

Eternally Damned: Prologue

Alexander

Year 1900

A vampire can live for an eternity, but eternity comes at a price. A vampire can only live forever if they meet their beloved, the other half of their soul, their blood mate.

I have heard many stories of vampires meeting their one true love. Stories that were told while I was a baby, stories told on the hunt for blood, novelties I never believed because every year I became older, the older the fairytale became. I'm seventy years of age, still a teenager in vampire years, but old in human, and still I have yet to meet a vampire that has met their other half.

Not even my own parents are fated.

It's been said that it's been well over two thousand years since a vampire has met their beloved and the only reason we have continued to survive is because we are able to change humans and mate our own kind. There are not many blood born anymore, like me.

Our numbers dwindle by the decade, and it doesn't help that there has been underlying tension between wolves and vampires. We say we are at peace, but it's a lie. They are attacking us right now and they have partnered with humans. Werewolves have become the human's pets, and together they have become a force that's hard for us to beat.

I don't know how or why, but I'm running for my life. I got lost in the havoc and strife trying to survive and dodge every wolf attack when I decided to go after my brother. It's so fucking typical for Atreyu to act first and think later.

And father knew I wouldn't be able to stay behind while my twin was on his own fighting our enemy.

I'll never forget the fear in my father's eyes. He looked at me as if it were the last time, he'd ever see me. I think of Greyson and Uncle Luca, Atreyu, Mother, and Rarity, my newborn baby sister. Emotion hitches my chest. Nothing can happen to them. They are my family.

The ring my father gave me glistens in blood that isn't mine as I try to find a way to survive. Thinking about what that particular responsibility means has my legs giving out from under me.

"He's slowing," a hunter shouts with glee and his werewolf bitch howls in agreement, commenting on how much speed I'm losing by the second.

An arrow whizzes by my head as I attempt to run full speed, zipping through the two-hundred acres of thick forest that's been in the Monreaux Coven for thousands of years.

I have to get back to the estate, but the chaos erupting in the woods makes the task seem that much more difficult. Too many hunters, too many werewolves.

We are outnumbered.

I've killed my fair share of beasts but not nearly enough.

And that is not where my issues even begin.

I glance down at my side, wincing when I see the rips in my shirt and the blood turning darker by the second. I was able to kill the werewolf that latched onto me, but not before his sharp teeth tore into my side.

The warnings my father told me over the years ring through my mind.

Whatever you do, Alexander, never get bitten by a werewolf.

If you get bitten, you get to the catacombs immediately.

If you see a wolf, run the other way. Confronting a wolf isn't worth the risk of getting bit.

Not many things can kill a vampire, we are pretty resilient. Like every living thing, we have a weakness, and ours is a werewolf bite. Something in their saliva is venomous to us, but what's worse is that it doesn't kill us right away.

It takes a few hours to set in.

At first, it hits our lungs, the venom making it harder to breathe by the second. It wouldn't be so bad if I wasn't running. Using the little energy, I have left is making the venom spread expeditiously.

Next, the cursed toxin hits our nervous systems, something I'm beginning to feel because my legs are becoming harder to move.

Then, it will be my vision.

And finally, my heart will slow to a dangerous rate, sending me into a deep coma that only my beloved can wake me up from before it's too late.

My life, as far as I know, is over.

I'm doomed. It's why I need to get back to the estate. If I can make it, I can go into the basement and underground where my father stores a few coffins that haven't been used in a few centuries.

We don't sleep in coffins, but father kept them around in case of emergencies because they are enchanted with Sarah Wildes magic that will protect us.

If I can get to the coffin, at least, I'll be able to fall into a coma safely.

"Fuck!" I roar to the sunseting sky as a sharp pain ignites in my left leg.

I stumble over my feet, tripping over a tree root that finally sends me tumbling down to the wet, soggy leaves kindling the floor.

My talons elongate, digging into the soil as an agonizing blaze paralyzes me.

Laying on my stomach, my legs tingle and my breathing becomes ragged.

My vision spins and I rest my forehead against the moss-covered dirt, the strong earthy scent tingling my nostrils. I can smell yesterday's rain. There's a caterpillar crawling somewhere in the distance, its body scratching along the ground.

Memories are next, they always accompany scents.

I close my eyes and see a young couple, girl and boy, teenagers, sneaking their first kiss next to this tree. She's wearing a full skirt and his shoes shine so much against the light, the moon is jealous.

I inhale again, the scent of rain drifting and morphing to a hot summer's day.

It's me and Atreyu around five years old, racing one another through the dandelions that had just bloomed. We wanted to see who had the fastest vampire speed.

He'd never admit it, but I won by a talon.

Breathing in, the vibrations of heavy paws have my eyes snapping open. Sweat begins to form along my brows as I drag myself to a nearby tree to rest.

I can't get up.

Everything hurts.

Everything burns.

My bones ache.

My fangs throb.

And my heartbeat is slowing as the venom takes over.

I clutch my leg, inhaling sharply while I stare up at the sky through the canopy of the trees. The branches spreading against the quickly darkening atmosphere, the stars bright above the leaves.

A scratch form in the back of my throat and I try to swallow to coat it with spit, but not even that helps. Sighing, I tilt my head down to stare at what is causing the pain in my leg.

I chuckle when I see it, then curse, "Son of a bitch."

A pure silver arrow pierces the meat on my bones, the tip dripping with what little blood I have left. I hold a hand to my side and grunt, swaying in place as a round of dizziness hits.

Goddamn were-fangs are sharp.

Reaching for the arrow, my hand goes to grab the tail end of it, but I miss.

Huh.

Suddenly, there are two arrows.

I squeeze my eyes shut and open them again, my sight returning to normal long enough for me to realize there's just one arrow.

Not good.

I don't have much time left.

My hand falls to my side, grazing over the clover and moss. I'm not sure I have enough strength to yank the arrow out of my leg, anyway.

Reality hits me hard.

I'm going to die.

And I'm going to die hearing the screams of my coven, the howls of the murderers, and the cackles of the sordid humans.

"I smell his blood," I hear the deep voice of a werewolf about a half mile away.

“Good. I want his fangs. I don’t care what you do with the rest of him,” a human reply, my advanced hearing picks up his every step and every time one of my kind falls.

My fangs.

Idiots.

That’s always been the commodity when humans or werewolves hunt us. Our fangs are linked to the longevity of life, healing, and sometimes pleasure. There’s a rumor these hunters believe— that our teeth will give their pathetic love lives a boost by inducing intense orgasms. The pleasure accompanied by a vampire bite is only with mates or a beloved, anyone outside of that, if we sink our fangs into you, it’s going to fucking hurt.

It’s our tears they really want though. Our tears have abilities beyond human comprehension and understanding, but it’s such a well-guarded secret, no one knows. The ones who haunt us think the answers are in our fangs.

Let them.

Our fangs can grow back.

But our tears? Those are sacred.

You’re going to wish you were dead if we bite you. The pain boils the blood, which makes it deliciously warm as we drink it down.

The thought of a nice hot neck has my mouth watering. That sounds divine right about now.

“What the fuck, Alexander?”

I turn my head to see my twin fall to his knees at my side, the leaves cracking under his weight.

“Get the hell up, Lexy.”

I curl my lip at the nickname. He knows how much I hate it, but I don't have the strength to fight him right now.

Plus, my anger diminishes quickly when I see the claw marks on the side of his face. Five thick gashes travel from his forehead, through his left brow, down his cheek, eye, and neck.

He's blind in that eye now, no doubt.

"Atreyu..." I say breathless, reaching for his face but he pulls away. "If you wouldn't have run off when you heard—"

He cuts me off, "Don't." He stares at my leg and debates how to take the arrow out, then analyzes the rest of me, his sights setting on my side. "No! Lexy, your side." He rips my shirt in half to see the teeth indentations along my ribs. "Damn it, Lex." Atreyu isn't the emotional type, but I swear I see his good eye fill with tears.

"I could say the same for you," I rasp, the howling around us closing in.

Werewolf scratches are different from bites, while I'll fall into a deep coma, Atreyu will have scars forever. We can't heal from werewolf marks. We either live with the burden they leave us or die a slow death that lasts two hundred years.

Blood drips from the wide wine-colored gashes in his face. "We'll be okay," he somehow manages to remain positive.

A weak laugh escapes me. "Just leave me, Atreyu. You still have time to get to the estate."

"No, you stubborn asshole. Get up right now. You can't leave me. We're in this until the end." He yanks the arrow from where it was lodged in the bone, his palm sizzling from the reaction to the silver. He tosses it to the side and his skin heals from the burn quickly.

Me on the other hand, I scream in pain as the tissue, muscle, tendons, and flesh try to stitch themselves back together, but they can't.

I'm too weak.

"Come on, let's go home." He throws an arm around me to lift me to my feet, freezing in the next step. He sniffs the air, eyes flickering from blue to pools of silver.

A ferocious growl trembles his throat and he bends down to pick up the silver arrow. Launching his arm back, he flings it using his vampire strength. It's a blur through the air and a second later, a yelp reverberates nearby.

"Good. Fucking dog," Atreyu sneers and helps me to my feet once more. His hot breath fogs the cool night while mine merely makes a cloud. "Don't give up on me. I need you. They are closing in and the estate is just up ahead."

The thought of walking any further makes my bones hurt, but I nod numbly, not wanting to disappoint my brother. The bite on my side burns with more intensity as we walk and the feeling of despair falls over me.

I don't want to die. I've barely lived. And there is a part of me that had hoped I'd be the rare one of our kind to meet his beloved.

Atreyu always said I was the dreamer while he was the realist, but there are no dreams anymore.

Reality has set its teeth in just as deep as the werewolf did.

"Your side..." Atreyu lifts his hand to reveal black blood, similar to the consistency of oil.

Time is no longer on my side.

I snort, finding it funny he is mentioning it. "Your face."

"Fuck you."

"We're both fucked, I'm afraid." My feet begin to drag, the tips of my shoes stained dark red as we hurry through the woods. "Did mother make it? Sister? Father,

Greyson, Uncle Luca?" I ask about our family, hoping we will see them at the end of this.

His lips press into a firm line. He says nothing and gives the slightest shake of his head. "I've ran all over, Lexy. There's no one left. I've been looking for you. Don't you feel it? Everyone is gone."

No. That can't be. It can't.

I close my eyes and a choked sob leaves me. My sister was only a day old. One day.

"I know. I know. Look at me."

I don't.

I can't.

"I said fucking look at me." He spins me around and his fingers dig into my shoulders, shaking me. "I know it's too much to process right now and we can't. Focus on surviving. Everything else can come later."

I nod, the pain of losing them an additional wound to my body.

If I had enough energy, I'd cry and go on a rampage of a hunt to avenge their deaths. There's no time to process though when my life and Atreyu's is on the line.

"The rest of the coven?" I question in a slur, desperate for the fickle bitch of hope to appear in this fucked up nightmare.

"I don't know. I haven't seen anyone, but it doesn't mean anything. I've been looking for—," his sentence is interrupted as a werewolf tackles him from the left, knocking the air out of his lungs with a grunt.

We should have smelled the wolf or at least heard him coming. Our wounds being infected with werewolf venom is affecting our ability to protect ourselves.

"Atreyu!" I scream, his name ripping from my throat, leaving a bloody taste against my tongue.

Right as I take a step forward, the wolf knocks me away with his massive paw and I fly through the air, watching the green plants blur together below me.

Somehow, I land on my feet, the buoyancy in my body still making it impossible to stand straight. Through the agony firing through my nerves, I inhale as deep as possible, grinning when I smell the weakness of my enemy.

Human.

His bitch of a wolf left him alone to fight my brother.

All by himself... with no one to save him.

And the dumbass didn't even take silver supplements to taint his blood.

With as much smugness I can muster, I turn around and smirk at the man. He must be in his fifties with gray hair and a matching mustache. He has wrinkles around his eyes as if he has lived a thousand lives, but he'll never have that opportunity. This life will be his only and I'm about to take it from him.

He slices a wide, long silver blade right in front of me. He's confident. The human sucks his tongue across his teeth as he gives me a hysterical cackle jabbing the knife toward my head. I dive to the right, dodging the sharp point by centimeters. My palm slaps against his neck and my black talons lengthen, pressing against his jugular. I can hear the beautiful flood of his life-giving elixir coursing through him, the vein in his neck pulsating with every excited, adrenaline-filled beat of his heart.

"Ah, there it is," I whisper into his ear. "You know what I love about humans?" I trail my nose across his cheek, breathing in the luscious scent. "You always give away when you're scared." I tighten my grip, my nails sinking further into his aged skin. "Your heartbeat changed. You're not so big and bad when you don't have a dog by your side."

The gray-haired man trembles and the raunchy scent of piss ruining my edge of bloodlust. Red droplets flow down my fingers in thick rivers.

It's warm.

Wet.

And breaks my will.

“You should have taken the silver supplements like your master said,” I say before sinking my teeth into his neck.

I forget humans don't have masters, not like vampires do.

My father was the coven master and now he is dead. Remembering him and the rest of my family has my anger reaching new heights. I want revenge. All we ever wanted was peace. I hold the human tighter until his ribs break, latching my fangs deeper in his jugular. I sift through his memories to see if he is the one responsible for my father's death, but he is just a stupid man who joined the hunt last minute.

The sigh of his last breath leaves his lips, but I drink his blood until he is dry. When I'm done, I'm stronger. I know the new burst of energy won't last long. The venom will eventually win in the end.

Ripping a chunk of my kill's throat out for the hell of it, I toss his body to the side and spit on him.

Curling my lip, I growl at the unmoving mass and then remember my brother. I jerk my head where the commotion is and see him fighting a werewolf. The beast is huge, the size of two grizzly bears, and werewolves can walk on two legs if they prefer. They have long claws, dark grey skin, and glowing yellow eyes.

And I can't wait to tear him limb from limb.

I try to use my advance speed to get to Atreyu, but my new strength fades and I slow. My limbs are sluggish as I drag my feet through the garnet ridden leaves, twigs, and mud.

My fangs drop again but I can't attack, I am too weak. I catch myself against a tree, the bark scratching my palm. Gasping for breath, with sweat dripping into my eyes, I watch in horror as the werewolf sinks his teeth into Atreyu's shoulder.

“No, Atreyu!” I roar as loud as I can, my voice booming for miles.

Atreyu doesn't even cringe as his veins begin to pulse black, the venom working its way into his system.

He uses the bite to his advantage. Atreyu grips the werewolf's jaws and begins to pull them apart. The wolf whines and his black irises widen when he realizes just how fucked he is.

I smirk. “Maybe next time, asshole.”

Atreyu takes a bite of the beast and with a new rush of rage, he rips the wolf's head in half, throwing the bottom jaw across the forest.

Another animal will feast well tonight.

Atreyu's chest heaves and droplets of ruby flow from his chin as he stares at his kill. “He killed mother,” he informs me, fists clenching by his side.

I swallow to coat my throat again, trying to take a step forward through the puddles of death to get to my twin. “Atreyu—” What he said about mother dying doesn't hit me yet. There's so much of me that can't believe it, that refuses to accept this is our reality.

“—I know.” He cuts me off. He stares down at his arm, watching the venom slowly work its way through his body. He is resigned, as if he accepted his death a long time ago. “It will be okay. Let's get to the catacombs. If we can get there, there's hope.”

I don't know who he is trying to convince. Me or himself.

He spits onto the carcass lying headless on the forest floor. “I fucking hate dogs.”

I snort. He reminds me so much of Greyson and my reminiscing is interrupted when I notice how silent the forest is.

Silence can be good, but in moments like this, the quiet is too loud.

There's no one left to scream.

“We need to hurry. There are a few hunters left a few miles away and they are coming.” Atreyu places a hand over his shoulder, red leaking between his fingers.

“I can’t go. I’ll just slow you down. The venom has taken me,” I groan, leaning against another tree, closing my eyes as my stomach turns and bile rolls up my throat.

Atreyu gripping my face awakens me. His fingers dig into my cheeks and I’m left staring at a warrior, blood and bone on one side of his face, and exhaustion on the other. “Hell no. You don’t get to give up on me. We will make it, but you can’t quit on me. I need you. You hear me?”

“Atreyu—” I choke, my heart slowing as we speak.

His good eye waters. “I need you. Don’t go.”

My brother is a lot of things, but a begging man he is not.

“You know we won’t make it out of this. You know what will happen.”

He is grim, pressing his lips together in a firm line. “I know.” Still, he holds me by the arm and hauls me through the trees and low branches. It’s like death is reaching out to clutch onto us, but in the nick of time, we escape.

As we get closer to the estate, I smell blood and smoke.

Vampire blood.

And that’s when the grief and loneliness set in. Now that I can focus on something other than surviving, I feel the loss. There is no connection, no thoughts colliding with mine, no warm buzz of home and protection.

I feel my brother, but compared to the power of the coven, our connection is low and distant, like he is yelling at me from a thousand miles away.

No one has survived.

Only we remain.

Fog begins to set in, sweeping just above the ground, a tinge of red in the ominous clouds.

So much death and no time to mourn.

We stumble through the tree line and fall to our knees. The mansion is before us. Our home. Our sanctuary.

And it's nearly been destroyed.

We take a moment to look around, stepping over dead bodies. I can't recognize them. They have been torn apart limb from limb.

"We don't have time to burn them. We have to get underground, now."

"Atreyu," I gasp his name on an emotional breath as I look around, but he drags me up the steps of the front porch. "We have to—"

He slams me against a wooden beam, not hard enough for it break but enough for it to crack. His eyes change from a light blue to a shimmering silver, he's always had unique eyes. "We have to leave them. You don't think I feel it? It's like my chest has been hollowed out. If we want to live, we have to ignore them. We have to. Plus, you're growing weaker." He places his hand on the back of my neck and squeezes. His forehead falls on mine and we share a single thought.

"La Fale brasken ini ou sanguila."

Its ancient language vampires don't speak anymore. It's old and outdated, only known by our kind.

The Fallen forever in our blood.

I nod and he leans away, stepping through the front door that is nothing but splinters on the floor. Windows are broken and as we walk, small red ponds cause my boots to stick to the hardwood.

I feel sick.

The bite is eating away at my soul, and it won't be long until it falls asleep, leaving me in the hands of my beloved, wherever she may be.

I bet she hasn't been born yet.

I don't look around the house. I can't. I know it is wrecked and death is a cloak around me. The fan is on and somehow blood got on the blades, splattering against the wall with a soft static sound that will haunt me in my coma.

Atreyu opens the library door, and he lifts me over his shoulder to go down the steps. I groan to try to protest but this is better. I don't think I can walk.

I hear the grind of a bookcase as Atreyu opens it with one arm. When we step inside, he slams his fist against the wall and the case shuts, leaving us in musky darkness.

It's been decades since anyone has come down here.

He continues down the dark hallway, nothing but night and dust around us until he runs into a wall.

"Ow," I bitch, not really feeling anything but wanting to make the situation lighter.

"Shut up." He lifts a trapped door hidden in the ground, disguised as dirt and stomps down those steps next. When we are shut in, there's another door below us.

I fall from his shoulder and throw up the blood I had earlier from the hunter.

Atreyu lights a torch. "Your blood is black. It's thickening and eventually it will stop flowing. And soon..." His face is pinched, the flames of the torch allowing me to see him work his jaw and look away from me. He exhales and tilts his head back, blinking at the ceiling.

His lashes are wet, glistening from the pearly tint they have.

His worry for me has my heart hurting.

I spit, rubbing my mouth against my shoulder. "Yeah." We know what that means. There's no need to talk about it.

“Come on. The catacombs are below us,” his deep voice echoes through the tunnel.

He slings me over his shoulder again and my eyes hood, barely seeing the dancing shadows the flames cast from the torch.

Atreyu hisses. “Fuck. I forgot about the pin prick.”

That’s right. Growing up we were taught the only way inside the catacombs was to sacrifice blood, hence the needle on the door.

“You, okay?” I slur, trying to make a joke.

He has gotten bitten and clawed by a werewolf. He can handle a pin prick.

Saying nothing, a scratch accompanied by a knock against the wall has me dragging my eyes open. Atreyu has placed the torch in its iron cast, freeing his hands and illuminating the forgotten room.

There are only two stone mausoleums that have seen better days but are strong and protected by magic. Again, no one can open the doors unless they are a vampire or a beloved.

Atreyu bites his hand and swipes his palm over each door. Cobwebs stretch and dust flies in the space after being disrupted.

They open to darkness, showing what eternity will hold for me.

I’m going to die in the dark.

As I prefer the night, it shouldn’t scare me.

But I’m terrified.

Atreyu grunts as he opens the grey lid of the coffin, the stone scraping against stone. It’s thousands of pounds, but since my brother is infected, a thousand pounds is more like a million.

“Alright. Come on.” Atreyu runs out of the mausoleum and wraps my arm around his shoulder before lifting me into his arms.

I want to tell him when we see each other again, he must never speak of this moment, where I was too weak to walk, but I don’t have the strength in me to say it.

He places me inside the cold, damp coffin.

I glance up to see the mangled side of his face covered by the shadows and the untouched side illuminated by the flame.

“Brother, brasken ini mi sanguila,” I whisper my goodbyes.

His jaw flexes and he bend down to press our foreheads against one another for what is probably the last time.

Brother, forever in my blood.

He shares the endearment through our minds. He’s never been the kind to share his emotions. “I’ll see you when I see you,” he replies on an emotional hiccup.

Something unlike him as well.

This is devastating. I’ll never see my brother again after this.

“I’ll see you,” I say, the final farewell.

His eyes swirl the hypnotic silver, his emotions raging inside him.

Atreyu huffs as he closes the lid, our eyes never leaving one another. His face disappears as darkness dominates. The stone grinding loudly until it suddenly stops, leaving me in a tight, small space.

He got me to safety just in time.

My heart descends to a near stop and my coma tangles my soul around its fingers, pulling me deep.

Death is always stronger than a man's will, but a beloved is stronger than the two combined.

All that's left to do, is wait.