

Eternally Damned: Chapter 9

Maven

I see Alexander running through the forest. The inky black hair bounces with every hurried step he takes. He looks to into the dark behind him and that's when I see the teeth marks on his side.

He is bleeding.

"Lex!" I scream his name, but he doesn't hear me.

He runs right by me, tripping over a tree root.

"Fuck," he curses, holding a hand to his side. "Goddamn werewolves."

A wolf howls in the distance with screams and he closes his eyes, one lone iridescent tear escaping his eyes.

I reach to wipe it away but can't touch him.

"Lex, get up. Run! Don't give up. I need you," I yell at him, checking every corner surrounding me to make sure we are alone.

My dream changes again.

This time, I see Alexander with someone who looks just like him. This must be Atreyu. I wince when I see his injuries. The long bloody claws marks on his face seem painful.

"He killed mother."

"Atreyu—"

"—I knows. It will be okay. Let's get to the catacombs. If we can get there, there's hope."

The dream switches again.

I'm in front of the house and Atreyu is carrying Lex, who looks like he is on the verge of death.

He is pale from the loss of blood, weaker by the second.

Wait, I've seen that wound before on his side.

I follow curiously, seeing where Atreyu goes, but with every step I cry silently, seeing the dead bodies of their coven in pieces. Blood everywhere I step.

I hold my hand over my mouth and weep for Lex.

I cry for his brother.

And I follow them into the dark hallways and basements. The smell old and stale, cobwebs lingering in the corners.

I'm cold and my breath is coming out in frozen clouds.

I watch as Atreyu pricks his hand and opens an iron door. The room is dark, and the air is hard to breathe. I hear the scratches of nails against the ground.

Rats.

He places Lex in a mausoleum, the only light is from the torch on the wall. "Brother, brasken ini ou sanguila," Lex tell his brother as they touch foreheads.

The tomb closes, the grinding of stone has my teeth aching when it closes, locking my beloved inside.

I catch a moment with Atreyu that Lex would never witness. Atreyu covers his arms across the top of the tomb and cries, the sobs heart breaking and loud. They echo in the small space.

Tears leak from his eyes, streaking down his face. He throws his head back and roars, the power trembling the foundation of the house again.

I can't help but mourn with him.

"Please, if not me, have his beloved come. He is too good and undeserving of darkness. I will die in my two hundred years happily if it means he lives." Atreyu presses a kiss to his hands and places it on the stone.

That's when I noticed the emblem on the top. I take a step closer as Atreyu opens the second crypt with the blood on his hands. He walks forward to his fate, the wound on his shoulder telling me he has the same destiny as Lex.

Running to the tomb, I notice a raised W with a rose intertwined.

The same mark I've left on Lex.

Did Sarah make these crypts? Is that why they are protected?

Atreyu closes the door to his resting place, and I'm yanked away from their horrible reality.

I wake with a sob in my throat... I was having the best night of my life and then the veil came back.

It was like someone forced their hand in my chest and ripped my heart out. To be so close to having him, to not at all, is a torturous agony. I'm thankful for the moments we shared, but I want more.

I want so much more.

I want the eternity he explained to me.

He's here. Alexander is here and he is waiting for me.

"Maven? Maven, what is it? I'm here, Beloved. I'm right here," Alexander says, wrapping his arms around me.

That damned veil in our way again.

I push him away and get to my feet. "Where are my leggings?" I ask him, glancing around desperately. I find my bra and put it on, then slip on my shirt.

"What's wrong? What's going on?" he asks, worry laced in his voice. "Don't leave me again."

The pain in his eyes has me bending down to kiss his forehead. "Never," I reply, the guilt vanishing as I flip the blankets and find my pants crumpled into a lump. "Found them!" I say way too excitedly. I pop them in the air to straighten them out and jiggle my legs in the spandex, then jump to get my butt covered.

"Tell me what is going on! Don't leave me," he repeats on a growl, his eyes changing from ice blue to red.

He'd stop me if I ever tried to leave again, not that I'd want to.

I belong right here with him.

I shake my head and invade his space, holding his face in my hands, the veil stronger than it was before. I can barely feel him now. Instead of a kiss on the forehead, I explain myself. "Never. I'd never leave you, but I think I know what happened to you, Lex. I've been having these dreams and I thought they were my imagination getting the best of me because you were so heavily on my mind." I smile hopefully. "They were answers you've been seeking. You and your brother, you got injured." I placed my hand on his side to remind him. "There was a war, between werewolves and vampires. You barely made it to safety. Atreyu carried you through this house and I think I know where to find you. You've been waiting on me. Your spirit didn't wake because I'm the coven witch. It woke because I'm your beloved. Only beloveds and vampires can open the tomb, at least, that's what Atreyu said in my dream. Do you remember yet?"

He shakes his head, the black brows showing confusion as he looks away.

"I'm not wasting any more time." I take his hand in mine. "Show me the catacombs."

"Your dreams make no sense, Beloved. I think they are just that... dreams."

I don't know why his doubt pisses me off so much but lightning cracks outside, lighting the room for a split second. I take my hand from his and clench my fists to my side. "I said show me the catacombs!" My voice booms as loud as thunder and the same black roses begin to twine across the floor, showing me the way. "Fine. If you won't, they will." I point to my roses, which I still have no control over. I don't understand my magic.

And I don't know if I even believe in it yet, even though I should. Magic surrounds me.

My feet crunch against the soft velvet of the thornless roses. "Show me the way to him," I whisper to them, and they bloom more, covering an old door with a broken handle. The vines and leaves twirl, turning the gold rusted doorknob. The hinges cry out as it's forced open after so many years of unuse.

The roses cascade down the steps, padding the way for me, they bloom under my bare feet with every step, the magic in tune with my thoughts. The room opens up to what looks like another sitting room. The green vines climb up a bookshelf, forcing their way down behind it. I grab the bookshelf and pull it away from the wall. It swings easily on a hinge, exposing a darkened hallway.

I can't see.

"Bring me light," I tell my roses, following my instincts once more.

Each begins to glow, their middles pulsating with gold to show me the way until I run into another wall. I look around, searching for a door, until I notice the vines circling a spot on the floor.

"Open it," I order, and the vines strangle the handle.

The door lifts, breaking cobwebs that are attached. My roses lead me down more steps, to another tunnel like hallway.

It's a maze.

"What are you doing?" Lex stops in front of me, his eyes begging for me to stop. "The dead can't be brought back to life, Maven. I'm sorry you are stuck with a mate you

cannot have," he says with so much sadness and disappointment, I can't decide if I want to kiss him or slap him.

"You aren't dead. You're in a coma from a werewolf bite." I shove him out of my way the best I can, which doesn't work since he can poof out of sight. "You won't be able to use that trick much longer," I warn.

God, if he isn't in a coma and I have to fight with a ghost for the rest of my life, I will be salting the doorways to keep him trapped so he can't vanish.

"I hope you're right." His voice comes from behind me.

I know I am.

The roses travel down the sloped dirt hall and take a right.

"Your magic is becoming stronger. It's beautiful," Lex compliments.

"It's because of you," I admit.

I have a feeling my magic would have lied dead forever if I had not met him. And my Pa would have never told me. I would have lived the rest of my life completely unfulfilled.

The roses stop at a large iron door with a needle protruding out where the handle is supposed to be.

"I think I prick my finger on this," I say to Lex, but only silence is returned.

I turn around to see what he is doing but he isn't there.

"Lex?" My lone voice reverberates off the walls.

Not wanting to wait a second longer, I hold back a groan when I press my finger on the needle. The drop of blood flows down the metal and disperses into a thin river in the nooks and crannies of the door. The rods of roses and leaves begin to move, the clanking of iron causing my ears to ring.

It unlocks and I have to throw my weight into the door to swing it open it's so heavy. The fresh roses follow me inside the cold room, the familiar cold breaths puff in front of me.

"I remember this room from my dream."

"I'm in here." Lex stands in front of the crypt. Monreaux is carved in the marble above him. "I feel it. I'm being forced to come back," he snarls. "I won't have death take me from you."

"It isn't." I press my hand against the door, the droplets of blood proving I'm a beloved gives me access. "Creepy," I say softly as I look around the small space. A stone coffin lies in the middle of the floor, designs of a W and roses capturing my attention.

"It's definitely not the royal treatment."

I chuckle at his remark, but the moment is fleeting compared to the seriousness of the situation. I hover my hand over the W engraved on the coffin, hoping that this fixes everything. Changes everything.

My whole life lies before me.

If this doesn't work, I choose coma too.

"Don't be upset if it doesn't work," Lex informs me. "I'm happier than I've ever been."

"You don't remember other moments of happiness because you're stuck where you are. You're meant to be with me." I press my bleeding finger against the stone and the blood turns black, darkening the cement. The stone begins to move on its own accord, a sandstorm of dust blinding me.

I cough, waving my hand in front of my face and when I can see the lid of the coffin moving slow, I use my own strength to push it away faster.

It doesn't work.

I will my magic to help, the roses circling around the lid, moving it effortlessly.

When the dust settles, I gasp when I see Lex's face. "My beloved," I whisper, running my hands through his hair. Whatever magic this tomb possesses has kept him frozen in time. For the most part, he looks healthy.

His clothes are disgusting, his shirt tattered and stained red, but I don't smell anything rotten, and to be honest, I expected more of a skeleton and soggy... bits.

His lips are full and pink, his dark lashes curl and frame his eyes. I tug on the useless shirt and see the wound, dried blood coating the teeth marks.

Feeling his body, his real body beneath my fingers is different than his ghost.

"I told you." I look over my shoulder to smile at Lex, but he isn't there.

And quickly my happiness fades. "Lex?" I search for his spirit everywhere, my eyes seeking every corner of the room.

Nothing.

I grip his face in my hands and cry, rubbing my fingers through the stubble on his cheeks. "Come back to me. I'm here, damn it," I raise my voice at his still body, watching his chest rise and fall. "I followed the directions. I'm here! Wake up," I beg.

No, I plead.

I rub my bleeding finger over his lips and blood red moons stare back at me suddenly, a madness etched on Lex's features as he licks his tongue over his lips. I watch as he inhales, his fangs longer than I remember.

His eyes roll to the back his head, and I slowly remove my hand, fear thudding my heart instead of blood.

His hand snakes out in a blur, gripping my wrist with a powerful hold. He sucks my finger into his mouth and moans, my nipples tightening against my shirt in response.

Before I'm able to take my next breath to try to speak to him, my back is slammed against the wall and Lex is towering over me, his talons wrapped around my throat in a deadly grip.

We stare into each other's eyes and right as he bends down to kill me, no doubt, he sinks his fangs into my neck instead, taking long swallows of my blood. He moans, trapping me against him with his body. I have nowhere to go.

I'm his for the taking.

Warmth spreads in my lower belly and with another suck against my neck, I explode, stars swimming in my vision as I come from the pleasure of his bite.

His mark.

It's been so long since he has had a drink, I'd let him have every drop if I could.

Alexander snarls viciously, like he is fighting not to tear me apart. His vampire strength can be felt in my bones as he holds on tight, my neck bent at an odd angle as he takes.

He breaks the kiss against my throat and flattens his tongue against my skin, licking every smeared drop along my flesh.

People lick their fingers when they are done with their meal. So right as I think he is about to call it quits, he bends my neck to the other side and sinks his fangs into my jugular.

Another explosion sends heat through my body as another orgasm hits me. He grunts, groaning as if he just came as well. I snake my hand out to feel the front of his pants, gasping when I feel his hard length. The material is wet from his release.

He's here.

In the flesh.

He is real.

He finally pulls away, his lips red from my blood, his fangs dripping from their meal.

I reach up and lick a stream from his chin, the iron metallic taste not as delightful as he seems to think.

“Beloved,” his voice is so close, so deep, the marrow in my bones calls out to him.

I didn’t realize how far away he actually sounded while on the other side of the veil. His words are crisp, an old accent twists his tongue making him sound sophisticated.

“You’ve found me,” he finally says, but then he staggers away from me. His hands run through his long, unkempt hair and he tugs before screaming, a nightmare unfolding before me.

My blood drips from his cuspids while prismatic-hued tears stain his face. I have to cover my ears the roar is so deafening.

It breaks my soul.

“Everything is gone. Everyone is gone,” he states, staring out the door. “Brother.”

He remembers.

But he remembers everything as if it happened yesterday.

For him, I suppose it did.

He runs out of the tomb and bangs on his brother’s mausoleum. He cracks the door, and the stone breaks the skin of his hand. Blood smears and the stone opens. Lex dashes inside and falls on his knees beside the coffin so similar to his own.

“I’m here, Atreyu. I’m here. I’m here, brother. Come back,” he begs, placing his hand on top of the W. “I can’t live this life without you. Everyone is gone.” He bends his head and sobs, a powerful creature, a broken man, succumbed to the pain of losing everyone he has ever known all at once.

I don't know why I didn't think about that before I released him from his coma. I was hoping our reunion would be magical, hot, and forbidden, but like a fool, I turned a blind eye to his past.

A past that feels like the present to him.

I step forward, feeling like I'm cornering a wild animal.

Tears fall from his jaw onto the floor, and I take one of the roses, ripping the petal off and wipe his cheeks with it.

"You are not alone, beloved. I am here and we will protect your brother. I swear it."

He blinks at me, as if he forgot I was here, his lashes sticking together from the tears, turning them into spikes.

Lex gathers me in one arm, tugging me close, while one hand remains on the coffin. His talons dig into the rock, scraping five lines down the side before his arm circles around me.

I hold him in return, my knees aching from the hard surface of the floor, but I don't care.

I have him in my arms.

And my vampire has so much healing to do.

"Maybe we can try to bring him upstairs?" I ask, hoping the idea makes him feel better.

"No, this room, these crypts are protected by Sarah's magic. They were the last two that survived the war before she was burned. He has to stay in here. So, I know he is safe."

I nod, understanding his worry.

"But you're a Wildes, maybe your magic can wake him?" he asks hopefully, placing my hands on the top of the W in the middle of the coffin.

His eyes are round with faith. "Please."

I know it won't work, but I'll do anything for Lex. I kiss his cheek and lift my hand to his mouth for him to bite.

He doesn't even drink. He bites making me inhale a breath, but the pleasure is short lived as he retracts his fangs and I gently push my hand on top of Atreyu's resting place.

The blood doesn't soak into the stone like it did before. My magic doesn't buzz in my veins.

Just stillness.

"I am not his beloved. My magic won't work. I'm so sorry."

He seems lost as he stares at my hand. He lifts it in the air and licks it clean, closing the wound with his saliva. "It's me who is sorry. I should have known better. In my haste, in my broken emotions, I had hoped for something I knew was impossible. I just thought, I found my beloved after 121 years, she woke me from a poisonous coma, and she's a descendent of one of the strongest witches that has ever lived. Hope is a fickle thing," he mutters. "You awakened me." He takes my hand, and my heart skips a beat when the heat from his palm seeps into mine.

"Come on. Let's go get you cleaned up?"

He kisses my hand before bending down and whispering, "Brother, brasken ini mi sanguila."

"What's that mean?" I ask in a soft voice, remembering the words from my dream.

"Brother, forever in my blood." His fingers drift down the body of the coffin before his hand falls to his side as he walks out of the door.

I follow close behind and instead of a dark stillness in the room, I give the room life. My roses fill the walls and bloom, hoping they will keep Atreyu company.

Lex snags me by the waist, and everything is a blur as he runs as fast as he can to the library where our little home away from home is.

The joy and excitement leave his eyes as he squats, picking up a fistful of ash and watching it fall from his hand. "These piles of ash, they are my coven. It's why I didn't want you stepping on them."

I run to him, throwing my arms around his neck and hold on tight, burying my nose in his shoulder. There are a few cobwebs in his hair, but I don't mind. "We will bury them. I'll create a new place for them to rest and be at peace."

He leans away, his thumb outlining my bottom lip. "You will?"

"Anything for you."

"I had hoped all those years ago, I would have met you, but when I got bit by the werewolf, you were my only hope. We can only live for 200 years without our beloveds. And it has been 191 for me and my brother. He has 9 years left." His forehead falls to mine. "It took me so long for you to find me, what if his beloved doesn't come?"

"She will. I'll find a way to bring her here. I don't care how many books I have to read. How many spells I have to try. I'll make sure he wakes soon."

"I can't live without him," he admits, the glowing streaks on his face reminding me of pearls. "Just as I can't live without you." He glances around the house, a home of so many things that used to be.

I make note to ask about the uniqueness of his tears. I've never seen anything like them before. An answer to that question isn't important. His stability is first.

There's no need to rush his process of accepting his reality.

We have forever.

His coven did not.

He has waited 121 years to mourn.

And what is worse is, not only can't he mourn in a place he knows, but he also has to grieve in a new world he doesn't.