

Sold to the Night Lord

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Chapter 131

“Eleazar has a son. He feared for him, given the tense atmosphere between the Purebloods and the Diluted. He wanted the bunches **to take** him in, to raise him far from all this. He was willing to disappear from his son’s life if that guaranteed his safety.”

“And?” This time it’s Drystan who asks.

“We don’t accept males in the camp.”

Raising my eyebrows, I let out a low whistle.

“And we’re the cruel monsters?” I retort with a laugh. “The banshees must be cold blooded to deny such an honorable request from a father worried for his child.”

The **banshees** aren’t the most feared creatures in our world-

I admit, even I **have** underestimated them sometimes.

The truth is that behind their delicate, fragile, melancholic appearance hide cruel women. They’ve been hunted for so long, much like the witches once were, that now they’ve completely shut themselves off from the world. They won’t care about anyone but themselves. Time

has made them selfish.

“The point is, Eleazar didn’t ask for the spells you’re talking about, and **Naja** didn’t help your enemies.”

The three of us fall silent while the gears in our heads turn. I think we’ve all reached the same conclusion, but none of us wants to say it out

loud.

“What if it was another witch?” I ask at last.

“One we **don’t** know about?” Drystan adds. “One that’s been hidden for centuries? Because I don’t see any other way for a witch to exist without us knowing. Naja’s been the only witch on the continent for almost five hundred years.”

“A slippery witch, then.”

Evanora is the only one who hasn't spoken yet. She seems to be deep in thought. She absentmindedly touches the small pale scars around

her mouth with her fingertips.

Drystan and I wait patiently while the banshee's blue eyes drift off.

The albino snake appears at the neckline of her dress, its scaly **body** slithering between her breasts and curling around her neck until it rests near her ear. It hisses something that pulls Evanora from her trance.

“There are no other witches that we know of. We haven't heard of any in hundreds of **years**. All have proven to be myths—even the Destroyer. I'll speak to Maja, let's see what she knows.”

She vanishes without another word, climbing **the** stairs and disappearing down the hall toward her chambers.

Only my friend and I remain, we both turn to face the castle doors and look outside, where they've already started cleaning up the mess.

“Evanora **is half**-witch, right?”

“Yes,” he admits. “Why?”

Seeing that I don't respond, he looks at me intently, frowning.

“You can't be thinking what I think you're thinking... you believe it was her?” He laughs, but without any real humor. “Its, it wasn't

“**Maybe** you're not thinking clearly”

“You're the one who isn't,” he sighs. “I get that you're upset with her for lying to us, but I can tell you with absolute certainty that Everior cares about Elara. She's here with us to help her, and she wouldn't do anything that would endanger or harm her. She knows the palo agra has inflicted and wouldn't aid her.”

“What if Ragna promised her something”

“I don't think Ragna can give her what she wants.”

Although I'm curious, I don't ask. I fall silent, mulling over everything that's happened.

Surprisingly, I find myself calm at this very moment.

The dungeons are wrecked, my prisoner has escaped, there are corpses in the garden, and yet a sense of calm has settled in my chest.

Involuntarily, I place a hand over my heart and rub, as if that might dispel the feeling.

I think I'm more used to **rage**, to emptiness, to darkness.

Is it possible I'm losing my mind?

How can I be calm in a moment like this?

I have no guarantees of anything, and yet I feel as secure as if I did.

The sky has begun to turn gray with the dawn. I take a few steps outside, and the cold of a snowflake settles on my cheek. I stretch out my hand and watch more gather in my palm

"Cassian...

My gut twists **as** I feel the tingle of a whisper by my ear.

I lift my head, hoping to see my human, the wild thing who used to fill these halls with color, but I am alone, I'm sure I heard her voice

The snow continues piling in my hand, when I close my fist, I feel it melting. I must be going mad—guess that answers it

My need to have her with me is so great that I'm starting to hear things that don't exist.

How long before I start hallucinating? Will I see her walking through the gardens? If I **look** up at her balcony, will i see her sad **gaze**?

I laugh hysterically.

"I'm going to be your ruin, and you, mine." I bite down on my lower lip with one of my fangs. "You'd be so proud of yourself if you knew you've driven me insane."

The snow is beginning to settle on the ground I predict that in a few hours, **a** blanket will cover everything. The red of blood will disappear beneath the purity of white.

"Cassian...

I shut my eyes tightly, pressing my hands to my temples, and shake my head. I stay still for a moment, then reopen them.

I can't drive her voice away... because it's inside my head.

Elara's voice has sounded in my mind

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Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 132

Soft fingers glide across my forehead while my eyes remain closed and heavy I'm exhausted, or maybe there's tonal

tringar than my

body forcing me to rest. The caress on my forehead continues, and involuntarily, my face feans into the touch it's wwm here, MINA something heavy over me. I wonder where I am. Maybe I wasn't wrong to assume this wols the Underworld the crackling of flames

I

accompanies the thought

The warmth is so comforting that lose consciousness again, I don't know for how long I just know that when I return to myst

no longer feel heavy and I can open them. I blink quickly, pushing away the fog of sleg, curiously otisering the new crane around me. There's no trace of the vast barren land or the swampy lake. Instead, there is what appears to be a cabin. The walls are stone and the floors wooden. In one corner, in the back, there's a fireplace, the source of the crackling flames Theard earlier Beside it, an

table.

"Elara"

I jolt on the small cot where I'm lying. I place a hand on my heart as I search for the owner of the voice. I recognise the velvety tonim and know exactly who I'm going to see. That doesn't lessen the rapid beating of my heart, though it's not out of fear, but a mixture of caution, anticipation, and uncertainty.

Ataroth is sitting in a chair beside me, his black hair framing a chiseled face that, as i confirmed before, is blindingly beautiful. However, that's not what catches my attention. It's his eyes-gray, like mine. Once again, a feeling of belonging stirs within me. When look at him, the reflection of something mine, I feel rooted.

"You seemed to have many questions earlier," he says, not taking his eyes off me

“That’s the first thing you’re going to say to me?”

“What do you want to hear?”

I want to scream all the questions flooding my head, starting with; how? How could he leave me alone all this time? Did he never feel need to meet me? Talk to me? Know who I am?... Yet none of them come out of my mouth, afraid of what the answer might be

“What is this place?”

“This?” he replies, nodding toward the fireplace. “Or do you mean what you saw before?”

I bite my lower lip and shift under the heavy blankets.

“This **is** a cabin I like to escape to sometimes. It **makes** me feel mortal.” He smiles, and I swear the room brightens, his teeth are perfect, and a small dimple forms in his left cheek. “What you saw cut there were memories”

“Memories?”

“Lilith thought it appropriate that you see them though maybe I had something to do with it too.” He tilts his face slightly, studying me with a curious air. “Do you want to tell me how you got here?”

I shake my head. I don’t know if I’m ready to recall what happened—especially involving him. I feel th When I close my eyes, I see bloody images, see my family dead, a throne made of twisted fangs, oces don’t know why it hurts so much to think about it. I can barely breathe,

of betrayal deep in my chest. eyes looking at me imploringly.

“Alright. Then I’ll **speak**”

ak i stay still, **focused on** his face. Doep down, it’s hard to believe he’s really here. “I suppose you know where you come from, what you are.,, but I don’t think you fully understand it if you did, you wouldn’t still be lingering in memories.”

“What do you mean?”

“Little by little, Clara”

He smiles again. I don’t return it.

His face shows no signs of imperfection. He looks like a thirty year-old man, flo gray hair or wrinkles—nothing that shows the passage of time. Of course, he’s a god; I’m foolish to even think something like that could touch him. Time. How ridiculous.

“You must think we’re terrible parents, and that’s fair.” His face lightens in a grimace
“The truth is, I have no excuse. You saw it in the memories—I didn’t believe I could love you, and I won’t lie to you. When you were born, I felt nothing. It’s not in my nature to feel affection or anything like it. Your mother is an exception, and many times I’ve questioned the authenticity of my feelings for her, Maybe love her because she’s the only one capable of making me feel anything. Still, I made her a promise. So when she left you with that human family before heading to the Pits, I watched over you. I took away your inesses, nightmares, pains, insomnia. You were a calm, serene baby I didn’t do any of it out of love, only to fulfill my duty to your mother. But time changed that, I couldn’t tell you when it happened, but little by little found myself wanting to escape the land of the gods just to see you, to care for **you**, to watch over you”

The pain grows deeper with every word that comes from his mouth. Ataroth doesn’t love me. He never saw me promise to keep. A burden.

“Why did you never speak to me? I never felt you—you never tried to reach out or let me know you were there.”

“You were safer not knowing the truth. It wasn’t the time. That human family was your best chance to live.”

more than a duty, a

“I always felt out of place, alone even when surrounded by people,” I confess. “How could **you**

? How could you do that to me?”

He nods as his eyes fill with something resembling sadness.

I wanted to introduce myself many times, but I knew deep down it was better not to. Your mother sometimes escaped, and we would sit together to watch you.”

“You make her sound like a **saint**,” I say bitterly, “As if she hadn’t conceived me to save her precious children. She plans for me to be a breeding machine.”

He leans toward me and, with a delicacy that surprises me, holds my chin between his fingers. I try to pull away, though it’s in vain, i clench my jaw. He focuses his gaze on me and slowly his mouth curves into a nearly mischievous smile.

“But she won’t be the one putting those babies in your womb, will she? You’re powerful, Elara. No one can force you to do anything—not even her. It doesn’t matter what desperation and vengeance have driven her to do, in the end, you will decide. Because luckily, you have the strength and power to do so without fear of anyone stopping you.”

“You don’t think like her?”

I need his answer to know if he’s **a** danger to me. His presence is already a constant reminder that I’ve never truly been wanted. My real family abandoned me, and the one that took me in used me to save their real child. I can’t hold **his** gaze, too full of resentment.

He lets out **a** deep breath.

*i helped make you out of love, Elara. I wasn’t thinking of any salvation plan. Everything I’ve done has been for your mother”

For a second, he seems to consider brushing his fingers over me, and I struggle internally between puing away or allowing the contact in the end, my face reveals my inner conflict, so he reconsiders and lets his hand fall back to his lap. He offers **a** shy smile.

“Why am I here?”

“How much do you remember?”

FII, 8 Aug

*I remember seeing my family dead for a moment i question whether it’s right to call the They’re more family than the man before me “I know I lost control and started fighting with The last thing I saw were Cassian’s eyes”

(family, but I quickly de with Rapna, and tha

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Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 133

“Cassian...” He rolls the name on his tongue. “He broke **you**. Or at least, he thinks he did. You lost control to completely you couldn’t rationally, Your nature is bloody, Elara. This might happen again if you don’t learn to control what you are.

The question escapes my lips almost as a **plea**. I need to know what I am. I need to name it. I don’t want to feel lost or alone. I want answers. Maroth must read my expression better than I think, because his gaze softens and he places his hand over mine despite my reluctance.

“if what you need is a name, you are my daughter. Is that enough? There’s no name for what you are. We can explore the extent of your powers and abilities little by little. Maybe you **are** a demigoddess”

“A demigoddess?”

“As I said you are my daughter, I am a god.” He frowns. “Though you do have some traits that make you... different”

Seeing the confusion on my face, he waves his fingers, conjuring a mirror before me. I run my fingers over my face in awe. My skin looks paler, delicate like porcelain and soft like velvet. My lips are tinted a deep red without needing any pigment, but the most surprising thing is my hair. It’s still long and black, but on both sides of my face are strands of a different color. I grab one between my fingers, examining it. It’s silvery gray

“It’s the mark,” he clarifies

“The mark?”

“I am Ataroth the Gray. Those strands in your hair mark **you** as my descendant. No one will be able to refute it.”

“You have them too?”

He lifts his hand to his left side **and** raises **part**

of his hair, revealing a strand the same tone as mine, only his remains hidden, Mine are clearly

visible.

“And **you** might want to check your teeth. Your hair isn’t the **only** thing that’s changed,”

I force a smile at the mirror and lose my breath at what it reflects. I bring the tip off my finger to the sharp fang and gasp when it pierces the skin and **a** small drop of blood emerges. My nostrils flare as a wild scent floats through the air.

“That’s why I can’t say you’re definitely a demigoddess.”

“I’m a Pure?”

“You have **part** vampire in you—and part god. You are, without **a** doubt, an extraordinary **creature**, Elara. Nothing can define you. You are something new and powerful.”

Heel p pressure in my temples, as if my head has reached its limit and is now overflowing, trying to rid itself of the extra weight of this Information. I massage my temples under the watchful gaze of the god.

Your mother has contacted me, he blurts out/She wants you to know something

look him straight in the eyes and then search for her, as if mentioning her would make her materialize in the room. However, it's just us in

this cabin

She's not here, she's in the Pits

11:33 Fri, 8 Aug

Chapter **133**

Why?

God gave her to the tallen angel Lucifer after Lilith gave birth to her children. He saw it as a punishment, and Lucifer covered her for being the mother of demons.

Then how did you two meet?.

He lifts his hand and brushes a strand of hair from my face in a gesture far too gentle for my heart not to flutter. It's intimate, familiar, Something that always should have been.

Maybe another time I'll tell you how we met. He fucks the strand behind my ear. For now, you need to listen to me. Lilith predestined you to Cassian Draven. Her most powerful daughter for her most powerful son

He says it with a slight grimace of distaste. That means you complement each other. Everything he does, you can undo. You are the counterpart. You are not broken, Elara. You just needed to rest, so get out of here, little one.

I shake my head. I can't. I've spent days, weeks, maybe months wandering like a lost soul. I can't leave this place, I'm trapped in this bam

land.

I don't know how, I admit.

There's a thread that ties you to Cassian, a thread that cannot be broken. He lets his hand fall on my shoulder as if that might instill the strength I need. Find it, visualize it, make it tangible and pull it. Follow the thread to the surface.

Even if I can't trust him, he's my only chance of getting out of here. I do as he says and close my eyes, but behind my eyelids there is only darkness. I see nothing, feel nothing different. I look at Ataroth and shake my head. He looks at me without moving a muscle, and then that violet mist emerges from him and wraps around us both. He nods, a signal for me to close my eyes again. His fingers press gently against my temples, cold and soft

Think about that thread, think about something that would push you to pull it.

I think of Cassian, of all the words spoken and the ones never said.

I think of the family I lost and the one still waiting for me.

I think of my **true** parents, who made me powerful for a purpose.

I think of that purpose, the one I refuse to fulfill. Instead, I think about making it clear who I really am—certainly not a breeding bitch,

I think of Ragna, of her people, and how I will kill them one by one to make her feel the same pain I felt.

I think of the Vitalle castle, of the salamander waiting for me in the library, of its confidence in thinking I'm the only one capable of warming the cold heart of a vampire who has spent centuries hating humans.

I think of betrayals.

i think of friendships.

I think of love.

Then, a violet thread materializes behind my eyelids with a unique glow.

I see it!

Good. Now grab it tightly and pull, climb to the surface. Get away from here.

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I imagine wrapping the thread in my hands, and to my surprise, I feel tingling in them. I smile with my eyes still closed, but the smile vanishes quickly when a thought crosses my mind.

Will I see you again?

I'm not ready to be near him, but also don't think I can live a full life now that I know he exists. I need more answers.

The warmth of his hands on my shoulders is comforting, however, the silence between us is suffocating until he responds

I am always with you. We will see each other again.

Deep down I'm not convinced, but all I can do is believe his words. This is not my place great things await me, vengeance to claim. So I pull the thread tighter between my hands, pull on it, and feel it grow taut beneath my palms. I pull and take another step, clenching my teeth until my lips bleed from the effort. I climb the imaginary slope with the violet thread cutting into my flesh, not stopping to lament

Remember who you are.

Atarotha's voice comes like a whisper carried by the breeze. I want to open my eyes to see him again, maybe for the last time, but something tells me that if I do, all of this will vanish. It's possible he's no longer beside me, maybe I'm alone. So I keep climbing, one step at a time. without stopping. The burning in my palms is unbearable, and still I don't stop. I grit my teeth and keep moving, driven by the memory of everything I've lost. Minutes pass in which agony strikes me relentlessly. There are moments when oxygen seems to disappear and my lungs burn. The pressure in my head also increases and then, all at once, everything disappears, giving way to a lightness that makes me feel like I'm simply a feather carried by the wind.

Somewhere, there is light. My eyes hurt. I take my time to prepare myself and try to open them again. I cry from the brightness, blinking several times to soothe the sting. Little by little, the world stops being blurry and I see a room I don't recognize. There are velvet red tapestries, gold-framed paintings, tall windows covered by heavy curtains. Next to the bed is an empty armchair, and on the nightstand several books are piled up.

I try to speak, but my throat is dry. I lift my hand in front of my eyes and confirm that the paleness is still there, and my fingers look like tiny twigs from a tree. As I examine everything around me, a scent like night itself **snakes** beneath my nose, more intense than ever. I clear my throat, trying to speak.

Cass Cassi...

I cough and try again,

Cassian...

I don't know how I manage to hear the hurried footsteps outside the room; still, I do. Their owner doesn't arrive immediately, he takes his time, expect to see Cassian's face when the doors open; instead, it's pink eyes that meet mine.

Cassian... I say again.

Ciro approaches me, slowly forming a smile. He's dressed impeccably, just as I remember, with a vest over his shirt and the collar perfectly pressed. He sits in the empty armchair and holds my hand in his, I don't feel cold when his skin touches mine.

You've returned, darling

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 134

ELSER

Confusion comes to me in waves. I don't know which of all the doubts swirling in my mind to express first. All I know is that this place is unfamiliar; it doesn't resemble my room in Cassian's castle of his own. Nor is Ciro's the first face I expected to see when I woke up. I can't shake the slight pang of disappointment. I look straight into his eyes and try more than once to form the words in my mouth, it's dry and tastes like

copper.

"Where is Cassian?"

His disappointment mirrors mine, though I fear for different reasons. He doesn't answer immediately, instead, he pours water from a pitcher and brings the rim of the glass to my lips. My throat is dry enough to push past my hesitation and accept what he offers. I drink the water in record time and still feel far from satisfied. I'm overwhelmingly thirsty. That thought leads to another and I raise my fingertips to my mouth, expecting to find the sharp tips of my fangs, but there's nothing. They're gone. For a moment, I wonder if all of this has been a bad dream.

"Cassian is not here," he says. "He won't hurt you again, Elara."

I pull away to **see his** face better, while wrinkles form on my brow

"What are you saying?"

"You don't belong to him anymore, and I'm not going to let him hurt you again."

His fingers brush the skin of my hand, but I don't pull away.

"He says it was an accident, but who does that to someone by mistake? The fact that you're talking to me right now is a damn miracle."

"What do you **mean** I don't belong to him?"

The features on his face soften even more, as if he were looking at a poor last girl and couldn't help but feel compassion. He slides his hand from mine to my face and gently strokes my cheek before sighing

"You need to rest now."

He gives me a small smile.

"I'll come to have dinner with you. Until then, rest so everything can go back to normal."

Normal. There's nothing normal about any of this. Unfortunately, I was getting used to Cassian, to the castle, to the people who work and live there. He leans toward me and for a moment I think he's going to do something as intimate as kiss me, but instead he simply extinguishes the candle's wick with his fingers and smiles at me before disappearing through the double doors. I'm more than willing to try to close my **eyes** and rest; however, the fear of not waking again keeps me staring at the ceiling,

Two pairs of footsteps—echo on the floor, approaching quickly, and then the doors open again. Whoever enters the room moves euphorically and opens the curtains, letting in daylight. I have to cover my eyes with my hands to keep them from tearing up from the sudden brightness.

"Miss Elara!"

hop

just my imagination. It's not, In I recognize Clarissa's voice and, almost disbelieving, remove my hands from my eyes and look up, front of me are her and Naida, both smiling **ear** to ear. Clarissa sits on the edge of the bed and quickly grabs my hand, while the other woman looks at me closely, her smile never fading **for a** second.

"You had us worried **sick**

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11:33 Fri, 8 Aug

"That wasn't my intention.

Clarissa's warm laughter fills the room.

"Of course not, dear"

She strokes her thumb over my hand in a soft, comforting caress.

“Everything that happened to you is a tragedy, but it’s not your fault. Lord Draven will be very pleased to know you’ve woken up and that you’re **well**.

Hearing her speak of him makes heat run through my veins. There’s a knot of nerves, anticipation, yearning in my stomach. Part of me thought he’d be here when I woke up, and my body just wants to get out of this bed and run to him. As if we were pulled toward each other by something greater.

“Why am I here?” ask, hoping they’ll give me the answers I need. “Ciro said I no longer belong to Cassian, What does that mean? Am I free?”

They seem to debate who should respond. Naida steps forward and, without losing sight of them, they look at each other, sharing a pained glance. Their pitiful look I’m starting to hate, she opens her mouth and starts saying things that further destabilize my world.

“You’ve changed hands, Elara. You’re no longer Cassian’s feeder, but **Ciro’s**.”

“What?”

My body screams to get out of here, but Clarissa presses my shoulder so I lean back against the pillows.

“Apparently, something in the Treaties allows him to claim compensation, one of his feeders. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—no pun intended.”

“Cassian allowed this?”

My heart aches, and I know the next words could either shatter it or melt the frost growing **inside** it

“He had no other choice.”

She shakes her head.

*He’s been coming to see you regularly and has been trying nonstop to bring you back, I’m sure he’ll find a way to get you back, he’s Lord Draven, he always gets what he wants.”

Inod. She’s right. Cassian always gets what he wants. No matter what it is, there’s nothing he can’t bend to his will. Rules have never stopped him, and this time won’t be different—though I’m not sure that’s what I want. I want to be free, I don’t want to be passed from one person to

another.

wwwww

“Miss,” Clarissa says to draw my attention. “It’s best if you don’t share too much information with **Ciro** About **Cassian**, the castle, or yourself”

“What do you mean?”

“**Ciro** Amery is a very intelligent ma

“What does he know?”

He could use **any** information you give him against the **lord or** against you. You must not trust him.”

If I don’t want to mess things up, I need to know exactly what story we’re going with, He mentioned earlier that **Cassian** said my state was **due** to an accident. We both know that’s not true, so I can only assume he doesn’t want to reveal the truth—and if I think carefully, that’s for the best. What would **Ciro** do if he discovered I’m half Pure? A shiver runs down my spine at the thought. If he finds out, he might tell the others, and not even **Cassian** could save me from **my** late. They would use me, force me to help **reinforce** the bloodline, and I don’t know how

Chapter 134.

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powerful **I** really am I certainly don't feel capable of facing so many Purebloods, with centuries of experience behind them, while I've only just discovered what I am

"The rebel Diluted attacked you and kidnapped you. Cassian came to rescue you, but he needed so much power he lost control, and you got hurt. He broke you, Elara. No human survives that."

is that fear I see in her eyes? Is she afraid of me?

"Cassian always gets what he wants, right? Even fixing a broken human."

I wait for them to contradict me and say they know the truth, but both remain silent, with an expression I can't quite place whether it's fear

of **worry**.

"Maybe you'd like to sit by the window," Naida says, completely changing the subject. "The sun will do you good."

When they see no objection from me, they get to work and gently help me to my feet. At first, my legs tremble and the weight of my body threatens to buckle my knees. I lean on them as I take my first steps in what feels like forever.

"How long have I been like this?"

"A little **over** a month."

A month. I've lost an entire month of my life. And not just that, it's been a month since I lost my family. The thought hits me like a hammer. When I reach the chair and collapse into it, I'm grateful—I doubt I could've taken another step with this fist clenched around my heart. Abigail's face is vivid in my mind, it doesn't matter if I close my eyes—I can still see her. I try to imagine her like that afternoon in the castle gardens, with her curls scattered down her back and her hazel eyes shining every time she saw a new flower. I don't want to see blood, or her pale skin, or her empty gaze.

"Would you mind leaving me alone?" I ask, a bit rushed by emotion.

For a few seconds they hesitate, but whatever they see on my face convinces them, and they leave silently. I manage to hold back the tears just long enough to hear the soft click of the door closing. The first sob rips through my throat. I press my fist to my mouth,

trying to mutilate it but then another sob rises, and another, and another. The tears flow freely down my cheeks, tracing hot lines until they fall from the cliff of my chin. I never allow myself to cry, I always think it makes me look weak—but if there's ever a moment to show weakness, it's this one.

AD

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 135

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The faces of my family stare back at me from behind my closed eyelids. They smile. I press my list to my chest, silently begging my heart to stop beating if that would make the pain go away. Isn't my freedom and my life enough loss? My heart begs to stop, to surrender to the cold so it can freeze and stop hurting—but my mind screams for revenge and warms my veins.

I open my eyes when the **tears** stop and find myself face to face with my reflection in the window **glass**. Maybe my fangs aren't there now, but the two whitish-gray strands remain on each side of my head. I twirl one around my finger to make sure it's real.

"I remember who I am... and I'll make my enemies remember too."

Dinner has been served in bed. On the tray is a broth that smells wonderfully delicious. I bring a spoonful to my mouth under Ciro's watchful gaze. I try to pretend I don't see him in the corner of my eye, watching me, but it's impossible. I set the **spoon** on the edge of the plate, sigh, and meet his gaze.

"Why?"

"Why what, dear?"

Without looking **away** from me, he picks up the glass resting on the nightstand. He brings the rim to his lips and takes a long sip. The glass **is**

crystal clear—I can see the dark red liquid sliding into his mouth, and even if my mind tries to fool me, the thickness as it drips from the corner of his mouth leaves no doubt. It's blood—and what horrifies me most is that I'm not repulsed by it... I'm eager. I turn away, focusing again on my broth and avoiding the liquid he drinks.

"Why me? Why didn't you just let

let things be?"

“I was entitled to compensation.”

He leans back, getting comfortable

“I think it’s more than fair to hurt him the same way.”

feeling and can blind us, but she didn’t love you, Ciro. She

“Cassian told me what happened. I understand that being in love is a powerful feeling
wanted to uncover your weaknesses by getting close to you.”

I expect him to contradict me or get angry at my words, not laugh as if I’ve just told the
best joke in history. Ciro’s laughter fills the air, and the

sound is warm and harmonious. He brings a hand to his chest and little by little, his
laughter subsides.

“Is that **what** he told **you**?”

He shakes his head, still with a smile on **his** lips.

“I suppose the coward didn’t have the guts to tell you he wanted her as much as I did.”

I don’t want to think about the bile rising in my throat or the snakes twisting in my
stomach. Nor the sense of betrayal **shaking** my chest. I blink a few times, hiding any
reaction. I tell myself that feeling anything resembling love is foolish—especially if the
object of that feeling is Cassian Draven. My jailer. My enemy. My fate.

“Cassian hates humans.”

“I don’t see how that hatred stopped him from taking you to his bed.”

He raises an eyebrow as he sees the color drain from my face.

“I can smell it on you. I’m not stupid.”

“So this is about your jealousy,” I snap through clenched teeth,

*All because he desired the human you loved.”

“He didn’t just desire her.”

His voice bites into my skin.

“He took her, and once he’d tainted our love, he killed her.”

“Then **what**? Do you

you plan to do **the** same to **me**

!”

I don’t let him see the fear I really feel. The mere thought of Ciro abusing me, all for a thirst for vengeance that’s been simmering for longer than I can imagine, paralyzes me. Have I escaped one limbo only to end up in a worse fate? A shiver tiptoes down my spine. Ciro’s expression is serious now—no trace of his smile or the jovial air that usually surrounds him. No, what stands before me now is his true self. A vampire. A

Pureblood. One who’s fed on resentment for many, many years.

“No, Elara, I’m not going to do the same to you.”

He exhales slowly and drums his fingers against his knee.

“It might be hard to believe right now, but there’s more than revenge behind why you’re here.”

“You’re right. I don’t believe you.”

He gives me a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes.

“I’d be disappointed if you did.”

He clicks his tongue.

“The truth is, I’m fascinated by you. I’m used to everyone falling at my feet because of my gift. Imagine my surprise when a human Seemingly **weak** and insignificant at first glance—doesn’t fall under the spell of my looks.”

“And?”

“I want someone to see me for who I am,” he admits

“And you’re the only one capable of seeing me.”

“How do you expect me to see you as anything other than my new captor?” I ask, my voice heavy with reproach.

“I’m your prisoner, C

Ciro. I can’t look at you any other **way**.”

Ciro rises from his seat, leans toward me, and places his hands on either side of my head. His breath carries a faint metallic scent that at another time would've turned my stomach—but now I find it delicious, tempting

“That didn’t stop you from feeling something for Cassian,” he counters.

“Still, I don’t plan to be your captor. You can **come**

and go from my villa as you wish. I don’t want you to be my feeder, I won’t feed from you, and I won’t force you to do anything you don’t want. In return, I ask only one thing”

My voice sounds like a thread, so thin I’m not sure he even heard my question. His pink eyes are close to mine, and as I look closer, his irises seem to ripple as if they hold the tides of the **sea**.

11-34 11, 0 AU

Chapter 135

“One month. Try to get to know me. See me for who I am, Give me a

“And what if after a month I see you the same?”

His lips are so close to mine that I can almost feel the smile forming on them.

“I’ll set you free.”

“Just like that?”

“Just like that.”

His breath brushes my lips once more and then he steps back, giving me space I didn’t realize I needed to breathe

“I don’t plan to be the villain in your story, Elara. I think there are others who manage that quite well. I want to show you the good side of vampires. How fun and satisfying we can be.”

A dark gleam flashes in his eyes.

“How pleasurable our company can be.”

I swallow hard at his last words. He notices and a daring, dark smile pulls at his lips. He grabs his glass and downs the rest of the liquid in a single gulp. The motion brings the scent of blood back to my nostrils. I dig my nails into the mattress and shift back a few inches. He catches the movement and arches an eyebrow at me.

“Are you alright?”

I swallow again and take a few seconds to compose myself. I can’t let him suspect me—suspect what I am. I nod and force a smile. He doesn’t seem fully convinced, but he doesn’t press further.

” see you in the morning. I’ll let you rest.”

He backs slowly toward the door.

“One last thing. Elara.”

“Don’t mistake my kindness for stupidity. I already let one human believe I was a fool—I don’t intend to make the same mistake again.

He gives me one last look over his shoulder and leaves without waiting for a reply. Not that I think I had anything to say. I’m left alone with my thoughts and the empty **glass**. My fingers grip its stem and I stare at the residue at the bottom, where only a faint reddish trace remains. I inhale the scent and as soon as I do, a horrible sensation ripples through me. I place the glass back in its spot and contort my face in disgust. I feel dirty, repulsed by myself for what I’ve just done.

Flook down at my hands, expecting maybe to see something different, but they’re still the hands of a human—or at least, they appear to be. I blow out the candle before I drown any deeper in this sea of disgust and stare into the darkness. The silence and the blackness are the perfect companions for my mind to wander in directions I don’t want. But it seems impossible not to think about the latest revelations. A stab of pain pierces my heart and I open my **mouth** to breathe and calm myself.

He told me I was the first human he had ever been with, told me his sad story of hatred toward humans—and I believed him. I felt special. I’m

such a fool.

Now all I have left is to polson myself with his lies

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 136

Cassian

D

It's been three days since the attack, and although everything has returned to normal and the castle doesn't appear to have suffered any damage, there's a sour feeling in my gut. Ever since I heard Clara's voice in my head, I knew something had changed. No wonder all my attempts to enter Ciro's villa have been intercepted time and time again. Every time, I receive the same response.

"The lord will extend an invitation when the time comes."

Maybe he expects me to grow tired of walking the road to his will, but I won't. I know, deep in my chest, that something has shifted, something isn't right. Now, sitting behind my desk with my fingers intertwined beneath my chin, I close my eyes and try to extend my power. It's madness—I could slip into anyone's mind—but recognize the lightly sealed obsidian gates of Elara's mind. My power brushes the surface, gently, like a lover, and taps a few times. **No** answer.

"Cassian?"

Ank's soft voice pulls me from my attempt to slip into Elara's mind. I open my eyes and find her sitting atop the candle war resting on my

desk. Her eyes look at me with a touch of concern.

"Have you seen anything!"

She **shakes** her head.

"Only her, **asleep**"

She

sighs.

"They often snuff the candle. I haven't been able to see anything else."

The idiot Ciro may **think** he can hide her from me, but he has no idea how intense our connection is. No matter what he tries, she called to me. I know now, more than ever, that it wasn't my imagination.

"Let me know if anything changes—If you manage to **see more**, if she opens her eyes and doesn't seem lost..."

She nods and gives me once again a look that's halfway between worry and compassion.

Ank lifts her legs and slowly melts into the flame, leaving me once again alone with my thoughts and my efforts to **slip** into the mind of the little wildcat. I don't know how long I persist, only that by the time I give up, I'm exhausted. I haven't even realized that

someone has entered and left a pitcher for me. Reluctantly, I pour myself a glass, bring it to my lips, and drink the contents without even tasting it. It doesn't matter

-it's not the flavor I crave

Another day passes in which my failed attempts are joined by the search for Ragna, Drystan and I lock ourselves up for hours reviewing maps, both old and current, trying to figure out where they might have fled. The Wastelands aren't an option—they know it's the first place we'd check. **Unless...**there's more there **than** we think. That's why we **consult** ancient maps, looking for hidden paths, caves, or anything my men may have missed, I receive reports constantly, extend my gift every day to gather news, and each time the outcome is the same: there's no trace of the shifters or Ragna

A knock on the door makes us both look up from the maps.

"Come in,"

One of the young guards stationed at the outer gates enters the room holding a wrinkled envelope between his fingers. He lowers his **head as** he enters and raises his gaze when I gesture for him to speak immediately.

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11:34 Fri, 8 Aug

"This arrived for you, sir

He steps forward and hands me the envelope..

"As per your instructions, came the moment news from Ciro arrived"

I don't bother checking the sender's signature. Hear the envelope open and pull out what at first glance appears to be an invitation. My eyes scan the words, and I feel an indescribable mix of emotions. It's an Invitation to a ball. If I had any remaining doubts before, they are now completely gone. I quickly grab a sheet of paper and a quill to scribble my acceptance

"Send it immediately."

I pour hot wax and seal it with one of my rings. The young guard vanishes as soon as I hand it to him. The door closes and Drystan looks me directly in the eyes, raising an eyebrow.

"Do you plan to explain what's going on?"

1 pinch the bridge of my nose.

“Ciro is hosting a party at his villa.”

I pause before adding

“Tomorrow night”

u think?

“A bit sudden for him, don’t you

“Without a doubt.”

I let out a deep breath

“That only confirms my suspicions. We both know him well, and if my assumptions are right and **Elara** has awakened, his ego won’t be able to resist rubbing it in my face. He’ll want to parade her on his arm, **provoke** my rage.”

“That’s exactly why you can’t give him what **he** wants.”

His face darkens.

“Still, I don’t want you to get your hopes up yet. It could be any one of his reckless parties, you know full well his frivolous nature doesn’t allow him to go long without indulging his impulses.”

“I can’t promise anything.”

A low chuckle rumbles from his **chest**, and shaking his head side to **side**, he pushes his chair back and stands. He gives me a pat on the shoulder before leaving and letting me be alone. I walk to the window and look outside, **toward** the gardens. I almost expect Elara to appear at any moment, her black hair cascading behind her as she walks. I can’t stop ruminating on the same thoughts over and over again.

The mirror returns my perfect appearance, without a single crack or flaw in my mask. Anyone who sees me would think they’re looking at Cassian Draven—the cold, unreachable vampire with an insatiable thirst. The reality is far more complex. Knuckles on the door let me know the carriage is ready. I don’t take much longer checking my appearance—not when the anticipation of what tonight might bring has me on

fast as possible edge. If it weren’t for how much my kind values appearances, I’d go on foot, running through the forest—anything to arr and put an end to this uncertainty.

walk with my back straight and an impassive expression until I step into the carriage. The journey will take a few hours, and I’m **not** surprised to find a feeder sitting in the seat across from mine. Before Elara, any trip was a good excuse to feed, knowing that at my

destination, men and women would be more than willing to satisfy my other needs. Then that annoying little wildcat crossed my path and

turned every argument with her venomous tongue into something far more fun and interesting to spend my time on. I don't know when the change happened—maybe if I'd noticed, I would've tried to build thicker walls, higher barriers, to stop whatever was awakening in me. Now I'm afraid it's too late. I need that sharp tongued girl. For what? I don't know. But I don't want her anywhere but by my side.

At no point during the journey do I address the feeder, nor do I even glance at her. When the carriage door opens again, music reaches **my** ears. I instantly **see** that the party isn't limited to the interior of the mansion—there are half naked dancers parading through the gardens, servants carrying trays overflowing with blood, and some quests already in various states of frenzy in the darkest corners, though not **enough** to escape our sight.

I show my invitation to the one receiving guests, though upon seeing who I am, he steps aside and lets me in. I reject the glasses offered to me and head straight toward the group of men who have been a persistent nuisance for weeks.

“Gentlemen.”

Aeron and the other Council members turn as I join them.

“Cassian,” **several** of them say in unison.

I tilt my head in greeting.

“Please, go on,” I say with false courtesy **as** the silence drags.

“I didn't mean to interrupt.”“”

I **see** in the eyes of some of them all the questions they want to ask questions not so different **from** the ones I've dodged from Aeron. They want to know the truth behind the deaths of the Diluted I took to the Wastelands. Fortunately, the **dead** don't talk, and the ones who returned alive are loyal to me. Fear is a firm iron fist

AD

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 137

“We were just commenting on how peaceful things have been with the bilated for the past few weeks,” one of them informs me. been no attacks on the Auctions, and no other Diluted have reported being pressured to join them

“No matter how idiotic you think they are, none of them would speak openly abesit proposals from the rebel Diluted,” I say “That would only

make us distrust them.”

Some suppress a chuckle while the poor fool who spoke withes in embarrassment. His ears would be turning red if he weren’t a vampire. He’s not entirely wrong, though—the Diluted are quiet, and that’s largely because their leader is hiding like a filthy rat. But he’ll show up eventually, and whatever small agreement we have will be completely forgotten. If it weren’t for him, maybe many of my worries wouldn’t

exit

“And you? Still refusing to give the Council an explanation for the men you’ve lost?” Aeron asks

I turn to him, raising an eyebrow, but I don’t let any other part of my body react to his question.

“I owe the Council nothing.” I reply with a calm, serene voice. “And you’d do well to remember that. All of you, in fact.”

“The Council only wants what’s best...”

“Best for who?” I interrupt. “All I know is that you tried to screw me over when I opposed your genetic aberrations.” I step forward, looking each of them in the eyes. “From the moment my parents fell and I showed my **power**, you declared me your leader without my consent. I don’t know when I gave you the impression I was magnanimous, noble, or kind, but let’s get something clear. I’m not a good leader. I’m a

tyrant

“**Cassian**

“This little filthy move, giving away my favorite feeder, is the only thing you could do to hurt me, and you know it well. But I assure you, I won’t forget this, I strike when you least expect it.”

“We’re all on the same side, Cassian,” Aeron interjects

“No. I think we stopped being on the same side the moment Elara crossed my path.”

And I fear they don’t grasp the weight of my words. This isn’t just about their betrayal when they voted behind my back to make her Ciro’s feeder—it’s about what I’d be willing to do for her if it’s all true, Elara is the key to our survival...or our annihilation. Either

way, I won't let anyone use her in any way, even if it means dooming **us** all to extinction. I'll look the other way while we die, as long as she's not exploited.

The sound of doors opening wide catches everyone's attention, Ciro enters the hall looking immaculate, a smile hanging on his lips and his eyes locked on me. I almost expect Elara to appear behind him **at** any moment, but it doesn't happen. The doors close behind him, with no company but **his** arrogance. He grabs a goblet and joins our circle.

"I'm glad you all could make it, gentlemen."

"This lack of notice is unlike you," says Aeron.

"There's a first time for everything."

Aeron's favorite feeder approaches to whisper something in his ear. He nods **and** disappears with her in an instant. The rest of us remain in a circle, listening to some of Ciro's ramblings

"Ciro," I call his attention. "Let's talk."

I gesture behind me with my chin, though we both know that **privacy** is only a dream for beings like us. Ciro pretends to think it over, playing

11:34 Fri, 8 AUD

key, until he nods and leaves the rest to join me. I don't miss the curious glances or the tension in their bodies. We walk toward the walls of the hall. Along the way, he swaps his empty goblet for one filled to the brim with black.

"So? What do you want to talk about?"

"You know perfectly well.

"don't like guessing,

so just speak"

"How is she?"

"Perfectly fine. Healthy"

"You haven't let me see her in the last three days"

A smile I'd love to punch off his face tugs at the corners of his mouth. He places a hand on my shoulder like we're old friends

“I’m just helping you with your emotional attachment” His reply earns a growl from me. “Behave, and let you see her tonight

“Are you enjoying yourself?” I reply in a voice that could freeze the very Pits of the Underworld. “You’d do well to remember never to laugh at the devil.”

“If you’ll allow me a piece of advice. If I were you, I’d stop threatening and trying to intimidate me. None of it will work, it won’t bring Elara back to you. You lost her before I ever claimed her.” He removes his hand from my shoulder and takes a step back. “Enjoy the party, friend. I’ send over one of the women you like, so you can go back to your old self.”

He disappears from my side, gliding through the room like the perfect host. His movements are those of a skilled dancer, his smiles those of a sorcerer. I never take my eyes off him—perhaps that’s why I don’t notice the chestnut-haired woman with bare breasts heading toward me until it’s too late. She carries a jug on her head, blood spilling from it with every sway of her hips.

“Master,” she purrs as she reaches me, trailing a finger along my collar.

“I’m not your master,” I mutter through clenched teeth.

“Tonight you can be.”

The flutter of her lashes has no effect on me anymore. Once, would have given in quickly to this Diluted’s charms, I would have played with her, bitten her breasts, and kept her mouth busy in front of everyone. The keyword is once. Her fingers on my skin are not pleasurable—they burn like acid.

bare my teeth

“I’m sure there are other gentlemen eager for your attention.”

“None who deserve it more than you.”

Any attempt to push her away is cut short when I feel like someone punched me in the gut. Worse—like someone **has** a first inside my chest, squeezing the organ that never beat, until I can barely breathe. I clutch my heart, stumble to the wall, and force myself away from the **crowd**, searching for a quiet place to fall apart without appearing weak. I hold myself together until I reach a door and slip behind it. Once alone, Flet out a groan of pain, though it brings no relief

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 138

I don't know if it's instinct or something else, but it almost feels like invisible threads are pulling me. With every step I take away from the people, the pain in my chest eases—but doesn't vanish, Hook around, wondering if should return to the party or seize the chance to go to Elara, until a familiar scent reaches my nose. I stop—or rather, freeze completely. My neck slowly turns toward the door beside me. I feel the source is behind it. I touch the handle. It could be just my imagination or maybe they moved Elara again... but something tells me no. This is different. I've had a feeling ever since I heard her voice whispering my name in my head.

With determination, I break the agony and open the door. The world tilts on its axis when I see the blood-red dress and the person wearing it. My eyes meet Elara's in the mirror. Saying she's beautiful would be an insult. The word doesn't even come close.

"You're awake," I say, unable to form more words

She doesn't turn. She just watches me through the mirror. Her hair is styled in a low bun, with some curls framing her face. I let myself be surprised for a moment by the platinum gray color. She wears a tiara and a diamond necklace gripped tightly in her hand.

"How?" I ask, stepping forward and quickly closing the door. "How did you wake up?"

"I don't have to answer your questions."

Her voice sounds familiar and yet not. It has a harder, wiser, more determined tone. The rustle of her dress as she turns is the only sound in the room. I tilt my head and study her without hiding my curiosity and awe

"If you think **that** being his feeder makes you any less mine, you're wrong, Elara." I take another step forward. "Tell me how did you come

back?"

"Is it true?" she snaps, ignoring my question. "is what Ciro told me true?"

"

Ciro tells many lies, little wildcat i **don't** know which one of them is upsetting **you**."

She twists her face in disgust, clenching her fists tightly at her sides. Her erratic breathing makes her breasts rise temptingly from the dress's neckline. When she sees in

my eyes what my lips don't say, she takes a step back, widening the distance my feet want to close.

"You told me I was the first." I frown, not understanding. "You said I was the first human you touched, the first you kissed; you lied."

"What did he tell you?"

"You're not denying it," she says in a whisper.

She takes another step back, as if I'd just pushed her. Her gaze is accusatory.

"I didn't lie," I say, choosing my words carefully, "You're the first human I ever brought to my bed voluntarily. Whatever version Ciro gave you, know that it's just another of his tricks."

Her laugh, though insincere, awakens dormant feelings in me.

"Tricks?" She raises an eyebrow. "Do you really think I'm that stupid?"

"Stupid is something I've never thought of you." This time, when I move closer, she doesn't step away, "You know my reasons for hating your kind. Do you think I'd let go of them so easily for a human?"

"I am a human"

Slowly, a wolfish

h grin spreads across my lips.

11:34 Fil, 8 Augi

"Darling, you know you're not." I take enough steps to let my fingers graze the curve of her exposed collarbone. "**Besides, we're** beyond desire, Elara,"

I know she doesn't want me to see how my touch affects her. Her jaw muscle trembles from how hard she clenches her teeth.

"When I found out about Neera's intentions, I seduced her. I made her believe I wanted her so I could get close and gain her trust and made it look like we'd shared a bed. I thought her betrayal would outweigh mine that way. That's the truth. That's what happened. I don't know what version he gave you, but this one is mine."

Her wild scent wraps around me, drives me mad. I just want to bury my face in her neck and engrave every cell of my being with her scent and the feel of her nearby. I swallow the saliva flooding my mouth.

“Did you kiss her?” The question leaves her lips weakly.

“I did”

“Good.” She blinks as if escaping a spell and looks at the closed door. “I think you better go before someone finds you here.”

“You’re not being rational. We’ve just found each other after everything and you just

“I don’t want to be rational”

“Are **you** angry with me?”

“No,” she says, unconvincing. “I’m just being cautious.

”

“You’ve never been cautious.” I smile. “If you were, you’d never have let me taste you.”

“Did I ever have another choice?” she replies, shaking her head “Leave, Cassian.”

I plant my feet on the ground, refusing to move an inch from her. Not now. Not until we have a real conversation—not this meaningless crap

“I need to earn your forgiveness. Is that it?” My fingers move fast and I catch her hand, cold to the touch beneath mine. “What do you want

from me,

Elara?”

“Nothing, Leave, **Cassian**, you’ll cause trouble.”

“**What** do you want, Elara?”

Silence swallows **us** whole, suffocates us. My fingers slide to intertwine with hers, and I pull her to me. Our foreheads touch, and for a second, I see her vulnerability in its purest, rawest form. I drink in her image while she dives into my eyes. It feels like it’s been a century since we were this close, I almost miss the shift in the atmosphere, under the spell of the strong, steady pulse pounding in her neck. Her scent intensifies, her eyes turn the palest shade of gray, and the edge of her fangs peeks below her upper lip, pricking the lower one. I don’t see pain in her **face** -I see unwavering determination and the dark gleam of sweet revenge.

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Send gift

No Ads

Sold to the Night Lord

Chapter 139

Elara

I shouldn't care.

I shouldn't care about any of this—not him, that's for sure. I shouldn't care if he lied to me, if there were others before me, if there will be

others after.

I should, but I don't.

There's something inside, a raw, twisted, almost primal feeling, that wants to take hold of me. I don't understand myself, and I fear I never will. How can I feel such contradictory things at the same time?

My heart did a somersault inside the shell of my ribs the moment I saw him step through the doorway. My fingertips still tingle with the urge to touch him, to feel his skin, the incendiary fire his touch spreads through my body.

Anger, desire, confusion, sorrow... a dangerous mix, a poison consuming me.

I'm aware of the exact moment the change occurs. It's as if someone poured ice water through my veins—or worse, as if my blood turned to

ice.

The edge of my fangs pricks my lower lip, and I feel a current sweep through my body.

Cassian lets out a small gasp of surprise, and his eyes don't miss a single detail.

He examines me from the gray strands in my hair to the tips of the heels peeking out from beneath my dress.

“Is that what you want? To see me on my knees?”

I can’t deny the satisfaction I feel when his face contorts into a grimace that borders on pure terror.

I don’t need gifts or pretty words if he wants my forgiveness—just his pride, his most prized possession. I want him to place it on a platter and

hand it to me.

“I kneel, and then what? Do I beg for your forgiveness?”

I tilt my head, mimicking a gesture that’s so his. I study his face with curiosity, waiting to see what comes next.

I straighten my back, showing confidence and composure, even though the truth is I’m lost and shattered.

“I’m sure you can be creative,” I reply, barely recognizing my own voice.

Silence takes over the room, time seems *to* stop and trap us inside it, with the noise of our thoughts echoing louder than ever.

It’s almost imperceptible and fleeting, but something like fingers brushes the surface of my mind, grazes the knuckles, asking permission to

enter;

but I keep my resolve firm and my mind tightly shut.

I’m the only one who can do this—resist him, remain immune to his gifts, reverse the effects of his actions.

Does it apply only to me?

Or could I be capable of extending it to others? Reversing the effects of his **gift**, returning the Broken to their original **state**.

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Chapter 199

My attention shifts to his throat, where I see his Adam's apple rise and fall as he swallows.

If time hasn't stopped before, I beg it to do so now.

Slowly, Cassian kneels on one knee, his eyes locked on mine, and the blood roars in my veins at the sight.

He stays like that for a moment, showing his defiance, until he lowers the other knee.

He clenches his fists at his sides and keeps his chin high, staring at me with those oceans trapped in his eyes.

With every second, my blood screams louder, and the most intense desire I've ever felt takes shape within me.

His unmistakable scent, like rain and night-blooming jasmine, fills the air and wraps around me like a lover's arms.

He swallows again, drawing my gaze to his neck.

My mouth fills with saliva, and thoughts I never imagined having race through my mind.

Apparently, I'm not the only one affected—his eyes darken, his nostrils flare, catching the scent of whatever he's detected.

I'm killing him.

The hem of my dress brushes against his knees, and without warning, his hand wraps around my ankle.

"Twice, Elara."

I fight the arrhythmic beating of my heart and my ragged breath.

"Twice what?"

"Twice I've knelt for you."

The tips of his fingers travel up my leg, caressing my calf.

"Cassian Draven never kneels. Especially not for a woman."

He lets out a low laugh.

“I was supposed to be the one to break you, to shatter your sanity–not the other way around.”

I hold my breath when his hand reaches the top of my thigh.

I’m *not* wearing underwear–just a stupid, thin slip that does little to hide my undeniable arousal.

He inhales again, and I know without doubt which/scent has caught his attention.

His thumb draws small circles on my skin.

“You’re wet. Seeing me on my knees turns you on.”

Little by little, a wicked smile forms *on* his lips as his thumb slides up to the crease of my groin.

“You’re definitely the punishment for all my sins, little wicked wildcat.”

I want to speak, to say something to stop this–yet I stay silent.

Muy

His finger brushes my skin, teasing, until it slides to my center and shamelessly traces the line between my lips.

I can feel my wetness on his finger.

I clench my hands, digging my nails into my palms, and bite down on my lip to keep any sound from escaping.

A metallic taste explodes in my mouth.

“I’m sorry, Elara.”

His finger continues circling my entrance.

+38

“You can’t imagine how sorry I am. I wish things could’ve been different. It killed me to do that to you, and every day I watched you in that bed, it devoured me. You were empty, and no matter what you think, you’ve always been full–so damn full of life that you gave a little of it to

me.”

With that signature elegance of his, Cassian removes his hand from beneath my dress and brings the glistening, wet finger to his mouth.

He watches my reaction closely as he wraps his lips around it and sucks, hungry-like this is the closest he's come to feeding in weeks.

The fire in my veins becomes unbearable.

I think it will reach my brain and burn it until nothing remains.

Maybe that's what drives me to grab him by the lapels, fists full of fabric, and force him to stand.

I crash my body against his, and for a fraction of a second, we look into each other's eyes and recognize one another.

Then I kiss him—or he kisses me.

I don't know who makes the first move in this madness of teeth, lips, and tongues, exploring one another again after weeks apart.

I taste myself on his tongue and a moan dies in my throat.

With practiced hands, *he* grabs my waist and pins me against the wall.

Not even the dress keeps me from wrapping my legs around his hips and pulling him close.

My fingers tangle in his hair—he's still not close enough.

His tongue licks my lower lip and travels down my neck.

I growl when I feel the edge of his fangs against my skin and I can't hold back anymore.

AD

Comment

My birthday 140



My hands move down to his pants and, with steadier hands than I expected, I manage to free the erection that was pressing **against me** moment ago.

“Ciro won’t take long to come looking for you,” he murmurs against my neck.
*Then hurry up.”

“It shouldn’t be like this. I want to take my time with you. I want you in my bed, moaning my name, going mad,”

My thumb slowly glides along the smooth skin of his length until it reaches the tip, where a droplet of his arousal has formed.

I catch it and spread it, moving my hand, earning a gasp from his lips.

“Elara…” he whispers, warningly.

“You asked what I wanted in return for forgiveness. I want this.”

“To fuck you against a wall? That’s what you want?”

“Among other things.”

“I’ll hurt you.”

“Now you care about hurting me?”

And with that, I break his restraint.

The gleam of desire and rage flashes in his eyes, and before I can finish my next thought, I feel him enter me.

It’s painful—more than the first time I was in his bed.

My body has to adjust to his size quickly.

This time he doesn’t ease into me—he thrusts all at once, stealing my breath.

I stifle a cry and bite his neck.

I don’t realize what I’ve done until his warm blood floods my mouth.

He growls in return and drives himself deeper and harder inside me.

He grips my ass in his hands, moving me against him at will, making our bodies meet again and again, filling the room with sounds of ecstasy and fury.

“If fucking you were sacred, I think I’d become a believer.”

The taste of his blood pushes me to the peak/faster than ever.

I feel like I’m going to fall any second.

I dig my nails into his shoulders as I suck on his neck and fill myself with that most primal flavor.

Cassian is fast and brutal with every thrust.

Chapter

140

I pull away from his skin, and his **tongue quickly** licks the **blood from my lips, erasing** all **evidence** of our **sin**
I half—close my eyes with each thrust that brings me closer to release, and he knows I’m almost there.

He lowers a hand to my clit and draws circles on it.

I move my hips, seeking more friction.

The sounds our bodies make are so filthy and erotic that my body tightens, my legs squeeze harder around him, and my fangs pierce **my lip as** I tumble over the edge of climax.

I see the glow of desire in his eyes before I shut mine and feel the heat of his tongue licking the blood from *my* wounded lips.

A guttural moan escapes his mouth, and the next thing I feel is a warm liquid inside me.

The last thrusts are clumsy and offbeat.

He buries his face in the crook of my neck as we both struggle to catch our breath.

His fingers still dig into my hips, and mine into his forearms.

Neither of us seems willing to leave the heat of the other—ironic, speaking of a vampire.

Cassian pulls away from my neck and looks at me, raising a hand to gently caress my cheek with his fingers.

The touch is soft and comforting.

I didn't realize how much I missed it, though it's not something I'll ever admit out loud.

"There's so much I don't understand about you," he murmurs.

"One moment you seem like the girl I met, and the next, you're here—eternal, immortal. You're fascinating."

Maybe it's his words, or something beyond my understanding, but I feel the energy that filled my body slowly fade.

My fangs no longer prick my lower lip, and I think I feel a bit of warmth return to me.

Cassian's features relax, seemingly relieved.

"Now you're scared of me?"

Another of his deep laughs escapes, sending goosebumps across my skin..

"I'm far from scared."

To prove it, he presses against me, and I feel *his* erection returning to life. I stifle a gasp of surprise, and he grins back.

I don't know why that image makes my heart ache.

Smiles are rare on him.

“What?”

“It’s just... I have to get used to all of this.”

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“**Me too.**”

He buries his face in my neck again, and I feel him inhale my scent as his entire body relaxes.

Clumsily, I move my hand to his back and slowly caress him, up and down; for a moment, his breath hitches, surprised **by** the gesture
As if this were something new for him.

I wonder if anyone has embraced him all these years—if any woman has ever touched him for more than lust or hunger.

Has anyone ever tried to comfort him?

To ease his pain?

“Do you hate me?” he asks.

Oh, I should. The gods know I should.

And yet, deep down, I know there are far stronger emotions—possibly the only ones that can rival hatred.

“With every fiber of my being,” I whisper.

“To my very last breath.”

“That’s a long time.”

Cassian brushes his nose against the sensitive skin of my neck.

“Though I should inform you—you’re a terrible liar.”

“And you? Do you still hate this weak human?” :

“For all eternity.”

He slowly pulls back and looks at me.

“Though I think it helps that you’re not a weak human at all.”/

“And if I were? What would have happened?”

His eyes meet mine with a fire that steals my breath.

If I remember correctly, you were already in my bed before I knew you weren’t human.”

He gives a faint smile.

“I think it’s pretty clear I was already far from salvation. Now tell me the truth—do you hate me?”

“I don’t blame you for what you had to do, if that’s what you’re worried about.

I understand the reasons that led you to it.”/

“And for the kiss with Neera?”

“I felt... betrayed.”

Chapter 140

“I **didn’t know you**, Elara.

He looks at me sincerely.

“I can only promise you that she never meant anything to me. Everything I did to humans.”

“I’m jealous,” I admit, ashamed.

B

was for a purpose. That’s what I’ve always **done** use

