

## Chapter 43

The world could not have aligned better. On the seventeenth of June Sebastian was called out to deal with an unruly pack who decided that poaching peaceful rogues was sport. He promised that he would be back by the twentieth and I just nodded my head along with his words, both relieved to be alone in the house and excited. The second he was out the door I was on the phone, the gears grinding away in my mind.

"Keiko," I greeted, my voice already breathy with delight.

"Charlotte, are you okay?" Keiko demanded. "Where is Hades?"

It was then that I realized that panting into the phone might've given the wrong idea. I quickly collected myself which came easily once the guilt of my unforgettable actions settled back on my shoulders. "Everything is fine, Sebastian just le," I replied, my voice level.

"Right, I keep forgetting that he actually has a name. I'm such an awful sister," she groaned. "But I know you called for a reason. What can I do for you?"

"Well, I have an idea, but I'm going to need to borrow a couple of your guards and I'm going to need Sebastian's mom's contact information."

As I laid out my plan there was some resistance from Keiko, which I expected, but it still stung. I hated the reminder that I had lost control, that I had terrified the man I cared about so deeply. And now, even medicated, people still worried for the safety of a man named a er the god of death, the man that alphas and well strategized groups couldn't take down. It made me feel evil and vile.

Eventually, Keiko helped me work out all of the holes in my plan, gave me Rita's cell phone number and o ered up three of her best guards for the next couple of days. She even o ered the fly Rita and her family wherever I asked which made me all the more giddy. Finally, something was going my way.

"Good a ernoon, Seb," Rita cooed into the phone when she picked up.

"Actually, it's me, Charlotte," I murmured into the phone.

"Oh, Charlotte, hello," she greeted, but there was tension in her voice. "Is Seb around?" Her tone was light and noncommittal but I could hear the concern under the current of pleasantness. Of course he had told them and of course she was worried to receive a random phone call from me.

"He actually just flew out this morning to go somewhere near Chicago," I answered, trying to keep my voice light and kind. It wasn't her fault, they had a right to know and any good mother would be concerned for their child. Still, I wished someone in this world didn't know how awful I was.

"Oh, well what can I do for you?"

"I was hoping you could get everyone into one room and put me on speaker. I have a couple things I wanted to talk to you all about."

Once again there was hesitation. Rita and Henry and Colin didn't have the same intensity as Keiko or the authority. They couldn't say no as easily and every time they tried to argue I would insert the wonderful parts of the plan that Keiko had helped me with. It took twenty minutes, but eventually, there was no more questions, just silence.

"You guys don't have to come if you don't want to," I blurted, suddenly realizing just how hard I was pushing and how much I was asking of people that I barely knew. People that could very well hate me. "I just thought that it would be nice for him to be surrounded by people that love him when he's going through so much. But I completely understand if you don't feel safe or if you have other plans."

My words were met with silence.

"Well, it has been years since we could spend Sebastian's birthday with him. We usually only get together around Christmas. It would be really special for him," Henry said, his voice so .

"You said we could use the royal's private jet?" Colin piped up.

"Of course," I said, already feeling the smile spread across my face.

A day later I was accepting the guests into the manor for the first time ever. My kitchen was stu ed to the brim with cooking supplies that one of the guards begrudgingly bought for me and I cleaned all of the guest bedrooms for what seemed to be the first time in centuries. At first it was all tense smiles and explaining that we had additional guards to protect the guests from me. But, a er a while, the guests seemed content enough with the position they were in and things seemed to relax. People even started referring to Sebastian by his real name instead of Hades.

"It's so weird to hear people talk about my son like he's some crazed murderer," Rita mused as she whisked a thick, chocolate batter. "Am I doing this right?"

"You're doing wonderful," I praised. "It was weird for me to know him as Sebastian at first, but when I called him by his real name his face lit up. Once I realized how much it meant to him and understood that he wasn't bad I vowed to never call him Hades again. Well, until..."

"That must've been very frightening for you," Rita murmured. "I remember Seb locking himself in his room and refusing to come out a er his first kill. He wouldn't eat, wouldn't talk to any of us. It was awful."

"It was. I'm terrified of myself now. Even when I feel completely normal I feel like I can't trust myself. I care about him so much, but I hated him so much all the same."

"It is terrifying, considering that you are his weakness," Henry stated as he glared at a recipe in front of him.

"Henry!" Rita scolded.

"What do you mean?" I demanded. He hadn't said the words in a way that made me believe I was some beautiful muse that Sebastian couldn't keep his hands o of. It was like I was toxic.

"It's time that she knows," Henry said, looking around me to stare at his wife. "She's family now."

"Sebastian doesn't think it's true," Colin said.

"Sebastian is wary with any of the legends, he doesn't want to build his hopes up to let himself down. That doesn't mean that they are impossible and it doesn't mean that they can't hold some truth," Henry pressed. "We would be doing her a disservice if we didn't tell her everything we knew. It's the only way she can be prepared."

"Please tell me what you know," I urged, settling myself on a bar stool at the island. I felt like whatever they were going to tell me was going to shock me o my feet.

Rita's expression fell from it's sti anger into defeat and her husband took over.

"We don't know if it's true, but we have found some information about potential previous werewolves like Sebastian. We worked the royals and their team of scholars to dig up whatever we could, thinking we could find a cure, which obviously we couldn't. But we did find a pattern. It seems that every two hundred years or so there is at least one report of a black werewolf with red eyes that seems impossible to defeat," Henry announced.

"Oh God," I gasped, my fingers flying to my lips.

"There are no similarities tying them together before they become Hades. Some of them are omegas, some of them are alphas, some of them were royalty, one was even a rogue. It seems that our Sebastian just seemed to be unlucky in getting picked."

"And do they all stay like that forever?" I asked, chewing on my lower lip.

"No, though many of them probably would've survived longer if they had. Once their powers fade the majority of them are hunted down like animals. About half of them were slaughtered by ones they had wronged."

"Christ, and the other half?" I asked.

"Some went into hiding and were never seen again. Some accounts were so old that there was no tracking or DNA available so we have no idea what happened to them. They just vanished. But one of them wasn't so lucky. He was never able to fully finish his task and retire. He was betrayed."

"Henry, please," Rita begged.

"She needs to know," Colin interjected. "We can't protect her. Sebastian is putting himself at risk by not telling her."

Henry sided with his youngest son and glared down at me. "The young man in question was still Hades, still bearing the curse. In theory, he should've been invincible. You've seen Sebastian kill, you know there is no chance for any other werewolf to kill him. But this man never was able to retire out of his course. His mate betrayed him and drove a silver stake right through his heart."

~~~Distraction Section~~~

Hello everyone. Y'all need to slow down on your reading because I have to do surprise updates to celebrate my numbers all the time. It's getting ridiculous. So today, we celebrate 125,000! See you tomorrow for the scheduled update!

Question of the Day: Describe your own personal heaven.

I would have access to horses that I wouldn't have to pay the vet bills and feed for. I would have an adorable fl u y dog that didn't shed. I would have millions of books at any given moment and time would stop whenever I read so I could read all day long without feeling like I accomplished nothing. My boyfriend would be there, and listen to me talk about writing instead of pretending to listen while thinking about motorcycles. Plus a huge tub for baths with wine. Basic as hell.