

# Arch-Enemies

## Chapter 4: Drake

I'm digging through what's left of my grandfather's papers. Giovanni and possibly my father seem to have gone through everything. I swipe the papers onto the floor just as Giovanni comes to the door.

"Prince Drake, your father has requested your presence for dinner."

"I bet he did," I respond without looking at him.

With hands on hips, I look around the room. My grandfather was smart enough not to leave something like this out where my father or Giovanni would find it. So where would he have put it.

"I'm happy to escort you to dinner," Giovanni says.

"You can tell my father that I won't be joining him for dinner tonight or any night," I say. When he once again doesn't move, I turn to him. I make shooing gestures with my hands and have the pleasure of watching his eyes narrow.

"Now run along, like the good little errand boy that you are, and tell him that I won't be coming."

Giovanni snarls, but turns and races off to tell my father of my insolence, no doubt.

I begin going around the room, searching for air currents in strange places, pressing on bookshelves hoping for hidden doors. When I find nothing, I move on to my grandfather's bedroom. However, it appears that this room has been demolished. The drawers have been overturned, the sheets shredded, the mattress stuffing is all over the floor, the curtains have been ripped from the walls. No wonder this room hasn't been cleaned up, no one can enter into this room during the day with all the sunlight it would let in.

I've just stepped out of the room when Giovanni slithers up to me again.

"Your father commands your presence in the throne room. We have distinguished guests that he wants you to meet. He indicated that you know the consequences if you do not comply."

I snarl, grabbing Giovanni by the throat and pinning him against the wall so his feet are off the ground.

“Do not dare to threaten me, Giovanni,” I say before dropping him. I know exactly what my father will do if I don’t comply. He’ll throw me out of the castle and disown me, not that I care, or I wouldn’t if I wasn’t still trying to complete this last mission for my grandfather.

I turn on my heel and stomp toward the ‘throne room’. My father said I needed to attend, he didn’t say that I needed to be polite. He’s about to see how an aggravated son treats his distinguished guests.

Just before I walk into the room, I catch the sweetest scent of blood I’ve ever smelled in my life. I stop, as I feel my eyes dilate, and I know they’ve turned dark red. My fangs extend and I lick the air, almost as if I can taste her blood in it. My mate. I’ve finally found my mate and she’s in my father’s fucking feeding room.

I slam the door open, flying into the room.

There are two beautiful women sitting on my father’s dais dressed in clothing from a previous century. One is sitting next to Amir, my father’s second in command, while the other is watching Silas as he feeds on a naked human, fucking her while staring at the woman who’s side he must have just left. She must have really pissed Silas off. I like these women already.

When I look back, I can see the golden eyes of the Guardians, the Custos Regni, in both women. This must be where the delicious smell is coming from. Everyone knows the scent of the Guardians is like a drug to vampires and apparently, I’m no different.

“Father! What is the meaning of this?” I demand, watching as the woman beside Amir jerks. When she turns, and her eyes meet mine, I know in that instant that she is my mate. It makes me feel even more sick that my father is subjecting them to the hideous side of what we are, the side my grandfather worked so hard to eliminate. My father has reverted this clan back to nothing more than the blood sucking leeches that other supernaturals say we are.

“Drake. Come in. As you can see, we have distinguished guests. Custos Regni.” He purrs, as if they are here of their own volition.

I look at my father and then the rest of the room in a current state of feeding frenzy with the smell of the Guardians fueling the vampires’ desire. “And you thought they would enjoy watching this?”

He shrugs as if he doesn’t understand the position that he’s putting us in. These are Guardians, the most powerful supernaturals that exist. You don’t make enemies with those that can literally obliterate you into dust.

“They are welcome to participate if they choose,” he says. I look at the girls, because they are barely old enough to be considered adults. I can see the horror and disgust on their faces at what they are witnessing.

I snarl at my father. “Yes, because there is no danger in a Guardian being drained by a vampire in a feeding frenzy. You go too far, father.”

“Do not challenge me boy!” he says, standing to face me. Finally, an appropriate reaction.

“Or what? You’ll kill me too? I’d like to see you try,” I snarl at him. He and I both know that at worst we’re evenly matched, at best, I’m stronger than he is. I question whether or not I should just fight him and be done with it. If it weren’t for my mission, I already would have. But for now, I look back at the women. They need my help.

“Guardians, please, come with me.”

As they stand, Amir grabs my mate’s hand. I’m just about to step in, when she handles the situation, Guardian style.

“I warned you not to touch me again, Amir,” she says and I watch her wolf push forward. Amir screams as he is turned to dust.

My father’s eyes go wide as he sees his second in command disintegrated in front of him. The entire room goes silent around us.

“Yes father. You would be wise to remember that they are called the Guardians of the Realm for a reason.” I snarl at him. “Ladies, please, come with me.”

I lead them to a much quieter part of the castle, the place where my room is located.

“At the risk of being forward, the safest place for you tonight is in my room. I’ll have the sheets changed and you can both sleep there. I’ll stay awake and make sure no one bothers you,” I tell them, hoping to do some damage control. Now that we’re away from the feeding room, I can smell the difference between the two Guardians. While the one smells delicious, my mate smells positively mouthwatering.

“What was your father planning to do with us?” The one who is not my mate asks me as I open my bedroom door for them. As my mate passes, I take a deep breath of her scent and I notice that she does the same.

I step in behind them, closing the door and leaning against it. I huff as I run my fingers through my hair.

“I have no idea what he was planning. My father and I obviously don’t see eye to eye. I was away when he challenged my grandfather for the title. If I had been here...”

If I had been here, my grandfather would still be alive. I walk to my mini bar and pour two fingers of whiskey into a glass before throwing it back. I need to relax, not only because my father has my anger flaring brightly, but also because I don't want to scare my mate any more than my father already has.

"Would either of you like a drink?" I ask them, glancing at my mate from the corner of my eye.

"What do you have?" my mate asks, stepping up to me. At least she's not afraid of me. Of course, she just obliterated a vampire into dust, so she has no reason to feel fear around me. She has no reason to fear me at all, but she doesn't know that yet.

"Pretty much anything you could want. Vodka, rum, scotch, whiskey, bourbon..."

"Bourbon," my mate says, making me smile.

"Make that two," her friend says.

"Two bourbons, coming up. Have a seat. My room isn't exactly visitor ready, I apologize. I wasn't expecting anyone to be in here this evening," I say, earning a smile from my mate.

"Do you mind if I ask your names?" I ask as I pour.

"I'm Leana Holstin and this is Lily Forte," my mate says.

I turn with the drinks in my hand. "Holstin, as in Angel Holstin?"

"Yes, she's my mother."

I nod, handing her the drink before walking to her friend. Holstin is a name I know well. My grandfather told me what happened to Angel Holstin, how a former vampire prince basically enslaved her and kept her as a blood bag. It's very unlikely that her daughter would ever consider accepting me as her mate. I know I just met her, but the thought makes me sad. I've waited half a century for my mate and now, she'll probably reject me.

I close my eyes and change the subject. She hasn't rejected me yet and right now, she needs my help. Maybe I can show her that not all vampires are like my father.

"What brings the two of you to Castle Shroud?" I ask, sitting across from them as Leana sits next to Lily.

"We wanted to pass through your territory. We were seeking permission from King Urien, not knowing that he was no longer King." Leana says. My fingers brush hers, as I pass the drinks over. Warmth, the heat of her body, sends jolts of pleasure through my body, straight to my dick. I have to fight the moan that nearly leaves my lips at the contact.

“And my father insisted that you stay,” I say, standing up. I need to put some distance between me and Leana.

“What did he think was going to happen?” I wonder out loud.

Maybe, if I can show Leana that I’m not the kind of vampire that my father is, she’ll give me a chance. Not all vampires have mates. It’s actually extremely rare, but I’m a royal vampire and my grandfather found his soulmate. Maybe that’s why he was the way he was, and why my father is so different from us.

“I will make sure you have safe passage through our territory. I would suggest that you get some sleep tonight. Where are you headed?” I ask, looking at Leana.

“Araphyra.” She says.

“What about our clothes?” she asks.

“Do you know where you were staying?” I ask, frowning. It would be better to get their things tonight before Giovanni goes through them.

“We were sharing a room in one of the turrets,” Lily says.

I snarl, and I know my eyes flash red. My father had no intention of ever letting them leave. He would have brought war to our lands and he’s too stupid to realize that we would be the one who would lose.

“I will make sure your clothing is here by morning. Until then, would you be willing to borrow some of my clothing to sleep in?” I don’t know if I smell as good to Leana as she does to me but if she offered for me to use her clothing as a pillow, I’d jump at the chance.

“That would be great. This,” Lily says, pointing to the disgusting dresses my father must have given them to wear, “isn’t really my style.”

“You can change in there. I’ll see about getting the sheets changed and getting your bags,” I tell them, handing them some clothes.

I can hear them whispering as I go to my door.

“Demetrius,” I call quietly, knowing he’s always nearby.

“Yes, my Prince,” he says, stepping up to the door from the shadows.

“I need you to get me the Guardians’ clothing. My father had them in one of the turrets,” I say and Demetrius’ lips press into a thin line. He was my grandfather’s second. He’s lucky to be alive, but I know he is true to me, not my father.

“Yes, sir. Anything else?”

“I’ll be leaving early in the morning, before everyone awakes so I can get the Guardians out of here before my father does any more damage to our alliance.”

“I’ll make sure you have clothing packed and some food to take on your journey,” he says.

“Thank you,” I say before closing the door.

I go to my closet and get a new set of sheets, stripping the ones on my bed. I’ve just finished changing them when Lily and Leana exit my bathroom.

I wasn’t expecting the possessive feeling that overcomes me at seeing my mate in my sweatshirt. I like her wearing my clothing.

“We could have done that Drake,” she says.

“You are guests here, regardless of how my father has treated you.” I reach out to touch her, but pull them back. She just came from the feeding room. She won’t want me touching her.

“Are you comfortable?” I ask them, dragging my eyes away from Leana to look at Lily.

“Yes, thank you.” Lily says.

“I have requested your bags be brought here. I apologize again for my father’s behavior. I hope....” I look at Leana. “I hope you won’t hold his behaviors against me,” I say softly.

“You have shown me that you are not that same person as your father. Thank you, for looking after us and making sure we are safe,” she says making my heart that hasn’t beat in nearly half a century feel like it just did.

“Get some sleep. I’ll have food brought in tomorrow morning, but I’m sure you want to get out of here early.”

“Yes, we are sort of on a deadline to get to Araphyra.” Leana tells me.

When they crawl into the bed, I turn off the lights, facing the doorway in case anyone thinks they will get past me. I have another drink that I roll around in my hand, sipping slowly as I alternate between looking at my mate in my bed and the door.

When Demetrius returns, I place their clothing in my room. I’m ready to close the door when Demetrius gestures me outside.

“Giovanni was in their room when I got there. He had already gone through their things. There was nothing I could do, but he wanted to know where they are. I’m sure he knows

now that I came for their clothes that they are here with you. You need to be careful tonight. Stay alert.”

I growl low, but nod. “Thank you.”

I walk back into the room and lock the door, then I move to sit down, ready to spend the night protecting my mate.

As I listen, I hear the deeper breathing of one of the women. I’m just wondering which one it is, when Leana crawls out of bed, coming over to me.

“I think we should talk.”