

Chapter 19

I was pacing around the VIP lounge, clutching Lyra's key in my hand. After some digging, I had found answers, but was left with even more questions.

"So you're saying that it's the key to Aether Estuary," Aeron muttered. "Only Astras can summon others there. Even angels can't breach it without invitation. We're locked out."

"Then why did Lyra have it?" Xic asked from the shadows.

The answer remained a mystery...like Lyra.

"In any case, we have more urgent matters to discuss. Harold approached Anastasia," I told them. "He mentioned Omisha."

"He is challenging you outright," Xic sco ed. "This is a declaration of war."

"Harold is working with the Blue Bloods," I said darkly. "Since that first attack. Or...he is the one using them."

"Explains how he controls low-tier Anima," Xic spat. "Filthy vermin."

"Mark Anastasia," Aeron warned. "Shae's not enough anymore. If she hears the truth from someone else...or worse, chooses the Blue Bloods—"

He didn't finish the sentence. He didn't need to.

"Aren't you a force one?" I murmured to myself, watching her laugh with her friends at the bar. "You've piqued my interest, love."

I downed my drink.

"To the thrill ahead."

As I turned to leave, Xic rose from the couch, pushing a woman o his lap.

"Leaving already?" He wiped the lipstick o his lips and grinned wickedly. "These are not to your taste?"

One was kissing Aeron's neck—not that he was paying her any attention. Two were lying naked on the couch Xic was occupying.

"All these years of restraint, brother." Xic snickered. "Careful—denying your nature has a way of turning saints into monsters."

"Did I ever say I was a saint?" I smirked.

I left the VIP lounge and went down to the main club.

"Aren't you a happy little thing?" I mused to myself.

The euphoria was radiating o her face. Their heads were joined and they were having a hushed conversation among themselves.

The bass trembled underfoot, but the moment I stepped into their circle, the pulse of the room shifted—from chaos to silence.

Anastasia visibly paled upon seeing me. Her friends scampered away when I moved toward her.

She was the last one to stand up.

"Shall we?" I raised my hand.

Anastasia placed her hand in mine.

"Good girl." I smirked at her obedience.

Her friends moved to block my path.

"Need a hand?" Aeron and Xic came.

"Looks like a much better party than the one we were having upstairs," Xic snickered.

"Please, don't do anything," Anastasia whispered to me.

She pressed her lips into a de ant line when I put a nger on them. My glare warned her of the dangers if she dared even think of rebelling.

I dragged her out of the club after telling my brothers to deal with her friends.

Her continuous protests were wearing my patience thin.

In one swift jerk, I brought her before me and held her close, my form looming over her like a menacing shadow under the dim lights outside the club.

"Do they know?" I asked calmly.

Anastasia kept her silence.

"Did you tell them about us?"

I crushed her arms in my bruising hold.

"They gured it out themselves," she sobbed in pain. I gritted my teeth in anger.

"They won't tell anyone."

"Don't anger me anymore, Anastasia," I grunted in annoyance when she kept trying to ght.

I pulled her closer, feeling the tremors coursing through her body.

Her pulse quickened at my proximity. Her complexion turned ashen when my eyes switched.

Her fear sang to me.

"No—" I grabbed her head to keep her in place.

"Stop, no." Her heart thumped wildly against my ribcage. I should hate this vulnerability on her.

But I wanted to claim it.

*I wanted to devour the water lilies.*

"You want mercy for your friends?" A dark thought curled in my mind. "Then earn it. With a price."

Anastasia whimpered when I skimmed my nose along the length of her neck before leaving a trail of kisses.

They didn't carry a ection. Only menace.

The shudders that rippled through her body with each kiss signaled she felt their danger.

"Cain!" She cried out my name when I bit into her pulse point.

"Kiss me," I whispered against her lips. "Kiss me like you mean it and I will spare your friends." I grabbed a stful of her hair.

"Please me, and I will allow you to meet them." Her eyes widened at my o er. "Sounds good?"

Without any hesitation, Anastasia grabbed my face with both hands and smashed her lips on mine. She got on her toes and looped her arms around, pushing herself into my body.

Her lips moved urgently and desperately against mine. Her protesting moans at my refusal to kiss her back were such a delight.

Her heart raged in fear. She was shaking like a leaf in my arms.

*Flashback*

"I can't do this," she whispered, her voice trembling.

"Why are you hesitating?" I asked Omisha. "Kiss me."

I wasn't unaware of her hesitation. That's exactly why I chose to teach her a lesson.

"Do you love me?" I asked her bluntly.

"Why do you keep testing me like this?" she answered with a question.

I pulled her into my body and forced her eyes on me by gripping her chin rmlly.

"Kiss me."

"Cain!" Omisha pushed at my chest. "Stop this." Her struggles to break free became violent when my eyes switched. "Someone will see us."

She jumped away from me when I released her.

"You don't understand." She held her hands to her chest. "I'll be cast out like my cousin's family."

I could see through her lame attempts to mask the truth.

"There is no need for this farce." I stepped back when Omisha tried to touch me. "I am not a means for your secret pleasures, Omisha. Don't come to me unless you grow enough guts to be mine before the whole fucking world."

*End of ashback*

There was nothing familiar about this. Anastasia's aura, presence, touch, warmth, and scent were di erent.

It aggravated me.

Her red hair, her warm brown eyes, her fair skin, and her soft features bore no resemblance to her past life. She smelled like water lilies that didn't irritate my nerves.

The disparity became visible the more I noticed.

Omisha never kissed me of her own accord. Anastasia did without hesitation.

How could there be no essence of her past self?

The revelation of her reincarnation with my wing came true. Then how come she was not what she used to be? She was bound to have a trait or two from her past—there were none.

She wasn't even born as a Blue Blood.

Her eyes utedered open and her gaze bore into mine.

She was scared. She was unsure. But she was determined to ght.

I grabbed her head before she could move back and forced her into a real kiss.

The soft gasp that left her mouth and entered mine broke an invisible dam.

Anastasia moaned when I tightened my grip on her hair and hips. She leaned into me as I deepened the kiss, though her tiny sts kept pushing me at the same time. It made me smirk.

She was nothing like anything I had ever tasted.

I had never wanted to kiss her like this in her past life. I never kissed Omisha this way.

My chest rumbled with growls the more her purity invaded my senses. Her virgin mouth was such a delicious treat, and I was enjoying every second of it.

*I wanted more.*

Her eyes stayed closed when I released her lips. She was clutching my shirt tightly in her small, soft hands.

Her cheeks were ushed with anger and embarrassment.

I pinched her chin and tilted her face up. Those ragged breaths—I wanted to steal them again.

I wanted to taint her purity with my sinful touches and watch her writhe in absolute pleasure under me.

The urge—the stir in my blood to claim her was uncontrollable.

I would have fucked her senseless if it weren't for that fucking curse.

It would kill Anastasia if she didn't consent to my touch. I couldn't aord that.

Her hot breath scorched my thumb as I rubbed her swollen, red lips slowly.

The enticing sight stirred something diabolical within me—an insatiable lust toward her.

A con agration I never felt for Omisha.

*What was happening to me?*