Chapter 13

Ethel remained true to her promise. I must've slept in - which made sense considering I had another night filled with screaming and shouting from the other side of the wall- and when I ventured out of my bedroom I found fresh fruit and vegetables in the fridge. Once again, the old house was completely soundless and I felt comfortable enough today to explore. Besides, I had spent a few hours cleaning the room with whatever I could find in the closet and I couldn't spend all day in the same space with nothing to do.

I moved around the house while straining my ears and a er twenty minutes of silence I decided that Hades had le to do whatever Hades did all day.

As I chewed on dried mango I meandered through the mansion. I suppose, in broad daylight, without the haunting presence of a murderer, the house was quite beautiful. It had high ceilings in most of the rooms and large windows which made the old space feel quite airy. In it's time I'm sure that it had been the epitome of modern and now it needed only a little bit of love to restore it to its former brilliance. And the house was full of surprises.

I went into my bathroom first, the one across the hall from my bedroom. Ethel had stocked it with everything I had asked for, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, a hair brush, and a tooth brush. I smelt my shampoo and was delighted to find that everything had a matching coconut scent.

I thoughtlessly le the space and went into another, only realizing what I had done a er I had walked into the new room. This was Hades's room, right next to mine and obviously the master with it's own bathroom and walk in closet. But it wasn't what I expected. I guess I had pictured black bedding and dark wall colours, not creams and browns with tasteful furniture and decor. And I certainly hadn't anticipated pictures. A er all, he seemed more likely to have a torture chamber than a real bedroom.

I dawdled over to a wall covered in picture frames, something drawing me towards them as if they would o er secrets about the man I was mated to. The first thing that caught my attention was a master's degree in electrical engineering. It made my associate degree in accounting look rather pathetic and, despite the fact that I hated him, I was ashamed of my limited education. Then I noticed his graduation picture in a cap and gown with one arm around a man and a woman. Strange, I had never thought of him as having parents. It seemed odd that someone so evil could be bred, especially by two people who looked to be in love.

Finally, my gaze landed on a college hockey team picture. And I couldn't find him. It was odd that he would have a photo of a team he wasn't even in, but his sinking red eyes didn't leap out at me. I stepped closer and studied the picture a little more intensely, certain that I was missing something crucial.

And there he was, with his angular, handsome features. He was wearing hockey gear which made him seem even larger than he was, towering over his colleagues on the ice. But his eyes weren't red and even more strange, he was smiling. He looked like a typical Canadian university student wearing his skates and green and gold jersey.

It didn't seem like it could be the same man. I read through the small printed names at the bottom of the photograph, searching for Hades. But the name associated with the space in the photo was Sebastian Oakley.

I didn't understand, but when I referenced the degree for his name I came up with the same result. Sebastian Oakley, a detail I had ignored before. Then, I realized his eyes were not red in his graduation photo either.

It seemed that Hades had not always been Hades. Something had happened. And it had happened in the last few years.

And, on that unnerving note, I fled from his room, telling myself there was a lot of house le to see.

I poked into two more guests bedrooms in an e ort to calm down and then found myself walking down a long corridor that only held two doors. I eased opened one of them. Two walls were lined with filled bookshelves. In the middle were two club chairs and a low co ee table. The whole space smelt like old paper. A library seemed to suit him somehow, especially knowing that he had a master's degree and lived in a house like this.

Intrigued, I closed the door and progressed on to the second door. Maybe this would be the room that spoke to his bachelor pad statement. I could see the ping pong tables and beer fridge now. But when I opened the door there was none of that.

It was grand, sweeping marble floors and open space. There was tapestries on the wall and huge windows along the back of the room. I took a slow step inside, scanning the space in disbelief. What kind of man has a ballroom in his house and still refers to it as a bachelor pad? What man in his midtwenties has tapestries anyway?

But, I had to admit, that the gorgeous space with all of its elegance, made me feel like a princess. I had never wanted to be one, thinking that I was much better suited to be a warrior, but the regal ambiance was enough to change my mind. In my jeans and tee shirt, I strode into the empty ballroom, pretending to be nodding at loyal subject as I went. Then, my eyes caught the sound system which was surprisingly high tech and well hidden on the mantel above the massive fire place.

The stillness and silence in the house was comforting at times. It meant that I was finally safe. But it could become unnerving as days stretched on, reminding me that I was not at home with my little sister and demanding father. I flicked through the downloaded playlist and was disappointed to find that I knew none of the songs. It looked like it was all classical, but I still chose one.

As the sound of a violin filled the space I continued on my journey, pretending to be a princess. Then, I was even more delighted to find that I had mistaken some of the glass on the back wall as windows, when it was glass doors that led to a balcony. I yanked them open and sucked in the fresh air as the melody fell over me. The way the wind blew into my hair as the tempo increased definitely a rmed my levels of royalty, but if I were a true princess I would be able to smell my royal gardens and stare out at magnificent blooms. I would have to get Ethel to buy me some flower seeds and a couple pots next time she went out.

But that would wait. With my eyes closed, I pinched my imaginary dress in between my fingers. Then, I began twirling into the room while humming along to the music. My head tipped back as I spun, imagining hundreds of subjects around me. It was a beautiful sensation despite the fact that it didn't feel quite right, like I was fumbling against the music.

Then, I felt it. A wave of power that struck me with such force I lost my breath.

I opened my eyes and there he was, standing right in front of me. His eyes were burning with an intensity that I couldn't read, but his hands were shoved into the pockets of his grey trousers. And he looked utterly mouth watering with his black shirt clinging to his muscles, the top two buttons undone.

"Sebastian," I whispered. In that moment his true name suited him much more than Hades.

Something unreadable flashed across his face, but saying his name seemed to crack the ice he was frozen beneath. He came deeper into the ballroom, approaching me as the music switched from the violin to a harp. I stayed still as he approached, too scared and too awestruck to move when he stopped in front of me and placed a hand on the small of my back. He held his other hand out in o ering as pleasure flared from my spine, straight to my heart.

"You haven't found the beat. Let me show you," he whispered.

I knew I shouldn't have, but I took his open hand and settled my other on his shoulder. He felt strong and stable beneath my touch and I squeezed ever so slightly.

Then we were moving. Slowly, but with an even pace I could never muster up myself. There was a second when I stepped before him and tried to tug him along, but he remained steady and eased me back to him with a tender suggestion.

"Relax, close your eyes. Feel the music and I'll do the rest," he encouraged.

I peered up at him through my eyelashes as we moved and saw that he was watching me. His eyes weren't the colour of fresh blood now. Though they weren't the natural brown in his hockey photo either, there was something in them, something so and sensitive that made me do as he said. My eyes fluttered shut, trusting him.

He took over for me, guiding me as we went. And we spun and stepped to the music until I felt the corners of my mouth turn up in a small smile and my body relaxed into the music. I focused on the way he felt under my hands, the sound of him humming along as if he had memorized every track on the playlist. And I allowed myself to accept the warmth and happiness that he brought just by touching me and being close.

Then, the sound of the harp dri ed o and we slowed to a stop. My eyes opened again.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have," he muttered, frowning down at the floor.

"Don't be sorry," I breathed, raising my hand to touch my pounding heart, wondering how much joy such a fragile instrument could handle. I never thought any man would be able to make my heart pound like that with such simple innocent touches.

Those amber eyes followed the movement, gazing at my chest where I had settled my hand. Then, it dri ed higher.

And whatever brown was le in his irises vanished.

"Hades," I choked out, knowing the look all too well when his teeth clenched together and his hands tightened into fists.

His fingers jolted up and circled the necklace around my throat. I gasped and my hands immediately moved to protect the last piece I had of Caleb. I was terrified and didn't understand the shi , but refused to let him take the necklace.

"Don't," I whimpered, my mind struggling to comprehend the transition.

"This is from that sick fuck, isn't it?" Hades demanded, his voice low and rough. It was the voice that came when his eyes changed like that. It was like he was possessed.

"Don't talk about Caleb like that!" I snarled. "I loved him."

The necklace was yanked o my neck, the clasp at the back breaking. And the last fragment I had of my best friend was taken away from me, only leaving a stinging line on either side of my neck. Seeing that necklace in the palm of Hades's hand made me sick.

"I'll never love you. You're a monster," I spat, then I was running out of the ballroom as the tears started to run down my cheeks.

---Distraction Section---

Hey everyone. Hope you all had a lovely weekend. I had such a good weekend I forgot to update. Am I a bad author? Perhaps. So to compensate I'm doing three updates in a row this week. This is update one so you can look forward to two more.

What is the most useless talent you have?

Pretty embarrassing but I can mimic a horse sport quite well. It took a strange amount of practice as a child, but it sounds pretty spot on.