The dreams aren’t real, I know that, but the ghost? That had to be real. I felt it touch my cheek, but instead of cold, it was a warm, caressing touch, as if the ghost was trying to wipe away my tears.

Impossible.

But what other explanation is there for the quaking of the house? I’ve watched enough movies to know ghosts can do some unbelievable things. How can I get the ghost to leave?

I swing my legs over the bed and sway, feeling sick and dizzy all of a sudden. It’s the same feeling I had in my dreams, as if the man talking to me was ill.

And the man... good god, he was gorgeous.

“You’re a crazy person thinking this ghost is good looking. You really don’t have a dating life,” I mumble to myself in the darkness.

The only light is from the moon beaming through the windows. I yawn, stretching my arms above my head as I stand, staring through the glass to the round white circle hanging in the sky. My brows crinkle together when I hear a howl reverberating in my mind and a clear hatred for the moon surfaces.

I pick up the picture on my desk and stare at the young man in the photo, Alexander Monreaux, the person who seems to be haunting my dreams. An idea hits me, a realization really. I rub the fragile glass with my thumb, staring into the ice-colored irises. “Are you the ghost in the house?” Maybe these dreams are a way for him to communicate with me. It’s a long shot, but the man in the photo is the same man in my dreams.

It’s the only thing I have to go on right now.

I gently place the photo next to my laptop and pull out my chair. My damp hair gets on my nerves as it sticks to my neck and I throw it in a messy bun on top of my head. A lone piece dangles to the side and taking one last look at the photo, I do what any sane woman would do when she’s being haunted.

She researches a way to get the ghost out of her home.

I type into Google, “How to get a ghost to move on,” I say it out loud as I type. I scroll through the results and most say the ghosts are bound there and have unfinished business. Until that business is complete, they aren’t going anywhere.

I see a few “spells” and the usual sage to help cleanse the home, but the thought of forcing him to leave upsets me and it doesn’t feel right.

“Okay...” I say unsure and begin to bite my thumbnail as I think. I blow out a breath and begin typing again. “How to communicate with a ghost.” I type.

A Ouija boards.

I jump out of the chair and run to my closet, digging through the different board games until I come across the Ouija board, I got for my thirteenth birthday. “Hmmm, does it matter if the board glows in the dark? Does it make the results less likely?” I ask myself. I bet this isn’t even a real board, but it’s all I have.

I sit down and shake the box until the top pops off, settling it on the floor. Unfolding the board, I stifle a laugh when it begins to glow.

Yeah, this isn’t going to work.

I close my eyes and place my hands on the planchette. “Is Alexander here right now?” I ask and wait for a few minutes to see if it works. After I don’t feel anything, I peek an eye open to see the planchette hasn’t moved.

“Damn it.” I drop my hands and stand, heading to my laptop again. I tap my fingers on the desk and click my tongue while I think of why it didn’t work. Granted, I only asked it one question, maybe that was it, but it was a pretty important question. He obviously isn’t here.

I begin typing into Google again. “Do ghosts leave their home?” I press enter and begin to read. “Ghosts can travel, but some are bound to where they died.”

My brows hit my hairline but a pang in my heart blooms thinking about Alexander dead.

I don’t even know this damn ghost.

But I don’t want him to be dead. I don’t know why. Maybe because it’s sad and heartbreaking. He must be so confused as to why I’m there. That’s what the shaking had to be about. He wanted me out of the house.

I snort. “Tough titty, ghost man. That’s my house now. We either learn to live together or your ass is out of there,” I say confidently. I know what I need to do now. I gather the Ouija board and place it on the bed, then begin to get dressed. Nothing fancy, just a pair of skintight leggings.

Because I have this sick thought that I want this ghost to check out my ass.

“You’re mental,” I sigh in disappointment. I throw on a purple shirt that says Witch’s Brew across it, gather the board, slip on my shoes, and head out the door.

There’s a light on downstairs as I ease the door shut. I look over the rail and see Pa in his recliner, watching TV. Whiskey is lying on the rug in front of the fireplace and Pa is flipping through the channels.

“Pa, why are you up?” I come down the steps, holding the board to my side, cocking my head in worry.

“Ah, just can’t sleep. Nothing but damn ads on this time of night. I swear, I’ve almost bought a damn blender ten times in the last hour. I don’t need a blender.”

A chuckle escapes me. I bend down and give him a kiss on top of his head. “Pa, try to get some sleep.”

He ignores me. “Ouija board, huh? Got a ghost in that Monreaux mansion? Doesn’t surprise me. It’s ancient. I’m sure a few people have died there.”

“Do you know any stories about the estate?”

He scratches his chin. “Nothing you don’t already know, I’m afraid. Why? Did something happen when you went there?”

I sit down on the couch and forget the cushion nearly hits the floor. I feel a spring pinching against my right butt cheek. I wiggle to get comfortable, placing the board on my lap. “Someone was there with me. And I swear, I felt him try to touch me, but then he got so mad that the house shook. I heard the cry, Pa.” Emotion chokes my throat. “It was so horrible. So much pain. And then I woke up a little bit ago with the oddest dreams. Flashes of... what seemed like memories, but my imagination is running wild. I need answers before I drive myself crazy.” It’s hard to believe it has only been a few hours since I left the Monreaux Estate. I feel like it’s been ages since those dreams made me feel exhausted.

“Did you say dreams?” His face hardens and leans forward in the recliner. “What kind?”

I lean back, not liking the tone Pa is having with me. “Nothing to be concerned about. Why?”

“What was said? Who was in your dream? What was it about?” He throws question after question at me.

“Pa, you’re scaring me.” I get up and head toward the door, his hand wrapping around my wrist to stop me. “Pa...”

“Maven, I didn’t know you were drawn to the house because—”

I yank my arm from his hand. “Because nothing. That’s my home. I don’t care what I dream. I can’t believe you’re trying to talk me out of this, after all this time.” I shake my head in disappointment, giving him one last look before grabbing the keys and running out the door.

“Maven! Maven, we need to talk. There are things you need to know!” He shouts after me, Whiskey barking behind him.

I wipe my cheek, heartbroken that the one person I thought I could count on would try to stop me from figuring out my destiny.

Yes, this house, this ghost, I’m meant for this. I don’t know how or why but I believe there is a reason I’ve been drawn to the estate my entire life.

I’m going to find out why and I don’t care if the news kills me.

I throw my arm over the passenger seat and turn my head over my shoulder to watch where I’m going as I reverse. I throw the truck in drive, ignoring all the potholes that are bad for the frame.

Pa would have a fit right now.

The headlights illuminate the night as I travel.

There's a loneliness that hangs in the dark, a type of solitude that feels like I'm alone in space. It's as if I'm waiting for someone to reach out and grab me, only to miss because they can't see.

I rub my chest with my fist, wondering where these emotions are coming from. They aren't from me.

I don't pass another car the entire ride to the Monreaux Estate. The weeds are already flattened from earlier so driving is a bit easier. When I get to the iron gate, the large M in the middle along with the keyhole seem bigger while I stare at it.

There's that feeling again, the overwhelming need to be here.

It reminds me of crippling anxiety mixed with butterflies and anticipation, fear, and love.

There are different types of love, I just haven't figured out what type I'm feeling yet.

With a tired sigh, I open the truck door and an annoying ding sound. I slip off the seat and the weeds crunch under my shoes as I walk to the gate. I haven't fought with my Pa in ages and as I insert the aged key, I know it's because this estate has already changed me.

With a hard click to the right, the lock opens and by flattening my palms against the M intertwined in the gate, I push it open, gasping when an image rushing to the forefront of my mind has me stumbling back. I hit the warm hood of the truck and hold the side of my head. Flashes of someone running through the woods in pain has me clutching my side.

Is it me?

No. I'm seeing from someone else's perspective.

I fall and it causes me to hit the ground in real time, my knees digging into the thorns weaving across the driveway.

My heart is racing. I hear something in the distance...howls? I cry out in turmoil, my side on fire and my vision blurring.

Blood.

I taste blood.

The gates groan and it yanks me out of my dream. With a large inhale of air as if I haven't been able to breathe for minutes, I fall forward on my hands. I'm present. I'm no longer running. I'm here. The ground is beneath me.

I curl my fingers against the dirt needing to feel the grains.

"I'm okay," I say, pushing myself onto wobbly legs. I stretch my arm to reach for the truck and use it as a crutch while I try to decipher what the fuck just happened. Am I losing my mind? Maybe this estate is vile. Maybe I'm slowly going mad because of the curses that live in the ground and trees like so many people say.

Specks of dirt and small bugs flutter in front of the headlights. I follow the glowing yellow as it tunnels toward the mansion, I've wanted my entire life.

After everything, fear is still the last thing I feel.

The tug on my soul begins again. My heart is a puppet, and the ghost in my house has to be the puppeteer.

I need to cut the strings, but I have a feeling not even that would be enough to get away from the force that this Monreaux estate has.

I hurry into the driver's seat and don't bother to buckle up. Slamming my foot on the gas, the tires spin as they try to gain traction. Rocks fly and hit the ground behind me, and the truck fishtails for a split second before surging forward.

Large, willowing trees with sagging branches line each side of the driveway. The leaves have all but nearly fallen to the ground, decorating the path in array of colors, but the majority are bright red.

As if I'm driving through a river of blood.

When I get to the front of the house, I jerk the truck into park and stare at the condemned estate.

It's so gorgeous, but in this moment, it looks like a fear come to life. The white paint is chipped from years of weather and the wood is rotted. The porch sags and the steps are broken. The Victorian home has had better days. The windows are shattered or completely missing, letting me peer into the abyss inside. The roof needs to be replaced and I'm starting to think I'm a mad woman for wanting this property.

What hold does this place have on me?

I snag the Ouija board, then the small flashlight Pa keeps in the glove compartment since I left the lantern here earlier. Slamming the truck door, I stomp up the steps with determination. I might have stomped a little too hard on the unfaithful wood and snap it in half, nearly tripping up the stairs.

Not letting it stop me, I ignore the slight pain in my ankle and march through the doorway of the house. A few leaves have made their way into the living room, and they swirl, scratching against the ground, but not from the breeze.

"Okay, so you're here. Awesome. Listen, buddy. I'm not in the mood. I think you're fucking with me, and I don't appreciate it. So come out come out wherever you are. It's time to have a little talk. I'm tired, need to shower, and I fought with Pa. I never fight with him." Not that this ghost cares about my personal life. I plop down on the ground and cross my legs, then unfold the Ouija board, placing the planchette in the middle.

From this moment on, I refuse to have my heart manipulated, whether it be by unrealistic dreams, selfish desires, or a damn sexy ghost.