Chapter 27

Symphony of Death

I stepped out of the portal and scanned the rooftop garden, sliding my phone into my pocket. I couldn't use my powers to hi Anastasia.

The curse was an impenetrable wall when it came to her. It was past midnight.

This building—void of humans—stood silent under the sky. When will this stubborn woman understand the delicacy of the matter?

She was wandering around alone , with my wing. Somehow, she managed to make me lose my cool.

"If it was not high enough," I muttered.

I teleported to her.

She was sitting in a daze, completely unaware of my presence. That alone stoked my fury.

"What are you doing?" I demanded.

Anastasia turned, startled.

"Where are your shoes?" I frowned, scanning her disheveled condition.

"I put them somewhere," she said, looking around aimlessly. "Strange! Where are my shoes? How will I go back?"

"Where is Shaul?" I asked, trying to remain calm.

"I put her to sleep," Anastasia whispered. "She wouldn't have let me come alone, so…I added sleeping pills to her milk. She plunked at the green.

"I wasn't expecting them to work."

"You insane woman," I ground out the words, eyeing the empty bottles around her. "How much did you drink?"

"Why are you scolding me?" she pouted, lips trembling. "You always shout. Always get angry." Hugging her knees, she looked away. "Stupid."

"You got a death wish, woman?" I sneered.

Her bravado was asking for her neck to be snapped.

"Sir?" Anastasia stunted, staggering to her feet. "You going to throw me o there?" She pointed to the parapet wall.

I watched her stumble toward it.

"Hey!" I shouted when she climbed up. "Get down."

She turned and almost tripped on the fat edge.

My body moved instinctively.

"Anastasia!"

"Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy? Caught in a landslide… No escape from reality…"

Her glare returned to me mid-note.

"I'm singing my misery," she said, pressing a hand to her heart.

"Open your eyes, look up to the sky and awwwwww—"

I rubbed my forehead.

She was a horrible singer in this life. Her voice was soft, but painfully o- key.

"I'm just a poor boy—" Anastasia stopped singing. "But I'm a girl. Can't an I girl or a woman? Forget it. She waved it o.

"I need no sympathy."

Her obstinacy was aggravating me.

"You will fall."

"You want me to fall? You want me to die? Tears slipped down her ushed cheeks. "You hate me, Cain. Whether I live or die—it doesn't matter to you."

She crouched and buried her face in her palms, sobbing.

"Everyone keeps on dying. I'm scared for Ifat and Angie. Please!" she begged, eyes wide and desperate. "Don't hurt them. Don't kill them because of me."

I pinched the bridge of my nose.

I could already imagine Emer and Xiz laughing their asses o . Those morons had forced me to stew over their words.

I spoke softly. "Anastasia."

The fear in her eyes at my approach clawed at my nerves. Her sts clenched, knuckles white.

She was trying so hard not to squirm.

"Look up," I ordered.

I pinched her chin and pulled her face up when she refused to comply. "Look at me."

Her eyes were full of fe, quivering tears—and it gave me a sick feeling.

"Are you a child?" I wiped her tears with my index nger. "You are a mess."

"I know." She nodded. "I am unsightly. I'm just—I'm tired."

"Get down for now," I lifted her from the wall. "Why drink if you can't handle your alcohol?"

She swayed, and I grabbed her arms to steady her. "You do the stupidest things."

"I don't. You do," she retorted. "Why fall for someone like her? You couldn't even tell that bitch was conning you," she stormed.

My eyes narrowed.

Little daredevil was testing my patience.

"King of the dead and blah, blah, blah," she xxx ed.

"Calling yourself names, Christina?" I sneered.

"I'm not Christina," Anastasia shrieked.

I wrinkled, enjoying her outrage.

"Go away if you're going to be nasty." She tried to push me away. "No, leave—"

"Easy there, love." She thrashed in my arms, but it was fruitless.

"Why are you ridiculously self?" she grumbled. "I can't reach your face. I want to ram my punch in it. The blue eye will add charms to your pasty looks."

"Should I show you my face again?" I threatened. "It will help you sit down in one place."

"I'm not afraid. What's there to be afraid of? Damn you!"

She hi ed, pouting—making my blood thump.

"Why're you handsome and hot either way?"

My grip on her waist faltered.

"Cow is dominatingly hot and the other is intimidatingly hot," she rambled. "It's like two hotties in one body."

She giggled and threw herself back in my arms, laughing at her own nonsense.

"Oh!" Anastasia grabbed my right hand and pressed it to her cheek. "Oh, this feels nice." Eyes closed, she sighed. "Cool and nice."

She brought my left hand to her other cheek. "Cool, cool."

"You're not scared?" She shook her head. "Why?"

"Because it's not scary." She whined when I tried to pull my hands away.

"Can I kiss you?" she said suddenly. "Bite your head. I want to kiss you."

She rose on her toes.

"Anastasia!" I cupped her jaw. "Enough."

My jaw clenched as she cupped my face.

"Look at me, Cain. Look closely. I don't look like her. My hair is red, my eyes are brown. My face… my body… none of it is here."

Her glossy eyes searched mine.

"I know you know my touch doesn't feel like hers. I know in my heart—I'm not her. And you know it too."

"I don't have a heart," I muttered. "Stop being delusional."

Those water lilies were all around me.

Her warmth was unwelcome, yet I didn't push her away.

"You have one," she whispered. "It beats insanely slow but this—"

She pressed a hand to my chest. "It knows. Your gloves won't change the truth."

I shoved to rest someone else.

"Your denial won't change fate," I chuckled darkly. "That works both ways."

"It hurts so much. It's unbearable, Cain," Her hands fell. "The sin you placed on me."

She gripped my shirt. "Your gaze tortures me. Your words haunt me."

I ground my teeth as her tears fell again.

"What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to go?"

My magic can heal her physically. It cannot s her soul.

Emer's words echoed in my ears.

"I'm scared of everything."

I balled my sts when she embraced me.

Her drunken state stopped me from pushing her away. "You abandoned me when you held on before. It hurt."

She sobbed softly. "It hurts when it shouldn't." Her grip on me tightened.

"I don't know how to deal with this anymore. That Logan… he scares me. He manhandled me."

He knew what it could do to her, yet he forced his ways. Just like always.

"Did he hurt you?" I murmured, my voice buried in her hair.

Anastasia buried her face in my chest. "I don't want to go with him, Cain."

"You smell like musk…" she mumbled. "Dust…and something cold. Like winter wrapped in skin."

She mumbled into my chest, her breath warm and heavy against me.

It's stupid, but it makes me feel safe. It always has—"

She was drunk. Loose-tongued. Maybe unaware.

But it was not the right person. I was not a person at all.

I was ruthless and immoral. I wanted her to xx er.

Even if I could get my wing right now, I wouldn't. Not because I had a conscience.

Not because I remembered the thought she was di ement. I wanted leverage over her transgression.

I wanted to clap this back in her face one day—I stood a step above her, even while stooping low.

I grabbed her forearms and pushed her back. The bandages fell, exposing fresh wounds.

She gasped as I kissed each wound, lingering on the fading mark on her left wrist.

"Will I die if you get your wing?" she asked innocently.

"You want to live?" I asked.

She didn't answer. "That hard to say?"

"I don't think so," Anastasia replied, looking down. "I don't have anything to live for. No. I don't care if I live or not."

She extended her left wrist.

Damn you, Emer.

"Do you know what it means to give it back to me?" I gripped her wrist. "You will doom the very world you wanted to protect."

"I'm not her, Cain. I am never going to say otherwise." Her drunk words held a certain steadiness.

"I'm not doming anyone. You exist between one and zero, remember?"

I narrowed my eyes at her calm.

"You're more like an antihero," she said, tapping my chest. "If God didn't interfere with your creation, there's a good reason. Your presence is not in vain."

This little thing.

I pulled her into me with a snap. "I won't even let you regret this moment."

I palmed the back of her head and crushed my lips to hers.

Sly little vixen.

Anastasia whimpered when I dug my ngers into her tender ash.

The kiss had been impulsive. Now, I couldn't stop.

She infuriated me to no end.

How dare she smile and spout nonsense?

She was Christina.

I'd never let myself forget that—no matter how di ement she looked, acted, or felt.

"Don't wish for what you can't handle," I growled against her lips. "You wouldn't want that."

"No!" she gasped, grabbing my face to stop me from pulling away. Her cheeks were aming.

"Can you read people's thoughts?"

"Yes," I replied curtly.

"Then why aren't you reading mine?" she mumbled.

I gripped her jaw hard. "Why can't you read mine?"

I couldn't read her thoughts—curse be damned. But I didn't need to.

I could see her.

"I want to kiss you again," Anastasia whispered, rising up on her toes. "I want to kiss you all the time."

She winced when I tightened my grip. "Cain!"

My lips devoured hers in a punishing kiss.

I molded her to me, meeting our bodies together.

It was already hard enough, restraining myself. And she had to go and say *sinful* things so innocently.

Bloody hell, she was enticing me—and I was telling her.

I growled into her mouth when she unbuttoned my shirt. Her hands roamed over my chest and abdomen, sending jolts through my veins.

It was alcohol.

I kept reminding myself. Yet…I couldn't stop.

Anastasia threw her head back when I kissed my way down her neck and to her shoulders. I didn't spare an inch.

Those water lilies—

Snap out of it, damn it.

I cupped her nape mly and kissed her full on the mouth again.

Anastasia pushed herself into me when I squeezed her hips. Her responsiveness was only making things harder.

If I didn't stop, it would lead to catastrophe when she sobered up.

Despise this. Loathe her and scorn everything she does.

Anastasia gasped loudly when I released her lips at last. Her cheeks were beet red and her eyes were hooded and clouded.

I unhooked her arms from around my neck and held them ently behind her back with one hand.

I pinned her when she tried to free her hands. "I don't intend to fall on the right side ever."

I released her hands roughly.

She reached for my hand despite the warning. "Cain" She placed my hand against her cheek.

"Did you kill Laura?"

That hope in her innocent eyes—

"Fuck you, Anastasia."

She trembled when a clap of thunder shook the air. I closed my eyes and breathed deeply to constrain my anger.

"You didn't tell her? My parents too, right?" She stumbled before me when I turned away from her. "Cain?"

I turned the other way.

"Oh, my god! I killed him." Anastasia started wailing. "I killed him."

She pointed to the plant she had stepped on. "I killed the planet." She cupped her mouth. "I ate the planet. I—"

She fell to her knees. "There is nothing left. How can I be this cruel?"

"Those are strawberries," I said, bemused.

"I ordered them because I got hungry," Anastasia moped over the empty box. "Strawberries come from the planet. I ate the planet."

She started wailing.

"I swear I will kill you or whoever tried to get you drunk again," I said. I lifted her in my arms. "Stop struggling or I will drop you."

The threat worked instantly. She wrapped her arms around my neck and zipped her lips.

I opened the portal.

"But the planet—"

"I will — your god damned planet, Anastasia. Shut up."

"How?" she dared to ask.

"Like this," I grumbled.

My eyes switched. Blue hues rose around us in various patterns.

Her eyes lit up with glee when my power seeped into the dead plant and revived it.

"Magic, Cain," she beamed. "You can do magic. You gave back its life."

The words stumbled out—half-slurred, barely strung together. I grunted when she kissed my cheek.

This was not what I bargained for.