

Chapter 33

I strode toward the chained altar, each deliberate step echoing in the dungeon's hush.

Serra lay before me—helpless, broken, as she'd broken Anastasia. Same position—reversed characters.

That was not the case earlier when I found Anastasia. Scared. Exposed. Crying.

I felt the same venomous thump in my veins.

Clarissa had disfigured Serra beyond recognition, and yet, my dark soul still hungered for more retribution.

They will pay heavily for their insolence.

Serra whimpered as I approached her.

"Cain... Please—" she begged. "I didn't go against you."

"Serra!"

I looked at Amon when he appeared in the dungeons and rushed toward his daughter.

My demons blocked his path and forced him to his knees.

"What are you doing—"

He coughed blood when I rammed him into the pillar.

"Ask again," I said calmly. "Speak, Marquis of Hell."

Only choked sounds came out of his mouth as he clawed at his throat. The veins popped in his eyes.

They were ready to explode.

"Still thirsting for my power?" I sneered.

Amon crawled across the floor. His forehead touched my shoe as he bowed endlessly.

"Mercy," he begged as he kissed my feet.

Spearhead bonds coiled around his body and sank into his skin, making him holler like a slaughtered animal.

Mercy? He dared ask for mercy after what he did?

I kicked him back and returned to the altar, circling Serra's chained form like a predator.

"I lost a wing and you bared your fangs?" I palmed Serra's forehead and faced Amon. "You sent your mutt to my home."

"I was wrong," Amon groveled, rubbing his hands when Serra started screaming. "I'll be your loyal dog forever. Please, spare my daughter."

"I warned your daughter, didn't I?" I growled, crushing her skull under my palm. "She will suffer the consequences for her insolence. And so will you."

"We were tricked by Harold," Amon screamed. "He said we could take out the wing from the girl—"

He was thrown across the dungeon.

"Who said you could *touch* her?" I snarled, making the walls tremble.

I left Serra and went after him.

I gutted him hard and pulled his head back.

"The great Marquis of Hell, Amon!" I chuckled darkly. "Let me show you who stands on the top."

The air stirred and turned black around the altar when I opened the rift to *Ochelas*.

Seisc stepped out of the black vortex and circled Serra.

"Cain!" Amon screamed in horror. "Have mercy, oh *Dalazar Daemnone*."

"I'm aware of who opened the gates of Acreoterra to those *Blue Bloods*," I scorned.

"I was wrong. I forgot my place." Amon struggled against the binds that chained him to the floor.

"There was a tradition before our times, no?" I muttered darkly. "The open *Sabbath*, was it? The demons fucked on the altar. Others used to get high and grind while watching them. Am I right?"

Serra screamed when one of the *Seisc* climbed on top of her.

"They don't only feed on humans. They have a terrifying sexual appetite too," I said, eyeing Serra coldly. "Much worse than your pets."

"I am your culprit, oh great *Dalazar Daemnone*. Please spare my daughter. I forgot my place. Show mercy, my lord—"

"When have you seen me show mercy?" I cut him sharply. "You wanted to taste the ultimate power?"

My eyes switched.

The *Seisc* stopped when I came to the altar.

I freed her limbs and cradled the back of her head.

"I knew you wouldn't do that to me," Serra sobbed.

I smirked as I helped her onto the altar.

"I love you, Cain," she threw her head back when I palmed her face.

Ana's terror flooded back.

"I—" I whispered close to her face. "Don't care."

Blood oozed out of her mouth as she stared at me with wide, petrified eyes.

I shoved her hand in her chest and slashed it open to her throat.

"How dare a lth like you touch her?" I hissed, digging my fingers into her face.

The ground tore in halves behind her.

The Abyss.

Amon screamed when I threw her in it.

"Go," I ordered *Seisc*.

They dived after her and tore her body to pieces as they fucked and ate her alive.

"Serra!" Amon howled like a wounded beast.

"What about him?" Aeron asked. "He knows Harold's whereabouts."

"It's an open war." My form shifted as I went to Amon. "I don't need petty tricks to lure them out."

I lifted him onto the floor by his throat.

"In due time," I muttered as I squeezed the life out of him.

He shifted into his demonic form, but I ripped him apart—vessel by vessel—from the inside.

I smirked as his bloody remains painted the floor.

It was such a beautiful sight.

"I'm born from death." I dusted off his flesh and blood from my hands. "You disappoint me."

Aeron and Xic looked at the dagger I threw across the hall.

The cloaked figure stopped before the blade could have torn open its way from his face to the pillar it pierced.

"Harold!" I sneered.

"Damn!" He removed his cloak and grinned. "I was a fool to believe I could fool you."

Aeron, Xic, and Clarissa stepped next to me when he approached us leisurely.

"Einar's missing," he commented offhandedly. "The execution gave me chills, Cain. So barbaric and inhuman!" He faked a shiver. "He was pretty useful."

"Is this your plan?" I scooped.

"The plan is to hunt your precious treasure," he taunted. "A beast who couldn't be shaken for a millennium woke up because of a small trick?"

I didn't react.

"You're hard to crack," Harold laughed. "Let me give you a heads up for old times' sake."

I raised one hand to stop my siblings from acting when he moved closer to me.

I remained unfazed when he leaned toward my shoulder. "Your precious will be attacked every second. Protect her if you can."

"Harold!" Xic snarled.

"An open war, you said?" He eyed me wickedly. "I was getting bored. This will be fun."

"You can only manipulate and stab from behind," I sneered. "You'll fight the frontlines?"

"Ouch!"

I grabbed his blade between my thumb and index finger. His lapdogs appeared behind him.

Xoran was one of them—in his jackal form.

"Damn you, Cain." Harold jumped back. "I'll be seeing you soon, my lord. Your little treasure to be exact."

He vanished.

"We could have ended this chase," Xic snarled. "Why do you need to play along?"

"Cool it," Aeron warned.

"Fuck o," he snapped. "We haven't found a single lead to undo the curse and you added more to your plate."

He raked his hair wildly. "How will you protect Anastasia?" he asked gravely. "Harold will come after her every second you are away."

Clarissa stepped in front of me. "Why did you react so severely?" she asked. "What does it matter if she—"

I grabbed her throat before she could finish.

"You are treading the wrong path," she choked. "Don't fall for her again."

"Mind your fucking business." I let her go with a jerk. "No one will be spared. None who'll come after her."

"You were to only protect her for wing—"

Aeron grabbed her shoulder.

"Einar was supposed to be at the mansion before midnight," I hissed. "And why didn't you tell her Clary was leaving with you two?"

My anger ached at their negligence. "Make one more mistake and I will have your heads."

I crossed the portal to my room.

The instant I entered, my bloodstained clothes dissolved. The stench would have been too much for her.

In the bathroom mirror, I saw only my eyes—cold, remorseless.

I washed away gore, donned sweatpants, and collapsed onto the couch. My head was throbbing.

I poured myself a drink, my eyes fixed on the bed. Anastasia was in the same position I left her in.

I finished my drink and went to bed.

I pulled the blanket down from her face slowly. She lay with her arms splayed, like a sleeping child.

Her face bore all the innocence of the world. My jaw locked seeing the red marks on her cheeks and the cut on her soft lips.

There were ugly black bruises on her wrists.

That punishment was not enough.

I sat next to her and held her right arm. I kissed her wrist and watched the bruise heal under my touch.

I healed her left wrist and tucked her arms under the blanket.

Anastasia sobbed in her sleep when I healed her ankles. Those tears—those clear pearls—made me sick.

I wiped her eyes with the back of my index finger.

"You are sly without even trying," I said, kissing her cheeks. My eyes fell on her slightly parted lips.

It angered me to in nity.

No one would touch her. Not while I was here.

If someone was going to soil her innocence, it would be me.

I frowned when her eyes opened slowly. Her unfocused gaze darted around the room.

I knew what she wanted. I fetched a glass of water and helped her sit up. She leaned into me as she drank.

She was acting in her sleep.

I put the glass aside and looked down at her. She fell back into a deep sleep on my chest.

Her mouth—that snarky, sweet, luscious mouth—was calling me.

Control.

I pressed my face into her hair and inhaled deeply. A soft sigh escaped her plush lips when I kissed her closed eyes.

My gaze was not ready to tear itself from her face.

Don't fall for her again.

The malevolence thumped in my veins with Clarissa's words.

You are a carrier of my power, Anastasia.

I pulled away from her. I'd protect you...but I'd never see you in a different light.