

## Symphony of Death

### Chapter 11

*"I had to do it," she whispered.*

*Tears welled in her eyes. "You would've destroyed the world."*

All this time she was right before my eyes. So close—just a beat of the heart away.

*I had my suspicions, but how did I not realize it right away?*

My jaw clenched as her scent resurfaced in my senses.

*Water lilies.*

Not jasmine—water lilies.

Not cold blue eyes—but warm brown.

Not just her scent. Her touch. Her softness. The way she felt in my hands.

It lled me with revulsion.

I sco ed as the air stilled before it stirred—a rip tearing open in space, shadows swirling with the arrival of a long-lost foe.

So, *she came!*

I couldn't decide what to make of her decision.

*Courage? Or folly?*

I watched with cold disdain as she stepped out of the void and surveyed my throne room. She icked her ngers. Dead torches sprang to life. I counted her steps. Her breaths. Until she stood at the foot of my throne.

"Lyra!"

"Laurel," she snapped. "It's Laurel Grace."

My laugh made the silence tremble.

"Well played, Lyra."

*^Flashback^*

"Are you going to leave her?" Aeron asked me, nodding at Anastasia. "Why did Harold involve her in the rst place? She is just a human."

I looked at Anastasia over my shoulder. Harold approached her, with his back toward us, blocking her from our view. A moment later, he faced me as he had her hanging on the edge.

One blink could make her fall.

Aeron had a point. What was Harold's plan with this girl? Was his interest in her merely because she was connected to me, however tenuously?

Did he not know I did not care for these human lives?

He turned toward me. "You can thank me for this later."

I watched as Harold pushed Anastasia o the roof. He mocked a salute and disappeared before any of us could have moved.

That was when my questions were answered.

A sharp pain shot through my left shoulder blade. My eyes turned when the same sensation coursed through me.

"He opened the port to Acreoterra," Aeron rushed forward. "She is not dead."

*Save me.*

My right wing appeared to surface and I jumped after Anastasia on instinct.

"Cain!" Xic yelled after me.

I dove toward Anastasia.

My wing coiled around us and we were standing on the rooftop in the next instant.

"It was you after all," I snarled at the limp body in my arms.

Aeron and Xic rushed forward as my wing recoiled and disappeared.

"What?" Aeron looked at Anastasia's still form in my hold. "Why did you—?"

"It is her." I grabbed her neck.

The venom of hatred that had been coursing through me for over a millennium pumped to life with a thirst for vengeance.

"She is the reincarnation of Omisha."

I raised her left hand and rubbed her wrist. The symbol glowed brighter.

"The bearer of the curse." I pulled her face closer to mine. "She has my wing."

For the rst time in a millennium, my half-living heart thundered. My grip on her nape became deadly as I drew her closer, letting my breath scorch her still lips.

"I found you." The dagger materialized in my hand. "Now die—"

"Cain, stop!"

A new portal cracked open behind me. The intruder stepped out of the rift.

"Lyra?" I didn't need to look. "Here I thought you burned in that re. Alive after all?"

She came before me.

"I thought the Enchantress couldn't age."

Her appearance surprised me—mildly.

"Every action bears a price, Cain," she said calmly. "Let the girl go."

I held her even tighter.

"You cannot kill her."

"I'll be more than delighted to humor you." I pressed the blade to her chest. The very same blade she, Omisha, used to sever my wing.

"Cain!" Lyra stepped forward, but Aeron barred her path. "Killing Anastasia won't restore your wing. You won't get it back."

I snarled when she dared another step.

"Please! Hand her over."

"You wish!" I crushed Anastasia against my chest.

As if anyone could take her from me now.

"She will die before you even think of extracting your wing. I am not lying."

I looked at Anastasia. I tried stirring her consciousness, but it didn't work.

"She won't wake up. She will die if she stays with you against her will."

"Don't try to play tricks," I warned. "I won't hesitate to slit your throat."

"I am telling the truth," she said, voice unwavering. "Let her go—for now." She reached out slowly. "You can nd us if I try to run."

I didn't want to let her go. Not now.

"Count on it, Lyra." I released Anastasia. Every cell in my body was screaming to take her back.

"You better come to me with a solution by tomorrow. Or I'll come for you."

*^End of Flashback^*

This time, Lyra didn't inch beneath my gaze.

Once, she couldn't even look me in the eye.

Now? She stared back at death.

"I'll tell you what you want to know," she said. "Leave my child alone."

"I can't." I rose from my throne. "She has my wing, *Laurel*. She stole something precious from me."

"She didn't do anything," she snapped. "You don't know."

"Then enlighten me," I said, halting before her. "Her reincarnation was prophesied. She was born with my wing. She sees Anima."

"She's not Omisha," Laurel insisted.

*Still lying to my face.*

"You can't take your wing unless she gives it to you willingly," she said. "That dagger is useless until then."

My jaw clenched.

"The wing is bound to her soul. Take it by force, and not only will she die—you'll lose it forever."

"Stop lying," I roared.

"I won't waste my breath," she said bitterly. "You are incapable of understanding anything remotely humane."

I snorted.

"But know this—you won't win."

"I am not weak, Lyra," I said as I leaned in. "I don't need any wings to wield power. You know that. I just want back what is mine. And I want to punish those who took it from me. It's betrayal I won't ignore. The arrogance of the Blue Bloods will be their undoing. I'll crush every last one."

"Anastasia has nothing to do with that," she hissed.

"She has everything to do with this," I hissed back. "Cast thousands of spells—you cannot erase her truth."

My rage echoed from the walls of my throne room.

"She will pay for her sins."

"Cain!"

"She *will* come to me," I said, stepping back. "I know the conditions. She will give herself to me—mind, heart, soul, and body. Every part of her will be mine."

I returned to my throne, watching Laurel with wicked eyes.

"She will do it willingly, Lyra. And I will take it all gladly, leaving her with nothing."

"Please!" Laurel begged. "It's not just you. The Blue Bloods will come after her too. I beg you." She fell to her knees. "Don't drag that innocent life into your feud."

"Innocent? She's the beginning of this all," I cut her o. "I don't care who hunts her. Her fate is sealed. She did this to herself when she took my wing and betrayed me."

My sts balled in rage.

"You can do nothing to change her future, Lyra."

I raised my palm and the dagger appeared there.

"I will kill her."