

Chapter 6

Sharon entered like smoke—beautiful, caustic, and too fragrant for her own good. I swiveled my chair to face her fully and frowned when she stopped across my table.

"We leave tonight. Just like you asked. I came to give you what you asked for." She flicked her hair, a sly smile curling her lips.

A dagger appeared on my desk. It was finally back where it belonged.

With me.

To think they could keep me from my own weapon. What a joke.

"Where were they keeping it?" I asked her disinterestedly.

"At the temple of the Ecaitheoa," she replied arrogantly. "It was not an easy job, you know. It's never easy to get past those Blue Bloods."

I could go there without breaking a sweat, take it before their eyes as they stood and watched me. But this was more humiliating for them.

My underling—creatures they called the bane of this universe, lowlives—stealing from them under their divine powers. Not great, but it brought me a sprinkle of satisfaction and amusement.

"Those dresses? Always destined to be mine," she purred. "That price was fair enough. Besides, I saved your show and raised the quality and reputation of your worldly business to new heights."

I picked up the dagger and observed it closely.

"It's forged from Black Phoenix ash. Won't it hurt you?"

"Only those who aren't me, *Kesia*." Her expression soured at the name—her real name. One she hated. "You served your purpose. It's time for you to leave."

"It's a shame you lost such talent for that little thing." She pointed to the dagger. "Anastasia Grace." Her voice was laced with greed. "Maybe I will take her—"

Her eyes widened and she clawed at her throat, but nothing came out except for her agonizing grunts.

"You Naxoris were a sin etched into the fabric of this world, you cursed-breed of nymphs and kelpie." I eyed her scornfully. "Don't forget it's because of me that you can live and walk and mooch off others' beauty to look the way you do."

She was thrown across the room and pinned to the wall. "Want me to peel back that stolen beauty, Naxoris?" I released her and she fell to the floor, gasping and panting.

"That face isn't yours, Sharon. Never forget that."

"I'm sorry," Sharon bowed, head touching the floor at my feet. "I forgot my place, my lord. I committed a great sin. It won't happen again. I won't look at that girl. Please, don't abandon us."

"Try to control your greed before it becomes your demise," I warned her. "If I hear of any more unwanted human hunting, I will turn your entire kind to dust."

"It won't happen again. I swear on my life."

"It better not," I growled.

She nodded furiously as she stumbled back to her feet and tried to uphold her crippled pride.

"Long live," she said, placing her right hand on her chest, "the king of death."

She vanished.

"Fucking parasites. Always a nuisance," I mumbled to myself.

I threw the dagger on the desk. If not for it, I would have never let these creatures enter the living world.

It was one thing they feared me and another to mold their twisted nature. They lived off human beauty and always wanted a heavy payment if someone needed them to do something.

Sharon created a mess for me that night.

"As if she can leave." I leaned back in my chair and looked at the letter Hannah sent me.

Anastasia's resignation letter.

"Tough little thing, I'll give her that," I chuckled, dry and bitter, watching the piece of paper vanish in bluish-black flames.

There was no denying Anastasia's talent, and her wit and grit were good entertainment.

I didn't want to take away her work, but it was the price that Naxoris demanded.

"You're not walking away." I sat back in my chair and leaned back, looking up at the ceiling covered with ancient murals. "Not yet."

To a normal eye, they looked like ordinary paintings, but only I knew what dark history hid within them. Every time I looked at them, I remembered that night.

And every time I closed my eyes, her betrayal played again—

Flashback

"Why?" I asked bitterly.

There was a time when my dead black heart thumped to life at the mere glance of her. But now, I felt nothing but revulsion.

"This was the only way," she replied softly.

Her voice was once music to my ears, but it felt like acid at this moment. Her scythe appeared in her hand, and my Ashrune morphed out of thin air.

I admired the massive black blade. It was no ordinary sword; it was made of the Anima it devoured in the depths of Acreoterra.

We charged at each other as thunder struck the dark sky. This was fated from the very beginning. She was no match for me, but she still tried.

I plunged my Ashrune deep within her abdomen without any remorse or hesitation.

"You should've known better." Blood oozed out of her mouth and she fell to her knees. It was a fatal blow.

My sword meant death to her kind.

"I don't forgive betrayal."

"I'm sorry. There was no other way left," she whispered hoarsely. She raised her hand for me. "I'm sorry, Cain."

"Dare to say my name again, Omisha," I spat. "Dare to touch me, and I will rip you to shreds."

"Please. Just once. I beg you." I bent next to her against my better judgment.

"I'm sorry, Cain. I truly am."

She palmed my cheek with her bloody hand. Her smile was mournful, laced with pain. I looked at her face blankly. The warmth that once flickered there was gone, replaced by something cold and distant—a stranger's face wearing a ghost's smile.

Had there really been any action between us?

Her eyes mirrored the poisonous blue of her blood. Her beautiful pale locks were matted and sticking to her face. Her red lips—I loved to kiss them, but now I despised them above everything.

"I love you."

"I loved you," I whispered darkly. "You should know what it means when our kind falls out of love."

"I had to choose between what I wanted and what was right." Omisha looked at me with tear-filled eyes.

"Faking it to the very end, Omisha?" I scorned.

"It was not easy for me, Cain, but I had to do what was best for everyone, for the world." Her lips trembled. "You are death and destruction."

"Nothing is going to change this truth," I replied menacingly.

"I'm sorry. I truly am."

I didn't pull back when she wound her arms around my neck and hugged me.

"But I have a duty to fulfill."

My roar was that of a wounded beast when Omisha plunged the dagger into my left shoulder blade. Light burst from my wound.

Two black wings, edged with golden flames, erupted from my back—pain searing through me as the spell sealed my fate.

"You wench!" I tried to push her off, but she held tight.

"This dagger is made of black phoenix ashes—the only material that burns through the divine core," Omisha whispered on my shoulder.

"Which you should not have to begin with." She held on as the spell sealed my fate.

"You cannot be allowed to live, Cain."

"Omisha!"

My howl was drenched in betrayal and anguish when my left wing came off my shoulder blade and disappeared into thin air.

"You wretched Blue Blood! What did you do?" I yelled angrily while clutching my wounded shoulder. "What did you do?!"

"I had to," Omisha said. She fell to the ground before me.

"I'm sorry, Cain," she said remorsefully when I fell right next to her.

Both weapons had black phoenix's ashes, and I was not going to survive until the dagger was pulled out. She made sure she dragged me down with her.

"I loathe you, Omisha," I spat. "You dragged my love through the dirt. Mocked it. Mocked me. Know that I will not spare you. Not in this life, not in any other. You will rue this day, this moment, Omisha. I swear I will make sure of it."

"I don't wish to encounter the same fate with you ever again, Cain," she choked between broken breaths. "No matter how much I yearn, I will never wish to be in the same world as you ever again."

Her hand reached for me. "I hope this ends here with us."

End of Flashback

"You thought it would end!" I looked at the locket in my hand. Her locket, the one I gave her as a symbol of my love and commitment to her.

"I have waited a thousand years for this day, Omisha." I clutched the locket angrily and looked at the ceiling. "You can put as many spells as you want, but I will find you."

A thousand years, and the damn thing still reeks of her. Jasmines.

I hated them. They always aggravated my senses.

As soon as it visited my senses, another one washed it away. Another alluring scent that I encountered recently.

It was strange how the throbbing sensation of Omisha's memory disappeared just by imagining it.

Water lilies.

"Cain?" Xic's voice yanked me from the past as he and Aeron entered the study.

"What you asked for," Aeron said as he placed the locket on the table.

I picked it up and skimmed through it. It contained every little detail about the little miss with the curly hair.

But not what I was hoping to find.

"What about the Anima that were in the room that night? Surely, they were released by Harold. What do you intend to do with him?" Aeron asked when I closed it and threw it on the table.

"He has been messing with the other end for the past twenty years," Xic said, looking at Aeron briefly before looking back at me.

"You know as well as we do what can happen if the Anima don't depart from this world," Xic said. He was serious, a rare sight. "It can tamper with the natural order of existence and get those fucking Blue Bloods on our backs."

"He's sneaking someone into Acreoterra. Or someone in there is trying to put wool over our eyes." Aeron palmed the table and leaned over. "No one can dare take Anima out of Acreoterra unless you want them to."

My little brother was smart.

"Keep playing with me, brother, and you'll give birth to another war." His eyes narrowed at my expression. "Take care of him now before that bastard starts one."

"No." Their frowns turned to dark scowls.

"He is no fool, nor are we. He is onto something. Something we are unable to see for now." I put the locket back inside the drawer. "He knows damn well what could happen to him, yet he broke the law. Let him be, let him play and be ecstatic a little longer."

"Sounds to me like you already know what he was brewing all this time," Xic said matter-of-factly.

"The hunt begins, brothers. Vengeance will be ours to serve and savor."

Wherever you are, Omisha, I'll find you.