

## Symphony of Death

### Chapter 4

"I am coming," I said into the phone. I walked briskly toward the elevators. "Get everything ready."

Just then, a faint thud echoed from inside the hall. I paused, my steps halting as silence followed like a warning.

"HELP!"

A blood-chilling scream ripped through the air.

"What was that?" Aeron asked through the line. "Cain?"

I didn't answer. I ended the call and spun back, storming toward the hall.

"Don't tell me—" I swung the door open, my voice laced with growing irritation.

The air shifted the moment I stepped inside. A low hum buzzed in my ears.

The stillness wasn't silence—it was a presence. The darkness wasn't empty—it was breathing, pressing against my skin like an oil slick.

I didn't inch. I let it slither, let it guide me to the ones who had sensed me and tried to vanish.

My fists clenched, and my body responded on instinct.

*Turquoise eyes gave way to electric blue. Pupils narrowed into vertical slits and bled red.*

Of course. These despicable vermin always summoned out the truth in me.

"What do we have here?" I chuckled darkly and walked further inside the pitch-black hall. "What an unexpected sight!"

Their stench hit me like spoiled earth. I could feel their fear coiling through the shadows.

The shadows recoiled at my presence, slinking back into corners they could never escape from. I didn't need light to see them—I felt them in my marrow.

Their wrongness vibrated through the air like a scream with no mouth.

"I am not even gone for that long and someone's already creating mischief back home?" My voice dropped, poisoned with disdain. "You know what happens when I find you here."

They knew the law. The boundary.

And yet, here they were—crawling across realms they didn't belong to.

"Parasites." I spat the word, my voice curling with contempt.

They howled when black chains lashed into existence, snapping around their grotesque necks. Not forged by earthly means.

Not bound to the door—but to me.

*Someone...*

*...is in for an explanation.*

My ear caught on soft whimpers that didn't belong to any of these damned. I turned and saw her—curled under the table like a frightened child.

The rest vanished the moment I raised my hand, transported to the only place that would tolerate their filth: Acreoterra, my home, their prison.

A realm between heaven and hell. For creatures like them.

Acreoterra welcomed them as always—screaming.

I'd caged worse in that realm. But it never stopped these desperate vermin from trying to crawl their way out of there.

*I need to sort this little mess before I tend to them.*

"Ms. Grace!" My voice rang sharp.

She inched violently.

"Come out."

She shook her head without looking. Her face stayed buried in her knees.

*She doesn't even realize who I am.*

I needed to know how much she heard or saw before I dealt with her.

"It's me." I crouched closer, temper suppressed. "Cain."

Her struggles halted at my name.

"Anastasia?" I reached for her again carefully. "Come here."

My jaw tightened at her hesitation and refusal to open her eyes.

"It's dark," she pleaded. "I can't see it. Please—turn on the lights."

When I touched her head to guide her out, her hands latched onto my arm like a lifeline. As I stepped back, her arms sailed out blindly, searching for me.

The next second, she wrapped them around my waist, burying her face in my chest. I stood still as she sought comfort in my presence.

Her touch pulled something old and bitter to the surface. A memory.

But it carried no pain now. Not even the ghost of it.

Whatever lingered from that past had long washed away.

The beat of her heart pounded wild against mine. She was warm, small, and soft—a fragile human with an alluring scent, sharpened by her fear.

"No!" she shook her head, clinging harder when I tried pushing her away. Her grip was weak—but desperate.

"No!" She rested my jacket, shoving her face deeper into my chest as if to hide from something.

"I'm going to carry you out," I whispered against her hair.

Her arms immediately circled my neck when I lifted her. She was holding onto me like someone on the edge of drowning.

I walked out of the dark hall and into the light-drenched hallway. She was unraveling by the minute, and the last thing I wanted to deal with was a human in tears.

"Anastasia?" I prompted softly for a change. Her arms tightened around me. "I cannot carry you all night."

Her head slowly detached from the crook of my neck, and her eyes finally uttered open.

Anastasia looked around reluctantly when I lowered her to the floor and unlocked her arms from around my neck. But before I could move away, her delicate fingers wrapped around my palm.

"Wait—don't leave, please. Don't leave me here."

The fear her cracking voice carried was real. Something stirred in my chest the moment her palm touched mine. A pull. A pressure. Foreign—and familiar.

For the briefest second, I heard another voice. Another girl. Another time.

I banished the thought with a bitter taste in my mouth.

Anastasia crumpled to the floor like a broken doll. She was so fragile and vulnerable. She had pushed herself beyond her limits these past days. The exhaustion, the burnout, caught up to her fear and painted it a deeper shade.

But she didn't let go of my hand. Her small fingers clung to my hand with their shaking strength. It was amusing, really, that these soft, small hands created those one-of-a-kind dresses.

"Don't go, please." Her small voice tore through my internal musings, and I looked at her again.

She, who wielded words like weapons, now trembled like a leaf. Clinging to me like a child.

There was no more in her now—only fear.

I bent on one knee before her and pinched her chin between my thumb and index finger.

Her brown eyes—big, misty, and wide—looked at me with a mixture of emotions. She was not crying, but her eyes were glassy.

She was looking at me like I was her only anchor.

It made the muscles of my jaw tighten.

"Don't look at me like that," I growled slowly, menacingly.

The ding of the elevator grounded me to reality before I could reveal my identity to this fragile woman.

I pulled my hand out of her feeble grip and stood up, stepping back before the person could step out of the elevator.

*What was that?*

"Ana!" a voice tore through the thickening silence.

*Angela was her name if I recalled correctly.*

"What's wrong?" she asked Anastasia, her gaze shifting to me warily. "What happened?"

"Angie—" Anastasia lifted a shaky finger toward the hall. "That—"

Angela hugged her, clearly trying to ground her.

"You are okay. Let's take you home now. You are tired."

Her fear—there was something unnatural about it.

*No one gets this rattled by a mere blackout.*

"My phone. The dress. Everything is inside," Anastasia said softly, glancing at me.

"I'll ask Nat to get your things and lock the place up," Angela said. Anastasia nodded at her in response, still watching me.

"Thank you, Mr. Black."

The same gratitude echoed through Anastasia's gaze on me. It made me smirk in amusement, how such a confident and bold woman was being so soft and timid right now.

"Let's go." Angela led her toward the elevator.

I stood where I was. The silence surrounded me once again.

But this time—something changed in it.

I grunted in annoyance when the phone in my pocket buzzed again. I took it out and put it against my ear.

"Must you use it to contact—" I looked toward the elevator.

"Aeron?" My eyes shifted toward the hall once more. "I want every little detail about Anastasia Grace."

I stared at the place she stood last.

*Everything.*