

Chapter 23

I shot Xic a warning glare when his amusement echoed around my study once more. He couldn't stop laughing despite my threats and his endless apologies.

My blood was already boiling—I didn't need another reason to reduce this place to ash.

"You revealed your true form," Xic snickered. "But Anastasia didn't seem frightened. Omisha didn't come near you for a week," he continued, drawing comparisons between past and present. "Maybe she isn't Omisha after all."

Things weren't proceeding as I anticipated.

Disclosing Omisha's truth stemmed into undesirable lapses. Anastasia didn't recall her past life. Her response to Larc's approach was sour. It was clear that he unnerved her.

She was crushed, but not groveling. I saw pure hatred in her eyes for her past when she smashed the portrait.

Why isn't she acting like she used to?

"It's all because of you, Clary," Aeron reprimanded her.

I wanted to rip her open and tear her to pieces. She had revealed Anastasia's past to her without my permission, ruining everything I had planned.

"Don't preach, Aeron," Clarissa snapped.

"Shut up," my voice shook the walls of my study. "Not another word out of your god-damned mouth, Clarissa."

"But—"

I grabbed her throat, slamming her into the pillar. "I won't care if you are my sister. Dare hinder me again and I'll shove you in the Abyss."

Her bones cracked under my force. "You coddled her when you should have ended this farce," she choked out.

Aeron and Xic stepped in and stood before me defensively, to keep me from killing her. Their bravery was laudable.

"You will kill me? For her?" Clarissa screeched.

"Don't start again, you two." Einar, Clarissa's husband, appeared through a vortex. He was a powerful warlock and half demon. I had asked him to come to figure out a way around the curse.

I ignored Clarissa's screams and turned to Einar.

"She is slipping from my grasp, Einar," I said.

"Every blow on her body, mind, or heart"—Einar grimaced—"Psychological, emotional or physical, will affect your wing. I told you time and again."

"What do you want me to do?" I clenched my fists.

"Your magic can heal her physically," Einar repeated his warning. "It cannot fix her soul."

I gritted my teeth. "I gave her everything she wanted. I even let her go back. This fucking curse doesn't let me near her and now she knows the truth of that fucking Larc. Who do you think she will choose?"

"She called you," Einar answered calmly.

I looked away from him.

"You cannot extract your wing by procuring a few sublunary aspects. You are not even close to reckoning what that poor soul wants."

"He doesn't want to know," Aeron added.

"Serra and Amon have gotten wind of things because of Harold," Xic informed us. "They are shadowing those girls all the time. Serra is more of a threat to Anastasia than Clarissa, Cain."

"Why do you think I asked you to watch the two?" I bit back. "Do your job for once. Anastasia's safety is my concern."

I poured myself another drink.

"You are hazardous to her," Einar retorted. "Heal her soul if you want your wing. The nature of the curse is more complicated than you can imagine."

"What?" Aeron and Xic asked simultaneously.

"The wing has become part of her soul. Severing it now will destroy it," Einar looked at me. "There's a chasm between coercion and consent, Cain. You pushed her to remember. The consequence is now carved into her soul."

I gritted my teeth.

"If you don't become part of her soul, the wing will perish the moment you sever it." He looked at me. "You hate the thought of her near you? You need to make her never want to leave your side."

The marble cracked when I gripped the counter. The windows shattered, and everything rattled and trembled under my wrath.

"Get me to the astral realm," I hissed to my brothers. "Lyra's key. Every answer lies there."

"And you, Clary." I glared at her. "Stay away from Anastasia. Leave this house."

"This is my home—"

"And I am *Dalazar Daemone*." They all knelt before me. "Don't push me, little sister."

"Come on, love." Einar ushered her out. "You have plenty of properties. Don't be stingy."

He looked at me. "I'm going to Acreoterra tonight. The Wenix bear knowledge about the forbidden curses. We may find something."

I went to my table and retrieved Omisha's locket from the drawer. I kept it for one reason only: as a reminder of the mistake that destroyed everything.

The flames engulfed the locket in my palm.

I gave it to her, but I felt nothing as I destroyed it.

"You hold no place in my memories anymore."

Moments later, my phone rang.

"What—" I sneered, only to be interrupted by a familiar voice.

"Cain? Why am I alone?" Anastasia's voice came pathetically through the phone.

"Where are you?" I listened for background noises. I heard some cars, seemingly far away.

"Why did I have to go through this?" Her voice cracked. "I never hurt anyone in my life."

What had this girl gotten herself into now?

"It's so dark here, Cain," she drawled. "I won't be eaten by Anima, right? That man won't come for me again, will he? I didn't like what he did. It was so scary."

"Don't move an inch, do you hear me?"

"Why me? What did I do to deserve this?"

The line went dead.